



TOWN OF WELLESLEY

WELLESLEY, MA 02482
Telephone 781-235-1212

POLICE DEPARTMENT

JACK PILECKI
Chief of Police

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wellesley Police Department Welcomes Officer Winnie Community Resource Service Dog is Newest "Recruit"



August 17, 2020 (Wellesley, MA) – The rookie blonde recruit for the Town of Wellesley Police Department is “so sweet, gentle, and very happy.” Those were frequent comments last week as the WPD introduced its newest officer to the community – Winnie, a 10-month old English Cream Golden Retriever, the Town’s Community Resource Service Dog.

Winnie is a furry, four-legged ambassador for the Town who will play a vital role in many specific situations faced by WPD, helping break down barriers between police and citizens. “Our officers frequently deal with people of all ages who are fearful, anxious, or dealing with some type of mental health issue. Winnie can help de-escalate these types of situations. She has a calming effect that will help the officers assist people in need,” said Wellesley Police Chief Jack Pilecki. “She’ll also make visits to our schools, the senior center, long-term care facilities, and join in community events.”

Winnie and her WPD partner Officer Tana DiCenso are currently in training with the Walpole-based service dog group Golden Opportunities for Independence (GOFI). The dog joined DiCenso as a four-month old puppy and lives with her full-time, going to school twice a week by herself and with DiCenso on weekends to learn socialization, obedience, and control skills as part of the AKC Canine Good Citizen Test.

“Having Winnie assigned to me brings a new level of excitement to come to work each day,” said Officer DiCenso. “She's a happy girl and always ready to roll, and that's a contagious attitude. Being physically around her has an immeasurable effect because you can't help but smile when you see her face or little tail wag.” DiCenso chose the dog's name because “a W name fit well with Wellesley and matched her demeanor and personality, very sweet and mellow.”

As with any new job, Winnie's first week at WPD was a chance to get to know her colleagues and adjust to her new surroundings. “Given the current COVID-19 conditions, it's a unique time to be introducing Winnie to the community. She's slowly been meeting people – she greeted residents at the recent Red Cross Blood Drive - and is getting used to being employed, so to speak,” explained DiCenso. The dog is also getting used to her new K9 police cruiser where she rides with DiCenso on all calls. “To give Winnie her own home we reconstructed a vehicle, removing the back seats so she has a large, flat space and installing a fan system to keep her safe and comfortable in both hot and cold temperatures.”

Residents can expect to see Officer Winnie out and about in Wellesley as more opportunities arise, can follow her on Instagram at **@winnieofwellesley**, and can find her happily wandering the halls of the Wellesley Police Department. Said DiCenso, “Everyone has been so receptive, coming to find her throughout the day for a quick greeting and belly rub. And Winnie enjoys going around to say hello to everyone in their offices, especially the Chief because she knows he has treats.”

Welcome to Wellesley Winnie – it's our treat to have you in the community!

Golden Opportunities for Independence (GOFI) Dog.

Golden Opportunities for Independence (GOFI) Dog is a local organization founded by Pauline Hoegler that breeds, raises and trains service dogs for communities and for individuals with disabilities. In addition to WPD's Winnie, her sister Charlee is a Weymouth Community Resource dog, and another sister Ruby is working in the Dedham Police Department. The Walpole Police Department has GOFI dog Rebel, Rocket is working in the Needham Police Department, and Bear is working in the Brookline Police Department.

Learn more about GOFIDOG at <https://www.gofidog.org/about-us>

-END-