

**Highway Angels:
Women who Perform Random Acts of Kindness Everyday**

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For Women in Trucking

About a year ago, the Truckload Carriers Association and Volvo Trucks North America got tired of seeing all the negative press about the trucking industry and its drivers. We knew that every day, truck drivers were performing random acts of kindness on American streets and highways, but that their acts were being overlooked. We knew that truck drivers were often the first on the scene of an accident, yet their good Samaritan efforts usually went unnoticed. We also knew that trucking companies receive hundreds of letters each year from motorists thanking a truck driver who helped them. All too often, the letters were left collecting dust in personnel files.

We decided to do something about it. We wanted to put a "Face Behind the Windshield" and elevate the public's awareness and appreciation for outstanding truck drivers. We wanted to tell them more about truck drivers than they see on the Six O'Clock News or in badly acted action/adventure movies. Building on the highly successful Goodyear Highway Heroes, we began Highway Angels Program to recognize the good deeds done by truck drivers everyday.

Highway Angels recognizes the random acts of kindness truck drivers perform every day: helping an inexperienced driver change a tire, assisting a grandmother find the right road, assisting at the scene of an accident. And some of the acts we found were heroic, like stopping a teenage girl from committing suicide or finding a newborn infant abandoned in a trash dump.

Nominations have come from motorists, highway patrol officers, fellow truck drivers and carrier executives. To date over 300 drivers have received the coveted highway angel lapel pin, certificate, and decal and their companies have received a certificate acknowledging a Highway Angel in their midst. Their stories are as varied as the drivers themselves. But the outcomes were all alike. People helping people to make the highways just a little friendlier, a little safer, and a little more civil.

Many of the stories are like those of Gilbert Pernia, who works for Wilson Refrigerated Express who was on his way home when he stopped to help a 65 year old woman who was stranded in a stalled car. The woman's medical condition was such that she was not suppose to be in the heat; yet, the temperature that was 100°. She'd been waiting for over 45 minutes before Gilbert stopped to help her.

I'm particularly impressed by stories like those of Velma Converse of CR England who stopped to help a family that had been rear-ended by another truck while stalled on the side of the highway. Velma found the husband unconscious, the baby bleeding badly with a severely injured leg, and the wife with a broken shoulder and collarbone. Velma quickly put a tourniquet on the baby's leg, assisted the wife, flagged down the

ambulance, and even found time to comfort an uninjured child with a teddy bear. Velma left when the police arrived and didn't even leave her name because she was late with her load. It was only after the wife contacted CR England to find out who her angel was that company found out about the accident. Thanks to modern technology, it was able to determine the driver and nominate her as a Highway Angel.

Or consider the efforts of Terry and Linda Falk of Cauden, Arizona, drivers for First A.R. Express of Austin, Texas. They came upon an accident in the middle of the rainy night. After stopping their truck safely, Terry started to pull the three children out of the wreck while Linda comforted them and saw that they were safely placed in the car of a passing motorist. While Terry tried unsuccessfully to get the Mother and Grandmother out of the car, Linda got help on the CB. While they waited, they calmed the two women, covered them with blankets to keep the rain off, assured them of the children's safety, and kept a fire extinguisher nearby. After the accident, the Falks noted that the children who were unharmed had been wearing their seat belts. Terry said, "The adults were not wearing seatbelts and may have saved themselves a lot of pain if they had been."

Marsha Moon of Hesperia, California, a driver for PFT Roberson and a retired nurse came upon a jack-knifed accident involving a car and another truck on a snowy road in Washington State. She and her husband, Byron, didn't hesitate to stop to help. When the Washington Highway Patrol arrived, they asked the Moons to remain at the scene. Marsha tended the injured because of her past medical training while Bryon assisted the WHP direct traffic. For her efforts, Marsha not only became a highway Angel, but she also received a citation for the Washington Highway Patrol.

Or consider the story of Shelly Bain of Conyers, Georgia, a driver with RWM Southeastern Services. Shelly was nominated by her husband and co-driver, Rick, for the effort she made to comfort a fellow truck driver who was seriously injured when he was thrown from the sleeper following a jack-knife accident. Shelly stayed with the driver for 30-45 minutes waiting for the emergency crews to arrive. Because of her quick actions, the driver did not go into shock. Perhaps, Shelly should have nominated Rick. With his own life at risk, Rick, grabbed a fire extinguisher because diesel was running out of both fuel tanks.

In another case where a truck driver helped a fellow driver, Theresa Glover of Wilson, North Carolina, who works for Green Arrow Motor Express, responded to the cry for help over the CB from Gary Benton, an independent contractor for MS Carriers. Glover was experiencing a medical emergency and Theresa was the only one who would stop to help. She contacted the closest Emergency Medical Team using the satellite communications equipment in Benton's truck and stayed with him until the EMT arrived. She even contacted the MS Carriers so they could get another driver to the truck. Grant, who suffered a mini-stroke, knows he owes his life to his angel, Theresa Glover.

Sadly, sometimes the results don't always have happy endings. Tania Jones of Bonifay, Florida, who works for Sunflower Carriers, was following a car in a construction zone.

Suddenly the car went off the road and struck a tree. Tania immediately stopped and ran back to offer assistance. She found the car on fire and driver seriously hurt. She returned to her truck, pulled out the fire extinguisher, and returned to put out the fire. As Tonia was holding the injured man's hand, he pleaded, "Don't let me die." Suddenly his hand went limp and the man died. The man's wife contacted Sunflower Carriers because she wanted to thank Tonia for trying to help her husband and comforting him in his final moments.

While it's nice for drivers to receive much needed recognition from their fellow drivers and companies, the second phase of our Highway Angels Program is to get these stories out into the general press. We want to send the stories to publications that will be interested in the event or the driver. For example, stories like those just described will be sent to publications like the *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. Other stories involving older motorists will be sent to *Modern Maturity*. Stories involving children not wearing their seat belts or other unsafe acts will be sent to *Parenting*. The stories will describe the event and the truck driver's efforts. But it will also include some important information about the trucking industry and how to safely share the road with a truck, such as staying out of the "No Zone."

But to make all this happen, we need to know the stories. Encouraging motorists to send in their stories is not about truck drivers tooting their own horn. It's about the trucking industry letting the public know what we already know—truck drivers care and there is very human face behind the windshield. As an industry, we must spread our wings and be more proactive in sharing with the public how truck drivers are making a positive difference in the lives of people they share they road with. So if you are a driver and see a random act of kindness, send us your nomination. If you work in an office and see a letter from a motorist thanking one of your company's drivers, tell us about it.

Nominations can be sent to Highway Angels Program, c/o Truckload Carriers Association, 2200 Mill Road, Alexandria, VA 22314, or fax to 703-836-6610, or e-mail to tca@truckload.org.