



CITY OF PERTH AMBOY
THE HONORABLE MAYOR WILDA DIAZ

For Immediate Release

News Media Contact:

City of Perth Amboy

Noelia Colon, Public Information Officer

732-826-0290 ext. 4006

ncolon@perthamboynj.org

Perth Amboy Receives K9 Bulletproof Vest

Perth Amboy Police Department receives a near \$5,000 donation for K9 Nico

Perth Amboy, NJ (August 20, 2018) – The Perth Amboy Police Department received a generous donation of a K9 Ballistic Vest from a non-profit that supports America's unsung heroes, Hike for K9 Heroes Foundation.

Perth Amboy's K9, Nico joined the Perth Amboy Police Department after graduating from the Bergen County Sheriff K9 Training Academy in August 2017 and is certified in patrol and narcotics detection.

"I want to personally thank *Hike for K9 Heroes* for their generous donation to the Perth Amboy Police Department. Partnerships are a catalyst to government and non-profit work. I am grateful to those who help advance our efforts to benefit our community," said Mayor Wilda Diaz.

Hike for K9 Heroes Foundation co-founder, Mr. and Mrs. James Saarikko learned about Nico, as the first K9 member of the department through their friendship with 13-year Veteran of the Perth Amboy Police department P.O. Maria I. Santiago and Retired Border Patrol Agent Antonio L. Medina. They asked if it would be possible to fully fund a customized ballistic vest to help keep Nico safe during investigations. Nico is now protected by a vest Custom Made to his body build by, "K9 Storm." Valued at over \$4,600, the vest is designed to protect Nico from any gun shots, stabbings and ease of use for his handler, Detective Sergeant Ralph Pinero.

K9 Nico responds to multiple jurisdictions including, Carteret, Woodbridge, South Amboy, Sayreville as well as for the Middlesex County Prosecutors Office, DEA and HSI.

“Hike for K9 Heroes is dedicated to helping more working dogs like, K9 Nico, along with service dogs partnered with military members or first responders. These canine teams are in need of various medical and dental care, training, equipment and support. At times, the purchase of these items can be overwhelming to the handler. Our goal is to help maintain the unique bond between canine and handler by offering support through generous monetary donations and overall well-being through outdoor activities. We are very grateful to our contributors and to those our cause supports,” said Megan Saarikko, co-founder.

Hike for K9 Heroes is fundraising to assist in future donations for those K9’s in need of vests, surgery and training. If you would like to donate, please visit: www.hikefork9heroes.org

About the Hike for K9 Heroes Foundation

Founded by James and Megan Saarikko, the foundation is based out of Virginia. Mr. Saarikko is a ten year veteran of the United States Navy, having been a Special Warfare Operator on the Navy’s Elite Team. He spent years training as a Marine Mammal Handler (MMH) and an Explosive Ordinance Expert (EOD). Mrs. Saarikko is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and currently training her working dog for search and rescue and disaster response. Antonio L Medina is the foundation’s chief information officer. Mr. Medina is a retired United States Border Patrol Agent who spent over 10 years in the southwest border of the United States working out of Tucson Sector Nogales Station. Prior to joining Border Patrol Mr. Medina spent 10 years in the United States Army spending the better part of his military career in the Army’s 3rd Special Forces Airborne group as a special forces communications SGT 18E. With multiple combat deployments.

About the City of Perth Amboy, Middlesex County, New Jersey

Perth Amboy, an urban community with a rich cultural history and a more than three hundred-year-old maritime and industrial legacy, is an interconnection point for major highways, roadways and waterways. Founded in 1683 and chartered in 1718, it served as the state capital until 1790 and is home of the Royal Governor William Franklin’s Mansion. Perth Amboy, is known for its beautiful waterfront, downtown shopping, and many fabulous restaurants.

For additional information about the City of Perth Amboy, please visit: www.ci.perthamboy.nj.us.

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