Rougarou the Rescue Dog joins Caddo Sheriff's K-9 Unit

Thursday, January 9, 2020

The Caddo Sheriff's Office is giving a rescue dog from the Humane Society of Northwest Louisiana a new "leash" on life after officially making him a member of the department's K-9 Unit, said Sheriff Steve Prator.

Rougarou is a "ball crazy" 1-year-old black Labrador retriever who has been training with the Sheriff's Office since October. Now that he's officially passed the test to become a sheriff's K-9, he's being assigned to a handler, Senior Deputy Maggie Boykin, in the Patrol Division. The two will start training together in the coming weeks.

"This is a real feel-good day in law enforcement for me," Prator said. "Anyone who knows me knows that I love animals, and to be able to bring two things together that I love – animals and the Caddo Sheriff's Office – it's a good day."

Rougarou is the first shelter dog to join the CPSO K-9 Unit. His new assignment will be narcotics detection. Over the past seven weeks, the department's K-9 trainer, Deputy Leroy Azlin, has worked with Rougie on detecting narcotics odors and conducting building and vehicle searches.

Turning to the local rescue organizations was an idea developed within the CPSO Patrol Division, headed by Captain John May. May knew rescues were used by federal agencies liked the U.S. Department of Agriculture, so he approached Sheriff Prator with the idea. The goal soon became growing the CPSO K-9 Unit without spending money.

Rougie came to CPSO from the Humane Society of Northwest Louisiana. Rescue Director Courtney Wingate knew the Sheriff's Office was looking for a rescue dog and thought Rougie would be the perfect fit. The Humane Society had received the dog from Cara's House animal shelter in Ascension Parish in September. Rougie, then known as Brew, was surrendered by his owner, after Cara's House employees had regularly seen the spirited animal running loose in the neighborhood.

But the road to becoming a CPSO K-9 wasn't always easy for Rougie. "When I first got him, I was worried he couldn't pass the test to get into the program," Azlin said. "We knew he had the drive, but he had issues like he wouldn't stick his head in a box to get his toy or get up on a box." Azlin said he enlisted the help of Troy Phillips, a dog trainer at Shreveport's All Dogs Unleashed, and "I got a different dog back," he said. "He scored very high (on the test), and he hasn't looked back yet. He's one of the hottest dogs I've had in the last 15 years."

The Caddo Sheriff's Office currently has four other K-9s. All are dual-purpose dogs trained in narcotics and patrol work, and all are European imports purchased from U.S. K-9 vendors. They range in price from $11,000 for a single purpose dog to $15,500 for a dual-purpose dog. The cost of Rougarou? $0.

Azlin has trained shelter dogs to be police K-9s for other departments, and he says some just don't have the genetic instinct needed for the job. "To find a dog like Rougie that was the first dog we took, I was amazed," he said.

Prator said he’s anxious to see Rougie at work and hopes to have more shelter dogs join the ranks of the Caddo Sheriff’s Office in the future.

Attachments





