

For many young people growing up in a small town, hometown pride is easy to find. Many grow up in the same town with the same classmates and friends for as long as they can remember. The feeling of taking pride in your hometown is natural, the opportunity to help protect and serve your hometown is one not to let pass you by.

Ben Bertram had a plan for when he graduated from Charlestown High School in 2004. He was going into the military to serve his country with pride. The plan took a different direction once his brother-in-law, Tim Wolff, a Charlestown Police Officer, started talking to Bertram about his future plans.

“Tim kinda got my mind to transfer to a career in law enforcement. He just kept saying with law enforcement, you don’t have to leave home. Originally, I wanted to go into the military,” Bertram explained. “It really started as a military thing and then the opportunity came to start working at the jail straight out of high school. I started doing that and got to mingle with the road officers and stuff. Hearing all that they were doing, then I wanted to do what they are doing.”

Bertram began his career in law enforcement in April 2005 at the Clark County Jail. He worked at the jail for five years. Bertram continued working at the jail while he became a Reserve for the Charlestown Police Department in 2008.

The more he worked as a Reserve, the more he liked what he was doing in his hometown.

“I liked what I was doing and I was good at it,” he added.

Bertram was sworn in as a full-time officer for the Charlestown Police Department on September 7, 2010. The following January he attended the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy and began the career path to protect his hometown.

Now the 26-year-old Bertram is taking on a new partner and new opportunity in his law enforcement career. This new opportunity is one he has wanted and even began the process before he had the opportunity for a new partner. Bertram’s new partner has four legs and a ton of energy. Bertram is the newest K-9 handler for the Charlestown Police Department. He recently attended Faus K-9 Specialties School in Elkhart, Indiana. During the six weeks of instruction he was trained with his new partner, KUbo, a one year old solid black male Belgian Malinois/ Dutch Shepherd mix.

“During the school we were able to train and bond and build trust,” Bertram explained. KUbo is certified in narcotics detection, tracking, area search, criminal apprehension, obedience and article search.

“I knew it would not be easy. He is not an average pet dog. They are wild and try to bite and back talk you. This is a 24/7 job. You are with them all the time,” Bertram explained about having a canine partner. “The hardest part was the narcotics. You must learn the body language of the dog. He will do the same thing every time. You have to know what the language means and what to look for.”

The opportunity for a K-9 officer was something Bertram was working for even before the opening at the department.

“I have always liked dogs so I wanted to do K-9. I started working with the dogs, I started training with the guys without a dog. I wanted to show them I was serious. I thought if I could

show them I was dedicated without having a dog, then if I got a dog, they would already know.” Bertram recalled.

The Charlestown Police Department had a K-9 opening once former K-9 Officer Jason Broady was appointed Assistant Police Chief by Keith McDonald.

McDonald explained the position became open once Broady accepted the offer of assistant chief and Broady’s K-9 partner, Maja, was close to retirement age. Maja has been retired, therefore, leaving an opening for Bertram and K-9 KUbo.

“The position opened up and I applied and got it,” Bertram said about his new position as K-9 Officer.

KUbo has had a long journey to get to Charlestown. He came from Slovakia and was held in a kennel in Poland before being shipped to the United States. Bertram explained KUbo was “green” when he arrived in Charlestown. The puppy was born to be a police K-9 but had no training. The training began soon after arriving in Southern Indiana and will continue until he is retired.

“You are constantly working with them. There is never a day off. You always have to work with them and train with them. A regular patrolman, when they have free time, they do reports. Me, I have to do training,” Bertram stated. “First you train with obedience, it is the foundation of it all. If they can’t be obedient, then it is not any good. Probably most important to take a dog with no training to build a certified police dog. A dog that does not know anything to a reliable dog that can protect the whole city. And you learn really quick, the dog always comes first.”

Bertram concluded, “This is not just a guy and a dog in the back of the truck. It’s a team. He is an extension of you.”