

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.

Saving a life on his daily rounds

"I had just finished the park-and-loop," Price, UT Branch 2171 member **Trent Hanna** said of delivering his route on Oct. 19 in the neighborhood he grew up in. "I heard somebody cry out for help. I went toward the sound."

Patron Jeff Hill had been using a small handheld grinder in his home workshop when the blade slipped and cut his wrist near his thumb, severing two major blood vessels and a tendon. "It went right across his wrist like a chain saw," Hanna said.

Hill had quickly pinched off the blood vessels and turned off the grinder with his foot. The customer was losing blood and knew he needed to get help because his wife was at work. So, he stumbled outside toward the street to try to get someone's attention.

"And lo' and behold: There's the postman right there in front," Hill told *The Salt Lake Tribune*.

Hanna saw Hill come out from an alleyway leading from his backyard. "When he came around the corner, he was holding his wrist," the carrier said. "He was in a lot of trouble, bleeding really badly."

Hanna grabbed his cell phone and called 911. He then attempted to tie

a tourniquet with a towel, but wasn't successful. Hill said he had a belt in the workshop, so Hanna got it and set the tourniquet.

"It was gruesome. It was the most brutal thing I've seen in person," the carrier said. "I covered it with a towel so he wouldn't see it and kept him calm and cool until the ambulance got there."

They made it to the front of the home as EMTs were pulling up.

Hill credited Hanna with helping to save his life. A surgeon sewed both of Hill's arteries back together, repaired the tendon and said he expected Hill to make a full recovery. Hanna went to visit his patron later that day to check on him.

The carrier gave kudos to Hill for running from his workshop. "If he had passed out, it could have been a different story," he said. "I don't even want to think about that."

Hanna has received a lot of media attention for his actions, but denies being a hero. He said it was all about good timing. "I was just the guy at the right place at the right time," the 14-year postal veteran said. "I would help anybody. That's what you do."

Being observant and alert to help customers

Walton, NY Branch 1341 member **Donald Gray** is no stranger to helping people on his route.

On Aug. 28, the carrier was delivering on his route when he heard a faint tapping noise coming from a house, but did not think anything of it. As he turned to leave, he again heard the tapping. This time, Gray looked and saw a hand on the inside of a window.

The carrier looked through the window and saw his elderly customer inside. "She was lying on her bedroom floor," Gray said. She explained that



Trent Hanna



Brandon Franklin

she had fallen about five hours before. “She asked me for help. She couldn’t get herself up,” the carrier said.

Gray tried the front and back doors, but they were locked, so he called 911 and waited at the home to assure his patron that help was on the way. When emergency responders arrived, he helped them get inside the house through a window. The patron has since recovered and returned home.

A few months later, on Oct. 27, Gray was on his route when he came across a note stuck to the mailbox of an elderly customer. It read: “Help, Mailman. I am all alone. Please call my pastor.”

The carrier quickly looked toward the house. “The door was wide open, which was unusual for him,” the carrier said. “I stuck my head in and called out for him.”

Gray discovered that the man was distraught. The customer seemed confused and was talking about being depressed. “He was very down because his wife was in the hospital,” Gray said.

The carrier called his postmaster and local police and stayed with the man until police arrived. Both the man and his wife are now home and

doing well.

The 18-year letter carrier and Navy veteran doesn’t think he’s a hero for his actions. Gray said he just tries to watch out for customers on his route and take action when necessary. “You do what you got to do,” he said.

Well, that’s not something we see every day

Shortly after leaving the post office to head to his route on Sept. 21, North Oakland County, MI Branch 320 member **Brandon Franklin** said, “I was coming over the crest of the hill and I saw this car with its hazards on.”

The carrier wasn’t sure what was going on with the vehicle, which appeared to be driving with no driver. “I drove past and I didn’t see anyone in it,” he said. “Something just didn’t feel right about the whole situation.”

He passed the Jeep from the other side and saw a woman inside as it was swerving across the road. The Jeep’s driver was unconscious and slumped over the center console into the passenger’s seat.

“She was starting to get into the oncoming traffic,” Franklin said. The

carrier got as close to the Jeep as he could and parked his LLV. He then got out and ran. “I was like Usain Bolt,” he told local news station WDIV-TV, referring to the Olympic sprinter from Jamaica. “I just sprinted a 100-meter dash and I’m able to catch up to her.”

Franklin yelled to the woman and dove in through the driver’s side window of the moving Jeep, with his feet in the air, as the vehicle was getting closer to a busy intersection and school zone. “I was able to get it into park and turned off,” he said. “Someone saw and called 911.”

EMTs soon arrived and were able to resuscitate the woman and take her to the hospital. “Of all the things you’ve seen on your routes, that takes the cake,” Franklin told WDIV-TV. “The driverless Jeep takes the cake.”

The three-year letter carrier said he had acted because he was concerned that the car could have hit a child. “It was a fight-or-flight moment,” he said. “If I didn’t, no one else was.”

Despite overwhelming local attention for his actions, Franklin insists he’s not a hero. “I’m not—I’m just a mail carrier,” he said. “It was just the right thing to do.”

Neighborhood watch



Lincoln, NE Branch 8 member **Donna Stajner** was delivering mail on her route one day last fall when “I heard this loud, stressful cry,” she said. She soon spotted a little girl outside a house. “This child is standing and holding onto her porch for dear life,” Stajner said. The carrier approached the child, who said between sobs that she was 5 years old—and home alone. After checking

inside the home to confirm that there was no caregiver around, Stajner called 911 and stayed with the girl. She told her, “We’ll hang out in my truck and wait.” A police officer soon arrived, and Stajner filled them in. As this was going on, the child’s mother and grandmother arrived. They were upset to find that a teenage babysitter had left the girl while she was most likely sleeping. “He left

her stranded,” Stajner said. “I felt bad for her.” The carrier was commended by the community for her caring role in the situation, but the 13-year postal veteran was surprised to be called a hero. “Someone is called a hero for going into a burning building,” Stajner said. “I just wanted to be sure this little girl was safe and taken care of. She comes up to me every chance she gets now.” **PR**

If it's not one thing, it's another

One Sunday last September, Peoria, IL Branch 31 member **Albert Lawson Jr.** was delivering parcels to the house of an elderly customer.

"When I got to the screen door, I heard her talking," he said. "She [had fallen] out of her motorized chair. I asked her if she was OK."

The woman explained that she already had contacted Life Alert for help, but it was clear to Lawson that she was not able to get back in the chair on her own. "Do you want me to help?" he asked her.

With the woman's permission,

Lawson entered the home and noticed other items of concern inside. "There was so much smoke," the carrier said. A piece of toast looked like it was burning in the kitchen and was filling the house with smoke.

"She seemed like she was having trouble breathing," Lawson said. He attempted to lift the woman off the floor to help her back into her wheelchair, but had some difficulty and decided to wait for help to arrive.

The carrier ran to unplug the smoking appliances in the kitchen and grabbed an item of clothing to cover the woman's mouth. "I was shielding her from the smoke," Lawson said. "I didn't want anything to



Albert Lawson Jr.

happen to her."

An ambulance soon arrived and paramedics checked them both out. They brought the woman to the hospital where, after a medical checkup, she was cleared to go home. She later called the post office to thank Lawson.

"I'm very proud to be in the position to help or save another," the third-year carrier said, though he denied being a hero. "I was worried about her. I hope she's doing well." **PR**

Eye on the elderly



On March 6, Rochester, MN Branch 440 member **Lisa Degnan** noticed something unusual at an elderly customer's home. "She hadn't gotten her mail for a few days," she said. "I was worried about her." The carrier was concerned because the woman normally cleared her mailbox daily. Degnan called the post office and informed someone there, and they called police to request a welfare check.

She then continued on her route. A short time later, she received a temporary forward for the customer's mail and thought no more of it. About six months later, the customer called the post office to end her forward, and asked if her regular carrier had been working back in March. "She saved my life," the woman explained. "Please tell her thank you." The officials who had responded to the welfare check Degnan had called for all those months earlier had found the woman on her floor, unable to move. "She had been lying unconscious for a while," Degnan said. The carrier learned that the woman had received medical help and had fully recovered. The 15-year letter carrier doesn't believe she's a hero, though. "I think I did the same that anyone in our

office would have done," Degnan said.

On June 6, Bakersfield, CA Branch 782 member **Bobby Krier** was delivering to a house on his route. As he got closer, "I could hear someone yelling, 'Help!' from the house," he said. When he got to the front door, he again heard a call for help. The car-



Bobby Krier

rier knocked on the door and the woman yelled again. Krier asked the woman if she was all right and if he could come in. With permission, the carrier entered the house through the unlocked door and saw his elderly patron on the floor. "She seemed all right," Krier said. "There was no blood or anything." The woman said she had fallen about 20 minutes earlier and couldn't get up. "I called 911 and waited until they came," Krier said. The carrier kept the 911 operator apprised of his patron's status. Krier waited with his customer for the ambulance to arrive. Medical personnel said that the woman had broken her hip in the fall. The 17-year postal veteran denied any heroics, saying of his actions: "It's just doing what needs to be done and helping my customers out." **PR**

Help on the way

Upon arriving at a home to deliver mail on Aug. 11, Rogers, AR Branch 1514 member **Jennifer Olson** found the door open. She then noticed the homeowner propped up inside. The carrier saw the customer unconscious on the floor with one leg propped up on the coffee table. “She wasn’t moving,” Olson said.



Jennifer Olson

“There was blood coming out of her mouth.” In addition, the woman’s dogs were jumping all around her. Worried, Olson called 911. While on the phone with the operator, the customer began to spit up blood. With instruction from the 911 dispatcher, Olson moved the woman to her side and propped both her feet up to keep her from choking on her blood. “It was pretty scary,” the carrier said. She also maintained communication with the customer and assured her that help was on the way. Olson also secured the customer’s dogs in the bathroom while paramedics tended to the woman. Medics told her that the woman had had multiple seizures due to a medication mixup, and a firefighter later called the postmaster to commend the

carrier’s actions. The customer soon returned home from the hospital and expressed her gratitude to Olson with tears and a hug. “She said I saved her life,” the carrier said. “It was pretty emotional.” Still, the third-year letter carrier doesn’t think her actions qualify her as a hero. “I would think anyone would do it,” Olson said. “How could you look at someone in need and just leave them there?”

On Sept. 26, New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member **Marcial Rodriguez** was going about his route when he heard something out of the ordinary. “I heard a kid screaming,” he said. The carrier rushed over to the boy and found him alongside an elderly customer, who was lying on the ground. “The woman and her grandson had been walking their dogs when she got tangled in the leashes and fell. “There was blood on her face,” Rodriguez said. “He was very upset and she was in distress.” The 8-year-old boy was alone with her and the woman did not have her cell phone, so he had called out to Rodriguez. The carrier helped the injured woman sit on the steps of his truck as he called 911. He then helped the boy get the dogs back to the woman’s house just down the block and returned to assist the woman. “At one point, I was afraid she’d go into shock,” the carrier said. He next called the woman’s daughter-in-law to tell her what had happened, and assured her that her son was safe and her mother-in-law was being properly cared for. “Marcial is a hero and should

be recognized as such,” the woman’s daughter-in-law, Sandy Catenaro, wrote to the local post office. “I am so grateful that he helped my family members and did not ignore my son’s cries for help.” But Rodriguez brushed off any superlatives for his good deeds, saying it was all in a day’s work. “After a couple of years, you get to know people,” the 30-year letter carrier and Navy veteran said. “It’s something all letter carriers do.”

While delivering on her route on Aug. 25, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Rene Brown** noticed a man lying face-down on concrete in his front yard. The carrier approached the customer to see if he was all right. “I looked over and it was a fellow carrier,” she said, noting that he had been on leave that week. Brown asked if he was all right. The man looked up and mouthed “Help” to



Brown, adding, “I can’t see and I can’t feel my legs.” Brown recognized these as symptoms of a stroke, so she called 911 and stayed with her co-worker to comfort him. “It was pretty scary,” the carrier said. EMTs soon arrived and Brown helped load her co-worker into the ambulance before they rushed him to the hospital for emergency surgery. The injured letter carrier is doing well and is currently going through rehabilitation. The man’s family



Darrell Tucker

members were grateful for Brown’s actions, saying that doctors had told them that if the carrier laid there for five more minutes, he may have died. Brown, a sixth-year letter carrier, denied any heroics. She said she just looks out for those on her route. “I would have done it no matter whom it was,” Brown said. “It goes along with the job.”

Canton, OH Branch 238 member **Darrell Tucker** was delivering his route on Sept. 17, 2015, when “I heard somebody yell, ‘Help! Help!’” he said. The carrier followed the direction of the sound and saw a teenage boy lying on his front lawn next to a lawn mower. A woman had already run over to help. “She was panicking,” Tucker said. The carrier ran to the scene and asked what was going on. The 16-year-old said he had had an accident with a lawn mower and had run over his foot. “A bone was sticking through his shoe,” Tucker said. “I covered it and tied a belt around his ankle to stop the bleeding.” He then called 911 and waited with his customer until help arrived. “I calmed him down and reassured him,” Tucker said. The boy was hospitalized and soon returned home. Doctors were able to save the teenager’s foot. The six-year postal veteran brushed off any mention of heroics, though. “I just did what anyone should have done,” Tucker said. **PR**