

# 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.

## On Halloween, carrier finds house fire is no trick

Rogers McCalister did not expect that being a letter carrier would be all that exciting when he joined the craft in 1994. He figured it would be a good job that would also allow him to get to know some new people.

One of the people the New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member occasionally chatted with on his route was John Trompen—although ordinarily, Trompen simply left his screen door unlocked so McCalister could have access to the mail slot.

Last Halloween, however, “[Trompen’s] screen door was locked,” the carrier told the *Morris County Daily Record*. “As I got closer, I could smell gas”—as in gasoline.

McCalister quickly enlisted the help of a neighbor and together the two men rapped on windows all around the house, worried that Trompen was somewhere inside, injured. When their efforts garnered no response, they called for official assistance.

Authorities arriving on the scene soon discovered that Trompen had, in fact, spread gasoline all over his basement and then set it ablaze in an apparent suicide attempt. Fortunately, fire fighters were not only able to douse the blaze.

They also managed to rescue Trompen and transport him to life-saving medical attention.

Morris Plains Mayor Frank Dreutzler praised McCalister for his quick thinking and gave the letter carrier a symbolic key to the borough. “This is a prime example of people who are not afraid to get involved and help each other,” the mayor said.

Fellow carrier Susan Robles believes that since McCalister’s actions took place on Halloween, he likely saved the lives of young trick-or-treaters as well. “I think that was great, what he did,” she said.

## Aid to injured patron proves special for a brother carrier

Postal customer Donna Cieska was always standing in a window and smiling whenever letter carrier Monica Cunningham made her delivery. So one day, Cunningham, a member of Mentor, Ohio Branch 4195, was tipped off that something was wrong when Cieska wasn’t in her usual spot. Worse, as Cunningham drew closer, she could hear her patron inside the house, yelling for help.

After the carrier pounded on Cieska’s door and assured her that help was on the way, “I ran across the street and told a neighbor that I had to use a phone,” Cunningham said. “He held out his cell phone, and I grabbed it out of his hand and ran back to the house while calling 911.

“He must have thought I’d lost my mind,” the letter carrier wryly recalled.

Cunningham found that Cieska’s back door was open, and that her customer was lying just inside.

“Her head was covered in blood, her lips were blue,” Cunningham said. “She was screaming that she couldn’t move. She was in terrible pain.”

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**-Branch 4195 letter carrier Monica Cunningham on spotting a patron in need of aid**

Photo courtesy of Garden City Observer

Detroit, MI Br. 1 member Billy Brooks



# Eye on the ELDERLY

## AFTER 22 YEARS

### ON THE SAME ROUTE,

**BILLY BROOKS** routinely checks on customers when things seem a little out of order. Brooks, a member of Branch 1, Detroit, Michigan, noticed mail and packages accumulating one Saturday morning at the home of a 70-year-old widower, so he checked with neighbors, who said that they had seen the man earlier, though he seemed disoriented. Taking note of the light in the living room and the sounds of a television within, Brooks went about his route. When the carrier came back Monday and the lights and television were still on, and there were no tracks in the snow in the front yard, he summoned help. Police and medical personnel found the man in a diabetic coma in his bedroom, but were able to treat him successfully thanks to Brooks' timely call.

**NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS BRANCH 1151** letter carrier Cindy Idelman knew that Virginia Page almost never allowed the mail to accumulate in her mailbox. So when Idelman noticed Page's box was almost overflowing one day, she rang the elderly woman's doorbell several times to check on her. "The more I thought about it, the more I thought something was wrong," the 22-year veteran carrier told *The Naperville Sun*, so she decided to call the police. It turns out that Page had fallen three days earlier and hadn't been able to call for help. Emergency responders took the 89-year-old woman to a nearby hospital for observation, where doctors expected her to recover completely. "I just felt like I had her guardian angel on my shoulder," Idelman said.

**LETTER CARRIER JAMES GREEN** came across one of his elderly customers who had fallen and cut her face, hands and chest in her backyard. Green helped her back into her home and offered to call paramedics to treat her wounds. The woman assured the carrier that her son would be home soon and that she did not want medical

assistance. Despite the woman's insistence that she could look after herself until her son's arrival, the Seattle, Washington Branch 79 member got a neighbor to come stay with her. The customer ended up going to the hospital for treatment after the son arrived, and required physical therapy to recover. After she returned home, the customer sent a letter to the postmaster praising Green for his assistance.

**UNCOLLECTED MAIL AT THE HOME OF** 84-year-old Harold Libby last August prompted letter carrier Karl Schmuch to wonder if everything was all right with his patron. Schmuch, a member of Massachusetts North Shore Branch 33, told *The Boston Globe* that when he shared his concern with one of Libby's neighbors, the neighbor phoned the elderly man's daughter-in-law, who lived nearby. The carrier continued delivering his route, but returned about a half-hour later to check on things. There, he found Libby's daughter-in-law urgently banging on the door. Schmuch insisted that the woman call the police, which turned out to be the right thing to do: Inside, responders found Libby dehydrated and lying helpless on his bedroom floor, where he had fallen more than three days earlier.

**GARDEN GROVE, CALIFORNIA BRANCH 1100** member Judy Castaneda was worried when she saw that the mail at one of the homes on her route had gone uncollected for a few days. Castaneda mentioned her concern to a neighbor, who checked on the patron and found that she had been lying on her kitchen floor for three days, unable to reach a phone to summon help. The neighbor called 911, and the woman was quickly rushed to a hospital for life-saving care.

**ONE DAY OF UNCOLLECTED MAIL** and cats pawing at the door may seem a subtle sign of trouble, but Michael Ochs recognized them for what they were. These slightly out-of-order developments prompted the St. Paul, Minnesota Branch 28 member to contact authorities, who found Ann Hanson lying injured in her home, unable to summon help. Luckily, Ochs was alert and Hanson was rescued.

While the two women waited for medical help to arrive, the carrier did her best to keep her customer calm—fetching water, a pillow, her purse and her house keys. Cunningham also used the time to contact Cieska's daughter.

The next day, the carrier checked on her patron at the hospital. She not only learned that Cieska had suffered a broken hip in her fall, but that her son is also a letter carrier in nearby Painesville.

"I want to thank Monica for going out of her way to help my mother," said Painesville Branch 549 member Bob General, noting that his mother was also very grateful.

"I don't feel like a hero," Cunningham remarked, "but I am glad I was there to get her the help she needed."

## Angelic taxi service

During a particularly bad snowstorm in Greeley, Colorado, Stanley Johnson was desperately trying to shovel his way through a four-foot snowdrift to clear a path for his car out of his driveway. He needed to brave the elements and get to a nearby hospital to check on his wife, who was having surgery that morning.

As Johnson toiled, a four-wheel-drive truck stopped by his driveway and the two letter carriers inside, Greeley Branch 324 members Jody Church and Freddy Gallegos, offered their assistance. After assessing the situation, the pair decided their vehicle was much better suited for travel in the adverse weather, so they helped Johnson put his car back in the garage, then drove the man to the hospital themselves.

"They were clearly intelligent and dedicated men," Johnson later wrote in a letter to the carriers' postmaster, "but to me, at that moment, they looked like angels."

## Post office parking lot wrong place to pick a fight

Letter carrier Greg Ball had just arrived for work at his downtown York, Pennsylvania station when he saw a couple coming down the street toward him. The member of York Branch 509 noticed the man was tugging the woman's arm, clearly trying to get her attention. Just as clearly, she was making every effort to ignore, and get away from, him.

"At first it didn't look all that bad, until the man grabbed the woman and pinned her up against a wall," said Ball, whom promptly called 911. Ball's fellow Branch 509 member Bill Garrison had also noticed the escalating argument, and they kept a close eye on the developing situation while awaiting the police.

The sparring pair eventually made their way into the post office's employee parking lot just as Branch 509 member Ed Wright was pulling into a space. Spotting the letter carrier, the man started walking out of the lot while the woman stayed put. "Do you want me to call 911?" Wright asked her, unaware that Ball had already done so.

Wright dialed the number and was speaking to the 911 operator when the woman's harasser suddenly turned around. "He ran up to Ed and clocked him right in the face," Ball recalled. At that same moment, a fourth branch member, Phil Inners, was in his car nearby. When he saw the punch, Inners popped out of his car and rushed to Wright's aid. The two men had just finished wrestling the assailant to the ground when police officers arrived and took him away.

## Always on call

Richard Russo delivers mail in a neighborhood populated by customers who are in their later years, a situation that has afforded the member of Providence, Rhode Island Branch 15 ample opportunity to render assistance as he makes his rounds—and sometimes when he is off the clock as well. His branch newsletter recently highlighted several such instances:

- When Russo showed up at the home of a 91-year-old patron on his route, she told him that she was extremely upset because her water heater had gone on the blink and started leaking. The letter carrier calmed his customer

down by first calling a plumber for her, and then by helping her mop up some of the water.

- Another time, Russo witnessed an 80-year-old patron being struck by a car. The carrier immediately called 911 and then stayed with the woman until paramedics came.

- As Russo stepped up to deliver mail to a house on his route, he heard through an open window an elderly woman inside calling out to him for help. She told him that she had slipped in her bathtub and was unable to pull herself out. The carrier crawled into the house through the open window, called an ambulance, then waited with his patron until help showed up.

- On his day off, Russo took a call on his cell phone from a hairdresser who owns a beauty shop on his route. The beautician told the carrier that an elderly customer's husband had failed to pick her up from the shop, and that the woman—yet another one of Russo's patrons—had become extremely agitated as a result. With Russo's help, authorities were soon summoned to the older couple's home, where they made the sad discovery that the woman's husband had died.

## Quick care for injured cyclist

Late one day, Mitch Daniels was startled when he heard first the screech of a car slamming on its brakes and then what he thought sounded like a two-car fender bender. But when the member of New Haven, Connecticut Branch 19 looked up the street to find the source of the sound, he spotted a car stopped in the middle of the street, with both a bicycle and the motionless body of Daryl Bookert lying next to it.

Daniels, an experienced Red Cross CPR and EMT instructor, wheeled his LLV up to the scene, grabbed his first aid kit, hopped out and asked the car's driver to call 911. While he treated the injured cyclist, the letter carrier also asked a bystander to jot down the victim's vital signs as he called them out, then stayed on site until help arrived.

Afterward, Daniels found out where Bookert lived and stopped by to check on his recovery. Daryl's father later sent a thank-you note to the letter carrier's managers. "I thank [Daniels] for his love of others and courage," wrote Ernest Bookert. "He is an asset to your company."

**O**n a rainy fall day, **Agu Laane**, a member of Brick Town, New Jersey Branch 5420, was delivering his route when he noticed a woman and several children stranded in their car in the middle of a flooded intersection. Apparently, the woman had misjudged the water's depth when she decided to drive through it. Laane was able to wade through the water to the vehicle and help get the family to safer, higher ground.

**"I was just doing curb-line delivery and could hear a lady calling for help,"** said **Terry Jensen**, a member of Brigham City, Utah Branch 2112. Having fallen in her driveway and broken her knee cap, the elderly woman dressed in a light jacket in sub-freezing temperatures was lucky her carrier happened along just 20 minutes after the injury. Following the woman's instructions, Jensen opened the front door and called to her son to bring some blankets. After instructing the son to call an ambulance, the carrier went back to bundle up the woman and then waited with his customer until paramedics arrived. Jensen's postmaster, David Ellis, said that no one would have known of the modest carrier's deed had the injured woman not been the sister of another carrier. "If all postal employees were like Terry Jensen, the Postal Service would be a lot better off," Ellis said. "We appreciate him."

**A strange odor prompted Northern Virginia** Branch 3520 member **John Lingafelt** to return to his customer's porch. The letter carrier alerted the 89-year-old widow that he suspected a gas leak and suggested she call the utility. A gas company representative confirmed that the smell was coming from a faulty gasket in the furnace's heat exchanger. What neither the resident nor the carrier could smell were significant levels of carbon monoxide that had flooded the home. Mrs. Meyer's grateful son, who lives nearby, said he had checked on his mother over the weekend but wasn't planning his next visit for a couple of days, and credits Lingafelt with saving his mother's life. Mrs. Meyers said simply, "He's a very good mailman and he looks after me."

**A**ble to stop a rolling vehicle with a single hand? Well, Denver, Colorado Branch 47 carrier **Dung Nguyen** did just that. When a customer stepped from her car to hand him a letter to be mailed, the car drifted backward, pulling the woman down and under the front tire. Nguyen leapt to the car and stopped the vehicle from rolling farther as he simultaneously dragged the woman from beneath the car, then leaned into the vehicle to place it in park. Despite a significant scare, Nguyen was able to save his customer from any serious harm.

**J**ulia Stroman found herself feeling seriously ill as she left her home to run an errand. When she realized her condition was becoming dire, there was no one to be seen except her letter carrier a couple of houses away. Stroman called out to Fredericksburg, Virginia Branch 685 member **Thomas Robertson** and he was quick to respond. Robertson helped his customer into her home so that she could call 911 and her sister for assistance. It turned out this immediate response was a lifesaver as Stroman was suffering a stroke. In a letter to the local postmaster, Stroman wrote, "Mr. Robertson was my angel of mercy to whom I am eternally grateful."

**J**ulie Isham noticed the smell of gas as she delivered to elderly patron Mrs. Bohanna. When Bohanna came to the door, the carrier suggested that the gas company be notified. Unfortunately, failing eyesight prevented the resident from finding a number to the utility, so she asked Isham for help. Isham both called information and obtained the number and alerted the company to the suspected leak. The Grandview, Missouri Branch 5267 member also suggested that Bohanna not stay in the house while she waited for an inspection. Indeed, there was a gas leak coming from a fireplace valve. Bohanna's son expressed his appreciation for Isham's saving his mother's life.

**A**n Huynh was delivering mail to P.J. Skidoo's Restaurant. As he exited, a woman in a wheelchair was sitting outside of an accessible van in an empty parking space, waiting for the driver to assist her. Another car began backing into the space toward her. Huynh ran toward the woman yelling to get the driver's attention. The carrier pushed the wheelchair to the side and banged on the window of the rolling car to get the driver to stop. The Northern Virginia Branch 3520 member managed to avert the impending collision, saving the woman in the wheelchair any harm. Several restaurant employees and customers witnessed the event and came out to applaud the carrier's actions.

**H**earing a customer struggling inside her home, letter carrier **Vincent Lang** came to the rescue. Donna Stiles had begun to choke as the carrier approached her door and was lucky that the Mobile, Alabama Branch 469 member was able to perform the Heimlich maneuver and clear her airway. Breathing a little easier, Stiles profusely thanked Lang for his timely aid.

**A recent letter to the editor from Cash** and Joan Jones in *The Scarsdale Enquirer* said, "Mailmen are the eyes and ears in

our neighborhoods [who] can report unusual things and summon needed assistance." The couple's kind words were prompted by the actions of Westchester, New York Merged Branch 693 member **Richard Darko**, who discovered a customer collapsed in his driveway in need of medical attention. Darko called emergency personnel, directed them to the ailing man and helped load him into the ambulance. The Jones added, "When you see your mailman, remember to thank him for his continued vigilance. His alertness could save your life or property."

**A**ndrew Ramstad was delivering to the home of an elderly customer when he heard the mumble of a low voice and saw the doorknob jiggle. When the door didn't open despite his calls to the resident, Ramstad called 911 and waited for emergency personnel to arrive. To the Virginia Beach, Virginia Branch 2819 member's surprise, once the door was open, it was not the elderly customer inside, but her adult daughter, who lay bleeding on the floor. Ramstad received a call from the injured woman's daughter the next day, who thanked him for his assistance.

**A**s MVS driver, **Phil Walker**, unloaded his truck at the Loch Raven Station, one of the wire containers he was delivering became entangled in the restraining straps on the floor of the trailer. When Walker went to free the container, two more containers rolled forward and trapped him between them. Letter carrier **Mark Julian**, a member of Baltimore, Maryland Branch 176, heard the driver's call for help and promptly came to his aid. As the carts were rolled away from the injured man, he collapsed to the floor of the trailer. Julian immediately summoned the help of a supervisor and called 911 for assistance.

**G**arden Grove, California Branch 1100 member **Joseph Behymer** recently came across an unlocked business on his route. Magical Blooms, a floral design studio, was inadvertently left unsecured when employees left the premises for the evening. Behymer was worried that the shop might become the target of vandalism or theft, so he flagged down two police officers, who in turn notified the owner. The owner was glad of the tip-off and sent someone to lock the doors and set the alarm.



# Eye on the ELDERLY

photo courtesy of Bradenton Herald

**West Coast Florida member Bob Whitely knew from the sound of his voice that his patron was in trouble.**



AN UNCOLLECTED SOCIAL SECURITY check alerted David Franklin to a customer in trouble. The Mid-Michigan Branch 256 member knows that the elderly resident waits expectantly for his check each month, so when it was still in the mailbox when Franklin returned from three days of scheduled leave, the letter carrier knocked on the door and looked in the front windows. When he saw the gentleman's arm rise weakly from the sofa in response, Franklin hurried to a neighbor's to call 911. Returning to the house, Franklin found the man had crawled to the door and unlocked it. Franklin also called the man's son and waited with him for the ambulance to arrive. A severe case of pneumonia had kept the man from food and water for several days, and hospital staff credited the NALC member with saving the man's life.

MARK BELLUCO WAS RECOGNIZED BY neighbors and out-of-town family alike for saving a woman on his route who had become severely dehydrated after a fall. Bellucco, a 21-year member of Rochester, New York Branch 210, discovered mail piling up in an elderly woman's box and called out to the customer from the front door. When she answered weakly, the carrier was quick to summon police, who discovered she had suffered a broken hip and become dangerously dehydrated. Bellucco says he "tries to be attentive to the elderly on my route," and was "happy everything worked out for the best."

LETTER CARRIER JAMES SCHMICK BECAME concerned when he noticed a customer in a senior living community on his route hadn't picked up his mail for a few days. The Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Branch 500 member, raised the matter with the managers of the complex and when they checked, they discovered the man was desperately ill and called for an ambulance to transport him to the hospital. Management gratefully credited Schmick with saving the man's life.

DURING FOUR YEARS OF DELIVERING HIS route, Bob Whitely had a number of casual conversations with 75-year-old patron Charles Parks. Shortly after Thanksgiving last year, Whitely noticed that the mail was piling up in Parks' mailbox. After knocking on the door and calling Parks' name a few times, the mem-

ber of West Coast Florida Branch 1477 "heard a groggy hello," he told *The Bradenton Herald*. That faint response was all the prompting the letter carrier needed to call 911. Emergency responders discovered that Parks had been lying on the floor inside his home for several days and had suffered a bad cut on his back. Parks' daughter "thanked me for looking out for her dad, and said if it wasn't for me, she doesn't know what could have happened," the carrier said.

LUZ ZAPATA IS A LETTER CARRIER WITH A past—as a nurse in her native Colombia. This prior training was a boon to an elderly woman on Zapata's route. Mrs. Addington routinely gets extra attention from the Miami, Florida Branch 1071 carrier, who brings her mail into her home for her. When Addington wasn't in her usual spot, Zapata called out, then went to investigate, finding her customer on the bedroom floor bleeding from a head wound. After performing first aid and calling 911, the letter carrier waited for help to arrive. When she finished her route and returned to the post office, Zapata learned that Addington's daughter had called her supervisor, and she was being hailed as a hero. "I personally do not take my actions as being heroic," the carrier responded. "I would hope that anyone would do the same in my position."

AS MRS. FARTHING WAS WALKING UP THE concrete stairs of the condominium where she lives, she lost her balance, fell backwards and struck her head at the bottom of the steps. Working nearby, letter carrier Marco Bennett saw the accident take place and hurried to his customer's aid. Bennett, a member of Tulsa, Oklahoma Branch 1358, first applied pressure to the wound on the back of Farthing's head, then called 911. The carrier stayed with the injured woman until the ambulance arrived.

"MY COMPLIMENTS GO OUT TO RANDY House for his excellent service above and beyond the call of duty." These words of praise went out to the Zanesville, Ohio Branch 63 member from the granddaughter of a 90-year-old woman on his route. As the woman's

health had declined, House began taking his customer's mail up to the door instead of leaving it in her box, and one day he helped her into her home after she became disoriented in her yard.

Three weeks later, House was not greeted by his customer when he came to the door, so he quickly summoned authorities, who found her in her bathroom having suffered a fall. House visited his customer in the hospital several times and drops by to see her at the nursing home where she now resides.

**THE BRANCH 82 B-MIKE** DESCRIBED IT AS "a rescue that almost didn't happen." Dan Smith happened to have a certified letter for an elderly customer who lives in a neighborhood with CBUs on the very day she needed rescuing. When the Portland, Oregon carrier rang her bell, he could hear an indistinct voice coming from within, but no one opened the door. Suspecting something was up, the carrier realized the door was slightly ajar and when he entered, he found the woman in a neck brace, lying disoriented on the floor. After helping her into bed, Smith called paramedics. Smith was honored by the district manager at a stand-up.

A CRY FOR HELP BROUGHT LETTER CARRIER Steve Fox to the rescue. While delivering a park and loop, Fox heard the calls of an elderly woman from the bushes just outside an apartment complex. Upon investigation, the Connecticut Merged Branch 20 member found a customer bleeding from cuts on her mouth and arm after she fell trying to get her groceries to her home. Fox quickly got both the woman and her groceries inside and while the woman refused medical help, the carrier stayed with her until she was able to contact her daughter. After finishing his route, Fox came back to make sure the woman was safe and her daughter had arrived.

## Taking charge, saving a life nothing new for this carrier

While delivering mail to a condominium community on his route, Ed Egging heard the unmistakable sound of a woman yelling for help. As he got closer, he identified the point of origin—a partially open window in one of the units.

Egging, a member of Portland, Oregon Branch 82, called back to her through the window. “She then told me that the key to her condo was hidden under a flower pot, so I found it and let myself in,” he said.

Once inside, the letter carrier discovered the elderly woman in her bedroom, wedged on the floor between her bed and dresser and unable to pull herself out. “She had fallen out of bed the night before and had been lying there for something like 12 to 14 hours,” he said.

Egging knew that moving an injured person was a bad idea, but when he tried to call for help, the woman insisted that he phone her son instead of 911. That proved fruitless, and the carrier explained to the woman he had no choice but to call the authorities for assistance.

As this transpired, “some of her neighbors started to gather inside, and I had to tell them what to do,” Egging said. He directed one to fetch a glass of water for the injured woman while he stayed by her side.

EMTs soon arrived and took the woman to the hospital. Later, Egging was told that his patron had broken several bones and had begun to bleed internally by the time he found her.

“If I had moved her, it might have killed her,” Egging said. Fortunately, the woman was treated in time and soon was up and around again, he said.

The letter carrier received praise for his actions not only in a letter from her grateful son, but also in a congressional citation personally presented by Oregon Rep. David Wu in a ceremony at Egging’s station.

This is not the first time Brother Egging has been recognized for heroism. In 1993, Egging received the NALC’s Hero of the Year award for his role in evacuating 20 people from a burning Portland apartment building (see June 1993 *Postal Record*).

The letter carrier, however, doesn’t view what he did as anything particularly special. “It’s what we do,” he said.

Rep. Wu also awarded a similar citation to Egging’s fellow Branch 82 member Jim Roach. One of Roach’s patrons had fallen inside her home and had been unable to get back on her feet. As Roach made his delivery, he thought he heard the faint cries of his customer in distress inside her home, so he called 911. Roach credits his sharp hearing for detecting a distress call others might not have picked up.

**Carrier Yolanda Josey was quick to act when a** co-worker collapsed at the post office loading dock. Bennie Bryant was suffering a heart attack when Josey, a member of Phoenix, Arizona Branch 576, came to his aid. Josey performed CPR and was credited with enabling Bryant to make a complete recovery.

**Customer Joseph Potts began to experience** chest pain and knew he needed to get to the hospital fast. He was on his way to his car in an attempt to drive himself when he collapsed on the sidewalk. Letter carrier **Lisa Powell** was nearby and immediately came to his assistance. In addition to calling 911, the Glen Burnie, Maryland Branch 4422 member helped Potts to a more comfortable location and waited with him for the ambulance. Powell visited the man in the hospital after work and continues to check on his recovery. In a letter from the customer’s niece, Mr. Potts and his family thanked the carrier for her “efforts and generous help.”

**Letter carrier Dennis Sierawski was delivering** mail shortly after a tornado drill in St. Charles, Missouri when he heard shouts from the basement of a home on his route. When he approached, he found that customer Betty Withhorster had taken refuge in the basement for the drill but had forgotten the key and become trapped inside when the door closed behind her. Sierawski, a Branch 984 member, reassured the woman that help was on the way and contacted her son who came and released his mother from the ersatz prison with the spare key.

**Quick thinking, neighborhood familiarity and a** bit of careful delegation helped save a customer’s life on **Carl Chargois’** route. The Lake Charles, Louisiana Branch 914 member noticed the strong scent of natural gas as he made a delivery one morning. After banging on the doors and calling inside and receiving no answer from the elderly customer, Chargois enlisted the help of a neighbor to call 911. The carrier then summoned the woman’s son-in-law, who lives in the neighborhood and was able to assist the fire department in gaining entry to the home. Fire fighters found the woman inside, asleep but unharmed thanks to her letter carrier’s timely aid.

**“I’m glad I didn’t have a cold that day,”** letter carrier **Brandon Reed** remarked, reflecting on his experience when passing the home of John and Christine White and their four-year-old daughter, Victoria. With clear sinuses, Reed noticed a faint smell of gas. The Canton, Ohio Branch 238 member immediately alerted the gas company. When the customer arrived home, he was greeted by a utility representative, who found that the furnace had malfunctioned and carbon monoxide was beginning to pool in the area. The letter carrier’s adept nose succeeded where the family’s carbon monoxide detector had failed, alerting the family to mounting danger.

# FIRE & RESCUE



photos courtesy of Muskegon Chronicle

**Muskegon, MI Br. 504 carrier Laura Riedell (r) rescued an elderly woman (below) whose house was on fire, and then comforted her as fire fighters put out the blaze (above).**

**L**aura Riedell had just rounded a street corner when she saw smoke coming out of a vent atop Mardell Gabel's house nearby. Having worked the route for nearly a year, the member of Muskegon, Michigan Branch 504 knew that Gabel was an elderly woman who lived alone, so she immediately called 911. An eyewitness told the *Muskegon Chronicle* that the carrier went straight up to the house and knocked on the door until Gabel answered. It turned out that the elderly woman had been cooking in her kitchen the whole time, oblivious to the blaze above her. Riedell quickly confirmed that Gabel was indeed alone in the house, then grabbed the woman's coat and purse and helped her outside just as fire fighters arrived.

**“It was dead quiet, [but] in a couple of minutes it became surreal,”** carrier Tim Callahan told *The Long Island Advocate*. Callahan, a member of Long Island, New York Merged Branch 6000, had been prepping the mail for delivery to a 16-unit co-op apartment complex on his route when, to his horror, he noticed not only smoke beginning to pour out of the building, but flames pushing their way through its roof as well. A deputy sheriff visiting from Florida who happened to be nearby also spotted the erupting blaze and instructed the letter carrier to bang on apartment doors and evacuate the building's residents. Although four residents ended up losing their homes to the fire, thanks to Callahan's efforts, none lost their life.

**C**leveland, Ohio Branch 40 letter carrier Ronald Hale told an employee at a business on his route that he thought he smelled smoke. “She said she'd noticed the smell, on and off, but didn't think much about it,” Hale said. “But when I walked through the double doors leading into the lobby, the smell was very strong.” Hale decided to go talk to the business owner, and the two traced the odor upstairs to an empty, smoke-filled office. “It was intense,” Hale said. “[The owner] tried to put out the fire himself while I called 911 on my cell phone.” The letter carrier then helped get everyone safely out of the building. Later, Hale found out that a computer monitor had been the source of the blaze, and although it took a while to put the fire out, the damage was confined to the unoccupied areas on the second floor.

**A**chimney is made to smoke, but an inordinate amount of smoke alerted carrier Philip Massa to a possible emergency. The



**D**avid Young saw smoke pouring from the windows of a home on his route. The carrier knocked on the door but received no answer and quickly called the fire department. The Kensington,

Maryland Fire Department put out the flames that originated from a stove fire apparently ignited by a pet dog. The Branch 4266 member was thanked by homeowner Mark Story, who said, “I will forever be indebted to Mr. Young for what he did to save my home.”

**T**he smell of wood smoke on a January day isn't unusual along James Diehl's route, but a mist of smoke surrounding a home was something serious. Reaching the door of the house and seeing smoke seeping out of the windows, the carrier banged on the door and called to the customer. “The door

was hot to the touch,” said Diehl. “It was pretty clear that there was a fire raging in there.” Diehl was fairly sure that no one was home and ran to a neighbor's home to call 911. The fire department arrived to quench the blaze and credited the Mansfield, Ohio Branch 118 member with minimizing property damage and saving two dogs locked inside. Diehl said simply, “It's our civic duty to stay alert and watch out for others.”





## Carrier provides first aid as gathering crowd gawks

Having just hit the door buzzer button, letter carrier Jeremy Shipley patiently waited for someone to let him in the secure building so he could make his deliveries. But when the member of Council Bluffs, Iowa Branch 314 peered in a window and saw an elderly man lying on the floor of an open elevator, his patience quickly evaporated.

Shipley immediately called 911, then started pressing the door buzzer until someone finally let the letter carrier inside. He then pushed his way through a small crowd that had gathered around the unfolding drama. To his dismay, no one offered any assistance.

Fortunately, the 911 operator had remained on the line on Shipley's cell phone and guided the carrier through the process of administering CPR until a medical team could arrive. Despite the best efforts of Shipley, the paramedics and, later, the emergency room staff, the man died.

The man's daughter wrote Shipley's managers to commend the letter carrier for valiantly trying to save her father's life. "He is a very special young man," she noted.

"Jeremy is an excellent letter carrier," said Shipley's postmaster. "[His] actions truly reflect the extraordinary type of person he is."

## Timely relief from tub

Mica Thomas had just finished delivering mail to the Bledsoes' house when one of Mrs. Bledsoe's sons came outside. The boy, whom the member of Brownwood, Texas Branch 1389 knew to be mentally challenged, calmly told the letter carrier that his mother had fallen, but that she was okay—she was in the bathtub. Because he didn't seem too agitated by this piece of news, Thomas finished her loop, then clocked out for lunch.

However, the nagging feeling that something was wrong at the Bledsoe house wouldn't go away, so the carrier decided to go back. That turned out to be a good move.

Thomas discovered that Mrs. Bledsoe had, in fact, slipped and fallen into the tub hours earlier and was not able to pull herself out.

The letter carrier used the Bledsoes' phone to quickly call a niece, whom Thomas knew lived just down the street. Together, the niece and the carrier were able to help Mrs. Bledsoe out of the bathtub.

The grateful woman told Thomas that she had figured she would be stuck in the tub until the food delivery man showed up, but the letter carrier's arrival proved more timely.

RODNEY DAVIES IS ONE OF FEW PEOPLE out and about at mid-day during the week in the neighborhood he serves and his dependable presence saved one very vulnerable man. While delivering his route one spring day, Davies noticed an elderly man with many lacerations and bruises stumbling in a nearby field, wearing only a shirt. The carrier approached the man after calling police and emergency personnel and it was discovered that the man was an Alzheimer's patient missing from a local facility. The Tulsa, Oklahoma Branch 1358 member was recognized by the Tulsa Police Department with a Citizen Appreciation Award for his actions. The presenting officer said, "I believe there was no possible way that anyone would have found or seen the victim if the mail carrier had not seen him."

"I GUESS I JUST HAPPENED TO BE IN THE right place at the right time," commented Ron Alvarez. This 27-year veteran of the USPS was on his route when he heard the thump of plastic garbage cans hitting the pavement nearby. When he approached the curb where the cans were set for collection, he found an elderly customer lying on the ground, bleeding from a head wound. Alvarez, quickly applied pressure to the wound and carried the man back to his house to get him out of the heat of the day. The man was taken by ambulance to the hospital where he received several stitches to close the gash. The Marina, California Branch 6385 member was lauded by his postmaster, who said, "His customers love him on his route. He's an exceptional employee."

"HELP ME! HELP ME!" A WOMAN'S VOICE called. "Help me, I can't get up!" Letter carrier Tom Franceschi heard the plea through the mail slot as he slipped that day's delivery through the door at an elderly customer's home. The Greater East Bay, California Branch 1111 member was unable to open the locked door so he quickly called paramedics to assist. When help arrived, they kicked in the door to find the 90-year-old resident had broken her pelvis.

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

It was a cold winter day when letter carrier **Joseph Baty** came across a 3-year-old crying bitterly on a doorstep. “I was just delivering my route in a part of the city that’s not too safe and saw this young girl crying for her mom,” the Ogden, Utah Branch 68 member said. “I have a girl that age so I stopped and asked what was wrong.” After knocking on several doors on the block and not finding the child’s family, Baty called police to take over. He waited with the girl until authorities arrived. Said one of Baty’s postal colleagues: “I am honored to work with someone who was paying enough attention and cared enough to stop and ask why this little girl was crying.”

Letter carrier **Kenneth White** happened upon a truck with its hood up parked in front of a house on his route one day. White immediately knew something was amiss, since the owner of the home was out of town visiting a sick relative. As he got closer, the Houston, Texas Branch 283 member noticed a broken window at

the front of the house. With that as confirmation of wrong-doing, White jotted down the license number, make and model of the truck and alerted neighborhood security. With the information the carrier provided, the thief was apprehended and the stolen items were recovered.

While delivering mail one February day, letter carrier **Stanley Marcinik** came across a 2-year-old boy standing in an intersection alone. Seeing no adults in the area, Marcinik scooped up the child and took him to a nearby apartment rental office where the tot could warm up while waiting for police to locate his family. Just three months later, the Newport News, Virginia Branch 609 member came across another toddler wandering around, again with no parents to be seen. As Marcinik approached, the boy held his arms out to be picked up. Police were summoned but when they arrived on the scene the child was so comfortable with the letter carrier that he cried when they took him to look for his parents.

## Gas leaks are a family affair

Having just delivered the mail to Dona and Mike Spears, Cleveland, Ohio Branch 40 member Bryan Williams approached the house next door, which belonged to Dona’s sister and brother-in-law, Delcie and Thomas Simmons. As he made his way up the Simmons’ walk, Williams thought he detected the tell-tale sulfurous scent that indicated escaping natural gas.

From inside the house, Delcie watched through a window as Williams turned around and headed back to the Spears’ house. “I thought, ‘Did he forget to leave their mail?’” she told *The Medina County Gazette*.

“I smelled [the gas odor] really strong,” Williams recalled and he decided to go back and ask Mike Spears for his opinion.

“I’d rather be safe than sorry,” Williams said. “When I smelled it, I knew something wasn’t right.”

It turns out that the Simmons’ had noticed the odor, too, but chalked it up to some road work taking place in the neighborhood. Thanks to Williams’ alert nose, however, gas company workers soon discovered multiple gas leaks, not just outside the Simmons’ front door, but in their basement and kitchen as well.

## Bank bandits foiled

Lee Hazel was driving to his next delivery when he spotted someone on the side of the roadway, waving down passers-by and shouting that the bank across the street was being robbed. Hazel, a member of Mt. Prospect, Illinois Branch 4099, had just pulled his LLV to the side of the street when he spotted the two bandits dashing out of the bank’s front door. When they hopped into a waiting car and drove off, Lee cautiously followed the pair to a nearby apartment complex, then phoned the police to notify them of the robbers’ whereabouts. The letter carrier’s call and his description of the getaway vehicle both proved crucial to helping officers apprehend the two criminals. ☒