

## 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](mailto:postalrecord@nalc.org). We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.

# Honoring heroic carriers

**H**eroism, 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.

## Looking out for his people

On March 17, Winfield, KS Branch 412 member **Jack Landrum** was on his route when he saw something unusual for one elderly customer. "I noticed her mail was piling up," the carrier said.

Concerned, he knocked on the door. The customer eventually answered. Landrum gave the woman her mail and went back to his route. "I think as a letter carrier, you always try to look after the customers, especially elderly customers," he said.

A few days later, after a long weekend, Landrum saw once again an accumulation of mail, and again he knocked on the door. There was no answer, so the carrier tried to open the door and "dogs were running around," he said. The carrier also noticed things inside the home stacked chest-high and worried about hoarding.

Landrum went to see the manager of the apartment building. "I asked the landlord, 'What's going on?'" he said, and the landlord told the carrier that the customer was not getting around like she had in the past.

Still concerned, "I asked around," Landrum said. He asked the police to check on the customer, and they told him to call an 800-number. Frustrated, he called adult protective services, but they only asked about the woman's health care and medications, questions Landrum couldn't answer.

Landrum again called police and pressed his concern. Officers responded

and reported that the woman opened the door, so they felt she was OK and did not need medical attention. Landrum still felt something was out of the ordinary with this customer, so he called adult protective services again to see if there was anything they could do.

The next day, the landlord told Landrum that the customer had died that morning. "I wish I could have done something more," Landrum said. "I used to check on her once a week. She didn't have much family here."

The carrier was praised for his concern in looking out for his customer. "This is a sad story, but as a postmaster, it makes me proud to know I have employees who are not only alert on their jobs but who truly enjoy their jobs and the customers they serve," Postmaster Debra Davis said.

"I'm proud to be a letter carrier. I was just doing my job," a 21-year letter carrier and Marine Corps veteran said. "I hope one day somebody checks on me when I'm that age."

## Carrier creates buzz in unusual situation

While on her route on Saturday, March 25, Corpus Christi, TX Branch 1259 member **Only Espinoza** noticed a customer acting in a peculiar manner. "I saw him walk to the end of the driveway and throw his weed-whacker in the air," she said.

The customer appeared to have been working in his yard. When Espinoza looked closer, "there were bees swarming around him," she said. "It was like something you see in the movies."

The man starting to run to the back of the house, and the family's two dogs, a pit bull and a Chihuahua, began to get attacked by the bees as well. When the man's wife came outside to help, she was also swarmed.

"I didn't know what to do," the carrier said. "They were both going crazy. I yelled to them that I was going to call for help," Espinoza said.

She called 911 and waited at a safe distance with neighbors for emergency



Jack Landrum



**Salem OR Branch 347 member Kimberly Smith received media attention after she blocked a driver from leaving the scene of a hit and run.**

responders to arrive. An ambulance soon arrived to take care of the family, and a beekeeper came to help to contain the bees.

The man suffered more than 250 bee stings and spent a few days in the intensive care unit, while his wife sustained about 50 stings. Both have since recovered and returned home, but their smaller dog died as a result of the attack.

The fifth-year letter carrier said she had never seen anything that severe on the job before, but she doesn't consider herself a hero. "I just tried to jump into action and tried to keep calm," Espinoza said.

## Taking charge and doing what's right

"There was a car on my route acting strange," Salem, OR Branch 347 member **Kimberly Smith** recalled of her work-

day on March 16. She drove around it to continue her rounds.

Smith then noted with horror that "the car passed me and I realized [its driver] had hit one of my customers," she said. The customer, 72-year-old Sandra Hill, was lying on the ground. Hill was seriously injured when the vehicle reportedly crossed the center line of the narrow two-lane road, hit the woman head-on, knocking her into her mailbox.

The driver apparently had continued for a short distance before pulling over.

Smith, who was down the street in her LLV, began chasing the car after its driver pulled over and blocked it. When the driver tried to flee on foot, Smith refused to let her.

"I just parked in front of her to make sure she didn't go anywhere," Smith told KOIN-TV. "The adrenaline took over. I don't even know why I did. I just did it."

The carrier kept the driver detained until police arrived. "It's all about kindness and you know, doing what's right," Smith told the news station.

Meanwhile, a witness called 911 and Hill was soon rushed to the hospital. Hill's husband, James, told KOIN, "Thank goodness for the mail lady. She saw what happened and she blocked the street and the person didn't get away from it."

Police arrested the driver when she allegedly failed field sobriety tests. She later was sentenced to more than six years in jail. Hill sadly died from her injuries.

James Hill told Smith he was grateful for her actions and gave her a hug. Smith, an 11-year postal veteran, brushed off any talk of heroics, saying, "I did what I would want anyone to do for someone in my family." **PR**

## Neighborhood watch



As Syracuse, NY Branch 134 member **Cassandra Mazur** pulled up to her park point while she was delivering mail on April 10, "I looked across the street and there's a little boy crying on the front porch," she said. Mazur finished the block, crossed back over and

saw that the toddler was still alone outside the home, sobbing. The carrier went up to the child on the porch and when she did, "I could hear a baby crying inside," she said. Mazur knocked on the door, and when it opened, the toddler ran inside. Mazur called out, "Is everybody all right?" but no one replied or came to the door. "I looked in the doorway and there was garbage and dishes all over the place," she said. The carrier saw the crying baby on the floor covered in dirt and surrounded by trash, and then she spotted a man on the couch, who appeared to be passed out. "It didn't sit well with me," the carrier said, so she called her supervisor, who in turn called police. "I grabbed the baby, took the toddler by the hand, and waited on the porch for police," Mazur said.

Police soon arrived and woke up the man, who it turned out was the father of the two kids. An officer later contacted the local postmaster to thank Mazur and provide an update: The children were placed in protective custody. Despite receiving praise, Mazur denied any heroics. "You never know what can happen to a kid," the third-year letter carrier said. "They're innocent. Someone's got to be their voice."

As Mobile, AL Branch 469 member **Delray Williams** went about his route on March 29 and was about to round the corner, "I heard someone calling my name," he said. The carrier turned and saw that the call came from a customer, Jean Lang, who was on the ground by her house. "I noticed her waving her hands,"

Williams said. "She said, 'Delray, come back!'" Williams ran over to the 85-year-old woman. "She had fallen in her back yard," the carrier said. "She had dragged herself to the fence. She wasn't injured; she just couldn't get up." He helped her up off the ground and back inside her house. Lang later called the post office to commend Williams for his "giving, loving and caring attitude." The 19-year letter carrier and eight-year Navy veteran said that in the past, "a mail carrier called me to let me know an ambulance was at my mom's house." While Williams said that he appreciates being called a hero, he just likes to help. "Anything I can do for an elderly customer, I try to do," he said. **PR**