

MATT ALVES
PUBLIC SAFETY CHIEF



September 6, 2024

Dear Hearts4Heroes USA,

I wanted to personally reach out and express my gratitude to your organization for placing General Mattis with the Lincoln Police and Fire Departments. The concept of a department comfort dog was something I have been researching for a number of years. I have attended multiple seminars by CPCA and IACP and I was convinced that the program was a benefit for first responders, but the barriers for entry seemed significant. Though there are a number of organizations nationwide that provide dogs for this purpose, I didn't know where to start, how to raise funds, and how the logistics of the program would work for us.

Then in November 2023, I met your founder, Shelley Martell, at a Veterans Day memorial in Lincoln. Shelley and I later connected, and after a few discussions, it was clear a relationship with Hearts4Heroes USA was a fit.

One of the main hurdles our organization was struggling with was who should be the handler. Having a small police and fire department, we don't have the luxury of enough staff to easily add time consuming programs. However, believing in this program so much, I elected to take on the responsibility of handler. Given my role as the Public Safety Chief, overseeing both the police and fire departments, I felt it was a unique opportunity to have the dog available for both disciplines. Shelley fully agreed and we started our search for a dog.

Over the following months, we met with Shelley and tested out a few dogs. Ultimately, Shelley found the perfect dog for us, General Mattis, a black Goldendoodle who was born in January 2024. Your organization coordinated multiple trainings, both one on one with me as well as trainings with my family, prior to Mattis coming home. Once the initial training was completed, Mattis was formally placed with us in June 2024.

Since we've had Mattis, he has become one of the most popular members of our team. Police and Fire staff enjoy having him around and I'm frequently asked if Mattis can spend time with various units in the departments. Mattis comes with me to meetings and people are always excited to have him present. Due to my position, I interact with all city departments, and he interacts with city staff routinely. He also recently assisted in his first call for service where he was a resource to calm and refocus a child experiencing a mental health issue.

Mattis came to us with excellent foundational training. With the recurring formal training sessions with Hearts4Heroes and daily mini-trainings, he continues to improve his skills. I look forward to him continuing to be a part of our police and fire wellness programs and his interactions with our community.

Thank you for playing a major role in helping promote positive mental health for our first responders. Your organization is appreciated and the work you do is vital for us to support our staff.

Matt Alves
Public Safety Chief

LINCOLN POLICE DEPARTMENT
770 SEVENTH STREET
LINCOLN, CA 95648

LINCOLN FIRE DEPARTMENT
126 JOINER PARKWAY
LINCOLN, CA 95648