



# IOWA



## LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Official Member Publication of the Iowa Peace Officers Association (IPOA)

# Honoring the service and sacrifice of peace officers and their families



### Inside:

- Ride4Cops seeks to raise \$150,000 for the families of fallen officers
- Special Olympics Iowa holds "Over the Edge" rappelling event
- IPOA Conference 2011 coming to Sioux City in May
- Police widows ask for COPS organization to help survivor families
- National CSI Camp in October at Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri
- State peace officers' memorial adds 15 names

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# James Saunders named director of Iowa Intelligence Fusion Ctr.

Des Moines, IOWA --- Iowa DPS Commissioner Eugene T. Meyer has named Assistant Director James J. Saunders as the new Director of the Iowa Intelligence Fusion Center. Saunders assumed the duties of Director on June 11. The position was formerly held by Russ Porter, who accepted an appointment with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI).

Director Saunders said Porter did an outstanding job promoting information sharing among the many public and private entities that protect Iowans.

"I look forward to building on their many successes," Saunders said.

Originally from the northwest Iowa community of Okoboji, Director Saunders graduated from the Iowa Department of Public Safety's 13<sup>th</sup> Basic Academy on July 2, 1987.

Throughout his career with Public Safety, Director Saunders has served Iowans in many different capacities: as a State Trooper in the Iowa State Patrol, a Special Agent with the Division of Criminal Investigation, state coordinator for the Iowa Law Enforcement Intelligence Network (LEIN), Bureau Chief of the DPS Public Information Bureau, and Assistant Director for DCI overseeing the Support Operations Bureau.

Director Saunders has represented Iowa law enforcement interests on the Executive Committee for the Mid States Organized Crime Information Center (MOCIC), a position he held for 11 years. MOCIC is comprised of nine Midwestern states and is one of six Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) operating in the United States.

Director Saunders earned a Bachelors Degree in public administration from William Penn University, Certificate of Public Administration from Drake University and is a graduate of Northwestern University's School of Police Staff and Command.

Commissioner Meyer said over the last



Director Jim Saunders

23 years at the Iowa Department of Public Safety, Saunders has proven himself to be a leader, regularly bringing together key stakeholders on a variety of issues in an effort to find solutions that will help law enforcement better protect Iowans. And these skills made Jim Saunders an exceptional candidate for the Director of the Fusion Center.

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IPOA, PO Box 100, Denver Iowa 50622 or [iacop2@mchsi.com](mailto:iacop2@mchsi.com)**

**Iowa Peace Officers Assn.:** Terry Dehmlow, [iacop2@mchsi.com](mailto:iacop2@mchsi.com);  
P.O. Box 100, Denver, Iowa 50622 [iowapeaceofficers.org](http://iowapeaceofficers.org)

**Magazine Editor:** Eric J. Salmon, [erineric@aol.com](mailto:erineric@aol.com),  
(515) 256-1395; 34334 White Oak Lane, Cumming IA 50061.

Iowa Law Enforcement: (ISSN# 0886-8336), published quarterly, is the official member publication of the Iowa Peace Officers Association. Secretary/ Treasurer's Office: PO Box 100, Denver, Iowa 50622. Editorial Office: 34334 White Oak Lane, Cumming, Iowa 50061. Office of Publication: 525 N. Front Street, Montezuma, Iowa. Periodicals postage paid in Des Moines, Iowa, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Iowa Law Enforcement, PO Box 100, Denver Iowa 50622.

# Let's not fix the pension system if it's not broken

September 23, 2010. I hope this message finds everyone safe and healthy after the end of summer. There has been discussion on some items of importance to us in the last few weeks.

The first is a proposal to move the Iowa Peace Officer Memorial from the Capitol grounds to the DPS grounds. Apparently there's a plan to put a building where the current memorial is, so the DPS was tasked with trying to come up with a plan to move the monument somewhere more appropriate.

The Iowa Peace Officers Association (IPOA) Board's position is the memorial is fine where it is, so leave it alone. But, if it must be moved then let's talk about where the majority of Iowa's peace officers would like to see it. Also there was a request of IPOA to help raise funds to move the memorial. Let me get this straight: the State wants to move the memorial dedicated to our profession, and wants us to raise the money to do it? Moving on.

The second item is the issue of "pension parity." This came after the Iowa Police Chiefs Association (IPCA) sent an email letting us know that they wanted their lobbyist to pursue "parity." There was some, shall we say, "spirited debate" among our Association, the Iowa State Police Association (ISPA), and the IPCA about what that term "parity" means, and why it needs to



**Sgt. Bill Melville**  
**IPOA President**

be pursued at this time. The IPOA Board has not heard from any of our members that there is a need to push for dramatic changes in either system at this time, so our position is that the systems aren't broken, so let's not try to fix them. Besides, IPERS and MFPRSI are so very different that it's going to be a disaster for one of the groups to try to equalize them. If you have a different opinion, let me know at IPOA2011@yahoo.com.

Lastly, the 2011 IPOA Training Conference is being finalized. The Conference will be held May 2-3, 2011 in Sioux City. The training will be "outlaw motorcycle

gangs," and the information on our speaker and his background will be in the next issue of Iowa Law Enforcement magazine. The cost of the training this year will be free for IPOA members, with a nominal fee for non-members who wish to attend. The conference and lodging will be at the Hilton Garden Inn, Sioux City. Room rates are \$89 per night, and there will be a block of rooms reserved for us.

IPOA will also be hosting lunch for its members on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, during which we will hold the annual business meeting. We are also trying to put together a pistol shoot for May 1<sup>st</sup>. This would be a separate event from the conference, but would be held the day before so those coming to town for the training can participate the day before if they wish.

Details (and sponsorship) are still in the works, but the shoot (if held) would take place at the Sioux City National Training Center. More to follow in the Winter magazine.

If you have an issue you would like brought up in the Iowa Legislature this year, please contact us. We are assembling our legislative agenda for next session, and we need your input.

Stay safe and enjoy the fall,

*Bill*

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**Plan now to attend  
IPOA Conference 2011  
May 2-3, 2011  
at the Hilton Garden Inn  
Sioux City, Iowa  
Training focus: outlaw motorcycle gangs**



Retired Urbandale P.D. Sgt. Mark Nagel, Car Seat Technician Pam Hanshaw, and Child Safety Seat Instructor Erica Kirchhoff worked the Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau booth at the Iowa State Fair on August 20.



**Registration closes Oct. 1.** Register or download forms at [www.catlet.org](http://www.catlet.org). Upon paid registration, attendees receive a menu to select up to 46 hours of clinics. Clinic selection will be on a first come, first served basis. Every attendee is guaranteed eight hours of training per day, Monday through Friday. Clinics are scheduled in 2-hour, 4-hour and 8-hour increments. Early bird clinics begin on Sunday at noon. There will be several optional night clinics and activities throughout the week.

Registration includes: lodging for five nights; Meals from Sunday dinner through Friday lunch; Attendance to 46 hours of professional clinics; Training materials; Ice Breaker on Sunday night; Lakeside Camp Dinner Thursday.

**Cost:** Single Occupancy \$1,370; Double Occupancy \$1,170; Triple Occupancy \$970; Daily Rate \$140 includes meals; RV Rate \$970 includes all meals; Off-site rate \$785 (no meals)

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# The 2010 National Crime Scene Investigator's Camp

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### Featured Clinics:

#### Recognizing and Understanding Basic Bloodstain Patterns

- Bevel, Gardner & Associates, Jonesboro, Georgia.

#### Basic Crime Scene Reconstruction

- Bevel, Gardner & Associates, Norman, Oklahoma.

#### Shooting Reconstruction (vehicles)

- Institute of Police Technology and Management (IPTM)

#### Processing Surface Skeletal Remains

- Institute of Police Technology and Management (IPTM)

#### Processing Buried Human Remains

- Institute of Police Technology and Management (IPTM)

#### Forensic Wound Identification

- Concurrent Technology Corporation (CTC), Fort Leonard Wood

#### Developing and Lifting Prints on Unusual Surfaces

- Lynn Peavey Co., Lenexa, Kansas.

#### Equivocal Deaths

- Dr. Michael Graham, Chief Medical Examiner, St. Louis, MO.

#### Forensic Analyses of the Skeleton

- Dr. Daniel Wescott, Florida International University, Miami, FL.

#### Footwear Casts and Impressions

- Jerry Luedeking, Kalamazoo Michigan DPS Crime Lab.

#### Seizing and Handling Digital Media

- Jeff Owen, Heart of America Regional Computer Forensics Lab.

#### Using Social Networking Sites as Investigative Tools

- Jeff Owen, Heart of America Regional Computer Forensics Lab.

#### Collecting Psychological Evidence in Trauma Cases

- Russell W. Strand, U.S. Army Military Police School, MO.

#### Serial Number Restoration (firearms)

- Todd Garrison, Missouri Highway Patrol Forensic Laboratory.

#### Forensic DNA Considerations

- Brian Hoey, Missouri Highway Patrol Forensic Laboratory.

**Other clinics include:** Basic Internet Investigations, Blood Presumptives, Cell Phone Investigations, Collection and Preservation of Firearm Evidence, Crime Scene Documentation (laser mapping), Digital Photography Techniques, Forensic Light Sources, Gizmos & Gadgets by Lynn Peavey Co., Peer to Peer Cyber Pornography Investigations, Post Blast Investigation, Sex Offenders: Breaking the Myth, Trace Evidence: Thinking Outside the DNA Box.



## Working at the Iowa State Fair

Capt. Chris Moline and Training Officer Chris Boswell worked the Iowa DOT Commercial Vehicle Enforcement booth at the Iowa State Fair on August 20.

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## 15 peace officers' names added to Iowa Peace Officer Memorial

# State Peace Officer Memorial service held May 14 at Iowa Capitol complex

Each year, during National Police Week, the Iowa Department of Public Safety holds the Iowa Peace Officer Memorial Service at the Capitol complex.

All officers who give their lives in the line of duty should be honored and respected for their sacrifice made in protecting the citizens of Iowa.

This year, it is with great pride the State of Iowa takes time during Peace Officer Memorial Week to honor 15 such officers. These 15 officers added to the memorial each died while working to apprehend a suspect, protect their community from crime, or maintain order.

**1. Chief Cole B. Shatswell, Onawa Police Department.** On October 22, 1989, Chief Cole Shatswell was dispatched to a shoplifting call in Onawa, Iowa. When Chief Shatswell arrived, he encountered one male and one female in a vehicle outside of the business. Chief Shatswell ordered the female subject out of the vehicle several times, but the subject refused. Chief Shatswell was assisting the female subject out of the vehicle when a struggle ensued. During the struggle, Chief Shatswell suffered a heart attack. Chief Shatswell died on October 22, 1989 at the age of 37.

**2. Marshall William Ross Hanshaw, Fairfield Police Department.** On August 1, 1917, Marshall William Hanshaw was shot and killed by a suspect who was high on morphine and threatening citizens of Fairfield with a rifle. Marshal Hanshaw had gone to the man's home and was attempting to reason with him when the suspect suddenly grabbed the rifle and shot him. Marshall Hanshaw was able to return fire, hitting the suspect twice. Several citizens arriving on the scene shot and killed the suspect.

**3. Officer Jake Frith, Milwaukee Railroad Police Department.** Officer Jake Frith and Officer Henry Talcott were shot and killed on April 14, 1893, while attempting to remove tramps from a coach car in the railroad yards at 19<sup>th</sup> Street in Dubuque, Iowa. Officer Frith was shot in



Iowa Department of Public Safety Commissioner Gene Meyer and Lt. Governor Patty Judge spoke at the Iowa Peace Officer Memorial May 14.

the neck and back.

**4. Officer Henry Talcott, Milwaukee Railroad Police Department.** Officer Henry Talcott and Officer Jake Frith were shot and killed on April 14, 1893, while attempting to remove tramps from a coach car in the railroad yard at 19<sup>th</sup> Street in Dubuque, Iowa. Officer Talcott was shot in the head.

**5. Sheriff Ernest Henry Wahlert, Hancock County Sheriff's Office.** Sheriff Ernest Wahlert was accidentally shot and killed when his revolver fell from its holster and discharged on February 4, 1930. Sheriff Wahlert and another Deputy were pursuing bootleggers during a snow storm when their vehicle left the road and became stuck in the snow. As the two officers attempted to push the car out of the snow Sheriff Wahlert's revolver fell from

his shoulder holster, discharged, and struck him in the chest.

**6. Special Officer Allen F. Shoemaker, Union Pacific Railroad Police Department.** Special Officer Shoemaker was shot and killed May 17, 1925, while conducting a railroad train check in Missouri Valley, Iowa. He came across nine men riding in a gondola car. Officer Shoemaker turned his flashlight on them and demanded to know what they were doing. One man drew a gun and shot Officer Shoemaker four times. He died a short time later in the railroad yard office.

**7. Special Officer Robert G. Murray, Union Pacific Railroad Police Department.** Special Officer Robert Murray was shot and killed in Council Bluffs, Iowa on October 14, 1921, while he and several other local and federal officers raided a farm-

## (State Peace Officer Memorial service, continued)

house being used by bootleggers and rail thieves. Officer Murray was guarding five men in one room while a Council Bluffs Police Officer was guarding a woman and a man in a second room. The woman was able to slip a revolver to the man who opened fire, killing Officer Murray and wounding the Council Bluffs officer.

**8. Corporal Jon Eric Hermann, Woodbury County Sheriff's Office.** Corporal Jon Hermann and another officer, Captain Heimbecker, were transporting prisoners by leased airplane from the Woodbury County Jail to state facilities at Oakdale and Mount Pleasant, Iowa on June 11, 1993. On their return trip, the officers stopped in Fort Madison, Iowa, to pick up prisoner Armando Cardenas for transport to the Woodbury County Jail. Upon departure from the Fort Madison airport the plane crashed, killing both Corporal Hermann and Captain Heimbecker. Prisoner Cardenas was seriously injured, but survived the crash.

**9. Patrolman Sylvan E. Dykstra, Sioux City Police Department.** Patrolman Sylvan Dykstra was accidentally shot and killed on July 18, 1953, while working at the police station, when another officer's service weapon accidentally discharged.

**10. Sheriff Jack L. Woodard, Polk County Sheriff's Office.** Sheriff Wood-

ard was killed in an automobile accident on January 21, 1974, after giving a speech at a gathering for the Peace Officers' Association. Road conditions were described as slick.

**11. Deputy Dewey Marshall, Polk County Sheriff's Office.** On October 30, 1926, Deputy Dewey Marshall was assisting Deputy Grover Brent from Sedalia, Missouri, with a warrant and extradition for William H. Boyd. When Deputies Marshall and Brent arrived at Boyd's residence in Mitchellville, Iowa, Boyd shot and killed Deputy Marshall. Deputy Brent also shot and wounded. Boyd took Deputy Marshall's weapon and fled into a field.

**12. Marshal George M. Butcher, Missouri Valley Police Department.** Marshal George Butcher was shot and killed on August 16, 1911, while searching for two suspects. During the search one of the men used a handgun to shoot Marshal Butcher twice. Although wounded, Marshal Butcher was able to exchange fire until he was finally shot a third time and killed. It was later discovered both suspects were brothers who had escaped from the Anamosa Prison. Both drowned when they attempted to swim the Missouri River near Omaha, Nebraska, in an attempt to escape a pursuing posse.

**13. Marshal Abner Whitney, Mis-**

**souri Valley Police Department.** Marshal Abner Whitney was shot and killed on April 28, 1894, after he and several other law enforcement officers surrounded a house where two robbery suspects were hiding. When the officers entered the house the suspects opened fire, killing Marshal Whitney. One of the suspects was shot and killed by other law enforcement officers. The second suspect was lynched by a mob.

**14. Officer Harry E. Davis, Marshall County Sheriff's Office.** Officer Harry Davis was shot and killed on September 9, 1978. That day a man opened fire on the Marshall County Jail's lobby using a high powered rifle. Officer Davis was sitting in the lobby of the jail at the time of the shooting. He was shot and killed instantly. The suspect was captured later that day.

**15. Officer Elijah Edward Wishart, Des Moines Police Department.** Officer Elijah Wishart was shot and killed by a man attempting to illegally dump rubbish in a graveyard. Officer Wishart had been appointed to guard the graveyard against dumping. When Officer Wishart approached, the suspect drew two .350 revolvers and shot Officer Wishart. Officer Wishart succumbed to his injuries on July 1, 1891.



Family and friends find their loved ones' names on the updated Iowa Peace Officers Memorial plaque.

# Urbandale Police Award Program held May 10 at Dept. Police Building

The following awards were presented at the Urbandale Police Department on May 10:

**Police Officer of the Year:**  
**Officer George Griffith**

Officer George Griffith (at right) was nominated and received the Urbandale Officer of the year award. Officer Griffith recently transferred back to patrol from the Investigation Division and continues to control and distributes intelligence files to fellow officers.

**Reserve Officer of the Year:**  
**Lonnie Hubbs**

Urbandale Reserve Officer Lonnie Hubbs received the Iowa State Police Reserve Officer's "Reserve Officer of the Year" award for his time and commitment to the Urbandale Police Department's reserve program.

**Promotions:**

**Kent Knopf** was promoted from Sergeant to Lieutenant and placed in charge of the Patrol Division.

**Steve Shivers** was promoted from patrolman to Sergeant and placed in charge of the Night shift- Patrol Division.

**Dan Stein** was promoted from patrolman in the Investigation Division to sergeant and will be assigned to the Patrol Division.

**Medal of Valor Award**

- **Sergeant Rob Johansen**
- **Sergeant Don Simpson**

Both Sergeants were involved in a drug buy case related to a recent double homicide case, that turned bad very quickly. Both officers responded in the gun fire exchange in which three fellow officers were injured, and the suspects were apprehended.



**Officer of the Year George Griffith with Urbandale P.D. Chief Ross McCarty.**

**Service Awards:**

5 Years of Service

- **Officer Mark Jorgensen**
- **Officer Chad Underwood**
- **Officer Eric Wilcutt**

10 Years of Service

- **Sergeant Dan Stein**
- **Officer Chris Greenfield**

**Special Recognition**

Staff Services Division:

- **Electronic Case Management** – providing a paper case management process, which in turned saves storage space and efficiency.
- **National Night Out** – Urbandale held it's first "National Night Out" in August to improve the Police Department/ Community outreach program.

Criminal Investigation Division

Homicide Investigation:

**Urbandale Police Detectives** were rec-

ognized for there commitment to solving crimes, by solving Urbandale's latest homicide case, which keeps Urbandale Police at the 95% or above in solving Part One crimes.

Investigation Clerk

Certificate of Commendation:

**Deb Elston**

Deb also does crime analysis for the Investigation Division, along with a host of other duties for the investigators. She was off-duty and recognized a vehicle, that matched the description of a vehicle involved in a recent Armed Robbery. She called for patrol officers with the information, followup investigation lead to the arrest of suspects for armed robbery.

**Citizen's Awards**

Community Crime Eye Award:

**Paul & Heather Dayton**

They took the initiative to investigate suspicious activity at a neighbor's house, which lead to the arrest of home burglars.

**(Urbandale Police Award Program, continued)**

Heather observed the activity, notified her husband who followed the suspects long enough to get the vehicle description and licenses plate.

**Citizen's Lifesaving Award:  
Chans & Katie Vonghasouk**

They were travelling home on I-80 in January during one of our many snow storms and observed strange lights on the other side of the interstate. They took the time to go back around and checked to find a vehicle off the road that would have been hard to see, with a female injured and trapped in the vehicle. They stood by and waited for rescue workers to arrive.



**Citizen's Service Award:  
John Windschitl**

John Windschitl volunteered his skills and time to ride along with police officers and developed a training video for the police department. The program airs on the City's government channel.





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Iowa Interactive CEO Harry Herington raising \$150,000 for fallen officers' survivors

# Ride4COPS' Herington visited Capitol; Widows want Iowa C.O.P.S. chapters

Business leaders presented checks in support of C.O.P.S., the national organization that helps fallen officers' survivors. And law enforcement officers flanked the families of survivors in attendance.

The occasion was Ride4COPS founder Harry Herington's June 16 stop at the Iowa Peace Officer Memorial, Des Moines. Herington seeks to make people aware of the inherent dangers of law enforcement, and raise \$150,000 over three years for C.O.P.S. and other organizations that help the families of fallen officers.

Herington, a former police officer and current CEO of the parent company (NIC) of Iowa Interactive LLC, is taking his quest nationwide by riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle to every state capitol in the nation.

He has already visited Texas, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Oklahoma and Indiana. The progress of his ride can be followed on [www.ride4cops.com](http://www.ride4cops.com).

Also speaking at the event were two police widows, Julie McPherren and Melisa Wissink, who advocate for the creation of an Iowa chapter of C.O.P.S. (Concerns of Police Survivors).

Checks were presented by representatives of Iowa Interactive's parent company, NIC, and Peoples Trust & Savings Bank to McPherren and Wissink.

Each year, approximately 150 police officers nationwide are killed in the line of duty, with families and co-workers left to deal with each tragic death.

At the Iowa Peace Officer Memorial rally, those in attendance included employees from Iowa Interactive and parent company NIC, CEO Herington, the families of fallen officers, Iowa Secretary of State Michael Mauro, a representative of Peoples Trust & Savings Bank; officers from the Des Moines Police Department, Polk County Sheriff's Office and the Department of Public Safety; and a host of others from the law enforcement community.

**About C.O.P.S.:** Concerns of Police



**At the Iowa Peace Officer Memorial on June 16: Former police officer Harry Herington (white shirt) and the family of slain Officer Daniel McPherren, who was killed by robbers in 1985 in Newton, pose with the Harley-Davidson motorcycle Herington is riding nationwide to raise awareness of the inherent dangers of law enforcement and to support the families of fallen officers. Herington will raffle off his Harley at the end of his ride.**

Survivors Inc. provides resources to assist in the rebuilding of the lives of surviving families and affected co-workers of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty, as determined by Federal criteria.

C.O.P.S. provides training to law enforcement agencies on survivor victimization issues and educates the public on the need to support the law enforcement

profession and its survivors. C.O.P.S. is a 501(c) (3) corporation.

#### **About Iowa Interactive, LLC**

Iowa Interactive is the Network Manager for Iowa.gov, the official Web site of the State of Iowa. The Web site is designed to help Iowa government entities Web-enable their information services and it is a collaborative effort among IOWAccess, the

## **(Ride4Cops, continued from Page 14)**

Department of Administrative Services, Information Technology Enterprise, and Iowa Interactive LLC.

IOWAccess is directly responsible for Iowa.gov. Iowa Interactive operates, maintains, and markets Iowa.gov and is part of eGovernment firm NIC's (NASDAQ: EGOV <http://www.nicusa.com/> ) family of companies.

### **About NIC**

NIC is the nation's leading provider of official government portals, online services, and secure payment processing solutions. The company's eGovernment services help reduce costs and increase efficiencies for government agencies, citizens, and businesses across the country. NIC

provides eGovernment solutions for more than 3,000 federal, state, and local agencies that serve 97 million people in the United States. Additional information is available at <http://www.nicusa.com>.

Iowa Interactive LLC offers eGovernment solutions to the State of Iowa and local governments in the state as well. Iowa Interactive is a subsidiary of NIC Inc. NIC is the leading provider of outsourced eGovernment portals.

The company builds and manages official government Web sites and eGovernment services for 21 states and hundreds of local governments in the United States.



**(Read Julie McPherrren and Melisa Wissink's June 16 remarks on Page 16)**

In Memoriam

# **Retired Cedar Rapids Police Department Assistant Chief Wallace F. Johnson dies**

Wallace F. Johnson, 86, of Cedar Rapids died July 14, 2010 at Heritage Nursing and Rehabilitation Center following a short illness.

Funeral services were held July 20 at the Cedar Memorial Park Chapel of Memories. Pastor Rick Gail of First Assembly of God Church officiated. Entombment was at Cedar Memorial Park Cemetery with honors provided by the Cedar Rapids Police Honor Guard.

Surviving are his sons, Nedrick Johnson of Des Moines, David (Gloria) Johnson of Cedar Rapids, Lynn (Cheryl) Johnson of Cedar Rapids, Ron (Jill) Johnson of Marion, and Alan Johnson of St. Louis, Missouri; grandchildren Matthew (Jessie) Johnson, Adam (Stacy) Johnson, Mark (Shawwna) Johnson, Julie (Jeff) Anderson all of Cedar Rapids, Alanah and Addison Johnson both of Marion; great grandchildren Jaxen, Max, and Ava; as well as several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, wife R. Maxine Johnson, his grandson Eric Johnson, and his siblings.

Wallace Francis Johnson was born November 30, 1923, in Kingsley, Iowa, the beloved son of Ferdinand and Elise (Walters) Johnson.

He was a graduate of Cedar Rapids McKinley High school, where he excelled in track and football. He served his country honorably in the United States 3<sup>rd</sup> Army 5<sup>th</sup> Division under General Patton during WWII.

He was united in marriage to Reva Maxine Guffey on May 26, 1946, at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Cedar Rapids; she preceded him in death on February 3, 2007.

Wallace Johnson was employed from 1951 to 1990 at the Cedar Rapids Police Department, retiring as Assistant Chief of Police.

He also enjoyed carpentry, and built

several garages as side jobs. He had numerous memberships that included: the Iowa State Police Association, where he was a past president; the Iowa Association of Chiefs of Police and Peace Officers; Mizpah Masonic Lodge #639 A.F. & A.M., Cedar Rapids Valley Scottish Rite El Kahir Shrine where he was a member of the Drum and Bugle Corp Unit; VFW Post# 788; Marion American Legion; and Trinity United Methodist Church, where he was a longtime usher.

Johnson enjoyed bird watching and animals – especially cats and dogs. He was also a fan of the Chicago Cubs, Green Bay Packers, and in recent years the Cedar Rapids Roughriders hockey team. He will be greatly missed by those who loved him dearly.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial donations be made to St. Luke's Hospice or to Trinity United Methodist Church.

# Police widows speak on the lasting pain of losing a spouse and how an Iowa COPS chapter could help these families

## June 16 Remarks of Julie McPherren widow of Daniel McPherren

“Thank-you all for being here today to share in this wonderful event.

My name is Julie McPherren and I am a police survivor. Now, you may be asking yourselves what exactly does that mean? You see, on Friday evening, September 13, 1985, my husband Daniel, a police officer with the Newton Police Department, put on his vest, uniform, badge, and duty belt and went to work just as he had hundreds of times before. He had not been gone very long when he returned to get his jacket as it was turning chilly. He wrestled and kissed our then nine-month-old son, Daniel Jr., good-bye, told us he loved us and went out to do the job he loved.

Two hours later there was a knock on our door, and the police chief and a lieutenant standing on the front porch to tell me that Daniel had been shot during an armed robbery at Hy-Vee West, and that I needed to come with them.

When I arrived at the hospital there was total chaos. Daniel’s co-workers, city staff, and hospital personnel were everywhere, but no one would look me in the eye and no one would tell me what was going on. I was eventually taken back into the treatment area where I was allowed to see my husband, and the heroic effort being made to save his life. I stood at the bottom of the gurney and touched his foot, someone said my name, and I watched a single tear roll down Daniel’s cheek. I knew right then that my life was going to change forever. I never saw my husband alive again. The criminals were both apprehended and brought to justice, both receiving, as I did, a life sentence.

Now, when I look back at that time, I’m not sure how I made it from day to day. I was 23 years old, I had a new baby – how did this happen? I had friends, family, but I was so alone. How could anyone understand what I was feeling? They couldn’t, and I just couldn’t be the person I was before. My heart had been ripped from my

*(See Julie McPherren, continued on Page 18)*



**Julie McPherren (l) and Melisa Wissink spoke at the Ride4Cops rally June 16.**



## June 16 Remarks of Melisa Wissink widow of Officer Sean Wissink

I became a widow on the day before what would have been the celebration of my 13<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. I was 31 years old. Within minutes, I became a single parent of two grieving children, and a single woman who had not been without a partner since I was 16 years old. That’s when I fell in love with Sean.

My husband, Sean Wissink, died doing something people do every day of their lives: he left for work. He had been a police officer for the Des Moines Police Department for a little under 10 years at the time of his death. On the morning of February 11, 2007, he lost control of the SUV he was driving and careened, head on, into a guard rail. After hitting a steel girder, his vehicle rolled down a steep embankment several times and landed upside down. He was exactly five miles from our home, it was 4 o’clock in the morning, and he was at the bottom of a hill, hanging upside down, out of sight from anyone who could help him in time to save his life.

That is the part most of you already know. What most of you don’t know is what happens after a line of duty death. In the state of Iowa, a police officer’s death is thankfully very rare. In 1869, Thomas Moore of the Muscatine Police Department was walking his beat on Ogilvie Hill. It was typical Iowa weather for July -- hot and muggy all day with a storm rolling through the state at night. At approximately 7:30 in the evening, lightning struck Officer Moore and he was killed instantly. Mr. Moore was the first documented police officer in the state of Iowa to be killed in the line of duty.

My husband is currently the last. Unfortunately, as history has painstakingly shown us, he will most likely not be the last for very long. There will be another police officer killed at some point, doing what they do best: their jobs.

There will be more children left without a parent; more wives left without husbands; more parents left without children.

*(See Melisa Wissink, continued on P. 17)*

## (Melisa Wissink, continued from Page 16)

Since 1869, we have lost a total of 156 police officers in the line of duty. That number may seem small considering the time span, but with each and every one of those 156 officers there are families, friends, and brothers and sisters in blue left behind. Those people who are left behind become known as “survivors.”

The very definition of the word survivor is a person who is regarded as resilient and courageous enough to be able to overcome great misfortune or hardship. I’ve had many people say to me, “I couldn’t have done it if I were you!” or “How do you do it?” and my answer is always the same, “I have no choice but to go on.”

Immediately after Sean died I was surrounded by dozens of people who wanted to help me in any way that they could. They wanted to ease my pain or even take it away. I knew it hurt them to see me hurting. I was very grateful to a fabulous thing my body did to try and rescue me on its own. This fabulous thing was called “numbness.” That only worked for about six months. Once the numbness wore off, I had to start dealing with my grief. Alone. Not because I didn’t have family or friends who WANTED to help me, but because I didn’t have any family or friends that COULD help me. No one understood what I was going through, except for me. I was alone in my journey to heal for 15 months.

Fifteen months after Sean died, my family made the long trek to our first National Police Week in Washington, D.C., to attend the ceremony for Sean’s name to be memorialized on the National Law Enforcement Fallen Officers’ Wall.

I made that trip with the intent to honor the sacrifice my husband made with his life. When our family stepped off of the jetway there were five uniformed officers waiting for us. They took each member of my family by the arm and escorted us to our luggage, and then gave us a police escort to our hotel, shutting down all traffic in front of us. On each bridge and intersection there were uniformed officers from varying departments saluting us. SALUTING US! They were honoring us, as survivors, for the sacrifice we made by losing Sean. I was in Washington, D.C. to honor my husband and, much to my surprise, I was being honored as well.

In addition to honoring our family, we were also provided the priceless gift of support. I attended seminars and sessions

where I was able to hear other survivors talk about how their officer had died, and most importantly how THEY had continued living. I made connections with people that were in my exact situation, and was able to build a support system of people who have now become some of my best friends and extended family. My children were able to meet other children who had lost a parent in the line of duty and compare their stories.

The organization that arranged this phenomenal display of respect, admiration, and support for our family was an organization called C.O.P.S. As explained earlier, it stands for “Concerns of Police Survivors,” and it’s an organization that has literally saved my soul. I always say that my children saved my life when I didn’t want to live anymore, but C.O.P.S. saved my soul. The most profound thing that C.O.P.S. provided me was a network of individuals who have been through what I was going through: other wives and husbands who had lost their spouse in the line of duty; other parents who are now raising their children alone too; other people who have been through the greatest tragedy they could never imagine and have lived to tell about it. I met people who were dealing with death that was as fresh as my loss, and I also met people that had lost their spouses five, 10, even 25 years ago and they were now happy again. That’s what gave me hope. That’s what led me to realize, I CAN DO THIS!

I should not have had to wait 15 months for this realization to occur. Fifteen months is way too long. Iowa is one of the few states that does not have a C.O.P.S. Chapter that can step in right away and reach out to families immediately after their officer is killed, to help them realize that they too can do this. Preparing them for what is to come over the hours, days, weeks, months, and even years after their officer dies is a crucial key we currently are missing.

Dealing with a “Line of Duty” death presents unique challenges that survivors are often forced to face. In my case, Sean’s death was on every news station and radio channel before I could even leave the hospital and notify all of my friends and family. My home was shown on the news with my house number visible to people that may have hated my husband and wished harm to our family. The name of the school my children attended was announced. The

program from my husband’s funeral that held letters written by my children to their dad for his last Father’s Day was read on the news for all to hear. On top of everything else we were experiencing, this was just a small taste of the invasion of our privacy that we were dealing with. When my children went back to school they had to field questions from their friends on why there was always a police car in front of our house. There were numerous legal and safety matters I had to contend with on top of my overwhelming grief. Comments were made on the Internet that my children saw from people joking about a police officer being killed. That police officer was their dad. My husband. He was a human being, and it was not humorous to us. I was not prepared in any way to be dealing with any of this. None of us were.

When an officer dies in a state that has a local C.O.P.S. Chapter, there are support systems in place that help a family and the officer’s agency before, during and after a line of duty death funeral.

They provide benefits assistance immediately following the officer’s death and years later, if necessary, to alleviate the families’ concerns over their financial well-being so they don’t have to fear things like losing their homes. They provide reimbursement for travel to C.O.P.S. “Hands-On Programs” like National Police Week; C.O.P.S. Kids Camp; spouse, parent, sibling, and in-law retreats; and also co-worker retreats to help the survivors left behind cope with the aftermath of the officer’s death.

Regular support meetings are held with topics including Getting Through the Holidays, Suicide Prevention, Starting Over, and Learning to Laugh Again. Family gatherings are another key factor in moving on and learning to have fun again. Trial and parole support is also offered in the event of a felonious line of duty death. Supportive cards can be sent on death anniversaries, officers’ birthdays, and holidays, too.

One-on-one support for individuals is given by pairing up “like” survivors who can share and relate to each other.

Finally, it is key that we provide education and training for our local law enforcement agencies and organizations on how to deal with these events before they happen, so that when they do happen everyone is prepared.

## (Julie McPherren, continued)

chest and crushed, and I felt that part of me had died, too.

The next spring, however, I received through our police department a letter from a woman in Missouri who identified herself as the Plains Region Trustee for something called “Concerns of Police Survivors” (C.O.P.S.). I had no idea who or what this was, but something inside me made me contact her. We corresponded and she told me about how she had been a young mother when her husband, a police officer, was also killed. I was so shocked -- there were others? She also told me about an upcoming event in Washington D.C., during National Police Week – something else I had never heard of. I got a formal invitation in the mail shortly thereafter. I went, and once again, my life was changed forever. I would like to share with you how this organization came to be.

Way back in the Fall of 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation naming May 15 of each year as National Police Memorial Day, and the week surrounding May 15 National Police week. This is in honor of all of our law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty, as well as those officers who each day put on their uniforms and go to war on our streets to protect and serve each and every one of us.

As fate would have it, some 20 years later a woman named Suzie Sawyer, who was then national secretary of the Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary, made a motion during a board meeting to sponsor a national peace officers’ memorial day service in Washington, D.C.

After much discussion, it was finally decided that on May 15, 1982, the first service would be held. Not many were in

attendance for this first service, but there were enough to suggest that this was something that should continue the next year. And it did, but with one change.

The night before the 1983 service began, Suzie was introduced to 10 young widows who had come to attend the Service. As these widows met with officers and members of the FOP Auxiliary and each other, they discussed their new lives after the death of their police officer. They expressed how they had become “the bad reminder of law enforcement’s ultimate sacrifice,” sadly feeling they had been abandoned by their law enforcement family. They did, however, find that having the opportunity to discuss their feelings with other widows – finally being able to talk to people who understand – was wonderful. Because of this, one young widow suggested to Suzie that the next year they should have a seminar. Suzie’s response: “And what would we talk about -- death?”

“Yes,” was the response. “Somebody needs to talk about death in law enforcement.”

In 1984, the third year of the memorial service, C.O.P.S. was born. One hundred ten survivors attended that seminar and voted unanimously to organize “Concerns of Police Survivors.” Over the years the C.O.P.S. family and organization has grown. It now reaches out to more than 15,000 families, co-workers, and law enforcement agencies. The National Police Survivors Conference is now two full days. C.O.P.S. also sponsors programs for children, spouses, parents, siblings, in-laws, and starting this year will have an affected co-worker retreat. They also sponsor scholarships, counseling reimbursement, benefit assistance, trial and parole support, trau-

mas of law enforcement training for law enforcement officers. All for No Cost!

The organization has come a long way from the days Suzie used to run things from her basement office and I was on the national board. There is now a national office (**NationalCOPS.org**) still run by Suzie down in Camdenton, Missouri, and things are much more streamlined I’m sure. There are also many states across this great country that have state C.O.P.S. Chapters whose members reach out to survivors and law enforcement departments to give support. Unfortunately, Iowa is not one of those states and we need to change that.

Generous gifts like the ones we receive today will help us get started, but there is a lot of work to do. I ask all of you for your support, your input, and your belief in this organization. Together we can make a difference in the lives of future survivors in the state of Iowa.

Thank you, Mr. Herington, for drawing attention to “Concerns of Police Survivors,” and for all of you for being here today.”

“We all need someone to reach out to us during our time of loss, and if that person has experienced what we are about to go through, that can be a priceless resource to have. C.O.P.S. knows that a survivor’s level of distress is directly affected by the response to the tragedy they are facing. There is no membership fee for survivors to join C.O.P.S., because the price paid is already too high. My hope is that what you have learned today will help bring awareness to the significance of opening a local C.O.P.S. Chapter, and the importance of community support to start this much needed endeavor.

Thank you.”

*Julie McPherren*

**Plan now to Attend: IPOA Conference 2011  
May 2-3, 2011  
at the Hilton Garden Inn, Sioux City, Iowa  
training focus: Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs**



Fingerprint Technician Dan Prall tells a young man and his mom about Internet safety at the Iowa DCI booth at the Iowa State Fair on August 20.



Trooper David Cutts, safety education, and Chaplain John Harrell were among those who staffed the Iowa State Patrol booth at Iowa State Fair 2010.

**Special Olympics Iowa raised \$117,000 with “Over the Edge” rappelling event**





On September 22, some 100 individuals, who collected pledges of at least \$1,000 each for Special Olympics Iowa, earned the opportunity to rappel down the 345-ft. high Financial Center building in Des Moines.

