

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.

From top: Mason City, IA Branch 471 member Joe Kuennen, Detroit Branch 1 member Darrian Crutcher, and South Florida Branch 1071 member Jesus Malvarez recently were interviewed by local reporters about their heroics.



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.

Carrier wins faceoff against large dogs

As Mason City, IA Branch 471 member **Joe Kuennen** went about his route on Oct. 9, 2013, he heard someone in distress.

As he entered a museum on his route, "I heard some awful screaming," Kuennen said. He looked up and saw a woman being attacked by two large dogs, a pit bull and a Great Dane, while she was on a walk with her own two dogs.

"There was no one else around," he said. "I didn't think about it—I just ran to help."

Kuennen knew the police station was only two blocks away. "On the way over to them, someone had poked their head out the door, and I yelled out, 'Call the police!'"

The woman had picked up her small dog, which was the object of the two larger dogs' attention. She was protecting it in her arms, but both dogs were going after it.

"The pit bull was jumping up and biting her arm," Kuennen said, and the Great Dane kept barking.

Someone came to assist the woman, so the carrier turned his attention to the dogs.

Kuennen had mace, so he grabbed it quickly. "The big dog catches your

attention first, so I went and sprayed that dog first," he said. Then he sprayed the second.

They both ran away briefly—but then circled around and came back.

So Kuennen sprayed them again. And again.

The carrier saw that the woman had bite marks all over her arm, scratches on her back and the back of her T-shirt was ripped. "You could see the blood," he said.

While Kuennen was tending to the action, a man and woman came driving by and called out to the dogs. The animals weren't theirs, but they knew the owners, and they put them in the back seat of the car and drove them away.

When police arrived, they called paramedics and the woman was taken to the hospital. The 20-year postal veteran helped officers with a police report before returning to his route.

"Everything happened so quickly," Kuennen said. "I was lucky to get out of that incident unharmed."

The carrier has run into the woman a few times since then—in the same spot, walking her dogs. The loose dogs that time "was a fluke," she told him. She thanked him profusely for his actions.

Though many are calling him a hero, Kuennen doesn't agree. "I was just helping somebody out in a time of need," he said. "I had my satchel and spray."

Carrier tackles house fire

While delivering mail on Oct. 22, 2013, Detroit Branch 1 member **Darrian Crutcher** saw smoke emanating from a house. The carrier went closer to the house. "A little girl was sitting on the porch, crying," he said. She told him that her mother was inside the house.

Crutcher called 911, and then ran inside and found the homeowner,

Carolyn Patterson, who was panicked and didn't know what to do. She had lit incense, which is believed to have started the fire.

"I told her she had to come outside," Crutcher said. He also asked her if there was a water hose. Patterson said there was.

He quickly found the garden hose at the side of the house, took it inside and hooked it up. "I got down on my knees to see where the fire was, because it was so smoky," Crutcher said. Once he spotted the flames, he began to battle the blaze.

"He was spraying [the fire] down and everything and knocked [the fire] down quite a bit," Patterson told the local Fox TV station, WJBK. "I think this room probably would've burned up. I really do."

Crutcher stayed on the job until firefighters arrived. As soon as the fire was in the hands of professionals, Crutcher went right back to his route. "I said, 'OK, they're there. The real firemen are here now so I can go ahead and do my job,'" Crutcher told WJBK.

Firefighters applauded Crutcher's actions. The carrier said firefighters told him, "You already put the fire out—what'd you call us for?"

David Weems of the Detroit Fire Department told WJBK, "It's great just to see citizens just stopping to do ... the good of man."

Crutcher was just glad he could help. "I wasn't thinking," he said. "The girl said her mother was in there, so I went in there.

"I wouldn't say [I'm] a hero," the eight-year postal veteran told WJBK. "It was a blessing for me to be at that spot at that particular time."

Delivering help

As South Florida Branch 1071 member **Jesus Malvarez** approached the mail slot at customer Olga Katona's home on Oct. 22, 2013, he heard her yelling, "Jesus, open the door, open the door!"

"When I heard this [jiggles mail slot] ... I started screaming not so hard, but he heard me," Katona told news affiliate WSVN. "This door was a little bit

open, and he went inside."

When Malvarez entered the customer's home, he found Katona, his customer for more than 10 years, sitting on her couch, trembling with chest pains. Katona had already called 911, but she told WSVN, "At that point, they take a little bit long, so he was calling again."

Emergency dispatchers coached the 20-year postal veteran as he waited with Katona until medics arrived.

Katona spent two days in the hospital. She told WSVN that she feels fine now, and she is grateful for that, but she also is grateful to her mailman.

"I was so glad somebody was here with me, and it was him," Katona told WSVN. "I thank God because he sent me him here."

Malvarez brushed off any accolade. "I help the people; that's it," he told WSVN.

When a local CBS TV news affiliate asked him how he feels about his co-workers calling him a hero, he said, "I do what I do, it's human, no?" **PR**

Fire and rescue

Phoenix Branch 576 member **David Jamieson** was delivering his route



David Jamieson

on July 18, 2013, when a man came running over to him. "They asked me if I had a cell phone on me," he said. Jamieson asked why, and the man said he had come from one street over and there was a house on fire. The carrier immediately di-

aled 911 and, knowing that the house in question was on his route, drove over to the burning house, which he believed to be vacant. Jamieson went around to a neighbor's house and retrieved their water hose. "I banged on the door and connected the hose," the carrier said. He started putting out the fire, which so far was contained to the backyard and a retaining wall, though "embers were flying into others' yards," Jamieson said. Since it was a windy day, "I got ahead of the fire and I kept the fire from creeping any further," the seven-year postal veteran said. He asked the neighbor to knock on the doors and the win-

dows of the house to check to see if anyone was inside the home. There were people in the home who had just moved in a day before and were unaware that their backyard and the walls between the yards were on fire. When the fire department arrived about 10 minutes later, Jamieson had most of the fire contained or put out, and he continued on his route. The residents inside the home got out safely, and the house itself was not badly damaged. Jamieson downplayed his actions, though, saying he would expect someone else to do the same. "It's more instinct than heroism," the Army combat veteran said. **PR**