

County K-9 memorial dedication May 19

By Alexa Zoellner azoellner@dailyunion.com | Posted: Wednesday, May 11, 2016 9:25 am

JEFFERSON — The dedication for a Jefferson County K-9 memorial recently erected in front of the Jefferson County courthouse will take place on Thursday, May 19.

The memorial aims to remember working dogs who have served within Jefferson County and passed away, reaching their “end of watch.” Currently, the memorial holds the names of seven dogs, with plenty of room for future K-9 officers.

K-9s from the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office who have reached their “end of watch” include Redman, who passed in 2003; Jahn, 2010; Jasko, 2010; Deuce, 2013; Ahron, 2013; and Mink, 2016. From the Watertown Police Department is Bako, who died in 2009.

“Our K-9 memorial is a memorial to the past K-9s that have worked for Jefferson County,” Deputy Jason Behm said. “And by Jefferson County, I don’t mean for the (sheriff’s office) specifically. It’s dedicated to any K-9 that has worked in the county.”

Behm is one of the two handlers currently in the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office K-9 unit. He works with Harlow, a Belgian Malinois-German Shepherd mix, the first mixed-breed dog to serve the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office.

“On the 19th, we’re going to have the donors that either gave time or materials, that type of thing, toward the K-9 memorial together for photos and kind of an official ‘thank you,’” Behm explained. “Then, sort of a ‘grand opening’ if you will, of the K-9 memorial, even though it’s open for public view at any time.”



K-9S REMEMBERED

K-9S REMEMBERED — After more than two years of work, a memorial dedicated to the K-9s who have served in Jefferson County is complete. The memorial was the idea of, and designed by, Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office K-9 handler Deputy Jason Behm. The memorial recognizes dogs who served within Jefferson County and have passed away, reaching their “end of watch.” A formal dedication will take place May 19 at 10 a.m. A crew from WISC-TV Channel 3 of Madison was in Jefferson Tuesday to do a story on the K-9 memorial. For more photos, [click here](#). — Daily Union photos by Alexa Zoellner.

Dedication of the memorial — located on the west side of the courthouse lawn — will take place at 10 a.m., just prior to the county law enforcement memorial program at 11:30 a.m.

The project has been in the works for over two years.

“(The idea) behind the design is that I wanted the design of the K-9 memorial to fit in with the town,” Behm said. “We’re not in the middle of Madison around the capitol. We’re not in Washington D.C., so I didn’t want anything overly extravagant. I didn’t want a 50-foot statue with bronze and gold and silver on it. I wanted something that fit in with the community color-wise, size-wise, appearance-wise.

“I wanted something that had a slightly classy look to it to correctly honor the memory of our dogs,” the deputy continued.

“Third, I wanted to do it with zero impact to the sheriff’s office budget. I didn’t want the sheriff’s office to pay for it. So, if it were going to come to the point where the sheriff’s office was going to have to pay for it, I wasn’t going to do it.”

In order to accomplish that, Behm requested donations from area businesses. They came in the form of bricks, concrete and even construction of the memorial, which was completed about two weeks ago.

“Every place I stopped, I didn’t even get to the point of officially asking for a donation,” he said. “People were so gracious, so generous.”

The idea was conceived by Behm, who also designed the memorial, shortly after he laid to rest his first K-9 partner, Deuce.

“The reason I did it is because I wanted to permanently memorialize the dogs that have worked in this county because they’re so valuable,” Behm said. “They’re such important tools of the department. They work so hard, are so dedicated and they really ask for little to nothing in return.

“They ask for a little bit of affection and maybe a treat once in a while and they just ask for more work,” he continued. “Because they’re such important tools of the department, I wanted to permanently remember them so their memories don’t fade away.”

Jefferson County’s K-9 program began in 1991 with then-Detective Sgt. Paul Milbrath and his labrador retriever, Redman. Milbrath was elected Jefferson County sheriff in 2002 and continues in that post today.

Redman served until 1999, but the department did not have a formal K-9 unit until then-Sgt. Jeff Parker submitted a proposal to begin the program in 1998. Jahn, a German Shepherd, was the first K-9 deputy to serve under that program, along with his handler, Deputy Greg Jansen. Since then, the office consistently has had three K-9 deputies at a time.

Mink, a German Shepherd and one of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office's three K-9 officers, was put to sleep Jan. 19, 2016, after an attempt to surgically address a bladder tumor failed to improve his quality of life. His handler was Deputy Scott Gukich, who had served seven years with Mink, who had been due for retirement later this year.

With Mink's passing, the department now is served by Harlow and handler Behm and Falkos and handler Deputy Jansen.

Besides Redman, Jahn and Deuce, past dogs that have served with the department include German Shepherds Ahron and Jasko. The sheriff's office also had a bloodhound, Ellie Mae, who now is retired.

Other than Ellie Mae, all of the K-9 officers have been dual-purpose dogs performing duties ranging from drug detection, tracking, area searches, building searches, evidence searches and apprehension to handler protection.