



# PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT

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*Chief of Police*

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March 12, 2013

## **“Victims and First Responders: The Critical Need for Gun Trafficking Legislation”**

### **Bipartisan Forum on Devastating Effects of Gun Trafficking Crimes**

I would first like to thank Members of Congress for taking up this issue. I am honored and privileged to be here with my fellow members of the Public Safety Community. I realize there is controversy over ‘Gun Control’ however the issue of what is known as ‘Straw Purchases’ of firearms is an issue I think everyone can agree on.

A brief description of Plymouth Township: it is a community of approximately 15,000 residents. During the day the population swells to approximately 80,000 people. The community has residential, business, commercial and industrial within its 9 square miles. The police department is allocated to operate with 46 officers. Currently the department is down 6 officers. The township is located in Montgomery County which borders the City of Philadelphia.

The morning of Thursday September 13, 2012 began like every other day in Plymouth Township Pennsylvania. Members of the police department left their families at home and reported for duty at 7:00am, with the expectations of returning home after the 12 hour shift. Officer Brad Fox was one of the four officers who came to work that day, he worked the shift with his K9 partner NICK. The day continued as a ‘normal’ day with officers responding to accidents, thefts and other daily requests for police service that take place during a ‘normal’ shift.



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At 5:42 pm the so called 'normal' day changed as did the lives of many. My officers were at a scene of a three vehicle accident when an Infiniti SUV decided they could not wait for traffic to clear and sped around the accident nearly striking the officers. Officer Fox pursued this vehicle as it continued to recklessly travel through Plymouth Township, forcing other motorists off of the roadway and eventually striking another vehicle pinning that driver inside the car. The operator of the SUV, Andrew Thomas, then exited his vehicle, while it was still moving, and fled on foot. This vehicle would later be determined to be stolen, although at the time this information was not known to Officer Fox.

Thomas fled on foot into an industrial area and along an elevated railroad track. The area was densely overgrown with vegetation that afforded a large area of cover and concealment to Thomas. The railroad tracks run parallel to a recreational bike trail.

Officer Fox, with his K9 partner Nick by his side continued to pursue Thomas on foot. Thomas had not gone far and had taken up a concealed elevated position in the brush as Officer Fox and NICK followed on the recreational trail. Armed with a semi-automatic handgun, Thomas ambushed and fired multiple rounds at Officer Fox and K9 Nick. Officer Fox was mortally wounded and Nick was injured from the gun fire as well, but thankfully survived.

This horrific crime took place on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 but actually began on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

ON that day Michael Henry legally purchased a 9mm handgun. He then sold this same gun to Andrew Thomas. Thomas who had a criminal record was unable to legally purchase a handgun due to a felony conviction. We learned later, he (Thomas) had Henry legally purchase a total of nine guns for him. Thomas paid Henry anywhere from \$300.00 to \$600.00 for each gun.

Henry sold the gun to Thomas with the knowledge that to prevent his return to prison he would use the gun to kill a law enforcement officer. Thomas had a history of fighting with the police and had been arrested several times in the past for this, but Henry still elected to sell the gun(s) to him.

The District Attorney of Montgomery County, Risa Ferman, acted swiftly and charged Michael Henry with the illegal sale of guns to Thomas. Due to the sentencing guidelines at the time of Officer Fox's murder, Henry faces only a short time in prison. On January 11, 2013 the Governor of Pennsylvania, Thomas Corbett, signed into Law what has become known as the 'Brad Fox Bill'. This bill requires a mandatory minimum five year sentence for a person convicted of the illegal sale of a firearm.



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As stated previously. This so called 'normal' day in Plymouth Township was shattered at 5:42 in the afternoon. This event not only shattered the lives of the Family of Officer Fox but it affected the lives of every officer in Plymouth and of the surrounding communities, as well as concerned citizens in our area. Officer Fox was one of 'them'.

Brad was a son, a brother, a husband, a decorated Marine and he was a dad. Brad not only served the small community of Plymouth, he proudly served his country in the military as a Marine. Brad joined the Marine Corps in 1999. He spent a total of eight years in the Marines and served two combat tours in Iraq. He was part of the initial invasion force, returned home and was eligible to be discharged. When he heard that his unit was to be re-deployed to combat duty he volunteered to stay in the Marine Corps and go back with 'his troops'.

Brad is the son of Tom and Kathy Fox a hard working couple who taught both Brad and his brother Jimmy to work hard but to also enjoy life. Brad met his wife Lynsay Mattozzi before his second tour of duty in Iraq. They fell instantly in love and were married shortly after he returned from war. Brad joined the Plymouth Township Police Department in August of 2007. He knew how new officers should act, be quiet, listen and learn. He did that and instantly was accepted. When an opening became available in the Canine Unit, Brad volunteered to take that position. He was partnered with NICK and trained at the Philadelphia Police Canine Academy. They were trained in both patrol duties and explosive device duty. After 6 months of training Brad and NICK settled back into patrol duties.

On April 13, 2012 Brad and his wife Lynsay were blessed with the birth of their first child, Kadence, who quickly became the love of his life. Brad also was a gifted athlete who excelled at playing ice hockey. Brad was the star in a local league and was a fixture at many Philadelphia Flyers games. He played on several law enforcement teams in the area and is deeply missed by his teammates.

The loss of Brad, as I said, touched us all. To me it was as if I lost a son. As Chief of Police of a relatively small department I know all my officers personally as well as their families. I will never forget what I was doing when I was called and the events that followed on that day. How my officers, along with hundreds of fellow law enforcement officers, grown men and women wept at the loss of their friend and partner.



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This was a senseless act committed not by just one murderer but by two. One was the person who shot and murdered my officer the second was a person who, without regard for anyone and with the knowledge of what the gun was to be used for, still elected to sell the gun, and thus destroying the lives of many. He did not just sell one gun he sold at least nine. To date, some of those guns have not been recovered.

I'd like to share a few final thoughts on Officer Brad Fox: he was murdered on the eve of his 35th birthday. On the morning of September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Brad told us that his wife was expecting their second child. Brad and Lynsay's son is due to be born March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013, a son who will never meet his father. Likewise, Brad will be the father who will never have the opportunity to hold, to play with or teach his son how to be a man. He had an infectious laugh that is unforgettable. He is unforgettable. And he is and will be forever missed. NICK has been retired due to his injuries and is currently living the life of a pampered pet with Lynsay and Kadence Fox. Coincidentally Michael Henry is pleading guilty today in Montgomery County Court.

Again, I would like to thank the Members of Congress for giving me time to tell my officer's tragic story. I would also like to express my condolences to my fellow members of the public safety community for the loss of their brothers or sisters, to senseless acts by senseless, lawless individuals.

Thank you

Joseph F. Lawrence  
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Plymouth Township Police Department