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Illinois Sheriffs' Association Executive Director Reflects on Powerful Ride Honoring Fallen Heroes and Their Families

Springfield, IL — Illinois Sheriffs' Association Executive Director Jim Kaitschuk recently participated in a deeply meaningful journey across the state—one that served not only as a physical challenge but as a profound emotional reminder of the enduring strength of families who have lost their loved ones in the line of duty.

The Illinois Chapter of the Concerns of Police Survivors (ILCOPS) hosted its annual **Cycle Across Illinois**, a 389-mile bike ride held each July that brings together surviving family members of fallen officers, law enforcement professionals, and community supporters. The event is much more than a ride—it's a moving tribute, a powerful community of healing, and a testament to perseverance in the face of tragedy.

Kaitschuk, reflecting on the experience, shared that this ride brought him back to his “why”—the reason behind the service, sacrifice, and long hours that come with public safety and leadership.

“The comradery, challenges, laughter, and tears are unmatched,” Kaitschuk said. “These families reminded me that no matter how bleak things may appear, we must keep moving forward. Crawling is acceptable, falling is acceptable (which I did twice), crying is acceptable, pain is acceptable—but quitting is not.”

The Illinois Chapter of Concerns of Police Survivors is a volunteer-run organization that provides immediate and ongoing support to families and coworkers of fallen law enforcement officers. At a moment's notice, they arrive—without pay and without hesitation—to stand beside grieving families and devastated departments, offering strength and guidance in the darkest of times.

“It’s impossible to put into words how selfless and impactful this organization is,” Kaitschuk added. “They are there in the moments most of us hope we never have to face, ensuring no family walks alone through tragedy.”

Participating in the ride alongside these families, many of whom have endured the unthinkable, was an emotional and humbling experience. While the heat of summer and the demands of the ride presented their own challenges, they paled in comparison to the weight of the losses these families carry every day. Yet in their strength, there was laughter. In their pain, there was hope. And in their journey, there was healing.

As Kaitschuk emphasized, rediscovering our “why”—our purpose—is vital in a world that often feels heavy. For him, the purpose is clear: “I serve in law enforcement and with the Illinois Sheriffs’ Association because I care deeply about helping others and building safer, stronger communities.”

The Illinois Sheriffs’ Association proudly supports the mission of ILCOPS and encourages community members to do the same. To learn more about the Illinois Chapter of Concerns of Police Survivors, support their efforts, or get involved, please visit www.ilcops.org.

About the Illinois Sheriffs’ Association

Founded in 1928, the Illinois Sheriffs’ Association is committed to strengthening the office of Sheriff through training, public education, and legislative advocacy. Representing all 102 Illinois counties, ISA works to foster safer communities through the collaborative efforts of law enforcement, community partners, and engaged citizens.

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