

A hero in life and in death

08 Mar 2010 — Bucks County Courier Times

Christopher Jones' commitment to his community, friends and family lasts beyond his death.

Anyone would rather honor a hero when he's alive.

But that's not possible with Middletown police Officer Christopher Jones. He was struck and killed by a drug-impaired driver while finishing a traffic stop on Route 1 near the I-95 interchange on Jan. 29, 2009.

Jones, who was posthumously promoted to detective because he had passed all the requirements, is one of 19 recipients selected by the American Red Cross as "Real Heroes of Bucks County." They will be honored during a March 18 breakfast at the Belle Voir Manor in Bensalem.

Jones was just 37 years old; a father of three - Christopher, Julianne and Brendan - and a husband to Suzanne.

"Chris was, besides being a really good young man (and) a good family man, an excellent police officer," said Middletown's acting director of public safety, Patrick McGinty. "He put his whole heart and soul into the job. We never had complaints about him, just compliments."

The compliments stacked up; Jones kept a collection of letters and notes in his locker like trophies of success. They were small successes in the everyday actions of a cop just doing his job like talking to someone's kid who was in trouble or treating a victim with care, a distracted driver with respect or a criminal like a human being.

McGinty praised Jones' professional and very human treatment of everyone.

Being the man he was day after day made Chris Jones a hero.

Even in death that heroism lives on. In the hours after he died, Jones' kidney was flown to Tennessee and transplanted into another father, Ron Crawford.

The Crawford and Jones families had been friends for more than 17 years, both Navy families whose patriarchs had served together aboard the same aircraft carrier. Crawford was dying of kidney disease and was on a transplant list the day Jones died. Suzanne Jones asked that her husband's kidney go to his close friend.

"There was no joy in our car when we left the hospital the first time," Wendy Crawford recalled months later. But the Crawfords also knew that it was deeply important for the Joneses that the transplant go well. There have been ups and downs over the past year. But things are now up for the Crawfords.

Ron Crawford is doing well, the Joneses said through a family friend. He's back to singing in a band, a recreation he hadn't been able to enjoy in recent years. He's alive and well, he's enjoying life.

Jones not only gave during his life, but also gave life in his death. A true hero, according to McGinty.

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