

## 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

**H**eroism, 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.

## Marine carrier not scared of a little blood

Kinston, NC Branch 1044 member **Kenny Goss** was delivering mail on April 22 when he was approached by his customer, Bobby Baker, who asked for help. "Hey mailman, do you have a bandage?" Goss said Baker asked him.

Goss asked to see Baker's arm and saw that it was bleeding profusely. "I told him to raise his arm up," said Goss, a retired Marine who served for two decades. "And keep pressure on it."

The man quickly went back to his house, and the carrier headed to his LLV to call 911. Baker reappeared with a T-shirt to wrap around his arm.

Baker told the carrier that he had cut his arm when he had tried to open a window to let out some smoke as he was cooking. He also reached for a storm window to open. "When I opened the outside window, the inside window went down on my wrist," Baker told *The Free Press*.

The old window was not only loose in the track, but the bottom edge of the wooden frame was jagged, and so it punctured Baker's radial artery. Baker had tried to stop the blood from spewing out of the artery, but it was still bleeding heavily. Not having a phone,



Long Island City, NY Branch 357 member **Joseh Urbina** was presented with a Postal Hero Award on National Superhero Day in April.

the customer went out on the porch and saw Goss a few doors down.

Baker's arm eventually grew tired, so Goss helped him keep it elevated. "It was bleeding really good," Goss said. "One of my Marines was shot in Beirut. I knew what to do because I had done it before."

Responding police officers told Goss to continue doing what he was doing until EMS units arrived to take over. Baker was taken to the hospital, where doctors mended his punctured artery.

The patron's niece called Goss to tell him that her uncle might have bled to death had he not been there to help.

Baker told the *Free Press* that he believed Goss was sent by an angel and is a good Samaritan. "A good Samaritan is somebody who will help you out," Baker said. "He doesn't have to be a brother or sister, but will help you out in a time of need."

But Goss brushed off any major credit. "I'm not a hero," the 13-year postal veteran said. "I just stopped the bleeding until the ambulance got there."

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**"One of my Marines was shot in Beirut. I knew what to do because I had done it before."**

—Kenny Goss of Kinston, NC Br. 1044

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## Life-and-death situation all in a day's work

It was just another March day for Long Island City, NY Branch 357 member **Joseph Urbina**. He went out on his route last March, delivered the mail and came back to his station. Oh, and he rescued dozens of patrons from their burning building.

Urbina didn't even mention the incident when he returned to his post office. Co-workers didn't learn of Urbina's heroic actions until grateful fire victims

showed up to offer thanks.

The carrier had seen a girl screaming from an apartment window. He determined that the blaze was on the fourth floor, and so he helped the girl and her family escape. He then banged on the door of the other 24 apartments to warn other residents to flee, then continued on his route.

He received a lot of praise from his customers.

"I was taking a nap with my daughter and someone started banging on the door," Maria Gomes, who lives on the

third floor of the four-story building, told *The New York Daily News*. "If it wasn't for him, me and my daughter, God forbid, I don't know."

"You need more people like him in the world," Daniela Valic, a longtime resident of the building, told the newspaper.

"These people know me; they are like my extended family," Urbina, a 27-year postal veteran, told the *Daily News*. "If I had not been in that building at that precise moment, who knows what could have happened? It really blew my mind. It was almost an act of God."

## Neighborhood watch

While out on his regular route on Jan. 7, Akron, OH Branch 148 member Kevin Holland noticed something suspicious. "I was just walking on my route and saw someone walking into a vacant house," he said. The carrier noticed that the windows of the home were open, and that there were finger marks on them. "I got 'Sherlock Holmes' on it," he said. He checked with a neighbor to see if anyone has recently moved into the house. They confirmed that no one had, so Holland asked them to call the police. "Police were there before I got back to my truck," Holland said. Responding officers were able to arrest the trespasser inside the home, and upon his arrest, it was discovered that he was a suspect in another city for a series of burglaries and for stealing a vehicle. Holland laughed at the idea of being called a hero, though. "I was just doing my job," the nine-year postal veteran said.

A child left sleeping on a school bus was saved thanks to South Jersey Branch 908 member Joy Melita. The sleeping 5-year-old boy was forgotten by the bus driver, who parked and left the bus after delivering other children to school. The boy woke up and left the bus and approached Melita on her route and asked for help. Melita called police. In a thank-you note, the boy's mother told Melita he knew he could trust a letter carrier. "That's so good that we have that reputation," Melita said. The bus driver faced disciplinary action.

Delivering the mail on a spring day, North Platte, NE Branch 1258 carrier Kriatrina Martinez heard a police broadcast about a criminal suspect at large. She soon



Kriatrina Martinez

noticed a man hiding under a car who fit the subject's description. Martinez called police, who arrested the man. "This type of cooperation certainly makes our job easier and safer," wrote

the police chief in a letter to her postmaster commending Martinez.

While training a new hire and delivering mail on his route on Jan. 15, Providence, RI Branch 15 member Robert Leigh noticed a young man emerging from the shrubbery beside a house on his route, carrying something in his arms that appeared to be a safe. Leigh asked the man where he was going, and he began to tell a story about coming from a friend's house where he had spent the night. Leigh was suspicious, so he continued talk-

ing to the man to try to slow him down and get a better idea about what he was up to, when he saw a police car from a neighboring town come down the street. He flagged down the patrol car, and the police officers in the car immediately recognized the man. They arrested the man after finding drugs and other stolen items on him.

As a postal customer left her car to put outgoing mail into a collection box last December, Raleigh, NC Branch 459 member Darryl Williams was emptying the boxes, whom he noticed the customer's car rolling forward—she had forgotten to put the car in park. Acting fast, Williams reached through the open window, grabbed the steering wheel and steered the car to a safe stop, avoiding passing traffic, parked vehicles and the collection boxes.

## Help on the way

While delivering the mail on a Saturday afternoon last May, St. Louis, MO Branch 343 member **Darren Mack** heard a distant cry for help over the hum of his vehicle. Turning off the engine to hear more clearly, Mack heard a voice: “Help me, mailman!” He walked toward the voice, which came from a wooded ravine. About 15 feet below, he spotted an elderly woman who had apparently fallen into the ravine. He called 911 and told her help was on the way. As paramedics finally lifted her to safety on a gurney, the woman pointed to Mack and said, “That’s my hero.” The woman had fallen the evening before while retrieving her mail from nearby mailboxes. But Mack doesn’t think he did anything special. “I’m no hero,” he said. “That’s just what we do.”

On his route last April, Westchester Merged, NY

Branch 693 member **Robert Womacsko** noticed that a customer hadn’t picked up her older mail. He sensed something was wrong, and his instincts were right—after he called police, the customer was found on her floor, incapacitated and in serious condition. She was taken to a hospital and was expected to recover.

Lubbock, TX Branch 2589 member **Wade Davis** was on his route on Jan. 10 when he saw a police chase in progress. “One officer was in pursuit of an officer on foot, and another was in pursuit of another suspect in a vehicle,” he said. He saw one officer get struck by a suspect in a car, leaving him lying on the ground with a head wound. Meanwhile, the second suspect struck Davis’ LLV. Davis called 911 and ran toward the injured officer to render first aid. He removed his uniform shirt and used it to stanch the bleeding from the officer’s injury. The carrier assisted the officer until EMS units arrived. Wade was commended for his actions, but brushed off any major superlatives. “I believe ‘hero’ is a little far out there,” the 25-year postal veteran said. “I believe it’s something any other carrier or civilian would have done. I was there at the wrong place at the right time.”

As Kinston, NC Branch 1044 member **Joseph Huff** was delivering his route one day earlier this year, he heard a customer call for his attention. The woman wanted the carrier to help her special-needs son who had fallen and was lodged partly under a parked car. As they waited for help to arrive, Huff put his satchel under the son’s head as a pillow and laid his jacket over him to shield him from the cold.

Springfield, IL Branch 80 member **David Dale** was driving to his route on March 1, 2013, when he saw a car hit another vehicle. The striking car flipped over on its top. Dale saw that there were people inside, so he made his way across two lanes of traffic to pull the occupants—a mother and her 5-year-old daughter—to safety. Immediately after pulling them out, the car burst into flames. Dale waited with the mother and daughter, who had minor injuries, until the ambulance arrived about 10 minutes later.

On Jan. 17, 2012, Central Oregon Branch 1937 member **Steve Filson** heard a fellow carrier call out for help because fellow branch member Jim Lascurain was lying on the ground in the garage, bleeding, unconscious and not breathing. Filson immediately ran into the garage, assessed the situation, and began CPR, continuing until emergency responders arrived on scene. The doctor at the emergency room said that only one in 20 people survive

this type of heart failure, and the Filson’s actions saved Lascurain’s life.

Cedar Rapids, IA Branch 373 member **Debra Nunemaker** noticed a few things askew at a customer’s house as she delivered her route on May 2, 2013. There was mail building up, some blinds closed, and a couple of days’ newspapers. She was concerned, so she notified a neighbor, who in turn called the police to ask for a wellness check. They found the customer on the floor after she had fallen two days earlier. She was dehydrated but otherwise in decent condition. The neighbor called the post office to thank Nunemaker and inform her co-workers of her actions.

While delivering mail on March 7, 2013, Seward, NE Branch 1883 member **Lisa Scholz** noticed blood on the sidewalk by the front door of a house on her route. The front door was open, so she yelled inside to see if the resident was OK or needed assistance. The man responded and asked Scholz to come in to help him. He apparently had been lying on the floor since the day before. The carrier got him some Gatorade from his refrigerator. He said he did not want an ambulance, so Scholz contacted her local postmaster, who called the police. They sent an ambulance, and Scholz waited until help arrived before continuing on her route.



Darren Mack



## When lifelong skills come in handy

As Mobile, AL Branch 469 member **Bob Tolson** delivered his route on Feb. 19, he saw three people in a front yard as he turned the corner of a street. “One man was lying down, another kneeling beside him cradling his head and neck, and the first man’s wife almost in hysterics,” he told his branch. So, he got out of his vehicle and approached the trio.

“I first noticed that the man lying down was not breathing and his face was purple,” he said. “One of the two asked if I knew CPR, and I said yes. However, this skill, although practiced, had not been used by me in a life-or-death-situation.”

So the carrier went to work.

“I knew I had to stop and do something,” Tolson told the local Fox TV news affiliate.

The carrier placed the man, Alfred Jefferson, on his back, cleared his airway, tilted his head and began using hands-only CPR. Jefferson would occasionally take a deep breath, but his breathing was very irregular and he had no discernable pulse. His eyes were fixed, and normal color did not

return to his face. “All I could do is continue the chest compressions for what seemed like a very long time,” Tolson said. “When the paramedics finally arrived, they took over and I went back to my route.”

Jefferson told Fox News that he had had a heart attack, and doctors told him only 1 percent of people survive what he went through. He also said that he was unconscious for four days and that he thanks Tolson for saving his life.

On his route, Tolson was reunited with Jefferson after he was released from the hospital. “It was pretty emotional for both of us,” Tolson said. Though Jefferson has only partial heart function now, “he seems to be doing fine.”

People in the community are calling Tolson a hero, but he disagrees with that appellation.

“I don’t feel like I did anything special. I just saw somebody in need and helped them out,” he said. “I encourage everyone to take a CPR class. Remember that a little knowledge can make a profound difference in some-



**Mobile, AL Branch 469 member Bob Tolson helped save a customer’s life using CPR skills. He was recently interviewed by local news media.**

one’s life. I was just someone with a little knowledge in the right place at the right time.”

## Fire and rescue

**Carolyn Hall** was delivering her route on Jan. 27 when she noticed a brush fire burning out of control up ahead. The Asheville, NC Branch 248 member saw that it had spread to cover about a half-acre and was spreading in the direction of a housing development. She called 911 and then started honking her horn to try to alert whoever was in the closest house. Hall couldn’t get anyone’s attention, so she went to the door and eventually two teenagers answered. The carrier convinced them to come outside until the fire department got there.

On Aug. 12, 2013, **Donald Anderson** was delivering his route when he noticed smoke pouring from the back of a house. The New Castle, PA Branch 22 member dialed 911 and proceeded to bang on the front door of the home to notify the residents to evacuate. Anderson then ran to the back of the house, where he found a garden hose. He turned on the water supply and sprayed water on the flames until the fire department arrived. Once firefighters took over and he saw that the situation was in good hands, Anderson continued on his delivery route.

Sharon Fire Chief Terence Whalen wrote to the post office to commend the carrier, saying that damage to the home was minimized by Anderson’s actions.

**Barbourville, KY Branch 2856 member Jason Grubb** was working his route on Jan. 8, 2013, when he came across a tuck fire. This was no ordinary fire—it was a bucket truck belonging to a tree-trimming company—and worse, a man was trapped inside the bucket. Grubb quickly called 911 to inform the local fire department.

The newspaper article about Marty Schulz



## Eye on the elderly

Madison, WI Branch 507 member **Marty Schulz** knew something was wrong on May 14, 2013, when he hadn't seen his 91-year-old customer, J. Bernard Lee, in a few days. This was unusual, because the carrier normally saw the man drive to and from a lunch date every day at exactly the same time. "I noticed that the gentleman's mail was building up," Schulz told *The Monroe Times*. So, he knocked on the door, but he didn't get a response. The 20-year postal veteran then called the local postmaster, who called police for an ambulance and a welfare check for Lee. The call ended up saving Lee's life, at least for one more day. Lee's son, Jim, was able to drive up from Chicago to be with his father before he died the next day. "We appreciated it," Jim Lee told the *Times*. "We appreciate having eyes and ears out there."

Southern Illinois Merged Branch 1197 member **Israel Fontanez** was carefully delivering his route on Jan. 8 after a snowstorm, when he noticed that a car was parked with its hazard lights on. Looking closer, Fontanez saw that his 80-year-old customer, Betty Purcell, had fallen on the ground and a man was trying to help her. "She had been trying to clean off her car," Fontanez said. The carrier rushed over and discovered that Purcell seemed to have broken her hip. "She was in a lot of pain," he said. The other man who was helping had missed a turn due to low visibility from the bad weather and had happened to go down this street. "It was luck that we were both

there," Fontanez said. He handed Purcell a phone, and she called her son. Fontanez then helped carry Purcell into the house and waited with her until the son arrived to get her medical attention. The carrier later found out that the woman returned home from the hospital soon after and was doing just fine. Fontanez doesn't consider himself a hero, though. "I don't think it's that big of a deal," he said. "I don't see how anyone could have just passed by."



San Francisco, CA Branch 214 member **Richard Cairo** was delivering mail one day in

December when he noticed several irregularities in the normal schedule of his 92-year-old customer, Mr. Michi. Cairo noticed older mail had not been collected and the customer's garbage cans were still in front of his house. "He had a routine," Cairo said. "He didn't do that this time." Michi didn't have family, so Cairo checked in with the man's friend, Joe, to see if the man had shown up to their regular bocce game. Michi hadn't. Cairo knew Michi kept the house locked up and it would be nearly impossible to check on him, so he decided to call police. "I went back to the station, clocked out, and went right back to the house," Cairo said. After a brief investigation, a police officer heard a faint cry for help coming from inside the house. The officers had to break down two doors

to get inside. They found Michi lying on the kitchen floor and in need of medical attention after being there 12 hours. "He had really scraped himself up," Cairo said. After a brief hospital stay, Michi was released. Cairo doesn't consider himself a hero. "I'm just glad everything worked out the way they did," the 30-year postal veteran said.

Northern Virginia Branch 3520 member **Isagani Ravelo** was delivering the mail last December when he came to the home of an elderly woman who often greets him at the door. Instead, he found her door open and heard her crying for help inside. He entered the home and found the woman on the floor with severe head injuries, the apparent result of a fall. After performing first aid to stop the woman from bleeding, Ravelo called an acquaintance of the accident victim for help as she requested. Ravelo also called the postmaster, who asked him to remain with the woman until the acquaintance arrived to assist.

Carrier **Samantha Collinson** was on her route on Jan. 30 when she heard what she thought was a cat meowing or child playing at a house. The Central Iowa Merged Branch 352 member then heard the sound again, so she peeked around the corner of the house and saw a man's arm move and heard him yelling for help. The elderly man had fallen on the ice and snow and was unable to get up. Collinson went over to help him and noticed that he was soaked from lying on the ground for 20 to 30 minutes

trying to get someone's attention for help. The man was exhausted from trying to get up on his own, so the carrier wrapped her arms around him and got him to his house.

Connecticut Merged Branch 20 member **James Erodici** was delivering mail on Nov. 15, 2012, when he noticed that a customer on his route still had two newspapers on her porch and had not picked up her other mail. He called a clerk at his post office, because he knew the customer always put in a vacation hold card when she goes out of town. The clerk said there wasn't an active hold for her. Erodici became more concerned when he noticed the customer's car in the driveway, but she didn't answer the door. So, Erodici did his best to look into her home and noticed that the patron was sitting in her chair but was not responsive. As luck would have it, police were on the scene down the street, so Erodici requested that they come to assist at the customer's home. Officers broke the door down and went inside to help the unconscious woman. They discovered that the customer had suffered an apparent stroke.

## Carrier keeps watchful eye on community

Fort Lauderdale, FL Branch 2550 member **Mark Gereffi** was delivering his mail on his route one day on April when he found one of his patrons lying on her back in front of her house, moaning. She was dressed to go somewhere, and she had her purse under her head like a pillow.

"I asked if she was OK," Gereffi said. "She thought she was having a heart attack."

Gereffi asked the woman if her husband Barry was around, but he wasn't. Gereffi then called 911 and was able to answer questions from the operator about her condition.

"I knew she had a history of health problems," the carrier said, which included a stroke and a heart attack.

The woman was conscious, so Gereffi put the operator on speakerphone and let the woman speak. "She explained how she felt and her symptoms," he said. When she couldn't speak anymore, Gereffi got back on the line.

"I could hear the sirens, so I knew they were relatively close," he said. He waited there until help arrived, and it was determined the patron had suffered another stroke. When Gereffi asked an EMT about her condition, the man expressed doubt and suggested prayer.

The carrier tried to call the woman's husband, Barry, but he didn't answer, so he left a voicemail message. Gereffi wanted someone

to know what had happened before he left the scene, so he contacted a neighbor, Patty, who called Barry and reached him.

Gereffi was there as the customer was taken to the hospital, and he acted like a middleman, telling Patty what was going on so she could tell Barry.

The woman received treatment in the hospital for a few days and was subsequently released.

Gereffi doesn't consider himself a hero, though. "This is something obviously anyone would do," the 30-year postal veteran said. "[As a letter carrier], you never know what you're going to come across. Thank God things worked out as they did."

## Neighborhood watch

Approaching the porch of a customer to deliver the mail on April 24, 2013, Charleston, SC Branch 3902 **David Dicker** looked up to see a 9-foot-long alligator on the front walkway, blocking the step. He originally thought it was a lawn sculpture--but then he saw it move. Just then, the customer walked out her door to get the mail, and Dicker warned her to look out. She went back in the house, dialed 911, and the Department of Natural Resources came soon after to remove the critter. The carrier was commended for preventing potential serious injury to his customer and others in the neighborhood.

On Jan. 24, 2013, Crystal City, MO Branch 4050 member **Patrick Henderson** was delivering mail on his route when he discovered what

appeared to be an assault rifle. The carrier contacted his supervisor, who then contacted the local police. Henderson then made sure no one else could handle the weapon until the police arrived. The police department later disclosed that the rifle was real, and was loaded. Henderson was commended for averting a potentially dangerous situation.

As Durham, NC Branch 382 member **Godfrey Fulmore** was delivering on his route on a rainy June 12, 2013, he had turned on to a street and saw a black car speed pass him. He noticed the driver stop in the middle of the road, get out of the car and waved the carrier by. Fulmore proceeded to deliver his mail but noticed the driver had let out two small children before taking off again. When the

carrier turned around to come back up the street, he saw the children in the middle of the road and asked the kids where the dad was and why he left them. Instead of answering, the older of the two children asked the carrier to take them to their dad at a store. Fulmore said he couldn't put them in the postal vehicle, but told the youngsters to come with him to a business that was on the corner of the street. He asked the business if the children could stay there and if someone would call the police. Fulmore left to finish his route after assuring the children that they would be OK there. The carrier checked in later, and found the police were there. Fulmore gave officers a statement, and they informed him that the children had been victims of a carjacking.

The children's parent called Fulmore to thank him.

On his route on a chilly Monday last January, Louisville, KY, Branch 14 member **John McMackin** noticed a 5-year-old girl standing alone and crying. She approached him and told him she was alone and scared. The girl's school had sent her home on a bus though she was supposed to be picked up at school. The child gave McMackin her mother's phone number and he called the mother, who was at work. She arranged for a neighbor to pick up the child, and McMackin waited with the girl until the neighbor came. McMackin's station manager noted that the child's trust of a uniformed, familiar letter carrier made her confident enough to approach him for help.



Cranford, NJ Branch 754 member **Melissa Hardin** recently was (below) interviewed by local news media and (bottom) presented with a Postal Hero Award on National Superhero Day in April.



## Carrier helps customer after icy injury

While delivering mail on Feb. 4, Cranford, NJ Branch 754 member **Melissa Hardin** went to deliver a parcel at a home when she saw the elderly customer there slip and fall as he was trying to chop ice away from his property. “It was really, really icy out,” Hardin said.

The man fell so hard that the carrier heard the man’s head hit the ground, so she quickly called 911 and comforted him. “I told him that everything would be all right,” the carrier said.

Hardin then banged on the front door to alert the man’s family. His daughter came to the door and seemed very distraught about the situation. “I calmed her down and told her he would be OK,” she said.

Hardin stayed at the scene to render aid to the man, who had a bad cut on his head and was bleeding.

“Her quick thinking and response was amazing!” the customer’s daughter wrote to the local postmaster. “I am so thankful she was there as I had no idea he was even outside. Melissa is a wonderful person and she not only helped my dad, but she reassured me that all would be well. She truly went above and beyond her responsibilities.”

Hardin was presented with a Postal Hero Award on National Superhero Day in April. But the 15-year postal veteran doesn’t think she’s a hero. “I just felt like it was the right thing to do,” she said. “I was at the right place at the right time.”

## ‘We wouldn’t turn our back on anybody’

Cincinnati, OH Branch 43 member **Mike Bruser** was delivering mail on Jan. 6, one of the coldest days on record for the city, on another carrier’s route. As he was placing the mail in each of the mailboxes at a condominium complex, Bruser heard a loud noise.

“I was delivering mail here and I saw an elderly man out of the corner of my eye walking, and then I heard him fall,” Bruser told local news media outlets.

The customer, 78-year-old Thurman Blades, had been walking to the condo clubhouse to drop off his dues when he found himself on the pavement, unable to move. The clubhouse was closed because of the low temperature, and since it was mid-day, not many people were around.

“I hit a patch of ice and I went down. I went down right on my knee,” Blades told the local news media.

Bruser jumped into action, ran to Blades’ side and tried to help him back to his feet. But the carrier realized he was not strong enough to help the large man by himself.

“He couldn’t get up and I couldn’t pick him up. I tried,” Bruser said. “I called 911. I ran to my truck and got all the cold weather gear I had and wrapped him up the best I could. It was already minus-3 that day.”

As they waited 20 minutes for paramedics to arrive, Bruser pulled Blades to the side of the clubhouse and propped him up against the wall.

“I kept his hands in mine,” Bruser said. “One was numb, so I was making sure he still had the feeling left in his fingers and toes.”

Blades’ wife said that with the clubhouse closed and few people braving the cold temperatures, her husband could have frozen to death waiting for help. The man said, “I mean, I really appreciate [Bruser]. He came to my aid right away. He didn’t even hesitate.” Blades sustained minor injuries from the fall, but he suffered no frostbite or other ailments from the cold.

But Bruser doesn’t think he’s a hero. “Anyone of us would have helped him. It wouldn’t have mattered if it was me or somebody else here. We wouldn’t turn our back on anybody,” he said. “Just happened to be here at the right time, I guess.”



## Help on the way

While out delivering mail in his postal vehicle in April of 2013, South Suburban Merged, IL, Branch 4016 carrier **Mitchell Love** heard a faint voice over the sound of his vehicle's engine. He turned off the engine and listened again, and heard calls for help from the garage of a patron's home. Investigating, Love saw Noreen Spero lying on the floor of the garage. She had fallen hours earlier and apparently broke both shoulders and could not get up. Spero told Love the code to open the garage door and he waited by her side after summoning authorities and Spero's daughter and sister. Spero told Love she knew he would come and had waited for the sound of his truck to call out for help. Spero was back home after two months of recovery in a rehabilitation center. "We're not heroes," Love said of letter carriers who perform selfless acts like his. "It's just part of our job."

Albany, NY Branch 29 member **Robert Pytell** was delivering his route on July 11, 2013, and when he arrived at one home, he saw his customer Geoff Willick's mother in the driveway by her car. She said hello and asked if Pytell would help her. She was apparently having trouble opening the trunk and she removed her bag from trunk once the carrier opened it for her. Pytell noticed that her speech was faltering when she asked for help, and as he assisted her, he felt something was wrong. He decided to ask for her son's phone number since he was concerned she might try

to drive. She agreed to give it to him, but couldn't seem to remember it and was apologetic about not being able to communicate well. Pytell was concerned and called 911. It was hot out, so Pytell helped her toward the house. As she walked with him, she started to collapse. The carrier helped ease her to a lying position on the porch and saw that she was starting to have convulsions. The carrier waited with the woman until medical assistance arrived and she was taken to the hospital. Pytell later heard that the woman was doing OK, having suffered a heart problem.

One day last spring, Central Florida Branch 1091 member **Alfonso Fata** was delivering mail to his customer, Howard Miller. He always placed Miller's mail bundled in a rubber band to allow the man to retrieve his mail without difficulty. The next day, Fata noticed that Miller had not picked up the previous day's mail. He went to a neighbor to ask about Miller, and the neighbor proceeded to call Miller's cell phone. There was no answer, so they called 911. Officers responded, and Miller was found on the floor. Residents of the community were grateful to Fata for his actions. "He is in fact a hero, someone that saved a man's life, just because he cares for our community," a group of residents wrote to the postmaster general. "Al, as we all here in the community call him, is not just the mailman but a friend. Most of us have known Al for a long time,

and he has always shown us respect and kindness. We are a community of 401 homes and we wish to have Al as our mailman for as long as we can. We feel a sense of safety that someone cares for us, and that we are not forgotten because we live alone."

Cincinnati, OH Branch 43 member **Edwin Smith** grew concerned on July 24, 2013, when he had not seen customer Virginia Kramer in a couple of days. It was unusual because Kramer usually came out to greet Smith when he delivered her mail. So, the carrier went to the renter's office to share his concerns and asked to have someone check on her. Kramer was discovered to be ill, and her daughter, Ruth, was notified. Kramer was taken to the hospital and was later sent to rehab. Ruth Kramer called the post office to commend Smith for looking out for her mother.

On March 12, 2013, Jamaica, NY Branch 562 member **Henry Zapata** was delivering mail when he noticed that his customer, Mr. Bauer, had not picked up his mail from the previous day. Zapata notified a neighbor, who called Bauer but received no answer. Since she had a spare key, the neighbor went in the house, where Bauer was found on the floor after having had an apparent stroke and subsequent broken hip from a fall. Bauer was taken to the hospital.

As Rialto, CA Branch 3982 member **Robert Lopez**

was going about his route one day, he noticed his customer, Michael Moon, in distress. Moon had been pushing his car and had injured himself and fallen in the street in front of his house. Lopez rushed over to the man and called 911. He made sure that the car was pushed to the curb and secured before Moon was taken away in an ambulance. Lopez stopped by the house after work to make sure Moon was doing all right. "It is quite impressive in these impersonal times that we have a postman who knows us by name and actually looks out for us, not just as names on his postal route, but as people he cares about," Moon and his wife, Kathleen, wrote to the local postmaster. "We are pleased that Robert Lopez is getting the special recognition her deserves. He is a credit to his job as a United States postal worker, but more importantly as a good citizen and friend."

Oklahoma City, OK Branch 458 member **Dennis Williams** was on his way to work on March 15, 2013, when he saw a car run off the road into an embankment and then roll over. Williams, along with two other passers-by in cars, stopped to help. Williams helped to pull the victim from the car and get the woman to safety before the vehicle exploded. The carrier stayed with the woman until an ambulance arrived. He later found out that the woman he helped save was also a postal employee.



## Eye on the elderly

On March 13, Centennial Colorado Branch 5996 member **Danny Chavis** became concerned about one of his customers because the man had not checked his mail for several days, which was unusual. “There could be 30 feet of snow on the ground, and he’d always pick his mail up,” Chavis said. But, he thought maybe the man had just gone on vacation without telling him. So, he just asked his floater to let him know if he saw the mail there the next day. He said he did, so when Chavis was back on his route, he brought the man’s mail up to the door and knocked. No answer. “I checked with four or five neighbors, and they said they hadn’t seen him,” the carrier said. One of the patron’s neighbors had contact information for the man’s daughter, so they called her. She found her father inside the house. He had suffered a stroke and was incapacitated, and he was taken to the hospital for treatment. Chavis, a 16-year postal veteran, was awarded a certificate at a ceremony on National Superhero Day, a day created by a group of employees at Marvel Comics. “A hero? I wouldn’t really say that,” Chavis said. “I was just doing my job as a letter carrier.”

Western Massachusetts Branch 46 member **Heather Labrecque** was going about her route on Jan. 7 at dusk and saw her 92-year-old customer. “She was coming down the street without a sidewalk,” she said. “I was standing behind my truck when I heard a noise.” The woman had slipped and fallen and wasn’t able to get up. “It

was really cold and icy,” the carrier said. Labrecque rushed over to the woman and helped her stand up. The carrier then noticed that the patron was not wearing appropriate shoes or clothing for the cold weather. “No gloves, no hat, nothing,” Labrecque said, so she brought her to her LLV as she called emergency personnel. “I put her in the heat and gave her my hand warmers,” she said. The carrier had been in health care for years and knew how to keep the woman calm until medical attention arrived. “She’s so sweet,” Labrecque said of her customer. “Anyone who was there would have helped her.”

**Rodney Downey** was delivering his route one day in January and went up onto the enclosed porch of a house. “I could hear somebody crying for help,” the Pueblo, CO Branch 229 member said. He noticed that the 81-year-old customer, Louise Grebenc, was lying just inside the storm door. She told him that she had been on the ground for 20 hours in what Downey described as “bone-chilling” weather. The door was locked, so Downey called 911 and went around to the back of the house to get inside. “I kneeled down on the floor next to her and checked her out to make sure there was nothing obviously wrong with her,” the carrier said. As it turns out, she had cut the back of her head in the fall, and the injury required staples. Downey waited with Grebenc until the emergency responders arrived. The carrier went by the emergency room later that evening to check on Grebenc, and she soon recovered and went back home. The

woman told Downey that he had saved her life. Downey doesn’t claim any heroics. “The hero is Mrs. Grebenc. The strength of this woman just amazes me,” the eight-year postal veteran said. “I just helped her out.”

Macomb, IL Branch 658 member **Rob Gronewold** knew that something was amiss when he went to deliver his route to his 82-year-old customer’s home on Saturday, June 8, 2013. He entered the home and found her on the floor. The woman told him that she had fallen and broken her hip and that no one had planned to return to the home until much later in the day. Her telephone was out of service, and her medical alert device failed to operate. Fighting pain, she dragged herself to her front door in the hopes of drawing attention. Gronewold called for help, then aided the woman and made her comfortable as they waited for medical personnel. “Please accept my most sincere thanks and appreciation regarding the recent gallant actions of one of your postal carriers,” the woman’s son, Thomas Canavit, wrote to the local post office. “In my mother’s neighborhood, the postal carrier is not only a friendly face, but also a mainstay of their community. Routinely, the postal carrier is one of the few people they see at their homes daily (Monday though Saturday). His actions on Saturday were not only commendable and undoubtedly helped prevent further pain and suffering, but given



Danny Chavis

my mother’s advanced age, it may have been much worse if not for his intrepidity and dogged determination. Please pass our entire family’s enduring gratitude; we will remain in his debt.”

When Central Florida Branch 1091 member **Greg Davis** noticed on Jan. 7 that a 75-year-old customer who lived alone with her dog was not picking up her mail, he attempted to call the customer, without success. That same day, the carrier received a call from a deputy sheriff asking for his assistance, since they were unfamiliar with the customer and her dog. When the dog was under control and secured, an ambulance was called and the customer was taken to the hospital. The customer passed away a few days later, but due to the care and concern shown by Davis, the customer was able to spend her final days with her family with dignity and in comfort.

## Fire and rescue

**Rebecca Marcano** noticed a strong smoke smell on Saturday, Feb. 23, 2013, as she went about her route. As she approached a home to deliver the mail, she saw smoke billowing from the roof. The Fort Wayne, IN Branch 116 member knocked loudly on the door and a pre-teen girl answered the door. Marcano told her to tell her parents that their home was on fire and to get out. The letter carrier also called 911 and gave emergency personnel the location of the fire. Marcano was told to make sure the family got out immediately, and to stay on the phone. She remained at the home to ensure that the family of four and all pets had safely evacuated and that the firefighters were on site to tackle the blaze before she returned to her route. The family would have had no early warning the home was on fire, since it had started in the attic.

On Dec. 11, 2012, Bluefield, WV Branch 880 member **Robert Williams** was on a park-and-loop when he noticed smoke and flames coming from an apartment building on the street where he was delivering mail. About that time, a woman came running out

of one of the units. Williams called 911 and then proceeded to go to each unit to alert the tenants of the fire. While waiting outside with the residents, Williams noticed that one of the victims was shaking, so he gave his coat to her, as he thought she might be about to go into shock. He stayed with her until the rescue squad arrived. When fire fighters made it to the scene, the carrier advised them that he hadn't gotten an answer from one of the tenants who might still possibly be inside. He also told them that one of the tenants still had cats inside her apartment. He then left to continue carrying his route.

On Feb. 21, 2013, Venice, FL Branch 5480 member **Alfred Georgio Jr.** was on his route delivering mail when he heard a smoke alarm going off and saw smoke coming from a nearby mobile home. As Georgio banged on the door, he noticed that the customer's car was not in the driveway, so he knew she probably wasn't there. The carrier called 911, and firefighters were dispatched. "Fortunately, Mr. Georgio's prompt actions enabled fire crews to quickly

extinguish the fire before it spread from its source, an unattended pot on the stove," Venice Fire Chief James Warman wrote to the local postmaster. "It should be noted that this incident could easily have become a major incident, as the residence was a mobile home. The City of Venice Fire Department would like to thank Mr. Al Georgio for going above and beyond the call of duty in providing assistance that dramatically improved this emergency situation."

In January 2013, Worcester, MA Branch 12 member **Lewis Green** was delivering mail to a home on his route when he heard the family's dogs barking inside the house. He knew something was wrong. As he looked inside through the windows, he noticed the house was filling with smoke. Green called 911, but received a busy signal. He tried again—but the line was still busy. He called his immediate supervisor to notify 911 of a house fire and to inform them of two dogs trapped inside. Firefighters soon arrived to put out the fire, which was saved from severe damage. They also saved the lives of the dogs.

## Going the extra mile for his 'second family'

On Jan. 2, Santa Clara, CA Branch 1427 member **Raphael Leon** was going about his daily rounds on the route he's had for all 29 years that he has been a letter carrier when "I imagined hearing something," he said. But there was ambient noise on the street—dogs barking and so on—so he continued on his way.

But when he circled back to the same house a little while later when it was quieter to deliver a package, "I stopped and really listened," he said. "It sounded like a lady crying for help." He looked around and didn't see anyone, but using his knowledge of the route, he remembered that the home was occupied by his elderly customer, Lorraine Myrick.

As he walked closer to the house, he could hear Myrick faintly call for help through the garage door. Leon called back to the patron and let her know he was there. "She said, 'Please help me,'" Leon said.

The woman told him that she had fallen in a room adjacent to the garage and couldn't get up. Leon asked how he could get to her since she was inside, and the woman gave him the code for the garage door.

Once inside, Myrick told Leon she had been there for at least three hours. She also said she had pain in her hip and asked the carrier to pick her up. Leon told her they needed to wait to see what was wrong first.

So, he convinced her to let him call 911, and he made her comfortable with a pillow and blanket until an EMS unit arrived to treat what turned out to be a broken hip. The carrier met up with paramedics outside to explain what happened and made sure Myrick was in good hands before leaving the scene.

Leon knew Myrick's daughter lived just a few blocks away, so he stopped there to inform her of the situation before continuing his workday.

But the carrier doesn't want attention for his actions. "To me, the satisfaction was seeing her smile when I walked in," Leon said. "I would do this for any of my customers. They're my second family."

## Fire and rescue

**W**hile delivering mail on his route on Jan. 4, 2013, Milwaukee, WI Branch 2 member **Ben McCanna** noticed a house on fire. As he got closer, he saw that there were children inside who were apparently home alone. He led them out of the burning house to safety. Once all the children were safely outside, he called the children's mother

for them to alert her to the situation. After rescuing the children, McManna went on to complete his route.

**C**olumbia, MO Branch 763 member **Ann Leonard** was delivering her route one day when she noticed the smell of smoke coming from a house nearby. The woman living there was sit-

ting outside on the porch, and Leonard asked if she had noticed the smoke. The woman, who was mentally challenged, said, "Oh yes, I did start to cook breakfast." She went inside with Leonard, who turned off the kitchen stove—the source of the smoke. The carrier was commended for likely preventing a larger fire and potential tragedy.

## Neighborhood watch



Clearwater, FL Branch 2008 member **Thornell Strawn** was honored by local police for helping to catch a burglary suspect.

**T**he chief of the Clearwater, FL, police force honored Clearwater Branch 2008 member **Thornell Strawn** for helping nab a burglar. On his route in February, Strawn called 911 when he noticed a suspicious man walking between houses and then entering a back window of one. Strawn stayed on the line and relayed what he saw until police arrived and arrested the suspect.

**A**s El Paso, TX Branch 505 member **Louis Prieto** was delivering his route one day in July 2013, he heard some banging. Prieto

looked around and spotted a young boy inside a car hitting a window, trying to get his attention. The carrier rushed over to the car which was parked in a family's driveway. He found that the vehicle was unlocked, although the child was

unable to get out. Once the door was open, Prieto checked the boy and found him to be OK besides sweating profusely in the heat. The youngster's parents were working on their home indoors and were unaware of the situation. They thanked Prieto for his watchful eye.

**F**lorence, SC Branch 1416 member **James McQueen** observed a crime in progress on Nov. 23, 2012, as two men in hooded sweatshirts were having a confrontation with an elderly man, 85-year

old Robert McIntyre. The man had come home to find two intruders in his house. He was holding them off with a pool cue after they demanded his wallet and car keys. McQueen stopped to offer assistance and the two men fled. He helped the victim into his house, where McIntyre called 911. McIntyre's wife wrote to the local postmaster to ask that McQueen receive recognition for his help.

**M**ichael Koenig was delivering mail on the morning of Nov. 17, 2012, when he began to hear loud sirens and saw racing police cars rushing through the neighborhood. As the Pittsburgh Branch 84 member continued to deliver his route, he heard a voice from a man suspiciously crouched down in the bushes. Believing he may have been related to the police activity, Koenig called 911. Upon arrival of the police, the carrier directed them to where the man was hiding. After a brief police chase, the police successfully ar-

rested the man, an alleged bank robber.

**A**s Flushing, NY Branch 294 member **Evan Arnow** was heading home from work on July 23, 2013, he noticed two young men acting suspiciously. He thought that one was attempting to steal a bike, while the other was acting as a lookout. Arnow let the boys know he had seen them, and they ran away, abandoning the bike.

**W**hile delivering mail to a home one day, Columbia, MO Branch 763 member **Larry Warren** smelled what could only be natural gas. Warren was not able to determine if anyone was home, so the carrier reported the leak to a gas company employee, who alerted the customer. An inspection revealed the customer's furnace was clogged and was also emitting dangerously high levels of carbon monoxide. The gas company employee said Warren's actions saved the customer's life as well as the lives of her five grandchildren, who were with her in the home.



## Delivering help at a dire time

On May 15, 2013, Memphis, TN Branch 27 member **Michael Taylor** was making a delivery to the house of Mary Fitzgerald, an elderly customer. Fitzgerald has a medical exemption that allows her to have a mailbox at the door, as opposed to the rest of Taylor's route, which is mounted.

On this particular morning, Taylor went to the door to leave a package, and when he did, he heard a faint noise. "But [I] wasn't sure who it was, or where it was coming from," he said. "It was a continuous moaning that faded in and out. I put my ear to the window and realized that someone was crying out, 'Call 911!'"

Taylor got his cell phone and called 911. He then checked the door, and found it unlocked, so went in.

"I could hear the cry coming from farther in the house," he said. "I followed the noise to the back of the house, where I found Mrs. Fitzgerald lying face down on the bathroom floor."

She was bruised and seemed dehydrated, and she told Taylor that she had been there since about 7:30 p.m. the previous day. She had been recovering from a recent shoulder surgery and was home alone. When she slipped and fell in the bathroom, she wasn't able to turn or get herself up and injured herself further. Emergency crews arrived soon to take Fitzgerald to the hospital.

The customer's family was grateful to Taylor. "Today my mother, Mary Fitzgerald, was saved by your postman," Fitzgerald's daughter, Mary Wilkins, wrote to the local postmaster. "I don't know how much longer God will allow us to have her in our lives, but I know if it had not been for your postman, we may not have had her past today ... Please give him the biggest hug for me."

But Taylor was just glad he was able to be there for his patron. "It was by the grace and mercy of God that allowed me to be attentive and alert when I made this delivery to pay attention to the cry for help," Taylor said. "I hope and pray that Mrs. Fitzgerald continues to recover."

## 'Carriers are just always there'



After knocking on his customer's front door on Feb. 24 to make a package delivery, St. Paul, MN Branch 28 member **Jeff Hinchcliffe** thought he could hear a faint call for help coming from inside the garage.

Hinchcliffe walked over to the garage door and called out for the customer, Richard Faulkner. The garage door was cracked a small amount, and the carrier could hear a weak yet pleading response came from the other side of the door.

"It was hard because I had no idea what was going on inside," Hinchcliffe told the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

The carrier asked the man if he was OK and if anyone else was home. Faulkner replied, "No, no one else is home, and I can't move."

Hinchcliffe attempted to lift the garage door but it was locked, so he told the patron, "I am going to get my phone; I'll be right back."

He ran to his car and grabbed his cell phone and called 911. He ran back to the garage and talked to the man, reassuring him that police were on the way. Faulkner told the carrier that he thought he had been there for an hour and a half to two hours.

Responding officers kicked in the back breezeway door to get into the garage to get to the man. Faulkner had apparently fallen down the steps from his house to the garage, and it looked as if he had hit his head on the garage floor.

"There was a big pool of blood, and he wasn't moving," the carrier told the Pioneer Press. "He was conscious but really wasn't moving much."

Hinchcliffe doesn't think he's a hero; he said that carriers are just always there. "There are so many carriers out there every day that help someone or saved someone, just by doing our jobs," the 20-year postal veteran told his branch. "We know our customers, and we know when things just don't seem right, and with so much bad publicity lately, it's nice to see the good we do."

The carrier found out soon after that Faulkner is doing well and recuperating at home.

## Watching out for the customers

Each mail delivery day, Syracuse, NY Branch 134 member **John Cloonan** would greet an elderly couple in their 90s, the Blissés, at their home. “They leave the door open, and I go in and hand them their mail,” he said.

On April 16, the carrier saw that Mr. Bliss seemed off. “He seemed very incoherent—he’s usually very chipper,” the carrier said. Cloonan also noticed that Mrs. Bliss was not in the living room with her husband as she usually was.

He asked Mr. Bliss how he felt, and he responded that he “felt lousy,” so Cloonan told him he could call 911 if he felt worse. The man responded that he had been thinking about doing that.

Cloonan asked Bliss where his

wife was, and he seemed unsure and suggested that she was in the bathroom. The carrier thought to himself, “Something doesn’t feel right,” and so he decided to call 911 and request an ambulance crew to check on his customers.

Cloonan also went next door to see if the neighbor had a contact number for the couple’s son. Their son arrived at the same time as the emergency medical team.

Upon arrival of the ambulance, Cloonan was approached by the Blissés’ son, thanking him for the attention he paid his parents. Not only was Mr. Bliss ill, but Mrs. Bliss had fallen while in the shower and was not able to get up.



John Cloonan

Mr. and Mrs. Bliss have since recovered from their ailments.

“It was a happy ending,” Cloonan, a 16-year postal veteran said. “I try to take care of my customers as best I can.”

## Eye on the elderly



**M**obile, AL Branch 469 member **Jeffrey Dunbar** had just delivered mail to 85-year-old customer

Betty Chenoweth one day last February and started to walk toward his next delivery. He then saw that the woman was lying on the ground by her mailbox and came running back. Chenoweth had reached to get her mail without stepping into the street, fell, and wound up lying in the street, unable to get up. Chenoweth’s daughter, Loretta Barton, told the local Fox TV station, “He tried to help her up, (and) realized she could not (get up). He picked her up in his arms, and he carried her inside her home, got her a telephone, made sure I was on my way. And, I just think that he’s a hero.” Chenoweth suffered a broken leg, and Barton said her mother would come home

from the hospital when she could walk again.

**O**n Jan. 14, South Boston, VA Branch 3170 member **David Katzenberger** was on his usual route when he noticed something in his customer’s backyard that did not look familiar. The back yard of this home is not visible from the street, but Katzenberger could see into it when he walked to the side of house to the mailbox. He first thought the shape was a roll of carpet in the yard but decided to check closer to be sure. When he got closer, he realized it was his customer, a 90-year-old woman, lying in the cold rain. Katzenberger could see a large puddle of blood underneath the woman’s head. It was apparent that she had been there for some time due to the color of blood

on ground. The customer was conscious and asked Katzenberger to help her get up. The carrier knew that a nearby neighbor was a paramedic and his wife was an anesthetist, so he ran to get help.

**O**ak Brook, IL Branch 825 member **Deborah West-Dent** was going about her route one day in July 2013 when she approached the house of her elderly customer, Josie Kiley. “I was putting mail into her mailbox and I heard a real soft voice saying ‘Help me! I’ve fallen!’” the carrier told her post office. So, West-Dent started looking around for the voice, when she saw Kiley lying on the ground on the side of her house. “I go over and she tells me she fell down and now she can’t get up. I ask her if she wants an ambulance and

she says yes,” she said. So, West-Dent called an ambulance and waited with Kiley for emergency crews to arrive. It turned out Kiley had broken her leg. “I spoke with her daughter a few days later and she was resting and recovering well,” West-Dent said.

**B**ux-Mont, PA Branch 920 member **Christian Bruzzese** was delivering mail one day last fall when he noticed his 85-year-old customer, Gertrude Keener, lying on her back on the side of her house behind a car. Her eyes were open, but she could not speak or move. Bruzzese called 911 and shielded Keener from the sun as they waited for emergency services to arrive. The carrier talked to Keener to keep her calm until the paramedics arrived about 10 minutes later. Keener told Bruzzese she had been on the ground for about three hours until he found her.



Christian Bruzzese

## Help on the way

On Dec. 15, 2012, Central Florida Branch 1091 member **Michael Trapp** was on his route when he noticed a customer lying inside his garage. He rushed over to render assistance to a resident by helping him up from his garage floor, where the man had fallen and could not get up. “But more importantly, your tactful efforts to get the resident to agree to allow you to call 911 to have paramedics come and check his condition resulted in ultimately leading to medical care that discovered a life-threatening medical condition for which he is now receiving treatment,” the local homeowners association wrote to the post office. “Your care and concern for the residents of our neighborhood have been manifested in your actions, and we want you to know that we deeply appreciate you.”

On Aug. 9, 2013, Greensboro, NC Branch 630 member **Jenny McDonough** came upon an accident as she was going to her next delivery. A van had run head first into a ditch. The carrier saw that the driver was hunched over the steering wheel, so McDonough secured her vehicle and approached the van. As she did so, she noticed smoke coming from the engine compartment. She was attempting to help the victim escape from the vehicle when other citizens showed up to assist her. McDonough stayed with the victim until emergency crews showed up. While

waiting on the rescue squad, she applied cold compresses and gave the man water. The victim had told her that he must have passed out from the heat.

On Aug. 16, 2013, Downers Grove, IL Branch 1870 member **Fabian Muratore** was delivering a parcel when he saw a customer fall while trimming his bushes. The carrier asked his customer if he was OK, and the man said that he was. Muratore returned to his postal vehicle and asked his supervisor to request a wellness check. Muratore’s supervisor called 911. A few minutes later, the customer’s wife found her husband on the floor in the family room, but thanks to Muratore’s request, paramedics were quickly at the door. The customer had suffered a heart attack. The couple wrote a letter to the post office thanking Muratore for his fast thinking.

On May 13, 2013, carrier **Richard Debeer** noticed that a customer hadn’t picked up her mail from her box in a few days, which was unusual. So, the Hazelwood, MO Branch 5847 member knocked on the door, but received no response. Next, he talked to the neighbors, who hadn’t seen her either. They continued to call her and knock on the woman’s door, to no response. So, the group called police. Responding officers went inside the house and found the customer in the bathroom, unable to move.

**Debbie Bykowski** was working in the post office one morning last fall when she noticed a maintenance man up on a lift changing the light bulbs, though he was standing in a position that appeared unusual to her. The Naples, FL Branch 4716 member continued on with her work, but noticed a few minutes later that the man hadn’t moved at all. She asked him, “Are you OK?” He didn’t respond. Bykowski immediately notified management. It was later discovered that the man was experiencing a side effect from diabetes.

As **Richard Johnson** was making a delivery on May 1, 2013, he heard someone calling for help. The Huntington, WV Branch 359 member cracked open the door to find customer Jennie Riley on the floor needing assistance. Johnson called 911 and waited until emergency responders arrived. Riley went to the post office a few days later to say that Johnson’s quick reaction may have saved her life, because she had been having a reaction to medicine she had taken.

One morning in late November 2013, Staten Island, NY Branch 99 member **Domingo Rivera** and other carriers were taking a break at the post office. Fellow Branch 99 member Charlie DiSilvestri was eating his breakfast when a piece of bagel got caught in his throat. Rivera saw that DiSilvestri was starting to choke, and so he sprung into action, grabbing

DiSilvestri and applying the Heimlich maneuver. In three attempts, Rivera was able to dislodge the obstruction.

**Mitchell**, SD Branch 498 member **Curtis Hohbach** was about to deliver a package one day last spring when he noticed a woman tending to her husband who had fallen on the sidewalk. The man had suffered cuts below his eye and to his hand. Hohbach assessed the situation and called 911. He waited with the man’s distraught wife and helped keep the man still until emergency personnel arrived on the scene.

While on his route on Aug. 8, 2013, Belleville, IL Branch 155 member **Gerard Luebbers** came across a patron, Mr. Wright, lying unconscious on his front porch. Luebbers, a former EMT, jumped into action, trying to revive Wright and checking him for a pulse. When he could not find one, the carrier called 911 and then stayed with Wright until emergency responders arrived.

When Farmingham, NM Branch 4377 member **Lonnie Sanchez** heard that his co-worker, rural carrier Karen Mayfield, had suffered a heart attack on the workroom floor on April 9, 2013, he rushed to help. Mayfield was not breathing, so Sanchez and two other employees administered CPR until paramedics arrived. They lost her about four times before she was taken to the hospital.



## Carrier gives a patron a big lift

As Eau Claire, WI Branch 728 member **James Pevan** was delivering his route on the afternoon of July 15, 2013, he spotted his customer, Jose Guerrero, in a precarious situation.

"I pulled up to deliver to the house, and I could see him under the vehicle," Pevan told the Eau Claire Leader Telegram. "When I turned around, I thought I could hear him yelling. It just didn't seem right."

Pevan didn't have a phone on him, so he ran across the street and asked people to call 911.

Guerrero had been working underneath his van in his dirt driveway when the jack he was using to lift the vehicle apparently slipped off a plywood base, sinking into the grass and causing the van to pin the man.

"(The van) was on his stomach and all the way up to his head," Pevan told the *Chippewa Falls Herald*.

"I started kicking my feet, hoping someone would see me," Guerrero told

the Leader Telegram. "I yelled and yelled. I kept my faith, knowing someone would come to rescue me."

Pevan did his best to try to free Guerrero himself. "I grabbed the jack and started to jack up the vehicle, but he had started to scream, so I stopped," Pevan told the *Leader Telegram*.

Police and EMTs soon arrived to help just a few minutes later. Pevan helped two police officers and a few passers-by lift the vehicle up a few inches to get the vehicle off Guerrero's face and chest, while EMTs pulled him out.

Guerrero told the newspaper that he had been conscious the whole time before being taken to a local hospital, where an exam showed he didn't have any broken bones. He received staples in one ear and an eyebrow to repair cuts and has a scar on his head.

"I don't think the whole episode took more than 10 minutes," Pevan told the *Herald*.

Talking with employees at the local

business where 911 was called, Pevan thinks the accident must have happened right before he showed up on his route. "One of the guys (at the shop) took a car out and said they saw (Guerrero) walking around the van ... and that must have been about two minutes before I got there," he told the *Herald*.

Chippewa Falls police Lt. Matthew Kelm praised everyone involved in freeing Guerrero. "(Guerrero) did survive in large part due to the quick and heroic actions of the letter carrier, officers and EMTs," Kelm told the *Leader Telegram*.

Guerrero was especially grateful for his letter carrier's actions. "If it wasn't for the mailman, I don't know where I'd be," he told the *Leader Telegram*.

But the 18-year postal veteran doesn't think he's a hero. "I'm just glad he's OK," he told the *Herald* about Guerrero. "The police and EMTs got there really quickly and got him out."

## Help on the way



Traci Schellbach-Wyrick of Killeen, TX Branch 4217 recently was thanked by her customer, Derland Bahr, who the carrier helped after he suffered a major hand injury.

Killeen, TX Branch 4217 member **Traci Schellbach-Wyrick** rang the doorbell of her customer to deliver a package on Jan. 11. He was yelling, "Not now, not now," Schellbach-Wyrick recalled. Then he said, "Can you help me?" The man explained that he had just fallen through his ceiling and severely sliced up his hand, which he had used to grab hold to some razor-sharp metal bands around the air-conditioning duct work as he fell. He had just wrapped his hand in a kitchen towel and made it to the door when Schellbach-Wyrick rang. The carrier followed him and a trail of blood through the house to the kitchen sink, where he told

her that he couldn't get the bleeding to stop. Schellbach-Wyrick told him to keep firm pressure on the wound as she called 911. During the call, the man's father and wife arrived. The wife was able to wrap her husband's hand further with medical tape, while Schellbach-Wyrick relayed instructions from the 911 operator. The carrier stayed on the line until ambulances arrived to take her customer to the hospital. The injury severed an artery, causing massive bleeding and cut tendons and it nearly took two fingers off. The patron had surgery a few days after the accident and doctors said they believed he would have a full recovery.