



The Kansas City, Missouri Police Department

Explorers preps youth for police careers

KCPD's resurrected Police Explorers Program is giving teens and young adults a look behind the badge at what it's like to serve in law enforcement.

With his goal of reaching the youth of Kansas City, Chief Smith tasked Major Mark Folsom in September of this year to start the Police Explorers program. The program is an affiliate of the Boys Scouts of America through Learning for Life and is open to young men and women ages 14-20 who have an interest in law enforcement.

While at a conference in Philadelphia in 2017, Deputy Chief Karl Oakman saw firsthand the positive impact the Explorers program made within the city's police department.

"There were young people in the program that were living in crime- and poverty-ridden neighborhoods, and the program gave the kids hope and motivation," he said. "Many have gone on to be police officers and are making positive changes in their community."

Currently, KCPD Explorers Post #8600 meets every other Thursday at KCPD's South Patrol Division. During the meetings, they are given a behind-the-scenes look at the different elements the department has. Recently, one of the tactical squads allowed students to look through their equipment, try on their vests, explore the Bearcat vehicle and ask questions to better understand the role they play for the department. They also have visited with the Canine section, been passengers on the Academy's driving course (a fan favorite), trained on defensive tactics and learned all about the Bomb and Arson Squad.



During the visits with different elements, the Explorers get a chance to build relationships with officers over their common interests.

"The Explorers program serves as a bridge between the Department and the community, not only with the Explorer members, but also with their family and friends," Major Mark Folsom said.

The Explorers have been meeting for a few months, and interest continues to grow from students around the entire city.

"As the program continues to grow, our goal is to have one Explorer Post at every Division within the next few years," Major Folsom hopes.

The program relies heavily on volunteers from the department. Two Sergeants attend every meeting along with several officers

who lead each squad.

"We are always looking for more KCPD volunteers, especially women, to be a part of the program," Major Folsom said.

The group is broken down into squads, allowing for more one-on-one time with KCPD officers and to feel what it is like to work as a small unit, just like officers on patrol do. As leaders develop within the squads, they have the opportunity to become a squad leader, gaining valuable leadership skills. The students also will learn how to report to supervisors – both orally and in written form – and how to be professional in their appearance, all of which are life-long skills.

Every Explorer will be given their own uniform, similar to the ones officers wear, but with white shirts, instead of the French blue. On their shirts, they will have a sewn-on silver patch-like badge, embroidered with *KCPD Explorer*. They each will have a yellow patch sewn on their sleeve, indicating

they belong to the KCPD Explorer Post. The goal is to have the Explorers, in uniform, help at events such as Academy graduations, community outreach events, parades and

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Class helped officers de-stress

A deceptively simple technique taught at the Department's annual firearms qualifications throughout 2019 has significantly improved KCPD members' shooting accuracy and helped officers maintain calm in highly stressful situations both on and off the job.

In fact, it reduced annual firearm qualification failure by 45% from 2018.

The Firearms Training Section implemented Techniques to Optimize Decision Making and Performance in High Stress Encounters in the classroom portion of the annual firearms qualification training. The training staff, themselves, had attended multiple, scientific-based trainings on topics like mindfulness and focused breathing.

Firearms Training Section Supervisor Sergeant Ward Smith said the class has the underlying principle of de-escalation.

"We were looking for something quick and readily usable for our people when they get in a stressful situation to take back control from the startle response, which we call limbic hijack," Sergeant Smith said.

"Our body is preparing for some kind of fight, but we're looking for ways for officers to short-circuit that response in proper instances. ... This deals with de-escalation, giving people the ability to remain problem solvers in a stressful situation."

One of those instances that the Firearms Training staff saw all too often was when some sworn members came in to do their annual firearms qualification.

"The look in their faces was like they were going to the gallows," Sergeant Smith said.

So to help reduce the stress of qualifying, the Firearms Training staff led department members through some mindfulness and focused breathing exercises before the shooting

portion. More than 80 percent of participants said they felt better and less stressed going into qualifying. And with a 45% drop in qualification failures after the course, participants performed much better.

But it wasn't just at the range that the course was making a difference. Sergeant Smith received a dozen phone calls from officers who thanked the Firearms Training Section for teaching the course and relayed how it helped them in a stressful situation. One of those calls was from Officer Kevin

starting to approach. He willed himself not to look at his right ankle because it hurt badly, and he feared if he saw it pointed at an awkward angle, he could go into shock.

"I started breathing – a controlled breath in and held it, then a controlled breath out and held it," Officer Hulén said. "... That and talking to the dispatcher kept me from getting panicky."

Officer Hulén said the breathing calmed him so much he initially rejected the paramedic's offer of painkillers. (Sergeant Smith said that's probably because the controlled breathing causes the brain to release the feel-good chemical, serotonin.) Ultimately, he had a broken ankle (which now has a plate with six screws in it) and injuries to both wrists, as well as numerous abrasions and bumps. He said the focused breathing that calmed him in the moment of his crash has been useful in other situations, as well.

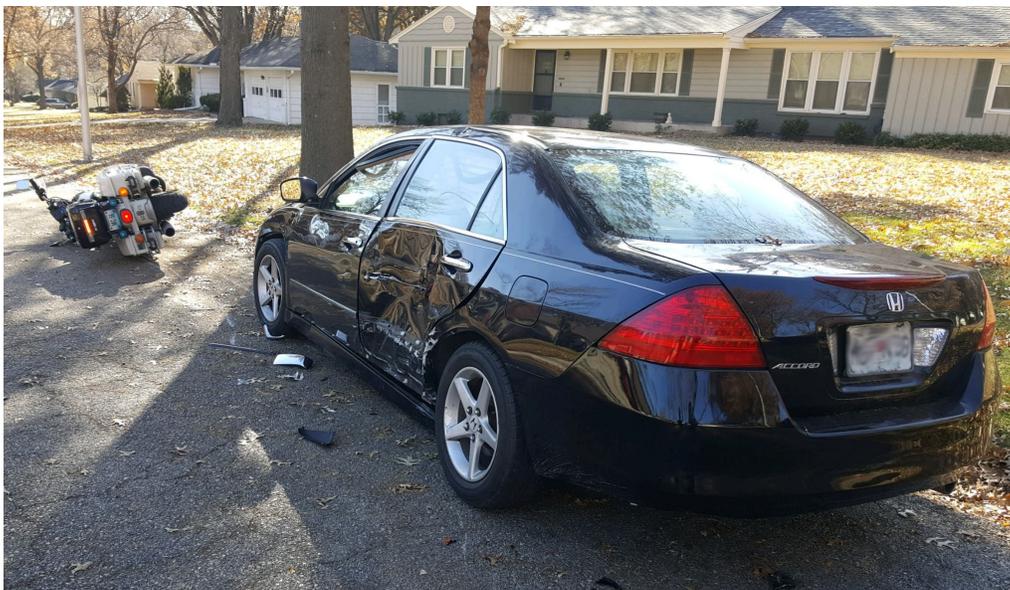
"I always do it before I get my blood pressure taken at the doctor's office," Officer Hulén said.

Sergeant Smith said

he's heard from officers who used the techniques in situations from a dangerous vehicle pursuit to trying to find their own special-needs child who had slipped out of the house.

"The staff here has been lucky over the years in that our work has been published a couple of times, and we've gotten some recognition," Sergeant Smith said. "But when a police officer comes in and says, 'Hey, keep doing that thing because here's how it helped me;' that's why we get up in the morning."

Sergeant Smith said it will be included in 2020's in-service and annual qualification training, with some new components added in.



Despite a severe injury, Motorcycle Officer Kevin Hulén was able to calm himself after this crash because of the focused breathing techniques he learned at the required annual firearms qualifications. The techniques also helped KCPD members perform better at qualifications, reducing failure rates by 45%.

Hulén, a motorcycle officer with the Traffic Enforcement Division.

Officer Hulén was trying to catch up to a car that had run a stop sign about noon Nov. 23 at 97th and Belleview. With his lights and sirens on, he tried to pass a car in front of him to catch up to the stop sign runner, but the car in front of him made a sudden left turn. There was no way for Officer Hulén to avoid it, and his motorcycle struck the side of the car. The motorcycle ended up in front of the car, and Officer Hulén landed on his back by the car's rear driver's side. He radioed for help and told the dispatcher what happened, but he could feel himself getting panicky. Bystanders were

more.

The KCPD Explorer Post should be well worth the time and effort put into the program. The leaders all confidently agree that there will be newly hired officers on KCPD, or an agency elsewhere, who have made their career choice as a result of KCPD's Explorer

program.

All Explorers must be between the ages of 14-20 years of age with an interest in becoming a law enforcement officer. They must be a student or have graduated with at least a 2.0 GPA and have good school conduct. For

more information on the program, please email Explorers@kcpd.org or contact Major Mark Folsom, 816-329-0994.

EXPLORERS, CONTINUED FROM P. 1

KCPD gets bigger and better bomb robot

A little after 8 a.m. January 9, a 911 caller spotted an abandoned briefcase on Oak Street near 20th Street. Officers shut down Oak and called the Bomb and Arson Section. The incident happened to coincide with the Section training on its first new bomb robot in 15 years.

The Andros FX by Remotec weighs about 1,000 pounds, compared to the previous robot's 450. It's much taller but has the same footprint as the old one. Bomb and Arson received the new robot in mid-December, but did not train with it until January.

The approximately \$450,000 robot was funded by a supplemental appropriation from the City to the Department's budget. Bomb and Arson Section Supervisor Mike Luster said the previous robot was becoming increasingly unreliable.

"The older robot was starting to show its age," he said. "We had upgraded it as much as it could be upgraded."

KCPD got its first bomb robot in 1999. Then in 2004, it got blown up by a grenade on a call in the Northland. The robot was replaced that year, and the Bomb and Arson Section has had the same robot since then.

Given what happened to the first robot, it should be fairly obvious why such equipment is needed.

"It's basically to do the



Above: The new Andros FX bomb robot completed its first mission Jan. 9.

Below: From left, the mini bomb robot, the old bomb robot - circa 2004 - and the new Andros FX.



things we could do without us having to go down there (to a potential explosive)," Sergeant Luster said. "It has the limited capabilities of a person. We can move it, manipulate it and X-ray off it."

All of those tasks are much easier now with the new Remotec Andros FX. Sergeant Luster said it has a bigger lifting capacity and is more user-friendly.

"It's controlled by an X-Box controller," he said. "Anyone who's played video games would pick right up on it. Our old robot's controls are all of these knobs and switches on a box."

Bomb and Arson detectives also can program it to do specific maneuvers and poses, so they don't have to manually enter all of the robot's moves every time.

The Section deploys a large and small robot on every suspicious package response.

"We try to make it an option on every call we go on," Sergeant Luster said.

The robots get a lot of use not just in Kansas City but in neighboring jurisdictions, as well. The KCPD Bomb and Arson Section is one of the few in the area with the equipment and expertise to handle calls with potential explosives, so they often assist other agencies. They also perform numerous public demonstrations with the robots throughout the year.

The Remotec trainers just happened to be in town when the abandoned suitcase showed up on Oak Street, so it was an ideal time to put the new robot to use. It performed well, Sergeant Luster said. The suitcase, it turned out, was empty.

Police help hundreds of families for the holidays

From giving away 500 Christmas dinners with Hy-Vee and Harvesters to a holiday party for deserving children to adopting whole families for Christmas, KCPD engaged in dozens of events in December to help the needy have happy holidays.



Upcoming Events

February 8
Badges & Baseball

February 18
Board of Police
Commissioners
Meeting

The Informant is a
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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.

Officially Speaking

Award

Meritorious Service Award

Director Linda Netzel

25-Year Rings

Detective Larry
Alderman
Administrative Assistant
Arthea Reno

Retirements

Officer Corby Adams
Detective Larry
Alderman
Master Detective Eric
Benson
Sergeant Christopher
Bentch
Sergeant David Berg

Master Detective Kelly
Bermond
Background Investigator
Toni Browning
Manager Edward
Brundage
Officer Thomas Cannon
II
Officer Elizabeth
Commino
Sergeant Barbara Eckert
Captain Kelly Eckert
Officer David Edwards
Inventory Specialist
Martin Edwards
Sergeant Rodney
Gentry
Sergeant Henry "Paul"
Hamilton, Jr.
Forensic Specialist
Saundra Haywood
Deputy Chief Sharon
Laningham
Deputy Chief Roger Lew-
is
Sergeant Daniel Mairet
Officer Michael Merino

Administrative Assistant
Janice Meyers
Major Diane Mozzicato
Director Linda Netzel
Captain Shawn Nichols
Officer Vickie Rabideaux
-Stous
Sergeant Steven
Robinson
Sergeant Donald Taylor
Captain Roy True
Administrative Assistant
Jennifer VanKirk
Detective Lexie Wallace
Officer Jarett Whipple

Obituaries

Retired Officer James
"Pat" Shea
Retired Sergeant Asa
Steen