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Imperial Valley Press | Posted: Thursday, November 6, 2014 1:10 am



Correctional K-9 handler Chance Armstrong pose for photo with eighteen-month-old Labrador-retriever mix canine Reddick during a presentation Tuesday at the Imperial County Sheriff's Office in El Centro. JOSELITO VILLERO PHOTO Tuesday, October 14, 2014

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Four-legged friend joins jail staff

By CHELCEY ADAMI Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, November 6, 2014 1:10 am

With his tail wagging, one of Imperial County jail's newest additions will help the jail run more efficiently and improve safety by keeping contraband out.

His name is Reddick and the K-9 arrived at the jail just a few weeks ago.

It had been a little more than a year and a half since the jail had a K-9, and Reddick specializes in finding narcotics, said Imperial County Sheriff's Office Lt. David Tirado.

Chance Armstrong, the correctional K-9 handler for the Sheriff's Office, is partners with Reddick and said before his arrival, narcotics were found weekly at the jail and were "on the rise."

However, it's believed that Reddick will be able to slow down the movement of contraband into the jail, and without narcotics, the possibility of violence among inmates or toward staff as well as overdoses will lower, Armstrong noted.

"Overall just having him is a big deterrent to others to be cautious not only with narcotics but with everything. It will minimize contraband coming in," Armstrong said.

Reddick has already been successful in finding narcotics including heroin as well as weapons at the jail. He will not only be used in the cells but also in the lobby, outside and records area, Tirado said.

Smuggled-in narcotics are "an issue in every jail," he noted, and since the amounts are often very small, they are typically hidden in spaces such as within bunks, corners, toilets, sinks, desks or seats. /



Four-legged friend joins jail staff

Correctional K-9 handler Chance Armstrong praises and rewards eighteen-month-old canine Reddick with a ball after finding a narcotic odor under a trailer during a presentation Tuesday at the Imperial County Sheriff's Office in El Centro. JOSELITO VILLERO
PHOTO Tuesday, October 14, 2014

"There's a lot of areas that are really small ... that we can't get to and the dog can with its sense of smell in these small crevices," Tirado said. "It's a lot of areas where it's very tedious for an officer to search and find drugs, especially in the small amounts."

There are about 170 cells at the jail, and with the use of Reddick, less manpower will be used to conduct searches and searches can be conducted more quickly. He can also assist with searching items that come in to further reduce the movement of contraband into the jail.

"We're really trying to use that dog to its fullest, because we have a lot of inmate movement now," Tirado said.

Reddick, a labrador mix, was purchased for the jail from K-9 Specialized Training and Consulting in Oakley which takes rescues dogs from animal control departments and rescue animal groups and trains them to specialize in skills such as narcotics detection.

"We can test over 100 dogs to find one that can do this job," said owner David Dorn, who trained Reddick. "It's the speed, intensity and focus on the ball. ... He could walk a plank and that's all he's thinking about."

Dogs trained in narcotics detection like Reddick won't be distracted by loud noises in the jail or inmates purposefully trying to divert the dog's attention, Dorn explained.

"It's faster, you use less manpower, and it's a big deterrent to have the dog going in," he said. "You hear toilets flushing when you walk the dog down the hallway (as inmates flush contraband.)"

Dorn has trained more than 60 rescue dogs to work in law enforcement, and by not using dogs from a breeder that may cost between \$10,000 and \$12,000, it also cuts down on costs. Reddick cost about \$5,000 from a supplemental law enforcement fund for the Sheriff's Office, outside of the general fund, Tirado said.

It's also often a second chance for some of the rescue dogs who may otherwise be put down, Dorn added, and "with the right drive, I make them from zero to hero."

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