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## ABOUT THE MSA

# Jail Administrator Committee

### OUR MISSION:

- To provide guidance in the care, custody and control of persons in custody while maintaining their welfare.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- To provide best practices which are legal, ethical and attainable;
- To provide a safe environment and training for staff to operate in an efficient and effective manner.

### COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Sheriff Chris Class – Cooper County – Chair  
Dan Keen – Co-chair  
Amy Larkin – Secretary  
Jeanne Merritt – Training Coordinator

### SHERIFF

Sheriff Cindi Mullins – Saline County  
Sheriff Kent Oberkrom – Henry County

### JAIL ADMINISTRATORS

Lieutenant John Axsom – Adair County  
Captain Sam Boyd – Henry County  
Sergeant Kevin Coates – Marion County  
Captain Scott Duck – Franklin County  
Captain Mike Barnett – Newton County  
Lieutenant Doug Bounous – Lawrence County  
Captain Ronald Floyd – Christian County  
Lieutenant Eric Foree – Montgomery County  
Sergeant Kevin Neville – Cass County  
Captain David Hannon – Miller County  
Eric Schleuter – Warren County  
Captain Chris Wolfe – Jackson County





# Working to Make Jails Safer



“I’m not sure people realize all that sheriffs, jail administrators, and their staff members have to deal with on a daily basis in their jails.”

When it’s time for me to write my message to all of you, my head is always full of ideas, knowing that I can’t possibly write about all the things there are to share because we have so much going on at the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association!

As I looked at our story list for this issue it was exciting to see the great articles that we have, but at the same time, it was a little sad. One of our stories is about Joe King, who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly late last year. He was one of the best instructors and team leaders that I have worked with. His professionalism and dedication to his job in law enforcement and helping others was one of a kind. Check out his story.

I’m not sure people realize all that sheriffs, jail administrators, and their staff members have to deal with on a daily basis in their jails. They are always looking for ways to make their jails safer and more secure for staff, inmates and the community. We share their stories to enlighten you and hopefully show you why it’s so important to support your local sheriffs — and law enforcement in general.

The article that looks at inmate transportation through the ages is fantastic! It’s interesting to read about how things have changed. It also amazes me to see how far our jails have come and how laws have changed. Everything from inmate phone calls to visitation and medical care is driven by certain available resources.

Of course, I must write something on training. The MSA is excited to announce our new 48-Hour Jail Officer Training Academy. This training will be held twice a year in nine different locations across the state. The classes are designed to give jail officers information on laws, report writing, handling grievances, and much more. Graduates of the class will leave with information they need to safely and correctly carry out their duties. One of our instructors, Skyler Viebrock, is also being profiled in this issue. Skyler has taught many classes in his time and continues to do an outstanding job. Talk about someone who is dedicated to his work! Check out our other great jail training instructors on our website, [mosheriffs.com](http://mosheriffs.com).

I want to thank all of the counties, sheriffs, and jail staff for what they do each day. Know that you are appreciated by many. As always, if anyone has any questions regarding the 48-Hour Jail Officer Training Academy or any other training let me know.

*Jeanne Merritt*

*Marketing Director  
Jail Training Coordinator  
Missouri Sheriffs’ Association  
Missouri Sheriffs United*

# NOTEWORTHY



## JAIL SAFETY

Cooper County finished the 40-Hour Corrections Officer class in January, put on by MOJO Consulting and Training in conjunction with the Missouri Sheriffs' Association. To schedule training in your area, email [jeanne@mosheriffs.com](mailto:jeanne@mosheriffs.com).



## DEDICATION ACKNOWLEDGED

Corrections Caseworker Rena Childs was recently recognized for 25 years of dedicated service to the Jackson County Detention Center. "Ms. Child is a well-respected member of our team and she had a terrific turnout for her special event on January 18, 2023," said Detention Center Director Diana Knapp. Child is pictured with Corrections Casework Administrator Dr. Ozundu Ugbaja.

## 'TEAM PLAYER' RECOGNIZED

According to Daniel Keen, director of the St. Charles County Department of Corrections, Corrections Officer David Tubbins embodies all of the department's core values: Pride, Professionalism, Integrity, Honor, Discipline, Vigilance, and Dedication. "He is a team player and perseveres through various challenges. Officer Tubbins is a 'go to' employee that always gets the job done and maintains a positive attitude. Thank you for your dedication, service, and job well done. We appreciate you," Director Keen said.



## SCCDOC JANUARY EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

"Officer McKevin Davis is a professional and wears our badge with honor. He is always prepared for work and consistently has a positive attitude. Officer Davis is task-oriented, helpful, a team player, and strives to do his best every day," said Director Daniel Keen, adding that was why Officer Davis was named Employee of the Month for January. "He continues to show interest in growing professionally within our department and he has an optimistic future. Thank you for your dedication, service, and a job well done. We appreciate you."

## DETENTION PROMOTION

Major Michael Cunningham was promoted to Deputy Director of Operations for the Jackson County Detention Center. Deputy Director Cunningham joined the JCDC team as a corrections officer in 2010. He quickly rose through the detention ranks and was promoted to manager of Detention in 2022. He has been serving as the point person for the Detention Center on the planning of the new facility in the Justice With Dignity project for the past two years.



Announce your special event or award recognition with MSA. Send information to [nancy@mosheriffs.com](mailto:nancy@mosheriffs.com).



## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Sergeant Brian Shahan was named the 2022 Employee of the Year in the Jail Division of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office. He started as a full-time corrections officer with the Montgomery County Jail in 2003, then attended the Law Enforcement Training Institute in 2005, earning a commission as a deputy sheriff. During his 19 years of service, Sgt. Shahan worked in all divisions within the sheriff's office, including the jail, patrol, and Court Services divisions. In 2016 he was promoted to corporal, and in September 2022 was promoted to sergeant in the Jail Division.

Sgt. Shahan handles most of the training for correction officers and patrol deputies. His certifications include Instructor Development School, Field Training Officer School, LiveScan, Defensive Tactics Instructor, and OPN Instructor. He is also charged with overseeing the jail's electronic and computer-aided control system, the entire networking system for all divisions,

correcting any problems with computers, the security camera system, and the video recording system.

Sheriff Craig Allison wanted to recognize two employees - one from the jail division and one from patrol - for their hard work and dedication to the sheriff's office and the community they serve. This year employees got to decide who would receive the awards. In November, staff was asked to nominate one of their peers, explaining why they felt that person deserved the recognition. Their nominee needed to possess certain attributes such as a positive attitude and good leadership and communication skills, if he or she encouraged cooperation among their peers, had regular attendance, was a problem solver, could adapt to change without complaint and worked well under pressure and during times of crisis.

"We were very pleased with the responses we received, and we agreed the staff had chosen two employees who definitely stood



out over this past year, with both being very deserving of this recognition," Sheriff Allison said. "Thank you, Brian, for all that you do for us. You earned this award!" (The other employee recognized works on the patrol side of the sheriff's office and is acknowledged in News Around the State in The Missouri Sheriff.)



## RECOGNIZING COMMITMENT

Jefferson County Sheriff Dave Marshak recently recognized employees who had worked five or more years at the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Justice Center:

Kimberly Case - 5 years

Michael Merseal - 10 years

Chester "Bud" Jordan - 15 years

Kenny Valeck - 25 years

"We all appreciate their dedication," the sheriff said.

## GOING HIGHER

After 30 years and 10 months, Captain Ray Franks announced his retirement from the Clay County Sheriff's Office. He began his employment as a control center operator in 1992, went on to graduate from the 120-hour POST-approved academy held at the Missouri Highway Patrol Academy in 1993, and then transferred to field operations/patrol in 1994, where he worked until 2007. Also, in 1994, Capt. Franks was selected as a Clay County Sheriff's Office STAR Team member and he remained on the team until 2009. In 2007 he transferred to administration as the background investigator and held that position until 2016, when he was promoted to sergeant of the Professional Standards Unit. In 2021, he was promoted to captain and served as the Detention Division commander until his retirement.

"Capt. Franks has served the County of Clay with honor and distinction throughout his tenure and has helped teach, train, and mentor countless members of this department, leaving his influence and legacy for years to come," said Sheriff Will Akin.

Although Capt. Franks is leaving the law enforcement world, he'll still be talking to people, telling them "No," and requiring them to listen to him or face the consequences as he works in his next chapter in life as a flight attendant.







## BRINGING HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Nearly three dozen volunteers gathered for required annual training at the Jackson County Detention Center. The session was led by Chaplain Ray Stewart and hosted by Programs Manager Folorunso Adebayo and Corrections Caseworker Administrator Dr. Ozondu Ugbaja, with support from Recreation Coordinator Osagie “Henry” Omorogieva.

Director Diana Knapp greeted the volunteers on behalf of the sheriff and Detention Center administration. “These amazing citizens deliver faith-based programming at JCDC every week to men and women of all faiths. In addition to facilitating national standards and supporting the Constitution for the religious freedom of those in our care, these selfless volunteers deliver hope and encouragement to a population in great need,” Director Knapp said. “We are grateful for their service and want to extend a special thank you to volunteer Chaplain Ray Stewart, who coordinates sessions and continues to recruit the faithful to participate in ministry within the Detention Center.”

## INCIDENT HIGHLIGHTS TRAINING IMPORTANCE

The Henry County Detention Center staff started the new year by responding to a medical event that highlighted the value of training in response, procedure, and lifesaving techniques, and the community’s EMS.

During lunch pass, an inmate began choking. Other inmates in the pod were quick to alert staff, who responded immediately to the situation. While the inmate had tried to “cough it up,” the inmate was clearly struggling when Officer Hartsell stepped in and deployed the Heimlich maneuver. The inmate regained some breath ability but was “wheezing” and not getting enough air. While using the Heimlich maneuver, Officer Hartsell also removed the inmate from the unit, where Corporal Humphreys then took over, attempting to clear the inmate’s airway. Meanwhile, Officer Brooks and Officer Fisher were securing the scene, and the master control operator, Officer Retherford, was simultaneously contacting the local EMS.

Clinton Fire EMTs and the Golden Valley Ambulance arrived and transported the

inmate to the local ER, where the blockage was removed, allowing the inmate to return to the facility within hours. Sheriff Kent Oberkrom said it was prior planning and training that made the whole event go smoothly, adding, “The Clinton community is very blessed to have a full-time paid fire department whose officers also cross-train in the medical service. The majority of the departments are state licensed EMTs who are dispatched alongside the Golden Valley Ambulance Service for all medical calls within the city limits of Clinton.”

Captain Sam Boyd, the jail administrator for Henry County, said that over the past year, a focus on medical training had brought CPR along with “stop the bleed” classes to jail staff. Staff assembled a “crash bag” and placed it in the high-traffic booking area of the jail. Since then, it’s been used several times for various medical events in the facility.

*“The Henry County Detention Center is extremely proud of the staff response to the medical crisis. Officer Hartsell was commended for his quick thinking in deploying the Heimlich maneuver, a move that may have saved the subject’s life,” said Capt.*



*Boyd. “I am always appreciative of the men and women who decide to venture into this line of work. Working in a jail environment takes patience, courage, dedication, and commitment. Every one of them deserves better pay and appreciation for the things they put up with or encounter on a daily basis.” Written by Sergeant Jacque Watson.*

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## NEW LIFE

The Christian County Sheriff's Office Chaplaincy conducted the first-ever baptismal service within the jail on December 19 for any inmate that wished to be baptized and give their testimony. In addition, Chaplaincy offers bible study to all inmates interested during their incarceration. Sheriff Brad Cole that he and the jail Command Staff were very pleased to be able to facilitate the event inside the jail, and they look forward to future baptisms for all inmates that wish to participate through the program.



## A JOB WELL DONE X 2

On January 23, Correctional Officer Glenn was assigned to search the cell an inmate who was rumored to be in possession of "ice." During the search, Officer Glenn noticed the inmate trying to conceal something in her shirt. During the search of this inmate, Officer Glenn observed a white powdery substance in the bra of the inmate. On September 26, 2022, Officer Glenn also found a "dynamite stick" during a search. These items were being used to allow inmates to huff muscle rub. "On multiple occasions, Officer Glenn's attention to detail and high level of awareness has reduced the amount of dangerous contraband inside the facility. Officer Glenn's actions reflect well upon herself, SCCDOC and St. Charles County," said Director Daniel Keen.

On January 23, Correctional Officer Leslie received information from an inmate that another inmate was in possession of "ice." Officer Leslie immediately reported this information to her supervisor. As a result of her actions, a white powdery substance was found in the bra of a female inmate. "Officer Leslie's attention to detail and quick actions stopped the use and/or distribution of a potentially dangerous substance inside of our facility. Officer Leslie's actions reflect well on her, SCCDOC and St. Charles County," said Director Daniel Keen. "Congratulation ladies for a job well done!"





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# INNOVATIVE IDEAS

WILL BE A PART OF THE NEW PERRY COUNTY JAIL



The new jail will have secure food and laundry service areas, a four-vehicle sally port, a medical facility, two padded cells, and holding cells in the courtroom area – in short, the bells and whistles that make a modern facility safer and more secure for officers and detainees.

It's out with the old and in with the new in Perry County.

On September 30, 2022, eight-term Sheriff Gary Schaff retired, and Jason Klaus was selected by the Perry County Commission to take over the top job. Klaus took his oath in October. Then, on January 9 of the new year, ground was broken for a badly needed new jail.

As a member of the Perry County Sheriff's Office since 1996, Sheriff Klaus possesses a broad base of experience and insight into law enforcement issues.

He said he decided to seek a law enforcement career while still in high school when on County Government Day, he was elected "sheriff" and "got to hang out with Sheriff Schaaf." He served briefly as a reserve before signing on as a detention officer. He served 13 years as the county's first school resource officer and four years handling road deputy duties. He then moved up to detective. However, his most defining position is serving as the Crisis Intervention Team coordinator for the

state of Missouri. CIT training improves officers' attitudes and knowledge about mental illness and provides them with more tools to do their job safely and effectively.

That experience is helping him as he oversees the construction of the justice center.

When, many years ago, discussions about the need for a new jail evolved into serious plans, they were supported by the community. In April of 2021, by a vote of 1,353 to 814, voters approved a capital improvements sales tax of half of 1 percent for 20 years to fund the construction of the Perry County Joint Justice Center. After 20 years, the tax will continue at one-eighth of 1 percent (0.00125) to provide the funds necessary to maintain the facility.

The roughly 60,000-square-foot facility, expected to be completed in mid-to-late 2024, will house the Perry County Sheriff's Office and Jail, City of Perryville Police Department, state and municipal





courts, Perry County Circuit Court Clerk's office, city and county joint 911 dispatch center, Perry County Prosecuting Attorney's and Coroner's offices, and local Emergency Management agencies. The facility will be located on the 6-acre tract of land purchased in 2021 in the 400th block of West St Joseph Street.

Zoellner Construction Co., Inc. of Perryville and Dille Pollard Architecture were awarded the contract to build the new facility at an estimated cost of \$26.5 million.

Sheriff Klaus said he was supportive of the police/sheriff combined-use concept from the beginning. He believes being housed in the same building will nurture an essential working relationship between the departments and help keep the community safer.

While the current design for the new facility features a 64-bunk, seven-pod jail, that's all a moving target as the project gets underway.

The sheriff says he hopes to get to 80 bunks by moving day.

Staffing, as everywhere, is an issue in Perry County. With Sheriff Klaus anticipating the need for at least six new officers after the move to the new facility next year, it could grow into an even bigger issue. However, he takes a proactive approach to meet their needs. With most of his jail officers commissioned, Sheriff Klaus offers the opportunity for new hires to attend a law enforcement academy and be commissioned on the county dime. His goal is to build a professional and flexible staff. With competition in nearby communities for good officers, the sheriff is focused on competitive pay - \$15.17 an hour for non-commissioned and \$17.65

for starting commissioned officers.

The current Perry County Jail is a classic example of a sheriff's office making do and adjusting to changing circumstances. Built in 1988 to hold 16, it now has enough repurposed space to hold 40. The average daily population runs about 35, although last year, there was a day it was packed with 54. Under Sheriff Schaff, a training room became a day room, and other miscellaneous spaces were converted to secure areas.

Sheriff Klaus explained that over the decades, the sheriff's office became more proactive in fighting the drug problem,

for officers and detainees. There will also be space to bring in programs, including drug and mental health counseling, for detainees.

Other innovations spurred by the sheriff will make the new Perry County jail modern, not just in construction but in the approach to county incarceration.

With a major interstate running through the county between St. Louis and Memphis, they handle a plethora of drugs, property, and crimes against people - and as a result, they house plenty of serious felons. However, they also deal with people who run afoul of the law due

to behavioral health issues. Sheriff Klaus says he intends to separate the criminals and those living with behavioral health concerns - physically and philosophically - as much as possible.

Given his experience with the CIT program, it is not surprising that Sheriff Klaus is laser-focused on establishing intake operations that

will assess, identify, and appropriately handle those coming to the jail with behavioral health issues. He has included a crisis holding room in the design to meet that end. There, those showing signs of mental issues can be evaluated and, when possible, diverted into treatment rather than being placed in jail.

"That may save (jail) capacity for violent offenders. I want to help those in need and jail those who need to be incarcerated. I've never seen handcuffs or a jail cell cure a mental illness," Sheriff Klaus says.

**BY MICHAEL FEEDBACK**




getting involved in investigations and operations that led to more arrests. At points, prisoners from other jurisdictions were held. As a result, the jail got even more crowded.

Much will be better in the new facility. Currently, their food service is contracted out and laundry is done by jail staff. Unlike many small jails, Perry County does not use trustees for jobs. It is partly due to conditions in the current jail but also part of the sheriff's office philosophy.

The new jail will have secure food and laundry service areas, a four-vehicle sally port, a medical facility, two padded cells, and holding cells in the courtroom area - in short, the bells and whistles that make a modern facility safer and more secure



# Planes, Trains, & Paddy Wagons



**G**etting inmates to and from court, hospitals or prison can be a challenge for modern Missouri sheriffs. It is a problem that stretches back through American history and remains strongly identified with the well-known, if haphazardly named, paddy wagon.

There is debate among those who make words their business about how exactly the phrase “paddy wagon” came to describe a secure box on wheels that gives law officers a place to hold onto malefactors. It is generally thought that the name began to take hold in post-1860 New York City when half or more of the local police were of Irish decent. Thus the driver of the wagon would likely have been Irish and subject to being referred to by the shortened version of Patrick - Paddy, held to be a derogatory name.

Another version has to do with the draft riots of 1863 in New York. The poor could not buy out of the draft, a lot of the poor population in the city was Irish and thus ended up being arrested in the disturbances. Whatever the case, by the first part of the 20th century, the moniker had become commonly used and widely understood.

Later in the 19th century, law and order was introduced to the wild area of what is now Oklahoma. In the 1870s and 80s U.S. deputy marshals would roll a jail on wheels across the Indian Territory, picking up bad guys and transporting them back to jail in Arkansas or elsewhere. The wagons came to be known as Tumbleweed Wagons because they wandered randomly across the territory. Such wagons might be out two or three months at a time and a caravan could include a chuck wagon as well. Prisoners were chained to the floor in the day and to trees when deputies camped at night. As uncomfortable as this might have been, being stood up in front of the famous “hanging judge” Isaac Parker in Fort Smith made the journey better than the destination for some.

By the 1920s, motorized vehicles were replacing horse-drawn wagons for prisoner transport. Frank Fowler Loomis is credited with designing and building the first motorized paddy wagon. The panel trucks looked a lot like vans used to deliver pies and so, naturally, become known as “pie wagons.” Another common name for police vans that came into common usage was “Black Maria,” a phrase that appears to have originated in England in the 19th century. One version has it that the name came from a large, aggressive black woman named Maria Lee who ran a sailor’s boarding house. Police would sometimes call upon her for help with troublesome prisoners.

Back in the 1930s, several railroads carried prisoners to rural prisons on specially outfitted railway cars. Supposedly the phrase “being sent up the river,” was coined as men found guilty of crimes in New York courts were sent by train to Sing Sing, a maximum-security prison located about 30 miles north of New York City on the bank of the Hudson River.



When the island in San Francisco Bay known as Alcatraz became a federal prison in 1934, a new kind of paddy wagon had to be employed to get some of the country’s most dangerous felons to their new home. U.S. marshals and FBI agents transferred 137 prisoners from the penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas to Santa Venetia, California. High-security rail coaches took the place of the paddy wagon for the trip west. Handcuffed and watched over by 60 officers, they made it to the dock where they were placed on a similarly secure boat for the trip to the island.

Made part of the popular culture by the movie *ConAir*, the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System is the largest prisoner transport system in the world. The first prisoner transport by air occurred in 1919 when a San Francisco cop, who later became a barnstormer, transported a gun runner from Alameda to San Francisco police.

Before the JPATS was established, prisoners were transported around the country on regular passenger flights at great expense and some risk. In 1985, the U.S. Marshalls Service was gifted a Boeing 747 by the Federal Aviation Administration. The idea of using it to mass transfer prisoners was born. It reduced manpower needs significantly with just 12 marshals controlling a plane of 200 prisoners.

Today JPATS, based in Kansas City, flies three full-sized airplanes to virtually every city in the U.S. Handcuffs and ankle and waist chains keep passengers in their seats. Those who are a particular risk are

issued spit masks, mittens that cover their hands, and additional restraints. Flights are scheduled to keep members of different gangs on separate planes.

Of course, whatever they are called colloquially, the prisoner transport vehicle is an integral tool for law enforcement and is particularly important for county sheriffs tasked with holding and transporting inmates on a daily basis. Today, it is a rare new jail that is designed without a sally port for safely transferring those inmates from jail to van and back again.

The importance of a secure, well-de-



signed transfer van is obvious and most sheriffs’ offices across Missouri have at least one. Modern paddy wagons offer a solid alternative to individual transfers in patrol cars when multiple inmates must be moved. Moving day can be a major chore, as was the case of Green County transferring more than 800 detainees to their new facility in just eight hours.

Patrol cars uneventfully escorted buses full of inmates, while a helicopter kept a watchful eye from above – certainly a much better, safer and quicker option than paddy wagons or tumbleweed wagons of old.

**BY MICHAEL FEEBACK**





# FINDING *new* PURPOSE

**M**any times K-9s are used in detention settings reactively. They're brought in when hidden contraband is suspected.

The Johnson County Sheriff's Office has taken a proactive stance by adding a full-time K-9 officer to their detention center team. He will work alongside his handler Sgt. Jason Matter.

While working in the detention facility, Ammo, a male Belgian Malinois dual-purpose patrol, and narcotics detection dog, will be used to search inmate housing areas, search inmate property, assist in inmate compliance, and provide escorts throughout the facility.



“The security challenges facing the daily operations of custodial facilities are constant across the board. Custodial facilities across the nation are proactively doing authorized searches, purchasing body scanners, and performing cell searches to try and mitigate the risks,” said Jail Administrator Jason Shackles. “We had an opportunity to partner an existing trained K-9 with an experienced sergeant in our Detention Division for this new program. We are excited to see how this new program can help eliminate contraband in our facility and help with the overall safety and security.”

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**THE CONCEPT COULD BE A WAY TO  
REPURPOSE RATHER THAN RETIRE LAW  
ENFORCEMENT K-9S THAT HAVE BEEN  
TRAINED TO SNIFF MARIJUANA ALONG  
WITH OTHER ILLEGAL DRUGS.**

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Captain Shackles explained how the program was made possible, in part, by “great timing. We knew we were going to be needing a new handler, and Sgt. Matter, who has almost 20 years of experience on all sides of the house, said he would be interested in working with a dog. The dog was going to have to be reassociated with a new handler, so we decided to give it a try.”

The duo went through training together at the Von Henger Kennels in Kingsville, Missouri; since then, they have been inseparable. Ammo lives with Sgt. Matter and has become part of the family, and Sgt. Matter got a fully functioning K-9 vehicle to transport Ammo back and forth between work and home.

“It’s working out well. It’s a whole new concept for us, so we’re still working out the schedule – the routine – because Ammo will work alongside Sgt. Matter as another officer, not just when we need a search in the jail. But when we do a search, the dog will be present at all times,” Capt. Shackles said. “Typically, the dog is a great deterrent and gets their attention.”

The concept could be a way to repurpose rather than retire law enforcement K-9s that have been trained to sniff marijuana along with other illegal drugs.

In November, voters approved an amendment to the Missouri Constitution that allows adults 21 and older – not just those with medical marijuana cards – to possess up to 3 ounces of recreational marijuana legally. As a result, k-9s trained to sniff marijuana can no longer establish probable cause for searches since they can’t tell officers what kind of drug they smell, only that a drug is present.

However, marijuana isn’t legal in a jail setting.

“Can we repurpose a resource? Probably. We have to start thinking of different ways to do business in law enforcement and corrections in general. Typically when a search is needed, they pull the K-9 from the road, they do what’s needed, and then they’re back out on the road. So sheriffs’ offices could start a whole new program to benefit the jail side,” Capt. Shackles said.



**BY NANCY ZOELLNER AND MAJOR AARON BROWN**



# FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE PREVENTION

## TRAPPED IN CELLS, 4 INMATES DIE IN JAIL FIRE

Do you think this could happen in your facility? This headline was from the Washington Post on September 14, 1991. The story was written about a jail fire in Taney County, Missouri, where 26 inmates were trapped in their cells; four of them died, 13 others were hospitalized.

A detailed investigation by Missouri State Fire Marshal Investigator Bill Zieres found that the fire was caused by an extension cord that short-circuited. The cord ran the length of the jail and connected to a battery charger on an auxiliary generator located outside the jail. The short-circuit knocked the power out to the jail, requiring the electronically controlled doors to be opened manually.

The short-circuited extension cord also caused the building that housed the generator to catch fire, and that fire then spread to the roof of the jail. The jail was filled with smoke from the fire. The four inmates who perished were housed in cells nearest

the generator.

The jail was closed for seven months while repairs and improvements were made. In the meantime, 26 lawsuits were filed against the county. According to the Springfield News-Leader, Taney County paid about \$1 million to settle the combined lawsuits from the families of the four inmates who died and the 21 inmates who suffered smoke inhalation.

Newspaper headlines carried news of another deadly jail fire a decade later.

## FIRE KILLS EIGHT INMATES TRAPPED IN A NORTH CAROLINA JAIL

On May 3, 2002, a fire started in a storage shed attached to the Mitchell County Jail in Bakersville, North Carolina. Of the 17 inmates being held in the jail, eight died of smoke inhalation. The shed held cleaning equipment, cardboard boxes, and a small heater.

Inmates were allowed to smoke in their cells, but when regular fire drills were held,

the cell doors were not opened. The jail, built in 1955, had no sprinkler system, but it did have smoke detectors and emergency lighting. Windows were left open to circulate fresh air.

The fire was investigated, and a cause was never determined. However, a 2002 report released by the state Department of Labor said that state and county inspectors failed to detect "serious safety deficiencies."

In January 2003, the families of the eight fatalities and nine survivors settled a lawsuit against Mitchell County for \$1.94 million. As a result, the jail was torn down, and a park was built in its place.

So, what can you do in your jail to lessen the chance of a fire causing a human injury or fatality? On page 19 is a checklist to go over with your staff.

Not all jail fires result in a judgment against a county. A fire broke out on September 6, 2007 in the Oregon County Missouri Jail. It was intentionally set by inmates who piled up combustible materials



in an attempt to escape. A lawsuit was brought against the sheriff's office for failing to adequately ensure an inmate's safety when the fire broke out in the facility.

However, the court found in favor of Oregon County and the Oregon County Sheriff's Office after evidence was provided that *"the Sheriff's Department searched the jail and discovered several items of contraband, including a rope connected to a toilet plunger handle, two metal pieces of wire made into "shanks," pills, lighters, cigarettes, matches, and other paraphernalia."*

The plaintiff also alleges the defendants acted with deliberate indifference by focusing on *"three areas where he alleges the defendants were aware of a substantial risk to his safety and disregarded the risk: (1) the jail's smoking policy, (2) the jail's fire-safety equipment, and (3) the emergency training provided to the officers."*

In regard to "the jails smoking policy"

the court found, *"During the September 1, 2007, search, the officers took preventative measures to inhibit the flow of lighters, matches, cigarettes, and other items into the jail, such as confiscating all current contraband and closing the window where the inmates were receiving the contraband. In light of these recent measures taken by the officers, they cannot be said to have failed to reasonably respond to a substantial risk to Davis's safety."*

In regard to "the jails fire-safety equipment," the court found *"the jail here had operable smoke detectors and the officers conducted protective sweeps for contraband just five days before the fire took place.... the jail's inoperable sprinklers and lack of extra fire equipment such as oxygen tanks do not, standing alone, amount to deliberate indifference in light of the officers' actions in searching for contraband, as well as the fire extinguishers and smoke detectors that were present at the time of the fire."*

In regard to "the emergency training provided to staff" the court found, *"Even if Davis is correct and Sheriff Ward should have engaged his officers in more exhaustive emergency training, this failure does not constitute deliberate indifference."*

Davis v. Oregon County, #09-2700, 2010 U.S. App. Lexis 11817 (8th Cir.).

If you provide fire-resistant bedding and clothing; keep control of the contraband in your facility by conducting weekly and monthly inspections; limit the types and amount of smoking materials; have on hand safety equipment that staff has been trained on; and practice fire evacuations of the inmate housing units; you lessen the chance of a fire and reduce your office's liability risk.

BY KEITH HOSKINS



1. What type of furnishings are allowed in your jail?
  - ☐ Is the bedding fire-resistant?
  - ☐ What is the trash receptacle made of, and is it emptied daily?
2. Do you hold monthly and annual fire inspections?
  - ☐ Do trained personnel do the inspections?
  - ☐ Do you invite the local fire department to inspect your facility?
  - ☐ Do you keep the documentation of inspections on file?
  - ☐ Fire Prevention – Every employee should be responsible for helping prevent a fire. This can be accomplished by not allowing books or magazines, legal materials, letters, toilet paper, bedding, and inmate uniforms to accumulate in excess.
3. Most jails have removed actual smoking materials and replaced them with E-cigarettes. If so, do you confiscate any E-cigarettes that were modified from their original condition? Do you allow inmates to have more than one E-cig, or must they exchange them when they have expired?
4. Fire Extinguishers, sprinklers, exit lights, and exit hallways -
  - ☐ Are your fire extinguishers

- inspected annually by a certified inspector?
  - ☐ Are your sprinklers checked to ensure they are clear of any obstructions and nothing is hanging from them?
  - ☐ Are your fire department connections clear of any obstructions, both internally and externally?
  - ☐ Are your exit lights properly illuminated?
  - ☐ Are your fire exit hallways clear of any obstructions? They tend to be used for storage.
- 5. Rescue breathing apparatus -
  - ☐ Does your facility have air packs? Or do you have 15-minute rescue hoods like I-Evac?
  - ☐ If so, is your staff trained and certified to use them?
  - ☐ When was the last time your air packs were inspected and the bottle hydrostatically tested?
- 6. Training – When was the last time your staff:
  - ☐ Trained on opening the doors with keys, simulating the loss of power?
  - ☐ Held an evacuation drill of one of the cell blocks or housing units?
  - ☐ Trained on the proper operation of a fire extinguisher?
  - ☐ Trained on the proper shutdown

- for a sprinkler head or shutting off the water to the affected area?
  - ☐ Trained on the fire alarm system to know where the alarm is activated and how to silence and/or reset the alarm.
- 7. Have your staff members been properly trained to report a fire and complete documentation after the incident?
- 8. Who is the designated person to contact fire department personnel upon arrival for escorting?
- 9. Evacuations:
  - ☐ Can the inmates be evacuated safely? What if there's a major disturbance occurring in conjunction with the fire?
  - ☐ Who is assigned to ensure that all inmates are evacuated from the affected area or housing unit(s)?
  - ☐ Who is assigned to complete a head count at the evacuation site to ensure all inmates arrive safely?
- 10. Fire Scene
  - ☐ The scene of the fire should be treated as a crime scene until the fire has been investigated.
  - ☐ Once a determination has been made on the origin and cause of the fire and the fire department has released the scene, cleanup will begin.



SKYLER VIEBROCK

# KEEPING THEM SAFE ON THE JOB

In Missouri, most people housed in county jails are not serving time. Instead, they've been charged with a crime and are being held without bond until their court date because they are a danger to society, a flight risk, or both.

Studies show that today more than half of those held in detention facilities have an active substance use disorder, while other studies report that approximately 20 percent of detainees are dealing with some level of mental illness. Because of their impaired thinking, many present behavioral management problems.

With those combined risk factors, working in a jail can be dangerous – especially for those with little to no experience and/or training.

More than a decade ago, the Missouri Sheriffs' Association (MSA) recognized the need to better equip detention officers and began facilitating training by contracting with those who have been certified as instructors by the Missouri Department of Public Safety.

Captain Skyler Viebrock, the jail administrator for the Pettis County Jail, is one of the trainers.

"I've worked patrol with the Tipton PD and Stover PD, and I still reserve with the Stover PD, but I love the corrections side of law enforcement. My bachelor's degree is in law enforcement administration, and I've always been interested in how we can improve jails and make everything safer and, when possible, make things better," he said.

Capt. Viebrock has worked in jails for the better part of his 17 years in law enforcement, but a slightly flashier aspect of law and order initially caught his attention.

"I grew up watching CHIPS and was intrigued with the whole idea of working in law enforcement," he laughed. "I got my college degree first, then took a full-time job at Morgan County, and they sent me through the academy after I worked there

for a year. At the same time, I worked part-time as a reserve officer for the Sedalia PD. After a year, I quit Sedalia and worked at Morgan County for the next 12 years."

He left Morgan County to take the jail administrator position at the Moniteau County Sheriff's Office and was there three years before taking a "short hiatus" to work in IT.

"I had been there for about six months when (Pettis County) Sheriff Brad Anders contacted me. We had worked together at

“I've worked patrol with the Tipton PD and Stover PD, and I still reserve with the Stover PD, but I love the corrections side of law enforcement.”

the Sedalia PD, and I was a little surprised that he even remembered me. He said he needed a jail administrator and asked if I'd be interested. I've been there a little more than a year," Capt. Viebrock said.

Ironically, a shortfall in training hours is what led to his desire to train.

"It's changed since then, but when I got my POST license, you had three years to get the required CEUs (continuing education units). Once it was time to report, I was short one hour. I decided I was never going to let that happen again – and I was going to do my best to see that it didn't happen to anyone else either – so I took every instructor development course I could find," he said. "Morgan County was big on training – and I enjoy being a trainer – so I took it upon myself to start updating all of our training. In the meantime, the MSA and MOJO got together

to offer basic training classes for jail staff, and I started instructing for them on my days off."

He teaches report writing with courtroom testimony, cell extraction, restraint chair training, defensive tactics, leadership and instructor development, and first-line supervisor training. And he teaches all over the state. "I looked at my calendar, and one day I was scheduled in Caldwell County (three counties south of the Iowa border); the next day I was scheduled in Howell County (on the Arkansas border)."

Capt. Viebrock said he, his sergeants, and lieutenants will be attending the FBI-LEEDA Supervisor Leadership Institute in the future. The program is designed to enhance the leadership competencies of first-line supervisors and middle managers.

As of late, he's been working with Jeanne Merritt, the MSA jail training coordinator, and other jail administrators to develop a 48-hour Basic Jail Officer Academy. Topics will include working in corrections, health and safety issues, legal issues, intake, booking and release, daily operations, and controlling resistive and manipulative behavior. The program flyer describes it as "a MUST for individuals just beginning a career working in a jail and a friendly refresher for those who have been working in a jail for some time."

"Deputies, who attend 700 hours of training to get certified might be with someone right during an incident, but then they take them to jail, and the detention officers are with subjects 24-7," Capt. Viebrock said. "It's important for them to get as much training as they can to know how to do their jobs safely."

For more information about the academy, contact Jeanne Merritt at 573-529-6900 or email her at [jeanne@mosheriffs.com](mailto:jeanne@mosheriffs.com).

BY NANCY ZOELLNER



# A Life Well-Lived

**JOSEPH KING** JANUARY 8, 1971 – DECEMBER 24, 2022

*“In the end, it’s not the years in your life that count; it’s the life in your years.”*

That sentiment leads off a tribute book to honor the life of Joe King, a well-known and well-liked protector of the peace who moved to heaven far too soon. And it couldn’t be more accurate.

King was in law enforcement for 30 years, working for the St. Joseph Police Department and the Buchanan County Sheriff’s Office before joining the Platte County Sheriff’s Office.

“Joe will be sorely missed by many people for many reasons,” said Platte County Sheriff

Mark Owen, who was his boss for more than 20 years. “He was a good man and he had a passion to do things right. He started with us around 1997 and was promoted to sergeant around 2000. Then in July of 2011, he was promoted to captain over Emergency Services, where he oversaw the Communications Center, Homeland Security, and Emergency Management. We dispatch for 21 agencies, so it was quite a job.”

In 2012, Sheriff Owen put King in detention as jail administrator. He said he needed someone who could write policy, and he knew King could get it done.

And he did – but King didn’t just help Platte County. He agreed to co-chair the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association (MSA) Jail Standards and Training Committee with former Cooper County Sheriff Jerry Wolfe to help county jails throughout the state improve their operations.

Jeanne Merritt, the jail training coordinator for the MSA, said after they settled on a mission statement, they developed a list of standards that were broad enough that they could be implemented in jails of all sizes.

“Our goal was to help the jails become safe and secure, not only for detainees but also for staff. Joe assigned standards to different jail administrators to work on, then he brought them back together, and they reviewed everything from a legal standpoint. He did a great job and put a lot of time and effort into the project. He really stayed on top of things to keep the

committee moving forward to get the job done,” Merritt said, adding that they accomplished what they set out to do when sheriffs adopted the standards in 2016.

In the meantime, back at the Platte County Jail, King set up a ministerial program in the jail and developed a plan to handle detainees with mental issues. As a certified generalist instructor, he taught classes for the MSA, he handled training for Platte County, and he served as the site coordinator for the MSA Training Academy hosted by Platte County.

Sheriff Owen said King was respected by everyone under his leadership. Because of that, he mentored many of the younger employees, who felt he was very approachable and

cared about them. He said King was also actively involved with the Shop With a Deputy program at Christmas and with the sheriff’s office Children’s Trust Foundation. “Joe just cared a lot about kids.”

He and his wife Laura also taught their children to respect the law – and they took that lesson seriously. Two of their sons are deputies – one works at Platte County, and the other works at Buchanan County – and their daughter previously worked as a dispatcher for Platte County. She is married to a Platte County deputy.

Sheriff Owen said when King left in 2021 to take a job as director of the Law Enforcement Academy at Missouri Western State University, he left a void that was hard to fill. “Joe was an academic. He loved to teach, so I understand why he left, but he was greatly missed.”

One of the many memories shared in the tribute book sums up King’s compassion, leadership, and dedication.

*“Commander, thank you for turning my dream of being a police officer into a reality, from the moment I set foot into your office to you helping me figure out how to fund school... you did everything with 110%. I will miss all the pep talks, knowledge and wisdom you shared with us – to ensure we were the best officers we could be. I promise I will make you proud. We got it from here, brother... may you rest in paradise, that you so dearly deserve. RIP Commander, you will forever be missed and always the person that shaped my career.”*





# *Sending Moms Love* FROM BEHIND BARS



**E**very year for the past several years, detainees in the Vernon County Jail have been able to remind their moms on Mother's Day that they love them, thanks to their chaplain.

Vernon County Sheriff Jason Mosher had been looking for a way to help his detainees stay connected to their families when his chaplain, Gary Almquist, approached him about allowing detainees to send Mother's Day cards to their moms.

"He said his ministry, The Fathers Love, would provide the cards and pay for the postage. It wouldn't cost the taxpayers anything, so we moved ahead. I'm glad we did because it's been good on many levels," the sheriff said.

Chaplain Almquist said he got the idea after reading a story about a similar program in another state.

"There was a large church located near a prison, and for Mother's Day, the church bought cards and put them out on a table in the prison. Inmates who wanted to send a card just needed to address them, and the church would mail them out," he said, adding that after getting the okay from Sheriff Mosher, he drove to Joplin and picked up 150 cards from ARM Prison Outreach.

ARM provides DaySpring Christian greeting cards to jails and prisons throughout the nation. According to their website, the cards are returns from retail outlets around the country. DaySpring then ships the mismatched cards and envelopes to ARM, where they are sorted and packaged for shipment.

"Since I'm the primary chaplain for Vernon County I have access to the jail so we bundled them based on the number of detainees in each pod or dorm, and then we handed them out. We told them they could write a note or decorate the envelopes, and we'd be back in about four days to pick them up. Then we mailed them out," Chaplain Almquist said.

Sheriff Mosher said it only took one Mother's Day for him to see results.

"It was a good – a really positive – thing for the inmates because it let them do something positive for their families," he said. "Moms are always going to love their kids no matter what they do, so we knew they would appreciate getting a card from them for Mother's Day."

Some moms have even written notes thanking the sheriff and chaplain for thinking of them on a day that can be difficult for moms who are apart from their children, especially when those children are behind bars.

While nearly everyone writes messages, many inmates also draw pictures on the cards and the envelopes. The sheriff and the chaplain both said they were amazed by some of the artwork. They also agree the project has been well received, with around 100 of the jail's 120 to 130 detainees taking advantage of the opportunity each year.

In addition to making a way for detainees to positively communicate with their moms, the Mother's Day project also allows staff to interact positively with the jail population.



"A lot of the time, inmates are upset or unhappy with the staff, making it hard to work with them. But when staff goes around to collect the cards, the inmates are very appreciative," Sheriff Mosher said. "The program also allows our staff to see the inmates in a different light because when they look at the cards – the drawings and the notes – it reminds them that our inmates are people – that they may not necessarily be bad people. Instead, they may be people who made bad choices."

**BY NANCY ZOELLNER**

For more information on The Fathers Love, visit the ministry's Facebook page or Gary Almquist's Facebook page. For more information on ARM Prison Outreach, visit [arm.org](http://arm.org).





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