

## HERO REMEMBERED



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**U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Doug Connor, left, pins a silver, life-saving medal on the shirt of Kaegan Schultz while the boy's mother, Cheryl Schultz, watches during a ceremony Wednesday in the gymnasium of the Pojoaque Wellness Center.**

# Officer's Memory Honored

## Coast Guard Presents Medal to Family

BY JEREMY PAWLOSKI

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**T**he U.S. Coast Guard has honored a Pojoaque tribal officer, who died last year while pulling a drowning 12-year-old boy from the Rio Grande, with a silver, life-saving medal — the second-highest award the service bestows.

Coast Guard Capt. Doug Connor pinned the medal on the shirt of the deceased police officer's son, Kaegan Schultz, 9, during a ceremony Wednesday at the gymnasium of the Pojoaque Wellness Center.

Kaegan's father, Kevin Schultz, 44, died Aug. 17, 2002, after he pulled a drowning boy from the river near Pilar while both were on a church outing fishing with a group of children.

"It was pretty apparent that this was a heroic



**SCHULTZ:** "We call him a hero, which he was"



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**Cheryl Schultz, center, and Pojoaque Pueblo Gov. Jacob Viarrial, left, listen during a ceremony Wednesday at the Pojoaque Wellness Center.**

effort that Kevin had done," Connor said.

Connor, who traveled to Pojoaque from Corpus Christi, Texas, to present the award, said it is the second-highest award that the service can give.

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Connor also said it was only the second time in his 25-year career with the Coast Guard that he has honored someone with the life-saving medal.

Friends and colleagues who spoke during the ceremony all described Schultz as a hero.

"We call him a hero, which he was," said Schultz's friend, Tommy Boylan.

Boylan added that if Schultz were still alive, he would say, "I'm just doing what God asked me to do."

Jeff McConnell, a friend of Schultz's who drove from Missouri to attend the ceremony, said his deceased friend, "would have just been blown away at the turnout, at the big to-do over his death."

McConnell said it is surprising that Schultz died saving

the boy, because Schultz was a diver during his career in the Navy. The state Office of the Medical Investigator termed Schultz's death a drowning.

The father of the 12-year-old who nearly drowned, William Ashbaugh, has said that his son had dropped some unhooked bait into the water, then tried to retrieve it, wandering into deeper water that was over his head.

Schultz, who was a chaperone with the church group and who was off duty at the time, ran from a distance to save the boy, Ashbaugh has said.

"He saved my son's life," Ashbaugh said during an interview in August 2002. "My son lost consciousness. I could never imagine someone giving me such an amazing gift as to save my son's life."

Police Chaplain Jose Villegas, who spoke during the cer-

emony, said afterward he is trying to ensure that Schultz's widow, Cheryl Schultz, can access all of the benefits she is due. He said he has learned that Cheryl Schultz does not currently qualify for benefits under the state Workers' Compensation Act, because she failed to file a claim within a certain time period.

Villegas also is trying to ensure that Cheryl Schultz gets federal line-of-duty death benefits.

"Right now in the state of New Mexico, there is no legal interpretation of what the line-of-duty death really means," Villegas said.

Villegas said he has sent letters to Gov. Bill Richardson and state Attorney General Patricia Madrid asking for a legal opinion of what a line-of-duty death means. Although Schultz was not technically on

the clock as a police officer at the time of his death, Villegas argued that he was acting in the line of duty.

"It was a line-of-duty death because he was wearing his badge, and he was wearing his gun when he died," Villegas said. "So there should be no dispute, but there is."

Villegas said he is trying to organize a statewide team to help survivors of law enforcement officers and firefighters who die in the line of duty.

Cheryl Schultz said she has been treated extremely well by local law enforcement representatives and her friends in the community in the wake of her husband's death.

However, she also cited a lot of red tape as an impediment in preventing her from accessing all of the benefits she is due in the wake of his death.