

## Bartlett's News Briefs



# NOT JUST ANYBODY

community-sponsored stories

by Pacifican Jean Bartlett, longtime Bay Area News Group writer

## With American Legion Post 238 at the helm, local service organizations dig deep to sponsor new Pacifica Police dog



From left, Officer Dave Evans and K9 Heimdall, joined by fellow Pacifica Police officers, Pacifica Police Chief Maria Sarasua, and Legion and VFW member Allan Hale, accept their community's generous K9 support. (Jean Bartlett photo.)

He's smart, he's handsome, he possesses extraordinary senses and his temperament is exceptional – of course his name is Heimdall, a name which finds its origins in the ever-vigilant Old Norse god, who could hear a single blade of grass growing and spot a ram from mountains away. Heimdall is the canine partner of Pacifica Police Officer Dave Evans and on Tuesday, November 18, Pacifica's American Legion hosted a meet-and-greet event at Post 238 to welcome Pacifica's newest police K9 team.

The event began with a live demonstration. Officer Evans and K9 Heimdall showed the canine's agility and ability to follow commands. We learned that Heimdall responds to commands in Czech because he was born and received his initial training in the Czech Republic. Then, on command, and with a police officer portraying a suspect while wearing a protective arm sleeve, K9 Heimdall was told to apprehend the "suspect." Like a bolt of lightning, K9 Heimdall ran the distance of the Legion's parking lot and bit and held the suspect, via the sleeve. Following his officer's command, the K9 released the good-natured suspect. We were also given a similar demonstration by Officer Henry Tran and his K9, Gambit. The demonstrations were fantastic. The crowd burst into applause.

We learned that the 18-month-old K9, weighs 75-80 pounds and is a very nice dog. For those who wanted to, there was a line to meet Heimdall and many did. When the K9 is not on the job, he goes home with his handler and is completely engaged with being the Evans family dog. We also learned that when K9 Heimdall retires from police work, he will live 24/7 with his Evans family. "Of course he will," Officer Evans smiled. "He's a good boy and we all love him."

Why are so many U.S. police dogs, purchased from the Czech Republic? During the communist era, the border patrol (in what was then called Czechoslovakia), became renowned for breeding and training German and Belgian shepherds. That knowledge and skill continues.

The demonstration was followed by a check presentation of \$15,000 to the Pacifica Police Department for K9 Heimdall. Pacifica Legion Post 238 and Pacifica VFW Post 10245 longtime member Allan Hale chaired this fundraiser.



"We have such good people in our local service organizations," Allan noted. "They want to help our community whenever they can. I had heard a while back that our Pacifica Police Department was in need of a new police dog, so the conversations and the fundraising began."

←K9 Heimdall gratefully acknowledges Pacifica's support. (Jean Bartlett photo.)

Along with several individual contributions, the following local service organizations brought Heimdall to his new home: Rotary Club of Pacifica; Pacifica Lions Club; Native Sons of the Golden

West Golden Gate Parlor #29; VFW Post 10245; American Legion Post 238; Auxiliary Unit of Post 238; District 26, California American Legion; and the Pacifica Moose Lodge. A representative from each giving nonprofit took a moment, at the event, to summarize what their service organization does—(there's more than could be summarized here, please investigate these good deed doers): provides humanitarian services, worldwide, including clean water and sanitation (Rotary Club); fights blindness and diabetes and empowers volunteers (Lions Club); preserves California history (Native Sons of the Golden West); supports veterans and provides service to their community at large (American Legion, VFW and the Auxiliary Unit of Post 238); does charitable work for children and seniors, and serves as a community hub for their members (Moose Lodge).

"It's all about community," Paul Lavorini, Pacifica Moose Lodge President stated, looking out to his fellow community givers. "If we do it together, we can do anything."

"We love you and we thank you," Steve Hansel, Pacifica Lions Club President told the Pacifica Police Department. "We believe in the Blue."

Korean War Veteran Hale spearheaded this Pacifica PD canine drive. It's not the first time. He also did so in 2016.

"The cost of a police dog then was \$11,500," Allan said, "and we looked to our volunteer service organizations again to raise that money and they came through. More recently, I heard there was an incident where a police dog was needed but there wasn't one available. Both of our canine teams were on the job. I talked to our Police Chief Maria Sarasua and the idea of a third police dog was really welcomed."

The work of a police dog might mean: locating a missing person, detecting narcotics, locating evidence, searching a building; sniffing for explosives, or apprehending a suspect through bite and hold. In addition, a K9 might be called on to perform public relations such as demonstrations for community groups or schools. We learned from Officer Evans that K9 Heimdall will be trained to detect drugs. He will not be trained to detect bombs. Scent detection training courses are specialized to identify specific odors.

While Bloodhounds, Labrador Retrievers, Rottweilers and several other breeds, can and do make excellent police dogs, the breeds most often used are: German Shepherds, Belgian Malinois and Dutch Shepherds. These dogs are protective by nature and known for their intelligence, loyalty and drive, as well as their willingness to be trained. And training is rigorous. Under any situation, including noisy and chaotic, a K9 must adhere to basic obedience commands, which include: "sit," "stay," "come," "go," "leave it" and "stand down." Those chaotic situations might include sirens, screeching tires, shouting voices, gunfire and slamming doors – and quite possibly, all at once. The K9s are taught how to easily ascend and descend stairs, jump over hurdles and find their way through difficult terrains. They are socialized so they can be relaxed around people and traffic, and other distractions, including other animals. No cat chasing! Training begins in puppyhood. Importantly, police canines always enjoy playtime and positive reinforcement.

The bond between a K9 and their police officer is extremely tight and when they retire, generally at 7 years of service or 10 years of age, 9 out of 10 times they live with their handler as the family pet. If for some reason that can't happen, their handler carefully chooses a loving family. The first Pacifica PD canine unit, Officer Dennis Barry and K9 Bar, was established in October of 1984.

K9 Heimdall was selected by Officer Evans after an extensive evaluation process.

"Officer Evans recognized K9 Heimdall's outstanding temperament and performance," the Pacifica Police Department noted in October. "Over the past month, Officer Evans and K9 Heimdall completed a rigorous K9 Patrol School, sharpening their skills in patrol operations, obedience and detection."

"All of us who sponsored K9 Heimdall did so because we are proud to do things that keep Pacifica safe," Allan said. "And for the veterans of our local Legion and VFW, we are driven by the phrase, 'Veterans still serving America.'"

While the guests of Legion Post 238 enjoyed cake following the new Pacifica Police K9 welcome, a number of those in attendance reflected on just how much our local veterans do for our community.

Post 238, and its Auxiliary Unit, participate in Legion youth mentoring programs: Boys State and Girls State, and the Americanism Essay Contest. Over the years they have also participated in baseball and marksmanship programs. They have supported three scout troops and sponsored local Eagle Scout projects. As requested, Post 238's Color Guard presents at a veteran's gravesite. They have also presented at Pacifica City Council meetings. The Legion members visit veterans in the hospital, and do care package programs with the Auxiliary Unit. They additionally look in on veterans through their Buddy program.

Post 238 and its Auxiliary Unit do the cooking and serve the lunch for Pacifica's annual American Cancer Society Relay for Life event. Since 2003, Post 238 has hosted the Pacifica Resource Center's monthly Second Harvest of Silicon Valley food assistance program at their Legion Hall on Buel. The program



provides community members in need with milk, fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, chicken, beans and rice. Along with donating their Hall for the event, Post 238 volunteers distribute, bag and carry groceries for their fellow Pacificans.

Additionally, when four alumni of Terra Nova High School's class of 1969 came to Post 238 in 2019, seeking help to build and place a 2,000 pound, black granite stone monument that memorializes the names of Pacifica's Vietnam and Iraq fallen, Pacifica's American Legion and VFW said, "Whatever is needed." On Veterans Day 2021, that completed memorial was unveiled. It stands at the western end of the Legion's parking lot in a quiet garden space.

American Legions throughout the U.S. have frequently offered funding assistance to canine programs, which include supporting service dogs for veterans with PTSD and other service-related issues.

"I know that all of our nonprofits who joined the Legion and the VFW in support of our new police dog did so because it is an honor to help our Pacifica Police Department."



At the American Legion, 11.18.2025, stands a room full of great Pacifica givers. Back row, l to r: Police Chief Maria Sarasua, Sergeant Brandon Smith and VFW Past Commander Greg Freeman. Front row, l to r: Corporal Henry Tran, Donna Fletcher (Native Sons of the GW), Mayor Sue Beckmeyer (Lions Club), Allan Hale (American Legion and VFW), Linda Jonas (Rotary), Janice Hale Key (Auxiliary Unit of Post 238), Paul Lavorini (Moose Lodge) and Officer Dave Evans.

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**By Jean Bartlett** (November 19, 2025)

Writer Jean Bartlett was recently recognized by the Board of Supervisors, County of San Mateo, for "her writing that connects community and preserves local history." She can be contacted through her website, [www.bartlettbiographies.com](http://www.bartlettbiographies.com). This story was anonymously sponsored. Link directly into this article, and see all the photos, under Bartlett Biographies News Briefs, [Not Just Anybody](#).