

Job now safer for all city police dogs

All now in vests

By Jennifer Boggs

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A year after presenting three bullet/stab proof vests to the Douglasville Police Department's K-9 units, Susie Jean of Vest N P.D.P. delivered two more vests Thursday so all five police dogs will be safer on the job.

Based in Lithia Springs, Vest N P.D.P. (Police Dog Protection) is a non-profit organization to raise money for bullet/stab proof vests for police dogs across Georgia.

"I'm really excited about all the communities and small businesses that have made this possible," said Jean, who has been working to collect money since starting her organization in July 2002.

On Thursday afternoon, Jean met with members of the Police Department to present vests for dogs Buzz and Ayco. Each vest, made of a lightweight and flexible material, costs \$695.

A friend of Jean's, Hal Schmidt, donated money for one vest, and the Midway Christian Academy helped with funding for the second vest.

"The rest of it comes from checks I receive in the mail," said Jean, who sends out newsletters to let people know about the work of Vest N P.D.P. Inc. "Our goal is to provide vests for every police dog in the state."

During the past year, Vest N P.D.P. has delivered eight vests and is planning for five more. In addition to Douglasville, the organization has raised money for bullet/stab proof vests for three police dogs in Powder Springs.

According to Jean, the next goal is to outfit the Red Dog Unit of the Atlanta Police Department with five K-9 vests.

"Susie goes about this with a passion," said Douglasville Police Chief Joe Whisenant. "It's not just a commitment to her. It's a passion to provide vests for every K-9 unit."

"Every penny she collects goes into this," he added. "I really appreciate everything she's done. Without her, we wouldn't have vests for any of our dogs."

The Police Department currently has five police dogs and Whisenant said he would like to add one more. He said the goal is to have a K-9 unit on every patrol shift plus one for the F.I.N.D. Unit on the interstate and one for the Special Operations Unit.

Douglasville's dogs and their human partners often train with the county's K-9 units, said Whisenant, adding that it was another good example of the two agencies working together.

Last January, dogs Darth, Ky and Bodo received vests through Jean's organization after collecting more than \$2,400 through the help of local fund-raising efforts from employees of the Lithia Springs Kroger store and 8-year-old Cody Shores, who collected about \$1,000.

Jean also gave credit to the law firm of Johns and Johns, which volunteered to help her establish the non-profit group, and to Douglas County Bank, which set up the organization's account with free fees.

Anyone interested in donating money to Vest N P.D.P. can contact Jean at 678-637-7056 or send money to P.O. Box 756, Lithia Springs, GA 30122.



Ofc. Adam Cannon and Ayco of the Douglasville Police Department pose with Ayco's new vest.



Nathan Todd/ Sentinel

Buzz waits patiently while Ofc. Tommy Deming and Cpt. Oliver Fladrich of the Douglasville Police Department put on his new bullet/stab-proof vest.