The Department of Police Services’ K-9 Unit: How Man’s Best Friend Protects UNLV

When you think of a K-9 dog, the first image to come to mind might be of a fierce German Shepherd, barking, baring its teeth, barely restrained by its human handler. But while you probably wouldn’t guess it by the friendly, playful nature of UNLV’s two K-9 Springer Spaniels, Buster and Simba, they too play the critical role of police officer. With the help of their respective partners, Officers Darrell Johnson and Bruce Taylor, Buster and Simba quite literally sniff out crime — more specifically, the dangerous explosives that could threaten the campus community’s safety at any time. Take a look inside the lives of UNLV’s K-9 Unit — man and man’s best friend fighting crime side by side — by turning to page 2.
Finding the calling

Although a longtime “pet person” and owner of a black Labrador, Officer Taylor had no idea K-9 handler opportunities would present themselves when he first joined the UNLV Police nine years ago. Officer Johnson, also a “dog lover,” found the K-9 openings in the department fascinating as well — though, like Officer Taylor, he had never gone beyond the realm of pet ownership prior. When the two K-9 handler positions were officially announced in 2013, however, both eagerly threw their hats into the ring.

As for Buster and Simba, police work was in their genes. Springer Spaniels are known for their energy and stamina, their ability to obey a variety of commands (including hunting orders), and most of all for their extremely gifted noses, which perform well in both wet and dry conditions. Springer Spaniels have served a variety of law enforcement agencies and rescue teams over the years with their sniffers, which can detect explosives, drugs, weapons, blood, and more. In fact, they can even distinguish different types of mobile phones from each other!

Training as a team

Buster and Simba moved all the way from Ireland to join Officers Johnson and Taylor in the K-9 Unit. The four then received training at the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) from the ground up. While it goes without saying that the dogs received explosives-detection and obedience training, their human counterparts received quite a bit of specialized instruction as well because handlers must be able to accurately recognize the behaviors and reactions of their canine co-workers. A whopping 288 hours went into the group’s training, which included hands-on explosives detection, K-9 first aid, and classroom instruction.

When it comes to detecting explosives specifically, there are two ways to train K-9 dogs effectively for the task: using food as reward or toys as reward. Simba and Buster are toy-trained K-9 officers, meaning that each time they are introduced to the scent of a chemical compound included in explosives (e.g., C-4 or ammonium nitrate), they are immediately rewarded with specific toys. Then, when they remember those scents and find them again, they receive their toys as reinforcement … and acknowledgement of a job well done.
The daily routine

K-9 partners’ relationships are different from any other type of police partner relationship, in that K-9 dogs live 24/7 with their human partners. Day and night, day in and day out, on duty and off, the two are together working, eating, sleeping, and enjoying life. In fact, once a K-9 dog’s employment term is up — generally after seven or eight years — it often retires to pet status in its handler’s home.

The day begins with breakfast and the ride in to work. Unless they’re pulling explosives duties at events being held at Sam Boyd Stadium or Thomas & Mack, it’s off to a routine patrol of the campus on foot, complete with preventive building sweeps to ensure no explosives are present.

Since the breed is known for its high level of energy, Simba and Buster exercise daily, both on and off the clock. Their noses get weekly workouts as well. Each Wednesday, Officers Taylor and Johnson hide training aids in various locations for Buster and Simba to find as part of maintenance training, keeping the dogs’ senses sharp.

When the day is done, the pairs return to their respective homes for some R&R. House life for Buster and Simba is much like that of your average pet’s, except for a few important distinctions. First, K-9 dogs can’t play in all the same ways that pets can, as it may recondition them contrary to their training, and it’s important that they perform their work diligently and skillfully. For instance, Simba only receives his tug toy while conducting his explosives duties; if playing with a toy off the clock, Officer Taylor will use a tennis ball instead. K-9 dogs must also take commands primarily from their handlers so they’ll respond appropriately at all times when in the field.

What a difference a dog makes!

Overall, a K-9 team’s life together is pretty fun. Officers Johnson and Taylor both emphasized how much they enjoy having their canine counterparts around. It’s helped them “stay young” and in shape, and it’s also helped them with their community policing efforts.

Officer Taylor said his relationship with the campus population has changed dramatically since teaming up with Simba. “Everyone loves to come out and do a meet-and-greet with Simba because everybody loves dogs,” he said.

Officer Johnson has noticed the same. “Buster is a great community policing tool,” he said. “And students know Buster. They may not know me, but they know Buster.”

Canine counterparts have helped the officers stay in shape; they’ve also helped with community policing efforts.
Got a Case of Moped Mania? Here Are the Rules of the Road

You know what they say about something that walks like a duck and talks like a duck. What if that thing you’re thinking of looks like a bike and runs like a car, though? What happens then?

Such is the case with mopeds, and not surprisingly, they’re causing a great deal of confusion for UNLV students eager to reap the rewards of driving these gadgets: affordability, ease of use, convenience, and just plain fun. After all, if you’re not sure which category mopeds fall into — bicycle or motor vehicle — how can you determine what rules apply to it or know if you’re breaking the law?

The UNLV Department of Police Services has compiled a list of the most common questions you need answers to regarding moped use on campus and in the state of Nevada to clear up the confusion and ensure your safety as well as the safety of others.

Q What are the differences among mopeds, scooters, and motorcycles?

A The distinction among these three motor vehicles relates primarily to engine size and power capacity, which determine top vehicle speed. As a rule, the smaller the engine, the slower the vehicle. The smallest and least powerful of the three is the moped, which typically cannot exceed a speed of 30 miles per hour because its engine size does not exceed 50 cubic centimeters. Scooters are in the middle; they also usually have center platforms to rest one’s feet on while riding, making them look different from the other two. The motorcycle is the largest, fastest, and most powerful of the group.

From a legal perspective, scooters and motorcycles typically fall into the single category of “motorcycle” in the state of Nevada, again depending on the scooter’s engine size and top speed. Mopeds, on the other hand, have their own designation. According to Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 482.069, a moped is a motor-driven scooter, cycle, or other vehicle that:

- does not have an engine displacement of more than 50 cubic centimeters
- does not produce more than 1,500 watts as its final output if electrically powered
- does not produce more than 2 gross brake horsepower
- does not have more than three wheels
- is not capable of maximum speeds exceeding 30 miles per hour on a flat surface when the motor is running.

Q Do I need a license to operate a moped?

A Yes. According to the Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles’ website, although you do not need a special Class M motorcycle license
to operate a moped, the state does require you to hold the standard Class C driver license you’d need to drive a car, truck, or other motor vehicle.

Q Do I need to wear a helmet while driving a moped?

A From a legal perspective in the state of Nevada, no, so long as the moped is a true moped with an engine size no larger than 50 cc and a top speed of no more than 30 miles per hour. However, it is strongly recommended that everyone operating any two- or three-wheeled motorized vehicle wear a helmet.

Q Do I need to register my moped with the DMV and get insurance for it?

A Again, according to the Nevada DMV, if the moped’s engine size is 50 cc or less and its top speed is 30 miles per hour, the state does not require you to register or insure the vehicle. Anything exceeding that size and/or speed qualifies as a motorcycle and requires registration and insurance.

Q Should I drive my moped on the sidewalk or the street?

A It is illegal to drive any motor vehicle, including mopeds, anywhere but on streets, preferably side streets with light traffic so as not to slow the flow of traffic on main thoroughfares or subject oneself to the dangers that nearby high-speed vehicles present. The UNLV Police Department does issue citations for operating mopeds on campus sidewalks because driving mopeds along pedestrian walkways endangers everyone. If you ride a moped to campus, make sure you walk it along sidewalks you may need to use to reach any location you intend to park it.

Q Do I need a campus permit to park a moped at UNLV?

A A campus permit is not required at this time to park a moped at UNLV.

Q Where should I park my moped on campus?

A According to the UNLV Parking & Transportation Department’s website, mopeds should only be parked in motorcycle parking areas on campus.

Still have questions? Contact us via the information listed on the last page of this newsletter. We’re happy to help!

More Information

Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 482.069 — “Moped” defined
http://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-482.html#NRS482Sec069

Nevada DMV’s “Motorcycles, Mopeds & Bicycles” page
http://www.dmvnv.com/motorcycle.htm

UNLV Parking & Transportation Services’ Frequently Asked Questions page
http://www.unlv.edu/parking/faq
Nobody ever thinks it could happen to them — especially when they’ve just fallen in love. Through the rose-colored glasses so many wear in the honeymoon phase of a relationship, you see a halo above your partner’s head, and your passion for that person can cause you to turn a blind eye to troubling behavior. “We just had a misunderstanding,” you may think, or, “My partner made a mistake. I’m sure it won’t happen again.”

But then it does happen again. Perhaps your partner sends unwanted packages to you on a regular basis. Or disturbs you constantly at school by calling, texting, or emailing you incessantly, though you’ve asked him or her to stop. Maybe he or she shows up at your home or workplace uninvited, sometimes even entering the properties without permission. Perhaps your partner threatens to harm you, or worse — does harm you.

Although it may be hard, you decide to end the relationship. Unfortunately, though, the behavior continues. It might be time to consider obtaining a restraining order.

What is a restraining order?

A restraining order, also known as an order of protection, is a civil order that can restrict another person from contacting you, coming within a certain distance of you, trespassing at your place of residence or work, and more in an effort to keep you safe and keep the other person within the confines of the law. You can obtain a restraining order whether or not you have ever filed criminal charges against the other party.

While the scenarios detailed earlier reference domestic violence within a romantic relationship, any victim of domestic violence such as is described above or that goes beyond those examples can obtain a restraining order. Additionally, because crimes like harassment, stalking, assault, etc., can happen under any situation...
circumstance, anyone who’s been a victim of criminal behavior of this nature can also obtain a restraining order.

**How does a restraining order work?**

To start, you will have to visit the courthouse associated with the county in which the activity/crime occurred to apply for the restraining order. You will initially be granted a temporary restraining order (TRO), which generally lasts for a period of 30 days in the state of Nevada, according to “Nevada Laws for Restraining Orders” by Rebecca Rogge. You will then have to appear in court — as will the person you’re filing the order against, though he or she will typically not appear before the judge at the same time as you do.

Next, there will be a second appearance before a judge, during which both parties, in the presence of each other, will have to explain the situation. The terms of the restraining order, if awarded, will be determined during this appearance, so you may find it helpful to have a lawyer present, though it is not required. Sometimes the person you file a restraining order against will not appear in court; in many cases, a restraining order will still be granted in that person’s absence.

You will then receive a copy of the restraining order, which you should carry on your person at all times in order to present it to police in the event that it is violated, Cathy Meyer advised in “8 Things You Need to Know About a Restraining Order.” Violations of restraining orders can result in fines, jail time, coverage of medical costs, etc.

*If your restraining order is violated, it is critical that you contact the police immediately to ensure your safety.* When the police respond to the call, they will typically sign a criminal complaint indicating the violator is in contempt of the restraining order.

**Important points to keep in mind regarding your restraining order**

First, make sure you show up for all court hearings related to your restraining order. Bring another person along for moral support if you wish, but always follow the guidelines the court has set forth so that your order will be granted and can be maintained. It can become extremely difficult to obtain or renew a restraining order if you haven’t been diligent on your part.

Unfortunately, while a restraining order can be reason enough for some to cease their abusive behavior, the fact remains that it is only an order, and a person can and sometimes will choose to disobey it. While none of us ever want to have to file a restraining order against someone in the first place, let alone see it violated, if you simply assume the restrained person will obey or hope a person’s behavior won’t escalate into something life-threatening in the event he or she does violate the order, you can seriously jeopardize your safety. Although a restraining order is a helpful tool, you must be willing to stay aware of your surroundings at all times and remain vigilant in protecting yourself as well. *That’s why it is essential that you contact the police anytime your restraining order is violated.*

There are other ways you can protect yourself too. The UNLV Department of Police Services provides educational materials that can help you learn how to better ensure your safety. The UNLV PD also offers Girls on Guard, a self-defense training course open to all women. To find out more, visit us at [http://police.unlv.edu/units/communityrelations.html](http://police.unlv.edu/units/communityrelations.html).

**More Information**

"8 Things You Need to Know About a Restraining Order"
by Cathy Meyer
http://divorcesupport.about.com/od/abusive/relationships/a/restrain_order.htm

"Nevada Laws for Restraining Orders"
by Rebecca Rogge
http://www.ehow.com/list_6789939_nevada-laws-restraining-orders.html#ixzz2zGhWuQZN
Don’t Let Your Cellphone Turn From a Friend Into a Foe: KNOW WHEN TO STOW

Anyone who’s ever been stranded on the side of the road with a flat tire knows how much of a lifesaver a cellphone can be. In emergency situations, mobile phones enable people to reach out quickly for help. They can also assist with documenting facts when accidents occur. With a quick press of a button, a cellphone can capture sound recordings, images, or video footage of evidence that can often be used in insurance claims, court cases, and more.

When does the device that can help get you out of a bind become the same one that puts you in the crosshairs of danger, though? When it distracts you from your surroundings and diverts your attention from potentially treacherous situations. By now we’ve probably all heard at least one story about a car accident caused by a technology-distracted driver or have seen an ad or two reminding us not to text while driving. And unless you’re using a hands-free function to talk, are an emergency response officer or law enforcement official, or are using your cellphone in an affixed navigation port, it is illegal in the state of Nevada (including the UNLV campus) to use a mobile phone while operating a motor vehicle, according to NRS 484B.165.

Still, cellphones remain dangerous in other ways, even if you’re not illegally using them while driving. Did you know that mobile phones have played a role in several pedestrian injuries that could have easily been avoided had the pedestrian simply put the phone away for a minute and paid attention to the crosswalk or curb instead?

According to a study conducted by The Ohio State University and cited by SafeKids Worldwide’s “Teens and Distraction: An In-Depth Look at Teens’ Walking Behavior” white paper, “an estimated 1,496 children and young adults under the age of 21 were seen in emergency departments for pedestrian injuries related to cellphone use from 2004 to 2010.” What’s worse is that people under the age of 30 are most at risk for these types of injuries in general, Jennifer Smola indicated in her article “Cellphone-Related Pedestrian Injuries Soar.”

When we lack awareness of our surroundings for any reason, we endanger ourselves. If you’re busy staring at a cellphone screen, it means you’re not paying attention to other things, including the people around you, vehicles crossing your path, and more. This leaves you vulnerable to becoming
one of the millions (and counting) who have been the victims of cellphone-related pedestrian injury ... and death.

What can you do to make sure you don’t become another statistic? The answer is simple: Know when to put your cellphone away and pay attention. Crossing a street? Stow it and focus on the road. On a bridge or staircase? Look at the ground ahead of you, not your screen. By putting your cellphone away in these circumstances on a more regular basis, you can greatly reduce the risk that you’ll fall victim to needless injury.

Your cellphone is not the only distracting device you carry, either. These same common-sense practices apply to tablets and portable music players as well, so be sure to keep those stowed too until you’re in a place where it’s safe for you to use them.

More Information

Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 484B.165
http://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/nrs-484b.html

“Cellphone-Related Pedestrian Injuries Soar”
by Jennifer Smola

“Teens and Distraction: An In-Depth Look at Teens’ Walking Behavior”
by SafeKids Worldwide

UNLV Police Upcoming Events

Girls on Guard Self-Defense Course
Jan. 7 – PHQ
1:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Rebel Roundtable Meet & Greet
Feb. 5 – SU by Info Desk
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Rebel Roundtable Meet & Greet
Feb. 19 – SU by Info Desk
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Rebel Roundtable Meet & Greet
Mar. 5 – SU by Info Desk
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Rebel Roundtable Forum: Spring Break Safety
Mar. 12 – SU 209
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Girls on Guard Self-Defense Course
Apr. 1 – PHQ
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
3:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Rebel Roundtable Meet & Greet
Apr. 9 – SU by Info Desk
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Rebel Roundtable Meet & Greet
Apr. 23 – SU by Info Desk
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Laptop Registration Event
May 5 – LLB Lobby
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

May 6 – LLB Lobby
8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

May 7 – LLB Lobby
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

May 8 – LLB Lobby
8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Rebel Roundtable Meet & Greet
May 7 – SU by Info Desk
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Promotion of Detective Stanley Berry

The UNLV Department of Police Services is pleased to announce that Detective Stanley Berry was promoted to the rank of detective supervisor on January 17, 2014. Detective Supervisor Berry has served as a parole officer with Nevada Parole and Probation and a police detective with the Highland Park Police Department’s homicide unit in Michigan. Detective Supervisor Berry received his police training from the Detroit Metropolitan Police Training Academy. He has also received certification from Northwestern University’s prestigious School of Police Staff & Command and training from the Detroit Fire Training Academy.

Promotion of Sergeant William Newman

The department is also pleased to announce that Sergeant William “Willie” Newman was promoted to the rank of special events lieutenant on January 13, 2014. Officer Newman previously served as director of security for the Miss Universe organization, vice president of corporate security for ETM Entertainment Network, a detective with both the Adams County Sheriff’s Department and Northglenn PD in Colorado, a sergeant with the Denver Narcotics Task Force, and an agent with the Colorado Bureau of Investigation. He has a bachelor’s degree in management in human resources from Colorado Christian University and received an associate degree in criminal justice from Arapahoe Community College.

Retirement of Dispatcher Claudine Brown

As of September 2013, former UNLV Dispatcher Claudine Brown has been enjoying her retirement from the Department of Police Services. Claudine served UNLV PD for 12 years as a Police Dispatcher III. Although we were sad to see her go, we’re grateful for all her hard work over the years and wish her a very long and happy retirement with her husband in Boulder City!

Departure of Officer William Burkett

The UNLV Department of Police Services bid farewell to Officer William Burkett of the K-9 Unit. Officer Burkett left the department to pursue a career with the Attorney General’s Office. He was with the UNLV Department of Police Services for eight years and worked with a now retired explosives dog in the department’s K-9 unit for six of those years.
Still Want to Learn More?

Just take a look at some of the people talking about UNLV’s finest in the media!

“Combating Workplace Violence Through Preparedness” by Kash Cashell
http://noworkplaceviolence.com/2013/09/18/combating-workplace-violence-through-preparedness/

“Elementary School Becomes Training Site for Shooter Scenario” by Denise Wong

“In a Quiet Student Union Meeting, Information That Could Save a Life” by Danielle McCrea

“Keeping UNLV Safe From an Active Shooter” by CBSLocal.com
http://lasvegas.cbslocal.com/2013/02/05/keeping-unlv-safe-from-an-active-shooter/

“Meeting at UNLV Addresses Response to Threats” by Molly Waldron

“More Than Stop, Drop and Roll: What to Do if a Gunman’s on Campus” by Evalesha Chidester
http://virtual-rebel.com/2013/11/15/more-than-stop-drop-and-roll-what-to-do-if-a-gunmans-on-campus/

“September 11: Rage and Resolve” by Julie Ann Formoso

“How to Fight Like Your Life Depends On It: UNLV Women Learn Self-Defense” by Evalesha Chidester

“UNLV Police Officer Provides Friendly Face to Serious Business” by Evalesha Chidester

The Police Blotter

January 2014 • Volume X, Issue I

The University of Nevada Las Vegas Department of Police Services is dedicated to providing excellence in protection and service to the university community. As law enforcement officers, we shall continuously endeavor to ensure a safe and secure environment conducive to a positive social and educational process.

The Police Blotter is a biannual newsletter published by the UNLV Department of Police Services’ Office of the Chief in order to assist the department in achieving this mission.

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