



Kotfila legacy lives on at HCSO



The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office is filled with heroes. This year for National Heroes Day, August 31, we are honoring the Kotfila family — a family team HCSO holds close to our hearts.

On March 12, 2016, HCSO Deputy John R. Kotfila, Jr. died in the line of duty while protecting and ultimately saving another driver from a wrong-way crash on the Selmon Expressway. That same year, Deputy Kotfila's younger sister decided to change her career path to keep her brother's legacy alive.

Originally planning to join the Coast Guard, Katelyn Kotfila dropped everything after her brother's death and moved to Tampa from her hometown of Falmouth, Massachusetts in October of 2016.

"After my brother died, it gave me a sense of purpose to come down here," said Katelyn Kotfila.

In June of 2017, Deputy Katelyn Kotfila was sworn in. Since then, she has worked in the Sheriff's Office Patrol Division. In July of 2020, she finished training and joined HCSO's Motor Unit. Now she works in District IV — the same district her brother patrolled.

The idea of joining the Motor Unit first crossed Katelyn's mind at her brother's funeral in 2016, after a heartwarming conversation with deputies that she says stuck with her.

"Three motor guys came up to me, and I had never met them before," Katelyn said. "They told me that I still have brothers down here, even though I had just lost mine."

From that moment, Katelyn was inspired. She knew she wanted to bring that same level of comfort to other families in the future. Today, she works alongside the deputies that she met at her brother's funeral — one of those being Master Deputy Donnie Rizer.

*"From about the second day of [Motor] school, I knew we had done a wonderful thing by talking her into coming," **said Master Deputy Rizer.***

Today, Katelyn keeps her brother's legacy alive by watching over District IV and putting a smile on everyone's face, no matter how hard the day may be — just like John did.

Sheriff Chad Chronister and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office are honored and proud to have worked alongside Deputies John and Katelyn Kotfila.

*"We can all go to sleep at night knowing there are deputies like John and Katelyn doing what they swore to do," **said Sheriff Chad Chronister.** "I want to say thank you to our deputies for wearing your badges with pride and always putting your community first."*

A video featuring Deputy Katelyn Kotfila's heroic story can be found below. The video will be shared across HCSO social media platforms today at noon ([@HCSOSheriff](#)).

For media outlets interested in highlighting Deputy Kotfila for National Heroes Day, soundbites and b-roll have been added to the HCSOSheriff YouTube page for your convenience. A link can be found below.



[CLICK HERE FOR FULL VIDEO](#)



[CLICK HERE FOR MEDIA B-ROLL](#)

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[After Hours On Call Calendar](#)

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