

# Transforming loss into positive change

## *Police widow delivers keynote address at safety conference*

**Sidney, B.C.** - Maryanne Pope - widow of Calgary Police Service Const. John Petropoulos and author of *A Widow's Awakening* - will be in **Campbell River** on **Tuesday, May 31<sup>st</sup>** to share her experience of transforming tragedy into safer workplaces.

Maryanne will be delivering the keynote address on Day 2 of the Strathcona Regional District's Upper Island Safety Conference, which takes place May 30-31 at the Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex in Campbell River. Her presentation, entitled *Officer Down: Transforming Loss Into Safer Workplaces*, will take place from 8:30-10 am and will be followed by an educational session from 12:45-2:15 pm.

During her keynote presentation, Maryanne will discuss her journey of coming to terms with her husband's death. Calgary Police Service Const. John Petropoulos was investigating a break-and-enter complaint at a warehouse when he stepped through a false ceiling, fell nine feet into the lunchroom below and succumbed to brain injuries. There was no safety railing in place to warn him – or anyone else – of the danger. The break and enter turned out to be a false alarm; there was no one in the building.

The experience forced Maryanne to accept the unacceptable and transform her loss into positive change. This was achieved through her writing and the work of the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund (JPMF), a non-profit organization that raises awareness about traffic and workplace safety issues facing emergency responders.

“Maryanne and John's story is a strong reminder about the absolute necessity for proper occupational health and safety practices to be in effect, as workplace fatalities can and do happen anywhere,” says JPMF Managing Director Ian Wilson.



During the educational session, entitled *Put Yourself in Our Boots: Workplace Safety for Emergency Workers*, Maryanne will be joined by local first responders to discuss why and how to consider workplace safety for emergency responders. Attendees will take away tangible tips as to how to ensure their workplace is safe for everyone, including those who may have to attend during an emergency.

For more information, or to set up an interview with Maryanne, contact:

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# Background

## Maryanne Pope

Maryanne was married to Const. John Petropoulos and is the Chair of the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund, an organization committed to educating the public that workplace safety for emergency services personnel is a shared responsibility.

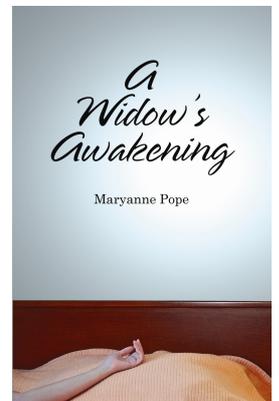
She is the author of the creative non-fiction book, *A Widow's Awakening*. She is an award-winning playwright and filmmaker, as well as a workplace safety advocate, an environmental educator and motivational speaker. Maryanne is the founder & CEO of Pink Gazelle Productions Inc. She lives in Sidney, B.C. Go to [www.pinkgazelle.com](http://www.pinkgazelle.com) for more info.

## *A Widow's Awakening*

Eight years in the making, this extraordinary – and true – story of soul mates, saints, saviours, suicide and safety in the workplace charts Maryanne's emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual journey through the first year of grief after the on-duty death of her husband, a police officer. *A Widow's Awakening* is a heart-wrenching, humorous and honest portrayal of the difficulty of accepting the unacceptable. Part of the book proceeds go to the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund.

Over 1,500 copies have been sold since the book's release in 2008.

"This compelling account of personal tragedy and its aftermath is told with brutal honesty and a sense of humour uniquely her own. The dangers and consequences of policing, its effect on family, friends and comrades, as well as the author's determination to improve workplace safety in memory of her husband, results in a fascinating and thought provoking book." - Chief Rick Hanson, Calgary Police Service



## John Petropoulos Memorial Fund

Const. John Petropoulos, a police officer with the Calgary Police Service, passed away on September 29, 2000 at the age of 32. John passed away in the line of duty while investigating a break & enter complaint. He died from brain injuries sustained after falling through a false ceiling, as there was no safety railing to warn him of the danger. After his death, several of John's recruit classmates set up the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund (JPMF). The JPMF raises public awareness that workplace safety for police, fire and EMS workers is a shared responsibility. When communities work together, many risks to these workers can be minimized. Go to [www.jpmpf.ca](http://www.jpmpf.ca) for more information.

