

COUNTY OF OAKLAND
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

MICHAEL J. BOUCHARD



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Day of School No Sweat for K-9 “Buddy”

OAKLAND COUNTY, Mich. – Sept. 12, 2025 – The first day at a new school can be frightening. And if it’s also your first day on a new job, it’s a recipe for ... becoming the most popular new face in the Pontiac School District.

Meet eight-week-old K-9 Deputy Buddy – the 16th and newest member of the Oakland County Sheriff’s Office Comfort Canine Unit. Buddy’s first day on the job was today. Accompanied by handler Detective and School Resource Officer Jose Garcia, Buddy made the rounds, beginning his day in the International Technical Academy, onto Pontiac Middle School before finishing his day at Pontiac High School.

“I am so pleased to have the community support and the donations that have allowed us to have the most extensive trauma/comfort dog program in America,” Sheriff Michael Bouchard said. “It has been transformational in the community as well as in our agency for helping people in very emotionally challenged times. I look forward to great things from our newest pup, ‘Buddy.’”

This trained and deputized 16 puppy unit is comprised of irresistible floppy-eared attention grabbers. They accompany their handlers virtually everywhere – schools, hospitals, public events, accident scenes – wherever they are needed.

Bouchard, whose K-9 Max is an original member and travels with the sheriff every day, started the unit about six years ago because he believed people seemed increasingly tense and anxious. He watched the number of mental health calls rise and felt the addition of comfort dogs could help people reduce their stress in challenging moments.

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The Sheriff considered several different breeds before settling on the Cavalier King Charles breed because of its temperament and size. The dogs have been purchased using private donations.

Dr. Kimberly Leverette, Pontiac School District superintendent, said she was grateful for the partnership and support from the Sheriff's Office.

"The Pontiac School District is excited to welcome Deputy Buddy as our comfort K-9 to provide support to our students and staff during stressful times," Leverette said. "A hug or walk with Buddy creates an environment of care that is soothing and inviting and we are excited to have him join our Phoenix Nation family."

Buddy will also be available to provide support throughout Pontiac as needed.