
San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office Introduces Custody Canine Program

By Correctional Training Officer Kim de la Cruz

Speed, intensity, and drive are the assets that San Joaquin County's newest officers possess.

With current changes in strip search policies state wide, contraband has become a problem. Sheriff Steve Moore's proactive response is to implement San Joaquin County Sheriff's first custody canine program. The program will be overseen through the custody division under the direction of Lieutenant Kimberly Moule.

Canine Officers Artos and Ion were selected by and are currently training with the San Francisco Sheriff's Department under the instruction of Senior Deputy Dave Dorn. Prior to training with Deputy Dorn, they were waiting to be adopted by someone, their fate unknown at a local animal shelter. Deputy Dorn says that for every canine that is rescued, twenty others have been tested and returned to the shelter lacking the behaviors necessary to perform the duties of a narcotics detention canine. A large part of handling is canine behavior and the animals must be "obedient to odor" explained Deputy Dorn. Both canines started their training prior to the selection of officers for the assignment.

Correctional Officers Oscar Tamez and Dan Blake were selected as handlers and are currently receiving the 120 hour training that is provided by San Francisco Sheriff's Department. During this action packed time, they learn everything from canine observation and behavior to leash control and first aid. The training environment is one of hands on and real life. These handlers began working with their canine companions as soon as they were selected. Prior to returning to San Joaquin County to start working they must pass a written test as well as a canine team test. Once they have received certification, their work will begin. Training will continue to be an important role for both the handler and the canine, requiring a minimum of 16 hours per month.

Officer Tamez with partner Artos and Officer Blake with partner Ion will begin their

duties on March first. Regular activities for the teams will consist of searching visiting areas, inmate mail, vehicles used to transport inmate work crews off of the facility, and facility perimeter checks. One of the canine teams will be on duty everyday of the week allowing for consistency with the regular duties as well as special requests for searches of inmate housing areas.

When the Captain of the Custody Division, John Huber was asked about his new additions he said, "Thanks to Sheriff Moore's approval of our initial canine program the officers working all of our facilities will have a tool that will make their jobs safer. The smuggling of drugs, narcotics, and tobacco is one of the many reasons there are assaults and other forms of violence in our facilities. I am looking forward to Sheriff Moore expanding the program so every team can have a canine officer and dog."

