



## **PRESS RELEASE**

Tacoma Police Department  
Tacoma, Washington  
[cityoftacoma.org/police](http://cityoftacoma.org/police)

### **IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 25, 2020

### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

Wendy Haddow, Tacoma Police Department Public Information Officer, 253-591-5968  
[whaddow@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:whaddow@cityoftacoma.org)

### **Tacoma Police Department Thankful for New K9**

Tacoma, Wash. – The Tacoma Police Department is feeling thankful this Thanksgiving. Due to the amazing generosity and compassion of local residents, the legacy of courageous K9 Ronja will live on at the Tacoma Police Department with the gift of a new K9.

On August 13, 2020, Tacoma Police K9 Ronja was killed in the line of duty during the pursuit and capture of an armed homicide suspect. As K9 Ronja and her fellow officers searched for the fleeing suspect, he ambushed the officers and fired numerous rounds. Without hesitation, K9 Ronja sacrificed herself and ran into the line of fire to protect the other officers. She was shot several times but none of the other officers were seriously injured. K9 Ronja passed away a short time later from her wounds.

When the community learned of K9 Ronja's incredible valor, they opened their hearts and donated to a memorial fund that was established in her memory to maintain the Tacoma Police Department's K9 program and to provide care for all law enforcement K9's in Pierce County. Thousands of dollars were donated to the fund by community members, including a very generous grant from the Names Family Foundation. This grant was obtained by a high school student who heard K9 Ronja's story and was so moved that he applied for a community grant from the foundation.

Thanks to the generosity of the community and that of the Names Family Foundation, our partners at Tacoma-Pierce County Crime Stoppers were able to purchase a new patrol K9 for our department. The new male K9, named "Axel", is already hard at work training with Officer Jennifer Syler, the same handler who was partnered with K9 Ronja.

Like Ronja, K9 Axel comes to the department from Slovakia. When the breeders in Slovakia heard of K9 Ronja's incredible bravery, the head trainer decided to send a dog that was in the process of training as his own personal dog. This is the greatest honor that a K9 handler could receive from a colleague.

As we welcome K9 Axel to our law enforcement family, we thank the community for its great generosity. Not only did donations and the grant cover the purchase of K9 Axel, but the funds will also continue to provide care for all of the K9s countywide. The remaining funds are being used to send every K9 and K9 handler to specialized training on K9 trauma and first aid. Upon completion of the training, each of our handlers will receive a first aid kit that is specific to treating injured K9s in the field. This training and equipment will be provided by a Special Forces veterinarian who has saved multiple military K9s during overseas combat operations.

The Tacoma Police Department would like to thank the community for K9 Axel and also for protecting all police K9s in Pierce County; K9 Vortex, K9 Moni, K9 Ammo, K9 Brix, K9 Chato, K9 Eddie, K9 Ripp, K9 Roc, K9 Kona, K9 Maverick, K9 Marshall, and K9 Mia. Above all, we would like to thank the community for remembering and honoring K9 Ronja. We are truly humbled by the generosity this Thanksgiving.

###