

A farewell to Officer Degen: Law enforcement turns out en masse for beloved canine

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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WOOD RIVER/GLEN CARBON - When difficult times happen, law enforcement and first responders are always there for one another.

Wood River Police Department's canine dog - Officer Degen - was suffering from cancer and was put to rest at Hawthorne Animal Hospital in Glen Carbon on Wednesday night.

There was an outpouring of support from law enforcement throughout the region and even several jurisdictions away in Illinois and Missouri to ride in procession. In Wood River, Edwardsville and Glen Carbon, along the procession route, there was a multitude of people with signs standing in support of the beloved canine.

Wood River Deputy Police Chief Dan Bunt said it was one of the more remarkable things he had witnessed in law enforcement.

"We had over 40 squad cars in the procession from Wood River to Glen Carbon," Bunt said. "We had some canine officers and their dogs come from Missouri and also as far away as other jurisdictions in Illinois. How serious the loyalty of the officers toward the dog and his partner was shown. It was sad to see the canine go down. In the last month, Degen started losing weight and had some type of incurable cancer. The handler thought it would be best to put him down so he wouldn't suffer."

Bunt said the support of the other officers and the community meant a lot to the Wood River Police Department and Mike Young, the dog's handler. Young's family said Mike was taking the loss of dog hard. Mike and his wife went in to spend the last moments with the canine in Hawthorne Animal Hospital in private. Outside, officers waited patiently outside to express their condolences to officer Young and reflect about the great career of Degen.

"I was surprised there were several lined up on the roads with people holding signs all the way from the route in Wood River to Shop 'N Save and theater in Edwardsville holding signs. SIUE helped with traffic all the way through their cities. This shows the respect the community and law enforcement had to Mike Young and the canine.

"The canine had a long career. He was brought over from East Alton and was always available when we needed him to do an investigation. He was used by several communities in his eight-year career."

Bunt best words were saved for last: "Everybody comes together when something like this happens. It means a lot."



