

Memorial for slain Deputy Scott Pine unveiled on anniversary of his death

In the year since Orange County Deputy Jonathan Scott Pine was killed on duty, his youngest son, Maddox, has learned how to walk and talk.

Pine's family has marked birthdays and holidays without him, his wife, Bridget Pine, said during a memorial service honoring her husband Wednesday.

"He kept our family bonded tightly together. Now our family has fallen hopelessly apart," Bridget Pine said, her voice breaking. "This past year has been a never-ending nightmare. Every day without him brings new challenges, new firsts, without Scott."

On the one-year anniversary of Pine's death Wednesday, about 200 people attended a candlelight vigil in the Westminster Landing subdivision in southwest Orange County, down the street from where he was killed.

His parents and children unveiled a memorial, a plaque embedded into a large concrete star on the ground surrounded by yellow and purple pansies in a park that has been renamed in honor of Pine.

Scott Pine's memorial

Orange County Sheriff's Jerry Demings at deputy Jonathan Scott Pine's vigil. (Chandler Doyle, Orlando Sentinel)

Pine left behind three children: Haley, 7; Ryker, 5; and Maddox, 2, who attended the vigil in matching navy blue T-shirts that read "I wear this for my daddy" on the front, with a photo of their father on the back.

Bridget Pine's T-shirt said "I wear this for my husband."

"A year ago today, I had to tell my children that their father is never coming home again," Bridget Pine said. "My life will continue to be lived in lost memories, with three children that want their daddy back."

Pine was Florida's first law-enforcement officer to die on duty in 2014.

A year ago today, I had to tell my children that their father is never coming home again - Bridget Pine, Widow of Deputy Scott Pine

He was called to the Westminster Landing subdivision to investigate a report of car burglaries nearby.

He spotted the burglary suspect, 28-year-old Benjamin Holtermann, and started chasing him. Holtermann ambushed Pine, shooting him three times with a stolen handgun.

Holtermann then shot and killed himself. His girlfriend, Erica Pugh, was arrested for her role as an accomplice to Pine's death and sentenced to 15 years in prison last month.

"Scott died the same way he lived. A servant, one loved by a great many," said Pine's pastor, David Uth of First Baptist Church of Orlando.

Pine's friend and colleague, Deputy Scott Hepburn, had Pine's name engraved in his badge.

Hepburn said he wears a Louisiana State University pin on his uniform to honor his friend, a Louisiana native and LSU football fan.

"We still look at this uniform every day, when we put it on, and it still reminds us of Scott," Hepburn said.

On Wednesday, a large group of neighbors from the Westminster Landing subdivision joined Pine's family and colleagues at the vigil.

Since Pine's death, residents have become warmer toward one another, said Dee McGowan, who has lived in the area for three years.

"The neighbors have come out more in friendship to each other," she said. "It's much tighter, much closer."

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