



K9 Kachina Retires From the Office of the State Fire Marshal

With a list of accomplishments as long as her leash, beloved K9 heads into retirement.

STATEWIDE (September 29, 2023) - After eight years with the Office of the State Fire Marshal, Kachina, one of Maryland's most beloved arson detection dogs, is retiring.

The ten-year-old black lab is one of four Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) trained dogs within the agency. She was the most senior canine among the 62 teams across the United States. She and her partner, Master Deputy State Fire Marshal Oliver Alkire, have assisted in over 600 cases in their time together throughout Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania.

During her career, Kachina has responded to or trained in every Maryland county and Baltimore City, an accomplishment that few K9s have experienced and a testament to her drive and dedication to everyone in Maryland.

Kachina was initially trained as a guide dog to aid the visually impaired by the Guiding Eyes for the Blind. However, her drive was recognized to be better suited as a working dog. At age 2, she was procured by the ATF to begin her training in arson prevention.

Kachina is trained to sniff out accelerants used to start a fire. Her heightened sense of smell helps investigators find clues that might have otherwise gone overlooked, and her "nose that knows" led to evidence that assisted in the convictions of several arsonists.

Kachina and Alkire have also been heavily involved with community outreach, sharing the importance of the ATF K9 program, fire prevention, and the power of canine capabilities to colleges, open houses, and events across the state. In January, they traveled to Glynco, Georgia, and assisted with training new ATF agents.

To keep their noses sharp, ATF dogs are food reward and required to train every day. Since her first training day till yesterday, Kachina has only eaten out of her handler's hand. It's estimated she has done this over 72,000 times throughout her career.

With four accelerant detection K9s, including Deacon, Sky, and Zorro, and explosive detection K9s Rosie and Paulie, the OSFM leads in the country with the most ATF-trained K9s.

ATF dogs can typically retire around 9, but being incredibly healthy and with a strong work drive, Kachina exceeded expectations and was extended for another year.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal has primarily utilized ATF Accelerant and Explosive Detection Canines. ***"The ATF Accelerant Detection Canine Program and its staff are the best in the world, and the K9 teams they train are top-notch. Master Deputy Alkire & Kachina have been incredible assets to the State of Maryland and its citizens. No matter what time of day or night, they were always ready to assist investigators."*** stated Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal Jason M. Mowbray.

Thanks to Maryland Senate Bill 156, Veterinary Care of Law Enforcement K-9s Act, Master Deputy Alkire will not have to worry about most of Kachinas' veterinarian care. Introduced by State Senator Bill Kramer of Montgomery County and signed into law by then-Governor Larry Hogan, it mandates that state and local police forces cover the "reasonable and necessary" vet costs up to \$2,500 a year and \$10,000 "over the life of the dog." The bill also created a state K-9 Compassionate Care Fund, which can include donations to cover such expenses and allows local governments to create funds.

"With the passage of Senate Bill 156, our canine handlers and their families now have the peace of mind and the means to pay for the medical expenses of their retired partners," stated State Fire Marshal Brian S. Geraci. ***"Our K9 partners are the most invaluable and versatile asset we have. They take on many tasks; all they ask for in return is loyalty and companionship. Bill 156 was the least we could do for our canines and handlers for their years of dedication."*** Geraci said.

Kachina will enjoy retirement with even longer naps, sleeping through the night, sunbathing, and a few more treats and belly rubs.

Alkire will be without, what many consider the best kind of partner for a few days. He agreed to renew his commitment and will leave Sunday to begin training in Virginia for his brand-new canine.

Click the following link for video of Kachina's Retirement

[Kachina's Retirement Video - Courtesy of MSP Media Affairs](#)



K9 Kachina and Master Deputy State Fire Marshal Oliver Alkire



At age 10, and after 8 years of service, Kachina retired today