

## **West Bloomfield Officer Patrick O'Rourke (Posthumously)**

Like his colleagues in the West Bloomfield Police Department and throughout the law enforcement profession, Officer Patrick O'Rourke knew there is a degree of risk even in meeting routine daily responsibilities. He also knew that in any critical situation involving weapons the element of danger is extreme -- potentially deadly. Every day for 12 years on the job in performing every kind of duty, routine or hazardous, he fulfilled his pledge to protect and serve.

Officer O'Rourke's shift had just ended last September 9 when a 911 caller reported trouble at a home in one of the suburban township's typically quiet neighborhoods. He and six fellow officers were dispatched to the location, where they encountered several people outside the home who immediately made it clear that this was the scene of a critical situation.

The individuals stated that an adult male who was a member of their family may have committed suicide. They explained that the subject, who had become increasingly depressed and distraught over financial, personal and legal problems, had retreated to his second-floor bedroom and fired a gunshot. At that point the police were called and the individuals exited the house.

The next hour brought several somber indications that the severely troubled man might have attempted to kill himself at the moment the single shot was heard.

Police learned he had sent his former wife a text message with wording that suggested he was suicidal. There was no sighting of the subject and no sounds were heard from the bedroom. Meanwhile, repeated telephone calls to him from police and family members were not answered. In short, there were no signs of life.

In consideration of all of these factors, the on-scene officers decided to make entry into the house. It was impossible for Officer O'Rourke or any of the others to know if the man was dead or alive, unharmed or wounded. In their minds it was equally impossible for them to delay determining whether the subject was in urgent need of medical attention.

Once a safety perimeter was established around the home and paramedics were staged nearby, Officer O'Rourke and the rest of a five-member team entered and proceeded in a single file behind a ballistic shield. Each was well aware of the danger they might be confronting – danger that escalated with every step up the stairway.

Repeatedly, the officers verbally identified themselves and declared their purpose.... to help the troubled man. There was no reply whatsoever until the team approached the bedroom door. Then the subject, proved he was still alive by making a tragic decision. With shocking suddenness, his response burst forth in the form of multiple gunshots blasting through the door and adjacent wall. One of the bullets struck Officer O'Rourke, instantly incapacitating him. He was evacuated to

the waiting paramedics who rushed him to an area hospital. Within an hour, the wound proved to be fatal.

The grievous impact of his passing was enormous and far-reaching. Most profoundly affected, of course, were his wife, four young children, parents and three brothers. His fellow officers in the department and throughout the state were stunned and devastated. The entire community of West Bloomfield, residents of all ages and backgrounds, poured forth a torrent of sympathy, sadness and gratitude. The common theme was, "He gave his all for us!"

Officer O'Rourke exemplified the watchword of our profession. He knowingly risked his life on the chance that an armed and deranged man might need emergency medical help, and the troubled man subsequently took his own life.

Officer O'Rourke lost his life just as he had consistently lived it, faithful to his commitment to protect and serve.

With much sadness and a great deal of admiration and respect, the POAM posthumously honors Patrick O'Rourke as Police Officer of the Year.

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