



SALUTE TO SERVICE



Undaunted
Fearless
Gutsy
Courageous
Brave
Intrepid
Heroic
Valor
Intrepid
Undaunted

"There is a bond between letter carriers and the American people that is unmatched in all of government service," NALC President Fred Rolando said at the Heroes of the Year ceremony held on September 24.

CARRIERS STEP UP LOCALLY, GLOBALLY

In an annual ritual highlighting special acts of bravery and compassion by letter carriers, the NALC celebrated six members as its 2009 National Heroes of the Year during a luncheon in Washington on September 24.

"As the recognized public face of the Postal Service, letter carriers are very proud to be so highly regarded by the people we serve," NALC President Fredric V. Rolando told more than 125 people gathered for the presentation, an assembly that included the union's resident national officers, leaders of other postal unions, top Postal Service and mailing industry executives and other honored guests.

"We also have the unique privilege, by virtue of our daily presence in most every community in America, of looking out for the elderly, protecting children, saving lives, thwarting crime, safeguarding property, and generally serving as an army of guardian angels in neighborhoods throughout the country."

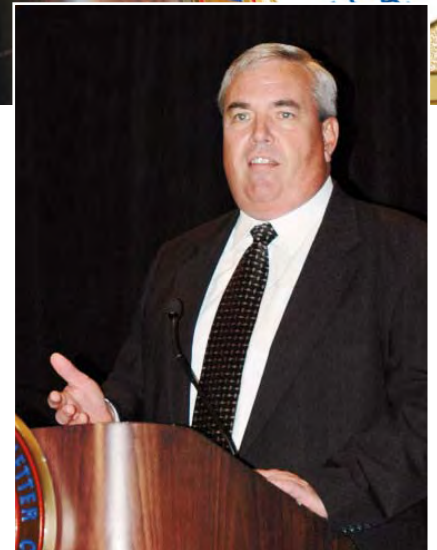
The president noted that the five men and one woman honored this year are "just a sample of the countless NALC members who have sprung into action, without hesitation, to come to the aid of others as they delivered mail along their postal routes or witnessed danger at other times of the day."

Before presenting the awards, Rolando thanked the panel of independent judges who reviewed the stories

published in *The Postal Record* of heroic and humanitarian acts over the preceding year and selected this year's recipients: Acting Assistant Secretary of Labor Shelby Hallmark, who is director of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs; Bud Biscardo, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison at the United Way of America; and Richard Bowers, chief of the Montgomery County, Maryland, Department of Fire and Rescue Services.

Rolando also recognized a number of special guests, including NALC President Emeritus William H. Young, Postal Regulatory Commission Chair Ruth Goldway and Commissioners Mark Acton and Nanci Langley, American Postal Workers Union President William Burrus, National Rural Letter Carriers' Association President Don Cantriel, National Association of Postmasters of the United States President Dale Goff, National Association of Postal Supervisors Secretary-Treasurer Jay Killackey, USPS Vice President of Labor Relations Doug Tulino, and representatives from Pitney Bowes, the Direct Mailers Association and the Alliance of Non-Profit Mailers.

The president also introduced Postmaster General John E. "Jack" Potter, telling the audience, "The Postmaster General sends hundreds of letters out



"The NALC and the Postal Service both have a great deal of pride in the job we do through our people," Postmaster General Jack Potter said during brief remarks. "And these six here are the epitome of all our employees."

HEROES OF THE YEAR 2009

Courageous and compassionate carriers



President Rolando is joined by PMG Potter and two of the independent judges in congratulating the award winners for their bravery and caring.

to letter carriers each year, acknowledging their brave deeds and thanking them for going the extra mile for their customers.”

In brief remarks, Potter said, “The NALC and the Postal Service both have a great deal of pride in the job we do through our people. And these six here are the epitome of all our employees.”

“For letter carriers, service to customers is an instinct, from the annual national food drive to serving as team coaches or scout leaders,” the postmaster general said. “This event is our opportunity to celebrate our people.”

THE 2009 NALC HEROES OF THE YEAR ARE:

National Hero of the Year: Tim Foote of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Branch 500, who, while relaxing at home on a Monday evening, sprang into action to rescue an elderly neighbor when he discovered the man’s home was on fire.

National Humanitarian of the Year: Emmanuel Anim-Sackey of New Jersey Merged Branch 38, an immigrant from Ghana who collects clothing and other supplies to ship to the poor in his home village.

Eastern Region Hero: James Patrick of Johnstown, Pennsylvania Branch 451, who, while delivering his route, rescued a pastor and his secretary from a burning church.

Central Region Hero: Matthew Polnow of Rockford, Illinois Branch 245, who

freed a wheelchair-bound woman from a burning van following a three-vehicle pile-up.

Western Region Hero: Victoria Wells of Seattle, Washington Branch 79, who spotted a fire at a day care center on her route and helped evacuate 10 children who were napping inside.

Special Carrier Alert Award: James Brown Jr. of Virginia Beach, Virginia Branch 2819, who heard cries for help inside the home of a pair of elderly patrons and climbed in through an open window to render assistance.

“There is a bond between letter carriers and the American people that is unmatched in all of government service, a bond of trust and caring,” Rolando said. “Carriers don’t just deliver mail to the homes and businesses along their routes; they care about the people inside those homes and businesses.”

New Jersey Rep. Bill Pascrell also spoke at the ceremony and congratulated the heroes. “You are our original first responders,” he said. “You understand what service is all about.”

Congratulating his Garden State constituent Anim-Sackey, Pascrell said, “Baba didn’t forget where he came from,” referring to the carrier by his nickname. “He goes above and beyond to serve his community and the global community, and his global humanitarian work is a credit to letter carriers and to all Americans.”

Stories and articles printed between July 2008 and June 2009 in *The Postal Record*, many in the Proud to Serve section, served as the basis for the judges’ selections. More details about each hero’s actions appear on the following pages. ✉

Rep. Bill Pascrell (NJ-8), who attended the event to honor Humanitarian of the Year Emmanuel Anim-Sackey (l), addressed all of the heroes: “You are our original first responders. You understand what service is all about.”



NATIONAL HERO OF THE YEAR

Timothy J. Foote ~ HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA BRANCH 500

RELAXING EVENING BECOMES FIRE RESCUE

On a cool Monday evening in mid-fall, letter carrier Timothy J. Foote pulled on a pair of shorts and a sweatshirt, kicked off his shoes, and settled in for a night of football on TV. Delivering mail was done for the day, a memory. Tomorrow's route was hours away.

The telecast had barely gotten under way when Foote was startled by screams from his youngest daughter, Laura. The girl had glanced out the window and saw the home of their next-door neighbor, 78-year-old David Jauss, fully engulfed in flames.

Foote's training and instincts immediately kicked in. The 10-year member of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Branch 500 had served in the Marine Corps, which sharpened his ability to quickly assess a crisis situation. He also had experience as a fire fighter captain, which allowed him to formulate a judicious, if risky, plan of action.

"I believe his instincts as a carrier helped, too," said NALC President Rolando, "that instinct to help out when needed, to put service above self, and to consider all those in our communities as friends and family, not just another delivery point on some financial sheet."

Looking back on the incident, Foote said, "It doesn't take long for a fire to kill someone, so I had to act quickly."

The barefooted carrier charged out of his home and raced over to Jauss' place. He forced his way into his neighbor's garage, dropped to the floor to get below the billowing smoke, and crawled into the elderly man's home.

"I could see fire in a door jamb and running across the ceiling," Foote later told a newspaper reporter. "Then

a big chunk of the ceiling came down and I caught a glimpse of the guy's leg."

Foote slid through Jauss' living room to where the elderly man was lying, unconscious and motionless. The letter carrier then retraced his route, dragging his neighbor along with him to a safe distance from the inferno.

Jauss wound up spending a month in the hospital, followed by weeks of rehabilitation, but he was alive—something fire officials said would have been unlikely had Foote not intervened.

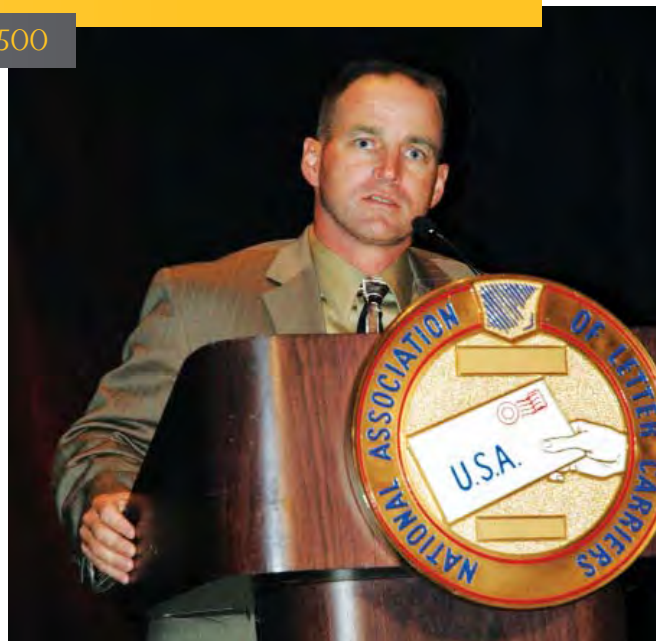
Because of Foote's instincts and exceptional bravery, the judges chose him as recipient of the NALC's 2009 National Hero of the Year Award.

"His responsiveness was superb," the judges noted. "Here he was, off duty, settled in at home, but was still ready for action in mere moments."

"This award is not the first Brother Foote has received for his bravery," Rolando noted at the awards ceremony. "He's also been presented the prestigious Carnegie Medal, which is given to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others."

"In my speech at the Carnegie ceremony, I said that I only did what anyone else would have done," Foote said. "Someone there took me aside later and said, 'No, Tim, not everybody can do what you did. You did do it and would do it again.'"

"I think that's an important message for all letter carriers to hear," he said. "Those of us who act do it because we're not everybody else—we act because we're letter carriers." ✉



"Those of us who act do it because we're not everybody else—we act because we're letter carriers," said Timothy Foote (above) upon receiving the National Hero of the Year award. He attended the ceremony with his mother, Pat (below).



West Orange, New Jersey letter carrier Emmanuel Anim-Sackey has lived and worked in the United States for 13 years, but the passing years have neither dimmed his memories of, nor diminished his love for, his homeland of Ghana.

Since he was granted a visa in 1996, “Baba,” as his friends call him, has worked hard to build a better life for himself and to help family members and one-time neighbors still living in his small—and quite literally dirt-poor—home village of Abetifi-Kwahu, about a two-hour drive north of Ghana’s capital, Accra.

CARRIER NEVER FORGOT WHERE HE CAME FROM



Rep. Pascrell (l) and President Rolando (r), jointly present the award to Humanitarian of the Year Anim-Sackey.

By day, the member of New Jersey Merged Branch 38 carried mail and, until recently, he worked nights as a cargo handler at Newark International Airport. He made a good living, eventually buying a home and sending the cash he managed to save to grateful family members in Ghana, a West African country where 28 percent of the population lives in poverty and unemployment is endemic.

Still, Anim-Sackey felt called to do even more. “I think it is not perchance that God picked me out from a village to bring me all the way to America,” he once told a news reporter. “There should be a reason, and to me, I think this is the reason—that I don’t forget what I left behind.”

So, in what little spare time he had, Baba collected clothing, books and toys and shipped them off to Africa. He became a familiar presence throughout West Orange, not just as a neighborhood letter carrier, but as a man with a mission, combing through yard sales and prowling secondhand shops.

That mission quickly caught his patrons’ attention. Soon, many were pitching in, not just through contributions, but gathering clothing and supplies themselves, eventually enough to pack a 20-foot commercial shipping container.

West Orange Mayor John McKeon, one of Anim-Sackey’s customers, devoted a segment of his cable public access show to his letter carrier’s cause, and later issued a proclamation designating Abetifi-Kwahu as West Orange’s honorary sister city. New Jersey Rep. Bill Pascrell, West Orange’s congressman, got in on the act, pulling some strings to expedite the container’s shipment across the Atlantic. Baba went along to make sure the goods got to the right place.

Because of his hard work, determination and generosity, the independent panel of judges selected Emmanuel Anim-Sackey as the NALC’s 2009 National Humanitarian of the Year. “Thanks to his stick-to-it-iveness,” they said, “Baba was able to rally a whole town, including its mayor, and make a lasting, long-term impression in two countries.”

Since the account of Anim-Sackey’s deeds appeared in the April 2009 *Postal Record*, the letter carrier has visited Ghana a second time, accompanied by two full shipping containers, and he is planning yet another trip in the coming months.

“On our last visit, we saw how the hospitals there are also badly in need,” he said, “so now we are collecting medical supplies as well.”

Enthusiasm in his Garden State community has swelled to the point where “next time, we might need three or even four cargo containers,” he said proudly. And while he still carries the mail in West Orange, Anim-Sackey recently left his airport night job to nurture a non-profit organization he founded—with encouragement and support from his patrons—called Adopt One Village.

“Baba is a great example of the old adage, ‘Don’t forget where you came from,’” said President Rolando. “He surely has not forgotten.” ☒

For more information about Adopt One Village, write 22 Blackstock Road, West Orange, NJ 07052, join the Adopt One Village group on Facebook, or visit adoptonevillage.org.

NATIONAL HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR

Emmanuel Anim-Sackey ~ NEW JERSEY MERGED BRANCH 38

EASTERN REGION HERO OF THE YEAR

James Patrick ~ JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA BRANCH 451

INSISTENT CARRIER PRIES PASTOR FROM INFERNO

As he walked his route last September, carrier James Patrick noticed bright flames and thick black smoke pouring from the eaves of a church rectory. The Johnstown, Pennsylvania Branch 451 member shouted back toward the nearby borough building for help, then quickly entered the burning residence.

Inside, he found the Roman Catholic pastor and the church secretary, oblivious to the danger as the flames began to consume the administrative offices of the Church of the Transfiguration and spread to the church itself.

Once he was alerted to the fire by the letter carrier, Father Robert Hall hurried to his bedroom and began trying to quell the flames with a fire extinguisher. He suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder and heard an insistent voice.

"Father, you have to get out. The whole roof is on fire," Patrick said, taking the extinguisher from the priest's hands and hustling him out of the burning building.

Once outside, Father Hall did need some medical assistance—he suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)—but paramedics determined he was basically OK. The secretary escaped unscathed, but one fire fighter was hurt fighting the blaze.

Patrick was selected by the judges for his cool, calm action in helping evacuate the pastor and his secretary. They noted the severity of the situation, with the fire growing more intense in both the church and rectory, and called the carrier's reaction "impressive."

Father Hall clearly recognized the importance of the letter carrier's insistence.



Branch 451 Secretary-Treasurer Michael Merritts accepted the award on behalf of James Patrick.

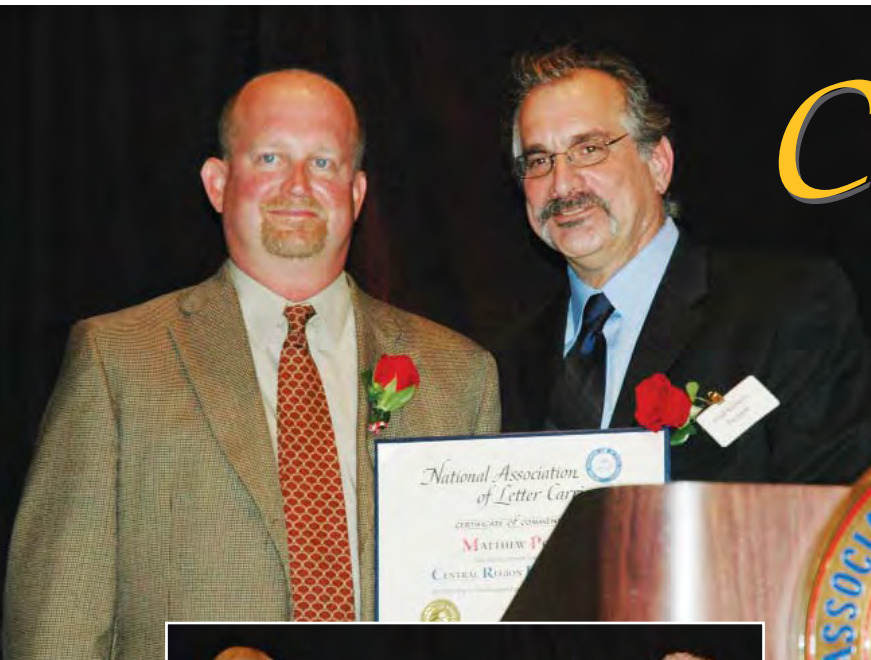
"In this day and age, when people don't want to get involved, I want to say thank you to your employee for going the extra mile," he wrote in a letter to the Johnstown postmaster. "Everyone in the building was safe and there was no loss of life, and for his involvement, I want to say thank you."

"Of course, that's the kind of involvement and caring that letter carriers show throughout the country," President Rolando said in presenting the award.

Since his heroic feat, Patrick has retired from the Postal Service and was on a long-planned trip, enjoying his new leisure time, when the Heroes of the Year ceremony was held. Accepting the award on his behalf was Branch 451 Secretary-Treasurer Michael Merritts. ☒

GIVE US THE STORY!

Branch officers are encouraged to send newspaper clippings and other reports of heroic or humanitarian service by members to *The Postal Record* at NALC Headquarters. Accounts of branch activities that benefit local communities are also sought for consideration for the Branch Service Award, which was not presented this year.



CARRIER WRESTLES WHEELCHAIR FROM WRECKAGE

A three-vehicle tangle of mangled metal and smoke confronted Matthew Polnow as he was delivering his route in Rockford, Illinois, early last June. As he reacted—spontaneously, he later recalled—the scene grew more ominous with each passing second. In the midst of the jumble of wreckage was a handicapped-transport van with a wheelchair-bound passenger trapped inside.

Initially, Polnow ran to the nearest car and quickly determined the occupants were not injured. He then went to the second vehicle, a truck, where fortunately no one needed assistance. The fast-moving NALC member continued on to the third vehicle—the van—and found a perilous situation.

The driver's air bag had deployed and the man had managed to clamber free, dazed but not seriously injured. When he saw Polnow, he told the carrier that a handicapped passenger was still inside the van, which was quickly filling with smoke as flames began to flicker from the engine compartment.

That did not deter Polnow. He managed to free the van's side door, which had been jammed by a ramp. Maneuvering the ramp into place, he climbed inside, unhooked the restraining belts and dragged the locked wheelchair—and the now-terrified woman passenger—from the vehicle.

Once free from the smoke, the Rockford, Illinois Branch 245 member located the controls on the chair and engaged them to move the woman to a safe distance from the wreckage.

In selecting this year's heroes, the panel of judges pointed to the "great degree of responsibility" Polnow took on in a dangerous situation—performing his own triage of the three vehicles and then using his judgment to "act quickly and appropriately."

The letter carrier was asked what was going through his mind at the time. Did he realize the van could have exploded at any minute? It happened so fast, Polnow replied, that he didn't have time to think about the danger.

"I just acted," he said, with the modesty typical of NALC's heroes. "I feel any other carrier would have done the same."

Polnow attended the award ceremony with his wife, Christine, Rockford Postmaster Ron Calloway and two buddies he has known since fifth grade, Adam Keenum and Brian Karr. ☒



Top: Matthew Polnow accepts the certificate declaring him Central Region Hero of the Year.

Above: Accompanying Polnow were his wife, Christine, and long-time buddies Adam Keenum (r) and Brian Karr.

CENTRAL REGION HERO OF THE YEAR

Matthew Polnow ~ ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS BRANCH 245

WESTERN REGION HERO OF THE YEAR

Victoria Wells ~ SEATTLE, WASHINGTON BRANCH 79

CARRIER AVERTS DAYTIME DISASTER

As letter carrier Victoria Wells made her rounds in Seattle, Washington, in March of last year, she smelled smoke, then noticed flames shooting from beneath the eaves of a customer's home. That was startling enough, but Wells was more alarmed than one might expect, due to her knowledge of the neighborhood. Her anxiety was heightened because she knew the home also served as a daycare center.

Wells ran to the front door and began ringing the doorbell and pounding on the door to get the occupants' attention. As she was doing so, she began to call 911. A woman who had just dropped off her daughter came from the back of the house to answer the door. Wells told her the house was on fire and to alert the owner. She then completed the 911 call to report the fire and headed around back to help get the children out of the burning building.

About 10 children were inside the daycare at that time, all of whom had been napping. Moving fast, the Seattle Branch 79 member scooped up one little boy and had three older children follow her up the driveway to safety. There they were met by a police officer and a neighbor who helped the rest of the children get out of harm's way.

A neighbor across the street opened up her home, inviting everyone in from the cold. Within minutes, the fire department arrived and put out the blaze. All of the kids were safe and only a portion of the roof was

damaged, thanks to quick action by Wells, a feat the three judges classified as "phenomenal."

Singling out Wells' story amidst the hundreds they reviewed, the judges noted the carrier "made all the right moves."

"This incident had all the ingredients for a potential disaster, but your quick action prevented that from happening," President Rolando told Wells as he presented the award.

Wells was accompanied to Washington for the ceremony by her mother, Doris Lyen, as well as Branch 79 President Rich Horner. ✉

Below: Western Region Hero of the Year Victoria Wells with her proud and happy mother, Doris Lyen.

Bottom: NALC President Rolando and Postmaster General Potter added their congratulations.



HE CAME IN THROUGH THE KITCHEN WINDOW

Betty and Horace Hill, an elderly couple in their 80s, live in a modest, one-story home on a quiet street in the suburbs of Virginia Beach, Virginia. It's a street with little traffic and a lot of community spirit, where neighbors get to know each other and notice when something is not right.

In recent years, Betty had taken on an additional role as caregiver for Horace, who had been immobilized by a stroke. The Hills' neighbors, mostly older folks themselves, were well aware of this, as was their letter carrier, James Brown Jr.

On a warm day in late June 2008, Betty was walking through the house when she tripped, fell and injured her hip. Unable to get up, she began to call out for help. Several neighbors soon responded to her cries and gathered outside on the Hills' front porch.

Brown, a member of Virginia Beach Branch 2819, happened to be delivering on the street at the time and went over to investigate. Arriving on the scene, he learned what had happened. A quick check revealed that the doors to the home were locked.

The resourceful carrier began to scout around the house, looking for some other way in. A desperate Betty hollered to him that he could break in if he had to—but fortunately, the 13-year letter carrier and Air Force veteran found that the kitchen window was unlocked.

Brown pushed the window open, wriggled his way inside and spotted Betty lying on the floor. He grabbed a phone and called 911 to summon help, then located the number of the couple's son, who lived nearby, and called to tell him what had happened.

The letter carrier stayed by Betty's side, comforting her until the EMTs arrived. When he opened the front door to let them in, several concerned neighbors followed close behind. Brown asked one neighbor to look after Horace until the son could get there, then he



picked up his satchel and returned to delivering his route.

Because Brown is such a shining example of how letter carriers are tuned in to their communities and always on alert to help out when needed, the judges named him the winner of the 2009 Special Carrier Alert Award.

"James assessed the situation and used some real ingenuity to get inside the house," the judges said. "And he acted without regard to his own personal safety—who could know what dangers might have been waiting on the other side of the window? Once inside, he not only took care of Betty's immediate medical situation, but he had the presence of mind to make sure Horace was taken care of as well."

President Rolando noted the joint NALC-USPS Carrier Alert program began in 1982 as a way for elderly and disabled patrons to register and ask that their letter carrier keep a particular eye out for their safety and to call for help if necessary. The special hero award recognizes all carriers who provide such important—often life-saving—service.

"As it happens, the Hills weren't participants in a formal Carrier Alert program," he said. "But, as James has proved, letter carriers are always on alert to the needs of our patrons and our communities." ✉

Above right: President Fred Rolando presents the Special Carrier Alert Award to James Brown Jr.

Below: Brown's wife, Patricia, and daughter Akeiba were on hand for the event.



SPECIAL CARRIER ALERT AWARD

James Brown Jr. ~ VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA BRANCH 2819