

MIDDLETOWN

Families hope Jones can save one more life

Chris Jones' wife made the decision to donate the officer's organs.

— Matt Coughlin, 215-949-4172

After fighting for 90 minutes to save Christopher Jones, doctors turned to his wife, asking her to give hope to others.

The Middletown police officer was killed Thursday morning after a horrific crash on the Route 1 Superhighway. He was pinned beneath his own police car before being rushed to St. Mary Medical Center.

Doctors did everything they could to save his life before turning to Suzanne Jones and asking if they could take his organs since he was listed as an organ donor.

Her answer was heard more than 1,000 miles away.

In Atoka, Tenn., another family was hoping for Jones to pull through. U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Ron Crawford and his wife, Wendy, befriended the Joneses when Chris and Ron were stationed together on the USS Kitty Hawk.

The two couples — like many military families separated from relatives — had become family for one another. The Jones' kids, Christopher, 16, Julianne, 13, and Brendan, 12, called the Crawfords their aunt and uncle and the Crawford kids, Molly, 17, and Matthew, 12, did likewise with Chris and Suzanne Jones.

When doctors asked Suzanne Jones if she wanted to donate Chris' organs she thought of Ron Crawford.

Crawford has been on the kidney transplant recipient list since November. He has had problems with his kidneys for several years. Then last year he was diagnosed with FSGS — focal segmental glomerulosclerosis, a disease that attacks the part of the kidneys where toxins are removed from the blood.

As Jones signed papers donating her husband's kidneys and heart valves Thursday, she asked a representative from the Gift of Life Donor Program if a kidney might go to Crawford. It was possible — but only if nine of Jones' and Crawford's antigens (substances capable of causing an immune reaction) were matches.

Jones said her kids were still very upset Thursday night and they were having a hard time coping with their father's death.

"I said that instead of crying for their dad we should be praying for their Uncle Ron," Jones said.

So they did.

On Thursday night, three antigens had been matched. Crawford's surgeon told him to get to Methodist Hospital in Memphis. By Friday morning, tests revealed a perfect match and one kidney was flown south for the transplant surgery.

"'Uncle Chris is like Jesus, whoever's life he comes into he touches'," Suzanne Jones quoted Matthew Crawford as saying after he learned his father was getting a kidney.

Doctors in Memphis made sure Suzanne Jones received hourly updates Friday night as the roughly four-hour surgery progressed. Late Friday she received the last update: the surgery had gone well and Crawford was resting.

Crawford could be on dialysis for several days or weeks until the kidney turns pink, indicating it's working, Wendy Crawford said.

Now, Jones said she'll wait to hear whether her husband's death might help others. She said she'd be notified if and when her husband's other kidney and his heart valves are transplanted.

Meanwhile, the Joneses and the Crawfords hope Chris can save at least one more life.

"Out of this extreme tragedy comes something in a million years we would never have expected or wanted," Wendy Crawford said. "But if we pull this off, [Chris Jones' children] will get to hug their Uncle Ron and know that there's a piece of their father in him that lives on."





Ron Crawford



Officer Chris Jones