



What does the American public think of when it thinks of letter carriers?

People know that we provide hand-delivered personal service to every home, every business, every American.

They trust us—voting us the most-trusted federal workers six years in a row.

They know that we deliver the finest and most affordable postal service in the world.

And they know we do it six days a week.

But some who were in need know that carriers answer the call as heroes.

Opposite page: the
Heroes of the Year

Right (from l): Rep. Jon Runyan (R-NJ), AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker, and USPS Chief Human Resources Officer and Executive Vice President Anthony Vegliante



“Quite simply, carriers are the glue that binds their communities together. Through communication. Through charity. Through heroism. These are the things we do best. And you’re about to meet this year’s best of the best,” NALC President Fredric Rolando told the large audience assembled at the annual NALC Heroes of the Year Awards luncheon.

The event was held Sept. 20 in the nation’s capital, with attendees including the union’s resident national officers, leaders of other postal unions, top Postal Service executives and other honored guests. In the yearly event showcasing special acts of bravery and compassion by letter carriers, the NALC honored six members and a special friend as its 2012 National Heroes of the Year.

Before presenting the awards, Rolando thanked the panel of independent judges who reviewed the stories about heroic and humanitarian acts published in *The Postal Record* between July 2011 and June 2012. Those who selected this year’s recipients were: Bud Biscardo, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison at the United Way of America; Richard Bowers, chief of the Montgomery County, MD, Department of Fire and Rescue Services; and Richard Daschbach, chairman and chief judge of the Employees’ Compensation Appeals Board at the U.S. Department of Labor.

Rolando also recognized a number of special guests, including Postal Regulatory Commission Chairman Ruth Goldway, National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association President Jeanette Dwyer and USPS Vice President of Labor Relations Doug Tulino.

The president then introduced USPS Chief Human Resources Officer and Executive Vice President Anthony Vegliante.

In brief remarks, Vegliante said, “What these individuals have done during the past year is what makes the Postal Service unique. It’s just not about doing a job, but it’s about being part of a community.” He went on to say that involvement in the community is what makes the Postal Service brand so strong.

Rolando then called on AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker, who told a story about her elderly mother, who lived alone. She would tell Baker not to worry, because, “My letter carrier always knows what’s going on with me.”

“It wasn’t just my mother; it was so many of the other mothers in the community I grew up in,” Baker said. “Without the letter carriers, and your connections and your understanding of what was happening in that community, their lives would not have been at the level that they were. So, I thank you for what you do.”

Rolando took the opportunity of the heroes event to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Carrier Alert program. The program allows elderly or homebound patrons to ask their postmaster or carrier to add to the mailbox a Carrier Alert sticker and register emergency contact information. If the carrier sees a sign that something is amiss—such as accumulation of mail—the carrier will try to contact the patron. If that’s not successful, the carrier will work with the program’s community partners to alert the emergency contacts the patron registered.

NALC President Fredric Rolando welcomes the crowd to the NALC Heroes of the Year luncheon.





Above: President Rolando recounted each hero's story to the crowd.

"ABC World News Tonight" named letter carriers as the persons of the week after reporting on the heroes event.



"For those without friends or family near, the knowledge that their letter carrier—a person they know and often the only person they see all day—is keeping an eye out for them can be a major relief," the president said.

Rolando then recounted each hero's story to the crowd before presenting the awards. Their stories are found in the following pages of this issue of *The Postal Record*.

During the individual presentations, Rep. Jon Runyan (R-NJ) arrived to congratulate Hero of the Year Tom Logue (see story, page 23). "I think a lot of time what we miss in America, we see things happen and don't react. That's truly what being an American is; it's about sticking that hand out and helping people. And helping people you don't know. That's one of the true prides of being an American." He went on to say that he is proud to stand with NALC on its fight to save the Postal Service.

The honorees were selected from among 200 nominees, whose stories of heroism and community service were published over the course of a year in this magazine. Those stories were collected into a booklet, *A Year's Worth of Heroes*, which was distributed to the attendees.

"As you leave here and head back from Washington to your communities throughout the country, I'd like you to look around and see how many carriers you come across, out there, delivering their routes, every day," Rolando said in closing. "And when you do, I hope you feel a little reassured knowing that if there's a fire, a car crash, an elderly person trapped in their house,

or a crime in progress, those carriers will stand up to be the difference between life and death.

"That's one more way we deliver for America."

HEROES IN THE MEDIA

On Sept. 21, "ABC World News Tonight" named letter carriers "Persons of the Week" in a segment that focused on this year's NALC Heroes of the Year. The piece mentioned several of the honorees and what they had done, interviewed them, showed video from this year's heroes ceremony with President Rolando presenting them with awards, talked to those rescued, provided historical context, and overall got across the message of carriers' value and dedication to the communities we serve.

That was just one of the media reports on the heroes. *USA Today* ran an article on page 2 of its Sept. 21 issue under the headline, "Mail carrier 'heroes' are eyes, ears, noses for routes." The story was reprinted in the *Detroit Free Press*. *The Washington Post* and *Bloomberg* also had stories on all of the honorees, with *The Post* running a follow-up photo report on the event.

Several regional media outlets ran stories about their local heroes, including pieces in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Duluth News Tribune*, *The Virginian-Pilot*, and several New Jersey newspapers and various radio and tv stations.

You can see the ABC video, along with videos of all of the heroes telling their stories on the nalc website at nalc.org/commun/heroes/index.html. ☒

Legacy Award

Bil Keane

As a cartoonist from an early age, Bil Keane's livelihood relied on his letter carrier collecting and delivering the mail. There was no Internet or fax; the comic strips traveled by U.S. Mail to the syndicate, which delivered them to newspapers across the country. His son, Jeff Keane, who now draws and writes "The Family Circus," believes that it was his father's appreciation for those who deliver the mail that most likely led him to devoting a cartoon every year on the second Saturday in May to the NALC Food Drive.

"Anything the letter carriers requested of him, he would have done," Jeff Keane said. "He moved from Pennsylvania to Arizona, basically because he knew that all he really needed was a mailbox to survive. They came through for the 50 years that 'The Family Circus' has run."

NALC's former Food Drive Coordinator Drew Von Bergen remembers that Keane, who lived in a suburb in Arizona, donated a cartoon to Phoenix Branch 576's drive either in the pilot program in 1991 or in the first national drive in 1993.

"I called Keane and asked him if he would allow us to use a cartoon on a national basis, instead of just in Phoenix, and he readily agreed," Von Bergen said. He would ask Keane for a new cartoon every year, and Keane was happy to oblige. "It was clear that he was very interested in the drive and what it did to help people and was very happy that so many branches used his artwork to encourage citizens to donate food."

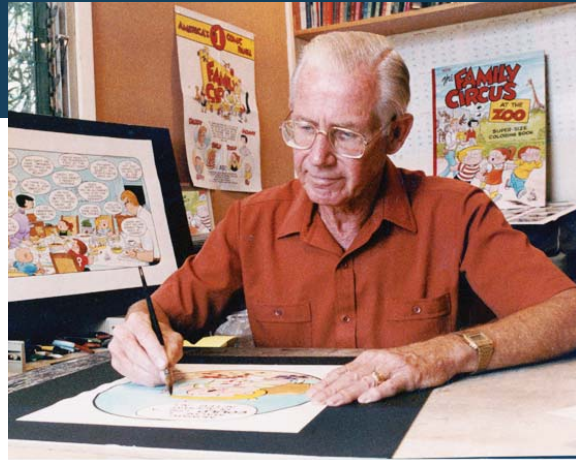
Keane's generosity, not just in using the day-of cartoon as promotion, but in letting NALC branches use the image on signs, T-shirts and banners, led to the children characters of "The Family Circus" becoming the faces of the NALC Food Drive.

"Keane's drawings served as a sort of unofficial logo for each year's drive," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "His characters were so familiar to our customers that, when you saw the image of Billy, Jeffy, Dolly or P.J. on a promotional poster, bag or T-shirt, it seemed as if a close, trusted friend was encouraging you to dig deep to help feed the hungry."

Keane had drawn several strips before launching the single-panel "Family Circus" comic strip in 1960. Today, it appears in nearly 1,500 newspapers. Although he officially retired a few years ago and turned his pen over to his grown son Jeff, he continued to provide ideas and jokes for the daily strip up until his death last November.

The judges were moved by Keane's generosity, and decided that awarding him the first-ever Legacy Award would be "a small way to pay back his talent," they said

With more than a billion pounds of food collected since Keane donated his first cartoon to NALC, it's a legacy his family and America's letter carriers can certainly be proud of. ✉



Bil Keane

Below: Jeff Keane gives an emotional speech about what the letter carriers mean to his father.

Bottom: The gathering gives a standing ovation to Bil Keane's memory.





Special Carrier Alert

Charlie Rose of Athens, OH Branch 997



Athens, OH Branch 997 member Charlie Rose has gone from helping individuals to helping whole communities. In the past he's helped a person who was having a heart attack and aided police officers find a suspect they were pursuing. But the reason he was honored with the 2012 Special Carrier Alert Award is because of his nose.

The 23-year postal veteran estimates that, in the past three years, he has detected at least a dozen natural gas leaks through out his route. In each case, he informed a resident of his suspicions, and the local gas company later confirmed it as an actual leak.

In fact, because of all of the problems, the gas company has decided to replace gas lines in the area as part of a \$1.2 million project that aims to replace 17,235

feet of pipe. "Not only am I proud of the fact that I've been involved in situations where I may have saved people's lives, but I've tried to protect people in the future by helping to bring on these repairs," Rose said.

Many local residents have been vocal about Rose's contributions to their neighborhood. Jane Lyons, a resident on the carrier's route, called the gas company based on a note Rose left. She had smelled a strange odor from time to time, but took Rose's suggestion seriously. "Basically, Charlie saved our lives," she told the local newspaper. "I don't know how many people would have left a note like that. I'm quite thankful that he cared enough to leave that message. Were it not for his good nose, we may not be here."

"We've got infrastructure that goes back to the FDR administration," Rose said. And thanks to his four to five trips to the city council, 4,500 to 5,000 new rental properties in the area also will be required to have carbon monoxide detectors.

"He has tremendous community connection," the NALC judges said. "He was a sustained advocate for the safety of thousands of people. He took care of neighborhoods—plural."

Rose said he just looks out for his customers, who he considers an extended family. "When letter carriers see a problem when they're delivering the mail, it's not unusual that they'll help," he said. "That's why I think it's so important that the American public realize what an important thing it is to have a mailman there six days a week and not five. Who knows if they cut back if that Saturday that the mail wasn't delivered is a day that we could have smelled, heard or saw something that we could have helped stop from becoming a dangerous situation?" ✉



Charlie Rose receives his award from President Rolando.

Eastern Region Hero

Celia Ruiz of Virginia Beach, VA Branch 2819

“I had just put my 6-year-old on the bus when it happened,” Virginia Beach, VA Branch 2819 member Celia Ruiz said, recalling the start of a particularly harrowing morning last January. Once Ruiz’ daughter had climbed safely onto the school bus, the carrier heard a loud noise. She saw in horror that her neighbor’s children had been thrown airborne after being struck by a drunk driver. “When I turned around, all I saw was people falling from the sky,” she said.

Ruiz, who has been a first aid responder for the past four years, jumped into action. “My first thought was, ‘These are kids, and kids I know. My daughter stays with them after school,’” she said. “I had to help.”

“At first I panicked,” Ruiz said, but she quickly assessed the situation. The father was moving and conscious and the two young girls were moving their legs, but the 5-year-old boy, David, was oddly still. His grandmother was on the scene and beat Ruiz to him. The woman began trying to move him. Ruiz tried to calm the woman and explain to her that David needed to stay still.

Ruiz called 911 and stayed on the line with the operator as she checked the boy’s pulse—very weak—and then began CPR. The amount of blood on the child’s face presented a challenge, so at the operator’s prompting, Ruiz removed the child’s backpack so the boy was lying on a hard, flat surface. “This time, there was no pulse,” she said. “I gave two rescue breaths and began chest compressions. It felt like a long time, but it was probably two to three minutes.”

As she completed these actions, Ruiz kept everyone calm and still to prevent further injury and assured the rest of the family that help was on the way. Though her arms began to tire, she pressed on with the CPR until emergency responders arrived to continue to try to revive him. Ultimately, they were successful.

Ruiz, an 11-year postal veteran, was just happy she was able to be there that day. “It hits really close to home. I feel like he was my own child,” she said. “I couldn’t not help.”

The carrier also said that she was glad she had had the proper training. “Now I know I can do it,” she said. “And I’m recruiting for more first responders at my station. The reason I took the training was because I have little kids at home.”

Judges said that Ruiz’ actions were especially heroic because “a lot of people are afraid to engage physically. She saved this kid’s life.”

Ruiz said she’s just thankful that David is going to be fine. “I feel honored to be used as a tool in helping out this family in a time of need,” she said. ✉



Celia Ruiz is named Eastern Region Hero of the Year.





Central Region Hero

Mike Sylvester of Duluth, MN Branch 114



While accepting the Central Region Hero of the Year award, Mike Sylvester talks about the importance of carriers being out in the community six days a week.

A runaway vehicle headed straight toward Mike Sylvester as he was heading up a street at the start of his route on Saturday, Feb. 4. The vehicle was careening out of control down the sidewalk at high speed, knocking over traffic signs and telephone poles in its path before it ran into a house about half a block ahead of him.

“[The car] sent a large cloud of debris into the air, as well as chunks of concrete, which showered down on the intersection to which I was pulling up,” Sylvester said. The vehicle kept going until it finally came to a complete stop against a telephone pole mere feet from where the Duluth, MN Branch 114 member was sitting in his vehicle.

Sylvester secured his LLV, then “I grabbed my phone and dialed 911 as I ran to the vehicle,” he said. Another bystander also saw what had happened, and as the two approached the vehicle, they noticed that the car’s fuel tank was punctured and rapidly leaking gas, and that smoke had begun billowing from under the hood. To make matters worse, the car also had ruptured a natural gas meter and gas line at the house.

Sylvester approached the vehicle and could see that the driver was an elderly woman. “I honestly thought that it was entirely possible that she wouldn’t be alive,” he said. “I wasn’t sure what I was going to find when I opened the door.”

He was able to speak to her through the broken driver’s-side window. People who now surrounded them began yelling, “It’s going to blow!” and telling them to vacate the area, fearing that the car would soon explode.

The carrier continued to speak to the 911 operator as this was happening. “We opened the door, and as the other guy worked to unjam the seat belt, I had to use my body to bend the door outward so we could get the victim out,” Sylvester said. Gasoline continued to leak and the natural gas smell became more and more pungent, but the two continued to try to get the woman out. Sylvester asked if she was hurt, and she responded that she didn’t think so. He asked if she could move, and she said, “Yes.” “We then each put an arm under



her shoulder and carried her out of danger as I continued to relay information to the dispatcher,” the carrier said.

Sylvester asked the woman if he could notify anyone, and he subsequently called her husband to fill him in. The woman said she suspected that her brakes failed, but she “was so disoriented, she couldn’t remember what happened,” Sylvester said. “It was a miracle she survived.”

Once responders arrived, Sylvester gave a statement and told them the woman’s information before continuing on with his route. Officials also got ready to evacuate several blocks because of the potential for a gas-line explosion. “The car was completely totaled,” the carrier said. “Officials couldn’t even tell the make or model.”

The eight-year postal veteran didn’t claim any heroics, saying that he just reacted. “I would hope someone would help out if it were one of my family members,” he said. “I think people should have a moral obligation to help others.”

In selecting Sylvester, judges called the carrier’s efforts “a life-saving act worthy of extreme recognition.”

The woman Sylvester saved told him, “I might have died if you didn’t help out.”

Sylvester has received all kinds of positive responses, but he was just doing what he had to do. “I’m just someone who delivers the mail,” he said. “People need to know we’re there for them no matter what.” ☒

Western Region Hero

Mike Hollmann III of Phoenix, AZ Branch 576

Hearing dogs barking and a woman's voice shouting "No! No!" jolted carrier Mike Hollmann III to attention as he was preparing for his park-and-loop route on Oct. 24. He hurried toward the cries.

As he got closer, "the dog barking got more aggressive," Hollmann said, "and the 'Nols' turned into screams."

The Phoenix, AZ Branch 576 member ran down an alley and climbed up to see over a 6-foot secured fence and saw that three dogs, including two pit bulls, were attacking each other and the woman who was lying on the ground near her wheelchair.

"She had her hand on one dog," the carrier said, and it looked like the woman had possibly even tried to throw her chair at the dogs to get them away from her. The woman had been bitten a few times and had a few puncture wounds. "There was blood on the animals and blood on her," Hollmann said.

The carrier dialed 911 and talked to a dispatcher about what he saw as he tried to use his dog spray to halt the animals. "My dog spray had an effect for about half a second," Hollmann said. "It was hard to stand there and watch everything going on." Hollmann stayed on the line while he simultaneously tried to distract the animals until police arrived.

When responding officers arrived, the carrier hung up with the 911 operator and climbed down off the fence as the police continued to fight off the dogs. "I heard a shot fire," Hollmann said. An officer had killed one of the more aggressive dogs.

"I kept asking the lady, 'Are you OK?'" Hollmann said. "She was straining for breath." When police and the woman assured Hollmann that the situation was under control, he left to continue his route.

As the carrier passed by the scene later on his way back to the post office, he noticed there were police still around and media outlets clamoring to find out what happened. Hollmann approached one plain-clothed officer to get an update on the situation. It turned out that all the dogs had been chasing a rat

when they started biting each other and the woman. The victim had been taken to the hospital for her injuries, but was going to be OK.

"In this terrifying encounter, one dog is bad enough, but three is even worse," the judges said in selecting Hollmann as the Western Region Hero of the Year. "It takes an act of courage to jump the fence to save a life."

Hollmann said his efforts were just part of a day in the life of a letter carrier. "Myself and other carriers are out there every day, and sometimes we need to help people," the 17-year postal veteran said. "I'm honored to think that someone considers me a hero."

Though he said he doesn't like being around dogs, Hollmann said, "Would I do it again? Yes, I would." ✉



Mike Hollmann III receives his award for helping to rescue a woman from three vicious dogs.





Humanitarian of the Year

Cassandra Summers of Naperville, IL Branch 1151



When a woman who has breast cancer sees Cassandra Summers walk into her room, she knows things are going to get brighter.

That's because Summers, a Naperville, IL Branch 1151 member, specializes in going to the homes of women with breast cancer and completely redecorating their rooms. In their time of difficulty, she brings encouragement and comfort in the form of bright colors and pleasing patterns.

The idea came to her when her cousin, Mary Ann Taylor, was diag-

walked in the room for the first time and both my mom and Mary said, 'This is beautiful.'

After Mary passed away in January 2008, Summers took the idea a step further. Relying on her study of design at the Illinois Institute of Art, she founded a non-profit group to redecorate the rooms of other breast cancer patients. She named her enterprise "Mary's Room."

"After receiving the news that I was selected to receive the National Humanitarian Award from the NALC, the song, 'God Has Smiled on Me' came to mind and I felt extremely blessed, honored and excited to receive such a prestigious award," Summers said.

"What I would like for people to know is that Mary's Room is a non-profit organization and we are still accepting donations and moving forward."

The recipient of Summers' latest room makeover praised her work: "Accepting the fact that cancer has entered your body is hard and going through surgery, treatments and recovery is even harder," said the woman, who is recovering from the cancer. "But I found a light of joy in Mary's Room providing complimentary decorating services to me."

"Cassandra Summers of Mary's Room came to my house and began to work her magic," she said. "The next day Ms. Summers came back to put the finishing touches on my room. The anticipation was killing me; I was so excited to see what my new room would look like. Moments later I walked into what look liked to me a page out of an IKEA book. My room was simply beautiful. I thanked Ms. Summers and the Mary's Room organization for all their hard work and dedication."

"She is addressing a significant social issue and going well beyond herself—enlisting donors, volunteers and partners," noted the heroes award judges. "She's giving women a whole new personal environment after the rigors of chemotherapy or radiation." ✉



Cassandra Summers is named the Humanitarian of the Year for her work helping women diagnosed with breast cancer.

nosed with breast cancer and began the exhausting treatment process. Summers found that when she helped her cousin by tidying up or rearranging her room, it brightened her mood, too.

"I noticed with the chemo and radiation how it took two days for her to get back on her feet. It took a lot out of her," Summers said. "I remember going over to visit Mary after the room makeover and she would always be in her room, sitting up reading. Prior to the makeover, she would be in the living room watching TV, so I can truly say that Mary loved the room even more after the makeover."

"What I remember the most are the smiles on their faces when they

Hero of the Year

Tom Logue of Cape Atlantic, NJ Branch 903

June 17, 2011—Father's Day—was just another day at the beach for Tom Logue of Manahawkin, NJ. That is, until he spied a young boy being pulled under the rough surf.

Logue, a member of Cape Atlantic, NJ Branch 903, had warned his youngest son Matthew to stay close to shore because of a very strong undertow and heavy waves. While he played with Matthew in the water, he spied a boy with a boogie board going out to sea. He saw the boy try to yell for help, only to be slammed by a large wave and disappear under the water.

"It was like someone had a rope around him, pulling him out," Logue said.

Logue quickly swam out to where he last saw the boy, but the boy was no longer visible. Luckily, the boy's boogie board signaled his location, and Logue was able to pull the boy's head to the surface. With the terrified boy clinging to his neck, Logue then had to negotiate the undertow and unrelenting waves to get back to shore in water above his head. "We were both getting hammered by waves," he said. "He was shaking the whole time."

Logue saw a very big wave heading their way, and waited for the impact. But the wave actually helped push them both past the undertow, and Logue got the boy to safety.

That Father's Day was a special one for two fathers.

Matthew, who had seen the incident unfold in seconds, said, "Way to go, Dad." Matthew's father emerged from the water a life-saving hero.

The father of the rescued boy then came running, along with a lifeguard and bystanders. But the rescue was complete, and Logue handed the terrified but relieved boy to his father. Logue jokingly said "Happy Father's Day" to the boy's father. Of course, it was no joke for the father, who was near tears in gratitude.

After a few high-fives from the rest of his family, Logue thought that would be the end of the story. But when a report on the incident, with his photo, appeared in *The SandPaper*, the local

newspaper in Surf City, NJ, Logue gained some fame.

"I never thought that I would get this much attention," he said. Strangers bought him lunch and sent him thank-you letters. Postal patrons stopped him to thank him and take his photo.

The Hero of the Year Award, Logue said, was "a complete surprise, and I'm very honored."

"Had he not done what he did, the child would have perished," the judges for the NALC hero award said. That this happened on Father's Day, they said, is "another thing to celebrate." ✉



Tom Logue receives the award for being NALC's National Hero of the Year.

