

# Proud TO SERVE

**T**he men and women featured here have a knack for showing up at the right time and place. More than that, these letter carriers are willing to go above and beyond, lending a helping hand just when it's needed most. We can be proud of our brothers and sisters.

## Harrisburg carriers come face to face with fires

On their way to work one morning, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Branch 500 members Tom Thomas and Matt Lloyd were among the first on the scene of a devastating blaze in a three-story building. A third Branch 500 member, Page Eckenrode also came upon the fire and alerted the fire department.

Thomas, who was a volunteer fire fighter for 20 years, immediately entered the rear of the building, while Lloyd waited on the stairs to direct residents away from the smoke-filled building. While Thomas checked the second and third floors for trapped residents, Lloyd tried to comfort two teary youngsters who escaped clutching the family cat, and directed a disoriented man to safety.

"I could hear the fire crackling behind some doors on the third floor and the smoke was very thick," recalled Thomas. "I think the people were mostly out by the time I got there." Once the fire department arrived, Lloyd looked at his watch and realized they could still make it to work by 7 a.m.

Just one day later, Harrisburg's Vigilant Hose Company responded to a fire at a mobile home. When they arrived

they found only a smoldering couch and a pile of scorched plywood in the yard.

It turned out Thomas had been in the area when he heard the dispatch for the fire on his scanner. The letter carrier went to the scene and, after a quick discussion with the owner in the yard, went inside. "I determined there were no other people inside, then decided to go in low, under the smoke," Thomas said. "I saw the couch was burning and the curtains were catching on fire, so I pulled the curtains down, stuffed them under the cushions and dragged the couch outside." The carrier returned to his route before the fire company arrived, satisfied that he had prevented severe property damage.

## Carrier foils brash burglar, relieves neighborhood

Residents of the neighborhood where Pueblo, Colorado Branch 229 member David Jiron delivers mail breathed a sigh of relief after the letter carrier nabbed a 17-year-old boy responsible for a rash of burglaries. "I don't feel like a hero," said Jiron, a former resident of the area. "I just feel like any American who'd help out the neighborhood." As he approached a home on his route where he knew the owners were at work, Jiron saw the youth in the yard. The letter carrier asked the boy what he was doing, and when the boy tried to flee, the letter carrier grabbed the offender.

Neighbors, alerted to the situation by the ruckus resulting from Jiron tackling the wrongdoer and the boy's struggle to escape, called police. After he was taken



Dave Jiron, a member of Pueblo, CO Br. 229, foiled and attempted burglary, nabbing the man suspected of committing a spate of neighborhood crimes. Pictured here with NBA Wes Davis (l) and former Branch 229 President Bob Labenberg (r).



Vince Garcia cases mail above. The Dayton, OH Br. 182 member was thanked by Emma and Gerald Murray (l) at a ceremony at the Fairborn Post Office, honoring Garcia for saving the life of their daughter, Barbara Harney.

photos by Charles Caperton/Greene County Dailies

into custody, the suspect confessed to several burglaries in the area.

Detective Glenn Fillmore of the Pueblo Police Department credited Jiron with stopping a crime spree. "Without anybody holding [the suspect] until police arrived, he'd have gotten away and probably committed more burglaries," Fillmore said. One neighborhood resident, Sharon Massey, praised Jiron, saying, "You cannot believe the sense of security I feel because of his actions. But, he wasn't just a hero that day. He always takes the time to check on the elderly and disabled on his route."

After Jiron stopped the thief he went back to his route and even filled in on another carrier's route. Kevin Romero, manager of customer service at Jiron's post office hailed the letter carrier. "Dave's got to keep on truckin' to get that route done," he said. "Even if you break up a burglary, the mail's got to be delivered."

## Tottering tyke saved from traffic

"I'm really just glad I was there," said Ames, Iowa Branch 1081 member Jessica Borkowski. When the letter carrier came upon a toddler wandering toward traffic alone, she was quick to come to his aid. The child had been sent outside by his grandmother to catch up with his grandfather, but the man hadn't received the message. Seeing his grandfather riding away on his bicycle, the two-year-old tried to cross the street to his mother's house on the other side. Borkowski came upon the

well-spoken boy and was able to learn where he had come from. The letter carrier's timely arrival and deft assessment of the situation allowed her to return the child to a very grateful grandmother.

## Letter carrier delivers timely aid to diabetic

Barbara Harney is a 52-year-old widow who lives alone. She also happens to be a diabetic. When letter carrier Vince Garcia noticed her mail hadn't been taken in, the Dayton, Ohio Branch 182 member looked in the window. He could see the woman sitting in a nearby chair, but she didn't respond to his calls. Garcia called 911 and emergency medical personnel immediately transferred Harney to the hospital, where she was listed in critical condition in a coma.

Despite the close call, Harney recovered and was present at the Fairborn Post Office when Garcia's actions were honored. The woman's parents, Emma and Gerald Murray, credit Garcia with saving their daughter's life, saying, "The outstanding action by Mr. Garcia is the main reason our daughter, Barbara, did not expire on that day."

A humble Garcia stated, "I don't feel like I did anything special...I guess it's just part of the job. I try to look out for everybody."

## The right place to drop a bundle

A sudden windfall can be a great boon, but what happens when you drop a bundle? Buffalo-Western New York

Branch 3 member Jim Porzio found an envelope containing a cash bank deposit of over \$1,600. He safeguarded the package and called the customer services manager at his station. After taking down the account number from the envelope, Porzio's manager contacted the local bank branch, which in turn got in touch with the customer.

Porzio's manager gave the letter carrier kudos for doing the right thing but says it's not a surprise because, knowing Porzio, it's "the only thing he would do."

## Taking on cranky canines

Angry dogs are the classic foe of the letter carrier. When Robert Cordoba, a Fort Lauderdale, Florida Branch 2550 member, saw two large dogs menacing an elderly woman on his route, he was prepared to do battle. He began to spray the dogs with repellent to protect the woman. Shortly after the carrier launched his offensive, a police inspector, who was delivering a subpoena nearby, noticed the commotion.

As the dogs retreated onto the porch of the home, the officer secured the animals within by backing his cruiser against the door. A neighbor summoned animal control. The inspector later said that both the woman and Cordoba were endangered by the dogs, and were it not for Cordoba's actions, the woman would certainly have been injured.

These same dogs had trapped a roofing crew atop a building shortly before turning on the woman and the dogs' owner was cited by both the police department and animal control.

# FIRE & RESCUE

While many are relaxing on a Saturday afternoon, letter carriers are hard at work. Luckily for the West family Larry Crawford was one such carrier. The Clarksville, Arkansas Branch 3692 member noticed flames coming from the roof of the West's residence and quickly alerted the family, who were unaware of the spreading fire. Crawford convinced the parents to evacuate and call 911 as he entered to rescue two children playing in the rear of the home. Although the house burned to the ground, Mrs. West praised Crawford's bravery and celebrated the safety of her family. News spread fast and Crawford was met on Tuesday by thank yous from many in the neighborhood.

Letter carrier Wayne Viger, a member of Lewiston, Maine Branch 241, smelled smoke at an apartment building on his route. Checking more closely, he heard a smoke alarm sounding inside, and then noticed smoke pouring through cracks in the windows and door of a ground floor apartment. He pushed open the door to find an elderly woman with her clothes aflame and her hair singed by fire. Viger pulled the woman outside and extinguished her burning clothing.

He reentered the building to check on others within. He called out to the other residents as he climbed to the second and third floors, knocking loudly on apartment doors and shouting to alert residents to the danger. He entered a third floor apartment when he heard a dog barking, but found that a locked door inside trapped the dog within. When he

reached the street he found a distressed family worried about their dog.

Viger stayed with the three children while the mother retrieved the dog. Viger also kept the disoriented woman from the first floor from trying to return to her apartment while residents waited for emergency personnel. Once the fire department arrived, the sooty and smoke-saturated letter carrier returned to his post office.

Jamestown, New York Branch 165 member Mark Carlson prevented a small fire from becoming a big problem on his route. Carlson was delivering mail when he noticed flames coming from a dryer vent. The carrier called the fire department, then checked to see if anyone was home. Carlson was able to help one resident escape and ascertain that no one else was home. The woman tried repeatedly to reenter the home but the careful carrier stayed with her to be sure she remained safe. Fire fighters were able to douse the flames before damage to the home became serious, and Carlson's watchful eye prevented injury to his patron.

"It might be a flat tire, someone with a broken hip, or even a fire," said letter carrier Perry Nentwig. "Letter carriers often happen across situations where someone needs help." Nentwig, a member of Glendive, Montana Branch 1643, is always willing to lend a helping hand on such occasions.

Recently, he happened upon a man in a truck who looked ill. As the car-

rier approached the vehicle, he realized the man was having a seizure. Nentwig summoned the rescue squad, which attended to the man.

This was not the first time Nentwig was among the first responders. A few years ago, the carrier helped the owners of a travel trailer when a gas leak on the stove exploded and blew off the roof and side wall.

Nentwig considers the people on his route his extended family. "Perry has had his route for quite a while, he knows everyone. It doesn't surprise me that he stopped to help," said Postmaster Rich Burley. "We get a lot of compliments on Perry."



Perry Nentwig, a member of Glendive, MT Br. 1643, is known for his willingness to lend a hand.

photo by Codi Newton

# HELP *on the Way*

“I kept thinking about my own kids and how I’d feel,” said letter carrier **Jerry Warren** of Cleveland, Ohio Branch 40, recalling how his deliveries had been loudly interrupted by a screaming child. The frantic child told Warren that the school bus had dropped her off at home when no one was there. Warren called 911 and outlined the situation to police. He later discovered, “it was a misunderstanding. A substitute bus driver had dropped her off at her home when she was supposed to be dropped at a babysitter’s.” Meanwhile, the worried babysitter contacted the school. Soon police arrived, as well as a representative from the school, who transported the girl to the correct address. “Her mom thanked me over and over,” said Warren. “I’d like to think anyone would help out in a situation like that; it’s just the right thing to do.”

**Paul Miller**, a member of Port Huron, Michigan Branch 529, knew a full mailbox was a sign of trouble at 58-year-old Kathleen Freeman’s apartment building. “I thought it was strange she hadn’t picked up her mail because I know she shops by catalogs,” Miller stated. When he found the apartment lobby unlocked he knocked at Freeman’s door and heard a very faint response, muffled by the noise from a dehumidifier outside the apartment door. He turned off the dehumidifier and could hear the woman calling for help. Miller went to a neighbor’s apartment to telephone for aid and to find a key to Freeman’s place. Freeman had fallen three days earlier and had been so badly injured she was placed in intensive care. Miller visited Freeman while she was in a rehabilitation facility. “The doctors told me later that if I had been left alone for another 10 hours, I would have died,” Freeman said.

**K**nowing when a little discomfort indicates a serious medical condition isn’t

always easy. Such was the case when **Loren Marsh** discovered one of his customers lying down on the porch. When the Worthington, Minnesota Branch 2065 carrier asked the man if he needed assistance, the customer replied that he was fine and that a neighbor was checking on him. Marsh asked again but the man insisted that he was fine. When Marsh finished his relay, something about the man’s condition still bothered him, so he returned to a neighbor’s house to get a second opinion. The neighbor called a relative on the police force who came to check on the man. The officer promptly summoned an ambulance and the patron was transported to a hospital and treated for severe dehydration.

**W**hen homeowners are away and neighbors are busy, a letter carrier can be a real help. **Darlene Ditsch** came upon a downed tree limb that had ruptured a gas line at a home along her route. The owners of the home spend most of the summer at a vacation home and come back only occasionally. The International Falls, Minnesota Branch 2149 carrier recognized the hissing and odor of the escaping gas for the danger it was. A storm the night before had caused the line to break and gas had been filling the home for nearly 12 hours. Responding emergency personnel had the gas turned off and stated that the homeowners were lucky that Ditsch notified them, as the flip of a light switch or the water heater cycling on might have caused a catastrophic explosion.

**A**ttempting to fix an underground sprinkler connection sent homeowner Albert Hughes headlong into a five-foot hole in his yard. Once in the pit, the 70-year old was unable to make it back topside. Four hours later **Janelle Mowery**, a member of

Spokane, Washington Branch 442, came to the man’s aid. Delivering to his home, the letter carrier discovered Hughes and alerted the fire department. Fire fighters retrieved the man and he was none the worse for wear. His wife, Valerie Hughes said, “We’re just very lucky.”

**A** workplace emergency was kept from becoming a serious loss when **Rick Zingale** came to the aid of a fellow postal employee. Long Zha became ill at work and went to the restroom to collect himself. Zingale, a Seattle, Washington Branch 79 member entered the restroom and discovered Zha unconscious on the floor. The carrier administered CPR until medics arrived. Emergency medical personnel credited Zingale with saving Zha’s life.

**L**etter carrier **Chuck Strange** was planning a late lunch one day and consequently arrived earlier than usual at the last home on one of his park-and-loop relays. He discovered a note to “Mailman” posted on the door. The contents of the note were alarming. The woman who lived at the residence wrote that she had taken sleeping pills with the intention of killing herself and that he should call the police and her daughter to advise let them know of her demise. The Marion, Indiana Branch 378 member promptly called the police, who advised him not to enter the home. Upon their arrival, Strange told them he needed to finish his route but that he would return and give them what information he had. Several houses farther along his route, a patron with a police scanner told him that emergency services had come for the woman and that she was responsive. Strange’s timely arrival allowed his patron a full recovery.