

SLTPD to double K-9 presence

By Kathryn Reed

Some police officers get the worst assignments â€” having to crawl under houses, being the first one in a building where a potential bad guy is hiding â€” and then having to always ride in the back seat.

And then when youâ€™re the one who schools always request as the special guest, it can get tiring.



Officer Tony
Broadfoot and
Duke.

Photo/SLTPD

Such are the hazards when you have four legs.

The burden is about to be shared. South Lake Tahoe Police Department expects to have another police dog on the streets in less than six months. This will double the agencyâ€™s K-9 unit. Several years ago the department had three dogs working the streets.

The City Council approved the expenditure at its meeting last week. The \$12,500 cost â€” which includes the animal and training for its human officer â€” is coming from fundraising by the local K-9 association and from asset forfeitures. No general fund money is being spent.

â€œIn regards to criminal activity, (K-9s) are the best

sources we have. If you roll up and think a burglar or someone is in a building where it's supposed to be vacant, it's very easy to have an animal do the search with an officer because its smell is so acute," explained Capt. Martin Hewlett, who is also acting police chief. "They are really indispensable in finding people. People are always hiding and running from us and don't want to be caught."

Some agencies have dogs just work the streets or just sniff out drugs. In South Lake, the dogs do both, with the majority of the work on the streets.

"SLEDNET (South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team) uses our K-9 because he can search a building or a room for drugs and maybe areas where we wouldn't think to look or can't look like in walls," Hewlett said.

Sgt. Josh Adler will be responsible for training the new dog to search for dope. He said it takes about two months to train the officer and dog to search for drugs.

Officer Tony Broadfoot and Duke, his Belgian malinois, are also called out to schools and youth organizations. K-9 demonstrations are more popular than a uniformed officer talking about the job.

The department hasn't decided who the other K-9 handler will be. Volunteers within the department will be sought.

The commitment is huge " with the animal being part of the officer's family.

The animals come trained to work the streets. It's the officer who needs to be trained to work with the dog.