

Child copes with dog bite injuries, fears

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April 22, 2009 10:24 pm

— THOMASVILLE — A little Coolidge girl lost her best friend on Wednesday. The Rottweiler Hanna Cannon fed with a bottle when the canine was the only puppy in its litter to survive was to go to a new home Wednesday. The 9-year-old girl no longer wants the dog, Trixie, around. “That was her best friend,” said Jack Cannon, Hanna’s father. Something happened to the child Saturday, April 5, that changed the way she feels about dogs. The incident is causing other emotional repercussions. Hanna was in the back yard of her Coolidge neighbor’s house when she was attacked by a border collie. She had gone next door where others had gathered around where a golf cart that had bogged down. When the cart was free, Hanna and others were walking away. The girl was swinging her arms when the dog attacked, said her mother, Diane Cannon. “She did not try to pet the dog,” Mrs. Cannon said. Some 163 stitches were required at the Archbold Memorial Hospital emergency room to close bite wounds. One of the child’s teeth was chipped and another loosened during the attack. “She had stitches on the inside and out,” the mother said. Mrs. Cannon said holes left by the dog’s teeth are in her daughter’s right eyebrow and the top of her left arm. A long, deep, jagged gash from the attack stretches along the girl’s right cheek. “She reached up with her left arm, she said, to cover her face,” the girl’s mother said. Lt. Melissa Hart, of the Thomasville-Thomas County Humane Society animal control division, said the child was “flopping” her arms when the attack occurred. The dog’s owner had the option of putting the border collie in quarantine at her personal veterinarian’s or at the humane society animal shelter. The owner chose her Moultrie veterinarian. After 10 days, the dog was released and has returned home. “It has a clean bill of health,” Hart said. The animal control officer said she considers the attack provoked by the child. “You have provoked bites, and you have unprovoked,” Hart explained. The dog, Kujo, which is confined to a fenced-in area, has not been a problem before, and animal control has not received complaints about the canine, she said. “The dog could have felt threatened and bit her,” Hart said. The attack took place in an area of the county zoned agriculture. Hart said Thomas County law allows dog to roam free in agriculturally zoned areas. According to a Thomas County Sheriff’s Office incident report, the dog is owned by Gail Tillman, who told the Times-Enterprise Wednesday she did not want to comment about the incident. According to the report, Tillman told a deputy the child “swatted” at the dog, “but never made contact when the dog attacked her.” Hanna’s father said his daughter has been afraid to sleep alone since the attack. She insists on sleeping with her parents. Thomas County’s animal control ordinance defines a dangerous animal as one that inflicts a severe injury on a human being or domesticated animal without provocation on public or private property at any time after March 31, 1989. The ordinance continues: “An animal shall not be a dangerous animal or potentially dangerous animal within the meaning of this article if the injury inflicted by the animal was sustained by a person, who, at the time, was committing a willful trespass or other tort or was tormenting, abusing or assaulting the animal or had in

the past been observed or reported to have tormented, abused or assaulted the animal or was committing or attempting to commit a crime.”

Thomas County government contracts with the humane society for animal control.

Hanna is a student at Cross Creek Elementary School. “Kids at school are calling her scarface,” said her father, an officer at Valdosta State Prison.

The Thomasville plastic surgeon who treated Hanna after the attack will see her again May 25.

Mr. Cannon has contacted a lawyer about the family’s need to recoup medical expenses resulting from the attack.

The family has medical insurance through Mrs. Cannon’s job as a cafeteria worker at Balfour School for Young Children, but the insurance will pay only 70 percent of Hanna’s medical bills.

The child will require plastic surgery on her face after the May checkup and again in 10 to 15 years, her father said.

“This will be with her the rest of her life,” Mr. Cannon said.

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