



# Sharing Ohio's Best Program

Recognizing Outstanding Community Policing



Agency of the Month

## Springboro Police Department

March 2020

### ***Comfort Dog Program. . . .***

Officer Blue was born in May of 2019 came to the Department in July. He immediately started training as a comfort dog. He is one of a few but growing number of comfort dogs that are showing up in Ohio police agencies and around the country.

The concept for a comfort dog in the department came from seeing comfort dogs in action at several natural disasters and also at several school or other mass shootings. The effectiveness of the comfort dogs was immediately obvious particularly at the scene of school shootings. In the case of a shooting in Marshall County Kentucky where twelve students were shot and two students were killed, the presence of comfort dogs in the school on the first day the students returned was incredible to watch.



In researching with Lutheran Church Charities, who have hundreds of comfort dogs around the country, the Springboro Police Department found out that comfort dogs work under multiple handlers. This was desirable because the department did not want to get into a one dog, one handler situation. Blue undergoes weekly training with 8 different handlers and is also trained to respond to whoever is at the other end of the leash. This has proven to be very effective.

Much of the training is exposure to countless scenario's and situations to develop a normal reaction to them. For example, when Blue visits nursing homes, he does not become concerned about wheelchairs, walkers, and canes.

Blue visits schools, has countless visitors, has his own baseball card collection starting, and provides comfort in a variety of settings. Recently a 911 emergency dispatcher passed away from flu complications, and Blue was a great presence during the time he spent in the Communications Center.

Officer Blue is a great addition to the staff. Recently, he spent time with a family whose 5-year-old son had shot himself when he discovered a gun in his grandmother's bedroom. Officer Blue was very helpful in getting the family to express their grief and speak with the Detectives.

He also spent a day with all employees of the Miami Valley Regional Crime Lab, who are really working overtime and long hours due to the opiate issue and COVID-19.