

MACKINAC ISLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT
JOB DESCRIPTION

INDEX AS: Police Canine (K9) Program

REVIEWED/AMENDED: February 5, 2025

Approved: ROUGH DRAFT

Chief Michael Gruits _____

POSITION:

The Mackinac Island Police Department seeks a certified and experienced canine / K9 and handler for search and rescue missions and wellness services as requested.

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR POSITION:

A. Age: Minimum twenty-one (21) Years of Age

B. Citizenship: United States

C. Education: High school diploma or GED (Other as required)

D. Criminal History: No felony convictions.

E. Driver's License: Must possess a valid Michigan Operator's License.

F. Background: Must successfully pass a department background investigation.

G. Physical: Candidate should be in good physical condition and must successfully pass a physical examination with a Physician.

H. Experience: Candidate must be experienced in K9 search and rescue and the care and training of a canine (K9) for at least 3 years prior to accepting this position.

I. Certification: Candidate must be a certified K9 Handler with their own certified K9 under State of Michigan standards to be eligible for the position.

J. Training / Records: Candidate must maintain all K9 and Handler training records and provide them to the Chief of Police monthly or as requested.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A. The handler and K9 must be able to assist in searching for missing persons and limited article searches, when available.
- B. The handler and K9 may provide wellness visits and educational opportunities as requested.
- C. The handler and K9 as a team will need to be able to locate, report, and document searches and finds.

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DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (CONTINUED):

- D. The handler and K9 must be able to work well with other entities of public safety and the community under stressful conditions.
- E. The handler must be able to document and report information via radio and in written communication form as needed.
- F. Other requirements deemed necessary by the Chief of Police.

COMPENSATION:

- A. This is a non-union position with no benefits.
- B. The compensation will be determined upon mutual agreement between the City and the selected candidate.
- C. The position is strictly at will and may be eliminated at any given time as determined by the Chief of Police.
- D. The position is a subcontractor position and not an employee of the City of Mackinac Island.

AUTHORITY OF POSITION:

This is a civilian subcontractor position with no arrest powers. It is limited to search and rescue functions and wellness services.

DEFERRAL

Anything not covered in this job description and explained in its entirety is hereby reserved as a right of the City of Mackinac Island to make the final determination.

Chief Grunts

MACKINAC ISLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICE SERVICE CANINE HANDLER

PART-TIME POSITION PROPOSAL

GOAL:

Through the use of a certified police service therapy canine (PSTC) for the Mackinac Island Police Department (MIPD), animal-assisted interactions will be provided for the well being of departmental officers, support staff, medical care staff, and other emergency responders. The PSTC team will also provide educational opportunities and staff wellness visits as requested at the Mackinac Island Public School. The team will also participate in outreach for the MIPD at various public events.

It is anticipated that the costs for this program will be nominal based on a combination of private and public donations that should offset program costs.

This civilian position will be part-time and is written specifically for Susan M. Stejskal, LVT, PhD as the PSTC handler and program lead.

JUSTIFICATION:

The increasing popularity of using therapy or comfort dogs in many different venues throughout the United States is evident by articles published in the popular press, scientific journals and in social media. Teams are used in schools, nursing homes, hospitals, and different places of employment. It has been established that animal-assisted therapy or interactions have been a very effective and well accepted tool to help people after critical events or who work in emotionally challenging conditions.

There is a wide variety in the training, certification, and deployment of many therapy dog teams. Some of these teams are made up of well-meaning dog owners who elect to visit with their pets without specialized training. Dogs used in animal-assisted therapy should be intentionally trained and the team should be certified annually by a national certifying organization. Dogs that are used to provide support for responders and/or victims after mass casualty or fatality incidents should be handled by people who have gone through Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) training and the team certified annually.

A few years ago, the United States Police Association (USPCA) recognized the critical role that well-trained canine teams can make in law enforcement agencies. As with patrol and detection canines, the USPCA PSTC teams must be certified annually.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:

The PSTC Team (Stejskal & K9 Sheriff Woody)

K9 Woody and I certify annually with the USPCA as a PSTC team. Additionally, after over 100 hours of critical incident stress management (CISM) training and specific K9 training, K9 Sheriff Woody and I are part of the Michigan Disaster Recovery Team (Mi-DART), part of the Michigan Mortuary Operations Response Team (MiMORT). We are also a working team for Crisis Response Canines, a national organization that provides animal-assisted interactions for first responders after mass shootings and other critical incidents.

Susan M. Stejskal, LVT, PhD

As a law enforcement K9 handler for over 20 years, I have been recognized by the courts as an expert witness in canine olfaction, forensic taphonomy, and the training and deployment of detector canines. My educational and professional experience in academia and the private sector allowed me to develop training in a variety of forensics topics for detectives, investigators, crime scene personnel, and canine handlers from law enforcement agencies throughout the United States and Canada.

I have provided presentations and training at national, regional, and state conferences throughout the US including the International Association for Identification (national and regional), the Midwest Association of Forensic Scientists, the National Association of Forensic Entomology, the American Veterinary Medical Association, along with many others. I have also provided training for Toronto Police Services, the New York Police Department (Emergency Services Canine Unit), USPCA Region 7 (New York), the New York States Canine Association, the Connecticut Police Work Dog Association, the Massachusetts Police Work Dog Association, and others.

I am a member and regional certifying official for detector canines for the USPCA, a member of the International Association for Identification, US National Institute of Science and Technology's

Organization of Scientific Area Forensic Committee - Dogs and Sensors Subcommittee, and am a past member of the Michigan Mortuary Operations Response Team.

I am the author of "Death, Decomposition, and Detector Dogs: from science to scene" (CRC Press, 2nd edition, 2022 and 1st edition, 2013), "Beds, Bugs, and Breakfasts" (CDCS, 2019), and two children's books, "The Little Dog Who Did Big Things" and "Buzz Visits Mackinac Island". I have also written several book chapters, case reports, and scientific journal and magazine articles. The most recent article ("What is a police therapy canine and how do I get there") was published in the USPCA Canine Courier.

After over 20 years of service, I recently retired as a Special Deputy/Forensic K9 Handler (Human Remains Detector or HRD K9s) and former lead of the Forensic Services Unit/Criminal Investigations of the St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department. I am still a member of the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office Water Safety and Recovery Team where I work as an HRD K9 handler on an as-needed and as-available basis.

K9 Sheriff Woody (Hundeleben Oh It's Sheriff Woody, CGC, TKN, RN, RI, USPCA(PSTC)

K9 Woody is a miniature wirehaired dachshund born in 2019 and moved to Michigan to live with me as his owner/trainer/handler. Woody has earned many titles from the American Kennel Club including the Canine Good Citizen, Trick Dog Novice, Rally Obedience Novice and Rally Obedience Intermediate titles. Sheriff Woody works as a Human Remains Detector (HRD) K9 focusing on helping locate drowning victims. Because of his detection success, K9 Woody received a regional award from the USPCA for his detection work in law enforcement.

K9 Woody certifies annually as a PSTC with the USPCA and is a working canine MiDART and for Crisis Response Canines.

K9 Maple (Springville Maple Rush, CGC, TKN, RN, RI, USPCA(HRD)

K9 Maple is an English Springer Spaniel born in Canada in 2015 and like K9 Woody, has many titles from the American Kennel Club. K9 Maple was also deputized and worked as an HRD K9 and has been involved in criminal investigations and missing person cases throughout the midwestern US and Canada. K9 Maple and I are also part-time employees of the Mackinac Island Historic State Park Airport, helping in avian and wildlife deterrence and control. K9 Maple may be also utilized in an educational or outreach capacity.

Most recently, K9 Maple and I have been asked by the Michigan Pollinator Initiative (Michigan State University) to develop a specialized program focusing on training dogs to detect a bacteria that causes American Foul Brood disease. AFB has been implicated in killing honey bees around the world for over a decade. Because she had to medically retire in May following bilateral elbow surgery, this is a perfect segue for us to start a new chapter while providing a needed service. The project will end with me writing a manual on how-to-train-an-AFB-detection-canine that will be published and distributed through Michigan State University Extension.

Attachment 1 is included and shows the activity and events that K9 Handler Stejskal and K9 Maple and K9 Woody completed in 2023.

PROJECTED BUDGET:

This part-time position is for a civilian (non-sworn) K9 handler (and certified PSTC) that will provide scheduled and unscheduled deployments as the PSTC team as available.

Acquisition Costs

The cost to purchase a trained PSTC from a private vendor can exceed \$10,000, but in this case there is no cost as K9 Handler Stejskal will provide an already trained and certified working canine(s).

Other Costs

All costs purchasing feed, veterinary medications and services, training equipment and costs associated with training, certification, and travel are covered by K9 Handler Stejskal (Attachment 1).

Salary

The total annual amount for salary is \$620. This is based on an hourly deployment rate of \$20/hour and an estimated 2 hours per month for routine Officer/Employee Wellness Visits (8 months) and \$20/hour for a projected 15 hours for educational and outreach programs.

The US Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) does stipulate that a K9 handler be compensated for daily care and training of a police K9 or for a K9 used as a department resource. FLSA does allow a different rate of pay for canine care, taking 30 minutes a day to complete. Based on a hourly rate of \$5 for canine care (\$2.50 per day) for 8 months (240 days) of the year, the canine care salary is \$600 per year.

The combined deployment and canine care salary is estimated to be \$1220 per year.

Potential Offsets

Many law enforcement departments offset the costs of a PSTC team through donations from private citizens and/or community foundations. With a modest annual budget and a potential grant from the Mackinac Island Community Foundation, there should be little to no cost to the city or the police department.

CONCLUSIONS

This proposal is being submitted to secure a part-time civilian police service therapy canine handler position with the Mackinac Island Police Department. The PSTC team would provide animal-assisted interactions for employee wellness and to provide opportunities for education and department outreach. Because much of the inherent costs associated with a certified PST canine are provided by K9 Handler Stejskal, the rest of the funding could come from private and public (community) donations making this a low cost, yet very valuable resource.

ATTACHMENT 2: CANINE DETECTION CONSULTING SERVICES:

SUE STEJSKAL AND K9S MAPLE AND SHERIFF WOODY EVENTS REPORT, 2023

(authored by K9 Handler Sue Stejskal)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

So far 2023 has been a busy year for K9 Maple and K9 Sheriff Woody. Both dogs have been involved in a total of over 100 events/deployments and interacting with many people.

Some of the highlights for 2023 are:

- K9 Maple and K9 Sheriff Woody each received their Rally (obedience) Intermediate titles from the American Kennel Club (AKC).
- K9 Maple and K9 Sheriff Woody continue to provide detection work for the St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department Criminal Investigation Unit and the Dive Rescue and Recovery team.
- K9 Maple assists the Mackinac Island State Park airport as a wildlife deterrence K9, helping keep the airport safe.
- K9 Sheriff Woody works as a Police Service Therapy Canine for the Mackinac Island Police Department.
- After an extensive application process and in April, acceptance of a complicated obedience audition video, K9 Woody was accepted as a member of Crisis Response Canines, a national organization whose mission is to provide support for first responders and others after a mass fatality/casualty incident.

SPECIFIC EVENTS/DEPLOYMENTS

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

CANINE	ROLE	NOTES
K9 Sheriff Woody	Detection	Case deployment - January
K9 Maple	Detection	Case deployment - April
K9 Maple and K9 Sheriff Woody	Detection	Case deployment - May
K9 Maple	Detection	Case deployment - June
K9 Maple	Detection	Case deployment - August
K9 Maple and K9 Sheriff Woody	Detection	Case deployment - August
K9 Sheriff Woody	Educational	Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel - June. Interacted with 16 people.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

CANINE	ROLE	NOTES
K9 Sheriff Woody	Police Service Therapy Canine	Public school (75 students + 15 staff K-12) – educational presentations and interactions for all classes (June)
		Multiple department officer wellness visits (~5)
		Outreach – 125 th anniversary of banning automobiles on the island. Met with Governor G. Whitmer (July 21). Crowd of approximately 325 and met personally with 35.
K9 Maple	Detection	Assisted in missing person search
K9 Sheriff Woody	Police Service Therapy Canine	Outreach – Music in the Park (August). Approximately 200 people, interacted with 8 including 2 police officers from AZ.
		Police Appreciation Dinner Cruise (August). Interacted with 14 people.
	Police Service Therapy Canine	First day of school – Mackinac Island Public School. Interacted directly with 25 people and indirectly with about 100.

STATE PARK

CANINE	ROLE	NOTES
K9 Maple	Wildlife deterrence canine	>75 deployments to date
		Interactions with staff and visitors (numerous).

Canine Detection Consulting Services

CANINE	ROLE	NOTES
K9 Maple	Educational	Kalamazoo Air Zoo – STEM Camp (July). Interacted with 23 students.
K9 Sheriff Woody	Educational	Western Michigan University – High School Forensic Science

		Workshop (July). Interacted with 19 people.
K9 Maple	Educational	Centreville High School (November). Classroom presentations about K9s in Forensic Science. Interacted directly with approximately 65 students and faculty.
K9 Maple	Training	Assisted with detection training with Ontario Provincial Police, Toronto Police Services, and other regional departments. Interacted with 10 K9 teams and 5 instructors.

CRISIS RESPONSE CANINES

CANINE	DATE	NOTES	NUMBER PEOPLE (direct/indirect)
K9 Sheriff Woody	May 3	Department wellness	8
	May 4	University student (finals week)	25
	May 6	Michigan War Dog Memorial – outreach and handler well being	20 / 80
	May 10	USPCA National Detector K9 trial – outreach and handler well being	25 / 75
	May 15	AZO – training and outreach	5
	May 27	Obedience trials and dog show – training and outreach	15
	May 28	Obedience trial and dog show – training and outreach	15
	July 7	Police department wellness	9
	July 14	St. Joseph County Veterans Administration Food Drive	4/6
	July 14	Officer Wellness Visit	8
	July 14	Sturgis Kennel Club dog show	18/30
	Sept 11	Police department wellness visit	9
	Sept 11	Responder wellness visit (two fire houses)	6/10
	Sept 15	Police department wellness visit	2
	Nov 10	Public relations at local dog event	20/150
	Dec 15	Officer wellness visit	4

CANINE DETECTION CONSULTING SERVICES:
SUE STEJSKAL AND K9s MAPLE AND SHERIFF WOODY
JULY 2024 REPORT

(authored by K9 Handler Sue Stejskal)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

So far 2024 has been a different year for K9 Maple and K9 Sheriff Woody. Both dogs have faced profound health challenges, necessitating some changes in service for both dogs. The following table provides the highlights for the first half of 2024.

Some of the highlights for 2024 so far are:

- K9 Maple and K9 Sheriff Woody provided detection work for the St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department Criminal Investigation Unit and the Dive Rescue and Recovery team up through May.
- K9 Maple had to medically retire as a human remains detection (HRD) K9 following her bilateral elbow surgery in mid-May.
- Due to time commitments and Maple having to retire, both dogs and I retired from the St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department in May.
- K9 Sheriff Woody continues to work as a member of the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office Water Safety and Recovery team, with the ability to provide K9 coverage through mutual aid as requested for the St. Joseph County dive team.
- K9 Woody also works as a Police Service Therapy Canine for the Mackinac Island Police Department following annual certification by the United States Police Canine Association.
- K9 Woody is now part of the Disaster Assistance Recovery Team of the Michigan Mortuary Operation Response Team working in canine-assisted intervention and therapy for first responders responding to mass fatality incidents in Michigan.
- K9 Woody also continues as a member of Crisis Response Canines, a national organization whose mission is to provide support for first responders and others after a mass fatality/casualty incidents.

The rest of 2024 and beyond...

- In early 2024, I was contacted by Dr. Meghan Milbrath of the Michigan Pollinator Initiative asking if I could possibly train a dog to detect a bacteria that kills honey bees around the world and then write a how-to-train-a-dog-to-do-that manual which will be distributed through Michigan State University Extension. This is an amazing opportunity that could help impact the health of apiculture (bee keeping) around the world. Although there is a small stipend provided through a grant, we are basically volunteering our time and skills to complete this project and assist beekeepers in the future.
- In April, K9 Woody and I were one of about 40 people invited to participate in the National Symposium for the Standards of Goal-Based Canine Interventions held in Atlantic City New Jersey in April. The primary discussion was focused on roles for different types of therapy dogs in

the United States. While some dogs provide basic comfort support for residents in nursing homes, others work in hospitals providing specific highly trained roles in hospitals (such as working with patients in pediatric intensive care units, etc.) or in canine assisted interventions. Because of the varying roles dogs can be used in, there is a need to more clearly define roles and different training, certification, and performance requirements of each type of "therapy dog". This is an exciting opportunity for us to help shape the future roles of canine-assisted intervention or therapy dogs.

UTILIZATION OF FUNDING

The funds provided by the Sturgis Kennel Club for health insurance for both dogs has been greatly appreciated and unfortunately utilized a lot in 2024.

In January, Woody ingested a foreign object that resulted in emergency surgery. Following his recovery, he returned to service. The following table describes the utilization of both dogs in the first half of 2024.

In February, Maple started to exhibit some abnormal signs that caused concern. Following several biopsies, Maple was determined to be clear of cancer. However, over the past few years, Maple demonstrated on-and-off lameness after large area searches. We had been addressing those episodes, but after a large cold case search, it became apparent this was not going to go away with rest and anti-inflammatory therapy. In April, we were able to have more testing done and found that Maple had likely injured both elbows (and broke two toes) in the past few years. She is one of those dogs who has more drive to work over sense and looking back, I believe she may have done this a few years ago. The result was bilateral arthroscopic elbow surgery followed by a strict 8-week recovery period (crate and minimal walking), and then a slow return to 'normal'. Fortunately, the bee bacteria detection project came at the right time, allowing her to continue to serve, but in a more confined and slower fashion.

The medical insurance provided by the Sturgis Kennel Club has allowed both K9s Maple and Woody continue to serve locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

SPECIFIC EVENTS/DEPLOYMENTS

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

CANINE	ROLE	NOTES
K9 Maple and K9 Sheriff Woody	Detection (K9 Maple's increasing periods of front limb lameness limited her participation in large area searches.)	Cold case deployment - April

POLICE DEPARTMENT & CRISIS RESPONSE CANINES

CANINE	ROLE	NOTES
K9 Sheriff Woody	Police Service Therapy Canine	Public school (75 students + 15 staff K-12) – educational presentations and interactions for all classes (May and June)
		Multiple department officer wellness visits (reaching over 150).
		Participated in national meeting in April (approximately 65 people and 25 dogs in attendance), showing that "little dogs can do big things".
	Human Remains Detection K9	Requested to assist with water recovery (May and June).

Canine Detection Consulting Services

CANINE	ROLE	NOTES
K9 Maple	Educational	Assisting with training with the Ontario Provincial Police in December (2023) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources K9 Unit (April).
K9 Sheriff Woody	Educational	Western Michigan University – High School Forensic Science Workshop (scheduled for July).

ATTACHMENT 3: UNITED STATES POLICE CANINE ASSOCIATION CANINE COURIER ARTICLE

TRAINER'S CORNER

WHAT IS A POLICE THERAPY CANINE AND HOW DO I GET THERE?

by Susan M. Hines, LVT, PhD - Multitask Award Police Department Police Therapy K9 Handler &
St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department Human Relations Detection K9 Handler

I decided to write this article to provide some background for handlers or departments who may be considering training, certifying and utilizing a dog as a USPCA Police Service Therapy Canine (PSTC). That is exactly where I was a few years ago with my partner K9 Sheriff Woody. Although I had certified and handled three other therapy dogs over the years, utilizing a law enforcement therapy canine was different. Over the past several months, I have received emails from people considering adding a PSTC to their departments and have been asked questions like, *What kind of dog should we get? What kind of training is needed?* As with all things canine, this of course is easily answered by "it depends."

Please note that these opinions expressed in this article are mine alone and do not represent specific departments.

What isn't a Therapy Dog?
Service dogs are not emotional support dogs (animals), but both types of dogs are used to support individuals. As defined by the American with Disabilities Act, basically a service dog is one who is trained to perform a specific task to help or assist a person who has a disability. Service dogs go through extensive training and evaluation before they are able to do their job. An emotional support animal (ESA) is a pet who helps their owner stay calm and comfortable, but the owner must have a "disabling mental health disorder" as diagnosed by a mental health provider. ESAs are not trained to perform a specific task, are not certified, and do not have the same legal rights as service dogs.

Service Dogs are NOT Emotional Support Dogs! And Emotional Support Animals Do NOT have the same legal rights!

What is a Therapy Dog?

Therapy dogs are generally dogs who are trained, often tested or certified and are used to "promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional or cognitive function in either group or individual settings" (www.akc.org). They are often paired with an owner who volunteers in settings to meet with people in nursing homes, hospitals, schools, etc. There is a wide variation in what a therapy dog

does and the training that the team goes through ranging from "comfort dogs" who are often found in airports to help calm nervous fliers to crisis response canine teams who respond to emotionally charged critical incidents such as mass shootings or disasters. For USPCA, the PSTC and handler are a team that work within a law enforcement capacity (www.uspcak9.com). Depending on the department, these PSTC teams could be used for internal officer and staff wellness programs as well as respond to critical incidents to support officers, staff, and families.

Some departments may utilize the teams in schools, courts, or as victim advocates. The only stipulation USPCA gives is that the teams should work in a law enforcement capacity for law enforcement and special members.

Intended Utilization

The most important step is to figure out how the PSTC will be used. Is the intention for the dog to work and stay within the confines of the department? Is the dog going to partner with a School Resource Officer or work as a victim advocate (court dog)? The environment and potential expectations for the dog should be considered before selecting a dog.

BRAINER'S CORNER

as a quest service dog. These dogs are often career changed to a different role like delivery. A dog with slight health imperfection that may keep it from working as an active service dog may be well suited as a police therapy dog. This is definitely something to consider.

An overly belligerent dog may not be the right choice when working with an officer after a traumatic event. That same belligerent dog may be just what is needed when paired with a School Resource Officer about to reach at a school event. One dog can do both if they are trained to do it.

The key in selection is to pick the most adaptable, confident, and friendly dog possible to begin the training process.

Training Considerations

The goal of the handler is to help a dog develop into a calm confident partner that can work as intended. This sounds easy, but depending on the team and the situations the team work in, it may require more than getting a friendly dog and going to work. Training a candidate for police therapy work may be very simple, or complex, depending on the individual dog selected and the intended work. If a young adult dog who was raised by one of the service organizations is selected to work in a predictable environment, the initial training will consist of the team working (i.e., obedience, controlled greetings, etc.) in that environment. If the breed is one that is friendly and outgoing, the training should be easier. If selecting a puppy to eventually use in a variety of situations, the training will take longer.

For training opportunities, it may be a good idea to check out local kennel clubs or obedience clubs.

If a puppy is less than one year old at the time of selection, the American Kennel Club's STAR puppy training classes are highly recommended. STAR stands for Socialization, Training, Activity, and Responsibility and is a way for the handler and puppy to learn together. This class helps a puppy and handler develop into a team.

The Canine Good Citizen (CGC) class offered by the American Kennel Club prepares a handler and dog to eventually take the CGC test. This is kind of a baseline test that a dog of any age can take that involves a number of exercises that the handler and dog must perform, but is basically demonstrating

obedience and a social setting with other people, dogs, and structures. The AKC/CAC is often a requirement for certification through many of the therapy dog certification organizations.

People often wonder if any dog will be able to pick up if an individual is experiencing stress. Do they do that naturally? Or can it be learned? A paper published in 2022 reported that dogs are able to detect humans experiencing stress. It appears that acute psychological stress produces changes in volatile organic compounds coming off breath and sweat in humans. (Wilson C, Campbell K, Pether Z and C Reeve. (2022) "Dogs can discriminate between human baseline and psychological stress condition odours". *Flav CNE* 17(19): e2274177). Through my experience with four therapy dogs, I have seen dogs who seem to come by it naturally, but most likely, learn to sense individuals who are experiencing stress through training and selective exposure.

Once the team is working well together, it is imperative to extend this training into environments that the team will work in. After the initial certification, the training should continue through the service life of the team, because the more comfortable the team is in an environment, the better the team will work. Annual PSTC certification is required by USPCA.

Other Considerations

Because therapy dogs interact closely with people, it is necessary that the dog be well groomed, fully vaccinated, and has an annual health check (including fecal examination). This is to protect potential or perceived risks to people.

The Handler

While working, the handler's job is to focus on the dog and less on the person the team is working with. This sounds counter-intuitive, but every time the team works, the conditions will be different, people are different, the environment is different, PSTC is different, and the handler is different. The handler must be aware of what is or could happen during a therapy visit and must look out for the dog. Maybe the environment is not right for the dog to work in. Maybe it is the area, maybe it is the people, or maybe it is just that day. The handler must be able to recognize when the dog is not comfortable and calm by recognizing signs of stress. There

What, for example, if one were going to select a dog to use as a "school dog", decisions should be made up front about some of the following: Is the dog to attend school functions or also to do outreach for the school/department? Is it to be a happy times or is the dog to be around kids who may be emotionally stressed, live in stressful situations, or have other behavioral issues? Is the dog going to be used as a court dog? Will this dog be trained to handle often highly stressful and emotional situations when being around children or adults who have witnessed or gone through severely challenging experiences? Is the dog supposed to work with Victim Services - helping with those who on the team or deploying with them in extremely difficult situations? These situations could become not just extremely challenging for the dog team, but also potentially physically challenging or even dangerous.

As can be seen, it becomes obvious that depending on how the dog is to be used, it is not as simple as get a puppy or a rescue, do some basic obedience, and now you have a therapy dog. Depending on the possible deployments and the actual dog, the team may

require a lot of training (initial and maintenance) to be effective in their roles. The dog's role is to be calm and receptive to individuals who seek them out.

Candidate Selection

The basics for selecting a candidate for therapy work are somewhat similar to selecting a detector dog - pick the healthiest and environmentally sound animal possible. A puppy vs. an adult? Purchase from a breeder or train internally? That depends on the skill and commitment of the department personnel. A rescue vs. a purpose-bred dog? Again - dependent on the department's needs and skills.

The breed? This does not really matter although it is a lot easier to start with a breed that was bred to work with people. In the American Kennel Club, there are seven groups of dogs based on what purpose the breed was developed to do. Many of the breeds within the toy and non-sporting groups were

developed to be companions, while breeds in the working and sporting groups were bred to work with people. Hounds were bred to work independently and to not be dependent on a person to hunt. It does not mean a hound would be a bad choice, but that more training may be required. There are all important things to consider this when selecting a breed. It is also recommended to really think about what role the dog will play as a police therapy dog. It may not be a good idea to use a breed like a German Shepherd Dog if working in a mental health crisis intervention role as it may be interpreted to be an "attack dog" instead of being there to help.

It may be a good idea to go to a local kennel club dog show to talk to breeders and/or owners to see what may be the best fit for your department. There could also be the potential that a local breeder may donate or provide a puppy at a reduced cost. It never hurts to ask!

Many people are picking the advertised hypoallergenic, designer crossbreeds, commonly referred to as doodles for a prospect for a therapy dog. Although a good concept, many of the doodles are no longer the labradoodle or goldendoodle

crosses, but instead often there are many more breeds involved in the crosses. With this, there is often less hypoallergenic properties as well as less predictability for behavior and overall health of the dog. If considering a doodle, it is advisable to only buy from breeders who can demonstrate health screens and guarantees for their dogs. At purchase prices often ranging from \$3K - \$5K for a puppy, this is a reasonable request.

If there is an organization in your area that raises dogs for service work (ex: Leader Dogs for the Blind and Paws with a Cause in Michigan), that could be another potential source for a police therapy dog candidate. These dogs come from a purposeful breeding program and the puppies often are raised in homes by people who follow a planned developmental training regimen. Occasionally a puppy may not make it into a service role due to physical or behavioral reasons. Testing at one year may reveal a healthy puppy who is too active to work

The Dog's role
is to be calm and
receptive to those
who seek
them out.

decision to work the dog or not – that call must be made by the handler. Using a risk benefit approach, and is similar in concept to a detection K9 handler deciding not to use the dog in a dangerous situation. The book "Teaming With Your Therapy Dog" (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI University Press, 2015) is a great resource that describes signs of stress and how important it is that the handler advocates for their K9 partner by supporting the dog in an unobtrusive way. Sometimes it may be necessary to take the dog out of a working situation when the dog is showing signs of stress, and allow it to just be a dog. At the end of the day, the job of the handler is to look out for the dog to allow it to work for a long time.

at rest of the story.

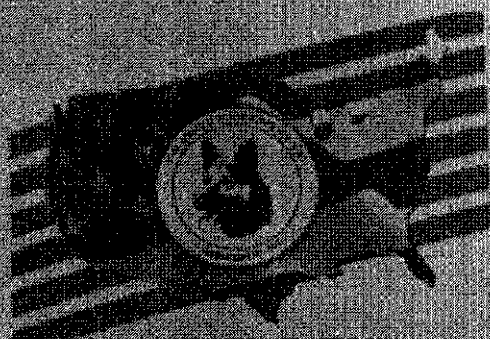
Another article will cover the journey of a police service therapy canine and what it took to pass

TRAINER'S CORNER

the USPCA certification, establish a department officer wellness program, and eventually becoming a member of Crisis Response Canines, a national organization that "provides strength, comfort and emotional support" for first responders in the aftermath of critical incidents.

Author Bio

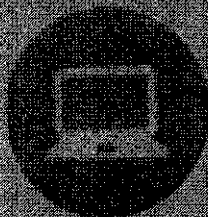
Sgt. Robert LVT PhD is the K9 Therapy Center Handler for the Maryland State Police Department and a Special Deputy / Human Remains Identifier with the St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department. She is a trainer and regional coordinator with USPCA Region 13. With over 22 years of law enforcement and professional experience, she has worked with K9 therapy dogs in different settings and environments in the United States and other countries in the US and Canada, with partner K9s, K9s and Vets, and has written articles, book chapters, and most recently, the second edition of *Death, Decomposition, and Forensic Dog*, from science to story.



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Full Membership to this association shall be open to any active, full-time, paid law enforcement officer, whether Federal, State, County, or Municipal, who is a canine handler, trainer or administrator, pending approval of regional elected officers. This shall include members of the Military Police who may be canine handlers, trainers or administrators. Any full members may continue as such in the event he or she enters military service and later returns to canine law enforcement on a full-time basis.

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