

TOWN OF VERNON

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October 20, 2021

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Town of Vernon Mourns Passing of Police Dog

Autoimmune Disorder and Pneumonia Claim Police K-9 Named 'Thor'

(VERNON, Connecticut) – The Town of Vernon is mourning the passing of Police K-9 Thor, an 8-year-old Belgian Malinois/German Shepherd mix who served with Vernon Police Officer Bryan Sembersky for seven years.



Vernon Officer Bryan Sembersky and Thor.

Sembersky was at Thor's side when he died on Saturday.

Thor was born in Slovakia and brought to the United States, where he trained with Sembersky as a patrol and drug detection dog. To be a patrol dog, Thor had to successfully complete training in tracking, building searches, area searching, finding articles and evidence, apprehending criminals and handler protection. As a drug detection dog, Thor consistently and accurately located marijuana, cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine.

As a team, Sembersky and Thor were nationally certified.

"The bond formed between a police dog and its handler is very special," said Mayor Dan Champagne, a former Vernon police officer. "I ask the Vernon community to join me in remembering Thor for his service and offering our condolences to Officer Sembersky and the entire Police Department."

Police Chief John Kelley said Thor was a valuable member of the Vernon Police Department and that Sembersky and Thor had multiple successes in tracking suspects and finding drugs.

"In February of 2016, Thor found 1,400 bags of heroin in a car after a routine motor vehicle stop turned into a drug investigation," Kelley said. "Two people were arrested and one received a three-year prison sentence."



Vernon Police Officer Bryan Sembersky and K-9 Thor at Vernon's National Night Out in August 2021.

Thor also went into a building and found a burglary suspect hiding in a crawl space, Kelley said. In doing so, Thor kept the responding officers safe and brought the situation to a peaceful resolution.

More recently, Thor played a key role in finding a firearm that was used in a homicide, Kelley said. The gun had been thrown into the Hockanum River. Thor searched the area and alerted at a spot near the river.

"K-9 Thor's keen abilities were instrumental in helping to recover the weapon," Kelley said.

Thor was also popular at community events, including National Night Out. Children crowded around Thor and Sembersky to learn about Thor and his work.

"Thor worked tirelessly to protect and serve his fellow officers and the residents of Vernon," Kelley said.

The Vernon Police Department will honor K-9 Thor for his service at a private ceremony.

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of approximately 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870- 3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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