

ASU tennis partners with ASU PD K-9 officers to keep balls in play

By Amanda O'Halloran, ASU News
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Arizona State University is committed to leading by example in global sustainability, an effort that can be seen throughout the university in unique ways and partnerships.

As a reflection of the university's sustainability culture, the ASU tennis team recently started donating its used tennis balls to the ASU Police Department's K-9 officers. Items that were once landfill bound are now an integral part of training, as they offer motivational rewards for supervised playtime after the dogs complete given tasks and exercises.

ASU K-9s are a key part of campus security, working behind the scenes to ensure the safety of the university community day to day and during special events.

"The ASU Police Department is a full-service law enforcement agency," said ASU Chief of Police John Thompson. "Our K-9s and their handlers reflect that. Being able to help protect the campus and extend those talents and efforts into the surrounding communities speaks highly of not just the K-9 program but the type of police department we are."

K-9s were first introduced to the department 16 years ago with the recruitment of Disney, a golden Labrador retriever trained to find materials used to make explosives. She has since retired but her service with the department was a wonderful success that opened the door for the program to continue and expand.

Today, ASU PD has five K-9s on staff: Nala, Maverick, Iceman, Xena and Scarlett. Like Disney, all are certified to sniff out materials used to make explosives. Nala is a German shorthaired pointer; Maverick and Scarlett are Belgian Malinois; and Iceman is a Belgian Malinois mix, while Xena is a Dutch Shepherd.

Since their inception, the K-9 teams are some of the most sought-after members of the ASU PD. Not only do they patrol all Phoenix metro campuses, but they can respond to requests from surrounding police departments in need of their specialized skills. Around campus, they are often working high-profile events, larger sporting games and shows at ASU Gammage. However, when

national events such as last year's 2024 NCAA Final Four basketball games and supporting events come to town, the ASU K-9s will work with other agencies and their K-9s for maximum coverage.

Each K-9 and handler represents hundreds of hours of training and work, so it is only fitting they are rewarded with quality playtime and tennis balls for a job well done. Lucky for them, the ASU tennis team trains just as hard — and goes through a lot of tennis balls — making this effort toward sustainability one dynamic duo.

"I am immensely proud of the work we do here," Thompson said.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Iceman, an ASU Police K-9 handled by Officer Nathan Makinen, is rewarded with tennis balls donated by the ASU tennis team after training at Mullett Arena in Tempe on Feb. 13. Photo by Samantha Chow/ASU

Gallery



ASU Police K-9 Maverick looks for ATF explosives during training alongside his handler Officer Vincent Williams at Mullett Arena in Tempe in preparation for working large-scale events.



Iceman, an ASU Police K-9, is rewarded with a tennis ball by ASU Police Officer Nathan Makinen after successfully finding an accelerant odor during training at Mullett Arena in Tempe on Feb. 13.



ASU Police Officer Vincent Williams and his K-9 Maverick train at Mullett Arena in Tempe on Feb. 13. Maverick is an ATF Explosives Detection Canine trained to work large-scale events.