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Officer Moro: A fine addition to local police

The Towanda Police Department's latest officer does not carry a gun.

And he would look pretty silly wearing a hat. But Officer Moro does have his own badge as well as the authority to assist his fellow officers in arresting local law breakers. For while he can't carry a sidearm, Officer Moro does bring his own unique talents in uncovering illegal controlled substances, as well as finding people who are lost or in hiding.

Officer Moro is a German shepherd dog, not yet 2 years old, who, along with his "partner" Towanda Officer John Hennessy, recently completed an intensive K-9 training program. Moro is now fully trained to sniff out marijuana, cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine. If called upon, Moro is also capable of tracking down criminals, as well as finding lost hunters and missing children.

It was through the efforts and generosity of Hurley's Supermarkets that Officer Moro was able to become a member of the Towanda Police Department. Hurley's entered a contest in 2005 sponsored by Kraft Foods to determine which store in the region had the best display of Milk-Bone dog biscuits. Hurley's won, and designated the $5,000 prize money to Towanda police to pay for Moro's purchase.

However, Moro was still a "rookie" when he came to Towanda, and so training was necessary to sharpen his natural abilities to identify specific odors, and "inform" his fellow officers when something is amiss. Officer Hennessy also completed an extensive training course that taught him how to properly use Moro as a police dog.

Scientists have estimated that a German shepherd's sense of smell is approximately 1 million times better than a human's. This means Moro will be able to tell if a person is carrying marijuana illicitly in his pocket much more readily than a human officer, who normally can only tell if it's around if it's being smoked.

Using dogs to detect drugs is nothing new – the practice was started in earnest in many metropolitan areas in the 1960s, and met with great success. But – as Moro himself has demonstrated – effective K-9 units are not cheap. Many smaller communities cannot afford such fine animals, and either have to make due without, or depend upon the generosity of one owned by a local dog trainer.

Following the completion of his training, Moro was officially sworn in recently by Towanda Mayor Richard Snell as a member of the department. Moro and Officer Hennessy have been making the rounds, introducing themselves to the community. According to reports, Moro has been a big hit with many of the students when he shows up at the local schools. Officer Hennessy recently reported that – as of the moment – Moro hasn't made any big drug busts yet, but he assures that it's only a matter of time before his talents will be put to good use.

Thanks to all the folks at Hurley's who worked very hard on the Milk Bone display, as well as the dedication of Officer Hennessy, the Towanda Police Department now has a new member whose unique talents will be an invaluable asset on the local war on drugs as well as other crimes. Moro is expected to remain a full-time officer on the force for the next six to eight years, and to perform some of his duties even after he goes into retirement.

As the old saying goes – "A dog is man's best friend." Moro has become the best friend of all the local police, and by extension best friend to the communities they all serve. We wish Officer Moro and Officer Hennessy the best of luck in their joint effort to protect and serve all the decent hard-working people of this area.