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Chef-Orinda's K-9-is Back

By Diana LaScala-Gruenewald



Almost six years ago, the Orinda City Council established the city's Police K-9 unit using funds that were raised by enthusiastic community members. Since that time, Chef the police dog has become an integral part of Orinda's police force. He is the constant and vigilant companion of Officer Danny Vargas, who was Officer of the Year in 2010. And in Orinda he will stay, at least for one more year.

Chef's position was recently threatened by the prolonged economic downturn. The K-9 program costs Orinda \$22,000 per year to run, and after much discussion, the City Council decided that elimination of the program would help balance the budget. However Chef's pink slip was revoked when Bob and Maryett Thompson offered to cover the cost of Chef's upkeep personally for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. "The dog is a tremendous asset to our city and the surrounding area," says Maryett, "The bad guys are afraid of the dog."

Last week, the Orinda City Council accepted the Thompsons' generous donation. The couple offered \$22,000 to the City, and said that they may also be able to donate in future years. The news was greeted with a joyful bark from Chef himself; the Orinda Police Department is grateful to have his continued partnership. The

Thompsons are working to set up a foundation to cover the ongoing cost of the K-9 program.

Police dogs provide a variety of advantages to the neighborhoods they protect and the departments they serve. Because of their keen sense of smell, they are uniquely suited to sniffing out drugs and explosives and tracking both suspects and missing persons. Police dogs can also pursue a fleeing suspect with greater speed than their human partners. Finally, dogs provide protection to the officers with whom they work. For these reasons, Chef has been a valued member of the Orinda Police Department since 2005.

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