

## Great Dane attacks girl, 14



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Braintree -

A three-legged Great Dane weighing about 200 pounds attacked a 14-year-old girl who was visiting her mother's home, leaving what Fire Lt. Jim O'Brien described as "a gaping hole" in her scalp.

The mother had to pry the dog's mouth open to release her daughter's head.

The girl was taken to Boston Medical Center, which, citing patient privacy, would not release the girl's name or reveal her condition.

"She did return home yesterday," O'Brien told the Forum on Monday. "She is doing very well and resting

comfortably."

O'Brien said that the Great Dane did not appear to be rabid and had no prior history of biting.

Animal Control Officer David Littlewood said in a separate Monday interview that the Great Dane, whose name is Sorno, is over four feet tall and weighs more than he does.

Littlewood said that Sorno has been "very good" since he was brought to the Braintree Animal Control Center after the attack.

Sorno's fate was not known at the time Littlewood spoke to the Forum.

"A decision has not been made," he said. "Before I make my decision, I will talk with the owner. It's her dog."

Sorno, who is predominantly white with black spots, has had a traumatic life.

"I talked to the place where the lady adopted him," Littlewood said. "He was struck by a car in March. One of his legs was amputated. The lady got him from the Great Dane Rescue League of Connecticut only a few weeks ago."

This marked the first time that Littlewood has ever had a case involving a Great Dane on the attack.

"They're a rare breed to begin with," he said. "There are only two or three in town at the most."

Unlike pit bulls, Great Danes do not have a reputation for fierceness.

"Not at all," O'Brien said. "In general, they're very quiet."

At approximately 5 p.m. on May 12, the girl and her 10-year-old sister, who live in Maine with their

father but were visiting Braintree for the Mother's Day weekend, were watching television.

"It was the first time the girls had spent time with the dog," O'Brien said. "The dog has only had contact with their mother. He is very attached to her."

When the older daughter got up off the couch to lie down on the floor, the Great Dane apparently "mistook this for some sort of threat," O'Brien said.

The mother, who was in the next room, heard the sound of the attack, rushed in, and took swift action by removing her daughter's head from the dog's mouth and calling 911.

When O'Brien and firefighters Bill Casey and Chris Dorn arrived at 280 Pearl St., police were already there.

"Everybody was outside of the house," O'Brien said.

Casey and Dorn applied pressure to stop the girl's bleeding and stabilize her.

"The dog was inside the front door," O'Brien said. "He was very excited and barking very loudly."

It was the first time that O'Brien had ever seen a Great Dane with three legs.

"No matter how many legs he has, a Great Dane is intimidating because of his size," he said.

The mother wanted to go into the house to help restrain the dog, but her daughters were worried about her safety.

A screen door was all that was keeping the Great Dane inside.

"Dave Littlewood did a great job," O'Brien said. "He had a restraining noose. He opened the door just a bit, and the dog didn't struggle and wasn't growling. He went into the noose with no problem."

Littlewood said that he had to use his hands to apply the noose.

"As he was being put into the van, the dog did not show one bit of aggressiveness," O'Brien said.

Fallon Ambulance arrived and took the girl to the hospital.