



THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

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I grew up in western Colorado. As a boy I felt the pain of others when the bullying and humiliation would turn on them. It was clear from a young age that I wanted to help others and was destined for a life of serving. After serving in the Marine Corps, In 1998 I became a police officer in Colorado and was proud to serve my community, but it didn't take long before I felt like there was more to be done than writing traffic tickets and solving neighbor disputes. On September 11th, 2001 I was a relatively young officer, still full of ambition to save the world. That evening, I resolved a dispute at a restaurant over the cost of a baked potato. This moment is the very beginning of what would eventually become The Blue Family Tree. It was planted deep in my soul to reach for a greater impact on humanity. I came to the decision that I wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself. Something that involved the masses. Something that would have an impact beyond my own personal capabilities.

I wanted to go to ground zero and dig through the rubble but I did not have the means to make that happen. Over the years there came hurricanes, and tsunamis, tornadoes and earthquakes. Disasters both natural and man made came and went and people suffered and died. I yearned to go and help but never did. I was searching for that purpose, looking for how I could contribute in a big way. I was searching for the answers to giving more than I could alone.

I joined my agency's honor guard and began traveling to police funerals all around the country. Despite the sheer volume of police death I witnessed in this assignment, it is a topic we never get good at. It doesn't get easier, in fact, it gets harder each time. As a result of my new assignment, I began studying line of duty death, starting with a commitment to read every new entry on ODMP (Officer Down Memorial Page). My wife and I were moved one evening and wished to send fifty bucks to a recently widowed police wife and young mother. We didn't know how. We weren't about to call the

agency and ask, and after more consideration it was decided that our fifty bucks wouldn't help anyway and we did nothing at all.

I stewed on this for a long time. I lost sleep thinking about my inaction on 9/11, and over 15 years since, and now again choosing not to send a gift to a widow when I genuinely wanted to so badly. It was during this internal battle that I realized my mission. I now knew how I would have an impact that was bigger than myself.

My fifty dollar gift and your fifty gift may not be much, but how many little gifts do these families miss out on? If I was feeling this way, surely there are others, and The Blue Family Tree was born, at least in concept, on that very day. I realized that beyond the financial gift, receiving anything at all from like minded and understanding families carries a value all in itself.

In 2016 I began the work of establishing a national 501(c)3 organization and learning how to create a website. For this career cop, this entailed a whole new set of self-taught skills and the learning curve was high. I had never been in marketing either, and getting others to understand my vision proved to be a difficult task, but over time all the pieces fell into place. The Blue Family Tree first began giving gifts to line of duty death families in 2019. Not yet having the donorship to give to every family on ODMP as planned, the very difficult decision with regard to who to give to became the organization's biggest struggle. Our board meets each year and goes through the deaths from the year before. Our first filter is agencies with donors, and quite surprisingly, that has nearly been the only filter needed most years since. By the end of 2023 The Blue Family Tree has given \$17,500 to 33 families across the nation.

We are always looking forward and aspiring to grow to our full potential. Our goal is six figure checks to every family on ODMP. It's not a benefit, it's a gift from you, your shift partners, from police and police extended family everywhere. It's a financial hug.

Patrick Rice
CEO - The Blue Family Tree

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