

Proud TO SERVE

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 202-662-2851 or postalrecord@nalc.org. We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.



What is a hero? Someone who rescues residents from their burning homes? Letter carriers do that.

Someone who attends to pedestrians knocked unconscious in car accidents? Carriers also do that.

Someone who helps a scared and frustrated woman get her just-snatched purse back? Carriers even do that.

This month, we showcase some letter carriers who did all that and more. The following stories document their heroism. For them, it's all in a day's work.

Carrier tackles burglar, says 'all in a good day's work'

Barbara and Craig Davis had come home to find that their house had been burglarized. "There were two diamond necklaces on my bed, which [the burglar] didn't take," Barbara told local TV station WNEP. "I guess he got startled." The burglar was most likely startled when Davis' son, Wilkes-Barre, PA Branch 115 member **James Gallagher**, entered the house on his route during a short break on June 22.

He arrived at the home and noticed someone had kicked in the back door. He called his mother and asked if she and her husband were having work done

on it, but when she told him they weren't, Gallagher grew suspicious.

It was discovered that the burglar had stood on an old milk box to get up to a window, lifted it and the screen up, and went inside. He then went to the basement to get a hammer and screwdriver and broke through the kitchen door before heading to a higher floor. "I actually heard them walking around upstairs," Gallagher said. "That's when I got on the phone, and I called the cops."

The six-year postal veteran yelled upstairs, "The cops are on the way!" The burglar heard and then kicked out a window, went onto the roof, and swung onto the porch below. "He took off running down the street, and that's when I tackled him," Gallagher said. "I held him down until the cops came."

Police arrived and took the burglar into custody, who was set to be charged with at least two other burglaries and theft. It also was discovered that the suspect, who works for a company that replaces water meters, knocked on a neighbor's door before the burglaries. When she answered, he told her that he would be working to replace water meters in the area and if she heard any banging or unusual noises, she shouldn't be alarmed.

The Davises had all of their stolen property returned, and were shocked at what happened. "I've lived here 50 years and never had a problem," Craig told WNEP. They're glad that Gallagher was there at the time, though. "I'm very proud of him," Barbara said.

Gallagher took his actions in apprehending the suspect in stride. "I'm flattered and blessed to be called a hero," he said. "But anyone would have done that."



Top: Wilkes-Barre, PA Branch 115 member James Gallagher received recognition for helping stop a burglar on his route. Above: Gallagher speaks with local news station WNEP.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH



Northern Virginia Branch 3520 member Bill Palum

After an earthquake on the East Coast Aug. 23, carrier **Bill Palum** noticed the unmistakable odor of natural gas while he was at his truck getting ready to deliver in a townhouse community. "I was parked by a storm drainage system," he said. The

Northern Virginia Branch 3520 member quickly notified property manager Deborah Wright. "It smells really strong of gas," he told her, and they both tried to narrow down where the leak was. Managers were able to shut off the gas to the houses within five minutes and contacted the local gas company. Upon investigation, the company found that the earthquake had completely ruptured the pipe in the supply line, which serves the several hundred townhomes in the area. The company worked all through the night to fix it. "It could have been a bad situation," Palum said. "It was lucky that my truck was parked there." Wright wrote to the local postmaster praising the carrier. "Without Bill's quick work in notifying us of this issue, it may have gone unnoticed for a while and could have had severe consequences," she wrote. "Thanks again, Bill,

from everyone here." But Palum brushed off the superlatives, claiming it was just "right place, right time. I was just glad to be of help."

On May 3, Puyallup, WA Branch 1484 member **Michael Adams** was delivering to some apartments on his route when he observed a toddler, about 3 years old, near some older children. The children soon left without the toddler—and Adams realized that they were not together. He tried to find the child's family, but since it was a large apartment complex, he wasn't able to. So, the carrier contacted police and kept the child safe until the boy was able to be reunited with his family.

While James Barry was on his route

While **James Barry** was on his route Aug. 6, he "kept hearing a little baby crying," he said, along with other random noises. A dog kept coming up behind him, which caused him to turn around at one point. When he did, he saw a toddler, clad only in a diaper, begin walking into a busy street, crying loudly for his mother. "I just reacted instinctively," the St. Louis Branch 343 member said, and he shouted a warning to alert others in the area.



St. Louis Branch 343 member James Barry

"I began waving my arms and running into the street," he said. He was able to successfully get drivers' attention and stop traffic in time to snatch up the child and bring him to safety. Once he reached the other side of the street, he tried to talk to the child, but the toddler was too young to know his address. "By this time, a small group of people gathered around, and I began asking if anyone knew the boy or where he lived," Barry said. "No one knew him." The carrier began to walk back in the direction from which the child had come. People from the group followed and helped to search for some sign of where the child lived. Minutes into their search, they saw a door swing open and a frantic man step outside, seemingly looking for something. They approached him and discovered that he was the child's father. "I put the kid down and he ran inside," Barry said. The man expressed his gratitude to Barry for keeping his son safe, and then the 14-year postal veteran continued on his rounds. Barry said he was happy to be able to return the child to his home, but said his actions were "nothing too terribly heroic." ✉

Carrier helps drag man to safety during house fire

Joseph Zapata was on his route on March 21 and was coming around the corner of a street when he spotted a man falling out of the window of his home, landing in the front yard outside. The carrier then looked up and noticed "fire was blazing out of the window," he said.

The San Antonio, TX Branch 421 member quickly called 911 to report the fire. In this type of situation, "your instincts and training come in," said Zapata, who was in the Air Force for 18

years before joining the Postal Service 12 years ago.

He then rushed toward the customer and, with the help of a neighbor who realized what was going on, grabbed the man and dragged him to safety in the neighbor's yard. In the process, the carrier himself suffered second-degree burns because of his proximity to the fire, but he stayed to make sure the man was OK.

After firefighters battled the fire, the fire chief said he recognized Zapata. That's because this isn't the first time Zapata's been hailed as a hero. About three years ago, Zapata went into his

neighbor's house that was engulfed with flames to pull the woman out. "I know my wife is going to say, 'I told you never to go into burning houses again,'" he said.

And, despite repeated hugs and words of gratitude from those he's saved, the carrier insists he was just doing what anyone would do. "No, no, I'm not a hero," Zapata said. "You take care of others."





Naples, FL Branch 4716 member Parker Correll

While on his route last August on a 90-degree day, **Parker Correll** became concerned when he heard a call for help. “I heard someone yelling for the mailman,” he said. He hurried in the direction of the voice, and

came to the home of a customer he knew. He thought the woman was going to give him a flower she had picked, but instead, he discovered that the customer had fallen in the yard 30 minutes earlier and was unable to get up. The Naples, FL Branch 4716 member helped the woman up, assisted in getting her back inside her home, and got her some cold water. When he saw that she was feeling better, he left to continue his route and stopped in again later to check on her. “Parker is an asset to our community,” Branch Secretary Cindy Quinn wrote to *The Postal Record* about the 11-year postal veteran. But Correll said it was something anyone would do. “To me, it’s nothing,” he said. “I was just doing my job.”

Harrisburg, PA Branch 500 member Britt Reed was on his route March 18 when he saw that a customer had fallen. The woman appeared to have broken her leg and to need stitches to her head as a result of the fall. Reed called 911 and stayed with the woman to comfort her until medical help arrived. He was commended for his conscientious actions and for caring about the people in his community.

While on his route on June 1, Tony Bonelli had stopped for a coffee break at the home of his friend, whose mother worked at the post office with him. “We were sitting and talking,” he said, when the friend’s 2-year-old son, Michael, started choking and appeared to have the symptoms of a seizure. “He went limp and was wincing,” Bonelli said. The Hudson Valley Merged, NY Branch 137 member, who has been a volunteer firefighter on and off for the past 16 years and has a daughter who had recently experienced a seizure, called 911 and then tried desperately to open the child’s mouth. They thought the boy possibly had swallowed one of his toys, but when they finally were able to open his

mouth, they discovered nothing blocking his airway. The carrier tried to keep the woman and child calm as they waited for EMS units, helping the child as he had several more seizures before the ambulance arrived. Bonelli, a 14-year postal veteran, deflected praise for his role. “It’s not anything someone else wouldn’t do, given the circumstances,” he said. “It’s just a reaction someone has to help someone.”

Debbie Goldsby was delivering mail on her route on July 1 when a woman approached her. The woman had discovered that her sister, who was Goldsby’s customer, had recently passed away, and her body was still in the house. The woman asked the Caldwell, ID Branch 1386 member if she would stay with her until help arrived. Goldsby obliged, staying with the woman to comfort her. The customer’s family later called the post office to thank the carrier for being so caring, kind and brave, saying it meant so much to them that Goldsby took time out of her busy schedule to stay with a grieving family member. Goldsby said her act wasn’t a big deal. “It’s just the person I am,” she told the USPS. “I would do it for anyone.”

Stanley Salters was delivering mail on June 28 when he noticed a woman lying face up on the pavement at the edge of the road and a car on the road ahead turning around. The Cayce-West Columbia, SC

“It’s not anything someone else wouldn’t do, given the circumstances.”

—Branch 137 member Tony Bonelli, who summoned help and aided a boy who was having seizures

Branch 4616 member approached the woman to see if he could help and parked his LLV to shield her from oncoming traffic. He discovered that the person in the other vehicle was trying to help but didn’t know what to do. The victim was responsive when Salters spoke to her, but she was losing a lot of blood from a head injury. The carrier called 911 and stayed with her until authorities arrived a few minutes later.

A voice calling for help alerted Derrick Harrison as he was delivering his route last summer. He hurried to the house, and a woman inside, Mrs. McNabb, spoke to him through the locked door. She told him where to find a spare key, which the carrier grabbed and opened the door. Inside, he found McNabb lying on the floor, where she had been for almost 24 hours. She had been yelling for help, but no one had heard her, so she had decided she would wait until Harrison made his way to her house to deliver the mail. The Alexandria, VA Branch 567 member stayed with McNabb until help arrived. Community residents soon found out about Harrison’s good deed. “Surely one of the bad effects of reducing the number of postal deliveries a week would be to reduce the opportunities for our postmen to do useful and helpful acts that they do besides delivering the mail,” neighborhood resident Lois Kelso Hunt wrote in a letter to the *Alexandria Gazette Packet* praising Harrison.

Carrier Thomas Logue, a 28-year postal veteran, was enjoying Father’s Day on June 19 at the beach with his family. He saw that a young boy on a boogie board out in the water was being pulled out deeper and deeper by a rip current. The Cape Atlantic, NJ Branch 903 member sensed there was something wrong, as if the child was too upset to even scream for help. A large wave suddenly came up and over the boy, hiding him from view. Logue ran to the water and swam to where the boy had been. He went underwater and pulled the boy up and, despite being knocked around by the current himself, he was able to hoist the boy onto his shoulders and bring him safely to shore. The boy’s father thanked Logue for saving his child’s life. ✉

Repeat hero's actions helps community infrastructure

Athens, OH Branch 997 member **Charlie Rose** knows the smell of natural gas very well. The 23-year postal veteran estimates that, in the past three years, he has detected at least a dozen natural gas leaks throughout his route. In each case, he informed a resident of his suspicions, and the local gas company later confirmed it as an actual leak.

In fact, because of all of the problems, the gas company has decided to replace gas lines in the area as part of a \$1.2 million project that aims to replace 17,235 feet of pipe. "Not only am I proud of the fact that I've been involved in situations where I may have saved people's lives, but I've tried to protect people in the future by helping to bring on these repairs," Rose told the *Athens Messenger*.

Many local residents have been vocal about Rose's contributions to their neighborhood. Jane Lyons, a resident on the carrier's route, called the gas company based on a note Rose left. She had smelled a strange odor from time to time, but took Rose's suggestion seriously. "Basically, Charlie saved our lives," she told the newspaper. "I don't know how many people would have left a note like that. I'm quite thankful that he cared enough to leave that message. Were it not for his good nose, we may not be here."

"We've got infrastructure that goes back to the

FDR administration," Rose said. And thanks to his four to five trips to the city council, 4,500 to 5,000 new rental properties in the area also will be required to have carbon monoxide detectors. Rose said he's not out for self-glorification, but he's proud that his actions were instrumental in making that decision.

But this is not the only way Rose has helped on his route. He also aided a person who was having a heart attack and helped point police officers in the right direction while they were pursuing a suspect on foot. (See the June 2008 and June 2009 issues of *The Postal Record* for more about Rose's prior accomplishments.)

Rose said he just looks out for his customers, who he considers an extended family. "When letter carriers see a problem when they're delivering the mail, it's not unusual that they'll help," he told the *Messenger*. "That's why I think it's so important that the American public realize what an important thing it is to have a mailman there six days a week and not five. Who knows if they cut back if that Saturday that the mail wasn't delivered is a day that we could have smelled, heard or saw something that we could have helped stop from becoming a dangerous situation." ✉



Bux-Mont, PA Branch 920 member Mark Feulner talks to a local news affiliate.

ON THE AFTERNOON OF AUG. 27, BUX-Mont, PA Branch 920 member **Mark Feulner** was on the route he's had for 17 years when he heard a voice calling for help. "I was just doing my normal route, coming up to the house, and I

heard the voice," he said. He went to the house of 85-year-old customer Marion Mellor and asked through the door what was wrong. "She fell right inside the door," he said. So, he checked both doors, but they were locked. He went to his vehicle and grabbed his phone and went back to the house. He assured the woman he was calling someone, and dialed 911. Mellor had been trying to go downstairs to the kitchen for lunch and tripped when she got near the bottom of the steps. She flew across the room and was unable to get up because of a broken hip. Mellor's two daughters were at work and none of her neighbors could hear her calls. The carrier stayed at the scene until police arrived soon after to take the woman to the hospital, and Feulner called Mellor's daughter to fill her in. "There are always stories like this one, where carriers will notice or hear someone calling for help, and I always wondered, 'Oh, what if that hap-



pened to me?" Feulner said. "Well, it did happen to me, so it was a good feeling to be able to help." Mellor said she just can't thank him enough, noting that if it weren't for Feulner, she would have been lying there until her daughter came home from work. "He was such a miracle man," she told *The Reporter*. "I just want everybody to know, we do have angels going around and watching out for us." The 23-year postal veteran downplayed his heroics, though. "I'm not looking for any attention," he said, "I was just glad to help out." ✉