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K-9 Officers suit up



Warwick Beacon photo by Jessica A. Botelho
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The Warwick Police Department recently celebrated the graduation of their two K-9 officers, Viking and Fox, German Shepherds that are trained for police work. Last week, the WPD recognized the donors of two bulletproof vests for the K-9s. Unfortunately, the dogs are just as vulnerable as their human handlers when they are in harm's way and two Massachusetts women gifted the vests, which cost at least \$1,000 each. Sandy Marcal (right) raised enough money for one vest. Heather McKibben (not pictured) held a concert dubbed Heatherfest to raise money for the additional vest. Marcal is the founder of Vested Interest in K-9's, Inc., a non-profit that raises funds throughout the United States and has bought vests for more than 115 K-9s since 2009. Warwick K-9 handler Aaron Steere is second from right. He and Viking were on hand for the presentation of the vests last week. Officer Paul Wells and Fox were not at the ceremony but conveyed their gratitude to the donors. More than 20 people were in attendance, including Col. Stephen McCartney, Major Raymond E. Gallucci Jr., Lt. Michael Gilbert, and Steere's wife, Bethany. The vests were donated in memory of two recently deceased dogs – Ivan, who was owned by Linda and Jack Burns (left), and McKibben's dog, Maddie. To make a contribution to the organization, visit vik9s.org.