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JOLIET MEN SAVE GIRL DURING DOG'S ATTACK

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By [TONY GRAF](#) STAFF WRITER

JOLIET -- Two brothers rescued a girl from a dog attack Saturday during which the large animal bit the 10-year-old five times and knocked her down twice.

Brett and Justin Boyter charged the dog and scared it off after the dog had attacked Lauren Elliott on Roosevelt Avenue on the city's West Side. Wearing a red collar, the large tan animal -- possibly a Labrador retriever mix weighing more than 100 pounds -- remains on the loose.

"I told them 'Thank you so much. You saved my life,'" Lauren said Monday. "I was just bursting out with tears, and my body felt like it was going to drop. They said to me, 'Does your family live near here?' And I said, 'If you take me to my friends' house, they'll take care of me.'"

Lauren received treatment at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center in Joliet, and Lauren's mother, Stefanie, called the city police, who made a report.

Lauren is still shaken, and has a bite wound above her right eye, as well as wounds on her right forearm, elbow and wrist. She also has a wound on her left hand.

In addition, the girl has a small wound on her right middle finger and a bruise on the knuckle of her left index finger.

Saturday attack

On Saturday morning, Lauren was at the home of Marissa Cerrillo, 10, a Boyter brothers' neighbor on Roosevelt Avenue. They had planned to go sledding with her friends.

The dog then approached Lauren and her friend.

"I was walking back. I was like, 'I'm not touching that dog,'" Marissa said.

Without provocation, the dog attacked Lauren, the girls said. Marissa said she ran to get help from her father, Willie; her brother Willie, 13; and Lauren's brothers Andrew, 13, and Jacob, 9.

The dog knocked Lauren down, and bit her on the wrist as she lay on the ground, Lauren said. The girl struggled to get back up and was knocked down again. This time, the dog bit her above her right eye, she said.

The second time the girl got up, the dog sunk its teeth into her right forearm, she said.

Working nearby were Brett Boyter, a social studies teacher at Joliet Catholic Academy, and Justin Boyter, who works at Enterprise Rent-A-Car in Joliet. The brothers, ages 25 and 24 respectively, were shoveling snow.

"We were just working when all of a sudden we heard this girl screaming, and the dog was barking," Brett said.

Brett looked and noticed that a large dog had sunk its teeth into the 10-year-old girl's forearm and would not let her go.

"It was a big dog," he said. "(On his hind legs) the dog was at least as tall as she was -- probably taller," he said. "So we took off from our driveway, running, to get her released from the dog, because it had a hold of her. We started charging at it, yelling at it. When the dog saw us coming at it, it didn't leave, but it backed off a little bit."

The brothers then got between the girl and the dog.

"Once the dog let go, our main concern was the little girl," Brett said. "The dog took off, and honestly I haven't seen it before or since. We weren't concerned about trying to grab it or capture it at that point."

Dog still loose

The brothers helped Lauren to the Cerrillo house, and the Cerrillo children called Lauren's mother at her home nearby.

Stefanie Elliott hurried to the scene, where she spotted the dog in the yards behind the homes on the block.

"My boys were like, 'We're going to find out whose dog it is.' I said: 'No. Then you're going to get bit.'" Stefanie said.

That was the last time the Elliotts, the Cerrillos or the Boyters have seen the dog. Stefanie took her daughter to the hospital and called the police.

Brett and Justin are graduates of Joliet Catholic Academy; Lauren, Marissa and Jacob attend Taft Elementary School; and Willie and Andrew attend Hufford Junior High School in Joliet.

Lauren was bundled up in several layers of clothing in preparation to go sledding on Saturday morning. Her mother is thankful for that, she said. If the dog attack had occurred in warmer weather, Lauren would have been wearing shorts and lighter clothing, and the dog would have caused greater injury, she said.

"If it was the summertime, she really would have gotten hurt," she said.

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