

# Honoring Our Four Footed Officers

## Guest Commentary

By  
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### Appreciation For Our K-9s

**Many of us have dogs as pets; however, certain dogs also provide a great service to our community.**

The Tampa Police Department has 12 narcotics police dogs, paired with 12 highly trained police officers, called "handlers." When a dog is released on a scene, his handler watches him for cues. When the K-9 picks up a scent, he closes his mouth, and his energy level accelerates. Once he zeroes in on the source of the narcotics, the K-9 is trained to give a final alert by sitting and placing his nose on, or in the container. According to K-9 Officer, **Corporal Tom Hevel**, "If there are drugs, the dogs are going to find them. You just can't hide from a dog."

The relationship between the dog and his handler is a true partnership, and a very special bond. As Hevel describes it, "My time on K-9 has been electric. Every K-9 handler has a calling to do this, separate and above from his calling as a police officer... everywhere the dog goes we go, from the swamps to inside the biggest buildings, looking for the bad guy, just to make sure he doesn't get away. The trust you develop can't really be described, it has to be felt."



**Assistant State Attorney Jennifer Gabbard** recently won a murder conviction against **Robert Pollock** in a cold case that relied heavily upon K-9 investigators. A witness reported to the police that he overheard Pollock threatening to dump a woman where he had dumped "**Nicki**." The witness was able to provide a general location, and several cadaver K-9 teams were brought in to search the area. **Canines Sekou, Koda and Rory** hit on the scent of human decomposition. A probe was inserted into the ground to vent the area, and the dogs hit again. There, six feet below, lay the body of **Nicki Hendriex** buried under a layer of concrete. This gruesome discovery, made possible by the cadaver dogs, provided the evidence prosecutor Gabbard needed to convict a murderer.

Bloodhounds are famous for tracking suspects, but they are also invaluable investigators. Scent evidence can't be seen, but is present at almost all crime scenes. A bloodhound working a crime scene can show detectives where a perpetrator moved, enabling a more intensive scrutiny of a confined area. By tracking the scent to its end, a bloodhound may even show how a perpetrator exited the scene; by car, boat, bicycle, or foot.

Explosive detection dogs are trained to locate explosive chemicals. Dogs are brought in to investigate the scene of an explosion or bomb threat, and to conduct special event security sweeps. Explosive detection dogs are relied upon heavily by our military in war zones. **Colonel Chris Landro** commanded the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines. His unit was responsible for patrolling the streets of Fallujah, and included six military work dogs. These dogs provided critical protection to the troops in searching buildings, limited route clearance, detection of improvised explosive devices, and even discovering enemy weapon caches. After working with these dogs, Landro reports, "I just wish we had more."

We are fortunate to have so many highly trained, highly committed K-9 units in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit. We are proud of these teams and

dependent on them to provide the highest safety and security for us all.

This article is dedicated to the memory of **Tampa P.D. Corporal Mike Roberts** (EOW: August 19, 2009) ([www.tampapba.org/cpl\\_mike\\_roberts/](http://www.tampapba.org/cpl_mike_roberts/)).

According to **Tampa Police Chief Steve Hogue**, Corporal Mike Roberts was an officer with exceptional skills, but if you had to pick one assignment that was his passion, it would have to be the K-9 Squad. Mike loved his job as a K9 officer. He was very proud of his most recent dog, **Ruger**.

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Did you hear about the banker who was recently arrested for embezzling \$100,000 to pay for his daughter's college education?

As the policeman, who also had a daughter in college, was leading him away in handcuffs, he said to the banker, "I have just one question for you. Where were you going to get the rest of the money?"