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5-year-old recovering after dog attack

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ABSTRACT

[Jaelynn Rodriguez] went outside to play with neighborhood friends about 4 p.m. on Sept. 23 when she was bitten by a dog that she'd petted before and that was "usually really friendly around children," her mother said.

Jaelynn was soon transported to St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla, where X-rays revealed a fractured skull and cheek. [George] said it is clear the skull and cheek bone fractures occurred during the dog bite. Jaelynn also broke her collar bone when the dog knocked her to the ground, George said.

"She has a big, huge personality and this hasn't slowed her down much," George said from Jaelynn's hospital room on Sept. 26. "She's hanging on to that little personality."

FULL TEXT

MISSION - Five-year-old Jaelynn Rodriguez is recuperating at home following surgery to repair a fractured skull, plus face and scalp lacerations, suffered when she was mauled by a German shepherd on Willow Drive Sunday, Sept. 23.

The little girl, a kindergarten student in Mrs. Levi's class at Washington Elementary School in Pendleton, is the daughter of Esther George and Troy Rodriguez.

Jaelynn went outside to play with neighborhood friends about 4 p.m. on Sept. 23 when she was bitten by a dog that she'd petted before and that was "usually really friendly around children," her mother said.

The dog was chained in its yard at the time of the attack. At press time, the dog was in possession of Tribal Police.

Jaelynn's parents, alerted by noise and commotion, went outside to find their daughter walking toward them with severe head and facial injuries. Nobody else was outside when they found Jaelynn, George said.

The little girl, accompanied by her father, was taken by Tribal Ambulance to St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton. George gathered up her 11-month-old daughter, Kiana, and, along with her mother and step-father, went to the hospital, where other family began to arrive.

Jaelynn was soon transported to St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla, where X-rays revealed a fractured skull and cheek. George said it is clear the skull and cheek bone fractures occurred during the dog bite. Jaelynn also broke her collar bone when the dog knocked her to the ground, George said.

Regardless, a neurosurgeon operated on the little girl into the night. A plastic surgeon performed reconstructive surgery on her face and scalp in an operation that lasted until about 12:30 a.m. Monday, Sept. 24.

She spent Monday and Tuesday in the hospital's Intensive Care Unit before being moved to a regular room.

George said doctors indicate that there was no brain injury.

"It's sad to be in this position, but we're fortunate because other things could have happened," she said.

In fact, Jaelynn's spunky, friendly personality has never waivered, her mother said.

"She has a big, huge personality and this hasn't slowed her down much," George said from Jaelynn's hospital room on Sept. 26. "She's hanging on to that little personality."

Jaelynn, her face and head heavily bandaged, was talking and out of bed the day after leaving the ICU.

"She was able to talk soon after she got out of surgery," her mother said. "She knows what happened, she remembers."

George, who works at Wildhorse Casino, and her husband, who is a CTUIR Fisheries tech, said they were grateful for the community support. She said the family is eligible to receive services from Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center and has insurance.

"We're thankful for all the support and we're working through this," George said.

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Pioneer Press (St. Paul, Minnesota)

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September 6, 2007 Thursday

His pit bull killed his son; now he's blamed

BYLINE: Emily Gurnon, Pioneer Press, St. Paul, Minn.

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Sep. 6--Zachary King lost his 7-year-old son in a bloody pit bull attack last month at the family's home in Minneapolis. Now, he may face more punishment in court.

King, 30, was charged Wednesday with second-degree manslaughter, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman said.

"As much as there's a tragedy in that family, that tragedy could easily have been averted if that pit bull hadn't been kept in the house chained to a pole," Freeman said. "The person who clearly knew the dangerous propensity of this dog was his father."

Before it killed Zachary King Jr., the male dog named Face had bitten two other people in incidents reported to animal control. But it also had bitten the boy once before and a family friend, according to the criminal complaint filed in Hennepin County District Court.

The complaint alleges King, "knowing his dog had a vicious propensity, failed to properly confine his dog and such failure caused the death of Zachary King Jr."

The complaint tells the story this way: King told police he tied up the dog the night before the Aug. 16 attack to prevent him from biting friends he was having over for a party at the house at 3530 Humboldt Ave. N. When the party ended about 4 a.m., King went to sleep. He slept in the next morning while his wife left for work. The dog remained tied up in the basement.

Meanwhile, the children -- including Zachary Jr. -- had the run of the house.

Shortly after 1 p.m., the elder King was upstairs when his daughter came screaming that Zach Jr. had been attacked in the basement.

King went downstairs and found his son "lifeless on the floor in a pool of blood," the complaint said. Face was standing over the boy. When King bent down to retrieve his son, the dog attacked him, too. King pried off the animal, ran to get a handgun and shot the dog.

The boy was rushed to North Memorial Medical Center in Robbinsdale, where he was pronounced dead. The Hennepin County medical examiner reported the boy died of blood loss and asphyxia associated with puncture wounds and lacerations on his neck.

The clamping force of the dog's jaws also broke a bone in the boy's spinal column.

When police arrived at the house, they found "a large amount of blood" in the dining room, bathroom, kitchen, rear hallway and basement steps, the criminal

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complaint said. The basement was worse: large pools of blood on the floor, blood on the walls, a hole in a sheetrock wall with blood smears around it.

King told police Face had a history of attacks -- including one that left his son with a scar above his upper lip. The dog had bitten the girlfriend of King's father. And Joe Friendshuh, who was working on a fence between King's yard and the neighbor's, was attacked in June 2006, which led to a trip to the emergency room and a \$22,500 settlement.

Animal control officers also logged a report of a neighbor child who entered the home unannounced and was bitten.

To keep Face from biting strangers, the family kept him tied up or muzzled, the complaint said.

A female pit bull, Ginger, had had puppies several weeks earlier, and several were also in the basement, King told police.

King was not in custody Wednesday, and no date had been set for his initial court appearance.

Zachary King Sr. told WCCO-TV he thinks what happened was a tragic accident, not a crime. He said losing a child is the ultimate punishment for any parent.

"It's a tragedy in our family," he said. "I just lost my only son, and now they're trying to press charges against me like I killed my son or something? It's not right."

King suggested that the recent outrage about Atlanta Falcons star quarterback Michael Vick's dog-fighting case is why authorities are prosecuting him.

"Just because Michael Vick and all this pit bull stuff going on ... they want to make a big issue over it. I don't know what's going on," he said.

The state sentencing guidelines for the second-degree manslaughter charge, for someone with no criminal history, call for probation.

Animal control officials said previously that the two earlier reports on Face did not warrant declaring the dog as dangerous.

Tom Deegan, manager of animal care and control for Minneapolis, said Wednesday the mother dog and six puppies were euthanized last week.

"We're required to keep them five business days, and if we get no contact on them, and the kennels are full, that's what we do," he said.

Five of the puppies were recovered after the fatal attack; a neighbor turned another in to animal control, Deegan said.

Tad Vezner and the Associated Press contributed to this report.