



San Ramon Police Department

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Scott Holder, Chief of Police



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Subject: **Press Release – San Ramon Police Department’s First K9 Retires**

Dar, a K-9 with the San Ramon Police Department, retired Monday.

The 12-year-old German Shepherd spent a decade patrolling the streets of San Ramon with Officer Marty Echelmeier. The oldest working law enforcement dog in Contra Costa County was officially signed off at 6:15 a.m.

“I don’t even want to think about it,” Echelmeier said about his first shift without Dar. “I know it will be very strange and lonely. I’m sure I’ll be calling (my wife) a lot to check in on him.”

Dar was the city’s first K-9 when he joined the department in 2003. He was born in the Czech-Republic and began intense training when he was just 8-weeks-old. Dar, whose name means “gift,” was brought to the U.S. at age 2 and was purchased by the city with federal grant money.

“Not only is Dar a part of our police department family, he is a highly recognizable member of our San Ramon Community. With the number of school and community presentations where he has appeared you would be hard pressed to find a local student who does not know Dar by name,” said San Ramon Police Chief Holder.

Echelmeier often brought his K-9 to lineup and into city offices. Socializing Dar with his fellow officers and city staff helped to create a better working relationship over the years. Dar’s experience and social skills allowed him to participate in more than 100 public demonstrations as well as the San Ramon’s Citizens Academy, Youth Academy, Explorers, Bike Rodeos and special presentations at area schools.

“Most police K-9’s work for five to seven years, yet Dar has served our City for 10 years,” Chief Holder said. “Over that period, his results speak volumes of him and his handler, Officer Marty Echelmeier’s, commitment not only to San Ramon, but to all of Contra Costa County.”

Dar is crossed trained, meaning he can locate the odor of narcotics, missing people or hiding suspects. Over the years, Dar has helped to apprehend more than three dozen suspects and he's located several others who were in need of assistance.

Over his career, Chief Holder says Dar has had 127 deployments resulting in Felony Arrests; 40 deployments resulting in the apprehension of wanted subjects; seven deployments which resulted in either arrests or article locations resulting in murder convictions and 176 deployments resulting in narcotic finds, the largest being 55-pounds of Methamphetamine buried 5-feet underground. He has also located 23 lost children or elderly people suffering from dementia.

"When you add all this together and factor in only one day when he did not work his normal shift due to illness, I doubt one could top this in any employee," Chief Holder said. "Dar was our first K-9 and set the standard for the others. Obviously, Dar has been outstanding, however; without the dedication of Officer Echelmeier, the Dar's career would not have been so rewarding. He will be missed and we wish him all the best in his retirement."

Officer Echelmeier says it's hard to pick just one memory of working with Dar, but he definitely won't forget a stolen vehicle pursuit at 3 a.m. where he lost radio contact. The suspect crashed and fled on foot into the darkness. "I was able to locate him by hearing the screams from where Dar had apprehended him with a solid bite. Dar was just waiting for me to take the suspect into custody," he said. "That guy got a good lesson on how impossible it is to hide from or outrun a dog."

Echelmeier's memories with Dar aren't all about work. Off-duty, the K9 was just another member of the family who was taken on family vacations to Tahoe and Carmel. As for taking on another K9, Echelmeier says it wouldn't be fair.

"It would be too difficult to bring another alpha dog into our household and more importantly, I wouldn't feel right taking another dog to work with me while Dar is still with us," he said. "The bond Dar and I share is so strong. He deserves the best. Most dogs are long retired before his age."

Echelmeier doesn't think retirement will suit Dar. "He loves to work and I know he will really miss it," he said. "Dar would definitely be too sad to see me go to work without him, so (to ease his distress) my wife will probably take him for a walk while I sneak out."

Every officer needs a hobby when they retire, and K9's are no exception. "Of course, we'll have to give him a new job to do too," said Echelmeier. "One of his favorite things to do is locate all the lost tennis balls in the ivy surrounding the tennis courts by our house. We bring home at least two or three a day and he adds it to his mounting collection at home."

The City of San Ramon will recognize Dar for his outstanding service during the City Council meeting at 7 p.m. on March 12. The public is invited to attend. Well-wishers may also attend a retirement ceremony for Dar on at the Community Center Terrace Room at 6 p.m. on March 21.