



Sharing Ohio's Best Program

Recognizing Outstanding Community Policing



Agency of the Month

Akron Children's Hospital Police

August 2021

B.R.A.V.E. (Behavioral Response Against Violence Escalation)

Akron Children's Hospital Police has created a specialized mental health unit called B.R.A.V.E. (Behavioral Response Against Violence Escalation) that incorporates CIT's core elements, utilizes collaboration, de-escalation, education, and understanding, while taking a trauma informed approach. As a result of this program the community in which these officers serve has seen a reduction of violent behavior in the mentally ill population, specifically juveniles, and reduction in use of force encounters across all demographics.

The specialized unit was the vision of Chief Jerome T. Klue and the unit was constructed between the Chief, his Command Staff, and Officer Dawn Roberts the first member of the unit. Sporting khakis and a polo, Officers are approachable, and less authoritative in appearance; allowing those they serve to feel more at ease with police



involvement. These calls occur on a daily basis and for the BRAVE Officers it is important to continue to use the CIT Core Elements as a progressive tool to help youth of today understand and deal with their illness. Mental Illness can be very traumatic for a child with a new psychiatric diagnosis because of the lack of familiarity with their illness. Officer Robert's is a graduate of Summit County's CIT Program in 2015 and 2019 Ohio CIT Youth Officer of the Year. Officer Roberts stated "she believes that positive police interactions with juveniles today lay the foundation for positive police interactions when they become adults."

The B.R.A.V.E. officers, who are CIT trained, assert compassion, empathy, patience, use a calming nature that brings comfort, and work to cater to the needs of each individual adolescent patient. Officers are focused on a collaborative approach; building relationships within the hospital and surrounding community to meet the needs of those suffering from a mental health illness and/or crisis. Through the relationship building violent interactions have been reduced, the person in crisis has been treated with more dignity and de-stigmatized, services have been provided more efficiently; thus resulting in increased stabilization and effective management of the disease. Further, these relationships and positive outcomes are strengthened through the Officers providing training to physicians, nurses, officers, and many other providers and non- providers.

This program in just over 2 years has been tremendous successful. Families routinely call the Police Department for a B.R.A.V.E. Officer to accompany their child to appointments; as they know the kind of compassion, empathy, and training these officers provide. The BRAVE Officers strive to know the children they deal with on a personal level and building positive rapport with families.



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K9 Therapy

Akron Children's Hospital Police have two (2) certified therapy dogs to provide comfort, reassurance, and support to all patients, visitors and staff, as well as being working police dogs. In the first few weeks of deployment, they have already made an immensely positive impact. Both handlers cannot count how many times they have been told the dogs have made someone's day.

Public Safety Officer Ramona Caley and Chase, a Chocolate Lab, work at the Akron Campus on Day Shift. Chase completed intensive and rigorous training at Excel K-9 in Obedience, Therapy and Scenario Based Public Relations. Chase

is a one-year-old energetic dog, who enjoys being friendly and loving to anyone she meets. Together Officer Caley and Chase have spent a year working on therapy training and learning how to work as part of the patient care team. Both will play an integral part in comforting and calming patients and parents who maybe anxious about being in the hospital. They are also available to provide the same comfort and calm to employees or visitors who need a friendly, reassuring face.

Police Officer Kayla Bash and Tucker, a three-year-old Black Lab, work at the Mahoning Valley Campus in Boardman. Officer Bash and Tucker are dual purpose, providing the same level of therapy services as Officer Caley and Chase, as well as being fully trained and certified in explosive detection.

Officer Bash and Tucker completed intensive and rigorous training at Excel K-9 and are certified with the North American Police Work Dog Association and the Ohio Peace Officer Training Council for explosive detection. They have already worked and trained closely with agencies across Northeast Ohio.

Although they are primarily assigned to the Mahoning Valley Campus, they are responsible for

providing explosive detection response across the health system, which spans as far west a Norwalk to Eastern Pennsylvania.

At the beginning to 2021 the Police Department received additional funding through a Bill and Lesley Waldman to add a third dog; the Waldman's, through the Akron Children's Hospital Foundation, have supported all three dogs. The third dog and handler have been chosen and will begin training at Excel K-9 in April. Like Officer Bash and Tucker they will be dual purpose in therapy services and explosive detection. They will be primarily assigned to the Akron Campus, but will also be responsible for protection and detection services across the enterprise.

Chief Klue said "I am thankful to our donor and excited to have all three dogs be a part of the Department of Public Safety - Division of Police; as they will provide reassurance and comfort to our patients and families who may be experiencing their worst day. Having dogs that are certified in explosive detection is essential in today's threat climate of Homegrown Violent Extremists and Terrorism. I look forward to continuing to advance hospital policing and providing the safest and most therapeutic environment possible to all our patients, their families and the entire hospital community".

