

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



Top: Jack Young
Below: Kelli Reed



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 helps man having seizure

Corpus Christi, TX Branch 1259 carrier **Jack Young** often saw a man named Keith strolling around the town of Rockport carrying an umbrella shielding himself from the sun. They would exchange pleasantries, and Keith would offer him blessings.

One summer day, the six-year carrier was walking around the neighborhood when he spotted Keith lying on his back, seizing in the middle of the road.

Realizing what was happening, Young stopped his truck, got out, grabbed Keith's umbrella and used it to block the sun, and called 911.

Young described Rockport as a small town where "everybody kind of knows everybody," so he was shocked when he noticed people driving around Keith but not stopping to help him.

"How can you not stop and help this person?" Young asked.

Once emergency services arrived, a neighbor came to the scene and told Young that Keith's seizures were triggered by heat, so Keith had made the right call by holding the umbrella over him.

As Keith was beginning to recover, he thanked and blessed Young for his part in the incident. He told the carrier he didn't remember what happened. After the customer was helped by para-

medics, Young returned to his route knowing Keith was in good hands.

Young has seen Keith around the neighborhood since the incident. Keith told Young that he has recovered well and is back to his old self—and blessed him again.

Customer falls three times, carrier lends hand

Kelli Reed, a Branch 8 letter carrier in Lincoln, NE, was involved in helping a customer who fell three times over the course of several months.

The first fall occurred in spring 2023, when her elderly customer fell outside his apartment and neighbors called paramedics. He was hospitalized for a dislocated shoulder. The nine-year carrier put his mail on hold until he returned from the hospital.

About a month after his first fall, Reed found her elderly customer on the floor of his living room unable to get up. After the carrier found out about his first fall and he returned from the hospital, she started delivering his mail directly to his door, so he didn't have to go downstairs to retrieve it. As she reached his door, it was open, and Reed could hear her customer yelling.

The customer was unable to move his arm to help himself up, and Reed wasn't strong enough to assist the man into a seated position by herself. She knocked on the door of a neighbor who she knew was home. Reed and the neighbor helped get the man in an upright position, and then the carrier called 911. The customer told Reed he thought he had been on the ground for about six hours.

Once the paramedics arrived, Reed continued her route. As it turned out, the man had dislocated his shoulder for a second time and was hospitalized for about a month.

"I felt like I was at the right place at the right time," said Reed. "It definitely could have been bad for him."

Once the man returned home, several months went by and then a similar situation played out again. This time Reed heard her customer yelling through the door, but the door was locked. He had been on the floor for about 10 hours. She called 911, and paramedics were able to break down the door and take him to the hospital. He then went to rehab before moving to a long-term care facility.

Letter carrier helps woman after serious fall

Going about his route in El Dorado, KS, one November day in 2023, Wichita Branch 201 member **Jeff Sparks** saw a woman sitting on the steps that led up to the garage door. He thought it was quite unusual that she was sitting there, so he asked if she was all right, and she told him she had fallen and injured her hip.

“My first thought was I need to get her help right away,” the six-year letter carrier said.

Sparks offered to call 911, but the customer had already called her daughter, a nurse, so she wanted to wait until her daughter came.

Sparks stayed with the woman and called his postmaster to let him know what was happening. The daughter

and son-in-law helped the woman into the house and called 911. At that point, Sparks asked the daughter to keep him posted on her condition before continuing his route.

A few days later, a note appeared in the woman’s mailbox telling Sparks that she needed to get surgery on her hip and would go to a rehab facility to recuperate.

Weeks later, the woman returned home, and Sparks has seen and talked to her outside several times.

“I was really glad to see her home,” Sparks said. “She gave me a hug and told me, ‘Thank you.’”

Carrier’s quick action saves man after fainting

Max Valdivia saw one of his retired customers, Mike, nearly every day on his route in a gated community in Rancho Cucamonga, CA. Mike would sit in his garage, work on projects and when the Ontario Branch 1439 member would come by with the mail, the customer would give him water or Gatorade.

When the 27-year letter carrier got to Mike’s house one day in early April, they had their regular exchange. Valdivia left to go back to his truck and as he was doing so, he heard a loud crash coming from the garage. Valdivia quickly walked back, where he found Mike on the ground. Blood was coming from the customer’s head, and he looked dazed. Mike had fainted and fallen on a dog gate in his garage.

Valdivia offered to call 911, but Mike declined. The carrier stayed with him until his condition improved, and then continued his route. Mike eventually went to a doctor and found out he had sustained a concussion and that he was dehydrated. Over the summer, Mike recovered, and his grandchildren came to visit him. Valdivia still talks to Mike every time he sees him.



Max Valdivia

“I was just happy that he was fine, and I was there,” Valdivia said.

Carrier saves man trapped under dresser

After returning to his route following a few days of vacation in mid-February 2023, Kansas City, MO Branch 30 member **Max Hawley** was met with an unfortunate surprise at the home of an elderly couple. A woman on his route had left a note on her front door: “Mailman, please knock. We need help.” Her husband had spent two and a half days trapped under a dresser.

“I felt bad that I hadn’t been at work the previous two days,” Hawley said. “I was just sad that he had to wait like that.”

The man’s wife had lost her cell phone and suffered from mobility issues, and the man’s phone was under the dresser with him. At the door, the 26-year carrier spoke to the woman, who explained the situation to him.

After lifting the dresser off his customer, “I checked on Tim and saw him barely conscious,” Hawley said. “I was afraid to move him, so I informed them that I was calling 911.”

Hawley then waited with the couple for emergency responders to arrive, at which point the carrier gave them all the information he had.

Hawley was able to get the phone number of the man’s sister, who subsequently kept him up to date on the man’s condition. After a month, he was able to return home. For the next year and a half, Hawley saw them occasionally and the man’s condition seemed to have improved. Unfortunately, the man died in August. **PR**



Jeff Sparks