

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.

Family, including pets, rescued from house fire

City Carrier Assistant and Worcester, MA Branch 12 member **Michael Ciccone** had just finished his route on

Dec. 10, 2019, when “a little girl ran up to my truck, crying,” he recalled. When he asked what was wrong, she told him that her house was on fire, and people were still inside.

The CCA sprang into action, dialing 911 as he ran towards the burning building. Inside the house, Ciccone found two woman and a dog, and guided them outside. “The smoke [on the first floor] was stomach-level—you couldn't see anything below your waist,” he said.

After they had been rescued, they told the CCA that another woman was still trapped in the basement. He tried to access the basement door, but encountered heavy smoke in the stairwell and was forced to retreat. Undaunted, Ciccone went around to the back door and was able to enter and rescue the woman, who turned out to be the 90-year-old homeowner. He then remained on the scene with the residents until the fire crews arrived.

During his search, the CCA also had learned that cats were trapped inside the house. He told the firefighters, who were able to save almost all of the cats. The story had another happy ending: thanks to Ciccone's prompt call to emergency services, the firefighters “did save the house,” he said. All the family members came through with no injuries.

Ciccone later was interviewed by the Worcester *Telegram and Gazette* and the *Sentinel and Enterprise*, in addition to being recognized by the fire department at a ceremony with the mayor. When asked how he felt about all the attention, Ciccone said, “It's overwhelming. I was just in the right place at the right time.” He continued, “The best part was helping the little girl, because I could tell how scared she was. I'd do it again in a second.”



Michael Ciccone (center) was recognized at a ceremony hosted by the fire department for his efforts to get family members **Lorraine Camataris (l)** and her granddaughter **Diana McCloud (r)** out of their home when it caught on fire in December.

Carrier receives acclaim for helping child

As Honeoye Falls, NY Branch 4747 member **Kim Neder Carey** was delivering to an apartment complex on her route on Sept. 4, 2019, she was greeted by a 7-year-old boy, who ran down the stairs towards her, crying.

The 23-year carrier asked if he was all right, or if she could do anything to help him, but the boy explained that he was not supposed to speak to strangers. After he thought about it, he added, “Well, I kind of know you—you are the mail lady and you deliver our mail every day.” Once she confirmed that, he trusted her and explained that he couldn’t find his hide-away key and was locked out of his apartment.

Neder Carey convinced him to come with her and explain the situation to the building’s office manager. After speaking to the manager, the carrier also was able to get in contact with the boy’s father—it turned out that it was the boy’s first day of school, and he had accidentally gotten onto the bus instead of staying for his after-school program. The parents were relieved to learn that he was safe, and they immediately came to pick him up.

The boy’s mother subsequently posted a lengthy thank you to the Honeoye Fall Community Facebook page, and other community members chimed in with stories about Neder Carey, describing her as a wonderful letter carrier and person.

Moved by her community’s outpouring of good wishes, she said, “I thought [the Facebook page] was very sweet—it’s nice to be recognized for the positive role letter carriers play in the community, since we usually only hear about the bad things.” But Neder

Carey underplayed her generosity in helping out the stranded child, stating, “I don’t think I went out of my way—I think all my fellow carriers would have done the same and gotten the little boy help.”

Alert carrier stops a fire from spreading

“It was a quiet night,” Buffalo-Northwestern NY Branch 3 member **Gregory Smith** recalled about his route on Nov. 18, 2019. But the silence of the evening was interrupted by a “faint beeping sound, like a smoke detector,” the seven-year carrier said.

Concerned that it might be a fire alarm, Smith investigated the source of the noise by walking around a few of the nearby houses. He eventually traced the noise to a house that had recently been sold. When the carrier peered in through the window, he immediately noticed a “smoky haze.” He realized that the house was slowly filling with smoke and called 911.

While he waited for the firefighters to arrive, Smith walked around the property, banging on the windows and calling out as he went, in an attempt to alert anyone who might be inside. The building was vacant, however, and when the firetrucks arrived, the firefighters were able to put out the fire before significant damage was done to the structure.

The fire department later posted about the incident on its Facebook page, explaining that the fire had been started by a malfunctioning heating unit and praising the carrier for his vigilance. Asked about how it felt to be recognized for his actions, Smith simply stated: “Feels rewarding.” He continued, “I’m out here every day, just trying to look out for the people on my route and help my customers.” **PR**



Gregory Smith

Eye on the elderly

“I was heading back to the post office after a normal day” of delivering mail, Fall River, MA Branch 51 member **Christopher Fletcher** recalled about July 30, 2019. He was driving past a customer’s house when he saw the customer, an elderly man, fall backwards onto his driveway. “He whacked his head on the pavement,” the three-year carrier recalled, “so my instinct was to stop and help him out.” After securing his vehicle, Fletcher ran over to assess the situation and called 911 once he saw that the man was bleeding from his head wound. The man was bleeding so heavily, in fact, that the carrier decided he couldn’t wait for the ambulance to arrive. “I have EMT training,” he said, “so I was able to provide first aid until the paramedics got there.” Fletcher was able to get the bleeding under control and the man stabilized before the emergency workers took over. Once the carrier informed the EMTs about the situation, he returned to the post office. Taunton police visited the post office in October to recognize Fletcher for his exemplary handling of the situation, but he was reluctant to accept praise for his actions. “I didn’t do it because I knew I would get recognition,” he said. “I think it’s just what any decent person would do.”

On Sept. 19, 2019, Pasadena, CA Branch 2200 member **Nicolas Ortiz Jr.** was



Christopher Fletcher

making his delivery rounds when he noticed a dangerous scene unfolding behind a parked vehicle. An elderly man, Paul Christianson, had fallen behind the vehicle in his driveway, and was unable to get up or alert anyone. “His driveway is steep,” the five-year carrier said, “but I could just see a little bit of the driveway and noticed him as I drove by. Thankfully, I was in the right place at the right time.” Christianson lived alone, so if Ortiz had not seen him, his situation would have been dire. The carrier repeatedly tried to get the older man on his feet, but “he just couldn’t get back up, and I realized this wasn’t going to help him,” he said. So he called 911 and waited with Christianson until paramedics arrived to take him to the hospital. Christianson fully recovered from his ordeal, and messaged Ortiz with grateful words of thanks.

But Ortiz takes the praise in stride: “I just call it being a Good Samaritan,” he said. “It feels great to know that I was able to be there for him. One day, when I retire, I hope my fellow letter carriers will be around for me.”

On Sept. 18, 2019, Rochester, NY Branch 210 member **Jason Hasbrouck** was delivering mail to a customer’s house when he saw that the customer’s door was wide open, with keys in the door. “That was really unusual, because the customer is elderly,” the six-year carrier explained. When Hasbrouck looked inside, he found the customer lying on the ground. “I called out to him, and he was barely conscious,” he said. The man also was surrounded by melted groceries—he had fallen the night before after tripping on his walker and had not



Jason Hasbrouck

been able to move since. Hasbrouck called 911 and waited with the customer until paramedics arrived. The responders later stated that Hasbrouck likely had saved the man’s life by investigating the open door and calling emergency services. But the carrier was modest: “I’m not a hero,” he said. “I just did what any other person would have done.”

“I was doing a route in Canton, [MI] when I saw the woman lying in her driveway,” Western Wayne County, MI Branch 2184 member **Peter Duncan** recalled about the events of Sept. 23, 2019. He stopped his vehicle and rushed over to the customer, who turned out to be an 86-year-old woman named Helen. The first-year carrier found her conscious but unable to move her limbs. Helen told him that she had fallen and struck her head on the pavement; she had been lying there for almost an hour before he saw her. Duncan quickly called 911 and waited with Helen until EMTs arrived on the scene. The woman had suffered a serious head contusion from her fall, but has since fully recovered. Duncan, who was a police officer for 20 years before joining the post office, was enthused by the opportunity to help. “I love working for the citizens and the community,” he said. “Just because I’ve changed jobs doesn’t mean that that’s changed.” **PR**