

Proud TO SERVE

Despite the sometimes extraordinary circumstances, many letter carriers take their role as heroes in stride. From being the first on the scene to going above and beyond to make sure all is well in the neighborhoods they serve, these men and women are the daily heroes that make a difference in the lives of patrons who find themselves in situations where a little extra help is just what is needed. Here are the stories of just a few such special letter carriers.

Up on the rooftop

Quinton Keylor of Zanesville, Ohio Branch 63 heard crying while delivering his route one morning. After putting the mail in the box at the home that seemed to be the sound's source, he listened

carefully. The crying was outside the home, he discovered, not inside. When he went around to the back yard, he saw a little boy around two years old out on the roof of the porch. Keylor told the child to stay put and swung into action. After pounding loudly on the front door repeatedly, he tried the door, which opened. He called out to see if anyone was home. The boy's mother finally appeared and Keylor informed her of the situation. Both mother and carrier rushed up the stairs to the second floor, where the mother climbed out on the roof while Keylor held her feet to make sure she didn't fall. Once the boy was safely inside, Keylor and his mother examined him and determined he was none the worse for wear. Keylor's persistence saved both a child and his mother from a potentially dangerous situation.

Neighborhood Watch

While on her route one frosty day, Royal Oak, Michigan Merged Branch 3126 carrier **Kathy King** noticed a little boy walking alone on the sidewalk. The child was wearing neither shoes nor a coat and seemed to be mentally challenged. King did not recognize him, so she contacted her supervisor, who in turn contacted the police. While waiting for assistance, the carrier put the cold child into her heated vehicle so he could warm up while authorities found where he belonged. A short time later, two young girls came in search of

the child, and when the police arrived, the girls helped them take the boy back to his grandmother's home nearly a quarter-mile away.

Knowing who belongs and who doesn't is second nature to many letter carriers. Such was the case for **Brian Messner** of Shawnee Mission, Kansas Branch 5521. When two men approached him and asked for directions, he immediately recognized them as a pair of wanted fugitives. Messner alerted the authorities and the men were apprehended a short time later, thanks to his tip.

Paul Newman Jr., a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Branch 157 letter carrier, delivers his daily route near an elementary school. One day while he was passing by the school, he noticed a distraught woman who was holding a 10-year-old girl on the school playground. When he got closer, he realized the child had stopped breathing, so he immediately began CPR.

Newman's quick response kept the girl alive until medical personnel arrived, ultimately saving her life.

FIRE & RESCUE

While delivering an NDCBU, letter carrier **Don Hicok** of Tucson, Arizona Branch 704 heard a loud crash as fire blew out the front windows of a nearby residence. He immediately called 911 and, after alerting other residents in the build-

ing, trained a neighbor's water hose on the blaze until fire fighters arrived. The fire had originated from an electrical short in a faulty oscillating fan. The family dog was the only casualty, as security bars on the doors and windows prevented Hicok from rescuing it.

When letter carrier **Dennis Price** of Providence, Rhode Island Branch 15 saw smoke and flames coming from a three-story home on his route, he didn't hesitate. Asking neighbors to call the fire department, Price proceeded to the house to alert the occupants. After the carrier banged on the door for some time, a 10-year-old boy answered. The boy told Price that others were in the house, so the carrier rushed inside. On the second floor, he found a woman who was incoherent in one room and a man asleep in an adjoining room. He roused the two, then left the house. When neither of them followed him out, Price went back inside the burning building and helped them both to safety. The fire marshal stated that the two residents had nearly succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning. Price's rapid response and daring persistence saved the family from certain disaster.

Entering a multi-unit apartment building at the Ambassador Arms complex in Saginaw Township, carrier **Lori Wilson** of Saginaw, Michigan Branch 74 noticed smoke in the hallway. She swiftly notified the on-site property managers who began a building search and found that a resident had put hot ashes in the trash inside an apartment. Wilson's quick reaction prevented a major fire and property loss.

Two-fisted defender

As Joshua Griffin-Ayres, a Cincinnati, Ohio Branch 43 letter carrier, walked through a local neighborhood, he encountered a group of pre-school children walking toward the public library with some teachers. Then in the distance he spotted two pit bull dogs approaching. The letter carrier warned one of the teachers to move the children along. However, the dogs quickly closed the gap between themselves and the children and began barking and acting in a threatening manner. Griffin-Ayres promptly pulled out two cans of dog repellent, positioned himself between the dogs and the children, and began to spray the animals. Eventually, the dogs backed off, allowing the children and their teachers to continue on to the library. The carrier immediately returned to his post office and informed his supervisor about the incident, and also reported the dogs to both the local SPCA and the police department.

CPR savior—again

When a group of teenaged boys were testing the waters of a swimming pool in their apartment complex, one of them injured himself while diving in. Luckily, South Florida Branch 1071 letter carrier Elijah Woody happened to be passing by on his route, and he immediately began CPR on the boy while paramedics were summoned. The carrier waited while the medics took care of the boy, then carried on with his route without making a big deal of his efforts.

Coincidentally, seven years earlier Woody rescued and resuscitated an unconscious six-year-old girl from the same swimming pool.

HELP on the Way

During the delivery of his route in Deltona, Don Shirtcliffe of Central Florida Branch 1091 heard someone calling for help. Inside a dimly lit house, he found a local elementary school teacher seriously ill and lying on her sofa. Shirtcliffe called paramedics, who quickly came to the woman's aid. The teacher and the principal of her school later thanked Shirtcliffe for "his calm demeanor and clear-headed thinking."





East St. Louis, IL Br. 319 member Ron Click discovered an elderly patron who had fallen on her basement steps.

Photo courtesy *Belleville News-Democrat*/Bill DeMestri.



Ron Click of East St. Louis, Illinois Branch 319 paid special attention to one elderly patron on his route. She had hurt her leg some months before and Click, knowing she was recuperating, made sure to bring her mail to the door and ring the bell. When she didn't answer one day, the carrier checked the back yard and found the woman had fallen down some steps to her basement, injuring her head. When he tried to help her back inside he found she was in too much pain—in fact, she had broken her hip—and called rescue personnel. The customers' family members regularly check on her, but they had already come for that day, before she fell. Click's actions saved her from a long night of pain waiting for aid. "We carriers keep an eye out for people," Click said. "I just like helping."

Royal Oak, Michigan Branch 3126 letter carriers **Bob Bonilla** and **Karen Bojarski** noticed that one of Bonilla's elderly customers had not been out and about for several days. This was quite unusual, so the two carriers informed their supervisor and the police. When the police arrived and entered the home, they located the woman on the floor of her bedroom, where she had fallen some time earlier. She was clearly dehydrated and had other injuries. Branch 3216 Vice President Bobbi Green noted, "The woman has no family, per se, so her 'postal family' was watching out for her."

When **Robert Johnson** of South Bend, Indiana Branch 330 found two days' worth of newspapers on the porch and Friday and Saturday's mail in the box of one of his patrons, he knew something was not right. He knocked on the door and called out, but knowing his patron was deaf and likely wouldn't hear him, he decided to check further. The back door was open, so Johnson entered and discovered his customer lying on the floor where she had fallen and broken her hip. The NALC member called 911, got the woman some water and comforted her as they both waited for the EMTs to arrive.

Juanita Kipa, a letter carrier from Macon, Georgia Branch 270, has known many of her customers for years. When one such patron with multiple health issues failed to bring in her mail or move her car, Kipa investigated. The blinds were down and no one answered her knocking, so she called information to get the resident's phone number and tried calling. When that failed to get a response, Kipa called emergency personnel, who promptly arrived and entered the home, finding the elderly woman injured and unable to get up.

Kipa has this advice for her fellow carriers: "We all need to be aware of the elderly and pay special attention to issues such as the heat index and whether the customers are retrieving their mail consistently. I encourage my customers to pick up their mail daily."

Letter carrier **Karen Caruso** of Lancaster, Pennsylvania Branch 273 heard shouts from a patron's yard and stopped to investigate. Caruso discovered a woman who had fallen and broken her hip while doing yard work. The carrier called both an ambulance and the customer's daughter, and then comforted the woman until help arrived and transported her to a nearby hospital.

Many patrons routinely notify their letter carriers when they will be away for a few days. When one such elderly gentleman failed to pick up his mail and hadn't notified **Edward Marnien** of Langhorne, Pennsylvania Branch 4931, the carrier was suspicious. Marnien phoned local police in an effort to contact the man's family. When they were unable to reach anyone, the fire department was called in to open the house. The customer was found on his kitchen floor disoriented after having suffered a stroke. The man's doctor said that in another six to eight hours the patron would have died. "I don't consider myself a hero, but rather a letter carrier doing his job," Marnien said. "I'm almost certain the carriers in my office and across the country would have done the same thing in the situation."

On his route, Alexandria, Virginia Branch 567 member **Tom Boughton** discovered a 91-year-old customer who was unable to get up after falling. Boughton quickly called 911 and stayed nearby as the patron was examined. After finishing his route, the carrier returned to ask neighbors for an emergency contact and called to notify the family.

The residents on the route wrote Boughton's manager, stating, "We feel extremely fortunate to have a postman of Mr. Boughton's caliber."

Finding mail accumulating in an elderly customer's mailbox, **Becky Burkett** of Thomas-ton, Georgia Branch 2809 felt it only right to try to locate the man. After knocking at the door and calling his phone, Burkett then checked with area hospitals. Ultimately, she called the police, who entered the man's home and found him semi-conscious after an apparent fall.

The carrier continues to check in periodically on the man, who is now in a local nursing home. "I feel this is part of our job—to look out for our customers, especially the elderly," Burkett said.

No matter the weather, letter carriers are on the job. One especially cold and blustery day, **Jim Bunck** of Dayton, Ohio Branch 182 found an elderly patron on the ground outside of her home, barefoot and without a coat. The strong winds had caught the woman off guard as she opened her screen door and pulled her to the ground. The woman had received some minor cuts from her fall, but fortunately she had been outdoors for only a few minutes before Bunck arrived and helped her back into the warmth of her home. ☒

Corrections: In the June 2006 *Postal Record*, an "Eye on the Elderly" item incorrectly identified Michael Scheffler's branch. He is a member of St. Cloud, MN Branch 388 and works in Benson. In a "Help on the Way" item, Oklahoma City, OK Branch 458 member Thomas Neal was misidentified as Neal Thomas.