

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.

Car fire no match for him

Boston, MA Branch 34 member **Dave Baldwin** had just parked his truck to do a loop in September when he heard screaming. A car with flames visible inside stopped near his truck—the screams were coming from the woman driving the car, who had dropped a cigarette. Baldwin leaped from the truck to help the woman, who was panicked and having trouble getting her seat belt loose. Baldwin freed her from the seat belt and pulled her out of the car.

"She was on fire," he said, adding, "I ripped her shirt off" because it appeared to be made of flammable material and was burning out of control. As other witnesses nearby came to help her, Baldwin turned to the car, which had come to rest near a home. He grabbed a garden hose at the home and put out the fire.

Firefighters arrived to tend to the fire and care for the woman, and Baldwin left. With minor burns on his hands, he took the rest of the workday off, treating the burns at home. He was back on the job the next day.

After three weeks in a burn unit, the woman wrote Baldwin a thank-you letter saying she had recovered.

Carrier saves woman from pit bull attack

On his route in October, 37-year carrier **Philip Moon** was in his mail truck when he heard a commotion. The carrier saw a customer with her two small dogs under attack from a large pit bull. Moon, a member of Amarillo, TX Branch 1037, jumped out to help.



Philip Moon

He managed to fight off the attacking dog and pull the woman and one of her dogs into his truck. The woman was bleeding badly from dog bites to her left leg. "The whole bottom of the floorboard was filling up with blood," he said. Moon called 911 and then took off his shirt to use to compress her wounds, which helped stop the bleeding.

"Then the dog came back and bit down on her other leg," he said. The pit bull forced its way into the partly closed door of the truck, forcing them both to fight off the dog as best they could. The woman's husband had heard the struggle and came to help. "Then the dog went after me," Moon said, biting his shoe and slightly injuring his ankle. "All this time, I'm talking to the 911 operator."

First responders arrived and animal control officers caught the dog while EMTs tended to the victim. Moon drove back to the post office, and that night, he visited the woman in the hospital, where he was told she had passed out twice from loss of blood. "You saved her twice," police responders told Moon—once from the dog and again from bleeding to death.

Moon doesn't consider his actions particularly heroic. "I'll be honest with

you—I was scared to death," he said. "I was just running on adrenaline."

"Knowing the people I work with, anybody would have done what I did," he added. "I don't consider myself a hero."

Where there's smoke...

Gary Powell, a 36-year carrier and an Army veteran, saw smoke while delivering to a duplex in Martin, TN, in October of 2019. Powell, a member of Memphis, TN Branch 27, wasn't alarmed. "I saw a wisp of smoke in front of me," he said. "I thought someone was grilling out."



Gary Powell

But when he moved to the other side, he saw more smoke and then flames through the window. Powell banged on the doors of both sides of the duplex and called 911. He was especially concerned for the woman who used a wheelchair and lived in the unit that was on fire.

The doorknob was very hot, so he went to a side door, where he found the woman trying to exit with her wheelchair—but it was lodged in the doorway. Powell helped the woman get out on her own feet, but she was screaming for her wheelchair, so Powell went inside to get it. "I breathed in some smoke, but not a whole lot," he said.

Firefighters arrived quickly and extinguished the flames, saving both sides of the duplex from total loss. After resting and calling his supervisor, Powell went back on his route. Though the fire occurred in 2019, the Postal Service only recently recognized

Emma McCarty and Mike Sala



Powell for his heroism following a delay in processing paperwork at his station during the pandemic.

Co-workers come to the aid of collapsed carrier

Yakima, WA Branch 852 member **Mike Sala** has no memory of collapsing on the workroom floor the morning of Saturday, Sept. 24.

“I was coming inside to grab another cart,” he said, “and then I’m having a conversation with a paramedic.”

His colleague **Stephanie O’Dell** heard a “thud” while casing her mail that morning. O’Dell, who has since left the Postal Service, called out “Are you OK?” to Sala, whose case was nearby.

Sala, a 24-year carrier, was not OK.

A rural carrier, Emma McCarty, found Sala on the floor and sounded the alarm. She and O’Dell rushed to his side and called 911. O’Dell, who had learned CPR in the Navy, tried to revive Sala with chest compressions. “He was turning blue,” she said, but after nearly 20 minutes of CPR, she knew it was working because he started making vocalizations and his skin color returned to normal. Exhausted, O’Dell let another postal employee take over CPR for a few minutes until EMTs arrived and took Sala to the hospital, where he was treated for a heart attack.

“I just did what any person would do,” O’Dell said. After Sala was on his way to the hospital, she recalls, “a police officer came out and said I saved his life. That was gratifying.”

Sala spent several days in the hospital before going home. He returned to work in December.

“I wouldn’t be here without her,” Sala said of O’Dell. “She saved my life. She’s my hero.”

Stephanie O’Dell



Carrier saves house and dog from fire

Sometimes, a letter carrier is a dog’s best friend. Enid, OK Branch 858 member and Army National Guard veteran **Damon Weber** has carried the mail since 2016. On his route on a windy day in December, he saw smoke near a home.

“On that day, the winds were 40-plus miles per hour,” Weber said. He followed the smoke to the back yard and found the source. The the wind had blown over a heater in a dog pen and started a fire—with a panicked dog locked inside. Even worse, the wind was blowing the fire toward the house and near propane tanks and gas cans stored next to it.

A neighbor, who Weber later learned was a retired firefighter, came to help and began dousing the fire with a hose, but the wind made the blaze difficult to quell.

“The dog was going crazy, and he was trying to get out,” Weber said. He pulled at the chain link fence of the pen and managed to give the dog room to squeeze out, but the dog was on a chain. He unhooked the chain and the dog ran for safety in the yard. The fire had heated the fence enough to cause minor burns on his hands through his gloves, Weber said.

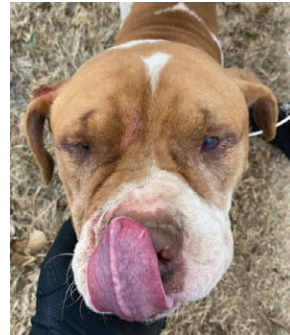
Firefighters arrived and put out the fire, and the dog’s owner came home and thanked Weber.

After the fire was under control and the dog had calmed down, he said, “the dog came up to me and he was my best friend ever.” Weber shrugged off the burns on his hands and continued on his route, returning later to take photos of the aftermath and of his new canine buddy.



Above: The Enid, OK fire site

Below: Damon Weber and his new best friend



This isn’t Weber’s first rescue on his route. In 2019, Weber helped two boys, a mother and baby out of a home full of smoke from a kitchen grease fire. **PR**

Eye on the elderly

On a hot day last summer in Knoxville, TN, **Justin Brannam** was walking his route and went up the driveway of the home of an elderly woman. He spotted her lying on the driveway, and thought at first that she was gardening, as she often was. But then he realized that she wasn’t moving or responding to his voice. Brannam, a member of Knoxville Branch 419, ran to his truck to get his phone and dial 911. He returned to the woman while waiting for first responders to arrive. “I just tended to her and made sure she was all right,” he said. An ambulance soon arrived and took the stricken woman to the hospital, and Brannam continued on his route. “It was just a good time for me to be there,” he said. The carrier later heard from the woman’s daughter that he probably saved the woman’s life. “If she had been out there any longer,” the daughter told him, “she would have died from the heat.” **PR**