

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 202-756-7403 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.

Keeping the route safe and secure

On March 30, Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **Joseph Manno** was completing his rounds when he observed unusual activity outside of the house he was delivering to. "I noticed two guys on a front lawn throw hoods over their heads," he said.

Manno didn't recognize them, and they didn't have any tools in their hands. "I heard them say, 'There's the mailman. Let's go,'" he said. "Then I watched them run to the back yard." He heard one comment that the homeowner wasn't home.

"This doesn't look right," the carrier said to himself. Manno knew the man who owned the home and, concerned, went to knock on the front door. The man's mother answered the door and the carrier tried to warn her about what he saw, but she didn't speak English.

So, Manno called police, who quickly responded. "They checked it out," he said. Police discovered that no one had broken into that home. The suspects appeared to have run to the neighboring house behind that one; those homeowners had just left for vacation. That home was secure, but the fence was damaged.

Later on Manno's route, the first homeowner located the letter carrier after his mother had called him. He asked the carrier what happened, and he thanked Manno for looking out for his

house and family. He also said that he had surveillance video at the home; after watching it, the man told the carrier, "Joe, they came 10 minutes earlier to case the house out."

Manno has been getting praise for his actions. "When we heard this story upon our return we were so grateful that Joe Manno had been on the scene. If not for his vigilance and quick action, our neighbors and possibly our home may have been burgled," neighbors Jennifer McGarry and Joseph Spletzer wrote in a letter to the district manager. "He cares and knows his neighborhood well enough to recognize when something is not right—when something or someone is out of place—and will take appropriate action."

But the 47-year postal veteran doesn't think he's a hero. Manno simply said, "I was glad I was there to prevent the crime."

More than just a 'good deed'

On March 18, Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **Victor Santos** was on his route with his postmaster. "Up ahead, I noticed a vehicle driving really slow," he said. The car continued to slow down, and Santos noticed it was drifting into oncoming traffic.

"The man's head was down," the carrier said, of the car's driver. When he got closer, he recognized the man as one of his customers.

Santos pulled over his LLV. "I crossed the road to find the man somewhat lethargic," he said. Santos put the man's car in park and shut it off, then yelled to his postmaster to call an ambulance.

"The man wasn't in the condition to drive. He was definitely not himself. He was slurring a little bit," Santos said. "I proceeded to take the keys and help him out." The carrier helped the man out of the car, and explained the situation to responding police when they arrived a few minutes later.

The customer had apparently been experiencing a medical issue. "My concern was a head-on [collision], because he



Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **Joseph Manno** was praised for his role in catching burglars on his route.



Irma Gonzales-Tranter

was in the direct line of traffic,” Santos said. “It all worked out well.” The carrier has seen the man since, and he is doing OK now.

The 21-year postal veteran simply said he was doing his good deed for the day. “It’s a situation where I just acted out of reaction,” Santos said.

Helping out ‘family’

On Jan. 11, Phoenix Branch 576 member **Irma Gonzales-Tranter** was delivering her route when she saw a grandmother with her two grandkids out on the front lawn. “I always see them out there,” she said.

Suddenly, she saw the woman run-

ning across the street with the 3-year-old boy, crying. Gonzales-Tranter was concerned, so she pulled over her LLV. The woman was trying to go to her neighbor’s house for help with her grandson Sebastian.

“He was blue to the face, unresponsive,” the carrier said. “I put him on the ground to start CPR.” The grandmother asked the neighbor to call 911 as Gonzales-Tranter continued chest compressions.

A responding police officer came within minutes to help with CPR, and together they were able to resuscitate Sebastian. An ambulance arrived a few minutes after, and paramedics

took over and brought the child to the hospital’s intensive-care unit.

Later that day, Gonzales-Tranter followed up to see how the child was and found out that Sebastian’s heart had apparently shut down after a seizure caused by an infection. The boy soon recovered and returned home.

Gonzales-Tranter said performing CPR was nerve-racking. “You just do the best you can and hope for the best,” she said.

But the three-year letter carrier doesn’t think she’s a hero; she said that letter carriers provide extra support for the community. “When you get to know your customers, they become family,” she said. “I just did what I had to do.”

Neighborhood watch

Oak Brook, IL Branch 825 member **Joyce Kolanowski** had just pulled up to a condominium complex on her route to deliver mail one day this spring. “There was a little girl outside with a backpack,” she recalled, “and she was crying.” The child asked the carrier if she could open the door to the building because her mom wasn’t buzzing her in. Kolanowski recognized the child and knew she lived there, so she used her key to get the girl access to go inside and then continued to put mail in the complex’s boxes. Soon after, the 7-year-old girl came back down, crying, saying her mom wasn’t home. “Don’t cry, because I’m going to stay with you,” Kolanowski told her. “She calmed right down,” she added. The carrier called police and waited at the building. “I couldn’t leave her outside,” she said. Police soon arrived and were able to get in touch with the mother on her cell phone. The child

had had an early dismissal from school; the mother was at the store, but she immediately rushed home to her child. Kolanowski said her actions are all part of the job. “We’re out there to keep our eyes open and pay attention to what’s going on in the neighborhood, not just putting mail in the mailbox,” she said. But the 17-year letter carrier denied any major hero-

ics. “To me, it was a simple act of kindness,” Kolanowski said. “I’m a mother and grandmother, and you don’t leave a crying child.”

On March 15, Portland, OR Branch 82 member **Charlie Grimes** was delivering mail on his route along with a trainee. “We were dividing and conquering the route,” he said, when “I noticed a little girl, in pajamas and barefoot, in a front yard.” Grimes knew that the young girl didn’t belong there. He kept an eye on her as he did his loops, but then saw her run to the middle of the street. The carrier went up to the girl and asked her if she was OK. The child started crying and held onto Grimes as he ushered her out of the street. “I whistled to my trainee to keep going and knocked on a door,” the carrier said. He asked the woman

who answered if she knew who the girl was. She did not, but she volunteered to call 911. An officer soon responded and attempted to take the little girl from Grimes, but she started screaming and would not let go of him. “The girl got attached to me,” Grimes said. “I held on to her.” The police called child protective services and began a door-to-door search for the girl’s parents. When child services arrived to take custody of the girl, she again started screaming and would not leave the care of Grimes. The carrier stayed with the child until the police were able to reunite her with her mother—two hours later. The girl had apparently gotten out of an unlocked house. The fourth-year letter carrier doesn’t describe his actions as heroic, though. “I’m a parent. I just trusted my gut,” he said. “I feel like I did what anyone who wears our uniform would have done.” **PR**



Oak Brook, IL Branch 825 1 member Joyce Kolanowski (c) received recognition from local Postmaster Julie Buckley (l) and POOM Michael Young for helping a lost child on her route.

The eyes and ears of the neighborhood

On May 5, Emerald Coast, FL Branch 4559 member **John Jackson** was going about his park-and-loop and had just dropped the mail in the box outside the home of his 78-year-old customer, Janet Doman. “I heard what I thought was someone saying, ‘Help,’” he said.

The carrier called out to see if the woman was OK. Doman called out, “John!” in return. “I knew she needed help,” he said, so Jackson broke the latch on the storm door and found her inside. “She was kind of tangled up in a chair that she had fallen into,” the

carrier said. “She was lying awkwardly.”

Jackson called 911. “She thought she had dislocated her shoulder,” Jackson told *The Bay Beacon*. He maneuvered Doman and moved the chair out of the way because her arm was caught in it. Doman told him that she had fallen four hours earlier and her medical alert necklace was not working.

Medical personnel soon arrived to attend to the woman. Doman told the *Beacon* that she calls Jackson her “guardian angel.” She added, “I was praying that he would hear me when he came because I know what time he

comes. I could have died there.”

Jackson, a 21-year postal veteran, told the paper he was “in the right place at the right time.” Doman had apparently broken her shoulder and has since recovered after going through rehabilitation.

The carrier and his customer became friends after realizing they had the same birthday. But Jackson doesn’t think he’s a hero; he’s just glad the woman had a mailbox right outside her house. “If it had been a curbside delivery, she’d still be there,” he said. “Because it was a door-side box, I was there. Any letter carrier would have done the exact same thing.” **PR**

Eye on the elderly

Hamilton, OH Branch 426 member **Heather Hollister** was delivering her route on March 11 when she noticed her elderly customer, Mary Jones, had not picked up her mail. Knowing this was unusual for Jones, “I knew something was wrong,” the carrier said. “I talked to her every day.” Hollister took the mail from the box and went to the door to check on the woman. She knocked, but heard nothing. She knocked again. This time, she heard Jones crying for help. The door was locked, so Hollister went to a neighbor’s house to see if they had a key, but they didn’t. The carrier then called 911.

“They came and busted down the door,” Hollister said. They found Jones lying in the garage, where she had been for at least two days. “She had fallen and couldn’t get up,” Hollister said. “She had issues with her legs.” She had wrapped herself in rugs in an attempt to stay warm. Jones was taken to the hospital for treatment and recovery. The first responders told Hollister that Jones probably would not have made it through another day on the ground. The 22-year postal veteran said it was a terrible feeling “when you hear someone hollering for help and you can’t help them.” Still,

Hollister doesn’t think she’s a hero. “I just feel that it was what anyone else would have done.”

Virginia Beach, VA Branch 2819 member **James Miller** was delivering the mail on March 16 when he noticed that mail was backing up in the mailbox of his customer, Jackson Wright. “He gets a lot of mail,” the carrier said, and he knew his customer usually picks up the mail every day. Concerned, Miller took the mail to the door and noticed it was open, just the screen door was closed. He knocked, and looking through the screen door, he could see Wright’s feet sticking out from behind the couch. Miller shouted in, and the man’s toes wiggled. The carrier called 911 and

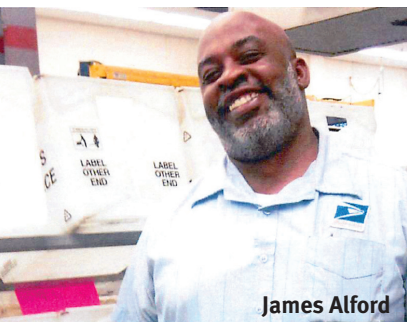
yelled to Wright, “Hold on—help is on the way,” he said. “I didn’t want him to exert any more energy than he had to.” Miller stayed on the line with the 911 operator until emergency personnel arrived. The man had apparently been on the floor for two to three days. Wright’s daughter later contacted the carrier to tell him how grateful the family was for his help. She also said that he was doing all right and would be moved to a retirement home. Miller, an eight-year Navy veteran and an 18-year letter carrier, doesn’t like to think of himself as a hero, though. He said he just tries to take note of anything unusual on his route. “I just want to help out,” he said. “I’m always trying to look out for the neighbors.” **PR**



Heather Hollister

Help on the way

Cleveland Branch 40 member **James Alford** was delivering a certified letter one day in May when he saw something out of the ordinary. “There was a car coming down the street kind of fast,” he said. “She lost control.” The vehicle soon ran into a tree. The carrier asked a bystander to call 911 and ran over to help. He began by opening up the door. He assessed the driver’s condition and then pulled the female driver out. “A child was crying in the backseat,” Alford said. “I grabbed the child and got her out of the car.” The carrier put both the mother and 9-year-old girl a safe



James Alford

distance away, since he saw that the car was leaking fluids. At that point, “You could hear the sirens coming,” Alford said. The carrier kept the pair comfortable until help arrived. Both victims were taken to a hospital, where they recovered. The driver told authorities she had tried to dodge a squirrel and lost control of the car. The 18-year postal veteran denied any major heroics. “If you see something that needs to be done, it’s our civil duty as human beings to do something,” Alford said.

On Saturday, Feb 27, Elmira, NY Branch 21 city carrier assistant **Angelica Bruno** was

delivering mail on a route that she had regular subbed on when she noticed that the mail had not been picked up from a customer’s mailbox. “The mailbox was right next to the back door,” she said. So, the carrier looked in through a big window into the apartment and noticed that the kitchen looked very messy. Bruno decided to keep an eye on the situation. When she returned on Monday, “I came back, and it was still the same condition,” she said, then, “I looked in and looked down.” This time, she saw that someone was lying on the floor, not moving. “I knew she wasn’t lying there before,” the carrier said. “I kind of panicked.” She reported her concern to her postmaster, who in turn called 911. Emergency personnel arrived from the sheriff’s department that was close by and took the woman to the hospital for treatment. Bruno called the sheriff’s office the next day to check up on the situation and found out that the woman was doing OK. The first-year letter carrier said that she just tries to be observant. “I’m usually pretty aware of my surroundings and what’s what,” Bruno said.

As New Jersey Merged Branch 38 city carrier assistant **Gregory Loughlin** delivered mail one day in March, he heard what sounded like his patron yelling. “The gentleman must have heard me put mail in the box and started screaming for help,” the carrier said. “I asked through the door if he was OK.” The man said he had fallen inside his home and injured his back. The door was unlocked, so Loughlin entered the house and found the man on the floor. The man

said he was in pain and asked Loughlin to call 911. His phone had fallen across the room and out of reach, the carrier said, so the man asked him to retrieve it and to also call his wife. Loughlin stayed with his customer until emergency responders arrived. “It may have been 20 minutes out of my day, but I felt really good about having helped one of our customers,” he said. As a volunteer firefighter, Loughlin didn’t think much of his actions. “It’s just one of those things that I do,” the second-year letter carrier said.

On Aug. 31, 2015, Moundsville, WV Branch 893 member **Randy Caldwell** was on his park-and-loop route when “I heard a fellow screaming really loudly,” he said. He went over to the noise, and found a man, Mr. Blake, trapped underneath a mobile home after a jack that the home had been hoisted up on had slipped. “It pinned this man to the ground,” Caldwell said. “He was yelling and screaming, and in severe pain.” The carrier called 911 and asked the operator to make sure responders brought heavy equipment to help free Blake. “They were able to come with a backhoe,” Caldwell said. Blake was soon freed and rushed by medical helicopter to the hospital. Caldwell was commended for his keen awareness of his surroundings and his concern for his customer. But the 30-year postal veteran said his actions weren’t that big of a deal. “I don’t consider it a heroic act,” he said. “I just called 911 and stayed with him until help arrived. Guys do that every day around the country.”



Angelica Bruno

On a sweltering Aug. 4, 2015, Lakeland, FL Branch 1779 member **Kenneth Jinwright** was delivering his route when he turned onto a side street and saw an elderly woman lying in the middle of the road with her purse’s contents scattered around—“right out in the sun,” he said. When the woman saw the carrier, she raised her arm to get his attention as Jinwright pulled over. “I thought, ‘Oh, this ain’t good,’” the carrier said. “Her face was all bloody and her arm was bent the wrong way.” He knew the woman, his octogenarian customer, and asked her questions to make sure she was oriented and alert. She said she was not sure how long she had been lying on the pavement. “If she had been there a minute, it would have been too long in that heat,” Jinwright said. He picked her up and “held onto her and walked back to her home,” he said. When they got there, the woman asked the carrier to call her daughter at work instead of 911. While Jinwright made sure the woman was going to be OK and waited for the daughter to get there, he prepared a cold compress for his customer. He later found out that the woman had broken her wrist and a finger, as well as sustaining some cuts. She had apparently fallen after overheating and passed out. The patron, who soon recovered and returned home after surgery, was thankful to Jinwright. But the 19-postal veteran didn’t think much of his actions, describing the word “hero” as overused. “I’m not a hero; a good Samaritan, probably,” Jinwright said. **PR**