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A silent salute for fallen deputy sheriff

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Berks County deputy sheriffs and law enforcement officers from around the county wept Thursday afternoon as the body of a slain deputy was escorted by about 40 police and fire vehicles through downtown Reading.

Conversations in the crowd were brief and voices were kept low among several hundred people, mostly county employees, who waited outside the courthouse for an hour for the hearse carrying the body of Kyle D. Pagerly to arrive shortly before 4.

As the procession neared, a large American flag suspended from two city fire truck ladders over Court Street became tangled at Sixth Street. Officers climbed a ladder to try to untangle the flag but their efforts were futile.

When the procession turned from Fourth Street onto Court Street, the approaching sirens quieted murmurs among the crowd.

Law enforcement officers saluted, as did others in the crowd, but most people just watched in silence as city police, sheriff's vehicles and police vehicles from various municipalities escorted the hearse.

Trucks from the Spring Township Fire Department also took part in the procession. Pagerly was a lieutenant with that department.

Pagerly, 28, was fatally shot in the line of duty with a team serving a warrant Wednesday night in Albany Township.

After the procession passed, the crowd slowly broke up, with many wiping away tears and speaking with hardly a whisper.

More tears than words

Deputy sheriffs and other county employees hugged one another on the sidewalks.

Asked if they wanted to say anything about their colleague, several of the county's remaining 93 deputies just shook their heads and dabbed their eyes with tissues.

One deputy pointed wordlessly to Chief Deputy Sheriff Tony Damore.

Asked for comment, Damore looked to the sky and said he had to collect his thoughts.

After a few moments, he said: "Kyle was a well-liked, dedicated professional. He really came into his own when he became a K-9 officer. He was good with his dog and with the public when he did demonstrations. He was just a serious professional. He did honor to the sheriff's department and all law enforcement in Berks County."

He added that Pagerly's badge number, 27, will be permanently retired.

Help on hand

Several dozen police peer counselors and several professional counselors from the county mental health/mental retardation office, the sheriff's chaplain, county human resources department's employee assistance program and the county police union were available to law enforcement shortly after the shooting, said Dr. Edward B. Michalik, county mental health/mental retardation administrator.

Many counselors worked through the night, said Michalik, who also is a deputy sheriff, as crisis negotiation leader for the Berks County Emergency Response Team.

Ryan Button, 26, of Wyomissing isn't a county employee but came downtown to show his support with his father, Curtis Button. They held American flags.

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A hearse, above and below, carrying the body of Berks County Deputy Sheriff Kyle D. Pagerly leads a procession up Court Street on Thursday.

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Ryan Button is a correctional officer in the process of joining the state police. He said he knows the risks of his chosen profession.

"It does cross my mind, but you can't enter it with that mind-set," Button said. "You're doing it to serve and protect. Unfortunately, some people have to give their lives in certain situations."

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