

## **Detroit hosts benefit for slain officers' families**

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The thought struck Tamie McKnight as she was driving to Detroit's 4th Precinct Police station clutching \$50 and two sympathy cards for the families of slain officers Matthew Bowens and Jennifer Fettig.

"It just hit me that it was not enough and I should do more," McKnight recalled.

She did.

The mother of two, who has lived her entire life in southwest Detroit, the home of the 4th Precinct, sent out an SOS to host a benefit for the Bowens-Fettig families. The call for help was answered in a big way.

The idea was quickly approved by the Moose Lodge charitable organization. In less than two weeks, nearly 1,000 tickets were sold. Supermarkets and restaurants donated food and raffle prizes. Local musicians volunteered their services.

The result: Nearly \$12,000 was raised for the families during the Saturday benefit, held at the Moose Lodge Hall on the city's southwest side. Hundreds of police officers, from city and suburban departments, other law enforcement types and just plain folks turned out.

Though there were moments of reflection and prayer, this was not an occasion for mourning. It was a time to pull together, enjoy the music, the food and the company with a renewed determination to see that the ultimate sacrifice paid by the young officers would not be in vain.

"It was a community coming together of police and citizens," said McKnight, a former bartender now employed as a Detroit News carrier by Detroit Newspapers. "I tried to keep it lighthearted. I didn't want any mourning. There was a time for that. This was just a time to help. I was overwhelmed by the support from businesses, police officers, the musicians and the community. I was hoping to sell at least 100 tickets and we sold nearly 1,000 and had other money donated, too."

Bowens, 26, and Fettig, 21, were gunned down last month after stopping a motorist in southwest Detroit. **Eric Marshall**, 23, of Detroit has been charged with their murder.

McKnight did not know the fallen officers or their families before the benefit. There were some touching moments when she finally met James Bowens, the father of Matthew Bowens, and the parents of Jennifer Fettig, who were on hand for the benefit.

Providing the entertainment were the Detroit Blue Pigs, the Police Department's community relations band, the Glenn Eddy band and the Family band.

Detroit Police Officer Senora Lee, the lead singer of the Blue Pigs, was moved by the outpouring of support.

"It shows a lot of people cared about these police officers," she said.

"Since the officers have passed, we've seen more community involvement. I think the city as a whole has become more compassionate."

James Bowens exchanged embraces with many well-wishers and found lots of takers for T-shirts being sold in support of a Bowens-Fettig law, which would re-establish the death penalty in Michigan for the killing of a police officer.

Part of the inscription on the T-shirt reads "Officer Down," taken from Matthew Bowens' last radio message for help before he was killed.

Shortly after the deaths of Bowens and Fettig, a pizza-delivery man was shot and killed in southwest Detroit. A raffle to benefit his family also was held during the event.

"It was a rough week for this neighborhood," McKnight said.

There have been some tough times for the 4th Precinct, marked by scandal and tragedy. Eight officers from the precinct are currently on trial in Detroit federal court, facing charges on civil rights violations. The area was also the site of the controversial killing of Malice Green in a confrontation with two police officers in 1992.

"There have been times when relations have been strained between police and the community, and I really hope this help builds something," McKnight said. "I hope it shows that cops are people, too. We need to work together and stand by each other."

Caption: Luther Keith Luther Keith

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