

# JIM RURIK

COLUMBUS, OH BRANCH 78

**S**moke pouring from an apartment building and a man's yell grabbed the attention of Columbus, OH Branch 78 member **Jim Rurik** as he was delivering mail along his route on March 21, 2013.

"I shut off my vehicle and ran across the parking lot," he said. As he rushed over, he saw a resident outside on the phone, so he made sure that the resident was calling 911. Rurik noted that the smoke was coming from the first floor of the building. Then he saw the source of the scream: a resident running out of the burning apartment.

"His pant leg was on fire, his boot was on fire. He was struggling," the carrier said. "He had sat down to try to remove his shoe, but was unsuccessful because of the flames spreading."

Rurik told the man to stop, drop and roll, and then he took off his postal jacket to smother the remaining flames on the customer.

"It's just one of those things. It was a situation and I reacted to it," he said.

Once he felt the customer was going to be OK, Rurik ran into the building. "I knew someone was still on the third floor, because I saw their vehicle was outside," he said. The carrier knocked on doors to notify residents and try to get people out.

"When I came back out, the fire department had arrived," Rurik said. "It happened so fast."

Once he saw that the situation was under control, Rurik returned to his LLV and completed his appointed rounds.

Firefighters said that the burn victim, who had just moved in that day, had tried to start a fire in his fireplace using lighter fluid. He suffered burns to his leg, but no one else was hurt and no other apartment units were damaged.

Rurik said that being named a hero is a great honor, but he doesn't think he did that much. "I still don't feel like I'm a hero in any way. There are people who do this every single day," the 30-year postal veteran said. "Other people would have done the same thing. I was just the first one there."

The judges disagreed. "He took immediate action, risking life and limb, and the result was a positive outcome," they said in choosing Rurik as the Central Region Hero.

Rurik said that as a letter carrier, you react when the situation calls for it. "I just did what I felt I had an obligation to do," he said.

