



The Kansas City Missouri Police Department

NE crime drops with partnerships

A man working on a home rehab project was murdered near Roberts and Bales in 2017, just north of an alley. He was likely killed earlier in the day, but people walked past his body on the ground all day long, and no one reported it.

“We all hear about crime, the common addresses, but when I was standing in the alley looking at the guy who got killed, I knew we had to try something different,” Captain Ryan Mills said.

That led to a unique KCPD-community partnership that has greatly decreased the amount of violent crime in Kansas City’s Historic Northeast area. In 2017, there were 11 homicides there. In 2018, there hasn’t been one yet, and the year is almost over.

Scarritt Renaissance Neighborhood president Leslie Caplan was the squeaky wheel, begging police department members to do something about the rising crime in their neighborhood. Captain Mills said younger gangs had gotten a foothold in the area and were bringing in more and more crime, from drugs to shootings. Regular enforcement strategies weren’t having an effect.

“The whole Northeast was really on the verge of going one way or the other,” Captain Mills said. “... What I really wanted to work on was our follow-through as a police department. We don’t always do a good job at that. And I wanted to use the community as a resource.”

Captain Mills, East Patrol’s Community Interaction Officers and others began meeting regularly with residents. They had to deal frankly with each other. For example, community members would report gunshots on Facebook to each other but not to police. When police confronted them on that, neighbors said they

didn’t report because police never came. They all eventually agreed that the more people who reported gunshots to police, the better police could identify where they originated and respond.

Then the group decided to go door-to-door – police and neighborhood leaders – starting with some of the hardest-hit blocks in the area. They told residents that police knew crime was an issue in the area, and they all needed to work together to stop it.

“All that we spoke to were happy to see us,” Leslie Caplan wrote to Chief Richard Smith and Captain Mills just before Thanksgiving this year. “I remember an elderly lady who invited Ryan and I to come inside to sit down and chat with her who was so happy this was happening. ... We followed that canvass with two others, one of which was very cold and again were met with happiness to see the police in the neighborhood and to be a part of the



Neighbors and police conducted several door-to-door canvasses of the Historic Northeast area, which was part of a broader crime-reduction project that led to the area dropping from 11 homicides in 2017 to zero in 2018.

block watch.”

Captain Mills said it was the perfect example of a project that took a lot of work and time in the beginning but paid off in spades later. Caplan concurred.

“I would say it was time well spent and led to many, many emails and calls through the following months from Ryan, Major (James) Thomas and now Major (Greg) Volker in re-

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Family secrets lie behind memorial statue

The uniformed officer depicted in bronze holding a young child atop the Kansas City Police Memorial in front of Headquarters has served as a poignant image of service and compassion for almost 100 years. But the real story of the man and child who served as the primary models for the statue is one of family secrets that have only recently come to light.

The main model for the sculpture was Officer William Bondurant, who was born in 1881. According to KCPD historical documents, local banker William T. Kemper approached Officer Bondurant while he was walking his downtown beat in 1919. Kemper told Bondurant he was tired of the old police memorial and wanted his help in soliciting donations for a new one. Several days later, Kemper asked Bondurant to be the model for the statue. Local artist Robert Merrell Gage began sculpting the statue in 1920, and it was completed a year later in 1921 and placed at 15th and Paseo. It was placed on red granite and moved to 59th and Paseo in 1949 and came to its final home in front of Police Headquarters in 1973.

Bondurant passed away in 1955. His last surviving child, Marilyn (Bondurant) Deister, passed away Nov. 21, 2018, at age 93. But she is not the girl he is depicted holding in the statue. That girl was Bondurant's first daughter, Marjorie, and despite the fact that Marjorie lived until 1994, Marilyn never even met her sister, the girl on the statue.

Debbie DeVaul is Marilyn's daughter and William Bondurant's granddaughter. Her grandmother was Bondurant's second wife, Erma. For reasons no one knows today, Bondurant and his first wife divorced, and it seems he never had contact with his first daughter, Marjorie, again.

"People didn't talk about those kinds of things back then," DeVaul said.

Three weeks before her mother Marilyn's death, DeVaul asked her to recount some of her life stories and recorded them. In the recording, Marilyn told of how she was digging in an old trunk as a young girl and found several framed pictures.

"I pulled out one of a little girl with blonde, curly hair," Marilyn said. "I didn't know who it was. So I took it downstairs and asked my



Marilyn Deister was the last living daughter of the officer depicted in KCPD's memorial statue, William Bondurant. He was sculpted holding his first daughter, Marjorie (Bondurant) Keys, whom Marilyn never met. Below: Marilyn met Marjorie Keys' (MK's) family in October, a month before Marilyn's death. Front row, from left: MK's son James Keys, Marilyn, MK's daughter Tina Rex; Back: MK's grandson Brian Rex, MK's granddaughter Stacey Keys, Marilyn's daughter Debbie DeVaul, and MK's grandson Mark Keys.



mother, 'Who's this?' And my mother said, 'Your father has been married two times, and that was his little girl.' I took the picture back upstairs, threw it in the trunk and didn't think about it for 85 years."

Marilyn and her younger sister Muriel (Bondurant) Incus (who passed away in 2016) found out a little later that their dad was cradling their older half-sister in the statue. He told them the story of how the artist had him and the back-up model, Officer Ira Boyle, in a large barn-type space somewhere in the city when he sculpted them. The artist had a fan blowing on Bondurant to make his uniform appear to be blowing in the breeze, but it was very hot.

Bondurant was supposed to be holding a small boy, but the boy was too fussy and wiggly in the heat. Bondurant had brought 3-year-old Marjorie along with him, so he held her instead, and she ended up serving as the primary model for the face of the child. But just a few years later, it seems he'd left Marjorie behind completely after

remarrying. His daughters from his second marriage never met her.

More than 80 years after Marilyn found the picture of her half-sister, she needed significant work done on trees in her yard. But the contractor she hired scammed her big time, taking thousands of dollars and not finishing the work. Her daughter, DeVaul, had heard good things about an arborist named Brian Rex. When he met with Marilyn, he told her she needed to file a police report because she had been defrauded by the previous tree contractor. She told him she would do so, and the police should listen to her because that was her dad on the statue in front of Headquarters. Rex stopped in his tracks.

"The baby in the statue that she was referring to is my grandmother," Rex wrote on his Facebook page on Nov. 29. "The man holding the baby is her father, my great-grandfather. ... This woman standing in front of me who I

had never met in my life is the half-sister to my grandma!"

Like so many other people in the family, he didn't know his grand-

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New law paves way for peer support at KCPD

Since Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 99 started lobbying for a peer support bill in the Missouri Legislature in 2015, three members of the Kansas City Missouri Police Department have committed suicide.

“Members need an opportunity to talk to one another in a peer counseling setting in a privileged situation,” FOP Lodge 99 President Sergeant Brad Lemon said. “Members haven’t had these conversations. At the end of the day, that’s part of why the number of officer suicides outnumbers those killed in the line of duty.”

The peer support legislation finally passed this year, and the Board of Police Commissioners approved the Department’s new Peer Support Policy at their November meeting. No one can say whether it would have stopped the three KCPD members who took their own lives over the past three years, but the goal is to prevent that from happening again.

Missouri was one of the only states without legislation protecting peer support in law enforcement agencies.

“The problem is that without legislation, it leaves open those conversations to courts and lawyers and everybody else,” Sergeant Lemon said.

Trial lawyers were the primary opposition to the bill through the years, Sergeant Lemon said, and they have one of the most well-funded political action committees in Missouri. Despite the measure’s bipartisan support, pieces of distasteful legislation would get tacked onto it, preventing legislators from approving it in prior years, Sergeant Lemon said. This year, when it got brought to a vote all by itself, it passed with healthy bipartisan support.

The 2015 President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing recommends better supporting the mental health of law enforcement. The

report states, “To add to the problems of those suffering from psychological distress, law enforcement culture has not historically supported efforts to treat or even acknowledged mental health problems, which are usually seen as a sign of ‘weakness.’ The challenges and treatments of mental health issues should therefore be viewed within the context of law enforcement’s unique culture and working environment.”

Indeed, Sergeant Lemon said that without peer support policies or legislation, if a fellow officer came to him with a mental health concern, he’d have to tell that person’s supervisor.

“Then we unplug that member and put them on limited duty,” he said. “That person thinks they should never have asked for help.”

Up to 60 volunteer department members will receive 40 hours of training to act as peer support specialists. Volunteers will be required to be empathetic with strong interpersonal and communication skills as well as a dedication to confidentiality. They need to be willing to be called out to critical and traumatic incidents department members may encounter. While they are not trained counselors, peer support specialists will be trained to listen and get department members to the professional resources they need for help.

The peer support won’t just be for traumatic incidents, Sergeant Lemon said. It will help members struggling with divorce, financial problems and other personal issues. It also will assist the immediate family of department members who are struggling. A licensed psychologist will provide instruction for and serve as an advisor to the Peer Support Team, according to the policy.

Sergeant Lemon said a selection process will be announced for department members who want to serve as peer support specialists.



FAMILY SECRETS, cont. from p. 2



Officer William Bondurant was the primary model for the KCPD memorial statue, which was completed in 1921.

mother’s sisters, Marilyn and Muriel, even existed. Thus began the effort to reunite a family that had been divided for more than 80 years. That was nearly three years ago.

When DeVaul, Rex and several others found out they were cousins, they were shocked. Many of them had attended Center High School together in the late 1970s and early ‘80s. Some of them also knew Marilyn Deister, who was a well-known swimming and synchronized swimming coach in Kansas City, as well as a physical education instructor in Kansas City Public Schools. They just never knew she was their aunt.

In October, Marilyn met up with Marjorie’s children and grandchildren. They exchanged stories, and she got to know some of the nieces and nephews she never knew she had. She died about a month later. Several of those nephews served as pall-bearers. Rex – her tree contractor turned great-nephew – was one of them.

“What are the odds that out of ALL the tree sales people in Kansas City to show up on her doorstep that day that it was me?” Rex wrote. “And what if she hadn’t told me about the man in the statue being her dad? We would never have known. God works in mysterious ways. Rest in peace, Marilyn. I’m glad God put me on your doorstep that day.”



Marilyn (Bondurant) Deister, second daughter of Officer William Bondurant, when she was in college.

Upcoming Events

January 5
**South Patrol Movie
Night and Talent Show**

January 8
**Board of Police
Commissioners Meeting**

January 17
**Entrant Officer Class
164 Graduation**

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sponse to crimes we reported, drug paraphernalia found on a sidewalk, suspicious people at The Concourse, car chases, situations that Ryan wanted to make sure we knew about or just to check in, say hello, and whisper that we hadn't had to talk much because things were so quiet in the neighborhood," Caplan wrote.

The neighbors are actively working together with police to report suspicious activity, and criminals have realized they won't get away with crime in the Northeast. Captain Mills said the crime reduction work in the area is now in a maintenance phase, but strong continued partnerships between police and the community are needed to maintain the progress.

Captain Mills recently transferred out of the East Patrol Division. He said he believes the changes made in the Northeast can be replicated elsewhere where police and residents are willing to partner closely.

Caplan said it's hard to believe how different things are in her neighborhood from one year ago.

"Thanks go to all who have been a part of this change and who have lifted us up when the onslaught of crime was bringing us down, especially Chief Smith, who began this journey with us so many years ago as the first Major to whom our neighborhood really mattered."

Officially Speaking

Retirements

Sergeant Joy Colmar
Admin. Asst. Johnnie Duke

Obituaries

Retired Detective William
Austin
Retired Sergeant Michael
Travis

**The mission of the
Kansas City Missouri
Police Department is to
protect and serve with
professionalism, honor and
integrity.**