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Girl in dog attack healing

By HEATHER DONAHOE
The Leaf-Chronicle

A 4-year-old Brook Mead Drive girl is recovering at home after a neighbor's dog attacked her Saturday.

The 8-year-old yellow Labrador retriever thought to have bitten Abby Marie Bent's face multiple times was up to date on his vaccinations, said Animal Control Director David Selby.



The dog — named Dyson — is in a 10-day quarantine at the house of his owners, Reinaldo and Cynthia Lopez.

Abby was playing with other children Saturday morning in the Lopez's back yard when Dyson — for undetermined reasons — attacked.

Abby's mother told an animal control officer the dog bit when Abby tried to pet him, Selby said.

"I don't think anybody really knows exactly how or why it happened," Selby said. "We still don't know if the dog was sleeping, and she came up and surprised him — it's just hard to say."

The Lopezes indicated they plan to have Dyson euthanized when the quarantine ends, Selby said. Animal Control won't file charges against the Lopezes because Dyson was vaccinated and wasn't running loose, Selby said.

Abby was flown to Vanderbilt University Medical Center and underwent surgery. She received numerous internal and external stitches on her cheeks.

Selby said a Labrador retriever's bite packs about 1,500 pounds of pressure.

"The wounds are severe," Selby said. "It's heartbreaking. She is an absolutely beautiful little girl. I have a 5-year-old daughter myself, and I can't imagine what I'd do."

Clarksville police spokesman Detective Vincent Lewis said Abby will have to have reconstructive plastic surgery to repair significant scarring.

The Bent and Lopez families declined to comment about the dog attack.

Selby warns parents against leaving young children unattended with dogs — of any breed.

"It can happen with any kind of dog," he said. "We have people bring in all kinds of dogs — a chocolate Lab just the other day — because they have growled at their kids," Selby said. "It's just really important for parents to watch their young kids when they're around animals."

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