

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



Adam Benincosa

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 woman who fell in her garden

On a sweltering day in May 2024, Roy, UT Branch 68 member **Adam Benincosa** saw a woman lying on the ground next to her garden in the front yard.

"Out of the corner of my eye, I saw some frantic waving, and I looked over, and it was one of my customers," Benincosa told KSL NewsRadio.

He ran over to the woman, Sherry Jarvis, and she told him that she had been lying on the ground for about 45 minutes after losing her balance and hitting her face on the wooden border of her garden.

"I was weeding, and I went to pull out this big weed. Well... the weed won," Jarvis told KSL.

Jarvis had attempted to yell for some neighbors she could hear, but they weren't able to hear her. That's when she saw Benincosa.

The resident was able to call her sister while she was on the ground and told her she had fallen, but her sister lived about an hour away, so she wouldn't be there for a while.

"We got her up, and she said she couldn't feel her legs," Benincosa said. "I would count to three. 'One, two, three, and then I'll lift you.' She kept

saying 'No, no, I can't feel my legs yet.' We had to let some blood rush back into her legs to get her up."

As they waited, Benincosa checked for signs of dehydration, but she seemed OK. He eventually helped her sit up and he sat with her for a few minutes. Then, Benincosa helped her into her house and Jarvis's sister arrived a little while later and took her to the doctor.

"I saw her a couple days later and her face was really beat up, but she was very grateful. I was just in the right place at the right time," Benincosa, a 30-year carrier, said. "She actually brought me cookies four or five days later."

Carrier saves woman in house fire

In late September, **Meagan Murray**, a carrier in New Hampton, IA, drove up to where she was going to park to start her next loop, but as soon as she pulled in, the Waterloo Branch 512 member saw smoke coming from a house. She called 911 and started walking to the door. Knowing that an elderly woman lived in the house and usually was home at that time of day, Murray banged on the doors trying "to see if she was in there, even," she said.

She tried multiple doors and there was no answer, so the carrier moved onto windows. At this point Murray said, "smoke was, like, really coming out all through the roof and the foundation." She knocked on a few windows, then she said she "tried one more time and then the lady finally knocked back from the inside in the window."

She went to the doors to see if she could open them, but they were all locked.

"I have no idea if it was adrenaline or what, but I just was, like, banging

on the door, like, wiggling the door-knob as much as I could,” Murray, a three-year letter carrier, said. “Jerking it, pushing it. I don’t know if it was God or what, but I got it.”

Murray walked into the smoke-filled house and spotted the soot-covered resident. The carrier reached out to the woman, and helped her out of the house to safety, comforting her until her family arrived.

As it turns out, the homeowner had just returned home from an errand and started the stove. A few minutes later, she heard a “pop” in the basement and then started to smell and see smoke. She couldn’t get the door between the kitchen and garage open, so she instead made her way to the living-room door. She had begun banging on the window when she spotted Murray.

A fire department investigation found that the electrical cord of a dehumidifier in the basement was likely the source of the fire, so luckily the resident wasn’t touched by flames. The letter carrier has seen the resident since, and she seemed OK.

“If you drive by the house, you wouldn’t think anything had happened,” the fire chief told the *New Hampton Tribune*, “but there’s pretty serious damage. If you think about it, when you have a fire in a basement, it’s going to cause damage to the floor joists for the first floor.”

The home was deemed a total loss, but the resident is still living in the same neighborhood while she waits for it to be rebuilt.

Carrier alerts neighbors of customer’s fall

Though Louisville, KY Branch 14 member **Gabrielle Washington** had been on her route for only eight months, she had already got to know her customers. One of them, Mr. Tedesco, 93, had

difficulties getting to his mailbox, so Washington would go to his back door each day, chat with him briefly and hand-deliver his mail.

One hot day in July 2024, while on her route, she saw Tedesco on the ground outside his back door.

“He kept holding his head,” Washington said, noting that he had a large gash there.

The carrier tried to get him up, but “he was just kind of like, ‘I don’t really want to get up.’”

Washington asked him if he wanted her to call emergency services, but Tedesco didn’t want her to. “He was an older gentleman, and I know how sometimes ambulances can be overwhelming,” she said.

She consulted a neighbor whom Tedesco talked to often and they asked Tedesco what he wanted to do. He said he wanted to go to his caregiver’s house. Washington and the neighbor helped him into Tedesco’s truck, and the neighbor drove him to his caregiver’s house.

The neighbor later stopped by the post office to thank Washington for her kind actions. He added that Tedesco was doing all right and that he had stayed at his caregiver’s house for a few days. However, he had many other health conditions, and his health took a turn for the worse and he ended up dying about a month after the fall.

Letter carrier helps prevent house fire

Westchester Merged, NY Branch 693 member **Israel Serrano**, a five-year letter carrier, has been on the same route for a year and a half.

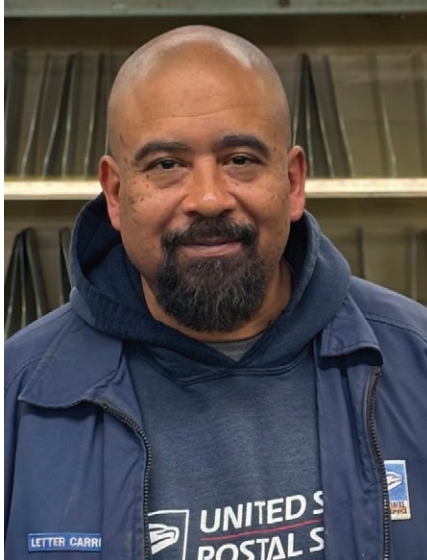
One of the customers on his route is in his 80s and has trouble bending down to pick up his mail when Serrano puts it in his mail slot. Serrano would regularly open the door and place his



Meagan Murray



Gabrielle Washington



Israel Serrano



The local Fox affiliate interviewed Doriel Carson about her heroic efforts.

COLA: Cost-of-living adjustment

- The 2025 projected COLAs for the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) is **0.1 percent**, and for the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), **0.1 percent**, following the release of the December consumer price index (CPI). The 2025 COLAs will be finalized with the publication of the September 2025 CPI in October 2025.
- The 2025 COLA under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) was set at **2.8 percent** following the release of the December CPI. This COLA is based on the change in the CPI between December 2023 and December 2024.
- Visit nalc.org for the latest updates.

customer's mail on the table in the entryway.

When Serrano opened the outer door on Jan. 11, 2024, he didn't notice anything unusual, but "then I opened the inner door, put the mail on the table, and I noticed that it was a little smoky," he said.

His customer normally sat in a chair visible from his front door, but Serrano didn't see him when he placed his mail down that day. The customer's son, Mike Dempsey, happened to live in the condo below him, so Serrano ran downstairs to alert him.

Dempsey went upstairs with Serrano and found his father in the dining room. Dempsey noticed something burning in the oven and turned it off.

"I'd like to pass on my thanks and appreciation to Israel, our mail carrier," Dempsey wrote to the Postal Service, noting that had Serrano not alerted him, "it probably would have been a very dangerous situation. ... Please recognize Israel for his great job and alertness."

"We prevented a fire," Serrano said of helping in the situation. "I felt great."

Vigilant letter carrier notices piled-up mail

Doriel Carson, a 12-year letter carrier, had just returned to her route after a few days off around Columbus Day when the Chicago, IL Branch 11 carrier went to put mail into an elderly customer's mailbox. She saw that there was mail hanging out of the box with

some of it on the ground. That was unusual, since the woman normally was diligent about collecting her mail each day. Carson picked up the mail but instead of trying to put it back, she rang the doorbell.

"I'm giving her time and I'm standing there for an extended amount of time, because I know she's elderly and it takes her time to get to the door," Carson said. "I'm not getting anything [a response], so I'm like, 'This is really weird.'"

As Carson stood outside the door, a neighbor spotted her, suggested that a wellness check should be performed and called the police.

Carson knew that the woman was a widow without children and didn't have many people who checked on her.

Emergency responders arrived, broke down the door and found the resident at the bottom of a set of stairs, where she had fallen and had been unable to get up for several days. Once paramedics had the situation in hand, Carson continued her route.

The woman was severely dehydrated and had fractured her hip. Carson said that she was in a rehabilitation facility, "and from what I hear, she's going to be just fine."

Helping patrons is just part of the job, the carrier said: "There are so many of us carriers that really love our job and care about our customers and the community that we work in, and we look out for them." **PR**