



DATE: October 17, 2007

TIME: 9:15 a.m.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, Punta Gorda, Florida

NEWS RELEASE:

CCSO REPORTS K-9 BLOODHOUND "LIBERTY" DIED LAST NIGHT; TWICE WINNING TOP

K-9 TEAM IN FLORIDA

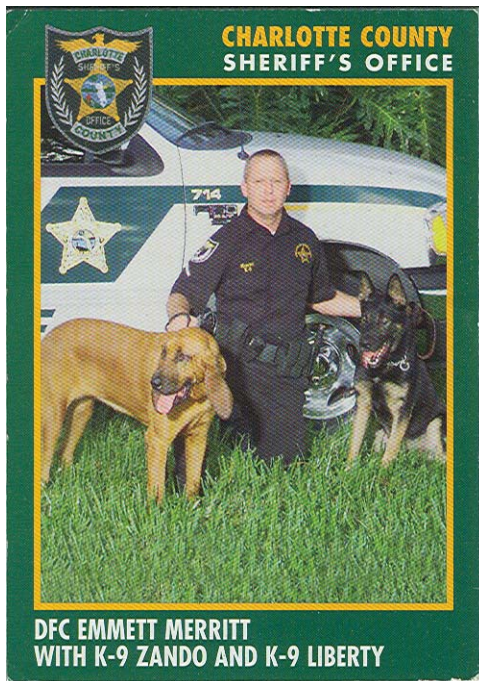
The Charlotte County Sheriff's Office reports that bloodhound "Liberty" died last night due to a severe medical condition that was discovered a couple months ago. Liberty's team handler was Deputy First Class Emmett Merritt. A special service for Liberty will be held Friday at 10:00 a.m. in the Royal Palm Memorial Gardens Pet Cemetery, 27200 Jones Loop Rd., Punta Gorda, off I-75 Exit-161.

DFC Merritt and Liberty were honored Sep. 10 in Tallahassee by Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp as the 2006 Florida Missing Children's Trailing Team of the year. This was DFC Merritt's third time winning this number one prestigious team honor. During the past four years, DFC Merritt was honored as the top K-9 Team in Florida with K-9 Rowdy in 2003, then Liberty in 2004 and Liberty again in 2006; in 2005 DFC Merritt and Liberty were runners up.

DFC Merritt has been with the CCSO since Aug. 1999; his K-9 partner Liberty was donated by the Kody Snodgrass Memorial Foundation of

Homosassa, Florida, known as 832 K-9's Deputy Dogs, Inc. Liberty's kennel name was originally "Diamond in the Rough." She was donated to the CCSO in memory of Deputy Snodgrass, badge No. 832, of the Lake County Sheriff's Office, a handler and trainer who was killed in a traffic accident Oct. 2001. DFC Merritt has since obtained another bloodhound thanks to the same foundation and the new bloodhound is currently in training. The other CCSO bloodhound team is DFC Deryk Alexander and K-9 Justice.

Liberty's original kennel name was "Diamond in the Rough" when DFC Merritt received her. The Sheriff's Office held a "Name the Sheriff's New Bloodhound" contest with all elementary school classes in the county submitting a name. There were 69 names presented and given to DFC Merritt's four children to select one name. "Liberty" was chosen as submitted by Mrs. Melissa Marlett who teaches K-1 children at Liberty Elementary. For their efforts, the class got a special pizza party, and the school received a special trophy, and the school got a K-9 "Doggy" demonstration Dec. 13, 2003.



*We'll miss this hero—"Liberty"
832's Diamond in the Rough*