

His final journey: Spectators gather to support Officer Blake Snyder during funeral procession

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GODFREY - Thousands of people from across the region set out to the roadways around the area to pay respects to the fallen **St. Louis County Police Officer Blake Snyder** as he made his last journey to his final resting place.

Hours before the procession even made its way down **Delmar Avenue** in **Godfrey** to **Valhalla Cemetery**, crowds began to gather along the route to show their gratitude to Officer Snyder, who died in the line of duty on **Oct. 6.** while responding to a domestic violence call in **Affton, Mo.**

Hazelwood Police Sergeant Norman Mars drove in the procession motorcade with several other police officers from precincts around the state of Missouri and Illinois.

“There’s no doubt that there were several hundred police departments involved in the procession,” Sgt. Mars said. “I’ve been doing this job for 21 years and unfortunately I’ve attended my fair share of police funerals. This is the first time that I’ve seen such an outpouring of love and support from the public for fifty or sixty miles, it was amazing.”

The procession, which stretched over six miles in length, made its way to Officer Snyder's final resting place. Police cruisers, vans, fire engines, ambulances, unmarked police vehicles as well as campus police cruisers and even a police SUV from a parish in **Louisiana** traveled down the route to Valhalla Cemetery.

Sally McClaine, one of the spectators on the processional route, took her children, nieces and nephews out of school so they could bid farewell to the man who is now known as a local hero.

"I went to school with when I was younger and I have two brothers that are police officers. It really hits close to home," McClaine said. "He was younger than I was, so I just remember him as a sweet little soccer kid. I know his family, too and I know that they are sweet people."



The funeral procession made its way from **The Family Church in Chesterfield, Mo.** and crossed the Clark Bridge as it entered Illinois. From there, the hearse and its police brigade escorts traveled down **Landmarks Boulevard** and onto the **River Road**. The procession turned right onto **Clifton Terrace Road** and drove onto Delmar to Valhalla Cemetery, where Snyder will rest for eternity.

“I really hope that we get to see the streets totally lined,” McClaine said. “It brings you to tears to see even driving it with no people on it. Now, we’re so early and there are people all the way down on the River Road already.”

“I’m here to show support mainly for all the police and everything.” **Gary Bauser**, who was lined up outside Melville Dairy, said. “I’ve got my American flag and I’ll be standing out there. It’s affecting all of us.”



Steve Winson and **Mike Lee** stood outside Winson’s home to watch the procession.

“I think it’s good for the community to come out and pay their respects,” Winson said. “It could happen to anyone at any time, you never know what’s going to happen. I feel sorry for his wife and his poor little kid. It’s hard to leave that behind like that.”

For Lee, Snyder’s death hits extremely close to home, as his cousin is a young police officer in Missouri and is also from Godfrey.

“Everybody should ” Lee said, “He laid his life down for us and we ought to do something for him. It’s no different from the guys going out and fighting in the service.”

Regardless of where one is at the time of the procession, it is clear that Officer Blake Snyder is filling the thoughts and hearts of those who will remember him forever.

“I picked the kids up from school early and all of the teachers were watching it live,” McClaine said. “Everybody’s heart is here even if they can’t be here.”

Though Officer Snyder was on everyone’s minds throughout the day, something made it clear that perhaps Blake was watching over those mourning as he made his final journey. Beneath the noisy helicopters that hovered above the cemetery or the sirens that roared from the police vehicles, a lone hawk quietly soared the crowds.

As written by J.K. Rowling, "the ones who love us never truly leave us." Perhaps this sentiment can help those hearts that need to heal after this tragic loss.

