

CRISTY PERFETTI & STEVE PLUNKETT

PEORIA, IL BRANCH 31

Peoria, IL Branch 31 letter carrier **Cristy Perfetti**, who has carried mail for 22 years, was returning from her route one day in May of 2013. As she parked her truck at the post office loading dock, she saw a disturbing scene. A man was walking with a 10-year-old boy through the post office parking lot, and the boy looked frightened and kept looking in her direction.

"It seemed to me he was trying to get my attention. The look on his face was indescribable," Perfetti said. "I knew something was not right."

The man took the boy behind the post office shed, and that's when Perfetti ran inside the post office and alerted supervisor **Stacie Pence-Bailey** about the situation. The supervisor went outside with Perfetti. Fellow Branch 31 member **Steve Plunkett**, a letter carrier for 26 years, noticed that something serious was happening and went outside with Perfetti and the supervisor.

Perfetti and Pence-Bailey confronted the man. He said that everything was fine, but the boy, who was crying and clearly frightened, said "No, you're not my father." Pence-Bailey asked the boy if he wanted to go inside the station, and he said yes. She took the boy inside the post office to safety and told co-workers to call the police. The boy later said the man had abducted him at knife-point.

Meanwhile, the man hurried away on foot, so Pence-Bailey asked Perfetti and Plunkett to follow him. The two letter carriers kept track of his movements, with Plunkett taking photos, until police arrived and arrested the man. "We were able to tell police exactly where he went," Plunkett said.

The boy's father came to the station and took him home.

Perfetti and Plunkett's actions, and the photos Plunkett took and gave to authorities, helped imprison the man—a repeat sex offender—with a life sentence.

"It's kind of overwhelming and unexpected," Plunkett said about the Unit Citation award. "It was just a case of doing the right thing." He said he knew anyone in his station would have done the same. "I think every carrier has got that in him or her."

"These two caring letter carriers noticed a problem and immediately worked as a team with their supervisor to respond," the judges said. "Their quick action as a coordinated group saved a child from harm and put a dangerous criminal in prison, and we felt it deserved a special 'Unit Citation' award." This is the first time the judges have presented a Unit Citation award.



L-R: Steve Plunkett, Stacie Pence-Bailey and Cristy Perfetti

