

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 keeps cool in pool emergency

On May 24, Los Angeles, CA Branch 24 member **Andrei Manea** was delivering mail to a house on his route when he heard shouting coming from the back yard. The seven-year carrier quickly alerted the next-door neighbors about the situation, and then ran behind the house to help.

When he reached the back yard, he witnessed a frightening sight: His customer, Forrest Latimer, was

unconscious in his pool, his head barely held out of the water by his wife. "His wife was screaming for help," Manea recalled—it was her cries that he had heard.

The carrier rushed to the side of the pool and pulled Latimer out of the water. While Manea called 911, one of the neighbors performed CPR on Latimer. He stayed on the phone with the emergency operator until paramedics arrived.

Latimer was taken to the hospital, but was soon able to breathe on his own and is now on the road to recovery. The carrier was praised by both the Latimers and their neighbors, who later said that "[he] had done everything possible to help."

Manea described the situation as "very

intense," but said that he was happy to come to the rescue of a customer. "My route is like family," he said. "I love my job, and we have a big part to play in the community." **PR**



Andrei Manea

Neighborhood watch

"I was turning the corner in my postal vehicle," Metairie, LA Branch 6119 member **Christopher Surla** recalled about a day on his route in September, when he spotted one of his customers sitting down on the sidewalk. "She was bleeding from her face," the 14-year carrier said, "and waving me down." Surla quickly pulled over, parked and got out. Walking toward the woman, "I asked her, 'Is there anything you



Christopher Surla

need?' And she asked me to go to her house and ask her husband to come pick her up," he said. The customer told him that she had fallen while out for a walk in the neighborhood—the blood on her face was coming from a cut on her lip she had received from the fall. The carrier recognized her from his route and knew that her house was close by, so he rushed down the street to alert her husband to the situation.

The woman was then taken home by her spouse, but ended up going to the hospital to receive stitches for her lip. The woman's husband later contacted USPS to praise Surla for his actions. The carrier, however, said he was simply pleased that everything had turned out all right. "I felt really good about helping her out," he added. "I was in the right place at the right time." **PR**

Eye on the elderly

In November, Arlington, TX Branch 2309 member **Lee Gammage** was delivering on a park-and-loop route when he heard a noise “like a cat yowling,” he recalled. After dropping the mail in the door slot, the 16-year carrier realized that the noise might have been someone inside trying to call for help. He went back to the house and called through the slot, and was answered with a yell from the customer. Gammage went around the house to the window, and the woman told him that she had fallen and could not get up. The customer, who had recently been widowed, lived alone and told Gammage that she had been lying on the floor “for a long time,” the carrier said. The woman asked him to get her next-door neighbor, but when the carrier went over to the next house, no one was home. Gammage returned and asked if he could help; when the woman agreed,

he entered through the unlocked back door. After speaking with the woman, “we decided that her hip might be broken, so I gave her my phone to call 911,” the carrier said. Once the woman was in contact with dispatchers, Gammage left to continue his route, but made sure that paramedics had arrived by the time he finished the loop. The customer was taken to the hospital for surgery, and has since made a full recovery. Her grandson later wrote to Gammage, thanking him for saving his grandmother. He said that while his grandmother was in distress, “she was holding out hope that she would catch the letter carrier.” Gammage said, “It’s an aspect of service I don’t think about much, but the public can count on us to be by once a day, and in this case, it saved someone a lot of agony, at the least.”

In September, Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **Joseph Kerrigan** was delivering mail to the home of an elderly customer when he heard an odd noise coming from the house. When he looked around for the source of the noise, “I saw a hand holding a cane and tapping on the window,” the five-year carrier recalled. Kerrigan went over to the window and looked inside, where he saw his customer lying on the floor. “The man was screaming, ‘Help, help! I can’t get up, call the police!’” Kerrigan said. The man’s neighbors heard the commotion and came running out to help, while the carrier searched for an entry point into the house. As the neighbors called 911, Kerrigan was able to break the back window and open the door. The neighbors went inside the house and were able to get the customer to his feet, but the carrier had cut his



Joseph Kerrigan

hand badly when breaking the glass and remained outside—“I didn’t want to get blood everywhere,” he explained. Shortly thereafter, police and paramedics arrived on the scene. Kerrigan ended up undergoing minor surgery to remove the glass shards from his hand, but has since recovered. Long Island Postmaster John Statkevics praised Kerrigan for his quick thinking, saying, “If Joe had not noticed the customer and acted accordingly, this situation could have had a tragic outcome.” But the carrier was modest about his role in the rescue. “It was kinda crazy,” he said. “I’m just glad the man was all right.” **PR**

Union Plus awards five scholarships to NALC kids

Union Plus is a program founded by the AFL-CIO to provide benefit programs to union members and their families. Since 1992, Union Plus Scholarship awards have been presented annually to union members or members of their families who want to begin or continue their post-secondary education. This year, Union Plus awarded \$250,000 in scholarships to 199 students representing 37 unions.



Daylin Boehmer

and she plans to major in elementary

education. She was part of her high school’s leadership council, a student leadership team that helps to motivate, support and encourage fellow classmates. “NALC has been especially helpful this year by protecting carriers’ well-being during the extra amount of work endured during the 2020 election season amid a pandemic,” Boehmer said. “I am very proud of my dad, his work ethic and his strong

News

education. She was part of her high school’s leadership council, a student leadership team that helps to motivate, support and encourage fellow classmates.

“NALC has been especially helpful this year by protecting carriers’ well-being during the extra amount of work endured during the 2020 election season amid a pandemic,” Boehmer said. “I am very proud of my dad, his work ethic and his strong

Scholarships (continued)



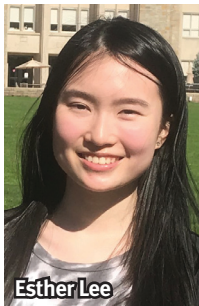
McKayla Leary

support of NALC.” McKayla Leary of South Berwick, ME, whose mother, **Patricia Leary**, is a retired member of Maine Merged Branch 92, was awarded a \$750 scholarship.

McKayla Leary is an Honors College student at the University of Maine, where she is studying engineering. She is a member of the Society of Women Engineers and Engineers Without Borders, with which she has been working on a project to build up water supply in Ixtupil, Guatemala.

Leary, who said she displays the Maine flag in her dorm because she is inspired by the state motto, *Dirigo* (“I lead”), pointed to a strike last year at Maine’s Bath Iron Works as a testament to the power of solidarity. “Unions are the cornerstone to a balanced economy and labor market,” she said, “and they certainly lead the way to a brighter future for their workers.”

Esther Lee of Brooklyn, NY, daughter of Brooklyn Branch 41 member **Kent Lee**, was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship. Esther Lee was also a 2020 Union Plus Scholarship recipient.



Esther Lee

She is a pharmacy major at St. John’s University Queens Campus in New York. She graduated from high school in 2020, earning an AP Capstone diploma, Advanced Regents diploma and AP Scholar with Distinction honors.

2021 Doherty and Donelon Scholarships selection delayed

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the announcement of the winners for the 2021 Doherty and Donelon Scholarship winners has been delayed.

The Scholarship Committee, composed of Sandy Laemmel, Detroit, MI Branch 1; Kimetra Lewis, Dallas, TX Branch 132; and Lawrence Kania, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3, has not yet been able to review the applications to prepare them for the judges, as many applicants are having difficulty obtaining the necessary transcripts and recommendation letters from their schools.

NALC Headquarters is working diligently with the applicants to obtain the outstanding documentation so that the Scholarship Committee and judges can perform their work and announce the winners as soon as they are able. **PR**

Lee’s mother also belongs to a union. Unions have significantly affected her family, Esther Lee said.

“Many of the opportunities that we’ve had are notably due to union aid,” she said. “Because of this, my family’s future is secure financially, socially and emotionally.”

Ryan Sand of Beatrice, NE, daughter of Lincoln, NE Branch 8 member **Jason Sand**, won a \$1,000 scholarship. Ryan Sand will attend Northwest Missouri State University (NMSU) this fall, where she plans to major in education. She is an NMSU Academic Excellence Scholar.



Ryan Sand

She follows in the footsteps of her mother, who teaches Spanish at her high school, Tri County High School in DeWitt, NE. Ryan Sand got a head start in her own teaching career by working as a teacher’s aide at Tri County.

Ryan Sand praised NALC for working to protect the safety of postal employees during the pandemic. “My family and I have benefitted from the labor movement, and we are grateful for the improvement of working conditions and benefits that have been provided through NALC’s efforts,” she said.

McKenna Wofford of Tahlequah, OK, daughter of Muskogee, OK Branch 1042 President **John Wofford**, was

awarded a \$500 scholarship. McKenna Wofford is a student at Connors State College in Warner, OK. She plans to attend nursing school and then join the Army, she said,



McKenna Wofford

“so I can help others who have helped and are helping me every day.” Wofford isn’t waiting to get into the action of the medical field, though—she already works as an assistant in a hospital emergency room.

Wofford commended NALC for providing her father with an opportunity for leadership. “The union has led my dad from being...[a] letter carrier to president of his union—an amazing man who I look up to, and someone who keeps looking forward to aspire to his dreams that one day he will achieve,” she said. Seeing how union members support each other has provided an important life lesson, she said, adding, “The union has taught me how to enjoy the good times, but also to not get down during the tough ones.”

For information about scholarship eligibility and applications, go to unionplus.org/scholarship.

In addition to the scholarship program, Union Plus provides a range of money-saving programs and services for union members and families. Go to nalc.org/member-benefits/benefits-for-members/union-plus for details. **PR**