

## MIDDLETOWN

## Philadelphia police give back in their own way

*City and county officers stood together at the funeral of Middletown Detective Chris Jones.*

By **BEN FINLEY** and **MATT COUGHLIN**  
STAFF WRITERS

Philadelphia police have gotten too good at burying cops.

They've put to rest four officers in Bucks County who were killed in the line of duty the past three years. For each of those, scores of Bucks County law enforcement officers had their backs at the funeral services and burials. So when they heard of the roadside death of a Middletown cop, they wanted and needed to return that respect.

It's unlikely any of the dozens of Philadelphia cops drinking coffee in the basement of the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul Thursday morning even knew fallen Detective Chris Jones.

But when word came that Jones' family would be arriving shortly for his funeral Mass Thursday, the basement immediately cleared. A thick blue line streamed upstairs to stand at attention on the sidewalk as Jones' family and friends walked from limos and buses to inside the Basilica.

"We feel their pain and understand it," said Philadelphia police Cpl. Brian Haughton of the city's 24th district, which serves the Lower Northeast. He had just paid his last respects to Jones, inside the basilica and recalled when many Bucks County police departments lined up to help the city bury three officers in Bensalem, at Resurrection Cemetery.

"We want to extend that courtesy back," he said. "We're one big family. It touches our hearts."

Lower Makefield police Chief Ken Coluzzi said Philadelphia police were part of the planning for Jones' funeral from the beginning.

"The very next morning after Chris's death, I spoke to Philadelphia Police Commissioner Ramsey who obviously offered his condolences and for Philadelphia officers to be at our disposal," Coluzzi said Friday.

That included the use of a helicopter unit, highway patrol officers and cops to escort family members from Philadelphia International Airport. And the department's Police Explorers, who along with city officers served as ushers for the nearly 2,000 mourners who showed up at Jones' viewing Wednesday night at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Penndel and the burial the next day.

"It's always hard whenever you lose a man in the line of duty and unfortunately we had four last year," Ramsey said. "And we had a tremendous amount of support from surrounding jurisdictions. When this tragedy occurred we wanted to step in right away and to help in any way we could."

Ramsey said even if Philadelphia police hadn't suffered so many losses in recent years, they still would have been giving anything they could to Jones' funeral services.

"We couldn't have done it without them," said Philadelphia police Lt. John Bradley. "All the jurisdictions have been helping out and stepping to the plate [for us] — and we're trying to do that for Middletown."

"How could we not do the same for what they've done for us," echoed Philadelphia police Sgt. Jeff Strunk of the 8th district.

For two days the Bucks area mourned Jones, who was killed after another car struck the rear of his police cruiser and pinned him between his vehicle and the Route 1 Superhighway on Jan. 29.

His viewing Wednesday night drew thousands, the Thursday morning Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia drew a capacity crowd of more than 1,700, and

the ensuing procession to Jones' burial at Resurrection Cemetery in Bensalem was five miles long.

Archdiocese spokesperson Donna Farrell said it was amazing to see the solidarity and cooperation between all the different agencies during the planning sessions.

Yet many of the police chiefs, lieutenants and officers who participated didn't want recognition, feeling that being named might somehow diminish the recognition that it was thousands of police officers participating, not just a few names in the paper. And chiefs said so many contributed they feared leaving someone out.

Warwick Chief Joseph Costello, who helped organize the events with Coluzzi, said the fire departments, ambulance squads and fire police were essential to the funeral services. He said fire police from throughout the county were directing traffic, containing crowds or delivering food to police posted at different locations despite the freezing temperatures.

Coluzzi said Warminster's Lt. Jim Donnelly ran the traffic detail and Bensalem's Sgt. John Gladu coordinated motorcycle escorts for each procession - from the funeral home to the church, back to the funeral home, down to the basilica and up to the burial.

Meanwhile, Lower Southampton Chief William Weigman, Morrisville Chief Jack Jones and Upper Southampton's Sgt. Frank Walter organized shifts of volunteer cops to fill in for Middletown's 53 officers.

The first shift was the night Jones died, from 2 p.m. Jan. 29 to 7 a.m. the next morning. Volunteers also covered shifts from 7 a.m. Wednesday to 7 a.m. Friday during the funeral services.

Some finished full shifts in their own jurisdiction and then drove into Middletown to patrol, Weigman said. While others' normal shifts in their own towns were adjusted so they spent it patrolling Middletown.

Many were working without getting paid, while others, like several Falls, Bristol Township and Bensalem cops, who were working anyway, had their pay donated to Jones' family or the Bucks County Hero Scholarship Fund benefiting the children of officers killed in the line of duty.

Lower Southampton Officer Stephen Castle, a 19-year veteran, was one of the unpaid volunteers.

"Each officer out there could have been in Officer Jones' place," Castle said. "We all go to domestics, medical calls, traffic stops and it's only because of the grace of God that it's not us. [Working a Middletown shift] is one way to honor not only [Jones] but every officer there in mourning."

Luckily there weren't any serious, violent crimes, Weigman said.

To avoid jurisdictional issues with criminal cases, he said Bucks County Detectives signed on to each case as an affiant, even the retail thefts. They were also filling in as the township's detectives.

Lt. Patrick McGinty, Middletown's acting public safety director, said township police were overwhelmed with the support, noting that 10 city police commanders showed up at the first funeral planning meeting to offer the various resources under their control. And he said he knew of Bucks officers who were asking to take their cars to Middletown as soon as their own shift ended the day Jones died.

"Now we're wondering, how do we go out and even begin to thank all these people and departments?" McGinty said.

The township has posted to its Web site a thank you to all the departments that helped. And last week, Chris Jones widow, Suzanne, said she can't thank all the police, firefighters, paramedics and fire police enough.

But somehow, it seems none of the emergency services want any thanks, they just wanted to help, and they just wanted to take part in honoring their brother.

"Whatever happens to one of us happens to us all," Ramsey said.

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Philadelphia police officers walk to the graveside funeral service for fallen Middletown Detective Chris Jones at Resurrection Cemetery on Thursday afternoon.  
BILL FRASER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Philadelphia officers stand in silence during a prayer for fallen Middletown Detective Chris Jones.  
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