

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

Honoring heroic carriers

Heroism, like the mail, comes in many packages—think of police officers or firefighters. But for some citizens in need of assistance, their heroes come in the form of concerned letter carriers.

Letter carriers are members of nearly every community in this nation and know when something is wrong. Spotting fires and injuries, they often are the first to respond. The following stories document their heroism. For them, delivering for America is all in a day's work.

A carrier's instincts proven right

Long Island, NY Branch 6000 member **Mario Serrano** thought things might be askew when he saw mail piled up at his 87-year-old customer's house on July 30. The 29-year postal veteran had been on the route for seven years and knew this was unusual.

Serrano went closer and could hear some muffled sounds coming from inside. The bathroom window was close to the front steps, so Serrano thought someone was taking a shower. "I heard



Mario Serrano

water running, and I thought someone was singing, so I paid no mind to it," Serrano told the local Fox TV affiliate. "But her mail wasn't picked up, so I finished the loop and something told me to go back."

The carrier returned to the house and rang the doorbell. He heard the woman scream, "Help me! Help me!" in reply. He called out her name, and she was coherent. "So I pried open the window, and I assured her she was going to be OK," Serrano said. The woman had fallen two days earlier and had gotten her foot caught between the bathtub and the toilet. Serrano called 911 and continued to comfort her until help came.

The carrier said that he was just doing his job. "You've got to thank God above for putting me in the right place at the right time," Serrano said. He praised his customer for her courage in the situation. "She's just as big of a hero as I am," he said. "She's the one who had the will to live." **PR**

Mario Serrano appeared on "Good Day New York" after rescuing a patron on his route.



Eye on the elderly

Bill Lindsay Jr. started his route on Oct. 18 and had made about four deliveries when he heard a loud noise that sounded like metal on metal. “I didn’t think anything of it until I heard a faint voice calling out a name,” the Southern Illinois Merged

Branch 1197 member said. Lindsay turned around to see the elderly customer from the house of his first delivery on the concrete porch, struggling. He hurried back about a half a block to get to her as she yelled for someone in the house to help. When Lindsay reached her, he real-

ized that she had fallen from her walker onto the concrete porch and metal railings. “She was complaining about her hip and head,” the carrier said. “I could see blood all over the porch and down the back of her head and clothing.” Since it was cold and windy, Lindsay thought the woman should be taken back in the house for medical attention, so he lifted her and got her back into her lounge chair. He then went into the kitchen and found a towel for the split in the back of her head and to get the bleeding under control. She was able to tell the carrier her daughter’s name and pointed to where her daughter was. “I then went back through the house and summoned her daughter,

who was sleeping due to working the night shift as a nurse,” he said. Once the daughter came in, and Lindsay saw that the mother was in capable hands and EMS units were on their way, the carrier continued on his route. “I talked with the woman’s husband later and he thanked me and filled me in on his wife’s condition,” Lindsay said. “The husband has thanked me again since the first time, and I think he is now glad the Postal Service is there in time of need.”

On the morning of July 31, Neenah, WI Branch 700 member **Danielle Boushley** was on the porch of a home delivering mail when she heard an elderly woman’s

voice. “I looked around and didn’t see anything,” she said. “Something told me to look down.” Doing so, she noticed the elderly woman lying helpless behind a large growth of bushes. The woman was without shoes and covered in mud. Boushley immediately called 911 and then crawled under the bushes to comfort her customer and hold her hand until first responders arrived. The woman apparently had fallen from her porch the previous afternoon and remained there overnight because her location prevented passers-by from seeing or hearing her. Boushley was just glad she could help. “I don’t feel like a hero,” she said. “It was just instinct, I guess.” **PR**



Bill Lindsay Jr.

Carrier helps save the day in ‘very scary’ situation

Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Barry Eleey** was on his way to work on June 5 when he came across a horrible sight: a man, Curtis Senf, lying unresponsive on the shoulder of a main road after being hit by a car while he was on his bicycle. The van had been pulling into a parking lot and its driver had never seen Senf.

“Other cars pulled away, and he was just lying there,” Eleey said. So, he secured his LLV and ran over to Senf to assess his condition. “He stopped breathing and he started turning blue,” the 15-year postal veteran said.

Eleey, volunteer fire chief Mark Stevens, and a nurse who were also passers-by, began performing CPR as they waited for rescue crews to arrive. Stevens always keeps a fully stocked medical bag in his car, as well as

emergency oxygen, and he told *The Buffalo News* that the group almost lost Senf when he stopped breathing. “But everything worked in sequence the way it should. Everything clicked,” Stevens said. “It was 100 percent working together as a group. Without them, I don’t know what the outcome would have been. Someone there was able to start CPR while I got out a bag mask right away.”

Because of Eleey’s help, Senf was kept alive and taken to the hospital via helicopter to treat his broken neck. “The outcome would have been much different if people didn’t stop and take an active role,” Niagara County Sheriff’s Capt. Gregory Schuey told the *News*.

Eleey said it was an interesting situation to be in, albeit a very scary one. “It was a team effort,” he said. “We all

hope someone would stop if that situation arose for us.” **PR**



Barry Eleey

Eye on the elderly

Bergen County Merged, NJ Branch 425 member **Jamaal Armour** became concerned one day last spring when he saw an accumulation of mail at the home of customer **Mary Dennis**. “She usually meets me outside,” he said. “I saw that she wasn’t picking up

her mail, and she picks it up every single day.” Armour knocked on the door, but got no response. So, he asked a neighbor to check on Dennis, and the neighbor called the police. Emergency personnel arrived shortly and had to gain access to the residence through a side window. “She was on the bathroom floor for five days,” Armour said. The 13-year postal veteran said he doesn’t feel like a hero. “I have a grandmother who lived alone and would want someone to do the same for her,” he said. “I’m glad I could help. It feels good to see her today.”

As **Tony Crosson** passed 83-year-old customer **Elizabeth Slobadin**’s house on his route on June 6, he noticed that the garage door was open and then saw a pair of broken eyeglasses in the driveway. As he was putting Slobadin’s mail in her box, “I could see through the kitchen window that she was on the floor,” he said. The New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member knocked on the door to see

if she was OK. Slobadin told him she couldn’t get up and told Crosson to “come on in.” The woman was home alone and said she had fallen outside while getting her newspaper. She managed to get herself inside the house, but fell again and couldn’t get up or reach a phone to call for help. “She had a cut over her eye,” Crosson said, and so he called 911. The carrier stayed with Slobadin until paramedics arrived to take her to the hospital. “I would like to commend this man for his actions; because of him, she was able to get medical attention,” Slobadin’s daughter-in-law **Cathy Whitaker** wrote to the local postmaster. “In this day and age, many people would not have gone the extra mile as Tony did. Myself and my family are so grateful to him for his help.” Crosson isn’t sure what would have happened to the woman had he not been delivering the mail, but he doesn’t think he’s a hero. “It was no big deal from my point of perspective,” he said. “It was nothing that any other decent human being wouldn’t have done.”

Christopher Erba was walking away from the mailbox at a house on his route on March 5 when he saw the elderly resident on the ground next to the handicap ramp. The Worcester, MA Branch 12 member rushed to the man’s side and found him unresponsive. Erba quickly dialed 911 and waited with his customer until a responder arrived a few minutes later. When the carrier saw that the man was

being taken care of, he left to complete his rounds.

On the morning of June 21 while delivering mail, carrier **Gilbert “Mitch” Lilly** came across an elderly woman who was wandering aimlessly and in some distress. “I had just gotten started on my loop,” the Lewiston, ME Branch 241 member said. “She was trying to talk to me, but it was all Spanish.” But then, she walked away. “I thought, ‘Maybe she’s lost,’” Lilly said. And when he walked back to his truck, he noticed she was still wandering. The carrier recalled a few words of Spanish from high school and again approached the woman to ask if she was lost or if she needed a phone. “She started crying—it must have been frustrating for her,” he said. Lilly decided to draw a map of the neighborhood for the woman and tried to ask where she lived. She pointed, and he thought he knew which house it was. So, he went there and told the woman’s presumed daughter about the woman. He made sure mother and daughter were reunited and then continued on his route. Lilly said he didn’t think his actions were that big of a deal. “She was just lost; I just got her back to her place,” he said.

As **Robert Cardellichio** was going about his route one day last June, he saw landscapers milling about outside a house. “In my limited Spanish, the best I could figure out was that someone had fallen,” the Bridgeport, CT Branch 32 member said. He then saw

his 85-year-old customer lying on the ground. She had fallen in the garage and was in a lot of pain. “Temperatures were climbing,” Cardellichio said. “I finally convinced her to get help.” The carrier called 911 and waited with the woman until EMS units arrived to treat what turned out to be a broken hip. The woman’s husband, **Daniel Baus**, wrote a letter to the postmaster general to commend the carrier’s actions. “Mr. Cardellichio showed intelligence while taking decisive and compassionate action,” Baus said. “In my view, Robert Cardellichio epitomizes what it means to be a public servant. My family will never forget what he did for us on that day.” The carrier brushed off any talk of heroics, though. “I have a saying: ‘A hero ain’t nothin’ but a sandwich,’” Cardellichio said. “It’s nothing I wouldn’t have done for anyone, either on or off the job.”

Minneapolis Branch 9 member **Megan Zachmeier** was delivering the mail on March 29 when she noticed mail and newspapers piled up at the residence of an 85-year-old customer. She spoke with one of the neighbors, who agreed that something might be wrong. They called the police, who were able to get into the home, and found the man lying on the floor. He had been there for several days but was still alive and was transported to the hospital. Neighbors went to the post office to report their gratitude for Zachmeier’s action. **PR**



Jamaal Armour

'No one would have seen him if I wasn't there'

On a hot day in late July, Dallas Branch 132 member **Tamara Bennett** had completed most of her assignment when she arrived early at the address of a business customer who regularly mails parcels each day.

"As I was putting packages in the back of the truck, I saw him collapse," she said. The business owner had started staggering and then he suddenly fell, hitting his head on a large scale. The carrier quickly went over to the customer and found him unconscious.

Bennett immediately grabbed her cell phone to call 911, but found that she had no reception. So, she rushed outside and had yelled for someone to call 911. Once she made contact with a passer-by, she rushed back to her customer, climbed onto the dock and determined that he was not breathing.

Relying on her military training and subsequent medical assistance

training, Bennett opened the man's mouth, removed some gum and then proceeded to perform CPR. "Everything just came back," she said of her skills.

Bennett had a personal experience that made her especially hopeful that this situation would turn out for the best. "I had a close relative die in front of me and I didn't know CPR then," the carrier said. Her relative died while they waited for the ambulance.

While tending to her customer, Bennett said, "I kept telling myself, 'Stay calm.'"

She then started applying chest compressions. "On the second round of CPR, he started breathing," Bennett said. When he regained consciousness, she gave him water and cradled his head until paramedics arrived. She found out that the man had passed out from the heat.



When everything appeared to be under control, Bennett loaded the remaining parcels and returned to her route. She doesn't think her actions were a big thing, but Bennett said that no one would have seen the man if she wasn't there. "I was in the right place at the right time," she said. "My blessing was seeing him alive." **PR**

Help on the way

On May 2, **John Rotenberger** was delivering a package to his customer, Har-

nett Hoerner. As the Panama City, FL Branch 3367 member knocked on the door, he heard Hoerner yell from inside.

"John, dial 911!" the carrier recalled her saying. "I fell and

broke my hip." The door was locked, so Rotenberger ran across the street to a neighbor's house to dial 911, then came back to Hoerner's door and waited and comforted the woman until first responders arrived and got inside to

provide help. "She laid there for 14 hours," Rotenberger said. "No neighbors would have heard her." The carrier, who has been on this route for 26 of his 28 years as a letter carrier, called his customers his family. "I'm grateful that I was there that day to deliver a package," he said.

George Tade, a Las Vegas Branch 2502 member, was delivering to cluster boxes at a condominium complex on Feb. 18 when he saw a horrific car accident. Tade immediately went out to see if he could help. Neither of the two young men who were in the front seats survived the impact of the collision. The carrier proceeded to climb in the back

seat to help the other man, who was attempting to get out of the vehicle. Tade was able to calm him down, and waited with him for paramedics to arrive. "I wanted to bring this act of heroism and humanity to your attention," condominium resident Franklin A. Oberster Jr. wrote in a letter to the postmaster general. "I believe this act of heroism and caring for another human being should not go unnoticed." Tade did not seek any attention for his actions. "It's just something a carrier would do," he said.

When letter carrier **Jacob Daniel** arrived back from his route on Oct. 3, he suffered a massive heart attack and collapsed on a skid. Long

Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **Kevin Kiefaber** had just returned to the office. "Everybody was very stressed out," he said. "I was trying to figure out what was going on." The postmaster started yelling for help, so Kiefaber ran over to Daniel. "He was foaming at the mouth," Kiefaber said, and so he started chest compressions for several minutes on his unconscious co-worker until Daniel was revived. Emergency units arrived soon after to take the man to the hospital. Kiefaber, a 25-year postal veteran and an Army veteran, said he was just happy to help. "I've seen a lot of close calls in the service," he said. "You don't think about it—you just do it." **PR**



John Rotenberger