

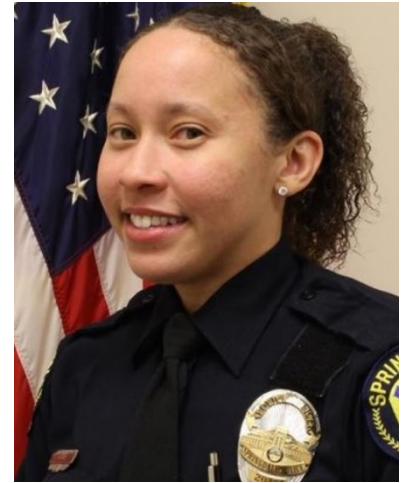
Police Officer Kaia Lafay Grant | Springdale Police Department

Badge 23

Age: 33

Served: 7 years, 7 months

August 22, 2012 to March 21, 2020



OFFICER

Kaia was born October 18, 1986 to Kevin Cornell and Gina Rebecca Grant. She was raised in the City of Wyoming.

Kaia was an honor student at Wyoming High School and graduated in 2005. She was "the kind of person you would want as a police officer," said Darby Lyons, who taught English for decades at Wyoming High School and counted Grant among a group of top students in her honors English class during the 2003-04 academic year. When she was 18, Kaia received a YMCA Southwestern Ohio Character Award for volunteerism.

She then attended the College of William and Mary in Virginia, studied economics and government. While there, she interned in the United States Senate, including for Senator Joe Biden, and on more than one occasion enjoyed chatting with senators over a beer. She graduated in 2009, returned home, and supervised an after-school program for at-risk youths in Cincinnati.

Kaia joined the Springdale Police Department as a Police Officer in 2012. Colonel Thomas Wells, while he was the assistant chief, interviewed Kaia and was impressed immediately. "She was kind of one of those people that you knew when you met her, this is somebody we need. This is somebody who is going to make a difference in our community."

She graduated from the Ohio State Highway Patrol Academy. Springdale Lieutenant Lynn McKee (Retired), who followed her through her field training experience and worked with her sporadically thereafter, said that from the beginning it was obvious that she was going to be special. "She was very physically fit, always had a smile on her face, and always did more than she had to." Officers from neighboring municipalities and townships had similar opinions of her.

MURDERER

Terry Blankenship (42) was born about 1978. He had been charged in Clinton and Clermont Counties four times with Domestic Violence and once with Assault. Twice he was permitted to plea to Disorderly Conduct and the other three were dismissed. He and his wife, Krista Blankenship, separated in October 2019.

On Thursday, March 19, 2020, about 8 p.m., Blankenship broke into Mrs. Blankenship's trailer at the Blanchester Mobile Home Park, 800 East Center Street. Her boyfriend, Kenneth Jordan, was in the rear bedroom on the phone with police communications. Blankenship expressed to Mrs. Blankenship that he intended to kill Jordan and went to the bedroom and pointed a pistol at his face. Jordan grabbed the gun and they fought over it before Blankenship gained control of it and pistol-whipped him.

Blankenship fled the trailer before police arrived and, on the way out, threatened to commit suicide by cop. Clermont County Sheriff's Office personnel contacted the Loveland and Elmwood Place Police Departments advising them to be on the lookout for Blankenship, wanted for Aggravated Burglary, armed and dangerous, and threatening "suicide by cop." They had an address where he might be staying in Elmwood Place and another where he might be working in Loveland.

INCIDENT

Forty-eight hours later, at 8:05 p.m. on March 21, 2020, Elmwood Police found Blankenship driving his maroon pickup truck and attempted to pull him over. Blankenship took off and they pursued him.

The pursuit went up Paddock Road to Interstate 75 to Interstate 275 and westbound from there. The pursuit entered the corporate limits of the City of Springdale. Officer Grant was preparing to or had already thrown out a Stop Stick, a tire-deflation device, between Route 4 and the Winton/S. Gilmore Roads exit when 30-year-veteran Sergeant Andrew Davis pulled up and got out of his car to assist.

Suddenly, Blankenship was coming through, but then he swerved his truck toward the officers. It is apparent that Officer Grant ran for cover behind her vehicle and perhaps on the other side of the crash barrier. She never made it. At 8:16 p.m. Blankenship, missing the officers, plowed into the patrol cars. Officer Grant was impacted by her 3000-pound car, pinned between the car and the crash barrier, and gravely injured. Sergeant Davis, also seeking cover, was struck by flying vehicle parts and injured. Blankenship was also severely injured in the crash.

Air Care responded to fly Officer Grant to the University Hospital Medical Center in Clifton. Sergeant Davis was transported by ambulance to Bethesda North Hospital; as was Blankenship.



DEATH

Officer Grant was pronounced dead upon arrival at University Hospital. Her remains were escorted to the Thompson, Hall, and Jordan Funeral Home in Forest Park on Sunday, March 22, 2020. They have been formally guarded, around the clock, by the Hamilton County Police Association Honor Guard since her death.

Officer Grant is survived by her parents, Gena R. Mobley and Kevin Grant (Conyer, Georgia); and grandparents, Joyce Mobley and Leon Brooks.

A funeral was held on Sunday, March 29, 2020, beginning at 9 a.m. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, agencies from a longer distance could not travel to Cincinnati. Regardless, hundreds of marked police and fire vehicles from around the tri-state left the Spring Grove Funeral Home in a cortege escorting Officer Grant's remains to Springdale, through her hometown of Wyoming. The procession was covered live by WLW-TV, WKRC-TV, and WXIX. More than a thousand citizens lined the 20-mile route from Spring Grove to the church. The route passed by her alma mater, Wyoming High School, and the Springdale Police and Fire Department buildings.

A service was held at the Vineyard Church. The final vehicles arrived at the church more than an hour after the first. Again, due to the pandemic, only the family and Springdale Police personnel were permitted inside. The services were live streamed on the Internet by the church. Outside, officers stood in formation and filled the church's large parking lots.

Donations can be made to [The Shield](#).

INVESTIGATION

The expressway was closed, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol and Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation conducted the investigation of the crash scene until 10 a.m. the next morning. Blankenship's firearm was recovered at the scene.

Blankenship's injuries were such that he required a higher level of care than Bethesda could provide. He was flown by Air Care from Bethesda Hospital to University Hospital where emergency surgery was performed.

Sergeant Davis was treated and released from Bethesda Hospital.

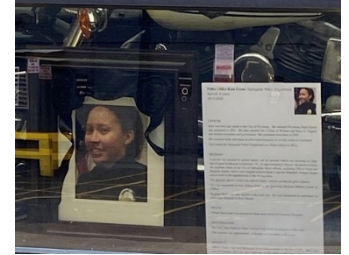
EPILOGUE

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine ordered all United States and Ohio flags be flown at half-staff, until the conclusion of her funeral services at public buildings in Hamilton County to honor Officer Grant. Law enforcement officers in Hamilton County have covered their badges with mourning ribbons.

Officer Grant is the first Springdale Police Officer to die in the line of duty. Other than two jail matrons, she is also the first female line of duty death in the entire Greater Cincinnati region.

Since the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum is closed due to the pandemic, Cincinnati Police Homicide Detective Edward W. Zieverink III (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Museum Curator, erected a memorial in the front window of the Museum.

Many residents of Wyoming are expressing their support and condolences with large blue hearts on their homes, blue bulbs in their porch lights, and chalk inscriptions on the sidewalks.



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