

Dog-bite victim remembered with clinic for kids

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Dogs don't like being hugged and never run away from a dog.

Those are just two of the tips children will learn during the St. John Ambulance bite prevention seminar, which takes place at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library Sept. 29 from 4 to 5 p.m.

The interactive session includes teaching children in Grade 3 and up the signs of aggression in dogs, how to approach dogs and what to do if knocked down.

"If we can help one child that would be fantastic," said Leslie Bullock, co-ordinator for St. John's ambulance therapy dog pro-

gram for Stouffville and Markham. "Prevention is key to stopping (dog bites). Just learning how to approach a dog is prevention."

Ms Bullock got the idea to host a seminar for children from the room she works in during the Paws for Stories program she leads at the library. The room is named after Courtney Trempe.

Courtney, 8, was killed in 1998 by a dog in east-end Stouffville. The incident rocked the town and drew headlines across Canada.

"It just seemed so appropriate to teach a bite prevention program in her room in honour of her life," she said.

There are a variety of reasons why dogs bite, which include protecting a possession,

food or water bowl, resting place or its owner/owner's property, according to the website of Doggone Safe, a non-profit organization dedicated to bite prevention through education.

The organization operates a victim support fund in Courtney's name.

A bite can also be caused by the type of interaction taking place between the dog and child. Other reasons include the dog being sick or injured, old and grumpy and just having a bad day, according to Doggone Safe.

"Different dogs react differently in each situation, so always be cautious, especially with dogs you don't know," according to the OSPCA website.

When a child sees a dog, he or she is drawn to it like a magnet, no matter the dog's size.

"Children aren't afraid and they just run up to dogs," Ms Bullock said.

But there is a proper and safe way to approach dogs. First, a child must ask the adult caretaker of the dog if he or she can approach and pet it, according to Ms Bullock.

The dog must then be approached by extending a hand to it with a closed fist. Let the dog smell the hand and then slowly and gently pet the side of the dog's head, said Ms Bullock, adding, petting a dog on the top of the head is frightening to them.

This rule applies to dogs of all sizes.

"You have more bites from small dogs than big dogs. People think big dogs are scary, but it's small dogs," Ms Bullock said.

People will often say the dog bit the child out of the blue and for no reason.

But that is not necessarily the case as dogs give warning signs before biting, according to Doggone Safe.

"Dogs don't bite out of the blue. Some-



COURTNEY TREMPE: Stouffville girl, 8, was killed in headline grabbing dog attack in 1998.

times nice dogs have just been subjected to one too many stressors and the result is a bite," according to the Doggone safe website.

Some of the warning signs that a dog has had enough include the dog gets up and moves away from the child; the dog turns its head away from the child; the dog suddenly starts scratching, biting or licking itself; or it does a big "wet dog shake" after the child stops touching it, according to Doggone Safe.

At the end of the discussion portion of the seminar, the children will have a chance to practise what they have just learned with Ms Bullock's therapy dog, Boss.

For more information on the program and to pre-register, contact the library at 905-642-7323.

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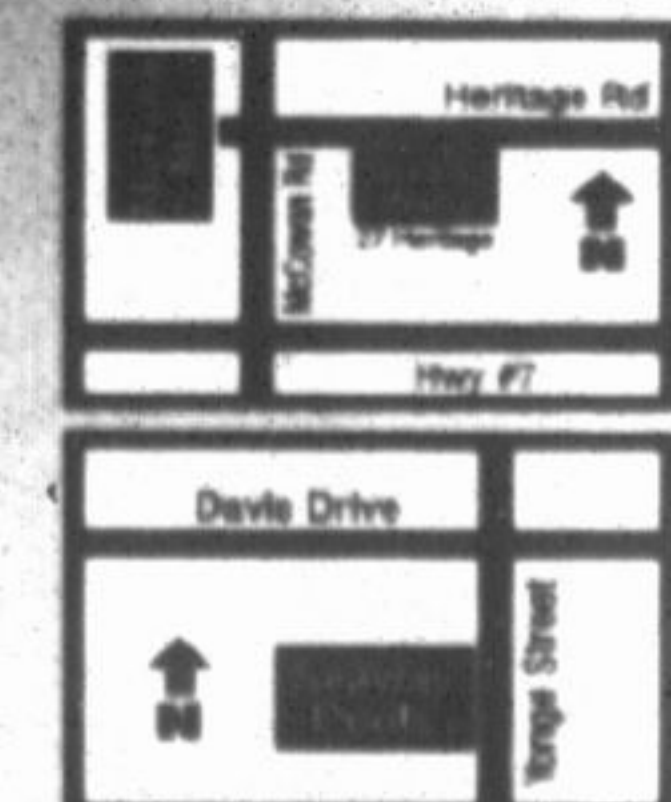
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