

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.

Watching out for those most vulnerable

On April 19, Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100 member **Chyanne Fauntleroy** was on her route when she saw police and volunteers passing out a bulletin for a 15-year-old girl named Abbey, who had been missing for 21 hours. Abbey had autism and functions at the level of a 12-year-old.

The city carrier assistant asked for a flyer so that she could keep an eye out for Abbey while delivering mail.



Fauntleroy then continued driving her route. "A girl matching the description with no shoes on was walking down the street," she said. It was about two blocks away from where the girl had last been seen.

The carrier immediately pulled over to the girl and began talking to her to put her at ease. "I used to work with kids with disabilities," Fauntleroy said. "As she's talking to me, I'm calling police."

Fauntleroy actually told Abbey that she herself was missing and needed help. Abbey said she would help her and not to worry or cry. The carrier kept police on the phone as she asked Abbey random questions to keep her talking. She said that police told her, "You're doing great; ask her these questions."

The carrier noticed that Abbey had a drawing in her hand and asked her to make a drawing for her, which she did, as she kept her talking and asking the questions police wanted her to, such as when she had last eaten. When Fauntleroy thought she was losing the girl's attention, she threw in questions like, "What's your favorite color?"

"I just kept switching the story up," she said.

Fauntleroy kept the girl distracted until undercover police arrived.

Medics determined that Abbey was dehydrated but otherwise all right, and soon reunited her with her family. More than 80 volunteers with the sheriff's department had been out looking for the girl.

Then, a few weeks later, in early May, Fauntleroy was on her route when she came across a 4-year-old girl who was by herself.

"Where's Mama?" she asked the crying girl when she ran up to her. The carrier called 911 and waited with her for about 10 minutes. Before police arrived, the child's mother came, and Fauntleroy was able to reunite the two.

The first-year letter carrier received

praise in local media for watching out for her patrons. "I don't think I'm a hero," Fauntleroy said. "I was just doing the right thing that anyone else would do."



Running toward commotion

While he was delivering his route on March 4, "I noticed a gentleman walking a beagle," said Evansville, IN Branch 377 member **Mark Schuh**.

On the opposite side of the street, another man was trying to put a leash on his pit bull. "[The owner and dog] were going in opposite directions," the carrier said.

Soon, Schuh said he heard a commotion and headed over to the scene, where the pit bull had begun attacking the smaller beagle and its owner.

The aggressive dog's owner kept trying to lay on top of his dog to get control, and Schuh stepped in to try to help. "Every time we'd get him away, he'd go after the dog again," he said, adding that this happened at least two more times.

The carrier pulled out his dog repellent spray from his satchel and used it on the pit bull until it retreated. "I sprayed almost a can," Schuh said. "The pit bull would have killed the dog. He was determined."

The smaller dog used the opportunity to get away and began running. The beagle was later found nearby on a



Left: Yakima, WA Branch 852 member Kyle Friedrich (pictured with his family) received a citizen commendation from the Yakima Police Department for helping to break up an altercation on his route.

Right: San Bernardino, CA Branch 411 member Moises Centeno (inset) helped put out a car fire he spotted in a customer's driveway.



porch, shaking.

The pit bull and his owner began walking home, and Schuh checked in with the beagle owner, who was badly cut. The carrier drove over to tell the customer's wife so that she could take him to the hospital. The man later received stitches for his injuries and his dog turned out to be gravely injured, but both recovered from the attack.

"What a wild day," Schuh said, adding that adrenaline kicked in and he just reacted.

The injured man later visited the post office to thank the 38-year letter carrier for his actions.

Schuh doesn't believe he's a hero. "I'm a quiet person and I don't like a lot of attention," he said. "Any of my co-workers would have done it. If I was in trouble, I'd hope someone would help me."

Stepping in to help

On April 15, Yakima, WA Branch 852 member **Kyle Friedrich** had just finished his lunch and was heading back to his route when he saw an altercation.

A man had apparently walked up to another man standing outside and asked for a cigarette. He then asked the man if he was "all white" and part of the Aryan Brotherhood, according to a police affidavit. The man responded, "What?" and the suspect then attacked him, the *Yakima Herald* reported.

"I think this guy was looking for trouble," the carrier said. "He had beaten the guy up and threw him through a window." The victim's leg was later discovered to be broken in the fight.

The suspect walked away, and Friedrich went to help the injured man. "I asked the guy if he was all right," he said. A bartender had also come out of a restaurant and tried to help, and someone had already called police.

The aggressor then came back over to the victim. Friedrich said that he thought, "He's done. I'm not going to let him hurt him anymore." The suspect then turned on the carrier, stealing Friedrich's keys before running away.

The suspect tried to get into a car, but the woman driving it locked the door. As he tried to get inside, Friedrich took the opportunity to surprise the man. "I went over there and told him 'Knock it off,'" he said. "He backed off [the car] and tried to fight me. I tackled him and held him down until police came."

The suspect later kicked a doctor while getting a medical checkup. He was arrested on suspicion of first- and third-degree assault, first-degree theft, second-degree malicious mischief and vehicle meddling. The victim was taken to the hospital.

Friedrich said it's "crazy" to be called a hero for his actions. "It was a reaction," the 14-year carrier said. "I've always been the type to step in and try to break up fights."

Spreading blaze no match for this carrier

"I saw a big, black plume of smoke," San Bernardino, CA Branch 411 member **Moises Centeno** said of delivering mail on Saturday, Aug. 18, 2018.

"As I got closer to the house, I noticed that the smoke was coming from the customer's garage," he added.

The carrier quickly parked his LLV and ran up to the house to notify the customers. As Centeno approached the door, he noticed that her car was on fire. He rang their doorbell and pounded on their door, but no one answered.

"I proceeded to grab the water hose and began spraying the car that was on fire," he said.

A customer who lives across the street, Joe Nevin, was walking up the street and also noticed the smoke. The customer soon came out of her house, and Nevin told her to call 911. "They said they didn't notice [the fire]," the carrier said.

"I was continuously spraying the hood of the car where the fire was coming from," Centeno said. "I was also spraying underneath the car and under the wheel wells where the fire was burning."

The carrier asked the woman to give him the key to her car so he could move it away from the garage—but it wouldn't move out of the parking position.

"As I was spraying the vehicle, I was
(continued on next page)

Help on the way

On Feb. 20, St. Louis, MO Branch 343 member **Edward Rader** was playing indoor soccer at a local high school when one of the opposing players collapsed. "He quit breathing," the carrier said. He looked like he was having a heart attack."

While someone called paramedics, the carrier began performing chest compressions and another man did some rescue breathing for 15 minutes until EMTs arrived. "Somebody had to do something," Rader said. "I didn't think twice about it. You

just do it." After using the defibrillator twice, paramedics were able to stabilize the patient and transport him to a nearby hospital. "He made it through," the carrier said. "Doctors said what we did for him probably saved his life. Rader later found out

the man had total blockage in an artery and had received two stents. He has since recovered. "I was just glad I was there and reacted and was able to help the guy out," the 35-year letter carrier and Army Reserves veteran said. **PR**

Proud to Serve



Tom Pecha

getting smoke all over my face and lungs, so I hosed myself down and blew my nose to get the smoke out of my nose and eyes,” Centeno said. “As I kicked some trash cans away, I noticed another water hose by the garage, so I gave the hose I had to [Nevin] and told him to keep watering the hood.”

The carrier grabbed the new hose and kept dousing the flames. After about 20 minutes, the two had extinguished the flames minutes before the fire department arrived to take over at the scene. Firefighters soon popped the hood of the car. “It was just smoldering by then,” Centeno said.

Firefighters offered Centeno some oxygen, which he accepted before continu-

ing on his route.

“I just did what anybody would do in that situation,” the 33-year postal veteran said. “In my eyes, I know that any one of my peers would have come to the customer’s aid as well. I’m just glad that God put me there in the right place and time to avert a catastrophe.”

Just a ‘part of our job’

While out on his route on Feb. 5, Brookfield, WI Branch 4811 member **Tom Pecha** entered a large apartment complex and began to deliver to the cluster boxes in the foyer. As he looked across the parking lot, he noticed what he thought was a winter coat lying dis-

carded in the snow.

The carrier decided to walk closer and noticed that it was one of his customers on the ground. The man had fallen on ice in the parking lot and appeared to be bleeding from a head wound. “Alan, are you OK?” Pecha asked.

The carrier asked Alan if he was able to move on his own; the customer was not able to and said that he had been briefly knocked out and had been lying there for at least a half-hour. “He was out of breath,” Pecha said.

The customer had gone out to his car wearing sandals to flip up his windshield wipers and had expected to be outside for only a minute.

The man had fallen on a rather large

Neighborhood watch



Kimberly Pryor

On Feb. 8, Chanute, KS Branch 1055 member **Kimberly Pryor** was headed to begin her route when she noticed something out of the ordinary. “There was a child in a diaper in the middle of an icy street,” she said. The toddler was wearing only a T-shirt and diaper in the 12-degree weather. The carrier immediately parked her vehicle and approached the youngster. She wrapped the child in her coat and called her supervisor, who in turn called 911. Pryor began to

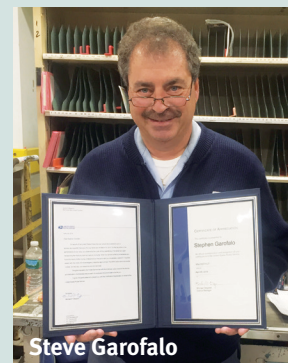
knock on doors to try to find the parents of the child. There was no response, so the carrier provided warmth and comfort for the youngster until help arrived. “Luckily, the child was fine—no injuries,” Pryor said, but added that police couldn’t find the toddler’s parents and took him to a local hospital. “We got him off the street in a timely manner,” the 15-year postal veteran said. “I did what anyone would have done if they saw a child in the street on the coldest day of the year.”

On Saturday, March 16, New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member **Steve Garofalo** was delivering to the first stop on his park-and-loop when, he said, “I saw a 2-year-old boy wandering the street.” He recognized the youngster as someone who lived on the street. The carrier carefully grabbed the child and

said, “Where’s your mother?” The child pointed toward his house. On the screened-in front porch, he found the toddler’s mother, Stephanie Wilson, with foam coming from her mouth. “She was lying there unconscious,” Garofalo said. “She was slumped over a stroller. I knocked on the door of the home, but no one else came.” The carrier called 911, and the first responders soon arrived. EMTs determined that the woman had been having an allergic reaction to her medication and were able to revive her. The carrier continued his rounds and then circled back to give a statement to officials. “If

it wasn’t for him, the EMTs wouldn’t have gotten there as quickly and I would’ve been brought to the hospital,” Wilson told WLNY-TV, the local CBS affiliate. “He’s an amazing guy in general. You don’t think of him as a postman, you think of him as a guy who walks around. Honestly, he’s like another neighbor.” Garofalo has delivered on the same route for 32 of the 34 years he’s been delivering mail and says he feels like

he’s a part of the community. “You don’t know what you’re going to experience when you’re walking up on a situation,” he said. “Someone was in trouble and I helped them.” **PR**



Steve Garofalo

patch of ice. “He must have tried to open the door and slipped,” Pecha said. The customer said he didn’t want the carrier to call for help or call his wife.

“Between you and me, let’s try to get you up,” Pecha said.

He was having trouble maintaining his balance while trying to pull the customer upright on the ice. The carrier noticed that at the curb 10 feet away, there was no ice. “Can you crawl over?” Pecha asked. Alan was unable to move his shoulder and arm, further hindering his mobility.

“I got on my knees and grabbed him by his belt,” he said. Once at the curb, the two rested for a few minutes. Then, using a crossed-arms technique Pecha had learned in the Marine Corps, he said, “I grabbed him and took him arm in arm.”

He gently pulled the customer upright and onto his feet and asked if he could provide any further assistance; the man declined but promised to visit the doctor on his own.

“He was exhausted,” Pecha said.

Pecha buzzed the man’s wife in their apartment using the callbox, and she helped her husband inside. Before continuing on his route, the carrier stopped at the apartment complex’s main office to inform managers of the incident and to point out how icy and dangerous the walks, driveways and parking lots were for the entire complex. The agents apologized, noting that they recently had switched to a new contractor for snow/ice removal, and said that the issue would immediately be fixed.

Alan later called the post office to thank Pecha for his actions, and told Pecha that he had gone to an urgent care center, where he had received stitches for his head wound.

“I’d have done it at any time, any place,” the three-year letter carrier said. “Being in a truck all day, I’m an eye of the community. Being a good citizen and helping our customers is part of our jobs.” **PR**

Eye on the elderly



Xaviar Morris

One day last fall, Northeast Florida Branch 53 member **Xaviar Morris** was delivering mail to a resident she spoke with on a daily basis. When she approached the front door, she heard him yelling from inside for some water. “I went to my truck to get a bottle and returned to try and give him the water, but I couldn’t open the door,” she said. The man appeared to be lying too close to the door for Morris to open it. “He told me he had fallen and couldn’t get up. I asked him if he wanted me to call 911,” the carrier said. “I was able to contact his sister to let her know about the situation. She said she was on the way.” Morris was able to speak to the man through the door and kept her customer calm until the woman arrived to assess her brother’s condition. The relative decided to call 911. The man was rushed to the hospital and later was transferred to a veterans’ nursing home. “I’m writing you to thank Xaviar Morris for saving my brother’s life,” the sister soon wrote to the local postmaster. “He had fallen and was on the floor for two and a half days. I would like to thank her for her quick action. We need people like that. Thank you again.” The six-year letter carrier said she felt good that she was able to help her customer. “We’re the eyes and ears out there,” Morris said. “Someone might need you someday.”

On April 17, Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100 member **Generoso “Geno” Abueg** noticed that a nonagenarian customer, Mr. Chavez, had not picked up his mail in several days. He knew that he had delivered a check the day before, and thought it was strange that it still would be sitting there. Concerned, the carrier checked with a few neighbors to make sure the customer had not moved or gone on vacation. “I told them my concerns,” Abueg said. One neighbor mentioned that Mr. Chavez had surveillance cameras at his house and usually went to grab his mail if he had seen that Abueg had been by to deliver. The carrier asked a neighbor to call police. Officers soon arrived to perform a welfare check and discovered the man inside. “His knee had buckled, and he was on the floor for three days,” Abueg said, adding that the man had been without food or water. Paramedics came and took Chavez to the hospital, where the carrier visited him later that day. The grateful customer then was transferred to a rehabilitation facility. The 32-year postal veteran said he was glad he was able to help the man, but that his actions fell short of being heroic. “It was just seeing something and saying something,” Abueg said. “It’s observing and knowing your route.”



Geno Abueg



Miranda Quaile

Eye on the elderly

Carbondale, PA Branch 163 member **Scott Bayer** was doing a loop on Saturday, May 26, 2018, as a T-6 when he discovered an elderly customer, Cecilia, unconscious on her side porch as he approached the home to deliver the mail. “She was not moving, unresponsive,” the carrier said. He had seen some of the neighbors as he delivered along the street, so he waved a woman, Mrs. Groves, over. The woman helped Bayer check on the customer. “She’s got some medical issues and uses opioids,” the carrier said. “We couldn’t determine how long she had been out



Scott Bayer

there.” Bayer called 911, and emergency responders soon arrived and treated Cecilia for an accidental overdose of her prescription medication. “They gave her Narcan and it revived her on the spot,” he said. The customer later told the carrier how grateful she was to him. “I did what anyone else would do,” the nine-year postal veteran said humbly. “We all have a heart that’s beating and we have to act.”

One day in early April, Silver Spring, MD Branch 2611 member **Ellen Samm** noticed that a woman on her route

had not picked up her mail, which was unusual. “I noticed a light on in her bedroom and kitchen,” she said. The carrier continued on with her route, but the next day, Saturday, she observed that the mail was not picked up and the same lights were still on, and she grew concerned. “Her car was also there,” Samm said. “There were a lot of little hints.” She alerted the woman’s neighbor and asked if she had any phone numbers for the woman. The neighbor said she had an emergency contact for her and that she would reach out. The neighbor called the woman’s family, who called police for a welfare check, and shortly paramedics were called to help the customer. When Samm returned to the route on Monday, the woman’s family was there and thanked her. The woman had apparently fallen after experiencing a brain aneurysm and was unable to move or call for help. She also had been dehydrated. “One of your member letter carriers, Ellen Samm, was instrumental in saving the life of my mother,” the woman’s son James Keegan wrote to *The Postal Record*. “Ms. Samm has and deserves our family’s respect and gratitude. Thank you, Ms. Samm!” Samm, a 14-year letter carrier and 20-year Navy veteran, declined any accolades for her actions. “I don’t think I’m a hero,” she said. “I just did what we’re trained to do. I’m not the only one who looks out for the elderly. It’s good to be aware.”



Ellen Samm

Dallas, NC Branch 5690 member **Miranda Quaile** greets Kathleen, a nonagenarian customer on her route, every day. “I always walk her mail to her door,” the carrier said. On Jan. 2, she went to deliver mail at the house and, through the glass door, saw that Kathleen was lying face-down on the floor inside her home. “Her head was under a dresser,” Quaile said. “She was moving her legs, so I knew she was alive. She had blood on her.” The door was locked, but the carrier was able to talk to Kathleen through the door. Quaile dialed 911 and, while waiting for emergency help to arrive, comforted her customer. She then provided information for first responders. Kathleen, who now is out of the hospital, said she had been on the floor for two days. The customer’s brother later called Quaile to thank her for her heroic actions, and added that if she had not found her and taken action, his sister might not have made it. The four-year letter carrier denied any heroics on her part. “Anyone from my office would have done it,” Quaile said. “I think God put me there at the right time.”

On Oct. 11, 2018, Clinton, IA

Branch 126 member **James Barr** was contacted by the city carrier assistant on his regular route, who told him that she had heard what she thought was a child’s cry at a home. Barr knew right away that it was the home of an elderly woman, Ardy Schnittjer, who lived alone, and he immediately headed there. “I noticed a soup can was thrown through a window,” Barr said. The woman had fallen while in her basement and did not have her phone or Life Alert with her. “I threw a can through the basement window so I could try to attract help,” she later wrote to the postmaster. “I knew Jim usually came by that window on his route and kept calling for him. In the meantime, I had managed to pull myself backward up the basement steps and got to a phone.” When Barr saw the can and broken window, he contacted police and was relieved to find out that Schnittjer had already received help. The carrier later went to visit his customer in the hospital, where she had received a hip replacement. “When Jim stopped later to inquire how I was, I was filled with gratitude,” Schnittjer wrote. Barr said that the woman was appreciative that

he had followed up, but he denied that his actions were anything heroic. “I’ve been in this town all my life. I know the people,” the 32-year postal veteran said. “I look out for my customers. I’d do that for anyone.” **PR**



James Barr