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**Walmart gives WPD \$7,500 to help with its K-9 program;  
*Shadow Trailers, K-9s United, Armstrong Home Builders, and Dr. Wade Bullock donate as well***



**Seen here during the \$5,000 check presentation on Monday morning (March 11) are (from left) Walmart Store (#1297) Manager Raciell Moreira, Co-Manager Kevin Kingsley, WPD Chief Dennis Strow, Walmart Store Assistant Manager Luke Hill, WPD K-9 Officer Rich Peters, and standing by the officer's side Shadow the police dog.**

## **Story and Photos**

**By Jeff M. Hardison © March 12, 2019 at 8:29 a.m.**

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**CHIEFLAND** – The Walmart in Chiefland presented a \$5,000 check early Monday morning (March 11) to the Williston Police Department to help the WPD with its police dog program.

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Accepting a plaque to Walmart Store #1297, is Manager Raciél Moreira (left). The plaque has a likeness of Shadow at the top in a circle with the words 'Williston Police.' WPD Chief Dennis Strow took the initiative to restart the K-9 program in Williston, and he did it with funding from private interests rather than tax dollars.



Before they went into the Walmart for the check presentation, Officer Rich Peters and K-9 Shadow provided photo opportunities in the Walmart parking lot.

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**The officer and his partner had just finished a 12-hour tour of duty from 6 p.m. on Sunday night to 6 a.m. on Monday morning (March 10). The early morning fog is seen in the background.**

WPD Chief Dennis Strow accepted the check from Walmart Store Manager Raciell Moreira, which was the second of two donations from the store to this cause.

Also participating in the event in Chiefland from Williston were WPD Deputy Chief Clay Connolly, WPD Administrative Assistant-Records Supervisor-Evidence Custodian Brooke Willis, WPD K-9 Officer Rich Peters and Shadow, the police dog.

Also participating in the event from the Chiefland Walmart were Chiefland Walmart Co-Manager Kevin Kingsley and Assistant Manager Luke Hill. Many customer service representatives from the store watched the presentation of the \$5,000 check in the break room.

Everyone enjoyed a buffet breakfast afterward in the break room. That breakfast was catered by The Gathering Table of Chiefland.

Chief Strow explained how the WPD police dog program has restarted from long ago. Before the chief accepted the post as the top law enforcement officer in the municipality of Williston, he was a deputy with the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

When the chief started at the WPD, there was a drug dog that had been used to its fullest potential, and with the added factor of budgetary constraints, it retired.

About 18 months ago, the chief received a call on a Sunday night in regard to a 2-year-old child that went missing.

A while back, Strow said, Officer Peters, who was named as the WPD 2018 Police Officer of the Year at a banquet and awards ceremony on Friday night (March 8), asked the chief why the WPD did not have a dog.

Officer Peters said he wanted to become the K-9 officer, Strow said.

"That was a good idea," Chief Strow said, "but we had no money."

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Long ago, the chief said, a K-9 would cost about \$3,500. The price today is \$9,000, he said. After the meeting Monday morning, Chief Strow mentioned to HardisonInk.com that Shadow's value is now set at \$16,000 with his skillset.

As for the cost, the chief mentioned there are other expenses as well such as training, equipment and maintenance. However, he decided to get a K-9 for the WPD.

The chief said he ran the request by Mayor Jerry Robinson, who said he endorsed the idea "But we have no money."

Except for the extra uniform for Officer Peters, Strow said, this entire K-9 program has been funded by private donations.

The Marion County Sheriff's Office agreed to help WPD, Chief Strow said.

MCSO K-9 Lead Instructor Jeremie Nix, K-9 Trainer Carlos Ramirez, WPD Lt. Matt Fortney and Officer Peters went to New Smyrna Beach, Chief Strow said, and they tried dogs.

After testing dogs all day, they came home with the dog, who celebrates his second birthday on May 14. This dog is a German Shepherd from Hungary.

The particular dog had been selected, the chief said, but he was still in need of money.

That's when Shadow Trailers of Williston and Armstrong Home Builders of Ocala each funded half the cost of the dog, the Chief said.

That's also how the dog became named "Shadow."

Walmart donated \$2,500 for equipment at the outset, the chief said.

K-9s United of Jacksonville stepped up with a \$5,000 donation too, Chief Strow said.

Dr Wade Bullock, a veterinarian in Williston, volunteered his service as the person to give medical care for Shadow, Strow said.

"Now Walmart has donated another \$5,000 for the program," Chief Strow said at the store Monday.

Reliable Drywall of Central Florida (Ocala) has purchased a bulletproof vest for Shadow, Chief Strow said. This is more of a lightweight tactical vest, the chief added.

Another vest is coming for the dog where he will have it as a uniform, and his WPD patch will have his picture on it, Strow said.

Shadow is totally certified to track people, conduct searches for articles, he can apprehend and he has completed his narcotics detection training, Chief Strow said.

Shadow and Officer Peters had just completed a shift from 6 p.m. Sunday night to 6 a.m. Monday morning, when they were at the Walmart on Monday for the 8 a.m. check presentation event.

Both the K-9 and his handler have equipment to assure Shadow's and Peters' safety.

Shadow has a safe riding area in the back of the cruiser, complete with a water dispenser for the K-9, Chief Strow said. The car has a heat sensor inside it, Strow said, so that if the engine stops and it becomes hot inside the cruiser, then the windows go down, a fan starts and an alarm resounds.

Officer Peters has a device on his belt so that if he is outside the closed cruiser and Shadow is inside, and Peters becomes distressed, the officer can push a button. That will open a rear door and Shadow will run to the officer's rescue, Strow said.

The chief let everyone know that if they live or visit Williston, "Shadow is a beautiful dog. He is very well trained.

"If they want to run from the law," Chief Strow continued, "of if they have drugs, then Shadow ain't their friend."

During the presentation program Monday, Walmart Manager Moreira said this is

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part of the community programs where Walmart is involved. Co-Manager Kingsley said this Walmart is the most community-oriented store he has seen.

Co-manager Kingsley said he is consistently impressed by how much Walmart employees give to their community, as well as how they work hard at their jobs in the store.

“This is a store,” Kingsley said, “where we all do this together as a store.”



**After the check and plaque presentation, Shadow and Officer Rich Peters provide another photo opportunity for the press. This part of the morning was followed by a breakfast in the Walmart break room for everyone involved. The fog was lifting a little, but it stayed around for a couple of hours past the 8 a.m. check and plaque presentations in Chiefland.**