

07-06-2016 Dallas Texas - Mark McCullers LEO - Flash Flood - Car

Police Officer Calvin Marcus McCullers, Jr.

*Southern Methodist University
Police Department, Texas*

End of Watch Tuesday, July 5, 2016

CALVIN MARCUS MCCULLERS, JR.

Police Officer Mark McCullers drowned when his vehicle was washed away in torrential flooding while he was working an off duty assignment at a construction site in Highland Park at approximately 1:30 am.

The construction site was at the intersection of St. John's Street and North Fitzugh Avenue, near the banks of Turtle Creek. A severe thunderstorm had caused the water level in Turtle Creek to suddenly rise and rush down the adjacent roadway. Officer McCuller radioed for assistance when the wall of water struck his car and began to wash it away.

He attempted to exit the vehicle and reach safety, but he was also caught in the flood waters and is presumed drowned. On August 24th, 2016, other members of the SMU Police Department located Officer McCullers' body along the banks of the Trinity River three miles from where his vehicle was swept away.

Officer McCullers was a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and had served with the Southern Methodist University Police Department for 17 months. He is survived by his wife and six children.



BIO

- **Age** 45
- **Tour** 1 year, 5 months

Badge Not available

- **Military Veteran**
- **Cause** Drowned

INCIDENT DETAILS

Off Duty

Search for Texas officer swept away in rain-swollen creek

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/officer-mark-mccullers-creek-floods-missing-swept-away-in-rain-swollen-creek/>

July 6, 2016 By Crimesider Staff Cbs News- Dallas

Search crews are looking for a missing Southern Methodist University police officer after the car he was driving was swept down a Dallas creek, [reports CBS DFW](#).

Turtle Creek was filled with rainwater when Officer Mark McCullers called for help early Tuesday morning, saying that the water was over the hood of his vehicle and that he felt the car moving, according to the station.



Search and rescue crews found the white Dodge that officials say Officer Mark McCullers was driving when it was swept away by a flooding creek Tuesday July 5 2016. CBS DFW

Surveillance video from a nearby home apparently shows the officer abandoning his vehicle before it was taken away by the water, [according to CBS DFW](#). Crews were able to locate the officer's white Dodge at the bottom of the creek on Tuesday afternoon.

Turtle Creek reportedly feeds into the Trinity River.

Authorities do not expect that McCullers will be found alive, reports CBS DFW. The father of six has worked as a patrol cop at the university since February 2015 and also served nine years in the Marines, [reports The Dallas Morning News](#).

Officials say the missing police officer was Off-duty, working as a private security guard at a construction site. They could not be sure if he was in his uniform or in plainclothes for the job.

Rescue efforts for the officer continued on the water with rafts and paddles early Wednesday, as crews retraced their steps in a second attempt to find McCullers.

Texas Police Officer Presumed Dead After Being Swept Away In Flash Flood

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2016/07/06/texas-police-officer-presumed-dead-after-being-swept-away-in-flash-flood.html>

July 06, 2016 Fox News

Rescue crews in Texas searched Tuesday for an off-duty Southern Methodist University police officer who is presumed drowned after he was swept away in floodwaters.

According to the [Dallas Morning News](#), the unidentified officer was working security at a nearby construction site when a thunderstorm swept through the area. The officer called a dispatcher to report that his car was being submerged by the water. The paper reported he lost contact with officials at about 1:30 a.m.

Dallas Fire-Rescue crews stopped the search for the officer at about 7 p.m. and are expected to continue scouring the area near Turtle Creek Wednesday morning. Officials said they were treating the search as a recovery mission.

About 40 people and a K-9 team joined the search. Crews searched a 2-mile area near the Trinity River, according to the Dallas Morning News.

Search crews discovered the officer's white Dodge Charger in the water Tuesday afternoon. A tow truck pulled it out of the water at around 3:45 p.m. Its windows were smashed in and concrete and mud had filled the vehicle.

[Fox 4 News](#) reported that surveillance footage may have showed the officer leave his car before his car was completely washed away.

Authorities said the officer wasn't inside.

SMU is located about two miles north of where the officer vanished. Campus officers and a spokeswoman search the area for hours.

SMU Police Chief Richard Shafer was said in a statement that he was saddened by the news.

"Our prayers and thoughts are with the officer's family members and other loved ones as the search continues," Shafer added. "Respecting the sensitivity of family members, first, we will share more information as it becomes available."

Search Resumes for Missing SMU Officer Swept Away in Floods

<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/search-resumes-for-missing-smu-officer-swept-away-in-floods/2102330/> **VIDEO LINKS ON SITE**

Man presumed to have been swept downstream in high water

July 10, 2016 By NBC 5 Staff

The search for a missing Southern Methodist University campus police officer [presumably swept away in the fast-rising flood waters of Turtle Creek early Tuesday morning](#) resumes Sunday. [[385521431,R]]



NBC 5 News/McCullers Family

Crews had to stop searching for Officer Mark McCullers Saturday night because of incoming storms.

Saturday's search was focused along Turtle Creek as well as in the Trinity River where crews are focusing on clearing debris in the river underneath Interstate 30. McCullers was working an off-duty private security job at a construction site at Fitzhugh and St. John's when he reported at about 1:39 a.m. to Highland Park police that water was over the hood of his car.

Surveillance video in the area recorded his vehicle on the Fitzhugh Avenue bridge being swept into the creek. While the footage is grainy, it appears McCullers opened the door and exited the vehicle before the car was swept downstream.

Search crews recovered the officer's car on Tuesday afternoon, but McCullers has not yet been found.

Video shows flood sweeping away Texas police officer, 911 call released

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/video-shows-flood-sweeping-texas-police-officer-article-1.2719013>

Jul 20, 2016 By Tobias Salinger | New York Daily News |

A missing and presumed dead Texas police officer could be seen getting swept away by flooding in the Dallas area in video released Tuesday.

Southern Methodist University police Officer Mark McCullers was working off-duty as a security guard at a construction site in Highland Park July 5 when floodwaters near Turtle Creek picked up his car and took him away, [according to SMU police](#).

His white Dodge Charger turned up the following afternoon, but search crews have yet to find his body more than two weeks later, [KTVT-TV reported](#).

Highland Park police on Tuesday released security camera footage and McCullers' 911 call from the early-morning thunderstorm. The video showed McCullers opening the door to the car just as the flash flood plucked his car away.

"It's flooding. It's about to go in my car," McCullers told the 911 dispatcher.

"Okay, you're in your car?" the dispatcher asked.

"Yeah, I'm in my car," McCullers said. "My car is moving right now."

"It's moving on its own or are you floating?" the dispatcher asked.

"Moving on its own," he replied.



**Southern Methodist
University Police Officer
Mark McCullers.**
(Officer Down memorial Page)



Video released Tuesday showed the floodwaters in Highland Park, Tex., plucking his car away.

"Do you need the engine over there to do a water rescue?"

"Yeah, I think so. It's getting to the point where it's getting pretty heavy."



A search team of 40 people and a K-9 crew searched for McCullers body for days before authorities said they believed he had drowned.

As many as 40 people and a K-9 crew tried for days to find McCullers before authorities said they believed he had drowned, [The Dallas Morning News reported](#). The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department was continuing the search for his missing body Tuesday.

McCullers had been serving on the SMU campus police force since February 2015 following a stint in the Marine Corps. The department posted a portrait of him and his wife of eight years Tiffany and provided [a link](#) for donations to a memorial fund in his name July 6.

McCullers' brother-in-law Ben Nix said in a statement at the time that the family understood that the "elapsed time and circumstances are not on our side." McCullers, a father of six children, was "one of the most devoted men we know," Nix said.

"Mark was devoted to his country as he served for nine years as a Marine," Nix said. "Mark was devoted to training proper gun control and combat techniques for the protection and service of others. He was devoted to the law



McCullers and his wife Tiffany had six children.

(Mark McCullers Memorial/Facebook)

as he served the last two years on the SMU police force and he was proud to call them family. Lastly and most importantly, Mark was devoted in his faith in God and to his family."

DPD: Body Found By Trinity Levee Is Missing SMU Officer

<https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/dallas-county/dpd-body-found-by-trinity-levee-is-missing-smu-officer/287-307241563>

August 25, 2016 Author: Jason Whitely

Dallas police say they believe a body found by an SMU police sergeant Wednesday afternoon at the edge of a Trinity River levee near downtown is likely that of an officer who disappeared in flood waters almost two months ago.



DALLAS -- Dallas police say the body found by an SMU police sergeant at the edge of a Trinity River levee on Wednesday afternoon is that of an SMU officer who disappeared during a flash flood almost two months ago.

The sergeant discovered the human remains in a large pile of sticks and debris that had washed up on the banks of the river just north of Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge. The body has been determined to be Ofc. Mark McCullers, 45, a police officer from Southern Methodist University, who was killed during a flash flood on July 5.

"We're rendering our honors," said Dallas Police Major Jimmy Vaughan on Wednesday. "I'm assuming it's [Mark McCullers], the police officer we're looking for, so we paid our respects."

Ever since McCullers was washed downstream, walking the banks of the Trinity has become routine for the university cops.

"The SMU supervisor comes down here approximately three times a week," said Dallas Police Maj. Jimmy Vaughan. "[He] usually comes with another officer or two."

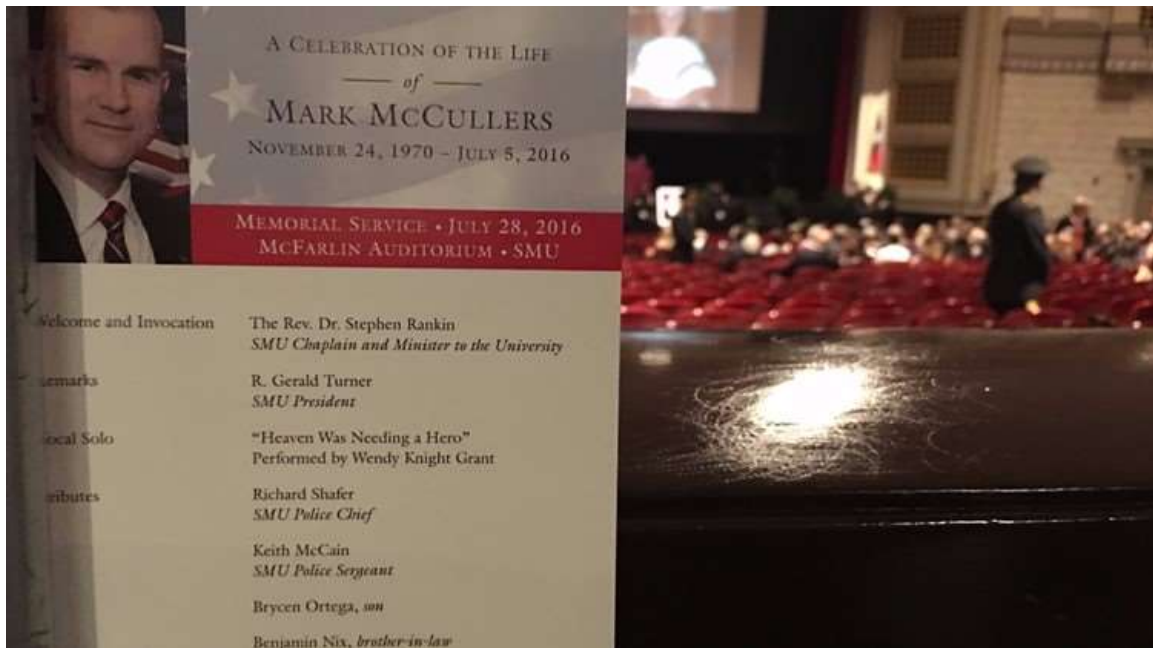


Police salute body believed to missing SMU Officer Mark McCullers on Aug. 24, 2016.

On Wednesday evening, the McCuller family told WFAA they're hopeful this finding could bring closure, because a shoe discovered during the first week of searching matches one found on the body Wednesday.

Dental records were used to positively identify the remains.

After police divers helped remove the body, workers from the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office unfurled an American flag on the scene and draped it over the stretcher.



Hundreds attended a memorial service for SMU police officer Mark McCullers on Thursday July 28, 2016 in Dallas. McCullers, 45, was swept away during a flash flood on Turtle Creek on July 5.

Police lined up and saluted as the gurney was pushed away.

The McCullers tragedy began than three miles away and seven weeks earlier.

"It's flooding. It's about to go in my car," said McCullers in a 911 recording as he called for help in the early morning hours of July 5.

McCullers was working off-duty guarding a residential construction site when a torrential rain storm resulted in a flash flood along Turtle Creek.

Surveillance video from the home under construction shows McCullers struggling to push open the passenger door of his Dodge Charger as water rises all around. It was the last time he was seen alive.

"My only concern is finding him," said Tiffany McCullers, the officer's wife, last month.

She held out hope, but now awaits closure.

"He's one of us. We don't stop looking for our own," Maj. Vaughan added on Wednesday afternoon.



Authorities at scene where body found washed ashore at Trinity River levee in Dallas.

The Dallas Police Department's dive team and SMU police responded to the scene at the corner of Oak Lawn Avenue and Levee Street, which is northeast of downtown. The SMU sergeant who found the body originally reported it was in uniform. Maj. Vaughan said he did not know whether the remains were in uniform or if a firearm was also found.

On July 28, more than 300 people attended a memorial service for McCullers, a father of six who served as a Marine, at the McFarlin Auditorium at SMU. McCullers joined the SMU Police Department in early 2015.

SMU Officer Mark McCullers Laid to Rest at Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery

<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/Funeral-Scheduled-for--391592501.html>

Mark McCullers buried with full military honors at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery

Aug 29, 2016 By [Brian Roth](#)

Family, friends and law enforcement gathered Monday morning to honor an SMU officer killed in flash floods earlier this year.

Southern Methodist University police officer Mark McCullers, a U.S. Marine, was buried with full military honors at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery Monday morning.

"He's home. I'm blessed and I'm thankful that they never gave up and all the searchers found -- stayed so dedicated and that we brought him home. That's the most important thing because he deserves to be home," said Tiffany McCullers, the officer's widow.

On July 5, McCullers was working an off-duty private security job at a construction site along Turtle Creek in Dallas when he notified Highland Park police that water had submerged the hood of his car.



SMU Police Officer Mark McCullers, who drowned after being swept away in floodwaters in early July, was laid to rest at DFW National Cemetery, Aug. 29, 2016.

Surveillance video recorded McCullers' vehicle being swept into the creek at the Fitzhugh Avenue bridge. McCullers was presumed to have drowned before his body was recovered nearly two months later.

"Officer McCullers was a beloved member of our University community, a skilled and dedicated officer and a proud U.S. Marine veteran," [said R. Gerald Turner, SMU President, in a statement.](#)

"We thank the many heroic men and women who searched in difficult conditions for Officer McCullers, including members of the Highland Park Department of Public Safety, Dallas Fire-Rescue, the Dallas Police Department, University Park Police Department and Texas Parks & Wildlife," Turner said.

- [Officers Salute Remains Found in Dallas Creek](#)

A memorial service for McCullers was held July 28 at SMU's McFarlin Auditorium. The McCullers family has established the Officer Mark McCullers Memorial Account.

Donations may be made at any Wells Fargo bank to account number 9976436577, or [online on PayPal](#).

DPD Dive Team Receives Donation In Honor Of Smu Officer Mark Mccullers

<https://dpdbeat.com/2017/01/31/dpd-dive-team-receives-donation-in-honor-of-smu-officer-mark-mccullers/>

01/31/2017

On Tuesday, January 31, 2017, representatives from the BMF Project presented the Dallas Police Department's Dive Team with a Hummingbird Helix 10 Side Imaging Sonar, in honor of SMU Officer Mark McCullers. Officer McCullers lost his life when he was swept away by flood waters July 5, 2016.

The ceremony was held at the Jack Evans Headquarters Building inside the Donald A. Stafford Media Conference Room at 1:30 p.m. and was immediately followed by an awards ceremony to recognize the Dallas police officers who assisted in the search. Interim Chief of Police David Pughes accepted the equipment on behalf of the Dallas Police Department and presented each officer with their award. SMU officials and the family of Officer McCullers were in attendance and the following officers were awarded the Certificate of Merit.

Deputy Chief Vernon Hale
Sgt. Rodrick Dillon #4535
PO Daniel Hale #9157
PO Daniel Kessenich #10933
PO Michael Koller #8899
PO Jose De La Rocha #9662
SC John Boucher #9636
SC Ryan Hales #9820
SC Matthew Hebert #8107
SC Matthew Kalinec #8022
SC Ryan Mabry #10083
SC Brandon Thompson #8411
SC Christopher Todd #8947



Dallas Police Dive Team

Wife Of Dead SMU Officer Fights For State Survivor's Benefits

<https://www.fox4news.com/news/wife-of-dead-smu-officer-fights-for-state-survivors-benefits>
March 30, 2017 [FOX 4 News Dallas-Fort Worth](#)

The wife of an SMU police officer who died when he was swept away in a creek working an off-duty job is battling to get state survivor's benefits.

Officers Mark McCullers was commissioned through the State of Texas, but he worked for a private institution – SMU. That disqualifies his family from receiving the same death benefits other police families receive in Texas, including college tuition for children and health insurance for those left behind.

The reason why the McCullers don't qualify – the SMU officer wasn't considered a state employee.

The benefits are important to Tiffany McCullers. Her pancreas had to be removed, and then a transplanted pancreas developed cancer and had to be taken out. She's currently living without a pancreas and is set for another surgery on April 10. The commissioner of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement said the state needs to change.

"In my opinion we have a moral commitment to look at it," said Rob Kyker. "It's not just law, it's just right. What's the right thing to do?"

McCullers and her family have a lease through June 28. The nearly \$500,000 worth of insurance money she would have received is missed.

"Where do I live? How do I take care of my kids? How do I take care of my health?" McCuller said.

The Dallas Fallen Officer's Foundation and the Texas Fallen Officer Foundation have been gifting the family when it can.

McCullers hopes lawmakers will fix the problem -- not just for her, but for other officers who work for private institutions in Texas.

SMU Officer Honored On One-Year Anniversary Of Flash Flood Death

<https://www.khou.com/article/news/local/texas/smu-officer-honored-on-one-year-anniversary-of-flash-flood-death/454563981>

A flood swept Officer Mark McCullers and his patrol car away at the Fitzhugh Avenue bridge July 5, 2016.

July 5, 2017 WFAA Staff

Family, friends, and coworkers of SMU Police Officer Mark McCullers gathered in front of the SMU Police Department Wednesday morning at the memorial bench

that bears his name to mark the one year anniversary of his accidental death in a Dallas flash flood.

While working a private security detail at a home under construction along Turtle Creek, a flood swept him and his patrol car away at the Fitzhugh Avenue bridge July 5, 2016. While his car was found 13 hours later a half mile down-stream, it took 51 days to find his body near the Trinity River.

On Wednesday, his widow Tiffany McCullers, nursing a recently broken ankle from an accident she suffered while moving out of the apartment she shared with her husband, stood with crutches in front of a large portrait of her husband quietly staring into his eyes one more time.

"It meant a lot," she said of the brief memorial service offered by SMU. "I didn't know if I could make it. I didn't know if I could handle it."

She gets help handling it with her husband's dog-tags around her neck. Worn smooth from constantly rubbing them between her fingers, she says they provide her comfort, as does the Marine tattoo on her left shoulder that matches one her husband had. The same tattoo artist created her tattoo along with the image of his dog tags with his end of watch date of "7-05-2016."

And Tiffany McCullers says she still visits the Fitzhugh Avenue bridge at least once a month. Mark McCullers is buried at DFW National Cemetery. It's the bridge where she says she feels closest to her husband.

"I just go mostly by myself now, just to talk," she said. "It hurts, and yet I feel like I can go out there and say anything and just talk and feel better."

"Just knowing that his service meant something to a lot of people here," the officer's brother-in-law Ben Nix said in praise of the memorial service on the one year anniversary of the accident: an accident overshadowed by the Dallas Police ambush and the deaths of five more officers that would happen two days later.

"Two days from now was probably one of the toughest days that Dallas has had to deal with. But in the shadow of that, was what our family was dealing with," said Nix.

There are now officer of the year awards at SMU and the Bush Center named after Officer McCullers. Because of him, private police departments like SMU can now receive state death benefits too. They couldn't before. His death has left its mark on a grieving family and a city that didn't know more dark days were still to come. As for promised flood control changes to Turtle Creek, the City of Highland Park says it continues to study the location, that past studies have identified several projects ranging from action gates to redesigning of roadways crossing the creek. A city spokesperson tells WFAA that "the city is currently working with the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) to secure funding for these projects."

Widow of Drowned SMU Officer Sues Highland Park, Dallas, Others

<https://www.parkcitiespeople.com/2018/07/11/widow-of-drowned-smu-officer-sues-highland-park/>
July 11, 2018 Staff Report

The widow of [Mark McCullers](#), the SMU police officer who drowned after being swept away by Turtle Creek floodwaters on July 5, 2016, is suing the town of Highland Park, the city of Dallas, and the companies responsible for the construction site where her husband was providing off-duty security.

In the wrongful death [lawsuit](#), filed July 5, 2018, Tiffany McCullers claims the defendants knew, or should have known, the dangers Turtle Creek could pose during a rain to those at the site where her husband was working. The suit accuses the construction companies of not adequately warning Officer McCullers of the dangers and the municipalities of negligence for not adequately maintaining and developing the property so that it would not pose a danger.



Mark McCullers

The suit also accuses the municipalities of failing to provide adequate warning to the danger and appropriate barriers that could have prevented the officer's Dodge Charger from being swept into the creek during the flash flood.

Mark McCullers, 46, was sitting in his sedan in the early hours of July 5, working off-duty private security at a Highland Park construction site, when heavy rains caused Turtle Creek to overflow.

News coverage described how McCullers called 911 around 1:40 a.m. as he realized rising waters were overtaking and moving his car. Video footage from the Fitzhugh Avenue Bridge shows him climbing out a door.

The car was found 13 hours later about a half-mile downstream during a search operation involving Dallas-Fire Rescue, Dallas Police Department, Highland Park Department of Public Safety, Search One Rescue Team, Texas Parks and Wildlife Game Warden's Office, and University Park Police Department. His body wouldn't be recovered until weeks later.

Sgt. Keith McCain found McCullers' remains on Aug. 24, 2016 near Oak Lawn Avenue and East Levee Street in a new pile of debris at the end of a more-than-mile-long drainage tunnel emptying into the Trinity River.

Widow of SMU officer who drowned in Turtle Creek sues Dallas, Highland Park

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2018/07/11/widow-of-smu-officer-who-drowned-in-turtle-creek-sues-dallas-highland-park/>

Jul 11, 2018 By Claire Ballor

The widow of the Southern Methodist University officer who died in 2016 after floodwaters swept him into Turtle Creek has filed a wrongful death lawsuit.

The suit was filed Thursday — the second anniversary of Mark McCullers' death — against the city of Dallas, the town of Highland Park and the construction companies that were overseeing the site McCullers was guarding when he died

His widow, Tiffany McCullers, and the city of Dallas both declined to comment, citing pending litigation. McCullers' attorneys and the other defendants did not respond to a request for comment.

Mark McCullers was working an off-duty security job July 5, 2016, after finishing his police shift at SMU. He was guarding the site of a home under construction along the creek at North Fitzhugh Avenue and St. Johns Drive in Highland Park when heavy rains inundated the area.

The creek overflowed its banks and spilled onto the road. Water began to flood McCullers' car and he dialed 911 for help, but it was too late. By the time officers arrived, McCullers and his car had been swept into the rushing creek.

His body was found seven weeks later in the Trinity River, about three miles from where he was pulled in.



Officers saluted as the body of missing SMU police Officer Mark McCullers was carried from the Trinity River late Wednesday afternoon.

Photo: Nathan Hunsinger / Staff Photographer.



Tiffany and Mark McCullers

The suit claims that the city of Dallas and the town of Highland Park knew the dangers the creek posed long before McCullers' death and were negligent by failing to "properly develop, maintain, inspect, repair and/or operate Turtle Creek to prevent it from causing flash flooding."

In 2006, two college students were swept into the creek after getting sucked into floodwaters. Only one survived.

The suit also says that the construction companies working on the home, Roosevelt White Construction and Calloway & White Construction, knew or should have known that Turtle Creek was capable of flooding and should have warned McCullers that the area where they had him park was subject to flash floods.

McCullers, who was a father of six, was "loving, compassionate, energetic, cooperative, patient, attentive, and a provider to his loved ones," the lawsuit says.