



# Murders drop with Operation LeGenD

**O**peration LeGenD brought many federal law enforcement resources to help KCPD investigate violent crimes and bring them to prosecution, and homicides have decreased greatly since.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr announced Operation LeGenD on July 8. Named after 4-year-old LeGenD Taliferro, who was murdered June 29 while he slept in an apartment near 63<sup>rd</sup> and Paseo, Operation LeGenD was a “sustained, systematic and coordinated law enforcement initiative across all federal law enforcement agencies working in conjunction with state and local law enforcement officials to fight the sudden surge of violent crime, beginning in Kansas City, Mo.,” according to a news release from the U.S. Department of Justice.

The operation, which lasted until Sept. 16, resulted in more than 500 arrests, including 37 murder suspects. Officers also seized 176 firearms. One of the murder suspects arrested was Ryson Ellis. He is charged with murder in the death of 4-year-old LeGenD Taliferro, the namesake of the operation.

“We promised that Operation LeGenD would be a short-term, high-impact strategy to freeze the escalation of violent crime and respond to the record number of homicides in Kansas City this year,” U.S. Attorney Tim Garrison said Sept. 28. “That promise was kept. Operation LeGenD has had a significant impact on violent crime in Kansas City, and those efforts will continue.”

About 185 federal agents came to Kansas City from the Federal Bureau of Investiga-

tion (FBI), U.S. Marshals Service, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to assist Kansas City Police detectives in investigating violent crimes. KCPD already has long-standing relationships with these agencies and works in conjunction with them on a regular basis. Those strong relationships, along with the 40% increase in homicides over last year going into July, led to Kansas City being the first city chosen for Operation LeGenD. It later expanded to eight other cities.

Operation LeGenD’s additional investigators and resources allowed KCPD to conduct these violent crime investigations at a faster rate than would have been possible alone, Chief Rick Smith said. It also helped in detaining violent criminals prior to trial, with prosecutors from the U.S. Attorney’s Office

charging 126 offenders federally.

“In many states it’s very hard to keep violent criminals in pretrial detention,” Attorney General Barr said at a news conference in Kansas City on Aug. 19. “But in the federal system, we have a better ability to hold on to violent offenders pending dispositions in a case. In far too many states, one of the problems we have in the criminal justice system now is the revolving door justice. One constant in my 30 years in law enforcement is that police do our job. It falls apart with courts, prosecution and sentencing.”

Attorney General Barr came to visit KCPD on Aug. 19 to see how Operation LeGenD was implemented here and tout its success. U.S. Attorneys from other jurisdictions implementing Operation

LeGenD also came to see how it was working so they could follow the Kansas City model in their communities.

Operation LeGenD achieved the goal of

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**U.S. Attorney Tim Garrison spoke about the success of Operation LeGenD at an August press conference. The event also featured U.S. Attorney General William Barr, the parents of slain 4-year-old LeGenD Taliferro—the namesake of the program— Chief Rick Smith, and the heads of other federal law enforcement agencies participating in the operation.**

## EDITOR’S NOTE:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest in Kansas City, production of the monthly Informant was postponed. We apologize for the delay.

# Churches help fight violent crime

Churches from every corner of Kansas City are joining with the KCPD to establish trust and reduce violence.

The program, Getting to the Heart of the Matter, launched Aug. 11 with more than two dozen church leaders from multiple faiths and denominations at Police Headquarters. It's the brainchild of The Rev. Darron Edwards, pastor of United Believers Community Church.

Its mission is, "To provide a base of strong support to the community as well as Police Chief Rick Smith and the KCPD and to establish the Faith community as a bridge between these groups to enhance trust, communication and cooperation."

Getting to the Heart of the Matter aims to reduce violence through many means. The program will:

- \* Partner with KCPD chaplains, social workers, community interaction and crime free multi-housing officers as additional resources, and aid in responding to the impact of trauma as a physical and emotional reality on the lives of young people and their families as a direct result of violence.

- \* Build meaningful relationships with high-risk youth.

- \* Focus on connecting, educating, and rebuilding the lives of youth who have been



**An Aug. 11 press conference in front of Police Headquarters with church and police leaders launched Getting to the Heart of the Matter, an initiative to reduce violence and increase trust.**

stigmatized by mainstream society, been incarcerated or have incarcerated parents by adopting neighborhood schools.

- \* Identify the unique systemic challenges within each neighborhood as identified by the KCPD divisions and prioritize those issues.

- \* Provide gang mediation and conflict resolution for high-risk youth with the goal of establishing cease-fires and building the foundation for active peace.

- \* Establish accountable, community-based economic development projects and teach financial literacy.

- \* Build partnerships with the social/secular/non-profit institutions of our city, along with like-minded communities of faith to help provide spiritual, human, and material support.

- \* Receive advocacy training as well as provide ongoing identified training in order to create, maintain, and sustain community mobilization.

- \* Provide job referrals to KCPD.

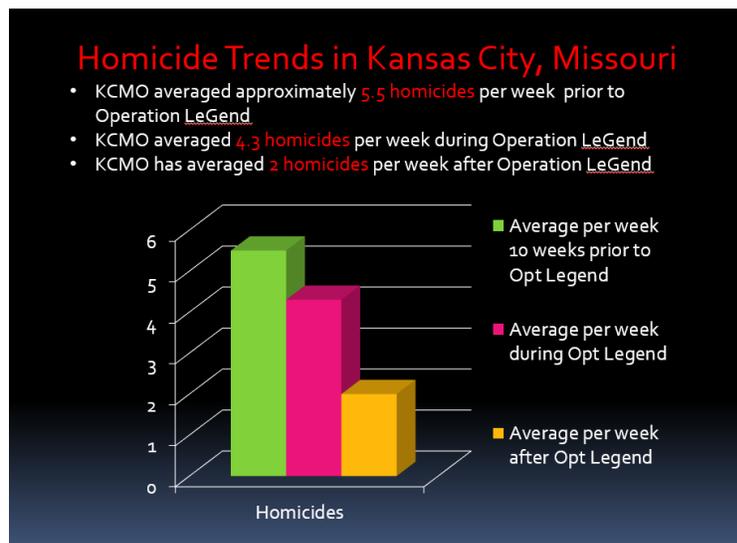
The Rev. Ronald Lindsay of Concord Fortress of Hope Church and The Rev. Emanuel Cleaver III of St. James United Methodist Church joined Rev. Edwards in developing Getting to the Heart of the Matter.

"Most faith communities have connections to their neighborhoods, even if the people living there don't attend that church," Cleaver said. "...Working with KCPD makes it where we can identify and address some of those things that need attention."

## OPERATION LEGEND, cont. from p. 1

slowing Kansas City's record-setting homicide pace. In the 10 weeks before Operation LeGend started, the city was averaging 5.5 homicides a week. During Operation LeGend, July 8-Sept. 16, that dropped to 4.3 homicides a week. In the 10 weeks after Operation LeGend, the homicide rate fell further to two homicides a week.

While the "surge" portion of Operation LeGend may be complete, the operation is far from over. Existing relationships with federal law enforcement partners are being enhanced. The FBI's Kansas City Field Office is embedding additional personnel in KCPD's Violent Crimes Division, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has created a new criminal enforcement group in Kansas City made up of eight agents and a supervisor. They are assigned to work full time with KCPD's Assault Squad to investigate non-fatal shootings. They also are helping KCPD charge shooters with federal gun law violations to get them off the streets as soon as possible.



# Soccer mentor brings officer to KCPD

Recent Academy graduate, Probationary Police Officer Juan Garcia, started his journey with KCPD at the age of 12 in an unlikely place: the soccer field.

He joined a new soccer team, the El Padrino FC Jaguars, in 2012, which was coached by Sergeant Ann Murphy.

The team was part of the Youth RISE Program, which "Coach Murph" began to mentor youth who are looked at as unreachable. Youth RISE consists of volunteers from various areas within law enforcement, educational institutions, and private sector businesses. Through mentorship, the program has provided opportunities for youth of Kansas City to develop skills and learn about teamwork, leadership, resilience, responsibility, the importance of education, interpersonal skills, and athletics.

"Juan had one of the biggest hearts on the team," Sergeant Murphy fondly remembered Juan during her time as his coach.

Most of the kids on her team knew Sgt. Murphy was an officer for KCPD. She remembers Juan mentioning to a young age he always thought it would be cool to be a police officer when he grew up.

"I wanted to join KCPD because I saw what Coach Murph did

and I was really inspired," Garcia recalled. "She helped so many kids and would go out of her way to make sure everyone had a chance."

Juan graduated from high school as a soccer all-star. He attended a local community college and remained in touch with Sgt. Murphy. He contacted her after he graduated from college and said, "Hey Murph, ...Do you remember when I was younger and I always said I wanted to be a police officer? Do you think I could do that?"

She remembered being calm and cool on the outside, but inside she was jumping up and down as she assured him, "Yes, of course you can!"

She met him at the KCPD Recruiting office to support



**Juan Garcia got to know Sgt. Ann Murphy through the Youth RISE soccer team she coaches, joining when he was 12 (above). Through her mentorship, he graduated from the Police Academy Sept. 10.**



him in seeing his dream realized. They filled out the application together and then went out to lunch. They discussed what a career with KCPD would look like, what it was like being a cop, what it required, the good things and the challenging aspects.

"I was probably full force after that, on making sure things got done and we got through the recruitment and hiring process together," Sgt. Murphy said.

Her support did not waiver during his time in the Academy. She regularly checked in with him to give him advice and encouragement. The qualities Coach Murph saw in Garcia on the soccer field were evident during his time at the Academy.

"He cared about what he did with his time, he cared about the people he surrounded himself by, he was fearless when it came to hard work, and he never took short cuts," she said.

His tenacity in the academy earned him the 169<sup>th</sup> Entrant Officer Class Director's Award, which is in honor of Deputy Chief Richard C.

Fletcher, who retired from KCPD in 1990. The award is received by a vote from academy peers to the class member who best demonstrates academic achievement, physical training, performance, firearms proficiency, positive attitude, teamwork, enthusiasm and leadership.

PPO Garcia, who was not aware he received the award until the graduation ceremony, credited his classmates, "It was an honor, I owe it to everyone

in my class," he said. "We would all push each other on every aspect."

"I am so proud of him and I am grateful that our paths crossed," Sergeant Murphy said. "I'm proud that he used soccer to pursue his education, I'm proud of the person he has become, and I'm grateful that he reached out that day and asked whether I thought he could become a police officer."

PPO Garcia is the first of many in the Youth RISE program who has an interest in law enforcement.

"We have a few Jaguar kids at local colleges who are

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# Fleet Operations Unit gets updated uniforms

**A** recent visit to No. 2 Garage (Fleet Operation Unit) reveals the staff has a new uniform look.

The previous uniform had been in place for about 10-12 years. It was a micro-checked light gray and black shirt. Another vendor recently purchased the uniform contractor, and the contract was up for renewal.

The members of the Fleet Operations Unit had been talking for some time about a different look for the shirts they wore. A selection of possible choices was provided, and Fleet staff opted for a new black shirt with gray-colored

sleeves. The new shirts have button covers to prevent buttons from being caught on the tools employees use—a safety feature. The shirts also have pen/pencil holders on the sleeve. Employees' first names will no longer be on the shirts. Instead, all shirts will have a nametag stating "KCPD Fleet Operations" on the left side.

Operation supervisors (crew leaders) will no longer have different-looking uniforms. They will go from gray shirts and pants to the same uniform as the automotive technicians. Crew Leaders will instead have a "Supervisor" nametag on the right shirt pocket.



Fleet Operations Unit's technicians and crew leaders display the new (black) and old (gray) uniforms.

# Captain fulfills promise to child

**A**n officer came through on a promise he made a little girl at a homicide scene thanks to a community organization that helps pets.

Officers responded to a homicide in the 3700 block of Benton about 7:30 a.m. Aug. 9. A disturbance broke out at the scene as friends and family members arrived. Amid it all was a little girl and her grandmother who lived on the block. The 6-year-old girl was upset about all the police activity.

Captain Daniel Graves noticed her, and he struck up a conversation with her about her puppy. The puppy was tied up in the front yard on a lead that was so tangled, it was only a few feet long. Captain Graves also spoke with the girl's grandmother. They said the dog needed a doghouse. He promised them he would get a doghouse and supplies for the



Captain Daniel Graves befriended a girl at a chaotic homicide scene Aug. 9. He spoke with her about her new puppy and realized it was in need of a dog house and some supplies, so he got them for her.

puppy.

Captain Graves tried several stores, but none had them in stock, and he wanted to get the girl a doghouse quickly. He reached out to Chain of Hope. Chain of Hope is a Kansas City non-profit that works to pre-

vent animal abuse and neglect in the urban core, providing owner education and shelter, medical assistance and spay and neuter services for pets.

Captain Graves and Chain of Hope delivered the new doghouse, along with an indoor kennel and several other supplies, Aug. 13. The girl's grandmother, Loren Troutt, said she appreciated what they did.

"You have some police officers out here like the ones that came today with (Captain) Graves that truly love and care about ... this community and the kids in this community," Troutt posted on social media afterward. "My heart goes out with a great big thanks for (Captain) Graves and the corporation that came out with him today, along with the other of-

ficers that accompanied him. Thank you all for coming out today to make a difference in my grandchild's life and mine."

# Child ID systems roll out for parents

**K**ansas City Police are using a new system to help find children in the event they go missing.

Dozens of families took advantage of the new EZ Child ID system when police rolled it out at a Slurpees with a Cop event Aug. 11 at a 7-11 store in south Kansas City. The system makes an ID card for children with their identifying information and takes digital fingerprints.

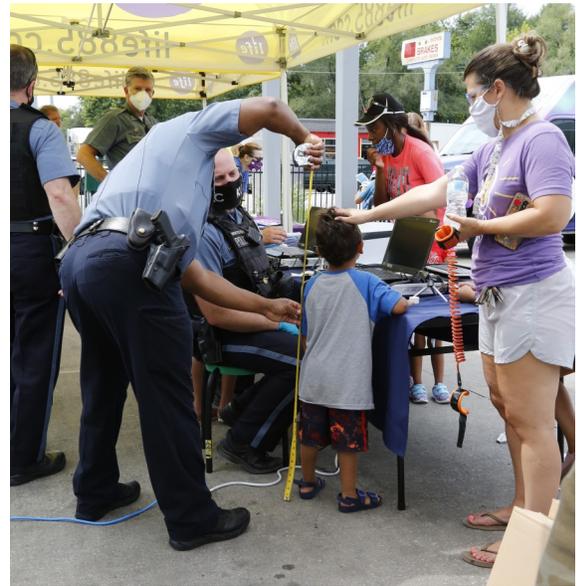
"In the event a child is abducted and an Amber Alert has to be issued, having that information already makes it much more efficient and easy," said Officer Jason Cooley, who spearheaded the project.

Blue Cross Blue Shield Kansas City, in cooperation with the Police Foundation of Kansas City, donated the money to purchase three of the

kits. Each EZ Child ID kit includes a hard case, laptop computer, digital fingerprint scanner, portable camera system, card printer and cooling equipment to run outside. Police obtained the kits in early 2020 and planned to roll them out at spring community events, which unfortunately had to be cancelled to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Some KCPD outdoor community events are up and running again, and Officer Cooley said it was the right time to deploy the EZ Child ID system.

"Kids are not negotiable," he said. "We've got to move forward with this. We've got to help parents, and we can have stranger danger conversations around it."



Officers measure a child's height for the new EZ Child ID cards at a Slurpee with a Cop event at 7-11 on Aug. 11.

## Officially Speaking

### Awards

*Special Unit Citation*  
Special Projects Section

*Life-Saving Awards*  
Officer Devin Hales  
Officer Landon Hartley  
Officer Rajdeep Khakh  
Officer Brian Ruch  
Officer Nicholas Quatrocky  
Officer Albert Villafain  
Officer Kelsey Wingate

*Meritorious Service Awards*  
Officer Debra Browning  
Sergeant Nicole Christmann  
Human Resources Specialist  
Rosalind Lee  
Officer Vito Mazzara  
Sergeant Brock Nelson  
Officer Shawnie Nix  
Officer David Osbahr  
Sergeant Patrick Rauzi  
Officer Joey Roberts  
Officer Anthony Rogers  
Officer Kori Smeiska  
Captain Gregory Williams

### *Certificates of Commendation*

Officer De'Andre Allen  
Officer Cody Halterman (2)  
Officer Adam Mullins  
Officer Levi Plaschka (2)  
Retired Officer Peter Schultz  
Officer Eric Stubbs

### 25-Year Rings

Sergeant Clifford Balicki II  
Sergeant Keith Ericsson  
Officer William Finn  
Detective Mario Floridio  
Sergeant James Green  
Detention Facility Officer Syed Hassan  
Officer Brian Leslie  
Officer John Lozano  
Master Police Officer Scott McCubbin  
Major Doug Niemeier  
Officer Rhonda Schulte  
Officer Darin Snapp  
Detective Jason Steinke  
Officer Daniel Watson  
Supervisor Janet Williams

Major Steven Young

### Retirements

Detective Cristin Allen  
Sergeant Clifford Balicki II  
Sergeant Jeffrey Colvin  
Captain Cindy Cotterman  
Detective Jeremy Curley  
Officer Richard Green  
Supervisor Susan Havlic  
Sergeant James Keller  
Officer Robert King  
Sergeant Jarrett Lanpher  
Officer Derek Merrill  
Detective Robert Murphy  
Operations Analyst Mark Russo  
Sergeant Robert Schweitzer

### Obituaries

Retired Officer Donald Hallauer  
Retired Officer Hadley Hathcock  
Retired Officer Eugene Heptig  
Retired Supervisor Donna Kinder  
Retired Officer Charles Lewis  
Retired Detective Charles Neuner  
Retired Captain John Ober

**SOCCER MENTOR,  
cont. from p. 3**

considering KCPD specifically for their future," Sergeant Murphy proudly stated. "We also have about 10 high school-aged kids who are interested in law enforcement as they continue to prepare for college, and I would be honored to stand side by side with them and serve our community together one day."

Since his graduation from the Academy, PPO Garcia is anxious to give back to his community both as an officer and by volunteering to help with Youth RISE as a coach and mentor. He is excited to help the kids reach for their dreams, just like Sgt. Murphy did for him.

**The Informant is a  
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# E.O.C. 169 graduates



Entrant Officer Class 169 graduated Sept. 10 with 17 officers being sworn into the Kansas City Missouri Police Department, and seven sworn into outside agencies. Valedictorian of the class was Liberty Officer David Cronin, and the Richard Fletcher Director's Award went to Officer Juan Garcia of the KCPD (see story p. 3). Acting Chief Shawn Wadle swore them in.