

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 assists co-worker during medical emergency

On May 6, St. Louis, MO Branch 343 member **La'Tecse Litteken** noticed that a fellow letter carrier, **Rebecca Pearl**, was swaying as she stood next to her vehicle outside the post office. A city carrier assistant and fellow Branch 343 member, **Anita Stewart**, was pleading with Pearl, trying to convince her to go home.

"I saw her going back and forth with [Stewart], and normally, I would just go about my business," Litteken said. "But something told me to butt in."

Concerned, and aware that Pearl had a serious pre-existing medical condition, Litteken asked her if she felt all right. Pearl insisted she felt fine, but the 22-year carrier noticed that she was still looking unwell.

"I told her, 'We can get someone else to deliver the mail, but we can't replace you,'" Litteken said, and she urged Pearl to go home.

At this point, Litteken noticed that Pearl's facial muscles were struggling to move, and she decided to act. She asked Stewart to find a supervisor, and insisted that Pearl come out of her truck and sit down. Pearl protested, but "I had a gut feeling that something was going to happen," Litteken explained. "So I just picked her up and put her on the ground."

Shortly afterward, "she started seizing," Litteken recalled.

Litteken made sure that Pearl was in a comfortable position, and asked Stewart, who had returned with the supervisor, to call 911. Litteken then knelt on the ground, cradling Pearl's head and speaking to the emergency dispatcher on the phone. She followed the dispatcher's instructions to keep Pearl's airway clear, and waited with her until paramedics arrived.

After EMTs had the situation under control, Litteken completed her deliveries for the day.

Pearl has since returned to work, and thanked Litteken for her assistance. "She said, 'Thank you for ignoring me,'" Litteken said with a laugh.

"I knew something wasn't right," the carrier continued. "God has a funny sense of humor, to put me in these situations. I just knew I had to stay calm and keep her focused on me."

During flash flood, carrier helps boy reach home

On July 15, a storm brought almost four inches of rain, resulting in some flooding. Colorado Springs, CO Branch 204 member **Viktor Luna** recalled, "I was at a four-way stop when I saw a young boy walking uphill with his bike."

Given how hard it was raining, and the potential for a flash flood, Luna became concerned about the boy's safety. As he was watching, the boy stumbled and fell.

"The current just knocked him over with his bike," the five-year carrier said.

Luna got out of his truck and helped the boy out of the water; they managed to get back to his truck just before it started to hail.

"His cell phone had been broken when he fell over," Luna said, and the boy was unable to get in touch with his parents. Luna offered to drive him home, and dropped him off, safe and dry, at his parents' house. **PR**



La'Tecse Litteken

Neighborhood watch

“I was walking between two houses, when I glanced in the back yard and saw him lying there,” Allentown, PA Branch 274 member **Gwynn Ross** recalled about delivering her route on July 8. The first-year carrier quickly ran over, she added, saying, “I was just hoping he was still alive—he was face-down on the ground.” When Ross reached the man’s side, he was alive, but barely conscious. When she asked him if he was all right, he “just

grunted,” she said. Given his condition, Ross called 911 and told emergency services about the situation. While she waited for them to arrive, the carrier stayed with the customer and tried to keep him comfortable—she was worried that he was suffering from heat stroke, given that “it was a really hot day, and he was dressed too warmly to be out” in the heat, the carrier explained. Paramedics arrived promptly and took the man to the hospital, while

Ross continued on her route. Later, the carrier found out that the man had suffered a heart attack brought on by heat stroke, as well as numerous abrasions from his fall, but that he was recovering well. Soon afterward, she saw the man’s son, who thanked her for helping his father. The paramedic who treated the man also was full of praise for Ross, and later wrote a letter to the post office lauding her for her rapid intervention. The EMT wrote, “She

should be recognized... as she most certainly went above and beyond her duties as a letter carrier.” Ross downplayed the plaudits, stating, “I was just glad that I didn’t get there too late.” **PR**



Gwynn Ross

Eye on the elderly

Kansas City, MO Branch 30 member **J. Anthony Mitchell** was delivering to a house on Aug. 20 when he noticed the homeowner emerging from his back yard. “He walked up and started trying to talk to me, but he could only make a grunting noise,” Mitchell recalled. The 22-year carrier, unable to understand, asked the man if he was all right. The customer nodded, but continued to speak incomprehensibly. Concerned, Mitchell went next door and spoke to a neighbor. “I said, ‘You’ve got to go over and talk to [the customer],’” Mitchell said. After making another delivery, Mitchell came back to the house and saw that the neighbor and the customer’s wife were still trying to communicate with the man. “I was worried that he was having a stroke,” Mitchell said, so he decided to call 911. He then waited with the man until the ambulance arrived. At the hospital, it was determined that the man had had a blood clot in his brain. The customer,

who has since returned home, told Mitchell that the carrier’s timely intervention may have saved his life. The carrier, however, believes that it was part of his duty as a letter carrier to help his customer. “It’s what we do,” he said.

On Aug. 17, Waterloo, IA Branch 512 member **Ron Chrisman** was making his usual deliveries; one of his customers, an elderly woman, had her mail delivered right to her front door to make it easier for her to collect. Chrisman usually knocked as well, so that the customer knew that he had made the delivery. On that day, the seven-year carrier and Navy veteran saw the customer’s mail from the day before still sitting in her box. Since the customer always told him if she was going to leave town, Chrisman became concerned. “I knocked on her door, and I saw that the door was cracked open,” he recalled. “So I hollered, but there was no answer.” He pushed the door

open, and immediately saw his customer—“she was lying on the floor, unconscious,” Chrisman said. The carrier, who previously had worked as a paramedic and firefighter for 16 years, felt his training take over. He knelt beside her as the customer began to regain consciousness, and asked her questions to evaluate her health. When she had difficulty remembering the date, he called 911. “She asked me to call her sister” as well, Chrisman said, “and then I stayed with her until EMS arrived.” Since the incident, Chrisman has kept in touch with the family, who thanked him for his intervention; the customer is still in a rehabilitation program, but is on the path to recovery.

Racine, WI Branch 436 member **Miguel Tobias** was making a door delivery on May 19—he typically places the mail for one of his customers, an elderly woman, at her screen door, since she has difficulty getting to the mailbox. How-

ever, on this day, when the city carrier assistant went up to the door, he saw that the mail had been accumulating. Concerned that something might have happened, Tobias peered through the screen. “I could see her on the floor,” he recalled. She was still conscious, but was not moving. Tobias, who had experience caring for an elderly relative, realized that she must have fallen and was unable to stand up. The customer was uninjured and capable of responding when the carrier called through the window, so after reporting the situation to his supervisor, Tobias called the non-emergency police line for assistance. “They came and got her up,” the carrier said. “They checked her out, but she’s doing well.” Tobias, who’s delivered mail for three years, said that he was glad he was there to help, stating, “A lot of people don’t have people to look out for them.” He added that it “felt really good” to be able to help a customer: “It humbles you a little bit.” **PR**