



# KCPD honors 50 years of innovation

Fifty years ago, the stuff that would become the quiet backbone of the Kansas City Missouri Police Department arrived at Headquarters.

It was a giant computer – an IBM 360 Model 40 – and it was the first time such a machine would be used for law enforcement purposes in the United States and probably in the world. With its whirring reels of tape and flashing lights, its duty was to get officers in the field criminal justice information in seconds. The whole project started a few years prior in 1966 when Chief Clarence Kelley hired Melvin Bockelman to be the manager of the Computer Systems Division.

Bockelman was a computer systems manager in the United States Air Force. Now 90 years old, he recalled that Chief Kelley had tried to get several people already on the KCPD to go to training to learn about computers and take on the job. But no one wanted to. Bockelman said they were too afraid for their careers if they failed.

“Chief Kelley pointed his finger at me only one time,” Bockelman said, and it was during his job interview in September 1966. “He said, ‘I want this computer to serve the officers in the field, and I want you to get the information to them within 10 seconds. Nobody else – no other police department – has that. They only have computer programs for administration. You’re going to develop it. Otherwise we’ll get someone else.’”

Bockelman rose to the challenge. When the first batch of equipment was ordered in May 1968, Bockelman told Chief Kelley it wouldn’t meet his 10-second goal. Chief Kelley told him to change the order.

“He said, ‘Change it, but in 10 seconds, it’s got to work,’” Bockelman said. “He never backed down on that.”



The equipment that would work arrived on July 10, 1968. On Sept. 1, 1968, KCPD revolutionized policing and made international headlines by installing computers in police cars that could retrieve data in seconds.

So on July 10, 2018, the Board of Police Commissioners honored Bockelman and Information Services employees past and present with a resolution for their 50 years of work at KCPD. Chief Richard Smith presented Bockelman with a Chief’s baton for his service and innovation, and the department hosted a reception for current and former Information Services employees. Bockelman extensively documented his career at KCPD, and his scrapbooks, pictures and articles were on display at the reception. He has since

donated them to the Kansas City Police Historical Society.

Bockelman didn’t just launch the first in-car police computers; he also created the entire region’s criminal justice information system: Automated Law Enforcement Response Team 1, more commonly known as ALERT. It connected a 10,000-square-mile area in western Missouri and eastern Kansas and allowed computerized criminal justice information sharing between 22 municipal police departments, six county sheriffs, the Kansas and Missouri Highway Patrols, the FBI, U.S. Postal Inspector, municipal and juvenile courts, parole officers, and prosecutors. These systems fed not only

Cont. on p. 2

**Pg. 2** CSI provides new sheets for rape victims

**Pg. 3** Detectives share tactics and faith in Ecuador  
News in Brief

**Pg. 4** Officially Speaking  
Upcoming Events  
Lip Sync Challenge

# CSI provides new sheets for rape victims

**K**CPD crime scene technicians almost always collect bedsheets for evidence and forensic testing if a sexual assault happens on a bed. During the course of her work, Crime Scene Technician Marisa Smith found out that those sheets they took were sometimes the victim's only set of sheets.

"We wanted to start a program where we replace the sheets on scene so the victim has one less thing to worry about during the investigation and healing process," Smith said.

Sexual assault victims often return home after having undergone an exam by a certified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner at a hospital and after being interviewed by police. And then they find that crime scene technicians have gone through many of their things processing them for evidence.

"It's necessary, but it's a very overwhelming process for them," Smith said.

Smith started her efforts by meeting with the department's long-time victim advocate, Supervisor Jennifer Miller. She also worked with Social Services Coordinator Gina English and Central Patrol Division Social Worker Tori Cawman. Because of their long-time work with victims, Smith wanted their input. She also wrote up her proposal and submitted it her chain of command, all of whom approved. She has worked to ensure leaving the sheets at the scene does nothing to taint the integrity of the forensic investigation.



**Crime Scene Technician Marisa Smith gives victims of sexual assaults brand new bed sheets. CSI usually has to take victims' sheets to process for evidence.**

Her coworkers in Crime Scene Investigation and at the Crime Lab have enthusiastically embraced the project.

"People are leaving sheets in my cubicle all the time," she said.

She keeps them in a linen closet at the Lab. When CSI gets called out to process a sexual assault scene involving a bed,

they ask the officers on scene if they can tell what size bed it is and bring corresponding sheets. If they can't tell, CSI technicians bring a set in every size.

Smith said crime scene technicians choose that career because it is cool and fun, but ultimately, they want to help people. Sometimes they feel like they don't get to be very helpful on a particular case until it goes to trial, which can take years.

"We're not like patrol (officers)," she said. "They can have direct positive contacts with citizens every day. When we show up the victim's always gone. ... This is a way for us to have an immediate positive impact."

The Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA) referred one victim to Smith right when the sheets program started in July. Since it was after the fact and not an active crime scene, Smith personally delivered new sheets to the victim at her home, where she met her young daughter, too.

"It was so humbling, and she was so sweet," Smith said. "If we never help anybody else, that was worth it to me. Now she has sheets she can snuggle in with her daughter."

Anyone interested in donating sheets can bring them to the community interaction officer at any of the six patrol division stations. They need to be new.

"For me, it's very important that they're new and in the package because it's a little thing that shows we value (the victims)," Smith said.

## 50th ANNIVERSARY, *Cont. from p. 1*

into patrol cars but also KCPD's helicopters and Communications Center. The technology was ground-breaking.

Once in operation, ALERT 1 received attention from all over the world. Stories appeared in national magazines and newspapers from Belgium to New Zealand. Visitors came from around the world to see KCPD's system, and Bockelman traveled to countries like Greece, Israel and Thailand to teach law enforcement agencies there how to implement similar technology. Bockelman won numerous awards for his innovation.

David Mann is the current manager of the Information Services Division. A 39-

year veteran of KCPD, he once worked with Bockelman.

"Our job in IT is to continue to deliver criminal justice information in a way that is accessible and impactful to the members of KCPD who are doing their jobs," Mann said. "... The ways and methods of doing that – the computers and software – has changed drastically. Changes in IT are constant. What has not changed is the vision Chief Clarence Kelley had in 1968 when he started ALERT, and that is the vital role technology can play in accomplishing the mission of the Kansas City Missouri Police Department."



**Department members looked at Melvin Bockelman's scrapbooks and items about the history of computers at KCPD at a reception.**

# Detectives share tactics and faith in Ecuador

Police officers spend a lot of time helping others, but Detectives David Epperson and Aaron Hendershot take helping others to a whole new level.

For the second year, both are going on a mission trip to Ecuador through Teaching Authorities Christian Truths in Central America (TACTICA) Ministries. Teams of officers and law enforcement personnel visit various locations throughout Central America to get a taste of cross-cultural missions while investing in the careers, safety and spiritual health of international safety partners. These trips consist of tactical training and leadership development, along with personal faith testimonies, Bible studies and evangelism.

Detective Epperson recalled how much of an impact his first trip had on him.

“Seeing how many people came to Christ; seeing that unfold in front of us was an exciting ministry to be a part of,” he said.

Detective Hendershot’s experience was similar, but something specific stands out for him.

“How similar as police officers they were,” he said. “They have the



Detectives David Epperson and Aaron Hendershot are making their second trip to Ecuador to train police there in tactics and share their faith. On their first trip, they conducted defensive tactic training (above) and led small group Bible studies, below.



same concerns, worries, excitement and joy.”

The team will work Sept. 21 through Sept. 30. This includes travel, and a day of team training for orientation. With five days dedicated to training, the TACTICA team teaches the Ecuadorian officers building searches, self-defense and many other police operation tactics. When the American team of officers arrives and begins training, they are welcomed with open arms.

Detective Epperson said the officers in Ecuador love selfies with the American team, along with gift exchanges. Hendershot agreed that the Ecuadorians were welcoming and enjoyed the opportunity to interact with their American counterparts.

Anyone interested in learning more about the program

can contact Jerry Conner, global outreach pastor with Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, at 816-781-5959.

## News in Brief



### South Patrol hosts Ex-Offender Hiring Fair

About 150 ex-offenders came to the first-ever Ex-Offender Hiring Fair that South Patrol Division hosted July 18. More than 30 businesses and service agencies were on hand conducting interviews and providing resources. The event was sponsored by several state and city elected officials.

### 300 people, horses come out to support police

Hundreds of horses and riders took to the streets of Kansas City on July 27 for the 3rd Annual Cowboys for Cops event. The fund-raising and law enforcement support ride went from the West Bottoms to the Liberty Memorial. It was organized by the Jackson County Sheriff’s Mounted Posse. (See picture in banner.)

## Upcoming Events

September 4  
**Citizens Police Academy  
Fall Session starts**

September 17  
**Board of Police  
Commissioners Meeting**

September 23  
**Broadway Bridge Run  
for Special Olympics  
Missouri**

The Informant is a  
publication of KCPD's  
Media Unit  
(816) 234-5170  
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## Video shows KC love

KCPD took on the social media law enforcement challenge of producing a lip sync video. Featuring department members, local rapper Tech N9ne, youth from the Police Athletic League and more, the video sought to show how much KCPD cares about the city it serves. It's been seen 870,000 times on the department's Facebook and YouTube pages.



## Officially Speaking

**25-Year Rings**  
Detective Owen Farris

**Retirements**  
Sergeant Anthony Sanders  
Detective John Cooley, Jr.  
Detective Laura Snapp  
Supervisor Jeane Fracassa

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