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DA KATZ INTRODUCES FACILITY DOG NAMED KIMI TO ASSIST IN SPECIAL VICTIM AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

*Comfort K-9 has Already Assisted in Cases to Put Abuse Victims at Ease
October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Kimi, a 2-year-old golden retriever/Labrador retriever mix, has been appointed to the District Attorney's Office as a facility dog to provide comfort and companionship to crime victims and witnesses. The service animal was provided free of charge by Canine Companions and is the only facility dog working in a New York City district attorney's office. District Attorney Katz introduced Kimi as part of the office's public information campaign during Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

District Attorney Katz said: "Kimi has been an extraordinary addition to our team here at the Queens District Attorney's Office. She's affectionate, highly trained and has already assisted survivors and witnesses, and put them at ease. It is extremely difficult to speak about traumatic events and service dogs like Kimi help vulnerable people feel more comfortable as they navigate through a prosecutor's office and the courthouse. I thank Canine Companions for providing us with the valuable team member and we thank our partners at the Family Justice Center, who have provided countless families with services and assistance. October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and I encourage anyone who needs immediate help to call the city's 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-621-HOPE."

Acting Commissioner of the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Saloni Sethi said: "Pets and animals are vital to the lives of survivors of domestic violence, providing emotional support and comfort during their healing journey. They also inspire our dedicated staff, reminding us of resilience and strength. We are thrilled for the opportunity to have a therapy dog support clients and staff alike."

Canine Companions Executive Editor Debra Dougherty said: "Canine Companions Facility dogs are trustworthy in professional environments and can perform over 40 commands designed to reduce anxiety and provide a calming presence. Placements like Kimi with the Queens County District Attorney's Office are exemplary of the human-animal bond because animals are non-judgmental and are always happy to have that human companionship. We're really proud to be able to help the most vulnerable people in society, and we look forward to hearing about the many successes Kimi will have helping victims testify."

Canine Companions is a national nonprofit organization that provides service dogs to individuals and organizations at no cost. The organization has placed more than 8,000 dogs since its founding in 1975.

Kimi, who started working in the office in August, has already assisted victims in three cases, including two children. She is partnered with Queens District Attorney's Office Detective Investigator Dionisia Mikalef and is available to work in any situation where prosecutors believe victims or witnesses will benefit. Kimi will primarily assist in special victims and domestic violence cases but is available to any bureau in the office that needs her services.

She was born on August 22, 2022, at the Canine Companions national headquarters in Santa Rosa, CA and spent the first year and a half of her life with Christopher Cashen of Bowie, MD, her volunteer puppy raiser, who taught her basic commands, good manners and socialization skills.

At the end of that time, Kimi went to Canine Companions' Northeast Region Headquarters in Medford, LI, where she worked with the organization's instructors learning more than 40 advanced commands including how to pull open a door, push a button and provide a "fist bump" with her nose.

During the six months of intensive training, Canine Companions instructors gave detailed reports on Kimi's progress and the animal was matched with Queens District Attorney's Office. Detective Mikalef, who takes Kimi home at night, also received specialized training with Kimi at Canine Companion's Long Island location.

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Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

