

US Marshal, 45, from York County 'died a hero - Evening Sun, The (Hanover, PA) - January 21, 2018 - page A11

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U.S. Deputy Marshal Christopher David Hill of Conewago Township 'died a hero' Thursday morning.

The 45-year-old father of two was killed in a shootout while serving a warrant in Harrisburg around 6 a.m.

York City Police Officer Kyle Pitts also was wounded. A Harrisburg police officer was struck in his body armor by a projectile, and was not seriously wounded.

The men were executing a warrant for the arrest of Shayla Lynette Towles Pierce, who was wanted by the Harrisburg Bureau of Police for terroristic threat offenses.

While arresting Pierce, the officers heard gunfire coming from the second floor of the house, officials said. Soon after, a man ran out the front of the home, firing at the officers. The officers returned fire, killing the man later identified as **Kevin Sturgis**, 31, of Philadelphia.

Pierce was taken into custody.

Officials were not sure of the relationship between Sturgis and Pierce. U.S. Attorney Dave Freed said there were multiple children in the house at the time, and that all were safe.

Sturgis had two active warrants from Philadelphia, according to a news release from Freed's office. One was for failure to appear for sentencing on a firearms charge. The other was for failure to appear for a probation hearing related to drug and stolen property charges. Sturgis also had been found guilty of rape when he was a juvenile, the news release states.

Who was Christopher Hill?

Hill, an 11-year veteran of the U.S. Marshals, worked at the U.S. Capitol before being transferred to Harrisburg in 2009. During the Eric Frein manhunt, Hill was chosen to lead a large group that conducted woodland searches for Frein.

Hill was an Army veteran who served from 1993-1996. He joined the Marshals Service in 2006 in Washington, D.C., and transferred to Harrisburg in 2009. He is survived by his wife and two children.

Hill received the distinguished group award for significant contributions in Afghanistan.

State Sen. Mike Regan, who served as U.S. Marshal in Harrisburg until his retirement in 2011, called

Hill "a heck of a guy."

"Just a really neat guy, very highly-trained," Regan said Thursday. "He also had a very humorous side, fun-loving. It really seemed the other deputies gravitated toward him."

Regan said Hill was part of the U.S. Marshals Special Operations Group, an elite, nationwide SWAT-style tactical arm of the agency.

"At a moment's notice, he might be gone, anywhere in the country," handling prisoner transport or security for high-profile criminal cases, he said. "He was probably as tactically sound as anybody in the country."

"He was a special guy, he truly was," Regan said.

Hill lived with his family in the Northeastern School District.

"We are going to support our kids and the family however they feel they need it," a spokesperson for the district said.

"Christopher Hill died a hero today," Freed said at a news conference in Harrisburg. "We will honor his memory with his brothers and sisters in law enforcement. We will provide answers to Deputy Marshall Hill's family."

David J. Anderson, acting deputy director for the U.S. Marshals Service, said Hill "was a devoted public servant who dedicated his life to making his community and this nation safer. We will never forget his commitment and courage. The nation lost a hero today."

Hill had close ties to York City Police

York City Police Chief Troy Bankert said his department also knew Hill well.

"The loss of him is felt upon this police department quite a bit," Bankert said during a news conference Thursday afternoon.

York Police Sgt. Craig Losty lives down the street from Hill. Losty didn't know Hill, but he'd sometimes see him outside playing basketball with his son, or he'd notice that Hill had already left for work by the time Losty was leaving the neighborhood.

Hill was a law enforcement brother, and his death was tragic, Losty said.

"It's a tragedy whether I knew him or not," Losty said.

Losty has been with the city department for 26 years. It's a job he loves, he said. But when he comes home, he goes about life just like everyone else.

Early Thursday evening, he let his cats outside to sniff around in the snow. They were eyeing up a bird that had perched in a tree in his front yard.

Police officers are just like everyone else, albeit their jobs are more dangerous than most, Losty said. He wished that more people realized that.

"At the end of the day ... people don't see that human side of us," Losty said. "The biggest thing people need to realize is that police officers are neighbors, police officers hand out candy on Halloween, police officers put lights out on Christmas."

When tragedy strikes, that's when people pause and consider the sacrifice police officers make, Losty said. Like with Hill's death and with the death of Baltimore Detective Sean Suiter, who was killed in the line of duty in November and who lived in Conewago Township just a few miles from Hill and Losty's neighborhood.

A lot of time, Losty said, the job doesn't define how a police officer lives his or her life. Losty thinks it's likely that many of the people in his neighborhood didn't know that Hill was in law enforcement.

But Hill's death will be felt across the law enforcement family, Losty said, noting it's likely that law enforcement will come from all over, from out of state, to pay their respects at Hill's funeral.

But Thursday night, Losty thought of Hill's family, his wife and children.

"When all is said and done, at the end of today, it's just tragic," Losty said. "Somebody's going to not have a father and husband."

York City Police officer injured

As for injured York Officer Kyle Pitts, he was being treated at Hershey Medical Center for non-life threatening injuries. He was assigned to the U.S. Marshals Task Force, according to a York news release.

He is the father of three girls and has been a part of the York City Police Department for 10 years.

Reporters Ted Czech, Brandie Kessler and Teresa Boeckel contributed to this report.

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