



The Kansas City Missouri Police Department

## Program changes youth-police dynamic

New data shows that a program KCPD started last summer has had a profound impact on the relationship between urban-core youth and police.

After its success on the East Coast beginning in the early 2000s, the Kansas City Missouri Police Department decided to implement the Youth Police Initiative (YPI), developed by former Kansas City resident Jay Paris with the North American Family Institute. A member of the Police Foundation of Kansas City funded the YPI and a study of its effectiveness.

YPI's goal is to bring at-risk youth together with police officers to share personal stories, meals, and to let their guards down long enough to have the difficult and honest discussions and to build relationships and understanding for both the youth and the officers. KCPD's East Patrol Division partnered with the J.D. Wagner Unit of the Boys and Girls Club of Kansas City on this initiative.

"KCPD was presented with the opportunity to engage with youth in a way we've always wanted to but lacked the proper program," Chief Rick Smith said. "The Youth Police Initiative is a program that actually changes attitudes and perceptions, turning what was perceived as an adversarial relationship into a trusting relationship."

Captain Ryan Mills was in charge of the initiative, and he selected Sergeants Troy Phillips and Michael Lenoir and Officer Nicole Wright to interact with youth throughout the week-long program in every session. They also had to recruit other officers – many of whom were relatively new and had little opportunity to interact with youth – to the program to have tough conversations.

KCPD hosted three YPI sessions with 15 teens in each. During the class, the kids and officers participated in a variety of structured exercises and conversations to encourage dialogue, build relationships and encourage honest information sharing. Regular outings occurred after that to continue their relationships.

The John Jay College of Criminal Justice surveyed the kids at the



beginning and end of their week-long session, and by the end of the first session...the teens who said "I know at least one police officer who I can trust" went up by 181 percent.

Data released in February showed that by the third session, the survey item of "police treat most individuals fairly," changed 207 percent from neutral to strongly agree. The third cohort of KCPD students exhibited one of the most dramatic shifts in attitudes toward police among similar programs nationwide.

The police officers who participated in the Youth Police Initiative also reported change, with a 67 percent increase in the item "I know how to resolve conflicts between teenagers and adults" and a 56 percent increase in "I know the names of many teenagers who live in the neighborhood that I patrol."

Police soon saw those results in action. In August, the aunt of

one of our Youth Police Initiative teens was seriously wounded when she was hit by a stray bullet from a rolling gun battle in the 2500 block of Cypress. The teenager was at the crime scene and immediately recognized two of the officers there from the program. He came and spoke to them, and the whole interaction with the victim's family went far better than we could have hoped ...because of their bond. Those officers also followed up to see how they could support him and his family after the trauma and during the investigation.

One of the students surveyed after YPI said the highlight of the training was, "How we got to talk to the police about how we feel."

The fourth session is underway now.

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# Retiree coaches pro, HS teams to victory

As a 14-year-old, now-Retired Officer John West was living out his dream, or so he thought, as batboy for the Kansas City Royals. Little did he know his life was going to take a turn through the relationships he built during his teen years working at Kauffman Stadium.

John always had a passion for sports, and when an offer from the Royals to be a team batboy came, he knew it was an opportunity he couldn't pass up. He worked with the team from 1977-1984. Over the course of the seven seasons John worked with the Royals as a teenager, he had opportunities most kids can only dream of: his locker was right next to Royals legend Frank White, he traveled with the team to spring training, worked in several playoff games and was a part of the 1980 World Series in Philadelphia.

KCPD off-duty officers were positioned right outside of the dugout during Royals games, and the batboy's seat was directly next to them. Before games, there was a lot of downtime, which gave the officers and batboys time to get to know each other. John recalls the fun they had playing practical jokes on the officers as they sat down on their seats, often on a quickly placed baseball, resulting in the officer shooting right back up.

One of those officers John remembers well was, now-Retired Officer V.L. Davis, a current civilian in the Internal Affairs Unit. Davis recalls answering many questions about the police department with John. It was not a surprise to him when John decided he wanted to pursue a career with the police department.

In January 1986, John joined the Police Academy, and by June of the same year, he was on the streets with his field training officer in the Central Patrol Division. After assignments in the Employment Unit and Narcotics and Vice, he spent the last 12 years of his career working in North Patrol, Watch 1.

"I worked dogwatch because I have three kids and could sleep while they were in



**Retired Officer John West, above right and back row below, is 1st base coach of the Kansas City T-Bones baseball team, which won the 2018 American Association Championship. He also coaches North Kansas City High School's girls basketball team, which brought home their first-ever state championship title in early March.**



school and get up and never miss anything," John said.

A devoted dad indeed, John attended nearly all his son's college baseball weekend games, driving overnight to and from Canton, Ohio, for 4 years.

During his time as police officer, he knew how important it was to give back to the community.

"Working midnights, I was looking for something to do until I went to work later in the night," John said.

He was offered a volunteer opportunity coaching baseball and softball at his alma mater and children's school, North Kansas City High School (NKCHS), during the afternoons. He jumped at the chance to connect his love of sports with his giving spirit, which turned into a 15-year coaching job.

After a 26-year career with the police department and seven years of part-time coaching, John received a call from NKCHS; they wanted him to be their full-time campus supervisor. His experience as a police officer was a prime reason he was offered the job. The campus supervisor is in charge of the security of all students and the three buildings at NKCHS. John was aware a job like this did not come along often and had to make a hard decision. He talked over the job offer with his wife, Carolyn, and decided to accept.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the police department, it was a great 26 years," John reflected.

In August 2012, Officer West retired from KCPD and became the campus supervisor. He continued to coach baseball, softball and girls basketball. Being a former police officer and a coach created an instant rapport with the kids at the school, which allowed trust and cooperation among the student body.

Not quite a year later in July of 2013, John was attending a T-Bones game, an independent-league baseball team in

Kansas City, Kan. He ran into Chris Browne, the general manager for the team. John and Chris knew each other from their batboy days with the Royals. Chris was looking for someone with knowledge of how to successfully run a clubhouse. He knew John had retired from the police department and had summer flexibility. John agreed to come out to the next game and offer his advice. The following morning Chris called, thanked him for his

*Cont. on p. 3*

# East Patrol helps grieving family

On one family's darkest day, Kansas City Missouri Police surrounded them with support and love by leveraging community partners.

A sergeant and two officers went to the call of a suicidal man on the Cleveland Avenue Bridge over Interstate 70 about 12:45 p.m. on March 4. The man was 18 years old, and his mother and sister arrived about the same time as police. Before any of them could stop him, the young man ran and jumped off the bridge. He died on impact. The mother and sister fell to the ground, devastated.

The officers on the scene were deeply affected by the family's tragedy. Sergeant John Beck called East Patrol Division Social Worker Trena Miller, who was able to get crisis support services for them within the hour. The family was leery of police officers but accepted her help.

The next day, the family contacted Miller, who went to their home with both East Patrol Community Interaction Officers Patrick Byrd and Greg Smith. As they spoke with the family, they learned the family had several needs. The first was that they did not have nice clothes to bury their loved one in. The family had a personal clothing request, and Officer Byrd and Miller were able to shop to find the exact items and match color and size for the family. Miller and Byrd took the clothing to Speedy Cleaners where the owner, Joyce, not only added to the outfit, but also cleaned and pressed the clothing at no charge to the family.

Miller contacted a local newspaper and was able to ensure the obituary could be run at no cost for the family. She also

started making calls for assistance with the cost of an unexpected funeral. Donations began coming in, including from Officer Brien Pitts and Sergeant Beck. Not only were they the first responders to the call, they also had provided emotional support to the family members who arrived on the scene. Miller was able to purchase flowers for the funeral from KCPD East Patrol at the new Sunfresh grocery store on Prospect, and the leftover money was applied directly to the funeral costs. They were the only flowers at the funeral.

Miller reached out to Officer Rita Olson-Stawicki, who coordinates many public events in East Patrol's community room and gym. Through this, she has cultivated many relationships, and not just in East Patrol Division. One is with the Job Corp Culinary Program in Excelsior Springs, Mo. The students of that program often are looking for opportunities to prepare and serve food to groups. The family of the victim could not afford a

repat meal after the funeral. The Culinary Program students graciously created meal platters for the family, which Officer Olson-Stawicki delivered directly to the family home after the funeral service. Sgt. Beck and Officer Eric Byers attended the funeral with Miller on their day off.

Social Worker Miller was with the family every day the week after the incident, providing support, resources, food, and a shoulder, oftentimes with law enforcement alongside her. The family, who had once been leery of police, was extremely grateful for the outpouring of love and support from KCPD's East Patrol Division.

"Inside that residence and throughout the week, we were all family," Miller said.



**Police shut down I-70 at the Cleveland Avenue bridge after a suicide there March 4. Then they helped the family cope with their loss, from funeral assistance to grief counseling.**

advice, and offered John a job as the T-Bones clubhouse manager.

John's years of working overnights prepared him for the jobs of clubhouse and equipment manager. During home games, he often worked until 4 a.m. doing laundry for the home and visiting teams and preparing both clubhouses for a next-day game. Over time John was given more responsibility and started helping with pre-game warm-ups, hitting ground ball drills and batting practice. Frank White, the first-base coach for the T-Bones, was not able to travel with the team on away games, so in 2014 John was called upon to coach first-base when the team travelled. This past season, the T-Bones set a franchise record of most wins and also won the

league's American Association Championship.

John is most proud of being able to introduce high schoolers to experiences they would never have the opportunity to see otherwise. For the past three years he has partnered with the T-Bones and the life-skills teacher to take a group of NKCHS kids to the T-Bones ballpark to provide hands-on learning with grounds keeping, the media department, and stadium operations.

"My hope is anybody I can get interested in coming out to a game is a good thing," he said. "They may have never thought of going to a ballgame and now they want to."

For many kids, this experience is their first time to a professional baseball stadium.

## **RETIREE COACH, *cont. from p. 2***

John also has been on the coaching staff of the NKCHS girls basketball team for the past seven years. This season, for the first time in school history, the team made it to the Missouri Class 5 State playoffs, where they were crowned the State Champions after defeating Jefferson City by a score of 43 to 34. John credits this championship as his "biggest accomplishment" during his coaching career.

John shows no sign of slowing down between his jobs of campus supervisor, manager and coach, however he does take time to have a weekly date night with his wife of 30 years at the movies. He is a proud dad of his three grown children: Dustin, Dannika, and Dyllan. With them grown, he has a bit more spare time and can often be found on a golf course, working on his golf game.



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KANSAS CITY MISSOURI POLICE DEPARTMENT

# MEMORIAL CEREMONY



10 A.M.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS

1125 LOCUST

**THURSDAY ~ MAY 23, 2019**

*Reception immediately following ceremony*

To **HONOR** fallen officers in Kansas City who **GAVE** their **LIVES** in service to others.

## Officially Speaking

### Awards

*Meritorious Service Award*

Detective Jason Decker

Retired Detective Wayne

Fitzner

Sergeant Richard Sharp

*Certificate of Commendation*

Social Services Coordinator

Gina English

Sergeant Andrew Henry

Officer Devin Jackson (2)

Officer Ian Morris

Officer Jacob Phillips

### 25-Year Rings

Detective Cristin Allen

Officer Marviel Pringle

### Retirements

Sergeant Sean Cutburth

Officer David Nathan

Officer Mark Wilson

### Obituaries

Retired Officer Carl Fordyce

Detective Christopher Garcia

Retired Officer George Nigh

Retired Officer Donnel Wiersma

## Upcoming Events

April 9

Board of Police

Commissioners Meeting

April 23

KCPD/FBI Youth Night

April 27

Drug Take Back

April 13

South Patrol Egg Hunt

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

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