



TRAINING FOR PETS

REASON program partners with local police and K9

JONELLE BOBAK Staff Writer Apr 2, 2018 (...)



Deputy M. Ollis lets Greyson Bristol, a student at Mull Elementary, pet K-9 Drift during the REASON class.

Jonelle Bobak/ The News Herald

K-9 Drift with the Burke County Sheriff's Office visited students at Mull Elementary School on Thursday as part of a program teaching about pet safety and reducing overpopulation.

The program, which is a six-part curriculum called “PREP,” which stands for pet responsibility education program, is being implemented into the selected schools by Lynn Jackson and Vicki Harper who have the passion to see students learn about being a responsible pet owner and pet advocate, reducing overpopulation, learning about safety precautions when around dogs and cats and making responsible decisions as a pet owner. The program is implemented by the group REASON — Reduce Euthanasia and Spay or Neuter.

They most recently completed the program at Chesterfield Elementary and now have completed one at Mull. The program is for fourth grade students.

On Thursday, K-9 Drift and his handler Deputy M. Ollis with BCSO came to tell students about her responsibilities as a police dog and what it takes to care for her.

Ollis has been working with K-9 Drift for two years this November. She is a black Labrador retriever and this is her fourth year of service.

K-9 Drift is not like other dogs that are at the Sheriff’s Office because she works in the School Resource Officer division within the schools.

“What is unique and different about Drift than most K-9’s is that she can find something that most of them don’t,” Ollis said.

She can sniff out methamphetamines, marijuana, heroin, but unlike other K-9’s, she is also trained to locate guns and ammunition, he said.

The importance of having K-9’s with this training is because students sometimes make the wrong decision to bring guns on school property, he said.

Ollis hid shell casings on a cart in the library and showed students how Drift was able to locate them in a matter of seconds.

A dog’s sense of smell is 100,000 times stronger than a human’s sense of smell, Ollis said.



Gabby King (left) stands with Deputy M. Ollis after she was awarded for having the best “Speuter” story.

Jonelle Bobak/ The News Herald

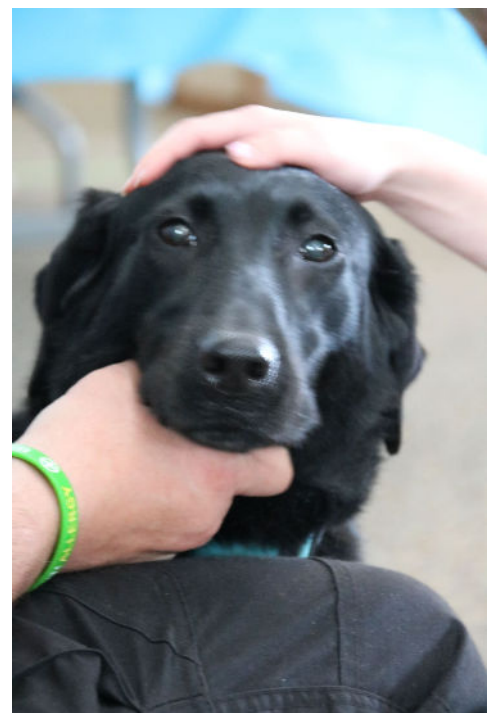


Responsibilities of pet owners

He asked students what people needed to do to keep their pets healthy and safe. They gave answers such as spaying and neutering, which will help the overpopulation problem.

Drift was spayed, which helped keep her more calm in her behavior, Ollis said.

As part of the program, students learn about different types of leashes and how metal linked collars that tighten when pulled are not to be used to tie up household pets.



K-9 Drift with the Burke County Sheriff's Office is trained to sniff out narcotics, guns and ammo inside schools.

JONELLE BOBAK/The News Herald

Those type collars are used for corrective measures with some police dogs when they are on the job, Ollis said.

“When they go on, they actually go high on the neck up next to the ears,” he said. “It looks like it hurts her, but believe it or not, it doesn’t. As soon as I let go of it, it releases.”

“She knows that when I pull on this, that it’s time to get back on track and get back to work,” Ollis said.

Owning a pet is also a financial responsibility with veterinarian appointments and food purchases.

“Every July, Drift goes for what they call a full pet check-up ... that visit alone is almost \$400,” he said.

The veterinarian does blood work, gives her shots, and gives heartworm medicine.

“(All this is to) make sure she is absolutely 100 percent healthy and able to do her job,” Ollis said.





Deputy Ollis talks with students about what responsibilities someone has when owning a pet.

Jonelle Bobak/ The News Herald

Owning a pet is huge responsibility, he told students.

He warned students to never leave their pet in a locked, hot car with the windows rolled up.

“My car is running right now with the air conditioning going because I don’t take Drift inside everywhere that I go, so she predominantly stays in the car.”

The BCSO patrol cars that are catered to K-9 use are able to send out different alert signals when the inside temperature is at an unhealthy level.

“Right now it is 70 degrees inside my car. If it gets to 80 degrees, the back windows, where Drift is at, roll down automatically,” Ollis said. “At 85 degrees, there is a fan that cuts on that blows fresh air to cool it off and at 90 degrees the blue lights and sirens cut on and the horn starts blowing.”

Students awarded for "Speuter" stories

Gabby King, a fourth-grader at Mull Elementary, was awarded for writing the best "Speuter" story during the program. In the story, students explained why spaying and neutering is important. Brady Davis and Lilly Wells also were awarded for their stories.

REASON is looking for volunteers who would like to help with the PREP classes that visit elementary schools. If interested call 828-403-3675. For more information about REASON and their efforts, visit www.reason-nc.org.

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