

Murdoch

From A1

liked the idea of working outdoors and meeting new people.

"I was as excited as I could be," he said. "The whole thing sounded really cool to me."

His regular route takes him through most of Union Grove's west side, serving about 575 homeowners and businesses every day Monday through Friday.

Customers have grown close to Murdoch and have learned to look forward to his daily deliveries because of his outgoing personality, his sense of humor and his cheery demeanor.

A couple of times, he has delighted children along his route by delivering mail on Christmas Eve wearing a Santa Claus costume.

Scott Maier, a manager at Union Grove Lumber, 1024 10th Ave., said Murdoch has become a beloved person in the village as someone who understands the importance of a little small-town friendliness.

"He's always got a smile on his face," Maier said. "It's contagious."

Starting in 1984, Murdoch delivered the mail in Union Grove part-time while also working occasionally in Elkhorn, Sturtevant or elsewhere. After a few years, he was assigned to Union Grove full-time and became a fixture on Main Street and in neighborhoods west of there.

He is one of three carriers based in the post office at 830 Main St.

Over the years, Murdoch got opportunities to transfer to other lo-



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Union Grove mail carrier Mark Murdoch, left, is shown with his wife Amy in 1990, during the first decade of a career in which he delivered mail to Union Grove homes and businesses for 38 years.

cations and work new routes. But he passed up those offers, opting to stay in Union Grove because of a growing love for the community.

"That was where I wanted to be," he said. "That was the community I knew."

Murdoch and his wife, the former Amy Schiefert, married in 1991 and settled in nearby Yorkville. The couple has one adult daughter, Paige.

As the years passed, Murdoch made more and more friends along his delivery route. Whenever a customer missed collecting their mail for a few days, he would knock on the door to make sure everything

was all right.

Soon, he started bumping into customers in restaurants and elsewhere. Children pointed him out in a crowd and whispered, "There's the mailman." Family members teased him that he was the unofficial mayor of Union Grove.

"Everyone loves him," his wife said.

The job has changed quite a bit in 38 years. Gone are the clunky catalogs from J.C. Penney or Sears Roebuck & Co., replaced now by a steady stream of packages heading out from Amazon.com warehouses.

Murdoch has weathered all the changes with a smile, happy to be



Union Grove mail carrier Mark Murdoch, left, shown with his daughter, Paige, center, and his wife, Amy, graduated from Union Grove High School in 1980 and joined the U.S. Postal Service at his father's suggestion.

working the same job that he felt so fortunate to get nearly four decades ago.

Jeff Kieslich, owner of Ruma Sports, 1000 Main St., said he enjoys talking sports with Murdoch as the mail carrier makes his rounds. Murdoch always seems to be in a good mood, and always has a friendly word to offer, Kieslich said.

"We're definitely going to miss him," he added.

Murdoch, who walks seven to nine miles a day on his route, has endured his share of inclement weather, not to mention the occasional unfriendly dog. He has sustained a few dog bites, although none of them too serious.

After having knee-replacement surgery last year, he decided it was time to retire, while his body still will allow him to enjoy a day of golf.

He will miss the customers, he said, but he and his wife have no plans to leave the Union Grove area.

"I know I've made the right decision," he said.

Co-workers treated Murdoch to a small retirement party, complete with a cake decorated with a photo of him. Former postmasters and others turned out to wish him well.

Jackie Appelhans, a co-worker for the past 24 years, said Murdoch has grown so popular in the community that customers ask about him whenever he takes time away from work.

Murdoch also is popular among his fellow post office workers, Appelhans said, adding that she will miss him during the workday.

"He's the one who gets everyone laughing," she said. "It's just not going to be the same."