

# K-9 VAR



The Purple Heart is awarded to employees injured in the performance of their duties to such a degree that they require hospitalization or immediate care from a physician. The injury must be of a serious nature capable of causing death or extended disability.



On March 17, 2009 at 2221 hours, Officer Stewart made a traffic stop on a reckless driver, who was also suspected of driving a stolen vehicle. The suspect tried to elude Officer Stewart and high centered his car on the concrete divider. The suspect ran on foot south bound through the houses from Longfellow and Division. A perimeter was quickly established as Officer Lesser and K9 Var arrived. K9 Var had retired on January 18<sup>th</sup> due to arthritis in his joints. Another K9 was selected to replace Var however that K9 could not pass necessary state requirements and had to be returned.



**From left: Officer Dan Lesser with Var and Sergeant Brent Austin**

On March 2<sup>nd</sup> Var was brought of retirement until a new shipment of K9's would arrive from Europe at the end of the month. Sgt. Austin assisted Officer Lesser and Var on a track of the suspect. Var has done hundreds of tracks in his career similar to this one, and this was a regular call of duty for him on a nightly basis. Var tracked right to where the suspect was hiding in some bushes about a block away in the backyard of a house. A foot pursuit ensued down an alley west bound across a busy restaurant parking lot (St. Patty's day) crossing Division and eventually ending in the parking lot behind Casa De Oro. Just as Var had come within arms reach of contacting the suspect, the suspect turned and opened fire on Var with an automatic handgun. Officer Lesser returned fire and mortally wounded the suspect. Var was shot in the face below his left eye. That round traveled through his face and skull and exited behind his left ear. A second round entered his left upper thigh and impaled itself into his bone. A third fragment round went through his left front paw. Lesser rushed Var to pet emergency where he underwent immediate treatment to stabilize him. A surgeon was called in later that morning and determined that surgery was more invasive than just leaving the bullet in his leg.

Var survived and he has a permanent limp to remind him of that fateful night and his last call of duty. Var is like any other police officer who places himself in immediate peril to apprehend a suspect or to save the life of a fellow officer. K9 Var is the highest example of what every patrol officer represents here at SPD, Service, Pride, and Dedication.

Var was presented his Purple Heart at the City Council Meeting on April 27th, 2009.