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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**INTRODUCING PEMBROKE POLICE K9 OFFICER SASHA**

**PLYMPTON** – Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz and Pembroke Police Chief Richard MacDonald are proud to introduce Sasha, a comfort dog to support students and residents.

The Town of Pembroke recently acquired Sasha, a Labrador Retriever, from Professional Canine Services in Middleboro, where she is currently performing her comfort dog training. Sasha, 6 months-old, was acquired by Pembroke Police with assistance from a \$5,000 grant from the Plymouth County District Attorney’s Office. Sasha’s handler is Pembroke Patrol Officer Mary Beth Simmons. Sasha will be used within the Pembroke community to assist with stress relief, and promote wellness, whether it be for school students, seniors, town employees or anyone experiencing tough times.

Pembroke Police Chief Richard MacDonald said, “In the short time Sasha has been a member of our department, she has already made a great impression within Pembroke. We are excited to see how she will help connect our department with the community.”

DA Cruz developed the Plymouth County Comfort Dogs Program to provide additional services and resources to our communities. The Plymouth County District Attorney’s Office provides a mini-grant to Plymouth County Police Departments to assist with costs associated with acquiring, training and caring for their comfort dog.

The pilot program has been designed to be implemented by either local School Resource Officers or the PD’s Community Outreach Officer, who in turn becomes the dog’s handler and sole caretaker. Both the handler and the comfort dog become members of the Plymouth County Comfort Dogs Program and are required to undergo all necessary trainings in the certification process to qualify as a comfort/therapy dog.

Our network of Plymouth County Comfort Dogs are present in our schools and are on hand to provide emotional support for students during the day, and available to the community at night and on weekends. Additionally, the handler and the comfort dog

work with the Plymouth County District Attorney's Office staff at community events across Plymouth County and provide comfort services at our Children's Advocacy Center and office.

There are currently 14 Comfort Dogs in the PCDAO pilot program.