

# Heroes in Houston



**Philip  
Dine**

**T**he flooding in South Texas caused by Hurricane Harvey was overwhelming—but so was the response by the region’s letter carriers.

They helped restore a sense of normalcy among residents by delivering the mail despite major obstacles, delighting and even surprising customers, while dealing in many cases with their own losses or struggles. They volunteered on holidays or Sundays to reduce the backlog of mail and because they knew checks or insurance letters were eagerly awaited. And many showed courage and compassion as they assisted others.

That’s what letter carriers do.

NALC members and officers in the greater Houston area helped with rescue efforts and fed hungry residents. They took care of folks on their routes when necessary.

And, importantly, they supported one another—from the NBA’s office to branch presidents to rank-and-file letter carriers—which made everything else possible.

The actions of some were truly remarkable.

**One veteran letter carrier, whose own post office was initially shut down by flooding, helped clean it while helping feed her co-workers, even as she navigated the floods to get treatment for a serious illness.**

A branch president heard a plea from the county commissioner for volunteers to save people, immediately hopped into the 1995 truck he’d been working on to make it capable of driving in three feet of water, and put it to the test by helping rescue flood victims—30 in two days.

And then there was the city carrier assistant who personally rescued people from deep waters while also coordinating dozens of rescues by helicopter and boat, started and then expanded a clothing drive, brought meals to shelters, aided residents on her route and more, hydrating herself when—day after day—there was no time to sleep. A trick she learned as a soldier in Afghanistan.

She spoke of her efforts only when assured she would not be singled out for attention.

What she did, she maintained, was “what any human being would do in this situation.” After just 90 days on the job, she has the attitude of carriers who’ve put in years or decades.

Amazing.

Or, maybe not so amazing.

This particular CCA was homeless as a child but, once entered into the foster care program, was fortunate to have a

caseworker who paid attention to her, bringing her clothes, checking up on her to make sure she was OK. Other people also reached out.

“Most caseworkers are overworked,” the CCA says. “I felt she went above and beyond. So that impacted me.”

As a result, even at a young age, she pondered her role in the world.

“I asked myself as a teenager, what’s my main purpose? That’s what I came up with: helping,” she says.

The concept of service led her to the military, and then to her new job. It didn’t hurt that she likes to interact with people, likes the outdoors, likes to work independently, likes walking.

“I felt like it fit me,” she says of the Postal Service.

There were many heroes among Houston’s letter carriers, even if not a single one of them seeks attention, and that almost surely will be the case as the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Florida recover from Hurricane Irma, which hit those areas as I wrote this.

(For more on the carriers in Texas dealing with Hurricane Harvey, see story on page 4.)

**As you read this, the annual Heroes of the Year event in Washington will be upon us, honoring letter carriers from across the country for having saved residents, improved lives or bettered communities. And they will ward off any praise or any suggestion that what they did was special or noteworthy, because that’s what the Heroes always do. Their co-workers, they will insist—not in false modesty but out of true conviction—would have reacted in the same manner.**

Cut, of course, from the same cloth as our many Texas heroes.

At a time when “leaders” in so many other fields regularly disappoint, Americans know where to turn for consistent displays of courage and compassion.

To you.

**EDITORIAL STAFF:**  
Managing Editor Philip Dine  
Designer/Web Editor Mike Shea  
Internet Communications Coordinator  
Joe Conway  
Writer/Editor Rick Hodges  
Editorial Assistant Jenessa Wagner

*The Postal Record* (ISSN 0032-5376) is published monthly by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Membership Department, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Subscription included in membership dues. First-class subscription available for \$20 per year (contact Membership Department).

© 2017 by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Circulation: 287,000. Union-printed using soy-based inks.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS? Contact the Membership Department.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube by going to NALC.org.

