



★ **HOME SWEET HOME:** From big-city amenities to small-town peace and quiet, residents' reasons are many for living in eastern Jackson County. **Pages 12-13**

## Neighborhood News

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### Hero who died saving a boy's life is honored

By EYOBONG ITA  
The Kansas City Star

His wife called him a "common Joe," but when a church picnic turned tragic, Kevin Schultz was the first to help.

It cost him his life.

Schultz, 44, a former Peculiar police officer and former Raytown resident, died last year while saving a 12-year-old boy from drowning in the Rio Grande River, about 30 miles from Santa Fe, N.M.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Coast Guard honored him posthumously with a Silver Life Saving Award. The ceremony was at the Wellness Center in Pojoaque, N.M., where Schultz worked as a patrolman until his death.

"I didn't know how prestigious it was," his wife, Cheryl Schultz, said of the award, which she received on behalf of her late husband. "The commander ... said in the last

### HERO: Former officer honored for saving a life

Continued from Page 1

25 years this was only the second person he has given the award to. That makes me feel more proud."

On Aug. 17, 2002, Cheryl saw her husband running down the Rio Grande River, where members of the Sangre de Cristo Bible Church of Santa Fe was picnicking. She did not realize something was wrong until some boys cried for help.

They had found the 12-year-old boy unconscious at the edge of the river. Kevin was under the water.

He was pulled out, and Cheryl, a former emergency medical technician in Independence, administered CPR until paramedics arrived and took him to the hospital.

The boy recovered, but it was too late for Kevin.

"I never got a pulse and never got anything out of him...at that point, we all knew that it was over," Cheryl said.

"He's just a common Joe who stepped out...I'm very thankful that he did what he did for the boy. I don't think he would have lived with himself if he hadn't saved him."

Kevin was buried at National Cemetery in Santa Fe, leaving his wife and a 9-year-old son, Kaegan.

"The coroner's assumption was that when he jumped into the water to save the kid, he hit his head on a rock," said Dan Wheeler of Independence, Kevin's father-in-law. "There appeared to be some abrasion on his head."

Cheryl said Kevin was best described as compassionate.

"He was my best friend," she said. "On top of that, he was a good Christian, a good husband and a good father."

The Rev. John Romero was not surprised by Kevin's heroism.

"He's always been a very unselfish and caring person," said Romero, pastor of Sangre de Cristo Bible Church.

Romero knew the family in Kansas City, where they attended Kansas City Baptist Temple at 5460 Blue Ridge Cutoff. In 2000, a year after Romero started a new church in New Mexico, the Schultz family joined him, and Kevin became a children's minister, dealing with elementary schoolchildren.

Romero said, "We miss him dearly, obviously. But I guarantee that if he had to do it all over, he would do it again."

The Rev. Mark McGaughey, a pastor at Kansas City Baptist Temple, agrees.

Kevin, he said, made a vital contribution for police officers in the church and the community.

Kevin was easy-going and always helpful, Peculiar Police Sgt. Jason Giaccone said.

"He was a real honest guy to have on your side," said Giaccone, who was a Cass County sheriff's deputy during Kevin's tenure in Peculiar. "He always had a good sense of humor. He was always upbeat, and that spread to everyone around him."

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