

Norwalk says final farewell to popular community police officer

By [Pat Tomlinson](#) 8:28 pm EST, Tuesday, January 28, 2020

Photo: Erik Trautmann / Hearst Connecticut Media

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Family, friends and fellow officers including Deputy Chief Sue Zecca mourn the loss of beloved Norwalk police officer Cesar Ramirez Tuesday, January 28, 2020, at St. John's Cemetery in Norwalk, Conn.

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NORWALK — Family, friends and coworkers said their final goodbyes Tuesday to Officer Cesar Ramirez, a 32-year police veteran.

The hundreds who gathered at St. Matthew's Church came not only to mourn the death Ramirez, 71, who died last week, but to celebrate his life.

Cesar Ramirez Jr., Ramirez's second-oldest son, said you only needed to gaze across the packed church pews to get a sense of how much the Norwalk community cherished his father.

"These past few weeks, many people have pointed out how proud my father was of me. And I realize that despite the fact that I always told my father how much I loved him, I never told my father how proud I was of him," Cesar Jr. said. "Today, I — we — say how proud we are of you, dad."

With tears in his eyes, Norwalk Police Chief Thomas Kulhawik called Ramirez a man who "walked the walk" and lived steadfastly by his beliefs.

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Media: Norwalk Hour

"He was the heart and soul of Norwalk, particularly South Norwalk," Kulhawik said. "I may hold the title of chief, and Harry (Rilling) may have the

official title of mayor, but we all understood that Cesar was truly the chief and the mayor of South Norwalk."

Kulhawik recalled how proud Ramirez had been when he received the U.S. Attorney's award in 2016 for [his achievements in community policing](#).

"I'll never forget it. He had received so many accolades over his career, but it was clear that this award meant so much. He didn't need the award to continue to do what he did each day, but I know that it meant so much to him that people recognized not only his efforts, but what his efforts meant to the community," Kulhawik said.

Rilling, who served as Norwalk's deputy chief when Ramirez was first hired, also recounted how important the South Norwalk community was to Ramirez.

While many officers operated out of their patrol cars, Rilling said Ramirez could be found walking the streets of South Norwalk with a grin on his face and good will in his heart.

"There were countless times where he would buy a cup of coffee or some food for someone in need. He was the kind of guy who would strike up a conversation with a stranger in the street. He cared for people, that's just who he was," Rilling said.

In honor of his lasting legacy, a full guard of Norwalk police officers escorted Ramirez's casket to his final resting place at St. John's Cemetery.

On Monday morning, students from Columbus Magnet School and Side By Side School gathered along the Concord Street to bid farewell to Ramirez, the longtime South Norwalk community police officer who watched over the two schools, as a police motorcade ushered his casket to a funeral home.

"He was our guardian, but now he is our guardian angel watching us from headquarters in heaven. Te amo, Cesar!" wrote Columbus principal Medard

Thomas on Twitter Monday.

Ramirez's death came one month after he signed off from Norwalk Police Department [for the final time](#). After he was diagnosed, Ramirez took an extended medical leave from the department that began Dec. 13, 2019.

"Needless to say that we are all heartbroken over his loss," Kulhawik said. "Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time."

Norwalk police started [a GoFundMe campaign](#) earlier this month on behalf of Ramirez's wife, Ana Ramirez, to [help cover medical costs](#).