

## 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](mailto:postalrecord@nalc.org). We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.

# Honoring heroic carriers

**H**eroism, 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.

## A rescue just in time for Christmas

Santa Fe, NM Branch 989 member **Melissa Garcia** first suspected something was wrong with one of her customers when she noticed on Dec. 18 that his mail was piling up. The customer, an older man, typically received a lot of mail each day, so he was diligent in collecting his letters.

The two-year carrier knocked on his door, but received no reply. However, since it was nearing Christmas, she figured that he might have gone to visit relatives and forgotten to stop his mail delivery. But she couldn't shake her bad feeling as she walked down the street. "I felt silly and paranoid," she

said, "but then I paused and thought, 'What if he does need help?'"

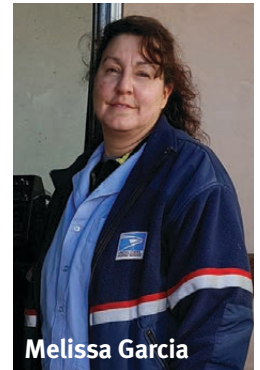
After she finished her deliveries on the street, she spotted a neighbor out walking, and asked him if he'd seen the older man recently. He said he hadn't, but went back to his house to check with his girlfriend to see if she had noticed anything. The girlfriend said that she had noticed that the man's chimney hadn't been giving off smoke for three days; the man usually had a fire going. Garcia decided to call police for a wellness check and then completed her route.

After she finished, she came back to the house just as officers were pulling in the driveway. The carrier went up to the house with the officers, and pounded on the living room window. This time, she heard a faint voice inside calling for help. "I yelled back, 'We're going to get you!'" Garcia said.

Police entered the home and found the man—he had been trapped in the house for three days without food or water after falling down his basement stairs. The man spent a week recovering in the hospital, but has since returned home.

Garcia's actions were later covered by the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, where the customer described his ordeal and praised the carrier enthusiastically.

Garcia said that knowing she may have saved his life was "an awesome feeling," and added, "Just knowing that I made a difference makes me proud, as a letter carrier and as a person."



Melissa Garcia

## Coworkers work together to lift car off of customer

"I was inside [the post office] when I heard yelling," New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member **Joe Hayes** recalled about his actions on Jan. 14. He was standing near Postmaster James Tee, who also heard the noise. "We thought it was a fight, so we ran outside," the 14-year carrier said, where they were confronted by a terrible scene—a woman was trapped under the wheels of a car.

Just moments before, the woman and her husband had been walking in front of a parking spot when the vehicle's driver pulled into the spot. After hitting the woman, the driver had panicked

## Help on the way

In September of 2020, Peoria, IL Branch 31 member and city carrier assistant **Brandon Dickinson** was delivering to a house when one of his customers, an elderly woman, rushed outside. "[She] was on the phone with 911, and I could hear her say, 'Oh, here's my letter carrier,'" the two-year carrier recalled. Frantically, the woman explained that her husband had fallen and hit his head. Dickinson,

a Marine veteran, jumped to her aid—he grabbed the phone and identified himself, and then went inside the house. Following the emergency operator's instructions, the carrier found the man, who was lying unconscious on the stairs and



Brandon Dickinson

bleeding from a head wound, and prepared him for CPR. Dickinson was able to shift the man off of the stairs into a more comfortable position, then ripped off the man's shirt to start CPR. At that moment, however, paramedics arrived and took over. EMTs were able to

get a pulse, and the man was taken to the hospital. "I stayed the whole time with [his] wife, just to make sure she was OK," Dickinson said. The man sadly died a few days later, but the family was able to fly in to say their goodbyes. The carrier said that he was happy that he had been there to support the man's wife. "She went outside to find someone [to help her], and I feel blessed that it was me," he added. **PR**

## Eye on the elderly

On Jan. 14, Chicago, IL Branch 11 member **Shonda Lemon** noticed that one of her customers, an elderly woman named Helen, hadn't been picking up her mail. Lemon made a habit of wrapping Helen's mail with rubber bands, to make it easier to grab, and she noticed that several of the rubber-banded stacks of mail had not been collected. "Day after day, she kept not picking up the rubber bands, and I knew something was wrong," Lemon told a local NBC TV affiliate. After the third day went by without Helen coming out of her house, the carrier decided to call 911 for a welfare check. When police investigated, they found the woman on the floor, where she had been lying for days without food or water. She was taken to the hospital, and has since moved to a rehabilitation center. Lemon received enthusiastic praise from Helen's family, who called her "an angel" and credited her with saving Hel-

en's life. The carrier, however, was reluctant to accept these acknowledgements. "I don't look at myself as a hero," she said. "I just look at myself as one of God's children looking after his other kids. That was my blessing for the day, that she was OK." Besides NBC, Lemon's actions were also covered by Fox News, CNN and several local news affiliates.

"I've been on this route forever," Portland, OR Branch 82 member **Terri Palmer** explained, which is why she became concerned when one of the customers on her route, an elderly woman, stopped picking up her mail. "Before, if she'd let her mail go a day or two without being picked up, I'd check on her—knock on her door and chat for a little," the 30-year carrier said. So, on Jan. 28, after the woman's mail hadn't been picked up for two days, Palmer went up to the door and knocked. "I heard her faintly saying, 'Help, mail lady, help!'" she

said. The carrier immediately called 911, and police officers arrived at the house a short time later. When they entered, they found the customer on the floor—she had fallen a few days previously and had been unable to get up again. The woman was taken to the hospital, and is still recovering in a rehabilitation center. The carrier's actions were covered by many local news affiliates. Palmer, an Army veteran, said that it was "gratifying" to be able to help, but added that she considered it part of her duty as a letter carrier in the community. "So many people out there, given the pandemic, need someone to look out for them," she said.

On July 22, 2020, Rochester, NY Branch 210 member **Anthony McMillon** was walking on his route when one of his elderly customers caught his eye. "I could see her lying on the ground," he said, and he rushed over to see what was wrong. The woman was

barely conscious and was unable to talk at first, so the two-year carrier called 911 to report the situation. McMillon then moved the patron into the shade and sat with her to wait for the ambulance. As she recovered, the woman told him that she had fallen while gardening and had been unable to get up. "It was around 100 degrees that day, and she said she'd been there for a couple of hours," McMillon recalled. The carrier asked if he could call anyone for her to let them know about her condition, and she asked him to contact her neighbor and her son. After he did so, the ambulance arrived, and the woman was taken to the hospital. Later, McMillon spoke with the neighbor, who thanked him for his assistance and reported that the woman was "doing fine." The carrier brushed off any praise for his actions. "I don't feel like a hero," he said. "I'm just glad I was there to assist her—I don't know what would have happened otherwise." **PR**

and tried to back up, trapping her beneath the wheels. As Hayes and Tee came out of the post office, her husband was frantically yelling for help, and the two men rushed to the woman's aid.

They were joined by fellow Branch 38 member **James Nolan**, who had just pulled into the lot. Like Hayes, he thought that the shouting stemmed from a fight. Then, "I heard someone shouting, 'Stop the car! You just ran over my wife!'" the 25-year carrier recalled. He raced over to the car. "I looked down, and I saw her feet" under the vehicle, Nolan said. He immediately called 911 to report the situation.

After his call, Nolan returned

to the car, where he, Tee and Hayes were joined by several customers. Together, they lifted the vehicle enough to pull the woman out from underneath.



**New Jersey Merged Branch 38 members Joe Hayes and James Nolan (center and right), along with Postmaster James Tee (left), were recognized for helping save a woman from being crushed by a car.**

"I held up the front end until someone said she was out," Nolan said.

The woman was subsequently taken to the hospital. Her husband later called the post office to report that she had been seriously injured, but was on the road to recovery.

Both Hayes and Nolan said that they were glad they had been able to help, but were modest about accepting praise for their actions. "We were just doing our human duty," Hayes said.

Nolan concurred, adding, "After it happened, everyone started throwing the word 'hero' around, but I hate that word. I just did what I hope anyone else in the parking lot would have done." **PR**