

## 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.

## Carrying customers out of burning house

In the spring of 2021, Charleston, WV Branch 531 member **Eric Smith** was driving to work when he came across a vehicle stopped in the road. “[It] was sitting with flashers on,” he recalled. “I drove past it at first, and then I saw the flames.”

The flames were coming from the residence nearest to the parked vehicle, and when the nine-year carrier turned his vehicle around to investigate further, he saw that the driver of the other car was going up to the house. Smith recognized him as a customer from his route, and he recognized the house, too—he knew that three people lived there.

While another passerby called 911, Smith told the other man how many people lived in the house. Smith, the first passerby and another neighbor decided to brave the smoke and flames and try to rescue the residents. “I got the front door open,” Smith said, “and there were two people lying behind the door.”

The man and woman had made it to the front hallway before collapsing from the smoke. “I pulled the first lady out, and she was unconscious,” the carrier recalled. “You could only go in as long as you could hold your breath.”

While Smith carried the woman a safe distance from the fire, another person



Eric Smith

went into the house to pull out the man. “By that time, the whole house was engulfed,” Smith said. The neighbor was unable to pull out the man by himself, due to the heat and thick smoke, so Smith went back into the house. “I went in and managed to get hold of him, and I pulled him closer to the door until I had to catch a breath,” he said.

Eventually, through a group effort, they were able to drag the man out of the house and begin administering CPR. At this point, “the house was pretty much coming down,” Smith said. A short time later, emergency services arrived on the scene and the woman was taken to the hospital. She was the only survivor of the fire—the man they had rescued did not survive, and a third person who had been trapped upstairs also died.

“Everything happened so fast,” Smith said, reflecting on his role in saving his customer. “I just did whatever it took to try and get everyone out.

“It was instincts—just try to save them,” he added.

## CPR training allows carrier to provide aid

On Nov. 10, 2021, Lynn, MA Branch 7

member **Steven Blaney** was reloading his vehicle when he saw what appeared to be an unconscious person lying on the steps of the house across the street. “I could tell that something wasn't right,” the three-year carrier said, “but I thought he was just passed out.” Still, he was concerned about the man's welfare, so he called 911.

Blaney told the 911 operator about the situation. He had just finished the call when he heard noises coming from across the street. Glancing over, the carrier saw that the man, now semi-awake, appeared to be trying to vomit.

Blaney quickly went over and examined the man, who was unconscious once again. “I tried to wake him, but I got no response,” the carrier recalled. Even more distressing, he could see that the man didn't appear to be breathing. “His lips were blue—so was his face, his fingernails,” Blaney said.

The carrier, suspecting a possible overdose, took the man off the steps, checked his pulse, and put him in the recovery position. “In college, I took an emergency responder's course and got CPR-certified,” he said, so he tried to follow what he remembered of his training.

“I also called 911 back,” Blaney said, “and the operator asked if I knew CPR.” When the carrier said yes, the operator asked him to do chest compressions on the man. Blaney proceeded to administer CPR until paramedics arrived and took over.

The man was given Narcan, an emergency medicine to treat opioid overdose, at the scene, and was taken to the hospital. Blaney then continued with his route. The man has since recovered—“I've seen him back around,” the carrier said.

As for Blaney, he said that his heroic actions resulted from gut instinct. “I thought, it doesn't seem right,” he added, “the way [the man was] lying” down outside. **PR**