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## Dog tried to save fallen partner, officials say

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Deputy Sheriff Kyle D. Pagerly's K-9 partner, Jynx, tried to save the mortally wounded officer and likely did save the lives of other officers searching for Matthew M. Connor in the woods near his family home in Albany Township, officials said Thursday.

Connor, 25, took cover in a sniper's nest at the top of a steep hill in the woods Wednesday night when the fugitive task force of federal, state and local officers team went to the property on Pine Swamp Road with a warrant for his arrest, according to state police.

Jynx alerted Pagerly to Connor, who was in full camouflage, troopers said. Moments later, Connor stood up and refused an order to drop his semiautomatic rifle, investigators said. Pagerly and Connor were both fatally wounded in the shootout that ensued.

"Jynx was a hero because he alerted on this guy," an investigator said after a press conference Thursday in the state police station on Kenhorst Boulevard. "There could've been more people killed or injured if it were not for that."

And District Attorney John T. Adams said that after Pagerly was shot, Jynx grabbed his partner's pants leg and tried to pull him to safety.

It might have been one of the 3-year-old German shepherd's last official acts as a member of the sheriff's department, according to Sheriff Eric J. Weaknecht.

"When we went to notify Pagerly's wife, one of her first questions was, where is Jynx?" Weaknecht said. "He will be retiring. Jynx is part of their family and the family has been torn apart enough already."

City police said some police K-9s can handle the loss of a handler and return to duty, but opinions were mixed.

According to a former K-9 officer, the bond between a police dog and its handler is so strong that the officer's death can end the animal's working life.

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"They spend more time with each other than a human does with his family. You really get to know each other," said Amity Township police Chief Kent A. Shuebrook, who served on a K-9 team for six years during the 1980s with the Toms River Township Police Department in New Jersey.

"The limiting factor is how old is the dog," Shuebrook said. "The average utility of a K-9 dog is seven or eight years."

Shuebrook said he wasn't commenting specifically about how the Berks County sheriff's department should handle Jynx.

Pagerly and Jynx had been working together since the sheriff's department's K-9 unit was formed in 2009. Little more than a puppy then, Jynx was trained to detect explosives and track people.

Shuebrook knows what the bond between Pagerly and Jynx was like.

"It's the best partner in the world," he said. "They trust you. You are the leader. They have faith in you and look out for you, and you for them."

"You spend all those hours training together, working together, in the car together. He's never in a bad mood because he had a fight with his girlfriend."

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