

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 recognized for help saving injured officer

Rochester, NY Branch 210 member **Ramique Hill** had already noticed the police officer across the street during one of his deliveries on Oct. 4, 2019, but he wasn't really paying attention when he heard a commotion coming from the scene. Then, suddenly, "I heard a gunshot go off," Hill said, and he quickly acted.

"I [secured] the mail and called the police," the carrier, who was a city carrier assistant at the time, recalled. The emergency responder asked him to check on the officer if he felt comfortable approaching the scene, so Hill went up to the house. He was standing on the porch when "I saw a lot of blood," he said.

Another shot went off inside the house, and

Hill, despite the danger, decide to go through the front door. There, he could see the officer lying on the ground in a pool of blood. "I didn't know what [part of him] was injured," he said.

A neighbor, who also had heard the original commotion and rushed to help, was restraining the assailant, so Hill quickly went over to the injured officer and attempted to calm him down. As Hill later found out, the officer had been stabbed several times during the course of a welfare check, including several serious injuries to his eyes.

"He was panicking and saying that he couldn't see," Hill said. "I let him know that the cops were on their way."

The officer was taken to the hospital and eventually recovered, though he did not regain his eyesight.

The incident was covered extensively by Rochester news outlets, which featured Hill and two others for their role in helping the officer. Hill was also recognized by the Rochester Police Department and the city of Rochester, and received the Postmaster General

Hero Award in recognition of his bravery on July 22.

The carrier was modest about the attention. "I just did at that moment what I thought was the right thing to do," he said.

Carrier's quick action aids fire evacuation

Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Joshua Detlef** was delivering mail on his route on May 7 when, he recalled, "I noticed smoke rising over the top of houses." When he raced around the corner to investigate, the 13-year carrier saw a customer's garage "engulfed in flames."

As he approached the house, he realized that a neighbor also had rushed to the scene. The neighbor was on the phone with a 911 operator while banging on the front door to alert the residents, but Detlef knew that the homeowners never used the front entrance.

He rushed to the side of the house.

"I ran and ripped open the side door," Detlef said. "There were two kids in there and the dog." A few moments later, the children's mother, Kelly Kwilos, came into the room from the basement, where she had been working. Detlef told Kwilos, "You have to get out of here—the garage is on fire!"

Alerted to the situation, Kwilos quickly gathered her children, mother and small



Ramique Hill (r), who helped saved the life of officer Denny Wright when he was attacked by an assailant with a knife, is interviewed alongside Wright by ABC news affiliate WHAM-TV.

dog and left the house. The carrier grabbed the larger family dog by the

“Everyone on the street was saying ‘thank you,’ and I said, ‘I just did what any of you would have done.’”

collar and left with them.

Once outside, Detlef confirmed that

all of the residents had been accounted for. “I just wanted to make sure that [everyone] had gotten out of the house,” he said. He then escorted the family to his postal vehicle to wait for the fire department. Just minutes after their evacuation, the fire spread from the garage to the house.

Once the Kwilos family was safe, Detlef looked around and noticed that the neighboring house also had caught fire. He rushed over to make sure that everyone was all right; fortunately, that family already had

evacuated. Once he determined that all of his customers were safe and emergency services were on their way, Detlef continued on his route.

Firefighters were unable to save the Kwiloses’ house, but thanks to Detlef’s quick thinking and bravery, nobody was injured. The carrier, however, downplayed his role in the situation. “I don’t feel like a hero,” he said. “Everyone on the street was saying ‘thank you,’ and I said, ‘I just did what any of you would have done.’”

Eye on the elderly

On June 26, Trenton, NJ Branch 380 member **Donald Alm III** was making a delivery on one of his routes as a T-6 when he was approached by that customer’s neighbor. The man told him that the homeowner, an elderly woman named Mary-Ann Urban, had not been collecting her mail or newspapers. The neighbor was concerned that something might have happened to the woman. The 26-year carrier decided to investigate. “I started knocking on the front window,” he said, “and I could hear someone saying, ‘Help me, help me.’” All the doors were locked, however, and the carrier was unable to get in. Alm called 911 and reported the situation. “Then I yelled back [to Urban] that we were getting help,” he said. He waited until emergency services arrived; when paramedics gained entry into the house, they found Urban on the floor. She had fallen several days before. She was taken to the

hospital and remained there for rehabilitation, but has since recovered and returned home. Alm did not mention his actions to others at the post office; his colleagues found out only when the regular route carrier shared the story. Alm said it was just part of the “unique” position that letter carriers have: “We interact with people the best we can,” he said. “I do like helping the community.”

Grand Rapids, MI Branch 56 member **Gail Ruthruff** had dropped off her normal Monday delivery to one of her elderly customers. She wasn’t too concerned when she saw that the mail was still sitting in the mailbox on Tuesday. However, by Wednesday, May 6, when she arrived at the house and saw that all of the mail was uncollected, the 25-year carrier became concerned about her customer. “I knocked on the door, and there was no answer,” she said. “So, I peered through the window, and I saw him

lying face-down on the floor.” She tried the door handle, which fortunately was unlocked, and entered the home. “He was alert, which was amazing since he’d been there since Sunday night,” Ruthruff said.

She called 911 and waited with the customer for paramedics to arrive. After making him comfortable, she made sure that his dogs were all right and gathered his medications to take to the hospital. When emergency services came to the house, they took the customer to the hospital, where he was treated for

dehydration, contusions and several broken ribs. Ruthruff said that she was “just doing my job.” She added, “You notice these things, especially if someone picks up their mail all the time.” **PR**



Gail Ruthruff

Smoke spotted, a carrier runs to help

On Saturday, May 9, Rochester, NY Branch 210 member **David Schickler** was about to deliver to the first house on his route when he noticed a car abruptly pull over to the side of the road. He then glanced over and saw the same thing that the car's driver had seen: smoke, rising from the back corner of a multi-apartment house on his route.

The driver opened his door and let the 32-year carrier know that he was calling 911. But Schickler decided not to wait for emergency services to arrive; as someone who knew the building well, he wanted to warn his customers about the fire.

After entering the residence, Schickler knocked on doors to alert the residents. When a couple

of residents opened their doors, "I told the two young ladies that they had to get out," the carrier said. By the time he had gone through the house, all of the building's tenants had been evacuated.

When he finally left the building, Schickler was met by firefighters, who began working to extinguish the blaze. The fire was later found to have been caused by an electrical short. Though the blaze was put out before any extensive property damage occurred, the flames did reach the bedroom of one of the young women whom the carrier had warned.

Schickler said that his assistance was just part of the job. "We're out here a lot, and we see a lot," he said. "You never know what you're going to find [on the route]." **PR**



Dave Schickler



Megan Mosher

Help on the way

On Jan. 16, Fort Atkinson, WI Branch 729 member **Megan Mosher** was in the middle of a route inspection with her supervisor when she noticed that a customer was lying motionless on his garage floor. When the two-year carrier knelt down to examine him, "he was cold to the touch," she recalled. The man was wearing only a T-shirt in freezing temperatures, and was unresponsive. Mosher yelled for her supervisor to call 911. "I tried finding things to cover him up" while they waited for emergency services to arrive, Mosher said. She

was able to find several jackets, which she laid on top of him. The man slowly regained consciousness, and told them that he had fallen and hit his head. He was confused and distressed, so Mosher and her supervisor stayed with him until paramedics arrived. The man's wife later called the post office to thank them. "I saw him a couple of months later," Mosher said, "and he was doing well." She added, "It was an honor [to help him]. As a community member, you need to be vigilant and pay attention when someone needs help." **PR**