K-9 Unit Officers Surprise Katz Elementary Students for Nevada Reading Week

With UNLV’s officers chiefly concerned about the safety and well-being of the campus, the department places great emphasis on reaching out to the community and creating positive experiences for the next generation of future Rebels. K-9 Unit officers Darrell Johnson and Bruce Taylor along with their explosive detection dogs Buster and Simba visited Katz Elementary School for Nevada Reading Week to provide young minds with a passion for literature, safety, and, of course, the desire to pet dogs.

Learn more about the Reading Week experiences of Officers Darrell Johnson and Bruce Taylor — as well as Officer Johnson’s favorite superhero — by turning to page 3.
Medical Marijuana: The fight for legalization

Though Nevada’s medical marijuana law removed state-level criminal penalties on the use of medical marijuana by patients with qualifying illnesses in 2001, it’s been a back-and-forth battle for potential cultivation facilities and dispensaries. Significant momentum picked up recently, and in the coming months of this year, medical marijuana is expected to be available to qualified patients. Sierra Wellness Connection—Nevada’s first medical marijuana cultivation facility—received licensing approval on March 23rd, and expects to open a dispensary in Reno in August.

Vegas Seven reports that from January 2014 to January 2015, the number of medical marijuana cardholders in Clark County increased by nearly 75 percent, from 3,544 to 6,195. The Review-Journal reported on May 5th that Euphoria Wellness, located here in Las Vegas, has 371 pre-registered patients. They and other businesses have hired and trained employees in anticipation of opening.

Elsewhere, in Colorado, the law currently allows for citizens 21 years of age and older—not just Colorado residents or qualifying patients—to possess one ounce of retail marijuana. According to the New York Times, roughly 16,000 18 to 24 year-olds are on the medical marijuana registry in Colorado.

However, Colorado and Washington residents still must follow the federal Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act prohibiting the possession of marijuana on campus. Likewise, UNLV and other NSHE facilities do not allow the possession of medical or retail marijuana on campus facilities due to the fact that it is against federal law and could potentially threaten federal funding.

As for the future of marijuana laws in Nevada, the Nevada Marijuana Legalization Initiative is on the November 8th, 2016 ballot in Nevada to allow voters to decide the next step in state marijuana law. If approved, it would allow for the legal possession of one ounce or less of marijuana for recreational use for people 21 years old and older. The revenue made from sales tax would purportedly be used for state education funds as well.

From January 2014 to January 2015, the number of medical marijuana cardholders increased to 6,195 in Clark County.

AT A GlANCE:

» Euphoria Wellness, Nevada’s first dispensary to receive its license, has over 370 preregistered patients

» Sierra Wellness Connection, Nevada’s first medical marijuana establishment, which will cultivate their own plants, is headed by former UNR president Joe Crowley
Officer Johnson’s calm yet charismatic demeanor was perfect for the four excited classes he read to throughout the morning. In true English Springer Spaniel fashion, Buster excitedly sniffed about the room before settling on a cozy spot between Officer Johnson and the teacher’s desk. After Officer Johnson finished reading a colorful book about a dog in a doghouse to each class, 30-plus sets of hands rose up, asking if they could pet Buster. Officer Johnson fielded questions about a range of topics, including Buster’s background and training. “Buster and I had three and a half months of training, but he learned everything a lot quicker than I did,” Officer Johnson joked to each class.

While the classes that Officer Taylor read to were excited by his presence, he conceded that the spotlight remained on Simba throughout the day. “I read to 3 classes. I guarantee you—my reading was important—but the majority of the attention was on Simba sitting in front of me,” Officer Taylor said.

The theme of this year’s reading week is to “Be a Superhero...Read!” Officer Johnson, whose two favorite superheroes are The Flash and The Green Hornet, said that for students who live in areas where citizens have negative contact with law enforcement, events like these help foster positive connections with police officers in the future. “For them to see an officer in uniform in a different light—in a learning environment—it impacts their life,” Officer Johnson said.

After the first class of the day lined up to pet Buster, a young boy excitedly approached Officer Johnson to tell him that he hopes to be a police officer when he grows up. “It makes me feel good,” Officer Johnson said. “I like it. Even if he doesn’t [become an officer] right now he has a different outlook on the police. So that’s my one, I know for sure, that had an impact. I feel good about that.”

With everyone from parents, elementary school children, and UNLV students delighted by Buster’s presence, Officer Johnson believes that participating in events around the valley and being seen with Buster as much as possible is vital to making the community a safer place. “I don’t get more attention, but he does,” Officer Johnson said. “Then students see me and they associate the two. The balance is good. They talk to me about him; I’m communicating with the community. Buster adds a whole lot plus he’s a safety diffuser. He’s doing both worlds for us.”

Officer Johnson said he cherishes his role as a representative of UNLV in community events, and that creating fond memories for people helps make UNLV and the police station stand out in a positive light. “My favorite thing is listening to the questions from the kids and looking at their faces when they pet the dog,” Officer Johnson said. “Their day is filled [with excitement] which is fun for me.”
It’s a position that no one ever expects to find themselves in: betrayed by a trusted friend, or the promise of new love shattered by an aggressive potential partner that won’t take no for an answer. “They call that acquaintance rape or date rape—it’s still rape. The victim typically doesn’t want to report that,” said Girls on Guard coordinator and instructor Sergeant Denise Murphy. It doesn’t have to happen like it does in the movies—in fact, it rarely plays out like that. Replace the obviously-shady criminal or date rape—it’s still rape. The victim typically doesn’t want to report that,” said Girls on Guard coordinator and instructor Sergeant Denise Murphy. It doesn’t have to happen like it does in the movies—in fact, it rarely plays out like that. Replace the obviously-shady criminal with a deceptively-charismatic smile, the dark alleyway with a dorm room or car, and you’ve got the setting for a potentially dangerous situation. “The most important thing a woman can do for herself is learn about self defense,” she said. “This particular class focuses on the strength that is in women’s bodies.”

Girls on Guard is a program offered by UNLV Police Services that teaches women basic skills to escape an attacker and avoid dangerous situations. By improving self-defense techniques and refining one’s ability to detect risky environments, female students, faculty, and staff take a gigantic step forward to ensuring their safety. “I believe it’s important to have the class to help them feel empowered, and be able to talk and share stories,” she said. Sergeant Murphy stays abreast of current trends in self-defense methods. She does research on her own time and tries to attend as many self defense classes as possible to ensure that she is incorporating new techniques. For her, being mentally prepared can be just as important as being physically prepared to ward off a potential attacker. “For the first 40 minutes we talk about awareness. Self defense is really 90% mental and 10% physical,” she said. “You have to get those physical movements and practice them, but most of it is in the head. You’ve got to be mentally
prepared to take care of yourself to fight.”

While empowering and educational, the class may invoke traumatic memories for some women. At one point during the three-and-a-half-hour class, a male officer dresses in a padded suit and simulates an attacking situation that students are then trained to handle. “The more exposure you have and being able to talk about it, it’s so helpful,” she said. “When you keep it inside and don’t ever tell anybody, it comes out in different ways. I think it helps just being able to have that support system. It turns into a really nice support system, having those students in the class.”

Sergeant Murphy cited the frustrating trend of victims of sexual assault being questioned about their attire and whereabouts as justification for being assaulted, whereas a male victim of another crime, such as robbery, wouldn’t likely be subjected to the same line of questioning.

The most important idea that Sergeant Murphy discussed is the freedom to confidentially and anonymously report sexual assault to Police Services. Due to a variety of factors, oftentimes the crime goes unreported, and the offender remains free. “Reporting is so important,” Sergeant Murphy said. “The most important thing is to tell somebody.” Sergeant Murphy said that she refers victims to the 24/7 Campus Advocacy Resource and Empowerment (CARE) line (702-895-0602) which directs victims to a variety of organizations and services that may be of use following an act of sexual assault.

She has received emails from interested male students, though the class currently focuses on the strength that resides in a woman’s body. She recommends reading *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin de Becker and *Fight Like a Girl...and Win* by Lori Hartman Gervasi as two of the most helpful self defense books for anyone. “Men have rights too. I always want to recognize the fact that men are victims too,” she said.

Interested in learning more or registering for a class? To contact Sergeant Murphy to learn more about Girls on Guard, call 702-895-3668 or email her at denise.murphy@unlv.edu. Girls on Guard classes are scheduled during the fall and spring semesters. To view a schedule of upcoming classes, go to Police Services’ event calendar at [https://www.unlv.edu/police](https://www.unlv.edu/police). When Police Services is ready to register new students for Girls on Guard courses, registration e-mails will be sent to members of the campus community via Rebel Mail and UNLV Today.
On the 30th anniversary of the Corporate Challenge, an Olympics-style, 41-event competition for local companies and their employees, UNLV’s teams are strong and tough as ever. Behind the unflappable confidence of team captain and UNLV Officer Stephani Loffredo, UNLV earned a second place overall finish in the biking event and a fourth place overall finish in the 5k running event.

While the accolades she’s helped UNLV collect over the past eight years have been great motivation to continue working hard, she derives the most pride from the individual medals she’s helped others earn. “When I recruit...I tell them, ‘You don’t have to be fast, you just have to do it, and you just have to have fun,” she said. “A lot of our members come home with a medal and they get so excited...You know when you’re hanging something on your wall, it was significant and you had a lot of fun.”

Officer Loffredo said that the Corporate Challenge atmosphere is more competitive in Las Vegas than in her experience in Cleveland, but at the end of the day, the lighthearted banter with rivals Zappos and Cox Communications is all in good fun. She also feels that the Corporate Challenge is valuable for what it does for participants. “I walk around to [teammates’] offices, and I see their medal hanging on their wall,” she said. “I love it, because that shows that the Corporate Challenge did exactly what it was supposed to do, and that’s to get people active and make people have fun.”

Perhaps most impressive about the unshakably optimistic Officer Loffredo’s attitude is her outlook on her fitness training. An equestrian who raced horses in high school, Loffredo is undeterred by the scorching summer heat when it comes to race training. What
As Officer Bruce Taylor strode confidently through the hallway with his explosive detection dog Simba in tow, it was easy to see why an estimated 685 students at Ernest May Elementary School’s Careers on Wheels were so eager to see him. Having an intelligent, playful dog with him certainly helped him stand out above 23 other groups of professionals whose careers revolve around, well, wheels. “They see the cool vehicles, and kids always gravitate towards police and firemen,” Officer Taylor said. “In my case, it makes it easier because I have a dog. What do all kids love? A dog.”

Careers on Wheels features businesses that typically operate through the use of vehicles. Blood services, law and police agencies, and other businesses around the valley simultaneously gave 15 minute presentations to rotating groups of Kindergarten through fifth grade students. “It’s extremely important that they’re thinking about their careers at an early age,” Officer Taylor said. “With young minds, they’re very impressionable. Some come up to you afterwards and say, ‘I want to be a police K9’...it gives you a lot of self pride.”

Officer Taylor kept the young minds engaged by relating Simba’s training to become an explosive detection dog to their own growth and path to education. “I instil in them that it’s important to go to school and learn,” Officer Taylor said. “Simba didn’t just become a police K9 just by being a dog. He had to go to school, and he had to learn, just like the rest of us.”

While Officer Taylor spoke to the students about the duties that his job entails, the training involved, and the importance of following through on one’s education, he was keenly aware of everyone’s favorite aspect of his presentation. “The shining moment: they can see Simba’s eyes poking out through the window,” Officer Taylor said. “The anticipation of meeting the dog, the expressions, the joy you see in a lot of the kids. Once we’re done and they move on, a couple kids lag behind, thanking you or asking questions. You just know you’re making their day by being there.”

Officer Taylor has seen first hand how having Simba by his side has improved community policing efforts, with even business professionals being overcome with excitement to catch a glimpse of the smiling, brown and white English Springer Spaniel with a talented nose. “It doesn’t matter if it’s small kids or grown ups,” Officer Taylor fondly recalls. “If I walk through a building on patrol, it wouldn’t take me too long. When I walk through with Simba? People come out of their offices, and you hear comments like, ‘You just made my day.’ Dogs seem to brighten everybody’s day.”

Whether it’s showing up for Nevada Reading Week, Careers on Wheels, or an on-campus event, Officer Taylor knows that being a representative of the police department and UNLV is about creating positive memories for the community. “We do a lot of events on campus,” Officer Taylor said. “If I bring Simba, people come over just to say hi to the dog. If they come over, it serves its purpose of getting them involved. It gives me the opportunity to talk to a lot more faculty members and students, find out information from them and let them know what we’re here for, and what we’re looking for from them.”
Displays of accountability and transparency have been qualities at the forefront of many students’ and faculties’ minds across the nation when discussing prominent issues affecting their lives. With recent protests in Ferguson, Mo. and Baltimore, there is a greater need for improved communication and cooperation between police forces and the citizens they protect. The implementation of body cameras for police officers is one such measure taken to increase trust and reduce the chances of misconduct occurring.

The Review-Journal reported that Las Vegas Metropolitan Police are undergoing a study of 400 officers—200 wearing a body camera and 200 without. The study includes cameras mounted on an officer’s collar, through an optic in the officer’s glasses, or in a battery pack with a recording chip in the front pocket. As Metro began experimenting with body cameras last November, UNLV researchers monitored the situation closely to determine if there was any improvement in quality of police-suspect interactions. The purpose of the study, according to Dr. Bill Sousa, the director of UNLV’s Center for Crime and Justice Policy, is to determine the effectiveness of the presence of the body cameras in limiting instances of misconduct by comparing the two groups of officers.

The implementation of such an idea comes with a hefty price tag, however. The cameras are expected to cost $500 apiece, and then costs will continue to climb due to long-term storage of videos. The Review-Journal reports that Metro expects to spend “$9.2 million in the first year to buy the cameras for all Las Vegas police and Clark County Detention Center employees. Recurring charges are estimated at $6.6 million annually, a cost which would increase as the amount of required video storage increased.”

On February 13th, the Nevada Legislature introduced Assembly Bill 162, which proposed that portable event recording devices be mandatory for certain Nevada peace officers, excluding university police officers of the Nevada System of Higher Education. The bill was approved by Governor Brian Sandoval on May 25th and will take into effect January 1st, 2016.
motivates her to run through the unforgiving heat are thoughts of the heroic efforts of firefighters in the July 2013 fires at Mt. Charleston. “It’s 100 degrees out and the firefighters are in their uniforms battling the fires. They’re dealing with temperatures way over 150 degrees and carrying 60 lbs. of weight, and I’m running in my shorts and a t-shirt with a bottle of water,” she said. “How could I complain when people like that are out there fighting fires?”

The business and government agency teams that compete in the Corporate Challenge are divided into three divisions (A, B, and C) based on their size. Currently in the largest division, UNLV improved to seventh place overall. In the future, Officer Loffredo looks to add bonus points for community service.

Businesses earn bonus points for volunteer hours that its members accumulate. As well, bonus points are earned through donations through United Blood Services; UNLV is currently in second place for blood donations. “That’s something to be proud of,” she said.

Interested in learning more and joining the team? UNLV faculty, staff, and student workers are eligible to join teams for a variety of events. For more information on the Corporate Challenge, visit: http://www.lasvegasnevada.gov/information/5216.
Did You Know:
Police Services Patrols Beyond UNLV

Did you know: In addition to patrolling the UNLV Paradise and Shadow Lane campuses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the UNLV Police Department patrols the Nevada State College (NSC) campuses and the Desert Research Institute’s (DRI) Southern Nevada campus as well. The DRI campus is patrolled 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and the NSC campuses are patrolled Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.

» For non-emergency situations at DRI, please call (702) 895-3668.
» For non-emergency situations at NSC, please call 9-311 from a campus landline or (702) 895-3668.
» For police assistance in the case of an immediate emergency, or if you observe a crime in progress at NSC, please call 9-911 from a campus landline or (702) 895-3669.
» For police assistance in the case of an immediate emergency, or if you observe a crime in progress at DRI, please call 911 or (702) 895-3669.

Despite NSHE’s exclusion from the bill, UNLV Department of Police Services Chief of Police José Elique said that he is committed to the effort towards openness and transparency, and seeks to fully implement body camera technology in the department over time.

It is believed that some of the positive aspects of using body cameras include:

» Body cameras serve as an independent and unbiased witness during police stops where disputes occur.
» They serve as a tool for the effective collection of evidence at accident scenes and at crime scenes where witnesses are reluctant to come forward (ex. domestic violence).
» The devices serve as protection for innocent police officers and/or defendants in a court of law.
» Body cameras serve as a tool for recognizing and correcting patterns of officer behavior that are detrimental to both the department and officer.
» Serving as a means for decreasing the number of frivolous complaints filed against officers.

If these benefits from the use of body cameras can be realized then their adoption will significantly aid police agencies and the communities they serve as they attempt to avoid incidents like those that occurred in Ferguson.
**Hiring of Jamie Bichelman**

The UNLV Department of Police Services is pleased to announce the appointment of Publications Writer Jamie Bichelman. He is assigned to the Office of the Chief, where he will assist Hobreigh Fischer. In his role, he will be responsible for the preparation and review of print and digital publications for the department and will assist in the department’s community outreach and crime prevention education efforts.

Jamie is an avid runner and researcher from Coral Springs, Florida. He earned his Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in December 2013. He wrote for the Review-Journal and was sports editor with UNLV’s Rebel Yell newspaper. Jamie is seeking his Master’s degree from UNLV in the Marriage & Family Therapy field.

His appointment became effective on March 2nd, 2015.

**Promotion of Hobreigh Fischer**

The UNLV Department of Police Services is pleased to announce the promotion of Hobreigh Fischer to the position of public information officer 1. His new responsibilities will include directing the department’s public relations & community outreach unit. He will continue in his role as government affairs liaison as well as manager for the Office of the Chief and all of its associated staff.

Hobreigh was hired by the Police Services’ department in 1999 after having worked as a political consultant for the Shelley Berkley congressional campaign and part-time college instructor. For many years he has served as the department’s publications writer. He is a two-time graduate of UNLV, having earned both a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in political science. He resides in Las Vegas with his wife, Sheila, and their daughter and son.

His promotion became effective in January.

**Promotion of Detective Paul Velez**

The UNLV Department of Police Services is pleased to announce the promotion of Police Officer Paul Velez to the rank of police detective. Detective Velez served as a detective-in-training for 10 months prior to receiving this well-deserved promotion. In his new role, Detective Velez will handle crime scene analysis as well as follow-up investigations.

Detective Velez is a 20-year veteran police officer of the New York City Police Department, and he received his law enforcement training from the New York City Police Academy. His work with the New York City Police Department included work in community-policing and community affairs. He also served on dignitary protection units for the United Nations and other high-profile New York City events.

He currently resides in Las Vegas.

**Hiring of Jamie Bichelman**

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His appointment became effective on March 2nd, 2015.
**Hiring of Ryan Doyle**

The UNLV Department of Police Services is pleased to announce the hiring of Information Technology Manager Specialist Ryan Doyle.

Ryan may be a familiar face to members of the UNLV community because he has served as the Information Technology Coordinator for the Lee Business School for over a decade. He also worked for UNLV’s Office of Information Technology prior to his appointment with Police Services. Ryan graduated from UNLV with a Bachelor of Science degree in Management Information Systems in 2002. He resides in Las Vegas with his wife and two children, who are big supporters of the UNLV women’s volleyball team.

His appointment became effective on June 1st, 2015.

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**Hiring of Officer Sean Kim**

The UNLV Department of Police Services is pleased to announce the hiring of Police Officer Sean Kim.

Officer Kim may be a familiar face to many on our campus because he has served as a part-time officer for the department’s event unit for approximately 6 months. He received his law enforcement training from the Silver State Law Enforcement Academy. He worked for the Nevada Department of Corrections for 5 years as a corrections officer prior to his appointment with Police Services. He resides in Las Vegas with his wife, daughter, and their two beagles.

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**Hiring of Officer Ghessan Istefan**

The UNLV Department of Police Services is pleased to announce the hiring of Police Officer Ghessan Istefan.

Officer Istefan received his law enforcement training from the Detroit Police Academy. Prior to his appointment with Police Services he worked for the Detroit Police Department for nearly 14 years, where he served in several roles, including patrol, special operations, and investigations. He has received training from the Detroit Police Department in mountain bike patrol as well.

He comes highly recommended to UNLV Police Services having received life-saving commendations and several work excellence awards in Detroit. Officer Istefan resides in Las Vegas with his brother and is looking forward to having his wife and daughter join him in Las Vegas soon.
**Hiring of Jennifer del Valle**

The UNLV Department of Police Services is pleased to announce the hiring of Jennifer del Valle. Jennifer will be working in Police Services’ Office of Budgeting & Accounting as a Personnel Technician II. She may be familiar to members of the UNLV community, since she previously worked as an Administrative Assistant III at Police Services and as an Administrative Assistant II in the Office of International Programs. Jennifer graduated from UNLV with a Bachelor’s Degree in Communications Studies and currently resides in Las Vegas with her husband Joshua and their son and daughter.

Her appointment became effective on March 2nd, 2015.

**Departure of Officer Laura Silva**

The UNLV Department of Police Services bid farewell to Officer Laura Silva of the police patrol unit. Officer Silva left the department to pursue a career as an investigator for the Attorney General’s Office. Officer Silva leaves Police Services after nine years of loyal service.

**‘Campus Carry’ bill does not pass**

The heavily-debated bills regarding gun possession on Nevada university campuses died during the recent session of the Nevada Legislature. There were three attempts to pass the legislation during the 2015 session. The first attempt was with Assemblywoman Michelle Fiore’s “Campus Carry” Bill (Assembly Bill 148). This bill initially passed out of the Nevada Assembly, but it failed to receive a committee vote in the Senate prior to legislative deadlines.

The bill regained life after it was amended and added to Senate Bill 175, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Michael Roberson, R-Henderson. Assemblyman Ira Hansen, R-Sparks, co-authored the amendment to the bill. On Thursday, May 21st, Assembly Speaker John Hambrick initially called for a voice vote on the amendment, though he was unable to determine how many assembly members were in favor or against. Review-Journal reporter Sean Whaley reported that Fiore was denied a request for a roll call vote and one-minute recess, and the amendment was officially denied after receiving 18 standing votes in favor and 24 standing votes against the bill. Eight Republicans and 16 Democrats voted against the measure.

A third attempt was made to pass a similar version of the Campus Carry bill—Assembly Bill 487. However, after passing out of the Assembly, the bill ultimately did not pass in the Senate.
Still Want to Learn More?

Just take a look at some of the people talking about UNLV’s finest in the media!

Ernest J. May Elementary School Morning News: Careers on Wheels
by Ernest J. May Elementary School staff
http://tv.ccsd.net/watch?v=poeDdejqohPe

Studio G April 28th newscast
by Studio G staff
http://studiog.unlv.tv/2015/04/april-28-2015/

The Police Blotter

June 2015 • Volume XI, Issue II

The University of Nevada Las Vegas Department of Police Services is dedicated to providing excellence in protection and service to the university community. As law enforcement officers, we shall continuously endeavor to ensure a safe and secure environment conducive to a positive social and educational process.

The Police Blotter is a biannual newsletter published by the UNLV Department of Police Services’ Office of the Chief in order to assist the department in achieving this mission.

UNLV Police Chief
Jose A. Elique

Assistant Chief
Sandy Seda

Newsletter Staff:

Manager, Office of the Chief & Editor
Hobreigh Fischer

Content & Design
Jamie Bichelman

Student Assistants
Samantha Slinkard & Stephanie Cohen

Contact Information:

Police Department Address:
UNLV Department of Police Services
University of Nevada Las Vegas
4505 S. Maryland Pkwy.
Las Vegas, NV  89154-2007

Police Department Website:
http://police.unlv.edu/

Police Non-Emergency Phone Line:
702-895-3668

Police Fax Lines:
General: 702-895-3600
Police Records & Administration:
702-895-2685

Questions & Comments on Newsletter:
hobreigh.fischer@unlv.edu