

# Generous local businesses donate protective vests for Bristol County K9s

Bristol County Sheriff's Office K9 Officer Kenny Almeida has three children, and he always wants to make sure they are as safe as possible.

That's why he so grateful to the generous donors who purchased a bullet- and stab-resistant vest for his four-legged partner Will.

"He's family. He's my third child," Officer Almeida said of K9 Will. "I want him to be as safe as possible."

Paul Palmariello of Regency Police Supply in Hyannis was at the Dartmouth correctional complex last month to present protective vests to Officer Almeida and Will, as well as Officer William Dillingham and his partner, Sharpy, and Officer Scott Robbins and his partner, Jerry.

Dr. David and Jane Askew of Dartmouth Dental, and Michael Panagakos of Panagakos Development donated the funds to purchase the vests.

"They've been big supporters of our K9 program for years," said Bristol County Lt. Paul Douglas. "This department hasn't paid for a protective vest for our dogs in 10 years, and it's because of the generosity of these local people who care about the safety and well-being of our police dogs."

The vests, manufactured by Armor Express, are light (weighing less than 10 pounds) and easy to put on in an emergency situation. An officer can have the vest on his dog in a matter of seconds.

"Speed is everything," Palmariello said. "And the light weight

makes it less restrictive, allowing them to have no drop off in agility or mobility.”

The vests also carry the same ballistic rating as the vests worn by Bristol County’s human officers.

“Each and every one of our K9 are just as much a member of our team, just as much a part of our family, as any of our human officers or staff members,” Bristol County Sheriff Thomas M. Hodgson said. “They are getting the same level of protection as our officers. We can’t thank Mr. Panagakos and Dr. and Mrs. Askew enough for their support, generosity and their compassion for the safety of our four-legged officers.”

Each of Bristol County’s eight police dogs are now equipped with protective vests. The new models for Sharpy, Will and Jerry retail for around \$1,000.

The Sheriff’s Office K9 program is available to assist state, local and federal law enforcement in every community in Bristol and surrounding counties 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.