

# SEARCHERS REDEDICATE CANINE MEMORIAL

BY COREY AIST, UNIT LEADER  
ALASKA SEARCH & RESCUE DOGS



Those who participated in the memorial rededication are from left to right, Trp. Aaron Mobley and Yukon, North Slope Borough Police Officer Julia Walsh and Hershey; Laurie Calandri and Wylie, Paul Stoklos his partners Buck and Mora; Corey Aist and Snap; Kim Trust and Foster; Trp. Greg Pealatore and Anchor; Kodiak Police Officer Michael Barnett and canine Max; Clare Lattimore and Rosy; Anchorage Police Officer Jason Whetsell and Bosco; and Jim Haga and Rio.

Search and Rescue dog teams respond to requests by Alaska State Troopers to help locate lost and missing people 24 hours a day, seven days a week in all weather conditions and to remote backcountry locations. On average, volunteer dog teams assist troopers every two weeks in searching avalanche debris, lakes and rivers and the vast Alaska wilderness. In addition, dog teams assist AST investigators looking for those who have become victims of foul play or of their own volition.

Nearly all the dogs used during search and rescues are trained in air scenting and trailing. This means the dogs work following scent particles in the air and on the ground to find any human within a specific area. Search dogs in Alaska are trained to work in environments that are contaminated by other searchers and people in a search area. Whether trailing a specific person from a scented article or looking for any human scent within avalanche debris, these dogs

will work through contaminated areas locating the missing person.

On Oct. 20, several search dog handlers, search volunteers, and K-9 teams from law enforcement agencies got together at the Alaska Search and Rescue Dog Memorial in front of the Alaska State Troopers headquarters in Anchorage. On this 10-year anniversary of the memorial, 25 dogs were recognized with dog tags and ribbons. Dog tags were created for each dog and people participated by tying a tag with a yellow ribbon to the tree. The dog tags will stay on the tree until sometime after the new year.

Notably, half a dozen AST and various police department K-9 teams came to recognize the efforts of the volunteer handlers and their search dog companions. It was a generous gesture on their behalf.

The Department of Public Safety gave a commendation recognizing the efforts of search dogs and their handlers across the state. Alaska State Troopers rely heavily upon volunteer search and rescue organizations such as ASARD. By state statute, the Department of Public Safety is responsible for overseeing search and rescue operations within the state. Sometimes that responsibility is shared with the U.S. Coast Guard or the Air National Guard's Rescue Coordination Center. Seventy to 75 percent of all SAR operations are done by volunteers on behalf of the DPS and the Alaska State Troopers. The volunteer dog teams make up a valuable tool used in search and rescues.

The search and rescue dog organizations around the state are glad to be of service to AST and the families of those missing or lost. These organizations appreciate the unique relationships they have built with AST and continue to be a vital part of the search and rescue community in Alaska. It's in the tradition of the Alaskan spirit that draws our organizations together. Visit [AST's PIO website](#) for other stories on [volunteer SAR organizations](#).

- Corey Aist started with ASARD in 1994 and has served with two companions - Bean, a yellow Labrador who has since passed, and now Snap, a 7-year-old chocolate lab. ■



ASARD member Jill Missal ties a ribbon on the tree outside the DPS headquarters building as part of the rededication ceremony while Paul Stoklos and his search and rescue partners Buck and Kiana wait their turn.