



July 2019

Fighting crime with hygiene products

KCPD is fighting violent crime with shampoo, toothpaste and deodorant.

When violence erupts in an area of East Patrol Division, Officer Vito Mazzara sets up a table in the center of it and starts handing out free hygiene products. Other officers, commanders and the East Patrol social services worker usually join him.

“People say, ‘Why are you here?’” Officer Mazzara said. “And I tell them it’s because right now there’s violence here, and I don’t want you to be afraid to be here. I’m showing you it’s OK to be here.”

Officer Mazzara leads the Badges for Basics program, a partnership between KCPD and Giving the Basics, a local nonprofit whose mission is to provide personal care products for human dignity. The award-winning program started when Giving the Basics Executive Director Teresa Hamilton cold-called the department.

“We wanted to build community,” Hamilton said. “... This allows police to be in the position to inject dignity into society.”

She got put in touch with Sergeant Cory LeMoine, who launched the program at KCPD. Giving the Basics works in schools, food pantries and with home-bound seniors. But Hamilton said police encounter people in need who no one else does. She also thought it would be a good way for police to build trusting relationships with the people they serve, thereby strengthening the community.

Badges for Basics has continued to grow, so much so that Officer Mazzara joined in and eventually took it over. A whole portion of the East Patrol sally port has been cordoned off to store the products Giving the Basics gives to KCPD for distribution. He has about 9,000 items in stock presently. Officer Mazzara tries to do product giveaways twice a month in areas that come up as trouble spots in the division’s weekly crime meetings.

At the first pop-up event last fall at a government-subsidized

apartment complex, residents initially were leery of police handing out everything from lotion to adult diapers.

“People kept asking, ‘Do you need my name? Do I have to sign something?’” Officer Mazzara said. “And we told them, ‘We don’t need anything from you. We just want to give to you.’”



Officers Danelle Williams and Vito Mazzara handed out free personal care products at one of their pop-up events through Badges for Basics.

Police gave out 800 products that day. Several of the people they served said they didn’t normally have a good rapport with police. As the officers were packing up, two people came up and gave them information that helped them solve crimes. The semi-monthly events continue to draw droves of people and inspire people to share what they know about criminal activity.

Officer Mazzara said he and the officers who assist him personally go over all the products with each recipient. They talk to them about how large their families are and what kind of personal care products they prefer.

“It’s amazing the walls that can be broken down in 45 seconds talking to someone about toothbrushes and deodorant,” Officer Mazzara said.

In just one year, Badges for Basics has served more than 1,400 families.

Personal care products are not covered by government assistance like food is. Giving the Basics Executive Director Hamilton said this can lead impoverished people to be shunned and feel unworthy because they’re not clean. They can’t get jobs, which perpetuates the problem.

Pg. 2

KCPD women ride where few have gone before

Pg. 3

From Locust to Thomas Speers Drive KCPD helps devastated family

Pg. 4

Officially Speaking Upcoming Events

— Continued on p. 2

KCPD women ride where few have gone before

For retired Officer Stacey Gareis, doing something that had never been done before was the motivating factor to join the KCPD Basics Police Motorcycle Training Course (also known as Wheels School) over 30 years-ago on April 24, 1989. She was the first female officer to ever do so and graduate.

Gareis had never driven a motorcycle in her life, just had been on the back of one as a rider.

"I just knew I wanted to be the first at something," Gareis said.

Instructors and participants know Wheels School is extremely hard.

"It is physically demanding in that you may fall 30 to 40 times in a day, and also mentally exhausting with all of the new infor-

mation coming at you," current Wheels School Training Officer Jacob Barlow said.

When Gareis went through the school it lasted 10 working days, but it recently expanded to 13 days to ensure the training is thorough and produces the best riders. Only the best of the best are given a coveted spot in the wheels squads of the Traffic Enforcement Unit, and on May 5, 1989, Gareis earned her spot.

During her two weeks of break-in, she was assigned to the 803 squad with now-retired Officer Cliff Henderson. She fondly remembers how she learned how vital it is to downshift to first-gear when slow-

ing down as she made a hard right-turn and fell off her bike while Henderson kept driving. She stood up and began using her back and legs to properly put the 800-pound motorcycle upright. She

done," she said.

However, it has also become the most rewarding challenge she has ever faced, especially when it comes to maneuvering the hefty bike through intricate exercises while making it look easy.

"I had amazing instructors who were so knowledgeable and patient with me," Pronske said.

Not only did she pass in October 2018, she passed alongside other male classmates who were twice her size and half her age.

Another current female rider, Officer Devon Stewart, agrees with Pronske and Gareis that Wheels School is the most challenging, yet rewarding thing she has ever done. And she passed the class twice! Stewart graduated in April 2015, but due to the length of time before being able to go to the Traf-

fic Unit, she went through the school again and graduated in April 2018.

"Our instructors are really the best; very encouraging and patient, great at explaining things, making it a great learning environment," Stewart said.

Being a KCPD wheels officer comes with a sense of pride. The KCPD Motorcycle Unit is known around the country for their precision and professionalism in how they ride. To the women who have blazed new paths in the wheels unit and those who are thinking of joining, keep riding.



Thirty years ago, (now-retired) Officer Stacey Gareis blazed the trail for female motorcycle officers in the Traffic Enforcement Unit.

got back on and drove off to meet Henderson where he had stopped. He looked at her and calmly told her not to forget first-gear. She never forgot again.

Gareis paved the way for more KCPD women to join Wheels School and successfully graduate. Since Gareis, four other women, including the first black female officer Karen Jenkins, have successfully graduated from the class.

Current rider, Sergeant Tamara Pronske, has been on the department for 25 years and said the school was incredibly physically, emotionally and mentally challenging.

"It was the hardest thing I had ever

Giving the Basics receives donations of personal care products from community drives, manufacturers, distributors and grants. Volunteers help sort and package them for distribution throughout the metro area, where they assist 250,000 people a month. The organization has grown rapidly since it was founded in 2011 and is about to expand to Wichita. Because of its success here, Hamilton wants KCPD to be the role models for Wichita police and other departments nationwide to organize and run a Badges for Basics program.

"KCPD has the opportunity to be leaders for dignity in other cities," Hamilton said. "... What a blessing to Kansas City to lead the way for

other cities because its police are dedicated to keeping people safe and healthy."

Giving the Basics, KCPD and the Kansas City Public School District won the Excellence in Collaboration Award at the 35th Annual Nonprofit Connect Philanthropy Awards Luncheon in May.

In addition to helping build similar collaborations nationwide, Officer Mazzara hopes to expand Badges for Basics to other patrol divisions in KCPD. It's already grown to several other departments in the metro area.

HYGIENE PRODUCTS, CONTINUED FROM P. 1

From Locust to Thomas Speers Drive

The mailing address of Police Headquarters will remain 1125 Locust Street, but the block on which the building sits has been honorarily renamed Thomas Speers Drive after the Department's first chief.

After Thomas Speers was elected as Town Marshall for four years, he was appointed as KCPD's first Chief of Police in 1874. He served until 1895 and remains the Department's longest-serving chief.

Kansas City Missouri Police Historical Society Vice President Alan Pierce of the Building Security Section has lobbied for the change for a decade. Chief Richard Smith approved the Historical Society's request this year, but that was only a small part of the process to rename the 1100 block of Locust. The Historical Society had to make an application to city government. That included getting the approval of 75 percent of property owners on the block (which wasn't hard because KCPD headquarters is the only property with an 1100 block of Locust address) and obtain petition signatures of Kansas City residents. The Historical Society gathered 60 of those.

The application also required an essay about why the street name should be changed. Clay Speers, grandson of Chief Thomas Speers, wrote the essay. Clay Speers wrote about how his grandfather was well-known and respected by notable Wild West personalities like

Wild Bill Hickock, Doc Holiday, and Wyatt Earp. Chief Speers championed proactive police tactics, creating a "rogues gallery" to track criminals and prevent crime. He also offered grace to young men who ran afoul of the law, scolding them instead of pressing charges.

Clay Speers wrote, "Fire Chief George Hale later remarked, '(Speers) talked like a father to the unfortunate that came to him and, to my personal knowledge, saved many young men from destruction and many families from being broken up.'"

He also was known to stand up for victims in court and protect families who were being targeted by scammers. Chief Speers was ousted by a "crooked judge" whose malfeasance he exposed in 1895, his grandson wrote. The whole Board of Police Commissioners resigned rather than remove Speers, so the governor – in the pocket of the elder Jim Pendergast – appointed a new board that would remove him.

Speers died the next year.

"Having been talked of as a potential mayoral candidate in the upcoming election, Tom Speers' untimely death in the early spring of 1896 was a great blow to the city," his grandson wrote. "It was reported in his Kansas City Star obituary that 'nobody in Kansas City was better known

and nobody was better respected or more generally liked than ex-Chief Speers.'"

With a little help from Councilwoman Heather Hall's office, the honorary street renaming was approved. The new signs were posted on both ends of the block on July 17.



KCPD comes through for devastated family

KCPD social service workers and officers from across the city banded together to help one family that has seen more than their share of heartache.

In the summer of 2018, East Patrol Social Service Worker Trena Miller helped a family whose home was riddled with bullets in a drive-by shooting. The family feared for their lives. Several young children lived in the house. Miller helped them find safe and stable housing immediately. Just by chance, Miller encountered the adult daughter of that family again earlier this year when she was out with officers on a different call for service. The woman lived on the same street as the call.

"She remembered me, gave me a big hug and we briefly caught up," Miller said.

The woman reported the whole family was doing well and was still grateful for the assistance they received.

Not long afterward, the woman called Miller.

The family had been celebrating the Fourth of July down the street from their house in their neighborhood. As they enjoyed the holiday, they were unaware that a firework shot off nearby went through the open window of their house, catching fire to the curtains. The blaze spread to the whole house, which was a total loss. Fortunately, no one was inside.

The woman has four young children and is due to have twins in December. Although she has a full-time job, the prospect of replacing everything her family owned was overwhelming, so she reached out to Miller for help.

"First, I called the social service team, and we all rallied to help find clothing for the children, sorting and labeling for each child," Miller said. "Clothes were gathered for both mother and father as well."

With help, the family was able to find a new home, but they had nothing to put in it. Miller asked Jackson County legislator and communi-



What remained of a large family's home after a July 4 fire.

Continued on p. 4

Upcoming Events

September 9
25-Year Ring Ceremony

September 10
Board of Police Commissioners Meeting

September 11
KCPD Explorers Interest Meeting

The Informant is a publication of KCPD's Media Unit (816) 234-5170 kcpd.org

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

DEVASTATED FAMILY, CONTINUED FROM P. 3

ty volunteer Scott Burnett to deliver five mattresses and box-springs to the family, which he did. That was just the beginning of an outpouring of KCPD assistance for the family's new home. An East Patrol desk clerk donated a nice flat-screen television. North Patrol officers and their families did much to

furnish the family's house, including donations of appliances, clothing and baby care items.

A coordinated effort of people who truly care about their community and its members helped this family get back on their feet," Miller said.

Officially Speaking

Awards

Meritorious Service Awards

Sergeant Michael Vulje
Manager Stephen Hoskins and Communication Specialists Danny Crockett and Larry Henderson

Certificates of Commendation

Captain Gideon Cody, Sergeant Jason Childers, and Officers Andrew Bartlett and Gary Coots

Promotions

To Supervisor

Natalie Cofield-Booker
Katie Dumit

To Sergeant

Aaron Hendershot

Jacob Moore
Matt Munson
Bryce Williams

To Captain

Jonas Baughman
Jamie Brown
Nathan Simecek

To Major

Donald Sight

25-Year Rings

Officer Corby Adams
Officer Derrick Akers
Captain Brian Bartch
Sergeant Christopher DeFreece
Officer Michael Feagans
Supervisor Melanie Fields
Major Dan Haley

Detective Darla Harris
Sergeant Bryan Jones
Detective John Keil
Supervisor Todd Lane
Officer Larry Lewis
Officer Krista Maggio
Master Detective Tim Mountz
Officer James Mullins
Forensic Specialist Michelle Nordyke
Captain Todd Paulson
Sergeant Steven Robinson
Officer Alan Roth

Obituaries

Officer Dennis Coates
Retired Lieutenant Colonel James Reynolds