



The Kansas City Missouri Police Department

Staffing reduces 911 hold times

As staffing goes up in the Communications Unit, 911 hold times are falling.

“We’re definitely making progress,” Communications Unit Training Supervisor Tamara Bazzle said.

After peaking in July 2017 at 39 seconds, 911 callers are being put on hold for less and less time as the department tries to correct the Communications Unit staffing deficit. In October, average hold times were down to 21 seconds. Residents complained about the hold times, and Chief Richard Smith repeatedly said being put on hold in an emergency is unacceptable. Call-takers and dispatchers also worked thousands of hours of mandatory over-time to cover the vacancies, which led to stress and burn-out, which led to resignations, which perpetuated the problem. Twenty-three people left the Communications Unit in 2017.

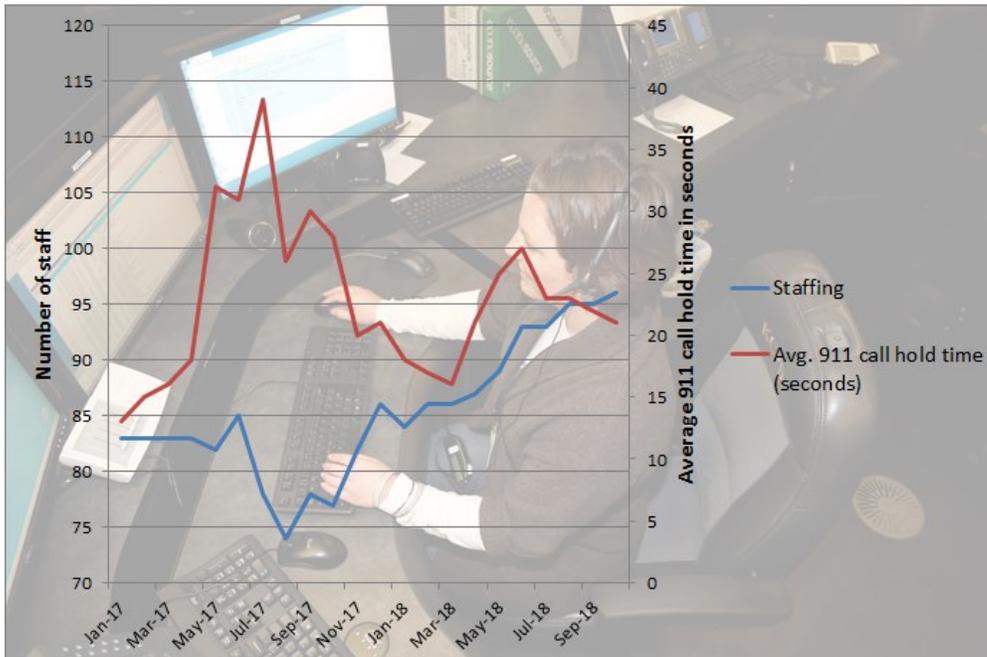
One big help came in May when the City budgeted for 15 additional positions in the Unit. To fill the gap before that, the Unit used outside contractors from other agencies and brought back former call-takers and dispatchers who now work in other positions on the department on an over-time basis.

Now, the department is trying to fill those 106 budgeted positions. They have eight left to hire.

Since August 2017, the Communications Unit has processed 321 job applicants. They’ve gone to numerous job fairs and recruitment events, Bazzle said. Other KCPD members referred friends and family to the job. Even those who attended the Citizens Police Academy got interested and applied.

“They’re people of all age groups, races, genders, levels of experience and educational backgrounds,” Bazzle said.

A few have had dispatching experience, like for a security company. Most don’t. But Bazzle said what they’re really looking



for are three traits: Excellent communication skills, the ability to learn, and good judgment that can be exercised quickly and under stress. And since the 911 Call Center is a 24/7 operation, they also have to be capable of shift work. Candidates are presented with scenarios to test their judgment in their job interviews.

Of the 321 applicants processed since August, the Communications Unit has hired 28. Three of

them came from elsewhere in the department, including Police Academy recruits who decided they would be better suited to a console than a squad car.

Hiring is just the beginning of a Communications Unit career. New hires go through five weeks of classroom training and seven weeks of on-the-job training with a trainer to be a 911 call-taker. That time can stretch longer, if needed. Since August 2017, six trainees left during the on-the-job training phase.

Chief Smith explained why this happens to the Board of Police Commissioners in January.

“Some people honestly don’t know what they’re getting into,” he said. “They do a heck of a job (training), but it is very stressful.”

Bazzle said they try to find a better fit elsewhere on the department for candidates, if possible.

“For some people, it’s just like, ‘Whoa! This is way too much,’” she said.

So even with the immense hiring efforts, it will take a while to have a fully trained

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Officer learns power of 2nd chances

Sometimes the smallest contact an officer has with someone can make the biggest impact, as one retired KCPD officer recently learned.

It started with an Oct. 16 e-mail from a man named Zach Mierva to thankanoficer@kcpd.org. Mierva said he wanted to send a letter to an officer with whom he'd had contact eight years ago.

"In 2010, he took a chance on me, and I wanted to express my gratitude," Mierva wrote.

That officer was Dan Coupe, who retired from KCPD in 2014. Administrative Assistant Liz Faron, Chief's Office, tracked Coupe down and forwarded him Mierva's letter. This is what it said:

Officer Coupe,

I want to thank you for more than you can ever know. I'm not sure if you remember me, but you arrested me in 2010 for drunk and disorderly and resisting arrest at a Royals baseball game. I acted like an absolute fool, and I deserved every bit of pain and anguish I received that night and in the months following. You told me to pay it forward after you got the court to not prosecute my charges, and I wanted to let you know that I've tried hard to earn the second chance you so graciously gave me.

Since that day we met face to face, I got married, deployed two times (one to Afghanistan, where I led a platoon), had a daughter, and finished graduate school at Columbia University. I have spent my career doing my best to help others around me, oftentimes giving second chances in your model. I'm currently a company tactical officer at the United States Military Academy, where I work with 113 future Army officers who will one day lead soldiers. I often share my story from that night, of what you did for me, and how I've responded since then to show others that if someone takes a chance on you, you can learn and become stronger.

I mean this quite literally, I could not have accomplished the things I have without you. That incident remains in my thoughts, a constant reminder of how easily the things you work for can be put in jeopardy when you make immature and idiotic decisions. However, more importantly, it reminds me of you; your example showed me how far kindness goes in helping others.

I wear a bracelet on my right wrist with the phrase, "Think clear, bold and resolute no



U.S. Army Captain Zach Mierva, pictured with his daughter upon earning his master's degree in organizational psychology from Columbia University, credits the second chance now-retired Officer Dan Coupe gave him with turning his life around and helping him lead others.

matter the peril. Let me not fail them." This comes from the Leader's Prayer, from the book Once an Eagle. Whenever I talk about what this means to me, I never say who my "them" is, because it's too personal to me to share with anyone. I want to let you know that you are one of my "them." I lead, teach, coach, and mentor young men and women with this as my guiding principle so that I don't fail you, Officer Coupe, because you gave so much to me. Sincerely, thank you.

Zach Mierva

Mierva is now a U.S. Army Captain in West Point, N.Y. He also enclosed pictures of his family and troops he has led. When Coupe received Mierva's letter, he said he cried for the first time in 20 years. Then he wrote Mierva back.

Dear Captain Mierva,

The (Chief of Police's Office) just forwarded me the most heartfelt and heartwarming letter I have ever received. It actually

brought me to tears.

I do remember (vaguely) the "incident" at Royals Stadium. You were not the first young man to tip a few too many there, but when I first met you in court, I had a gut feeling that the incident had impacted your life and that you were deserving of a second chance to make good. It appears from your letter and pictures that I was correct.

I am proud of what you have accomplished and the sacrifices you must have made along the way. You have a beautiful family and a career you should be proud of.

As I reminisce about my 38-year career in law enforcement, I always wondered whether I made any difference in people's lives. Maybe I have. I am also reminded of the dying last words of Tom Hanks in Saving Private Ryan, "Earn this." It appears that you have.

I am placing this letter in my Bible in hopes of someday, upon my passing, both my sons can use it in raising their families.

I would be honored to meet you some day. God Bless you, your family and thank you for keeping our country safe. Your debt to me is paid in full and then some, Zach.

Ret. Officer Dan Coupe

It didn't end there. Captain Mierva responded to Coupe's letter with more information about how far his positive impact has gone.

Sir,

Thank you so much for your kind response. Fate would have it, I've had a series of alcohol-related incidents in my cadet company in the past week. I had the pleasure of sharing my story with them all just over an hour ago, in the hopes that they can learn from my mistakes.

As time progresses, I find more and more value from the experience. Your email helped close a gap left in my heart, and I am so thankful for you and your service to the citizens of Kansas City. I personally subscribe to the concept of third-generation leadership, which means that those who you interact with will influence another generation, and that generation influences the next. It means that you may not feel the impact of your service until much later. I have no doubt in my mind

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Trick-or-Treating with KCPD

Numerous patrol divisions, the Police Athletic League and the KCPD Friends and Family organization hosted large Halloween events drawing thousands of children and their families throughout the city. A great time—and lots of candy—was had by all.



Son carries on dad's KCPD role

At the Communications Support Unit, it's like father, like son.

That's because Technical Systems Manager Edward "Ed" Brundage is the second in his family to work at what he affectionately calls "Radio."

His father, also named Ed Brundage, started as a technician in KCPD's Radio Unit in 1957. In 1963, he became supervisor. He was able to see the shop through a radio transition before his retirement in 1982. So the younger Ed is no stranger to the telecommunications world. Brundage's dad would bring him to the shop on weekends.

"I used to come in on weekends when it wasn't busy to see what they did," Brundage said. "It was usually a light day and as a responsible 10-year old, I would try to get my dad to turn on the lights and sirens."

Brundage also had an interest in electronics in general at a young age. His dad was an

avid amateur radio operator, or a HAM, and had several radio-controlled planes.

The elder Ed Brundage has passed away, but his legacy lives on through his son.

The sounds of sirens and radio traffic fill the air, as lines of patrol cars wait their turn to be fitted with radio equipment and sirens. All this is done under Brundage's watchful eye. As manager, Brundage's day involves making sure the radio system is up and operational. More than 9,000 users are registered on the system from agencies around the area. (A user is a radio unit that has a unique ID.) Brundage also oversees the operational status of the Regional Interoperability System, which allows agencies from across the Metro to be able to talk to one another. That is a large operation covering six counties on the Missouri side and 10 radio towers.

Since the world of electronics and telecommunications can be highly technical and have

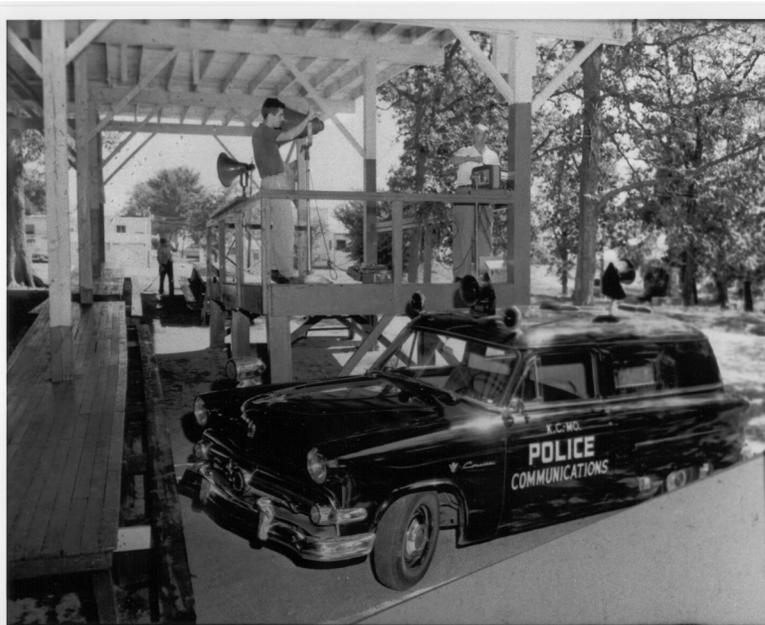
its own set of jargon and acronyms, Brundage will often act as an interpreter, so to speak. He takes the information a technician has presented to him about an issue or system and passes it up the command chain to get it addressed.

It's clear that Brundage likes what he does, and one thing especially sticks out: the people. One of his favorite things to do is chairing the Regional Technology Committee at the Mid-America Regional Council.

"I get to meet a lot of people from public safety," Brundage said.

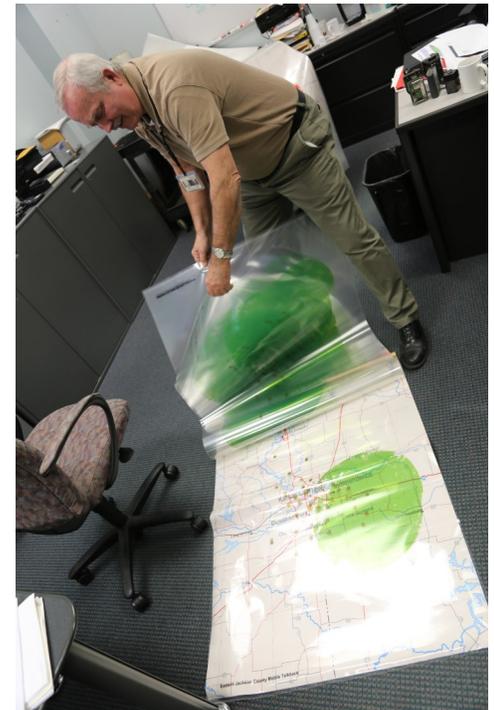
He also enjoys getting the opportunity to serve the officers who patrol the streets of Kansas City every day.

"That's our job – to take care of them," he said.



Left: The elder Ed Brundage (in darker shirt) installed a public address system for KCPD's Radio Unit, where he worked from 1957-1982.

Right: His son, also Ed Brundage, is now the manager of the same unit, now called Communications Support. Brundage flipped through the coverage area maps of the Regional Interoperability System, which he oversees.



911 HOLD TIMES, *Cont. from p. 1*

staff due to training time and members leaving call-taker classes. And after about a year working independently, call-takers then undertake another 16 weeks of training to take on dispatcher duties, as well. Bazzle said dispatching requires much more multi-tasking and quick decision making than call-taking.

"We constantly have members in training," Bazzle said. "... Because we train so long, it's going to take us a while to get back where we were."

The Communications Unit also has done away with mandatory overtime, Bazzle said, instead using a number system that gives priority time off to those who have worked the most shifts in a row. Members now work out covering shifts among themselves.

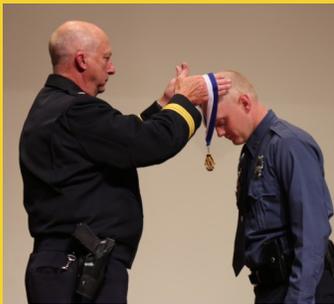
SECOND CHANCES, *Cont. from p. 2*

that you've touched so many, and they have helped others as well.

If you go purely by numbers and that theory, I've led or influenced roughly a thousand Soldiers and Cadets since we met. Multiply that by 20 (average of number of Soldiers in an Army element), and that's the number of people whose lives you've indirectly made better. Your imprint is firmly on them, and I'm forever grateful for that.

Zach

If any officers, like Dan Coupe, wonder whether they've made an impact, Captain Mierva's story should help put those doubts to rest.



Officially Speaking

Awards

Special Unit Citation
The 2017-18 Violent Crimes Enforcement Division

Life-Saving Awards
Sergeants Dawn Jones, Michael Luster and Jason Quint, Officer Carlos Mena and Probationary Police Officer Tyler Moss

Sergeant Christopher Krueger, Officers Teurika Humphrey and Austin Reed

Sergeant Jeffrey Littlejohn and Officer Uriel Ojeda

Captain Paul Luster

Sergeant Jonathan Rivers, Officers Daniel Bartlett, Eric Joy, Louis Curtis and Seth Farris

Officer Eric Williams

Meritorious Service Awards
Officer Elizabeth Commينو

Officer Millie Gray

Officer Robert Murphy

Officer Matthew Tourtillott

Sergeant William VonWolf

Officer Jeremy White

Certificates of Commendation
Sergeants John Bryant and Andrew Gore, Detective Kari Mutschler, and Officers Luke Abouhalkah, Darren King, Travis Menuey, Tanner Moats and Corey Sanders

Officers Joshua Bailey, Laura Easley, MacKenzie Easley, James Gale, Jordan Infranca, Jason Kern and Eric Stubbs

Sergeants Richard Anthony and Jonathan Hess, Officers George Sterling and Matthew Stillman and former Officer Chad Elliott

Distinguished Service Medals
Sergeants Michael Buckley and Christopher Toigo

Medals of Valor
Sergeant Randal Anderson and Officer Jonathan Munyan

Promotions

To Assistant Supervisor
Alexis Lalli
Lisa Randle
George Santoro
Julia Snyder

To Supervisor
James Ferguson
Jason Kennedy
Maegan Roby

To Manager
Gregory Scott Hummel

To Captain
Jason Asper
Jeffery Hughley

To Major
Stacey Graves
Michael Hicks
Doug Niemeier

25-Year Rings

Senior Legal Analyst Johnnie Crawford
Operations Supervisor Jerome Hutchinson
Supervisor Kimberly Richmond

Retirements

Civ. Robert Barry, Jr.
Master Detective Mark Cassady
Officer Kevin Colhour
Officer Kristun Crawford
Sergeant Michael Foster
Sergeant Lorenzo Simmons
Officer Brian Stockman
Detective Kristin Strawn
Sergeant Robert Strawn

Obituaries

Ret. Captain Jackie Brady
Ret. Captain Frank Etzenhouser
Ret. Officer Jeffrey Goede
Ret. Officer Terrance Harlow
Ret. Officer Eugene Krogman
Ret. Officer Joseph Pils
Ret. Officer Antonio Trujillo
Ret. Officer John Winn

Upcoming Events

Dec. 1

Christmas Party for Children of Homicide Victims

Dec. 9

Kansas City Chiefs First Responders Appreciation Game

Dec. 17

Board of Police Commissioners Meeting

**The Informant is a publication of KCPD's Media Unit
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www.kcpd.org**

KCPD partners on prevention app

The Kansas City Missouri Police Department is the first in Missouri to join the Ring Neighbors app to provide the community with real-time, local crime and safety information. The Neighbors network already has millions of users and has been instrumental in catching package thieves, stopping burglaries, and keeping neighborhoods safe.

Residents can download the free Neighbors app (available on iOS/Android at: <https://download.ring.com/Kansascitypd>), join their neighborhood, and use the app to: monitor neighborhood activity; share crime and safety-related videos, photos and text-based posts; and receive real-time safety alerts from neighbors, local law enforcement and the Ring team.

“Becoming part of the Neighbors app allows us to build on the success of our WatchKC program,” Chief Richard Smith said.

“When residents voluntarily provide us with video and pictures of suspicious and criminal activity, we can more effectively prevent and solve crime.”

How It Works

- Download the Neighbors app.
- Opt-in to join your neighborhood.
- Customize the geographic area you want to receive notifications for (users must verify where they are located and cannot participate in other neighborhoods).
- Receive real-time alerts from your neighbors, local law enforcement and the Ring team that inform of crime and safety alerts as they happen.
- View local crime and safety posts via a live feed or interactive map.
- Share text updates, photos and videos taken on any device, including Ring’s home security devices.
- Work with your community to make neighborhoods safer.

