

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS

HEROES OF THE YEAR



“**O**ur union, the National Association of Letter Carriers, very proudly represents over 300,000 active and retired city letter carriers who proudly work for 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 25. “Our members are public servants. And as

all postal employees do, we devote our professional lives to serving our communities. And as we’ll hear today, not only is that service provided in the form of delivering mail and packages, essential services, but also in our role as the eyes and ears of our communities.”

Renfroe emphasized that letter carriers look out for their communities because they are proud of their efforts and of the role they play. “Letter carriers take a lot of pride in the work that we do,” he said. “And very often, as we celebrate here every single year, the service that we provide goes far beyond delivering the mail.”

Because letter carriers are out in the community, the NALC president pointed out, carriers often are the first to notice when something is out of the ordinary on their routes. “There’s really no other people across America that know all of our communities like letter carriers do,” Renfroe said. “We’re out there six days—and often seven days—a week, and we get to know our customers. We also know when something is not right. We know when something is not normal and are often in a position to be the first to step up. And today we are honored to have the opportunity to recognize a special group of people as our Heroes of the union.”

Renfroe thanked the panel of independent judges who selected the nine Heroes from numerous nominees, whose stories of heroism and com-

munity service were published over the course of 2025 in this magazine, as has been done since 1974. This year’s judges were Brea Ellis, union service representative at Union Plus; Don Havard, business manager at the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 99; and Kayla Warner, executive assistant to the international secretary-treasurer at the Amalgamated Transit Union.

The annual ceremony highlighted the special acts of courage and compassion performed by NALC members to save or improve lives along their routes. Attendees included the union’s resident national officers, NALC Headquarters staff, U.S. Postal Service leaders, members of the Postal Regulatory Commission, a representative from the USPS Board of Governors, journalists, and many others from the labor and postal community, including the presidents from the American Postal Workers Union, the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, and the United Postmasters and Managers of America.

Renfroe invited AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler to the stage, where she lauded the letter carrier heroes for their inspiration. “This past year, our letter carriers and federal workers have been tested in unimaginable ways,” Shuler said. “So, these stories bring us hope and so much pride. I know that’s how I feel. My heart is just swelling when I read of the incredible contributions,

NALC
President
Brian L.
Renfroe





because we as workers, yes, we do our day jobs, but we are a part of the fabric of this country.”

She continued: “The work we do is indispensable, and the care that we bring should never be taken for granted. And I think about the critical work that our letter carriers do every day, making sure our neighbors get their medications, get those Social Security checks delivered, and our ballots, packages, so much more. But it goes well beyond that. We are deeply enmeshed in our communities.”

Shuler noted that carriers take the time to get to know and connect with the customers they serve, and in moments when someone needs help, union workers step up in heroic ways. “Our mantra in the labor movement—say it with me—is, ‘An injury to one is an injury to all.’ And the heroes we’re honoring today are shining examples of that.”

President Renfroe next invited Deputy Postmaster General Doug Tulino to the lectern.

“It is my privilege to be here today with our employees who represent the absolute very best of what the United States Postal Service stands for,” he said, adding that carriers are in every neighborhood daily and bind communities together. “Because of that, you are aware of and witness more than most people can ever imagine.”

Tulino pointed out that carriers’ daily service means that they’re often the first to notice and also the first

to help. “That is why letter carriers are the most trusted public service in our country. You give new meaning to the word hero, because you don’t just serve, you protect. You don’t just observe, you intervene. And you don’t just pass by, you stop. Sometimes heroism looks like saving a life. Sometimes it looks like preventing a tragedy. And sometimes it looks like steadfast support and giving back by raising money, supporting families, and helping a community in need. It takes many forms and happens frequently, but it always comes back to the same thing in my mind: a letter carrier’s instinct to care and a sense of service to their customers.

“So, on behalf of the Postal Service, I want to thank you for that service. And to today’s honorees, I want to give you a sincere and heartfelt congratulations. We are proud of you. We are certainly grateful for you, and we are honored to recognize you. And in honoring you today, we also honor every letter carrier and all our employees across our country who serve with courage, compassion and professionalism every day.”

Returning to the podium, President Renfroe then individually invited each Hero to the stage to sit with him and have a conversation about their incredible stories—stories that included letter carriers helping those in medical distress or in danger from crimes or fires, as well as watching out for lost children.

He then presented each honoree with an award certificate; they also received a lapel pin. The stories of the Heroes are found in the following pages of this issue of *The Postal Record*.

“One thing has been consistent over the many years that I have attended these lunches,” Renfroe said in concluding the event, “and that is that our heroes, while performing incredibly brave and courageous acts that often result in saving lives, every one of them views themselves and views what they did as really no big deal, and said just anyone would have done it.”

He said that feeling is representative of the spirit of service that letter carriers and postal employees as a whole have. That spirit has made the Postal Service successful and trusted among the people that they serve. That’s “why we continue to have the opportunities to serve our communities well beyond delivering the mail in special ways, ranging from very small good deeds to the heroic acts that we’ve been able to honor those winners for here this afternoon,” he concluded.

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



CHRISTOPHER PEREZ

NATIONAL HERO OF THE YEAR

WESTCHESTER MERGED, NY BRANCH 693

“I was on my park-and-loop, running in my truck, delivering mail, just a regular day, and I noticed to my right that there was a big plume of white smoke,” **Christopher Perez**, a four-year letter carrier, said. “That’s how it started.”

He had just finished one section of his route in Yorktown Heights, NY, on March 28, 2025, when he saw the smoke coming from an area he had just delivered to. At first, the Westchester Merged Branch 693 letter carrier thought that maybe someone was putting leaves in a fire pit, which is not allowed in this development.

He kept his eye on the smoke. “It went from super white to very dark black, started to black out the sky,” he said. “That’s when I started to panic.”

Perez got in his truck and drove back to the area. “Everything started to change as I was getting close,” he said. “I started to shake, I started to worry, because I care about every single one of my customers as they do for me.”

As he pulled up, he saw flames 10 to 15 feet high and several neighbors of the 55-plus senior community gathered.

“There was no police, no firemen, nobody,” the carrier said. “Just a little old lady who had a little walker. She looked me in my face and was like, ‘Christopher, there’s a man in the house.’”

Perez knew his route well, and knew that the homeowner, a snowbird from Florida, was currently having their mail forwarded. “Come to find out it was actually her son who was house-

sitting at the time, but nobody knew,” he said.

Perez first ran around the four-unit building, knocking on everyone’s doors to make sure that they knew about the fire and were getting out.

The woman insisted that she had seen a man in the unit. Perez walked to the back of the building and saw the man come out onto the second-floor balcony in the back of the house.

“I’m telling the gentleman, ‘Hey, I don’t know if you know, but the house is on fire. You need to get out of the house,’” Perez recounted. “He looked at me and goes, ‘Oh, I gotta get my keys and my phone.’ And I’m like, ‘OK, you better hurry up. You better hurry up. Come on, get out of the house.’”

Within minutes, the house was starting to go up in flames. “So, now I’m getting pretty antsy,” Perez said. “I’m like, ‘Dude, you really gotta get out of there, sir.’ He kept saying that he can’t find his keys. He kept continuing to go in and out of the house. I’m thinking, ‘You know what? I’m going to go to the front door, kick in the door and bring him out, and that’ll be the end of the story.’”

Little did Perez know that he wouldn’t be able to get within 20 feet of the front door because it was covered in flames. “At the time, I had a big beard that went down to, like, the middle of my chest,” he said, “and when I ran to the front where the fire was at, it literally curled my beard on my face. Now that plan is completely out, because there’s no way I’m run-

ning through a door that’s completely engulfed in flames.”

The carrier tried to keep his cool and figure out his next steps.

“The first thing that came to my mind was, ‘I’m about to witness someone pass away in front of my eyes in one of the most horrific ways,’” he said. “So panic, adrenaline pumping, I’ve run back to the other side.”

The flames at this time were at least 20 feet high, Perez recalled. “I’m like, ‘My God, this guy’s not going to be able to get out, and the only way he’s going to be able to get out is if he jumps,’” he said.

He continued: “So, I run to the back, and I’m like, ‘Sir, listen, there’s no way you can get out this front door. Can you please jump? If you jump, I’ll catch you somehow. We’re both going to get hurt, but I can guarantee you that’s probably going to be the best-case scenario, because you will die if

Firefighters inspect the damage caused by the fire at a house on Perez’s route.





Perez tells his story in his own words at the event.



Christopher Perez

you stay in this house.’ He was like, ‘No, I’m not jumping.’ ”

The man was in his 50s, and Perez remembered him saying that he couldn’t “afford” to jump due to the possible effects it could have on his body. Despite the man’s refusal to comply, Perez knew he had to do something.

“It was like a fight-or-flight situation, and I chose to fight,” Perez said. “And I backed my mail truck underneath the porch, jumped off the front of the hood, jumped onto the roof, Spider-Man’d over the balcony.”

He made his way into the house and found the man in the kitchen, still looking for his keys and phone.

“I was like, ‘Forget about your keys and your phone. That’s replaceable, but you are not,’ ” Perez said. “Then, I dragged him and pulled him out the door. He did not want to put his leg over the banister. He’s like, ‘No, no, I have a bad hip, I have broken ankles, I’m 200 pounds, you can’t lift me.’ And I’m just like, ‘Too many excuses, you need to just go, you’re gonna die.’ ”

To urge him to jump, Perez said, “I have a family, and I’ve got to make it home to them, and there’s no way that I can go home to my family and say that I left you behind. So, we both have to go,” and he just looked me in my eye and said, ‘Fine.’ ”

Finally agreeing to leave the building, the man let Perez help him over the banister. “After what felt like forever, maybe 15 minutes, 10 minutes tops, we got that leg over that balcony,” he said. “You could just hear things cracking in his body as he’s doing it.”

He eventually gets the second leg over. “He turns around, looks at me, he’s like, ‘You expect me to jump?’ ”

Perez said he needed to get a little aggressive with the man, but he convinced him to jump to the LLV’s roof. As he and a few others helped get the man from the vehicle, fire and police vehicles arrive, with one chief telling him, “Great job, young man; you did a great deed.”

After finishing his route, the carrier returned to the scene to give a statement.

Although the building was severely damaged, none of the residents sustained any serious injuries. After being demolished, the building is now in the process of being rebuilt.

The carrier has received some media attention for his actions, but he’s brushed off any praise. “I feel like it’s something that anyone would do, you know?” he told News 12 New York.

In selecting Perez as National Hero of the Year, judges noted his persistence despite the man’s hesitance. “Christopher just didn’t give up on anyone, even with the stakes getting higher and

higher,” they said. “He clearly went above and beyond to try to forcefully but kindly get the man out.”

Perez was simply glad he could help. “It was a blessing,” he told the crowd at the Heroes of the Year ceremony, “to be in that position, to be able to do something, to be healthy enough to do something.”



KYLE QUILLEN

EASTERN REGION HERO

CAMDEN, NJ MERGED BRANCH 540

“So I’m not one to believe in divine intervention, but it quite felt like that that day,” Kyle Quillen, a two-year letter carrier, said of April 23, 2025. “I found somebody’s lost dog, I met a new customer, so I was a little bit behind where I was supposed to be at the time. Also, it was a nice day, so I wanted to get my longer relays out of the way and save my shorter ones for the end of the day.”

Quillen was on his route in Cherry Hill, NJ, turning from one street to the next when he smelled smoke that was coming from the direction of a home he had just delivered to. When the Camden Merged Branch 540 member turned his head back, he said he saw “a plume of smoke coming from the house.”

Quillen started running back to the house as he called 911. He saw that the home was now engulfed in flames.

“I was going to go to the neighbor’s house, because these houses are very close together, to make sure that nobody else was home,” he said.

He knocked on the door, then turned to knock on the neighbors’ doors—but as he turned the corner, he saw a woman, a baby and a dog all on the side porch. The woman was “petrified” by the fire when he found her, the carrier added, as the fire was progressively getting worse inside the house.

He hung up with the emergency dispatcher to help. “As I was approaching the property and approaching the lady, I saw her holding the toddler,” Quillen said. “There was a baby gate in the porch in between us. I couldn’t figure

out how to get it open, so I just told her to hand me the baby.”

The woman was worried about the dog getting loose. “I asked her where the dog’s leash was. It was in the front porch,” the carrier said. “And I told her, well, that was already gone. It’s completely engulfed by that point.”

Quillen thought quickly. “I take my Arrow Key and I make a makeshift collar, and I take my bags from my satchels and strap, and I use that as a leash,” he said. “And the whole time I’m running after this big Chow Chow, I’m like, ‘Please don’t bite me, please don’t bite me.’”

Eventually the carrier gets the dog under control and brings him out, handing him off to a neighbor to secure him before running past the fire and smoke going back to the back yard for the woman and her child.

“Now she is in the back yard trying to go out through the back gate, but the fire’s moving pretty quick. So, as I made contact with her, I grabbed the baby and tucked him into my shoulder, and we ran past the fire, and I got them both out of the back yard, past the fire of the house.”

About two minutes after Quillen helped everyone out, the fire department arrived. Firefighters were able to put out the two-alarm fire, but the house has been razed and has been vacant since. The woman and child were checked out for smoke inhalation at a nearby hospital.

After talking to the fire officials, Quillen went on with the rest of his route.



In bestowing the honor of NALC Eastern Region Hero of the Year on Quillen, the judges commended the carrier for his ingenuity. “It was just triage in the situation,” they said. “You hold the baby, you take the dog, make a makeshift leash out of a part of his uniform. He involved a neighbor, too. He was aware of his surroundings, asking, ‘What can I use around me and on me to fix this?’”

“I was just completely happy that the only thing that was lost was the house, and nobody’s life was lost,” Quillen said. “Nobody lost their pet. It was a good feeling.”



SYDNEY BILLINGSLEY CENTRAL REGION HERO DAYTON, OH BRANCH 182

A man screaming for help along with dogs barking alerted **Sydney Billingsley**, a Dayton, OH Branch 182 member, as she was delivering her route on June 28, 2025. Initially, the four-year letter carrier was unsure whether she was hearing correctly, but quickly realized she was, so she approached the house. She asked the man whether there were any dangerous dogs, and he said there were not.

When she entered the house, “I found him lying on his stomach in a pool of his blood,” she said, “and he had told me that he had been shot and that he had been robbed.”

“I used to be a firefighter, so I’m no stranger to danger,” Billingsley added. “It was just an instinct. I just saw a man call for help, and I have some medical experience.”

As she called 911, she looked for something to plug up his wounds, and used towels she found hanging on a door to apply pressure to a few of his eight gunshot wounds.

“I was lying across this man’s body,” Billingsley said, “sprawled out trying to hold pressure on—I think I had about three gunshot wounds that I was putting pressure on. One on his shoulder, one in the middle of his back, and on his left thigh.”

Police and an ambulance came about five minutes later, while the carrier stayed on the phone with the 911 operator and asked the man questions.

“I knew exactly what to do: put pressure, keep him conscious and talk to 911 thoroughly,” Billingsley said.



Sydney Billingsley

The man survived the shooting, but after being released from the hospital, he was taken to rehab due to the loss of feeling in his legs. Billingsley kept in touch with him throughout.

“The person who heard the male calling for help and ultimately called

911 likely saved the victim’s life by getting him the medical attention he needed in a timely manner,” Dayton Police Sgt. Andrew Zecchini told the *Dayton Daily News*.

The Dayton police investigation led them to a suspect who had recently served prison time for killing a person, and he was soon arrested on two counts of felonious assault and one count of aggravated robbery. Billingsley testified in court for the case.

The judges, impressed with the carrier’s knowledge about what to do in the situation, as well as her willingness to get involved, named Billingsley NALC’s Central Region Hero. “A lot of people would not take a chance to go into someone’s house to help, not knowing what they were going to find in there,” they said. “Thank goodness she did.”

The carrier was modest about her actions. “I’m just very grateful that I was able to just be there,” Billingsley said at the Heroes of the Year ceremony. “Right time, right place.”



President Renfro thanks Billingsley for her heroic service.



JAIRO LOPEZ

WESTERN REGION HERO

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK BRANCH 458

Hheavy smoke coming from a customer's trailer windows and loud smoke alarms got the attention of **Jairo Lopez** of a possible fire as he was working his Midwest City, OK, route on March 13, 2025. The Oklahoma City Branch 458 member had worked on his current route for about two years and knew that an elderly woman who was deaf lived there and that she wouldn't have been able to hear the alarms.

The eight-year letter carrier parked his postal vehicle and knocked on the door. He tried to open it along with the windows, and also to scream for her, but it was to no avail. So, he searched for help.

"I drove around to the other street where I had seen some maintenance workers," Lopez said. "I notified a

maintenance worker, and he drove with me back to the lady's house."

The maintenance worker had a spare key to the woman's home, so they went into the trailer together. They found the woman toward the back of the trailer. She was unaware of the fire, because she didn't hear the alarms or see a sign of the fire. When Lopez reached her, she was "unconscious or asleep." Lopez said, "We took her out," explaining that they lifted her "shoulder to shoulder" and carried her outside.

The fire was minor and resulted from a faulty wire in the oven. It was contained in time, leaving only smoke damage. The woman was fine afterward and hadn't sustained any injuries. Lopez has seen the customer on several occasions since, and she often greets him when he is delivering mail.

Lopez never told anyone about the incident. His actions became known only after the property manager informed the post office about the carrier's good deeds about two months later. "I'm not really a person that likes attention," the carrier said.

"You're a hero, brother," NALC President Brian L.

Jairo Lopez



Renfroe told him at the Heroes of the Year ceremony.

The judges agreed. "He actually had to go take the extra step to get the maintenance worker to get the key, because he knew that banging on the door wouldn't do any good, and that's because he knew the customer. And he didn't just alert the woman, but he actually physically got involved in the situation," they observed before naming Lopez NALC's Western Region Hero. "Not everyone would go into a smoke-filled house, and not everybody pays enough attention to their neighbors."

Lopez explained his actions simply. "If I can help out, I'll help out," he said.

Lopez tells of rescuing a deaf woman from smoke and fire.





MEAGAN MURRAY HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR WATERLOO, IA BRANCH 512

“It was it was a beautiful day in Iowa,” Meagan Murray, a carrier in New Hampton, said of a day in late September 2024 on the route she had been on for three years. “I was getting ready to park, start my next walking loop, and I looked out and I was like, ‘Gosh, there’s a lot of smoke, like, coming from the foundation of this house.’”

New Hampton is super small, the Waterloo Branch 512 member said: “I know everybody. So this was an elderly lady and her son lived there, but he was at work.”

She called 911 right away and started walking to the door. Knowing that the woman was usually home at that time of day, Murray banged on the doors.

With smoke, “you don’t realize, I guess, how quickly it starts to get worse in a short amount of time,” she said. “And so by the time I was on with 911, I’m like, ‘The house is on fire.’ I go to the door—everything’s locked. Go to the garage—it’s locked. I’m knocking, I can’t see in at this point.”

At this stage Murray said, “smoke was really coming out all through the roof and the foundation,” adding, “But I’m like, I know she’s in there, she doesn’t drive much. I was just really worried.”

She knocked on a few windows. “I’m banging, banging—nothing,” Murray said. “And it’s getting bad at this point, like I should probably step away, but I told the dispatcher, ‘I just want to try one more time. I’m going to bang as hard as I can on this front window.’ And on my last attempt, she knocked back from the inside. And so I’m like,

‘She’s in there! I heard it.’”

The carrier went to the doors to see if she could open them, but they were all locked.

“I have no idea if it was adrenaline or what, but I just was, like, banging on the door, like, wiggling the door-knob as much as I could,” Murray, a three-year letter carrier, said. “Jerking it, pushing it. I don’t know if it was God or what, but I got it.”

Murray walked into the smoke-filled house and yelled for the woman. “I was like, ‘Come here, honey; I’m here, I’m gonna help you,’” she said. “So she came, she embraced me, and I got her out the front door.”

Firefighters arrived about four minutes later, and Murray comforted her customer until her family arrived.

As it turns out, the homeowner had just returned home from an errand and started the stove. A few minutes later, she heard a “pop” in the basement and then started to smell and see smoke. She couldn’t get the door between the kitchen and garage open, so she instead made her way to the living-room door. She had begun banging on the window when she spotted Murray.

A fire department investigation found that the electrical cord of a dehumidifier in the basement was likely the source of the fire. The woman had also been trying to call 911 from a landline that wasn’t working due to the electrical part of the fire.

“If you drive by the house, you wouldn’t think anything had happened,” the fire chief told the *New Hampton Tribune*, “but there’s pretty serious damage. If you think about it, when you have a fire in a basement,



Meagan Murray

it’s going to cause damage to the floor joists for the first floor.”

The home was deemed a total loss, but the resident is still living in the same neighborhood while she waits for it to be rebuilt.

The letter carrier has seen the resident since, and she seemed OK.

In selecting Murray as NALC’s Humanitarian of the Year, the judges noted that she put herself in harm’s way. “By going in the house that she already knew was filled with smoke, we feel like that’s what made her take that extra step to humanitarian, because she was thinking of the person and not really thinking of herself because they were both in danger.”

Murray said that God put her there that day for that reason. “I know had I been four minutes later, four minutes earlier, I maybe wouldn’t have seen it. She would not have gotten out,” she said.



THEODORE MAY

THE VIGILANT AWARD

BUFFALO-WESTERN NEW YORK BRANCH 3

“I was getting to my next park point on my route, and as I got out, I heard, like, crying coming from somewhere,” said Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Theodore May** as he was walking his route on Oct. 21, 2025. “I couldn’t really pinpoint it because I was looking on the sidewalks. And then I looked into the middle of the road, and there was a kid crying for his mom, telling me he wants to go home.”

The child had been walking down the middle of a side street near the busy Main Street in Buffalo when May heard the toddler.

“I’m searching for a parent or an adult, and there’s no one around,” the three-year letter carrier recalled. “I was shocked. You see a 3-year-old, you’re not thinking he’s unsupervised. ... It was just him in the road ... so I was kind of in shock for a minute.”

May got into his truck and asked the boy where home is. “He just kept pointing toward, like, a very busy intersection like Main Street,” the carrier said. “So, I’m like, ‘You know, buddy, you can’t go anywhere without, you know, an adult.’”

A woman across from where May’s postal truck was parked came out. The carrier told her the boy is lost and asked her to make a call. “There’s a day care down the road, so I assumed, you know, he maybe got out of there,” he said.

May knew that there was a day care facility about half a mile away because it is part of his delivery route. May stayed with the child while the

woman called the business. “She did get ahold of the person, and she came flying down in her car to come get the kid,” May said.

The day care was unaware of the boy being missing, although May estimated that he had been gone for at least 10 minutes.

Concerned about the day care’s loss of the boy, May reported the provider to the Office of Children and Family Services, the agency responsible for child care in New York state. “I just want to make sure this doesn’t happen again to a kid,” May said.

That resonated with the judges. “The part we liked was that he actually reported it to child services to make sure it didn’t happen again,” they said in selecting May as one of NALC’s Vigilant Award honorees. “He assisted and took the extra step.”

May was certainly at the right place at the right time. “I almost took a break right before I left, but I skipped my time to take it at that next park point,” he said.

Reflecting on the incident, the carrier remembered that there wasn’t anyone around, saying, “If it weren’t for me, he probably would have been gone.”



Theodore May

May tells President Renfroe and the crowd about finding a small child in a busy street.





RAFAEL POZO

THE VIGILANT AWARD

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL BRANCH 2810

“I was out on my route and I was delivering parcels packages, and it was an oversized post, so we had to drive it out,” Arlington Heights, IL Branch 2810 member **Rafael Pozo** said of the afternoon of Dec. 6, 2024. “I see that behind me there is a garbage truck. Nothing abnormal. You see garbage trucks all the time. You’re on the route, you know where they are, they know where you are. It’s a routine.”

But this time, he said, “The garbage truck was smoking, and these things are powered by natural gas. So what ended up happening is that the garbage truck caught fire.”

The 13-year letter carrier saw the driver get out of the truck and attempt to put out the flames with a small fire extinguisher. “These flames are 15 feet high in the air. You’re not going to put them out with an onboard extinguisher,” he said.

After making sure that the driver was all right, Pozo called 911. Worried about the children who were leaving a nearby elementary school for the day and going onto the residential street where the fire was raging, Pozo warned students and administrators to steer clear of the area.

Within minutes, firefighters arrived. They had only started setting up to fight the flames.

“The fire ignited the tanks and there was an explosion,” Pozo said. “Debris flew everywhere and this debris is on fire. It flew for three blocks. The sound was incredible.”

Shrapnel flew everywhere, injuring three of the emergency responders,

including a firefighter whose leg was hit with shrapnel.

“Those guys are the heroes in this situation,” Pozo said of the emergency responders.

One teacher who was a customer of Pozo’s for 12 years was about to drive up to her house that looked right out at the scene when Pozo warned her. She was able to avoid the shrapnel from the explosion.

“She would have been standing in her living room when the truck exploded,” Pozo said. “Shrapnel flew through her living room window, destroying the interior of her house. She says that I saved her life.”

The shock wave from the explosion caused substantial property damage in the immediate area. Sections of roof and siding were blown off onto nearby houses and windows were shattered. Parts of the truck were found several blocks away.

Although Pozo was far enough away from the explosion to avoid getting hit with shrapnel, he said, “My ears were definitely ringing for a couple of days after that” due to the extremely loud noise that came from the explosion.

This wasn’t the last time this happened. Exactly six months later, on June 6, 2025, around the same time of day and in the same part of his route, Pozo again called 911 about a garbage truck that was on fire caused by a lithium battery.

There were hundreds of kids outside for their end-of-the-school-year party. Pozo described the situation as being a



lot “scarier,” so he made sure to warn them. This time the truck driver avoided explosion by dumping the truck load onto the pavement, preventing the flames from reaching the natural gas.

In selecting Pozo as one of NALC’s Vigilant Award honorees, judges praised the carrier for his situational awareness and care for the community. “He was so concerned about the kids in the area,” they said. “He cleared everybody away from the action, the danger.”

“I was very fortunate to be there at that time in that moment,” Pozo said.





ALEXANDER SKOMRA HONORABLE ACT BUFFALO-WESTERN NEW YORK BRANCH 3

Last summer, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Alexander Skomra** had visited Philadelphia, PA, and happened upon a fire station that was handing out free Narcan, a medicine that reverses an opioid overdose. Thinking that he would never know when it might come in handy, the carrier picked up some.

On Oct. 15, 2025, Skomra was on only his third day carrying mail alone.

“I was checking my scanner and noticed I had missed a package, so I had to go back to a place I’d already been,” the carrier said. “And as I’m walking up the street, somebody comes out of the house screaming, ‘Hey, postman, do you have any Narcan?’”

Remembering the Narcan he had in his satchel, Skomra retrieved it and followed the person.

“So I went to the house and the woman was obviously overdosing,” he said, adding that the woman was making “this awful breathing noise.”

Skomra administered the Narcan to the woman by nose.

“Within a couple minutes, she was fine,” Skomra said. “She, like, came around and could answer questions and stuff. Before that, you could just see her eyes moving.”

“I should have already left that area,” he said. “It was kind of weird that it happened in a way for me to be able to be there to help.”

The carrier has seen the woman a few times since



Alexander Skomra

and she seemed to be all right.

The judges were impressed with Skomra’s forethought and effort, awarding him NALC’s Honorable Act award. “It was nice that he saw the Narcan and said, ‘You know what? Let me put this in my bag in case somebody in the community might need it. Let me hold on to it.’”

“Third day,” NALC President Renfroe emphasized at the Heroes of the Year ceremony. “Job’s hard enough when you first start—amazing.”

Skomra was glad he was there. “I really doubt they would have, like, called EMS or the police to come help them,” he said. “So the fact that I was able to be there—I’m really grateful for that.”

President Renfroe praises Skomra for having the foresight to carry Narcan on his route.





TIFFANY McCARTY

HONORABLE ACT

WICHITA, KS BRANCH 201

“I was delivering curbside ... and a young girl came from the opposite direction yelling, ‘Help! He’s got a gun! He’s gonna kill me!’” said **Tiffany McCarty**, a two-year letter carrier in Wichita, KS, of her route on Feb. 26, 2025. “So my instinct was to just throw it in park ... and call 911.”

McCarty felt for the young woman. “She was so scared and crying,” the carrier said. “She was only 21. ... I felt like I had to do something right then.”

She sat the woman on the outside ledge of her LLV and asked her a few questions while speaking to the emergency operator. “While I’m talking to 911, I’m kind of keeping an eye out diagonal, and the guy comes out and he’s got his arm up and there’s a gun,” McCarty said.

After spotting the weapon, McCarty acted quickly. “I squeeze between our little LLV tray and our chair, which is not very big, by the way,” she said. “I squeeze down there to avoid—I don’t want to get shot either. So she’s sitting on the LLV ledge, and then I’m sitting on the floor and we’re, you know, conversating. She’s hysterical.”

The man looked around. “He didn’t even pay attention to the mail truck. Like, it was almost oblivious that I was even there, because it was normal for me to be there every day delivering mail,” McCarty said, adding that he soon went back inside.

The carrier waited with the woman, trying to keep her occupied until an emergency response team got there about 10 to 15 minutes later. After McCarty spoke with them, she returned on her route.



Tiffany McCarty

“I was scared for her. I’m a mom, so I can only imagine [her] being one of my daughters,” McCarty said.

Following the incident, she was still delivering mail to the assailant’s house, which made her worry something would happen to her on her route.

“I was nervous for the simple fact that I was still on that route, and I wasn’t sure if he would find out that the postal worker said something, you know?” McCarty said.

A few days after the incident, the carrier found out from a police report that the man had been arrested for aggravated robbery. He had stolen toiletries, a charger, a debit card and a few other items from the young woman. McCarty is unsure of what has become of the assailant, but she is now working at a different station.

“She showed her bravery even involving herself to help protect this young girl,” the judges said in naming McCarty one of NALC’s Honorable Act Heroes.

The carrier was glad she was able to assist. “I feel like, because Kansas is so flat, there was not many places for her to go,” McCarty said. “And so, had I not been there, you know, who knows what would have happened. She was young, and she needed somewhere to go, and she came to me.” **PR**



McCarty tells of protecting a woman at risk from a man with a gun.