

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.

Screams and gunshots can't scare this carrier

Detroit Branch 1 member **Marlon Williams** was delivering mail one day in April when "I heard someone screaming," he said. "I know a real scream from a fake scream." The carrier stopped what he was doing and drove toward the sound, which came from about a block away.

As Williams was pulling up, he heard two gunshots inside a house. "It startled me," he said.

A woman, Jessica Margheni, came out, covered in blood, and she told Williams that the family's pit bull had suddenly attacked her father, Don, in the backyard. Don had had his back turned, and he thought maybe that was why the dog didn't recognize him and attacked. When the dog turned on Jessica, she grabbed a gun and shot the dog.

She told Williams that Don was in the basement, so the carrier went inside to help.

There were puncture wounds on the man's neck, and "his arm was mangled and his leg was mangled," Williams said. "It was blood everywhere... I put the pressure by his neck and I kept the blood from flowing out."

A neighbor who arrived to help called 911, and emergency responders soon arrived.

"My phone had dropped. I didn't

have any communication so I just hoped the neighbors or somebody would come," Jessica Margheni told WBJK, the local Fox TV news affiliate.

The Marghenis were grateful for Williams' actions and are doing just fine now. "He did his job. He did a very good job. We're thankful," Jessica told WBJK.

But Williams doesn't think he's a hero. "I was just there at the right time, that's all," the 16-year postal veteran told WBJK.

This carrier has his customers' backs

On April 16, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Joseph Moskal** was going about his route when "I heard the most blood-curdling scream you could ever imagine," he said. He looked up and saw in horror that a 14-year-old girl was being attacked by a 300-pound man on her front porch.

Moskal ran to the scene. A neighbor was trying to question the man, who had his hands around the girl's throat. "He was trying to kill her," the carrier said.

Charging up the porch, Moskal body slammed the man to get him off the girl, who had been choked unconscious and was bleeding. The aggressor got up and attacked the girl again, so Moskal slammed him down once more and then stood on the man's back, using the door and window as leverage to keep the man down. The neighbor had already called 911, but Moskal called as well while he held the man down.

The neighbor helped to restrain the man and, after a few minutes, police and emergency responders arrived, arresting the man and providing medical help to the girl. "She was lifeless and I thought she was dead," Moskal told USPS. "And what was probably only a few minutes seemed like forever, waiting for help to arrive."

Police told Moskal that if he had



Detroit Branch 1 member Marlon Williams received media attention for his role in tending to a customer after a dog attack.

Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member Joseph Moskal recently was recognized for helping to save a young girl on his route from an attack. Pictured (l to r) are Branch President Larry Kania, Moskal, local Postmaster Thomas Szklarz and Station Customer Services Manager Paul Urbanski.



interceded only a minute later, the outcome might have been much different. "I was at the right place, at the right time," Moskal said. "Afterwards, I was shaking and, to this day, I still see the event happening in my mind."

Northwest District Chief Anthony Barba told *The Buffalo News* that the attacker, a man with a history of mental health problems and who was an outpatient at a local psychiatric center, targeted the girl randomly. She had been out on her porch waiting to be picked up for a school-related activity when the man rushed up. "She was on her porch and all of a sudden he darted over to her and before she could move he started choking her," Barba said.

The girl was treated for her cuts and bruises and was released soon after, while the suspect was hospitalized at a psychiatric facility and was expected

to face charges upon his release.

But the third-year letter carrier doesn't think he's a hero. "It was more or less subduing him," he said. "I'm just glad I was able to help."

Letter carrier to the rescue

Concord, NH Branch 72 member **Scott Martin** was delivering mail one day in February when "I could hear a beeping noise," he said.

He traced the sound to his 104-year-old customer's smoke detector inside her house. He knew the woman lived by herself, and the situation just didn't seem right. No one responded when the carrier knocked on the door, and when he looked across the street he saw a neighbor looking back. "I waved him over," Martin said.

With the neighbor, the two men entered the home. "The kitchen was full

of smoke," they said. The woman who lives at the house had forgotten a pot of eggs cooking on the stove, which was now charred.

She was in the living room and seemed happy but surprised to see the men in her home. "The smoke was getting in the living room" just at that point, the carrier said. "She had no idea what was going on."

They got her out of the house and then opened windows to ventilate the home. "We made sure she was safe and getting fresh air," Martin said. The woman was unharmed and grateful for the carrier's help.

But he brushed off any superlatives for his life-saving actions. "I'm just glad I was there," he said. Martin, who has spent 17 years out of his 23 as a letter carrier on this route, added, "Anything out of the ordinary, I notice."

Eye on the elderly

On a rainy Sept. 8, 2015, West Palm Beach, FL Branch 1690 member **Toni Williams** was delivering mail when she saw that one of her elderly customers had fallen. She had apparently tripped over a low concrete wall and was not easily visible to passers-by. "I guess she had slipped," the carrier said. "She hurt her elbow really bad and also broke her hip." The octogenarian told Williams she had been there for two hours in the rain. "I



Toni Williams

helped lift her up and got her into a covered lawn chair," she said. Williams then called 911 and the woman's son to fill him in on the situation. Williams stayed with her customer until paramedics arrived to take her to the hospital to treat her injuries.

When the carrier saw that the scene was in good hands, she continued on her route but later visited her customer in the hospital. The woman soon returned home. "Everything's back to normal," Williams

said. But the 20-year postal veteran brushed off any accolades. "Really, I did what anyone would have done," she said. "You just help someone who needs help. I'm just glad I was there."

While delivering mail on Sept. 14, 2015, Omaha, NE Branch 5 city carrier assistant **Christopher Ewing** heard his 92-year-old customer, Jean Couch, yelling for help from inside her home. "I looked in the window and saw her on the ground," he said. The CCA entered the home and rushed to the woman's side. He lifted her up and placed her in a chair, per her instructions. Couch told him she had fallen

about 45 minutes before. "She was just stuck there," Ewing said. She was on hold with Life Alert to get help, so Ewing called 911 to make sure she got medical attention. In the meantime, he comforted her and collected all of her medications and papers that had fallen to the floor. Life Alert came back on the line, so the carrier called to cancel an ambulance. Ewing provided Couch with her phone so she could contact her granddaughter. The first-year letter carrier doesn't think he's a hero; he said he's just doing his job. "I always look in to see how she's doing," Ewing said. "Being able to help her makes me feel good."

Proud to Serve

Grand Rapids, MI Branch 56 member **Louie Kunst** learned that his actions in getting a package to his customer went viral via the website Reddit.



Carrier's actions go viral after chasing down would-be thieves

On Dec. 30, 2015, Grand Rapids, MI Branch 56 member **Louie Kunst** had just delivered a package to a customer's door when he saw three teenagers on the sidewalk. "They were checking out every porch they walked by," he said. "I'd never seen them before, and I do this route every day. I kept an eye on them."

Kunst then saw one of them go up to a house where he had just delivered a package, take it, then start walking away with it.

Quickly finishing his loop, Kunst jumped into his vehicle and caught up with the teens as they were walking down the street. "At that point, my adrenaline was going," the carrier said. "I don't confront people very often."

The carrier could no longer see the

package. "I asked, 'Where's the box?'" Kunst told the local Fox TV news station. "And they acted like, 'We don't know what you're talking about.' I said, 'No, where's the box? I know you have it, I saw you take it off the porch. Where is it now?'"

Once the carrier pulled his cell phone out of his pocket to take photos of the teens, they threw the hidden package to the ground and took off running.

"I think they were more scared that someone did see them and confront them," Kunst told mlive.com, adding that he does not think the teens realized stealing mail and packages is considered a federal offense.

"Just the audacity of it! This is a nice area and neighbors look out for each other," the package's intended recipient, Nathaniel George, told Fox. "The fact they went up on the porch to grab the package is a little alarming."

Soon after, Kunst brought the dilapidated package back to the office. "The box looked like hell," he said. He and his supervisor re-taped it and wrote a letter to the patron to let him know what happened.

The patron was so impressed with Kunst's actions to retrieve his stolen package that he posted a photo of the letter on Reddit.com, saying, "The U.S. Postal Service doesn't play games." The post has since gone viral and generated thousands of online comments.

Kunst, whose parents are also letter carriers, told mlive.com he will continue to be vigilant on "the best job" he's ever had. "There's a lot of pride to it because a lot of people respect you," the four-year letter carrier added. "It's something that needs to be done right."

But he brushed off his heroic actions, saying, "That's what makes our community strong—looking out for each other."

Fire and rescue

When he began his deliveries on Sept. 8, 2015, Rochester, MN Branch 440 member **Bill Belch** noted something that concerned him. "I heard a fire alarm in a house constantly beeping," he said. When he got to the house, the alarm was still going off and he saw that smoke was coming out from the basement and a living-room window. The carrier knocked on the door, but didn't get a response. He then heard a dog whining; looking inside, he saw it running around in circles. Belch called the fire department, which was on the scene within minutes. In the meantime, he noticed that

the door was unlocked, so he went inside, grabbed the animal and brought him outside to safety. "[The homeowner had] put the oven on 'self-clean' and it caught on fire," the carrier explained. While flames never started, the house had filled with smoke. The customer later thanked Belch for saving her house and her dog. But the 18-year letter carrier brushed off any accolades. "I didn't do much to be a hero—just called 911," Belch said. "The dog probably appreciated it. Other than that, I don't know."

One day this past winter, Hartford, CT Branch 86 member **Joe Major** was going

about his route when he saw a woman in distress at a house nearby. The carrier went closer and noticed smoke coming out of her home. The woman didn't speak much English, but indicated to Major that "her husband was still inside," he said. The carrier called 911 and then headed toward the back of the house, where he saw that the home was full of dark smoke. The dispatcher on the line told Major not to go inside, so he stood by the back door. "I just kept yelling and yelling for him," he said. "I think he followed my voice." The man eventually made his way to the back door, and the carrier

took the man to a neighbor's house for safety just before firefighters arrived on the scene. The man was taken to the hospital and was treated for smoke inhalation. When Major saw that everything was in good hands, he continued on his route. Though the home was later declared uninhabitable, the man and woman were OK, and the fire department called Major's post office to commend the carrier. But the third-year letter carrier didn't think his actions were a big deal. "I think I did what anyone else would have done," Major said. "I just walked by. I was lucky I was there at the right time." **PR**

Help on the way

Rochester, NY Branch 210 member **Kelly Chapman** was delivering her route on Sept. 22, 2015, when she saw a woman lying on the ground. “I saw that she was on the railroad tracks,” she said. “She had tripped over a grate and fell.” The woman was not very coherent, so the carrier called 911 and helped make the woman comfortable by placing her satchel under the woman’s head. “I don’t believe she broke anything, but she was pretty bruised up,” the carrier said. Chapman stayed with the woman until medical help arrived to take the woman to the hospital. The four-year letter carrier doesn’t think her actions were that heroic, though. “It was just something I’d do, no matter what,” Chapman said.



John Scive

Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **John Scive** was on his route one day last winter when he saw a woman slumped over in her running car. “She didn’t look good,” he said. “She was either sleeping or out cold.” He asked a customer to approach the car with him in case she spoke only Spanish, as many in the neighborhood did, and they found the woman unresponsive. Scive opened the door and turned off the car. “She

was blue and firming up,” the carrier said, and he suspected a drug overdose, so he called 911 and stayed on the scene until emergency personnel arrived. “They told me to leave her in the car,” Scive said. Responding medical personnel treated the woman by spraying narcon up the woman’s nose, which counteracts heroin, and soon found a pulse. “She sat up like nothing had happened,” the carrier said. Scive said an EMT told him, “Well, you saved her life. About five more minutes and she’d be dead.” When the carrier saw that the woman was in good hands, he returned to his route. “You get to know when something looks out of place,” Scive said. “She didn’t look like she belonged there. You know who belongs and who doesn’t.” But the 11-year postal veteran doesn’t think he’s a hero. “The firefighters are the heroes,” Scive said. “I just called 911. I hope that someone would do that for me.”

Louisville, KY Branch 14 member **William Goodwin II** was delivering mail one day this past spring when he saw his customer, Mrs. Jackson, lying in a flower bed outside her house. Thinking it was strange, the carrier crossed to that side of the street to check on her. A couple who was passing by also noticed and stopped to help. “She was going to get the mail and fell,” Goodwin said. She had apparently tried to use her arm to break her fall. “Her

arm was mangled behind her back,” the carrier added. “You could tell that it was broken.” Jackson’s husband had been inside the house and came out when he heard the commotion. He started to help pick his wife up, but he was injured and in a walking cast, so Goodwin and the passerby picked up the woman and carried her inside. An ambulance soon arrived to check out Jackson’s condition; meanwhile, Goodwin knew some of Jackson’s family members lived down the street, so he went to inform them about what happened. Not getting a response, he left a note. Realizing that his customer was in good hands, Goodwin continued on his route. Despite receiving praise for his actions, the 12-year postal veteran insists that it wasn’t a big deal. “It wasn’t really heroic; it was just being in the right place at the right time,” Goodwin said. “It feels good to help someone. Anyone with a heart would do it.”

Rochester, NY Branch 210 member **Justin Hull** was going about his route on Sept. 28, 2105, when “I heard a loud banging” from a nearby house, he said. His customer had fallen inside and crawled to the



Justin Hull

front door, using the screen door to hit the door frame to get his attention. When Hull arrived at the scene, the customer “was in pain and agony on the floor,” Hull said. “He had closed his eyes in distress.” The man began to get nauseous and complained he was having chest pains. Hull sat with the man and called 911. “I stayed on the line with them and I had him focus on his breathing,” the carrier said. He kept the man awake, and waited with him until emergency responders arrived to take the man to the hospital. Doctors discovered clots in the man’s heart and legs. The patron’s nephew, a USPS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) agent, wrote a letter to the post office, saying, “My uncle is very grateful and knows Justin may have quite literally saved his life. Please pass on my sincere thanks.” The first-year letter carrier brushed off any accolades, though. “I was just happy I was there for him,” Hull said. “I just did what I hope someone else would do for me in that situation.” **PR**

Eye on the elderly



Lorenzo Clark

One day this past spring, Morristown, NJ Branch 272 member **Lorenzo Clark** was delivering mail when he heard a faint noise coming from inside an elderly customer's house. "I thought it was the television, but I wanted to check," he said. The carrier approached the house and he saw through the screen door that the woman who lived there was lying on the floor. He called out to her and she said, "Help," the carrier recalled. She told him she had fallen that morning and had not been able to get up, and she beckoned him to come inside. Clark helped the customer up and called one of her family members. Later, the customer's son-in-law, a retired letter carrier, contacted the postmaster to thank Clark for helping his mother-in-law. The 11-year letter carrier doesn't think he did anything special; he just said that being alert on the route is important. "It's something we're taught to do, to pay attention to our surroundings," Clark said. "Day to day, I try to help."

On Dec. 17, 2015, Scotts-bluff, NE Branch 1836 city carrier assistant **Aaron Beckstrom** was delivering mail when he noticed an elderly gentleman just standing on his steps partway up, holding onto the rail and not moving. "It was really cold," Beckstrom said. "He didn't have any gloves on." The CCA asked the man if he was OK and if he needed help. The man indicated that he needed aid and said that he had thrown his grocery bags up on the porch but he couldn't make it up the steps to get into his apartment. Beckstrom was concerned for the man. "I just helped him up the stairs," he said. "I didn't know what else to do, but I couldn't leave the poor guy outside in those temperatures." But the first-year letter carrier doesn't think he's any sort of hero. "I did what I figure anyone else would have done."

On Feb. 8, Western Massachusetts Branch 46 member **Heinz Hochrein** was returning to his vehicle at a park point on his route when "I heard someone scream," he said. The carrier looked over and saw that his 84-year-old customer had fallen and couldn't get up. The carrier went over to the customer. "I did my best to pick him up—it was kind of icy out," Hochrein said. The carrier got the man inside and assessed

him for injuries. "He didn't have any obvious bruises," he said, and the man told him he felt OK. Hochrein called the man's niece who usually came to check on him and made sure she would come over. Once the carrier was sure that his patron was OK, he continued on his rounds. "I don't consider myself a hero," the 11-year letter carrier said. "I was just glad I was at the right place at the right time."

On Saturday, Aug. 29, 2015, Charleston, WV Branch 531 member **Holly Allen** was delivering to an elderly customer. The woman had knee issues and lived about 150 feet from the street, so Allen would always bring her mail to the house. The carrier realized he had not seen her in a while, so "I opened the door and heard her yelling, 'Mr. Mailman, is that you?'" Allen responded, and found out that the woman had slipped on pickle juice in her kitchen and fallen. At the customer's request, Allen contacted the woman's granddaughter and stayed with his customer until the relative and emergency personnel arrived. "She was so thrilled that I

would even stay with her," Allen said. An ambulance arrived soon after, as well as the granddaughter. When the woman arrived, she asked if anyone else smelled gas. They found out that there was a gas leak in the basement, and

that gas had already filled the basement. They were able to turn it off without any issues. "I was so happy I was able to help a little bit," Allen said. But the 17-year letter carrier doesn't think he's a hero. "It's one of those 'lucky-to-be-there type things,'" he said. "It's something every one of us would have done, if called upon."

Fort Worth, TX Branch 226 member **Dan Do** was on his route on Sept. 23, 2015, when he noticed his customer Mrs. Harris's mail had been accumulating in the mailbox. "She always clears the box every day," he said. The woman would usually leave a note for him if she was going to be away. After three days, "The mail never moved at all. I thought, 'Something's wrong,'" he said. He knocked on the window, but didn't get a response. "I got an instinct that something was really wrong," he said. The carrier called the police to do a wellness check on Harris. Responding police and firefighters broke in through the back and found the woman unconscious on the floor, where she had been for at least three days. She was taken to the hospital, where she was treated for dehydration and released to a rehab center to recover. Once Do saw that the situation was in good hands, he continued on his route. Though he was commended for his actions, the 15-year postal veteran doesn't think of himself as a hero. "I'm just doing my job," Do said. "Any mail carrier would do the same." **PR**



Aaron Beckstrom

Looking out for customers of all ages

On Feb. 8, South Florida Branch 1071 member **Richard Herrera** was going about his route and was turning in a cul-de-sac when “I noticed a little girl crying profusely,” he said.

Herrera recognized the young girl, Layla, because on Saturdays her parents would let her come to get the mail from him. The carrier knew she was about four blocks over from where she lived. “She had no inclination as to where she was going,” Herrera said. “She was

frantic, crying.”

The 5-year-old also recognized Herrera as her trusted letter carrier, and asked to get in his mail truck. Instead, he followed protocol by securing his vehicle and walking her back to her house.

On the way, they saw the girl’s uncle riding around on a bike, on the lookout for her. The girl had apparently been dropped off at the wrong bus stop; they found her parents waiting there.

“She was the smartest 5-year-old I’ve ever encountered. She knew what to do,” Herrera said, adding that he told Layla she had done the right thing.

“I took precaution to make sure she’s secure,” he said.

Layla’s family was grateful to the carrier. “I don’t know what would [have] happened that day had he not been there to help,” Layla’s grandmother, Cathy Czaruk, wrote to the postmaster general. “Please tell him thank you from our entire family.”

Herrera said he’s humbled by the recognition of actions, but doesn’t think it was that big of a deal. “We interact with customers every day,” the 23-year letter carrier said. “To me, it came as second nature. I did my job to the best of my ability. I’d do it again in a heartbeat.” **PR**

Neighborhood watch

Grand Rapids, MI Branch 56 member **Nicklaus Gleason** was delivering his route one day in October 2015 when “I smelled a pretty bad odor in the front yard of a house,” he said. He didn’t think too much about it and continued on his



rounds. The next day, a Saturday, he smelled it again and thought it was strange. “I got to the end of the street and saw an energy truck. It had to be a sign,” Gleason said. “I stopped and talked to the worker. He said they would check it out.” On Monday, Gleason’s scheduled day off, “I received a text from my swing person telling

me I was a hero,” he said. “Come to find out, the furnace had a huge leak.” The gas company told the homeowners they were lucky to be alive. He found out that the furnace was in the basement, where some of the members of the family lived. “They were extremely grateful,” Gleason said. But the 13-year postal veteran doesn’t think he’s a hero. “I was just happy that I was there,” he said. “I just felt like I was doing my job.”

Stockton, CA Branch 213 member **Richard Valles** knows his customers well; this past spring, his elderly customer, Helen Gough, confided in him that she was scared of the workers she had hired to do her windows. Valles had noticed them lurking around her property and described them as con artists. “I’ve seen them in the neighborhood before,” he said. “They were messing around in the house.” When Gough told her carrier that she was scared they might hurt her, “I just wanted them out of there because I knew

they were trouble,” he said. So, he asked neighbors for any contact information they might have for Gough’s relatives, and contacted the woman’s daughter, who lived eight hours away. She eventually came and got all of the men out of the house. “[She alleged that] they were scamming her and had taken thousands of dollars,” Valles said, adding that the district attorney was looking into the case. But the carrier doesn’t think he’s a hero. “I just made sure Helen was safe,” he said. “That’s all I worried about.” Valles, who has been on this route 25 years of his 30 as a letter carrier, said, “I always look out for my neighborhood. I try to take care of all my people out there like they’re my family.”

On Jan. 22, Boston Branch 34 member **Robert McGee** was delivering his rounds. “I was walking from yard to yard, my usual route,” he said, when he smelled the strong scent of natural gas as he approached a house. He knew the resident, Jean Higgins, worked from



Richard Valles

home, so he alerted her, advising her to call the gas company and evacuate the property. She did. Gas company crews arrived within a half-hour and determined there was a major leak in the gas line that went to Higgins’ house. She was able to return after a five-hour evacuation. Higgins was very appreciative of McGee’s actions, telling him that authorities had told her that her house could have blown up. “To this day, she still thanks me when she sees me,” the carrier said. “It could have been bad, I guess.” But don’t try to call the 15-year letter carrier a hero. “I was just happy to be where I was at that time,” McGee said. “Everything turned out well.” **PR**