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Sunday, December 15, 2019 • MARTINSVILLEBULLETIN.COM • Martinsville, Virginia \$2

REMEMBER HIM FOR THE WAY HE LIVED

Those who love Eric Goff II, of Patrick Springs, young officer with Danville Police Department, want you to remember his life, not ask about his death



Eric Goff II is shown with his girlfriend, Hannah Helbert. He was planning to propose.

PHOTOS SUBMITTED

By Bill Wyatt
bill.wyatt@martinsvillebulletin.com

Eric Goff II had bought an engagement ring for the woman he loved. He had a job that seemed to suit him. He lived in his hometown and talked to his parents pretty much every day. By all accounts, he was as happy as a 22-year-old could be.

So why on Nov. 18 did Goff, a police officer for just less than a year with the Danville Police Department, take a gun and kill himself at his home in Patrick Springs?

Goff was a self-proclaimed “mama’s boy,” the pride of Eric and Amy Goff of Patrick Springs, the brother of Erica Falls, apparently very much in love with Hannah Helbert ... and he was gone, dead.

Details are scant about why on this day and in this way he decided to take his own life.

We know that he had been planning to propose to Helbert. He recently had bought a set of rings. He had talked about asking her father for her hand in marriage.



SEE GOFF | A10 Eric Goff (left) and his son enjoyed many hours together.

Falling tree kills fire chief and wife

Charlie and Sherri Bradshaw both were beloved in community

By Bill Wyatt
bill.wyatt@martinsvillebulletin.com

The Horsepasture Volunteer Fire Department was in full mourning on Saturday after the department’s chief, Charlie Bradshaw, and his wife, Sherri died in a stunning accident not far from the firehouse on Friday afternoon.

Firefighters lowered the American flag in front of their station to half mast, and they posted an “end of watch” message on the marquis.

The Bradshaws had just picked up their twin grandsons about 4 p.m. and were traveling east on Bouldin Road in Henry County when a tree inexplicably fell on their sports-utility vehicle.

The SUV left the roadway near 109 Bouldin Road and may have clipped a utility pole before careening into a wooded area and striking a tree. Both were pronounced dead at the scene. Their grandsons survived.

“I’m not sure if they hit the utility pole or not, but the vehicle drove through the tree that struck the vehicle, and there was a utility pole down, and then there was the vehicle in the woods, a few hundred yards away,” Henry County Public Safety Director Matt Tatum said. “I couldn’t go down there and see that, I just couldn’t.”

SEE CHIEF | A8



BILL WYATT/MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Charlie and Sherri Bradshaw died in this crash.

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54 HIGH 33 LOW

WEATHER

Today will have intervals of clouds and sunshine. Tonight will be partly cloudy. For detailed weather information, see Page A2



See the winners from the Bulletin’s cutest pet contest. Page A12



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Magic of Christmas

star news

UP TOWN

MHC Christmas Parade 3PM Today

Goff

From Page A1

He didn't leave a note, and no one said they had any indication he might be thinking of ending his life.

We don't know who found the body and the circumstances of that discovery.

We do know that the manner of death was listed as suicide, according to Tracie Cooper, district administrator for the Medical Examiner's office in Roanoke.

And we know that this happened one evening in a series of events no one can quite figure out.

"He had been drinking," Amy Goff said. "He wasn't a drinker, I mean, what 22-year-old hasn't had a time when they might try and drink too much?"

She said he was at his home and that, sometime between 7:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., he was gone.

"Eric was an amazing young man. He had the biggest servant's heart I have ever witnessed and he was always looking for ways to help others," Helbert said in an email. "He was happy, witty and caring. He was the kind of person that took time to enjoy and value the little moments just as much as the big moments."

"Eric loved being the one to make others smile and would do just about anything to make it happen. He was a proud son, brother, friend, fiancé and officer. He is irreplaceable. I will miss him always."

That's why Goff's parents sat down to talk for about an hour less than a month after their son's death, saying as difficult as it was to talk about this at all, they wanted people to remember Eric Goff II for how he lived and not how he died.

A close family

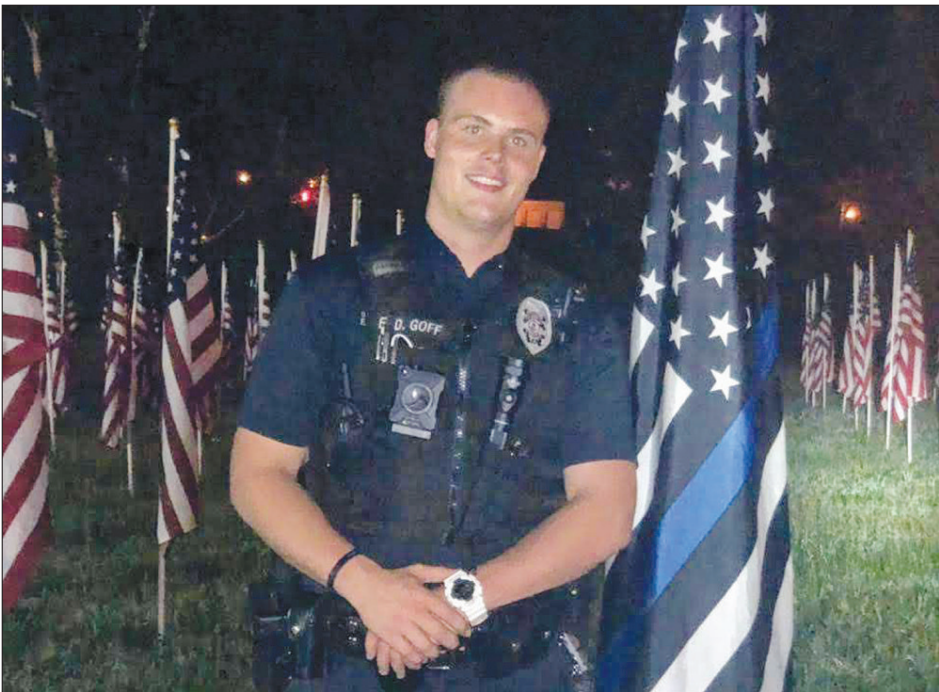
"We talked every day," Amy Goff said. "We are a very close family, and he was a mama's boy. He didn't mind saying it, either. If anyone asked him, he would own up to it: 'Yeah, I'm a mama's boy.'"

Goff was active in the JROTC program at Patrick County high school and intended to join the Marines after graduation, but a knee injury forced him to change plans.

"He joined the Danville Police Department, because they let him start early," Eric Goff said.

"They let him work in the office when he was 20. He became a patrol officer right out of the academy."

Goff graduated from the Piedmont Regional Criminal Justice Training Academy in Martinsville in January. He was assigned to DPD's patrol division.



Eric Goff II joined the Danville Police Department earlier this year.

"Eric loved to make people happy and make people laugh," Amy Goff said. "When his patrol unit sent him out to get some drinks, he came back with one super-sized cup and four straws."

"Instead of everyone having their own coke, he came back with four straws," she said while showing a video on her phone of her son and three of his Danville police brothers laughing and drinking from the same cup.

"It was his first night on duty. ... He was just that way ... with everybody."

'How Eric affected people'

The Danville Police Department along with police departments all across the United States have training programs designed to teach young police officers the importance of camaraderie, but Goff's personality and his genuineness instilled a sense of love and care with nearly everyone he met.

"Right after he died, one of his buddies [a police officer] was dispatched to a domestic call, and the guy [alleged suspect] came out of the house and said the only one he wanted to talk to was Eric," his father said.

"When the officer explained he couldn't talk to Eric, and then what had happened, the man sat down with the officer on the curb by the road for 20 minutes and helped the officer deal with what had happened."

"That's how Eric affected people. Just the news of Eric [his death] changed this man's attitude completely, and here he was helping the police officer that had come to help him."

The Goffs talked about the time their son saw a stranded vehicle by the side of the road in Patrick County and stopped to help. He stayed with the woman and her car until

her husband and help arrived.

"We could talk all day about the things he did for people," Amy Goff said. "We are twice his age, and he did more for people in his life than we've done put together."

Said Eric Goff: "Of course we're proud of our son, but people that hardly knew him were impressed with the way he treated people, like Chris at Eden Jewelry."

'The tragic news'

Chris Hyler is the owner of Eden Jewelry in Martinsville. He met Eric Goff II when he came in to buy a ring and wedding bands for himself and his future bride.

"He was just an admirable customer," Hyler said. "He told me he had been to the beach with his girlfriend a month prior, the size rings he needed ... yes sir and no sir... just a respectable young man."

"On the day of his passing, he called me and talked about how nervous he was to speak to his girlfriend's father, to ask for his permission to marry his daughter."

"I told him, 'You'll be fine.'"

"Then I get a call from his girlfriend the next day, and she told me the tragic news. We had just gotten these blue line watches [law enforcement watch], and I decided I wanted to give one to the family."

Goff's father came to the store to pick up the wedding rings and Hyler gave him the watch as a gift along with a second wedding band Goff wanted to go with the engagement set.

"I wanted to give him that," Hyler said. "I was just so impressed with Eric and the family too."

Officer of the month

A Danville Police Department statement on the death of Goff noted that "Eric distinguished himself as an officer and was recognized as the

department's July 2019 Officer of the Month. He is best remembered by his

friends and fellow officers as someone who was light-hearted and could make you laugh."

Chief Scott Booth said he was saddened by the unexpected death. "The Danville community mourns the loss of one of our officers. Officer Goff was a great police officer and an important member of our department – he will be missed," Booth said.

According to the FBI Report of Offenses Known to Law Enforcement, in 2016 the violent crime rate in the city of Danville was almost 270% higher than the average rate in Virginia. The 2012 FBI Uniform Crime Report listed Danville as having the 11th highest number of murders and the 14th highest number of violent crimes per person in the state.

"Law enforcement

officers respond to and witness some of the most tragic events that happen in our communities," according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness website. "On-the-job stress can have a significant impact on their physical and mental well-being ... many officers struggle with alcohol abuse, depression, suicidal thoughts, post-traumatic stress disorder and other challenges."

Goff was in his eighth month as a patrol officer when he ended his life.

The stress of the job

The local critical incident stress management team arrived at the Danville Police Department on Nov. 20, two days after Goff's death.

SEE LIFE | A11

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Who Hijacked My Fairy Tale?
Starring Kelly Swanson
Friday, January 17, 2020 - 7:30 PM

Join Kelly Swanson – award-winning storyteller, comedian, motivational speaker, and author, as she takes you on a hilarious and motivating journey to a happier-ever-after. From muffin-tops to age spots to “the girls” gone wild, no topic is off limits.

“Anything Can Talk!”
starring David Pendleton
Sunday, January 26, 2020 - 2:00 PM

Ventriloquist David Pendleton amazes an audience with his ability to make them believe anything can talk. His cast of comedic characters include: lovable but blunt 94-year old spinster, Aunt Tilly; the quick-witted trouble maker, Mack Elroy; and doggy yet adorable hound dopy, Buford.

We Shall Overcome - A Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
featuring Damien Sneed
Tuesday, February 4, 2020 - 7:30 PM

Inspired by the words & action of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., We Shall Overcome features an ensemble of multi-genre vocalists and instrumentalists performing gospel, classical, jazz, Broadway and spirituals, with the spoken word from some of Dr. King's recorded speeches.

Steve Dorff- I Wrote That One, Too...
Friday, February 14, 2020 - 8:00 PM

Steve Dorff has had over 400 artists from all genres of music record his songs. I Wrote That One Too... A Life in Song-writing from Willie to Whitney is a memorable behind-the-scenes look at the stories behind the songs, with Dorff performing some of his best-loved hits.

FOR TICKETS CALL: 336-887-3001 VISIT: HighPointTheatre.com Acts and dates subject to change. For the latest news, go to HighPointTheatre.com