

# Proud TO SERVE

**I**n this modern age, with greed and violence staples in the news, examples of courage and compassion are more important than ever. Across this nation, letter carriers are often the first to discover people in need due to accidents, attacks or fires. The following reports are offered to honor the actions of all NALC members whose quick thinking and sharp reactions have saved lives.

## Like the cavalry, carriers ride (or drive) to the rescue

As he was finishing his rounds, Alan Girard saw smoke and an orange glow coming from the second floor of a six-story apartment building for senior citizens.

Girard, who comes from a family of fire fighters, quickly leapt into action. As he came closer to the building, a window exploded, with flames shooting out and up toward the third floor. As the regular carrier for the complex, he had a pass-key and used it to gain entry. Once inside, he pulled the fire alarm and ran through the first-floor hallway, knocking on doors to alert residents of the spreading blaze.

He then climbed the outside stairwell to the second floor, where the smoke was very heavy, and managed to get the elderly residents out of their rooms and into the stairwell. There he was met by fellow carrier Rick Quinonez, who also had spotted the fire. Together they helped residents, including a wheelchair-bound woman, down the stairs to safety.

By this time, it looked like the cavalry was arriving—in the form of white postal vehicles. Brother carrier Gilbert Rangel joined Girard and Quinonez, returning to the building to knock on doors and

escort the elderly residents—some of whom used walkers—to safety. Two other carriers, Tanya Joseph and Karen Hill, rushed to the top three floors and found others needing help. They knocked on doors until they were certain they had alerted everyone, then helped dozens of occupants make their way down the stairwell to safety.

All told, the group of five Greater East Bay, California Branch 1111 members helped more than 100 people escape from the building before the fire department arrived to contain the three-alarm fire.

## Giving accident victims a lift

A school bus full of small children was involved in an accident while letter carrier Jerry Wayne Johnson was delivering mail nearby. The member of High Point, North Carolina Branch 936 immediately rushed to the scene and managed to open the bus's front doors. Jagged shards of broken glass lined the doorway, so Johnson lifted each child—63 in all—carefully through the opening and off the bus, handing them one by one to passersby who stopped to lend a hand. Three adults were also inside the bus, and the carrier helped them disembark safely as well. Johnson then remained with the accident victims until police and rescue units arrived.

## Carrier foils burglary bid by out-of-place foursome

It had been an ordinary workday delivering mail in a gated community until carrier Cindie Lindemon saw something out of kilter. Four men in their early 20s wearing backpacks were walking down the street, and she immediately suspected they didn't belong there. The Las Vegas, Nevada Branch 2502 member

**“When I realized what I did, it was gut-wrenching. I don't know if it was adrenaline or stupidity or both.”**

—Branch 2502 letter carrier Cindie Lindemon, on helping to foil a burglary



Las Vegas, NV Br. 2502 member Cindie Lindemon helped foil a burglary on her route.

called the security guard to alert him. Since he couldn't leave his post, he recruited a resident coming through the gate at the time to call the police and to drive over to the carrier's location.

By the time the neighbor arrived, the men had already struck, with three inside a house and the fourth out front, pacing while talking on a cell phone. Lindemon was keeping watch as the neighbor talked to the man outside when suddenly the "inside" men appeared, toting bags filled with items from the house. The three burglars quickly scattered—two ran in one direction while the third split off in another. The carrier chased two of the thieves down the street in her LLV, honking her horn and yelling at them to stop. Police arrived a few minutes later and, with guns drawn, captured three of the men. They were held on felony burglary charges.

Lindemon said she was shocked at what happened, but her first instinct was to get back to work, so she continued with her deliveries. "When I realized what I did, it was just gut-wrenching," she told *The Silverado (NV) Home News*. "I don't know if it was adrenaline or stupidity or both."

## Radio call leads to fire rescue

When listening to his police scanner at home, Timothy Foote heard a report of smoke and flames at a neighbor's house just three doors down. The Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Branch 500 member immediately ran to the scene, and heard bystanders reporting that a person was still inside. He immediately broke through the garage door and, crawling in his bare feet, Foote rescued the 78-year-old resident lying unconscious on the living room floor.



WHILE MAKING HER USUAL ROUNDS, letter carrier Tammy Schulte thought she heard a yell for help coming from the home of one of her elderly customers. Schulte, a member of Garden Grove, California Branch 1100, went to the porch and rang the woman's doorbell. A definite cry came from inside. Schulte, knowing that a neighbor had a key to the house, ran next door and enlisted the neighbor's help. The two of them went inside and found the customer lying on her kitchen floor, unable to move and becoming dehydrated. "She had been there for six hours," Schulte told a local news station. "I got her a drink of water while the neighbor called 911." The letter carrier learned that the elderly woman had been trying to give her dog a treat when the excited canine bowled her over. The fall fractured both her hips. Paramedics took her to a hospital for treatment, and later she spent time at a nursing home to recover, Schulte said, adding, "I'm glad I was there to help."

LETTER CARRIER MIKE BLANTZ WAS driving his LLV to the next segment of his route when, ahead of him, he saw a car swerve wildly out of control, weaving in and out of its lane before striking a utility pole. Blantz, a member of Americus, Georgia Branch 420, parked his vehicle and dashed over to check on the car's elderly woman driver. He found her stunned but otherwise unharmed, so Blantz helped her out of her car to sit on a nearby bench. Next, he phoned 911 to report the crash, and then waited with the woman until EMTs could arrive to assess her condition.

AL BLOUSE, A MEMBER OF YORK, Pennsylvania Branch 509, delivered mail as usual to the home of an elderly woman on his route on a typical Monday. When he again delivered to her home on Thursday, after having been away on two days of scheduled leave, he was alarmed to see his customer's mailbox overflowing with uncollected mail. Polling the woman's neighbors, Blouse discovered that no one had seen her out and about since the previous Sunday. Worried, the carrier called his supervisor, who relayed Blouse's concern to local police. It turns out the 66-year-old woman had

collapsed in her home, but thanks to Blouse's action, she received treatment at a local hospital for what was later diagnosed as brain cancer. "Working this job, you get a sense of your patrons and you watch out for the elderly," Blouse told the *York Daily Record*. "I like to think we watch out for each other."

LETTER CARRIER THOMAS ROBERTSON managed to be at the right place at the right time when he discovered his customer, Julia Stroman, outside her home and calling out for help—help that the member of Fredericksburg, Virginia Branch 685 was more than happy to provide. Stroman, as it happened, was having a stroke and was frantically trying to get back inside her home to call 911. Robertson helped the woman inside, then made the call himself. Stroman later wrote a letter, calling Robertson her "angel of mercy" to whom she is "eternally grateful." "Words are inadequate to fully express my gratitude to him," she said of her letter carrier. "He helped save my life."

WHEN SOMERSET, MASSACHUSETTS Branch 51 member Nelson Brandao noticed that an envelope under a customer's storm door had been there a while, he began to worry. The carrier knew his 79-year-old customer Doris Bessette didn't usually leave things there. He knocked on the door, and when Bessette opened it, he saw that she was moving slower than usual, and was somewhat disoriented. He suggested calling for an ambulance, but she dismissed the idea. A friend was coming by to check on her, so he decided to wait until she came. When Bessette's friend got to the house, she immediately called Bessette's son, who lives two houses away. After checking with his wife, who is a registered nurse, the son called 911 immediately. Although she answered questions from paramedics right away, they still took Bessette, a diabetic, to the hospital. "I feel like he's a guardian angel," Bessette told *The Herald (MA) News*. Brandao said he was simply paying attention to his customers the way he always does. "If you pay attention to your customers, customer service goes a long way."

## Telltale mail a lifesaver

Working on an unscheduled day, Judith Kahl covered her own route to collect some overtime. When the Western Wayne County, Michigan Branch 2184 member delivered mail to her 87-year-old friend and customer Clara Giss, she tied it to the door handle as she usually did and continued with her route. When Kahl returned the next day, the bundle of mail was still there, which was unusual.

Suspecting something might be wrong, Kahl yelled into the house, but got no response. She tried to reach Giss by telephone, but the line was busy, so she called police and asked that someone come check on the woman. When officers arrived, they asked her to wait on the porch. When officers emerged a short while later, Kahl rushed into the house.

"I was so grateful she was alive," the letter carrier told *The News-Herald* in Southgate, Michigan. "When she saw me, she said, 'Judy, my angel. I knew you'd come.'" Giss, who had fallen earlier in the month and suffered head injuries, was found to have a blood clot. "She laid there a day, day and a half, before I found her," Kahl said. "Thank God I worked that day (before)," or she wouldn't have left the telltale mail.

## Rescue all in a day's work

Spotting billowing black smoke while filling in on another carrier's route, Hempstead, New York, carrier Konstantine Andreas dropped his mail and called 911 as he ran down the street to the scene about a half-block away.

Blind 82-year-old Susan Williams had accidentally started a fire as she attempted to fry an egg. She made her way outside and stood on a porch that extends along the side of the house, until a neighbor picked her up and lifted her over the porch railing into the arms of the Long Island Merged Branch 6000 member. They carried the woman to safety across the street to wait for the fire department.

Andreas, a PTF carrier of only about six months at the time, said his actions were a result of a burst of adrenaline. "You really don't have time to think at that point," he told New

York's *Newsday*. "You just have to react."

After the rescue, the carrier picked up his mailbag and completed his route. "The mail must go through, no matter what," he said with a smile.

## To catch a thief

Letter carrier Richard Wood was about to deliver mail to a store on his route when he saw through the window that a robbery was in progress. Wood, a member of Minneapolis, Minnesota Branch 9, stayed outside the business and watched helplessly as the thief first grabbed money from the elderly clerk behind the counter, then struck the man and ran out. The robber barely had time to get through the door, however, before Wood tackled him and held him pinned to the ground until police arrived.

## Carrier's 'ripple of kindness'

Amy had planned to start her day with a trip to the bank, but panic set in when she realized the envelope containing her deposit—\$900 in cash and checks, including her paycheck—was nowhere to be found, even after a thorough and frantic search of her apartment, her car, and the street outside her building.

Despondent, she returned to her apartment. Suddenly, there was a knock at her door. "I almost didn't answer it," she said. "I was feeling so low, I didn't want to speak with anyone."

At the door stood letter carrier J.J. Collazo, a member of Tampa, Florida Branch 599, who asked her if her name was Amy. He had found an envelope full of money and a paycheck while he was delivering his route, and was searching for its rightful owner.

Using the paycheck as a guide, Collazo had called Amy's place of employment to help track her down. After she verified the company name on the paycheck, he was satisfied the money was indeed hers and handed it over.

Amy offered the letter carrier a cash reward, but he refused. "Instead, I had to settle for giving him a big hug to show my sincere gratitude," she said. "J.J. has started a ripple of kindness that hopefully will become a tidal wave in the near future."

**Hattie Potocki, working in her back-yard** garden one spring morning, lost her footing and fell to the ground. Unable to move and fearing she had broken a bone, she looked around and noticed her letter carrier, **Darrell Boreen**, delivering mail to a neighbor's house. Potocki called out to the carrier, a member of Wahpeton, North Dakota Branch 1388. At first, Boreen couldn't locate his patron, but he soon discovered her and immediately went inside her house to call 911. He then waited with her until an ambulance arrived before going back to delivering his route. Boreen found out later that the woman, who had indeed suffered a broken bone in the fall, was the mother-in-law of his station's mailing standards specialist.

**No one answered when letter carrier R.G. Dacunha** knocked on the door of a customer's house to deliver a parcel. The Kansas City, Kansas Branch 499 member then heard a cry from inside the house. Realizing the woman was in pain, he dialed 911. The doctor told the customer that if she had waited any longer before receiving medical treatment, she could have died.

**After finding a customer unconscious in** a front yard while delivering mail, **Chad Kelley** first tried knocking on the door, but no one was home. When he couldn't rouse the man, Kelley called 911 and stayed with him until an ambulance arrived to take him to the emergency room. The Santa Rosa, California Branch 183 member was commended by the customer's parents for his "merit of saving a life." It turned out the man was a diabetic and might not have survived had he not received emergency care.

**While delivering mail on his park-and-loop route, Ricky Bourland** found a customer sitting in a chair with her head slumped over. Realizing she was unconscious, the Plano, Texas Branch 4065 member immediately called 911 and got the attention of a neighbor across the street. The two stabilized the customer while emergency services were dispatched to the residence, and the woman was then taken to the hospital. The customer had lost consciousness because of a reaction to a medication she had taken earlier.

**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Branch 157** member **Bill Rotchford** heard a man yelling for help while on his mail route. He followed the man to a little boy, but the child wasn't breathing and was turning blue. The carrier told the man to call 911 while he performed CPR. By the time the emergency squad arrived, the boy was breathing again. "The boy said, 'If you

weren't here, I would've died,'" Rotchford said. "It's a wonderful feeling to know I was at the right place at the right time to help."

**At first, letter carrier Kim Smith had not** noticed anything unusual as he approached a home on his route while delivering mail. It wasn't until the member of Detroit, Michigan Branch 1 approached the mailbox that he saw his 86-year-old customer, John Gowen, lying on the ground in some bushes just off the porch. Gowen told the carrier that he had come outside to check the mail when he slipped and fell, hurting his face, shoulders and back. Smith told the man to stay still, then went inside to call 911 and to alert Gowen's bedridden wife. The letter carrier then stayed outside with Gowen until the ambulance arrived.

**Garden Grove, California Branch 1100** member **John Bergen** was delivering mail on his route when he heard cries for help coming from a nearby home. Rushing to the door, a woman inside called out to him that she had fallen and was in too much pain to get back on her feet. Bergen tried the door but found it locked, so he dialed 911 on his cell phone. Paramedics quickly arrived and forced their way into the woman's house and took her to the hospital for treatment.

**Dora Trimboli had just stepped outside** her house one January day when she tripped and fell, landing squarely on a patch of concrete. Fortunately, letter carrier **Ebony Eley** happened to be nearby, and the member of Long Island Merged, New York Branch 6000 quickly came to her elderly customer's aid. Trimboli was unable to stand, so Eley dashed to a neighbor's home and asked them to call the police. The carrier then held the older woman in her arms, keeping her warm until officers arrived. Confident Trimboli was safe, Eley resumed her route.

**Dan Clark, walking his route, came** across an elderly woman sitting on a public bench. Clark, a member of Leavenworth, Washington Branch 3320 and also a trained first-responder for the local fire department, noticed that the woman seemed disoriented. He helped her lay on the bench and kept her calm, staying with her until paramedics arrived. "It was no big deal," Clark said later. "I'm trained for it." Clark's OIC, Kat Smithson-Page, disagreed. "I believe caring about people is a big deal," she said.

**While delivering mail to a business on** his route, **Terry Johnson** noticed a woman struggling to help her husband into

a car. Johnson, a member of Houston, Texas Branch 283, learned that the man suspected he was having a heart attack and his wife was attempting to drive him to a hospital. Johnson suggested it was better for the pair to stay put and call an ambulance instead, and he waited with the couple, keeping them both calm until the paramedics arrived.

**Hearing a customer calling for help,** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Branch 157 member **David Christy** checked out the situation. A fallen patron had waited two hours unable to get up, and was also suffering from chest pains. The letter carrier immediately alerted a neighbor and emergency personnel. "I'm so grateful he was there to help her," the customer's sister, Dorothy Shackelford, said. "I don't know what might have happened if he hadn't been."

**When Honolulu, Hawaii Branch 860** member **Renee Yanamine** noticed that a woman who lived alone in her condominium unit hadn't picked up her mail, she rang the bell but got no answer. She notified an officer of the condo association, and together they entered the unit, finding the resident unconscious on the floor. Paramedics took the woman by ambulance to the hospital, where she died the next day. "If Renee hadn't worried about our neighbor, she might not have been discovered before she died," said E.Y. Young, a condo officer. "We're grateful to her for making the effort to find out if all was OK."

**A man working on his lawn mower** caught three of his fingers in the blades, suffering traumatic amputation. Letter carrier **Steven Keller** was coming up the street as it happened. With assistance from sister Royal Oak, Michigan Branch 3126 member **Bonnie Giroux-Potts**, they helped to stop the bleeding, called 911, retrieved the fingers and put them on ice, and waited until paramedics arrived.

**Cries for help caught letter carrier Sandra Walker's** attention as she went along her route. The El Paso, Texas Branch 505 member discovered an injured woman on the ground. The customer had broken her hip during a fall and been outside in the 102-degree weather for three hours before anyone came to her rescue.



# Eye on the ELDERLY

Princeton, NJ Br. 268 Shop Steward Wayne Porter (l) congratulates letter carrier Robert Flynn, who helped save an elderly customer's life.



**NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT BRANCH 19** member Louis Ferraro III saw an elderly woman choking and trying to catch her breath after food became lodged in her throat. The letter carrier performed the Heimlich maneuver, clearing her airway, and then dialed 911. The reporting police officer averred Ferraro had saved the woman's life.

**LETTER CARRIER LUAN MOHR NOTICED** mail had been building up for a couple of days in the mailbox of one of her elderly customers. Mohr, a member of Central Iowa Merged Branch 352, thought this was strange, since the woman usually picked up her mail every day. The carrier mentioned her concern to some neighbors, who decided to call the police for help. When officers arrived they found the patron inside, lying on the floor. She had apparently fallen two days earlier and had not been able to get up. Paramedics whisked the woman to the hospital for treatment. The next day, the emergency room staff phoned Mohr's station to commend the letter carrier for her awareness and for taking action. (Helping her older customers is becoming a habit for Mohr. The April 2007 *Postal Record* reported a similar incident when she came to the aid of an elderly woman who had fallen in her home.)

**HAVING MISSED HIS DAILY DOSE OF** insulin, postal customer William Beaumont went into diabetic shock and passed out on the front lawn of his home. When letter carrier Ernest Smith spotted Beaumont lying unconscious on the ground, he went over to check on the man, then used his cell phone to call paramedics. Smith, a member of Atlanta, Georgia Branch 73, reported Beaumont's symptoms to the 911 operator, who instructed the carrier to prop his patron's head up so the man could breathe. Help soon arrived, and thanks to Smith's description of the situation, they knew just what to do to help Beaumont recover. A few weeks later, the healthy patron came to Smith's post office to thank him personally. "Had Ernest not seen me and offered his help, I'm not sure I'd be here," he said.

**AS LENA VARNER WALKED THROUGH** her house one morning, she stumbled and fell to the floor. Unable to stand and

regain her footing, let alone reach her telephone to call for help, she dragged herself toward her front door and waited there until she heard her letter carrier, Mark Burris, make his way to her home. Varner had placed some outgoing mail in her mailbox, so she knew that the member of Marcelline, Missouri Branch 2027 would soon be by to make his pick-up and delivery. As she heard Burris step on to the porch, she called out to him for help. The letter carrier entered the home and used Varner's phone to call 911, then waited with her until first responders arrived. "Mark is an example of just how much our customers count on us each day," said Marceline Postmaster Will Owens, "sometimes, for things other than just the mail."

**WITH YESTERDAY'S NEWSPAPER STILL ON** the front porch of one of letter carrier Bert Lucas' elderly customers, the member of Decorah, Iowa Branch 445 became concerned. Later, he shared his thoughts with the woman's granddaughter, who also lived on his route. The woman immediately went to check on her grandmother and discovered she had fallen the day before and had been unable to get up. Not too long after that, Lucas' caring instincts were called upon again when he noticed that several days' worth of mail had gone uncollected in another customer's mailbox. Lucas alerted the landlord, who entered the apartment and found the gravely ill man lying in his bed, too sick to call for help. "It makes me feel good to be able to do something that makes a difference in someone's life," Lucas said.

**IT WORRIED LETTER CARRIER TERRI** Gonchar that her elderly patron's mail from the previous day was still sitting in her mailbox. Gonchar, a member of Modesto, California Branch 1291, knocked on the woman's door to check on her welfare, but received no answer. The carrier then shared her concern with a next-door neighbor, who agreed they should call 911. When the police arrived, they discovered the patron lying on the floor, unconscious. Paramedics took the woman to a local hospital, and soon she was on her way to recovery.

**WHILE OUT DELIVERING HIS ROUTE ONE** day, letter carrier Peter Kiss noticed what looked like a woman lying on the ground beside the sidewalk. As the member of New Jersey Merged Branch 38 drew closer, he recognized her as an 83-year-old patron. He learned that she had stumbled and injured herself in a fall while out walking her dog. Kiss immediately used his cell phone to call 911, then waited with his customer and consoled her until help arrived.

**RETURNING TO HIS ROUTE ON A MONDAY** morning after a week off, Royal Oak, Michigan Branch 3126 member Larry Rutz saw three newspapers scattered on an elderly customer's porch. Knowing it was unusual for the patron to not take his paper in, the letter carrier opened the man's mail slot and called out his name. Hearing no answer, he went next door to ask the neighbor if she had seen him recently. Upon checking the garage and seeing his car, they called 911. The customer was rushed to the hospital after he was found on the floor, where police believe he had been since Friday night, more than two days earlier.

**MAKING HIS ROUNDS ONE DAY, PRINCETON,** New Jersey Branch 268 member Robert Flynn noticed his 76-year-old customer, Lilly Horton, had not picked up her mail in a few days and grew concerned. The carrier quickly notified police, who entered the customer's home to find her unconscious in the bathtub and in critical condition. They immediately took her to the hospital. Flynn is credited with helping save Horton's life.

**"CAN YOU HELP ME GET UP?" WHEN** San Jose, California Branch 193 member Luis Olitoquit heard a woman calling out through the screen door as he was making his delivery, he entered the house and found the 71-year-old customer on the floor. She had undergone several knee-replacement surgeries and apparently had re-injured her knee. Unable to get her back on her feet, he called emergency personnel, who took her to the hospital by ambulance. ☒

## Rescue sparked by ‘wrong’ smoke

Carrier Jim Borkey was standing in the back yard of his longtime friend Nick Bartzis, enjoying the pleasant weather, when they saw smoke coming out of a chimney nearby. The men quickly realized that was wrong, since they knew it was a furnace vent. After calling 911, the two ran over to the house, and noticed that a van parked in the driveway had a handicapped decal. Only after loud shouts and repeated pounding on the door did an older woman appear. The carrier and his friend told the resident, who had been asleep on the couch, that her house was on fire.

Even though smoke was starting to billow out of the door, the woman was reluctant to leave—she seemed confused and was worried about the safety of her two pets, a dog and cat. Borkey, a Cleveland, Ohio Branch 40 member, grabbed her arm and insisted she come out. She moved to the front steps, but would not relinquish her grasp of the storm door until responding firefighters pried her hand away, finger by finger.

The fire began when a basement ceiling fixture shorted out. The resident and her pets escaped without injury, though the house suffered \$100,000 damage. Borkey credited Navy training he and Bartzis received for their fast reactions. What they did “was just a thing. We just reacted,” the carrier told *The Record Courier*. “We were lucky to be in the right place at the right time.”

## Carrier proves friend indeed

Making his rounds one day, Danny Brozowski spotted a customer’s truck on the man’s front lawn. The engine idled while the driver was slumped over the steering wheel. The vehicle, still in drive, had come to a stop against a bird bath in the front yard. Assessing the situation in an instant, the Watsonville, California Branch 857 member reached into the cab, put the truck into park, and turned off the engine. The driver was very disoriented; Brozowski knew he was fighting cancer. The carrier took his patron into the house, where he found and administered oxygen, called out to a neighbor for help, and called 911. The man evidently had mixed up his medications.

Brozowski said he always keeps an eye out for his elderly patrons, and within a four-day span, the carrier saved the day again. On his way to work, he noticed another customer’s truck stalled in the middle of the road with its hood up. The carrier used his own vehicle to tow the truck to a safe parking area. “I might get the spotlight today,” Brozowski told *The Santa Cruz (CA) Sentinel*, “but I know many postal carriers here who do the same thing.” ✉

**A**ccumulating mail alerted David Lehman that something was wrong at a home on his route. The Western Wayne County, Michigan Branch 2184 member contacted a neighbor right away and asked if he had seen the man in the last few days or knew if he was away. The neighbor went to the man’s home and knocked on the door. Hearing no response, he peered through a front window, where he saw the customer lying on the living room floor. The police department and rescue service were contacted and the man was taken to the hospital. He had suffered a medical emergency two days prior and a doctor said if the man had not been found when he was, the situation would have been fatal.

**W**hen Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Branch 84 member Bill Waychoff noticed that a customer had not picked up his mail in a few days, he knocked on the door and shouted his name in order to get his attention. The letter carrier heard cries for help inside, so he ran to a neighbor’s house for assistance. Although the neighbor had a key to the customer’s front door, the screen door was locked. Hearing repeated calls for help, Waychoff broke down the front door. The carrier found the patron in his bathtub, where he had been without food or water for several days. Waychoff called 911 and got the man something to drink, staying with him until paramedics arrived. Doctors said that if the carrier had not found the man when he did, given the 90-degree heat and high humidity, the man would not have survived much longer.

**H**earing the frantic cries of a mother whose 9-year-old daughter was choking on a chunk of hot dog, letter carrier Maria Montes ran into the customer’s home. The South Florida Branch 1071 member asked several questions of the mother and grandmother to confirm that the paramedics were on the way. She then noticed the child’s stepfather was not administering the Heimlich maneuver correctly. Montes, who is familiar with the procedure, tried to coach him, step-by-step, on the spot, but the young girl lost consciousness until paramedics arrived to help dislodge the food and take her to the hospital. The carrier is credited with helping save the young girl’s life and was praised for maintaining her composure through the crisis. “The next day, the whole block was thanking me,” said Montes. “But I really only did what I had to do at the moment.”

**C**arrier Gardner McCullough was quite alarmed when he heard cries for help on his daily route. He ran toward the voice and discovered a man whose motorcycle had fallen on him. His fractured shin bled profusely. The Havre de Grace, Maryland Branch 1749 member immediately called 911 on his cell phone and stayed to comfort the man until help could arrive. ✉



**Greater East Bay, CA Br. 1111 letter carrier Josephine Salcedo alerted authorities to a house fire she noticed as she was delivering mail on another carrier's route.**

**A**s carrier Josephine Salcedo turned the corner onto the last street of the route she was filling in on, she saw smoke coming from a duplex's garage and also heard the faint sound of a fire alarm. The Greater East Bay, California Branch 1111 member quickly called 911 and answered any questions she could. "I was so nervous; I never called 911 before," Salcedo recalled. By the time fire trucks arrived, the fire had spread very quickly to the upstairs and to the home next door. The homeowner credits Salcedo's actions for helping to prevent the fire from destroying the entire house.

**While delivering mail one day, Belleville, Illinois Branch 155 member Gary Schroeder noticed fire coming out of a trash can and immediately called 911. Finding a water hose on the side of the house, he sprayed water on the fire and the side of the house until the fire department arrived. Since there were strong winds that day and the houses are situated very close together, fire officials said that had Schroeder not taken action when he did, the house would have been lost, especially since there was also a large can of gasoline inside the garage that could have exploded.**

**Arriving at a customer's house to deliver mail, Chicago, Illinois Branch 11 member Gordon Freeman noticed smoke coming from inside an exterior wall of the house. He knocked on the door and urged the customer out of the house. The woman, who was from Poland and spoke only limited English, did not believe Freeman at first, but he managed to convince her of the danger. She vacated the house with a bucket of**

water, but Freeman stopped her, explaining it might be an electrical fire. The carrier called the fire department, which was able to put out the blaze before any serious damage occurred.

**When Columbus, Ohio Branch 78 member Donald Columber saw a thick cloud of black smoke coming from a home while he was working, he immediately alerted the residents in the neighborhood. He called 911 as he proceeded to run from house to house, knocking on doors to get people out. The resident of the burning house was not home at the time and no one was injured in the fire, although the structure suffered major smoke damage. The carrier is a Marine Corps and Army veteran and currently serves in the Ohio National Guard. "In my mind, veterans want to continue to give to the country in one way or another; that's what we are trained for," Columber said. "This is why I wanted to work for the Postal Service."**

**Delivering to a house on his route, Northern Virginia Branch 3520 member Munda Banya heard a smoke detector sounding inside, as well as smoke coming out of the windows. Concerned that his customers were inside sleeping, Banya quickly called the fire department. No**

one was injured and the carrier is credited with helping to prevent major damage to the house.

**D**riving to his next pick-up, Hollis Higgins noticed flames coming from underneath a stalled van. The driver of the vehicle was seated inside, trying to start the engine. The Spokane, Washington Branch 442 member pulled onto the shoulder of the roadway, quickly grabbed his fire extinguisher, and ran to warn the driver of the danger. While he was dialing 911, a police officer arrived and together they fought the blaze until the fire department appeared a few minutes later.

**Carrier William Silay had completed his rounds and was on his way back to the office when he noticed smoke coming out of a house. The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Branch 84 member quickly called 911 before entering the house. Inside, he found a handicapped woman in bed, crying out for help. Since he couldn't carry her by himself, he asked two telephone company employees who were working nearby to help. Together, the men carried the woman out of the house to safety on a mattress.**

**The small, one-story house was already ablaze by the time letter carrier Kim Snyder got to it one spring afternoon. Snyder, a member of Quincy, Illinois Branch 216, had just asked some neighbors to call the fire department when she was stunned to see a woman dash into the house in an attempt to rescue**

her 4-year-old son. As a crowd gathered, Snyder heard the mother call out for help. Acting quickly, the letter carrier sprinted into the burning building and helped the woman carry the boy outside to safety, then proceeded to perform CPR on the unconscious child. Unfortunately, the *Quincy Whig-Herald* reported that the boy died a short time later at a local hospital. ☒



photo by Kathy Lucas

**Columbus, OH Br. 78 carrier and Ohio National Guard member Donald Columber notified neighbors after he saw a burning house on his route.**