

Proud TO SERVE

What is a hero? Someone who rescues residents from their burning homes? Letter carriers do that.

Someone who attends to pedestrians knocked unconscious in car accidents? Carriers also do that.

Someone who helps a scared and frustrated woman get her just-snatched purse back? Carriers do that, too.

This month, we document the heroism of letter carriers who did all that, and more. For them, it's all just in a day's work.

Carrier discovers precious delivery at vacant house

Columbus, Ohio Branch 78 member **Michael Herron** had just begun delivering his route and was passing by a vacant house when he heard a baby's cries. Approaching the porch to investigate, he saw a newborn's face poking out from a crumpled garbage bag. The infant appeared healthy despite being covered with blood and her own waste. A section of her umbilical cord was still attached.

The carrier promptly began looking for help, knocking on doors of nearby homes. One neighbor called 911 while another took charge of the baby. Emergency workers took the newborn to a children's hospital and she later was placed in foster care.

Herron was commended for his attentiveness and quick actions. "I'm just glad that she's healthy and happy," he told a local news affiliate. "You

know she started out the lousiest way possible, but it seems like she's on her way now."

Florida carrier gives aid to victim of thugs

Dino Papadakis, 77, legally blind and wheelchair-bound, was in the gold and silver store he and his wife own when two teenagers came in, dumped him from the chair and began kicking and punching him. One found a pistol Papadakis kept in the store, put the loaded gun to his head and pulled the trigger. The gun, miraculously, didn't go off.

As the store owner lay on the floor, he caught a glimpse of something outside—approaching letter carrier **Jeff Brock**. The two thugs raced out of the store, apparently spooked by the arrival the Clearwater, Florida Branch 2008 member. Hearing Papadakis' calls for help, Brock rushed inside and found the man flat on his back. The carrier quickly called 911 and told a dispatcher which way the attackers were headed. They had stolen the man's gun and more than \$400.

Another person, who briefly chased the teens, returned to help Brock lift Papadakis off the floor. That witness was able to positively identify two suspects, who were snared by Clearwater police and charged with felony armed robbery and battery.

Papadakis credits Brock with saving his life. "He's a hero," he told the *St. Petersburg Times*. "If he wasn't there, I'd be dead." The events unfolded on the day after Memorial Day, and Brock wasn't supposed to be on the route that day. He modestly said he happened to be in the right place at the right time. "I did what anyone would do," he told the *Times*. ☒

"He's a hero. If he wasn't there, I'd be dead."

—Store owner Dino Papadakis on Branch 2008 member Jeff Brock saving his life after being assaulted



ONE DAY CARRIER MICHAEL BOERJAN noticed that a customer had not picked up her mail. The St. Paul, Minnesota Branch 28 member knew this was unusual because the woman loved getting her *Time* magazine and would often be waiting for him to hand it over. He checked to see if the woman was around, but when he got no response, he called 911. Police were dispatched and found that she had fallen a few days earlier and was unable to summon help. She was taken to the hospital to recover. The dispatcher Boerjan spoke to said the action undoubtedly saved the customer's life. In a letter to the station manager, the dispatcher wrote, "Your letter carrier, Mike Boerjan, mentioned that his customer did not have anyone to care for her except her daughter who lives in Florida. He was mistaken. She had him."

WHILE ON HIS ROUTE, TACOMA, WASHINGTON Branch 130 member **Dave Bungert** found an elderly patron lying on the sidewalk with a displaced hip. The carrier called 911 and stayed with the woman until the ambulance arrived, comforting her and assuring her she'd be OK. When Bungert later saw the car of a friend of the customer, he flagged her down to notify her that the woman had been taken by ambulance to the hospital. The customer later wrote a letter of praise to the postmaster, stating, "The mail gets through in ways we don't always anticipate."

KENNETH CLARK WAS AWARE THAT HIS customer, Mr. Smith, was elderly and disabled, so he made it a habit to knock on the door and call out to him whenever he delivered the mail. One day, Clark knocked and asked through the door how he was doing. Smith responded that he was on the floor, unable to get up. The Washington, DC Branch 142 member rushed to the home of a neighbor, who called 911 and produced a key to Smith's home. The customer had very low blood pressure and was severely dehydrated. "Without the

assistance of Clark, (Mr. Smith) would have been seriously ill or worse," Smith's daughter said.

WHILE ROBERT CROCE WAS DELIVERING mail to customer Suzanne Potaracenko, the elderly woman fainted. He prevented her from collapsing and quickly brought her back to consciousness. As soon as the woman seemed stable, the Long Island Merged, New York Branch 6000 member called 911 and Potaracenko's niece, Natalia Lonigro, her only relative. "It was because of this wonderful man's actions that my aunt is well today," Lonigro wrote in a letter of gratitude to the postmaster. "I can say with the greatest satisfaction that I am happy that my aunt

"I can say with the greatest satisfaction that I am happy that my aunt lives in a town where a mailman can save your life."

—Natalia Lonigro praised Branch 6000 member Robert Croce after the carrier kept her aunt from injuring herself when she fainted

lives in a town where a mailman can save your life. I can only imagine that you must be so very proud of employees such as Mr. Croce to represent your post office."

AS BUFFALO-WESTERN NEW YORK Branch 3 member **Joseph Guz** was delivering on his route, he noticed an accumulation of mail and a strange odor at a customer's home. Fearing that the odor signaled a natural gas leak and that the resident was ill, he contacted his office for assistance. Phone calls were placed to the police and gas utility company. Though there wasn't a gas leak, the police did find the elderly resident unconscious inside the home. Because of the carrier's suspicions, the customer received the necessary medical treatment.

DELIVERING MAIL AT AN APARTMENT building behind a customer's home, **Manuel Gutierrez** heard a knocking sound. He followed the sound and found that an elderly woman had fallen inside her home about 15 hours before. She couldn't feel her legs and couldn't move. The woman lived alone and the home was locked. Gutierrez, a San Diego, California Branch 70 member, called 911 and comforted her until paramedics arrived. The customer sent a letter to the San Diego district manager saying, "Manny Gutierrez is my angel; he saved my life!"

JACK LEE NOTICED THAT MAIL HAD NOT been collected for about three days at the home of an elderly customer on his route, so he called the police to request a wellness check. Responding officers discovered the woman had fallen several days prior and was unable to get up and call for help. The weather had been in the upper 90s all week, but she was alert and conscious when police arrived. The Oak Brook, Illinois Branch 825 member was credited by the West Chicago Police Department for potentially saving the woman's life. ☒

HELP on the Way

Customer Mike Block was backing his motorcycle out of his storage shed when he lost his footing and fell, becoming pinned underneath the bike. Block tried but failed to escape from the trap and, since it was afternoon, didn't see any neighbors he could call for help. Carrier **Greg Crumit** was making his rounds when he saw Block's predicament and rushed to assist him. The Hagerstown, Maryland Branch 443 member lifted the bike to free the man and checked him for injuries. Block thanked Crumit for his help, and the carrier went on his way, never reporting the incident, which only came to light thanks to the patron.

Denver, Colorado Branch 47 member **Greg Sykes** was out to dinner with his family one night when a diner, a former Colorado congressman, collapsed. The representative's wife began crying out for help and Sykes was the sole person to heed the call. Discovering the man had no pulse, he proceeded to perform CPR for 20 to 25 minutes as they waited for an ambulance. Responding EMTs said the man's condition was dire and would have resulted in death had Sykes not stepped in to help. The lawmaker's wife wrote Sykes a letter, saying

that, thanks to him, she and her husband would soon celebrate their 57th wedding anniversary.

During the course of delivery, carrier **Leo Sutherland** saw a van strike a pedestrian and flee the scene, leaving the badly injured victim on the ground. Sutherland sprang into action, positioning his LLV with the flashers on to shield the woman from traffic. He called 911 and then stayed with the woman, who suffered a severely broken leg, until the ambulance arrived. The Mid-Michigan Branch 256 member also gave law enforcement authorities the details of the accident.

Mon-Yough, Pennsylvania Branch 332 member **Beth Matlock** was delivering mail to a house when she noticed her customer, Mr. Smith, lying on the floor. She immediately notified a neighbor, who called 911. Smith had suffered a stroke some time earlier and no one else was going to be home until 5 p.m., making Matlock's arrival all the more timely. The letter carrier was commended for her attention to the situation, which could have been much worse without her instructions.

An elderly woman was driving in a neighborhood and neared a stop sign. As she went to apply her brakes, she instead stepped on the gas, hurtling the vehicle into a telephone pole. Brenham, Texas Branch 1550 member **Robert Brown** was walking back to his LLV after completing a loop and saw the crash. The carrier ran to the vehicle and assisted the driver until an ambulance, summoned by another witness, arrived. Brown was commended for his quick and caring actions.

Mid-morning during the workday, **Chad Dant** was driving when he spotted a boy, Brandon, who had fallen off his bicycle and hit his head on the sidewalk. Dant quickly stopped his LLV and ran over to the boy and held him tightly, as he was having a seizure. He kept the child from choking on his tongue and prevented him from a serious head injury. No one in the neighborhood was around to see what had happened. Minutes later, a friend of Brandon's came along on his scooter and the carrier handed him his cell phone, asking him to call 911. The Cincinnati, Ohio Branch 43

member continued to hold on to the youth as he continued shaking. While Dant waited for the ambulance, a neighbor saw what was happening and came to assist. The young friend, meanwhile, ran to get Brandon's parents. The youngster was coherent by the time the ambulance arrived minutes later.

Perry Hodges noticed that his customer, Jean McClousky, had not retrieved her mail in two days. Since he knew this was not like her, Hodges contacted one of her neighbors, who attempted to reach McClousky by phone. When they got no answer, they knocked on her door. McClousky, who had suffered a stroke, was able to crawl to the door, albeit with much difficulty. Spotting her, Hodges immediately called for help. Medical workers told the carrier later that had it not been for his concern, they might not have been able to save his patron.

Hearing a customer's cries for help one day, **Joe Rice** rushed to see what was the matter. His customer Randy Gibson's legs were trapped underneath a trash can filled with heavy ceramic tiles that toppled over when Gibson attempted to wheel it to the street. Rice quickly pushed the can off Gibson's body and notified the man's wife, who called 911. "Thank you so much to mailman Joe for hearing my cry for help and rushing to my assistance," Gibson told the post office about the Wichita, Kansas Branch 201 member. "My strength had run out and my legs and toes were tingling. Please recognize him for his outstanding service to mankind."

Herbert Summers was delivering mail to an elderly customer's home when she pulled up and hurriedly exited her car to approach him. As she did, she was not successful in putting the vehicle in park, and the car began rolling. She tried to chase it, attempting to reach in and stop the car. In her attempt, she got knocked down, and the vehicle ran over her leg. Summers, who was securing his vehicle to help her when she approached, called 911 and remained with her until EMS arrived. The Charleston, South Carolina Branch 3902 member was commended for helping to ease his customer's condition as they waited for help to arrive. ☒



On her route, Janet Byrnes heard a smoke alarm going off at a residence. Since she knew an elderly customer lived in the apartment, she grew concerned and notified police, who came to investigate. They forced open the door and found a moderate amount of smoke, caused by food burning on the stove, and the customer asleep in her bedroom. Officers escorted the 94-year-old hearing-impaired woman from her apartment, and she received attention from the arriving EMS unit. Police Chief Frank Papapietro wrote a letter to the postmaster informing him that the Bergen County Merged, New Jersey Branch 444 member's actions and personal knowledge of the people on her route not only prevented a more widespread fire, but most likely saved the life of her customer.

Smelling smoke while on his appointed rounds, Noe Herrera went to investigate. Looking in the window of a house, he saw the smoke permeating the entire

first floor and quickly notified a neighbor to call 911. Herrera then went to the back of the house and found the sliding door unlocked. He entered the house and immediately headed for the kitchen, where he found the source of the smoke—a pan left unattended on a burner. The heat was so intense that the pan's handle melted. The Hayward, California Branch 1707 member turned off the stove and removed the pan from the burner. He then opened the doors and windows and checked the rest of the house for occupants. Finding the house empty, he continued on his route while the neighbor waited for the fire department. The homeowner later contacted the postmaster to tell her that there was a hero working at the post office and said she wanted to thank Herrera for saving her home.

As Ann Dennis delivered her route she saw small gray puffs of smoke escaping from the window in the kitchen at the back of a house. She knocked at the

door, but received no response, so she dialed 911 on her cell phone. The fire department arrived minutes later to take care of the problem. The residents were grateful to the Greenville, South Carolina Branch 439 member for discovering the fire before it caused major damage.

While delivering her rounds, Salt Lake City, Utah Branch 111 member Patricia Busath noticed smoke escaping from the rear of a home on her route and immediately called 911. When fire fighters arrived, they found the back deck of the home engulfed in flames, but the crew was able to quell the fire quickly. No one was home at the time, and damage was confined to the back exterior of the house. "She was just glad she was in the right place at the right time to help," Station Manager Gene Brackus said. "Our letter carriers are very much tuned in with the community and the customers within the neighborhoods where they provide mail delivery service." ✉

On the job one day, carrier Anthony Joyce came across a money clip holding \$300 at the curb of a residence on his route. There was no ID, but he made several attempts to contact the homeowner. That evening he finally reached the man. The carrier asked whether the customer had misplaced anything. "Yes," the man replied. "I lost a money clip with \$300." The Mayodan, North Carolina Branch 4883 member delivered the good news to his patron that the cash had been found and returned the money the following afternoon, when the man thanked him profusely for his honesty.

Seeing a toddler crossing a busy street, carrier Richard Felty stopped his LLV and positioned it so it protected the child from traffic. The Tacoma, Washington Branch 130 member had tried unsuccessfully to communicate with the child for several minutes to find out where she lived when the child's frantic mother pulled up in her car. The mother was stunned when she found her little girl with Felty in the middle of the street. A neighbor who witnessed the

incident said, "Rick's actions very likely saved that child from being injured or killed. It is wonderful to know that people such as Rick are moving around our neighborhood as silent heroes."

Delivering the mail on a day when the heat index reached 100 degrees, Robert Campos saw a toddler in a shirt and diaper standing on her front porch, crying. The little girl was attempting to open the door, but could not. He approached her and asked if she needed help, then knocked on the door, getting no response. The Milwaukee, Wisconsin Branch 2 member called the office to report the situation and gave the girl some water since he noticed her face was red and she apparently had been outdoors for a while. A police officer arrived, knocked on the door and, again, got no response. The letter carrier, the toddler and the officer were pondering their next course of action when a man burst out of the house, frantically

searching for something or someone. It was the child's father, who had been napping. Campos was commended for the care and concern he showed for one of his youngest customers.

Two pit bulls escaped from a residence on carrier Janice Johnson's route. The dogs tore through the screen of the front door window and attacked a woman who was out walking her own dogs. Johnson quickly pulled out her dog repellent spray and was able to hold the dogs off until the owner was able to come from the house and get them under control. The Albert Lea, Minnesota Branch 718 member was praised for her swift defense of her patrons. ✉

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH