

Sheriff's Lt. Mike Herek helps partner Buffy, a yellow Labrador, get ready for her employee badge photo close-up.



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER YEH

Sheriff's K-9 'Buffy' Trades Dog Tag for MTA ID Badge

By LISA HUYNH

(June 10, 2003) "Buffy," a yellow Labrador who works with the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau, recently traded her dog tag for an MTA identification badge.

Buffy is the personal pet of Sheriff's Lt. Mike Herek, not a trained police dog. Her job description is "Public Relations K-9" and many days she can be seen patrolling the Metro Blue Line stations, especially around the holidays.

"The public assumes that she's out there searching for drugs and bombs, but she's really out there to make it appear like she's looking for something," says Herek. "We use her on a 'as-needed' basis."

Buffy, who is the first dog to receive an MTA identification badge, has been working as a doggy decoy for about a year. Herek says the purpose of the MTA badge is to provide credibility when she walks through a building.

"It not only shows that she's associated with the Metro system," he says, "but also is a partner with the Sheriff's Department and MTA."

A 26-year veteran deputy, Herek created the program to keep the transit system safe, and it has worked.



Buffy wears her badge while on duty.

"People throw drugs into the trashcans, just by seeing her from a distance," says Herek. "If Buffy and I can make a difference in any way, then we know that we're doing our job and that's good enough for us.

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