

# Proud TO SERVE

**I**n this modern age, with greed and violence staples in the news, examples of courage and compassion are more important than ever. Across this nation, letter carriers are often the first to discover people in need due to accidents, attacks or fires. The following reports are offered to honor the actions of all NALC members whose quick thinking and sharp reactions have saved lives.

## Carrier delivers help morning and afternoon

**Tom Nehlen** of Youngstown, Ohio Branch 385 had recently become a letter carrier after serving in the military. About a month into his current route, he was making his rounds one morning when he saw smoke billowing from a window. Accompanied by a neighbor, Nehlen carefully entered through a side door into the smoke-filled kitchen, where the home's residents were clustered, and they helped everyone reach safety outside by the time fire fighters arrived to put out the flames. The fire started when a 3-year-old boy playing with a lighter ignited a mattress in a first-floor bedroom. There had been no working smoke detectors in the home, and damages were assessed at \$15,000. "At least everyone was safe," Nehlen told the *Warren Tribune*. "I never met them before. I just delivered their mail."

Later that afternoon, while delivering in another part of town, the letter carrier saw a 12-year-old boy crash his bike into the side of a van in traf-

fic. "I was the second vehicle in line behind the accident," he told the *Tribune*. "I had to call 911." Nehlen then acted quickly, getting out of his vehicle and rushing to the youth's side, then waiting with him until paramedics arrived.

## Carriers team up, save man and dog from burning home

One morning as she was delivering mail, carrier **Sharon Roulo** noticed smoke coming from a home. She immediately called 911 and also contacted fellow Western Wayne County, Michigan Branch 2184 member **Lori Boljesic**, who was working nearby, was more familiar with the route and would have a better idea if anyone were home.

The two knocked on windows and got one bedroom window open. Climbing inside, they found a man in his 20s, asleep. They awoke him and told him to escape through the window. The two women also found one dog and got it out of the house, but sadly, a second dog succumbed to smoke inhalation.

The owner of the home had apparently put a load of clothes in the dryer and then left the house. She told fire fighters she had only been gone for 30 minutes before the fire was reported. "The lint in the dryer caught fire, which caught the clothes on fire," Acting Fire Marshal Gary Leirstein told the *Westland Observer and Eccentric*. "Items around the dryer caught fire—there were a lot of clothes packed around the dryer. The dryer burnt up pretty good." Fire damage was limited to the utility room, but there was smoke damage throughout the home. ☒

**"I was the second vehicle in line behind the accident. I had to call 911."**

—Branch 385 member **Tom Nehlen** recalled helping a young boy who ran into a vehicle while riding his bike

NOTICING A PILE OF MAIL STILL IN AN elderly customer's box, **Arne Syvertsen** became concerned since the resident normally picked up her mail on a daily basis. He asked a neighbor to check on her, then left the area after finishing his route. The next day, he found the mail still sitting uncollected. This time, the Staten Island, New York Branch 99 member sought out another neighbor, a fire fighter. Together, they got into the house and found the elderly woman disabled in her bedroom, unable to move because of a broken shoulder. Syvertsen was commended for his attentiveness and concern for the well-being of his patrons.

**JOSEPH ASHLEY** WAS DELIVERING MAIL to the house of Sandra Leicht, a patron he knew well. Because she has limited mobility, her mailbox was installed right by her door so she could just reach out and grab her mail. Or, if the door was open and she was nearby, the carrier would enter and hand-deliver the mail. This day, however, something was wrong—Ashley saw Leicht apparently unconscious while she was baby-sitting her 4-year-old great-granddaughter. When Leicht didn't respond to Ashley's calls at the door, he quickly called 911 and summoned an ambulance. The Muncie, Indiana Branch 98 member stayed with his patron until paramedics arrived. It was determined the customer had passed out due to low blood sugar. Once Ashley finished his route, he came back to check on the woman. "Bless his heart," Leicht told the *Star Press*. "If it hadn't been for him, I don't know what would've happened."

WHILE ON HER ROUTE, **TINA MEDERSKI** heard her elderly customer call out her name, asking for help. The carrier entered the house and found 81-year-old Pearl Rosenthal on the floor of her bedroom, stuck between the bed and the dresser. She had been there for five hours, unable to reach the phone or her Lifeline device. The Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member called 911 and Rosenthal's daughter-in-law, then stayed with her until paramedics arrived. Gloria Schenbeck, the daughter-

**"Bless his heart.  
If it hadn't been  
for him, I don't  
know what would  
have happened."**

—Sandra Leicht praised Branch 98 member Joseph Ashley after the carrier found her unconscious while baby-sitting her granddaughter

in-law, told a local news affiliate, "If it hadn't been for Tina coming and delivering her mail like she does every day, she could have been there for God knows how long."

**CLARA KUNKEL** SUFFERED A FALL IN THE garage at her apartment one morning, sustaining facial injuries and a fractured knee cap that prevented her from getting up from the floor. She had been taking out the trash and, luckily, the garage door was raised. She yelled for help for about three hours, unanswered. She managed to crawl back through her laundry room and into the kitchen, but still could not reach the phone. Around noon, she heard **Jerry Liu's** LLV drive up outside, and Kunkel decided to try again for help. Liu heard her faint cries and followed a trail of blood into the kitchen, where he found his elderly customer. The Sun City, Arizona Branch 6156 member hurriedly dialed 911 and stayed with Kunkel until the emergency crew arrived.

**BRADLEY COOPER** BECAME ALARMED when he saw that an elderly woman on his route hadn't picked up the previous

day's mail or newspaper—an anomaly for the customer. He called the postmaster to ask her to call the police and have them check on the woman. Knowing the church the customer attended, the postmaster called the pastor first to see if he knew if she was on vacation or visiting her children. When the response was negative, police were notified, and officers discovered the woman on her floor, dehydrated and with a broken leg. She had been there since the previous morning. The Salina, Kansas Branch 486 member was commended for the care he showed his patron.

**SALEM, OREGON BRANCH 347 MEMBER Susan Herrmann** saw that an elderly customer's mail was piling up. The carrier knocked on the door but heard no response. When she checked the garage, she saw the car there, so she grew worried and tried again, this time hearing cries of distress in response. Herrmann dialed 911 and stayed until medical help arrived. Paramedics said the man had been down for two to three days and was extremely hungry and dehydrated. The carrier was lauded for her diligence and commitment to her customers.

WALKING DOWN A STREET ON HER ROUTE, **Dawn Barraclough** heard 78-year-old patron Pauline Sheldon's calls for help from her porch where she had been eating lunch. As the carrier got closer, she noticed that Sheldon's speech was different, she was flushed, and she had trouble standing on her own—signs of a stroke. Barraclough contacted 911 and then Sheldon's family, communicating with them what was happening. The family explained to her that the woman had diabetes and high blood pressure. The Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Branch 500 member quickly learned how to administer the woman's insulin injection and then got Sheldon a cool compress for her neck while they waited for the ambulance to arrive. "Dawn helped prevent a potentially debilitating situation where Mrs. Sheldon might have lost her abilities," acting postmaster Mark Houtz told the *Daily News*. "This was not just a run-of-the-mill act."

# HELP *on the Way*

**S**eeing unretrieved mail at the residence of her customer Pam Walker, **Janalyn Romero** grew alarmed. The carrier went to a neighbor's home and inquired if everything was all right with Walker. The neighbor didn't know and also didn't have a key to the house but managed to track down a phone number for a friend of Walker's who had one. When entry was gained, Walker was found to be barely breathing. Because of the Sun City, Arizona Branch 6156 member's actions, the customer was rushed to the hospital. "Please extend our sincere appreciation to Janalyn Romero," a community member wrote to the local postmaster.

**O**n a 90-degree day with extremely high humidity, **Jeffrey Fabian** came upon a customer, John Finney, who was having a problem in his wheelchair-accessible van. The elderly man had slipped off his wheelchair while attempting to move to the driver's seat and had been stuck for about 20 minutes. Because one of Finney's legs is shorter, does not bend, and was caught between the wheelchair and the seat, it took Fabian nearly a half-hour to maneuver the chair off Finney and back onto the ramp. The carrier then lifted Finney, a large man, onto the chair and sat with him for a while to make sure he was OK. Soon after, the Virginia Beach, Virginia Branch 2819 member called his station manager to let him know about the situation, returned to his vehicle and resumed his route. Not long afterward, another customer noticed that the letter carrier himself did not look well and called 911. Fabian was treated for heat exhaustion, but returned to work the next day. The carrier was commended for his personal sacrifice in coming to the aid of a patron.

**E**very day, **Ron Minard** saw a familiar sight: G.T. Cox, sitting by his front door, waiting for the mail. The carrier had become well acquainted with the man in the process of delivering the mail to his door

due to his medical disabilities. For a few days, Cox had told Minard that he wasn't feeling well and hadn't been eating and drinking much. The next day, Cox was not waiting for the mail. The carrier knocked on his door to no response, left the mail in his mailbox and continued delivering the route. The following day, the scenario was similar: No Cox. Minard knocked several times, again to no response. He looked through the window and saw a living room light on and heard a loud beeping noise. Cox's pickup truck was in the driveway, and something just didn't feel right to Minard. The carrier rushed next door to ask a neighbor about Cox. The neighbor was unaware of any problem, but remarked that no one came to check on him regularly. The Huntsville, Alabama Branch 462 member called the police and his postal supervisor. All the doors and windows were locked, so police received authorization to force entry. With help from the fire department, which knocked open the front door, they made their way into the home. Inside the extremely warm house, Cox was found in a back bedroom, dehydrated and incoherent. Minard was credited with saving the life of his customer.

**O**n a 102-degree day, **Dan Do** was delivering mail to a neighborhood on his route when he saw a customer, Al, on the ground in his yard. The Fort Worth, Texas Branch 226 member rushed over to assess the man's condition before hurrying to a neighbor's house for help. The group returned and tried to turn the man over. Do alertly asked the neighbors if they had a chair with wheels and when one was obtained they successfully helped the man back into his house. Once the carrier made sure everyone was OK, he returned to his route.

**M**aria Elena Romero noticed the flag up on a curbside mailbox, so she reached out to grab the mail. In the stack were a few outgoing letters, but on top was

a note addressed "Mailperson." The note began, "Call 911. I'm dead. I am in the bathroom and I left all doors open. Please find a nice home for my two cats," which the note described. Romero knew the woman and knew this letter was no joke. She decided not to enter the home, instead grabbing her cell phone to call 911 and then call her supervisor. A police officer soon arrived, read the note, checked the doors (all unlocked) and peered through the windows. He saw two cats that matched the descriptions. The officer called for assistance and told Romero to remain on the scene. The customer was found in the bathroom with a blanket wrapped around her, unconscious but still alive. Paramedics soon arrived and, suspecting that she overdosed on medication, rushed her to a hospital. After being interviewed by police, the Fresno, California Branch 231 member resumed her route. Romero was credited with saving her customer's life. "I don't believe I need recognition," she said. "I just did what I felt was right."

**P**roviding auxiliary assistance on a route neighboring his own, **Oscar Sosa** came across an elderly red-faced gentleman leaning against a car, struggling to breathe. The customer had recently purchased the vehicle and was trying to siphon gas from his van to the car. Already frail health-wise, the man was overcome by the fumes and was on the verge of passing out. Quickly putting the pieces together, the Pueblo, Colorado Branch 229 member quickly knocked on the door to get the man's wife's attention and had her call 911. Meanwhile, the 11-year postal veteran helped the man to the house and stayed until emergency vehicles arrived. Because of the man's location between the two vehicles, which blocked visibility from the street, his condition might have gone unnoticed for hours. Sosa made sure the next carrier on the route checked in on the man.



# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

**T**he sight of a woman lying on the ground on his route immediately drew the attention of **Robert Bogdan**. Being trained in first aid, the carrier went to assist the customer. He calmly asked a series of questions to assess her condition, finding out she had suffered a fall, and he tried to determine whether she had suffered a stroke or had any broken bones. The Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Branch 500 member then waited with the woman until EMTs arrived.

**S**alli Hislop was about to make her third delivery of the day when the customer's dog came running out to her truck, barking urgently and attempting to climb into the vehicle. This was unusual behavior for the dog, so the Salt Lake City, Utah Branch 111 member got out of her vehicle and spied the customer lying on his front porch, apparently suffering a heart attack. His wife was standing over him, unsure what to do. The carrier asked the wife to call 911 while Hislop began CPR and continued until police and paramedics arrived. Although the man seemed unresponsive, medical personnel were able to revive him thanks to Hislop's prompt attention.

**W**hile exiting his truck to begin delivering, **Kent Scippio** saw a cyclist ride through an intersection and fall. The letter carrier watched as the man sat on the curb, assuming he was collecting himself after the spill. As Scippio returned to his vehicle, he saw the man still sitting there, but this time he noticed his whole body was shaking. As the Newport News, Virginia Branch 609 member approached him, the man asked him to call 911. A woman approached the scene, saying the man was diabetic and going into insulin shock. Scippio ran to his vehicle and got a candy bar for the man, whose condition immediately began to improve. He stayed with the man until emergency services arrived, then continued on his route. ☒

**S**eeing a toddler clutching her blanket and stepping out into the street right where it curves, **Ed Markowitz** quickly took action. The 25-year postal veteran stopped oncoming traffic and walked the child back to safety. The girl was too young to tell the carrier where she lived and Markowitz saw no adults. Recruiting a customer he knew well to watch the child, the carrier began knocking on doors of homes where he was aware children lived. He was having no luck until he came to a house where the door was answered by two children, both under 10 years old. Their guilt was evident when they realized their little sister had slipped away. The father was shocked when he was roused with the news and expressed his gratitude to the Pueblo, Colorado Branch 229 member upon his child's return. Markowitz returned to his rounds without reporting the incident. The act only came to light when a postal customer who had witnessed the event brought it to the attention of the postmaster.

**A**s **Teresa Crenshaw** was exiting her personal vehicle to walk down the street to report for duty, she noticed a toddler in the back seat of a parked car. Surveying the area and seeing no adults nearby, she contacted management and the police right away. When police arrived, they found the child was freezing and soiled and took him to the hospital. The New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member was commended for her attentiveness and concern. Police said the child's life could have been at risk had Crenshaw not intervened.

**A**s carrier **Shane Salisbury** approached a very busy intersection, he spotted a young girl riding her tricycle in the southbound lane of the street with the northbound traffic passing her at speeds of up to 40 mph. Salisbury stopped traffic, took the little girl's hand and brought her to the sidewalk. He told her to stay out of the street for her safety and that she needed to go home. As he

watched her pull away, she again headed for the street. As the Fort Wayne, Indiana Branch 116 member was approaching to stop her, another concerned citizen helped him by pulling his vehicle into the intersection to stop traffic. The citizen dialed 911 and Salisbury made sure the young girl was safely in the hands of police officers before he resumed his route.

**O**sceola, Arkansas Branch 2756 member **Jason Deaver** was on his way home from work when he saw two women at an abandoned gas station with the hood of their car up. The carrier pulled in and asked if he could help. After looking at the vehicle, Deaver said he believed a new battery was needed, so he drove to a nearby auto parts store to purchase one. He returned and installed the battery, which got the car running again. The women expressed their extreme gratitude for his help. "This young man is of the highest caliber, character and conscience," Steven Pace, a son of one of the women, wrote to the USPS. "Any recognition possible would be an understatement." ☒



**LISA MIRSHAMSI WAS ON HER DAILY** rounds when she noticed that an elderly patron, Mrs. Dorsey, had not picked up the previous day's mail. Having been on the route for eight years, the carrier knew her customer's habits well, and instinctively knew something must be wrong. With effort, Mirshamsi was able to see in the window and spotted Dorsey motionless on the couch. She immediately called 911 and summoned a neighbor who she knew had a key. The responding police officer found Dorsey unresponsive and medical help arrived shortly thereafter. The Pueblo, Colorado Branch 229 member stayed long enough to make sure Dorsey received proper care, then continued on her rounds. Postal officials were only made aware of the incident when the police officer notified her supervisor of Mirshamsi's good deed in saving Dorsey, who would not have survived much longer due to her frail health.

**NOTICING ACCUMULATING MAIL IN** elderly customer Gladys Herrmann's box, carrier **Hugh Nickle** decided to notify neighbors, who in turn contacted authorities. When Herrmann was checked on, she was found to be near death. Herrmann's son, Bob, wrote to the postmaster to laud the Oak Brook, Illinois Branch 825 member's efforts. "Please accept and share our family's thank-you," he wrote. "Hugh truly has 'hero status' with our family."

**PILAR OLIVAREZ WAS DELIVERING HER** route when she heard a voice calling for help. Upon investigation, she found an elderly customer lying on the garage floor, bleeding, after falling down some steps. The woman's medical alarm device had become unplugged, and the serious injuries she had sustained kept her from moving, so she had been down on the floor for more than an hour. Olivarez called an ambulance, comforted the customer while waiting for the EMTs, and stayed after to clean up the blood left behind so the woman's family would not have to see it. The woman's

daughter, Susan Van Guelpen, wrote a letter to the postmaster, declaring the family "eternally grateful" for the Santa Rosa, California Branch 183 member's heroic actions.

**GOING ABOUT HIS ROUTE, HERBERT Garvin** noticed an elderly customer, Cecilia Trottie, had not been picking up her mail. The carrier quickly notified a neighbor, who got in contact with the 90-year-old customer's family and emergency medical personnel to check on the woman. Trottie was found on the floor where she had fallen three days earlier. She suffered a heart attack and was struggling with pneumonia. Paramedics said the woman would not have survived another night on the floor. Trottie's grand-niece wrote a letter thanking the Columbia, South Carolina Branch 233 member.

**NOTICING AN ELDERLY PATRON HAD NOT** pick up his mail for three days, carrier **Frank Cacciotti** canvassed the neighborhood, asking neighbors if they had seen the man. All responses were negative, so Cacciotti and one neighbor went back to the house and looked in through a window. The man was lying on the floor and they began to hear faint calls for help. The neighbor went inside to

help the man, who had fallen several days earlier, while the carrier called 911 and then waited for help to arrive. The Racine, Wisconsin Branch 436 member was credited with helping to save the man's life.

**ONE DAY LAST SUMMER, CARRIER KEN Merrill** saw accumulated mail and a customer's car parked in the same place as the day before. He checked the door, and, finding it unlocked, went to the kitchen, where he found 81-year-old patron Phyllis Winslow on the floor in a weakened condition. She had fainted after choking on a mint. The Maine Merged Branch 92 member called 911 and waited with Winslow until help arrived. He later checked up on her at the hospital. "The doctors tell me that, had my mailman not found me when he did, I wouldn't have made it," Winslow said of Merrill. Since her late husband was a career letter carrier, she found it "only fitting that my guardian angel comes from the Postal Service. I am so lucky to have him."

**ON A HOT WEEKDAY AFTERNOON, Charles Robinson** saw that the mail he had delivered to 71-year-old customer Paul Cox had gone uncollected for two days. Since he knew Cox usually kept the front door open wide enough to place a fan near the locked screen door, he grew concerned when he saw the door was only opened a crack, despite the high temperature. Robinson yelled inside, and he heard a moaning voice in return: "Mailman? Can you get in?" The Cleveland, Ohio Branch 40 member tried, but the storm door wouldn't budge. Cox suggested the back door, where the carrier found another locked screen door, but he was able to yank it open. He learned his patron had slipped and tumbled down a stairway two-and-a-half days earlier. Cox had crawled to the top of the stairs, but was still unable to reach the phone and was slipping into diabetic shock. Robinson called 911 and waited with the man until paramedics arrived. ☒

**"Hugh truly has 'hero status' with our family."**

**—Bob Herrmann praised Branch 825 member Hugh Nickle after the carrier's attentiveness led to his mother's receiving life-saving attention**