



One year later: Remembering Officer Blake Snyder

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Officer Blake Snyder was killed in the line of duty on Oct. 6, 2016.

The Riverbend native was a beloved soccer coach, youth group leader, St. Louis County Police Officer and friend to many people across the entire St. Louis area. He was killed in the early morning hours while responding to a domestic violence call in South St.

Louis near Affton. Snyder's killer was identified as 18-year-old Trenton Foster. Snyder was 33 years old at the time of his death, and he left behind a young family.

Since that tragic day, people who loved Snyder from both sides of the river have honored his memory through various events and fundraisers for both his family and charities for first responders killed or injured in the line of duty and their families.

On Friday, several of Snyder's friends have shared memories of him on social media and changed their default profile pictures to honor him.

Perhaps the largest project being done in Snyder's honor, however, is an entire building named after him being built at River of Life Family Church, located at 3401 Fosterburg Road in Alton. Senior Pastor Mark Church said Snyder served as a youth group leader for the church from 2002-2010. His memory was honored at the church's Freedom Fest, held the weekend before the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"He was like a full-time volunteer," Church said. "During his college years, instead of running around and soaking up all he could for himself, he was an amazing servant. His red Jeep was in the parking lot all the time. He was the right-hand person for our - then two - youth pastors."

Ground was broken for what will become the new youth and family ministry building last Sunday, following the 11:15 a.m. services. Church said several local officials joined with Snyder's parents, Dick and Peggy Snyder and his widow, Elizabeth Snyder.

Church said the idea to construct a building in Blake Snyder's honor came from a service he conducted during the weekend of the church's Freedom Fest. During that service, Dick and Peggy Snyder, who are members of the church, joined Adam Snyder - Blake Snyder's brother - in a video interview, which was played during the service.

"The interview was special," Church said. "They shared their hearts with us, and it encouraged and inspired people. I used that video as part of the message that day."

That message was "what is your response to freedom?" Church said he challenged his congregation by asking what they were doing with their freedoms. He said he asked them to focus on being grateful and generous with that freedom.

"Don't just use your freedom on yourself," Church said. "Through love, use it to serve one another."

Believing Officer Blake Snyder to be a stunning example of that message, Church said he decided that day to erect a building in honor of his former youth leader, who Church said gave so much of himself and his freedom.

When completed in the spring of 2018, Church said the youth and family ministry building will continue to spread the message of service and community outreach he believed Officer Blake Snyder embodied. He said, when completed, it will be approximately 7,000 square feet with room for expansion.

"It will be phenomenal for outreach through the youth of our city," Church said. "We could host after-school programs there."

Another event to honor the memory of Blake Snyder will take place on Oct. 14, 2017 at Ted's Motorcycle World, located at 4103 Humbert Rd. in Alton. The ride, which charges \$20 a bike and \$5 for riders is being hosted by the Gateway Chapter of the Reguladores LEMC. It is being called the "First Annual St. Louis Area Fallen Hero's Ride."

Registration for that ride will take place from 9:30-11 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 14, and 100 percent of the proceeds will go to benefit the St. Louis County Police Welfare Association.