

Proud TO SERVE

What is a hero? Someone who rescues residents from their burning homes? Letter carriers do that. Someone who assists injured senior citizens? Carriers also do that. Someone who stands up against would-be kidnappers and thieves? Carriers even do that. In fact, your NALC brothers and sisters consistently go “above and beyond.” The following stories document their heroism. For them, it’s all just in a day’s work.

Necessary roughness

Alaska letter carrier Jonathan Higgins was pushing his mail cart out of the Anchorage Center for the Performing Arts when he heard a man yelling, “Stop! Thief!” The man was chasing 39-year-old Jeffrey Turner, who had just robbed a KeyBank branch and was running toward the NALC member. At that moment, instinct kicked in, and Higgins, 43, a member of Anchorage Branch 4319, tackled Turner, knocking him to the ground. The two men struggled, and Higgins had to dodge a punch from Turner before the thief managed to twist away from his grip.

Undaunted, Higgins, a former football player, raced after Turner and caught him again, holding him until a couple of nearby police officer candidates noticed the melee and helped subdue the would-be bandit. Satisfied the police had matters under control, the letter carrier went back to his mail cart to finish his route.

The FBI told the *Anchorage Daily News* it recovered the money Turner had stolen from both the KeyBank and from an ATM customer earlier in the day, and Anchorage police charged him with two counts of robbery.

Wounded officer saved

Hearing the popping sound of gunfire, Arizona letter carrier John Leslie’s head jerked up from the stack of mail in his vehicle just in time to see two men screech off in their getaway car. Leslie, a few feet from the action, called 911 and rushed to the aid of an injured police officer who had been shot during a routine traffic stop.

When the carrier, a member of Phoenix Branch 576, was unable to locate the man’s pulse, he immediately cleared the man’s airway and began administering CPR. By the time emergency personnel arrived, the quick-thinking carrier had restored the man’s pulse. Leslie then provided police officers with a detailed description of the suspects before continuing his route.

Carrier aids surgery patient, stays on schedule



“I’m running 10 or 15 minutes late,” letter carrier Bobby Connell reported to his supervisor over the phone. And with good reason—as he approached a customer’s house, a voice inside shouted to him for help.

After entering the house through an unlocked door, the Columbus, Ohio Branch 78 member found his patron curled up on the floor in pain. She explained that she was recovering from back surgery and had fallen the day before. Until the carrier’s arrival, no one had checked on her in more than 24 hours. After calling 911, he comforted the woman until paramedics arrived. He then continued on his route—and even returned to the station on time.



Anchorage, Alaska Branch 4319 member Jonathan Higgins stopped a would-be thief in his tracks.

photo: Erik Hill/
Anchorage Daily News



Eye on the ELDERLY

Dale Fatchet Jr. knew he had to act quickly when he saw an out-of-control vehicle swerving down the road. As the driver approached a busy intersection, it became clear that the car was not going to stop. The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Branch 84 member pulled alongside the car and steered it to a stop through the driver's side window. The passenger, an elderly man, was slumped over, unconscious, in the passenger's seat, and his wife was too distraught to drive. Fatchet told the woman to keep the vehicle in park and used his cell phone to call 911 and the couple's daughter. He remained by the woman's side and comforted her until paramedics arrived.

Customer Marian Hough hadn't picked up her mail from the day before. Letter carrier **Diana Hamilton** knew Hough was in her 80s, lived alone, and rarely left her house. After peeking in the window but seeing nothing unusual, the Santa Barbara, California Branch 290 member asked neighbors if they had seen the elderly woman recently. They had not. After reporting the situation to her supervisor, Hamilton had an idea. Knowing that Hough always sent birthday cards to the Hathaway family down the street, she called them. Mr. Hathaway, a fire fighter, dispatched paramedics immediately. The elderly patron was found on the living room floor, where she had been since suffering a stroke. Thanks to the carrier's concern, Hough is now making a steady recovery.

An elderly customer was lying in his yard with a broken leg when letter carrier **Tammy Slay** approached. When the Royal Oak, Michigan Branch 3126 member asked the patron if he needed help, he replied that he didn't want to go to the hospital in an ambulance. Slay went in search of the man's wife and notified her of her husband's injuries.



Above: Syracuse, New York Branch 134 member Terry Esposito warns two teenagers not to go inside a house hit by lightning.

Left: Fire fighters discuss the fire damage, while Esposito (in background) continues his route.

photos: Scott Allardice/
Syracuse City Eagle

Lightning strikes house, roof catches fire

"I almost got to be a hero, but a letter carrier was already there," wrote editor Scott Allardice of the *Syracuse City Eagle* newspaper. Both men were nearby when lightning struck a house, starting a fire on the roof.

Letter carrier Terry Esposito, seeking shelter from the storm on a neighbor's front porch, immediately called 911 to report the fire. The Syracuse, New York Branch 134 member then headed over to the house to alert the occupants. Although the thunderclap had shaken the house and the lights flickered, it wasn't evident to the residents they were in peril.

"If it weren't for the mailman, we wouldn't have known that lightning hit the house," said one of two young women who were evacuated.

Following the carrier's advice, the two young women and a small dog left the house. A few minutes later, they made an ill-advised attempt to re-enter the house, but the letter carrier stopped them, warning them it was still dangerous. Newsman Allardice was reduced to taking photos of the letter carrier in action.

When fire fighters arrived, Esposito continued his route, knowing the situation was under control. The fire

chief praised the carrier's speedy reaction, which allowed his crew to shift their concern from saving lives to saving property.

Kidnapping attempt thwarted

During a safety class, an 11-year-old girl learned that if someone tried to kidnap her, her job was to run, screaming, to the nearest adult. Two days later, she had to put that training to use—and the adult she ran to was Glen Burnie, Maryland Branch 4422 member Thomas Soroka.

According to police, 68-year-old Daniel Bassett grabbed the girl's arm when she walked past his parked van on her way home from school. She pulled away and flagged down Soroka, who was just finishing his route. Soroka, who noted the van's license plate number before it sped away, told the *Maryland Gazette* that the girl had red marks on her arm, and "was scared to death."

"You're safe now," Soroka told her. "I'll take care of you." He escorted her to the home of a neighbor and called the police. The carrier provided a description of Bassett's vehicle and its plate number. A short time later, police located the van and arrested Bassett, charging him with attempted kidnapping and misdemeanor assault. ☒