



Matthew C. Moynihan
Chief of Police

South Kingstown Police Department

1790 Kingstown Road
South Kingstown, Rhode Island 02879
(401) 783-3321 Fax (401) 783-8139
www.southkingstownri.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Introducing... Leo!

South Kingstown Police Department names and swears in new compassion dog

South Kingstown Police Chief Matthew C. Moynihan today introduced the town's first compassion dog at a swearing-in ceremony. The 10-week-old Bernedoodle puppy, Leo, will serve as a support dog for first responders and help assist the police department with outreach to children, seniors, victims of crime and as needed for crisis response in the community.

"Studies show that a dog's presence can help lower blood pressure and reduce anxiety, making Leo capable of doing work that few humans can accomplish," said Chief Moynihan. "Our officers' well-being is paramount, and we will be asking Leo to serve as a wellness ambassador in the department and a compassion dog in our town. He has town-wide jurisdiction, and we know he is up to the task."

"The interest in this program and in this puppy has been overwhelming and we received more than 1,800 submissions for suggested names," Moynihan continued. "In police jargon, LEO means "law enforcement officer" and we particularly liked it because it recognizes that he is an important member of our team."

"We are excited to welcome Leo to South Kingstown and appreciate the donations in support of our compassion dog program," said James M. Manni, South Kingstown Town Manager. "Investments in community policing improve the quality of life for residents and will make our town an even better place to live and raise a family."

"CIT-RI and South Kingstown Police Department have developed a great partnership to address behavioral health needs in the community and adding a compassion dog to the department is right in line with the CIT mission," added Allie Welch, Crisis intervention Team Program Assistant. "When morale and mental health are supported on the departmental level, it brings success into the community as well. We are so excited for SKPD and know the compassion dog is a great addition to their team."

Leo was donated by his breeder, Cove Angels of Taunton, MA and his food is being supplied by Rumford Pet Centers. AT&T provided funding to support the compassion dog program at the South Kingstown Police Department as part of its commitment to the health and wellness of first responders.

“We are happy to donate this Bernedoodle puppy to the South Kingstown Police Department in appreciation for the important work that first responders do every day,” said Kerry Buckley, Owner of Cove Angels Breeding. “His sweet disposition and kind heart are perfect for this job. He and Officer Bryan Monte will be a great team for the department and this town for many years to come.”

“This is a wonderful opportunity to contribute to our community and support this very special dog,” said Michael Squatrito, Executive Vice President for Rumford Pet Centers Inc. “We look forward to seeing Officer Monte and Leo in our stores and around South Kingstown.”

“First responders in Rhode Island and across the country deal with traumatic and high-stress events daily. Public safety service comes with great personal sacrifice, and many first responders silently carry the burden. That’s where we hope this compassion dog program can help. With just a wag of the tail, compassion dogs can help decrease stress, boost morale, improve coping and so much more,” Patricia Jacobs, President – AT&T Northern Region. “We applaud Chief Moynihan and Town Manager Manni for their leadership and for taking action to prioritize the health and wellness of their officers. We hope this program will make a major impact at the South Kingstown Police Department and across the community.”

Leo was sworn in by Chief Moynihan and will be handled by Officer Bryan Monte, a Community Resource Officer and 6-year veteran of the South Kingstown Police Department.

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