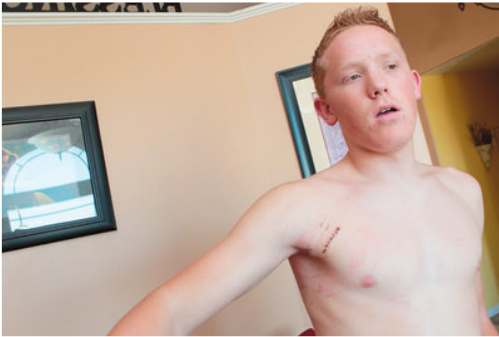


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Dog attack leaves boy scarred, family feeling frustrated

by Lisa Christensen

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All Cody Stanworth wanted to do was go to a birthday party.

On June 21, the 16-year-old was jogging the mile and a half from his Grantsville home on Old Lincoln Highway to a friend's party when he heard barking and growling from a neighbor's dog, a German shepherd. He turned and faced the animal just as

it lunged, biting his right underarm and shoulder. When the dog wouldn't stop attacking, Stanworth tried to fight it off.

"I just kept hitting it and kicking it, trying to get it off of me," he said.

Stanworth was taken to Mountain West Medical Center by ambulance. He spent eight hours in the hospital and had two surgeries to repair damaged skin and muscle. Twenty-four stitches later, he was able to go home.

Now Stanworth's family are asking questions about the way Grantsville City police handled the incident, and why the German shepherd, which had attacked another boy last year, was allowed to attack their son.

"It should have been taken care of the first time," Cody's mother, Karen, said. "And then to have it happen again and still not have anything done — had we not said anything it could have happened a third time."

Cody said the dog's owner, Richard Dillard, called the dog off after the attack. Then Cody called Karen, who called Grantsville City Animal Control. But Cody's father, Wayne, said when the animal control officer came, she allowed the dog to stay at the home because it was current on its shots and had a proper kennel.

"A proper kennel has nothing to do with it," Wayne said. "First of all, that dog never stays in a kennel, ever. It's a house dog."

Wayne, a police officer for the West Valley Police Department, said in his experience it is standard procedure to take a dog that has attacked into custody until either the owner surrenders it or a legal hearing is held to determine if there is cause for the animal to be put down — neither of which happened in this case.

In October 2009, the dog bit another local teen, who also had to go to the hospital for puncture wounds below his left eye and elbow, according to a Grantsville City Police report. The Dillards paid for the 13-year-old boy's medical expenses, the report stated. No charges were filed against Dillard.

Last Friday, however, Grantsville City Attorney Ron Elton said a court order was filed for the dog to be put down, which it was on the same day. Charges were also filed against Dillard for the dog running at large and attacking a person — both Class C misdemeanors.

The Dillards pled not guilty this morning to both counts in Grantsville Justice Court.

Dillard declined to comment on the charges.

Grantsville Police Chief Dan Johnson would not comment on why the dog wasn't impounded following its first attack, or why it wasn't taken from the home following the attack on Cody.

Wayne said he believes if Cody had been much shorter the dog's bite would have easily been to his son's neck, and any of his three younger children would have been killed by the same attack.

Wayne said he's glad the dog was destroyed, but is still frustrated by the time that response took.

"They did handle it, and maybe they just drug their feet, but I just don't appreciate that," he said.

[Lisa Christensen: lchristensen@tooeletranscript.com](mailto:lchristensen@tooeletranscript.com)

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