

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 202-662-2489 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.

Carrier's intuition helps save customer's life

"I had gone up to the [customer's] door to check to see if he had picked up the mail," Sacramento, CA Branch 133 member **Melissa Pastorino** recalled about her actions on July 14. Given that the customer was elderly and lived alone, the 22-year carrier was concerned whenever his mail wasn't collected promptly.

The mail from the day before was still there, but nothing else at the house looked amiss. "I started to walk away, and then I turned back," Pastorino said, driven by her instinct. As she got close to the house again, "I

heard a faint 'Help!' " she said.

Pastorino moved even closer, then: "I listened again, and heard 'Help me!' "

She knocked on the door, and the man's voice became even louder, pleading for her assistance. Pastorino immediately called 911.

While on the phone with the 911 operator, the carrier began searching for a way into the house. The front door was locked, and no neighbors were home. A few minutes later, however, one of the neighbors returned, and walked over to see what was going on.

Together, they were able to get through a fence into the back yard. "We went around and tried all the doors and windows," Pastorino said, but everything was locked.

They could still hear the man's cries of distress, and finally decided to try breaking down the front door. "We hit the door, and it busted open," the carrier said.

Inside, they found the customer on the floor, where he had been lying for more than 24 hours.

There was blood around him, so "I checked on him to make sure that he wasn't still bleeding, and then started giving him water," Pastorino said. She then waited with him until paramedics arrived.

The man was treated for severe dehydration, and he ended up spending two weeks in an intensive care unit. He has since recovered and moved to a rehabilitation facility.

"I was just so thankful that I found him, because [his voice] was very faint," Pastorino said about her role in rescuing her customer, adding, "You deliver on a route for so many years, you get to know people and their habits—you pay attention to these things." **PR**



After hearing about Sacramento, CA Branch 133 member **Melissa Pastorino's** heroic actions for a customer, a co-worker decorated her case at the Orangevale Post Office.

Help on the way

On June 24, “I was actually on somebody’s porch, delivering a package, when the lady came out screaming, ‘Somebody help me!’” Fort Wayne, IN Branch 116 member **Joshua Flaugh** recalled about his eventful day on the route. The elderly woman lived a few houses down with her husband. Upon seeing her distress, the six-year carrier immediately leaped into action. “I ran over to my truck and grabbed my iPhone,” Flaugh said, and then raced down the street to the woman’s house. When he got to their back yard, he found the woman’s husband lying on the ground, unconscious. “He was lying there, no pulse, no heartbeat,” the carrier recounted. Flaugh promptly called 911, and the operator was able to walk him through CPR. “I knew the basics, but I didn’t feel confident,” Flaugh said. “I hadn’t ever done it before.” The carrier continued



Joshua Flaugh

to do chest compressions until emergency responders reached the scene and took over. Paramedics labored to save the man, but they eventually were asked to stop resuscitation attempts by his wife. In a commendation letter, the carrier was praised by Branch 116 President **Tim Scroggs** for “showing great courage and fortitude to do all he could to save the life of a customer,” but Flaugh declined the “hero” label.

“I’m not doing anything that someone else wouldn’t have done,” he explained. “Anyone who sees an elderly woman coming out, yelling ‘Help me!’ would have done the same. I just did what needed to be done.”

On Feb. 16, Brunswick, GA Branch 313 member **Shana Mathis** was “at the stop sign, ready to cross the intersection,” she recalled, when she glanced at the crosswalk and saw her 80-year-old customer Ruth Blake step off the curb. As the six-year carrier watched, Blake missed her footing and took a hard fall, rolling several feet and landing in the street. “I immediately stopped the truck and got out,” Mathis said, “and went to see if she was OK.” When she approached Blake, she could tell that the customer was definitely not all right—“she was screaming, she was



Shana Mathis

in so much pain,” the carrier said. Mathis quickly called 911, and then waited with Blake until paramedics arrived. The carrier later visited her customer in the hospital, where Blake was being treated for contusions. “She was so thankful, so grateful—she kept calling me an angel from the sky,” Mathis said. “She said had I not been there, she would have died.” After Blake returned home, the carrier walked her mail up to the customer’s front door each day, until the woman felt fully recovered. Mathis was modest about her role in rescuing Blake, saying that she was nervous the entire time she was assisting the woman. “I’m not a nurse; I don’t have any medical background,” she added. “I was just thinking, ‘I’ve got to call 911.’” **PR**

Eye on the elderly

In late February, “I was walking up to the mailbox [of a customer] when I saw the door was open,” Harrisburg, PA Branch 500 member **Melissa Stinsman** recalled. The four-year carrier knew that the customer, an elderly man, usually kept his door closed, so she went up to the front of the house to investigate. When she glanced inside the door, “I saw him lying on the floor,” Stinsman said. The carrier asked the man if he was all right, and he told her that he

had fallen off of his chair lift and had been lying there for a couple of hours. “He was begging me for help,” she said. Stinsman quickly entered the home and began assisting him back into his chair. “It took about 20 minutes, because he was so worn out that he could barely use his muscles,” the carrier said. Finally, she was able to get him back onto his seat. The man declined her offer to call 911, so Stinsman watched him to make sure he traveled up the stairs safely. Afterward, the



Melissa Stinsman

carrier went next door to his neighbor’s house to ask them to check in and make sure that the customer was OK. “I checked in the following day with the neighbor,” Stinsman said, “and [was told] he was fine and very thankful.” But the carrier was modest about her contribution to her customer’s welfare. “I was in the right place at the right time,” she added. “It feels really good to help people, and I know they would do it for me if they could.” **PR**