
Families of slain cops find solace, help in group

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The flag-draped caskets, rows of solemn police officers and hundreds of squad cars capped off a week of painful *deja vu* for Leah Scanlon.

The Friday funerals for Detroit Police Officers Matthew Bowens and Jennifer Fettig were the first Scanlon has attended for Detroit officers since her husband, Officer Michael Scanlon, was killed two years ago, also in mid-February as he made a traffic stop.

"It's a little bit easier with time but you still relive it," Leah Scanlon, 26, of Chesterfield Township said Sunday. "It still recalls the same memories."

Scanlon said she hopes the loved ones of Bowens and Fettig will find solace in a group she credits with being "just an immediate family" after the loss of her husband, who also leaves behind a 4-year-old son and 2-year-old daughter. On Sunday, Scanlon gathered in Farmington with dozens of supporters of the Michigan Concerns of Police Survivors, or MI-COPS, at a benefit to help the group continue supporting family members of slain police officers.

"When this kind of thing happens, it's like an atomic bomb goes off in the family and there are all these pieces to put back together," said MI-COPS board President Diane Philpot, whose husband, Jerry Philpot, was shot to death while on duty in Detroit's 4th (Fort-Green) Precinct in 1995. Bowens and Fettig were officers in the same precinct.

Philpot of Brownstown Township said when a police officer is killed, MI-COPS network of survivors shows the officer's family that they can carry on. "That gives you every incentive in the world to go on," Philpot said. "I remember distinctly that I just wanted to die. If God had taken me, I would have been happy."

But MI-COPS gives families "the tools to help them put their lives back together" by sponsoring retreats, counseling and summer camp for victim's children, and providing role models who assist in the grieving process.

A nonprofit organization founded in 1988, MI-COPS has helped about 300 families statewide.

Additionally, MI-COPS members lobby for legislation, attend trials with the families of slain officers and organize trips to the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington, D.C. -- all through volunteer help and donations from benefits like the one held Sunday at the John Cowley & Sons Irish Pub.

Donning navy-blue ribbons, MI-COPS members hugged, exchanged news and decried what they called another senseless loss among the ranks. The second-annual benefit had been scheduled before Bowens and Fettig were killed, and many who gathered at the pub had seen each other at the funeral services on Friday. Philpot hoped at least 200 people would turn out for the fund-raiser, which Cowley's sponsored by donating food and staff.

MI-COPS has two other benefits planned in Warren, including a euchre tournament on Saturday and a dinner dance on March 19. While such events provide the funding for MI-COPS programs, they're also a chance for members to connect.

"It almost helps you get through it by helping others get through it," said Scanlon.

For more information about the upcoming MI-COPS benefits, call 810-580-9420 or by visiting www.mi-cops.org.

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