

President Amatuzio Donates Trained Police Dog

The newest member of the Superior, Wis. police force came all the way from Slovakia. Blek, a specially trained German Shepard, was donated to the city of Superior by AMSOIL President and C.E.O. Al Amatuzio. K-9 handler officer Todd Maas and Superior Chief of Police Floyd Peters brought Blek by the AMSOIL Corporate Headquarters to thank Amatuzio and tour the AMSOIL Building.

Blek was imported by John Haller of Top Dog Police K-9 Academy in Evansville, Ind. Top Dog Academy supplies trained police dogs to some of the nation's most successful police K-9 Units such as St. Paul, Minn., Cincinnati, Ohio, Evansville, Ind. and Des Moines, Iowa. Blek received some initial training prior to his arrival in Superior, but the rest of his training will be completed by Officer Maas.

Multi-Purpose

When his training is complete, Blek will be what the police consider a dual-purpose dog, meaning he is a patrol dog and a detection dog. Blek will be used to search buildings, locate evidence in open areas, track fleeing suspects and help find lost children and adults. Blek will also apprehend suspects by biting and holding them for officers and protect his partner, Officer Maas, on the streets.

"The most use the unit will have is drug detection, where he will search cars and buildings for marijuana, cocaine (including crack), methamphetamine and heroin," said Maas. "This is one of Blek's strengths and what we wanted in Superior. We already have several assists for drug arrests."

Young and Hard-Working Addition

Blek is only one year old, so even though he is highly trained and very disciplined, he still has a lot of puppy traits.

"He knows when we are working, and he is one of the most serious dogs that I have seen since I started handling police dogs," said Maas.

Blek was added to the force after his predecessor, Dargo, was hurt in the line of duty. Dargo, who was also donated to the city by Amatuzio, started the Superior K-9 unit in July 2003 after a 22-year absence of dogs on the Superior Police Department. Dargo started when he was two, and was also a dual-purpose German Shepard. He was imported from Germany and took commands in German. He suffered a couple of injuries on the job that restricted him to drug detection only.

"Just like humans, the dogs need to be prepared," said Maas. "Dargo was sent out to apprehend a person after he had been in the car for a while and was not stretched out. When he ran off, he tore his right rear inner thigh muscle and when it healed, the muscle shrank, no longer allowing him to fully extend his back leg."

Career-Ending Injuries

Dargo also developed a bulged disk in his lower back from all the jumping that is demanded of the dogs. "This was aggravated in early May 2006 when he was tracking a suspect in Duluth, Minn. for the Duluth Police and he jumped off a five-foot retaining wall," said Maas. "That pretty much



Officer Maas introduces AMSOIL Executive Vice President and General Manager Dean Alexander and President and CEO Al Amatuzio to Blek.

ended his patrol career." Dargo was taken to the University of Minnesota Animal Hospital where they said fixing his injuries enough for him to work again would require surgery.

"It costs \$4,000, requires a long recovery time and is not a 100 percent fix, so it was decided to get another dog," said Maas. Dargo was kept on for drug detection until they got Blek in October.

"Dargo is now fully retired and living a 'fat cat' life with me and my family at home," said Maas. "He is starting to allow Blek more run of the house, but the two of them still are at odds and are separated much of the time."

Making a Difference

In the three and a half years Dargo worked, they averaged about 180 calls for service per year, with well over half of them being drug related. In addition, Dargo was responsible for an average of approximately 50 drug arrests a year, and he has made a large impact at Superior Sr. High School, where they can search at almost any time.

"AMSOIL has been a major contributor with our K-9 Unit from the start in 2003, and with that help I'm sure that the Superior Police Department has been able to keep other programs to continue their service to Superior," said Maas. "Without AMSOIL, our K-9 Unit would be cutting it very close with budget cuts. We couldn't be more thankful."