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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**New Police Dogs Join DSH-Atascadero**

**ATASCADERO** - DSH-Atascadero Hospital Police Department is proud to welcome two new K9 Officers: Kilo and Booker. The 15-month-old yellow Labradors were introduced to their new handlers in September. Handlers Officers Belken and Wilson have fifteen years of law enforcement experience at DSH-Atascadero.

Prior to their appointment, the dogs received six weeks of narcotics detection training at a Makor K-9 training center. After being paired with their handlers, the teams completed additional training in conjunction with the San Luis Obispo Sherriff's Department. Both dogs are certified under the California Narcotics Canine Association and were officially introduced to staff at the Hospital.

"They're doing great, learning fast, and have adjusted to home life," said Officer Belken, who is paired with Kilo. When asked about the new assignment, Booker's handler, Officer Wilson said, "We like it. It's challenging and rewarding." Officer Belken continued, "It's amazing to watch the dog's progress from day one to where they are today. It's interesting to see how much more they are learning to search on their own, without prompting."

Booker and Kilo are DSH-Atascadero's third generation of narcotics detection dogs; the last set of canines retired in August 2015 after ten years of service. Throughout the history of the canine program, the dogs have provided contraband control and support for ensuring safety at DSH-Atascadero. They also respond to calls for service in the community.

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