

OCT 2026

The inside stories for you!

SHERIFFS, LAW ENFORCEMENT & MEMBERS NEWS & UPDATES



The Illinois Sheriffs' Association is proud to announce Tazewell County Sheriff's Office K9 Maverick and his Handler, Deputy Austin Gillespie, as the 2027 ISA K9 Hero

Launched in 2024, the ISA K9 Heroes Program was created to celebrate the remarkable service and sacrifice of police K9s and their handlers across Illinois. Each year, Sheriffs' Offices are invited to nominate their K9 teams for recognition. These highly trained dogs assist in narcotics detection, search and rescue, suspect apprehension, and community outreach - serving as both protectors and ambassadors of public safety.

Meet Tazewell County Sheriff's Office K9 Maverick!

Deputy Austin Gillespie is an 8-year veteran of the Tazewell County Sheriff's Office is partnered with K9 Maverick, a 4-year-old male Shepherd/Malinois mix.

During his service, Maverick has demonstrated his value as a law enforcement K-9 through narcotics detection, article searches, tracking, fugitive apprehension, and assistance to surrounding law enforcement agencies.

Throughout his career, K-9 Maverick has contributed to more than 100 narcotics seizures. These deployments have assisted deputies and other law enforcement officers in locating illegal narcotics, developing criminal investigations, and making arrests. Maverick's contributions to narcotics enforcement represent a significant portion of his service to Tazewell County and the surrounding communities.

In addition to narcotics detection, Maverick has been utilized by the Tazewell County Sheriff's Office and surrounding agencies to track fleeing suspects and violent fugitives. His tracking capabilities have proven particularly valuable when suspects have fled into wooded areas, fields, and other

difficult terrain where traditional search methods are limited.

When K9 Maverick is not discovering narcotics or chasing down the bad guys, he enjoys a crowd and has shown off his skills at Tazewell County Sheriff's Office – National Night Out and numerous school demonstrations.

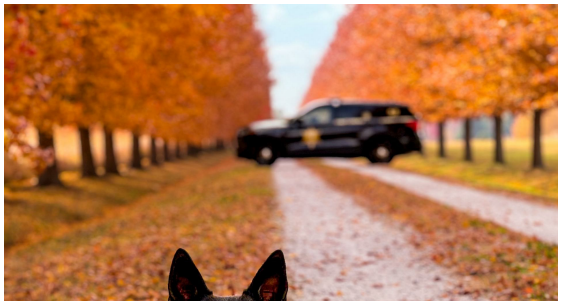
When he's off duty, he loves swimming in lakes and relaxing in cool creek water to beat the summer heat. Maverick and Deputy Gillespie also enjoy hiking together, giving him a chance to explore and burn off some of his seemingly endless energy. Above all, Maverick is happiest when he's chasing a ball or playing tug-of-war with Deputy Gillespie.

READ MORE ABOUT K9 MAVERICK AND HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

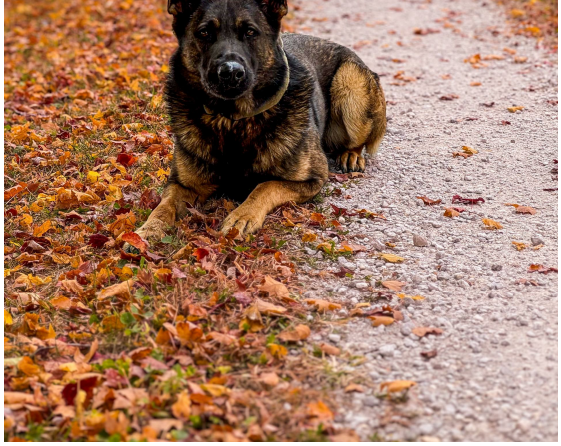












K9 Maverick will have a plush available for preorder in our holiday store opening at the end of October!

DONATE TO THE ISA K9 HEROES SERIES!

2027 Winner!

When you donate $30, you'll receive one of our NEW plush K9 Heroes with Trading Card!

Meet the ISA 2027 K9 Hero - Tazewell Co. K9 Maverick, a dual purpose K9 trained in Narcotics odor detection, article searches, and fugitive tracking. Maverick joined the Tazewell Co. K9 Team 3 years ago and was paired with his handler Deputy Austin Gillespie. ***He is a HERO, and you can learn all about him when you donate and receive your plush and trading card!***

Hero *- one who gives of themselves, often putting their own life at great risk, for the greater good of others...*



Illinois Sheriffs' Assoc. K9 HERO Series — In Partnership with Tazewell Co. Sheriff Jeff Lower

PRICE: $30 ea. includes shipping

Scan QR Code for the Online Form!

Your Donation Makes a Difference!

Every time you shop or become a member, you help ISA continue to provide support and training to Sheriff's Offices throughout Illinois. **This special Tazewell County K9 HERO Maverick plush is a DONATION ITEM, with a portion of proceeds going to the Tazewell County K9 Unit in honor of K9 Maverick.** This ISA K9 plush is fitted with a personalized camo tactical vest, embellished with the ISA logo, sheriff collar and Blue-Line Hero dog tag! Dimensions: 4" x 9"

...AND it comes with a K9 Maverick Trading Card!!

Special Thanks to our 2027 K9 Hero Sponsor:

MORTON ANIMAL HOSPITAL

mortonanimalhospital.com



SHERIFFS K9 HERO SERIES

Brought to you by the Illinois Sheriffs' Association

ilsheriff.org/k9-heroes

Go to our site to read the full story on Maverick!

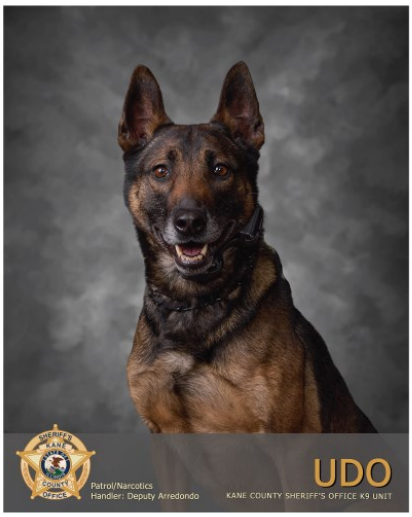
DONATE TO THE ISA K9 HEROES PROGRAM

2027 NOMINATIONS

CONGRATUATIONS TO ALL OF THE AMAZING SHERIFF'S OFFICES, HANDLERS, AND THEIR K9S THAT WERE NOMINATED THIS YEAR



Fayette County Sheriff's Office
K9 Zero & Handler,
Sgt. Brock Rich
Black German Shepherd
4 Yrs Service



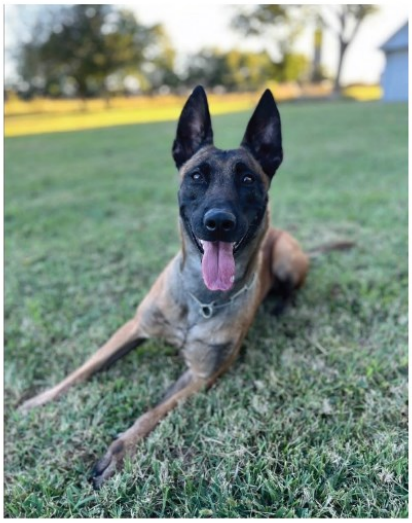
Kane County Sheriff's Office
K9 Udo & Handler,
Detective Lionel Arredondo
Malinois/Dutch Shepherd mix
3 Yrs Service



Kendall County Sheriff's Office
K9 Snow & Handler,
Deputy Stewart Blouin
White Mixed Breed
2 Yrs Service



McHenry County Sheriff's Office
K9 Kylo & Handler,



Washington County Sheriff's Office
K9 Luna & Handler,

Deputy John Wisniewski
German Shepherd
4 Yrs Service

Sgt. Brent Klingeman
Belgian Malinois
6 Yrs Service

FRANKLIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Kyle Bacon

403 East Main Street • Benton, Illinois 62812 • 618-438-4841

SPECIAL NEEDS OCCUPANT AWARENESS PROGRAM

Franklin County Launches Special Needs Occupant Awareness Program

The Franklin County Sheriff's Office, Franklin County Office of Emergency Management and Communications, and other local public safety agencies have launched a Special Needs Occupant Awareness Program to improve communication and safety for individuals with autism, developmental disabilities, or other conditions that may affect communication during an emergency.

Because individuals may communicate, process information, or respond to stressful situations differently, interactions with first responders can sometimes present unique challenges. Through this voluntary program, families can confidentially share information about their loved ones' needs, helping dispatchers provide responding law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMS personnel, and other first responders with information that may support a more informed and appropriate response.

As part of the initiative, Franklin County sheriff's deputies will receive specialized Autism Informed Response training through the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board. The training focuses on recognizing characteristics of autism, understanding sensory sensitivities, using effective communication techniques, and applying response strategies that promote safety and understanding.

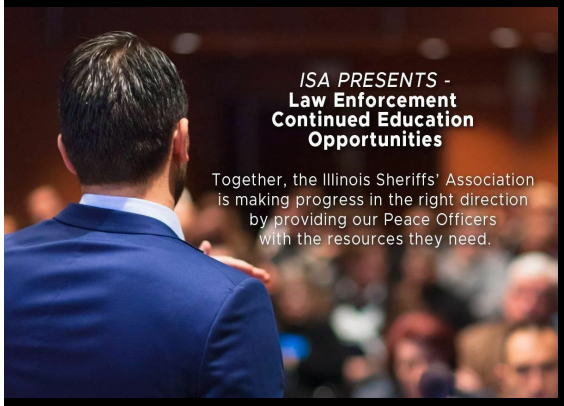
Participating families will also receive up to four identification decals at no cost to place on their homes or vehicles, alerting responding personnel that an individual may benefit from additional communication or support. Registration is voluntary, and all information submitted through the program is confidential.

The Illinois Sheriffs' Association thanks the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and its public safety partners for their thoughtful work in developing this initiative. Special recognition goes to Deputy Tyler Baxter and Alexea Baxter for their efforts in planning and preparing for the program's launch. Their work reflects the importance of understanding individual needs, supporting families, and ensuring every person is treated with dignity, patience, and respect.

For more information: Franklin County families interested in participating can access the registration form through the Franklin County Sheriff's Office mobile app, request a form by emailing dvice@sherifffranklincounty.com, or pick one up at 403 East Main Street in Benton.



2026/2027 ISA Conference & Training Schedule



New Sheriffs Management Institute
November 15-19, 2026
President Abraham Lincoln Hotel, Springfield

Retiring Sheriffs Banquet
Sunday Nov. 15th, 6:00pm
President Abraham Lincoln Hotel, Springfield

Sheriffs Winter Training Conference
February 13-16, 2027
Embassy Suites, East Peoria

Chief Deputy & Jail Administrators Conference
April 28-30, 2027 East Peoria, IL

Visit Our Website

We would not be able to put our training and conferences on without our Preferred Vendors! The Illinois Sheriffs' Association would like to thank your vendors listed below!

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DuPage County Launches I.G.N.I.T.E. Program to Expand Inmate Education and Rehabilitation

The DuPage County Sheriff's Office is making history as the first jail in Illinois to implement **I.G.N.I.T.E. (Inmate Growth Naturally and Intentionally Through Education)**, a national initiative focused on education, workforce development and reducing repeat offenses.

Announced by Sheriff James Mendrick, the program is being introduced in partnership with JUST of DuPage and the National Sheriffs' Association. Participants will have access to

educational and personal development opportunities five days a week, including GED preparation, college-level courses, financial literacy and vocational training leading to job certifications.

I.G.N.I.T.E. builds on DuPage County's existing rehabilitation efforts, expanding opportunities for individuals in custody to develop practical skills and prepare for successful reentry into their communities. By combining education, job training and ongoing support, the initiative aims to reduce recidivism and help participants build more productive futures.
The program was developed by Genesee County, Michigan, Sheriff Christopher R. Swanson and is now expanding to communities across the country. DuPage County's launch represents an important step in bringing this approach to Illinois.

Learn more: [DuPage County Sheriff's Office Becomes First in Illinois to Bring I.G.N.I.T.E. Program to Inmates]

2026 ISA Get to Know Your Sheriff Series
OCTOBER | Tazewell County



the path for me.

2. Describe your role as Sheriff in your Office and throughout your County:

As Sheriff, my role is to lead and support the men and women of the Sheriff's Office so they can serve our citizens effectively and professionally. I also work to remain accessible, listen to the concerns of our residents, and build strong partnerships throughout the county to help keep our communities safe.

3. What is your favorite part about being Tazewell County Sheriff?

My favorite part about being Sheriff is having the opportunity to make a difference in our community. I enjoy working with our staff, other agencies and community partners toward a common goal.

4. Describe what drives you to get involved within the community:

The people are what drive me to stay involved. We have tremendous support throughout Tazewell County, and I believe it is important to return that support by being present and involved in our communities.



IF YOU WEREN'T DOING WHAT YOU DO NOW, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR DREAM JOB?

I am fortunate to be doing my dream job now. If I were not Sheriff, I would probably want to be a pilot in some capacity.



WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU AREN'T WORKING OR VOLUNTEERING?

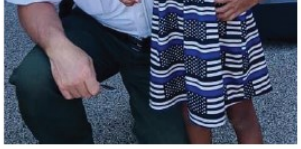
I enjoy spending time with my family, traveling, camping, and being outdoors.



WHAT MIGHT SOMEONE BE SURPRISED TO

KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I have had my private pilot's license since 1991.



5. What's the best thing to happen to you because of your community or career in peace keeping service?

The best thing has been the relationships I have built throughout my career. I have had the opportunity to work with many great people and form friendships that will last long after my career is over.



6. Tell us about someone or something that has influenced you:

Starting as an auxiliary deputy and working my way through every rank has shaped the way I lead today. Those experiences taught me to never forget where I started or what I expect from others.

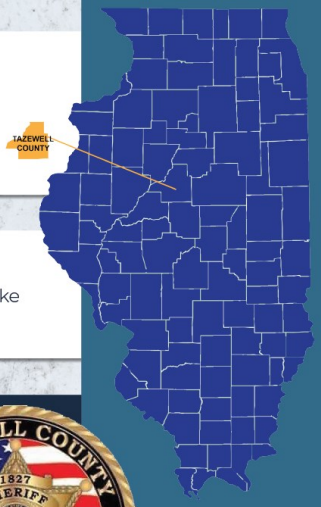


7. What do you consider the biggest challenge in your community?

Mental health and substance abuse are serious challenges in our community. First responders often witness their effects firsthand, but lasting solutions depend on our entire community working together.

8. How do you think someone meeting you for the first time would describe you?

I hope they would describe me as approachable, down-to-earth, and straightforward. I try to treat everyone with respect and make people feel comfortable talking with me.



9. What advice would you give young people?

Work hard, treat people right, and don't be afraid to start at the bottom. Take advantage of opportunities, you never know where they may lead.

Congratulations Sheriff: Last month marked Sheriff Lower's 38th year with the Tazewell County Sheriff's Office!

FOLLOW THEM:
Tazewell County Sheriff's Office

Fall Safety: Staying Safe as the Days Get Shorter

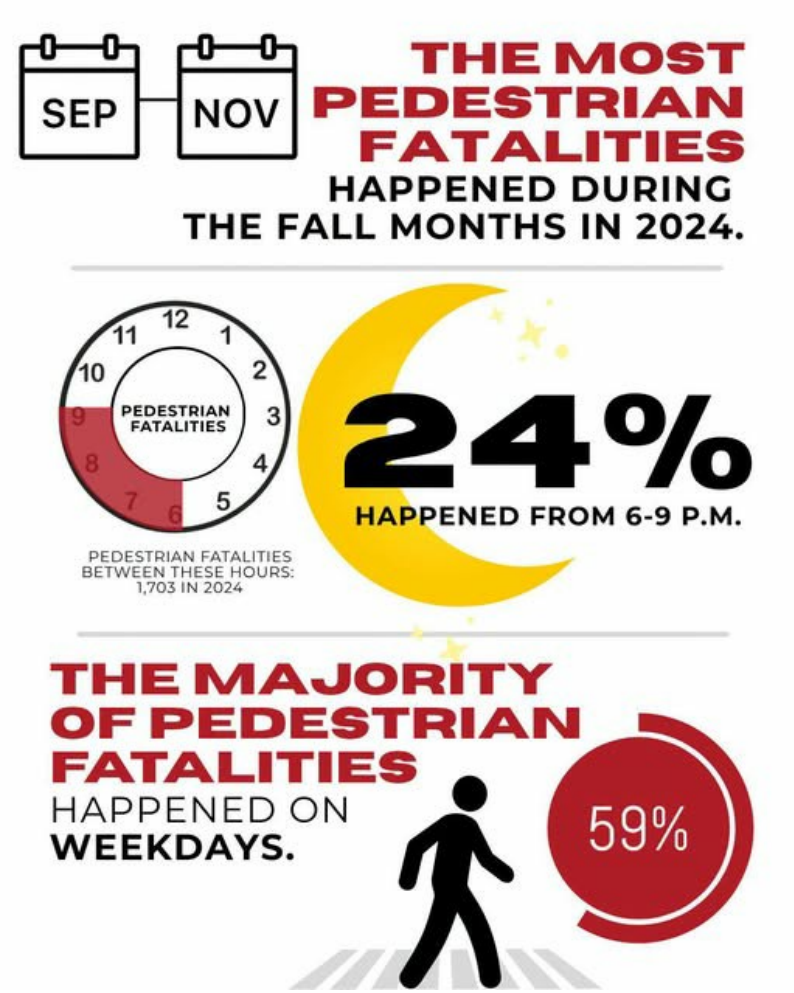
As fall arrives and daylight hours become shorter, drivers and pedestrians should take extra precautions to stay safe on the roads. Earlier sunsets, changing weather conditions, and reduced visibility can make it more difficult for drivers to see pedestrians, particularly during morning and evening commutes.

Drivers are encouraged to slow down, remain alert, and watch carefully for pedestrians near intersections, school zones, and crosswalks. Allow extra time to react, keep headlights on when visibility is reduced, and avoid distractions behind the wheel.

Pedestrians can also take steps to improve their safety. Follow traffic laws, use designated crosswalks whenever available, and look both ways before crossing. When walking in low-light conditions, wear bright or reflective clothing to help drivers see you, and avoid distractions such as looking at a phone while crossing the street.

By staying alert, following traffic laws, and looking out for one another, drivers and pedestrians can help prevent accidents and keep Illinois communities safer throughout the fall season.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)



NEWS FROM IL AND AROUND THE COUNTRY

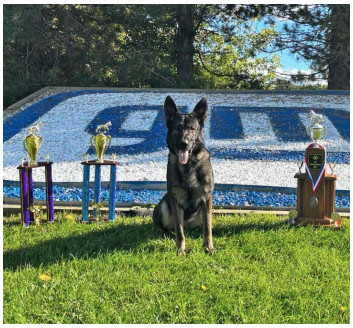


BOONE CO.

From badge to stripes: Boone County deputy turns football official on game days

By: Rock River Current

READ MORE

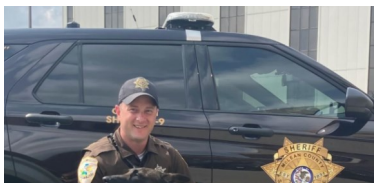


LAKE CO.

Three Lake County Sheriff's K9 Teams Win Multiple Regional Titles

By: Lakecountyil.gov

READ MORE



MCLEAN CO.

A four-legged deputy is hanging up the badge

READ MORE



By: Cole Loiacano and Lauren Warnecke | WGLT.org

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