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News
Dog attacks young girl; 9-year-old recovering after 200 stitches, surgery, dad says

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BY RON BARTLETT

MELROSE - A 9-year-old Melrose girl is home recovering after receiving hundreds of stitches following a dog bite to her face Saturday night.

The girl's father, Putnam County Sheriff's Detective Elton Miller, said the prognosis is good that his daughter, Miranda, will completely recover physically.

Emotional wounds will surely remain, however.

"It was a very severe facial laceration," Miller said Wednesday. "It took well over 200 stitches that started at the base of her eye and curled all the way around her cheek and down to her lip.

"Physically she's going to be fine. Emotionally is our big concern at this point."

According to a sheriff's report, Miller and his family were at a friend's house on Hall Street in Melrose when the attack took place.

Miranda, along with other children, was on the floor coloring as the dog, a 65-pound brown and white mixed-breed named Bruiser watched from a distance.

When one of Miranda's coloring pencils rolled near the dog, she went to retrieve it and the dog bit Miranda's right cheek.

The dog, with the young girl in its jaws, continued to shake its head violently until Miller and a friend pulled it away.

The dog had shown no previous signs of aggression, its owner, Christy Slone, said.

In a panic as he tried to treat his daughter's gaping wound, Miller picked her up and ran to his patrol car. He then rushed his daughter to the emergency room at Shands at UF in Gainesville.

Fortunately, Miller said, a plastic surgeon was available within a half-hour and Miranda underwent three hours of surgery.

Miranda spent the night and was released from the hospital Sunday afternoon.

Miranda is now home recuperating and remains in good spirits, Miller said.

"Ironically she never cried once," he said. "In fact, she calmed me down. I was upset trying to get her in my police car to drive her to Shands and she actually stopped me and made me calm down enough to drive her."

Maj. Steve Rose, the sheriff's chief of Special Services - which oversees

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animal control - said he has spoken to the owners of the dog, and was told that they will have the animal euthanized by their veterinarian after the mandated 10-day quarantine.

Meanwhile, additional procedures may be required later for Miranda, Miller said, including some laser work to reduce scarring.

"We have to wait for it to heal before we can see what our next step is going to be in the way of cosmetic surgery," he said. "We're just playing it by ear."

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