

Eight years sniffing for dope

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K9 officer recognized for service

The Gallup Police Department recently recognized an officer who had served with the force for eight years as he headed off to retirement.

That officer was Nero, a Belgian Malinois who had served in the department's K9 program, alongside Detective John Gonzalez.

More than 20 people showed up at a ceremony Aug. 14 where Nero and Gonzalez were recognized and where Nero was officially retired.

Gallup Sgt. Terrance Peyketewa spoke with the *Sun* Aug. 19 about the ceremony and Nero's history with the department.

"K9 officers [like Nero] are used mostly to locate persons or items," Peyketewa said. "They are trained to detect when a person is fleeing so we can utilize a K9's nose to find people in a specific area or building."

Peyketewa said Nero was certified in narcotics work, so they had him working traffic stops as well as patrol services.

"[Nero] was also capable of doing high-risk traffic stops as well, such as high-risk incidents where his presence alone could de-escalate a situation," Peyketewa said.

When asked about Nero's accomplishments, Peyketewa recalled one narcotics incident during which Nero and Gonzalez were involved in a drug seizure.

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“That case and their presence and actions resulted in over 300 pounds of marijuana being seized,” Peyketewa said. “There was also one incident where there was a man with a gun and a shotgun in his vehicle. The suspect failed to comply and Nero went and neutralized the scene.”

No officers were harmed in that case even though the suspect was armed, he added.

Peyketewa said the next step is to find his successor and keep the K9 program going.

“Hopefully we’ll get the new dog in place [by the fall] so we can get the program back up to speed,” he said.

Nero will be turned over to the care of his handler Det. John Gonzales and his family.

By Cody Begaye
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