

The ultimate sacrifice of those on the 'Honor Roll' will never be forgotten

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Chief of Police

For many Californians, the term "Honor Roll" conjures up images of academic excellence and the proud feelings associated with seeing your name included on a prestigious list.



For those of us in law enforcement, the "Honor Roll" is not a list on which we want to find our names. Although this list also gives rise to feelings of pride, it is the list of California peace officers killed in the line of duty.

So far in 2016, 33 names of officers who lost their lives throughout the United States were added to the national Honor Roll.

Each year, the California Peace Officers' Memorial Foundation holds a ceremony to honor the men and women in law enforcement who have made the ultimate sacrifice and joined the list that year. The numbers vary from year to year, but since 2001, the

names of 159 California Police Officers have been added to the Peace Officers' Memorial Monument in Capitol Park in Sacramento and are included in the Honor Roll on the Foundation's website.

Those names are also included in the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington DC and are joined by thousands of others. These brave men and women are honored each year in our nation's capital during National Police Week that runs from May 15 to Saturday May 21.

According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, on average, one law enforcement officer is killed in the line of duty somewhere in the United States every 61 hours. Since the first known line-of-duty death in 1791, more than 20,000 U.S. law enforcement officers have made the ultimate sacrifice.

In remembrance, we honor the sacrifice of two of our fallen family members: James D. "Dave" Ketchum and John W. "Mike" Libolt, who through noble commitment to duty, made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our community.

Both officers were killed on March 10, 1987 when their helicopter collided with a Newport Beach copter while pursuing a suspect in a stolen car. Ketchum and Libolt were both 15-year veterans and became the first Costa Mesa police officers killed in the line of duty in the department's history

The good work that we do day in and day out does not frequently end up in the paper. It is not considered news because it is what we chose to do – protect and serve our respective communities.

None of us wants to be included on the "Honor Roll" for our service, but recognize that the Honor Roll is there to remind us that each year, there are those of us who will make the ultimate sacrifice in service to our communities.

The risk of this sacrifice keeps many from entering the law enforcement profession. Those of us who chose law enforcement start each day with a desire to serve and protect our communities by putting the safety of others before our own. We are husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters. We are coaches, counselors, mediators and mentors.

We dedicate ourselves to fighting crime and drugs to create a safe community for those we serve. We help at-risk youth in schools, parents in crisis and connect the homeless and mentally ill with services. We show up when you call 911 to help you in a time need or an emergency.

We do these things with the understanding that it's part of our job and we proud to serve our community.

On a related note, we are proud of records specialist Tina Foster's brother, Niagara County Sheriff's Deputy Joe Tortorella, who received a Medal of Valor award this week from President Obama.

Below are links about the award and the actual incident. His heroic actions truly made the difference that day.

<http://www.wgrz.com/news/local/deputy-tortorella-receives-medal-of-valor-from-president-obama/196825976>

<http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/wheatfield/acting-on-his-instincts-a-sheriffs-deputy-prevented-a-tragedy-20150504>

We are fortunate to work in a community where the overwhelming majority of our population trusts and supports what we do. This support is earned by your tireless efforts to protect our citizens, enforce our laws, and keep our community safe in accordance with the core values of Teamwork, Integrity, Professionalism, and Service.

The men and women of our Department care deeply for Costa Mesa

and demonstrate that care through various community engagement efforts – many of which are done on our own time.

We also strive to decrease crime and ensure a high quality of life through proactive and intelligence based policing strategies. We are grateful to serve a community that supports its Police Department and to not have to struggle with the challenges that plague many other cities.

I encourage members of the community to show that support during National Police Week by shining a blue light to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their community and to show our local heroes how much they are supported by those they serve.