Kansas City Police have a new tool to find vulnerable people who wander away from their caregivers.

The Care Trak system will help officers locate people with diminished mental capacities, including those who suffer from autism, traumatic brain injuries, Alzheimer’s and dementia. The Police Foundation of Kansas City funded the $10,000 system. The money was donated the day after a 5-year-old boy with autism went missing in Cass County and was found dead in a pond. KCPD’s helicopter officers assisted in the search for that boy.

Sergeant Brad Deichler and Captains Darren Ivey and Todd Marckx led KCPD’s efforts to secure Care Trak. Sergeant Deichler uses it for his own autistic son. He said he is confident it can save lives.

“I’m part of a national network that sends out alerts when a child with autism wanders off,” Sergeant Deichler said. “About 10 to 15 percent of the time, the child dies. It’s usually a drowning. Or they fall off an overpass or get hit by a car.”

KCPD is the first agency in the metropolitan area to deploy Care Trak.

Users of Care Trak wear a rugged bracelet on their wrist or ankle. If they wander away, police use radio telemetry to track them down. A hand-held antenna tells officers if they are getting “hotter” or “colder” as they get nearer to or farther from the missing persons. Radio telemetry is more accurate and inexpensive than GPS technology.

Each of the Department’s six patrol division stations will have a tracking unit. A dozen officers underwent training Aug. 14 and 15 to use the system, and they will train other officers at their stations, as well as detectives.

“This gives parents and caregivers one more piece of technology to eliminate some stress and help them sleep a little better at night,” Sergeant Deichler said.

The Care Trak bracelets themselves cost about $300 initially, then about $3 monthly. Police are working to secure donations to help Kansas City residents pay for them. Medicaid also offers waivers to help caregivers buy them.

Police are encouraging anyone with a loved one who suffers from a disease or disorder that makes them prone to wandering to use a Care Trak bracelet. If that person goes missing, caregivers should call 911 as soon as possible and inform the dispatcher that their loved one was wearing a Care Trak transmitter. The dispatcher will then send officers out with the tracking device.

Eventually, Captain Ivey said he hopes to create a website where Care Trak users can register and provide anything from a picture to medical information. This will help officers be prepared to respond to calls involving these individuals and to help them find them if they wander away.

But technology isn’t the only thing police are using to assist people with special needs. Sergeant Deichler has taught multiple courses to more than 1,000 officers in the metro area about how to interact with people who have autism and other cognitive challenges.

“Eight times out of 10, when police contact somebody with those issues, they haven’t committed a crime,” Deichler said. “They’re just in distress. Usually it’s because of a basic need – they’re hungry or cold or need to go to the bathroom. They just don’t know what to do.”

Police hope this combination of technology and training will help them better respond to and assist the most vulnerable residents of Kansas City.
Officer helps 96-year-old get A/C

On one of the few days this summer in which temperatures climbed higher than 90 degrees, July 25, Officer Patrick Byrd got a call about an elderly woman who was walking outside and appeared disoriented.

He contacted 96-year-old Helen Adams. She was holding a stack of papers related to the person who held her power of attorney. She was concerned someone was somehow stealing from her. Officer Byrd looked over the paperwork and determined that was not the case. He then drove her home and walked her to her door. But when he got her inside, it was stifling. It was about 11 a.m. and nearing 90 degrees in her house.

Officer Byrd saw the single window air-conditioning unit in her bedroom was blowing hot air. He asked her how long it had been broken, and she said it had been a few days. Ms. Adams had no family in the area to assist her with getting it fixed or replaced.

A few days before Officer Byrd encountered Ms. Adams, staff with the non-profit Bishop Sullivan Center contacted the KCPD Media Unit, asking if they could make all patrol officers and detectives aware of their Elder Cool program. The program provides free window air-conditioning units for low-income, elderly residents and deposits $100 in the account of their electric utility so they won’t be afraid to use it. The Media Unit worked with the Patrol Bureau to get the word out, and within two days, Officer Byrd came across someone in need of the program and knew who to call.

“I didn’t want to leave her in that condition,” he said.

Officer Byrd took Ms. Adams to a neighbor’s house with working air-conditioning to cool off and await the arrival of her new unit. In about two hours, technicians with the Bishop Sullivan Center showed up to install it. Officer Byrd – a 16-year KCPD veteran – stuck around to make sure she knew how to use it and to fix a minor electrical issue.

“He believed me,” Ms. Adams said of how hot her house was. “He knew I wasn’t fooling.”

Officer Byrd said he will be stopping by regularly to check on Ms. Adams, and he’s asked his fellow officers to do the same. He also gave her his personal cell phone number so she could contact him any time.

“I looked at Ms. Adams as being my great grandmother,” he said.

PAL Football featured at Chiefs game half-time

The Police Athletic League Predators tackle football team played at half-time of the Kansas City Chiefs first pre-season game at Arrowhead Stadium on Aug. 7. The team is composed of 10- to 12-year old boys, most of whom are playing tackle football for the first time.

The PAL team is part of KC United, a sports initiative involving young people from all over the metro area. The goal of KC United is for leaders and mentors throughout the city to use sports to reach young people, part of the same philosophy used at PAL. KC United set up the Chiefs’ half-time appearance to provide a few of the boys in the program a once-in-a-lifetime chance to stand on the field at Arrowhead Stadium.

The PAL football program is in its third year. Last year, more than 15 teams played at the PAL Center at 1801 White Ave., and the Center hosted many games. The championship games for four separate age divisions took place under the lights at the PAL field. Currently, the PAL football program has two tackle football teams, more than a dozen volunteer coaches and approximately 60 players involved. The program has doubled in size from last year, and the quality and caliber of the program is growing each year.

Through generous donations from local businesses and individuals, the PAL field is fully irrigated with a sprinkler system, has stadium lights and is professionally maintained by a local landscaping company.
Entrant Officer Class 151 graduated August 7 with 18 officers being sworn into the Kansas City Missouri Police Department, and five sworn into outside agencies. Seven of those KCPD officers are veterans who previously served or currently serve in the U.S. Military. KCPD Officer Walter Gibson received the Richard Fletcher Director’s Award and Valedictorian went to Blue Springs Officer Alexander Smith.

KCPD now dispatching for outside agency

For the first time, Kansas City Police dispatchers are dispatching for officers of another city.

August marks the fourth month since the KCPD Communications Unit took over dispatching for the Village of Claycomo, which is surrounded by Kansas City on all sides. Its police department has nine full-time officers (including the chief), a part-time detective and some part-time officers.

“Their’s the first outside agency we’ve ever dispatched for,” Major Eric Winebrenner said.

The task isn’t overly burdensome for KCPD’s Communications staff because Claycomo generates only about three calls a day, Winebrenner said. It has a population of about 1,400, with an additional 4,000 people working at the Ford manufacturing plant at any given time.

Claycomo Police Chief Matt Coonce said he and his officers have been very pleased with KCPD’s service, but listening to all that goes on in Kansas City, North, was a bit of a shift.

“The dispatchers have been very good, and we’ve been very happy with the quality,” Chief Coonce said. “The radio traffic has been an adjustment for us. We weren’t used to hearing it all day long, but with Kansas City, it’s almost like it never stops!”

Claycomo is hooked into the North and Shoal Creek patrol divisions’ dispatcher and hears their radio traffic. Coonce said it’s been beneficial to be connected to what’s going on around them.

But KCPD was, in fact, very interested, and the price – about $31,000 annually – was agreeable. Manager Steven Hoskins and Captain Karen True put together the agreement, basing the price on the number of calls Claycomo typically dispatches.

And Claycomo may not be the last outside agency for which KCPD dispatches.

“It keeps us aware of what’s going on, and it makes the mutual aid work much smoother,” he said. “Just yesterday, a Kansas City officer was in our area and asked for assistance, and we were able to hear it and be right there.”

Claycomo had staffed its own dispatcher at one time but could no longer afford to do so. Another agency dispatched for them in recent years, but that contract ended abruptly, and they needed to find another dispatch service as quickly as possible. Coonce said he called almost every law enforcement agency in the Northland, and they either didn’t want to do it or were unaffordable.

“It didn’t bother calling Kansas City for a long time because I didn’t think they’d be interested,” he said.

But KCPD was, in fact, very interested, and the price – about $31,000 annually – was agreeable. Manager Steven Hoskins and Captain Karen True put together the agreement, basing the price on the number of calls Claycomo typically dispatches.

And Claycomo may not be the last outside agency for which KCPD dispatches.

“We could potentially do others,” Winebrenner said.

“Throughout the country, it’s becoming more regional. A lot of cities can’t afford to do this themselves anymore. With CAD (computer-aided dispatching), personnel, radios and equipment, it gets cost-prohibitive for smaller towns.”
Upcoming Events

August 19
Patrol Divisions’ Open House

August 26
Board of Police Commissioners Meeting (South Patrol Division)

September 16
Board of Police Commissioners Meeting (Academy)

The Informant is a publication of KCPD's Media Unit
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Officially Speaking

25-Year Rings
Detective Ernest Baskerville
Officer Todd Beard
Sergeant Thomas Blow
Sergeant John Bryant
M.P.O. Mark Cassady
Sergeant Christopher Cesena
M.P.O. Leslie Cornell
Sergeant Jeffrey Cowdrey
Officer Frank Disciacca
Sergeant Troy Entrop
Detective Paul Hartke, Jr.
Human Resources Specialist
Marquita Hundley
Officer Christopher Lein
Administrative Assistant
Karl Jefferson
Detective Karen Jenkins
Major Floyd Mitchell
Detective Christopher Ruark
Captain Donald Sight
Forensic Specialist
Benjamin Simmons
Sergeant Phillip Smith
Detective Michael Stockman
Sergeant Rachelle Volker
Administrative Assistant
John Wolfer

Awards
Certificate of Commendation
Sergeant Steven Griswold
Sergeant Timothy Riepe
M.P.O. Michael Briggs
Officer Daniel Collins
Officer Michael Crowson
Officer Nathan Getman
Officer Clyde Harvey
Officer Jonathan Hutsler
Officer Jonathan Janes
Officer Joshua Meierer
Officer Joseph Miller
Officer Peter Neukirch
Officer Kyle Oldham
Officer Matthew Rittenhouse
Officer Richard Robinson
Officer Michael Schmer
Officer Jarett Whipple

Retirements
Sergeant Curtis Klein
Detective Robert Browning, Jr.
Detective Stuart Carpenter
Detective Gary Cowden

Obituaries
Retired Captain Ira Jenkins
Retired Detective Conrad Hymer
Retired Officer Samuel Angelo
Retired Officer John Henderson
Retired Officer Alfred Sauer