

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Bloodhound added to Salem Police K-9 Unit***

**Salem, Ore.** — The Salem Police Department has officially added a new member to the police force, K-9 Shelby. She is unlike any other police service dog the department has ever had—given her floppy ears and propensity to drool.

Shelby is a one-year-old bloodhound and the department's new trailing service dog. The idea for the addition of a hound came as the department faced the retirement of the most experienced dog in the unit, [K-9 Es](#). "The chance to add a canine to help in the search for a lost child or elderly person was something we considered seriously," said Patrol Division Lieutenant Brandon Ditto. "A hound's scent receptors far surpass the abilities of a German Shepherd or a Belgian Malinois, breeds trained to search and apprehend suspects in heightened criminal situations," explained Ditto who oversees the agency's police service dog program with Sergeant Matt Gill.

In January, a child went missing in southeast Salem. Officers and several K-9 teams were unable to locate the child. As the hours passed and the temperatures began to dip, a search and rescue team with a bloodhound offered their assistance. Within a short time, the team's dog found the child. The experience resonated with the unit's handlers, and the search was on to determine the necessary elements to implement Oregon's first law enforcement trailing service dog program. Sergeant Gill made connections with a bloodhound trainer in South Carolina, and a plan was developed for the future of the program.

When the [Salem Police Foundation](#) learned of the opportunity to enhance the K-9 program and the benefit to the community, the organization moved quickly to assist. All the necessary funding for the purchase of the dog and the costs involved in training the officer was provided by the foundation. The organization has generously donated the cost and training for each of the six current dogs in the Salem Police K-9 Program, absorbing the expenses which would have to be allocated through the department's budget.

Currently, Shelby and her partner, Officer Zackary Merritt, are training with an experienced handler to further develop their skills and techniques. The duo will handle calls for service involving a lost child, or a missing individual with medical circumstances which may affect their memory or ability to communicate. Over time, however, the hound will also be trained to work alongside her five other patrol counterparts on broader police operations.



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Some residents may have already seen Shelby as she and Officer Merritt have recently been at community events. “Shelby is very friendly. She is out getting to know her new home and meeting people,” added Ditto. “She’s developing a real *scents* of community.”

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