

Proud to Serve

Proud to Serve is a semi-regular compilation of heroic stories about letter carriers in their communities. If you know about a hero in your branch, contact us as soon as possible at 202-662-2489 or at postalrecord@nalc.org. We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.

Honoring heroic carriers

Heroism, like the mail, comes in many packages—think of police officers or firefighters. But for some citizens in need of assistance, their heroes come in the form of concerned letter carriers.

Letter carriers are members of nearly every community in this nation and know when something is wrong. Spotting fires and injuries, they often are the first to respond. The following stories document their heroism. For them, delivering for America is all in a day's work.

'The human thing to do'

During a St. Patrick's Day parade on Saturday, March 17, Denver Branch 47 member **David Linscott** was navigating his way along the onlookers, roadblocks and traffic to deliver a mail route.

"I initially dropped off the mail at an apartment complex and then crossed the street," he said. The carrier then noticed a man lying on the ground.

Upon closer inspection, the carrier recognized the man as a security guard with whom he had recently spoken. The guard's jaw was clenched, his eyes were open and his mouth was foaming.

Linscott, a former social worker who had some medical training, believed the man was having a seizure. He jumped into action. "I took my satchel and put it under his head," he said, to protect the man's head from the concrete, and called 911.

All the while, parade-goers were passing by and commenting—but no one stopped to help.

While Linscott was speaking to the emergency operator, the man regained consciousness. Linscott said the operator told him, "Whatever you do, don't give him fluids."

The carriers spoke with the man about his medical history until medical professionals arrived.

He later found out that the man had survived, but he could not track down

any more updates.

Linscott said that the term "hero" was hard to grasp. "It was quite the experience, but I'd do it again in a heartbeat," the third-year letter carrier said. "It's the human thing to do. If someone's in need, you help them out."



Jumping into action

On May 9, Green Bay, WI Branch 619 member **Tony Robertson** was going about his workday when he saw a vehicle speed through a four-way intersection, jerk wildly to miss a car coming past, then hit a pole and roll over. "It was shocking to see right in front of me," the city carrier assistant said, adding that had the car not hit the pole, it would have been on a trajectory to go into a nearby bay.

Robertson said he thought to himself, "That's a bad accident for whoever's inside."

He quickly parked his mail vehicle and ran over to the car. "The vehicle had flipped over on its side and it was still running—it was revving," he said. Robertson climbed on the side of the vehicle and was able to get the door open.

A passerby came up and told the carrier she had called 911.

Smoke was swirling around inside, but once it cleared, Robertson could tell that a man was sitting in the front seat.



“The person was awake and conscious,” the carrier said, and he passed that information onto the passerby who was on the line with the emergency operator.

Robertson was able to reach inside and turn the ignition off.

“He never said a word to me,” Robertson said of the driver. “He was maybe dazed a little bit.” After making sure the occupant was all right, Robertson waited for the police and fire departments to arrive.

After giving a statement to police, the carrier finished his route. He later heard that the driver had been found to have minimal injuries.

Robertson, an Army veteran, said he had medical training and wanted to take action. “I could do something, for sure, to help.”

But the second-year letter carrier doesn’t think he was a hero in this situation. “I think everybody, seeing that and being there, would have done the same thing if they were able,” Robertson said.

Watching out for the neighborhood

“There were these guys walking up to this house,” Van Nuys, CA Branch 2462 member **Susan Dragicevich** recalled of delivering mail on her route on Jan. 25. The men looked suspicious as they loitered around the side of a house whose owners were on vacation.

There had been a string of burglaries in the neighborhood so the carrier had been on high alert. “This is not right,” Dragicevich said she thought.

She continued on her route to not raise alarm but kept her eye on the men by pretending to sort the mail behind her truck, keeping out of sight and calling 911. Two men came out from behind the house, where an alarm was now blaring and where a sliding glass door had been broken.

They began to walk down the street, so Dragicevich followed them. “You don’t think,” she said. “The adrenaline

is going.” She called 911 again to make sure they were aware.

When the suspects heard a helicopter hovering above, they ran toward a get-away vehicle. One suspect jumped in the car with a driver waiting and they took off, leaving the other man behind.

Dragicevich helped police by pointing out where the suspects had thrown a filled backpack and a hat. The carrier gave a statement to police, including a description of the man and the vehicle. The second suspect, hiding nearby on foot, was soon caught by police thanks to the carrier’s help.

The neighborhood made Dragicevich an honorary Neighborhood Watch member, but the 25-year postal veteran doesn’t think she’s a hero. “We’re out here every day,” she said. “You’ve just got to keep your eyes out when things don’t look right.”



Susan Dragicevich

Fire and rescue

While on his route on March 13, Waterloo, IA Branch 512 member **Austin Rentz** heard an unusual sound at the home of an elderly patron. There was a beeping noise through the walls, and he thought it might be a house alarm. Knowing that it was the house of the postmaster’s mother, the carrier called Branch 512 President **Thomas Kinn** to ask him to alert the postmaster. “As I was coming back on my swing, [the noise] got louder,” Rentz said. Looking closer, he saw smoke pouring from the door of the woman’s house and realized that the beeping sound had been from a smoke detector. The

carrier rushed inside and got the patron out safely. Rentz then went back inside the home and opened all the kitchen windows to let the smoke vent. “I think she was cooking and forgot all about it,” he said. “The smoke was so thick, I had to cover my mouth going in.” The postmaster told Rentz how grateful he was and how he now has an even better idea of what it is that carriers do every day. “It’s something any person would do,” Rentz, a five-year letter carrier, said of his actions.

“I pulled up and saw flames shooting out the window and the side of the

garage,” Gary, IN Branch 1326 member **Connie Allen** recalled to the local CBS-TV affiliate of a house fire she encountered while delivering her route on April 17. The carrier noticed the customer’s car and pickup truck in the driveway and thought someone might be inside. “I went up and knocked on the door and heard a dog barking,” she said. Allen kept knocking and soon the patron, Dan Komenda Jr., answered. He had been inside taking a nap before work. Allen told the man to get his dog outside and to grab his keys to move his cars, which were in the direct line of the fire. She then

called 911. Once firefighters arrived to fight the blaze, Allen left to finish her route. “I think she saved the house,” Komenda told the television station. “She saved me, possibly saved my dog. She made a big difference.” The local fire chief told CBS that the carrier’s quick thinking had saved firefighters from spending precious minutes searching the home for residents so they were able to focus on fighting the fire. The 18-year postal veteran denied any major heroics. “I was glad I got there in time,” Allen said. “God put me in the right place at the right time. I just did what anybody else would do.” **PR**

Carrier reacts during harrowing accident

On Feb. 14, Garden Grove CA Branch 1100 member **Michael Musick** was having lunch with fellow Branch 1100 carriers **Areli Ramirez** and **Noemy Martinez** curbside in front of Ramirez's LLV.

"All of a sudden, this car started swerving," Musick said. "I noticed it out of the corner of my eye." The carrier quickly jumped to the side and yelled for the two co-workers to watch out as the car barreled toward them.

"It just scraped me," he said. "I was

really lucky."

He immediately grabbed Ramirez, who was closest to him, and attempted to pull her away. Musick almost got her out of the path of the car, but she sustained a crushed ankle.

Martinez, who was out of reach, was not as fortunate. "I noticed her leg was gone," Musick said. "I was trying to keep her calm. I was scared, but I wasn't worried about myself."

Musick thought quickly and applied his belt as a tourniquet to keep Martinez from bleeding out.

After hitting the two carriers, the careening car then struck the LLV head-on,



Michael Musick

sending it into a light pole, which finally brought both vehicles to a halt. Three children were in the back seat of the out-of-control car, but none was hurt.

Police and paramedics soon arrived. Martinez's leg was amputated at the scene, and the injured carriers were taken to the hospital. Both carriers are recovering from their injuries.

Despite receiving high praise from his co-workers for his actions, the 11-year postal veteran said, "I was just looking out for my friends."

Neighborhood watch



Mariah Seegmiller

While delivering mail on Saturday, Feb. 3, Denver Branch 47 member **Mariah Seegmiller** spotted a 3-year-old crying up ahead. "The little guy was on my route, just standing outside the door," she said. Not seeing anyone supervising the boy, the carrier walked over to him, and he started walking over to her. Seegmiller knocked on the door of the house, but only heard dogs barking. "No one was answering, so I walked around the house,"

she said. The carrier still saw no sign of a guardian. Uncertain what to do, she began walking with the boy, hoping that the parents would come looking for him. When that did not happen, she became concerned and called her supervisor, who called law enforcement. Seegmiller stayed with the toddler until officers arrived, comforting him and engaging him so he would not be afraid. "I gave him snacks from my lunch and talked to him," she said. "That made him happy." City officials investigating the incident found that the child's mother was incarcerated, and the guardians charged with caring for the child were neglectful of their duties. The toddler was removed from the premises and was put in the custody of social services. "It was disturbing," Seegmiller said. "I immediately kicked into mom mode. I wasn't going to leave the

little guy." But the five-year letter carrier doesn't think she deserves any special recognition for her actions. "I just think that the little man is a hero because he has a lot more to deal with in life than I do," she said.

On Aug. 30, Cleveland Branch 40 member **George Morrison** was going about his route and noticed something amiss at a home he regularly delivered to. "As I approached the mailbox, the side door was open," he said. "So was the main door. That was what alarmed me." The couple who lived there usually worked during the day, so that was unusual. Morrison knocked, but got no response. He then notified the residents' neighbor that something didn't look right. The neighbor, in turn, checked the house and also found a window pried. "He said he'd call the owners, because they were at work,"

Morrison said. One of the homeowners soon arrived at the home, and police officers came to investigate. Officers discovered that the home had indeed been broken into, which the neighbor later relayed to Morrison. The burglars apparently had broken into the garage and had used a ladder to enter the house through a back window. Items missing included two television sets, a laptop, other electronics, money and car keys. One of the TVs eventually was found in a back yard on a neighboring street, severely damaged. The couple reached out to the carrier to thank him for watching out for their home. Morrison, a 25-year letter carrier and Marine Corps veteran, insisted his actions weren't a big deal. "If we're out there doing the job every day, you notice all those little things," he said. **PR**

TIME FOR A CHANGE

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Help on the way



Charles Anderson

On Feb. 9, Mobile, AL Branch 469 member **Charles Anderson** noticed something unusual at his customer Mr. Yates's house. "When I delivered mail on Friday, he hadn't taken the mail in Thursday," he said. When the mail was still there Saturday, the carrier became worried and knocked on the door. When Anderson didn't get an answer, he walked to a neighbor's house to see if the residents had seen him. They said they had not and they too grew concerned. "His car was still in the same spot," the carrier said, which made them all think Yates might still be inside. The neighbors called Yates's brother, who lived down the street. He broke into his brother's house, found Yates inside and called 911. The man had had a stroke. "When they got to him, he was barely breathing," Anderson said. The customer was hospitalized and soon

returned home to recover. Yates later wrote a letter to Anderson to thank him for saving his life. The nearly 30-year letter carrier and Navy veteran brushed off any accolades. "It's just something that we do," Anderson said of letter carriers. "We always look out for our customers."

While delivering his route on a cold day in January, Minneapolis Branch 9 member **Chad Steinke** noticed someone lying face-down on a concrete landing near one of the buildings on the carrier's route. "I thought she was dead," he said. "There was blood everywhere." As the carrier got closer, he recognized the woman as a patron who has Parkinson's disease. "I said her name a couple of times," Steinke said. The third time, the woman responded: "Hi Chad; I fell." While Steinke was trying to help her, she told him that she had been on her way to the grocery store and had fallen. She could not get up and thought she had been lying there for about an hour. She began to roll over. "I didn't want to move her, but she wanted to sit up," Steinke said, so he gently helped her. The carrier asked someone from across the street to call 911 while he stayed with the woman. He gave her his coat and hat and tried to keep her warm until paramedics arrived. "It was surprising to me that no

one saw her, but it's a busy world," the carrier said. The woman thanked Steinke, saying, "You saved my life." The five-year letter carrier denied any heroics, saying, "I just happened to be in the right place at the right time. I just did it to make sure she was safe."

While delivering mail to a customer's box on May 2, Rochester, NY Branch 210 member **Steve Siverd** said, "I came across this note." It said, "Look in the garage for my body." Worried, the carrier said he thought, "What do you do? Oh my gosh." Siverd peeked in the garage and saw the man in his car. The car was running and the doors were closed. "He pretty much looked like he was dead to me," the carrier said. He tried to call 911 but the call wouldn't go through, so Siverd called his supervisor, who was able to get through to 911. First responders soon arrived and



Steve Siverd

found the man barely alive in the garage. The man recovered in the hospital. Siverd brushed off any mention of heroics. "I was just there to make the phone call," the 25-year postal veteran said. "I would say the real heroes are the first responders."

One day earlier this year, Rochester, NY Branch 210 city carrier assistant **Jason Ingutti** was delivering mail when "this girl came running out to my truck," he said. She didn't really speak English, and merely said "911!" The carrier followed the girl to the garage area of her home, where he saw her father lying unconscious on the ground. The carrier said it appeared that the man had had a heart attack. "He looked like he had already gone," he said. "The mother was crying hysterically." Ingutti called 911 and, as they waited for the paramedics to arrive, the 911 operator walked him through the CPR process. "I was nervous, but I had to do it," the carrier said. He proceeded to administer CPR to the man for a few minutes until paramedics arrived and took over. Once he saw that the situation was under control, Ingutti picked up his mail bag and continued on his route. The first-year letter carrier brushed off any talk of heroics, saying, "I don't think I did anything." **PR**

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Helping out 'family'

On Tuesday, April 10, St. Marys, PA Branch 1500 member **Roger Carlson** was delivering his route with his supervisor close behind. As they approached the home of an elderly customer, the carrier saw something unusual. "The mail was still in her mailbox from Monday," he recalled.

Carlson told the supervisor that he was concerned, because the 94-year-old woman normally talks to him daily and notifies him if she will be away. Carlson knocked on the doors and windows and yelled for her, but received no response. "It was a gut feeling that something was wrong," the former paramedic said. "Her car was in the garage and her door was locked."

Carlson was aware that the woman's family owned a well-known local brewery, so he used his supervisor's cell phone to look up the number and then called and notified a family member there. As he later drove past the brewery, he stopped in and made sure that they had gotten the information. The representative said that the woman's nephew was on his way to her house.

While back on his route, Carlson heard an ambulance go to the woman's house, and he stopped by to speak with paramedics. "They found her on the floor," Carlson said. "She had had a stroke." The woman was wearing a life alert necklace, but was lying on her stomach and unable to get to it to call for help.

When Carlson saw that the situation was in good hands, he completed his rounds. The woman was taken to a hospital and then a rehab center, where the carrier went to check on her.

Carlson was soon contacted by the patron's family members and friends, who told him how appreciative they were of him being so aware of his sur-

roundings and for his fast actions that may have saved the woman's life.

The customer unfortunately died a few weeks later. "Her family got to say goodbye," Carlson said. "I was glad I was able to help the family out."

Carlson said that he was humbled at being called a hero, but that his actions were part of his job as a carrier. "You look after the people who want to be looked after," the 15-year postal veteran said. "They're kind of like family to you."

'Doing the right thing'

While delivering his regular route on May 15, Greater East Bay, CA Branch 1111 member **Nestor Quilates** saw two men exiting a house down the street. One had a large suitcase and a duffel bag.

The carrier knew that the homeowner had been hospitalized for some time. "I thought it was a relative of the guy, but they looked suspicious," he said, so he went to investigate.

"They punched a big hole in the door where they unlocked it from inside," Quilates told KTVU-TV, a Fox



Nestor Quilates



Roger Carlson

affiliate, "and I saw the bricks on the floor that makes me think it was a burglary."

He quickly marked down the license plate of the suspects' car and asked a neighbor to call 911. Police soon arrived and confirmed the break-in. Quilates provided information to the officers on a description of the suspects. Neighbors gave security video that showed the men leaving the house. The two men, along with a third accomplice, were arrested 45 minutes later in a neighboring town, and police returned the items to the home.

The suspects were awaiting charges from the county district attorney's office at press time. All three men had criminal records. Piedmont Police Capt. Chris Monahan told KTVU that Quilates "was our eyes and ears from a distance. He used his telephone to support what we were trying to do by calling us and taking pictures. I don't think he ever put himself in harm's way."

Neighbors are proud of their carrier. "People try to think about community and this guy's really doing it," resident Karl Leahy told KTVU. "That's pretty awesome, taking care of what's around and the community. It's priceless."

Though Piedmont, CA, Mayor Robert McBain proclaimed June 4, 2018, "Nestor Quilates Day" at a city council meeting, the carrier denies any heroics. "We're the eyes and the ears of the neighborhood," he told KTVU. "They say I'm a hero, but I say, 'No, I'm just doing the right thing that I'm supposed to do.'" PR

Eye on the elderly



Rhonda Graziano

New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member **Rhonda Graziano** had delivered mail on her route to a senior apartment complex on Monday, March 26, and was off Tuesday. When she returned to work on Wednesday and delivered to a 95-year-old customer, “Mail was still in the box, which was unusual,” she said. As she completed her route, the carrier also did not see the man walking as he normally does. Concerned, she knocked on the door with no answer, so she went to the management office to report that there might be an issue. The office manager retrieved the key for the man’s apartment and opened the door to find the customer unconscious on the floor, and the manager called 911. The man had suffered a stroke and had been on the floor for almost three days. He was rushed to the hospital and soon had an operation. Graziano found out that the man had unfortunately died about a week later. The carrier received praise from her post office for trying to help her customer. The 23-year letter carrier said she just does what she can for her customers.

Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **James Klein** was delivering to a cluster box on his route on Saturday, April 7. He had an elderly customer, Ms. Staton, who had dementia, so he would normally walk the woman’s mail to the door for her, he said. She usually would answer the door when he knocked—but not that day. The carrier contacted the local police department for a welfare check, and officers soon arrived to investigate. The woman opened her door for the police and said she was fine. Klein had Monday off and returned to the route on Tuesday. “I noticed the mail was in between the doors,” he said. Concerned, he contacted his post office, who in turn called police. They found the woman unconscious and lying on her bedroom floor, where they estimated that she had been for three days. Staton was taken to the hospital and it was discovered that she apparently also had cancer that had not been diagnosed. She unfortunately died a week later. Despite receiving praise for his actions, Klein said he just tried to check in with those on his route. “I’m not a hero; I’m just doing my job,” the 32-year letter carrier and Air Force



James Klein

veteran said. “I’m looking out for my customers.”

While returning to her route one day this spring after a vacation, Pekin, IL Branch 209 member **Chris Swenson** was delivering to an elderly customer’s home when she noticed accumulated mail. “As soon as I walked up onto the porch and saw all the newspapers, I knew something was wrong,” she said. The carrier knew the woman lived alone and was concerned for her well-being. Swenson knocked on the door and, when she did not get a response, alerted her supervisor, who contacted police for a welfare check. The next day, the carrier returned to the route and found the situation unchanged. She again knocked at the door. This time, the woman answered. “I asked her if she was OK,” Swenson said. “She answered me,” but she didn’t look good. Not feeling that the situation was right, the carrier spoke to a neighbor, who agreed. Swenson again called her supervisor, who again called police. Soon officers and paramedics broke in through the front door and found the woman on the floor in her home in need of medical attention. She had fallen in her bedroom after speaking with Swenson. The woman was taken to the hospital and soon returned home. She now has round-the-clock care and is doing well. Swenson has helped to save at least three customers during her 29-year postal career. “I’m doing my job out here and I try to notice things,” she said.



Ralph Presbrey

Pekin, IL Branch 209 member **Ralph Presbrey** was working his route on April 18 when he heard his 85-year-old customer, Kay Cook, shout to him from inside her home. Cook saw Presbrey through the large window of her home and noticed that she was lying on the floor. “I hollered in the window and asked, ‘Are you hurt?’” Presbrey said. “She said her back and hips were hurting her.” He tried to open her front door, but couldn’t get in. “Don’t move—I’ll go get help!” the carrier called out to Cook. Presbrey knew that Cook’s daughter, Jody Soler, was a postal worker at his office and lived behind Cook, so he ran over to her home, but neither she nor her husband was there. He also ran to the home of Cook’s son, which also was in the neighborhood, but had no luck there either. Presbrey called the post office to speak to Soler, who soon arrived, entered the house and awaited the medical help her mother needed. Cook has recovered and now lives in an assisted-living facility. “Who knows how long (Cook) would have laid there” without his help, Cook’s other daughter, Danielle Cook, told the *Pekin Journal Star*. Presbrey, a 12-year USPS employee and an Air Force veteran, said he didn’t like being called a hero. “I would have done that for anyone, and I hope anyone would do that for me,” he said. **PR**