

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. For them, delivering for America is all in a day's work.

'I deliver bills and save lives'

Delivering packages on New Year's Eve, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Tim Martin** turned a corner and saw a car on fire in front of a mobile home. Some neighbors were trying to put out the fire by throwing snow on it, but Martin noticed that the technique was not working. Other neighbors were filming the fire with their phones.

But then he realized that the fire was spreading to the mobile home.

Knowing that an elderly resident with breathing problems lived there, Martin asked the neighbors if she was home. They said yes—but kept filming.

The fire was blocking the front door, so Martin rushed to the back of the trailer. He pushed the back door open, but it was held shut with bungee cord. "Luckily, I'm skinny enough to squeeze through," he said. He found the home filling with smoke and the woman looking frantically for her shoes. "Let's get you outside," he told her as he helped her leave the house with her purse and dog.

First responders had arrived, and Martin helped the woman find an EMT who could give her oxygen. To avoid blocking the fire vehicles that were coming to the scene, he left in

his truck, continuing his route. Martin returned a few days later and learned the woman was all right and had been able to move back into the home.

In recognition of his heroic actions, his supervisor coined a slogan for Martin: "I deliver bills and save lives," and even made him a superhero cape. It was all in fun, but Martin said he doesn't feel like a hero.

"I just think I'm just a regular guy," he said. "I was just happy that I could help."



Tim Martin wearing the cape that his supervisor made to recognize his heroism

Carrier jumps to aid of unconscious co-worker



Manny Sanchez

passed out," Sanchez said. The four-year carrier and member of New Jersey Merged Branch 38 rushed to help his stricken co-worker, five-year carrier **Dominique Pockpa**.

"I didn't feel well," Pockpa, a fellow Branch 38 member, recalled. "I passed out. I heard the voice of Manny. When

I woke up, I was in the hospital."

When Pockpa collapsed, Sanchez knew exactly what to do—he had served as a combat medic in the Army, including two combat tours.

Sanchez quickly asked other employees to stand back and asked one of them to open a window to provide fresh air. When a supervisor tried to remove Pockpa's jacket, Sanchez warned him not to before he could check Pockpa for injuries from the fall. After finding that he had no apparent injuries, Sanchez removed some of Pockpa's clothes to prepare him for CPR or use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), a device located in many post offices that can detect heart problems and administer life-saving treatment in an emergency. He checked Pockpa's breathing and heart rate.

Before Sanchez could start CPR or use an AED, though, first responders arrived, so Sanchez relayed the vital signs to the EMTs and let them take over caring for Pockpa.

After a few days in the hospital and a few weeks of recovery, Pockpa returned to work. "Manny is ready to save the life of anybody, no matter who you are," Pockpa said.

"We're glad to have him back for sure," Sanchez said.

Sanchez said he shies from being called a hero. "I'm not a hero for doing the right thing," he said.

Suicide note leads to call for, offer of help

Dennis Bracco didn't have any mail for one of his customers on his route in Buffalo, NY, on a day in January, but he spotted a note on the mailbox and walked over to read it.

"Note to postman. Call 911. My body is in the bedroom," the note began,



Dennis Bracco

followed by a plea to care for the man’s cats.

Bracco, an eight-year member of Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3, recognized it immediately as a suicide note. He went to the customer’s door, which was unlocked, and opened it, calling for the customer.

“Then I second-guessed opening the door,” he said, because he didn’t know what would happen or what he would

find. Instead, he called 911 and his supervisor and waited for police to arrive.

“It all happened so fast,” Bracco said. “It took me by surprise.” He later learned that the man had not carried out his plan to take his own life, and that by calling to the man through the door, Bracco might have caused him to stop his suicide attempt.

Bracco saw the customer a few months later in front of his house. The

man apologized for leaving the note, but Bracco, who once had a family member attempt suicide, told the man to come to him if he needed help.

“If there’s any time you want to talk,” he told the man, “I’m here.”

Bracco is grateful that he took the time to check the note despite having no mail to deliver to the man that day. “I’m glad my instincts told me to check the box,” he said. **PR**

Help on the way

David Rumore has carried the mail for 22 years, long enough to get to know his customers well. Out on his route on a cold, windy day in late

December 2022, Rumore was in his truck when he heard a voice crying for help. “It was really windy that day,” Rumore recalled. “It was fortunate that I heard him.” Rumore, a member of Kansas City, MO Branch 30, rushed to the source of the pleas, a house on

his route where an elderly man lived. Rumore found the man lying in his garage, injured and unable to stand. Rumore called 911 and stayed with the man until first responders arrived. Though he later learned that the man had died from his injuries, Rumore said the man’s family was thankful for his actions. “Mr. Rumore needs to be recognized for saving my uncle from what could have been hours of misery,” the man’s nephew wrote to Branch 30 President **Melvin Moore**.

City carrier assistant **Ryan Costa** had only a few months under his belt

in January when he approached a house with a mail slot on his route in Worcester, MA. The Branch 12 member placed the mail in the slot and heard a man’s voice call out for help from inside. Costa called back. The man said he thought he was having a stroke. Costa ran back to his truck to get his phone and called 911. Still on the line with the dispatcher, he went back to the house and found a side door that was unlocked. “I found him in the living room, on the floor,” Costa said. “He was shaking and sweating profusely.” The man asked Costa for some water. Costa stayed until paramedics arrived, called his supervisor, and then returned to his route. He later learned that the man had been lying there for at least eight hours. It was a Saturday, and the stricken man was staying at his sister’s house—the sister was out of town and wasn’t due back until Monday. “His sister was extremely thankful” that he had been there to help, Costa said. The man was taken to a hospital and later recovered. Costa says he is not the hero in this situation. “I feel like I did what anybody should do



Ryan Costa

in that situation,” he said. “I just called the paramedics—they saved him.”

Delivering the mail in Kenosha, WI, in February, 22-year carrier **Steve Cairo** spotted an elderly woman sitting in her driveway. “I stopped the truck and saw that she was bleeding from her head,” the Branch 574 member said. She told him she had fallen. Cairo went to his truck and called 911. The dispatcher asked him to stop the bleeding while he waited with her for paramedics to arrive. He found some paper towels in her garage and used them to help staunch the blood flow. After emergency responders arrived and took her to the hospital, Cairo returned to his route. The woman’s thankful husband later said it was lucky that Cairo had seen her, because the neighbors living on each side of her house were “snowbirds” who were living elsewhere for the winter. So, without Cairo, she might have been outside much longer. “I was just glad I could help her,” Cairo said. **PR**



Steve Cairo