

North Tonawanda Police Department

Therapy dog part of police reform & reinvention collaborative

BY THOMAS E. KRANTZ
Chief of Police

Therapy dog "Remy" is sworn-in as the newest member of the North Tonawanda Police Department.

Remy is a 4-month-old Golden-doodle that is owned by Det. Lt. Michelle Day, (pictured with Remy). Remy will be utilized to provide emotional support for crime victims and people who have experienced traumatic events.

Research has shown that child victims have a 50% increase in disclosures when dogs are used in an interview. Remy will also be used for follow-up investigations regarding mental health and domestic calls. She can be deployed at schools, festivals, parades and other events to encourage positive contacts between the community and the police.

Remy is currently in the process of being trained as a therapy dog and the program will be launched upon her completion of training.

Krista Vince Garland, NT School Board member, resident and community activist for the City of North Tonawanda, was able to coordinate the training of Remy for free and is willing to assist in any way, as she currently owns therapy dogs.

Esther Pullano is the owner and trainer at Niagara K9 Training Center, located at 2956 Niagara Falls Blvd., and has agreed to train Remy.

A therapy dog is one portion of the police reform and reinven-

tion collaborative the City of North Tonawanda has been working on. The committee on police reform has had two meetings so far and we are preparing for our third meeting on Nov. 5. We have identified mental health, substance abuse and community policing as the greatest concerns so far for the department; although, numerous topics have been discussed. We are seeking additional concerns from our citizens, but unfortunately we have had very little public input up to this point. I have had four three-hour open meeting dates and a suggestion/question section on our website that only one person has utilized thus far.

In Part 1: Key questions for insight and consideration of the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative resource guide, the guide states that the purpose is "to foster trust, fairness and legitimacy" within communities throughout our state and to "address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color." This is where we need community input! There is only so much that we can accomplish with our 13-person committee without the community as a whole expressing any concerns you may have.

Trust me, we realize that not everyone likes the police, but we are getting nowhere if we do not communicate with each other. I'm sure we cannot fix everyone's concerns, but perhaps there is common

ground on some issues that can be addressed.

In an effort to have an open dialogue with the public, I will be hosting a public address via Facebook live on Thursday, Nov. 12, at 5 p.m. on the North Tonawanda Police Department Facebook page. At that time, I will be available to answer any questions relating to the North Tonawanda Police Department and the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative as it relates to our community.

In addition, the committee has launched a survey that can be taken online for review by the committee. Here is a link: <https://forms.gle/BJEomC49SxKUpwAK7>.

Visit the North Tonawanda Police Department website at ntpolice.com for updates, information from the committee and a link to the resource guide.

We urge the residents of North Tonawanda to take the survey and/or participate in the live Facebook meeting on Nov. 12.



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