

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.

Carrier's quick reaction helps in scary situation

One day in October 2018, Escondido, CA Branch 2525 member **Eric Reyes** was delivering mail on his route when he heard a loud bang nearby. "It was a [Volkswagen] Beetle and a truck," he said.

He didn't think too much of it, because fender benders often occurred in the area. Still, he turned to look closer at the collision, and saw the truck flipped over on its side. "The Beetle stood normal, on all fours," Reyes said. The carrier noticed people rushing to assist the occupants of the tipped-over truck.

Reyes felt compelled to act. "I took my vehicle, parked on the corner, and jogged over there," he said. Since there already were a lot of people helping the male driver and his kids at the truck, he headed to the Beetle.

That car had a couple inside. The driver, Chris, was dazed, and his girlfriend, Angelique, was in the passenger seat unconscious. The man was trying, unsuccessfully, to pull on his girlfriend to get her out of the car.

"Hey, let me get in there," Reyes said to him, before forcing his way into the car to help. The carrier tried to unbuckle the woman's seatbelt to get her out of the car when he noticed smoke coming from



beside her.

Unable to get the seatbelt undone, Reyes shouted for a knife. A man came over with a knife, and another brought a fire extinguisher. Using the blade, the carrier cut the seatbelt off as smoke continued to swirl. "It quickly became fire," he said. "I'm pulling on her and she's still not coming out."

Reyes knew that time was of the essence. "I yanked on her with everything I could," he said, finally managing to pull Angelique from the burning Beetle. The man with the fire extinguisher ran over to try to put out the flames.

They still were close to the vehicle, and the carrier knew they needed to move the woman to a safer distance. "The car's on fire," Reyes told Chris, who was still in shock. "It's going to explode. We've got to move her."

Reyes moved Angelique across the street and had Chris stand in clear view so that he would be able to see emergency technicians when they came and alert them to Angelique's position. He told Chris, "If the ambulance comes, you scream."

The carrier put some cushioning under the woman's head to stabilize

her, and tried unsuccessfully to get the attention of a police officer who was directing traffic to help.

EMTs arrived a short while later to check out the couple. Angelique had fractures of her neck and pelvis, and had broken ribs on her right side. She also had brain swelling and burns. Chris had cracked ribs as well as a concussion.

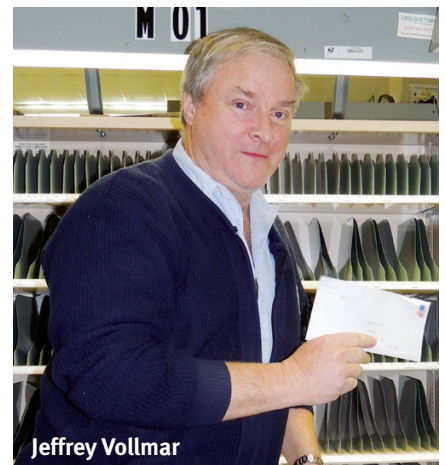
"I will never be able to repay him," Angelique told the local NBC TV station, speaking of the letter carrier. "He saved my life, definitely."

Reyes, a three-year letter carrier and a Marine Corps veteran, brushed off any accolades for his actions. "It's just reaction," he said. "It's the heat of the moment. I wasn't worried about me; I just wanted to help her."

A carrier's habit of heroics

On Dec. 15, 2018, Freehold, NJ Branch 924 member **Jeffrey Vollmar** was delivering to a cluster-box unit when, he said, "I heard someone yell and moan for help."

An elderly man he recognized apparently had stumbled while walking to his car and had struck his head, most likely on the trunk of his car. "He went face-first into the street," the carrier said. The carrier rushed to the man's side and



noticed that he was bleeding from his head.

Vollmar saw a man walking by. “I yelled for him to get a clean towel,” the carrier said, and the man did so.

The carrier then called 911 and stayed with his customer to comfort him, while keeping pressure on his wounds using the towel. “I had him lie still because I didn’t know if he had a neck injury,” he said. “His wife came out and was crying.”

Paramedics soon arrived to take over. “He had a bunch of stitches put in,” Vollmar said. He saw the man a few days later, and the customer expressed his gratitude to the carrier.

“Whenever you see someone who needs help, I feel it’s my responsibility to render assistance in their time of need,” the 21-year letter carrier and Marine Corps veteran said. “I was happy that everything turned out good and that he’s up and around again.”

This isn’t Vollmar’s first time being called a hero. He was previously recognized as NALC’s 2010 Eastern Region Hero of the Year for saving a customer from her burning home and for helping to fight the fire.



Photo by Nick Morgan / Mail Tribune

A towing crew works to remove a vehicle that crashed into a grocery store where Medford, OR Branch 1433 member Edd Maris (r) was shopping. He helped the driver by administering CPR after she suffered a medical emergency.

Watching out for those in need, on the job and off

A car came crashing through a grocery-store wall as Medford, OR Branch 1433 member **Clifford “Edd” Maris III** was shopping on his non-scheduled day on Saturday, Dec. 22, 2018.

The driver had accidentally accelerated while suffering a cardiac arrest and the car ended up perched on top of a pile of store products three feet in the air.

“I could see that she was unconscious,” Maris said, adding: “All her doors were locked.”

With assistance from other bystanders, they were able to break a side window and unlock the driver’s-side door.

The vehicle was still elevated, but Maris was able to carefully lift the woman up and out of the car. “I got her to a clean spot and did all the vitals checks,” he said. “She split open her head pretty good.”

The carrier, a former Air Force medic, began administering CPR on the woman.

“My training kicked in right away,” he said. A police officer on scene was relaying information to an ambulance that was on route.

Maris continued the procedure for about five minutes before he noticed any changes.

“She came through,” he said. “We got a pulse back. That was the best part.”

Paramedics soon arrived to take the driver to the hospital.

For his efforts, Maris was honored in January by the Medford Fire-Rescue’s citizen recognition group for his life-saving role in this emergency situation and received the recognition wearing his postal uniform.

The 31-year letter carrier says that being called a hero is both “embarrassing” and “humbling.”

“It’s doing something anyone else would hopefully do,” he said.



Fire and rescue

On Oct. 23, 2018, Lake City, IA Branch 5028 member **Bonnie Enabnit** was delivering mail on her park-and-loop route when, she said, “I smelled something like it was burning and there was a faint beeping sound.” There were no visible signs of smoke, but the carrier knew that the homeowner’s neighbor used a wood burner. She knocked on the side door of the home where she smelled the fire, but no one answered, so she

went back to the front of the home to check for any other signs. She then went over to the neighbor. “He said he didn’t have a good sense of smell,” she said, but she persuaded him to go to the home with her to check on the vents. Concerned because of the burning smell, they called 911. Police soon arrived, followed by the fire department. Upon entering the house, firefighters found a pair of gloves smoldering on top of a space

heater, which had sparked a fire in a bathroom undergoing remodeling. “They said that within 15 minutes, the house would have gone up in flames,” Enabnit said firefighters told her. But she doesn’t think she should be called a hero for her actions. “I’m just thankful I was in the right place at the right time,” the 24-year postal veteran said. “I like that I can be a watchful eye in the neighborhoods I deliver to.” **PR**



Neighborhood watch



Georgeanna
Graham

“As I approached, I could smell gas,” Rochester, NY Branch 210 member **Georgeanna Graham** said of delivering mail to a customer’s home on Jan. 17. She detected the natural gas odor only near the woman’s mailbox, and so she went to the door to alert the customer. “I was happy she was home,” the carrier said. Graham told her that she wasn’t certain, but that it seemed the smell was coming from her property, and so she urged the customer to call her gas company. Utility workers soon arrived and discovered that there was indeed a gas leak on the premises. They evacuated the woman, as they worked to correct the problem. The customer later expressed her appreciation of Graham’s concern and action to the post office. “I just happened to be at the right place at the right time,” the 15-year postal veteran said. “All of us carriers, that’s

what we do. We look out for our communities.”

While delivering her route on Jan. 16, New Haven, CT Branch 19 member **Syreeta Frasier** noticed a toddler wandering down the street alone. “Why does this kid have no coat on?” she wondered. As the child walked closer, the carrier noticed that the child was soaking wet, badly bruised and covered in blood. She also smelled of beer. The carrier tried to talk to her, but the girl seemed to speak only Spanish. “She had a phone in her hand, but it was locked,” she said. Frasier was concerned and decided to call police. It was cold that day, so Frasier went to the child and picked her up. “I wrapped her in a fleece sweater and put her in the truck,” she said. When officers arrived, the carrier maintained contact with the child while explaining to the police that she apparently spoke only Spanish. As Frasier spoke with police, she noticed a man running down the street, calling out to the child. The man also appeared to be bloodied. The situation seemed suspicious to Frasier, who has

worked in the area for a few years. “I had never seen them before on my route,” she said. The youngster wasn’t responding to the man and instead began calling out for her mother. Police questioned the man about the whereabouts of the child’s mother, but he gave vague responses and multiple explanations. Officers decided to take the child to the hospital to be checked out separately from the man. Frasier never found out what exactly came of the situation, though she later knocked on the door of the home where the girl supposedly lived and was told by someone that the toddler didn’t live there. “When you deliver mail every day, you get familiar,” the 12-year postal veteran said. “All the kids on my route call me ‘Auntie.’ I was just doing my job.”

On Oct. 4, Marion, OH Branch 280 member **Mary Smith** smelled natural gas at a house while she

was delivering the mail, so she knocked on the customer’s door. When the elderly resident, Mrs. Ingram, opened the door, “I told her I smelled gas,” the carrier said. Ingram



Syreeta Frasier

asked what she should do. Smith told her to contact the gas company, and the customer asked how. The carrier told Ingram to look for the company’s number on a bill, but that if she couldn’t find one, to let her know when she came back around and she would help her find it. “She said she wasn’t feeling well and was going to bed,” Smith said. The carrier once again urged her to call to report the possible gas leak. Ingram did contact the gas company and told the carrier a few days later that the company had come and evacuated her from her home due to carbon monoxide. “The house was 80 percent filled with gas,” Smith said, adding that, had it reached the hot water heater, which was the source of the gas leak, there likely would have been an explosion. Ingram sent her carrier a thank-you letter and also came to the post office to call attention to Smith’s actions. “She said if it wasn’t for me, she would have gone to bed and not woken up,” the carrier said. Despite her customer’s praise, Smith doesn’t think she did anything out of the ordinary. “Every carrier at some point in their career will be a hero,” the 22-year postal veteran said. “We are the eyes and ears of the neighborhood. I’m no different than any other carrier.” **PR**



Mary Smith



Bryan Burton

'Every second counts'

On Jan. 8, Dayton, OH Branch 182 member **Bryan Burton** was delivering his final package of the day as a T-6 to a business across the street from the post office. He had been trying to deliver it throughout the day.

"I walked over there to see if he was open," the carrier said. "He was." As he walked into the shop, there appeared to be no one around, so he planned to scan the package and place it on the counter.

"That's when I had noticed a gentleman lying on the floor, unconscious, with a three-foot [wide] puddle of blood around his head," he said.

The carrier scanned the room once again to make sure that, if this was a

robbery, the assailant wasn't still there. Not seeing anyone, Burton rushed to help the man, who was the store owner, and began to assess his injuries.

"I'd noticed the blood was coming from a large wound from the back of his head," the carrier said, "and from my combat medic training in the military and my EMT training in college, one of the most important things about head wounds after stopping bleeding, which is tricky as well, is to keep the patient awake or try to get them awake."

The man roused as Burton accessed his wound, which was starting to clot. "He popped up awake on me for a few seconds," he said. Burton moved the man into a more comfortable and

stable position, then ran next door to a sandwich shop and asked the employees to call 911 since he did not have his cell phone with him.

"I then ran back to the patient and continued to keep him awake until the cops arrived," he said. Paramedics soon followed.

The three-year carrier and Army veteran later heard that the owner was doing all right. He apparently had suffered a seizure, and had fallen and hit his head, requiring 48 stitches—but is now back at work.

"Thank God for happy endings," Burton said, adding that he was just doing his job. "If you have the training and the knowledge, you should help. Every second counts." **PR**

Help on the way



Daniel Virgilio

On Nov. 26, 2018, Hartford, CT Branch 86 member **Daniel Virgilio** was delivering mail to an apartment complex on a hold-down when he noticed something concerning. "I saw a lady on the ground in a puddle," he said. The weather was cold and rainy, and the woman was face-down in the mud with her legs on the porch. Virgilio rushed to her aid but found her unresponsive. He immediately called 911, and the dispatcher walked him through CPR over the phone.

"It was nerve-racking," he said, explaining that he never had performed the life-saving procedure. Virgilio continued for about five minutes and was able to resuscitate the woman before an ambulance arrived a few minutes later. EMTs took over and transported the woman to the hospital. The woman's husband later thanked Virgilio for saving his wife's life. The third-year letter carrier said being called a hero for his actions was "a little much" and that he just tries to watch out for customers while on his rounds.

One day this past winter, Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100 member **Harry Nguyen** was delivering mail to a customer's house when he noticed that the mail had not been picked up for six days. Concerned, he contacted the street's community as-

sociation manager, and told him that the man normally always picks up his mail and will stop mail delivery when he goes on vacation. The manager in turn contacted the man's neighbor, Mark, who quickly came to the man's house. "The neighbor jumped over the fence," Nguyen said, and once inside found the man lying unconscious on his living room floor; he apparently had fallen and was unable to get



Harry Nguyen

up. The neighbor called 911, and the man was taken to the hospital. Medical personnel told the community association that the man probably would not have made it much longer, as his kidneys were starting to fail. Nguyen went to visit his customer in the hospital. "He's getting better and better," he said, adding that the man has since been moved to a rehabilitation facility. "If not for Harry being so observant, this homeowner might have died," the community association's board of directors wrote to the local postmaster. "We want to send our heartfelt and sincere 'thank you' to Harry for noticing this and helping in saving a life of one of our homeowners. He is a hero in our eyes." The 14-year letter carrier downplayed any accolades. "I think in that situation, everyone would do the same," Nguyen said. **PR**

Eye on the elderly



Matthew Malecki

As Utica, NY Branch 375 member **Matthew Malecki** visited the house of an elderly customer on his route on June 4, 2018, the city carrier assistant saw something alarming. “As I opened up the storm door, she was on the floor and her head was in a pool of blood,”

he said, adding that her walker was on top of her. “I called 911 right away.” The 94-year-old woman was not responsive at first but then started to talk. “It was definitely a scary moment,” Malecki said. The 911 operator told the carrier to find a clean towel and apply pressure to the cut on her head. “I talked to her and asked questions to keep her responsive,” he said. Paramedics soon arrived to take over, and an EMT told Malecki that he believed that the carrier had saved his customer’s life. “It looked like she misjudged her footing

[on the steps] and hit her head on her doorknob,” Malecki said. He found out from EMTs that the woman was on blood thinners, causing her bleeding to be more profuse, and that she had likely been there for between 90 minutes and three hours. The woman recovered and soon went to

a nursing home. Brushing off accolades of heroics, the one-year letter carrier insists that he was simply in the right place at the right time. “As a mail carrier, we see all kinds of things out there,” Malecki said.

On Oct. 27, 2018, St. Louis, MO Branch 343 member **Cierra McLin** was delivering to some apartments on her route and noticed something amiss at an elderly customer’s mailbox. “Her box was so full,” the carrier said, adding that this was unusual for the woman. The carrier decided to knock on the customer’s door. “I heard her screaming, ‘Help!’ ” McLin said. She was unable to open the woman’s apartment door, so she called 911. Responders soon arrived, discovered that the woman had fallen on the floor and had been

there for four days, and took her to a hospital. A few days later, McLin saw the woman, who told her how grateful she was for her actions. The three-year letter carrier said she simply watches out on her route and speaks to her patrons as much as she can. “I try to do my best with my customers,” McLin said. **PR**



Cierra McLin

Join the NALC Veterans Group

The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide NALC members—both active and retired letter carriers—who are also military veterans the ability to connect with fellow NALC veterans and stay informed on issues of importance to letter carrier veterans. It is free to join.

Members receive a pin as a symbol of gratitude for your military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at right and mail it to the address included. A fillable version is also available at nalc.org/veterans.



You continue to serve your country—
THANK YOU!

NALC Veterans Group

Complete this form and mail it to:
NALC Veterans Group, c/o NALC,
100 Indiana Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2144

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

NALC BRANCH NUMBER: _____ BRANCH OF SERVICE: _____

I BELONG TO THE FOLLOWING VETERAN GROUP(S):

☐ AMERICAN LEGION ☐ DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS ☐ VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
☐ OTHER: _____

Free
to join