

County dedicates K-9 officer memorial

By Alexa Zoellner azoellner@dailyunion.com | Posted: Friday, May 20, 2016 9:50 am

JEFFERSON — The day went to the dogs. More specifically, to the K-9 officers that currently are, or previously have, served Jefferson County.

The dedication of the recently erected K-9 memorial in front of the Jefferson County Courthouse took place Thursday morning, just prior to the Law Enforcement Memorial Day program.

“I would like to thank each of you for your presence this morning as we dedicate this very important memorial,” Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office Chief Deputy Jeff Parker said at the start of the ceremony. “The memorial that stands before us is a symbol of appreciation to a special law enforcement partner that understands like no other the definition of loyalty and commitment. That partner that we honor today is the law enforcement K-9.”

The memorial was the idea of, and designed by, Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office K-9 handler Deputy Jason Behm. It recognizes dogs who served within Jefferson County and have 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.



K-9 AND LAW ENFORCEMENT MEMORIAL

K-9 AND LAW ENFORCEMENT MEMORIAL — 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. It recognizes dogs who served within Jefferson County and have passed away, reaching their “end of watch.” A formal dedication ceremony for the memorial took place on Thursday at 10 a.m. Gathered for the dedication were citizens and law enforcement officers from around the Jefferson County area. Following the dedication was the Law Enforcement Memorial Day ceremony. For more photos, [click here](#). — Daily Union photos by Alexa Zoellner.

Gathered for the dedication were citizens and law enforcement officers from around the Jefferson County area. In addition, state Rep. Cody Horlacher, R-Mukwonago, was present, as were K-9 teams Behm and Harlow, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Deputies Scott Gukich and K-9 Balko and Greg Jansen and K-9 Falkos; and Ripon Police Department Officer Trevor Henke and K-9 Rony.

Following the posting of the colors by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard, the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer, Parker spoke about the history of police K-9s.

"Police working dogs have been used by law enforcement agencies for over 100 years," Parker said. "The English used bloodhounds while searching for the infamous criminal Jack the Ripper in 1888, and during that time, they allowed canines to accompany bobbies on patrol."

In 1899, police in Ghent, Belgium, began to formally train dogs for police work. By 1910, Germany had police dogs in over 600 of its largest cities. Parker explained that K-9s or military working dogs have seen action in every modern-day war, dating back to World War I.

The use of canines in law enforcement became popular in the United States in the 1970s, when they were used both in Vietnam and stateside for riot control.

Today, K-9s are considered a part of the law enforcement office they serve. In many departments, the K-9s have their own badges and are sworn in just as their human handlers are.

"The law enforcement K-9 plays a vital role in today's law enforcement mission, from tracking, building searches, locating narcotics, to bite and officer protection," Parker said. "The most valuable talent that any K-9 possesses is simply enhanced public relations. The saying 'man's best friend' is so true with these dedicated partners. The dedication, love and devotion that these animals show is absolutely remarkable.

"One moment these K-9s can be apprehending someone that is evading arrest," he continued. "The next moment a group of children have their arms wrapped around the K-9 and are having their faces licked. I think the phrase should be restated that these four-legged officers are the 'community's best friend.'"

Behm thanked those who helped make the memorial possible.

Donors included Archie Monuments, of Watertown; Hans Brothers Concrete, of Jefferson; Janesville Brick, of Janesville; Masonry Plus, of Wausau; private donors and others.

He also spoke about his motivation for creation of the memorial.

"Several years ago, Deputy Scott Gukich had to put his first partner, K-9 Jasko, down," Behm said. "A short while after Jasko's cremation, I asked Scott what he did with his ashes. Scott said that he had left K-9 Jasko's ashes in the trunk of his squad.

“Scott said that he hadn’t found anything to do with K-9 Jasko’s ashes that seemed appropriate,” he continued. “Scott, Greg and I are brutally honest with each other — and sometimes we rib each other — so I told him, ‘that’s kind of creepy.’”

Fast-forward to 2013 and this time, it was Behm’s turn to put down his K-9 partner, Deuce.

“I received K-9 Deuce’s ashes back and, naturally, put them in my squad because that’s where he always rode,” Behm said. “Several weeks later, I found myself riding with Deuces’s ashes in my squad because I couldn’t find anything appropriate to do with them. It was then that I felt what Scott felt.”

That, he said, was his motivation for building the memorial.

Parker read the names of K-9s from Jefferson County who have reached the “end of watch.”

“In closing, I want to echo what Deputy Behm has already stated,” Parker said. “We cannot run programs like this without public support. We are so grateful for your sponsorships and donations that help support our K-9 programs.”