

Watch Out McGruff, There's a New Crime Dog in Town

By Christopher Cussat | Photos by David Pinchot

LAST MONTH, IN HONOR OF PATRIOT DAY (September 11th), the Bridgeville Police Department swore in and proudly welcomed a furry new officer to the force: all the way from Holland, Addo is Bridgeville's new K-9 police dog.

After a year of hard work, planning and training, Chief Ed Bogats, Jr. and Patrolman/K-9 specialist James Lancia, Jr. brought the department's new K-9 unit into fruition. Thanks to Lancia's initial idea, Bogats' assistance and the local government's approval, Addo is now ready to protect and serve. "The adding of this K-9 unit was accomplished mostly through the cooperation of our mayor, borough manager and council, who are all very supportive of our police department's progressiveness," said Bogats.

Addo is a three-year old, black German Shepherd with an uncanny intelligence and ability to quickly switch from his work mode to friendly mode. Lancia explained, "[Addo] is a thinking dog, and he has a great mind. It's absolutely amazing – he'll look at a situation and figure it out." Bogats agreed, "His intelligence level is incredible – it's remarkable how he can differentiate between his two modes."

Addo can easily distinguish between something harmless and something that is not right and then take the appropriate action. Said Lancia, "He looks at the overall picture and then makes a decision about how he should act based on how people are acting around him."

Borough Manager Lori Collins, quickly became fond of Addo. "He knows his roles, he knows how to do his job, and he also knows how to properly interact with the public, residents and children. That's so important," she said.

Addo will be an integral tool for the Bridgeville Police Department, which is why Chief Bogats and Officer Lancia pushed for the program. Said Bogats, "I've always been fond of K-9s because of their ability to participate in the prevention of crime and their natural reaction to the causation factors of crime – this [dog] is a tool that can help prevent the influx of terrorism, narcotics and other crimes."



Officer James Lancia with Addo at Chartiers Park.

Lancia, a master dog trainer, was handpicked for the assignment of training and handling Addo. The dog has been trained for drug tracking, article search, area search, building search, tactical S.W.A.T. and hand signals. Not limited to only helping the Bridgeville Police, Addo will also assist other area police departments that do not have a K-9 unit.

Beyond Addo's primary police duties of walking a beat in the business district, mobile and foot patrols, tracking suspects and narcotics investigations, he will also serve as a strong symbol of public safety for the community. The Bridgeville Police plan to use Addo in their D.A.R.E. and other educational programs in our schools as well as having him interact in community functions and events. Said Bogats, "This dog is truly a multifunction, multifaceted tool, and he will be used as such."

Paying for the new K-9 unit has been a collaborative process. According to Bogats, funding was found through their regular budget, outside means, fundraisers and donations. For example, Officer Lancia donated his professional training services at a savings of over \$7,000 to the borough. In addition, Bogats was able to purchase a used police vehicle for Addo at a substantial discount from the Bethel Park Police Department.

Everyone is excited about Addo being a part of the Bridgeville Police, but no one is more thrilled and impressed than Officer Lancia, who will be working with Addo every day. "I'm super happy with this dog – he definitely is going to be the best dog that I've had so far." From the pride and affection heard in Officer Lancia's voice, one can tell that he has not only been assigned a new partner, but he has also met a new friend for life. •



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