

Dear Madison County,

In November of 2015, Officer Daniel Ellis, my husband and loving father to my son, was killed in the line of duty.

Over the past couple of years, the citizens of Madison County have become more than just our community; they have become our friends and hand-picked family. They felt our pain and hurt when Daniel was shot and killed. They rallied around our family, providing support and strength. They were there.

Since then, this community has been continually healing with us, never leaving us behind as so often happens in this world. As I drive around town, I see constant reminders on road signs and bumper stickers that Daniel has not been forgotten. I am ever thankful to be a public servant here in our community. I know that Daniel and I could not have picked a better place to call home.

I wanted to take the opportunity to thank David Smith, Commonwealth Attorney, and Jennifer Smith, Assistant Commonwealth Attorney, for the way they have handled this case. They have gone above and beyond in carrying out their prosecuting duties, sometimes spending over an hour after court hearings explaining to us the judicial process and preceding. They listened to us vent with frustration over the legal system and often bared the brunt of our concern and anger.

Ultimately, it is the decision of the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office to offer and accept plea deals. In the case of Mr. Sizemore and Mr. Ratliff, I fully support the plea deals that were taken. At the end of the day, we have to make peace with the punishment. There is no such thing as justice on this earth. Nothing can bring Daniel back.

The trial was originally set for July of 2018. In the meantime, I have been listening, learning, and praying. My ultimate desire is to protect Luke and provide for him the best life possible, because that is what Daniel would have wanted. The plea for Mr. Sizemore of life in prison without the possibility of parole ends the court process and provides finality. We will not spend the next 20-40 years in appellate courts or in front of parole boards pleading our case. Mr. Ratliff took a combined plea of 30 total years. At least for the next 30 years, I will sleep well at night knowing Luke can grow up in our community without fear of these individuals. At three years old, Luke was forced to face things that no child his age should have to when he lost his father. I believe these sentences give Luke the childhood he deserves in a town full of loving people that cannot wait to watch him grow up. After 30 years, Luke will have more options. As an adult, he can choose where he goes to college and where to live.

The end of the court process does not mean we will forget about Daniel. This community has gone above and beyond to remember our hero. They have planted trees, made park benches, named roads and buildings after him, and more. Better yet, they continue to remember us in their thoughts and prayers. We will all carry Daniel's memory in our hearts always and take it with us everywhere we go.

Our community will allow his legacy to live on through the foundation created in his name. In just two and a half years, the foundation has been able to create a fully funded endowment scholarship at ECU as well as continue to give back to Madison County by helping those in need. As Daniel's wife and Luke's mother, it has been my mission and privilege to remember Daniel by continuing to do good for others in his name. Acts of kindness will always outlast any news story or trial report.

With the community's help and through the Foundation, we have been able to channel our anger into energy and use our energy to do good. Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Tragedy changes us forever—hopefully for the better. While our talents are all different and none of us will walk the same path, we must remember even the smallest act of caring for another person is like a drop of water: it will make ripples through the entire pond.

I have found much truth in the words of another widow: In a blog she wrote, "While I would not wish my pain on anyone, I do wish my perspective on the world." We gain perspective from what we endure and how we survive. Every person has a lifetime of choices to make, and while we do not know how long our lifetime will be, we are all still here for a reason. My hope is we all continue to treat each other well and help our neighbors whenever possible.

Thank you for all the love and support you have given to our family. You are each a blessing,

Much Love Katie Ellis