



MEDIA RELEASE

Homeland Security

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John R. Kasich, Governor

John Born, Director

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OHIO HOMELAND SECURITY PRESENTS EXPLOSIVE-DETECTION CANINE TO THE CENTRAL STATE UNIVERSITY PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

COLUMBUS – Central State University (CSU) has enhanced safety on campus and in the surrounding area with the introduction of Opie, the university's newest officer and explosive-detection canine. Funding for the canine and its ongoing care is provided by Ohio Homeland Security (OHS), a division of the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS), through a federal grant and OHS budget funds.

“To protect the people that we care about most, there's probably no better way I can think of than through preventative measures,” said ODPS Director John Born. “The fact that we can not only respond to threats, but clear areas before events that could be targets, will be lifesaving.”

After 10 weeks of training, Opie, a male Belgian Malinois, is ready to patrol CSU alongside his handler, Patrol Officer Concetta Picciano. A 3-year veteran of the Central State University Public Safety Department, Officer Picciano spent the past five weeks training with canine Opie in Columbus. While his primary duty is on the CSU campus, Opie is available to assist local law enforcement if called upon.

“I wish to say thank you to the Ohio Department of Public Safety and Ohio Homeland Security for the opportunity to make our campus and community safer through the explosive-detection canine project,” said CSU's Director of Public Safety/Police Chief Mark Machan. “K-9 Officer Opie is a fantastic addition to our staff. Officer Picciano's work with Opie will make this project successful and provide a safer campus environment.”

In addition to Central State University, Kent State University, Cleveland State University, The University of Toledo, and Ohio University were selected to receive canines during this round of university deployments. Bowling Green State University, Ohio State University and Youngstown State University received explosive-detection canines in June 2014. OHS created the program earlier this year to aid in response to potential bomb threats at Ohio universities and their surrounding communities.

Federal grants and budget funds through OHS cover the expense of the purchase, training, veterinarian bills and other equipment necessary for the program's success. The cost for each canine is \$12,767.

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