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When police dogs attack Off-duty pup lunges at girl delivering flyers

By **RENATO GANDIA, SUN MEDIA**

The mother of an 11-year-old boy bitten by an off-duty police dog more than a year ago says she's horrified another kid has been attacked.

"I'm absolutely frustrated that yet again, another child was put in danger of serious injury due to an attack by yet another police dog," Susan Thursby told Sun Media Friday.

A 12-year-old St. Albert girl has been nursing bumps and bruises after Flint, an Edmonton police dog, latched onto her arm while she delivered flyers Wednesday afternoon.

Thursby said the image of her now 12-year-old son Zachary receiving 67 stitches came back to her Friday after reading about the latest incident.

Zachary, then 11, and his 11-year-old cousin were at the police union's Blue Meadows campground in the city's west end Aug. 27, 2006, when police dog Sam – who was with his handler Const. Glen Thursby and on a leash – bit the boys for no apparent reason.

The constable is Thursby's ex-husband.

Less than two weeks after the attack, Sam was put down. It's believed to be the first time in city police history that a service dog has had to be euthanized for an attack.

Since then, Thursby has been asking for the reversal of an EPS policy requiring officers to take police dogs home as pets.

"They are not pets," insisted Thursby.

In a letter addressed to her last January, Chief Mike Boyd wrote that police dog handlers "have the responsibility to ensure proper measures are in place to secure their dogs in kennels at all time, including secondary latches."

Flint's handler was coming out of his St. Albert home just before 5 p.m. Wednesday and was about to put the unleashed dog into a mobile kennel when the girl approached.

Police said the two-year-old dog lunged at the girl and grabbed onto her arm before the officer got control.

Flint's teeth did not puncture the girl's skin, police said.

The dog has been suspended, but it's not clear what will happen next.

Thursby, still saddened by Sam's death, said she and her son fear Flint may face the same fate.

Edmonton Humane Society spokesman Diane Shannon said she wasn't aware of the circumstances of the recent attack but is confident Boyd will follow through on his promise of a full investigation.

"He's a big animal lover," Shannon said. "I'm very confident he will get all the facts and he will look for a proper outcome."

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