

KEARNEY POLICE DEPARTMENT

JULY - SEPTEMBER | 2025



A WORD FROM CHIEF KOWALEK

If I haven't introduced myself yet, my name is Gabe Kowalek and I am extremely honored to be the Police Chief for the Kearney Police Department. I am also proudly writing my first quarterly newsletter and hope that all has been well over the last few months. Members of KPD have been working hard to keep the city of Kearney a safe place to live and to maintain community trust and support. This is a great city to serve and the support we receive is overwhelmingly felt. This was very evident at the annual Law Enforcement Appreciation Banquet which was hosted by the Friends of Law Enforcement group in July. Members of KPD and their families are incredibly grateful for this thoughtful gesture and look forward to this yearly event.

As school is back in session and there has been an increase of young drivers heading back to classes and younger children walking/biking/scooting to school, we strongly encourage voluntary compliance from the public to follow the rules of the road. Officers are present to "remind" drivers when needed and have been highly active with traffic enforcement over the last few months. This has resulted in many arrests for DUI, possession of controlled substances, weapon seizures, and warrant arrests. I could not be prouder of this entire organization as it takes every division in the department to do their part in order to ensure that KPD remains a professional organization that is efficient and effective.

KPD is currently hiring, and I encourage anyone who knows someone interested in our agency to urge them to apply. For more information, please visit joinkpd.com or contact Officer Faz at 308-233-5241. I wish everyone nothing but the best this upcoming fall. Go Lopes!!!!

NEW HIRES/ASSIGNMENTS/PROMOTIONS

This quarter Officer Gavynn West graduated from the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center and was sworn in on August 26th alongside Chief Gabe Kowalek. Officer West began his rigorous Field Training with Officer Austin Hibberd. Following Sergeant Greg Benson stepping down as



the Team Leader for the Emergency Service Unit to focus on his new role of Sergeant of Criminal Investigations, Officer Austin Hibberd was selected to assume that role. Hastings College Junior Chase Palowski completed his 200-hour internship.

The department also celebrated the following milestone anniversary:

10 years – Officer CJ Obradovich



INVESTIGATOR JEFF SCHWARZ RETIREMENT

Investigator Jeff Schwarz's last day with the Kearney Police Department was on August 22nd, 2025. His law enforcement career included a combined 29 years (11 yrs Lexington Police Department, 9 yrs Dawson County Sheriff's Office and 10 yrs Kearney Police Department.) While at the Kearney Police Department Investigator Schwarz served as a Field Training Officer, Taser Instructor, Accident/Scene Reconstructionist, and most recently served in the Criminal Investigations Bureau. We thank Investigator Schwarz for his years of service and wish him all the best in retirement!



LIFE SAVING AWARDS

This quarter we proudly recognized Officer Derek Payton, Sergeant Brad Newell, Officer David Humphrey, and Lieutenant Jason Koettters for their quick actions and teamwork during a medical emergency that ultimately saved a man's life.

On May 3, 2025, officers responded to a 911 medical call at Candlewood Suites. A 13-year-old boy, Jackson, reported that his 42-year-old father, Daniel, was not breathing. Jackson remained calm and provided clear information to dispatchers, helping officers reach the scene quickly.

Officer Payton arrived first and immediately began CPR. Officer Humphrey arrived shortly after with an AED, which was applied and delivered a shock. Sergeant Newell assisted by helping paramedics

transport the patient to the ambulance and by contacting Daniel's wife, who was out of town, to notify her of the situation. Lieutenant Koettters oversaw the scene and drove the ambulance to the hospital so paramedics could continue CPR.

From Jackson's composed 911 call to the coordinated response by first responders, the proper use of training, communication, and equipment saved Daniel's life. We were honored to have Daniel and his family join us as we recognized these officers for their outstanding efforts. The quick response and effective application of training they displayed is commendable and we appreciate their dedication to the citizens of this community.

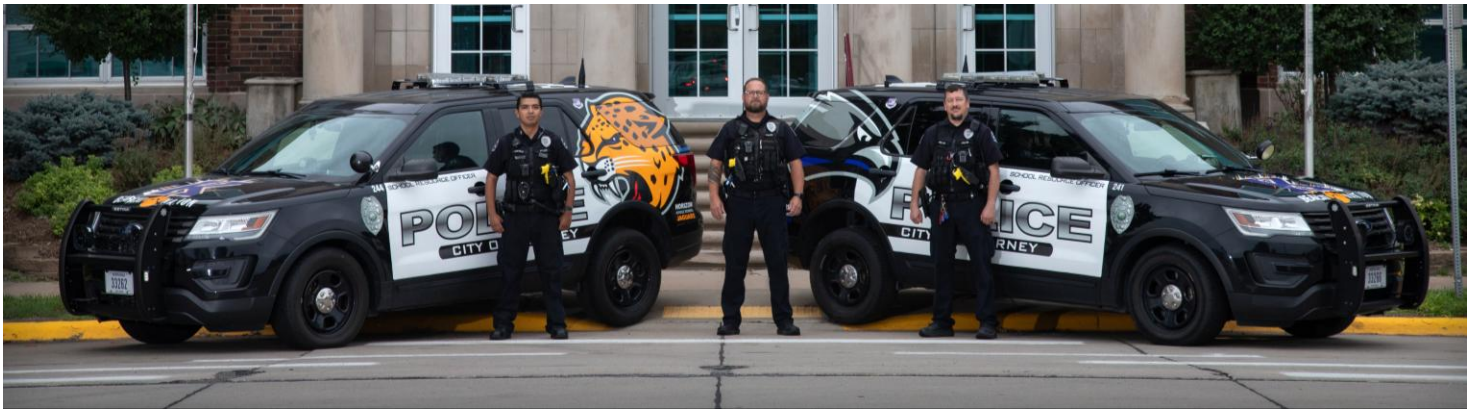


K-9 KUBA

We're excited to announce that this quarter, our new K-9 Kuba has been certified with his handler Officer Zach Schwarz. They join our other K-9 team, Officer Alstrom and K-9 Bane. Kuba is a 1-year-old Dutch Shepherd from Arkansas and has already proven to be a tremendous addition to our department.

Over the summer, the team completed four certifications: Narcotics Detection, Tracking, Article/Evidence Detection, and Handler Control/Patrol. Since joining, Kuba has been deployed 22 times. He will be officially sworn in at the City Council meeting on October 14th.





2025/2026 SCHOOL YEAR

At the Kearney Police Department, the safety of our students and teachers remains one of our top priorities. From the morning commute—whether walking, biking, driving, or riding the bus—to the time everyone returns home, we’re committed to keeping our schools and neighborhoods safe.

Our three dedicated School Resource Officers—Officer Dennis, Officer Arevalo, and Officer Weller—spend their days in the schools mentoring and supporting students. This year, we’ve been fortunate to participate in several High Five Fridays, creating positive connections with students to start their day off right. Officer Weller is currently teaching the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program at Emerson and Northeast Elementary Schools, helping students make smart and healthy choices. Additionally, all sworn officers recently completed training designed to familiarize them with local school buildings and better prepare them to respond in the event of a critical incident.

We’re grateful for the strong partnerships we share with our schools and extend our sincere thanks to all the outstanding educators in our community!

5TH ANNUAL LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION BANQUET

Thank you to everyone who helped organize, promote, and attend the 5th Annual Law Enforcement Appreciation Banquet, hosted by the Friends of Law Enforcement at the Younes Conference Center. The outpouring of support from our community is truly unmatched. We are incredibly grateful and blessed to serve the remarkable citizens of Kearney.



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