A Kansas City Police canine passed away Sept. 28 after contracting a mysterious illness in the line of duty.

Brunie, a 3-year-old Belgian Malinois, was the partner of Officer Jason Brunghardt. They’d worked together since March 2012. They were featured in the last issue of the Informant for winning the Patrol Apprehension Case of the Year from the National Police Canine Association.

On Sept. 21, Brunghardt and Brunie were doing a demonstration at the City’s Truck-a-Palooza event when they got a call to assist Belton Police with a felony suspect who had fled into a wooded area near 163rd Street and 71 Highway. Brunie did his job and flushed her out, but at some point during the search, he came into contact with something toxic. He contracted a disease called dysautonomia, which degenerates the parts of the nervous system that control automatic functions like digestion, respiration and blood pressure. It almost always is fatal. The disease is most prevalent in Missouri and Kansas, and the first case wasn’t diagnosed in Missouri until 1988. Veterinarians believe it could be from soil-borne bacteria that invade rotting food or carcasses and produce toxins.

After the search, Brunie was fine, but he started acting unwell the next day, Officer Brunghardt said. He wouldn’t eat or drink. Multiple trips to the veterinarian kept him hydrated, but he kept declining. Brunie dropped from 76 to 59 pounds in a week. After talking to the veterinarian and his commanders, Officer Brunghardt chose to have the dog euthanized so he wouldn’t have to suffer anymore.

Officer Brunghardt said it was very hard losing his partner and friend. Brunie cost the department $12,000, “But to me, he was priceless,” Brunghardt said.

The other officers in the Canine Unit teased Brunghardt that he’d built Brunie the “Taj Mahal” of dog kennels at his house. Brunie got along well with Brunghardt’s wife and his other two dogs, who still go looking for him daily. Although Brunie’s and Brunghardt’s names were very similar, it was only coincidence. Brunie was named before the police department acquired him.

Brunie was born in the Netherlands and underwent initial training at the Von Liche Kennels in Denver, Ind., where KCPD acquired him. He was dual-purpose, trained for patrol work and detecting explosives. In the incident for which he won the National Police Canine Association’s Apprehension of the Year award, Brunie caught a carjacking suspect who had fled from police and pulled a gun on them as they closed in. It all was broadcast on live television from a news helicopter.

Brunie had his other memorable moments, too.

“We were doing a bomb sweep at Kauffman Stadium before the All Star Game in 2012, and he took a poop on home plate,” Officer Brunghardt said.

He was one of the strongest biters in the unit, so he usually was the dog used for public demonstrations. He also was the dog who helped teach the four-hour canine course for recruits at the Police Academy.

“He was a super hyper, super athletic dog,” Brunghardt said. “He was very nosy. He wanted to know who you were and what you were doing. .. He was a very good dog.”

Although the loss has been difficult, Officer Brunghardt will have to get a new dog. He travels back to Indiana later this month to select a new partner.
Kansas City Police are doing more than ever before to serve residents of Kansas City who don’t speak English.

According to U.S. Census data, 13 percent of residents age 5 or older in Kansas City speak a language other than English. That’s more than 48,700 people who speak 44 different languages. A recent review by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Civil Rights has prompted the department to enhance its services to non-English speakers.

The review came not because KCPD was doing anything wrong, but because it is a condition of federal grants the department receives, said General Counsel Virginia Murray, co-chair of the recent Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Committee. Operations Analyst Mark Russo is the other co-chair. In a given year, those grants comprise about 8 to 10 percent of the department’s budget, so compliance is vital.

The LEP Committee convened in April 2014 and consists of officers and non-sworn staff from many department elements. Some members are bilingual, and some aren’t, which was by design, Murray said. In addition to the 25 recommendations issued by the Office of Civil Rights, the committee generated eight more. Some changes have been made, others are being tested, and others are still being researched.

When they started digging into the data, Russo said, the Committee discovered something surprising. The Office of Civil Rights states that if more than 1,000 people or 5 percent of a city’s population speak a certain language, the police department’s vital documents must be translated into that language. That’s why most of KCPD’s forms are available in Spanish. But the committee discovered that those forms also need to be translated into Vietnamese. More than 3,330 people in Kansas City speak Vietnamese. That pales compared to the almost 30,000 people who speak Spanish, but it makes Vietnamese Kansas City’s second-most popular foreign language.

In addressing the recommendations from the Office of Civil Rights, the department so far has changed its “Contact with Foreign Nationals” policy, and created a different policy just to address issues of contact with people who have limited English proficiency.

The Office of Civil Rights also discourages police from using people they contact at scenes from providing translation, which has been a common practice. It instead recommends officers use official translators from the department’s bilingual skills list or use the Language Line service, except in emergencies. And in those cases, a bystander is only to be used as a translator until an official one can arrive. Often, the people officers use for translation are the children of those involved. The department now is working toward stopping that practice.

“This is not just to serve the limited-English-proficiency population, it’s about the officer safety involved,” Russo said. “An officer may be making the wrong decisions based on what an 8-year-old says.”

The East Patrol Division, where almost a quarter of the population speaks a language other than English, is testing a new form to address this problem from Sept. 1 to Oct. 31. When officers encounter someone who doesn’t speak English, they must request a translator from the bilingual skills list. Officers will have to fill out information about the contact and what language the person they’re contacting speaks. The translator will have to fill out information about the nature of their translation. If it provides valuable information in East Patrol, it could soon be extended to the rest of the department.

Officers also likely will be issued “I speak” cards, featuring different languages residents can point to to indicate which one they speak. Larger signs would be put in patrol division stations and the Headquarters lobby.

The department soon will assign a limited English proficiency coordinator to continue to manage KCPD’s compliance and report to the Office of Civil Rights.
Sister fulfills late detective’s dream

After a retired KCPD detective lost her battle with cancer, her sister helped fulfill her dream.

Because of that, young patients at Children’s Mercy Hospital can escape to the world of a dream-traveling wizard and a dog named Spike through the book, “The Dream Travelers – From the Beginning,” by Cindi Elli. She came from her home near Springfield, Mo., to donate autographed copies of her book.

The book originally was a project of Elli’s sister, retired KCPD Detective Linda Leslie, who passed away last March. Leslie began writing the children’s book after taking a creative writing class more than 30 years ago, but work and family responsibilities caused it to take a back seat.

According to Elli, her sister Linda would take abused children to Children’s Mercy Hospital’s Scan Unit for evaluation during the course of her job handling sex crimes and child abuse cases. Because of that connection, Elli chose that unit to receive the books. Shelly Nicole with CMH Volunteer Services accepted them on the hospital’s behalf.

After Linda retired and moved to Boulder, Co., with her husband, former KCPD firearms instructor Calvin Leslie, she became very ill in 2012. After several months, Elli moved her sister into her own home in Springfield to be closer to their mother, Martha Johnson. Leslie’s son Ryan Bieberly, grandson Quinn and stepson, KCPD Officer Brian Leslie, all live in Kansas City.

“At Linda was an avid reader,” Elli said. “After she passed away, I found 20 to 30 boxes of journals and notebooks of favorite quotes she had written down for the last 30 to 40 years. I took some time and went through some of those journals, and I found 7 to 8 typed pages, postie notes, little scraps of papers and drawings of what she wanted the chapters (of her book) to look like.”

Elli took her sister’s notebook to read when she went to the Colorado Rocky Mountains to scatter her ashes. On the return flight, Elli told her husband that she was going to complete the book for Linda. Elli used her journalistic skills to add more meat to the book, weaving Leslie’s favorite quotes from Albert Einstein and Winston Churchill into an adventure story with inspirational messages. The main characters are 8, 10 and 12 years old.

“I had been a journalist for many years,” she said. “I knew it had to be fantasy and lots of imagination or it wouldn’t grab kids. I knew the lessons couldn’t be preachy.”

She began the book last July 1 and completed it by the end of the year. Several manuscripts were distributed to various publishers, and within 4-6 weeks, a San Antonio independent publisher contacted her with an offer to publish it.

“It came pretty easily,” Elli said for writing the book. “When I was writing, I’d be working on a chapter, and I’d say, ‘What would sis say?’ We were so close she would start a sentence and I could finish it.”

Elli also donated books to libraries, children’s organizations and hospitals in the Springfield area and the Mayo Clinic Children’s Center in Rochester, Mn.

Her goal was to make a difference in the life of a child now, hoping they will take the lessons learned and make a difference in the life of a child later on: dreaming it forward. There are lessons on bullying, animal abuse and more, which will continue in her second and third books, completing the trilogy.

More information can be found on the www.thedreamtravelersbook.com website, including contests to win an autographed book or to be a character in a book.

Kansas City hosts NACOLE Conference

Kansas City played host to the 20th Annual National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) Conference from Sept. 14-18, which boasted a record attendance.

For years, the Kansas City Missouri Police Office of Community Complaints (OCC) has bid on hosting the NACOLE conference. This year they made a renewed effort and were successful in bringing the conference to Kansas City for OCC’s 45th Anniversary. Kansas City hosted the conference in 1999 and has been the only repeat city in 20 years of NACOLE conferences.

The theme of the 2014 conference was “Building Community, Broadening Oversight.” There were 311 attendees, making this conference tied with a previous conference in San Jose, Calif., in 2007 for record attendance.

“The overall event was very positive,” OCC Senior Legal Analyst Karen Williams said. “It seemed like current events across the state really brought forth the need for oversight in communities of all sizes and demographics.”

Watching all of the hard work for the past year and seeing the conference come to fruition was gratifying for Analyst Williams.

“We had wonderful volunteers and support from the Board of Police Commissioners and the Kansas City Missouri Police Department,” she said. “It ensured this event was a tremendous success.”

To learn more about NACOLE, visit www.NACOLE.org. Next year, the conference will take place in Riverside, Calif., from October 4-8, 2015.

OCC Director Pearl Fain recognized Officer Jeff Krebs, who gained fame in a viral video for dancing with inner-city youth, at the conference.
Upcoming Events

October 15
25 Year Ring Ceremony

October 16
KC Crime Commission Luncheon

October 28
Board of Police Commissioners Meeting (South Patrol Division)

November 1
Crime Stoppers Tent Event

November 13
Headquarters Rededication

November 25
Board of Police Commissioners Meeting (Headquarters)

Retirements
Major Michael Corwin
Sergeant Harold Headrick III
Officer Marta Hayes
Officer Ramona Lewis

Obituaries
Retired Captain Clark Sheckells
Retired Sergeant Frank Schump
Retired Detective Barbara Baker

Awards
Special Unit Citation
Sergeant Rod Gentry
Detective Robert DeYaeghere
Detective Michael Helvie
Detective Wayne Jones
Detective Mike McClure
Detective Ricky Ropka
Detective Paul Thilges
Detective Paul Williams

Officially Speaking

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Detective Michael Helvie
Detective Wayne Jones
Detective Mike McClure
Detective Ricky Ropka
Detective Paul Thilges
Detective Paul Williams

Awards Cont.
Meritorious Service Award
Officer Janice Heins
Officer Dwight Parker

Certificate of Commendation
Sergeant Joel Lovelady
Sergeant Scott Selock
Officer Bradley Bailey
Officer Nathan Kinate
Officer Michael Lenoir
Officer Jeremy Meythaler
Officer Jason Quint
Officer Chad Pickens
Officer Justin Pinkerton
Crime Scene Technician
Lori Nelson
Crime Scene Technician
Madison Palmer

Distinguished Service Medal
Detective John Cutcliff

Medal of Valor
Detective Robert Jorgenson
Officer Marcus Smith