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Canine
'Deputy' Kona
and Sheriff's
Deputy David
Cervantes on
a routine
patrol aboard
a Metro Gold
Line train.

New 'Deputy Dog' on the Job for Transit Services Bureau

- Kona is sniffing out crime on the Metro System

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Aug. 26, 2004) An energetic new "deputy" with the loyalty of a German Shepherd and the speed of a greyhound is now on the job helping sniff out wrongdoers on the Metro System.

Kona, a two-year-old Belgian Malinois (MAL-in-wah), joined the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau recently and, under the guidance of partner Deputy David Cervantes, already is taking a bite out of crime.

Trained to detect the presence of firearms, in the past two weeks she has helped Cervantes confiscate three pellet guns from juveniles. And, even though she's not a narco dog, her mere presence has led to six drug-possession arrests on the Metro Blue and Green Lines.

PHOTOS: BILL HEARD

Kona provides "an extra level of protection for our customers and for our employees," says CEO Roger Snoble, who greeted the dog and her master in his office this week. "Dogs have some



CEO Roger Snoble greets Kona and her partner, Sheriff's Deputy David Cervantes, in his office.

talents people simply don't have and teaming those talents up with the talents of our deputies gives us a lot more security."

10 weeks of training

Cervantes and Kona participated in 10 weeks of intensive weapons detection training before being assigned to duty. Their patrols begin in the

afternoon and continue until the early morning hours – the period when criminal activity is at its height.

The 10-hour shifts are long for both man and dog, and Cervantes has to be aware of when Kona needs to eat, take a break or relieve herself.

"It's very taxing on the dog to do searches," he says. "Actually, it's 15 times more exertion for her during detection work than when she's not working."

Expand canine squad

Metro Police Chief Capt. Dan Finkelstein would like to have more patrol dogs on the force. He plans to expand the canine squad over the next few months.

The investment in what is proving to be an effective law enforcement team is small, he says.

The outlay for Kona and the training she and Cervantes received was just over \$9,000. It cost another \$1,300 to convert the deputy's patrol car to carry the dog. In addition, Cervantes receives a small stipend for dog food and veterinary care.

"They're a great crime prevention tool, but they're also a good community relations tool," Finkelstein says of the deputy and his canine partner. "It's good for our riders to see Dave and the dog on the rail lines. It sends a message that, if you're a law-abiding patron, we want you on our system and want you to be safe. If you're a criminal, you need to go elsewhere."