



Community reacts to officer's death

STAFF REPORTS

PASTOR, OUR LADY OF GRACE CHURCH

After Middletown police officer Chris Jones died Thursday, his wife was the one consoling her husband's friends and fellow police who had gathered at St. Mary Medical Center, the family's pastor said.

"She was going to them, comforting them. That was amazing that she could find the strength to do that," said the Rev. William B. Dooner, pastor of Our Lady of Grace Church in Pennel.

Dooner spoke fondly of Jones, who formally became a Catholic several years ago at an Easter vigil and regularly attended Mass at Our Lady of Grace.

"A very, very good man, very good family," Dooner said soon after meeting with the family following the tragic death.

"He enjoyed working with people, and for people," Dooner said. "I would always bump into him at Wawa in the morning, getting coffee and doughnuts, and he'd be friendly with everybody.

"You could see he was a police officer because he wanted to be of service to the people," he added. "He always seemed to be interested in other people."

The funeral services haven't been scheduled yet, Dooner said, but the Mass will likely to be at Our Lady of Grace.

THE POLICE

Middletown Sgt. Ken Mellus arrived at police headquarters Thursday in shock.

"I was his sergeant. He worked very hard and was always willing to help out and worked from the time he got to work until he went home after his shift. This is a major loss for our department," Mellus said.

Northampton Chief Barry Pilla, a very close friend of Middletown Chief Frank McKenna, called it a "horrible day."

"Frank retires Friday and to have this happen to the department is just tragic. I did not know the officer, but heard he was truly dedicated to his profession," Pilla said.

Middletown constable Jim McMeeking worked with Jones taking prisoners to jail.

"You will never meet a nicer guy. That sounds cliché, but he was the ultimate professional. He worked very hard and worked from the time he got to work until the time he went home. He did not just cruise through a shift for a paycheck. He earned every penny," McMeeking said.

Jones was a 1989 graduate of Bensalem High School and was close friends with Max Levine, who still lives in Bensalem.

"He was a great, great guy and truly dedicated to his profession," Levine said.

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Since Jones's three children attend the Neshaminy School District, acting Superintendent Lou Muenker said counseling personnel will be made available once administrators determine where they're needed.

"We will be providing support to those affected by this tragic loss," Muenker said in an e-mail to the newspaper Thursday afternoon.

Jones's kids are enrolled at Herbert Hoover Elementary School, Maple Point Middle School, and Neshaminy High School. All three facilities are in Middletown.



Fire Chief Frank Farry (left) of the Langhorne-Middletown Fire Co. and firefighter Chris Reeves salute a procession of vehicles escorting the hearse carrying the body of Middletown police Officer Chris Jones Thursday. STEVE GENGLER / **STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**