

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 202-662-2489 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.

Jumping in to help

On Feb. 11, Denver, CO Branch 47 member **Todd Tucker** headed to the Greeley, CO Branch 324 office, where he had planned to meet with Branch 324 city carrier assistant **Alan Hart** to discuss a Muscular Dystrophy Association event.

"When I got there, I saw him lying on the floor under the desk," Tucker said. "He was gasping for air and spitting up. I had to yank him out of the desk area." No one else was in the office.

The carrier moved Hart into a better position on his back, began clearing his mouth of debris and performed CPR. "His eyes rolled back in his head and he stopped breathing," he said. Tucker continued CPR, and when Hart would begin to breathe again, Tucker would roll Hart onto his side. Tucker continued this process, as the man kept stopping breathing.

"I went from panic to anger," Tucker said. "I was not going to lose this guy."

At a point when Hart was breathing, Tucker called 911 and paramedics soon arrived to take over. EMTs stated that they thought they had lost Hart when his face turned blue, but halfway to the hospital, he woke up in the ambulance.

The building was evacuated for about four hours after medical person-

nel detected lethal levels of carbon monoxide on both of its levels. Hart was discharged later in the evening, once his oxygen levels returned to normal. It was later determined that Hart had suffered carbon monoxide poisoning from a boiler unit in a closet in the rented branch office.

"Todd Tucker is a true NALC hero and deserves to be recognized," Branch 324 President **Richard Byrne** wrote to NALC Region 4. "All the emergency personnel that we've spent time with today have told us that if Todd Tucker wasn't there and didn't jump in when he did, Alan wouldn't be here today."

"It was an experience, I'll tell you what," Tucker said, but the 21-year postal veteran brushed off any accolades.

"I think the heroes are the first responders," he said, adding, "I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

'All in a day's work'

In early December 2018, Atlanta, GA Branch 73 member **Kevin Addison** received a mail-hold request for a couple on his route.

"I noticed that the name on it was different," he said. "That raised a red flag and it kind of roused my suspicion."

The request also stated that they wanted to pick up mail at the post office. The carrier had been delivering mail on that street for 15 years, so he knew his customers' routines. The couple will occasionally put in a vacation mail hold, but they never had previously requested post office pick-up.

On Dec. 10, Addison went to the door and knocked. Fortunately, the residents answered, and the carrier checked in with them about the request that his post office had received for their address.



When Denver, CO Branch 47 member **Todd Tucker** found a fellow letter carrier suffering from the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning, he quickly began CPR and called 911 for help.



Customers of Atlanta, GA Branch 73 member Kevin Addison asked their city to recognize the carrier for his actions in helping to identify mail fraud on his route.

They said they had not put one in. “I showed it to them and they were kind of horrified,” Addison said. The couple said they did not recognize the name or the Boston-area phone number listed.

After Addison spoke to his supervisor about the suspicious holds, postal inspectors and police put together an undercover sting. Investigation of the phone number led police to arrest a suspect just two days later on charges of financial identity fraud, financial transaction card theft and criminal attempt charges.

Addison was interviewed by inspectors and information he provided also helped police to later identify three additional victims. “Thank goodness it turned out to be a matter they could resolve quickly,” the 38-year USPS veteran said.

Addison’s neighborhood patrons were so grateful that they all got together and asked the city of Dun-

woodie to award the carrier a commendation; a ceremony was held for that purpose.

Playing down the attention for his actions, the carrier said he simply tries to be cognizant of his surroundings. “It’s all in a day’s work for me,” Addison said. “We’re out here and looking out for our customers every day.”

Assisting a patron in need

While making her daily rounds on Nov. 29, 2018, St. Louis, MO Branch 343 member **Lisa Harkrader** approached the door of one of her elderly customers. As the carrier was separating her mail for delivery, she thought she heard a faint cry for help from the woman.

“If I didn’t have mail [to deliver], I would never have heard her,” Harkrader said. “I tried entering her front door, but it was locked. The lady cried out that she

thought she had broken her leg. I told her that I would get help.”

The carrier quickly walked across the street. “I asked the neighbor if he had a key to her house and he informed me that he didn’t, but that she sometimes left the back door open to let her dogs out.”

Learning this, Harkrader went to the back door of the home, to find that it was indeed unlocked. She entered and identified herself. The woman was lying on the floor close to the front door.

A man who lived next door arrived soon thereafter and called 911. “He and I both comforted her,” the carrier said. “She was a little disoriented, frantic and scared.”

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Eye on the elderly



Sheila Pierce (r) with her customer Madeline, whom she helped after a fall

On Dec. 29, 2017, New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member **Sheila Pierce** had been driving on her route and was headed back to the post office. She happened to take a left instead of going straight, as she normally did. She glanced into a customer’s back yard and that’s when she saw her 92-year-old customer, Madeline Grassano, on the ground. Pierce hurried over to her. “She said she fell and was there for 45 minutes,” the carrier said, adding that the weather was freezing that day. “I tried to warm her up.” The woman told her carrier that she had gone

there to feed the birds but had tripped. She had called for help but none of her neighbors had heard her. “When I had almost given up hope, God sent an angel named Sheila Pierce,” Grassano later wrote to the post office. The carrier comforted the woman and called 911 as well as the woman’s best friend. “Maddie, you’re going to be all right,” Pierce told her. She stayed by her side until a police officer and then EMTs arrived to take her to the hospital, where doctors said Grassano had a fractured hip. After being released from the hospital, the woman spent some time

in a rehabilitation facility before returning home. “I will be forever grateful to her for saving my life,” Grassano later wrote to the post office. “Besides being my hero, Sheila is a terrific mail carrier, one who is conscientious, courteous and dependable. I feel very fortunate to have her deliver my mail.” Pierce described herself as a people person and said that if she sees mail piled up, she always will check on her patrons. “I enjoy serving my customers,” the 31-year letter carrier said. “I love her so much. It makes me feel good that I could be there for her.” **PR**



Lisa Harkrader

The woman wanted to move, but Harkrader told her she should wait until EMTs arrived. The carrier moved furniture that had been overturned to allow paramedics to enter through the front door. Harkrader then went outside and waited for the ambulance to arrive.

The two found out that the woman's daughter, who lived with her mother, would not have come home for at least

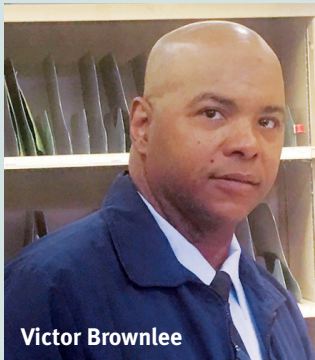
five more hours. The neighbor was able to find the daughter's phone number and have her meet her mother at the hospital.

Some of the woman's family members were waiting for Harkrader when she delivered mail a few days later. "They expressed their gratitude to me for coming to her aid," she said. They told her that the woman had broken

her hip and had had surgery the next day, and that she was sitting up by the following day.

"I'm just glad I had mail that day and I was put in a position to help someone," the 26-year postal veteran said. "I think a majority of the population would have done what I've done." **PR**

Neighborhood watch



Victor Brownlee

Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **Victor Brownlee** was delivering mail on Sept. 28, 2018, when he detected the odor of natural gas at a customer's house, which alarmed him. "It was very, very strong," he said. "I knew they have a baby girl." The carrier rang the doorbell, told the homeowner, Gary, about the smell and asked if anything was going on with their gas or stove.

The man said that he and his wife, Amanda, had been sick with colds and couldn't smell anything. "Do me a favor and call the gas company," the carrier told him. They immediately made the call, and utility workers soon arrived. Technicians found a significant leak

that threatened the safety of the couple and their 4-year-old daughter, as well as their neighbors, as it could have led to a chain-reaction explosion. The couple had remodeled their home recently, and the technicians discovered that their gas meter was not up to code. Amanda approached Brownlee on his route the next day, crying and thanking him for saving her family's lives. "We were lucky to have a mail carrier who cared enough to say something," she later wrote to the local post office. "We narrowly escaped what could have been a devastating situation." Brownlee, whose own son had died by drowning, said that he thought his son had sent him there to help the family. "I don't feel like I'm a hero," the five-year letter carrier said. "I would have done it a thousand times over for anyone."

Lansing, MI Branch 122 member **Kelly Garland** was taking a short break in her postal vehicle from delivering her route on Sept. 17, 2018, when, she said, "I saw in my mirror a woman walking her dog." At first she thought it was just a cute scene but,

looking closer, it seemed that the woman was chasing after the dog, trying without success to grab its fur. "She was distraught," Garland said. "Do you need help?" the carrier called to the woman. Yes, she answered. The woman was dog-sitting Rufus, who belonged to her sister. The dog slowed for a moment as Garland greeted it. "I was going to cut him off at the pass," she said, but Rufus had other ideas. He swerved around her and kept on eluding capture. The carrier began chasing him around a corner toward a cul-de-sac. "I had him twice and he got out from me," she said. "He never slowed down." The dead end of the street didn't deter the dog, who quickly ran the other way, with Garland still following behind. By this time, Rufus's dog-sitter fell behind the pair, went to get her car and began circling the neighborhood. Garland kept

going on foot. When the dog stopped to answer nature's call, "I gained on him," she said. "People pitched in to help out." After chasing Rufus for close to a mile, Garland, along with a mother and daughter in the neighborhood, cornered the dog in a shed behind a garage. The mother provided a leash, and Garland was able to corral Rufus. "I lassoed him," she said with a laugh. Then, the mother-and-daughter team drove her back to where Rufus was staying, to reunite him with his dog-sitter. "Much appreciation for Kelly's willingness to help out," the dog-sitter later wrote to NALC. "She is a stellar letter carrier,

friend to all dogs, and our hero!" The 21-year USPS veteran said the notion of being called a hero for her actions was "hilarious." "I just do my job," Garland said. "Sometimes I get to help people, and that's pretty great." **PR**



Kelly Garland