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Wednesday, Aug. 8, 2007

Search is on for owner of mauling dog in Village

Giant, a 10-pound miniature pinscher, escapes Lake Whetstone attack with his life
by Sebastian Montes | Staff Writer

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As LaShawn Thomas rained punches down on the estimated 80-pound dog that had her 10-pound miniature pinscher clamped in its jaws, she was sure that her companion of eight years would not survive the mauling.

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"He shook him like a rag doll," the 42-year-old Montgomery Village resident said Friday, as she held her trembling, stitched-up pooch named Giant in her arms.

Nine days after the attack, Thomas recalled the July 25 evening. She and Giant were taking one of their regular walks around Lake Whetstone when a large white dog attacked Giant. After researching, Thomas believed the mauling was done by a fighting dog of Cordoba, pit bull, Great Dane and boxer and others, according to the Web site of the Dogo Argentino Club of America.

Suddenly the dog dropped Giant, but started stalking again, pacing in circles as it stared down the small dog, Thomas said.

Against her better judgment — and the advice of a veterinarian technician who happened to be walking by — she picked up Giant. Moments later, another passerby managed to get the Dogo — who had broken away from its owner — back on its leash.

The attack left Giant with a hole in his chest the size of a tennis ball, which took two hours of surgery to mend, Thomas said. It has cost her thousands of dollars in veterinary bills, she said.

A woman who was walking the Dogo — who said she was the owner's mother — gave Thomas her son's cell phone number, but neither Thomas nor officials have been able to make contact with him.

Without more substantial information, the attack investigation has stalled, said Steve Bartlett, field supervisor for the county police's Animal Services Division.



Brian Lewis/The Gazette
Montgomery Village resident LaShawn Thomas was walking her dog Giant, a 10-pound miniature pinscher, when the animal was attacked and mauled by another dog.



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Animal Services has subpoenaed the number's billing address, but

Bartlett knows there's a chance it may be a false number.

The Humane Society of the United States, based in Gaithersburg, says that there are over 4.5 million dog bites of humans each year, about 10 to 20 of which end up being fatal.

Bartlett estimated there are about 1,000 bites of humans and 1,000 animal-on-animal attacks reported in the county each year.

Like all dog-on-dog attacks, Thomas' case is a civil matter, not criminal, Bartlett said. If located, the owner of the Dogo could be fined \$500 and be held liable for damages.


Two weeks after the attack, Thomas hasn't shaken the memory of that night. She recalls wrapping a bleeding, bite-riddled Giant in blankets to keep him warm; the seemingly eternal car ride to the Metropolitan Emergency Animal Clinic in Rockville; the blur of the waiting room, where she sat until 1 a.m. with a neighbor, who tried to distract her with idle conversation.

Giant's prognosis is good. The Dogo's teeth missed a major artery by mere millimeters, Thomas said.

Giant was put on pain medication and antibiotics, and there's a fungus that will be treated when he is strong enough, Thomas said.


Thomas knows it will be several months before Giant is able to once again join her runs. She goes alone now, but knowing that Giant's attacker is still at large, she can't help but look over her shoulder.

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