

# Census Worker Helps Save Woman From Fire in S.C.

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On a hot Saturday summer morning in South Carolina, Debra McAlister — a census taker for the Anderson County Local Census Office — had just completed one of her assigned vacant/delete checks. Her next stop was a few miles north down a two lane country road in Pendleton.

"I was driving to my next home visit, which was about a quarter mile north of Bishop Branch Road," McAlister said. "I had the window down because my air conditioner was not working, and I heard someone crying for help."

McAlister quickly pulled over into the driveway of a small goat farm. She discovered an elderly woman sitting on the side of the road.

"She was covered from head to toe with soot," McAlister said. "I thought that she was suffering from smoke inhalation."

After calling 911 and her census supervisor, McAlister ran back to her car to get the woman some water. She gently lifted the woman's head and instructed her to take small sips. The woman began explaining that she had been defrosting her freezer before the fire started in her home.

According to reports, by the time the Pendleton firefighters responded, the front two rooms of the house were consumed with fire. It took about 20 minutes to bring the fire under control, and the wood-framed, one-story home was a total loss, authorities said.

The woman, 86-year-old Carolyn Dalton, was flown to a burn center in Augusta, Ga., about 90 miles away.

"I made sure that they got her into the helicopter, and then I asked one of the EMTs if it was OK for me to leave," McAlister said. "I can handle pressure, but it takes me just a few minutes to get myself together. I stopped at a local gas station to get something to drink, but it was closed."



Fire fighters work to control a July 10 fire inside Carolyn Dalton's house in Anderson, S.C. A census worker, Debra McAlister, helped save the elderly woman.

Photo courtesy of Nathan Gray / Anderson Independent Mail

McAlister said she sat in her car at the gas station for a few minutes thinking about her elderly mother-in-law, whom she cares for, before continuing on to the next vacant/delete check on her list.

"Once I knew that Ms. Dalton was OK, I went on to do my job," McAlister said. "I do believe that God put me in this job and on that road for a reason."

Dalton was released from the burn center the following day.

"I really enjoy helping people,"

McAlister said. "Don't ever hesitate to help someone in need. If you lend a helping hand, someone might be there to lend you one whenever you are in need."

McAlister, who is seeking full-time employment, hopes to find a job where she can answer her calling. At 51, McAlister is completing her third temporary tour for the 2010 Census. Several years ago, she lost her job and then her husband passed away.

"The Census Bureau has been a tremendous help with getting me out of the house and helping to get me out of depression," McAlister said. "This job has also given me the opportunity to learn the community and meet some very interesting people."

## Communications Campaign Wins 5 Marketing Awards



The 2010 Census Integrated Communications Campaign won five marketing effectiveness awards, plus a newly created Top Agency Award, from the 2010 Summit International Marketing Effectiveness Award competition. The five awards were the most in the competition's 16-year history.

The campaign won Platinum Awards (highest degree of marketing effect) in the government category with "Puerto Rico Doors," a print and out of home ad, and "Displaced Persons," a print ad aimed at people who lost their homes. The campaign won Silver Awards

(reaches the level of influential impact) with "Next 10 Years," an animated TV ad, and "Frank," another TV ad. The 2010 Census website earned Best of Category in government.

"Recognition of work by Summit International is a great honor," said Alexandra Figueroa of the 2010 Census Publicity Office. "Not only does it provide validation and an objective critique, it also comes with special opportunities — publicity, Web profiles, certificates, plaques and trophies."

More on the awards can be found at <[summitawards.com](http://summitawards.com)>.