

# **Hattiesburg Police Department K-9 Program Expansion**

## **Summary of Proposal**

In order to better serve and protect the residents of Hattiesburg and surrounding counties, the Hattiesburg Police Department proposes to expand its current K-9 program to have a dual-purpose police dog readily available on each patrol shift. The Hattiesburg Police Department is requesting the funds from Asbury Foundation to purchase two additional police dogs and three SUVs to be outfitted as K-9 cruisers. Costs for the dogs and outfitted SUVs are estimated at \$192,000. Two officers currently employed with the Hattiesburg Police Department will be selected to partner with the two new dogs as their K-9 handlers. Two of the SUVs will be the assigned vehicles to the two new K-9 teams, and one of the SUVs will be assigned to a current K-9 team in need of a cruiser replacement.

Once the dogs are purchased and the K-9 officers are selected, the dog and officer teams will undergo an initial three-month training together with Sergeant Stephon Richardson at the Hattiesburg Police Department Training Academy. Any ongoing training will also be conducted at the Training Academy. In addition to assuming the cost of training the police dogs and K-9 handlers, the Hattiesburg Police Department will also assume the responsibility of providing for any other needs associated with the K-9 program, including equipment and supplies for the dogs, veterinary expenses, officer salaries, and vehicle fuel, maintenance, and repairs.

The Hattiesburg Police Department is comprised of over 100 police officers across four shifts. The current K-9 program in place consists of two dual-purpose dogs and one specialty-trained bomb detection dog. A dual-purpose dog is one that has been trained to detect drugs as well as apprehend criminals, while the only job of the bomb detection dog is to detect bombs. Since there are four patrol shifts and only two dual-purpose dogs, a K-9 officer is not always readily available when one is needed. When this situation occurs, the Hattiesburg Police Department has to request assistance from other agencies and wait for K-9 support, and valuable time is lost in the process. With the addition of two dogs, each patrol shift would benefit from having its own K-9 team. Police dogs provide a wide range of benefits and can be used for a variety of tasks. Not only are they skilled at detecting drugs, but they can also be used to apprehend criminals, conduct missing searches, protect officers, conduct building searches, locate evidence, identify suspects, assist with traffic stops, and participate in K-9 demonstrations at local schools. Expanding the K-9 program would also make the Hattiesburg Police Department more readily able to provide assistance to surrounding counties and law enforcement agencies in need of K-9 support.