

PAW & ORDER!

by Tracy Campion

Pele and Zeff

Photos by Piper & Abbey

Pele's sleek black face peered out from the back of the police car as Officer TJ San Miguel pulls up. Officer TJ, who is from Hawaii, named her partner after Hawaiian Pele, the goddess of fire, lightning, wind, and volcanoes. With her exuberant expression and eagerness to go, I can see that it's a fitting name. TJ slides the partition between Pele's part of the car and hers, and Pele leans her head on TJ, who smiles.

Pele, who is three years old, is almost done with her training as a Seattle K9; by the time this article goes to print, she'll likely be a fully certified K9. It's a special treat to be able to see Pele on her journey as a K9 officer – and see the partnership that TJ and Pele have.

"She should be done with her training during the next few weeks," TJ explained, "and then we'll be hitting the streets!"



Pele is ready to work when the vest goes on!

We're joined this evening by Officer Chris Hairston and his K9, Zeff, who is also in training; and Officer J. Moyer and his K9, Kosmo, who is already fully trained. The officers take turns running the K9s through exercises, including commands for "down" and "stay." The commands are in German, and without exception, the three dogs listen attentively. Each dog, in turn, comes over to greet me, tails wagging and kisses liberally available. It's clear that they love their jobs and their partners.

Afterward, we drive to a residential area for the dogs to take turns tracking a scent and finding items that were placed along the way, including a glove and a hat. Pele took to the trail first, her nose sifting the ground back and forth. Down the hill we ran, and then across a street. She paused at one point, looking back and forth. Then she continued again; when her head and tail went up, it was clear that she'd found the officer at the end of the trail.

With these exercises complete, we drove to an industrial park with underbrush. A few lights were on, but parts of the terrain were dim and uneven. Officer Moyer handed me a small flashlight.

Pele and Zeff took turns finding their tracks; Officer Hairston, who's a former marine, was hidden well. I was startled when Pele found him, only a few feet away from me, in the brush. Her nose could find what my eyes couldn't.



Pele & Officer TJ

It was Zeff's turn next. He looked alert and ready to go. It looked like this track would be much longer and farther into the brush. Officer Moyer handed me a larger flashlight. Once the track was down, Zeff sprang into action; I sprinted behind the officers, up and down the industrial park hills, the light from the flashlight bouncing in the hollows. Zeff found Officer TJ, who was hiding behind a wall, and quickly grabbed the training sleeve. Zeff pranced away from TJ, holding the sleeve, his tail held high. Officer Hairston, who had been holding Zeff's lead, looked just as proud.

While Zeff and Pele passed their training tests with flying colors that night, running, jumping, crouching and searching (whether on a training mission or the real thing) requires a healthy regimen, sometimes including hydrotherapy. Pele makes regular trips to Wellsprings-K9, where she is evaluated for her gait, muscle mass, and strength. Founder Sheila Wells uses focused strengthening exercises and Pele's sessions, which run approximately two hours, and typically include myofascial stripping, unwinding work, stretching, and joint mobilization.

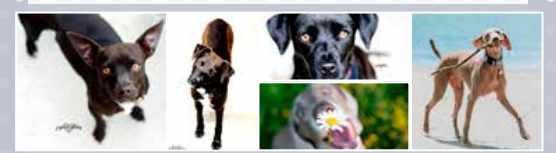
According to Sheila, "Pele first came to Wellsprings-K9 because there were some concerns about her balance. When she comes in for a session, she's excited and ready for a fun, intense workout, and leaves barely able



Pele & Sheila enjoying a workout

to keep her eyes open, ready for a nap in the patrol car! Because of the sessions, she's able to do her work without the fear of injury that was there prior to her therapy with me."

Learn more about Wellsprings-K9 at their website: wellspringsk9.com. Visit the SPD's Canine Unit's official webpage at www.seattle.gov/police/units/K9.htm and visit the Retired Seattle Police Canine Fund on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Retired-Seattle-Police-Canine-Fund-111037078953628>.



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