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CONCERNS OF POLICE SURVIVORS (COPS)

By Mike Messerich, Board Vice President of Iowa COPS



Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS) was formed nationally in 1984 with 110 members and has since expanded to more than 30,000 families today. The Iowa Chapter of COPS, formed in 2010, is bringing to Iowa the organization's mission of "rebuilding shattered lives of survivor and co-workers affected by line of duty deaths through partnerships with law enforcement and the community."

My name is Michael Messerich, Board Vice President of Iowa COPS. I wanted to take this opportunity to explain some of the many resources COPS can provide, as well as ways you can become involved and support the survivors and co-workers of officers killed in the line of duty.

Iowa COPS provides a support system consisting of survivors who have been through similar experiences and have a better understanding of how someone is feeling. The spouse of a fallen officer helps the spouse of a fallen officer, siblings help siblings, parents help parents, co-workers help co-workers and so on. This support is not only provided to survivors of local officers that have been killed in the line of duty, but also to the Iowa families of officers from all across the nation. Iowa COPS also reaches out to individuals who became survivors prior to the Iowa chapter forming, exposing them to the resources offered.

When requested by a police department, the Iowa COPS Funeral Response Team provides support in the days leading up to services, and assist with necessary paperwork to help survivors receive entitled benefits. Following the initial services, the COPS organization doesn't fade away. COPS is known by survivors as the family you never want to become a part of, but the family you wouldn't want to be without.

Survivors are first introduced to programs offered by National COPS during Police Week in Washington D.C., including retreats for spouses, kids, siblings, parents and co-workers that are offered throughout the year. These programs allow for that continued survivor-to-survivor connection and support system. For first-time attendees, Iowa COPS provides one-on-one guidance as to what to expect ahead of time, and assists with travel plans to make the experience as beneficial as possible. During Police Week, survivors also attend the National Law Enforcement Memorial, Candlelight Vigil and National Peace Officer's Memorial Service, where first-time attendees hear their officer's name read and see their officer's name on the wall for the first time.

Through fundraising efforts, Iowa COPS is able to provide resources and financially assist survivors in attending Police Week and retreats each year. There are many fundraising events throughout the year, including the Iowa COPS Black and Blue Ball, the Iowa COPS Bike Team, the Sean Wissink Golf Tournament and merchandise sales including t-shirts and challenge coins.

Tickets will be going on sale soon for the 2016 Black and Blue Ball to be held at the Embassy Suites in Des Moines on February 27, 2016. Our bike team will also be looking for riders to honor fallen officers during RAGBRAI in 2016. Each rider on the bike team carries a flag across the state of Iowa during RAGBRAI, displaying the name, picture and end-of-watch date of the officer they are honoring. As the team crosses Iowa, we meet with survivors and share the stories of the officer we are riding in honor of to ensure they are never forgotten.

Iowa COPS offers free training and assistance to departments and officers to help them be more prepared for a line-of-duty death. COPS knows that a survivor's level of distress is directly affected by the agency's response to the tragedy. Iowa COPS can provide Below 100 and Iowa COPS training tailored to your department's needs.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that it's never too late to reach out to the families of officers killed in the line of duty to show your support and ensure that the sacrifice these officers made will never be forgotten. I would also like to thank the Iowa State Police Association and its members for all the support you have provided.

For more information about resources provided by Iowa COPS, upcoming events, how to join our bike team or how to purchase merchandise, visit iowacops.org or our [Facebook page](#).