

## 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.

## Carrier saves woman from flooded vehicle

Tucson, AZ Branch 704 member **James Paradowski** was going about his route on Sept. 12, 2014, during a monstrous rainstorm when he saw flood waters carrying a car driven by a woman under a bridge near his route.

"I pulled my truck out of the way so my mail wouldn't get messed up," he said, and he called 911. Paradowski enlisted the help of a bystander, and the two of them got to work.

"Her car started floating and did a 180 and got wedged right underneath this bridge," he said.

When they looked closer, they saw that the young woman was trapped inside, panicking.

The water was at chest-level and rising. "She was saying, 'Help, get me out of here!' over and over and over, and we were trying," Paradowski told KGUN-TV.

Standing on the bridge, they tried to keep the woman calm and tried to pull the hatch open, but they couldn't. Then Paradowski noticed that the car's headlights were still on. Because that meant the car's batteries were still functioning, the two men talked the woman through lowering the rear window so they could pull her out.

"We were reaching down, trying to grab her out and then we pulled her up in between the bars and she got out," Paradowski recounted.

Just 15 minutes later, the car was almost completely submerged. "You see water and it's running fast, it doesn't matter if it's a couple inches," Paradowski said. "If you've got a truck, a car, it doesn't make a difference. That water's just going to pick it up and move it.

The carrier talked the woman into heading to a school nearby. "She was a little shaky, panicking" about the state of the car, he said, but the woman got out of the rain and went to call her mother to pick her up.

Though Paradowski, a 22-year Marine Corps veteran who was deployed in Afghanistan, admitted that the woman could very likely have been killed, he doesn't think of himself as a hero. Paradowski, who's in his first year as a letter carrier, said, "We do other things besides deliver the mail. You just happen to be there. Any postal worker would have done it."

## Carrier handles 'chaotic situation'

Greenville, SC Branch 439 member **Tammy Dill** was delivering her route on Aug. 7, 2014. She went to a customer's door with two parcels and the mail and knocked. From inside, she heard movement and a crash.

A young girl came to the door and asked the carrier if she had a phone, and "the brother was saying, 'Mommy, Mommy, Mommy,'" Dill said. The mother had just collapsed. Dill passed the girl the mail and started asking questions while calling 911.

"All these thoughts are going through my head," Dill said.

The dispatcher gave Dill instructions and asked questions, starting



Tucson, AZ Branch 704 member **James Paradowski** (top) recently was interviewed by local TV news station KGUN after helping rescue a driver from her flooding vehicle (above).

with, “Is she breathing?” Dill couldn’t tell because the woman was face-down, so she rolled her over. She noticed that the woman was taking shallow breaths, but the dispatcher told her that she wasn’t breathing—it was just a reflex—and instructed Dill to start compressions, talking her through it until EMTs and firefighters arrived.

Dill sent the boy to find a neighbor and asked the daughter if there were any family members she could call. They called the girl’s grandmother in California, followed by the mother’s boyfriend, Lance, who was at work 45 minutes away.

The crews worked on the woman for 20 minutes without response. The carrier heard paramedics say, “Are we ready to call it?” Dill said. “My heart was just breaking for these kids.”

When the crew stopped for a mo-

ment, they detected a faint pulse. The EMTs put a backboard on the woman and prepared to take her to the ambulance. But when one paramedic moved a plant on the front porch before taking the woman outside, it disturbed a yellow jacket’s nest, releasing the stinging insects everywhere, including some inside the house. So EMTs carried the woman out the back door instead, then checked on the children to make sure they were OK—just as Lance arrived home.

Dill thought the customer was in good hands, so she went back to her LLV. There, she saw the paramedic who had found the nest, looking as if he was in trouble. “He was sweating—it looked like someone had poured water on him,” Dill said. Then he collapsed. She summoned help for him, and later discovered that doctors had treated him for 40 to 50 stings.

“It was an absolute chaotic situation,” Dill said.

Dill also learned that the woman had a serious heart problem. The letter carrier stopped at the house the next day to check in, and the grandmother, who had arrived from California, thanked Dill for saving her daughter’s life. The 22-year postal veteran also went to the hospital and visited her customer, who returned home the following day.

“I just consider her a walking miracle,” Dill said.

Though others consider Dill a hero, the carrier said she just knew she was in the right place at the right time. “I didn’t do anything that anyone else wouldn’t have done,” she said. “I’m just thankful for everyone from the 911 dispatcher, who was telling me what to do, to the firefighters. It was totally a team effort.”

## Eye on the elderly



**Bernie Holliday III** recently was recognized for his heroic actions by Region 13 National Business Agent **Tim Dowdy**.

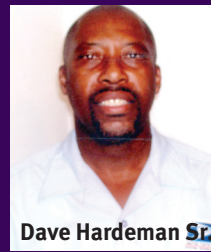
**B**eckley, WV Branch 2420 member **Bernie Holliday**

**III** was on his park-and-loop route on June 16, 2014, when he saw an elderly customer’s caretaker come out of the house trying to summon help. Investigating further, Holliday found that the man was unresponsive and had a weak pulse. “I just called 911 and stayed with him until emergency services arrived,” the carrier, an Army combat veteran, said. But the 15-year letter carrier doesn’t think he’s a hero. “I just assume I would do that for anyone,” he said.

**O**n July 21, 2014, Hartford, CT Branch 86 member **Dave Hardeman**

**Sr.** was on his appointed rounds when he noticed that the rear screen door was propped open at an elderly customer’s house. Sensing that something was wrong, the carrier called out for her. After receiving no response, Hardeman looked closer and saw that the customer’s walker was lying sideways on the ground in the doorway leading to the back yard. He immediately ran around the garage and into the back yard. “She was lying on the ground, wedged between the back door and her walker,” he said. She was also clutching her phone, unresponsive with her face turning blue.

Hardeman called 911 and performed CPR as directed until EMT and police arrived a few minutes later. The woman was taken in an ambulance to the hospital. Though the woman died there the next morning, doctors said her chances of surviving had been much higher because of the 16-year postal veteran’s actions. “I just tried to do what I could do to save her life,” Hardeman said.



**Dave Hardeman Sr.**



## Quick-thinking carrier stops runaway car

Berlin, WI Branch 1144 member **Greg Kasubaski** was returning to his vehicle after delivering his last stop on June 13, 2013, when he saw a car come through an intersection on the road up ahead, without stopping or even slowing down. The carrier noticed in horror that the car was actually picking up speed as it went through a second intersection.

As the car got closer, Kasubaski saw that no one was in the driver's seat, and the runaway car was coming up to another intersection. "I chased it down

and opened the door up," he said, and he managed to jump inside.

"The steering wheel was actually locked," he said, and was veering left. The foot brakes didn't work, so he pulled the emergency brake. "That finally stopped it," Kasubaski said, which was fortunate because a river was a block away. "That's probably where the car would have ended up," he said.

The owner apparently had just bought the car that day and had parked it at the top of a hill near

where she was purchasing auto insurance. "It must have come out of gear and rolled down the hill," Kasubaski said.

Police and the car owner thanked the 28-year postal veteran for his quick thinking and brave actions, but Kasubaski said he was just doing his job. "I was just glad the door wasn't locked," he said. "I was really concerned where the car would end up." **PR**

## Help on the way



who looked like they were horse-playing," he said. But when he looked closer, he saw that there was a woman lying in a yard, passed out, with the middle-school kids crowding around her. He ran across the street and assessed the woman. "She was breathing a little bit, but her breaths were growing labored," he said. Talley called 911 and his supervisor and then administered CPR until emergency officials arrived. Talley had learned the life-saving procedure

**W**hile delivering his route that's near a school on May 8, 2014, Akron, OH Branch 148 member **Lorne Talley** noticed a bit of commotion nearby. "There was a group of kids

while he served in the Navy. Once he knew that the woman was in good hands, he continued on his route. The second-year letter carrier brushed off any accolades for his actions. "You just do what you can for the good of everyone," he said. "It's just doing the right thing."

**P**ittsburgh, PA Branch 84 member **Carl DiBenedetto**, delivering mail on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2014, was passing through a shopping center when he noticed a vehicle with out-of-state plates about 200 yards away with its headlights on. "It seemed odd. It was in a funny location," he said. "As I passed the car, I noticed a woman." The brake lights also were on. Looking closer, he saw that the woman inside had her head back and mouth open. The carrier did not have his cell phone on him that day, so he drove to the local police station to report what he had

seen. Officers went to the scene and found the woman unresponsive, and she was taken by ambulance to the hospital. DiBenedetto was commended for his alertness and quick actions in helping the woman. But the 22-year postal veteran said it wasn't a big deal. "I don't think I did anything spectacular," DiBenedetto said. "I keep an eye on my surroundings. I was there at the right place and time, I guess."



**G**arden Grove, CA Branch 1100 member **Thoai Le** was delivering mail on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2014, when he came upon a man, Larry, who was giving his neighbor, Jim Stanley, CPR after the man had collapsed. "I dropped my satchel," Le said, "and asked, 'Is there anything I can do?'" Larry had been on the phone with a 911 dispatcher and was getting tired, so Le jumped in and continued CPR on Stanley while the neighbor stayed on the line, relaying instructions to the carrier until first responders arrived. "I continued with chest compressions," Le said. "It felt like forever, but it was only about three minutes." Le was credited by the Anaheim, CA, city council, Mayor Tom Tait and Anaheim Fire Chief Randy Bruegman for his actions in helping to save Stanley's life. But Le said he's "not worthy" of being called a hero. "It's literally something anyone would do," the eight-year postal veteran said. **PR**



## Eye on the elderly

Central California Branch 231 member **Carlos Iniguez** was delivering his route on Oct. 24, 2013, when he heard a strange noise coming from the home of his elderly customer, Frances Silva. When he walked by, “Her garage door was open, and I thought I heard ‘Help,’” he said. Iniguez went up to the door and yelled out, “Ms. Silva, are you hurt?” Silva told the carrier that she had fallen. Iniguez ran inside and found out that the woman had tripped going from the garage inside and injured her hip. Silva asked the carrier to call her son, who had a business just around the corner.



Carlos Iniguez recently was recognized for his heroic actions by Region 1 National Business Agent Christopher Jackson.

“She was really stressed,” the carrier said. “I went in there and calmed her down and got her to laugh.” Iniguez stayed with Silva until the son arrived, along with paramedics. Silva’s daughter-in-law, Janet, called the post office the same day to express how grateful she was to Iniguez for his kind actions. Silva normally wears a life alert necklace, but had taken it off when she went to get her hair done. Iniguez brushed off any talk of heroics, though. “It’s

part of my job,” the 14-year postal veteran said. “I just saw that she needed help.”

On July 29, 2014, Connecticut Merged Branch 20 member **Shawn DuPerry** was delivering mail on his route after he had returned from a vacation when he noticed that one of his customers had not retrieved her mail for a few days. The carrier knew that the 89-year-old resident, Lottie Slivinski, was meticulous about collecting her mail, so he was concerned about her. “A sub doesn’t know your customer like you do,” he said. There was an outside screen door and an inside wooden door, and they were open, so he believed the woman had to be inside. DuPerry knocked on the door, but when he didn’t get a response, he contacted the police and requested that they check on Slivinski. Responding officers knocked on the door, but also didn’t get a response. They entered the house and found the woman on the kitchen floor. Slivinski was conscious and breathing, but dehydrated since she had been without food or water for four days. The woman was treated at the local hospital, then was moved to a rehabilitation facility to recover. Slivinski’s relatives later saw DuPerry as he was delivering his route and said they were “very, very grateful” to the 17-year postal veteran for saving her life. DuPerry, a Marine veteran, brushed off any major heroics. “A hero is someone who gives his life for something,” he said. “I did what you’re supposed to do—I made a phone call.”

On Saturday, Feb. 8, 2014—a day when the wind chill dipped below zero—South Ma-

comb, MI Branch 4374 member **Kevin Gnagi** was delivering mail when he saw his elderly customer, Jan Morris. “She had just pulled in the driveway,” the carrier said. They talked about the weather briefly, and then he continued on his route. As Gnagi was heading back down the street, he could hear something coming from Morris’ house. “I heard the faintest ‘Help me, please help,’” he said. Gnagi traced the sound to the garage and saw that Morris’ feet were sticking out of it. She wasn’t dressed for the weather and had fallen and injured her leg. Gnagi covered her with his coat, called 911 and stayed with Morris until paramedics arrived, helping to keep her calm and thinking straight. “She was in a lot of pain,” he said. When he could hear sirens, Gnagi went outside to wave the ambulance toward the garage. Once he saw that his customer was in good hands, he continued on his route. Morris’ daughter wrote to the local post office, saying: “Mom’s postal carrier is a wonderful caring person and we thank God for him every day.” Gnagi said he was just happy he was able to help her. “I take a lot of pride in my job. You get close to the people,” he said. “Who’s going to leave someone lying there, stranded? When someone needs help, you help them. That’s what it’s all about.”

Lufkin, TX Branch 2279 member **Reyes Escobedo** was delivering his route on Sept. 3, 2014, when he saw an elderly couple in distress. His customers had been walking on their driveway when a wheel broke on the man’s walker, and he had fallen. While the woman tried to hold her husband up,



Kevin Gnagi

she too fell on the concrete driveway and began screaming for help. Escobedo had not heard them, but saw them on the ground. “I went to help them out,” he said. He put a pillow under the man’s head to make him comfortable, and took a sheet and rolled him onto it so that he could ease him up without hurting him. He then assessed the man for injuries. He did not appear to have broken bones, but his arm was bleeding. “He got scratched up pretty bad,” the carrier said, but the woman did not have any injuries. Escobedo assisted both of them back to their feet and waited until their daughter arrived. He then helped both customers back into their home. Once the 10-year postal veteran was sure the couple was in good hands, he returned to his route. The customers later called the postmaster to recognize Escobedo for his actions. But he doesn’t think he’s a hero. “I think the good Lord put me in the right place on the right day,” he said. **PR**