





A Season for Giving

This is the season for giving. For *The Postal Record*, it's also the season to recognize the good deeds of letter carriers who help others in their communities, whether during the holiday season or all year round.

This season, we bring you stories about NALC members who collect food for area food banks, who deliver food directly to needy families on their routes and who cook holiday meals for the hungry. They support the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) and the families it serves. They distribute gifts. They raise funds for women's shelters. They help with disaster relief. And they look out for fellow carriers on hot and cold days by bringing them refreshments on their routes.

We know we've only scratched the surface with these stories. Many more NALC members and branches support their communities throughout the year in many different ways. Share your story or nominate a letter carrier or branch effort to be featured by contacting *The Postal Record* by phone at 202-662-2851 or by e-mail at postalrecord@nalc.org.

Four friends Become Angels



Top: The Better Angels of Our Human Nature get financial and volunteer assistance from other postal employees in the region. **Below:** The group gathered and delivered supplies to those hurt by Superstorm Sandy. **Bottom:** They also financially assisted in the creation of art therapy kits for children with a family member in hospice care.



It all started in late 2009 on New York City Branch 36 member **Ernest Twomley's** route.

While delivering mail, he noticed a mother and daughter outside of their apartment building, and the 11-year-old girl was screaming in pain. His fatherly instincts kicking in, Twomley helped by carrying the girl up the stairs and into her apartment.

Soon after, he found out that the youngster he had helped with his small action had a terminal illness. Twomley, a 29-year postal veteran, said he asked himself, "What can I do for this family?" He headed back to the post office and mentioned to fellow Branch 36 members **David Correa** and **Heriberto Rodriguez** and postal employee Don Daggett that he wanted to do something for the family over the holidays.

Correa, a 31-year letter carrier and Navy veteran, told Twomley, "If you want to do it right, see if she has any other brothers and sisters. She can look like a hero." As it turned out, the girl had three brothers. So, Twomley asked the mother to have her children write letters to Santa Claus and he would make sure they got delivered to him.

The carriers solicited support and funds from co-workers and management, and then went to some stores to get gifts for the entire family. The girl really wanted an American Girl doll, so Twomley and Rodriguez, a 28-year postal veteran, went out shopping in New York City. "You can imagine two guys shopping for dolls," Rodriguez said with a laugh.

They then invited the family to the post office for a party, where they presented the mother and children with the gifts. Daggett dressed up as Santa Claus. "We made it the best Christmas they ever had," Twomley said. Someone said to him, "You made a differ-

ence in that family's life."

"To me, we just got a doll," he added.

Soon after, the girl died. When the four men went to the home to check on the family, there was a grief counselor working with them.

Correa said it got them thinking, "We could get involved by having a bereavement bag."

They soon teamed up with the Metropolitan Jewish Hospice to provide the children with a creative arts legacy kit, which helps therapists provide coping skills during the bereavement period through a program called "Art & Soul." (Naturally, the bag resembles a letter carrier's satchel.)

The carriers said that going to the hospice had been the toughest part, but it had been worth it when they saw the smiles on the patients' and family members' faces.

This experience led them to want to do more. The foursome was interviewed by a local news reporter, who dubbed them "The Better Angels of our Human Nature." When they solidified their commitment by creating a non-profit organization in 2010, they adopted that name as their own.

Besides providing support to sick and terminally ill children and their families, they've gone on to help with dozens of other causes, including Superstorm Sandy relief, "Toys for Tots" drives, Christmas parties for kids with autism, school supply drives, fundraising for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), supply drives for women's shelters—the list goes on. There is fundraising in stations, and Better Angels has its own Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number (67657) to raise funds to help.

Better Angels does regular events all year long in the New York City area, though the group is trying to expand its reach by going to all five boroughs,

Playing Santa

Long Island and New Jersey, and the organization is open to expanding even further by creating other non-profit outlets.

“Little acts of kindness go a long way,” Rodriguez said. “If we can deliver a letter and bills, we can deliver services to the community when they need it.”

The letter carriers cited one experience that was particularly memorable. After they found out that a fellow carrier’s house had burned down, they teamed up with a local merchant that supplies USPS uniforms.

Area letter carriers who had money left on their uniform allowance vouchers donated hundreds of dollars to her. Better Angels matched the donation.

“Everyone chipped in and got her a year’s worth of uniforms,” Twomley said, and they presented her the gift at the post office. “She started crying—she was overwhelmed.”

After Superstorm Sandy in 2012, when their city was hit especially hard, Better Angels knew they wanted to take action. Teaming up with another local post office and a fire department in the neighborhood, “We rented a truck and people would come by and donate water, mops, and we drove it out to victims,” Correa said.

“We not only live in the community, we work in the community,” Rodriguez said. “If there’s a tragedy, we’re suffering as well.”

Twomley said, “Just recently, there was a woman our reps came across who had terminal cancer.” So, they came up with the idea of an “Angels time out”—in which they sent her (and her daughter, who was her caretaker) to a beauty salon for a day of pampering. “We wanted to make her day as pleasant as can be,” Twomley said.

The guys say that a lot of people just want to do a good deed to get a photo op. Not them. “We want to get our hands dirty,” Twomley said. “We’re stepping up and doing what we need to do.”

Correa added, “We try to help in as



many different ways as we can.”

“We have to depend on one another,” Rodriguez said. “I just want to make sure that I am a solution to what people need.”

The carriers and their volunteers are glad that they are able to make a difference. “The highlight of all of it is that we can take some of the ugliness that’s been dished out to these people, and make their lives less stressful than they have to be,” Twomley said. “It feels great that we’re there and we could make a big difference, and I feel we are.”

While there are not currently a lot of other letter carriers involved, “Our goal is to get every station involved in community work,” Twomley said. “We want to make the biggest impact in the postal system as we can.”

This includes getting managers involved, such as permission to store donated toys at the post office.

They’ll ask carriers in other stations if they have women’s shelters with

Rockford, IL Branch 245 member Francis J. Loebach Jr., better known as “Chops,” retired last July after completing 50 years of active service. Always a customer favorite, during the last six years on the same route he had for 36 years, he delivered mail on Christmas Eve as Santa Claus and handed out candy canes to his patrons. “I look like him—I figured, why not?” he said. “The parents seem to get as much a kick out of it as the kids do.”

which they can partner. “It’s just a matter of getting people who want to participate,” Twomley said. “All you need is a willingness and wanting to help.”

The foursome thinks that, as letter carriers, they are uniquely able to identify what members of their communities need. “We see and feel what they go through,” Rodriguez said.

Twomley added, “Letter carriers are recognized as being pillars of the community—this solidifies it.”

For other carriers around the country who want to do something similar, the guys have plenty of advice. “Whatever it is the community needs, reach out to a person who knows what it needs,” Rodriguez said. “Speak to friends and co-workers from other stations. Reach out to congressional representatives. Sit down with them and ask, ‘Is there a way we can help?’ ”

Twomley said that volunteers are out there. “Look around—there’s always

a helping hand to do something.” He added, “Give not just money; give from yourselves.”

And the guys would love to help out carriers and branches personally, even creating new regional outlets of Better Angels. “We’re more than happy to speak to them,” Rodriguez said. “If we can expand somewhere else, or if individuals want to start their own organization, we can show them the process we went through.”

NALC members are also welcome to pass along ideas to Better Angels. Twomley said they want letter carriers to be “a positive force to be reckoned with.”

Better Angels just wants to help make postal communities better places. “We can’t do everything, but even the small stuff we do is pretty rewarding for families,” Correa said. “We’re delivering mail and delivering hope.”

Visit tbangels.com for more information and to contact the carriers. **PR**

He keeps the carriers cool



John Lauer

Out on their routes in the summer heat, the letter carriers of Binghamton, NY Branch 333 get hot and thirsty, but thanks to the “hydration patrols” by the branch’s Director of Retirees **John Lauer** and his wife, Doris, they end their days refreshed and safe.

Doris, who is president of the local NALC Auxiliary, first suggested taking water out to carriers on a hot day in 2011. Lauer had just retired that year. When he carried mail, she had kept tabs on him to assure he had enough water and was safe in the heat. When Lauer told her the post office did not supply water to carriers, Doris said, “Well, maybe we should.”

The couple took on the task for the whole region, buying water and sports drinks by the case and distributing them to carriers on every hot day. They buy most of the drinks with their own

money; local businesses sometimes pitch in when they run out.

“We were probably out 45 to 50 days last year,” Lauer said, including a heat wave that kept him busy for nine straight days. They distribute drinks to carriers as they leave their stations in the morning, and Lauer drives out to find carriers on their routes to supply them with drinks. Last year, the carriers went through 37 cases of sports drinks, 13 cases of water and seven cases of flavored water.

“People say to me, ‘How do you know where to find them?’ ” Lauer said. “I delivered mail for 30 years—I have a general idea where all the park points are.”

The Lauers don’t abandon their carriers after summer’s heat wanes, though. When winter temperatures drop into the 20s, Lauer and his wife also keep the carriers warm and comfortable by serving hot coffee, tea and cocoa. **PR**

Feeding the hungry throughout the country

One of the most meaningful gifts is the gift of nourishment. Just as letter carriers nationwide collect food for those in need as part of the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive each May, many also ensure that hungry people don't go without during the rest of the year, especially the holiday season. Here we bring you some of the stories that have come to our attention of letter carriers helping to keep the needy fed and cared for in this season of giving and throughout each year.

Not wasting his time on Earth

Van Nuys, CA Branch 2462 retiree **Daniel Rathbone** cites former baseball player Roberto Clemente, who played in Rathbone's hometown of Pittsburgh, as one of his inspirations for the decades of volunteer work the carrier has done to feed and dignify the less fortunate.

"Whenever you have the opportunity to make a difference in this world, and you don't, you're wasting your time on Earth," Clemente once said.

"That inspires me to go out and reach out and help the less fortunate in the world," said Rathbone. "I use that as a starting post to reach out and

help other people."

Clemente was known for his own charitable acts; he died in 1972 when the plane he had chartered crashed on its way to deliver relief to his native Puerto Rico following an earthquake.

Rathbone is definitely not wasting his time on Earth. He jumped right in to his charity work after retiring from the Postal Service, and 23 years later he's still going strong. As a member of the mission committee of his church, Knollwood Methodist in Granada Hills, CA, Rathbone has extended his reach to feed many needy people in the Los Angeles area.

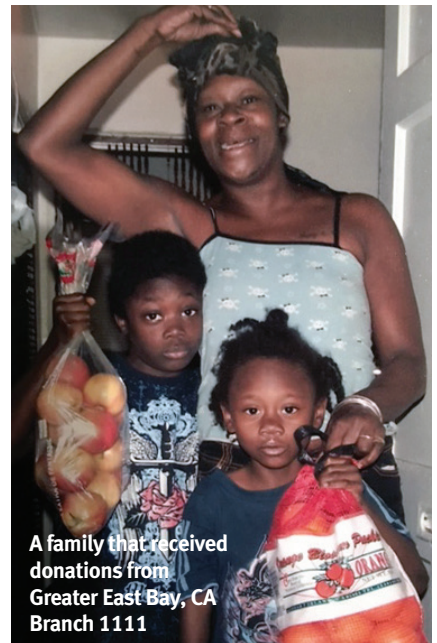
An Army veteran and gold card NALC member, Rathbone devotes about 25 hours a week to picking up food donations and distributing them as a volunteer for North Valley Caring Services (NVCS). With Rathbone helping to organize their efforts, the active carriers in his branch have pitched in through the Letter Carrier Food Drive. Rathbone also oversees a program at another church that serves breakfast to the needy, and he organizes and cooks for the NVCS Thanksgiving meal that feeds about 300 people each November.

Rathbone never misses a chance to help the less fortunate in other ways. He has taught Sunday School at a juvenile detention facility, went to New Orleans in 2005 for Hurricane Katrina relief, plays Santa Claus for needy children at Christmastime and participates in a memorial service the day before Thanksgiving to remember homeless people who have died, often with no one to mourn them.

He remembers two people in particular who, with his help, made their lives better and then turned to helping

others. A homeless couple, Tom and Lorraine, found permanent housing and "they came back and donated turkeys the last two or three years," Rathbone said. "They remembered when they were hurting and somebody was there to help them."

Rathbone has no plans to slow down his efforts to help others. "As long as I'm blessed with good health, I'll be there," he said.



A family that received donations from Greater East Bay, CA Branch 1111

Dinners delivered

For the letter carriers of Greater East Bay, CA Branch 1111 and other postal employees and managers at Eastmont Station in Oakland, CA, assuring that their neediest customers don't go without a nice holiday dinner has been a tradition for at least three decades.

"The letter carriers know the needs of each customer because they visit them every day," Eastmont letter



Daniel Rathbone



Left: Keith Fumagalli (c) presented a donation to the Maranatha Food Pantry in Chambersburg, PA.

Bottom: An official proclamation from the legislature of New Jersey recognized Cape May's postal employees for their efforts during last year's food drive.

carrier **Darlene Amey** said. Amey coordinates the effort each December, collecting donations from employees and shopping for dinners.

The station puts goodies like turkey, ham, stuffing, canned vegetables, dinner rolls, fruit and cake for dessert in five boxes. Any leftover cash from the donations is divided among the boxes. Carriers then deliver them to needy families identified by letter carriers on five different routes.

Amey said she remembers the Christmastime giving happening since she started at the station 33 years ago. "Ever since I've been here, it's been going on," she said. "When I retire, somebody else is going to carry it on."

Filling the food pantry

Harrisburg, PA Branch 500 letter carrier **Keith Fumagalli** was walking his route many years ago when he spotted a homeless man leaving a cart outside a grocery store. To help the man, "I decided I would leave 20 bucks in there and walk away," Fumagalli said. "Then I thought about it and said, 'I can do better than that.'"

Back at his station in Chambersburg, PA, Fumagalli collected donations from his fellow postal employees and bought turkeys that he and some other carriers delivered to needy patrons for Thanksgiving. They later delivered gift cards instead, and about 10 years ago, to reach more people, they focused their efforts on supporting the Maranatha Food Pantry in Chambersburg.

Since then, Fumagalli and a few

volunteers from other crafts have collected and delivered more than \$5,000 for the food pantry donated by their fellow postal employees in the station. "They're very, very generous," he said. "I've got some great co-workers. Without them, this wouldn't be possible."

Fumagalli, an Air Force veteran, said helping others "does more for me than it does for them. It makes me feel so good to be able to do that for them." He plans to continue his charitable work at his station until he retires in a few years and then perhaps pass on the tradition to younger letter carriers.

"He's probably the most selfless person I know," said Darrel Vance, a fellow Branch 500 member who alerted *The Postal Record* about Fumagalli's efforts. "He's a very humble person and he just can't do enough for the community. He's always giving to those who can't give back, and he doesn't expect to be given anything in return."

A full table for the holidays

The postal employees of Cape May County in New Jersey never forget the hungry among them. For three decades—since before the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive became a national event—members of Cape May Branch 903 and surrounding areas have collected food for needy people to enjoy in the holiday season.

The effort began with now-retired Branch 903 member **John Vollrath** in the Wildwood, NJ, post office and

soon expanded. "Believe me, it's really needed in this community and this county," Vollrath said. "I saw how people went to food banks and were turned away, not having enough food to feed their kids—that bothered me."

Postal employees from all crafts and supervisors volunteer their time and effort each year on an early Saturday in December to collect food, led by letter carriers who carry the bulk of the food. "They hump that day to get it back," Vollrath said. Even local retired postal employees help by transferring the collected food to food banks.

Vollrath estimated that the last Cape May food drive yielded about 60,000 pounds of food for several area food banks. "The amount of food that has been collected over the years overwhelms me," he said.

The state legislature of New Jersey recognized Cape May's postal employees for their efforts with an official proclamation issued the day of last year's food drive. The proclamation recognized them "as an inspiration to all and whose energy and achievements help us glimpse a future of hope and promise." **PR**



Branch makes giving to MDA a yearlong gift

The Muscular Dystrophy Association, NALC's only official charity, is close to many members' hearts. When letter carriers of Fall River, MA Branch 51 saw a letter to Santa on the post office's bulletin board last year from a young boy who wished to have a cure for his brother Jaden's MD, they were especially touched.

Jaden's family happened to live on one of the routes of Branch 51 President **Paul Knarr**, a T-6. He contacted the mother to get some additional details about Jaden and the rest of the family and had her provide a wish list. "They had quite a bit of stuff on the list," Knarr said. "The younger brother wrote that it would be his best gift if Santa could get his brother to walk again."

Then Branch 51 got to work.

The five post offices that make up the branch collected more than \$1,000 for the effort over the course of just three days. The children's words got to the letter carriers. "When we read the letter to the carriers, we were able to collect money so easily," Knarr said. "They were able to put a face to the cause. They were genuinely enthused to bring these kids something for the holidays."

The funds went to gift cards for movies, toy stores and restaurants. "That way, the family could enjoy the holidays the way they wanted to," Knarr said.

Branch 51 put everything together in a gift basket and had the regular carrier deliver it on the route. "We got a card from the family after," Knarr said. "They were so overwhelmed and they had a great December."

Indeed, the members of the Fall River branch helped one local MDA family have a great Christmas, but they

certainly don't stop there.

They're currently gearing up for their fourth annual bowlathon, which gets the whole community involved. In the spring, they offer "MDA shamrocks" for postal employees to donate to the cause. Donors' names are printed on shamrocks hung up at the stations; the drive collects hundreds of dollars each year. The branch president also has been involved with a local MDA camp, saying that he is fortunate to see firsthand how NALC helps.

Knarr suggested that any branches that want to do similar events should reach out to local MDA representatives, who can come and talk to carriers. "The local chapters [of MDA] are very supportive," he said. (Members can also reach out to Assistant to the President Geneva Kubal at NALC Headquarters at 202-756-7403 or mda@nalc.org.)

In addition, a personal link to the disease does wonders for the cause. "I've always found that what's compelling is to put a face with it," Knarr, an 18-year postal veteran, said.

All of these efforts that Fall River Branch 51 makes helps to deliver the cure for MDA. "It makes you feel like you're making a difference," he said. "We're doing our part to make others a little more comfortable." **PR**

