

Community grieves for Seaside's Sgt. Goodding

EO Media Group

SEASIDE — Thousands gathered Friday, Feb. 12, to remember Seaside Police Sgt. Jason Goodding as a father, husband, friend and comrade who gave his life protecting the community he loved.

A procession guided Goodding's casket from Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center in Warrenton to a memorial at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center, passing through downtown, where hundreds of law enforcement officers and residents turned out to pay their respects.

Goodding, 39, was shot and killed Feb. 5 while trying to arrest a suspect on a felony assault warrant.

Gov. Kate Brown presented Goodding's widow, Amy, with the Medal of Ultimate Sacrifice, and the well-liked officer was remembered with love, humor and affection in remarks by Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin, Seaside Police Chief Dave Ham and state Sen. Betsy Johnson.

"He always made every single person he talked to feel like you were his best friend," Bergin said fondly at the memorial. "And there's 1,600 heads in this place right now, and I can see about 1,100, 1,200 of them shaking their heads going, 'Yeah, that's just so true."

"So true." Ham, who was close friends with Goodding as well as his chief, described the fatal shooting as "our worst nightmare."

"Jason brought out the best of others," he said, "whether it is personally or professionally, whoever he was working with, whether he is supervising or mentoring."

Ham said Goodding "did his job respectfully. He was fair. He was kind. He carried out his duties in the most professional manner and represented the Seaside Police Department in the best possible way."



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Police officers salute as Sgt. Jason Goodding's hearse passes during a procession involving hundreds of police vehicles.

Inside the convention center hall, the sheer magnitude of men and women in uniform, the regimental precision and the profound respect resonated.

Claudio Diaz of Brooklyn, New York, is a member of Brotherhood of the Fallen. They turn out when an officer is killed in the line of duty. "We come out, we also have multiple chapters, we have a Chicago chapter and an Aurora, Colorado, chapter," Diaz said. "We come and we share support for people around the nation. We all wear uniforms, we all do the same job, and we're all one big family. Six people, two for the honor guard and four from the brotherhood."

Earlier Friday, the most eerie thing was the quiet.

U.S. Highway 101, as if in mourning itself, joined in the moment of silence. The road was cleared in Goodding's memory.



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Capt. Gordon Houston of Seaside Fire and Rescue helps position a flag over Broadway.

The city came to a standstill and people hugged one another and cried in the streets. American flags flew everywhere, trailing the firetrucks that came from throughout the state, proudly poised to share the memory of an ultimate hero, sacrificed in the line of duty. Baker County, Marion County, Douglas County, Clark County, Oregon State Police, City of

Sweet Home, La Grande and Union County. On they came.

"With our small community, and you think of the larger picture of law enforcement that protects us," Seaside's Kevin Leahy said. "I'm very good friends with Astoria Police Chief Brad Johnston and Cannon Beach Chief Jason Schermerhorn. They're family guys, just thinking about that part ..."

His voice drifted for a moment.

The president of Seaside Rotary, Leahy and others shared memories of Goodding at the group's Thursday luncheon. "There were words and memories about Sgt. Goodding, so many memories of the community members. He coached their daughter's team, or they knew him through his other volunteer work. He was always there from beginning to end, just to reinforce what a special community we had."

The memorial was not confined to a single location — there were too many friends, family members, community members, officials, law enforcement officers and emergency service personnel who wished to say "goodbye."

To accommodate the throng of locals and out-of-towners, venues throughout the North Coast simulcast the memorial service.

The Seaside High School gymnasium, one of the satellite locations live streaming the ceremony, started filling up just after noon. For some people, putting their grief into words was too hard. "The thing about Jason is he touched a lot of different people in a lot of different ways," said Kevin LaCoste, of Gearhart. "He was well-liked wherever he went."

He was one of Goodding's "poker buddies," and the officer also coached LaCoste's son in football. Goodding "died way too young," LaCoste said, and the incident serves as a reminder to appreciate the ones you love, as Goodding did.

LaCoste said "there is no doubt" Goodding would have been at the memorial if it was one of his colleagues who had fallen. The turnout in honor of Goodding is "amazing," he said. "I think Jason would have loved to see this show of love and support for him," LaCoste said.

North Coast Family Fellowship and other venues in Astoria, Gearhart, Seaside and Cannon Beach were hosting groups to watch the service.

Officer Randy Huserik, with the Seattle Police Department, vacations in Seaside with his family, so he feels a personal connection to the loss of Goodding and how it impacts a small agency like the Seaside Police Department.

"I felt compelled to be here for the Goodding family, as well as the Seaside department," he said. "For them, something like this is devastating."

However, this sort of incident affects the law enforcement community as a whole, as well. All across the country, men and women face risks while on their jobs serving their communities. For all of them, Huserik said, "the goal at the start of the shift is to go home at the end of the shift."

"You never know when it's going to go bad, when something will go wrong," he said.

R.J. Marx and Katherine Lacaze contributed to this report.

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