



Huntington Beach Police Department

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Eric Parra, Chief of Police

Press Release

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Huntington Beach & Newport Beach Police Departments Unveil Memorial Plaque in Honor of Huntington Beach Police Officer Pilot Nicholas Vella

Today, Sunday, February 19, 2023, the Huntington Beach Police Department (HBPD), in collaboration with the Newport Beach Police Department (NBPD), unveiled the memorial plaque in tribute to Huntington Beach Police Officer Pilot Nicholas (Nick) Vella. The unveiling took place at Marina Park in Newport Beach on the first anniversary of Nicholas Vella's passing.

"Our Huntington Beach community takes great pride in our Police Department and the phenomenal work our police heroes do for Huntington Beach and the surrounding area," said Huntington Beach Mayor Tony Strickland. "While I didn't have the honor of meeting Nick, the many stories I have heard about his dedication to our City, his family, and his law enforcement brothers and sisters make clear what a tremendous father, husband, son, friend, and officer he was."

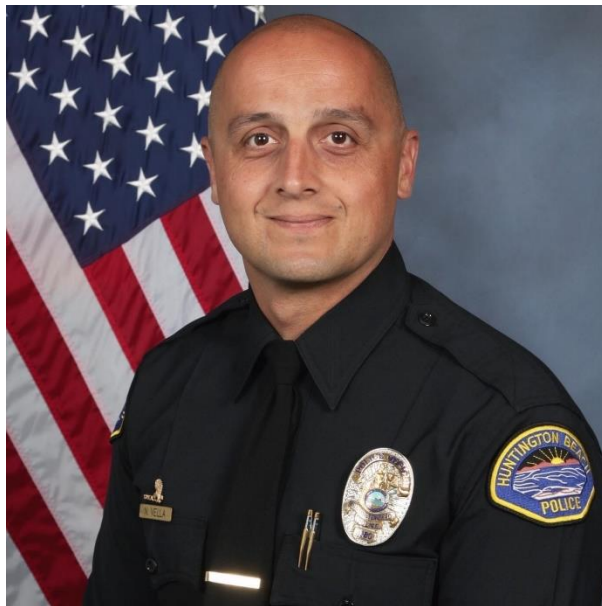
"The City of Newport Beach is honored to celebrate the life and sacrifice of Officer Pilot Vella, said Newport Beach Mayor Noah Blom. "His bravery and valor shall be remembered forever."

Nick started his law enforcement career with the Laguna Beach Police Department and lateraled to the HBPD in 2008. At the HBPD, he worked a variety of assignments, including Patrol, Beach Detail, SWAT, and Tactical Flight Officer, as an ancillary duty while still working Patrol. In 2016, Nick was assigned to the Air Support Unit, where he earned the positions of Police Helicopter Pilot and Certified Flight Instructor. Nick was well-loved and well-respected by everyone who knew him.

On February 19, 2022, Nick tragically lost his life in the line of duty. He was in the Huntington Beach police helicopter (HB-1) and responding to a call for service when it crashed into the waters off Newport Beach. Nick is survived by his wife Kristi, daughter Dylan, father John, mother Marcella, and brother John Arthur.

"One year has passed, and there are still no words that can adequately express this loss," said Huntington Beach Chief of Police Eric Parra. "We will always remember Nick on this day. He was a selfless and driven police officer and man who we were blessed to have known."

“Officer Nick Vella’s service and selfless sacrifice to the City of Newport Beach will never be forgotten. This memorial plaque is a fitting tribute to a man who dedicated his life to protecting and serving others,” said Newport Beach Acting Chief of Police Joe Cartwright.



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