

Sheriff shares final arrangements;

Traffic and parking are considerations

By Jeff M. Hardison © April 23, 2018 at 10:08 a.m.

TRENTON -- Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz said on Monday morning (April 23) that the viewing, funeral and line-of-duty burial arrangements for the two members of the Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office who were murdered on Thursday (April 19) have been set for tomorrow (Tuesday, April 24).

Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Noel Ramirez and Deputy Sheriff Taylor Lindsey were shot to death in Trenton on April 19.

Every person who had planned to attend the Lunch and Learn Program in Cross City on Tuesday has been notified that the Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition has cancelled that event and will reschedule it for a later time.

Sheriff Schultz said every member of the public is invited to attend the viewing, funeral and burial events. He reminds attendees and people within the path of the funeral procession that there may be some level of inconvenience for traffic and parking.

The sheriff said visitation starts at 10 a.m. in the Bell Middle High School gymnasium-auditorium. BMHS is located at 930 S. Main St. (U.S. Highway 129) in Bell.

The non-denominational funeral service is scheduled to start at 11 a.m. in the BMHS Gym-Auditorium, Sheriff Schultz said.

The funeral service is anticipated to end and the procession to Rosemary Hill Cemetery {which is also known as Bronson Cemetery, Rosemary Cemetery and has GPS Coordinates of 29.45334, - 82.6356} will begin at 12:30 p.m. if all goes as planned for tomorrow, the sheriff said.

Rosemary Hill Cemetery is located on Thrasher Drive (State Road 24) in Bronson, east of Hawthorne Avenue (U.S. Alt. 27).

Sheriff Schultz said he anticipates the line-of-duty burial ceremony to start no earlier than 2:30 p.m. tomorrow afternoon (Tuesday, April 24).

The route of the funeral procession from BMHS to Rosemary Hill Cemetery is scheduled to be on U.S. Highway 129 from Bell to Trenton.

In Trenton, the procession will turn from southbound U.S. 129 onto Gilchrist County Road 339 at the GCSO, where it will go east toward Bronson. When the procession reaches U.S. Alt 27, it will go toward Bronson by turning left at the intersection of Levy County Road 339 and U.S. Alt. 27.

At that traffic light in Bronson, the procession will again turn left and go to the cemetery, which is on the left a few blocks east of that intersection.

All motorists and people who conduct business along the route are reminded to be mindful of the probable traffic issues. The sheriff asks all people to exercise patience and show respect to others during this event.

Anyone can participate to any level in this process, Sheriff Schultz said. Law enforcement officers who are part of this funeral will have particular parking privileges.

The two places BMHS in Bell and Rosemary Hill Cemetery in Bronson will experience relatively intense traffic and parking issues as a result of the anticipated significant amount of public support that is anticipated to occur.

One method that the public can show support and not add to congestion in those two cities is to stand along the route the procession will pass.

Sheriff Schultz said there will be law enforcement support so that any streets entering the path of the funeral procession will be temporarily closed to allow the group to pass through. The sheriff urges all supporters, too, to be safe in regard to staying aware of traffic as they stand to show their support of the two men and their families as they go to where their bodies will be put to final rest.

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“I think it would be great if the people of the community show support to the families of these men,” Sheriff Schultz said. “All of the services are open to the public. Traffic and parking will be a challenge. Considering the sacrifice these men made, I know people will not see some extra walking to be too much of an inconvenience.”

Gilchrist County Sheriff endorses method to help families of fallen deputies

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Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © April 22, 2018 at

TRENTON -- Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz on Saturday evening (April 21) endorsed people sending donations to an organization named Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation.

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Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz listens to the presentation.



Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum (left) and LCSO Lt. Scott Tummond listen to the presentation.



Some of the many banners and flowers presented to the GCSO to memorialize and honor the two fallen deputies.



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Gigi Ramirez, the widow of Sgt. Noel Ramirez, hugs John Hodges of the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation.

https://youtu.be/6-61_GmKcWQ

In this video, John Hodges of the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation speaks about why the group pays off mortgages for widows and children of fallen officers and firefighters.

John Hodges, the chief operating officer of the organization came to Trenton as did Larry Olson, vice president of marketing and communications.

They came from the home office located on Staten Island, N.Y., to speak to some of the survivors

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from the horrific murder of two deputies of the Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office and to help them.

This foundation is providing a method for people to donate money to pay the mortgage on the house of the widow and children of Gilchrist County Sheriff's Sgt. Noel Ramirez, 30, a seven-year veteran of law enforcement

GCSO Deputy Taylor Lindsey, 25, also died at the hands of a killer on Thursday (April 19), and the representative of the foundation said the group will determine a method to help people remember him.

Sheriff Schultz said he had fully vetted the organization, and he sees it as an authentic group that is worthy of utilization in this effort.

Hodges first shared the origin of the name of the group, which comes from his late cousin's life being ended during the terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001.

New York City Firefighter Stephen Gerard Siller was an orphan who was raised by his older siblings. He grew up to be an extraordinary individual and dedicated firefighter. More than most, he knew that time was precious and accomplished much in his 34 years.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Siller, who was assigned to Brooklyn's Squad 1, had just finished his shift and was on his way to play golf with his brothers when he got word over his scanner of a plane hitting the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Upon hearing the news, Stephen called his wife Sally and asked her to tell his brothers he would catch up with them later. He returned to Squad 1 to get his gear.

Stephen drove his truck to the entrance of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, but it had already been closed for security purposes. Determined to carry out his duty, he strapped 60- to 65-pounds of gear to his back and raced on foot through the tunnel to the Twin Towers for three miles, where he gave up his life while saving others.

"Our hearts go out to the family of Sgt. Noel Ramirez," Hodges said, "his wife Gigi and two children, and also to the family of Deputy Taylor Lindsey."

Hodges said the foundation is a family-based organization, and they know how tragic it is to lose a loved one so suddenly and unexpectedly in such an unfair way.

On Dec. 20, 2014, the foundation started this particular program to help surviving family members after an event like happened in Trenton on Thursday, Hodges said.

Two police officers sitting in their patrol car in Brooklyn were shot at point-blank range that month by a man who had traveled to the city from Baltimore vowing to kill officers. The suspect then committed suicide with the same gun, authorities said.

NYPD officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos were in the car when the gunman, Ismaaiyl Brinsley, walked up to the passenger-side window and assumed a firing stance, then-Police Commissioner William J. Bratton said. The officers never drew their weapons, the authorities said.

Brinsley, 28, then fled down the street and onto the platform of a nearby subway station, where he killed himself as officers closed in.

The Foundation felt that was "so unfair and so wrong" that it immediately chose to pay off the mortgage of those two families' homes, Hodges said, to assist those families.

Since those first two mortgages were paid off, Hodges said, the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation has given out a little more than \$5 million in housing assistance to families of first responders, in law enforcement as well in the fire service and medical service, who were killed in the line of duty.

Hodges said the Foundation's leadership saw what happened to Sgt. Ramirez and Deputy Lindsey as being similar to what happened to NYPD officers Liu and Ramos.

The Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation is going to pay off the mortgage on the family

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home of the Ramirez family, Hodges said, "... so that moving forward there will be no further debt on that home."

Hodges said the Foundation will do this as soon as it gets with the family after things calm down a little bit, in the near future.

"Additionally," Hodges said, "we are going to get with the family of Deputy Taylor Lindsey when it is appropriate. Certainly, right now it isn't appropriate. And with that, although he is not married and he does not have a home, we will work together with them. And we will discuss with them how to provide them with some money to start a scholarship fund in his name. So his name, and what he did, and the hero that he was will live on too."

Hodges said the Foundation chose to start paying off mortgages when the two officers were assassinated in New York.

When a first responder is killed in the line of duty, and he or she leaves behind children, then the Foundation sees this as a method to "wrap arms around them" figuratively.

The child's world revolves around Mom and Dad, their home, their friends and their school. When such a tragic and horrible act like has happened occurs, he said, the reduction expense by not having a mortgage is one less concern for the family.

This act helps increase the odds for the family to not have to move. The children can stay with their friends and have a more stable life than might occur if not for this help.

Hodges said this effort depends on donors.

He added that 100 percent of what goes into this account will go toward these two families, and if there is more raised than needed, then that money will stay with those two families too.

Also, if the funds go to the families through the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation rather than through other means – there is zero income tax liability to the recipients, Hodges said.