



HEROES OF THE YEAR



NALC
President
Brian L. Renfroe

“We at the National Association of Letter Carriers are very privileged to represent over 280,000 active and retired city letter carriers employed by the United States Postal Service,” NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said as he welcomed a large audience to the NALC Heroes of the Year Awards luncheon held in Washington, DC, on March 27. “Our members are public servants, and we devote our professional lives to being of service to our communities. Not only do we provide the essential service of delivering the mail, but we also often act as the eyes and ears of our communities.”

Renfroe emphasized that letter carriers do this because of the great pride they take in the work that they do. “More often than not,” he said, “our

impact goes beyond just simply what our core mission is—and that’s delivering mail to the American people. No one knows our communities and our neighborhoods like letter carriers. We deliver on our routes six, and even seven, days a week. We get to know our customers.”

Because letter carriers are out in the community, the NALC president pointed out, many times carriers are the first to realize that something is not right on their routes. “We’re also often the first to step up and provide some level of help or assistance,” he said. “Today, we’re here to honor some very special letter carriers that have been selected as NALC’s Heroes of the Year. Because around this country, every single day, letter carriers perform heroic acts.”

The annual ceremony highlighted the special acts of courage and compassion performed by NALC members to improve—or save—lives along their routes. Attendees included the union’s resident national officers, NALC Headquarters staff, U.S. Postal Service executives, members of the Postal Regulatory Commission, representatives from the USPS Board of Governors, journalists, and many others from the labor and postal community, including leaders from the American Postal Workers Union, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association, the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, and the National Association of Postal Supervisors.

Renfro invited Postmaster General Louis DeJoy to the podium, where DeJoy lauded letter carriers for their service as part of the Postal Service’s role in the nation’s critical infrastruc-

ture, especially during difficult times.

“Often, a letter carrier’s role may not end when the day is over or the job is done. It may transcend into their private lives,” DeJoy said. “Sometimes our carriers are called to go above and beyond the call of duty when something unpredictable happens. Sometimes it requires an incredible act of heroism when our carrier happens to be in a life-altering defining moment and follows his or her instinct to do the right thing above all else. That carrier, despite the personal risk involved, acts selflessly and helps others, making that carrier a hero.”

DeJoy noted that letter carriers play a significant part in the lives of the customers they serve, and he praised the Heroes of the Year for rising to the occasion and acting with courage, decisiveness and urgency. “You epitomize the ideal of a public servant, and your actions reflect the very best expectations of the Postal Service



Postmaster General Louis DeJoy

The Heroes of the Year event was held on March 27.





The NALC Heroes of the Year

and of the country,” the postmaster general said.

“I would like to recognize and congratulate the NALC Heroes of 2024,” he added. “I am proud to be your colleague. May we all live up to the example you set.”

Returning to the podium, President Renfroe explained that the ceremony would be presented in a different style this year, featuring an interview format to give attendees the opportunity to hear the stories directly from the honorees. “I think that it will really come across as impactful and display the passion that our people have—in particular, these heroes,” he said.

Renfroe thanked the panel of independent judges who selected the He-

roes from dozens of nominees, whose stories of heroism and community service were published over the course of 2023 in this magazine, as has been done since 1974. This year’s judges were Erkeisha Terry, director of labor engagement at United Way Worldwide; Brea Ellis, union service representative at Union Plus; and Joanne Johanson, program specialist at The Trust, powered by the National Football League Players Association.

He then individually invited each Hero to the stage and spoke with them before presenting each honoree with an award certificate and a lapel pin. The stories of the Heroes are found in the following pages of this issue of *The Postal Record*.

“There’s one thing that’s always constant with these heroes: They don’t think what they did was any big deal. I think that very much exemplifies the spirit that the city carriers that we are privileged to represent display day in, day out,” Renfroe said in concluding the event. “I think I can speak for everyone in the room in sharing the inspiration that we take from what we just heard from each of you heroes.”

Video of the Heroes of the Year event is available on NALC’s YouTube channel at youtube.com/ThePostalRecord. **PR**

NALC HEROES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Following this year’s Heroes of the Year Awards ceremony, news coverage of the ceremony and honorees was extensive, with stories running in a number of print and online outlets across the country, including Federal News Network, the *Amarillo Globe-News*, *The Buffalo News*, the *Arizona Daily Star*, New York’s *The Post-Star*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Yahoo!, USPS Link and 21st Century Postal Worker.

Broadcast outlets that reported on the event included Amarillo, TX’s ABC affiliate KVII-TV, CBS affiliate KFDA-TV, NBC affiliate KAMR-TV and Fox affiliate KCIT-TV, and Baton Rouge, LA’s ABC affiliate WBRZ-TV, as well as multiple national radio airings in outlets such as 24/7 News Source and American Urban Radio Networks and on state radio networks including Colorado Public, Florida News, Louisiana News, Michigan News, Oklahoma News, Texas State, and TownSquare Media (New Jersey) Florida.

PARTNERSHIP AWARD

THE BETTER ANGELS OF OUR HUMAN NATURE NEW YORK, NY BRANCH 36

New York, NY Branch 36 carrier **Earnest Twomley's** chance encounter with a child on his route a decade ago led him to organize toy drives every Christmas for needy children.

Seeing a mother he knew from his route emerging from a taxi with her three children, he noticed that one of the children, a little girl, was in distress.

"She's screaming in the middle of the street," he recalled. "I went over there to see what the issue was because I have three kids myself."

He offered to help by delivering the little girl to her home.

"I said, 'Have you ever been delivered to your apartment by a mailman?' And she just looked at me and started laughing. So, I picked her up, carried her a couple of flights of stairs, put her on a couch, and that was it."

But then a neighbor who saw what he had done told him the significance of his kind act.

"One of the neighbors said, 'That was a real nice thing you did.' I said, 'What? Stop a little girl from crying?'" The neighbor told Twomley that the little girl had a brain tumor and had been returning from New York's Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center after a round of treatment.

Wanting to do something more for the family, the next time he saw the mother while out on his route, he asked her for letters to Santa Claus from the children. He then asked some fellow carriers to help fulfill the wish list, and everyone pitched in.

"So, picture a grown man going into the American Girl doll store and picking out the stuff that she wanted!" Twomley said.



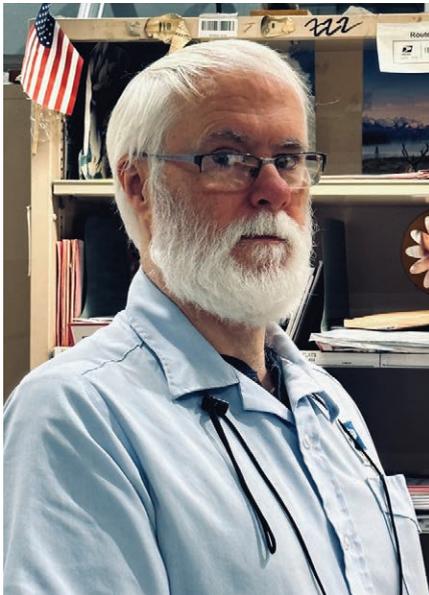
Twomley and several other carriers invited the family to get the presents under the Christmas tree in the lobby of his station in Manhattan. Somehow a local TV news station heard about it, and when the story aired an idea was born.

"The newscaster called us 'the Better Angels.'" That inspired Twomley and fellow Branch 36 members **David Correa** and **Heriberto Rodriguez**, along with postal employee Don Daggett, to form a nonprofit group called the Better Angels of Our Human Nature to bring the spirit of that first generous toy drive to many more children.

Postal employees at several stations in New York donate toys each year for the effort, each filling up a postal container with toys.

Of course, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without Santa Claus. A few years ago, after spotting fellow Branch 36 carrier **Daniel Weber** growing a beard, Twomley hatched a plan, asking Weber to let it grow out until Christmas. "So he's our official Santa Claus" each year, Twomley said.

Heriberto Rodriguez (l), David Correa (c) and Earnest Twomley explain how the carriers started their efforts to give back to the New York community.



Daniel Weber

The group's outreach has expanded far beyond that first family by serving children with disabilities in schools and underprivileged children in women's shelters. Last Christmas, the Better Angels provided gifts for 290 children at the New Hope Transitional Housing family shelter in the Bronx and for 153 kids at PS 186X Walter Damrosch School, a Bronx special education school.

This year they are busy collecting even more toys for PS 186X. "We have 800 kids with disabilities in the school where we're going to fill the gymnasium up with toys and everything else for them," he said. "What we usually do is get the toys and put them in a room. The kids come in; they pick whatever they want."

The Better Angels piggyback on the postal network to retrieve toys from donation boxes in several New York stations.

Twomley said the satisfaction of seeing the joy his work brings children is its own reward. He still remembers a mother who called and pleaded with him to keep a toy giveaway at a shelter open late one day, because she was late bringing her daughter.

"She comes running in, and she's out of breath," he said. The woman was parked in the street because she couldn't find parking, so someone went to watch her car and others brought her daughter, Mia, who used a wheelchair, inside.

"Her face lit up because we left all the toys that we were going to leave for them anyway in that room. And I said, 'Mia, just pick anything that you want. It's yours,' " he said.

"Her mother started crying, and for everybody in that room, there was not a dry eye in the place. And she picked up her toys, and we made her day. And for that moment, that moment is exactly why we do that."

In selecting the foursome for NALC's Partnership Award, the judges said they were impressed at how the carriers took advantage of the postal network and their ambition to do more. "They keep growing," they said. "The sky is the limit for them. It grew because it inspired the other people within the branch, like the people who were doing relays. They were just probably trying to figure out, 'How can we help?' And now they are helping."

And the girl who was "delivered"? "That was a core memory," the judges said. "You know she's going to remember that forever." **PR**



HONORABLE MENTION

TIMMYE CROWLEY BILLINGS, MT BRANCH 815

After 21 years on the job, Timmye Crowley knows her customers well. Out on her route on a non-scheduled day on a cold, icy evening in Billings, MT, in November 2022, Crowley got out of her vehicle on her mounted route to bring an elderly customer's mail to his door so he wouldn't have to come to his box in the bad weather.

"When I walked up to the door, it was late, dark, and I could see him inside sleeping, and I could hear all of his smoke detectors going off," the Billings Branch 815 member said. She knew he was hard of hearing and the smoke alarm wasn't waking him.

"His house was full of smoke, and he was leaned [back] in his chair, sleeping," she added.

In bestowing one of NALC's Honorable Mention honors on Crowley, judges noted how compelling the story was. "She was so aware of her customers on her route," they said. "She [didn't] say, 'Oh, that person will hear it'—no, because she remembered this person's hard of hearing."

"I started pounding on the door, kicking it and ringing the doorbell," Crowley said. The man finally woke up and came to the door, still unaware of the fire: "He had no idea what was going on."

The carrier called 911 and brought the man to safety. "I got him outside, away from the smoke," she added.

At the door, she noticed the fire was simply a plug-in cooking appliance with burning food inside, so she went inside and unplugged it. The man had been asleep for about 20 minutes and had left his dinner cooking.

After the fire department arrived to take over the situation, Crowley returned to her route and followed up with the man's family the next day to check on him.



Timmye Crowley receives her certificate from President Renfro.

"Timmye's part of this community," judges said during deliberations. "She's basically their neighbor at this point."

Sen. Steve Daines of Montana later honored Crowley for her actions by placing a tribute to her in the Congressional Record, stating, in part: "Thanks to Timmye's efforts, a potentially fatal outcome was avoided. It is my distinct honor to recognize Timmye Crowley for her passion and willingness to go the extra mile serving the Billings community. Keep up the great work, Timmye. You make Montana proud!"

Despite the effusive praise, the carrier downplayed her actions. "I didn't feel like a hero," Crowley said. "I feel like I was just doing my job." **PR**

HONORABLE MENTION

BRITTANY GILES

WEST PALM BEACH, FL BRANCH 1690



Brittany Giles receives her award from President Renfro.

Brittany Giles was leaving work one day in December 2022 when she saw her manager doing something different. “My boss was making these super cute envelopes and stuffing them with a bunch of stuff,” the Port St. Lucie, FL, letter carrier said. They were responses from kids’ letters to Santa. “There were really cute letters she typed up, acknowledging that these kids wrote to Santa, and she put in colored pencils, crayons, coloring books, candy canes, whatever.”

Giles, a six-year letter carrier with West Palm Beach Branch 1690, immediately asked her manager if there were more. “I saw the bag and I started reading them, and a lot of them broke my heart. There were a lot of super-sad letters,” she said. But one stood out.

Camron King, then 10 years old, asked Santa for some toys and to have his family “come together and to have fun and to not get bullied.”

Giles knew she had to get involved. “As a childhood cancer survivor, granting a child’s wish is dear to my heart and comes naturally,” Giles said.

“When I read that, you know, I’m a mom. I have two little kids. I’m super big on family. I have always taught my children to be as nice as possible to everyone, especially the struggling children at school that are being picked on. Those are the ones that you want to go make friends with, right?” she said. “This was [more than] a year ago now, and I can still tell you exactly what the letter said because it stuck with me so much, because his letter was about how he wanted his family. He didn’t want to be bullied. I mean, it broke my heart.”

Giles left her post office that evening and went to the return address on the Santa letter—the residence of Camron’s grandparents, who looked at this letter carrier like she was strange. After explaining that she had received Camron’s letter and wanted to know what toys he would like (he hadn’t included anything specific in his letter), the grandfather began crying.

“You have no idea how much this means to me,” he told her. He also called Camron’s mother, Amy, who brought the boy to meet Giles.

“He normally goes to Grandma and Grandpa’s house after school, and then he had his cousin help him write the letter,” Amy King told WPTV, the West Palm Beach NBC affiliate. Camron was born without his left hand and has a muscle nerve disorder, Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, which “affects his nerves and muscles in his legs and



arms, so as he gets older it kind of deteriorates.”

“They said he wouldn’t be able to walk, but he’s walking, running, playing soccer. I’m very proud of him. I always say, he’s my little miracle baby,” King added.

When Giles—a cancer survivor who was told (incorrectly) that she would never have children—met Camron, she told him, “I work for Santa and I read your letter, but you didn’t say what type of toys you want. So, he sent me down here to get a list and bring it back to him.”

The boy’s face lit up and he gave her a list of gifts for him and his family. Giles wrote down his ideas, but she left with a few more that hadn’t made it onto the list.

She reached out to St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office Deputies Ethan Kirk and Rebecca Ireland. They all pooled their own money to buy the gifts on the list. And Deputy Kirk told WPTV that he had “asked [Camron] if there’s anything I can do for him, whether it’s go to his school, talk with his school resource deputy and just try to figure out a plan and try to get this stopped.” The police ultimately held an anti-bullying assembly at Camron’s school and spoke to every kid there.

After local news covered the story, it began to take on a life of its own. The national organization Bikers Against Bullying contacted Giles and wanted to do something. They rented out a Chuck E. Cheese restaurant and arcade and hosted a party for Camron and his family. Just as he had asked in his letter, he got to come together with his family and have some fun.

“It was a great thing to see how many people truly cared and wanted to get involved and be a part of this,” Giles said.



Camron’s party put on by Bikers Against Bullying

She encourages everyone to help in their community. “I’m sure every community or city has a mayor, and if you don’t have anything that your office is a part of, you can always go through that way and try and get involved with your city. But, especially after COVID, things are rough for a lot of people right now,” she said.

As for Camron, the carrier is still a part of his life, seeing him and his family regularly. “This is my extended family at this point,” she said. “Community is everything. Family is everything. And it doesn’t have to be by blood.”

“Camron is not going to live a long life,” Giles said. “As he gets older, his body will start shutting down. He does not retain information. He does not remember a lot of things. But the fact that I could give that kid a merry Christmas,

even if it only lasted in his mind for a few moments, it was worth it.”

In selecting Giles as one of NALC’s honorees, the judges noted how she went above and beyond. One judge said of Giles, “I had to take a pause” while reading because it was so emotional, adding, “Because he is not going to remember that she did this for him. So, she didn’t do it to get his admiration or anything.”

In accepting her award, the carrier said that a little compassion goes a long way. “My fortunate background has taught me values such as empathy, which has guided many decisions throughout adulthood, including how to best serve others,” Giles said. “We all have opportunities, and we can all make a difference. Camron is the hero, and I am fortunate enough to be his friend.” **PR**

THE VIGILANT AWARD

TOMMY HOWE
FALL RIVER, MA BRANCH 51



Tommy Howe receives his certificate from President Renfroe.

“I knew something was wrong,” said Fall River, MA Branch 51 member **Tommy Howe** when he saw a man sitting by the road with a push lawnmower resting on his legs.

The carrier was nearing the end of his route in Taunton on a hot day in July 2023 and initially thought the man was feeling the effects of the heat. It looked serious enough that Howe stopped to help the man.

“I rushed over to him,” Howe said. “I tried to get him to stand up, and within, I would say, 30 seconds, he went unconscious. His lips were blue, so I knew he wasn’t getting oxygen, and I knew it was serious.”

Howe, a carrier since 2007, didn’t see anyone else around but he knew that the man needed help. He decided to lay the man down, then quickly ran to his truck to grab his phone.

As he did so, he spotted a pair of roofers working on a house nearby and

yelled to them to assist. He took the lead and called 911. “I had one kid go up the street and wait for the ambulance, and the other one I grabbed and said, ‘You’re coming with me,’ ” he said, giving him his water jug to offer to the stricken man.

Because the man’s lips were blue, “I know it was a matter of minutes” before he could die, Howe said. “We basically kept him alive until the ambulance got there.”

Responding EMTs thought that the man might have had a heart attack, so they got loaded him into the ambulance. But it was a different story.

“One of the guys opened up his mouth and saw that his tongue was exploded,” Howe said. “So, I knew right away that he had allergic reaction to something. And they stuck him with an epi [pen]. And he came to.” The man ended up having had a severe allergic reaction to insect stings.

A couple of weeks later, Howe spoke to the grateful man, named Robert. “He said he doesn’t remember anything for four hours after that, so he was in bad shape,” he said. “But I thank God that he was [later] walking around. If I wasn’t there, within minutes, I don’t think he would be around. I’m glad somebody was there. It just happened to be me.”

In naming Howe one of NALC’s Vigilant Heroes, judges praised his leadership. “It’s literally a class on bystander intervention,” they said. “He jumped into action, delegating to all the people around him. He used the resources he had. He was just knowledgeable and in control of the whole situation.”

Howe’s customers presented him with two cards, and the city of Taunton gave him a certificate of appreciation. While the carrier said he’s honored to be recognized, he doesn’t think of himself as a hero. “I just happened to be at the right place at the right time,” Howe said. “I reacted.” **PR**

THE VIGILANT AWARD

KYLE MAILMAN WICHITA, KS BRANCH 201

Kyle Mailman had just started a new route along the Arkansas River in the northwest part of Wichita, KS, in April 2023. “I had one house with a recessed entryway, a mail slot on the door, and I got everything ready,” the Branch 201 member said, adding that as he got to the base step, he could smell the unmistakable odor of natural gas. He had heard recent reports of some gas leaks and was concerned.

“I go up to the door, and I hit the floor,” the two-year carrier said. “I started to choke a little bit with how concentrated it was there in the entryway. My first thought was, if it’s coming from inside the house, this is really, really bad. They might already be unconscious or dead inside.”

He knocked on the door rather feverishly, and thankfully a resident named Mary was conscious and answered. The carrier began talking with her. “I’d had natural gas poisoning 20 years prior, so I knew a little bit about it,” Mailman said. “We started going over the symptoms of it. She was irritable, she was fatigued, she was having trouble comprehending very basic things that normally she could.”

Concerned, the carrier told her, “Get out of the house, get everybody out now. Just leave the front door open, get the gas company over here. They’re going to care more about you reporting a leak than me.”

Satisfied that the situation was taken care of for the moment, Mailman continued delivering mail while waiting for the gas company to investigate.

Gas company representatives sniffed the property with their gas-detecting device. A significant leak was found outside the door, and upon further inspection, they learned that a gas valve for a fireplace was leaking heavily into the house. “That explained the symptoms,” Mailman said, adding that everyone turned out to be OK.

As it turned out, construction of a new bridge about an eighth of a mile away and spanning the Arkansas River, had caused gophers along the riverbank to move into residential areas due to the impact of driving the support pylons into the ground. The gophers dug long tunnels underground, and when they encountered gas lines, they often chewed through them, causing dangerous leaks, Mailman said, adding, “The gophers had chewed through the gas line right out front of her house.”

For going above and beyond, the judges named Mailman one of NALC’s Vigilant Heroes. “He was aware of the neighborhood issues and then took action when he was presented with a problem,” they said.

“To me, it’s not really a big deal,” Mailman said about his actions. “I hope everyone out there would be looking after each other.” **PR**

Kyle Mailman receives his award from President Renfro.



HUMANITARIAN

HARRY BITTNER
CAMDEN, NJ MERGED BRANCH 540



Harry Bittner receives his certificate from President Renfroe.

and walked around with a bucket to collect money from concertgoers.

Within a week or so, the band and Santa visited the houses of the selected families and dispersed gift cards and presents.

“It became much more tailored to the families that we were helping. It kind of grew into this thing where we’d be able to get information on the families, like how many kids, what are their ages, what are their sizes,” he said, adding that the bandmates’ spouses shop for the kids’ clothes and toys, and then they’d all wrap the items. “It was a huge success,” Bittner said of the 2020 endeavor—so much so “that we had every intention of doing it every year.”

They had just set out preparing for the 2021 show that October when Bittner went in for routine blood work. “Next thing you know, I’m casing mail in the morning. I get a phone call from the nurse, and she says, ‘Your liver enzymes are through the roof, and we’ve got to figure out why,’ ” the 29-year letter carrier said. “And that just kind of set off this chain of events where I had to get all these different tests.

“It was an ultrasound and then an MRI, and I find out I have this tumor,” he continued, adding that after undergoing a colonoscopy he was diagnosed with Stage IV colorectal cancer. “I’m reading, and I’m thinking, ‘Oh my God, how did I go from perfectly healthy a month ago to, man, I might have three or five years?’ You know, that starts all setting in.”

“Around the same time, we’re doing Year 2 of the Christmas gig. And it’s just under this shroud of uncertainty and fear and what’s going to happen next. I know that chemo is coming, and I just kept thinking, ‘Boy, I hope it

Harry Bittner picked up a bass guitar when he was 15 and has loved playing ever since.

Fast-forward to 2019, when the Camden, NJ Merged Branch 540 member joined a five-member cover band called uNGLuED.

As COVID-19 was spreading and venues were shutting down, the band decided to do a traveling Christmas show by driving around a truck with 20-foot utility trailer to a few locations, and the band would then play Christmas carols on the back to spread some cheer.

“There was a bit of a fear that maybe we were inviting trouble on ourselves, asking people to gather to come see us, even though it was outside,” Bittner said, adding that he asked his bandmates, “‘Why don’t we make this a fundraising thing, too?’ Nobody’s going to give us grief over that.”

The carrier was put in touch with a retired prosecutor who works with a

charity in South Jersey and helped find families for the band to assist with the money collected.

“And boy, did she ever,” Bittner said. “I mean, you hear these nightmare, horrible stories about everything from people that had lost their jobs and just were hurting for money with little kids to a woman that was a victim of domestic violence and kind of out on her own.”

The first year they played four stops. “We would tow this huge trailer decked out in lights and with a tree on it to a couple of different neighborhoods where we knew it wouldn’t be an issue,” Bittner said, including at a school parking lot and at a Veterans of Foreign Wars building. Bittner’s friend, Joe Popow, whom he called “the most authentic Santa you’ve ever seen in your life” accompanied them. He also recruited his younger of two daughters, Alyssa, who dressed as an elf and handed out candy canes to children

doesn't start until after the Christmas gig,' he added. "I didn't want to let my bandmates down. I didn't want to let the people down that were going to be on the receiving end of these gifts."

Fortunately, he was able to fully participate in the annual festivities. "It was even a bigger success than the first year. More people turned out, more money was raised, more families were helped," Bittner said.

They continued to collect cash, sometimes gift cards, and also PayPal donations at each stop. After receiving help from the retired prosecutor the first year with selecting families, the band was able to start finding them on their own through word of mouth.

One of his favorite memories from the endeavor was when the band was playing a gig and a man approached them and said they had helped him and his family the first year, when they were in a tough spot. He had then gotten a new job and was doing better, so he wanted to offer a donation for another family in need.

"That was really cool, because that was like, we've made a difference in these people's lives, and now they're appreciative, and they're here to support us as a band—but more importantly, they're here to pay it forward and give it to somebody else who's now down on their luck."

Bittner began cancer treatment in January 2022, including chemotherapy, radiation and a surgery during which surgeons removed 60 percent of his liver and a section of his colon. In addition, "I had my gallbladder removed, hernia repaired, and I ended up with an ileostomy bag for nine weeks," he said.

After a scan in December 2022, "they found a tiny little piece of cancer in



uNGLuED on its trailer, ready to perform

my common bile duct," he continued. "And there again, the first thing I'm thinking is, 'I don't know when surgery is going to be, but I hope I can get this Christmas gig in,' and I find out the surgery is going to be February. We did Christmas show No. 3, and again—bigger, better, more money, more families."

On more than one occasion, they've helped somebody who's fighting cancer and having a hard time providing for their kids, Bittner said, adding, "I'm in that unique situation where when we go out to these people and we give them gifts for their kids, I can also give these people a hug and say, 'Keep fighting. You're going to beat it. I beat it. You'll beat it.'"

The carrier and his bandmates performed their fourth annual charity show on Dec. 9, 2023, and helped multiple families, including one who lost everything in a house fire, even their dogs. He estimates that they've raised \$15,000 to \$20,000 since they began. "It's pretty humbling and it's very rewarding to help these people and give them a better Christmas and stuff," he said.

Bittner said of their fundraising, "You just do it because it's the right thing to do. While it's been a rough two years for my family, there's people out there that have it worse."

On a personal note, "things are looking up. There's no sign of cancer right now," Bittner said. "Being able to do all this stuff with the band really helped me. Every minute I learned a

song or played a song or played a show or whatever was a minute that I wasn't thinking about cancer. That was a real gift to me."

The judges were impressed by Bittner's efforts, naming him NALC's Humanitarian of the Year. "He was in need—he could have tapped out and nobody would have blamed him," they said. "He helped in such a creative way, using the skills that he has, the connections he has as a band. He was able to just bring community together to get this done."

Bittner emphasized that he didn't act alone. "I want to acknowledge my bandmates, too," he said, giving a shout-out to vocalist Wally Pratz, guitarists Bob Walker and Jim Incollingo, and drummer Ryan Cathrall. "The five of us together did this. You don't have to ask these guys twice."

His eldest daughter, Haley, whose wedding Bittner presided over in 2021, gave birth to a baby girl in January, and the carrier and his wife, Joan, are enjoying being grandparents. Indeed, he's thought of his legacy: "I want my kids, and my grandkids eventually, to have something to remember."

And, Bittner adds, "I want people to go, 'Hey, you know what? This dude, he wasn't feeling great and he looked like hell, but he bundled up and put hand warmers in his pocket and jumped on a trailer to play Christmas carols to help out other people that weren't doing so good,'" he added. "That's what it's about for me. That's why I do it." **PR**

EASTERN REGION HERO

TIM MARTIN
BUFFALO-WESTERN NY BRANCH 3



Tim Martin receives his award from President Renfro and shows off his cape (below).



Turning a corner while delivering packages on New Year's Eve in 2023, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Tim Martin** saw a car on fire in front of a mobile home. Some neighbors were trying to put out the fire by throwing snow on it, but Martin noticed that the technique was not working. Other neighbors were filming the fire with their phones.

But then he realized that the fire was spreading. "Within a minute or two," the carrier said, the blaze "went from engulfed to raging. It started melting the siding of the trailer and starting the trailer on fire."

Knowing that an elderly resident with breathing problems lived there, Martin asked the neighbors if they had called 911 and if the woman was home. They said yes to both—but kept filming.

Martin knew he had to act fast. The fire was blocking the front door, so he rushed to the back of the trailer. He

pushed the back door open, but it was held shut with bungee cord due to some recent windstorms. "Luckily, I'm skinny enough to squeeze through," Martin said. He found the home filling with smoke and the woman, who was disoriented, looking frantically for her shoes.

"Let's get you outside," he told her as he helped her leave the house with her purse and dog. He stuck with her despite her needing to move slowly due to breathing problems caused by COPD. "I pushed her, helped her, nudged her down to the back door and down the steps," Martin said.

First responders had arrived, and Martin helped the woman find an EMT who could give her oxygen. To avoid blocking the fire vehicles that were arriving at the scene, he left in his truck to continue his route, but not before other residents had caught wind of his actions and called the post office to notify them of Martin's good deeds.

The carrier returned a few days later and learned that the woman was all right and had been able to move back into the home.

In recognition of his heroic actions, his supervisor coined a slogan for Martin: "I deliver bills and save lives," and even made him a superhero cape. It was all in fun, but Martin said he doesn't feel like a hero.

"I just think I'm just a regular guy," he said. "I was just happy that I could help."

The judges were impressed by Martin's quick action and determination despite the many obstacles, and they selected him as NALC's Eastern Region Hero. "It's so brave for someone to see a fire and go *into* it," they said. "He didn't let any of the barriers stop him. He pried the door open, he squeezed through the bungee cord, pushed his way in—that's not something everybody would do." **PR**

CENTRAL REGION HERO

DOMINIC JACK

BATON ROUGE, LA BRANCH 129

“Right after I delivered the mail, I heard a ‘pop,’ ” Dominic Jack said as he performed a loop on his route in White Castle, LA, one day in January 2023. “I thought it was a transformer going up.” Checking the back of a house where he heard the sound, he saw smoke and suspected there was a fire since they don’t have a chimney.

The two-year carrier, a member of Baton Rouge Branch 129, knew there were children living in the house, so he called 911 as he rushed to help.

“I could hear somebody screaming,” he said.

He saw a toddler in the back yard, afraid to move. He coaxed the boy to come to him to reach safety. Jack then encountered a teenage girl at the front and convinced her not to go back inside to retrieve her phone. After rescuing two more children, a neighbor told him their grandmother was in the house. He went through the back door of the burning house and found her near the door, crawling to safety. Jack picked her up and took her to the front of the house with the children.

When he was sure all four children and the grandmother were safe, Jack went to the next-door neighbor’s home to warn them because he knew there were elderly people living there, and then alerted the neighbors on the other side. The house on fire was completely engulfed by the flames, but the others were not harmed—but more importantly, nobody was killed or injured.

“Due to the quick thinking of this carrier we, and several of our neighbors, were able to get out of our houses safely and before the firefighters had

arrived on the scene,” one elderly neighbor wrote to the post office. “Carrier Dominic is definitely an asset to the Postal Service and the community!”

“Even after he saved those people, he was still looking out for anyone around just to make sure everyone was safe,” the judges observed before naming Jack NALC’s Central Region Hero. “He used all his skills—first to coax a small child, another to convince a teen to leave her phone, and then to go in the house and carry out the grandmother.”

“It was just an instant reaction,” a modest Jack said of his heroic efforts. “I just did what I would do any day.” **PR**

Dominic Jack receives his certificate from President Renfro.



WESTERN REGION HERO

RANDY FIELDS
BOULDER, CO BRANCH 642



Randy Fields receives his award from President Renfroe for his actions when a car crashed into his post office (below).



“It was a normal, cozy, easy-going Monday morning. No chaos whatsoever,” Randy Fields said of being in the Valmont Post Office in Boulder, CO, on a July 2023 morning just before disaster struck.

“I heard a big crash and saw glass exploding into the post office,” he said. A car had crashed into the building. He ran toward it and watched as the driver tried to back out, then move forward, then back out again. As other co-workers tried to stop the woman from moving the car, Fields heard someone moaning in pain.

“I turned the corner and saw a man on all fours,” the Boulder Branch 642 member said. “Blood was pulsating from a wound on his left arm.” The car had struck him and pinned him to a counter. The man, he later learned, was a postal customer named William Coffin.

Fields, who has carried the mail since 2005, took off his belt and used it as a tourniquet, with the help of another postal customer. After multiple attempts and readjustments, they managed to stop the bleeding, but Coffin had lost a large

amount of blood already and was slipping in and out of consciousness, so they talked to him to try to keep him awake.

“I was scared he was going to die,” Fields said. “[We] sat there and wrenched on his arm, just waiting for the police, the paramedics and the fire department to show up, which seemed like an eternity.”

The man was seriously injured and when EMTs arrived, they took him to the hospital. Fields and his co-workers managed to go out on their routes that day.

Coffin survived and eventually returned home. “Mr. Coffin sustained a whole list of injuries,” Field added, including “a lacerated artery in his left arm, 16 broken ribs, fractured tibia separated from his knee, both ACLs and MCLs torn in both knees, a shattered pelvis, collapsed lung and dislocated shoulder.”

Though Coffin will have to undergo more surgeries and rehabilitation, “in two years, he’s going to make a full recovery,” Fields added.

Because of the carrier’s heroism, judges had an easy time naming Fields NALC’s Western Region Hero. “Without his help, [Coffin] would *not* have survived,” they said of the situation.

Despite multiple accolades, the carrier is reluctant to be called a hero. “I initially just thought it was something that everyone would do for another human being,” he said.

To thank Fields for helping to save his life, Coffin had him over for dinner. “The emotions were incredible,” Fields said, “as we relived every moment for a solid two hours. We shared memories of everything that happened that day, from him telling me that he could feel every single bone in his body just crush one at a time, to sitting on the ground on all fours thinking about giving up.”

But, Fields said, no one gave up that day: “He didn’t, I didn’t, we didn’t.” **PR**

NATIONAL HERO

PHILIP MOON

AMARILLO, TX BRANCH 1037

A commotion caught the attention of 37-year carrier **Philip Moon** while he was in the mail truck on his route one day in October 2023. The carrier, who's had the same route for 27 years, saw a customer he knew with her two small dogs being attacked by a larger dog.

"I jumped out of my truck and went to help," said the Amarillo, TX Branch 1037 member, "and I was able to get the dog off of her by beating on it with my hand on its head." One of her dogs ran away and the dog chased it, giving Moon a chance to help.

With the woman bleeding badly from bites to her left leg, he pulled her and her other dog into his truck. "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.

The attacking dog forced its way into the partly closed door of the truck. "Then the dog came back and bit down on her other leg," he said. Moon and the wounded woman fought off the dog as best they could.

The woman's husband heard the struggle and came to help. "Then the dog went after me," biting his shoe and slightly injuring his ankle, Moon said. "All this time, I'm talking to the 911 operator."

Moon and the husband finally got the dog to stop attacking. "Between the two of us, we were able to beat him off a second time by kicking him and hitting him on the head," he said. First responders arrived and animal control officers caught the attacking dog while EMTs tended to the victim.

That night, he visited the woman in the hospital, where he was told that 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."

In naming Moon NALC's National Hero of the Year, the judges said they were impressed that the carrier had kept his cool while talking to 911 dispatchers, struggling with the dog and helping a severely bleeding woman all at the same time. "He was multitasking," they said. "There was so much going on."

Moon insists his heroics were simply a result of good timing. "Knowing the people I work with, anybody would have done what I did," he added. "I know I'm receiving this award for being a hero. I don't consider myself a hero. I'm just very grateful and honored and thankful that I was in a place where I could be of some assistance to somebody in need." **PR**

Philip Moon receives his certificate from President Renfroe.

