

## 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](mailto:postalrecord@nalc.org). We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.

# Honoring heroic carriers

**H**eroism, 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.

## Preventing a fiery tragedy

As Philadelphia, PA Branch 157 member **Dwight Washington** was delivering mail on Saturday, March 16, "I came upon a house on fire," he says. "No one was out[side]."

Flames were climbing up an exterior vinyl wall of the home. "It shocked me," the carrier said. "I ran and knocked on the door."

No one responded, so he ran to the house of a neighbor, where he got a

fire extinguisher. The carrier hurried back to the blaze to use it, but the extinguisher quickly ran out.

Washington said he was pumped up with adrenaline and, thinking quickly, he grabbed a garden hose and battled the blaze as the home's occupants—who had been asleep—opened the door to the house and realized what was going on. The family escaped to safety and called 911.

Emergency responders soon arrived and took over, though the carrier already had the fire contained. Washington provided the police and firefighters his information and went back to his route.

"Had the fire gone unchecked for a few more minutes, the outcome could have been devastating," local Fire Marshal John Rohrer wrote to the post office. "Due to Mr. Washington's quick, responsible actions, the fire was contained, the residents were saved from harm and the home was deemed to be inhabitable, restoring some normalcy to the family's life."

A civic commendation for Washington is in the works, and the grateful customers have praised their carrier in person since the incident.

The 26-year letter carrier said that the family lucked out, in that there was only external damage. "They were able to stay in their house," Washington said. "I was glad I was there. It could have been a tragedy."

## Carriers watching out for the blind

Letter carriers always watch out for those in their communities, but lately it seems they have paid special attention to those who are vision impaired.

On May 31, DeKalb, IL Branch 706 member **Terry Lowie** was on his route when he noticed that a blind man and his dog were stopped in the middle of an intersection. "It was 10 cars deep

on both sides," he said. "The dog was just lost."

Lowie said the man's seeing-eye dog became spooked because of the vehicles that stopped. The carrier recognized the pair, as he had seen them out walking many times before. "I was surprised no one else did anything," he said.

The carrier was concerned. "I pulled up to the stop sign and jumped out," he said. Lowie made his way to the middle of the street to take the man's arm and assist him to the sidewalk safely. The man asked Lowie to guide him in the direction of downtown.

A customer later stopped into the post office to explain what she had witnessed, telling a supervisor, "It was the greatest thing I've seen in a long time and wanted [the supervisor] to know about it."

Lowie, a 21-year postal veteran, denied any heroics in the matter. "I just look at it as another person doing a good deed," he said, adding, "It's something that anyone would do."

On Sept. 17, 2018, Oklahoma City, OK Branch 458 members **Eric Beu** and **Mark Simone** decided to take a train to the Mall of America in the late afternoon after attending Branch Officers Training for the day in Minneapolis.

While on the way, a young blind man got off at the same stop as the two carriers. Beu noticed that he was about to step onto the open tracks and asked if he needed help. The man, Abraham, told the carrier that he was looking for the Mega Bus stop. Beu Googled the location and found out that he was at the wrong end of town.

The two carriers wanted to help, so they decided to help Abraham find his way. On the way across town, they got to know Abraham, who was in Minneapolis because he was going to attend a school for the blind. The man's and friend had driven him from Chicago



Dwight Washington

to attend the school and, on the way to Minnesota, they had gotten into an argument and his friend left him and drove back to Chicago. “It was just a bad deal for him,” Simone said.

Abraham asked if they could help him get back home to Chicago. Simone and Beu agreed that they couldn’t leave him stranded in Minneapolis. Beu bought the man a bus ticket back to Chicago. Because Abraham hadn’t eaten since breakfast, and the bus wasn’t scheduled to leave for about three hours, they found a restaurant

that was still open and was serving food late. After, the carriers walked him to the bus stop, put him on the bus, and made sure he had cab fare from the station to his home in Chicago.

Abraham called Beu the next morning to let them know that he had made it home and thanked them for the help.

Both carriers rebuffed any accolades for their actions.

“We just did what any other normal human being would do,” Simone, a 20-year carrier and a Marine Corps



**Oklahoma City, OK Branch 458 members Eric Beu (front l) and Mark Simone (center) with Abraham, the new friend they met and helped while in Minneapolis for NALC Branch Officers Training**

veteran, said.

Beu, in his fifth year of carrying mail, said that, as letter carriers, “We keep our heads on a swivel for all sorts of things.” **PR**

## Eye on the elderly



“I’ve been on the same route for 18 years, so I know my customers pretty well,” Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Jeanne Lippacher** said of delivering mail on a 17-degree day in February. She came upon a 93-year-old customer outside her home who called out to her. Lippacher went over to the customer, who had fallen in her backyard and was unable to get up. She said she had been there for about 40 minutes. “She had no gloves on, and her hat had blown off,” the

carrier said. The woman turned down an offer by Lippacher to call an ambulance and instead asked the carrier to help her inside her house, which Lippacher did. “She had a list of phone numbers by her phone,” she said. It was a neighbor whom Lippacher knew, so she called. The carrier stayed with her patron until the neighbor arrived to provide further assistance, and the neighbor later took her to the hospital. The woman eventually was admitted to a physical rehabilitation center. Unfortunately, she died about a month later, but the woman’s family was grateful to have been able to spend that time with her. “I’d do it for anyone,” Lippacher, a 22-year postal veteran said. “[My customers] would do it for me. They’re like my family. It’s automatic.”

On Saturday, May 12, Pulaski, VA Branch 1793 member **Mark Hines**

was nearing the end of his assigned route when he heard someone calling for help. The carrier followed the voice and, through the brick wall of a garage, spoke with the elderly customer. “I asked if everything was OK,” he said. “I couldn’t see her at all; I could just hear her.” Hines learned that the woman had been out in her garage and fell, causing bleeding and possible broken bones. She told Hines that she had been unable to move or get up and had been waiting for him to deliver mail at her home. Hines was able to call the customer’s church’s office, leading to the pastor being alerted. The pastor had a spare garage

door opener, and when she arrived, she opened the garage door. “When we found her, it looked like she had a lot of trauma to her face,” the carrier said. To be safe, they called 911 and an ambulance soon arrived to take her to the hospital. The customer later called the post office and said that, if it hadn’t have been for Hines’s actions, she might have lain there and died. The five-year letter carrier and Marine Corps veteran denied that any heroics occurred that day. “I don’t see it as anything above or beyond,” Hines said. “I think any other carrier would do the same thing in that situation.” **PR**



## Help on the way



Jabari Hardiman

Toledo, OH Branch 100 member **Jabari Hardiman** was delivering mail to an apartment complex on his route on April 11 when he heard a customer call for help. “She was leaving to go shopping and fell,” the carrier said. “I just happened to be there.” The woman’s apartment door was open, so Hardiman entered and assessed her condition. She was lying in an awkward position on her arm. “I figured I shouldn’t move her,” he said, and followed the patron’s wishes to call 911. The carrier comforted the woman until he heard sirens, and then went outside the apartment to direct emergency responders to his customer. “She broke her arm really badly and bumped her head,” Hardiman said. After receiving treatment at the hospital, the woman returned home and soon expressed her gratitude to her letter carrier when she saw him on his route. “I don’t think I did that much,” the 14-year postal veteran said. “She’s really thankful, but it’s like so many other carriers’ stories. We’re at everyone’s house every day. We’re part of the community.”

“I was going from one park point to the next,” said Janesville, WI Branch 572 member **Candy Jeffrey** of driving to her next relay on June 18, when she observed a man face-down on his bicycle. She got out of her postal vehicle and called to him, asking if he was OK. Getting no response, she shook him, but still got no response, so she called and spoke to a 911 operator. “They told me to roll him over and start chest compressions,” she said. “It’s scary when no one’s around to help you. It was rough getting him to roll over.” Jeffrey continued the life-saving procedure until police and then paramedics got there to take over. The man eventually regained a pulse before they took him to hospital, though he unfortunately died two days later. Jeffrey is CPR certified, but said, “I’ve never done it on an actual person before.” The city of Edgerton presented the carrier with recognition for her heroic act. The carrier of three years was grateful, but said, “I think I did what anyone else would have done. I’m just a human being helping another human being.”

“I heard a woman scream,” Lynn, MA Branch 7 member **Lee Morrison** said of delivering his route on May 6. “Then I heard another woman scream.” Following the sounds, the carrier found his patron, Mrs. Wilkins, on the ground after she had tripped and hit her head on the pavement. “She took her hand off her head and it was full of blood,” Morrison said. A neighbor had heard the screaming and came to see

what happened, so Morrison asked them to call both 911 and the woman’s husband. The carrier, a former EMT, administered first aid. “I brought her over to the step and calmed her down because she was hyperventilating,” he said. Morrison guessed that Wilkins had a concussion, based on tracking her pupils, so he tried to keep her awake and out of shock. The carrier stayed with the patron until police arrived, then continued on his route. The next day, Mr. Wilkins visited Morrison on his route to express his thanks and update him on his wife’s condition, saying that he had taken her to the hospital. She had to have stitches and had indeed suffered a concussion. Shortly after, Mrs. Wilkins also wrote a letter to the post office expressing her thanks. “They said if I hadn’t been there, she may have hyperventilated and passed out,” he said. Still, Morrison doesn’t think he’s a hero. “I just did what any normal person would have



Janesville, WI Branch 572 member **Candy Jeffrey** (right) received recognition for providing CPR to a man in need on her route from Branch President **Sherrie Dorsey**.



Lee Morrison

done,” the 20-year letter carrier and Air Force veteran said.

On April 16, St. Paul, MN Branch 28 member **Rowland Sutherland** was delivering a parcel to retired fellow Branch 28 member **Stephen Metzdorf**. “I had a package for him, and he usually always answered,” Sutherland said. When he knocked on the apartment door, the carrier heard a faint “Help!” in response. “Luckily, the door was unlocked,” he said. Concerned, he went inside and found the man on the floor. The customer told his carrier that he had tripped on his vacuum cord the day before. “He was disoriented,” Sutherland said. “I couldn’t get him up.” The retired carrier had bruised two ribs, both elbows and knees, and part of his hands and he was dehydrated. Sutherland knocked on a neighbor’s door and asked him to call 911. Metzdorf was taken to the hospital, where he stayed for three days, followed by three weeks in a rehabilitation facility. He had been on the floor for 21 hours. “He saved my life,” Metzdorf wrote in a letter to NALC Headquarters. “As a former letter carrier myself, we have had many conversations. I consider him a friend. I really think that I would not have survived without his help. What a good man.” Sutherland, a 31-year letter carrier and a Marine Corps veteran, called his actions “no big deal,” but added that “if I wouldn’t have had a package for him, I would never have knocked on his door. Who knows how long he would have laid there.” **PR**