

Proud TO SERVE

More than being in the right place at the right time, letter carriers have a real willingness to help. These stories recognize carriers who went above and beyond to help those in the communities they serve.

Dynamic carrier duo aid injured, fight crime

Letter carriers Kerry and Karla Reinke are brother and sister—both biologically and in the union sense—and members of Palatine, Illinois Branch 4268. On the same day last June, the siblings found themselves facing emergency situations on opposite sides of town.

Kerry Reinke was on his lunch break at a local eatery when a woman ran into the restaurant, screaming for help. Her husband had been trying to change a flat tire on their car when his arm became pinned between the jack and the car's frame. When Kerry got outside, two other men were already on the scene, struggling mightily to lift the car. Kerry joined in the effort and, on his count, the trio managed to hoist the car up as the wife pulled her husband free. The letter carrier then asked the restaurant manager for a bag of ice to place on the injured man's arm until paramedics arrived.

Meanwhile, Karla Reinke was delivering mail in a residential neighborhood when she saw a teenage boy standing next to a house on her route, a house that she knew was empty while its owners were away on vacation. As Karla drew closer in her LLV, she heard the lad shout, "Here comes the mail truck!" Suddenly, two of the boy's accomplices jumped out from behind the house brandishing pipes, and together, the gang ran off past Karla's truck and up the street—

just as she was using her cell phone to call 911 to report the suspicious activity. Police responded promptly and checked the house, telling Karla it appeared the boys had been trying to break into the dwelling.

A few minutes later, as Karla continued her route on the next block, an elderly patron beckoned her over. The woman reported that there were some rough-looking boys hiding out in her back yard, and that she was afraid. Quickly connecting the dots, Karla whipped out her cell phone and gave the police an update. Fortunately, since the officers were still on the scene only a block away, they arrived in time to apprehend the would-be burglars.

Delivery and timely pickup

Steve Kovatch had just started delivering his route when he spotted smoke coming from the house of his elderly patron, Irma Wasky. Kovatch, a member of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Branch 84, ran to the house and arrived on the porch at the same time as Jason Snyder, who was working nearby and had seen the smoke as well.

The two feared the worst when they discovered that where there was smoke, there was indeed fire. They immediately began calling out Wasky's name. Wasky and her nurse hollered back, yelling that the flames had trapped the pair inside the basement.

Snyder called 911 from his cell phone, then kicked in the basement's outside door. Kovatch followed him in, lifted Wasky up and carried her to safety while Snyder helped the nurse escape the inferno.

Later, a grateful Wasky praised both Snyder and Kovatch, and called her letter carrier "the best mailman in the world."

"You always read about postal workers pulling people out of burning houses and things like that, but I never thought that would be me."

—Branch 476 letter carrier Bernard Riley, after aiding an injured elderly patron.



Siblings and Palatine, Illinois Branch 4268 members Karla and Kerry Reinke both had a chance to be heroes on the same day.

Letter carrier, medicine man

At first, letter carrier Jeff Beougher wasn't terribly concerned that a couple days' worth of mail was sitting uncollected in Gerald Greenwood's mailbox. But the more he thought about it, the more it nagged him, so when he learned from a co-worker that, three days later, the mail still hadn't been picked up, the Hot Springs, South Dakota Branch 1480 member went to his customer's home to investigate.

When the carrier arrived at Greenwood's house, he could clearly see that among the mail that had started to pile up were two packages containing medication. Beougher immediately went to a neighbor's house and asked them to phone the police. When officers arrived, they entered Greenwood's home and found him inside, unable to summon help. Beougher later learned that the man's kidneys had failed, and had it not been for the letter carrier's intervention, Greenwood's prospects for survival would have been slim.

A modest lifesaver

It wasn't until postal customer Bernadette Dottero sent a thank-you note to letter carrier Jackie Marshall's managers that anyone found out about Marshall's Christmastime heroics.

Marshall, a member of Las Vegas, Nevada Branch 2502, was delivering her route just four days before Christmas when she encountered a frantic Dottero, whose father was seated inside a car, having an apparent heart attack.

After she secured her LLV, Marshall helped the man out of the car, eased him to the ground and administered CPR while Dottero called 911. The emergency operator then coached the letter carrier over the phone on what to

do to keep the man alive until medical help could arrive. Once the ambulance showed up, Marshall simply went back to her route, never saying a word to anyone about her lifesaving effort.

Race for the rescue

His LLV was legally parked on the street, so when a car passed him on the sidewalk to his right, letter carrier Roger Alfrey was pretty alarmed. The driver was about to crash into a local business after suffering a seizure. The Lexington, Kentucky Branch 361 member immediately jumped from his vehicle and was able to put the moving car into park before it slammed into the building. Alfrey prevented the vehicle from hitting pedestrians in the vicinity and also helped to comfort the driver until EMTs arrived.

Baby not on board

On a rather warm day in early June, letter carrier Charles Hacker was delivering in a residential neighborhood when he was startled by the sight of a baby strapped into a car seat on the front lawn of a home on his route. The member of Columbus, Ohio Branch 78 knew the baby girl belonged to the family who lived there, but the girl's parents were nowhere to be found.

Hacker first sat with the baby for a few minutes, rocking her and talking to her to comfort her. He then called his supervisor to report the situation, and the supervisor immediately phoned the police. Shortly, an officer showed up at the home at just about the same time the baby's frantic and tearful parents returned. Hacker learned that the parents had secured their daughter in her special seat, but in the flurry of their departure drove away without installing

the seat in the back of the car.

The girl's parents were not only thankful that Hacker happened by at the right time, but were also grateful that the letter carrier's observations, included in the official police report, helped convince the local child protective service office that this was a one-time incident, not typical of their parenting skills.

Carrier delivers patron more than just mail

"I heard this faint voice saying, 'Help me,'" letter carrier Bernard Riley told *The Natchez (MS) Democrat*. "So I looked and there she was on the ground."

Riley heard the soft cries while making his usual rounds one day. When he investigated, he found that an elderly customer had fallen down in her garden and was helpless. "She did not need CPR, so I just looked for a blanket to cover her because it was a cold day," Riley said. He made sure she was comfortable and waited with her until paramedics arrived.

The victim's family as well as the postmaster credit the Natchez Branch 476 member with saving his customer's life. "If Bernard would not have been there, the outcome could have been disastrous," Postmaster Bill Farrow said. "What he did is just typical of his character. He sets such a great example for his co-workers and this post office."

Riley said he believes any carrier doing the rounds would have stopped. "You know, you always read about postal workers pulling people out of burning houses and things like that," he said, "but I never thought that would be me."

HELP on the Way

photo by Peter Sgro/The Middleboro Gazette

S. E. Massachusetts Merged Branch 18 carrier Paul Kelliher (center, with family) was honored for alerting the Boyd family (right) of a gas leak in their yard. Kelliher's parents are pictured at left.



While approaching a house for delivery, letter carrier **Paul Kelliher** smelled something of concern: the pungent odor of natural gas. The Southeast Massachusetts Merged Branch 18 member notified the resident, Melissa Boyd, who was homebound with her four-week-old baby. The gas company was notified, and a dangerous leak in the yard was repaired. The new mother was so grateful that she contacted Kelliher's post office about his actions. The letter carrier received an award from Postmaster Frank Bowen, which stated, "The action may have saved the Boyd family...from death or serious injury."

Scott Butler knew that Mr. Herin was not one to leave his mail sitting around, so when the member of Cape Atlantic, New Jersey Branch 903 noticed uncollected letters spilling out of his customer's box, he pulled out his cell phone and asked authorities to investigate. It turned out Butler's instincts were right on the money: Emergency responders found the man lying on the floor inside his house, and immediately rushed him to a nearby hospital for treatment.

While letter carrier Gary Snyder was out delivering mail one spring day, he was startled to find one of his customers lying face down in her garden. The member of Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 was able to turn the woman over, but as he helped prop her upright, she started convulsing. Snyder immediately pulled out his cell phone to call 911, and then stayed with his patron until emergency personnel arrived.

On one day in late June, Mike Adisano was making his way toward St. Francis Cabrini Church along his route. As the Brooklyn, New York Branch 41 member drew near, he spotted two elderly women crumpled on the ground at the foot of the building's steps. The letter carrier immediately ran over to check on the pair and discovered that one of

the women was his customer, Amy Liberti. She told Adisano that she and her friend had lost their footing and tumbled together down the stairs. The carrier concluded the women were too seriously injured to move, so he called for help and stayed with them until medical assistance arrived.

Garden Grove, California Branch 1100 member **Carlos Ortega** noticed his customer's front door was ajar. Investigating further, he found the resident, Dorothy Petievich, in need of medical assistance after suffering a stroke and falling in the backyard. He quickly contacted help, and Petievich credits Ortega with saving her life.

Letter carrier Donna Grant realized some-thing must be wrong when she noticed that a customer's mail had been piling up for several days. She notified other community homeowners, who discovered the customer lying on the floor inside. Emergency crews were called and the woman was taken to the hospital. The homeowners' association held an award ceremony to thank the Richmond, Virginia Branch 496 member for her care and commitment to their community.

In the course of delivering her route, Min-neapolis, Minnesota Branch 9 member **Roberta Thull** detected a gas leak at a customer's home. The carrier reported it to emergency personnel and because of her prompt action, a potential explosion was averted.



Western Mass. Branch 46 carriers (from l) Christopher Boyle, Cindy Houle, Dave Lundgren, custodian Brad Farrell and PM Wayne Desroches were honored for the assistance of their co-worker (see next page).

As he was carrying out curbside deliver-ies, letter carrier **Jim Paine** noticed a woman on her knees in her yard. Seeing a gardener already on the scene, the letter carrier thought the woman was getting help and continued with his work. After finishing the cul-de-sac, however, he looked back and noticed the woman still was not standing. When he went over to check on her, he noticed blood on her forehead—she had fallen and suffered a severe cut. The gardener was trying to help, but was having difficulty since he did not speak English. The Garden Grove, California Branch 1100 member called 911 many times only to get a busy signal. The woman then asked Paine to call her daughter who lived nearby. She arrived within minutes and took her mother to the hospital, where she received several stitches to stop the bleeding.

When letter carrier Michael Cruz was picking up packages from a regular customer's home, he realized something was wrong. After hearing a strange sound coming from the home, he investigated. Finding the woman lying on the floor behind the door, the Augusta, Georgia Branch 263 member dialed 911 and stayed with her until paramedics arrived. Cruz's customer later called to thank him for saving her life.

Being aware of a customer's regular habits allowed letter carrier **David Kirkbride** to come to his aid. The letter carrier noticed that the man hadn't picked up his mail in two days. Knowing the patron lives alone, rarely has visitors and never leaves his mail in the box overnight, Kirkbride knocked on the door. Hearing no answer, the Canton, Ohio Branch 238 member called 911 and reported the need for someone to check on the customer. Emergency responders found him incapacitated on the floor with a serious infection and rushed him to the hospital.

Ricardo Santos was clearly in the right place at the right time. While delivering mail one day, the letter carrier saw his customer, Eva Sachs, fall after hitting her head on a hanging planter. The Garden Grove, California Branch 1100 member immediately called 911 and stayed with the woman until paramedics arrived.

Accumulating mail and an absent pet are what clued Columbus, Ohio Branch 78 member **Pete Watkins** that something was not right. When the letter carrier noticed a patron had not picked up her mail for several days and did not see her dog, which always waited on him in the window, he followed his instincts and contacted authorities. They entered the house and found the woman incapacitated in the bathtub, apparently the victim of a stroke.

Quick reactions and teamwork were necessary when letter carrier Patricia Clifford stopped breathing and went into cardiac arrest at the post office. Co-worker **Christopher Boyle** was the first to notice Clifford's discomfort and immediately alerted custodian Bradford Farrell, who dialed 911. Letter carrier **David Lundgren** and Postmaster Wayne Desroches performed CPR on Clifford after she lost consciousness, while letter carrier **Cindy Houle** acted as a liaison with emergency personnel. Doctors at the hospital told the Western Massachusetts Branch 46 members that their timely assistance and composed manner contributed to Clifford's survival and recuperation.

Delivering mail one day, letter carrier Sandra Willey heard women's voices crying for help. When she walked into the garage, she found the two women on the floor with blood around them. The Shelbina, Missouri Branch 2354 member discovered they had taken a bad fall off the back step. After checking them over, Willey promptly called the authorities for help. ✉

Fast finger nails prankster

Probably one of the last things letter carrier Wendy Williams expected to hear when she picked up the ringing phone at her Bentonville, South Carolina post office was someone on the other end of the line making a bomb threat. The caller then immediately hung up, but the quick-thinking Williams, a member of Bentonville Branch 1590, remembered that she could dial star-69 to activate the phone system's return-call service. Sure enough, a digital voice read off the number belonging to the phone used to call in the threat.

Williams immediately gave the information to the police, who traced the number to a pay phone in front of a business on Bentonville's main street. Fortunately, the business had a security camera that had managed to snap a photo of the caller, giving investigators a clear enough picture to allow them to identify and arrest the caller. Even more fortunately, the bomb threat turned out to be a fake.

SUV flips, carrier steps up

While going about her daily rounds, Barbara Cochran was alarmed to come upon an overturned sport utility vehicle lying in the middle of a residential street, its entire front end crushed. Cochran, a member of Northern Virginia Branch 3520 and a former emergency room technician, could hear the sound of rescue vehicles approaching, but knowing that mere seconds could mean the difference between life and death, she got out of her LLV and rushed to check on the driver's welfare.

Cochran found a man wedged in the back seat, apparently thrown there by the force of the crash. He was alert enough to tell her that his legs were trapped and his neck was in a lot of pain. The letter carrier reached inside one of the car's broken windows, trying to keep the bleeding accident victim calm and still, fully aware that any movement on his part could make already serious injuries much worse—or even fatal. Soon, fire fighters arrived, extricated the man and took him to a nearby hospital, where he was expected to make a full recovery.

Heroic effort helps customer in distress

"Help! Help!" Landa Byron, who was filling in on another carrier's route, kept hearing the faint cry, but thought it was a prank by children close by and kept walking. As she passed one house, though, she heard the plea again. She stopped to figure out where the sound was coming from. "She must have seen me, so she yelled louder, 'I'm in the garage,'" the Western Wayne County Branch 2184 member told *The News-Herald* in Southgate, Michigan. "There she was, lying on the ground. She had broken an ankle and had fallen down and was lying behind her car. You could see she was bleeding."

Since Byron wasn't her regular carrier, the elderly woman was hesitant at first to accept her help, having her run to neighbors' houses for help, but none were home. While waiting for paramedics to arrive, Byron found a box in the garage and leaned the woman on it to alleviate some of the pain. The woman suffers from osteoporosis, making her bones very brittle and easily broken. "I'm really happy that I was on the route that day and could help her out," Byron said. ✉