

## 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](mailto: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.

## Good Samaritan carrier acts again

Chilton, WI Branch 2594 member **Kristi Spindler** was delivering mail on May 5 when she saw her elderly customer, Dean Connors, fall. "He smacked his face right on the concrete," she said.

The carrier sprang into action, helping to control the bleeding but, at Connors' request, did not call an ambulance. He explained that he was diabetic, hadn't been feeling well that day and shouldn't have been outside.

Spindler helped the man back to his home, about three houses away, but the front door was locked. They went to the back door, and she had to get the man's key to it out of his pocket because his hands were injured in the fall.

Once they got inside, Spindler helped Connors climb about 20 stairs up to the main level. "He kind of leaned on me," she said. Spindler got her customer into a comfortable chair and administered some first aid. "He was bleeding like crazy," Spindler said. "He was a bloody mess."

She then attempted to call his wife, but was unsuccessful. Worried, she then said, "Don't you dare move." She headed next door to the house of a neighbor, who returned to the house

with her and was able to convince Connors to let him take him to the emergency room.

Connors sustained wounds to his teeth, face and hands. When Spindler saw him the next day, she said, "He was all black and blue."

The customer later called the post office and said, "It was a good thing she saw me. I don't know how long I would have laid there otherwise."

But the 20-year letter carrier doesn't think she did anything special. "I was in the right place at the right time," she said. "Hero? No. I guess a good Samaritan."

This was not the first time Spindler has been recognized in *The Postal Record* for her heroic actions. She was also featured in the October 2012 edition for helping to save elderly patrons from their burning home.

## Carrier prevents 'catastrophic' derailment

One day in early September, Zanesville, OH Branch 63 member **Brian Ball** was going about his mail route as a train was passing nearby.

The train, which contained 54 open-topped cars filled with coal, was slowing down as it crossed an intersection and was preparing to make its switch.

"I just happened to be close to where it stops to switch tracks," he said. The city carrier assistant saw that a portion of the train axle was off the track and on the ground as it was close to switching to another track.

"It was making a screeching noise," Ball said. He also noticed that there were indentations in the pavement.

Ball yelled up to the engine conductor to point out the situation. The conductor got out of the car to inspect the train, and the carrier continued on his route. "I didn't think anything of it," he said.

But the conductor hadn't been able to see that part of the train from his



Kristi Spindler



Leo Herrera

window. “They said it would have derailed the whole train if they kept going,” Ball said.

“It was a mechanical failure where the side frame of the truck was dragging,” Brian McLain, a manager for the railroad, told *The Perry County Tribune*. He compared it to a wheel bearing going out on a car: “It’s sort of the same thing. We thanked (Brian) for what he did; he did his part in preventing something that could have been much worse.”

McLain said that a train wheel had to be replaced on the main line, causing a five-hour delay while a part was brought in and the car was raised for the wheel replacement.

Though the train conductor said the condition of the axle could have led to a “catastrophic derailment” during the switchover, Ball maintains that he

does not deserve the title of hero.

“All I did was bring it to their attention,” the second-year letter carrier told the *Tribune*. “I was just in the right place at the right time.”

### Hero carrier aids patron with machete injury

While on his route one day this past fall, Seattle, WA Branch 79 member **Leo Herrera** spotted unusual activity. “I saw a lady running back and forth on the street frantically,” he said.

When he saw her husband in the driveway by his pickup truck, drenched in blood, the carrier asked if he could help.

He had been in the process of clearing brush on a neighbor’s property using a machete when he accidentally

hit himself in the ankle.

Herrera jumped into action when he saw what was going on. “He had cut really deep, cut bone,” he said. “He was in so much pain. He was worried about going into shock.”

The carrier, an Army veteran, called 911 and then quickly gathered a supply of towels to make a tourniquet. “I bundled them up, wrapped them around his leg and cinched them tight,” Herrera said.

Medics arrived on the scene shortly thereafter and took over. The customer survived the injury and kept his leg, and the man’s wife later called the post office to commend the carrier.

Herrera brushed off any accolades, though. “I was just lucky to be there at the right time,” the 24-year postal veteran said.

## Help on the way

On June 10, Philadelphia Branch 157 member **Mia Hinnant** saw that fellow carrier Henry Hamilton was looking lethargic after he returned from his first set of relay drops. “The key thing he



Mia Hinnant

told me was, ‘I’ve never felt like this before, ever,’” she said. He was hesitant about seeking medical

treatment, but Hinnant insisted that he seek help and drove him to the hospital. Hinnant also made sure that his supervisor and family knew about his situation. The next day, another co-worker told her that

Hamilton had had a stroke and had lost some movement in his right side, and that if he had not gotten to the hospital when he did, it could have been worse. Hamilton called Hinnant to thank her and told her, “You’re still bossing me around.” He was recovering at a rehab center and continuing to get stronger. But Hinnant doesn’t think she’s a hero. “It was just meant to be for me to be there,” the eight-year postal veteran said.

One day in early May, Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **Glenn Simmons** was delivering mail at a customer’s house when he noticed that, across the street, there was a leg sticking out of the garage and a dog wandering around. The customer, Len Seidel, was usually outside

walking during the day and greeted Simmons. Concerned, he ran to his truck to grab his cell phone and called 911. He then went to wait with Seidel. “The trunk of his car was open,” so Simmons figured the man had passed out while trying to grab groceries from the car. The carrier stayed with the patron until help arrived. After seeing that the situation was in good hands, he continued on his route. “No one knows what caused me to faint,” Seidel wrote in a letter to the Postal Service. “The problem could have easily been a heart attack or a stroke and the actions of Glen Simmons could very well have saved my life.” Simmons doesn’t think he’s a hero, though. “It was a scary day but a good feeling” that he got to help, the three-year letter carrier said.

On Dec. 30, 2014, Stockton, CA Branch 213 member **Shawn Kang** was going about his route when he heard his customer, John Frassetto, cry out for help. “He was under the car,” Kang said. Frassetto had been working on his vehicle when it slipped off the jack and fell on top of him. Kang went to help, calling 911 and waiting with the man until emergency personnel arrived just a few minutes later. Frassetto’s injuries were severe—he lost an eye—but he survived. His wife called the carrier to thank him for his help. “They said I’d be his friend forever,” he said. Kang brushed off any major accolades, though. “I feel happy that I saw him,” the 15-year letter carrier said. **PR**



Evangeline Johnson

## Carrier helps customers narrowly escape fire

Detroit Branch 1 member **Evangeline Johnson** was delivering mail on May 19 when “I saw smoke coming from a house,” she said.

The carrier went to the back yard to investigate and discovered that the back of the house was engulfed in flames.

“I knew someone lived there and ran to the front door to alert anyone that might be inside,” Johnson told the USPS.

“A woman answered the door and ran to grab her child. They had been sleeping.”

The carrier called 911 and firefighters arrived shortly to extinguish the fire as she went back to her route. The fire department said the family was lucky that Johnson was able to wake the family up before the fire spread throughout the home.

But Johnson doesn’t think she’s a hero—she’s just glad she could help before it was too late. “Luckily her and her baby didn’t get hurt,” the 10-year postal

veteran said. “I always help people on my route. I’m sure anyone would have done the same thing.”

## Going above and beyond

Youngstown, OH Branch 385 member **Gina Mowen** was delivering mail as a T-6 on July 16, 2014, and approached an elderly customer’s house. “As soon as I closed the mailbox, I heard someone yelling, ‘Help!’”

The carrier checked the doors to the house, but all of them were locked. “I

## Neighborhood watch

On June 1, CCA **Keith Fluker**, a Kenner/Norco, LA Branch 4342 member, had just left a package at a customer’s house and continued on his route. “I saw someone walk toward that house,” he said. “I knew the [customer] wasn’t home.” A teenager took the parcel from the front porch where Fluker had just delivered. Suspicious, the carrier called the post office and the police, then finished his route. A responding officer found Fluker on his route and asked him to describe the suspect. With the carrier’s description, a sheriff’s deputy apprehended the alleged thief later in the day. About two weeks earlier, another customer on the same street had reported a missing parcel. Fluker hoped this arrest would put



an end to the theft of parcels in the neighborhood. Fluker, a Marine Corps veteran, denied any heroics. “I always watch around me,” the second-year letter carrier said. “I was just doing my job.”

While on his route on Sept. 16, Framingham, MA Branch 334 member **Ray Abbott** “had just pulled up to a bakery to deliver,” he said. He was sitting in his LLV when a car slowly went past, almost side-swiping his postal vehicle. “All of a sudden, a girl jumped out of the back seat,” the carrier said. She was screaming, and the car almost rolled over her. The carrier got out of his vehicle and ran over to the runaway car that was quickly making its way through a parking lot. Abbott jumped into the car, put it in park and shut the engine off. While inside, he

discovered another young girl in the back seat who had been too frightened to move. Abbott got that child safely out of the car, then picked up the first child and made sure she was all right, then asked her where their parents were. She responded that they were inside the bakery. Abbott went inside and found the mother, who cried when he told her about the situation but thanked him for looking out. The car ended up traveling almost 100 feet. “It was intense. It happened pretty quick,” Abbott said. “No one else was around.” But don’t try to call the 22-year postal veteran a hero. “Right place, right time,” Abbott said. “I like to think that carriers do stuff like this all the time. I’d do it again.”

Oak Brook, IL Branch 825 member **Randy Wells** was on a park-and-loop section of his route on April 17 when “I happened to see a wallet in the middle of the road,” he said. He picked it up, then walked about 10 feet and found a debit card. Check-

ing the wallet, he saw it had the same name as the other items in the wallet. He then found another card with the same name. “There were \$20 bills flying around as cars were passing,” he said. Wells managed to find four \$20 bills and then took the wallet to the postmaster back at the post office. Wells told him that he thought the flying money probably belonged to the same person as the wallet. They were able to locate the wallet owner by her driver’s license and an employee ID card in it. When the postmaster asked her how much money had been in the wallet, she claimed it was the same amount that was found and came to the post office to pick it up. “She was pretty grateful,” Wells said. She said she had been riding her bike, and when she got to her destination, the wallet was missing. But the 10-year postal veteran doesn’t think he should be considered a hero. “I didn’t think anything of it,” Wells said. “I hope someone would do the same for me.” **PR**



saw that the front window was open,” Mowen said of her customer’s house. She didn’t have a phone on her, so she went to the neighbor’s house. She asked them to call 911 and asked them for a step ladder, then returned to her patron in trouble.

Mowen put the ladder up against the house and gained entry through the bathroom. When she got to the hallway, “There was blood everywhere,” she said. The woman’s leg was bent the wrong way, and her nose was bleeding. The woman did not know how long she had been ly-

ing there, but apparently had passed out and then regained consciousness.

Mowen grabbed a rag for the woman to hold against her nose and then phoned her children to let them know about the situation. Mowen stayed with her customer to comfort her until an ambulance arrived.

After the ambulance left for the hospital, the woman’s dog escaped from the house, so the carrier and a police officer tracked it down and made sure it was secure inside the house.

Mowen tried to keep tabs on her

customer, and asked the regular on the route for updates. The woman had broken her leg and had some brain bleeding, and she went to a nursing home to recover. When Mowen saw the customer again, the woman was very appreciative. Her late husband had been a letter carrier, and she told Mowen, “I think Harry sent you here to save me.”

But Mowen doesn’t think she’s a hero. “I think anyone in that situation would have done the same,” the 15-year postal veteran said. “I was happy she was able to recover fully.” **PR**

## Eye on the elderly

When Reading, PA Branch 258 member **Robert Cavanna** was delivering his route on Nov. 22, 2014, he noticed two newspapers outside an elderly resident’s home. “And that never happens,” Cavanna told local TV news station WFMZ. “You know when something’s not right.” Cavanna knew that the resident has two canes and had health issues, so he called 911. Responding police and firefighters soon arrived. “They had to bash in the back door to get in,” he said. They discovered that the man had fallen down inside about a day earlier and hadn’t been able to get up or to get to the phone. “[Cavanna is] certainly a hero,” Lt. Thomas Endy of the Wyomissing Police Department told WFMZ. Soon after, Cavanna received a thank-you card from the family, and was presented with a civilian service award at a borough council meeting, though he brushed off any heroic praise. “I feel good about it, but I felt anyone else would have done

the same thing I did,” the 30-year postal veteran told WFMZ. “I’m glad he’s OK.”

On June 4, South Macomb, MI Branch 4374 member **Brian Prince** was delivering mail when he heard someone calling. “It was a faint cry,” he said. “I could hear them, but I couldn’t see them.” The carrier attempted to get to the elderly customer but could not, so he called 911. “I was talking to him the whole time,” Prince said. Emergency responders were there in minutes. The man had fallen the day before and had not been able to get up. The customer was taken to the hospital and treated for dehydration. The four-year postal veteran doesn’t think his actions were all that heroic, though. “I just did what anyone else would do,” he said.

On a cold and snowy Feb. 24, Kinston, NC Branch 1044 member **Mitch Hamilton** was delivering mail on his

route when “I heard a lady call for me,” he said. His elderly customer was standing in a yard and appeared to be disoriented and in distress. Hamilton parked his truck and ran across the ice to her. The woman was not wearing a coat, only had slippers on her feet, and had a shower cap on her head. The carrier noticed that about a half-inch of snow had accumulated on the shower cap, and there were no tracks in the snow, so he figured the woman had been standing in the same spot for some time. She said she had dropped her friend off, but couldn’t answer any other questions. Hamilton thought she seemed lost, and so he led her by the hand down the street. “I started looking for houses that she might belong to,” he said. At the second house



Reading, PA Branch 258 member **Robert Cavanna** recently was interviewed by a local TV news station for his role in helping his injured customer.

they went to, the woman’s husband came to him and told the carrier that his wife has dementia, had wandered away from home, and he had been out looking for her. Hamilton checked on them later that day, and the woman was home and doing fine. The 24-year postal veteran has been commended for his actions, but he insists that it wasn’t a big deal. “She was lost,” he said. “A hero is a strong word for doing a good deed.” **PR**