



MASSACHUSETTS  
*Suffolk County*  
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**SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT TEAMS UP WITH 7-YEAR-OLD DONOR AND VIK9S ORGANIZATION TO VEST K-9**

Suffolk County Sheriff's Department K-9 Officer Tim Frates recently received a bullet and stab resistant vest for his K-9 partner "Joka," from the Vested Interest In K9s, Inc. organization, courtesy of one of Massachusetts' youngest and most concerned citizens.

Following a conversation with her parents about the job that a retired neighbor once held as a K-9 police officer, seven-year-old Kaylee Wiroll became curious about the kinds of obligations and assignments that are carried out each day by K-9 officers and their furry, four-legged partners.

Upon learning about the frequent dangers faced by dogs utilized by law enforcement agencies throughout the State of Massachusetts and around the country, Kaylee embarked on a mission to determine ways in which she could help to protect other law enforcement K-9s.

Kaylee's focus became clear after viewing a segment on the Channel 5 news program "Chronicle," which featured a story about police dogs that were being fitted with protective vests. With the aid of her parents, Stacy and Michael Wiroll, Kaylee discovered Vested Interest In K9s, Inc., a local organization tasked with the sole purpose of protecting these courageous but vulnerable animals.

"Kaylee came up with the idea because one of our neighbors is a retired K-9 officer," said Stacy Wiroll. "She wanted to know what a K-9 officer was and what they do, and we explained to her that the K-9 protects the officers. So, she wanted to know, 'who protects the K-9's?' Later, when we saw something on Chronicle one night about the K-9s being vested, she said that she wanted to help."

Led by Kaylee, a Memorial Day fundraiser was held in the backyard of the Wiroll family home in Dracut, complete with dunk tank, goodie bags featuring bone-shaped cookies and a host of other bid-worthy items.

"It was right around the time that we had to put down our own dog, Brady, so it was a very emotional thing for us," said Wiroll. "But, I think it helped to get her through that tough time."

Ultimately, Kaylee raised \$1,400 to provide the vest to Joka that was presented during a recent ceremony held in Lowell at Kaylee's school before more than 140 children and administrators. In attendance at St. Michael's were SCSD K-9 officers Sergeant Corey Lewis and Deputy Julie Wilder, who participated in a demonstration with Deputy Wilder's K-9 counterpart "Luka" and Corporal Frates and his partner Joka before the vest presentation.

Embroidered inside the collar of the vest presented to Joka read an emotional reminder from the Wiroll family and an offering of good will wishes toward its recipient: "May you always be safe. In loving memory of Brady W."

As the President of Vested Interest In K9s, Sandy Marcal has worked tirelessly to ensure that such wishes are fulfilled. Thus far, more than 65 law enforcement K-9s have received the protection of a stab and bullet resistant vest that may one day save their lives, thanks to the organization's efforts.

"It's a great pleasure to continue to work with the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department to provide bullet and stab resistant vests for the working dogs that help to keep us safe," said Marcal. "We've expanded our efforts and now we vest law enforcement dogs all over the United States. There are always dogs that need our help and we look to network with people everywhere to try and meet the need."



From left to right: Suffolk County Sheriff's Department K-9 officer Corporal Tim Frates (with partner Joka), Sergeant Corey Lewis, Kaylee Wiroll, Deputy Julie Wilder, Stacy Wiroll (holding Mike Wiroll), and Michael Wiroll.

To learn more about Vested Interest In K9s, visit: [www.vik9s.org](http://www.vik9s.org).

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