

Davidson officer fired, faces charge of cruelty to animal

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Staff Writer

On Sept. 10, the Town of Davidson Police Department fired community services officer Ken Latzer.

Latzer, 63, who faces a misdemeanor charge for animal cruelty, was initially suspended with pay on Aug. 14 for an error he made that resulted in the death of a cat.

According to DavidsonNews.net, "On Aug. 13, Mr. Latzer was transporting a dog to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Control when he picked up a cat and decided to transport both animals at the same time. The cat was placed in the trunk of the car while attached to an animal control stick. Upon arrival at the facility, Mr. Latzer reported the animal was dead."

Early media coverage of the incident painted Latzer as a cruel animal killer. Few Davidson citizens publicly supported Latzer at the beginning of the incident, although he has been recognized as an asset to the community. Latzer has handled parking enforcement and animal control for three and a half years, and he has helped many residents adopt pets. Latzer is also known for handing out dog treats in front of Davidson

Elementary School while directing traffic.

At a recent Davidson Town Board Meeting, many in attendance ardently supported Latzer.

Doug Boone, a resident of Davidson, said that Latzer worked "tirelessly on behalf of pets." According to Boone and others at the meeting, Latzer fought for animal adoption instead of euthanasia.

"Ken is the face of the police department for many students [at Davidson College]," Parker Himes, '06, told town board members. "We are losing a valuable asset to the campus. All he could be guilty of is an error of judgment. We need to apologize to Ken Latzer for what we have done to him."

Mayor of Davidson Randy Kincaid thanked those at the meeting for their support of Latzer but could make no further comment because he was "constrained by state law," and does "not participate in personnel decisions."

Kincaid assured citizens at the meeting that Latzer's fate is in the good hands of Davidson Police Chief Jeanne Miller and Town Manager Leamon Brice.

Latzer is working with a lawyer to prepare for his Oct. 4 court appearance in Charlotte. The outcome of the case remains to be seen.



A woman wears a shirt advocating the release of the Jena students. Davidson students will support the "6" and travel to protests in Louisiana on Thursday.

Jena, from page 1

white-on-African-American violence. Initially arrested and charged with aggravated assault, their charges were increased to attempted second-degree murder.

The national media has given spotty coverage to the issue. President of the Black Student Coalition Jeffrey Scott '08 expressed disappointment with the media's failure to publicize the story.

"The story was not given adequate coverage from the national media. It was approximately one year until most of the country was informed of this situation...One of the biggest concerns for some Davidson students was the fact that they were not aware of the situation as a whole," he said.

The discussion of the Jena 6 also raised questions about racism at Davidson. Once the meeting broke up into small discussion groups, many minority student present offered an anecdote in which a fellow student insulted his or her ethnicity or uttered a racial slur.

Carlos Flores '08, who is Latino, shared an example of racist commentary that he experienced while on the Court. A white student approached him and said, "You're a Latino. You're never gonna be one of us. Stop trying so hard to be one of us. But you're okay because at least you're not a n—r."

Kimberly Bunting '10, an African-American student, shared a similar story of an interaction between her and a white student. Bunting was socializing with a group of white friends when one of the women's boyfriends—also a white student—arrived. In an audible whisper, he asked his girlfriend, "Do you know that you're hanging out with black people?" When his girlfriend said yes and asked him if he wanted to join them, he replied, "I don't wanna get killed."

Others students—both white and minority—shared how uncomfortable they felt when they witnessed or heard stories about female students parading a "huge" Confederate flag behind the senior apartments during a North-South drinking game a few weeks ago. Some wondered whether or not it would have been appropriate for them to approach the women with a request to respect their fellow students by putting away the flag.

Another student shared stories of her roommate using racial slurs, including « n—r » in the course of casual conversation. Flores '08 pointed out that it is complacency with "little things" like racial slurs or a Confederate flag on display that allows big things like Jena 6 to happen and to remain largely unnoticed.

The surprise that many white students expressed when they heard these anecdotes supported Flores's theory. Several explained that they were unaware that overt racism existed on campus. Elyse Harris '08 offered a possible reason for their ignorance: people refuse to talk about controversial issues.

"What scares me is the cover-up issue. I hadn't heard about Jena 6 until the BSC brought it up."

Bunting suggested that, at Davidson, much of the apathy concerning racism results from students' busy schedules and the academic pressure that they face. She described the general student reaction as an intellectual judgment that racism is wrong without any action to back up the opinion. "Well, that's wrong, but I gotta go do the paper."

Flores added that there is discontent between knowing that racism is wrong and understanding why.

Students also discussed the problematic nature of symbols such as the Confederate flag. Several white students from the North explained that, to them, the flag is a no issue because it is not something they encounter frequently. Bunting offered a very different perspective. As an African-American living in the southern portion of Texas, she explained that, in her hometown, the Confederate flag was displayed as a sign that African-Americans are not welcome in specific places.

"It's like I have to buckle up when I'm home [because I know what I'm going to face]," she explained.

In response to the claim that the Confederate flag represents Southern culture and history, several Southern students—both minority and white—explained that they do not feel that the flag represents them.

According to Professor of Education Hilton Kelly, one of the small discussion facilitators, those who have been hurt by the symbol are the ones who determine its meaning.

Flores agreed: "When you talk about power dynamics, I don't think those power can tell me how to feel about the symbols."

Despite the negative stories that several students shared, Darrell Scott '10, who organized the event, acknowledged that Davidson is not a lost cause.

"While it [racism on campus] is not horrible, I wholeheartedly believe that [we] can improve. Many students are ignorant to a lot of things that plague the black community and the only way to cure ignorance is education," he said.

During the large group discussion that followed the small group discussions, several students offered suggestions for using the night's interactions to enact positive change. David Dennis '08 advocated spreading an evening's message: "I think everyone needs to talk to 10-15 people after this and not say, 'I went to the Jena 6 discussion. I'm not a racist. I feel good about myself.'"

Craig Pickett '08 challenged his fellow students to address racist attitudes at Davidson and beyond: "Students don't speak out of fear. Davidson prides itself on training leaders. When you graduate with that degree is it just a piece of paper, or are you really a leader?"

Jessica Givens '10, 2010 Class President, is organizing a trip to Jena to protest the actions of the district attorney and the treatment these students have received. Students attending will leave Wednesday 5:30 p.m. by bus for Louisiana.

CAMPUS POLICE BLOTTER

09/10/07 09:24 a.m. Escort /Convoy Robert Walker Dr.

Officer received a call on the officer cell phone from student requesting a ride back to campus from River Run. Student stated that she went running and had started to hurt. The officer transported student from River Run back to Jamison Dorm.

09/11/07 08:07 p.m. Elevator Misfunction Tomlinson

Officer received a dispatch call to assist a female student stuck in the elevator in Tomlinson Residence Hall. On arrival, reporting officer was met by maintenance staff. Members of Davidson Fire Department assisted maintenance in removing the student from the elevator.

09/11/07 08:08 p.m. Fire Alarm Belk Dorm

Officer received a dispatched call advising that Davidson Fire Department had been dispatched to Belk Dorm in to respond to a fire alarm activation. On arrival it was determined a pull station located across from 224 had been pulled. Davidson Fire Department checked the building and reset the alarm. Students were unable to provide any information as to who may have activated the alarm.

09/13/2007 02:00 p.m. Stolen Bike Public Safety

Officer spoke with a male student at the Public Safety office in reference to a larceny. The student stated that sometime on Thursday, 09/13/2007, between 10:00 a.m. and 11:20 a.m., some unknown person took his bicycle. He stated that he had left his bike in front of the Martin Science building at 325 Concord Rd, and when he came out, the bike was missing. The bike was a specialized, Hard Rock Sport, black and gray in color, with a rip on the front of the seat. The student advised that he had a lock on the bike, but failed to secure it. The bike was in fair condition and cost approx. \$350.00. If found, please contact Public Safety.

09/14/07 01:32 a.m. Suspicious Male Martin Court-Jamison

Officers were dispatched to Martin Court-Jamison in reference to a suspicious white male walking a black Lab. Dispatch advised an anonymous female had reported the man after he asked for a drink of water. The caller described the man as a white male in his 30's. The suspect was never located.

09/15/07 12:22 a.m. Fire Alarm Martin Court-F

Officer was dispatched to a fire alarm call at Martin Court-F. Upon arrival the officer was informed by a male student that he had seen a subject with dark hair wearing a white button up shirt and jeans walk up to the pull station and pull the alarm. The student stated that the subject then took off running and got in the back seat of a dark colored SUV. Davidson Fire Department arrived and reset the alarm.

09/15/07 01:07 a.m. 911 Hang Up Tomlinson Dorm

Officer was dispatched to Tomlinson Dorm in reference to a 911 hang up. Dispatch advised someone answered the phone and advised that they were drunk and everything was all right. Dispatch was unable to give an exact location for the call. Upon arrival the officer checked the interior and exterior of the dorm and was unable to locate where the call originated.

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