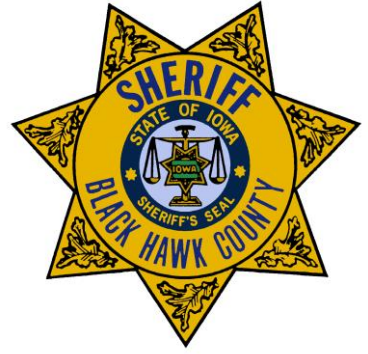


# **Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office**

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## **For Immediate Release**

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01-30-24

### *Sheriff Introduces the Newest Furry Deputy to the Public*

For several years, Sheriff Thompson has been lamenting about the challenges of mental illness colliding with the duties of his staff on the streets and in his jail. Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office has taken a large leap forward in addressing those collisions by adding an additional staff member uniquely trained for such interventions and responses.

At 730am, Sheriff Thompson officially swore in K-9 Deputy "Mary" as the newest member of the office. Mary is a 22 month old, pure bred black Laborador Retriever. Mary and her handler, Deputy Karla Altenbaumer, have been in New York for several weeks training for her new position and returned last late week. Mary comes to the department from a non-profit organization called "Puppies Behind Bars".

Puppies Behind Bars trains incarcerated individuals to raise service dogs for veterans and first responders, facility dogs for law enforcement, and explosive-detection canines. The puppies enter a New York prison facility at just 8 weeks of age and live with their incarcerated puppy-raiser for approximately 24 months. As the puppies mature into well-loved, well-behaved dogs; their raisers learn what it means to contribute to society rather than take from it, and the K-9s learn the skills necessary to provide essential services.

**A CRIMINAL CHARGE IS MERELY AN ACCUSATION AND THE DEFENDANT IS PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.**

Deputy Altenbaumer and Mary graduated from the program on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. This was a culmination of unique training experience, during which they trained together with the incarcerated women raisers in how to effectively handle and care for Mary. Mary knows many different commands that will assist her in her duties as a facility dog for the Sheriff's Office.

Mary will assist Deputy Altenbaumer in supporting Officer Wellness, Community Engagement, and aiding in Crisis Response Efforts. Mary is very friendly and loves attention. They are very excited to deploy as a team, and Sheriff Thompson looks forward to the impact that these two can have together on the county. "I look forward to them working together in response to mental health calls, suicidal persons, simple mental health transports... to help deescalate the situation, and internally within our department with our Peer Support Team, or just at our community events. Mary and Karla will have a significant impact where I believe impact is needed right now in law enforcement." says Sheriff Thompson.

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#New Beginnings

#Puppies Behind Bars

#K9DeputyMary