

Acts of kindness

All across the country, every day, good people perform acts of kindness for strangers. Only rarely do they receive recognition for their selfless work. In our ongoing series, The ENQUIRER will put the spotlight on those who care enough to make life better for those around them.

S EVEN years ago, Susie Jean was horrified as she watched the story of a police dog brutally shot to death by a gun-wielding criminal on an episode of "America's Most Wanted."

The courageous canine was shot, fell over and then got up – and went straight after the criminal before collapsing and dying in his handler's arms.

"I was absolutely devastated, particularly because I had recently lost my own two beloved German shepherds to cancer," recalls Susie.

Susie knew she had to do something to make sure that police dogs were better protected. She founded a nonprofit charitable group, VEST 'N P.D.P. (Police Dog Protection), Inc. to supply custom-made Kevlar bulletproof vests to canine cops everywhere, free of charge.

"THESE COURAGEOUS ANIMALS PUT their lives on the line to protect us from criminals – and I just want to help them do their dangerous work with as much safety as possible," Jean of Socorro, N.M., told The ENQUIRER.

"My dream is to have a protective vest for every police dog in the country that needs one."

The day after watching "Most Wanted," Susie contacted her local police department and learned that – as in most places – there just wasn't enough money to provide a vest for every dog.

"I just couldn't believe that these brave dogs didn't have protective vests," explained Susie. "If we expect them to go under fire for us, the least we can do is provide them with good equipment."

She immediately went to local businesses to raise funds to buy vests for the local police dogs.

Susie started with donation boxes

in pet stores and vet offices, and within two months had enough to provide three vests for dogs. Things just took off from there!

"Our Web site was donated, and we got a big helping hand from the company that supplies the vests, Uniform Sales of America. They provide custom-made vests at their cost, \$700, rather than at the \$1,500 they sell for," she says.

While most of their dona-

tions come from private individuals, they've also had some big names step up for the cause. NASCAR drivers Tony Stewart and Greg Biffle are campaigning to help raise money, and the charity has received grants from the Wal-Mart Foundation.

Since 2002, Susie has provided vests

for nearly 400 police dogs in 40 states.

"But that's just a drop in the bucket when you consider all the dogs that need vests."

ENQUIRER readers can help by donating at www.vestnmdp.com or by mailing a donation to VEST 'N P.D.P., 1201 Vista Dr., Socorro, NM 87801.



Susie Jean founded the nonprofit group VEST 'N P.D.P., Inc. to help protect canine cops like Deek (shown with Officer Ashley Sanderson)

GUARDIAN ANGEL OF CANINE COPS

Bulletproof vests save dog heroes' lives

Tell us about a **KIND PERSON**

If you know of someone who deserves to be honored for acts of kindness, please let us know by e-mailing us at: letters@nationalenquirer.com. Or write to us at: Acts of Kindness, National Enquirer, 1000 American Media Way, Boca Raton, FL 33464-1000. We'll pay you \$250 if we use your submission.