

James Rabe ([00:03](#)):

So Pete, uh, you are a mail carrier, your USP S employee. Yes. Correct. How long have you been doing that?

Peter Bruening ([00:11](#)):

28 years. 25 of that was in Stewartville. Where were the first three years at Rochester?

James Rabe ([00:21](#)):

What's it like suddenly being thrown into the spotlight?

Peter Bruening ([00:27](#)):

Yeah, she wasn't expecting that. You know, you just do just a normal day with the kids, you know, and yeah. I had no idea, but it actually started up about a month ago and then it kind of went a little bit by her own story, but then it kind of died off and now it's just taken a whole new life again.

James Rabe ([00:44](#)):

Well, that's right, because it actually was shot in January.

Peter Bruening ([00:47](#)):

Right.

James Rabe ([00:49](#)):

That's cool. Um, is that something you do a lot, take time to have fun with kids?

Peter Bruening ([00:54](#)):

Oh, I absolutely. That's my day. I mean, you know, it's just, it's just the innocence of them and, uh, there's so much negativity in the world right now. Right? The only ones, not the only ones, not negative or the kids. You can't find a negative kid,

James Rabe ([01:10](#)):

Even when they're positive kids.

Peter Bruening ([01:14](#)):

Yeah, exactly. But how it really started with the kids was 10 years ago. Um, I started carrying a little bit of candy because it was in the, it was in the summer and I started to notice you don't see kids outside anymore. Beautiful days. I wasn't seeing kids outside. So I started carrying candy and, uh, to get the kids to come outside. So literally when they knew I was coming, they would wait three, four hours outside just to, for me to show up at one piece of candy. That's so great. And the parents loved it. I loved it. And it got them outside and got them a little more active. That's kind of how the whole thing started with them. Now. It's just the relationship got stronger, stronger, stronger. I mean, I have kids all day long. Right.

James Rabe ([01:56](#)):

I must be one of the fun things about having a route like that, or you get to interact with the same folks regularly,

Peter Bruening ([02:03](#)):

Right? Correct. You get to know a lot, a lot, sometimes too much.

James Rabe ([02:09](#)):

Um, I, and I assume it's not just little kids that you enjoying getting to know, but it's also sometimes it's the older folks on your routes that probably need a good hello and hi, how are you doing

Peter Bruening ([02:19](#)):

Right. Exactly. It's all, it's all ages anywhere. And especially the ones, you know, the older generation that doesn't have family that can check in on them or, you know, I can just check in and say, Hey, how are you? You know, in which I do, there are quite a few of the elderly on their own, you know, you're kind of that watchdog, right?

James Rabe ([02:36](#)):

Yeah. It's an important role. I used to deliver meals on wheels and I found out just how few people, how few people people see if they're, if they're living at home and they're older and they don't have family coming around, sometimes it's only the, the, the male guy or gal and the, uh, and the meals on wheels person.

Peter Bruening ([02:53](#)):

Right. And I learned that lesson years ago, um, a lady on my row had, she hadn't picked her mail up and she picked it up day and I should have went with my gut on the first day. And I didn't check it until the third day here. She had fallen and she laid there for three days. Oh my gosh. And I said, I'm not going to let that happen again. So, you know, so I make a point to make sure that, you know, you check on these people that need to be checked on. And since you've been doing it for a while, you must have watched some kids grow up and graduate. Even that's the worst part. You're like, man, I'm getting old. Yeah. Some of them are having kids now. Right. Right. Exactly. So you're like, but yeah, for sure. Yeah. It's been, it's been going on for so long that, yeah, definitely.

Peter Bruening ([03:35](#)):

Some of the young ones from years ago that used to bring me pictures every day. Now they're having kids, you know, that's great. That's just great. You know, I'm talking to Katie money. She's, she's like, you know, the kids think of you as part of the family. Yeah. I mean, honestly, that's how it connected. You do get to some of them, the bunny kids are amazing. I mean, they've done. I mean, they're just, I look more forward to seeing them kids private than the kids do being me. Well, you might think so, but I, uh, I got here and I kind of sandbagged ya because we also have Katie right here. She's coming into the middle. Oh, hi. Hi guys. That's awesome. That's a surprise.

The Bunne Family ([04:30](#)):

We were surprised that you weren't working today.

Peter Bruening ([04:33](#)):

Yeah. I've got a day off my day off. So the first out pretty good. Yeah.

The Bunne Family (04:36):

Oh, Olivia, the oldest. I'm Claire. I'm the second child. Isaac. I'm the youngest. I'm Josie. And I'm Katie bunny.

Peter Bruening (04:46):

Hey Katie bunny. Now you said something in that story that I thought was really powerful. You think of him as part of the family, when you're out getting ready to do stuff or you're making cookies, you say, Hey, remember Pete.

The Bunne Family (04:58):

Oh yeah. The kids actually are probably the ones that remember Pete better than I do. So when we're out and about, or making cookies or whatever we were doing, it's like, well, we got to get something for Pete here. One of the cool things that I thought was cool is when it was Pete's birthday, a girl from the town just messaged everybody. I think she might've put a message on Facebook and just said, it's Pete's birthday today. And then the whole community pitches in and get something for Pete. So yeah, he's special to everyone here.

Peter Bruening (05:31):

Thank you. Is there anything you'd like to say to the MP? Well, you know what it is true. It's like, you know, you don't realize, um, like the difference you do different, you do make in kids' lives, I guess, until you like these kids. And I hope I make as much difference as they do for me because it literally, like when I come around the corner from the house, I'm disappointed if I don't see them, it's they literally are part of my day. So like when they're gone or whatever, I mean, it's disappointing to see them. It's like, Oh, take my day's not whole, unless I see, it's not just her kids. It's all the kids on my belt, you know, that I look forward to seeing, you know, and that thing about the birthday, it is kind of true. And it's just an, I mean, it's just a nice gesture. That community treats me very well. And I guess your work goes appreciated. So yeah, that's a great thing.

The Bunne Family (06:24):

He is awesome. And he just, uh, he's just very generous to people and I love that about him and he's super special to us and yeah.

Peter Bruening (06:38):

Yeah. And that nicest thing is, I mean, there'll be lifelong friends, no matter, no matter what I mean, once we get that kind of connection, I mean, I'll be, I'll be friends with these kids probably for life. I'm sure. I don't see that changing, which is a great thing for me. So you guys make my day for sure. Katie, what do you think when you look, when you looked out the window and you saw him getting on the sled, what do you, what do you think when you see stuff like that?

The Bunne Family (07:11):

I hope our insurance is up to date. No, I first, I mean, it doesn't surprise me at all that Pete would do that, but at the same time, it surprised me that he got out of his truck and was sledding down our Hill.

Um, but I mean, if you look at the video, all the kids have suckers in their malls because Pete, you know, that's from Pete. So yeah, it doesn't surprise me.

Peter Bruening ([07:41](#)):

So I think the funniest part of that video is you only see the beginning, but the kids had built this junk and I gotten out of the truck and I said, I don't know why, because I'm going over the jump. And I don't think they believe me that I was going to go over the jump. But part of the video was I almost hit a tree that that's part of the video. Can't see. So I'm like, yeah, I had to bail off at the last second for sure. It's a rugged course. Right. But then I'm like, hopefully I don't get hurt after this. Yeah. So, but now yeah, but just how crazy this has gotten up from it. It's, it's just kinda, it's kinda cool. Yeah, for sure. Well, I know that Storyville loves having you as a community member or you can agree to that, right? Katie? Oh,

The Bunne Family ([08:32](#)):

A hundred percent. Yes.

Peter Bruening ([08:35](#)):

And, and it's people like you, Pete, that make a community fund that make people feel like they're all part of something bigger. And I, I can't tell you how much that means to me as a guy that's been in this area for so long, I have moved a bunch and I've told people you don't understand Southeastern Minnesota is different. There's some big towns or some small towns, but they feel like you're in a community like people about each other and

James Rabe ([08:56](#)):

You exemplify that, man.

Peter Bruening ([08:58](#)):

Well, thank you. Yeah. And that, and that's absolutely true. Yeah. And like I said about the kids earlier, you know, somebody, some adults, they need to find that 10 year old kid in, in themselves, sometimes you remind yourself, have fun, you know, and get about the negative stuff and to have some fun and yeah. And focus on that.

James Rabe ([09:18](#)):

Well, and as adults, we're role modeling when we don't know it.

Peter Bruening ([09:22](#)):

Yeah, exactly. That's yeah. This is that perfect example. Yeah. I guess I didn't realize as role modeling, I guess. Yeah.

James Rabe ([09:30](#)):

It's important to know you can have fun at work.

Peter Bruening ([09:34](#)):

Right. For sure. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. But you know, another funny thing about this, how it's changed since I started doing this, what's kind of funny, like with the candy and of course, most children have cell phones now, so now there's days, they don't always get candy every day, you know, there's days, you

know, but then there's days when I do have it, I'll go for a little while. But once the first one, especially if there's a no school day, once the first one finds out, they text each other that, Hey, he's got, Kathy's just the assembly line, weight support me. That's for sure. So when my kid finds out, by the time I get to my afternoon, they all know. Yeah. So, yeah. So it's pretty funny.

James Rabe ([10:18](#)):

That's cool. That is just fantastic. I think awesome, Katie, that you took the time to shoot video. I think it's awesome, Pete, that you care so much about Starkville, about the community in which you live. And I think it's great that, uh, that, that kids, all the restorative mill are so welcoming and loving,

Peter Bruening ([10:36](#)):

Right? Yeah. For sure.

James Rabe ([10:41](#)):

Is there anything else you'd like to say Katie and family, family, bunny [inaudible]

Peter Bruening ([10:47](#)):

Absolutely. And I actually do love you guys. You make my day,

James Rabe ([10:55](#)):

You later. Y'all bye Pete. That is amazing to see in here.

Peter Bruening ([11:01](#)):

Thank you. Yeah. There's yeah, for sure. That definitely makes it a good job.

James Rabe ([11:07](#)):

I've really enjoyed this conversation. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Peter Bruening ([11:12](#)):

Uh, no, just that, you know, I actually enjoyed this too. And uh, no, and I just let you know, hopefully people see this and just say, Hey, yeah, it's not that hard to enjoy your day a little more. Especially with the times that we're going through right now. Right. You know, when people can't see each other in all and get in that slump and especially those that can't get out and what the

James Rabe ([11:34](#)):

Pete Bruening. Thank you so much for your time today. I hope you have a fantastic week.

Peter Bruening ([11:38](#)):

All right. Thank you. You have a great weekend.