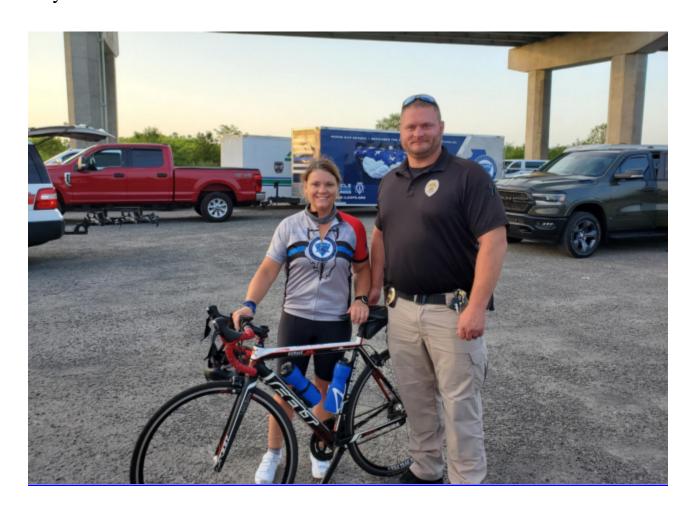# Wood River Det. Sgt. Burns And Sister, Riana, Have Special Family Connection With C.O.P.S. Ride

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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WOOD RIVER - Wood River Det. Sgt. Aaron Burns and his sister, Riana Whitehead, have a very special connection to the Illinois Cycle Cross Illinois, which began today. Riana was part of the area riders who departed from the Alton Marina early Thursday.

This ride is special to both Aaron, Riana, and members of the Wood River Police Department. Aaron and Riana's brother, Patrolman Evan Burns, was struck and killed by a stolen vehicle while attempting to deploy spike strips during a pursuit on Tuesday, August 16, 2011. He worked for the Caruthersville Police Department, Missouri.

The 16th Annual C.O.P.S. Ride started today, Thursday, July 15, and will end Sunday, July 19, 2020. The Cycle Across Illinois bicycle ride recognizes and honors the extraordinary contributions of law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty.

Det. Sgt. Burns escorted the first stage of the ride in a Wood River Police vehicle. The incident that involved Burns' and Whitehead's brother was reported as follows: Deputies from the Pemiscot County Sheriff's Office had started pursuing a stolen SUV on I-55 that was being driven by a man wanted for an assault. The vehicle exited at Highway 84 and started driving toward Caruthersville, MO. Patrolman Burns and another officer began to set up spike strips on the roadway. When the stolen vehicle approached, the driver struck the first police car, injuring the officer, and then rammed the SUV broadside into Patrolman Burns' vehicle, killing him. The driver was arrested and faced murder and assault charges. Patrolman Burns had served with the Caruthersville Police Department for two years. His son was one year old at the time. "We have them in our thoughts and prayers while they remember their brother at this time, and we have all who have died in the line of duty in our hearts forever," said the Wood River Police Department in a statement.