

## Pal must retire

# Oakland cop trains new friend for snoop duties

By MARTI BENEDETTI

Oakland County Sheriff's Deputy Ed Stout has a large task ahead of him: training the sheriff's department's new tracking dog.

The two-year-old black and tan German Shepherd, named Caesar, will take the place of Stout's tracking dog, Pal, who has cancer and is expected to only live four to eight more months.

Caesar was donated to the sheriff's department last week by Gary Sparman of Pontiac, who saw the stories on Pal's illness in the newspapers.

"I had so many calls from people who thought their dog could replace Pal," Stout said. "Everyone thinks their dog is Rin-Tin-Tin."

"But Caesar, who was Sparkman's house pet and has no prior tracking experience, met all my standards. He's a gorgeous animal," Stout said.

Stout, who has been a dog handler with the sheriff's department for 15 years, said build and temperament are the most important factors in choosing a tracking dog.

"A dog should accept people, not be apprehensive of crowds or over-aggressive," Stout said. "Caesar gives his



Caesar sniffs out a snowball thrown by Deputy Stout.

whole effort in retrieving and uses his nose even more than Pal."

Six-year-old Pal, who was donated to the sheriff's department for \$1, proved

to be a faithful co-worker and companion to Stout for five years.

Despite injections and medication administered by veterinarians at

Michigan State University, Pal is slowly deteriorating from cancer of the lymph glands. But he continues to do his job with Stout.

"He was dehydrated, throwing up and losing considerable weight for a while," Stout explained. "But now his weight is up and he is able to perform adequately and then some. Michigan State veterinarians predict he will do fine for a while and then go downhill real fast."

Pal will hold his own as the department's top-ranking dog while Stout teaches Caesar the fundamentals of tracking.

"In the spring, I'll be working with him for obedience," Stout said. "I'll talk to him, coax him and get him to relax. Dogs are like people. They have their own personalities and you have to make training a game for them."

THERE ARE FIVE phases to training a dog, Stout said. After obedience is learned, the dog must be taught tracking, building searches, property searches and free searches (which means a dog uses the wind to his advantage in a search). Training usually takes about 14 weeks.

Pal is one of two tracking dogs in the sheriff's department. Stout said the department's canine corps should be expanded.

"Dogs do more than what meets the eye," he said. "Most of the funds we receive for our canine program are donated. And we should be able to provide funding for our own program."

Stout added the sheriff's department has asked the county board of commissioners to fund the canine program,

but have been repeatedly turned down over the years.

Currently, Pal's upkeep and veterinary care are handled, from food charge, by the North Hills Veterinary Hospital in Rochester.

Stout is hoping that funds will come through for a possible Oakland County Canine School, where other deputies could be trained as handlers under Stout's instruction.



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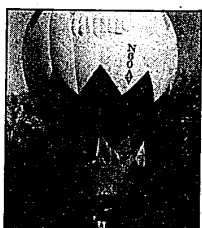
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