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SHERIFF OF ERIE COUNTY

September 16, 2026

The Honorable
Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin St.
Buffalo, NY 14202

Re: WNY Heroes Donation

Honorable Members:

Attached, please find a proposed resolution and accompanying memorandum requesting authorization for the Erie County Sheriff's Office to accept a donation from WNY Heroes, Inc. WNY Heroes has generously offered to provide the ECSO Wellness Program with two therapy dogs for use in multiple wellness initiatives.

Representatives of my Office will be made available upon request to answer any questions you may have.

Very Truly Yours,

John C. Garcia
Sheriff of Erie County

Attachments

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Members of the Erie County Legislature
From: Erie County Sheriff's Office
Re: WNY Heroes Donation
Date: September 16, 2026

Summary of Recommended Action

Approval of this item will authorize the Erie County Sheriff's Office to accept a donation of two therapy dogs from WNY Heroes, Inc. The dogs were trained as part of WNY Heroes highly successful Pawsitive for Heroes program. One of the dogs – a pitbull named Piper – will be assigned to the Erie County Sheriff's Office Wellness Coordinator. The wellness coordinator will take Piper to various substations and offices utilized by the Sheriff's Office to interact with deputies. Piper will also be available for trainings, wellness fairs, and critical incident stress debriefings.

The second dog – a mastiff named Midnight – will be assigned to the peer team leader at the Erie County Holding Center. Midnight will accompany the peer team leader around the facility during his shift. As corrections work can often be stressful, the presence of a therapy dog around the complex is expected to provide comfort and emotional support for deputies. Midnight will similarly be available for critical incident stress debriefings at the Holding Center.

Fiscal Implications of Proposal

WNY Heroes, Inc. is not requiring any compensation or consideration from the County. Expenses related to the dogs' care will be factored into the Erie County Sheriff's Office budget (Fund 110, Funds Center 11510) in future years. The Erie County Sheriff's Office is not requesting an additional allotment of funding at this time.

Reasons for Recommendation

Police work and corrections work carry unique sets of challenges that can drive stress, anxiety, and depression. These jobs are not only dangerous, but they also take law enforcement officers away from their families for what sometimes turns out to be extended shifts. Research shows stress among law enforcement professionals can be significantly reduced after spending time with therapy canines.¹

Consequences of Negative Action

The Erie County Sheriff's Office Wellness Program would be unable to take possession of two therapy dogs. This would prohibit the advancement of employee wellness within the Office.

¹ Binfet, J.T., Draper, Z. A., Green, F. L. (2020). Stress Reduction in Law Enforcement Officers and Staff through a Canine-Assisted Intervention. *Human Animal Interaction Bulletin*, 8(2) 32-46. <https://doi.org/10.1079/hai.2020.0011>

Steps Following Approval of Measure

Certified copies of the approved resolution shall be forwarded to the County Executive, County Attorney, Division of Budget and Management, Comptroller, and Erie County Sheriff's Office.

A RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY:
ERIE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Re: WNY Heroes Donation

WHEREAS, it is the mission of the Erie County Sheriff's Office to provide quality public safety services to our community by promoting a safe environment through police and citizen interaction with an emphasis on integrity, fairness and professionalism; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement work is known to be stressful and can often be the primary drivers of anxiety and depression amongst officers; and

WHEREAS, the Erie County Sheriff's Office administers a wellness program for its staff, the primary goal of which is to support employees' physical, mental, and emotional well-being; and

WHEREAS, WNY Heroes, Inc. has generously offered to donate two therapy dogs trained through the Pawsitive for Heroes Program to the Erie County Sheriff's Office Wellness Program; and

WHEREAS, these dogs will be available to offer emotional support and post-critical incident stress relief for members of the Erie County Sheriff's Office Police Services Division and Jail Management Division; and

WHEREAS, authorization from the Erie County Legislature is required for the Erie County Sheriff's Office to accept this donation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, the Erie County Sheriff's Office is hereby authorized to accept a donation of two (2) therapy dogs from WNY Heroes, Inc. 1001 E. Delevan Street, Suite 9, Buffalo, NY 14215; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Sheriff is authorized to incorporate the dogs into the Erie County Sheriff's Office Wellness Program; and be it further

RESOLVED, certified copies of the approved resolution shall be forwarded to the County Executive, County Attorney, Division of Budget and Management, Comptroller, and Erie County Sheriff's Office.

FISCAL IMPACT: As Indicated