

For firefighter widows, a gift from the heart

Kathy Perpetua, the Holme Circle woman who sells handmade rosary beads, last week donated \$2,235 to the widows' fund of International Association of Fire Fighters Local 22.

Perpetua made the donation during the fund's 14th annual holiday luncheon on Nov. 21 at the union hall, at Fifth and Willow streets.

Active firefighters serve the meals, and the women are presented with gift bags, along with a turkey and all the fixings. The afternoon also included dancing and a disc jockey.

Perpetua, whose husband, Tony, is a retired fireman, thanked all of the people who bought rosaries at craft shows at American Heritage Federal Credit Union, the Immaculate Mary Home and Father Judge and Holy Ghost Prep high schools.

In addition, she thanked the owners of the New Boulevard Diner for running a raffle that raised \$150 for the fund.

Earlier this year, Perpetua donated \$800 in rosary sales to the family of Lt. Dave Meskill, a fourth-generation Philadelphia fireman who died in March of cancer. He was survived by his wife, Geraldine, and sons Conor, Sean and Aidan. ••

— Tom Waring



TOM WARING/TIMES PHOTO

Holme Circle resident Kathy Perpetua (right) donated \$2,235 from the sale of handmade rosaries to the widows' fund of the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 22. The donation was made on Nov. 21 during an annual luncheon at the union hall. Perpetua and Local 22 president Bill Gault join widows (from left) Joan White, Betty Eisenlohr and Margaret Ginty.

SURVIVORS

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Dozens of vehicles from police departments throughout the Philadelphia area take part in a caravan that delivers holiday meals to surviving family members.

"It's a happy and sad moment at the same time," said Maritza Mohamad, a police officer whose sister and fellow officer, Isabel Nazario, was killed in September 2008 when her squad car was hit by a stolen, speeding Cadillac Escalade driven by a 16-year-old boy in West Philadelphia. "It reopens wounds."

Judy Cassidy and her three young adult children feel the same way. Things haven't been quite the same since Chuck Cassidy was shot to death in the fall of 2007 when he interrupted an armed robbery at a West Oak Lane Dunkin' Donuts.

Still, they are glad the FOP and Binns pay a visit during the holidays.

"It's nice that they remember," said Judy Cassidy, who lives on Willits Road. "They can't do enough for everybody."

That was the same feeling at Nazario's house on Welsh Road in Holmesburg. The visitors were greeted by Mohamad and the fallen officer's college-age daughter, Jazmin, and mother, Patricia Santiago.

"I feel happy that they remember my daughter," Santiago said.

The meal deliveries took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, Nov. 22-23. Lodge 5 president John McNesby and Philadelphia police brass were among those making the deliveries.

Usually, most of the caravan is made up of motorcycles. However, because of the rain, squad cars were used.

Turkeys and side items were delivered on Nov. 22 to the families of the following fallen officers:

- Gary Skerski, the 15th Police District community relations officer who was shot to death in 2006 while responding to an armed robbery at a Northwood bar. Anne Skerski, his widow, now lives in New Jersey.

- Chris Jones, a Middletown Township, Bucks County officer who was struck and killed on Route 1 while making a traffic stop in January 2009.
- Joseph Szczerba, a New Castle

County (Del.) sergeant fatally stabbed in the neck in September by a man after responding to a disorderly conduct call.

On Nov. 23, the group met at the Philadelphia Police Academy before departing for Sunnybrook Golf Club in Plymouth Meeting for breakfast with police chiefs, including Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey.

Besides the stops at the homes of Nazario and Cassidy, the caravan visited the homes of the following officers:

- Walter Barclay, who was shot and paralyzed by a burglary suspect in Olney in 1966. He died of complications of the wound in 2007.

- Stephen Liczbinski, a Burholme resident who was shot to death in May 2008 in Port Richmond while trying to apprehend bank robbers.

- John Pawlowski, who was shot to death in February 2009 during a dispute between two men at Broad Street and Olney Avenue.

- John Marynowitz, who was shot and critically injured in 1993 in West Oak Lane when he and partner, Robert Hayes, stopped a gypsy cab that was driven by an illegal immigrant

from Haiti and contained drugs. Hayes was killed.

- Patrick McDonald, of Morrell Park, who was shot to death in North Philadelphia in September 2008 by 27-year-old Daniel Giddings, a parolee whose life of violent crime started when he was 10.

- Ricky Bowes, of Somerton, who was shot in the hip by Giddings before returning fire and killing the murderer of Patrick McDonald.

- Andrew Stackwicz, a 22nd Police District sergeant and East Torresdale resident who died of a heart attack in October 2008 sometime after a foot pursuit in North Philadelphia.

- Timothy Simpson, a Holme Circle resident who was killed in Port Richmond in November 2008 when his squad car was struck by a stolen car whose driver was eluding police. The suspect, William Foster, pleaded guilty to third-degree murder and was sentenced last month to 19 to 40 years in prison. ••

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