





Toledo Officer Samantha Snowberger passes the department's other K-9 officers as she carries her partner K-9 Falko's ashes to her cruiser during Falko's funeral service at the Huntington Center.

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Toledo officers say good-bye to K-9 Falko

Canine always ready to 'catch some bad guys'

BLADE STAFF

Toledo Police K-9 officer Samantha Snowberger today called K-9 Falko her guardian, partner and best friend at a funeral service to honor the fallen K-9

"When he heard that tone over the radio, he was ready to work and catch some bad guys," she said about the night he was shot and killed by a suspect the dog was trying to apprehend.



Officer Samantha Snowberger, K-9 Officer Falko's handler, Chief George Kral listen as Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson reads a proclamation during the dog's funeral service.

THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH

Hundreds of people — many of them law enforcement officials — attended the funeral service today at the Huntington Center for the German shepherd who died in the line of duty last week and was being honored with a full police funeral service. The service started at noon and ended at about 12:40 p.m.

Ms. Snowberger and her deceased partner left together for the last time, as she placed the dog's ashes in her cruiser at the end of the service.

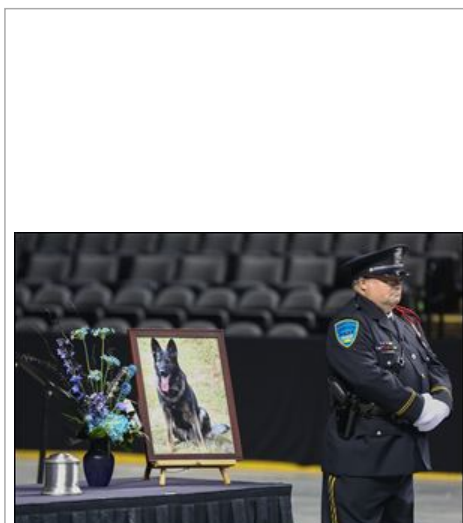
PHOTO GALLERY: Funeral service for Toledo K-9 Officer Falko

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Part of Jefferson Avenue was blocked off to accommodate parking of police vehicles by authorities who traveled from other jurisdictions to attend the service. The on-street parking lot was filled with K-9 unit vehicles from Ohio and Michigan, including Lima, Twinsburg, Huber Heights, and Livonia, Mich.

The 2-year-old police dog on Aug. 12 was pursuing a suspect who bailed out of a stolen vehicle after a short chase and ran from police. The man hid in the crawl space of a vacant house on Earl Street, and Officer Snowberger released Falko into the space to apprehend him. The man shot the dog in the face, and Officer Simon Urbina returned fire.



The Oregon Police Honor Guard stands watch over K-9 Officer Falko before a memorial service today at the Huntington Center.

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Police later identified the shooter as Reginald D. Marshall, 27, of Cleveland, who was wanted for aggravated murder related to a May 21 shooting there.

Marshall also died. An autopsy Friday showed he died of a single gunshot to the temple consistent with suicide, though a final ruling awaits further testing.

Gov. John Kasich ordered that all U.S. and state flags be flown at half-staff upon all public buildings and grounds throughout Lucas County and at the Ohio Statehouse today, from sunrise to sunset.

Chief George Kral spoke at the funeral about the commitment Falko had to his handler since training.

"I would sit in awe as he stared into her eyes, unflinching, waiting for her command," he said.

James Morrison, 31, is a family friend of Ms. Snowberger. It said it was important for him to show support for Falko's service.

"He did his job to the fullest until the day he passed," Mr. Morrison said.

Jamie Newton, 65, of Toledo, said she is an animal lover who wanted to honor

Falko, a fallen hero.

"We'll never forget him. That name will stick in my mind forever," she said.



Attendees sign memorial books near a blanket bearing the image of Toledo Police K-9 Officer Falko before the funeral service at the Huntington Center.

Falko was the department's first-known K-9 to be killed in the line of duty. The last line-of-duty death in the department was that of Detective Keith Dressel, a 13-year veteran of the department, who died Feb. 21, 2007.

Falko was trained in explosives detection and general patrol duties such as suspect apprehension, tracking, and building and evidence search.

With the help of Officer Snowberger, who will return to the K-9 unit, another male German shepherd has been selected from Von der Haus Gill German shepherds in Wapakoneta, Ohio, to fill the void left by Falko's death. He will undergo the same training as Falko was and will later join Toledo police after he and Officer Snowberger complete a six-week training session together.

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A California resident and friend of Mike Craig, Toledo city councilman for District 3, has offered to cover the cost of purchasing the new dog. Chief Kral said the department will contact the potential donor to discuss the offer.

The Toledo Police Patrolman's Association has established a memorial fund for Falko to create a tribute for the dog in the department's memorial gardens. Donations may be made at Toledo Police Federal Credit Union branches in the downtown Safety Building, 525 N. Erie St., and at 4280 Heatherdowns Blvd., or at the Toledo Fire Fighter's Credit Union, 2800 W. Laskey Rd.

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