

Dog biting out crime
By Christina Chapman

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Alex is a 5 year old, 75-pound German shepherd from Czechoslovakia. He is a police officer for the Grundy County Sheriff's department.

"The dog is a police officer," said Patrolman Curt Kneller, who accompanied Alex's partner, sheriff's deputy Jason Cory. "If he dies in the line of duty he gets a full police burial."

At my third Morris Police Citizen's Police Academy on April 1, Cory brought Alex in for a visit and to explain the importance of police dogs.

"He can find a dime in a backyard," Cory said.

Alex, and all police dogs, are trained to find scents that do not belong in the surroundings. Everyone has their own scent, Cory said. And the more excited a person gets the more scent they give off. So when chasing a criminal whose adrenalin keeps rushing, the dog keeps tracking him or her.

"He can walk in the house of someone who is making vegetable soup and smell each individual ingredient separately," Cory said.

In January, Alex tracked a man with a 45-minute head start for three miles. The man had stolen a car and crashed it. Alex was brought on the scene when the man ran on foot.

"Look at how big his feet are," said classmate Betty Chesharek.

Not that the officers would have let me, but I passed on volunteering to wear the protective sleeve and allow Alex to demonstrate on me how he captures a criminal, but Kneller did and was not even scared.

"Let's go find the bad guy," Cory said to Alex as Alex's nose lowered to the ground and his tail wagged with excitement.

It took Alex seconds to find Kneller hiding in the bathroom. Alex barked and cried at the bathroom door in the basement of city hall. Once he was let in, Alex jumped full force onto Kneller going for the protective sleeve. Alex is familiar with the sleeve and immediately knew it was a game.

Alex has been called out all over the area, Cory said, such as Lemont, Plainfield, Joliet, Minooka and all across Interstate 80.

In his three years as an officer with the county, Alex has helped find 14 kilos of cocaine in one case, \$75,000 in cash in another and 20 pounds of marijuana, just to name a few, Cory said.

Cory and Alex are more than just partners – they are roommates. Alex goes home with him every night and Cory is in charge of taking care of Alex, although he is reimbursed some by the county. Thank goodness because Alex hoes through 45 pounds of food a week.

Police dogs usually have a six to 10 year life span due to the stress they endure everyday.

Alex cost \$12,000 to bring to the United States and when he retires from the sheriff's department, Cory will have to buy him off the county, at an extreme discount. But is has to be Cory who buys him because Alex cannot just go to anybody with the training he has. If Cory does not take him, Alex could be put down.

But no worries, Cory and Alex are inseparable. They are partners in crime, well in preventing crime.

Christina Chapman can be reached at (815)729-6172 or by email at cchapman@scn1.com