

Vested Determination

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I turned the page with an apprehensive hand. Each word I read made the actions I had to take clearer. With this newly gained knowledge I had no other option but to take a stance, reach out a helping hand, and carve a path of hope within the lives of police dogs throughout my community.

It all began on a normal Sunday afternoon. My 12 year old self, cuddled in a corner, holding my favorite book: Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul. Each story within the book enticed my dreamy yet driven mind to make some sort of difference. The only problem was that I was not yet sure what kind of difference I was going to make. All of that questioning came to a sudden realization when I read a story highlighting the vast amount of police dogs that enter life threatening situations each day without a bullet proof vest. The idea of those innocent and heroic animals being put in harms way all while serving the safety of the public, broke my heart and urged me into action.

As soon as I placed down the book, I marched over to my family's computer and began researching different ways of raising money. That next week I distributed donation boxes, flyers, and phone calls to local businesses, local schools, and newspapers. Luckily, each person I contacted seemed as eager to help the situation as I was! Soon enough, donations were flowing into each of my boxes and the local newspaper wanted in on the effort of providing police dogs with a safer work

environment. With funds rising, each step of the way I was constantly reminded of how important my efforts were.

Every day police dogs enter the field of criminal injustice protecting their state, their public, and their partners. With each courageous act of protection these dogs have pursued, they are time and time again placed in incredibly dangerous situations without any form of protection. Police dogs are commonly the first set of eyes to assess a situation proving an operation safe for police men to enter. With this in mind, it is most certainly animal cruelty to place such talented, smart, and brave animals into such harms way.

One K9 bullet proof vest ranges from five hundred to one-thousand dollars.

Unfortunately, due to the price of the vests police stations are not always in the financial position to vest their not only best friends, but companions, and in many instances life savers.

Upon contacting my local police station I learned of many police dogs throughout New Hampshire who were working without protection. With each check I collected, and each door I wound up knocking on, the hard work especially seemed as if it had been appreciated one evening driving home from dance class with my mother. As we turned the dial on the radio to our local "hits" station, to my absolute surprise, the DJ was talking about how the article, published of my efforts in the newspaper, sparked his interest in the subject making him also realize the beauty in helping these animals. Whilst promoting the foundation, he also noted a story he had found of a police dog risking its life without a bullet proof vest. He reported to anyone listening that night the story of Murph the dog who died from serving his community.

As it was told, an armed suspect for the kidnapping of a young boy during the 1980s was fleeing from the police. During the police's pursuit to capture the armed man, he shot the first officer who entered the house in which he was hiding blinding the officer from what was taking place around him. In an attempt to assist his colleague, the second officer entered the premises to where the suspect was located. In efforts of removing the kidnapped child from the arms of the suspect Murphy, the squad's highly trained police dog, was ordered to enter the building to help in the distraction of the suspect. During Murphy's attempt, the suspect shot him and he later died. Unfortunately this is just one story of a police dog risking its life for the protection of their partner and community only to result in their death.

Such beautiful animals should be commended and in the very least, be provided with some form of protection while on the job. The DJ's efforts to create awareness of police dog's need for bullet proof vests sparked the attention of listeners across the state. Within the next week I received nearly one-thousand dollars of contributions in the mail. With one-thousand thirty-six dollars raised so far, I was no where near ready to stop. The safety of heroes was at stake. The safety of police dogs was my goal, and someone needed to make their safety a reality.

Throughout that year I continued my work within my efforts of raising awareness and funds to purchase police dogs bullet proof vests. While most of my friends were either at basketball practice or perfecting their double dutch skills with their neighborhood friends, I was making phone calls, creating flyers, and conducting interviews to serve the dogs who serve us three-hundred sixty-five days a year. In the end, I raised not only awareness in my community of these special heroes, but I also

raised two-thousand three-hundred dollars. With that money I was fortunate enough to buy four police dogs bullet proof vests from my state who were working without protection.

To service the rights of animals is to also service ourselves. Each living creature on this miraculous planet poses a gift, purpose, and beauty to the world in which we live. It is our job as human beings to use the resources and voices we are given within it to reach out within our communities and make a difference. Whether this is done by simply recycling, or helping a neighbor watch their children so that they do not arrive home to an empty house creates acts of kindness that spiral into another where harmony and thankful actions are formed. Animals are part of who we are. They are part of our identity, existence, and survival. To not respect animals is an act in which can only be performed by the individual who has not yet been enlightened to the fact that we are all in fact connected. To preserve such a beautiful connection, the world can only maintain it through kindness and love from human to human, human to animal, and animal to animal. Upon my efforts of representing police dogs everywhere, I learned that it truly is not just about making sure the ones around you are being taken care of. It is truly about being thankful for everything we are given, and to cherish every form of life that inhabits the Earth for we have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive from one another.

In honor of my efforts, the New Hampshire police dogs that were going to receive a vest in result of my efforts all got together to mingle and celebrate their new protection with their masters and trainers. That afternoon, while observing the relieved and ecstatic expressions from each trainer, family, and partner, the absolute connection between animals and humans became even more evident. That treasured connection is one that

should never be broken through something as tragic as a shooting during a break in or a burglary. My vests were going to provide a barrier of hope for those four brave dogs when they embark on situations such as those. Situations; most of us can not even imagine. While reading Chicken Noodle Soup for the Teenage Soul that day cuddled up in my room, I had no idea what a profound impact it was going to make on my life and my stance on animal rights. When I closed the book that day and headed to the computer, I set off to complete a task. A task of humanitarianism, a task of creating animal awareness, a task of establishing justice for as many as I could, and a task of providing bullet proof vests to police dogs in need. With four lives to live, four heroes to save, and four vests to provide, I was ready for whatever challenge lay ahead. As long as I helped save the lives of police dogs, one paw at a time, I could be content.

Works Cited

Hansen, Mark V., Kimberly Kirberger, and Jack Canfield. *Chicken Noodle Soup for the Teenage Soul*. Vol. III. Cos Cob, CT: Chicken Soup for the Soul. Print. More Stories of Life, Love, and Learning.