Proud to Serve

Many people hear the word "hero" and think of fire fighters, police officers or soldiers. But some also think of another person in uniform: their dependable letter carrier.

All across the nation, letter carriers are often the first to discover people in need due to medical emergencies, accidents or fires. The following stories are offered to honor the actions of those carriers whose quick thinking and speedy reactions saved lives and spared others from harm.

Long Island Mgd. Br. 6000 member Nicole Streb appears with a boy at a ceremony to recognize her heroism. She stopped his hand from bleeding after a household accident.

Roughhousing shattered by glass door

The saying goes, "Boys will be boys," but a better one might be, "When boys horse around, someone gets hurt." Just check with Long Island Merged Branch 6000 carrier Nicole Streb, who knows how quickly playtime can stop being fun.

She was subbing on a route in Lindenhurst, New York, when she saw two brothers fooling around—one trying to keep the other from entering the house through the sliding glass door. Streb continued delivering her route when she heard a crash followed instantly by screams.

"I just knew it was *that* house and *those* boys," she said.

She ran back and found the youngsters panic-stricken. The older one was dashing from door to door at the neighbors looking for help while the younger was inside, holding his bleeding hand over a bathroom sink—three fingers cut to the bone. Streb reassured him that he was going to be okay and created a makeshift tourniquet.

"I tied it off with a wash cloth, a dish towel or something," she recalled.

The carrier called 911, then stayed with the boys until the ambulance arrived and family friends took over. The boys' mother, a retired police officer who was testifying in court that day, said of her carrier, "She handled it like a professional, when somebody else would have gotten very nervous."

Diabetes no shock for carrier

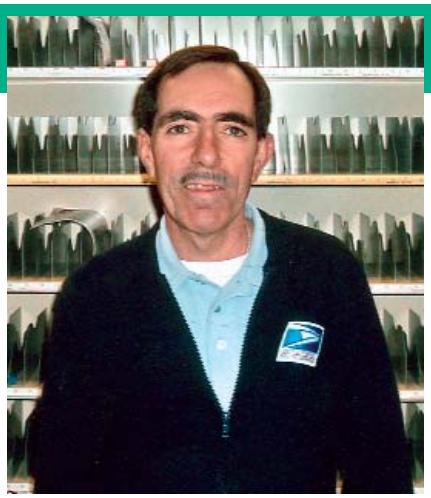
"I think I'm dying," Dalton, Georgia resident E. Martin Smith said as he slumped in his van where it had rolled to a stop halfway onto his lawn.

"I noticed him in the van off the driveway and realized he was in trouble," Joel Corn, a 14-year member of Dalton Branch 1833, said. "I didn't know how long he'd been there, so I asked him what was wrong. When he said 'I'm dying,' it kind of spooked me."

Smith, a diabetic, had been running errands and missed his midday meal, causing his blood sugar to plummet. Two hours had passed as Smith languished in the vehicle, unnoticed and unable to find the strength to open the door. The carrier immediately called 911, summoning police and medical personnel, who found Smith's Medic Alert bracelet and took him to the emergency room for the proper treatment.

For his action, Corn received a special, personal reward. One day as he was delivering, Smith called Corn over, despite the fact that Smith has a post office box and rarely receives mail at his house. As the letter carrier approached, Smith thanked him and presented him with a quilt Smith's wife had made with a personal dedication on the back.

"Mr. Corn really saved the day by checking on him," said a neighbor who witnessed the rescue. "He kind of looks out for all of us."



Frank Maglio, president and shop steward for Hudson, NH Br. 4917, intervened to defuse a potentially deadly domestic dispute.

Fur coats aren't always enough

Wisconsin winters are not fit for man nor beast, especially without the proper care. So, during the long cold season, Waukesha Branch 397 member Joe Deloria makes sure to keep watch over those living on his route.

Trudging through the snow one day, he came to a house where something seemed amiss. The tire tracks in the driveway had been dusted over with new snow, suggesting that no one had driven on it since a previous storm. Thinking his patron might be in distress, he checked the mail slot and saw a pile of unopened mail. He also discovered four cats running to the slot, desperate for attention. He notified the police department of his suspicions before returning to his route.

Police entered the house. Though they found no customer in distress, they discovered three dozen abandoned animals alone in the house. The neglected pets were taken to shelters for care.

Domestic dispute gets vehicular

Even an imagination like Cecil B. DeMille's would not have prepared Frank Maglio for the scene that awaited him outside the Blockbuster as he walked his route near the Hudson Mall—a woman was driving her car forward and back while another woman staggered along side, her arm trapped in the car's rolled-up window.

Maglio, president and shop steward for Hudson, New Hampshire Branch 4917, boldly ran in front of the car, forcing the driver stop, then waited for police to arrive. It was only later, once authorities had compared all the witness statements, that the story became clear:

The driver had run into an ex-boyfriend and his family. During an argument, the driver started her car and tried to roll up the windows, but not before one of the ex-boyfriend's relatives thrust her hand into the vehicle and was caught by the closing glass. The angry driver began shifting the car from forward to reverse and back until Maglio blocked the way and told her to calm down.

Ultimately all parties to the melee were charged with simple assault and Maglio happily returned to his route.

A friendly face for lost child

The nine-year-old girl ran down the street, crying and wiping fresh tears from her face with every step as she looked for just one familiar face to help her. Fortunately, the first one who found her was her friendly mailman, Steve Redd, who asked if she was okay.

"Actually," she said, summoning her most grown-up manner, "I'm not doing too good. I got on the wrong bus. I was supposed to go to day-care. Now, no one is home and I can't get in."

The Cleveland, Ohio Branch 40 member calmed the distraught child and helped her call her grandmother on his cell phone. He waited until the grandmother collected the girl, then continued on his route, glad to be of service.

"My wife and I are eternally grateful for his actions," the girl's father wrote in a letter. "It is people like this postman who make the world safe for our children."

One bad trip

As she prepared to deliver a relay in a residential neighborhood on a cold December day, a faint, undistinguishable sound caught Sally Seyler's attention. When the Kansas City, Kansas Branch 499 PTF got closer, she clearly heard an urgent voice calling, "Help me, help me."

A man lay in his driveway, coat and hat on, but not wearing any shoes. Although he was shivering and wet, he seemed coherent and said he thought he had broken his leg or hip. Despite his protests, she blocked his efforts to stand and called 911 on her cell phone. She then got a blanket from his truck, covered him up, and refused to leave his side even when a police officer showed up.

The officer gathered the man's daily medications and they both waited with him until the ambulance arrived. Only then would Seyler return to delivering the mail.

Wesley Dabbs (l), a member of Columbia, SC Br. 233, receives congratulations from branch President Ed Martin. Dabbs helped fire fighters rescue two elderly women who were trapped when their house caught fire.

Carrier helps pet, owner

It's not unusual for Jennifer O'Brien to find correspondence in her customers' mailboxes—what was unusual on one January day was finding a note addressed to her. The letter implored whoever found it to take care of the resident's pet, as she was going to kill herself.

The Central Iowa Merged Branch 352 carrier dashed to the front door, knocked and found the woman clearly in distress, slipping in and out of consciousness. O'Brien called Customer Service Manager Ira Dickman, explained the situation, and asked him to summon the police. She then comforted the woman until the ambulance arrived. Not only did the woman get treatment at the hospital, but animal control officers made sure the pet was looked after.

"There is no doubt in my mind that were it not for the compassion and caring Jennifer shows toward her customers this woman would have died," Dickman said. "Jennifer is truly a hero to us all."

Lending muscle to blaze rescue

A team effort, including the assistance of Columbia, South Carolina Branch 233 carrier Wesley Dabbs, rescued two elderly twin sisters when their house went up in flames.

While walking down Pine Belt Road on his route, Dabbs "happened to look up toward [the house], and saw flames shooting about 10, 15 feet," he said. Finding a policeman already on the scene, the letter carrier helped locate an ax so they could break down a locked door. The intense heat and overpowering smoke forced the men back. Fortuitously, fire fighters arrived nearly simultaneously and rushed into the house through the broken door, using the valuable time saved to find both sisters and carry them from the inferno.

The women were taken to the hospital, where one recovered and was released, though her sister's injuries were more severe and she died a few days later.

Carrier's lesson in CPR

The special delivery at Creighton Elementary School in Philadelphia that day was the breath of life for a 10-year-old girl. The third grader was working on a dance routine during morning recess when she passed out and appeared to stop breathing. A teacher's aide carried her inside, where Branch 157 member Paul Newman happened to be standing.

Knowing CPR, Newman started in while the school nurse was summoned. The letter carrier

"If you hadn't been there I might have been 'one of the frozen ones,'" an 83-year-old woman wrote in thanks to her hero—Bellevue, Nebraska Branch 4128 member **Michael Bott**. Bott had found the woman semi-conscious and laying in the street after having fallen on the ice and hit her head. He carried the woman into her house, called 911 and found a neighbor to stay with her until the ambulance arrived. "Mike didn't think he was doing anything special, but the customer he helped was extremely grateful," Bellevue Postmaster James Bullard said. "We are proud of his actions."

Having not seen any sign of elderly Audrey Newton, **Jeffrey Cushner** of Wilmington, Delaware Branch 191, asked a neighbor to check up on his customer. The neighbor alerted the authorities, who found Newton sprawled on her floor with several broken bones. The neighbor later told Cushner that his concern probably saved Newton's life.

When the Burlington City, NJ Sovereign Bank was robbed, Willingboro, NJ Br. 5801 member James Chester (inset) was able to slip out and call 911, as well as provide police with a description of the thief.

Dennis McDonald, *Burlington City Times*

later recalled that he could only think of his own children while he acted.

The nurse joined in to spell the carrier until they were able to revive the youngster. Emergency personnel arrived and took the girl to the hospital, where she was checked over and determined to be okay.

This wasn't the first time Newman managed to lend a hand, having helped a patron who collapsed in her home back in 1994. This time, a visibly shaken Newman said he was just glad to be in the right place at the right time—for the second time.

No withdrawal for this crook

Tensions were already high in the banks on High Street—someone had robbed the Farmers & Mechanics Bank the day before—when carrier James Chester entered the neighboring Sovereign Bank to deliver the mail. But he didn't realize that the excitement in the bank had nothing to do with the prior robbery until he heard a man standing in front of a nearby teller warn, "Don't put any dye packs" in with the loot.

For an instant, the Willingboro, New Jersey Branch 5801 member thought it was a joke, until he looked into the eyes of his own teller.

"Don't go," she mouthed silently.

Chester leaned back to see if the man would notice him, and decided to get out of the bank and find help. As he left, he dialed 911, alerted police and a neighboring business, all the while keeping an eye on the bank.

As the thief left, walking right past the carrier, Chester heard a hysterical cry from the bank tellers. Quickly checking to make sure they were all okay, he watched as the robber tried to flee. When police arrived, he gave the officers a description of the man and the direction he was headed. It was easy work for the police to find the felon and arrest him.

For the next four hours, Chester had to repeat the details of his experience again and again, until he was finally released by the authorities. Not thinking twice about it, the conscientious NALC member took up his satchel and completed his entire route.

Police concluded that the Sovereign Bank thief was not involved with the earlier heist, but Chester is confident they can crack that one without him. ✉

Ted Snyder could only look on in horror as Carl Mills, one of his elderly customers, fell and impaled himself on a piece of rebar. The Garden Grove, California Branch 1100 member ran to a neighbor to have him contact 911 before rushing back to Mills. Snyder comforted the man until paramedics appeared.

"Usually, he's sitting on his porch waiting for me each day," carrier **John Ollis** said of 78-year-old Richard Newton. But the Richmond, Virginia Branch 496 member noticed that the man hadn't picked up his mail. When some neighbors confirmed that they hadn't seen Newton recently, he asked them to call the police. "He had been unconscious on the floor for about three days," Ollis learned when he went to visit Newton at the hospital.

Conway, South Carolina Branch 3649 carrier **Rick Wise** was delivering to an apartment complex on his route when he saw a 70-year-old female resident laying on the blacktop parking lot, her head bloody. As Wise came to her aid, along with two other residents, the woman explained that she had tripped over a parking block. The concerned carrier comforted her until emergency personnel arrived.

Finding an elderly resident ill and splayed out on the front patio, New Castle, Pennsylvania Branch 22 carrier **Lynn Vandevander** called 911. Waiting for the paramedics, she comforted the man, keeping him calm.