

KEARNEY POLICE DEPARTMENT



APRIL - JUNE | 2026



A WORD FROM CHIEF KOWALEK

I hope everyone is having a fantastic summer and finding time to appreciate the small things in life. The Kearney Police Department continues to be blessed as we remain fully staffed. As employees retire or life circumstances change, we are grateful to have highly qualified individuals eager to join our team and serve this great community. A great deal of that success is due to the outstanding work of our Special Services Bureau. This team oversees recruitment, our field training program, community service officers, and our internship program. Each of these areas have proven to be effective in discovering, guiding, and developing future officers of KPD.

As you enjoy the remainder of the summer, I encourage everyone to stay safe and not become complacent. Tragic stories happen every year around the nation during this time of children drowning in lakes or pools and children getting struck by vehicles while riding their bikes/scooters. Be aware of these dangers, use safety measures around water, keep a watchful eye, and talk to your children about roadway safety as well as assure that they are always wearing a helmet. Keeping our children safe is a shared responsibility, and we are proud to partner with parents, schools, healthcare providers, and community leaders in that effort.

I am looking forward to this next quarter as I approach my first year as Chief of Police. If there are ways we can improve our service or if a member of the Kearney Police Department has made a positive impact on you or your family, I would love to hear about it. Every week, I try to highlight the great work KPD is doing and the positive impact that they have on community members. Thank you for your continued support, and I hope you have a safe and enjoyable rest of your summer.

Take care, Chief Kowalek

NEW HIRES/ASSIGNMENTS/PROMOTIONS

This quarter Officer Josh Goodbrake and Officer Ethan Mrockzek graduated from the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center and were sworn in alongside lateral Officer Jason Gould on May 12th. All three are currently in the Field Training Program and we look forward to them graduating the program and joining the Uniformed Patrol Bureau. Chase Pawloski was hired for the Community Service Officer position this quarter. Chase is a former intern and we are pleased he has chosen KPD to begin his law enforcement career.



Intern Ebony Handler completed her 120 hours on April 1. University of Nebraska at Kearney Criminal Justice student Gael Sotelo was selected as the first joint KPD/BCSO intern and is completing 300 hours. This innovative dual internship provides a unique perspective from both City and County law enforcement operations. Visit JoinKPD.com to learn more.

The department also celebrated the following milestone anniversary:

- 5 years – Investigator Noah Stewart

INAUGURAL CHIP IN FORE D.A.R.E. GOLF TOURNAMENT

With the goal of expanding the D.A.R.E. program to every elementary school in Kearney and Buffalo County, the Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association, with the support of Lieutenant JC Small, organized a fundraising golf tournament to help purchase the curriculum materials needed for expansion.

The event was an overwhelming success, with 35 teams participating and \$13,425 raised which far surpassed the original \$5,000 goal. We extend our sincere thanks to all of the participants, donors, sponsors, and organizers who made this event possible.

These funds will help empower local youth by teaching confidence, responsible decision-making, and life skills while strengthening positive relationships between students and law enforcement.



CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY AND YOUTH CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY

This quarter, both the Citizens Police Academy and Youth Citizens Police Academy were a tremendous success, with excellent participation from community members and local students.

Lieutenant Koettters once again led the Citizens Police Academy, providing participants with an inside look at the many facets of modern law enforcement. School Resource Officer Dennis coordinated the Youth Citizens Police Academy, creating an engaging and informative experience that gave students a hands-on glimpse into police work.

We extend our thanks to both program coordinators, as well as the many department members who provided demonstrations and presentations throughout each academy.

If you are interested in participating in either academy in 2027, please email kearneypolice@kearneygov.org to be added to our notification list. We will send a reminder when applications open.

2026 POLICE MEMORIAL CEREMONY

During National Police Week, the Kearney Police Department and Buffalo County Sheriff's Office paused to honor the law enforcement officers who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their communities.

Members of both agencies, fellow first responders, and community members gathered at the Law Enforcement Center for a memorial ceremony to remember the fallen and reflect on their legacy of courage, compassion, and commitment.

We also recognize the families who stand behind the badge, whose sacrifices and unwavering support make this profession possible. Their strength and resilience will never be forgotten. During National Police Week and every day we remain committed to honoring those who gave their lives in the line of duty.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

We had another fantastic quarter connecting with our community! From High Five Fridays at local schools, 3rd grade tours and D.A.R.E. graduations, to Healthy Kids Day, the Kearney Public Library's Summer Kickoff, and Fishing with First Responders, we enjoyed countless opportunities to build relationships with those we serve. Thank you, Kearney, for making our community such a wonderful place to live and work!



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