

Proud TO SERVE

Despite the sometimes extraordinary circumstances, many letter carriers take their role as heroes in stride. From being the first on the scene to going above and beyond to make sure all is well in the neighborhoods they serve, these men and women are the daily heroes that make a difference in the lives of patrons who find themselves in situations where a little extra help is just what is needed. Here are the stories of just a few such special letter carriers.

The power of prayer

Making her daily rounds, Synetta Drayton-Haggary came upon a distraught elderly woman sitting on her porch, engulfed in despair. The Jacksonville, Florida Branch 53 member describes most of her customer interactions as quick and friendly, but on this day, she knew she had to take a little time.

"She asked me if I would pray for her, and I didn't ask her any questions," the carrier said.

Together, they prayed for several moments. When the now-sobbing woman lifted her head, she handed Drayton-Haggary a pistol. The customer had intended to kill herself, but the carrier's attention had given her hope.

Drayton-Haggary, an active member of the New Generation Christian Fellowship, called a fellow church member and the police for backup. The officers were handed the weapon when they arrived. Now the carrier checks on the customer nearly every day.

Abandoned toddler

Shortly after Catina Walker started carrying her route one day, she happened upon a toddler who was standing in the middle of a residential street, no adult in sight. As she walked up to the little boy, the member of Peoria, Illinois Branch 31 noticed how dirty he was, wearing only a large shirt and no shoes. Walker guided the boy over to the sidewalk and asked him where his mother was. "Work" was all he said.

The letter carrier then set out to try to locate the boy's mother, but was unsuccessful: None of the people she spoke with in the neighborhood knew the child or where his home might be, and no one at several nearby businesses recognized the lad, either. Ultimately, the letter carrier contacted the local sheriff's department, which placed the abandoned boy in the care of a state child welfare agency.

Warm baby, cool head

A frantic woman outside a home on Hector Mendez' route caught the letter carrier's attention. Panic-stricken, the woman explained to the member of Camden, New Jersey Branch 540 that her baby had stopped breathing. When Mendez found out that paramedics were already on the way, he focused his attention on the child and performed CPR until help arrived.

As Mendez worked to save the child's life, he noticed that the baby felt warm to his touch, so he put some bystanders to work, asking them to soak some towels in cold water and bring them to him



Photo by Bob Self/The Times-Union

Jacksonville, FL Br. 53 carrier Synetta Drayton-Haggary attends a prayer meeting in the shell of a building that New Generation Christian Fellowship plans to turn into a church. She says prayer is a part of her life, and it became vital to a woman on her mail route.



Amante Borja

VAN NUYS, CALIFORNIA
Branch 2462 member Amante Borja knew his elderly customer lived alone, and when he saw that the man's car was still in the driveway and that his mail hadn't been picked up

for several days, the letter carrier suspected trouble. Borja tried knocking first on the front door, then at a side entrance. It was there that he thought he heard someone knocking back. The letter carrier dashed to the home of a neighbor who had a key to the older gentleman's house. The two men found the customer in his bathtub, unable to pull himself out. Paramedics took the patron to the hospital, where he stayed for several weeks before he was well enough to return home.

AFTER FIVE YEARS ON THE ROUTE, Gary Derby had become quite familiar with his customers. So, when mail began to pile up in Carlton Wellons' mailbox, the member of Tidewater, Virginia Branch 247 knew something wasn't right with his elderly patron. Derby also knew that none of Wellons' children lived nearby. The carrier asked a next-door neighbor to use her key to get inside Wellons' home. Inside, the pair discovered Wellons in bed, too sick to reach a phone to call for help. Derby immediately dialed 911 himself, and soon Wellons was on his way to a hospital. Following a stay at an assisted living facility, the customer returned home, fully recovered.

FOR THE SECOND DAY IN A ROW, Luan Mohr found her customer Margaret's door wide open and her mail uncollected. The member of Central Iowa Merged Branch 352 was worried for her elderly patron's safety but knew exactly who to turn to for help: Margaret's neighbor, one of Mohr's former letter carrier co-workers. Together, both the current and former carriers entered Margaret's house and discovered the woman lying at the bottom of her basement steps, where she had fallen

two days earlier. The neighbor called 911, and after a hospital stay, Margaret moved into an assisted living facility.

KAREN FELL, COVERING A ROUTE FOR A vacationing carrier, sensed something was amiss when an elderly customer failed to greet her when she delivered his mail as he had for several days. Fell, a member of Waseca, Minnesota Branch 1447, was also worried because the man's door was ajar for a second day. Fell contacted her managers, who in turn asked police to look in on the gentleman. When officers arrived, they found the stricken man lying on the floor. He was rushed to the hospital, but unfortunately died two days later.

AN ELDERLY PATRON IS VERY GRATEFUL that letter carrier Jan Coursey took the time to check up on her. The Lincoln City, Oregon Branch 6418 member noticed that although the customer's car was parked inside the garage, several days' worth of mail had accumulated in the mailbox. When Coursey received no answer after knocking on the door, she shared her concern with a neighbor, who had a key and entered the home. She found the woman in her bathtub, unable to pull herself out. Medical help was summoned, and despite some minor injuries, the patron was quickly on her way to recovery.

LETTER CARRIER ROSSIE PHILLIPS COULD count on his elderly customer, Vincent Selkis, to be around when his mail arrived, either at his mailbox or working in his garage nearby. One hot July day, however, Selkis was nowhere to be found, and Phillips, a member of Tucson, Arizona Branch 704, decided to check on him. As Phillips went around the man's house, calling out his name, he heard Selkis in his back yard, crying out for help. The man had fallen in the yard and couldn't get up, and because he had lain there for several hours, he was growing dehydrated and delirious. The carrier quickly used his cell phone to call 911 and waited with his patron until help arrived.

so he could try to bring down the child's temperature.

The grateful mother called Mendez' managers the following day to report that the baby was doing fine, thanks largely to the letter carrier's efforts.

Stranger in the snow

Carrier Lee Hickey, a member of Great Falls, Montana Branch 650, had carried the same route for nearly four years, so he had developed a notion for detecting when things were out of sorts in the neighborhoods he served. One day in early February, his instincts told him something was wrong as he began a loop on one of the residential streets. "Things were just kind of different," the carrier told *The Great Falls Tribune*.

His intuition, unfortunately, turned out to be right on the money. As he went to put the mail in his customer's receptacle, he spotted a woman he had never seen before lying face down in the snow between the house's front steps and the garage. Springing into action, Hickey ran to his LLV to get his cell phone and called 911. When he returned to the woman, he wrapped her in his uniform jacket, then used his vest to create a makeshift pillow for her.

Once paramedics arrived, the letter carrier simply returned to the station to exchange his now snow-soaked coat for a clean, dry one, then went right back to the incident scene—to continue carrying his route from where he left off. "I don't really feel I did anything extraordinary," Hickey said later. "I just did what I would want someone to do for me, my family or my friends."



Eye on the ELDERLY

WHEN KEN PRAUS, A MEMBER OF DICKINSON, South Dakota Branch 1463, saw that both newspapers and mail were beginning to pile up at the home of one of his elderly customers, he shared his concern with his managers. The postmaster got in touch with Dickinson police, who checked on the woman and found her in her home gravely ill. The responding officers called an ambulance, and a grateful family later told Praus that, by taking the time to check on his customer's welfare, he very likely saved her life.

IT WAS A SWELTERING ARIZONA MONDAY when Bob Martin found one of his elderly patrons, Lucille Rosenstock, lying on a sidewalk, her dog at her side. When he reached her, she was able to explain she had fallen some time earlier and couldn't get up. Worse, she was starting to show signs of severe dehydration. Martin, a member of Tucson Branch 704, made her as comfortable as he could, ran to the Rosenstock home nearby to notify her husband and to call for help, then went back and stayed with his customer until help arrived. After a brief hospital stay, Rosenstock made a full recovery.

THE UNCOLLECTED MAIL AND NEWSPAPERS at Mr. Palmer's house alerted letter carrier Patrick Flynn that something was wrong. After knocking on the elderly patron's door and receiving no answer, Flynn, a member of Denver, Colorado Branch 47, asked a neighbor to help check on the man. They went inside Palmer's home and found him weak and lying on the floor. Flynn called 911 and stayed with his customer until an ambulance arrived.

NORTH OAKLAND COUNTY, MICHIGAN Branch 320 letter carrier Kevin Pyszora was delivering his route one day when he found one of his elderly customers lying on the floor inside her home, having fallen some time earlier. Pyszora used the woman's phone to contact family members for help, then stayed with his customer until the relatives arrived.

ON A HOT SUMMER DAY, SARAH ROBINSON heard a cry for help as she made a delivery to the rear of a home. The let-

ter carrier, a member of Mon-Yough, Pennsylvania Branch 332, peered into the house's enclosed porch and saw her elderly patron, Ida Wigand, lying on the floor inside. The door to the porch was locked, so the letter carrier assured the 86-year-old woman that she would be right back, then went to her LLV to retrieve her cell phone and call for help. It turned out Wigand had fallen two days earlier and had broken her hip. The elderly woman later called Robinson's station to thank the carrier for her alert intervention.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LETTER CARRIER Eddie Caralipio was delivering mail to a door slot when he noticed an elderly woman lying in the rose bushes next to her front porch. She told Caralipio, a member of San Diego Branch 70, that she had fallen earlier in the day and had injured her shoulder on a sharp rock. The letter carrier used his cell phone to call 911, then waited with his customer for the ambulance to arrive. Once the woman recovered, she told Caralipio's managers that the carrier deserved "a gold star on his forehead" for being there when she needed him.

AS PATRICK WYKSTRA APPROACHED A house on his route, the letter carrier noticed an elderly customer seated in a chair inside her garage. Knowing that the woman suffered from a form of dementia, the member of Kalamazoo, Michigan Branch 246 asked if she was all right. She calmly replied that she had fallen in her basement and that she thought she might have injured her leg. It was then the carrier looked at her foot and noted with horror that it was, in fact, twisted completely around and bleeding profusely. Despite the injury, she somehow had managed to make her way up the steps and into the garage. Wykstra immediately ran to a neighbor's house to call 911, then came back and stayed with his patron until the ambulance came.

"YOU GET TO KNOW PEOPLE ON YOUR route and I knew something wasn't right," said William Hutnik, a letter carrier from Easton, Pennsylvania Branch 389. When an octogenarian on his route failed to pick up her mail and didn't respond to his calls at her door,

Hutnik flagged down a police officer. A neighbor contacted the resident's brother and he accompanied the police in searching the house. The woman was found under a table in the basement, having fallen down the stairs, injuring her shoulder and suffering cuts that required stitches. The resident says she remembers little, except feeling cold when they found her. Hutnik says, "I'm just glad things turned out the way they did."

WHILE MAKING HER ROUNDS, LOS Banos, California Branch 3768 member Michelle Torres heard muted cries for help. Concerned, Torres followed the sound and found one of her customers, an elderly handicapped woman, lying in the driveway near her wheelchair. Torres helped the woman into her chair and then called 911. The letter carrier stayed with the woman until help arrived. As the woman needed to recover in the hospital for some time, Torres was concerned about the customer's two dogs. So Torres made it a part of her daily routine to feed and care for the dogs in their owner's absence. She came by on her way to work each morning and again on her way home to be sure the dogs had food and fresh water.

LETTER CARRIER JAMES HEYMAN SPOT-ted one of his elderly customers, Ms. Fiegelist, down on her hands and knees in her garage. "I parked and ran over," said the Tiffin, Ohio Branch 413 member. "As I got closer I could hear her yelling for help." The customer had fallen when unloading groceries from her car and smashed a bone in her face. Heyman helped the woman into her home, called her daughter-in-law, and got her an ice pack for her bruised face. While waiting for the daughter-in-law to arrive to transport Fiegelist to the hospital, Heyman unloaded and put away the thawing groceries. "I think you should add to the postman's motto, 'neither rain nor snow nor dark of night,' something about picking up old ladies off their garage floor," wrote Fiegelist in a thank-you note sent to the post office. "If you hadn't come along, I'd probably still be there."

Clinton, IA Br. 126 member Tom Goldensoph



Carrier, fire fighter, 'angel'

Margaret Murphy had received a UPS package that was meant for someone else, and when she saw letter carrier Tom Goldensoph coming up her steps to deliver the day's mail, she rushed toward the door to catch him, hoping he might help her get it to the correct address. In her haste to get to the door, however, her leg clipped the sharp edge of an end table, creating a nasty and painful gash.

Goldensoph, a member of Clinton, Iowa Branch 126, heard her cry out in pain. The carrier, a volunteer fire fighter who has had some medical training, called inside. Murphy replied that she had hurt herself and asked him to come in. Goldensoph later told the *Clinton Herald* that he found his customer on the floor, "bleeding pretty badly" from a deep, two-inch long cut. The letter carrier quickly helped the woman up into a chair and then called 911.

Although Murphy's leg required 20 stitches, she made a full recovery. "I don't know what I would have done if Tom wasn't there," she said of her carrier. "He was like an angel."

Teamwork saves a life

Letter carriers Chris Lapierre and Jean Dalbec of Nashua, New Hampshire Branch 230 are part of their post office's First Response

Team. As a result, they have received extensive first aid training. It was that training that helped save the life of a clerk in their office who collapsed from a heart attack.

Dalbec had gone to investigate an unusual noise coming from the nearby locker room when he found clerk Peter Lescarbeau sprawled on the floor, gasping for breath. The letter carrier immediately sounded an alarm for a "code one" medical emergency. Lapierre heard the alarm and grabbed the office's automated external defibrillator (AED) while clerk Dana Coletti brought a first aid kit to the scene.

The team began to work on Lescarbeau, and when the clerk stopped breathing, Coletti started CPR while Lapierre charged up the AED and placed its contacts on Lescarbeau's body. Soon the device delivered a jolt of electricity that restored his heartbeat and brought Lescarbeau back to consciousness, and he remained awake while paramedics loaded him into an ambulance to take him to a nearby medical facility.

Later, an ambulance company executive remarked that the First Responder Team's efforts "no doubt saved the life" of Lescarbeau. The clerk's doctor also praised the postal crew, noting that their treatment had made the difference between life and death.



Photo courtesy Todd Skulnik/USPS

Nashua, NH Br. 230 carriers Chris Lapierre (l) and Jean Dalbec (r), along with clerk Dana Coletti and the automated external defibrillator, worked together to save a fellow postal employee's life.

Mark Kennedy, a member of Topeka, Kansas Branch 10, was returning from his route when he spotted a woman lying in the middle of a quiet, residential street. When he stopped to assist her, she told him she had a medical condition that sometimes caused her to black out. Keeping an eye out for any cars that might be headed their way, Kennedy used his cell phone to call 911, then remained at the woman's side until help arrived. "I didn't do anything any other carrier wouldn't do for their customers," Kennedy said. "I'm just glad that I was able to help."

Like most letter carriers, Columbus, Ohio Branch 78 member Kyndas Holland usually knows who's home and who's not during the day. That's why she thought it was odd to see what looked like someone moving around inside one

customer's home as she delivered mail to that address. Heeding her suspicions, she phoned the police and asked them to come have a look for themselves. It turns out a thief had broken into the home—a thief who ended up in custody because of Holland's quick thinking.

Piled up mail is one of the surest signs something's not quite right at a patron's home, so when Roy Pancoast found several days' worth of uncollected mail in a customer's box, he decided to investigate. Listening at the door, he heard a faint noise coming from inside. The Vancouver, Washington Branch 1104 carrier peered into a window and saw his customer lying on the floor, bleeding. Pancoast immediately used his cell phone to alert the authorities and call for help.

HELP on the Way

Last November, Raleigh, North Carolina Branch 459 letter carrier Steve Weathers was placing mail in a residential cluster box when he heard a faint cry for help coming from somewhere nearby. Weathers secured the box, then went to investigate the source of the sound, tracing it to a nearby customer's house. The man inside called out for help when he heard Weathers' knock on the door. The carrier found that the door was unlocked and went inside, where he found the patron in the kitchen suffering from a hip injury. Weathers phoned both 911 and the customer's son, then sat on the floor, comforting the injured customer until paramedics arrived.



Photos courtesy of Macomb Daily

Mount Clemens, MI Br. 654 member Sam Romeo (below) lends a hand evacuating residents of a senior citizen home, taking special care to comfort his agitated patrons.



FIRE & RESCUE

Seeing smoke and flames pouring from a mobile home on his route, Jeff Musgrave lost no time running directly to the door. As he dashed, the Walterboro, South Carolina Branch 6123 member instructed two children playing in the area to call 911. Upon entering the home, the carrier found a man asleep on the sofa in a room engulfed in smoke. After rousing the man and getting him outside, the customer told Musgrave that he thought there were still children inside. Musgrave returned to the flaming structure, searching throughout the bedrooms, under the bed and in the closets. Musgrave found no one inside, and after a quick breath of air outside, he grabbed a nearby hose and proceeded to battle the blaze until the fire fighters arrived. Declining medical attention, Musgrave went back to his route in a sooty uniform. Walterboro Fire and Rescue Director Barry McRoy referred to the carrier

as a “true hero” and said, “Thanks to his quick action, the homeowner and his house were saved.”

Anthony Ferebee, a member of Tide-water Virginia Branch 247, arrived at a home with smoke rolling out from under the garage door. The carrier went to the house’s frontdoor to alert the customer and have her call the fire department. Noticing a large jug of drinking water on the porch, he took the container directly to the source of the fire. After dousing the flames, Ferebee checked with the customer to be sure she was all right before continuing on his route.

Walterboro, South Carolina Branch 6123 member Karen Keegan heard a smoke alarm and smelled smoke as she approached a home on her route. Finding no one home, she

quickly called 911 from her cell phone. The fire department arrived to find a forgotten pot smoldering on the stove. Keegan noted that she was a little later than usual making her deliveries, which serendipitously put her in the right place to avert a potential catastrophe.

When he smelled smoke coming from a residence on his route, Robert Needham knocked on the door. Receiving no answer, the Arlington, Virginia Branch 3520 member tried the knob and found the door was unlocked. Needham went quickly to the kitchen and found food burning on the stove. He turned off the stove and rechecked the house to be sure no one was in danger. Deputy Fire Marshall Todd

Lupton stated, “Mr. Needham placed his own well being in danger to help another and prevented this home from sustaining a terrible loss to fire.” The carrier was thanked at his station for his service to the community and for a job well done.

Mount Clemens, Michigan Branch 654 member Sam Romeo was on hand to lend support to evacuation efforts after a fire at an apartment complex for senior citizens forced dozens to flee. Joining other passers-by, Romeo quickly helped seniors to safety as fire fighters attempted to quell the blaze. A reporter from *The Macomb Daily* observed Romeo carefully bent over, speaking quietly with several residents, making sure they weren’t overly stressed. “This is my route, so I know a lot of these men and women,” Romeo explained.



Working with kids and dogs

Lora Hott had volunteered to take her neighbors' baby for a ride while the child's parents did some Christmas shopping. As she worked to secure the child's car seat in her vehicle, however, the toddler wandered off to play with Hott's dog down at the end of the driveway. Spotting the tot getting away, the woman chased after the child, but just as she closed in, she tripped on the curb and fell into the street with a force that knocked her out, cold.

That was the scene that confronted letter carrier Jay Stephens when he turned the corner into Hott's neighborhood—a woman lying motionless in the street with a small child and a dog standing helplessly nearby. Stephens, a member of Virginia Beach, Virginia Branch 2819, ran to the bleeding, unconscious woman, scooped the baby up into his arms, then stood watch for any oncoming cars.

A neighbor who witnessed the scene unfold called 911 while another, a nurse, gave Hott first aid. When paramedics arrived, Stephens left the child in the care of the neighbors and finished his route. After a few days went by, the letter carrier learned that Hott had sustained a concussion and injuries that required surgery. "I don't know what would have happened to me or the baby if it wasn't for Jay," Hott said later, adding that she believes the carrier saved her life.

Not laying down on the job

It was route inspection time and Rodel Capulong, a member of Garden Grove, California Branch 1100, was delivering mail under the watchful eye of an inspector, Tom Pouliot, when suddenly Pouliot had a seizure.

Capulong, who had served in both Navy and Air Force Reserve medical corps, first called for medical help, then gave the inspector first aid, placing him on his side to keep the man from choking on his own tongue. The letter carrier stayed with Pouliot and then assisted the ambulance team when it arrived moments later. Doctors later praised the carrier for his help in saving a fellow postal employee's life.

JEAN McDONALD AND HER MAILMAN James Conyers have been buddies for years; in fact the two share a birthday. "I would tell him every time I go out of town so he would hold my mail," McDonald said. "He is the best mailman in the world." So when mail was left in the mailbox without notice, the Raleigh, North Carolina Branch 459 member knew something was amiss. McDonald had become ill and was unable to summon help, having suffered alone for over 24 hours. Conyers contacted his customer's niece, who lives across town and responded immediately. "My kidneys shut down, my blood pressure and heart rate went down," McDonald recalled after a week's stay in the hospital. "If James hadn't have told Brenda and Brenda hadn't have come and found me, I would have been a dead woman. I just can't thank him enough." Thanks to Conyers' response, the two shared a slice of birthday cake just two weeks after McDonald's collapse.

WHILE LETTER CARRIER DEBIE RUTAN was delivering mail to one of the homes on her route, she discovered the elderly woman who lived there lying on the ground in her garden. The woman told the member of Maine Merged Branch 92 that she had fallen earlier in the day and had been unable to right herself. The carrier contacted 911 and remained with her customer until the paramedics arrived. Fortunately, the woman's injuries were minor; she was treated there at the scene and helped back into her home.

DORIS ANN FOSTER, A 77-YEAR-OLD customer on Doug Farrington's route, had gone out to the cluster box near her home to check on the mail. On the way, she tripped, fell, and smacked her face against the concrete. Her husband, William, who was with her, tried unsuccessfully to move Doris Ann out of the hot Texas sun to check on her injuries. Farrington had been a short distance away, and the member of San Antonio Branch 421 rushed over and picked up the stunned woman and helped steady

her on her feet. William Foster later wrote and thanked Farrington for being in the right place at the right time and for his willingness to help out—not to mention his strength.

AN ELDERLY MAN APPEARED TO BE WALKING aimlessly in a neighborhood on letter carrier Brad Perez' route, so the member of Tampa, Florida Branch 599 went up to the gentleman and asked if he needed help. The man seemed disoriented and, to complicate matters, spoke little English. Perez contacted 911, then offered the man some water while they both waited for medical help to come. An interpreter who arrived with the paramedics learned that the older gentleman had started walking from his home earlier that day, got lost, and ultimately wound up nearly seven miles away from his starting point. Assured that the man was in good hands, Perez continued delivering his route.

LYNNE AMALONG, A MEMBER OF PITTSBURGH, Pennsylvania Branch 84, was carrying mail when she heard cries for help coming from the back yard of a home belonging to an elderly man on her route. The man had been doing some work in one of the trees in his yard when he lost his footing and fell to the ground. Amalong called 911 and then waited with the man until paramedics showed up.

MAIL HAD GONE UNCOLLECTED FOR several days at the home of an elderly customer on letter carrier Matthew Dubois' route. Concerned, the member of Willoughby, Ohio Branch 3688 asked a neighbor to call the police. When the police arrived, they found the patron inside, lapsing in and out of consciousness.

ONE DAY, AN ELDERLY WOMAN WITH A house on Kathy Matson's route took a tumble and lay in her front yard, unable to get up. She was there for several hours before the Lafayette, Indiana Branch 466 letter carrier arrived with the day's mail. Matson promptly called 911 and got the lady the medical help she required.



LETTER CARRIER FERNANDO ADONA SAYS he just happened to be in the right place at the right time. The San Jose, California Branch 193 member was delivering mail in a residential neighborhood when he discovered an 89-year-old woman lying on the ground, suffering from an apparent leg injury. Adona knew that the woman used a cane to help her walk and had evidently lost her balance. The carrier used his cell phone to call for medical help and stayed with his customer until an ambulance showed up.

HEARING A CUSTOMER CALLING OUT HIS name didn't strike Walter Koch as all that unusual, but it was obvious to the Cleveland, Ohio Branch 40 letter carrier that something was wrong with the urgency of the summons from an elderly patron. Koch traced the panicked cries to a house on his route and pushed through the locked screen door to get inside. There, he found a woman bleeding and lying at the foot of the basement stairs after having slipped and fallen. She told him she had been there for nearly an hour before the carrier showed up. Koch called 911 and waited with her until help arrived. Later, he checked on her in the hospital. "This just seems to be a responsibility that goes with the job," he said, "and it's one that makes me feel good."

WORRIED AT HOW BOTH THE MAIL AND newspapers were piling up at a patron's home, letter carrier Johnny Mitchell of Winston-Salem, North Carolina Branch 461 decided he needed to check on her, so he sought the help of a neighbor, who called 911. Emergency responders found the woman had fallen and was unable to get back up, and although coherent, she was severely dehydrated.

OTTUMWA, IOWA BRANCH 447 MEMBER Rick Johnson noticed one of his elderly customers had not picked up her mail. When he knocked he got no answer, but a neighbor who checks on the customer regularly spotted him. Johnson and the neighbor called the customer, a relative and then an ambulance. Emergency personnel found the

woman had fallen and took her to the hospital, where she stayed several for days.

RACHELLE ROY NOTICED THAT NEWSPAPERS were accumulating at the home of her 74-year-old customer, Steve Tafelski, so she immediately called 911. The police department arrived and broke down the door, locating Tafelski, a retired USPS clerk, unconscious on his living room floor. The customer's relatives later contacted Roy's station to commend her on her actions. The Toledo, Ohio Branch 100 member also got kudos from her station supervisor, who wrote, "The heroic actions of Rachele Roy undoubtedly saved a life of a fellow family member of the U. S. Postal Service." In fact, a recovered Tafelski recently celebrated his 75th birthday.

ONE FALL DAY, 84-YEAR-OLD HILDA GOUGE fell in her backyard and broke her hip. She lay there about an hour, knowing her carrier should be arriving soon. In fact, Amarillo, Texas Branch 1037 member Roberto Marquez was right on time. Without knowing for sure that he was there, Gouge started calling out to him at the time he usually delivered. He heard her cries for "Mailman" from across the street and found her in her garden. After calling 911, Marquez sat with her and talked to her about her beautiful backyard to keep her mind off of her pain. Gouge's daughter wrote a heart-felt "thank you" to the carrier, saying, "Please know how much your kindness meant, staying with her and comforting her. Our family is very indebted to you. God bless the postal carrier!" Marquez modestly replied, "It felt really good to help someone, but it wasn't anything that anyone else wouldn't have done."

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA BRANCH 70 member Joseph Gomez has a knack for helping out. Noticing mail accumulating at the home of an elderly man who lives alone, Gomez went to the door to see if everything was okay and heard the man calling out from just inside the door. When Gomez summoned medical personnel, they had to go through a window to help the man who had collapsed next to the door.

This wasn't the carrier's first caring act; he was written up in the local paper just a year before for aiding a customer on his route. "I don't do this to get my picture in the newspaper," Gomez said with a laugh. "Helping people is the right thing to do. If I am ever in need of help, I hope someone will be there for me too."

WHEN DARLENE KORVELA NOTICED A full mailbox and a meal from Meals on Wheels hanging at a customer's door, she quickly investigated. The Minneapolis, Minnesota Branch 9 member knocked at the door to no avail, then went to the side windows to look in. A light in one of the windows caught her attention, and upon knocking at the window a hand waved weakly back. As the arm waved she noticed blood, so she immediately went to a neighbor's home to call for help. When EMS personnel arrived, they rushed the injured resident to the hospital.

A QUICK BREAK FOR DUNDEE, ILLINOIS Branch 1649 member Randon Schultz at a McDonald's led to saving a life. While in the restaurant, Schultz came to the aid of an elderly woman choking on her meal. The carrier quickly performed the Heimlich maneuver and cleared the woman's airway. When the ambulance arrived, the woman was already recovering. Schultz was commended by the West Dundee fire chief who stated, "Truly through [his] efforts a life was saved!"

AFTER TRAINING AS A NURSE, SUSAN Chavez found a second career as a letter carrier, which was to the benefit of one elderly gentleman on her route. When the West Coast Florida Branch 1477 member saw her customer fall while working in his yard and strike his head on a sharp object, Chavez came immediately to his aid. The man was bleeding significantly from a head wound. The carrier, undaunted, applied pressure to control the bleeding with one hand while calling 911 on her cell phone with the other. Emergency personnel credited Chavez with preventing her customer from incurring serious complications as a result of his head wound.

Two men in blue

A Henry County, Georgia police officer appeared to be having some trouble subduing a man who had become unruly during a traffic stop, so letter carrier Nathaniel Roberson, who was driving past the scene on his way to work, decided to see if he could help the officer. As the member of Atlanta Branch 73 drew closer, he saw blood was dripping from bite marks on Officer Eric Arrington's arms and that the driver was desperately trying to grab the cop's service pistol. Roberson rushed over, helped wrestle the man to the ground, and kept the suspect's arms pinned behind him until backup arrived.

Arrington later told Roberson that in risking his own safety, the letter carrier very likely saved the police officer's life. Henry County Police Chief Russell Abernathy agreed and awarded Roberson the county's Chief's Citizen Award.

Fire down below

While out making his rounds in late October, letter carrier Nery Montano heard a fire alarm sounding from the bottom floor of one of the homes on his route. The member of San Francisco, California Branch 214 had only been on the route for three months, but he knew that his customer, Albert Yip, lived in the basement apartment. His attempts to get Yip to come to

the door were unsuccessful, so Montano went upstairs to alert the tenants there to the emergency below. The neighbors led the carrier to the backyard, and from there he climbed into Yip's apartment through an open window.

Montano pushed his way through thick, black smoke to a pot that had been left unattended on the kitchen stove. The carrier placed the pot outside, quickly checked to make sure no one was at home and the apartment was secure, then resumed his deliveries.

The carrier has a knack for putting out house fires. Ten years ago, Montano was carrying the mail when he saw an apartment manager trying to unlock the door to a smoke-filled apartment. The carrier gained the manager's permission to smash open a window with a fire extinguisher, climbed inside, and then used the extinguisher to put out a fire on the kitchen stove.

San Francisco Postmaster Noemi Luna praised the letter carrier. "Nery Montano exemplifies how our letter carriers serve as the eyes and ears of the neighborhoods we serve," she said. "He is a truly caring individual and an asset to the Postal Service."



Photo courtesy of Henry County Communications Department

Henry County Georgia Police Chief Russell Abernathy (l) awarded Atlanta Br. 73 member Nathaniel Roberson (c) with the Chief's Citizen Award for saving Officer Eric Arrington's (r) life.

When Rochester, New York

Branch 210 letter carrier **Shawn Whalen** stopped by Evan Smith's home to deliver the mail, he was surprised to find Smith's seven-year-old daughter and her young friend sitting on the porch steps, sobbing. School had let out early that day and as a result the school bus had dropped off the children before the usual time. The two girls had arrived at the Smith home to find it empty and locked. Whalen knew that Evan Smith worked at a business on his delivery route, so the carrier called the girl's father, alerted him to the situation, and waited with the youngsters for someone to come and let the girls inside the house.

It was unusual for Mr. Imperial to leave his daily paper outside, thought letter carrier **Scott Cote**,

especially into the early afternoon hours. Back at the station, Cote asked fellow Rochester, New York Branch 210 letter carrier **Craig Merritt** to swing by the Imperial house on the way home to take another look. When Merritt noted that the paper was still in the same spot, he asked a neighbor to call 911. Inside, police found Imperial lying on the floor, having fallen down a flight of stairs following a heart attack earlier in the day. He recovered and his grateful daughter, Maureen, said, "If it weren't for these two carriers, we would have lost my father."

With 28 years of service with USPS, **Troy Lucas** is ever-alert to the happenings along his route. When the Missoula, Montana Branch 701 member saw a slow-

moving vehicle weaving back and forth across the road, he followed along to investigate. The car came to a stop on the shoulder and Lucas approached the driver to assess the situation. The driver was slumped over the steering wheel and wasn't breathing. Lucas quickly pulled the driver from the car and administered CPR until emergency personnel arrived. Responders were able to revive the man largely due to Lucas' attentions. Missoula City police sergeant Steve Brester nominated Lucas for a commendation and was on hand, along with Captain Dick Lewis, to present the proud carrier with the Citizens Lifesaving Certificate.

HELP on the Way



Photo courtesy of USPS

Troy Lucas with Citizens Lifesaving Certificate

HELP on the Way

Amid the usual smells of autumn, letter carrier **Sergio Fimbres** detected an odor that was clearly out of place—a smell that indicated the presence of escaping natural gas. The Kingman, Arizona Branch 576 member followed the scent to a nearby residence. Quickly, Fimbres notified both the home's owners and the authorities, and when gas company inspectors arrived, they discovered that a buried gas main had sprung a leak and that the entire neighborhood had been placed in grave danger. The grateful customers later called Fimbres' managers, praising the carrier's quick thinking that likely averted a catastrophe.

Jeff Sabbag, a 27-year letter carrier, was alarmed by the quantity of mail that had gone unretrieved from Jerry Bushey's mailbox. It occurred to the Utica, Michigan Branch 4374 letter carrier that he had neither seen nor spoken with the customer in a while, and nearby residents also noted it had been three or four days since they had seen their neighbor. Concerned for his patron's safety, Sabbag called the police, who entered Bushey's home and found the man in a weakened state, lying at the bottom of his basement stairwell, where he had fallen after suffering a stroke. Hospital staffers later noted that Sabbag's timely phone call had made a big difference in increasing his customer's chances for survival.

On a day when the mercury climbed into the mid-90s, Kansas City, Missouri Branch 30 letter carrier **Gary Thurman** needed to deliver a package to a customer in an apartment complex. He rang the customer's doorbell and was greeted by a five-year-old child, who told the carrier that no adults were home to sign for the parcel. Behind the child was another who appeared to be no older than two. Noticing that the apartment didn't seem to be air conditioned and worried about the safety of two young children left alone, Thurman first contacted the apartment manager, and then called the police.

Cincinnati, Ohio Branch 43 letter carrier **Dave Stewart** was delivering his route when he witnessed an abduction taking place right before his eyes. He quickly dialed 911 and gave police a detailed description of what he saw—the kidnap-

per, the victim and the car involved. The attacker fled the scene and had made it across the state line, but helped by Stewart's account, police were able to quickly identify and arrest the assailant.

When Rhonda Cross walked into an apartment complex on her route, she immediately detected the telltale smell associated with natural gas. At once, the alert member of Crown Port, Indiana Branch 1624 notified the apartment building's manager. The manager later called the post office to thank Cross for bringing a potentially lethal gas leak to light.

Arash of mid-day home break-ins came to a rapid end, due in large part to the actions of Saginaw, Michigan Branch 74 letter carrier **Lori Wilson**. Wilson's home happens to be on her mail route, and when she stopped in to make some lunch, she noticed a strange car parked in her own driveway. She pulled her LLV in behind the car, carefully approached the two occupants and was asking them what they were doing there when she heard a noise coming from inside her house. As Wilson stepped away to use her cell phone to call 911, the band of burglars beat a hasty retreat around her LLV. Fortunately, the letter carrier's description of the bandits' car, complete with license number, helped police quickly capture the criminals.

John Shubbish, of Utica, Michigan Branch 4374, was making a delivery at a business' loading dock when he saw one of the company's employees, Chris Boone, begin to have a seizure. Shubbish asked a police officer who happened to be nearby to call for medical assistance, then found another employee inside the building and alerted the individual to Boone's condition. The company later thanked Shubbish for his attention and quick action, stating that the carrier "clearly aided in saving Chris's life."

The temperature was already in the 90s when Tucson, Arizona letter carrier **Warren Tobey** found one of his customers, Christine Whitney, unable to get up after having fallen in her front yard several hours earlier. When the member of Branch 704 reached Whitney's side, the woman was lying face down in the grass and was showing signs of heat stroke. Tobey dialed 911 on his cell phone to

summon help, and then waited with his patron until paramedics arrived to take her to a hospital.

A lost five-year-old boy knew a letter carrier was the right person to ask for help in finding a way home. **Michael Czarnopys** was delivering his route last July when he discovered the frightened and teary-eyed youngster. The member of Mid-Michigan Branch 256 first calmed down the lost boy, asked him for his home address, then escorted the lad back to his home, safe and sound.

Barre, Vermont Branch 617 letter carrier **Jeff Machia** was delivering mail to a home on his route when he heard the sound of someone nearby calling for help. Machia quickly found the source of the distress call: Mary Lois Pudvah, a patron who had tumbled down some stone steps outside her home. The carrier remained calm and told his customer to stay still while he used his cell phone to summon help, then waited with her until EMTs arrived.

Jeff Young was a veteran 15-year carrier when he began delivering on a brand new route, so he was already well aware that the mail that was piling up in a customer's box could be a sign of trouble. Young shared his concern with a neighbor, who agreed to look in on the patron while the Akron, Ohio Branch 148 carrier continued his deliveries. The neighbor later told the carrier that the customer had suffered a stroke and had been lying on his bathroom floor for two days before he was found. The customer recovered and later told Young, "I'm glad you are my mailman." The letter carrier said he was simply happy to help. "You always hear about these things, but this is the first time it's happened to me," Young said. "We need to always be alert and know what is going on with our customers."

Salt Lake City, Utah Branch 111 member **David West** was working his route one day when he witnessed a woman fall outside her home. The carrier immediately rushed to the woman's side and quickly made two calls for help: one to a neighbor who was watching nearby, and the other on his cell phone to a 911 dispatcher. West then stayed with his customer until help arrived on the scene. ☒