

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 rescues family of six from house fire

On March 12, 2019, "I was parked for my 10-minute break, and I looked to my left," Champaign, IL Branch 671 member **Matthew King** recalled. "I [originally] thought that someone was grilling, but then I knew that there was too much fire."

One of the houses in the neighborhood had caught on fire—a stray cigarette butt had set the porch ablaze. "I ran over and banged on the door [to alert anyone inside]," the three-year carrier said. As it turned out, the whole family—including three children—were still inside the home, unaware that the house was on fire.

After helping everyone get outside, King called 911 and went into the home to find buckets. He subsequently started a chain of water buckets with help from neighbors, and managed to keep the fire contained until firefighters arrived. Thanks to King's timely intervention and quick thinking, "we were able to save the house," he said, and nobody was injured.

The story was covered at the time by the local NBC affiliate, WAND-TV, and King was recognized in an award ceremony at the fire station in November for his act of bravery. But King,

who served in the Army, shrugs off the praise and ceremonies. "I don't really feel like I had a choice in the matter," he said. "When there's something that needs to be done," such as extinguishing a burning building, "you just have to do it."

Carrier prevents vehicular fire from spreading

It was Saturday, Nov. 23, 2019, "just around Thanksgiving," when Cranford, NJ Branch 754 member **Xavier Carpio-De Jesus** says he noticed smoke pouring out of the front of one of the parked cars on his route. The car's owner had placed the battery charger on the car and gone inside, where he had fallen asleep. In the meantime, his car had caught on fire.

"I ran to the house and banged on the door," the five-year carrier recalled, but he was unable to arouse the homeowner. The car had started sparking, so Carpio-De Jesus ran over to the home of a neighbor who he knew was friendly with the car's owner. When the neighbor's son came to the door, the carrier asked him to call the homeowner, and then rushed back to the car.

"I tried to find the cord to unplug the charger," the carrier said, but the car began sparking furiously. "I thought [the garage] was going to catch on fire," Carpio-De Jesus said, so he went back to the owner's front door and began banging on it again. Finally, the owner came to the door.

"He said, 'Why are you banging on my door?' and I said, 'Your car's about to catch on fire!'" Once the man realized the gravity of the situation, he frantically pulled the plug and cut off the power. When he realized that the carrier had saved his car and possibly

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Cranford, NJ Branch 754 member **Xavier Carpio-De Jesus** was recognized by the mayor of Garwood, NJ, for his role in stopping a vehicular fire.

Eye on the elderly

Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Peter Mellerski** was delivering mail on Feb. 28 when he noticed one of his elderly customers in an unusual situation. “It’s not every day you see someone on the ground,” the six-year carrier said. The man was sitting coatless in the snow, and his hands were bloody. “He told me he was going to get the paper, and he had slipped on the ice,” Mellerski said. The carrier helped the man stand up and escorted him into his house. “I wanted to call 911, but he said no, he didn’t need [an ambulance],” the carrier said, adding that he thought the man’s condition seemed to improve once he was inside the home. When the customer seemed stable, Mellerski went on to finish his route. However, he wanted to be sure that the man was all



Peter Mellerski

right, so he went back to the house during his lunch break. This time, when he saw the customer, “he seemed much

better to me,” the carrier said. Mellerski rebuffed any praise for his actions. “I was just doing what I thought was right,” he explained. “I would do it again.”

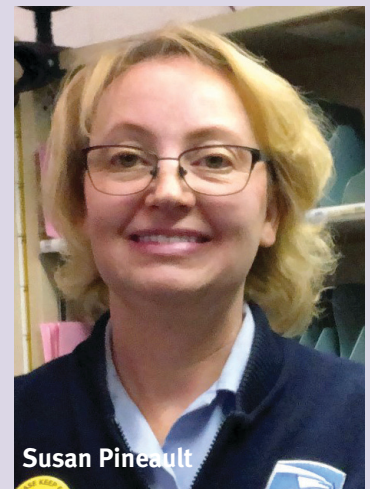
While delivering his route on Feb. 12, Burlington, VT Branch 521 member **Kenneth Bosley Jr.** saw his customer, an 89-year-old woman, outside her house while in lightweight clothing and with only slippers on her feet. “It was still winter, and it was not warm out,” the 16-year carrier recalled, “and I saw her standing on her little stoop.” The carrier, who was delivering mail across the street, walked across the road to check on her. When he learned that she had been locked out, Bosley gave her his thermal vest, scarf and gloves so that she could get warm while he went for help. The carrier didn’t have his phone, so he walked his delivery loop to scout for a friendly neighbor. One of the neighbors was home, and happy to help once Bosley explained the situation. He went back to the woman, and then, slowly and carefully, escorted her down the icy sidewalk to the neighbor’s home. The neighbor called emergency services and a locksmith, and the woman eventually was able to get back into her house. The woman’s visit to the post office the next day to thank Bosley was the first time anyone had heard about

the incident. Bosley, an Air Force veteran, explained his reticence by stating that he views helping the community as part of the job. “I think it’s so important that we are in the neighborhood every day,” he said. “I don’t think the general public understands how much we check in [on our customers].”

On Saturday, Nov. 23, 2019, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Tammy DeCorse** noticed that one of her elderly customers had not picked up his mail in two days. “I also saw his medical ID on the driveway,” she said. Concerned by these signs, the two-year carrier alerted a local firefighter who lived down the street, who agreed with her assessment of the situation; she then called 911. When emergency responders entered the house, they found that the man had fallen in his bedroom and had been on the floor for two days. The medical ID had slipped out of the man’s pocket before the fall. The resident was hospitalized for dehydration and was released a few days later. DeCorse said it “felt great” to be able to help the customer, adding, “In this job, you get to know the patterns of [your] customers. It’s all about paying attention and staying alert.”

While Keene, NH Branch 590 member **Susan Pineault** was delivering on

her route one day in October 2019, she heard a faint cry for help coming from a customer’s house. The door was



Susan Pineault

open, and when she entered the home to investigate, she found the elderly homeowner on the ground and unable to stand. “There was a sliding glass door, and [the woman] had crawled to it” and opened it to call for help, the 20-year carrier explained. She added, “I helped her up and got her cane, and I asked if she wanted me to call anyone.” The carrier then helped her contact her daughter to let her know about the situation. The woman’s family was very grateful to Pineault for her actions—they wrote a letter to the post office praising her willingness to help, writing, “[We] know this [to be] far above her duty, and we so much appreciate her valiant effort and kindness.” Pineault downplayed her actions, saying, “I think letter carriers are doing this all the time.” **PR**

his house, “the guy was very thankful,” Carpio-De Jesus said with a laugh.

The carrier later was recognized by Garwood, NJ, Mayor Sara Todisco for his actions. For his “responsiveness and

helpfulness to Garwood residents,” he received the Garwood Community Spirit Award. Carpio-De Jesus, who served in the Army prior to his postal career, described the feeling of helping his community as “amazing.”

“It was so weird,” he said, and added, “The houses are so close in the neighborhood. If his house had caught [on fire], it could have spread to the whole block. After the fact, you realize, I might have saved someone’s life.” **PR**

Neighborhood watch

On Nov. 14, 2019, Helena, MT Branch 220 member **Michayla O’Dell** was on her route when “I was driving along, and I heard something,” she said. “But I couldn’t tell what it was, because our trucks are so loud.” She glanced in her rearview mirror and saw a young girl, about 9 years old, running behind the

vehicle. “She was chasing my truck, screaming and crying,” the first-year city carrier assistant (CCA) said. O’Dell pulled her LLV over and approached the girl. “She said she’d just gotten off school, and had gone to a friend’s house, and then started walking home,” the CCA recounted. “And then she’d gotten lost.”

O’Dell asked the girl if she knew her home address, but the child could only remember the house number, not the name of her street. O’Dell called 911 and reported the situation, and then waited with the girl until the police arrived. She later found out that the police had returned the girl home safely. O’Dell said that it “felt good” to be able to help her community, but declined to take any special credit for her assistance. “I think God has a plan

for everything,” she said. “I’m just glad I was there to help.”

“I was driving down the street when I saw this little dog,” Northeast Florida Branch 53 member **Brenda Jordan** recalled about the events on July 29, 2019. “I saw that [the dog] had this long red leash trailing behind him,” the two-year carrier said, “and I’m an enormous animal lover, so I pulled over.” She started looking around the vicinity for the dog’s owner, and noticed that an elderly woman, Annette Share, was crouched on her hands and knees in her garage a short distance away. When Jordan got close, she saw that the woman’s hands were covered in streaks of blood. On her way over to the woman, the carrier also grabbed the dog, which had been wandering into the middle of the road. “I showed her the dog, and she said, ‘That’s my dog,’” Jordan said. Share explained that she had fallen on the ground while getting out of her car, and then had crawled into the garage because she could not pull herself up. Share was mostly worried about her dog, who was blind and deaf,

and asked Jordan if she could bring the dog inside. After the carrier did so, she came back outside and tried to lift Share up, but the woman was too badly injured to stand. Instead, “I got her pulled up onto a chair,” the carrier said, and then Share asked Jordan to call her daughter. Jordan did so, and waited with Share until her daughter arrived. While chatting, the two women found out that they both had lived in Toronto, Canada, and Jordan was able to distract Share from her pain and worry. Share later was transported to the hospital, where she learned that she had broken her hip. After emergency surgery, she made a full recovery at a rehabilitation center. In a letter she wrote to the post office, Share’s daughter described Jordan as her mother’s guardian angel, and stated that without the carrier’s help, her mother would have lain there in pain for a much greater period of time. “It’s one of the best feelings I’ve ever had, to be able to be there for someone [I] didn’t even know,” Jordan said. “I think it’s the best feeling in life, to be able to help someone.” **PR**



Michayla O’Dell