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Community Page

Local canine a police dog in training

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**

The Champion

When residents of Hawthorne Village noticed a dog being housed in a crate in a garage, they began to worry there was a case of animal neglect on their street.

What other explanation could there be? So they reported the incident to the Humane Society. It wasn't long before a couple of animal control officers arrived at the Beaty Trail home to investigate.

Const. Darrell Moores and his wife, Nathalie, answered the door and explained the situation. This wasn't the first time there had been some concern over their four-and-a-half-month-old German shepherd, Riva. The time before, it had been the dog's overnight barking that had irked some of the neighbours.

Const. Moores didn't blame the nearby residents. How could they know Riva was a police dog-in-training?

Tired of the misconceptions, Const. Moores decided to send out a letter explaining Riva's unique job to his neighbours, and now attitudes are much friendlier, he said. People now understand that because of the nature of Riva's future job, she can't be treated like a pet.

"With a police dog, you want them to have a bit of an edge to them. You don't want to coddle them," Const. Moores said, explaining the training helps bring out their "prey drive."

Const. Moores is part of the emergency response team of the RCMP's Toronto detachment. One day, if all goes well, Riva — pronounced Ree-vah — will be a police dog, working in such areas as criminal apprehension, tracking and article searching. She may even search for drugs and explosives.

Along with Ms Moores, also a member of the RCMP, Const. Moores is raising Riva for the first year of her life, getting her ready for the more formalized portion of her training, which will be done in Alberta at the RCMP's main police dog training centre. They got her when she was eight weeks old.

"It's not a nine to five job," Const. Moores said, explaining she goes to work with him every day; the police detachment has a kennel.

Riva weighs about 42 pounds now and will be about 65 by the time she's fully grown. One of the reasons she stays outside overnight is it makes her coat develop quicker. When people began complaining

about Riva's barking, the Moores put her in the garage because they didn't want to bring her right inside.

In the letter, Const. Moores asked residents to remember that whenever Riva's out of her kennel in the backyard or crate in the garage, she's in training.

"Feel free to stop, say 'hi' and ask questions if you see us walking around, but please don't pet her," he advised.

As for the barking, they're continuing to work on it, Const. Moores said, adding she's a dog just like any other.

After Const. Moores goes through this process with one more German shepherd, he said he'll be eligible to train for the RCMP's Police Dog Services and become a dog handler.

Going through this 'imprinter's course' — what the RCMP calls raising a police dog for its first year or so — is one of the qualifications of an officer wanting to be part of the dog service, Const. Moores said.

"Everyone who's a dog handler has to be an imprinter as well," he explained.

As the dogs are trained, those not suitable for life as a police canine are weeded out. Similarly, the officers who don't enjoy working with dogs as much as they thought they would are also weeded out.

The RCMP's dog service officially came into existence in Alberta in 1935. German shepherds are used for their versatility, strength and courage. Plus, their heavy coats allow them to work in extreme temperatures.

Const. Moores said he first became interested in working with police dogs after helping train a dog belonging to an officer in his detachment.

The bond between dog and man doesn't take long to form, he said, and Riva has a definite personality already. She's playful and has no fear of people.

Although she's been introduced to the Moores' pet chocolate lab, interaction isn't encouraged, Const. Moores said. She doesn't mix much with the neighbourhood dogs, either. "Sometimes people get a little offended because everyone wants their dogs to play together," Const. Moores said.

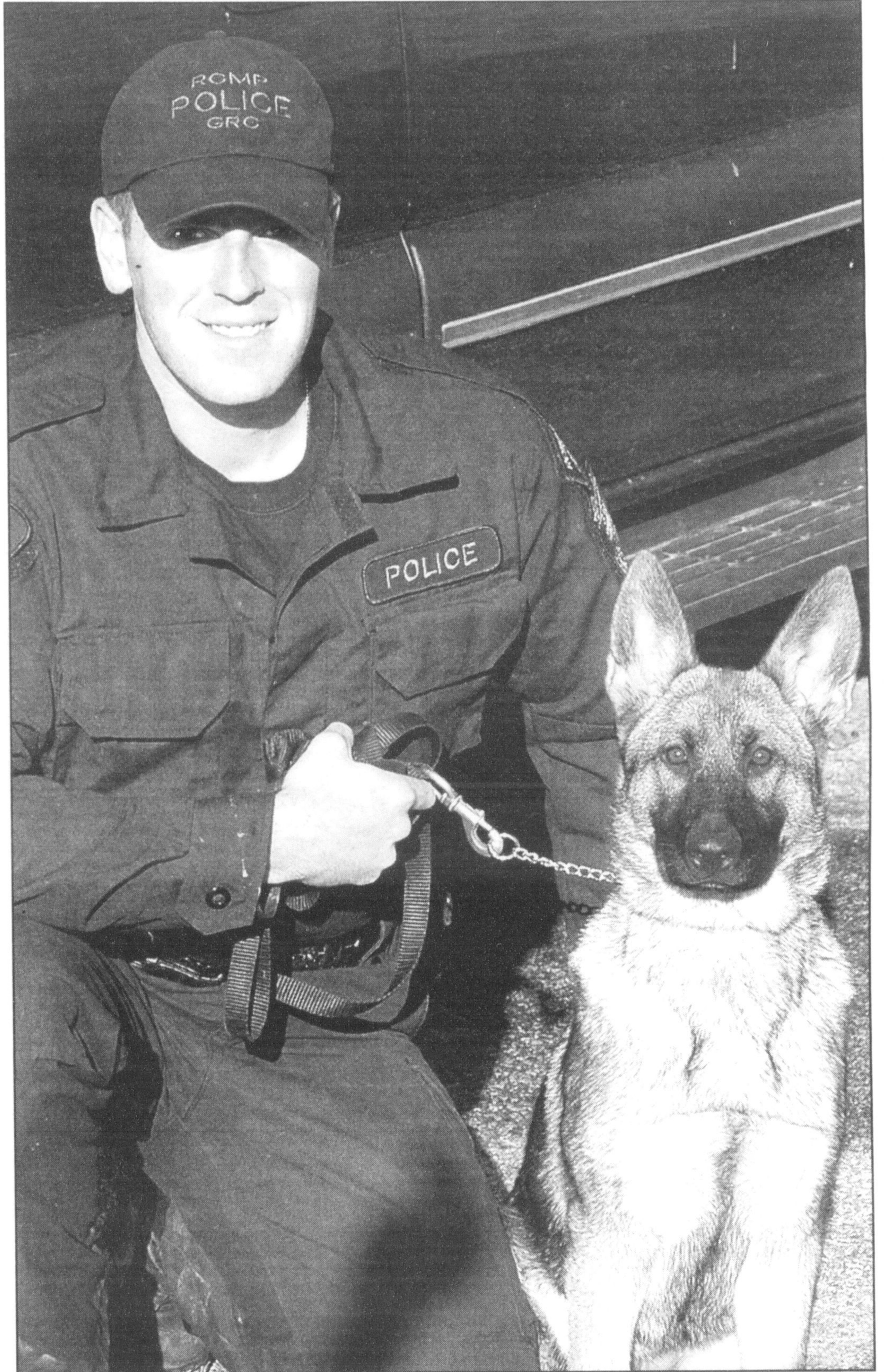
So far, it seems Riva has what it takes to become a police dog.

"She has an excellent nose. Her tracking and article searching are pretty good," Const. Moores said.

It'll be a sad day when he has to give up Riva, Const. Moores said.

"They say the first one is the hardest to let go," he said, adding, "You've got to remember it's for the greater good."

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Beaty Trail resident and RCMP Const. Darrell Moores is training Riva to be a police dog.

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Programming Schedule — Tuesday, October 25 - Monday, October 31, 2005

Tuesday, October 25	Wednesday, October 26	Thursday, October 27	Friday, October 28	Saturday, October 29	Sunday, October 30	Monday, October 31
1:00pm SportsZONE Live	1:00pm Halton Hills Council Oct 17 2005	12:00pm Swap Talk (Replay)	1:00pm Halton Region Council Oct 26	4:00pm TVC Sports: HS Football - MM Robinson vs Assumption	10:30am TVC Sports: HS Football - MM Robinson vs Assumption	1:00pm Milton Council Oct 24
6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	3:00-6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm Milton Council Oct 24	3:00-6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm TVC Sports: Canadian Open Raquetball Classic Final	3:00pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	3:00pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	6:00pm Bottom Line	6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm TVC Sports: Canadian Open Raquetball Classic Final	6:00pm Milton Council Oct 24	6:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
7:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm Taking Care of Your Future	7:00pm Bottom Line	6:00pm-Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm-Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm Milton Council Oct 24	8:00pm SportsZONE Live
8:00pm Auto Experts (Live)	7:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	7:30pm Taking Care of Your Future			8:00pm-Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	11:00p -Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA
9:00pm Halton Hills Council Oct 17 2005	8:00pm Swap Talk (Live)	8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA				
	9:00pm Milton Council Oct 24	9:00pm Milton Council Oct 26				
	11:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA					