Canines solving crimes

Local police dog trainers recognized nationally

Todd Billiot
Staff Writer

LAFAYETTE — When an armed robbery suspect in Terrebonne Parish fled the crime scene in his car, he may have thought he was on the road to freedom.

But Ringo, a Belgian Malinois dog trained by Jack Robicheaux of K-9 Concepts, Broussard, tracked the suspect while he was driving the car, and found the car two miles away, said Lee Roy Lierette, a deputy with the Terrebonne Parish Sheriff’s Office.

“He (Ringo) was able to track the skin and hair coming off his arm,” Lierette said.

Because of stories like this, K-9 Concepts has developed a reputation as one of the top police dog training centers in the nation, according to law enforcement officials.

“The owner is extremely knowledgeable, probably one of the most knowledgeable in the country,” said Lt. Brad Church with the Gretna Police Department outside of New Orleans.

Dogs from K-9 Concepts know what they are doing. In Gretna, a city that covers a three-mile area, more than $4 million in cash and thousands of pounds of illegal drugs have been taken off the streets because of the dogs, Church said.

The Gretna Police Department owns three dual-purpose dogs from K-9 Concepts.

Jack and Sheree Robicheaux established K-9 Concepts in 1986 to train patrol, narcotic and dual-purpose dogs. They have trained dogs for more

See CANINES on Page 18A
Canines

than 25 years. Dogs and handlers have been trained for police and sheriff departments in states such as Idaho, New Jersey, Kansas and North Dakota.

The Robicheauxs use a training center in Broussard and abandoned buildings in Lafayette to train the dogs. They are always looking for new places to train the dogs, such as old buildings and mobile homes, Jack Robicheaux said.

Jack Robicheaux said he obtains the dogs from breeders in Europe. He needs several weeks to train the dogs, he said. Each year, he sells 40 to 50 dogs and trains 200 dog-handlers.

Not all dogs will make it through the rigorous training, Robicheaux said. A dog has to have the right personality. It has to want to retrieve, and sniff and track, he said. A police dog’s career can last several years, usually until health problems that come with age begin to set in, Robicheaux said.

“The dog has to pass a test,” Robicheaux said. “They have to pass sociability and noise-sensitivity tests. They can’t be scared. Every dog is different, just like people.”

Gill Osborne of the Victoria, Texas, Police Department, said his department has bought dogs from K-9 Concepts for several years.

“Jack’s reputation precedes himself,” Osborne said.

James Carinhas, with the Patterson Police Department, near Morgan City, agrees.

“You get the best dogs here,” Carinhas said.