

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.

### Carrier's alert saves sleeping family

On March 9, New Iberia, LA Branch 988 member **Noah Pullin** was making

his final deliveries of the day at a trailer park. After dropping off the mail, "I got back in the truck, and right in front of me, [I saw] the front-most trailer was on fire," the city carrier assistant recalled.

Pullin immediately rushed from his vehicle to warn the inhabitants. As he ran toward the trailer, he also used his cell phone to call 911.

When the carrier reached the mobile home, a neighbor joined him and told him that she had heard voices coming from the back of the trailer. Pullin and the neighbor began banging on the front door and windows to warn whomever was inside, but they did not receive a response.

Unable to open the door, Pullin looked around for something to help him get inside. "I picked up a piece of wood that

was lying on the ground," the carrier said, which he then used to break the windows.

Pullin went around to the other side of the residence, where he spotted the homeowner and his two children escaping the flames. "Two little girls came running toward me, and I told them to get farther away [from the fire]," the carrier said. He went over and helped the man, who was assisting his wife, Gaynelle Robertson, as she climbed out of a window.

Robertson later told local CBS affiliate KLFY that she "was traumatized because I thought I was going to be stuck in there and didn't have [a] way out." As Pullin was later told, the family had been sleeping and was unaware of the fire before

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## Help on the way

**O**n Feb. 2, Cedar Rapids, IA Branch 373 member **Donna Moeller** was delivering on a park-and-loop route when "I heard someone hollering," she said. "But I couldn't make it out." As she walked closer to one of the residences, she could tell that the noise was coming from the customer's garage. "I knocked on the garage and said, 'Is everything OK?'" the 26-year carrier recalled. "He said, 'Hell no—I need an ambulance.'" Moeller raced next door and asked a neighbor to call 911. She then went back to the home; there, the carrier found a garage-door opener inside a truck parked in front of the house. Once she was able to get inside the garage, the carrier found her elderly customer, Pery Lawrence, lying on the floor. Lawrence told her that he had fallen several hours

earlier and injured his leg. To make matters worse, "it was pretty cold, and he just had his housecoat on," Moeller said. The carrier stayed with Lawrence and tried to keep him calm until the ambulance arrived. At the hospital, Lawrence was treated for a broken femur and dislocated hip, but has since gone through rehabilitation and returned home. Moeller described the experience as stressful—"I felt like I was going to have a heart attack"—but extremely rewarding, given the fact that she may have saved Lawrence's life. "He lives alone, so he was pretty worried," she said. "He said I was his last hope."

**O**n June 18, 2021, West Palm Beach, FL Branch 1690 member **Thomas Oja Jr.** dropped off a package for one of his elderly customers,



**Thomas Oja Jr.**

Gene Clements. "I usually have to walk up to deliver, so I know the guy fairly well," the six-year carrier said, but he didn't see Clements that day. He was moving on to the next house when Clements's tenant came running outside. "The lady came out screaming my name," Oja recalled, "saying, 'Please hurry,' the guy was on the ground." The carrier rushed back to the house, where he saw Clements lying unconscious on the floor. "He looked like he was already dead," Oja said. "He was purple and red and not responsive at all."

The tenant told Oja that she had already called 911, so the carrier started to do chest compressions on Clements. "It was all I knew what to do, from [classes] when I was a kid," he explained. Together, he and the tenant continued administering CPR until paramedics arrived and took over. Clements was taken to the hospital, where it was later determined that he had had a heart attack. "I saw him a few months later—as far as I know, he's still doing good," Oja said. As for his own actions, the carrier said that he was just thankful he was able to help. "As soon as I knew it was something serious, I just ran in there," he said. "Thankfully [the chest compressions were] enough to keep him alive." **PR**



**Noah Pullin**

his knocking had roused them.

Once Robertson was out of the trailer, “I kept asking over and over to make sure that no one else was in the house,” the carrier said. As it turned out, everybody was safe—the fire had been started by a space heater in

the older children’s bedroom, but they were already at school.

Firefighters arrived a short time later, but by that time, the fire had destroyed the trailer—“it didn’t take long to burn

through it,” Pullin said. They were able to extinguish the blaze before it spread to the neighboring trailers. The family was hospitalized for smoke inhalation, but no other injuries resulted from the fire.

Pullin attributed his ability to keep calm in the face of danger to the six years he spent in the Marine Corps. “Right place, right time. That’s what I told anyone who said, ‘Good job’ yesterday,” he told KLFY. “If it was me or my family, I would want somebody to help out.”

## No smoke in his eyes

On the afternoon of Feb. 8, “I was dropping off the last package of the day,” San Jose, CA Branch 193 member **Ignacio Rosas III** recalled, when he noticed smoke in the air around him. The

carrier thought that something might be wrong with his vehicle, so he got out of the LLV to investigate.

“I parked, hopped out and looked to my left, and I saw smoke coming out of this house,” the one-year carrier said.

Immediately, Rosas jumped back into his vehicle and drove toward the smoke. Once at the scene, he could tell that the house was definitely on fire. “It was not that big a fire at the moment—[mostly] gray smoke,” he said. He quickly called 911.

While on the phone with emergency operators, the carrier decided to report the fire to the neighboring buildings. One house belonged to an elderly couple, whom Rosas urged to evacuate. The other building was a day care. As the carrier saw small children playing

## Neighborhood watch

On a summer day in 2021, Dayton, OH Branch 182 member **Nicholas Pierce** was delivering to a retirement community when he noticed a child who looked out of place. “I saw a little girl on a scooter wandering around by herself,” the seven-year carrier recalled, “so I asked her if she needed help.” The girl told Pierce that she was lost. The carrier asked if she knew the address of the place where she was staying. “She said the right [street] number, but she didn’t know the street [name],” Pierce said. Still, using his knowledge of his route, the carrier was able to figure out what street she lived on. As he escorted her there, he let her borrow his cell phone to call her parents. Once they approached the address, it turned out that the girl had remembered the street number wrong as well—however, Pierce was able to figure out the



**Nicholas Pierce**

correct address after asking her a few more questions. As they walked over to the right house, she was met by her parents, who were grateful to the carrier for his help in returning the little girl home. But Pierce was modest about his role. “It’s just common courtesy,” he said. “It’s what anyone would do for anyone, if you see someone in trouble.”

The first person to tell him about the missing boy was a police officer, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Gregory Samek Jr.** remembered about his eventful day on March 25. When he began his route in the morn-

ing, the officer stopped him and showed him a picture of a local boy, who she said had been absent from school that day. The four-year carrier, who knew the kid from his time around the neighborhood, told the officer that he had not seen the 12-year-old. “I said I’d keep my eyes open,” Samek recalled. Later that day, he ran into one of the boy’s relatives, who happened to be another letter carrier. The other carrier told him that the family had not seen the preteen since the night before. Samek became increasingly worried that the boy may have gotten injured, given the number of open fields and abandoned buildings in the neighborhood. The carrier kept a careful lookout as he continued on his route. “Probably about an hour later, I was walking down the street” when he saw a boy in a familiar gray sweatshirt about

20 houses away, Samek said. “I remembered in the photo [the officer had shown him], he had a gray Under Armour sweatshirt.” The carrier didn’t want to risk the boy running away from him, so he waited until the kid was much closer before speaking to him. After greeting the boy, Samek told him that his whole family was out looking for him. “He was like, ‘What?’” the carrier said with a laugh. As it turned out, the boy had gone to spend the night at a friend’s house and had no idea of the panic he’d caused. Samek escorted the boy to his mother’s house, which was a short distance away, and let the family know that he was safe. The carrier said that because he knew the boy from his route, he “just kept my eyes peeled a little bit more than usual—God forbid something happened to him.” **PR**



**Brandon Airosus**

outside, unaware of the danger they were in, he said that cemented his urge to “act fast” and get everyone a safe distance away from the fire.

Shortly after Rosas’s call, police and firefighters arrived on the scene and were able to put out the flames. “The older gentleman [who owned the house] did pass away,” Rosas said, though it was unclear whether his death was caused by the fire.

Rosas’s actions, meanwhile, have made him a hero to the residents of the cul-de-sac whom he warned. “The neighborhood really embraced me,” the carrier said. “They made me a sign, and they’re always stopping and thanking me.”

## After car accident, carrier rushes to the rescue

Boston, MA Branch 34 member **Brandon Airosus** had just finished

his last delivery of the day and was heading back to the post office one afternoon in November 2021 when he stopped at a red light. “The traffic [in his lane] was at a standstill, but there was tons of fast traffic [going the other way],” the 25-year member recalled.

As he waited for the light to turn green, a little girl and her grandmother stepped into the crosswalk. Moments later, “the little girl broke away from the older woman” and ran past Airosus’s vehicle into the other lane, the carrier recalled. “A car came from the opposite direction, and she got sideswiped.”

Airosus was horrified, but acted swiftly. Immediately putting his LLV in park and switching on his hazard lights, he called 911 as he rushed over to the child.

“She didn’t get hit head-on, but she

was screaming and crying,” the carrier said. He tried to calm her down, as well as her grandmother, but “there was a language barrier,” he explained.

Concerned about the girl’s danger from oncoming cars, Airosus decided to move her out of harm’s way. “I thought, ‘I’ve got to get this poor girl off the middle of the street,’” he said. “So I picked her up carefully.”

The carrier brought her over to the sidewalk—“Next thing you know, you’ve got police and firefighters [at the scene],” Airosus said. The girl was taken to the hospital, where she was treated for a broken leg.

The carrier was modest about the recognition he received for his actions. “I had no choice but to react—she literally ran right across my bumper,” he said. “I didn’t really do anything. I was in the right place at the right time.” **PR**

## Eye on the elderly

“I hadn’t seen the customer for a couple months,” Las Vegas, NV Branch 2502 member **James Desnacido** recalled, but that changed on Jan. 8, when he approached customer Allan Menkin’s house and heard his wife calling for help. “His wife waved me in to help,” the six-year carrier said—when he went into the house to see what was wrong, he found Menkin lying on the living-room floor. The elderly man had unexpectedly collapsed, and neither he nor his wife could get him back in his chair. “His wife told me he’d been that way for a couple of hours,” Desnacido said. The carrier was able to lift Menkin back to his feet, and then placed him back in his recliner. The customer was grateful for his assistance, and later said that “James literally saved my life by rescuing me from a serious fall.” The carrier,

however, was modest about his actions, saying, “I just do like all carriers—help out when you can, and then get back to delivering when everything’s safe.” Desnacido was also recognized in a ceremony held at the post office. Menkin was unable to attend the ceremony, but sent the following message: “Give deepest thanks and my best regards to James. He is the



**Las Vegas, NV Branch 2502 member James Desnacido (l) is recognized for his actions by Branch President Glenn Norton.**

representative that the Postal Service should be proud of!”

On April 22, Pittsburgh, PA Branch 84 member **Shaelynn Goodwine** was delivering on her route when she became concerned about one of her elderly customers. “She usually picks up her mail every single day, but the last time I’d seen her [was] Monday,” the eight-year carrier recalled. Goodwine had been off work for a few days, but when she returned to find that the woman’s mail had been piling up, she thought that something might have happened to her customer. Given that it was close to Easter, the carrier thought that the woman might have been visiting family,

but decided to keep a close eye on the situation. When another day passed with no sign of the customer, Goodwine decided that the time had come to act. She called police to request a welfare check. When police investigated, they found the woman on the floor, unable to move. “She may have had a stroke, and she fell and broke her hip,” Goodwine said she was later told. “The next day, she probably would not have been [alive].” The carrier said that she was “kind of nervous” about requesting the welfare check, but that she was gratified to know that her call may have helped save the woman’s life. Goodwine later received a call from the police officer she had talked to, who let her know that she would be receiving a letter of recognition from the city of Pittsburgh for her actions. **PR**