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**Every Dog Has
His Day**

Clinton Police
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2018
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CONFERENCE



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K9s4COPs & K9s4KIDS

Q&A SESSION WITH
KRISTI SCHILLER

By Doug Roller

Social entrepreneur, civic volunteer, ambitious visionary, charitable do-gooder. What do you get when you cross those attributes with the elegance of Grace Kelly, the fearless independence of Annie Oakley, the humor of Lucille Ball, and the va va voom of Marilyn Monroe? You get my friend, Kristi Schiller, a modern Southern belle who has dedicated her life to law enforcement, specifically K9s. She may look like Monroe and act like Ball, but she always makes visitors feel as if they are part of her world with her warmth and razor-sharp wit. Forbes referred to her as “Queen of the Internet,” but she is just “KK” to those closest to her. She is usually never without her sidekick and personal security guard, K9 Johnny Cash — a 140-pound King Shepherd. Within moments of being around her, you know that Kristi is passionate about her family and the foundations she lives for: K9s4COPs and K9s4KIDS.



It is impossible to define Kristi in just a few words. She seems to be at ease in most any situation with the toughest men and women in a magnitude of industries. If lack of knowledge or expertise intimidates her, Kristi never lets it show. Most know her background story about how K9s4COPs came to fruition, and I am personally still in awe of how far it has developed globally. I am honored to have been there most of the way with a front row seat.

Kristi was relaxing at her ranch in College Station, Texas, with her husband, John, and little girl, Sinclair, the day before Christmas Eve in 2009. While watching the 6 p.m. news, she noticed the grief-stricken figure of Harris County Deputy Ted Dahlin that filled her screen.

Even with the sound turned down, the devastation was crystal clear. Deputy Dahlin and his K9 partner Blek, a Czech-German shepherd trained in explosive detection and patrol, had been in pursuit of burglary suspects when the dog sped ahead locking in on the track. The highly trained K9 cornered the suspects, but another suspect came from behind and choked the dog to death. Officers found their fallen K9 comrade along a fence line. After apprehending the suspects, it was apparent Blek didn't go quietly. He gave his life doing his job.

The polarizing devastation Kristi said she felt watching this story unfold left her numb. Immediately she started making phone calls on speed dial to friends with political clout: a federal judge, the secretary of state, and even Governor Rick Perry. She hoped to give an anonymous donation that would supplement that department and Deputy Dahlin's new partner quickly, but she learned a mountain of red tape was involved. Dahlin would have to stay on desk duty until the county could budget the funds to replace his four-legged partner and cover the cost of

training. Kristi soon discovered that, in general, law enforcement fund-raising tended to be low-wattage affairs: car washes, bake sales, or BBQ plate dinners. Kristi realized that most civilian supporters want to strengthen their ties between communities and the officers who keep them safe. She was determined to become the conduit that made this happen through raising the funds personally and an awareness campaign.

Kristi and John Schiller have opened their homes and tapped on their address books to help many charitable causes, ranging from Texas A&M University and Texas Children's

Hospital, to the National Mental Health Association and various fine art museums. When the Schiller family is locked into a cause there is no doubt their passion is a driving force.

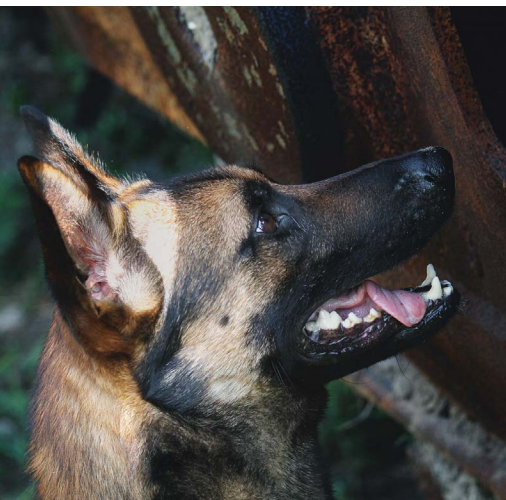
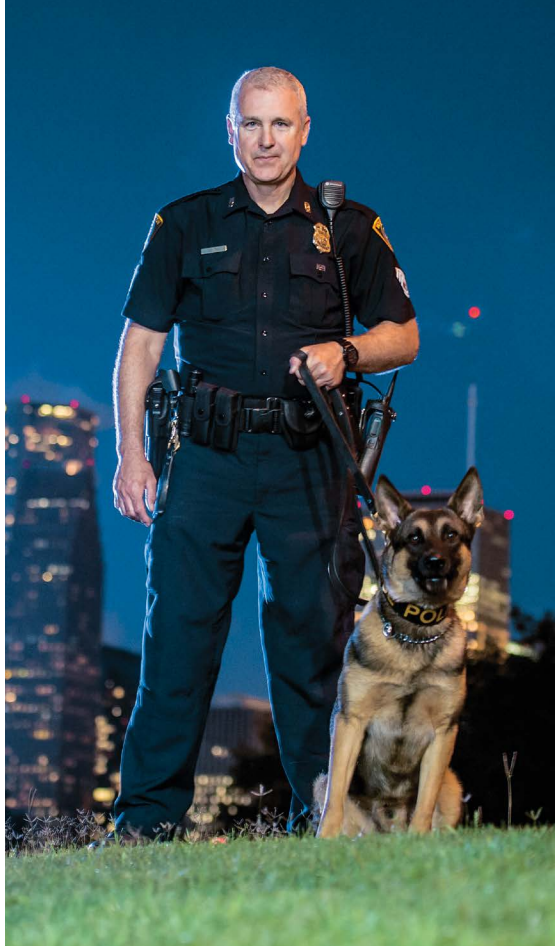
"The night I lost my partner in 2009 was pretty emotional for me," Dahlin reflected. "I knelt over his lifeless body and promised him that I would make things right. In the days following, I continued to think about needing to do something to teach others from my

lessons learned from the incident and to not let my partner's death be in vain. I wasn't sure how or what I was going to do, but I knew I wanted to do something."

Just two months later Dahlin received a call from K9s4COPs.

Kristi explained, "I was so moved that Dahlin's life was saved by Blek's quick action, I immediately began researching departments that were in dire need of a K9. Regrettably, K9s are the No. 1 item cut from most department budgets."





She was quoted that the typical cost of a trained K9 ran between \$10,000 and upward of \$45,000. Kristi drew on her lifetime of civic volunteerism and created the nonprofit K9s4COPs. Immediately the foundation began living up to its mission by donating highly trained K9s to local and state law enforcement agencies and school police departments making specific requests.

“Kristi has been like a sponge since this started, asking questions, attending classes, and traveling to learn more about K9s, handlers, and training,” said Dahlin, who honorably serves as an executive member of K9s4COPs. “She not only knows how important these K9s are to the public, but how important they are to the handlers and their families. She gets that these K9s can help bring us home to our families.”

Last year, Kristi decided to take their daughter out of fast-paced, ever-growing Houston and made the move to their ranch full time. Here she is surrounded by the things she loves most: her foundation, family, friends, and enough farm animals to make Noah build an extension on the ark! If you are fortunate enough to spend

time with Kristi, be prepared that an adventure will ensue, laced with spirits, great food, and lots of one-liners and laughter, creating a world-class story to share with your friends. Recently, during a week-long training staycation at Schiller Ranch, we spent some time reflecting on life, family, and K9s4COPs.

DR/WDM: *Who inspires you?*

KK: The men and women who put on uniforms every day. Law enforcement, first responders, and teachers are the closest people we have on earth to superheroes. I am moved by those who give of themselves without expecting recognition in return.

DR/WDM: *What motivates you to take each day with the energy you focus on K9s4COPs?*

KK: I live my life by the three G's: gratitude, graciousness, and giving back! I am so blessed and humbled watching my daughter, Sinclair, morph into a young lady, knowing she has the fundamentals her father and I have instilled in her. We all exist because of what we give. We wake up every day, and I remind her how grateful we are to live in the greatest country in the world. Each day brings a new gift — some come in the form of



“It was always instilled in me that if someone gives you their time, that is the most precious gift anyone can bestow.” — Kristi Schiller

obstacles. As I reflect on things I thought were life altering at the time, I realize the experiences I thought were blocking my path in reality were my path! Every situation in my life has come full circle as a gift of a teaching experience eventually. I reiterate to Sinclair daily, “If you can, then you do! No one can stop you.”

To some, charity is writing a check and donating money. For others, it’s offering to open their network of contacts or giving their time. It all makes an impact in the world. It was always instilled in me that if someone gives you their time, that is the most precious gift anyone can bestow. On the other side, are the recipients...I consider it an honor every time K9s4COPs gets an application in our foundation office from a department or ISD asking for our help.

DR/WDM: How has your life changed since founding K9s4COPs in 2011?

KK: As cliché as it seems, I honestly cannot recall what life was like before I gained my law enforcement family. Of course, every major chapter in my life has been extremely rewarding. Starting K9s4COPs from the ground up has been the most challenging, yet the most rewarding work I have ever done. I am OCD, so I am hyper-focused on trying to knock every role out of the park each and every day. Without a doubt, outside of being a mommy, K9s4COPs and K9s4KIDs are my life’s calling.

DR/WDM: Of all the roles you play, what is your favorite?

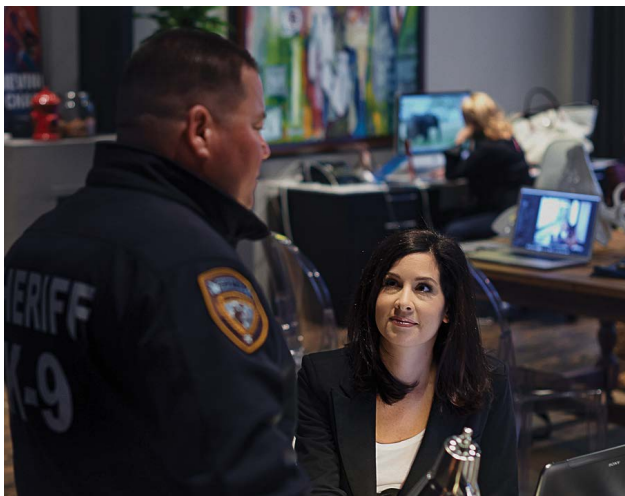
KK: They are all my favorites! Wearing so many different hats definitely keeps things from being mundane. My day

varies in warp speed from corporate wife, to Indy 500 carpool captain, or as a political pundit to my precocious 11-year-old daughter. On some days, I pride myself that I am the self-proclaimed “farm-to-table ranch nutritionist.” One of my K9s4COPs board members is Dave Zinczenko, author of *Eat This Not That*. At least a few times a month, I try to stick to his theory of “making better bad choices.” Combined, these are the highlights of my résumé as COO of Schiller Ranch. I am the starship commander to the breathing tangible assets: occasional foal watch, to racehorses, to managing my 29 personal dogs that reside here. I personally oversee the suggestion box at the ranch, which is a joke, since I am the only person who has the (imaginary) key to the lock. Of course, I play SEC therapist during Aggie football season as well.

DR/WDM: K9s4COPs is now based at the beautiful Schiller Ranch. It is often described as a cross between Disney and Green Acres. It certainly seems to run like a well-oiled machine.

KK: Well, thank you! I would love to take all the credit, but there are six women (including myself and my daughter) who live on Schiller Ranch. My mother, JoJo, is the spicy matriarch. My childhood best friend, Shanna, is the real hero as “ranch manager,” and her daughter, Zoey, lives here too. Then about two years ago, my dearest friend from New Orleans, Cynthia, moved on the ranch. She oversees a lot of the back end that makes this place run smoothly.

Actually, at times, it seems like a reality show in the making. Any given day of the week, we could have a wine dinner for two dozen by the lake, while at the same time 30 cops are here training with their K9s.

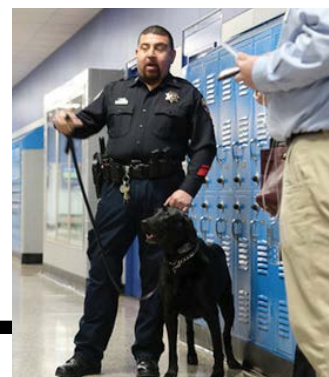
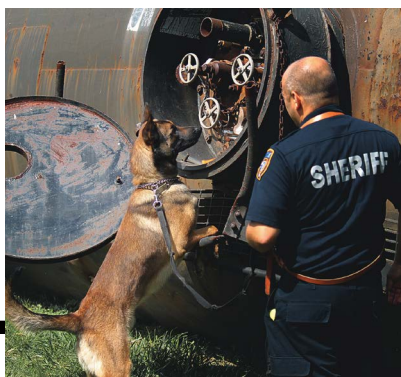


It is a mix that works, but it is baffling to me still. I have an incredible support team. Kristin “Gatekeeper” Brown (who has been with me since 2004 and is the most incredible human God ever breathed life into) makes sure every one of my ideas meets the highest standard. Kortney Kruse is a marketing and social media genius who is finishing her MBA at Texas A&M, although I am not sure why she insists on getting that degree — I am never letting her leave me!

All these women keep me grounded. Someone asked me once, “What all do you grow on the ranch?” I said, “Aggies, racehorses, whitetail deer, K9s, and plenty of estrogen.” I am blessed that everyone I mentioned believes in my dream of K9s4COPs every bit as much as I do. My job is to dial for dollars, naturally with the support of my friends. My dearest friend and executive board president, Laurie Krohn, is without a doubt our biggest cheerleader. The theory of “it takes a village” is the biggest understatement ever! I am so grateful for those who surround me.

As far as K9s4COPs goes, I have a family of officers who serve on my law enforcement board who are my true heroes and help me stay grounded as we grow. These officers who have been put in my path have doubled as guardian angels and therapists. Harris County Deputy Ted Dahlin, for whom the foundation was based, has never faltered in standing by me when I have had some really out-of-this-world ideas. The tagline we live by is “Blek Gave All That Started It All.” We make sure every day that we remember his death was not in vain. His spirit lives on in every K9 we place.

When I reflect on the past seven years, it still seems like yesterday that the then sheriff gave Harris County Sgt. Mike Thomas orders to kind of oversee my efforts and to help me if I needed anything technical. Then along came Sgt. Stuart Red from the Houston Police Department. We actually met in a sandwich shop. I saw “K9” written on his car and stopped to visit with him and tell him if he ever needed anything to please let us know. He said, “Let me know if there is anything I can ever do.” I said, “As a matter of fact, would you be on my board?” Last, but certainly not least, rounding out my LEO board team is Harris County Sgt. Chris Moore. I am not quite sure how he has three kids under six years old and then tolerates me on top of it! There is not a day that goes by that I do not call, email, or text one of these incredible guys. Their patience and loyalty is mind-boggling, yet comforting to me. Of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention the constant outside support I get from you, Doug Roller! You have sat on my board since its inception and have educated me in the art of K9. You will forget more than I will ever know, and you still have the patience to walk me through things regularly.”





DR/WDM: *I think you have chosen wisely in whom you surround yourself with and have not been afraid to ask questions, and you have a desire to learn.*

KK: I trust my team implicitly. This is vital to any organization. I take every bit of advice I am given to heart. Judgment is sometimes a tough pill for me to swallow, especially when I am reaching for the moon. Those who have been with me since the start and have never wavered remind me that I am running out of oxygen and may need to revisit my quest. I also learned that if you're going to risk jumping out of a plane without a parachute, you should make damn sure someone who has a parachute is within arm's reach.

DR/WDM: *What has changed the most since you started K9s4COPs?*

KK: Well, in 2011 we had just a handful of dogs on the streets, and now we have almost 200 teams on patrol! K9s4COPs dogs have removed over a quarter of a billion dollars in contraband, including confiscating over 5,000 firearms. And they have helped with 7,000 felony arrests. I cannot describe the sense of pride that I have for these officers and

the tools that we provide them. I do admit that I have to have my cell phone automatically go silent at 10 p.m. and back on at 5 a.m. If not, it would go off all hours of the night. I get photos or texts from our K9 teams all over the U.S. It just gives me goosebumps when I wake up getting the news of a major bust.

It literally feels like last week, my little girl, who is now 11, was a preschooler, and I was sitting in the carpool line calculating the street value of kilos on a Big Chief tablet for our stat records to show the impact this particular K9 made in the community. Then I feel like I went into the proverbial phone booth and spun around, slipped on some magical Buccellati golden cuffs, and boom, I became the talking head for K9 law enforcement. Now my office is churning out daily press releases on K9 captures or drug busts. K9s4COPs granted K9 Liberty to France after a RAID K9 perished at the hands of a suicide bomber. K9s4COPs was the fan favorite at the 125th annual Rose Bowl Parade; the theme was Dreams Do Come True. And we have not even peaked yet!

When plans initially started becoming reality, I had no idea how the outpouring of support of the national media would snowball and create a path for us — the love and overwhelming support from Steve Harvey, People Magazine, the NFL, and NBC News. I recall standing at the French Embassy, and the ambassador gave K9s4COPs an award. I looked at Ted [Dahlin] and said, “This just cannot be real. It is all because of you and Blek.” When we received the highest award given by the FBI, again I was left in awe of the magnitude by which we had grown. Last year I spoke in Washington, D.C. at the Capitol about the vital role K9s provide in keeping our communities and schools safe. Congress wanted to hear what we had to say.

K9s have a voice, and I am proud to assist in translating the message. Knocking on doors and asking for donations to keep it all moving are the cards that I have been dealt and intend to play. It is a blessing and I do not doubt my abilities to raise awareness for one moment. The vocational aspect I am still learning on a daily basis. I am a seasoned cliff jumper, so I wouldn't trade this experience for the world.

DR/WDM: Tell me more about your vision for your initiative, K9s4KIDS.

December 14, 2012, the tragedy of the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting hit too close to home for me, as Sinclair was the same age as many of the victims. It prompted me to launch the K9s4KIDS initiative in late 2013. The K9s4KIDS program provides K9s to schools, making them a safer place for students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

We created K9s4KIDS to sustain an alternative, kinder, and gentler approach to keeping our school children safe. Statistics show that a trained K9 on campus serves as a double deterrent, keeping narcotics from being distributed and serving as a personal protection barrier against potential harm to our innocent students. These K9s are extremely social, yet highly qualified warriors that are accustomed to going straight to the source of the dilemma — the shooter or threat — and disengaging the suspect.

The bottom line is a simple concept. If these heroic dogs can buy just an extra 30 seconds between an armed assailant and an innocent child, just imagine how many victims of these senseless shootings would still be with us.



I firmly believe that guns in schools aren't the answer. I personally have a concealed handgun license, and I am a member of the NRA. I am an avid wing shooter and deer hunter. I don't want to see teachers carrying. That is a recipe for disaster. It would only be a matter of time before a gun fell into the wrong hands from a teacher's bag or desk drawer. Many parents with the same concern will likely remove their children from schools. This would create a whole other set of issues, from socially inept young adults to a gross lack in structured education.

A socially tuned K9 allows these children a place of learning where they can embrace their innocence and not feel the paranoia and oppression of guns on campus. One of the strongest attributes a child and dog have is their sense of fear. I struggle with people having handguns around my child who aren't idealistically equipped to assume this role. In speaking with other parents, I have felt the same sense of anxiety. As parents and taxpayers, we shouldn't burden our children or underpaid educators with this decision without exhausting every alternative avenue as a logical means of defense in our schools. Since K9s4KIDS' inception, we currently protect about a million kids a day in schools. These incredible K9s, along with their handlers, sweep thousands of lockers and cars each school year, and meet and greet the students they keep safe each day.

In addition to the protection a trained police dog on campus gives, these four-legged officers

and their handlers provide outreach by visiting with students at school assemblies and events and participating in crime safety prevention presentations. All K9s4COPs officers can serve as K9s4KIDS ambassadors. Those who aren't specifically school officers also make visits to schools in their respective cities to teach students about what it's like to be a K9 officer, to show them a demonstration of the K9 in action, and to meet the K9 and officer who patrol their neighborhoods to help keep them safe.

Two years ago, K9s4KIDS welcomed the Texas A&M University Police Department as a K9 recipient with the donations of K9 Tyson and K9 Jackie — the first ever K9s protecting the university. These fast-acting K9s provide security at sporting events and school venues and have protected an estimated two million people from the threat of bombs and explosives. In addition, K9 Bah'le was presented to Hondo

Independent School District, and Brazosport Independent School District welcomed K9 Mickey. After the February 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, K9s4COPs has seen an increase in the number of school police departments who have applied for a K9. Additionally, parents and concerned citizens across the nation are reaching out to K9s4COPs asking how they can start a K9 program at their schools.

K9s4KIDS school police officers who have received a K9 from K9s4COPs say that having a K9 on a school campus has been a game-changer in some of the most unexpected ways. It shows an entirely different side of a K9's work: Kids who are withdrawn and insecure are drawn out when they see that dog, and they want to talk. They start talking about things that are going on around campus. Officers would not have that connection with the students without that K9 to open the lines of communication and make them feel comfortable to talk.



The K9's presence also keeps the students on the straight and narrow. People not knowing the dog's role on campus adds a measure of security that was unanticipated. It puts a lot of people on check. Especially on the high-risk campuses, the students are little more conscious of their actions. They're mellower knowing they've got a German Shepherd Dog or a Belgian Malinois on campus. The dogs calm the environment, and a calmer school adds to calmer, more relaxed students.

DR/WDM: No doubt, your confidence and ideas have allowed you to be bold and step outside the box. What else do you want people to know about you and K9s4COPs?

I would be kidding myself if I said people never judged me prior to meeting me or being around my family. I absolutely know that those who do not know me profile me immediately. I always laugh to myself when people tell me, "You know, you are nothing like I thought you would be" (which means what they have read about me via Google). I am lucky that the 80–20 rule has worked in my favor — 80 percent of the time what I've said or what I've done is something I've been immensely proud of, and 20 percent of the time, I am wishing that internal filter had worked a little better. You cannot be afraid of saying something wrong, nor ever hesitate to apologize when you are.

When Ted Dahlin first met Kristi Schiller, he too had to often remind himself that there is always more than meets the eye.



"I have always been one to not try and judge books by their covers," said Dahlin upon recalling his first meeting with Kristi. "If I were to do that, I might have had the typical thoughts on Kristi being the very pretty, high-society, trophy wife on the arm of a rich, powerful husband. After talking with Kristi at our first meeting, I thought we made a connection. I could sense Kristi's true compassion and caring for my loss and her wanting to do something about it. Today, I'm still in disbelief of what came from a personal tragedy for me and my family. I have gained true friends in the Schillers and family in K9s4COPs. Kristi is a tenaciously compassionate giver who has absolutely no quit in her."

In this fast-paced world with nonstop social media, Kristi's family, friends, and plethora of animals keeps her grounded and focused.

Calm in the eye of the storm or force of nature herself, Kristi says her dogs are the greatest teachers of human nature, and we would do well to follow their example by enjoying the simple things in life. Greet your loved ones at the door. Enjoy the simple pleasure of the wind in your face. And, when you want something — or want to make a difference in the world as Kristi Schiller has — dig until you find it.

K9s4COPs is committed to being part of a solution that works to keep communities, schools, and children safe. To help support K9s4COPs, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, please visit K9s4COPs.org, call (979) 825-9900, or email info@k9s4cops.org.