

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.

Carrier takes charge, saves girl using CPR

After delivering on his route on June 15, Colorado Springs, CO Branch 204 member **Kimberly Smith**—who goes by “Smitty”—headed back to the post office, where he learned that one of his scans had failed. He went back to the apartment complex where he had delivered the package, but found nobody in the leasing office.

Outside, he found the leasing manager soaking wet, and she asked, “Smitty, do you know how to do CPR?”

Smith knew immediately that there was an emergency at the apartment's pool. He ran to the pool and saw a teenage girl lying face down with bystanders watching helplessly.

“I guess my military instincts kicked in,” said the 66-year-old Army veteran who first learned CPR in the Army.

Smith squeezed the girl's chest to expel water from the woman's lungs, and after ensuring that her airway was clear, began chest compressions.

“I was telling myself, ‘This young lady can't die today,’ ” he said.

As he heard sirens that signaled the approach of paramedics, the teenager regained consciousness. Once the paramedics arrived and took over her care, Smith scanned the package and went back to the post office.

He met the grateful woman and her family a few weeks later—she had suffered no permanent ill effects.

After media reports about the incident, the people on Smith's route have hailed him as a hero. “The customers have been showing me so much love,” he said. “I was humbled to be in the right place at the right time,” he added, “and the man upstairs made that possible.”

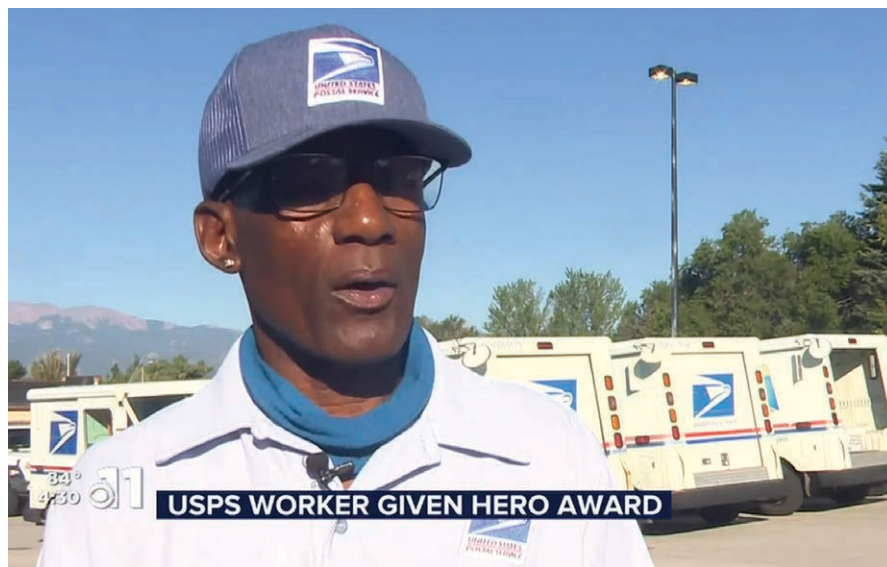
Still, saving a life is an amazing feeling, he said: “I could hit the lottery and it wouldn't be like this.”

Convention delegates look out for kidnapped child

On Aug. 10, four delegates from Oklahoma City Branch 458 to the 2022 NALC national convention in Chicago were returning to the McCormick Place Convention Center when they saw two cars driving erratically in front of the convention center.

“We heard a commotion between two vehicles,” seven-year carrier **Eric Beu** said. The cars were honking at each other and driving recklessly.

Kimberly “Smitty” Smith told the local CBS affiliate about rescuing a teenage girl.



The convention delegates who rescued a kidnapped toddler, from l: Casey Ritchie, Eric Beu, Meagan Sperling and Jeremiah Grant



“It looked like road rage,” added delegate **Casey Ritchie**, a six-year carrier.

They watched as the driver of one car abandoned it, still running, in the middle of the street and hopped in the other car, which made a U-turn

and sped away. The carriers surmised that it was a stolen car that had been ditched.

Meagan Sperling, an eight-year carrier, approached the remaining car to investigate—and spotted something shocking inside.

Help on the way

In June, retired carrier **Wendell Obernyer** was enjoying Ashtabula, OH Branch 482’s annual steak fry with Branch Vice President **David Landis**. Walking with Landis to sit at a table, Obernyer—who carried the mail for 34 years before retiring a decade ago—noticed that Landis was choking. Nobody else in the room had detected the problem. At first, Obernyer asked if anyone else could help, but then his instincts from CPR training kicked in. He stood behind Landis and did the Heimlich maneuver, dislodging the food from Landis’s windpipe. “It came out just like that,” Obernyer said. “He was hurting for air at that point.” A grateful Landis thanked Obernyer for saving his life.

Erie, PA Branch 284 member **Tim Getz** was in his truck on one of his routes as a T-6 in June when he heard screaming. He wasn’t sure whether someone was fighting or in trouble, but he followed the sound to the back of a house just to be sure. There he saw a woman in a pool. She was in a panic, holding an unconscious teen-age girl. A former volunteer

firefighter, Getz sprang into action. He helped the woman pull the girl out of the pool, and then he began CPR while the woman called 911. Getz performed chest compressions for about five minutes until the fire department arrived and took over the life-saving efforts. Despite Getz’s efforts, the girl died that evening at the hospital, but there was a silver lining: The family contacted Getz through Facebook to thank him and meet with him, and they told Getz that because of his efforts, the girl had survived on a ventilator long enough for her father to reach the hospital and see her while she was still alive. “That made me feel a lot better,” Getz said.

At a stop for gasoline for her postal truck in June, **Sherry Angel** spotted a woman trying to drag an unconscious man into a car. Angel, a member of Greensboro, NC Branch 630 since 2014, is trained in CPR. “Someone had to take ownership of the situation,” she said. Angel assessed the man’s pulse and breathing. The man was not breathing and his pulse was very faint. Angel asked bystanders to

call 911 as she began performing CPR, hoping to keep the man alive until paramedics arrived. “All of a sudden, he started breathing,” she said. “Then I heard a sweet sound.” Sirens announced the arrival of EMTs to take over. They determined that the man had overdosed; they administered Narcan and he woke up. The woman who had tried to drag the man into the car was his companion. Before returning to her route, Angel said that she told the now-conscious man that he had almost lost his life to drug abuse.

On Saturday, June 18, Houston, TX Branch 283 member **Rosie Taylor** heard crying coming from one of the apartments on her route. She knocked on the door and a woman came to answer it, holding a newborn baby. “She was speaking Spanish,” Taylor said, “and I didn’t know what she was saying.” She was gesturing frantically toward the baby. Taylor

knew a neighbor who spoke Spanish and English, so she ran to her apartment to summon the neighbor, who came to help and explained that the woman was crying “My baby’s dead!” Taylor called 911 and followed the instructions of the dispatcher, who told them to hold the baby sitting up and rub her neck to get her to breathe. The frantic mother followed the instructions, and the baby began breathing again. Paramedics arrived and took the baby to the hospital, and Taylor continued on her route. The carrier said she sees the thriving baby nearly every day on her route. **PR**



Rosie Taylor

“There’s a baby inside!” she yelled. A 1-year-old boy was strapped into a car seat in the back of the vehicle.

The fourth carrier in the group, **Jeremiah Grant**, had already begun to call 911, but the child made the call more urgent. With Ritchie relaying their location to Grant to tell the police dispatcher, Sperling looked after the child. Beu reached in and turned on the car’s hazard lights, while Sperling, concerned about the child’s safety, took the toddler out of the car and held him.

Chicago police already had been searching for the car with the child inside, and officers arrived quickly with the boy’s father. Sperling handed the boy over to the father and, after the four carriers gave their statements to police, they went back to the convention center floor.

Beu was previously recognized as a 2020 NALC Hero of the Year after he and another carrier from the same branch helped a lost, hungry man who was blind find his way home.

Child cries for help, carrier saves mother

On a hot Saturday morning in July, **Andrew Russell** of Denver, CO Branch

47 was trudging up a hill on his route when he spotted a car pulled over. He didn’t think anything of it until he heard a child screaming from the car, “My mother’s dead! My mother’s not moving!”

Russell ran to the car and found a woman unconscious in the driver’s seat. He tried to revive her but couldn’t. The car was still running, so he took the little girl who had screamed out of the car for her safety and called 911.

EMTs arrived quickly and were able to coax the woman to wake up, and they learned that she had taken fentanyl. The child, age 6, was soon united with a family member.

After calling his supervisor to report the incident, Russell continued on his route. “It was definitely a different start to the day,” he said. “It certainly could have been a lot worse.”

Missing girl back home thanks to carrier

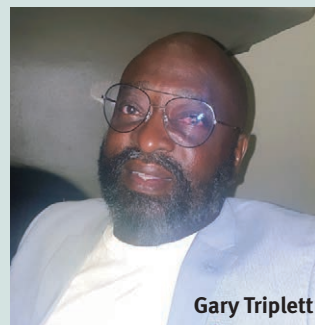
Caleb Fronk didn’t pay much attention to a report about a missing girl he saw on Facebook while on his break last June. He certainly didn’t expect to find her. But after his break, Fronk kept an eye out and spotted the 7-year-old

Neighborhood watch

In August, at the end of his workday, **Gary Triplett** of Baton Rouge, LA Branch 129 was driving his mail truck in rush-hour traffic on a six-lane highway when he spotted a small girl wandering in the middle of the road. As cars swerved to avoid her, Triplett, a 22-year carrier and former Army Reserves mem-

ber, took action. “Everybody else was panicking,” he said of other drivers. He stopped his truck in traffic and rushed to grab the toddler. Standing on the median with her in his arms, Triplett called police. The child’s mother was in a nearby beauty shop, and when she came outside, Triplett handed the child to

her. Police arrived to investigate, and they arrested the mother for improper supervision of a minor. Triplett said he had acted on instinct. “That’s what we do as letter carriers,” Triplett said. “We’re out here in the middle of a lot of dangerous situations—we’re like guardians out here.” **PR**



Gary Triplett

girl with autism wandering down the street alone.

Fronk, a city carrier assistant and Rochester, NY Branch 210 member, turned his truck around to help the little girl. He was surprised that nobody else had stopped to help.

The girl didn't seem to care about being lost and kept walking. "I tried to get her to stop," he said.

Fronk told her that her mother was looking for her, but that didn't work—"She said, 'OK, bye,' and kept going," Fronk said. So he offered her a seat in his mail truck, and she obliged.

Fronk called 911 and tried to distract the girl to keep her seated while he waited for police to arrive. The girl told him she was looking for her missing cat.

She was a long way from home, Fronk said, and not far from an interstate highway, so he was glad to have found her when he did. Police arrived with the girl's mother a few minutes later.

Fronk doesn't have children, but said that he knows that parents need people like him keeping an eye out in their neighborhoods. "I can only imagine the fear of missing a child," Fronk said.

Carrier saves family from rising floodwater

Delivering the mail on his route on a rainy July day, St. Louis, MO Branch 343 member **Darren Hale** spotted a family trapped inside their home by flood waters. The area was experiencing a storm that produced record rainfall amounts, causing flash floods and two deaths.

Cheryl Jackson's 11-year-old daughter had called her mother at work for help as water began to flood their home. Jackson had raced home, arriving just as Hale was on her street.

Hale leaped into action and helped

get Jackson's two children and their elderly grandfather out of the house to safety. The water, Hale said, was at knee level and rising.

Hale also rescued a neighbor's dog from the home next door.

"It's just crazy to me that somebody who doesn't even know me was like, 'I'm here for you. Don't worry about it.' He made me feel safe," Jackson told the local Fox news affiliate. She and her kids hugged Hale the next time they saw him on his route.

"I feel good knowing I helped," Hale said. "I'm just glad everybody's all right."

Spotting smoke, carrier rescues couple from fire

Joshua Cirrito was out on his route last June when he spotted smoke coming from an attic vent of a home.

Cirrito, a member of Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3, banged on the door. An elderly woman answered. She and her husband, Cirrito said, "were completely unaware" of the fire.

Cirrito helped her and her disabled husband leave the house and called 911, waiting until the fire department arrived to return to his route.

He checked on the couple's house later that day and learned that, though the house was damaged, firefighters were able to save it. The couple later sent him a thank-you card and called his supervisor.

"It felt pretty good" to save the couple's home and possibly their lives, Cirrito said. "They were very grateful." **PR**



Darren Hale

Eye on the elderly

On his route, Sparks, NV Branch 2778 member **Jason Sinski**, who has carried mail since 2013, heard a woman screaming, "Where are you?" Sinski ran toward the screams, which were coming from a customer's backyard. An elderly woman was trying to find her husband, who was calling out for help. Sinski located the man with his head trapped in a box holding wiring for a sprinkler system. The man had been working in the box and his head became tangled in the wires, with his face in a puddle of water. Sinski helped free the man. The grateful man said he had slipped and fell in the box and had been trapped for an hour. His wife had called 911, so Sinski stayed until paramedics arrived before continuing his route. "It's surreal when you find yourself in that situation," Sinski said. "It's really cool that you can help someone in their time of need." **PR**