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HLPD adds two new canine coworkers

New police dog and therapy dog coming in April

BY JANELLE FISHER CITY PAGES EDITOR

HOBART – Following K-9 Officer Bax's recent retirement, the Hobart/Lawrence Police Department (HLPD) will add two dogs to its ranks this month — its next K-9 officer, Jax, and the department's first therapy dog.

Jax spent some time in Hobart in December to bond with Hobart/Lawrence Officer Chris Tremel, who was Bax's handler and will also be Jax's handler.

Currently, Jax and Tremel are in New Mexico completing the training process and will return to the HLPD at the end of April.

But before Jax and Tremel return from training, HLPD will have another furry friend join its ranks.

At board meetings earlier this month, both the Hobart and Lawrence Village Boards approved a therapy dog program to be implemented in the HLPD.



Jax spent some time in Hobart in December to bond with Hobart/Lawrence Officer Chris Tremel, who was Bax's handler and will also be Jax's handler. Submitted photo

The first dog of that program, an Australian labradoodle puppy donated by Blueberry Cottage Labradoodles, will be picked up by the department April 9.

Once the puppy is paired with its department handler — a posi-

tion HLPD Chief Michael Renkas said has received significant interest — it will begin its training.

"Our imagination is going to be our limit," he said. "Our initial, low-level goal as we really want to get them trained to what's called

Canine Good Citizen through the AKC (American Kennel Club). Start there and then kind of expand and build upon that so we're able to use the animal for interviews with victims or witnesses See K-9 page 7



Pulaski Community Middle School Educator Sarah Morgan is surprised with her award during a school assembly for the district's Golden Apple recipients. Greater Green Bay Chamber photo

Golden Apple recipient works to create a classroom culture

BY KRIS LEONHARDT EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

GREEN BAY – Pulaski Community Middle School Educator Sarah Morgan is working to create a classroom culture that is both safe and nurturing.

Morgan was a recent recipient of the 2023 Greater Green Bay Chamber Golden Apple awards and spends her days teaching those with intellectual disabili-

ties in grades six to eight.

"Creating culture is an important part of my classroom program. Monthly, my students work in our restaurant which incorporates academic and functional skills," she explained.

"The students plan, shop, cook, serve and deliver. We also work to grow food in our school garden as we process pizza and

See MORGAN page 7

MMC MULTI MEDIA CHANNELS LOCAL MEDIA • BETTER RESULTS

MMC purchases Kewaunee County Star News

GREEN BAY – Multi Media Channels (MMC), the publishing company of this newspaper, has purchased the Kewaunee County Star-News from Gannett Co., Inc.

MMC CEO Patrick Wood said that the company plans to invest heavily in local news there, covering school and municipal events.

"Local is the most important part of what we do," he said. "We believe strongly that consistent, honest reporting of everything local in Kewaunee, Luxemburg, Casco and Algoma will enrich the vibrancy of our region as well as making our governments even stronger through open and honest accountability."

The publication will also be transitioned to U.S. Mail delivery, with a 10,000-copy circulation.

MMC began its work in community newspaper publishing in Denmark, Wis., in 1953. Under the leadership of its founder, Frank Wood, the business expanded into other markets. Today, the company remains in the Wood family, owned and operated by both family members and employees, publishing more than 30 print publications, including 22 weeklies and 17 digital channels that serve the central, northern and eastern regions of Wisconsin.

The sale closed on March 27.

Hobart voters see contested races

BY KRIS LEONHARDT EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Editor's Note: The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author. They do not reflect the opinions of this publication or Multi Media Channels.

HOBART – Voters in the village of Hobart will see contested races on April 4, as Village President Incumbent Richard Heidel faces challenger, Jody Hakes.

Two incumbents and a challenger will also face off for two trustee seats.

The Press Times reached out to all five candidates to learn more about them.

Following are their responses:

President Richard Heidel (Incumbent)

Bio

My family and I have lived in Hobart for more than 33 years. My secondary education consists of degrees from the UW-Madison and Marquette University in mechanical engineering and political sci-

ence, respectively. I worked as a mechanical engineer for two utilities, a capital development organization and a Fortune 500 paper manufacturer. With 21 years of active and reserve duty as an Army officer, I'm the third of four genera-

tions of military veterans with one of my sons (and his family) currently serving as a US Army Green Beret. I've served for 19 years as a Hobart village trustee and village president, hav-

See ELECTION page 8

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K-9
from page 1

of traumatic incidents and children, as well, involved in that. Bringing them into schools as well, using it as a de-escalation tool, using it for community engagement and using it for internal peer support. There's a lot of different applications for a therapy dog like this and realistically, it's going to be how much effort we put into it."

Unlike the department's other canine officer position, the therapy dog will come into the department as a puppy and do all of its training there.

"It's very unique and different from Bax and Jax where they go to an assigned training," Renkas said. "We can kind of create our own path with what we can do and accomplish based on the dog and the handler."

One goal Renkas said the department has for the new therapy dog is for it to be able to improve community engagement.

"If I'm sitting at a booth and I want to talk about what the police department can do for citizens, what we have to offer, it's really a good icebreaker where somebody may see the dog sitting next to us and make us more approachable to start that conversation about 'what is this?' And then, 'what is the canine program? What else do we have?'" he said. "We can start building the relationship with others who may not have wanted to approach us if we were just standing there at any one of the community events that we have."

Renkas said the therapy dog will play an important role in working towards one of his goals for the HLPD — extending care and courtesy to victims and witnesses.

"One of my main focuses is really geared towards victims and ensuring that

we're treating victims properly and with the respect in dignity that they deserve," he said. "And what, in law enforcement, can we do to ensure that we are utilizing all of the resources that we have access to to ensure that we are providing that level of care? And as we talk about victims and witnesses, being more trauma-informed when we're interacting with them."

"Traditional law enforcement oftentimes creates silos. Our job in law enforcement is to find the truth of the matter, of what had occurred, and make an arrest if applicable and then push it to the next part of the criminal justice system. Sometimes in that lens, there's the ability to not be very trauma-informed as you're interviewing people to find the truth."

"One of the principles of being trauma-informed is safety. Utilizing a therapy dog creates an environment where a victim or witness would feel more safe. And trustworthiness is another principle of being trauma-informed and there's trustworthiness with bringing the animal in. What we're talking about here is just more of a holistic approach to get everyone onto the same page to come to the final outcome without creating more trauma while we're moving through the process."

The benefits the new dog will bring to the department are not only external though, as Renkas said there are many ways the dog can help internally.

"It'll really enhance our internal peer support efforts, having an animal that's trained and can not only interact with officers daily, but also assist when we have critical incidents or other crisis responses," he said. "An officer may need some downtime and the dog can come in and they can, as studies have shown, dogs just seem to do

a lot for increasing positive moods and decreasing anxiety and blood pressure and such."

Renkas said he also hopes the therapy dog will also be an important tool in encouraging conversations about mental health among the officers of the HLPD.

"It's also going to improve our communication within the organization and the culture shift in law enforcement to talk about mental health issues," he said. "Law enforcement seems to be kind of slow [to change], but it's really starting to take hold for peer support and mental health among officers nationally... We're going to be able to really increase our efforts and change the culture that we have, having this tool and building a peer support team and network here."

Much like Bax, and now Jax, has been available to assist other departments in the area upon request, Renkas said Jax and the therapy dog will be able to lend a paw in other jurisdictions as needed.

"It'll be the same thing as with Bax and Jax," he said. "They're utilized for narcotics sniffs and apprehension by request very frequently while they're working and the same would go as well [with the therapy dog]. If there was an issue that would need our assistance, we'd be more than happy to allow our handler to go out there within reasonable grounds for whatever the situation is. We want to ensure this isn't just Hobart and Lawrence victims and witnesses, but as much as we can help. I think everyone's on the same team in law enforcement — we want to provide the same thing. If our usage of this canine can help somebody avoid or work through trauma, we want to make sure that we provide that as best we can."

MORGAN
from page 1

spaghetti sauces. The restaurant allows our students to take an early role on working on pre-vocational skills needed for future employment.

"In addition, I work to build a culture within our school. Often in special education, we 'push into' regular education."

Morgan uses a "reverse inclusion" experience, where regular education students are brought into the classroom, where those with intellectual disabilities already have a safe, established environment.

"Here, we have games, crafts, cooking, and community service where my students are able to work on social, communication and recreational skills with peers," she explained.

"Our group supports each other in homeroom, lunch and in general classes. The culture of caring and inclusion is school-wide which assists and enriches all."

"Culture is important in the community. Twice a month, our students attend 'Grit920,' an adaptive bootcamp for exceptional athletes. Grit920 is a collaboration to bring real-life, functional exercise experiences to students with disabilities. We learned that exercise is for all and through modifications we are able to assist students with functional movement, strength, balance, health, wellness and age-respectful activities in a community setting."

They are in their seventh year of the partnership and looking to bring the program to other schools.

The school has also partnered with a local business to create a "community-based experience" for secondary students with disabilities.

"The work tasks are differentiated. Younger students fold and label pizza boxes while older students fulfill pizza orders. This yearly event incorporates many skills and opportunities," Morgan explained. Through these and other programs, the school is providing students with experience, knowledge and abilities that will take them into the future, while providing an opportunity to fail, learn and grow. "These experiences help students to grow in a nurturing environment so that they can be as independent as possible," Morgan said.

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