

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.

A special note about Heroes of the Year

The 2019 Heroes of the Year ceremony was to be held in Washington, DC, on Oct. 30, after this issue went to press. Full coverage of the event will appear in the December *Postal Record*.

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.

Intuition helps carrier to save a life

Adrian, MI Branch 579 member **David Rink** was delivering his route on Feb. 12 when he noticed mail building up at the home of his elderly customer, Mrs. Cousino. "This woman gets more mail than anyone else," he said. "She is very faithful at picking it up. It was too big of a red flag to ignore."

Concerned, Rink went down the stairs to the woman's apartment and knocked. "I hear nothing," the carrier said. He walked to a neighbor's door and asked the man who answered if he had seen Cousino. The man had not, but said that he and his wife had been wondering, too. The man had a key, and the letter carrier and the neighbor knocked again. This time, they heard a faint response from Cousino, who said she was all right. They kept asking questions and, with her permission, the two entered the apartment.

The carrier then spotted the woman. "She's on the floor," he recalled. "Her leg is just sticking up. She's between a couch and a coffee table."

They asked the woman if they could call someone to come check on her. The neighbor knew the woman's nephew, and called him. Rink continued on his route, but stopped by later to check up on her. The neighbor had been unable to reach the nephew, so he had called 911,

and Cousino agreed to go with the medics once they arrived.

Rink later visited Cousino at the hospital, and the woman also sent her carrier a letter expressing her gratitude. "I don't have the words to thank you for all you have done for me. You literally saved my life by intervening for me," she wrote. "Had I laid there another day or two, I would have been beyond dehydrated, would have died on the floor. I thank God for good people. You never knew me; I was one of many on your mail [route]. Yet you were willing to recognize the need and stepped up to help me. I am so thankful."

The 32-year postal veteran said that his actions were just part of being a letter carrier. "It was just intuition," Rink said. "The job is more than carrying the mail. We can have an impact on people's lives."

Carrier always has an eye on the elderly

On June 28, Lynn, MA Branch 7 member **John D'Amato** was at a senior apartment complex on his route when he noticed one of his elderly patrons, Richard Lembo, in the parking lot. "I see the man lying flat on the pavement next to his car," he said.

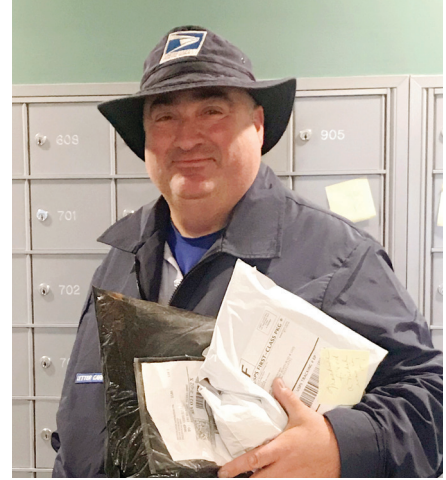
The carrier ran over to help. Lembo told the carrier that he couldn't get up and had been on the ground for about 10 minutes. "His knee had given out," he said. D'Amato tried to pick the man up, but was not able to do so.

He then remembered that a hospital stool was on a nearby porch, so he ran to get it and came back. "I was able to lift him up on to the stool and then in the car," D'Amato said. Lembo didn't have his cane, so the carrier retrieved it for him from the passenger side of the car.

D'Amato asked if he needed further assistance, but Lembo said he didn't and thanked the carrier for helping him.



David Rink



John D'Amato

into her home. After making sure that she was OK, D'Amato continued on with his mail deliveries, but stopped by the building manager's later to suggest having a security bar there to help patrons; one was soon added.

The 18-year postal veteran brushed off accolades for his actions, saying that carriers are watchful on their routes because they care about their customers. "I think any carrier that I know would do the same thing," D'Amato said. "If my parents went down, I'd expect their carrier to be a helper." **PR**

D'Amato then proceeded to his next stop. "The timing worked out," he said of his actions.

This wasn't the first time that D'Amato had helped elderly patrons on his route who had fallen. In September 2018, he noticed customer Joan Maselbas on the ground in front of the same apartment complex while he was delivering his route.

The woman was diabetic, as is the carrier, so he understood what she was going through. She had fallen while exiting her house. "She had lost energy in her legs," the carrier explained.

D'Amato, along with a neighbor, was

able to get Maselbas up and back into her apartment. After being assured that she was all right, the carrier continued on with his mail delivery.

Then, while delivering his route just two months later in November 2018, he noticed another elderly patron, Janet Harvey, fall down on the steps of her building.

D'Amato rushed across the street to help. "She was trying to pull herself into the doorway and got knocked down [by the door]," the carrier said. "She was trapped there between the door and the step."

She thanked him for helping her back

Eye on the elderly



Yvette Stevens

Photo by Shirley Ruhe/Arlington Connection

As Northern Virginia Branch 3520 member **Yvette Stevens** tried to deliver mail to a customer, she found that there was no more room in the box, she told the local newspaper, the *Arlington Connection*. "It wasn't like him. He pulls his mail every

day," she added. Stevens had been off on Monday, but on Tuesday she noticed the front door of the house was open. "That wasn't unusual because the elderly man who lived there liked to work outside and would often be weeding or walking around the block," she told the newspaper. But on Wednesday, the door was still open. By Friday, Aug. 2, Stevens knew that something was wrong. "I asked a neighbor to do a welfare check," she later said. She later received confirmation that the man had fallen. EMTs responded and transported the man to the hospital. He since has been moved to a rehabilitation facility. Stevens said that she had heard the man had survived the five days on the floor by drinking Coca-Cola, which is the only thing he could reach. "I always speak [with] and sometimes I form bonds with my customers and make sure they trust me," the 22-year letter carrier

said. "If you see something, say something. Thank God I was there so he could have a second chance at life."

While delivering her route on May 6, Cedar Rapids, IA Branch 373 member **Paige Klenk** noticed something unusual at an elderly customer's door when she approached to deliver her mail. "I saw a cane sticking out and it was rattling," she said. "I yelled for her." The customer responded, telling Klenk that her walking cane had become lodged in the door and she had been lying on the ground for about four hours. "She had been trying to open the screen door and couldn't get up," she said. The carrier asked, "Is it all right if I come in and help you?" The woman said yes, so Klenk first went to get a neighbor whom the woman is close with. The two then retrieved the customer's cane and helped her to her feet. "I felt so bad for her," the carrier

said. "Her feet were swollen." They both sat with her and, once the neighbor assured Klenk that the situation was all right, the carrier continued on her route. The customer later told Klenk that she was grateful for the compassion she was shown during her time of need. "I'm happy I was there, because who knows how long she would be on the floor," the three-year carrier said, but added, "I did probably what anyone would do." **PR**



Paige Klenk

Help on the way



Aaron Ice

Louisville, KY Branch 14 member **Aaron Ice** was delivering mail on June 17 when he noticed something alarming. “I saw a man who looked like he was in distress, on his porch,” he said. The carrier ran over to help. He knew that the customer had had some health issues and was weak. “He was getting out of his car and fell on his porch,” Ice said. The carrier helped the customer back on his feet and into his home. Ice then made sure the man was OK before continuing his route. The customer later called the post office to commend his carrier for helping him in a time of need. Ice said he didn’t think his actions were “drastic” enough to be called heroic. “I just saw a man who needed help,” the 14-year letter carrier and Army Reserve veteran said. “It was right place, right time.”

On July 9, Youngstown, OH Branch 385 city carrier assistant **Timothy Henry** was on

his route and, as he rounded the corner at a house, he saw the resident, Tom. “I look over and see this guy lying on the ground,” the carrier said. “It didn’t look right.” When Tom saw his carrier, he called out for help, and Henry rushed over. The man had a gash on his leg and nose and was covered in blood. He was awake, but told Henry he had been lying there for about 10 minutes in the heat after falling off the back porch while grilling. Tom had his phone next to him, but didn’t know how to use it because it was new. Henry helped Tom call 911 and waited with him. “I tried to keep him calm and relaxed until an ambulance arrived,” he said. “He was banged up, but nothing too serious.” Responding medical personnel told Henry that if he hadn’t intervened when he had, Tom might have had a heat stroke. The second-year carrier said it was “flattering” to be called a hero, but added, “I didn’t do anything anyone else wouldn’t have.”

On Aug. 7, Upland, CA Branch 2168 member **Danny Marcrum**

was delivering to an NDCBU box in a gated community that caters mostly to senior citizens. “I heard strange noises coming from a distance,” he said. “It sounded like a cat in heat. It was odd.” As the noise persisted, the carrier felt compelled to investigate the sound. He approached a garage across the street, calling out, “Hello?” The moaning subsided, but then Marcrum heard a faint, “Help, help.” He continued to follow the sound around through a side gate. “I saw her leg,” he said, adding that the rest of the elderly patron’s body was lying in the garden between a rock and bushes where she had fallen. “She was at a very precarious angle. She was absolutely pinned in there. It definitely startled me,” the

carrier said. Marcrum, a former Army combat medic, assessed the woman for broken bones and had her move around a bit. He said he’d call 911, but the woman insisted that he not. The carrier said he was nervous because he didn’t want to injure her, but agreed



Youngstown, OH Branch 385 member Timothy Henry (right) received recognition at his post office for helping a customer in distress on his route.



Danny Marcrum

to help. Marcrum bent over top of her and told her, “Give me a big bear hug and I’m going to give you a big bear hug and we’ll see if we can get you up.” He gingerly lifted the woman to her feet. “She was relieved,” he said. He sat the woman down on a bench, got her water and made sure she called her daughter. Once he knew that she was in good hands, he continued on his route. “Thank you so much for coming to my rescue,” the woman later wrote to her carrier. “Your thoughtfulness of checking on me the following day and bringing my mail was much appreciated. Had you not helped me, I might have had a long ‘rest’ whether I wanted it or not.” The next day, Marcrum went to visit the woman, who gave him a big hug. “I was glad I was able to recognize something was wrong,” the 14-year carrier said, but added, “Any other person would have done the same thing.” **PR**