The Kansas City Regional Crime Lab has proved itself as one of the best in the nation after receiving a new breed of accreditation.

The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors – Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB) bestowed their International Accreditation for Forensic Science Testing Laboratories on the Kansas City Lab on Sept. 3. A total of 104 city and county crime laboratories have earned the International Accreditation. Kansas City, however, is just one of seven labs nationwide to get accreditation in eight different disciplines, the most of any city or county lab ASCLD/LAB reviewed, according to their web site’s directory.

“For a local department, it’s a very impressive achievement to earn International Accreditation in all those disciplines,” ASCLD/LAB Executive Director John Neuner said.

The eight disciplines in which Kansas City’s lab earned International Accreditation are drug chemistry, toxicology, trace evidence, biology, firearms toolmarks, latent prints, crime scene and digital multimedia evidence.

The Kansas City Regional Crime Lab was previously accredited under ASCLD/LAB’s Legacy Program, but leaders wanted to take it to the next level. Neuner said the new level of accreditation is more stringent, has more requirements and is harder to achieve. It requires forensic laboratories to conform to standards that are in place for labs around the world, not just those agreed upon by American lab directors, as the old system did.

It took two years of work for the Kansas City Lab to earn the International Accreditation, said Lisa Dowler, the Lab’s Quality Assurance Manager. A group of staff members from every discipline met on a weekly basis to ensure the lab met each of the 450 required standards. She said the process made them better.

Forensic Specialist Crystal Frowner used lighting techniques to unveil fingerprints on a bottle she dusted. KCPO’s lab is one of only seven nationwide to earn ASCLD/LAB’s International Accreditation in eight different disciplines.

“It makes us look at ourselves and look at our processes and how we can continually improve them,” she said.

She said the new standards are very customer-based, and their customers are several people in the judicial process: detectives, prosecutors, courts, attorneys and whoever gets their reports.

The process also had an impact on everyone at the Lab, from the scientists to the Building Operations and Property and Evidence technicians.

“It affected how we communicate with our customers, how we order supplies, how we check our instruments, word our reports, fix issues when they arise, how we set our goals and manage the laboratory,” she said. “So not only was the scientific staff affected, everyone was, from the Building Operations personnel that clean the labs to the administrative assistants and how they order our supplies for us.”

So why did everyone go to so much work for a piece of paper that grants International Accreditation for the next four years?

Ultimately, it’s to fight crime. When the Crime Lab presents evidence that is all but irrefutable, criminals go to prison and victims get justice.

“It’s a symbol for the people of Kansas City and the courts that a quality system exists within your lab, and you’ve demonstrated you’re following internationally recognized standards,” Neuner said. “It gives greater confidence in the quality of work coming out of the laboratory.”
Since the late 1980s, Chief Darryl Forté has wanted to complete the department’s two-week “wheel school” motorcycle training program. He finally did so August 25 - September 5 along with eleven other officers, and he counts it as one of his most rewarding experiences on the Department.

He knew more than 70 on-duty motorcycle police officers in the last decade had been killed in accidents nationwide, including two KCPD officers since he joined the department in 1985.

“Curiosity about what the training was and how training was being conducted got the best of me,” he said.

So he decided to find out first-hand what it entailed.

Chief Forté had heard that experienced riders, on their personal motorcycles, felt as though wheel school was challenging and taught them how to ride more safely and skillfully.

Chief Forté may have more than 35 years’ experience riding motorcycles and owns a Harley Davidson Street Glide, but he said he felt totally unprepared to operate a motorcycle on that first day of training during slow-speed exercises.

“Slow-speed maneuvering is not as simple as driving the highways at 60-70 mph,” he said. “Slow-speed maneuvering requires skill.”

Chief Forté said he absolutely has a different perspective on the Traffic Unit’s day-to-day job. He says his exposure to and dialogue with staff, including sergeants and commanders, broadened his view on the challenges and needs of the Traffic Unit. He said he now realizes why so many dignitaries, organizations and others from out of state hold KCPD’s Traffic Unit in such high esteem.

“Our officers are well-trained, skilled and dedicated professionals,” Forté said.

The KCPD and Missouri State Highway Patrol trainers were extremely patient, helpful and professional, he said, and his fellow students were great to train with.

“All of the trainees exhibited positive attitudes and were encouraging to others throughout the training,” he said.

Chief Forté said his favorite part of wheel school was the daily exposure to and successfully completing new exercises that were introduced. Maneuvering the motorcycle at low speeds was the most challenging for him.

“Wheel school overall was the most challenging thing I have had to complete and ranks in the top three as one of my most rewarding accomplishments during my tenure on the department,” he said.
Police shuttle driver is a renaissance man

Building Operations Tech
Fredric Sims shuttles department members from the Holmes parking lot to Headquarters and the Annex every morning. The ride is usually quiet except for the music 26-year-old Sims has playing. Music is a big part of his after-hours life.

Much like Peter Parker, who transforms into the super hero Spiderman, Sims has similar traits. No super powers, just super talents which he used to transform himself since joining the department 2 years ago.

“I studied jazz for a while in college, for 6 years as a whole, and stopped,” Sims said. “I was going for a Bachelor’s of Music Degree.”

Sims’ first band was an R&B cover band called Soul Vibe. You can now catch Sims playing keyboard and singing background vocals with a band called Run With It. He’s been with them for about a year. Other members are lead-singer and guitarist Miguel Caraballo, drummer Kenneth Davis, bass player and background vocalist Clint Velasquez, who also played guitar in the Soul Vibe band.

Sims was pleased to see so many police department members at the band’s September 6 Record Bar performance.

“Dude, I think it was easily the best show we ever had,” an excited Sims said.

It coincided with the release of their first full-length album of rock/soul-influenced songs, titled The Weekend.

“We call it kind of like the love child of Kings of Leon and Bill Withers,” he said.

The band plays regularly at the Record Bar, the Czar Bar and the Riot Room. They plan to branch out to Columbia, Mo., or Wichita, Kan., hoping to keep the Kansas City followers hungry for their music by not playing here so often.

They promote their shows through social media, word of mouth, the Pitch newspaper and The Big Dumb Fun Show, an online radio show that supports local bands. Look for the band’s posters at the area stations, or visit their website at www.gottarunwithit.com.

The band is only one facet of Sims, however. He also is a spoken word artist – which is performance poetry where literary art meets performance art.

“It’s not necessarily acting,” he explained. “Just being more in the piece, in the moment. Making the piece come alive.”

Sims began writing poetry as a child but stopped to pursue music. His love for poetry never died, crediting a piece written by Jessie Lian called “Founded” for sparking his interest again. She wrote it for a Spoken Word competition for an artist called Propaganda. Sims said listening to this piece as a fan had a profound effect on him. “I was grabbed in to begin to write again,” Sims said.

A friend encouraged him to take a poetry class. He did. He then entered a piece in the Passion 4 Christ Movement Poetry Slam competition, placed in the top 10 out of 65-70 entries, and traveled to Chicago in July for their Legacy Conference. He said it was surreal, and he learned a lot from the workshops. He was surrounded by a high caliber of poets who expressed lots of love and support in the potential they saw in him.

He also performed at the Blue Room’s Jazz Poetry Jams in January, placing second. That led him to the Uptown Arts Bar where he performed his own show and had to brainstorm enough material to cover a 30-minute set. Lots of friends and family came.

Says Sims, “You do poetry for the love of the art form – not to make money. Nobody does it to get rich.”

The grand poobah of poetry slams, the Pounds Slam, will take place Nov. 5 at the Uptown Arts Bar. Sims could earn a spot on the team that goes to the National Poetry Slam competition.

He’s used his talents to compose a heartfelt, personal piece for his friends’ wedding. He’s also writing a When the Saints (www.whenthesaints.com) fundraiser piece, helping to send two friends to Malawi, Africa, to fight sex trafficking. He will perform this on September 20.

He said he is passionate about those kinds of things and would like to do a couple of stories about his church, The Redeemer Fellowship Church. He leads worship for the Sunday morning or evening services. Sims also plays the piano, sings, and rehearses the band for the services and shares Sunday responsibilities with the worship pastor.

Plan on seeing less and less of Sims, though. He’s continuing his weight loss journey.

Since he joined the department, Sims has lost a total of 140 pounds. That’s another whole person! But he is not stopping. It’s taken months of hard work, modifying what he eats and support from friends that keep him going. He says they text message weekly to keep each other motivated.

According to Sims, there are three key elements to his success; 1) his Christian faith, 2) his supportive team of friends, and 3) his idea that this is no longer considered an option because his health was suffering.

“You have to do it,” he said. “Losing 140 pounds is a different life. The more I lose, the easier things are. I had zero physical aspirations. I couldn’t do anything at that higher weight. I can dream now. Maybe a 5k or more.”

He said he knew it would be a long hard journey, but he was determined to lose 2-3 pounds a week.

“Then before you know it, you’ve lost 10,” he added. “When I joined the department I was not a poet, was not in the band and was a bigger person.”

So, next time you ride the shuttle and Sims pulls out the ladder to assist an easier entry. Climb aboard and really hear the music.
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**Retirements**
- Detective Dana Mauzy

**Obituaries**
- Retired Major Jessie Harris, Jr.
- Retired Officer Merle Hoffman

**Awards**
- Purple Heart
  - Officer Eric Johnson
- Certificate of Commendation
  - Officer Tamara Jones
  - Officer William Thompson
- Life-Saving Award
  - Officer Joseph Smith
- Meritorious Service Award
  - Sergeant Cindy Cotterman
  - Forensic Specialist Alexis Lalli

**25-Year Ring**
- Clerical Supervisor Ouida Cutchlow

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