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Newport News Sheriff's Deputies Pedal their Bicycles to the Nation's Capitol

By Lt. Kathleen Carey, PIO,
Newport News, VA Sheriff's Office

Law enforcement officers bicycle across Virginia on their way to the Nation's Capitol raising awareness and money for the families of officers who died in the line of duty.



As part of National Police Week, hundreds of Law Enforcement United, Inc. members paid tribute to fallen officers across North America with a three day, 240 mile bicycle ride to Washington, D.C.

Bicyclists came from all over the U.S. and Canada to participate in the 2012 "Road to Hope." Among them were three members of the Newport News, Virginia Sheriff's Office: Sgt. Robert Daniels, Sgt. Henry McCoy, and Cpl. William Churchill. "It was truly an awesome experience paying your respects to officers who have died in the line of duty," said Sgt. McCoy.

Day one of the ride began in Chesapeake, Virginia on May 10th with teams from Florida, North and South Carolina, Minnesota, and Texas. There was a second group originating out of Pennsylvania. The two groups would unite for the final leg. They pedaled the last fourteen miles, two-by-two... a string of bikes that stretched well over two miles.

Pictured left to right: Sgt. Robert Daniels, Cpl. William Churchill, and Sgt. Henry McCoy represented the Newport News, Virginia Sheriff's Office on the 3-day, 240-mile Law Enforcement United bike ride during National Police Week.



The ride's mission was to raise awareness about law enforcement and to raise funds for two charities. C.O.P.S., or Concerns of Police Survivors, offers support services for the families of fallen officers. This year's ride raised \$150,000 for the C.O.P.S. Kids Summer Camp. An additional \$80,000 went to the Officer Down Memorial Page (ODMP), an online memorial which honors the fallen and their survivors. For the cyclists, the adventure could not be more meaningful. Sgt. Daniels experienced every imaginable feeling. "It made you feel proud, overwhelmed, joyous, and very emotional when you'd think of what you were there for."

The first day swept over the flatlands of Suffolk, through the soft rolling terrain of James City County, and ended in the state's capitol of Richmond. It was the longest day -- 112 miles -- but day two was the most challenging. The hills through Stafford County were monsters that needed conquering. "My leg muscles were already hurting me from the first day," explained Cpl. Churchill. "I didn't know how I was going to get through those hills." But you do. You power through with the help of your fellow riders. "You didn't know the guy beside you, but he's got your back," said McCoy. Literally. "They pulled you along if you were falling behind. A more experienced rider would come up alongside you. You're pedaling. He's pedaling, and he'd put his hand on your back and push you up that hill," he explained.

The other motivator was the encouragement of strangers. Daniels described how children would line the roads outside their school and cheer and give them high-fives as they pedaled by. There were multiple scenes like that in every small town. "Once you saw all the police officers in these towns lined up on overpasses with their patrol lights flashing and saluting us as we passed," Daniels said, "you forgot about the pain."

Each cyclist was given a metal bracelet engraved with the name of someone who sacrificed his/her life to protect our liberties. They were also given a flag with the officer's name, photograph, and end of watch date. An arrival ceremony was held at which riders were introduced to survivors, providing an opportunity to learn more about the person they were honoring. Those bracelets and flags were given as gifts to widows, children, or parents. McCoy rode in honor of Willie Amos Cammon, Heard County Sheriff's Office, Georgia; end of watch 3/3/11. Daniels rode for Craig Allan Orrell, Texas Department of Criminal Justice; end of watch 5/12/11. Churchill honored Rogerio Rene Morales, Davie Police Department, Florida; end of watch 1/13/11. "I actually got to meet the widow and the family of Officer Morales," said Churchill. "That was the most touching thing." 🌟

A thin blue line is shot across the night sky at the May 13, 2012 Candlelight Vigil held at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

