

Centerburg mourns fallen officer

Officers

By NICK SABO

News Staff Reporter CENTERBURG — The small, close-knit community of Centerburg is home to many police officers, and Westerville Police Officer Eric Joering was one among them.

Monday night at a prayer vigil held at the Central Ohio Joint Fire District station, the community and fellow officers mourned and reflected on Joering's life. Joering was one of two officers killed responding to a domestic disturbance in Westerville Saturday.

Joering leaves behind a wife, Jamie, and four daughters. Three of the girls attend Centerburg schools. The family has resided in Milford Township for years.

Westerville Police officers escorted Jamie and their daughters into the station, then formed a protective semi-circle around them. One of the girls led in her father's K-9, Sam. After some words by COJFD Chaplain Phil Lohmeyer, a line formed around as friends gave the family hugs and offered condolences.

Lohmeyer described the vigil as "Centerburg comfortable" and encouraged everyone to stay a while, share fellowship and pray.

Ron Kemmerling, a lieutenant with Columbus Police, has lived in the Centerburg area for years. Kemmerling said he did not know Joering personally, but said he understood what may have drawn him and his family to the area.

"There are a lot of officers from Columbus and Westerville who live out here," Kemmerling said. "I like the sense of community here. It's a place where you can get away from all of it, from work."

Westerville PD Cpl. Justin Alloway got to know Joering through the force, and the two became best friends. Alloway said he was serving as a "family liaison" for Joering, and asked that media present at the prayer vigil respect the family's privacy for the time being. Alloway said the police department and the Joerings will be healing "for the rest of our lives."

Westerville Police Lt. Tracey Myers said that the level of support WPD has seen has been overwhelming. Area police departments are covering calls and shifts for Westerville, giving the officers time to mourn and attend services.

Myers has also seen the blue ribbons tied up on trees around Centerburg in honor of Joering. Like the Joering family, Myers calls Centerburg home.

It's the kind of support the officers need, and the support the community needs as well, Myers said.

"This coming together is going to help with the healing a lot," Myers said. "This is a nice community. There is a lot of love here."

There were many children in the crowd who attend school with the Joering girls. Kayla Larimore, who is friends with one of Joering's **See OFFICER on Page 3A**

"Eric didn't stop being a public servant when he took off the uniform at the end of the day and left westerville. His heart was bigger than that."

— Phil Lohmeyer, COJFD chaplain



Joshua Morrison/News
Westerville Police Department Lt. Tracey Myers, right, consoles a guest at Monday night's vigil for Westerville

Joshua Morrison/ News Westerville Police Department Lt. Tracey Myers, right, consoles a guest at Monday night's vigil for Westerville Police Department officers Eric Joering and Anthony Morelli, held at the Central Ohio Joint Fire District in Centerburg. To see more photos, visit.

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daughters, brought a blue peace officer flag that she and her siblings, Jazmyn and J'shon, made at home. Beneath the flag's black stripes and single blue stripe is written "#Joering Strong."

Kayla's mother, Heather, said she has known the Joering family since Kayla was five.

"Eric was always good, always very helpful, very nice," Heather said. "He was always trying to reach out to people and help."

Mark and Heather Edwards and their daughter, Abby, came to the prayer vigil in support of the Joerings.

"I only met Eric a handful of times, just being out and about," Mark said. "He was a very nice guy."

Lohmeyer said Joering was well-known to firefighters. Many remember him stopping to help at crash scenes, directing traffic.

"Eric didn't stop being a public servant when he took off the uniform at the end of the day and left Westerville," Lohmeyer said. "His heart was bigger than that."



Joshua Morrison/News Jasmyn Larimore holds a sign she made for fallen Westerville Police officer Eric Joering. A vigil was held on Monday night at the Central Ohio Joint Fire District. To see more photos, check out mountvernonnews.com.