

Proud to Serve is a semi-regular compilation of heroic stories about letter carriers in their communities. If you know about a hero in your branch, contact us as soon as possible at 202-662-2851 or at postalrecord@nalc.org. We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.

Honoring heroic carriers

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

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

Delivering mail, saving a life all in a day's work

One day in April, Atlanta Branch 73 member **Christopher Montedoro** was driving his route and stopped at the home of Elma McIntire, a 90-year-old

customer who lives alone and receives delivery to her door.

When he pulled into her driveway, the carrier said, "I glanced down, and I saw her head hovering two feet off the ground. I parked my truck and hopped out."

McIntire said she had gone out to check her mail and had fallen. It was raining, which made the ground slick, and she told the carrier that she didn't know where she was.

Montedoro noticed a large knot on her head. He asked if she was OK. McIntire's response: "No." He asked if he could call an ambulance, and she again said no—she just wanted to get back inside the house.

"She was in pretty bad shape, and I didn't want to hurt her anymore," the carrier said. So, he gently lifted her up and got the woman inside her house to



Atlanta Branch 73 member **Christopher Montedoro** recently was interviewed by his local FOX-TV station for his role in helping his injured customer, Elma McIntire. Also shown at right is Branch 73 President **Ben Jackson**.

Eye on the elderly



Dennis Cronin

On May 26, Garden State Merged, NJ Branch 444 member **Dennis Cronin** noticed that after the long Memorial Day weekend, mail

was building up in elderly customer Helene Starr's outdoor mailbox. This was unusual for her. He knew the customer was disabled and, concerned for her welfare, Cronin called through the mail slot, "Are you OK?" Although he heard an affirmative response, when the mail was not taken in the next day, he alerted Starr's neighbors. "Something's wrong," he told them. He yelled into the house again, and did not hear anything, so he went back to the neighbors, who called 911. The woman was found on the ground, having been unable to get up for three days. "Without Dennis's concern, alertness and proactive efforts, I dread

thinking of the consequences for Helene, who after the hospital, is now in rehab," Helene's niece, Joanne Wolf wrote to *The Postal Record*. "Dennis is an angel, and the Starr family thanks him with all our hearts." But the 28-year postal veteran brushed off any high praise. "It's what we do every day," Cronin said. "It's part of the job. I try to look after my customers."

As he was delivering his route one Saturday in February, Wilkes-Barre, PA Branch 115 member **David Rosario** noticed a few days' worth of mail accumulation outside an elderly customer's house. "The man would meet me at the door every morning," he said. Rosario

figured the man was visiting with his children, but after he saw a package out front that had not been picked up, he became concerned. "He had a big panoramic window out front, so I looked in," the carrier said. "He was on the floor, and he looked lifeless." Rosario contacted the post office and 911. Responders found the man inside on the floor after he had gone into diabetic shock a few days earlier. The man was alive and was taken for medical attention. But the first-year letter carrier doesn't think he's a hero. "I was just being observant and making sure our customers are OK," Rosario said.

her easy chair.

Montedoro noticed that McIntire's shoulder was at a bad angle and asked if there was anyone he could call for her. When she had trouble remembering a name, he worried she had suffered a concussion. She eventually mentioned a name, Linda, and the carrier called her for help and stayed until she arrived to take her to the hospital. When he knew that McIntire was in good hands, he continued on with his route.

The carrier called his customer the next day. McIntire said she was still hurt, but doctors said she had not had a concussion, but did have a broken shoulder and would go through rehab.

Montedoro visited her a few days later and she told him how grateful she was for helping her out. "I love all you guys," McIntire told KSB-TV in Atlanta. "You don't get enough credit. And that sweet man is my sweetheart forever." "She's pretty much adopted me at

this point," Montedoro said.

McIntire's home sits on a hill and it was unlikely she would have been seen from the street after she fell. Still, the 21-year postal veteran thinks the media attention on him has been unwarranted. "It just broke my heart to see her there in pain. I wasn't going to leave until she was OK," he said. "I try to be a decent person. I didn't do anything that any other carrier wouldn't have done."

Eye on the elderly



Steven Finkle

Las Vegas Branch 2502 member **Steven Finkle** was on his route on March 10 when he noticed mail accumulating in his elderly customer Carol's box. The carrier knew that a neighbor, Al Ghilarducci, was a close friend, so he knocked on his door. Ghilarducci had a key, so he went to check on the customer. He found the woman on the floor; she had not been able to move for more than three days after she had tripped. "Worst thing is for somebody to fall, not be able to get to a phone," Finkle told the local CBS TV news. "She could have been dead

in a matter of hours probably." Carol soon recovered and receives nursing care now. Neighbors praised the 23-year letter carrier. "I commend Steven," the neighbor told the post office. "What an amazing mailman he is, the kind you can only imagine in a Norman Rockwell painting." But Finkle doesn't think he's a hero. "Al and his wife are the ones who saved her. I just knocked on the door and said, 'Hey, we've got a problem.' They're the ones who took care of her. They deserve the credit," he said. "To me, it was no big deal. I just look out for my customers."

Worcester, MA Branch 12 member **Richard Metterville** was putting mail in the slot of an elderly customer's house on May 8 when he heard a woman calling out to him. He looked in the slot and saw the woman on the floor after she had fallen and hit her head. "Are you OK?" Metterville called through the slot. "Yeah—I just can't get up," she replied. The door was locked, so the carri-

er called 911 and waited with his patron until paramedics arrives. "She had banged her head when she went to sit in her chair with casters," the carrier said. She had gotten to her phone, but couldn't dial, so Metterville helped by calling her son. The woman recovered in the hospital and soon returned home. Despite his customer thanking him profusely, Metterville insists he didn't do anything heroic. "I'm not a hero, I just called 911," the 37-year letter carrier said. "Luckily I was around when it happened."

On March 4, Westfield, NJ Branch 1492 member **Pedro Pinto** was delivering mail when he noticed that his 90-year-old customer had not picked up the mail the prior two days. "She never leaves it until the next day," he said. Knowing that the woman was a widow who lived alone, the carrier expressed his concern to a neighbor across the street and asked if she had seen any activity at the house. The neighbor called the police,

who responded along with the local rescue squad. Upon entering the house through the back, they found the woman on the kitchen floor, severely dehydrated and unable to move with her vital signs unstable. It was discovered that she had tripped on her kitchen floor three days earlier, where she remained unable to get up or to reach a phone. The woman was taken to the hospital for medical attention, followed by a stay at a rehabilitation center, and then returned home. "She's fine now, thanks God," Pinto said. But he doesn't think he's a hero. "It was just being concerned," the 21-year postal veteran said. Others disagree. "Had it not been for the diligence of Mr. Pinto, my client could very well have died," the customer's lawyer wrote to the local postmaster. "Mr. Pinto is truly one of our nation's unsung heroes who go above and beyond in the performance of their duties and is truly a credit to the United States Postal Service." **PR**



August Paoletto

Super carrier to the rescue

West Palm Beach, FL Branch 1690 member **August Paoletto** was driving back to his route from his lunch break one day last winter when “about a block away, I saw a car coming toward me, and all of a sudden, it was a big cloud of dust.”

He drove a bit farther, and when the dust cleared, Paoletto saw the car on its side after it had rolled several times. It had landed on the driver’s side just inches from a deep ditch. The carrier got out of his truck and ran to help.

“I called 911 and stayed with the victim and her friend, who was driving behind the woman’s car, to calm them down,” the carrier said. “She was freaking out and trying to get out of the car.”

The car was too smashed for the driver to open the door. “The woman was panicking,” Paoletto said. He noted that he didn’t detect any smell of gasoline and didn’t see anything leaking from the vehicle. “I told her to sit back down and relax, and that 911 was on its way,” the carrier said. “If the car had rolled into the ditch, there’s no telling what could have happened.”

When the EMTs arrived on the scene,

they had to use the “jaws of life” to remove the woman. Fortunately, she sustained no injuries.

The women had said she had seen a dog in the street and was trying to avoid hitting it.

“Her friend gave me a hug and thanked me for staying with them and calling 911,” the 26-year postal veteran said. “The victim is lucky to be alive. I was prepared to jump into that canal had her car fallen in.”

Helping out her ‘second family’

On April 21, Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **Elizabeth Peterson** was delivering her route. She walked to the front door of a house and started to place the mail into the slot.

“I noticed that the mail was turning black,” she said. She quickly pulled the mail back out. “I looked up and saw a faint hint of smoke coming from the back of the house,” she said.

She immediately called 911, then she rushed to all the doors and windows, banging to check if there was anyone inside. “Fortunately, there was no one home at the time,” Peterson said.

Soon afterward, the whole house was engulfed in flames and one side collapsed. The fire chief arrived and called for assistance from several surrounding fire departments.

Although the house was severely damaged, firefighters said that if it had not been for the quick response of Peterson, the results could have been a lot worse for the homeowner.

But Peterson insists she doesn’t deserve the “hero” title. “I love my job, and I love my customers. My customers are my second family,” the 19-year postal veteran said. “I’m just doing what I wish anyone would do.”

Carrier aids fellow carrier

On March 25, Pittsburgh, PA Branch 84 member **John Stillwell** was on his route when he received a phone call that a fellow letter carrier had been attacked by a dog.

Stillwell immediately called the carrier, then went to the area where he had been attacked. “I saw he was bleeding a lot at the knee,” he said.

Stillwell called 911 and asked where the dog was. Once he heard that the pit bull was still loose, Stillwell made sure he had mace in hand, but he did not see it.

The carrier retrieved the scattered mail and secured it. When the postmaster and police arrived on scene, Stillwell had everything under control.

The attacked carrier needed stitches but was otherwise OK, while the dog was later found and quarantined.

Stillwell doesn’t think what he did was all that special. “I don’t consider myself a hero in any way,” the 28-year postal veteran said. “I came to help my fellow workmate.” **PR**



John Stillwell