



The Metro Detroit Police and Fire Pipe and Drum Corps perform at the unveiling of the Michigan Fallen Heroes Memorial in Pontiac.

## New memorial pays tribute to fallen police officers, firefighters

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Hundreds of police officers and firefighters from communities all over Michigan came to Pontiac this week to witness the unveiling of the Michigan Fallen Heroes Memorial on the north end of the Oakland County government campus.

The memorial features a firefighter and police officer, cast in bronze, kneeling before granite tablets engraved with the names of police and firefighters lost in the line of duty since 1864.

There are currently 761 names on the memorial and more will be added on an annual basis as more pass away and more are discovered historically. Since the unveiling of Phase I of the project in September of 2002, 19 police officers and firefighters have been added to the list.

The event, emceed by WOMC deejay Dick Purtan, featured prayers, remembrances by families of the fall-

en, a 21-gun salute by Oakland County Sheriff's deputies and a performance of "Amazing Grace" by the bagpipers of the Metro Detroit Police and Fire Pipe and Drum Corps.

County Executive L. Brooks Patterson said his years as a prosecutor and as the county's lead administrator has given him many opportunities to meet and interact with police and firefighters in Michigan.

"I've witnessed firsthand the courage of public safety officers," he said. "Every day these men and women place themselves in harm's way. The people of Oakland County are proud of the quality of life here and that is enhanced by the police and fire departments serving here."

Equal to their courage, he said, is that of the families left behind by the tragedies inherent to public safety work.

Oakland County Sheriff's Chaplain William Waldmann said there are a number of support groups for families of the fallen both on the local and

national level.

"They take care of one another," Waldmann said. "When the incident is new they're very tight and they keep in touch throughout."

Eton Rapids Township Supervisor Linda Wilbur came to the unveiling Monday. Her husband, township Fire Chief Richard Wilbur, died in the line of duty nearly two years ago. She said the monument in Pontiac was a great tribute to him and others like him.

"I had been to the state (firefighter's) memorial in Roscommon and the national memorial (in Maryland)," Wilbur said. "This is nice, it's certainly a lot closer to home."

She said she's received a lot of support from groups connected with the national and state survivor's groups. Since visiting the national memorial, she's been talking to others via e-mail.

"It's nice to know you're not the only one having the same problems and feelings," Wilbur said.