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Ventura Police Department adopts first therapy comfort dog

Ventura, Calif. — The Ventura Police Department adopted a therapy comfort dog to improve the physical, social, and emotional well-being of officers, staff, and community members in crisis and after having experienced trauma.

Asher, a 1-year-old Cavalier King Charles Spaniel and Poodle mix, or Cavadoodle, was donated to the department by [VIP Dog Teams](#), a local non-profit dedicated to improving people's health through promoting the human-animal bond that leads to healing.

"When first responders are equipped to deal with adverse reactions to stress, they are better prepared to handle situations fairly, calmly, respectfully, and empathetically," said Police Chief Darin Schindler. "I am excited to add Asher to our dedicated team of public servants to help enhance the health and wellness of our employees and residents."

As a therapy comfort dog, Asher's functions include easing tension and lowering post incident stress and anxiety levels for employees, soothing victims and witnesses of crimes, providing support to those impacted by traumatic events, and visiting other City departments and various community events for educational purposes.

After an internal interview and selection process, Business Services Officer, Roger Wang, was selected to serve in a collateral assignment as Asher's handler. Asher has completed American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen certification. Prior to being ready for service, Asher and his handler will complete Canine Good Citizen Testing and a Public Access Test.

"Asher has a calm temperament, is hypoallergenic, and does not shed, making him the perfect pup to assist anyone," said Roger Wang, Asher's handler. "I am grateful to be part of a program meant to bring comfort and relief to so many in need."

When Asher is not on the job, he will be on-call 24/7, but will go home with his handler and serve as a family dog.

Asher joins a robust wellness program consisting of time dedicated to physical fitness, a peer support team, critical incident stress management debriefings, and mandated annual mental health check-ins with a certified clinician. Learn more about the Ventura Police Wellness Program at www.CityofVentura.ca.gov/Wellness.

Continued veterinary expenses, food, and grooming for Asher will be covered by the Ventura Police Community Foundation, a local non-profit dedicated to strengthening public safety and enhancing the quality of life in the community by providing support to the Ventura Police Department. Learn more about the Ventura Police Community Foundation at www.VenturaPoliceFoundation.org.

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