

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.

Quick action saves man from overdose

While making his usual deliveries in a shopping center on his route on Sept. 10, 2019, South Suburban Merged, IL Branch 4016 member **Chris Gustafson** drove behind one of the stores and noticed a couple sitting in their car in the parking lot. The 13-year carrier pulled up and made his delivery, but when he began to drive away, he saw that “the girl had run around to the other side of the car.”

As Gustafson watched, the woman reached into the car and begin shaking her boyfriend, who the carrier could tell was unresponsive. “He was just flopping around,” Gustafson said. He quickly realized that the man was seizing, and dove into action. “I yelled out of my window that she should call 911,” he said, and then he ran to the car.

While the woman called, Gustafson took over the situation. “His lips were blue,” he said. “I shook him a little and his tongue was blue, too.” When the man did not respond, the carrier knew that he had to put into practice the skills he had learned in a CPR class more than 20 years before. “I’d never had to do CPR before,” Gustafson said, but he knew the man needed immediate medical assistance. He gave him “a

couple of breaths” and had just started chest compressions when the paramedics arrived and took over.

Later, the police disclosed that the man had overdosed on heroin, but had survived his ordeal thanks to the carrier’s timely assistance.

For Gustafson, it was more of a surreal experience than a heroic one: “One minute you’re just doing your job, and the next it’s literally life or death in the parking lot,” he said. “And then you go right back to delivering mail.”

Carrier saves woman from vicious dog attack

Lorain, OH Branch 583 member **Alex Uber** was on his regular route on Nov. 6, 2019, when he heard screams coming from the backyard of one of his customers.

He ran down the driveway to see what was wrong, and found a woman being attacked by her dog. “I could see the dog grabbing her by the shoulder...it was dragging her across the grass,” the four-year carrier later told Cleveland 19 News. “She was bleeding pretty bad.”

He leapt over the fence into the backyard, where he sprayed his mace at the dog. When that didn’t work, he tried to pull the dog off of her shoulder. “I figured anything I could do would be more than just saying I walked past and didn’t do anything,” Uber said.

By alternately yelling and using his mace spray, Uber finally managed to distract the dog long enough for the woman to pull herself free, and both the carrier and the woman managed to get out of the backyard. She had 27 puncture wounds from the attack and was admitted to a hospital’s ICU, but fully recovered.

A neighbor who witnessed the attack stated, “If it wasn’t for [Uber], I think the

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—Alex Uber

outcome could have been a lot worse.” The carrier demurred. “I’m not a hero,” he said. “I did what anyone would do.” Uber is currently enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and is set to begin active duty in February.

Carrier risks flames to alert community about fire

“I was delivering across the street on the cul-de-sac when I saw flames shooting out of the window,” Santa Ana, CA Branch 737 member **Jose Garcia Jr.** recalled about his route on Sept. 18, 2019.

He had been in the middle of his deliveries when he noticed the fire, but once he saw the danger, he knew there was no time to lose. “That customer [in the burning house], she is always home,” the six-year carrier explained.

He jumped out of his vehicle and sprinted across the street, where he began banging on the windows,

desperately trying to alert the homeowner. While he attempted to do so, “the last window blew out, and suddenly the rooftop was on fire,” Garcia recalled.

The house now was engulfed in flames, so the carrier moved to the neighboring homes—the houses were connected duplexes, and he knew that any residents next door would also be in danger from the fire. Eventually, the firefighters arrived and took over the scene.

As it turned out, neither the homeowner or her neighbors were at home during the fire—in fact, the only injured person was Garcia himself. “Once the fire trucks arrived, I went



Alex Uber was interviewed by his local news affiliate after he saved a woman from a dog attack.

to go call the post office and tell them what happened,” he said. “And I just started feeling like my hand was burning.”

He later found out he had sustained second-degree burns to his hand from knocking on the windows, but his heroic actions ensured that no one was left inside while the fire raged. **PR**

Help on the way

It was Sept. 26, 2019, and Chillicothe, OH Branch 452 member and CCA **Michael Jordan** was delivering mail when he saw a tan sedan run through a stop sign. “He kind of came up on the curb, and when I looked over, [the driver] was hunched over in his car,” the two-year carrier said. The sedan narrowly missed hitting Jordan, who had been walking right next to the curb. The car immediately pulled over; the driver, an elderly man, slumped out of his vehicle and called loudly for help. Jordan was only a few feet away, and rushed over to assist him. “You could see he wasn’t doing well,” the carrier said. He asked the man if he was all right, and the driver

requested an ambulance. The CCA called 911, and continued to wait with the man and talk to him until EMTs arrived. Jordan was most pleased that the story had a happy ending: “I heard he made a full recovery,” the carrier said.

On Saturday, Aug. 31, 2019, Sarasota, FL Branch 2148 member **Joseph Loeser** was delivering on his route when he saw one of his customers, Ray O’Brien, waiting by the bus stop. The carrier continued on his route, but when he passed the same area an hour later, O’Brien was still there. Given the temperature that day (“The heat index was around 110 degrees,” he recalled), and remembering the numerous talks about

heat stress he had heard from USPS, Loeser had a strong feeling that something was wrong. He asked O’Brien if he was okay, but despite the man’s insistence that he was fine, the carrier decided to get him some water. When he returned, O’Brien was slumped over on the ground. The carrier immediately put all of his heat safety training to use. “I got him sitting up, and then I just tried to keep him cool—I shaded him and put a water bottle on his neck,” he said. Loeser also told local security guards to call 911. An ambulance came and took O’Brien to the hospital, where they diagnosed him with heat stroke. After he recovered, O’Brien thanked Loeser for

helping him in his time of distress, but the one-year carrier was very modest about his role: “The real heroes are the EMTs,” he said. **PR**



Joseph Loeser