

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.

Carrier keeps a watchful eye on the neighborhood

On March 2, Denver Branch 47 member **Robert Batley** was just starting his route when he saw a toddler walking right down the middle of a busy street. "She was in a diaper with no shoes," he said. No vehicles were stopping.

"That was the main thing, that nobody wanted to stop," he told the local Fox TV news station. "I know it's early in the morning [and] people were on their way to work, but you got to have a little time to stop and help a baby. ... My heart was just beating so fast because she could've got hit."

Batley was about a block away, and so he rushed over in his postal vehicle.

"Cars are going by and I thought I'd get over there as quick as I could because she could dart out in the middle of the road," Batley told the local CBS TV news station.

He stopped in the middle of the road to protect the 2-year-old from traffic and then got her out of harm's way before calling 911. "I held her by the hand on the sidewalk until the police came," he said.

County deputies soon responded. "They took her and were trying to talk to her, but she was so young and she didn't know where she lived,"

Batley told Fox. The sheriff's deputies searched the neighborhood and went door to door looking for the girl's parents. They learned that the girl was being watched by her grandfather, who had put the girl in front of a TV and didn't check on her. The girl had apparently walked out of the front door. The grandfather was unaware his granddaughter was missing until deputies arrived.

The child was OK and she was soon returned to her parents. "It's mind blowing ... I'm just glad she's safe and I'm glad she's back with her mom," Batley told CBS.

"He's a great man for him to step in and do that for that child," neighbor Nicole Mohnney told Fox.

The 16-year postal veteran said he just knows the neighborhood. "We're out here every day and we see what's going on," he told CBS.

Letter carriers look after their own

On Nov. 13, 2015, Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100 city carrier assistant **Brian Williams** went to meet up with fellow branch member Ramon Perez to pick up some parcels to deliver.

As the second-year letter carrier approached Perez, "He was backing up in the middle of the street," Williams said. Perez had become surrounded by a group of three suspicious men. "The mail was in the middle of the pavement," Williams said.

So the carrier pulled his postal vehicle between the men and Perez, in an attempt to defuse the situation. "They were coming toward him, and I was just trying to give a barrier," Williams said.

The three men started running in different directions. Williams found out that Perez had been trying to deliver the mail when one of the men



Denver Branch 47 member Robert Batley (top l and above) recently was interviewed by a local TV station about his role in saving a young child from the middle of a busy street.

approached him. “He was delivering at a house and one of the guys started talking to him,” Williams said. “He

said, ‘I didn’t know I needed to say ‘excuse me’ to deliver the mail.’ ”

The man hit Perez just before Williams approached. Williams gave a statement and was asked by police if he could look at some photos to help identify the suspects.

Despite the recognition, Williams said being called a hero “feels a little excessive.”



Brian Williams

Alert carrier saves man in dire medical situation

On Nov. 25, 2014, St. Paul, MN Branch 28 member **Leonard Kaiser** was delivering to an auto repair shop that was the first stop on his relay. Normally he walks into the business and puts mail on a repair workbench, but something caught his eye. “I thought, ‘What’s wrong with this picture?’ ” he said.

Then he saw that his customer, who is the business owner, was lying on the ground under a hoist—but there was no car on it. “I immediately set the mail down and went over to him,” Kaiser said.

The man was lying face-up on his back. “He had white foam covering his face,” the carrier said. “He was

gurgling.”

He did not respond when Kaiser spoke to him, but “I reassured him I was there,” he said. “I did have CPR training, so I had a pretty good idea of the steps I needed to take,” he said.

He cradled the man’s head and checked the man’s pulse and breathing as he called 911. While talking with the 911 operator, Kaiser began CPR, tilting the man’s head and continuing to monitor his breathing. He continued to reassure the man until first responders arrived nearly 15 minutes later and continued to give them information on the situation.

Kaiser knew that the man had a wife and granddaughter who lived upstairs. He knocked, but there was no answer. He told police so that they could track

Neighborhood watch

Salt Lake City, UT Branch 111 member **Sean Anderson** was delivering his route on a park-and-loop on Jan. 7 when he approached a home. “When I walked to the front door, I got a strong smell of natural gas,” he said. He knocked on the door, but received no response. Anderson then knocked on the neighbor’s door, but no one was home there, either. After completing his loop and returning to his vehicle, the first-year letter carrier called the gas company to report the scent. Later in the afternoon, his route returned him to the same area, and he saw a crowd of people. Anderson approached a worker from the gas company and identi-

fied himself as the person who reported the odor. The worker, who was with the homeowner, told Anderson that the main gas line into the home had cracked and broken, and that the situation could have been a tragedy if not for Anderson’s response. “It was bad enough that they had to evacuate the whole neighborhood,” Anderson said. The homeowner expressed his gratitude to the carrier. Anderson, an Air Force vet-

eran, said of his actions, “I saw a problem and I couldn’t leave it alone. I didn’t want anyone to get hurt.”

On Jan. 28, Western Wayne County, MI Branch 2184 member **Nickolas Gilley** was going about his route when he smelled an indication of a gas leak at a house on his route. The next day when he continued his rounds on the street, the smell “was even stronger,” he

said. He knew that an elderly woman lived at the house in question. Gilley saw the woman’s neighbor, so he notified him and he called the gas company. Workers soon came to cordon off the street to find and fix the leak. “It was a pretty massive leak,” Gilley said. “They were out there in 15 to 20 minutes.” Gilley was commended for preventing a potential fire or explosion, as well as potential injuries. The third-year letter carrier said that he doesn’t think he’s a hero; as a letter carrier, you get to know people and things on your route. “‘Hero’ is too much,” he said. “I didn’t think it was that big of a deal. Anyone would have done it.” **PR**



Sean Anderson

them down. The carrier left to finish his relay but later returned to check on the situation.

The man had apparently tripped over a hose and fell under the hoist, hitting his head and suffering a concussion. While there, he ended up having a diabetic episode.

While tending to the man, “I could smell this particular smell, it was acidic,” Kaiser recalled. After some research about diabetes, the carrier discovered that the smell meant that the man had only a small amount of sugar in his body that it was trying to convert.

There is not a lot of foot traffic in and around the shop, so it’s unlikely anyone would have found the man as quickly as the carrier did. “It’s a one-person business,” Kaiser said.

The six-year postal veteran returned to deliver mail the next day and was greeted by the man’s granddaughter. “She thanked me and gave me a big hug,” he said.

But Kaiser doesn’t think his actions warrant any major accolades. “I don’t think ‘hero’ is the appropriate term,” he said. “I didn’t want to make a big deal about it. I’m just trying to be there for people.”

Carrier aids frazzled patron

One day this past winter, Bristol, VA Branch 807 member **Mike Barbrow** was delivering mail in cold rain when he noticed an elderly woman by her car waving to get his attention. He pulled up alongside her and asked, “Do you need some help?”

The woman, June Long, had become disoriented while driving around town. She had attempted to turn her vehicle around in a grassy area and got stuck. “She looked frazzled,” Barbrow said.

Long had called her daughter for assistance but could not provide her with enough information about her whereabouts. At that moment, Long’s daughter called again. Barbrow knew the daughter, Shirley Blevins, and took Long’s phone to inform her of her mother’s location.

The carrier then walked Long back to her car. There were railroad tracks nearby that didn’t have warnings, so the carrier made sure she was safely inside her car before he resumed his mail deliveries.

Blevins later sent a letter to the local postmaster expressing her gratitude. “She was cold, wet and shaken but otherwise well,” she wrote. “My family



Mike Barbrow

and I are very grateful to Mr. Barbrow for his assistance and kindness. It is reassuring to know that postal employees, in addition to their daily task of delivering mail, are willing to take time to help someone in need.”

But the 31-year postal veteran said it was just the right thing to do. “I was glad to be able to help her out,” Barbrow said. “I couldn’t help but think of my own mother and hope that someone would come to her aid if she was in a similar situation.” **PR**

Help on the way



Marc Levine

Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **Marc Levine** was on his route one day last year delivering to a community complex when he heard a customer calling his name. The carrier saw that the man was on the ground and went over to him. “He was having seizures,” he said, so he called 911. The man wanted Levine to help

him get up, but “I waited for the police and ambulance to come,” Levine said. “The paramedic on the phone was telling me what to do. I just let them know when he was breathing, when his eyes were open.” Levine recruited a neighbor to get some supplies from their house. They put a pillow under the man’s head and a towel under him

so he’d be more comfortable until he could go to the hospital. The man’s son went to the post office to thank Levine, who found out that the man was doing fine and recovering at home. The 20-year postal veteran doesn’t think he’s a hero, though. “Trying to help people is nice,” he said. “I was just doing my job.” **PR**

Eye on the elderly

On June 22, 2015, Auburn, ME Branch 345 member **Alyson Thompson** was going about her route when she saw that her 90-year-old customer had collapsed near his home. “I noticed his foot,” she said. “There was blood on his arms.” The man could not get up on his own and wanted the carrier to help. Not wanting to move him due to his injuries, Thompson called 911 and stayed with him until paramedics arrived. Since he was disoriented, she decided to stay at the scene until one of his family members could join him. Thompson’s customer was taken to the hospital and



Alyson Thompson

continued to recover, and he told Thompson he was grateful she was there. “He calls me his girlfriend,” she said. “When you deliver mail to the same houses day after day, you become an unofficial guardian,” she said. Thompson, a nine-year letter carrier who comes from a long line of postal employees, doesn’t think she’s a hero. “I was just doing my job. I think anyone would help someone who saw someone on the ground,” she said.

Philadelphia Branch 157 member **Kevin Sommerer** was going about his route on Sept. 29, 2015, and approached the house of his

90-year-old customer, Edna Goddard. “She comes out every single day to greet me at the door,” he said, and she’d notify him if she wasn’t going to be there. But on that particular day, Goddard’s screen door was locked while the main door was open. Sommerer heard the TV, so he knocked on the door and called for her, to no avail. “I had a funny feeling,” the carrier said. He asked a few neighbors if they had a key to the screen door. No one did, so he called 911. After waiting almost 20 minutes for an ambulance to arrive, the carrier decided that time was of the essence. He said, “I broke through the screen door and unlocked the latch,” he said. Once inside, he found Goddard slumped over in her chair. He dialed 911 again and this time the ambulance came a few minutes later to take the woman to the hospital. Sommerer found Goddard’s phone, and because he knew Goddard’s niece’s name, contacted her to give her an update. The niece soon came and told Sommerer how grateful the family was to him for his actions. The carrier found out that Goddard had had a stroke and was able to recover at the hospital. “She’s a really nice lady. A lot of the people on my route are my friends,” the 14-year postal veteran said. But does Sommerer think he’s a hero? No. “I did a good deed,” he said simply.

Pasadena, CA Branch 2200 member **Cynthia Maker** was delivering her route on Sept. 21, 2015, when she heard a faint cry for help. She knew an elderly customer

lived at the house, so she grew concerned. “I banged on the door,” the carrier said. “She said, ‘Cindy, I fell.’” The carrier immediately called 911 and waited for the paramedics to arrive. “She had fallen and couldn’t get up,” Maker said. Responding EMTs arrived and broke through a back window to get inside. They found that the woman had been lying on the floor of her home for four hours in need of medical attention for a dislocated shoulder, and they took her to the hospital. Maker visited her customer at the hospital after work, and after that in her new home to make sure she was doing well. But the 21-year postal veteran doesn’t think she’s a hero. “It was no big deal,” Maker said of her actions “I just thought I had good hearing, or else I wouldn’t have heard her.”

On Sept. 10, 2015, Pensacola, FL Branch 321 city carrier assistant **Tia Miinch** was getting ready to start a park-and-loop when she saw what she thought were children playing. She got closer, and “I noticed one of my customers on the ground,” she said. The elderly woman was usually sitting outside of her home when Miinch came by. The first-year letter carrier found out she had fallen and could not move her leg. Miinch couldn’t find the woman’s husband, so she called 911 and stayed on the scene until paramedics arrived. “She was sitting in an awkward position,” Miinch said. “I didn’t want to move her, so I let her use my legs as a pillow.” EMTs soon arrived to take her to the hospital for what turned out to be a



Kevin Sommerer

broken hip. Miinch checked in with the woman’s husband and found out that she had returned home to recover soon after. “It was nothing too crazy,” Miinch said of her actions. “It’s really just part of the job to pay attention to our surroundings. We know when things aren’t right.”

Fort Smith, AR Branch 399 member **Amy Taylor** was going about her route on Aug. 7, 2015, when she noticed that an elderly customer had not picked up her mail in several days. “She always checks her mail every day,” the carrier said, adding, “She’s always outside.” Taylor has been on this route for almost a dozen of her 13 years as a letter carrier. “When you’re on your route this long, you know your people,” she said. “You just get a feeling.” Concerned, the carrier went to a neighbor who she knew takes the woman to the grocery store regularly, but he hadn’t heard from her. So, Taylor called her supervisor, who in turn called 911 and asked for a wellness check. Responding officers found the woman on the floor of her home. EMTs took her to the hospital, and thereafter she went to a nursing home to undergo rehab. Taylor, a Marine Corps veteran, called the “hero” title “corny.” “I didn’t do anything miraculous,” she said. “It’s just being an attentive citizen. You take care of your elderly.” **PR**