

113th PAPD Academy Class Donates to the Family of Slain Jersey City Police Officer Melvin Santiago

The reality of the dangerous job they were preparing for presented itself to the PAPD recruits of the 113th Class on the morning of July 13, 2014. That morning Jersey City Police Officer Melvin Santiago was shot and killed after responding to the scene of a reported robbery in progress at a 24-hour pharmacy not far from the Port Authority Police Academy.

All police officer deaths are sober reminders of the dangers police officers face every day but Santiago's murder struck a personal chord with each PAPD recruit. First, the PAPD Academy and Headquarters as well as the Holland Tunnel and PATH Commands are located in Jersey City resulting in a close working relationship between the two departments. Second, Police Officer Santiago was out of the academy only six months, not long ago a recruit himself.

The 113th Class took up a collection for P. O. Santiago's family as a show of caring and understanding and to stand in solidarity with the Santiago family. After graduation the first order of business, before the 113th reported to their commands, was to meet with the Santiago family and present the proceeds of the collection. Police Officer Joe Malvino of the PAPD Academy accompanied Probationary Police Officers Samantha Koch and Liam Huzcko to the Jersey City Police Department's North District Stationhouse to meet with the parents of Police Officer Santiago. Huzcko and Koch, on behalf of the 113th Class, presented a check in the amount of \$2,000.00 to Santiago's parents.

Huzcko and Koch graduated the Port Authority Police Academy on Friday, August 22, 2014, in a ceremony at the Dunn Sports Center in Elizabeth, NJ. The 113th Class, consisting of 249 recruits, is the largest PAPD class graduated in the long history of the Port Authority Police Department.

According to a Port Authority press release the 113th included 39 woman, 26 military veterans and two 9/11 Legacy Recruits; Probationary Police Officer Patrick Gorman, the son of Port Authority Police Officer Thomas Gorman who was killed in the line of duty on September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center and, Probationary Police Officer Liam Huzcko, son of Port Authority Police Officer Stephen Huzcko, also killed in the line of duty on September 11, 2001. Gorman and Huzcko are the first children of PAPD September 11, 2001 Line of Duty Deaths to graduate the academy.

Probationary Police Officer Jennifer Morrone, cousin of PAPD Superintendent of Police Fred Morrone, who also died in the line of duty on September 11, 2001, also graduated. In an interview aired on WPIX News, Morrone spoke emotionally about her cousin and how his legacy will shape her law enforcement career.

During the graduation ceremony four recruits were introduced as the class honor graduates receiving special recognition. The Captain Kathy N. Mazza Award for the graduate who received academic excellence was presented to Probationary Police Officer Ronald J. King III. Probationary Police Officer Nicholas O. Dattoli was noted for the highest achievement in firearms proficiency with the Chief James Romito Award. The graduate who best exemplified the attributes and commitment to physical fitness,



- Front Row: L—R P.O. Santiago's Parents, P.O. Samantha Koch, P.O. Liam Huzcko
- Back Row L— R P.O. Joe Malvino, Unidentified Jersey City P.D. representative

Probationary Police Officer Mark D. Bergery, received the Police Officer George Howard Award. Probationary Police Officer Christopher Jimenez was honored with the Superintendent Fred V. Morrone Award as the graduate who exemplifies the best in all categories. Each of the honor awards is named in memory of a member of the service killed in the line of duty on September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center.

The Port Authority PBA congratulates 113th Class and wishes each member a long, healthy career.