

CENTERVILLE PD RECEIVES CRUCIAL BALLISTIC VEST DONATION



(Left to right) Houston County's FOP Lodge President Mike Zimmerman, Chief of Police Cedric Duncan, Lieutenant Howard Hubbard and State Vest Committee Member Guy Fussell show off the most recent donation for Centerville Police Department.

Houston Home Journal

Brianna Romero

Sat, Dec 03, 2022

CENTERVILLE, Ga. — Ensuring law enforcement can do their jobs safely is a top priority for the Fraternal Order of Police, and earlier, they had the chance to fulfill that vow by assisting the Centerville Police Department.

On Nov. 30, the FOP donated 10 ballistic vests and 20 tourniquets to the department as part of "Operation Protect the Protector," an initiative designed to assist smaller agencies that may have smaller budgets. President Mike Zimmerman and State Vest Committee Member Guy Fussell, on behalf of the FOP's Houston County Lodge #98, presented the equipment to Centerville Chief of Police Cedric Duncan Wednesday morning.

The FOP and Centerville PD started the ordering process about a month ago. Now every officer within the department will be able to go about their day-to-day lines of work with a custom-fitted vest.

The police department bought 10 more vests at the same price FOP paid, completing the order. Typically around a \$16,000 price tag, FOP predicted a total savings of at least \$6,000 by providing the vests this way.

Speaking to The Journal, Duncan said he was feeling great about the donation, and said it filled a great need within the police department. "I was wondering where I was going to buy enough vests for the whole department," Duncan explained. "Some of them had gone out of date, and these fell in my lap at the right time."

Fussell was excited to present the vests and said supporting law enforcement in their safety is a cause that is near and dear to him. "Every officer should wear a ballistic vest every day," Fussell said. "The FOP is working to ensure that more officers within our state have this extra level of security. Being able to present these vests and tourniquets to the officers that I have worked with over the years is special to me."

"You can't put a price on officer safety," he added, later.

Nationally, 281 officers have been shot, 55 fatally, stressing the life-saving nature of this support from the FOP. "In the world we live in now, it's extremely important that all law enforcement officers wear protective vests, and the FOP is proud to assist in that effort," the FOP said, in a release.

Described by Fussell as a fraternity, the FOP represents every officer of Centerville Police Department, 170 members in Houston County, over 6,500 members of law enforcement across the state and over 356,000 participants nationwide.

Besides gear donations, the FOP also assists in outreach to their members, aligning with their mission to "cultivate a spirit of fraternalism and mutual helpfulness among our members and the people we serve."

Joining has its benefits, such as free college, discounts on services like car rentals and vacations, competitive rates on home and auto loans and valuable health insurance and life insurance, with payouts for accidental and line-of-duty deaths going to families quickly. "If a family member dies, it could take six months to a year before the insurance company pays off," Fussell explained. "Not with FOP. The beneficiary will — especially in a line-of-duty death — have a check within three days. We don't wait."

Any full-time sworn law enforcement officer working for a government entity is eligible to join the fraternity. With their delivery on Wednesday, in total, the FOP has provided 176 agencies with 1,026 vests. In the future, Fussell said they're also hoping to provide a critical tool for ensuring public safety: Narcan kits, and training on their use to help treat overdoses.

- *HHJ News*