

Richland County Sheriff's Department, other S.C. agencies, honored for K-9 sacrifices

Five K-9s from three South Carolina LE agencies perished in 2024

COLUMBIA, SC, UNITED STATES, May 26, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Deceased K-9s with the Richland County Sheriff's Department (RCSD) have been honored with a beautiful new memorial statue in RCSD's memorial garden in front of RCSD headquarters in Columbia. The statue was officially unveiled on Thursday, May 15, National Peace Officers Memorial Day.

The unveiling followed the National Police K-9 Memorial Service held May 11 at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C., initiating National Police Week 2025.

During the Washington service, 22 deceased K-9s from across the U.S. were recognized as having been killed in action (KIA) or lost to natural causes over the previous year. Five of the 22 losses were from South Carolina, and three of the five — Bumi, Kodak and Wick — were RCSD K-9s, each of whom died in the line of duty. The other two S.C. K-9s lost were K-9 Coba with the S.C. Law Enforcement Division and K-9 Mikka with the Lee County Sheriff's Office.



Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott presiding over the unveiling of the RCSD K-9 statue, May 15 (Photo by Deputy Jay Weaver)



RCSD deputies and Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott (right) at the National Law Enforcement memorial in Washington, D.C., May 11.

RCSD's three K-9s, along with their handlers, were honored in D.C., and each RCSD deputy handler placed a red rose at the base of the national memorial. The three K-9 losses suffered by RCSD were more than that of any other law enforcement agency in the U.S. for 2024. Most of the other attending agencies experienced only one K-9 loss last year. "Though one loss is one too many," said RCSD Deputy Chief Maria Yturria.

Four days following the Washington service, RCSD held its own memorial service.



Detail of K-9 statue at RCSD headquarters, Columbia S.C. (Photo by Deputy Jay Weaver)

"This [the K-9 statue for RCSD] is a fitting memorial," said Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott during the May 15 unveiling ceremony. "This past Sunday, not only were human law enforcement officers lost in the line of duty recognized, but fallen K-9s, nationwide. Through the years, we've had several Richland County K-9s lost in the line of duty. This [the RCSD memorial] recognizes both those K-9s we have lost to natural causes and those lost in the line-of-duty, the KIAs."

According to Lott: "The K-9s names are inscribed on the memorial, but the line-of-duty losses have a special star added next to their names. We want to make sure they are never forgotten. The sacrifices made both by the K-9s and their handlers must be recognized."

Lott added: "Unfortunately for us, we've lost four K-9s in the line of duty, three of them last year. My hope, prayer and dream is that we will never have another star [designating KIAs] added to this memorial."

The fourth K-9, Fargo, was shot and killed in 2011.

Sadly, in the early morning hours of Wednesday, May 21, 2025, another RCSD K-9, "Kiro," was shot and wounded by a fleeing suspect in northeast Columbia. Fortunately, Kiro and his handler survived the ensuing exchange of gunfire. Unfortunately, the suspect was killed when the deputy was forced to return fire.

RCSD maintains approximately 25 K-9s, including several full-service patrol dogs, responsible for criminal apprehension, tracking and pursuit, narcotics detection, and locating missing persons, two EOD dogs (K-9s that detect bombs and explosive devices), one electronics-detection (computer hard drives, cameras, etc.) K-9, and a search and recovery K-9. RCSD also has "C.J.,"

the department's popular crisis intervention K-9.

Funds for the RCSD K-9 memorial were raised by the non-profit K-9 Godmothers.

Special Deputy W. Thomas Smith Jr.
Richland County Sheriff's Department
[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/816218679>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.