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.

Working together to save a life

On April 16, 2020, "I was on the [workroom] floor of the post office," Petoskey, MI Branch 523 member **Buck Anthony** recalled, "when I heard someone say, 'Hey, someone has collapsed!' " The 13-year carrier rushed to assist; when he got close to the unconscious man, he realized that it was the office janitor.

"I noticed he wasn't breathing," Anthony said, so he and a clerk kneeled down to provide medical aid. While the clerk did chest compressions, the carrier kept the man's airway open so he could breathe. Eventually, Anthony felt the man's pulse return.

By this time, the station's safety officer had arrived on the scene with the office defibrillator. Anthony helped him set it up next to the custodian. The carrier, who had previously been an EMT, had the most experience using defibrillators—"I've brought a few other people back," he said.

"I shocked him five times to keep him [alive]," Anthony said. "And I stayed with him until the paramedics arrived." The man was taken to the hospital, where he recovered.

The carrier, who also has previously served as a station safety officer, shop steward and branch vice president, was glad that he was able to provide the man with the necessary medical aid. "I did the [defibrillator] training, and I use it when I need to," he said.

"I just do what I have to do," Anthony added. "It's not until afterward that you realize—I just saved someone's life."

Carrier helps man after lawnmower accident

"I was driving up the street delivering, when I happened to see someone lying on the ground," Bristol, TN Branch 807 member **Derrick McKinney** recalled about his route on June 3, 2020. "So I parked and ran over to him."

When the seven-year carrier got closer to the man, McKinney heard him speaking to a 911 operator on his phone, for reasons which were painfully clear—his foot had been seriously injured and a toe had been severed. The customer had run over his own foot with a lawnmower.

McKinney leapt into action. "I told him to take his shirt off to use as a tourniquet," the carrier said. "I knew the first thing I had to do was stop the bleeding."

The carrier, who had received medical training in his previous job as a firefighter, managed to tie off the man's foot with his makeshift tourniquet. "Then I got him a bottle of water and kept him calm," McKinney said. He waited with the man until paramedics arrived.

The customer was able to keep his foot, and he has since made a full recovery. But McKinney doesn't feel that his actions were particularly heroic. "I just thought, if that was me, I would want someone to stop and help me," he said.

Buck Anthony

Eye on the elderly

On June 23, 2020, Winston-Salem, NC Branch 461 member **Ronald O'Neal** was delivering on his route when he reached the apartment of one of his customers, Gloria Reid. "She usually met me every day," the 27-year carrier said, but on this day, Reid was not there to greet him. Then, O'Neal noticed that something else was off. "The door was cracked open, but the top lock [on the apartment door] was locked," he recalled. The carrier made the rest of his deliveries in the apartment building, but after he was done, he still felt uneasy about Reid and went back to her unit. The door was still locked, so he knocked and called out her name. After receiving no response, O'Neal looked through her window and saw that her purse was on the floor. "I knew something was wrong," he stated. Concerned, he reported the situation to the apartment complex manager, who called police. Upon their arrival, officers found Reid—she had been lying on her bedroom floor for more than a day. The woman was taken to the hospital, where it was determined that she had had a stroke. One of Reid's friends sent a letter to the post office, writing, "...O'Neal certainly deserves to be commended by [USPS] for his heroic actions... he was an angel in disguise saving my friend's life." O'Neal said that, as a letter carrier, "You get to know everyone's routine, and you notice when something tells you that something's not right." He added, "I just try to look out for everybody."

"I've been carrying the same route for eight years, and I know all the people on my route," Northern Kentucky Branch 374 member **Karl Herklotz** said. That's why he became concerned on Sept. 28, 2020, when he realized that one of his customers, an elderly woman, had not collected her mail from the previous day. "I stop and talk to her every day when I see her outside," the 21-year carrier and Marine veteran explained. "I always see her out there." He also knew that she had fallen the month before. "When I stopped to talk to her [the day following the previous incident], she was sitting on her porch all bruised up," Herklotz recalled. Given her history, he wanted to investigate to make sure that she hadn't hurt herself again. The carrier knocked on the door, but there was no response. "I thought, 'Man, that's not right,'" he said. Herklotz went next door and spoke to the woman's neighbor, who mentioned that she, too, had not seen the older woman recently. They decided to contact police for a wellness check. Upon entering the house, police found the woman on the floor—she had broken her hip and been

Karl Herklotz

lying there for a day. Later, the paramedics who responded to the call told the carrier that the customer might have died if he hadn't taken action. The neighbor commended Herklotz's actions in a news article by the local Fox affiliate, and praised his intuition. But Herklotz says that those instincts come with the job. "We're a set of eyes and ears in the neighborhood," he elaborated. "When something's different, you notice it." **PR**

Carrier uses movie inspiration to provide emergency aid

"It was a regular day," Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100 member **Fernando Garcia** said about delivering his route on Oct. 9, 2020. "I had just finished delivering to the street when I heard a lady scream."

The woman was screaming loudly, and the three-year carrier knew that something was wrong. He looked around for the source of the noise, and saw a man on the ground outside his house.

"I went to go check [on him] and ask if everything was OK," Garcia continued. "When he turned around, I saw that he was holding his left arm, and he was just covered in blood."

The man, Miguel Cabrera, had injured himself on a tool while working on his roof; his sister, who was calling 911, was the one who had screamed.

Given the fact that Cabrera's arm was "bleeding profusely," the carrier determined that immediate medical aid was necessary while they waited for the ambulance. Garcia remembered the tourniquets he had seen in movies, and quickly fashioned one out of his belt.

"[I] looped it through the hole, put it around his arm, tightened it as best I could" and then held it in place, the carrier recalled. "It was only about five minutes, but it felt like forever."

The paramedics arrived and took Cabrera to the hospital, where he received 10 stitches for his wound.

The story was covered by many media outlets, including CNN, the *New York Post*, and local Fox and CBS affiliates. Cabrera was

Fernando Garcia

grateful to the carrier, whom he called a "real hero."

Garcia, however, was modest about his actions. "I was honestly just happy to help," he said, "and happy that he was able to keep the arm." **PR**