Just the Facts

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Cops in the Community; McGruff Sighting—

On Tuesday morning we had a McGruff sighting at a local daycare facility. McGruff the Crime Dog and Community Service Officer Josh Federly visited Jackie’s Daycare Friends and spoke with a group of about 10 preschoolers about stranger encounters and general safety topics. If you are interested in McGruff paying a visit to your organization or group to talk about safety, click on McGruff’s picture to be linked with the department’s police presentation page.

Its Hard to Teach an Old Dog New Tricks—

In March of 2006, Officer Brandon Fandel and his canine partner Bullet embarked on a law enforcement journey together that came full circle on Wednesday as Bullet stepped down from the police force to enter retirement. Bullet, a dual purpose police canine who came to us from the country of Slovakia, has served the community tirelessly for the past seven years, be it tracking down a criminal, detecting illegal narcotics, or conducting a presentation for a group of preschoolers. However, the years of being a working police dog have caught up to him and physical demands have limited his effectiveness and are simply uncomfortable for him—though his drive hasn’t wavered, Bullet definitely deserves a bit of a break. In retirement, Bullet will have to make the adjustment from being a service dog to a companion pet as he will remain a part of the Fandel family, though we are sure there will be many days when Bullet will like to be back out on the beat! We would also like to thank Officer Fandel for the dedication he brought to the position and the sacrifices he and his family have endured during the last seven years. Being a canine handler requires a great deal of commitment to fully take advantage of the capabilities of a police canine and we truly appreciate Officer Fandel’s efforts and their combined teamwork toward keeping Owatonna safe!

Compliance Check Results—

At least twice a year, the Owatonna Police Department conducts compliance checks of local on & off sale liquor establishments and tobacco retailers to make certain they are complying with state laws and not selling alcohol or tobacco to underage youth. The checks are two-fold—to enforce state statutes and local ordinances and to identify, warn, and educate establishments that serve or sell alcohol or tobacco to underage youth. The recent checks, using underage operatives, the department conducted 21 checks on liquor establishments and only found 17 to be compliant—four businesses sold to the underage operatives. Similarly, the department conducted tobacco compliance checks at 28 local tobacco establishments only found 26 to be compliant—two business sold to the underage operatives. In each of the instances where a compliance check was failed, formal criminal charges have been requested from the County Attorney’s Office against the employee who made the sale. In addition, the retailer may be subject to penalties imposed by the City of Owatonna. Compliance checks are an example of the partnership between the Owatonna Police Department and the Steele County Safe & Drug Free Coalition.

Congratulations Joe—

On Monday afternoon, Officer Joe Swenson and his wife were joined by Sgt. Andy Devinny, Captains Eric Rethemeier & Jeff Mundale and Chief Keith Hiller at the Minnesota Science Museum for the MADD Minnesota organization’s annual Statewide Recognition Awards Luncheon. The event is held to recognize law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, and community partners who, either in their work or in their daily lives, strive to eliminate drunk driving and underage drinking from our communities. Officer Swenson, nominated by Sgt. Devinny, was one of the 44 law enforcement officers being considered statewide for the Outstanding Service Award which recognizes officers who have made a difference in the last year by going above and beyond in the area(s) of education, prevention, policy or enforcement and whose efforts are making an impact in reducing alcohol-related death and injury on Minnesota’s roads. In 2012, Joe was credited with 41 DWI arrests accounting for over 22% of the total number of DWI arrests made by the entire department. Though Joe was not selected as one of the 2013 award recipients, we are extremely proud of the dedicated work he has done in the community in removing impaired drivers off of our roadways and being one of the top DWI enforcers in the State of Minnesota. The photograph above shows Officer Swenson holding his Outstanding Service Nominee certificate.