



## Stargazing

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### KC police officers lead a St. Patrick's Day flash mob in Westport

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03/17/2015 8:33 PM | Updated: 03/18/2015 12:05 PM

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KCPD officers led a flash mob in Westport on Tuesday during the St. Patrick's Day parade.  
YOUTUBE

So this happened Tuesday during St. Patrick's Day festivities: A group of KCPD officers led a flash mob in Westport.

Check out the YouTube videos below. You can tell who's done the Electric Slide many, many times before.

Yes, we're talking about you, Officer Chato Villalobos.

The idea for the dance came from and was organized by three KCPD officers: Julie Tomasic and her husband, Matt, and Villalobos.

Julie Tomasic works in the department's Victim Assistance Unit. Matt Tomasic and Villalobos are partners who work out of the Westside Community Action Network Center.

"We knew there was going to be no middle ground on this," said Matt Tomasic. "It was either going to be a success or a colossal failure. About 10 seconds into it I got this feeling of complete relief."

With the big St. Patrick's Day celebration at hand, they wanted to do something in these tense, post-Ferguson days to show the public that police are more than cold, unfeeling cyborgs, like the cops portrayed in video games, Tomasic said.

"The notion was that with all this craziness going on throughout the United States that it's very important to do something to humanize us, to show that we are from the people we are helping to serve," he said.

"And we thought that dancing and making fools out of ourselves was one way to do it."

The officers spent the last week or so calling colleagues and sending out emails looking for volunteers. "We didn't have much time to plan it so we had to pick a dance we thought people already knew," said Tomasic.

He jokingly called his partner "a closeted wedding dancer."

About 4 p.m. after Tuesday's parade, they gathered in front of Kelly's in Westport. Officers on motorcycles arrived first, clearing the space and signaling that something big was about to happen.

Villalobos could tell that the crowd was a little uneasy about what was unfolding – something bad, perhaps? – because “right way everybody pulled out their phones because they wanted to catch what was going to happen.”

The surprise came when one of the officers yelled “hit it,” to Jackson County legislator Scott Burnett, who provided the sound system, and the lead “dancers” ran into the street and started doing the Electric Slide.

About 40 officers in all danced, including a few Jackson County sheriff's deputies who were working that location. When Tomasic asked if they wanted to join a flash mob “they thought it was a practical joke at first,” he laughed.

His colleagues were nervous about dancing in public, Tomasic said, but he gave them a last-minute pep talk: “History favors the bold, and have fun.”

And they did. Two moments stood out for Villalobos: Seeing people clapping and jumping in to join the dance, and watching the faces of his colleagues.

“Their expression was a combination of fear and happiness, just enjoying being part of something positive in the middle of a St. Patrick's Day celebration,” Villalobos said.

On a day when the police are usually busy arresting people for overstepping the boundaries of the law, they could dance.

Comments posted to YouTube and social media have been overwhelmingly positive. The moment has “viral” written all over it.

“It makes me proud to read comments on Facebook and Twitter that say ‘this is what my police department does, what about yours’ and ‘proud to be KC,’” said Tomasic.

“If we can help foster that kind of civic pride it makes me glad.”

But Tuesday wasn't all about dancing in the streets for the flash mob organizers.

On his way home at the end of his shift Villalobos helped catch a man suspected of a cold-case rape.



