



2016 WESTERN REGION
HERO OF THE YEAR

David Crestik

San Diego, CA Branch 70

“I heard a beeping sound and thought, ‘What the heck is that?’” San Diego Branch 70 member **David Crestik** recalled. It was on Saturday, July 12, 2014, and he was delivering mail on the last part of his swing, at a retirement mobile home park. No one was around. The carrier then noticed dark smoke coming out of a screen door from a nearby mobile home and quickly went over. “I couldn’t see, but yelled in, ‘Anyone in here?’”

Crestik said. He then heard his elderly customer, Sharon Branden, respond that she was on the floor and also had cut herself.

“Once I heard her voice, that was it,” Crestik said. “I went inside, and I kept calling her.”

There was thick smoke everywhere and the flames were concentrated in the dining room. “The fire was going pretty good,” he said. “The dining room table was on fire; [so were] the chairs.”

He found Branden lying on the ground by the back bedroom. Crestik asked the woman if she was able to walk, and she said no. So he started to lift Branden from the floor, but she fell back down again.

Crestik wouldn’t give up. “I picked her up, threw her over my shoulder and went to the neighbor’s house,” he said. The carrier then called 911 and waited for firefighters and paramedics to arrive. Once they responded, he explained to them what had happened.

When the carrier knew Branden was in good hands, he continued on with his route. The woman’s home was destroyed, but Branden was doing all right after being treated for smoke inhalation.

Crestik has received a lot of media attention as a result of his actions, later receiving a plaque from the mayor, who also declared a day in his honor. “That was pretty amazing,” the carrier said, but added, “I just take it in stride.”

In selecting Crestik as the NALC’s Western Region Hero of the Year, judges commended the carrier’s situational awareness. “He placed himself in incredible danger and put his life second to others,” they said. “A house can be rebuilt—a life cannot.”

The carrier doesn’t think he’s a hero, though; he said it was just fortunate timing. “God blessed me and called upon me,” the 21-year postal veteran said. “He put me there at the right time. If I hadn’t gone in there, she probably would have perished.”

