

## Luciano: Family grateful for boy's heroics during dog attack

By **PHIL LUCIANO**

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LONDON MILLS — Lee Moore was shocked to see a normally peaceful dog bite a little girl.

"It was strange," the 15-year-old says. "The dog nipped her once, so I figured it might bite her again. So I decided to help her, and got between the two."

His efforts allowed the girl - 9-year-old Paige Ayers - to escape with just a minor injury. But Lee got a trip to the emergency room, multiple injuries and 29 stitches - along with the gratitude of Paige's family.

"Her arm is bruised," says her mother, Chastity Ayers, 33. "She would've been worse, if not for Lee."

Adds Fulton County animal control officer Steve Beekman, "Sounds like she was very lucky."

Lee lives with his parents at 205 Terwilliger St. in London Mills, a burg of about 400 residents west of Farmington. Paige lives down the street, and on Friday both were at the home of George Garrett, along with several other youths.

Lee had gone there to chat with one of the Garrett children, and at 3:30 p.m. he was outside the residence, ready to walk home. Also outside the dwelling was Paige. Another girl was about to join Paige outside, and she opened a door to walk outside. As she did so, Tank, a 2-year-old Labrador mix, pushed its way outside, Lee says.

Lee says the dog had behaved well on his previous visits to the home, and even had allowed Lee to pet it. But on Friday, the dog dashed at Paige - a wee lass of just 70 pounds - and bit her arm, Lee says.

The girl screamed, and the dog backed off. Lee ran several feet to step between the two, then ran away from the house to distract the dog away from Paige. As the dog ran after Lee, Paige dashed for safety, inside the house.

Lee - a stocky sophomore who stands about 5 feet 1 inch and weighs 190 pounds - felt the dog sink its teeth into his inner right thigh. He says he didn't have time to think about the pain: He was too busy trying to fight off the animal, which was buried between his legs and gnashing at the teen's flesh.

"We were wrestling on the ground for about 30 seconds," Lee says, matter-of-factly. "I had to kick the dog to get it off."

But no sooner did the mutt let loose than it chomped onto Lee's right arm. Lee shook loose and ran toward the house. With the dog chasing him, he nonetheless managed to slip inside and shut the door behind him without further attack.

Paige and Lee were treated at Graham Hospital in Canton. Paige needed only a small bandage for her bite. But Lee required 29 stitches - 23 on his leg and six on his arm - to close his wounds.

Both were able to attend school Monday. However, nights have been hard for Paige, says her mother.

"She has had nightmares that she and Lee are getting attacked again," he mother says.

George Garrett was cited with failing to keep the dog's rabies shots current. For that, he faces a fine of up to \$150.

Plus, the dog has been impounded at Fulton County Animal Control. It will be observed for 10 days to make sure it does not have rabies. So, far there have been no such indications, says animal control officer Beekman.

Meanwhile, animal control administrator Dave Hahn (who could not be reached for comment) has the power to decide what to do about the dog. By state law, he could deem it dangerous or vicious, both of which carry ramifications as to the dog's disposition. A vicious dog can be ordered euthanized.

However, owner Garrett says he will not wait for any such decision: He will have the dog euthanized. He says that although the dog never had acted aggressively before, he does not want to risk anyone else getting hurt.

"He's gonna have to be put down," says Garrett, who apologized to Lee for the dog attack. " ... I have five kids myself. And there's four to six (other) kids here any time. I can't afford for (further attacks) to happen."

That news should come as a relief to Lee's father, Rory Moore.

"If you see the bite marks, that dog wasn't trying to hurt him - the dog was trying to kill him," Moore says.

Meantime, Moore is proud of his son.

"Damn right I am," Moore says. "He's taken it really well. I think he'd do it again."

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