

Proud TO SERVE

In this modern age, where murder and violence have become regular fodder for the news media, examples of courage and compassion are needed now more than ever. Across this nation, letter carriers are often the first to discover people in need due to attacks, accidents or fires. The following reports are offered to honor the actions of those carriers whose quick thinking and speedy reactions have saved lives.

Carrier delivers aid twice in 24 hours

On one of his routes, carrier **Larry Baker** came across a woman on the street who needed assistance with her disabled husband, a Parkinson's disease patient and stroke victim, who had fallen and wasn't able to get up. Baker used his first aid training to help the man and then accompanied the woman to her residence. He talked to the man, who he found to be coherent, while the woman called EMS.

Later that day, the Cayce-West Columbia, South Carolina Branch 4616 member watched as a van veered off the road, hit two trees, a fence and a carport. Baker acted quickly, blocking neighborhood children from going too close to the vehicle. He recruited a neighbor for help in assisting the driver, who they discovered was diabetic, and kept a close eye on the situation while authorities were notified. Baker brushed off any praise. "I didn't do anything someone else wouldn't have done for me if they had the chance," he told USPS officials.

Carrier helps avert dangerous ordeal

When **Duane Bash** entered an upholstery store on his route, he saw two men in the store acting strangely and sensed that the shop workers were very uneasy. The men had asked to use the store's phone, saying they were hopelessly lost, even though Moberly, Missouri, is a small city. They were trying to explain they needed to call a friend for a ride, and asked directions to a nearby convenience store. When shop worker Shirley Nichols mentioned the name of the convenience store and one of the men said, "Yeah, the one that was robbed," she became increasingly scared. Nichols was relieved when Bash entered, and signaled him to stay close.

The men continued to make several phone calls and kept looking out the windows suspiciously, while Bash stood guard near the women and kept an eye on them. When the men went outside, another shop worker began to call the police, but that plan was foiled when the men walked back in, so she instead called a customer. The worker then snuck her cell phone to the bathroom and called the police, who arrived shortly after the men left. Police eventually apprehended the two suspects, both of whom were parole violators and had concealed weapons on them. Nichols wrote a letter to the postmaster to praise the Branch 335 member, saying, "I just wanted you to know how very thankful to him we are, as he possibly saved our money if not our lives." ✉



Cayce-West Columbia, South Carolina
Branch 4616 member Larry Baker

ROBIN HERCHE WAS WALKING HER route when she came across two elderly patrons, Jean and Paul Byers, who were on the floor of their garage. Paul, who had a brace on his leg, had fallen getting out of his car. His wife tried to help him up, but she also fell. Herche passed by just a few minutes later and saw what had happened. She was able to help the woman up, but was unable to help the man, so she quickly ran to a neighbor's house for assistance. Within minutes, the couple was up off the floor. The carrier stayed with the Byerses for a while longer to make sure they were OK before continuing on her route. Jean Byers wrote a letter to the postmaster praising the Boise, Idaho Branch 331 member, saying she and her husband could have been on the cold cement floor for a lot longer had Herche not passed by and stopped to help, since not a lot of people walk by during the day.

PULLING UP TO THE MAILBOX OF A house on his route on a cool day, **Kenneth Gilbraith** heard cries for help. He began looking around and saw an elderly woman in her 80s lying beside her garage. The carrier pulled into the driveway and went to assist the woman. She said she had fallen and thought that her hip might be broken. Gilbraith quickly got in touch with 911 and sat with the woman until an ambulance arrived. The customer's daughter let the post office know that she was very grateful to the Marietta, Ohio Branch 154 member for taking the time to help her mother.

NOTICING FOUR DAYS' WORTH OF accumulated mail, **Nathan Divin** grew very concerned. He also noticed his elderly customer had not come out of her house to offer him a drink, like she did on most days. When he approached the house, he heard a bird inside screaming, "Mom! Mom! Mom!" and became increasingly worried for his patron's well-being. Since the customer had no family in town, Divin decided to notify the police before resuming his route. On his way back later that day,

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—Branch 2184 member
**Bonnie Price found a cus-
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and contacted 911 and the
woman's family.**

the San Antonio, Texas Branch 421 member was stopped by an officer, who asked if he had been the one to place the call. He said he had, and was told that because of his actions, the woman was taken to the hospital after suffering a stroke and was recuperating.

BONNIE PRICE HEARD ELDERLY CUS-tomer Mary Gubacz crying for help one workday. The customer, who was dressed only in a robe with her hair disheveled, was disoriented and asking for help to get back into her home. The front door was open. Price helped the woman back inside and sat her on the sofa to calm her down before continuing on her route. The next day, it was a similar story—Price saw Gubacz wandering around the mobile home park in her robe again. Price approached the customer and coaxed her back to her home. This time, the Western Wayne County, Michigan Branch 2184 member noticed phone numbers by the phone and decided to call the woman's family as well as 911. Price sat with her for 45 minutes waiting for help to arrive. "I thought of my own mother," Price told USPS officials. "I couldn't leave her." The Gubacz family was grateful that Price was willing to help,

particularly since there were train tracks nearby that the woman could have wandered toward. "My faith and my belief tell me what I am supposed to do," Price said. "I look out for others every day."

PHILIP HOWARD WAS GOING ABOUT HIS route when he came across customer Paula Eddy on the ground. She had been taking her garbage to the curb when she lost her balance and fell, unable to get up. The Columbus, Ohio Branch 78 member helped Eddy to her feet and made sure she was OK before continuing on his route.

ELYRIA, OHIO BRANCH 196 MEMBER David Poszgai heard what he thought was a cat meowing in distress as he delivered mail to a retirement community on his route. He went to investigate to be sure, and found that it was actually one of his elderly customers, Barbara Fricke. The woman had a gash over one eye and an injured leg and had been lying on the ground for the better part of an hour. Poszgai got Fricke a blanket and towels and called 911 before contacting neighbor Sarah Bennett for assistance. He then waited by his customer's side until EMS arrived. The woman had been outside cleaning her dog when she fell. "He did everything," Bennett told *The Chronicle-Telegram*. "He was the one who heard her. Otherwise, she would be out there yet." But Poszgai was quick to brush off the credit. "I'm not a hero," the 22-year postal veteran told *The Morning Journal*. "I was just being a good neighbor."

WHEN TOM MOELLER CAME ACROSS A mailbox at an elderly customer's house with the prior day's mail still visible, he grew concerned. He repeatedly knocked on the woman's door to no avail. He decided to enter the home and discovered her on the floor in a semi-conscious state. The Carrollton, Kentucky Branch 2883 member called 911 and stayed with the woman to comfort her until an ambulance arrived. EMTs and police credited Moeller with saving his customer's life. ☒

FIRE & RESCUE

On his route one day, Mark Garofalo saw that there was a tractor on fire in front of a residence. The machine was very close to the house, and the fire's heat was causing the siding to melt. Aware that the house also serves as a day-care facility, Garofalo ran inside the building, knocking on doors, and he began taking the children inside to safety at a neighboring house. The Boston, Massachusetts Branch 34 member completed the evacuation before the fire department arrived at the house.

Driving along during his workday, Central Florida Branch 1091 member Dennis Moreland began detecting a strong smell of smoke. As he approached the next residence on his route, he observed smoke at the back of the prior home. The carrier quickly parked his vehicle, and as he rounded the corner to turn back, he saw flames shooting out of the chimney.

Moreland immediately dialed 911 and ran to the front door to alert the customers. Ms. Devlin answered the door and assured the carrier her family was gathered around the fireplace, watching a movie on the unusually cold and windy Florida day. He persuaded her to douse the fire in the fireplace to prevent feeding the chimney fire. While waiting for fire fighters to arrive, Moreland and Devlin's husband grabbed the garden hose and attempted to control the flames. Once the fire department arrived and he saw that the situation was under control, the 15-year postal veteran continued on his route. The next afternoon, Moreland realized the entire chimney had been dismantled in order to extinguish the fire. The Devlins had only lived in the house a short time and expressed their sincere appreciation for Moreland's quick response. ☒



Central Florida Branch 1091 member Dennis Moreland alerted his customers, the Devlins, and authorities when he noticed a chimney fire at the house. Pictured with the carrier are Courtney and Kyle Devlin.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Smelling the strange scent of natural gas at a house on his route, DeWitt Tolbert went to knock on the door and brought his concern to the attention of the elderly couple who lives there. They called the gas company right away and they immediately shut down the furnace, which they discovered had gone bad and was giving off carbon monoxide. Although the gas had not yet started entering the house, it was only a matter of time, said the gas company, before the defective furnace would have caused the entire house to fill with the deadly fumes. The furnace was soon replaced and the residents sent a letter to Tolbert, thanking the Wheeling, Illinois Branch 4739 member for potentially saving their lives.

Charlotte McGinnis was involved in a car accident one winter day and sat in her car, waiting for help. No one was passing by, so she began honking her horn to try to get someone's attention. As Matt Kloss passed by while on duty, he heard the horn and found McGinnis in her car. The Freeport, Illinois Branch 223 member called 911 and a towing service and stayed with her until help arrived. The customer thanked Kloss for his willingness to help her during her time of trouble.

Delivering a package to the front hallway of a customer's house, Erin Ross detected a strong odor of natural gas. She rang the doorbell of the home, but heard no reply. She didn't put the matter

out of her mind, though. On another street on her route, she saw a gas company truck and tracked the driver down to explain the situation. The gas company representative went to check on the house and discovered a serious gas leak in the basement. "If she had not followed up on her concern, I am sure it would have resulted in certain disaster for me and my home," customer Christine Bialaszewski wrote in a letter to the post office about the Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member. "I will be forever grateful to Erin Ross for showing such concern for another human being. She is truly a special woman and a wonderful representative of the United States Postal Service." ☒