



Deputy Shauna Taylor applies Neosporin to an injury on her dog Hoyce Sunday afternoon at the Jackson County Sheriff's Department. Taylor has been caring for Hoyce since he was eight months old.

A nose for crime

story by EDMUND MEINHARDT • photos by MELISSA BARR

Conservation Police Officer Chris Mohrman and his dog Chance were tracking a suspect in the woods near Kinkaid spillway. Chance stopped suddenly and would go no farther, his expression indicating he was ready for his reward.

Mohrman couldn't see anyone. He called out the suspect's name, and watched as the man stood up right next to Chance.

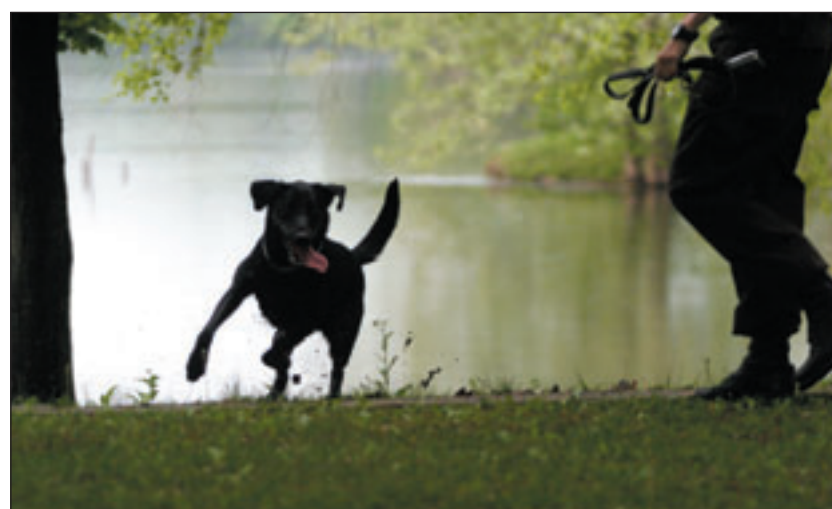
Chance had been sitting on the man's chest.

"The trainers tell you 'Trust your dog. He's smarter than you are,'" Mohrman said when recalling the incident.

Mohrman and Chance form one of five K-9 teams in the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Law enforcement agencies have long recognized the ability of dogs to locate people and evidence, and there are K-9 units throughout southern Illinois.

The dogs

The Jackson County Sheriff's



Hoyce runs to meet his handler, Deputy Shauna Taylor, after taking a dip in Lake Murphysboro April 22.

Department formed its K-9 unit in July after acquiring and training two Black Labradors, Hoyce and Major. Lt. Mike Teas, who developed Jackson County's K-9 unit, estimates the department has spent about \$10,000 on the program so far.

The department bought Hoyce in May from Cindy Brodie, owner of the Brodie K9 Center. Terry Cottonaro, who owns Lost Lake Kennels in Murphysboro, sold Major to the department in April. Hoyce was eight months old when the department bought him. Major was 2 years old when he joined the department.

"One dog can replace seven men," Brodie said. "One dog can search a three-block warehouse for drugs in less time than it would take seven police officers. And the dog won't miss anything."

Brodie said she doesn't train dogs until they are about a year old. Hoyce moved in with Deputy Shauna Taylor, who cared for him and bonded with him but didn't try to train him. Brodie, who has been training dogs for 25 years, likes her trainees to be a little raw when they arrive.

"They need to grow up and just be puppies for awhile," Brodie said.

Major moved in with Deputy Kenny Lindsey. The department bought dog kennels for Lindsey and Taylor to keep at their homes. The K-9 officers are responsible for the dogs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The department provides food and gives the officers overtime pay in compensation for these extra responsibilities.

Brodie doesn't want the dogs trained to stay off furniture. She doesn't want their natural curiosity inhibited in any way. All she wants is for the handler to interest the dogs in fetching.

"You have to let them stay rude and stupid," Brodie said. "Shauna did a great job of keeping him rude and stupid."

A dog trains for eight weeks before its handler arrives. During this time, Brodie hides various objects, including narcotics, and allows the dog to find them. She teaches the dog to associate a successful search or track with the reward of chasing a tennis ball.

Hoyce had already formed a strong bond with Taylor before arriving in Tennessee to train. He resisted Brodie's initial attempts to interest him in the tennis ball.

"His attitude was, 'You don't do this. Trainer-lady does this,'" Brodie said.

Lindsey and Taylor carry tennis balls in the pocket of their uniform. Lindsey also keeps one on the console of his patrol car.

Hoyce and Major each spend a lot of time in Ford Crown Victorias whose back seats have been converted into mobile kennels, at an approximate cost of \$2,500 per car. Sensors monitor the car's temperature. When the temperature inside reaches 87 degrees, the windows automatically roll

down and window fans turn on.

Whenever the dogs enter the Jackson County Jail, they make their rounds to get attention from employees. When entering the dispatchers' area, Major gets his "pets" from Lisa Hunziker and Jackie Naas and then sits down by the filing cabinet where the dispatchers have hidden a box of treats.

The people

Handlers have to be carefully trained. "The hardest part is training the handlers," Brodie said. "Actually, you train the dogs. You work with the people."

The handler must learn to read the dog's behavior and to be the dog's link to human law enforcement officers.

Trusting the dog is not always easy, as Taylor and Lindsey have discovered. Success helps. For Lindsey and Major, that success came on a

cold night when the ground was covered with snow.

A speeding car had crashed into a guard rail. The occupants fled, and Deputies called for Lindsey and Major.

"Tracking somebody is the most frustrating thing we do," Lindsey said. "All the information is second-hand, and sometimes even police officers will give you bad information."

There were about half a dozen police officers walking around the scene by the time Lindsey and Major arrived, which can make it hard for the dog to pick up the right scent.

Major led Lindsey about half a mile through pitch darkness, through fields of weeds and tall grass.

"His behavior told me he was on the trail," Lindsey said. "His nose was to the ground. He was pulling hard on the lead,



Major jumps in excitement before beginning training April 22 at Lake Murphysboro. Deputy Kenny Lindsey's seven-year-old daughter Hannah, right, participated in the training by hiding articles and setting a track.

and I could hear the air coming into his nostrils."

The suspects were hiding on the bank of the Big Muddy. When they heard Lindsey and Major approach, they surrendered.

"We would never have found them without Major," said Teas. "We probably would have searched for about 10 minutes and given up."

For Lindsey, it was a breakthrough. He knew Major could do what he had been trained to do.

"I was on Cloud 9 that night," he said.

Taylor received a call one night about a stolen truck stalled in an intersection in De Soto. She and Hoyce arrived on the scene and Hoyce began sniffing every bush and tree he encountered, eventually leading Taylor to a patch of grass. The haphazard nature of Hoyce's movements made Taylor doubt he had the scent.

"You should never doubt what your dog is doing," Taylor said. But she did. There was no sign of the suspect. Eventually they gave up.

Taylor was driving home when she saw a man standing in the driveway of a nearby fish farm. It was after 2 a.m. and the fish farm was closed. The man was wearing a blue overcoat, which fit the suspect's description. Taylor pulled in to investigate and the man took off running.

She called for backup and pursued the man on foot, but lost him in a wooded area. When backup arrived, she and Hoyce began tracking. Hoyce took her through the wooded area to the edge of U.S. Route 51 and attempted to lead her across the pavement.

Taylor resisted. Dogs don't track well on pavement. They backtracked, and Hoyce

made straight for the pavement again. This time, she relented and crossed the highway with another officer following. On the other side they found a fresh footprint made in a frozen mud puddle.

They continued into a wide field bordered by a ridgeline, and doubt once again crept into Taylor's mind. There didn't seem to be anywhere to hide. But they continued the track.

Hoyce was heading for the ridgeline, so the other officer went ahead and began working his way through the trees along the ridge.

"I heard him yell 'Get down on the ground!'" Taylor said. The suspect was hiding behind a tree, and Hoyce had been heading right to him. Taylor said they probably would not have searched that side of the highway if it hadn't been for Hoyce.

Trust your dog. He's smarter than you are. The experience drove the lesson home.

"I was very happy with Hoyce, but I felt like I had let him down," Taylor said.

The law

Teas approached Jackson County Sheriff Bob Burns about forming a K-9 unit.

"We had wanted dogs for a long time," Teas said. "But we had to wait until the timing was right."

Until recently, court rulings concerning search and seizure presented challenges to law enforcement agencies that wanted to use dogs to sniff for drugs. The ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Illinois v. Caballes* changed that.

The Caballes decision held that allow-

ing a dog to sniff the exterior of a vehicle traffic stop did not infringe upon Fourth Amendment guarantees against illegal search and seizure. In the majority opinion, Justice John Paul Stevens wrote "a dog sniff... that reveals no information other than the location of a substance that no individual has any right to possess does not violate the Fourth Amendment."

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan argued the Caballes case before the Supreme Court. She told the Associated Press that the decision was a victory for law enforcement and said canine units were indispensable in the war on drugs.

The American Civil Liberties Union objected immediately. In an interview with the Associated Press, ACLU Attorney Harvey Grossman called the use of dogs "intimidating" and said thousands had called to complain about "suddenly finding their cars surrounded by policemen and drug dogs."

Police officers don't have a free hand in deploying dogs to sniff for drugs, and cannot do so without justification. Jackson County's dog handlers must master a thick binder of legal decisions and departmental procedures governing the use of dogs, and document the circumstances and outcome of every search.

In addition, the state of Illinois requires the dogs to be certified. Jackson County's dogs are certified through the Brodie K9 Center in Liberty, Tenn., where they were trained. To maintain certification, the handlers must devote several hours each week to training the dogs.

Major's body jerked in mid-stride as though he had been jolted by electricity. He braked and stopped, but quivered.

"Heel!" Lindsey said again.

Major trotted back and sat at Lindsey's feet.

"I don't know what more I could ask of him," he said.

"The program is monitored very, very closely," Teas said.

Teas said he turned immediately to Mohrman for advice. They spent about eight months researching the law, the costs, the equipment, the procedures and every other detail he could think of before taking a comprehensive plan to Jackson County Sheriff Bob Burns, who gave his approval.

The department is a participant in a federal Drug Enforcement Administration task force, and receives some federal funding through that participation. At least some of the funding comes from money seized in drug raids. Some of this money was used to develop Jackson County's K-9 unit.

"Sheriff said, 'Let the bad guys pay for it,'" Teas said.

Training never ends

Lindsey walked over to a utility pole and stuck a folding knife into it at about eye level.

"Let's see if he can do a high find for you," Lindsey said.

It had been a quiet night so far in Jackson County, so Lindsey had returned to post to give Major a workout. He was training him to find objects that weren't on ground level.

Major exploded out of his mobile kennel, bounding around, leaping and wiggling. Lindsey smiled faintly and just let Major play for a few moments.

"Sit," Lindsey said.

Major sat, but quivered. Dog and handler locked eyes.

"Search," Lindsey said.

Major charged off at a fast trot, vacuuming the ground with his nose. He moved in loops and curlicues, working closer and closer to the pole, then passing it to investigate the porch of a nearby house.

"That's a first," Lindsey said.

Major went back in the direction of the pole. Suddenly the sound of air rushing into his nostrils grew louder. He put his paws on the pole and sniffed, working higher and higher until his body was stretched almost to full length. When his nose touched the knife, he abruptly sat down and looked at Lindsey, who praised him and threw the tennis ball.

Lindsey said he is proud of what he has accomplished with Major, and is pleased that the level of trust between them helps keep Major safe. Major obeys his commands, even under difficult circumstances.

"I can call him off when he's chasing the tennis ball, which is the thing he wants most in the world," Lindsey said.

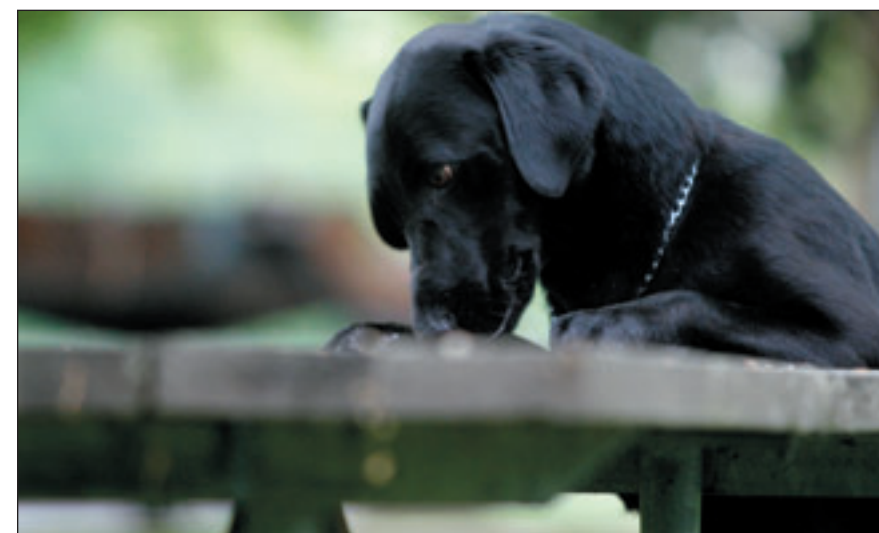
To demonstrate, Lindsey threw the ball down the parking lot. Major took off after it at full speed. He had traveled about 12 feet and was gaining on the ball when Lindsey yelled "Heel!"

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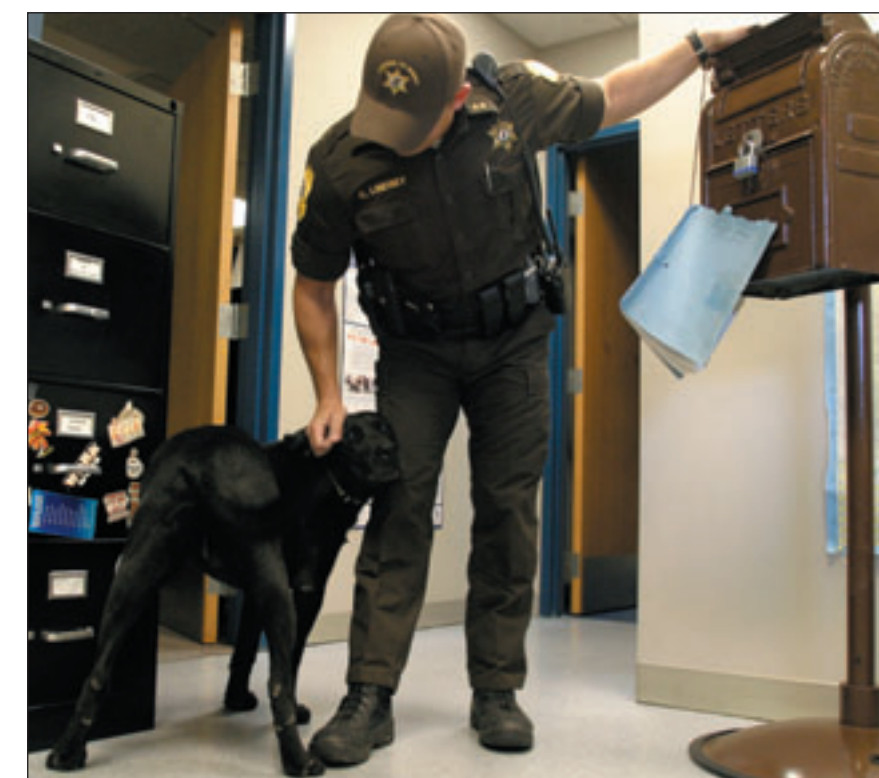
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Hoyce sniffs out marijuana in a picnic table during training April 22 at Lake Murphysboro.



Deputy Kenny Lindsey pets his dog Major April 27 at the Jackson County Sheriff's Department. Major, now about three years old, joined the department when he was two.