

Mark Pizzo

Rock Hill, SC Branch 1003



2016 NATIONAL
HERO OF THE YEAR



It started out as a normal workday. On Nov. 30, 2015, Rock Hill, SC Branch 1003 member **Mark Pizzo** was delivering mail as usual and pulled up to the last part of his route on a cul-de-sac. “Every day I see a group of kids playing,” he said. “That day, there was a dog with them,” a neighbor’s pit bull.

He then saw the kids run between two houses, and Pizzo kept going on his route. “I could see between the houses, and at that point, I saw the dog jump up at the girl,” he said.

Pizzo told WSOC-TV, “I thought it was playing with her...but then it knocked her down.”

He decided he needed to take action. First, he whistled over at the dog. “When I yelled out of my truck, nothing happened,” Pizzo told WBTV-TV. “Then I heard her scream. The scream I will never forget for as long as I live.”

The carrier then ran toward the girl, 7-year-old Kayden White, whose head was gripped in the jaws of the dog as it was dragging her under a trampoline and was covered in blood. “It had her by the top of her head, by her braids,” Pizzo told WSOC. “So it was like a rope toy. It was pulling at her head and she was screaming.”

Once he was at the scene, Pizzo tried to grab the dog by its muzzle, but it wouldn’t let go of White. “The dog had started to pull the child away from me, so I knew the dog didn’t want to let go,” Pizzo told *The Charlotte Observer*. “At that point, I struck the dog until it let go of her.” He punched the dog at least four or five times, he said, before the pit bull finally relinquished its hold.

Then, the dog shifted its attention briefly toward the carrier. “I was hoping that was going to happen,” Pizzo told the newspaper.

Pizzo threw White onto the trampoline to try to move her out of harm’s way. But the pit bull wasn’t done. “The dog jumped up on the trampoline to go after her again,” Pizzo told the *Observer*.

A neighbor who had heard the commotion joined to help the carrier get the dog under control and also was bitten.

Pizzo grabbed the child and took off running, somehow making it away without sustaining an injury to himself. “I had blood down my shorts, on my face,” Pizzo said. “You would have thought I was half-dead with the amount of blood I had on me from the little girl.”

White’s brother arrived after hearing the ruckus and took her home, and police soon arrived on the scene. The youngster was taken to the hospital, where she received seven staples in her head. The dog was picked up by animal control and was euthanized.

White’s mother, Shaquitta, told WSOC how grateful she was for Pizzo’s actions. “If this man, this man of God, was not there, my daughter would not be here,” she said. “I’ve seen stories that kids die every day, from a pit bull, and she’s alive. She’s here with me now.”

But the 11-year postal veteran doesn’t think he’s a hero. “Some people say I saved her life, but do I know that? I stopped the situation from what was happening. That’s all that mattered to me,” Pizzo told the *Observer*. “I’ve been bit before; I’m a mailman. It’s part of the job.”

Pizzo has received a lot of media attention because of his actions, including in newspapers and on local TV news broadcasts, and he even was featured on the “Steve Harvey Show.”

“The spotlight’s not for me,” he said. “I like to do my job and fly under the radar.”

Well, unfortunately for Pizzo, that’s probably not going to happen anytime soon. In naming the carrier NALC’s 2016 National Hero of the Year, judges described Pizzo’s persistence in the face of danger. “He took action immediately, no second

thoughts,” they said. “It must have been terrifying to hear someone so in need.”

The carrier summed up his actions simply: “I did what I thought was right,” Pizzo said. “I would hope that everyone would do that.”



Mark Pizzo and the girl he rescued appeared on the “Steve Harvey Show.”