

GRIEVING COPS HONOR PAIR BY AIDING FAMILIES - 1 OFFICER - A FRIEND - TO GIVE EULOGY TODAY

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Detroit Police Officer Jason Skoczylas watched in horror as an ambulance sped into Henry Ford Hospital carrying two of his colleagues suffering from gunshot wounds.

He regained his composure, approached the ambulance and helped unload his friends.

"It's the worst thing I ever had to do in my life," Skoczylas (pronounced SKO-za-lis) recalled Thursday. "I was partners with both officers. I work on the same shift."

The ambulance contained 4th (Fort-Green) Precinct Officers Jennifer Fettig, 26, and Matthew Bowens, 21. Within 12 hours Monday, both were pronounced dead.

Soon afterward, Fettig's parents, Tim and Kathy, were in a Detroit police helicopter being flown in from Petoskey. The department needed a liaison to help them prepare for the worst week of their life.

Skoczylas stepped up.

"I heard a lieutenant asking, 'Who's going to do it?'" he said. "There wasn't a choice. I demanded it."

That's been Skoczylas' assignment all week -- to stay with Fettig's parents, drive them wherever they need to go, get them whatever they need.

"I'm trying to keep their spirits up, but they are the ones keeping me going," he said.

Kathy Fettig has made what Skoczylas called the ultimate request: She asked him to eulogize her daughter at today's funeral for both officers in Detroit.

"Oh man, is it an honor," he said. "These officers would take a bullet for me. I would take one for them. I'm going to pay my respects."

Skoczylas, 26, said Thursday evening that he didn't know how he would present his words to the thousands of mourners expected to pack Greater Grace Temple. But he knows what he wants to say. "Jennifer was an outstanding officer," he said. "She was tough, but she could make you feel good, no matter what kind of day you were having. I'm going to talk about her smile."

Four other family liaisons have helped Bowens' and Fettig's relatives: Sgt. Simeon Ginton, Sgt. Erik Eide and Officers Alfonso Ruiz and Millard Newport. Fourth Precinct Lt. John Morell said he is moved by the job they have done.

"These guys have done so much," Morell said. "I'm extremely proud of them. They're walking zombies, but they have stayed with the families and made all the arrangements. . . .

"There aren't words for me to say what they've done."

In between assisting Fettig's family, Skoczylas has been visiting fellow precinct officers on his shift, the midnight shift.

Fettig and Bowens were shot at 2 a.m. Monday during the shift. A 23-year-old Detroit man, **Eric Marshall**, is charged with first-degree murder in connection with the slayings.

Those late-night shifts are painful right now, Skoczylas said.

"We don't have help from anywhere else, so we've got to help our own," Skoczylas said. "I just stop by every night to talk."

After the families leave town, Skoczylas will return to the shift.

"I can't worry about it," he said. "I've got to go back. I can't leave my other officers out there without me." A funeral service for both officers will be at 10 a.m. today at the Greater Grace Temple, 23500 W. Seven Mile in Detroit.

Caption: Photo; Photo J. KYLE KEENER/Detroit Free Press

Officer Jason Skoczylas is tending to the Fettig family.

Detroit Police Officer Jason Skoczylas, who worked with the two slain officers on the midnight shift, is to speak at their funeral today. He doesn't know how he'll get through it, but he knows what he wants to say: "Jennifer was . . . tough, but she could make you feel good, no matter what kind of day you were having. I'm going to talk about her smile."

Matthew Bowens
Jennifer Fettig

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