

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 202-662-2420 or at postalrecord@nalc.org. We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.

Honoring heroic carriers



Jodee Jones

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 their 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.

Carrier calls firefighters to house on fire

Jodee Jones, a Clarksville, TN Branch 364 member, was driving along her delivery route in late February when she spotted smoke off to the side. It was coming from the attic of a single-family house.

"I kind of stopped, did a double take and realized that there actually was smoke, and I promptly called 911," Jones said. "Firefighters were there within minutes."

After she realized there was a fire, Jones said she initially "panicked, obviously, because I know the people that live there.

[The customer is] sweet. She's a mom [with] two boys. She's fought breast cancer. I believe she's in remission now. So, they had a hard enough time as it is."

Luckily, there was no one home when she knocked on the door, and no cars in the driveway or the garage. Jones found out later that a phone charger in the bedroom had started the fire.

The house has been under renovation since then. "They got the windows boarded up, so I assume [there was] quite a bit of damage," Jones said. The homeowners still have not returned to the house.

Jones said the homeowner had messaged her on Facebook the next day to thank her, saying, "If there was any more damage, then the house would have been a total loss."

The one-year carrier was just happy that she could help her customers. "I am glad to have been in the exact spot I was that day," Jones said. "It brings me great joy knowing I saved a family from losing everything."

Carrier saves 14 from explosive fire

Michael Waite, a five-year carrier and a New Haven, CT Branch 19 member, was driving his route one day in late December 2023 when he saw a man walk out of the front door of his townhouse. He wasn't wearing a shirt or shoes, and his body was covered in soot. A thick plume of smoke billowed out from above his head, hinting at the chaos from within.

Waite swiftly dialed 911 on his phone as flames erupted from the windows of the burning building. Urgently, he knocked on the neighboring doors, ensuring that all the residents in the vicinity were safely evacuated before the fire had a chance to engulf their homes.

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The fire Michael Waite spotted



Robin Allen (c) receives recognition from NALC and the local fire department for rescuing her patron (seated).



Eye on the elderly

Jamy Tucker, an Oklahoma City, OK Branch 458 carrier in Ardmore, sees one of her elderly customers nearly every day she delivers mail. The customer had broken her hip the prior year, so as a courtesy the two-year carrier knocked on the woman's door each day to give her the mail. The woman would either come to the door to get her mail or direct Tucker to come inside and drop it off.



It was Feb. 5, which was a Monday, and Tucker hadn't worked all weekend. She knocked on the door as she always did, but this time the customer didn't open the door—the only thing the carrier heard from the woman was a mumble coming from inside the house. So, the carrier tried the door, and it was unlocked. She went in and saw the elderly woman on the floor of the living room.

"I could tell by the way she was laying that her other hip had been broken, so I called 911 and I stayed with her [until they got there]," Tucker said.

The first thing she heard the woman say was "water," so she fetched some water from the sink for her.

As they were waiting for emergency services to arrive, the customer told her that she was going on her third day of being unable to get up after falling out of her wheelchair.

"I was just terrified for her," Tucker said.

The customer lived alone, so there was no one around to notice that she had fallen. Tucker later found out from a neighbor that the woman had undergone hip surgery and was still in the hospital in mid-March.

Robin Allen has been a letter carrier for 25 years and has delivered on her current route for about seven years in Dayton, OH, so when something is out of the ordinary, she notices.

One of Allen's elderly customers picks up her mail from the mailbox every day and puts her mail on hold when she is out of town. The customer even got Allen's phone number when she had to go to the hospital for a knee surgery and was worried that if she had to stay at the hospital for longer than expected, she would need to continue to have her mail on hold.

However, one February

day, the Branch 182 carrier noticed that the customer hadn't picked up her mail for several days. She was concerned, so by the fourth day Allen called the police for a wellness check.

"It kind of made me nervous because she's not the type to do that," said Allen. "She usually has it out of the mailbox every day."

Police came about 45 minutes after Allen called, and responding officers were able to get the customer out of her house and to the hospital, where she stayed for 11 days. The elderly woman had fallen down the stairs and was unable to get up.

"She really thought that's where she was going to die," Allen said.

Nathan Bowes was walking up a house's stairs to deliver mail one day in winter 2023 in Geneva, NY, he looked down at his satchel to get out the mail that he was delivering. When the Rochester Branch 210 carrier glanced back up, through the glass door of the house he saw a woman in her 90s on the ground. She was calling out for help.

Bowes asked permission

to open the door, which the patron granted. He entered the home and asked if he could help her, and she said yes. So, Bowes called emergency services and stayed on the line to update them.

"I just kept letting her know, 'You'll be OK,'" Bowes said. "And she had mentioned that her legs just stopped working. She was just standing, doing her normal thing."

They had a conversation about their lives, while Bowes tried to distract her from the pain she was feeling.

"I just tried to keep her mind off of everything and I just sat in her doorway and talked to her for a bit, and then the ambulance showed up and they kind of took it from there," Bowes said.



Kendra Bjork



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The owner of the apartment where the fire started had medical oxygen tanks, which Waite said, “Once the fire got to those, they started exploding.”

All 14 townhomes were heavily affected, and “they’ve been vacant since that day, but luckily no one was injured,” Waite said.

The saved occupants included the family of a clerk at Waite’s station. “This man is my hero forever,” the co-worker, Monique Johnson, wrote in praise.

“It just feels good knowing that nobody was hurt,” Waite said.

Carrier points police to stolen goods

Waterloo, IA Branch 512 member **Kendra Bjork** was nearing the end of her route in Traer when she spotted two people—a woman and a man—whom she thought to be “shady.” The three-year carrier noticed that the woman was wearing a ski mask and had a hoodie on cinched tight around her face, and they were both wearing big coats despite the unseasonably warm November day.

As Bjork was looking at them, she noticed that the two suspicious individu-

als were attempting to hoist a motorbike into their vehicle through the side door. She said it was a “really nice Iowa neighborhood, so they stuck out.”

She approached them and said to them, “Are you stealing that?” The moment she did, the woman hopped into the car and sped off. The man attempted to start the motorbike to no avail. To avoid any further conflict, Bjork walked away from the man and called her supervisor, who in turn called police. The carrier had written down the make and model of the car as well as the license plate to help police identify the suspects.

“We were able to locate them in the vehicle a short time after it was initially reported,” Casey Schmidt, deputy sheriff of the Tama County Police Department, said.

Schmidt said that the department had obtained a search warrant for the car, where officers found thousands of dollars’ worth of items, including a leaf blower, power tools and packages stolen from the doorsteps of houses and businesses.

“We’re just thankful that the mail carrier called it in,” Schmidt said. “I mean, kudos to her. We wouldn’t be here without her.”

Carrier saves family from house fire

With his biggest fear being house fires, Garden State Merged, NJ Branch 444 carrier **Brian Timm** knew that when he saw smoke coming from a metal bowl on a customer’s porch that he had to intervene.

The customer bought and sold items on eBay, so there were a lot of items sitting on her porch. One of them was a shiny metal bowl with a small cardboard box and a small piece of Styrofoam inside—the perfect recipe for a fire on a sunny afternoon in February.

The four-year carrier happened to be talking on the phone with a co-worker when he initially saw the smoke. Timm said to him, “You know, I see smoke coming from the front porch.” As he approached the porch, he saw a neighbor who lives down the street. She began to run over when he noticed the fire. Timm didn’t think that the homeowner was home at that time, so he asked the neighbor to tell the homeowner’s daughter—who happened to live across the street from her—about the fire.

In the meantime, he grabbed the bowl from the porch and took it off to the side to try to smother the fire. Timm flipped the bowl over on the sidewalk

and when he did, the fire grew, so he just started stomping on the bowl. As he did, the daughter came over and went into the house to get water. By then, the fire in the bowl was mostly out, but to be safe, they doused it with water when the daughter returned.

He later found out that both the homeowner and her son had been inside the house when this was all happening, but they hadn’t noticed the situation on the porch.

Timm was glad that he was able to keep the fire from spreading.

“It could have been worse,” Timm said. “The houses are so close together in that neighborhood.” **PR**



Eye on the elderly

It was a scalding hot day in Petersburg, VA, and **Cara Neri** had been back for only a few days after doing union work at NALC Headquarters, so she was getting used to her route again. It was above 90 degrees that summer day in 2023, and the Branch 326 carrier was on her normal 13-mile route.

“I was having a hard time breathing myself [because of the heat]; I’ve got asthma,” Neri said.

She noticed an elderly woman with a milkshake in her hand lying

on the ground in front of her house. She tried to talk to the woman, who was not able to

respond, and Neri thought that she might have a mini-stroke.

The carrier stayed with the woman, tried to give her water and called emergency services. As Neri waited with the homeowner, she saw a jogger and asked her to stay with the homeowner so she could get a hat and paper towels from her truck to make the woman more comfortable in the heat.

When Neri got back, she and the jogger tried to pick the woman up to take her into the house, but they were unsuccessful. After a few minutes, EMTs arrived and thanked Neri for calling, saying if the customer had been out there for just one more hour she could have died from heat exhaustion.

Jonathan Martin, a five-year letter carrier in Akron, OH, forged a friendship with a 100-year-old woman on his route, Mrs. Ramian. The Branch 148 member would hand deliver her mail and have nice conversations with her.

“She’s a treasure, you know?” Martin said. “It was wonderful talking to her. She just had so much to share.”

Martin said he had noticed that the resident was at home every day and didn’t often leave the house, so when she didn’t answer the door on Feb. 6, he knew “something was going on.”

He went around to the front of the house to look through the bay windows, but it was difficult to see in because she had no lights

on, and he was wearing prescription sunglasses. Eventually he spotted Ramian on the floor trying to crawl to the front door. The carrier went to the house of Ramian’s neighbor, who he knew had a key, but nobody was home, so he called 911.

After emergency services arrived, Martin called his supervisor to tell him what happened, then returned to his route. When his workday ended, he went back to Ramian’s house and spoke to her son, who told the carrier that she was OK.

This wasn’t the first time she had fallen, and Martin said she was afraid to fall again. She returned to her home long enough for Ramian to see her before she moved to an assisted living facility. **PR**



Cara Neri