

Proud to Serve

Proud to Serve is a semi-regular compilation of heroic stories about letter carriers in their communities. If you know about a hero in your branch, contact us as soon as possible at 202-662-2403 or at postalrecord@nalc.org. We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.

Honoring heroic carriers

Heroism, like the mail, comes in many packages—think of police officers or firefighters. But for some citizens in need of assistance, their heroes come in the form of concerned letter carriers.

Letter carriers are members of nearly every community in this nation and know when something is wrong. Spotting fires and injuries, they often are the first to respond. The following stories document their heroism. For them, delivering for America is all in a day's work.

Alert carrier rescues girl from vicious dog

On Nov. 30, 2015, Rock Hill, SC Branch 1003 member **Mark Pizzo** was delivering his route as usual and pulled up to the last part of his route on a cul-de-sac. "Every day I see a group of kids playing," he said. "That day, there was a dog with them," a neighbor's pit bull.

He then saw the kids run between two houses. Pizzo kept going on his route, but when he got in sight of the children again, he saw the dog knock down 7-year-old Kayden White.

"I thought it was playing with her and, like, jumped up and pushed her, but then it knocked her down," Pizzo told WSOC-TV.

He decided he needed to take action. "When I yelled out of my truck, nothing happened," Pizzo told WBTB. "Then I heard her scream. The scream I will never forget for as long as I live."

The carrier then ran toward the girl, whose head was gripped in the jaws of the dog as it was dragging her under a trampoline. "It had her by the top of her head, by her braids," Pizzo told WSOC. "So it was like a rope toy. It was pulling at her head and she was screaming."

Once he was at the scene, Pizzo tried

to grab the dog by its muzzle, but it wouldn't let go of White. "The dog had started to pull the child away from me, so I knew the dog didn't want to let go," Pizzo told *The Charlotte Observer*. "At that point, I struck the dog until it let go of her." He punched the dog at least four or five times, he said, and the pit bull finally let go.

Then, the dog shifted its attention briefly toward the carrier. "I was hoping that was going to happen," Pizzo told the newspaper.

Pizzo threw White on the trampoline to try to move her out of harm's way. But the pit bull wasn't done. "The dog jumped up on the trampoline to go after her again," Pizzo told the *Observer*.

A neighbor who had heard the commotion joined to help the carrier get the dog under control and was also bitten.

Pizzo grabbed the girl and took off running. "I had blood down my shorts, on my face," Pizzo said.

Her brother soon came when he heard what happened and took White home, and police soon came to investigate. The youngster was taken to the hospital, where she received seven staples in her head. The dog was picked up by animal control and was euthanized.

White's mother, Shaquitta, told WSOC how grateful she was for Pizzo's actions. "If this man, this man of God, was not there, my daughter would not be here," she said. "I've seen stories that kids die every day, from a pit bull, and she's alive. She's here with me now," she said.

But the 10-year postal veteran said he just did what he thought was right. "Some people say I saved her life, but do I know that? I stopped the situation from what was happening. That's all that mattered to me," Pizzo told the *Observer*. "I've been bit before; I'm a mailman. It's part of the job."



Rock Hill, SC Branch 1003 member **Mark Pizzo** (top l and above) recently was featured on Steve Harvey's talk show and interviewed by a local TV station about his role in helping a young customer escape a dog attack.

New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member **Garfield Scott** (top and below) was interviewed by local news media about his role in helping revive his customer, **Ellis Simonson**, via CPR. Top: Scott is pictured with Simonson's daughter, **Dianne Cook-Rock**. Below: Scott (back, third from l) visits with Simonson (front, l) during his recovery.



Carrier springs into action to revive collapsed customer

New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member **Garfield Scott** was delivering mail one day in October 2015 when he heard customer **Dianne Cook-Rock** screaming for help. Her 87-year-old father, **Ellis Simonson**, was inside his apartment but wasn't responding to phone calls.

She had a key, but she couldn't get inside his apartment because of a chain lock. Cook-Rock came every day to take her father to see her mother in her nursing home. "I talk to him every day," Scott said. "Something was out of whack.

"I've been an EMT since 1987 and I had a gut feeling that something was wrong," Scott told Fios 1 News. "And she said, 'Can you help me get in the door?'"

Because of the chain lock on his door, the carrier requested permission from Cook-Rock to kick in the door. She agreed, so Scott jumped into action by kicking it down.

He found Simonson on the floor. "I rolled him over and he was unresponsive," Scott said. So, he called 911 and then went into EMT mode. "I did a few emergency breathing [maneuvers], open up his airway," the carrier told the local CBS-TV news station, and the man soon regained consciousness.

Simonson recovered in the hospital and was undergoing rehabilitation for

a stroke. "He's got a strong, fighting spirit," Scott said of his customer.

After saving Simonson, Scott went about his route, and didn't tell anyone about his efforts—until Simonson's daughter sent a note to the post office. "He's a hero; he is the biggest hero ever," Cook-Rock told CBS. "I love this guy. He's family."

Scott brushed off any major accolades, though. "I was just there and did what I had to do, which anyone would have done, I believe," Scott told News 12 New Jersey.

"It's an example of our caring attitude and commitment to the community," the 16-year postal veteran added.

Criminals shouldn't mess with this carrier



On Oct. 28, 2014, Hazelwood, MO Branch 5847 member **Michael Murphy** was in his postal van about to make a delivery to a bread company. "When I pulled up in front of the business, I saw a man," he said, adding that he thought the man was acting strangely. After he made his delivery, he saw a small child running and yelling, "Someone help my mommy!" The man had attacked the girl's mother's



van, hitting it and trying to snatch her purse. The man then came back with a brick and started hitting a window of a different vehicle, an SUV, though it didn't break.

There were three women inside the SUV; one woman fell to the ground from the back seat of it, and the driver had come around to try to help her. "He was yelling, cussing and trying to carjack them," Murphy said of the attacker. "He really frightened them."

Bakery employees began coming outside to see what the commotion was. When Murphy saw the man raise the brick to hit the woman on the ground, he ran across the street and hit the suspect's arm.

Murphy, a 30-year member of the Navy Reserves, said, "I then grabbed him by his arm and picked him up by his legs and slammed him to the ground."

A passerby aided Murphy turn the suspect on his stomach, face-down. "I secured him and held him down until police came," the carrier said, adding, "It all happened so fast."

Neighborhood watch

As Syracuse, NY Branch 134 member **Carl Dashnaw III** was going about his route on July 8, 2015, he noticed a strong gas odor. He detected that it was coming from a specific house, and as he got closer he noticed that it was

a vacant house with a "for sale" sign out front. "If you didn't smell it, something's wrong with you," Dashnaw said. "I could hear the leak." Concerned, the city carrier assistant called his supervisor and contacted emergency

personnel. Just a few minutes later, "I heard sirens coming and they shut the whole block down," Dashnaw said. This included police, firefighters and local gas company workers, who determined that the gas line had rusted through.

"It could have been a bad situation," Dashnaw said. Still, the first-year letter carrier didn't think his actions were anything to write home about. "I don't feel like a hero," he said. "I was just in the right place at the right time." **PR**

Police put handcuffs on the man and thanked Murphy for his help. An officer later told Murphy that the man had a record as a repeat violent offender.

Murphy said his military training helped in the situation. "It was a natural thing for me," he said. "I was just doing what I was trained to do."

But the 28-year postal veteran doesn't think of himself as a hero. "When I saw this, I just thought about my mom and sister," he said. "If you are conscious and mindful, then you help someone."

Carrier saves patron in the midst of blaze

On Saturday, July 12, 2014, San Diego Branch 70 member **David Crestik** was delivering mail on the last part of his swing when "I heard a beeping sound," he said. No one was around.

The carrier then noticed dark smoke coming out of a screen door from a nearby mobile home and quickly went over. "I couldn't see, but yelled in, 'Anyone in here?'" Crestik said. The elderly customer, Sharon Branden, responded that she was on the floor and had also cut herself.

"As soon as I heard her voice, I knew I had to go in," Crestik said. When he entered the home, there was thick smoke everywhere and the flames were concentrated in the dining room. "The fire was going pretty good," he said.

Crestik asked the woman if she was able to walk, and she said no. So he lifted Branden from the floor, put her over his shoulder, and carried her to a safe area outside. Crestik then called 911 and waited for firefighters and paramedics to arrive.

Once the carrier knew Branden was in good

hands, he continued on with his route. The woman's home was destroyed, but Branden was doing OK after being treated for smoke inhalation.

Crestik later received a plaque from the mayor, who also declared a day in his honor. But he doesn't think he's a hero. "God blessed me and called upon me," the 20-year postal veteran said. "Without my faith, I wouldn't have gone in."

Carrier helps out in perilous situation

While delivering mail on Oct. 5, 2015, Providence, RI Branch 15 member **Dennis Price** heard a crash around the corner. He walked over and "I saw a minivan on its side," he said. The van was driver's-side down on the pavement after it had struck a pole and caused electrical wires to fall.

While a woman walking her dog called 911, Price climbed up the undercarriage of the vehicle and attempted to open the passenger-side door. "It was jammed shut," the carrier said.

Price spoke with the driver, asking his name and if he could move. "I was lying on the driver's-side door on top of the van," he said.

Two passersby came and helped Price break the window on the passenger-side door. One had a knife and used it to cut the man's seat belt, and then together the group lifted the man out of the van. "No major injuries—just scratches," Price said.

When Price saw that the situation was in good hands, he resumed his route.

The driver of the minivan told responding police that he had lost control of the vehicle after its front axle broke, and



Dennis Price

that the van had rolled onto its side after striking the pole. Hundreds of customers temporarily lost electricity as a result of the incident.

"I didn't know I was touching metal on live wire," Price said. "It was more dangerous than I realized."

But Price, a 28-year letter carrier, doesn't think he's a hero; he said as letter carriers, they're there to assist families. "It was a reaction, 'What can I do to help?'" he said.

Who ya gonna call? Letter carriers

On Dec. 8, 2015, after Las Vegas Branch 2502 city carrier assistant **Ken Hatcher** had finished a couple of assignments, he was sent back out to get additional mail from another CCA, **Al Malanum**.

Malanum had been delivering the last box on the street when he heard a woman frantically calling for help. The mother was holding her 6-month-old boy, Maverick, who was not breathing. He apparently had turned in his blanket that he was lying on and was suffocating. He was turning purple. Panicked, she tried to revive him. When her efforts failed, she ran outside to try to get help.

She asked Malanum whether he knew CPR. The carrier did not, but he immediately got on his phone and called 911. While Malanum had the emergency dispatcher on his phone, he went up to the door of the house where the woman had returned to help her baby. As he waited, trying to help by relaying what the dispatcher was telling him, Hatcher had pulled up,



David Crestik

seeing the postal vehicle parked outside with its emergency flashers on.

“I got out and was like, ‘What’s going on?’” Hatcher said.

When Hatcher approached, Malanum asked him if he knew CPR. Hatcher did—he had been trained on the life-saving technique as a 22-year Air Force fighter crew chief, and he refreshed his infant CPR knowledge twice after the birth of his children—but he had never had to use it.

He moved swiftly. Not wanting to lay the baby on the cold ground to assess him, Hatcher told the mother to give him the baby. “I ran inside into the light,” he said. Hatcher could see that the baby was not breathing. “His eyes

Las Vegas Branch 2502 member Ken Hatcher with the child, Maverick, he saved

were open,” he said.

Meanwhile, Malanum gave the mother his phone to talk with the emergency dispatcher and stepped outside to guide the ambulance to the house. The mother was relaying the baby’s condition while Hatcher worked.

Hatcher asked her if she thought Maverick had swallowed anything. He checked to ensure the baby’s airways were clear. He also checked the child for a pulse by firmly grasping the boy’s leg to check the femoral artery; this is sometimes called a “baby pinch.” “When I squeezed his leg, he took a deep breath and started crying,” the carrier said.

The dispatcher told him that was



a good sign and to keep him crying until assistance arrived. Then Hatcher handed the baby back to his mom and told her he thought the child was going to be OK. By this time, the ambulance and EMTs arrived to take over, and Hatcher continued his mail delivery.

Despite some news media attention, Hatcher doesn’t think his actions were a big deal. “I didn’t do CPR; I didn’t do compressions,” the first-year letter carrier said. “All I did was take the child to assess him.” **PR**

Eye on the elderly



Fall River, MA Branch 51 member **Jim Lambert** pulled up to a delivery on his route on Saturday, Nov. 21, 2015, and headed to the mailbox that was on the side of the garage. “I saw the couple’s son run to the front of the house,” he said. As he headed back to his LLV, Lambert saw that an elderly woman was lying face-down in the garage.

“There was blood—she was bleeding from her head,” the carrier said. Lambert quickly approached her. “I shook her a little bit,” he said, and discovered that she was semiconscious and moaning. The carrier yelled to the son, “Take care of your mother and grab some towels,” as he dialed 911. He then asked the son if his father was around. It turned out that he was in the backyard on a riding lawn mower, unaware of what was going on. Lambert went to the back of the home to get the attention of the woman’s husband. A neighbor who was a police officer came by when he saw what was going on, and emergency responders arrived soon after. “Everything kind of fell into place with help around,” Lambert said. After EMTs took control of the situation, he left to finish his route. The family thanked

Lambert for his heroics and let him know that the woman had returned home from the hospital and was now recovering, thanks to the carrier’s quick actions. But Lambert, a 30-year postal veteran, brushed off any major praise. “It’s not anything that any letter carrier wouldn’t have done,” he said. “We’re just there to help our customers if we can.”

One day last summer, New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member **Dionna Brooks** noticed that an elderly customer who lives alone still had mail in the box from the previous day. She thought maybe he just hadn’t picked it up yet. She had the next day off; when she returned the day after that, she saw the mail piled even higher. Concerned, Brooks looked through a window and saw the customer’s legs. “I started banging on

the window,” she said, and then asked, “Are you OK?” Brooks’ phone was in her postal vehicle, so she ran to get it. “I called 911 and they were asking me questions to ask him,” she said. “I stayed there at the window, talking to him.” The patron asked if Brooks could come inside, and the carrier went to the front door, finding it open. She found the man lying on the floor, where he had been for two days after falling. “I didn’t want to move him, so I just got him some water,” she said. Police arrived and entered the house to assist the man. After a period in rehab, he returned home. But Brooks doesn’t think she is a hero. “I was glad I was there at the right place at the right time,” the 15-year postal veteran said. “I’m just a person who cared enough to make sure he was OK.” **PR**