



Ontario officers honour 'fallen four'

Ontario officers present families of slain Mounties with \$25,000 cheques

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EDMONTON -- When he learned four young Alberta mounties had been slain in an ambush by a known police hater, Durham Police Const. Darryl Rice knew he had to find a way to honour the fallen officers.

On March 8, five days after constables Brock Myrol, Peter Schiemann, Anthony Gordon and Leo Johnston were gunned down near Mayerthorpe by convicted criminal James Roszko, Rice launched the True Blue Heroes bracelet campaign to raise money for their families.

Since then, he has raised more than \$125,000 from the sale of more than 50,000 bracelets across North America and even overseas, in Ireland and England.

On Saturday, Rice and seven other officers from Ontario presented the families of the four officers with cheques for \$25,000 each, plaques and sports jerseys bearing their sons' last names and the number of the day they were born. The remaining money will be used to help the families of several Ontario police officers who have died on the job this year.



CREDIT: Brian Gavriloff, the Journal

The mothers of four slain RCMP officers -- from left, Doreen Jewell-Duffy (son Anthony Gordon), Grace Johnston (son Leo), Colleen Patricia Myrol (son Brock) and Beth Schiemann (son Peter) -- hold up True Blue Hero bracelets. Ontario officers presented the families Saturday with money raised through the bracelets, as well as hockey jerseys bearing their sons' names.



CREDIT: Brian Gavriloff, the Journal

"When we launched this

campaign, I thought there has to be a special way to pay tribute to these boys' lives and to their making the ultimate sacrifice," Rice said at a small ceremony at Sutton Place Hotel.

Durham Police Const. Darryl Rice, who launched the True Blue Hero bracelet campaign, and Kim Gordon, wife of slain RCMP officer Anthony Gordon, comfort each other during a ceremony Saturday.

Although the money will not bring back their loved ones, Rice told the families he wanted them to know they are in the hearts and minds of thousands of police officers and ordinary people, who wear the bright blue bracelets in memory of the four dead Mounties.

"If you ask any police officer why they want to do the job they do, they will tell you it's to help people and to make a difference. These four boys made a difference," said Rice, his voice cracking from emotion.

The four Mounties were shot by Roszko after being ambushed as they guarded a marijuana grow operation and stolen auto parts found inside a Quonset hut on his Mayerthorpe-area farm.

It is not the first time Rice has raised money to help the families of police officers who have died on duty. He raised more than \$70,000 for families of New York Police Department officers who died in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Rice also presented Gordon's wife, Kim, with a sports jersey and blue sweatshirts for their two sons.

"My boys are going to grow up and they are going to know about men like you," she said, her eyes brimming with tears.

Schiemann's father, Don, thanked Rice and his colleagues for their support, and said the families of the four officers plan to continue pushing for changes to better protect Canadian police officers on the job.

The families will meet with Prime Minister Paul Martin on Tuesday in Ottawa to ask for changes to the justice system, which would include mandatory minimum sentences for certain crimes.

They also want the Liberal government to scrap Bill C-17, which calls for the decriminalization of marijuana possession.

There is already an epidemic of grow operations in Canada, said Schiemann, and decriminalizing possession of marijuana is not the best way to deal with the country's drug problems.

"What happened on March 3 can happen again. The conditions are ripe for it," he said.

"Police today face an unreasonable risk. We are going to do whatever we can to make it safe for police to protect us."