

## 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.



From l: Rochelle Spratling, Angel Caban, Richie Snowden and Jenice Williams

# 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.

## Co-workers come to the aid of collapsed carrier

On a spring day at Emerald Station in Las Vegas, 35-year letter carrier **Farrell Chenin** collapsed without warning on the workroom floor. Fellow Branch 2502 members **Angel Caban, Charletha Marzett, Richard Snowden Jr., Rochelle Spratling** and **Jenice Williams** sprang into action to

help their stricken colleague.

Marzett was the first to discover Chenin lying on the floor of the station. "I called his name and rolled him over," but got no response, she said. She called for help and assisted the other carriers with performing CPR. Snowden and Spratling readied Chenin. "I just cleared his airway and held his head back," Snowden said. "I didn't want him to choke, so I elevated his head," Spratling said.

Caban, who was certified in CPR through USPS, began chest compressions. "When I saw him on the ground, I just jumped," Caban, a 28-year carrier, said. Marzett assisted with mouth-to-mouth breathing. Williams, a former medical assistant in a physician's office, monitored Chenin's pulse and talked to him. "It was nerve-wracking" seeing her colleague in distress, she said, "because it's someone you see every day. Everyone who works here is family."

Snowden and Williams monitored Chenin's pulse, which came and went, and his breathing, and helped keep him comfortable. Paramedics arrived and took over chest compressions and rushed Chenin to the hospital. Thanks to his brothers and sisters, Chenin survived his ordeal and left the hospital for a rehabilitation center; however, he died a few months later.

## New carrier stands up to man with knife

Out delivering the mail in her truck in Torrington, CT, in August, city carrier assistant **Christine Cambizaca**—who had started the job only a month earlier—was approached by a barefoot woman, who was crying, afraid and struggling to speak.

"She had blood on her nose and bruises on her face," Cambizaca said.

"Are you OK?" Cambizaca asked her. "Are you being followed?"

The woman nodded. Cambizaca, a

member of Connecticut Merged Branch 20, called her supervisor, who told her to call 911, which she then did.

The carrier then spotted a man who seemed to be looking for the woman, so she let the victim wait inside her truck while she stood outside. The man approached the truck and yelled at her and the woman inside the truck, demanding to be let in, but Cambizaca refused, despite the danger.

"I got scared because I saw a knife in his pocket," she said.

Cambizaca tried to get into the truck through the back door, but the man noticed and tried to get in the truck that way, so she shut the door again to protect the woman inside. A neighbor heard the commotion and came outside, distracting the man and allowing Cambizaca to get in the truck.

From the truck, she saw the man throw the knife at the neighbor, who was not injured. The neighbor picked up the knife and continued to distract the man until police arrived. They arrested the man, and an ambulance took the woman to the hospital. After telling officers what happened, Cambizaca continued on her route.

"I was calm," she said of the incident, "but I was scared."

Thought many hailed her as a hero, Cambizaca had a different take. The victim, she said, "could have been anybody's daughter or sister. No matter who it was, we should always look after each other."

## Carrier aids crash victim

Delivering her route in Anaheim, CA, in May, **Esther Perez** saw a car hit another vehicle and then veer off the road and hit a tree. The Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100 member, who has delivered the mail for 29 years, immediately took charge. She ran to help the car's driver, but he was unconscious and locked inside the car. "I could tell he wasn't breathing," she said.

## Help on the way

On a Sunday in July, Fresno, CA Branch 231 member **Dylan Diaz** was delivering packages at an apartment complex when he encountered a lost child. "I saw this little girl, maybe 2 or 3 years old at most," Diaz said. "No shoes, no clothes—just in a diaper." The child was crying and saying she was lost. Diaz, who began carrying the mail this year, picked up the child and calmed her as he searched the apartment complex for her home. After carrying the child while searching for her parents, Diaz reunited her with her father. The carrier called his supervisor to report the incident and returned to delivering the mail. When he saw the child, "I instantly thought of my daughter," who is 5, Diaz said. **PR**

## Fire & rescue

Three-year carrier **Justin Possinger**, a T-6, was delivering a route from the East Stroudsburg, PA, post office in June when he saw an elderly couple on their porch. The woman told him that something had struck their house. He saw no evidence of that—but then he smelled smoke. Possinger, a member of Lehigh Valley, PA Branch 274, called 911 and helped the couple get away from the home as they waited for firefighters to arrive. However, the husband, after coming out the front door, began to go back inside. “The husband was a little more stubborn,” Possinger said. “He wanted to go inside and find the fire with a flashlight.” The carrier convinced him to come back outside with his wife. When fire units arrived, Possinger quickly got his truck out of the way and continued on his route. The next time he walked that route, the couple told him that the fire had been caused by an electrical problem, but that their home was safe thanks to his quick action. “It’s not something you expect,” Possinger said of saving the couple’s home and perhaps their lives, “but you’re happy to know you could make a difference.”



**Justin Possinger**

**John Fitzgerald**, a carrier at the Saugus, MA, post office who has delivered the mail since 2005, turned a corner on his route in August and saw something unusual. “The air was yellow,” he said. He wondered if someone was burning leaves. Then he saw the source of the smoke—a house. “There was smoke pouring out of every part of it,” Fitzgerald said. He banged on the door and heard a dog barking inside, but nobody came to the door, so he opened it. He went inside through the smoke just far enough to find a woman. He urged her to come out to safety, with her dog. Firefighters arrived to try to quell the blaze, which he later learned took several hours. The house was heavily damaged, but no lives were lost. “I was just in the right place and the right time,” Fitzgerald, a member of Lynn, MA Branch 7, said. “Just doing my duty.” **PR**

**Esther Perez**



Perez asked others who had stopped for something to break the window with, and someone handed her a 2-by-4. After telling someone to call 911, Perez broke the glass, unlocked the doors and checked on the man.

She managed to open his airway and get him breathing again as paramedics arrived. Perez then continued on her route. She later learned that the man had made a full recovery, and that the cause of the accident was his malfunctioning pacemaker.

The experience of saving the man’s life was particularly meaningful to Perez. “I had just lost my father” despite trying to revive him with CPR, she said. “My dad died in my arms. I felt like I redeemed myself—I couldn’t help my father, but I was able to help this man.”

### Brave carrier rescues snakebite victim

**Dashawn Spratley**, a city carrier assistant in Port St. Lucie, FL for the last year and a half, was driving in his mail vehicle on his route in May when he heard a call for help.

He couldn’t see where the voice was coming from, so he drove down the street toward it until he found a woman lying in her driveway behind her car. The woman had been bitten by a snake and fallen and broken her shoulder.

“There was blood coming out of her foot” at the site of the bite, Spratley said.

The snake was still there. The carrier told the woman not to move so she would not attract the attention of the snake and risk another bite. He ran in her house to get a mop, which he used to chase the

snake away. After he called 911 and paramedics arrived, he continued on his route.

He later learned that the woman was recovering from her injuries and the snake was not venomous.

Spratley was humble about his actions. “I did what I hope anyone in my position would do,” he said.

### Detecting a fire, carrier helps police investigation

Spokane, WA Branch 442 member **Jeffery Patterson** was delivering the mail in Spokane Valley in August when he smelled something burning. The 24-year carrier and Army veteran looked around and noticed smoke coming from one of the units of a nearby apartment building.

Patterson knew that a woman with health issues who was housebound lived in the apartment. He banged on the door and windows and tried to get inside, but could not, so he went to a neighboring unit and asked if they had a phone number or key for the unit that was on fire, but they did not.

“The neighbors didn’t know the house was on fire,” he said. They quickly left their unit.

Patterson called 911 and told the dispatcher about the woman inside. When firefighters arrived, he continued on his route.

Patterson later learned that the woman inside had been murdered and the fire apparently had been set to cover up evidence. While his actions could not save her, it did preserve evidence that could lead to the arrest of her killer.

Patterson did not consider his actions particularly heroic. “I did it; the fire department came; I went back to doing my job,” he said. **PR**



**Dashawn Spratley**