

Deputy U.S. Marshal killed in line of duty to be - Daily Item, The (Sunbury, PA) - August 12, 2018

August 12, 2018 | Daily Item, The (Sunbury, PA) | Joe Sylvester

U.S. Marshal Christopher Hill died while protecting the public.

And though he also was a football hero at Warrior Run High School, he was humble.

"I was amazed that at the services at the Giant Center in Hershey, a lot of his fellow marshals never knew he played football or knew he was as good as he was," commented Buddy Johnson, who was the Warrior Run High School quarterback in the late 1980s when Hill was a star tailback.

Johnson and teammate Justin Blakeney are leading the drive to memorialize Hill by retiring his football jersey number — 32. That will happen Aug. 31, during halftime of Warrior Run's first home football game, when the Defenders play Milton Area.

Hill, 45, was shot and killed while assisting in serving a warrant on a woman inside a Harrisburg home Jan. 18. The Dauphin County District Attorney's Office revealed on March 1 that Hill, a member of a U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force that included local and state law enforcement, was killed by friendly fire when another task force member was firing at Kevin Sturgis, 31, and a bullet passed through a wall and struck Hill. Task force members shot and killed Sturgis when he ran from the home while shooting at police.

Warrior Run Superintendent Alan Hack said the idea to retire Hill's number came from some of his fellow players.

"Some of his former teammates approached the district about doing something in his memory," Hack said. "They asked to retire his football number during the first home football game of the season."

Athletic Director Nate Butler said Johnson and Blakeney wanted to do something and approached their former coach, Ted McPherrin, to help them.

"It kind of grew from there," he said.

Butler said there will be a tent set up behind the east end zone, where a video about Hill will play on a continuing loop. Johnson and Blakeney will be there to answer questions about Hill.

Butler said the school also will hold a student assembly that afternoon. Hill's wife and children, who now live in Florida, are expected to fly in to attend. Johnson and Blakeney will speak.

Johnson said he kept thinking about Hill after his death and what his close group of friends could do for Hill and his family. They approached McPherrin, who scheduled a meeting with Hack.

"From that moment forward, we had the support and blessing of the (Warrior Run) administration, school board, athletic department and community," Johnson explained in an email. "The positive impact that Chris Hill had on all those he met was astounding."

He said the purpose of the assembly is to inform the student body who Chris Hill was and of the numerous heroic things he did serving his country.

"Let them know the extraordinary husband, father, brother, son and friend he was. Show a slideshow of Chris from youth to adulthood. Friends, family, U.S. Army Ranger, U.S. Marshal Service SOG (Special Operations Group) team member. His wife, Sylvia, and children will be in attendance. As will state Senator Mike Regan (R-31, of Harrisburg)," Johnson said.

He said longtime teacher, coach and historian John Corman will serve as master of ceremonies at halftime where a framed jersey bearing number 32 will be retired and dedicated. Johnson and Blakeney plan to address the football team and distribute No. 32 helmet stickers to wear all season.

Johnson said that as a player, Hill was "electric." He had speed, agility, good vision and power.

"He would dish out compliments regularly and knew the true meaning of team," Johnson added. "As a leader, Chris was hardworking, dedicated, determined, relentless, understanding and had a heart of gold. He picked us up numerous times. Now it's our turn to pick him up. I just wish I could reach out my hand, scoop him up from the grass and hear that laugh. Honoring the outstanding kid he was and the honorable man he became will suffice."

He said retiring Hill's jersey will help in the healing process.

"When we got together he wanted to hear what we were doing in our life, hear about our families. Very humble," Johnson said. "Our brother was a U.S. Marshal, but he wanted to learn about our life experiences. Others first. Humble. That was Chris."

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