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LLSSA Scholarship

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My Hero

My stepdad, Steve Orr, is a Rapides Parish R.A.D.E. and K-9 officer. He works extremely hard doing his job, which involves working his regular hours plus countless other hours because of search warrants, waiting on someone on the side of the highway(he always says drugs don't have a "time"), searching schools, and a vast amount of time goes into training his dog to detect drugs and to track bad guys. In doing all this, he helps secure our community every day.

When I was in elementary school, it was a lot different having him come to my school as a third grader than having him come to my school as a senior in high school. As a third grader, it was exciting because all the other kids wanted to see the dog, and my stepdad would always show us tricks and let me come to the front of class to be his assistant. However, as I got older, it felt "less cool". Once I got to high school, I noticed that kids seemed to disrespect the police, and some even saw him as a threat. Most of this behavior, I concluded, was learned at home and was unwarranted. If they would only take the time to know the person I know, they would understand that he is fulfilling his sworn duty, which is to protect and serve. He often participates in our family dance competitions, acts as the family jokester, and is always the one trying to make someone laugh. I realized the last few years of high school how hard he actually works in trying to keep drugs out of our school, and I am so thankful because I know he is making it a safer place for kids to learn.

My stepdad's work expands into much more than just his 10am-7pm job. Often, we are waiting for him to eat supper, watch a show, play a game on family night, etc. When my mom gets the message that he will not be coming home and doesn't even know when he will be home because they have an unexpected search warrant

to serve, I can tell my mom gets nervous . Sometimes I do too, because I know how very dangerous his job can be, but I know that in serving this search warrant and getting the bad guy, he is making things safer for everyone.

Our family has learned to go with the flow when my stepdad is working. We all now understand that waiting for someone on the side of the highway can take the rest of the evening, and sometimes it might even last into the next day. These situations are not ideal, but it is necessary for him to do his job correctly and to the best of his ability. This waiting game for the bad guy can sometimes feel unending. However, when he gets a large amount of narcotics, or any amount, for that matter, along with weapons, money, and the bad guy, he calls it a productive day, and we all feel better knowing that it is off the streets.

One of the most important parts of his job is training his K-9 partner, Tripp. If I have learned one thing about having a police dog, it's that they are a lot of work. On top of the intense training they do weekly to make sure that Tripp does his job correctly, there are several hours each week spent on just caring for the dog such as making sure he is bathed weekly, daily cleaning of his home kennel and his work kennel in the police unit, feeding and giving him fresh water and daily exercise a few times a day to get rid of some energy. When it's hot outside, we set up a cooling fan; when it's cold, we set up a heater, or he comes to his inside kennel, depending on the weather. He does not like storms, so we try to keep his anxiety level low by bringing him in. I have come to understand that all the work my stepdad puts into his K-9 partner helps him do his job and keeps him and others safe. Together, they have tracked missing children, adults with Alzheimer's, and numerous suspects through wet, dark wooded areas. They have stopped crimes in progress, found a large amount of narcotics and weapons that would have eventually made it to the street.

In the end, I have to say I couldn't be prouder of my stepdad. He is honest, fair, hardworking, not scared of anything that I know of, and you will always find him on the right side of the law, doing his best to keep our community safe. I asked him the other day why he has to train his other K-9 handlers so vigorously, and he

said that he will retire in a few years, and he wants to set the department up for the future. He said if he can leave the K-9 department in better shape than when he got it and have his successors trained in all they need to know to be successful, then he will have done his job to make his community a safer and better place.