

today's local news

carlsbad | oceanside

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Girl recovering from dog attack

Vista 2-year-old was bitten by pit bull Thursday

By Jeremy Breningstall
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VISTA — She is like most 2-year-olds. She laughs, she pouts, she makes small exclamations.

Her parents are glad to hear her voice again.

After going several days without speaking or eating, a Vista girl is home recovering from facial injuries resulting from an encounter with a pit bull.

Grace Miecznikowski was with her parents Thursday night as they finished a truck sale in San Marcos when the dog, a 15-year-old with no previous history of problems, suddenly pounced on her, the Miecznikowskis said.

"Tony Miecznikowski, the girl's father, said they were within a few feet of their daughter when the attack occurred — and it was a good thing. "If I was 10 feet away, she probably wouldn't be here right now," Tony said.

The dog's owner chose to have the pet euthanized Friday.

Grace's parents described what happened as a freak accident but one that has sent home a powerful message they would like to spread to others: be careful when children are around strange dogs, even if the dog seems friendly.

The incident occurred swiftly.

On Thursday night around dusk, a man from San Marcos called about the Miecznikowski's Dodge Ram 1500, which he was interested in purchasing.

"He was a very nice guy," Tony said. "He had the money."

The Miecznikowskis agreed to follow the buyer home to his San Marcos residence to complete the transaction.

The buyer invited them in and they had a conversation. The dog was cooped up in a back room. The buyer then asked the Miecznikowskis if their daughter likes dogs.

Like most young children, Grace is fond of dogs — or at least she was.

The pit bull, which belonged to the buyer's nephew, was released outside.

The Miecznikowskis were talking to the buyer on a patio when the attack occurred. Contrary to an account provided by an Animal Control officer, the Miecznikowskis said they never let their daughter out of their sight.

The dog ran out of sight in the backyard but returned to the patio and without warning jumped on pint-sized Grace.



Usually a chatterbox, 2-year-old Grace Miecznikowski of Vista was silent for several days after a pit bull bit her nose and face.

they said.

The dog just trotted right up to Grace and latched onto her face," Tony said.

Grace was lifted off the ground and was being tossed around like a rag doll, said Brandi Miecznikowski, Grace's mother.

"Tony kicked the dog as the truck buyer (who did not wish to be interviewed for this article) grabbed the little girl away from it.

"I looked over my shoulder and she was head to toe in blood," Tony said.

As that point, by their own account, the Miecznikowskis went into shock. They got into the car with Brandi driving and Tony holding Grace in the backseat, just driving without being certain which direction they needed to go in order to reach a hospital.

Realizing the severity of Grace's injuries, they called 911. Paramedics arrived and a helicopter followed, landing in the street to bring Grace to Children's Hospital in San Diego.

The truck buyer, who had followed them, gave Tony "the shirt off his back" because Tony's was too bloody for him to enter the helicopter, Tony said.

Because Grace's face was so covered in blood, Tony said he couldn't even be sure where her injuries were — if she had been bit in the neck or elsewhere.

The whole sequence of events, from their arrival in San Marcos to the time the helicopter landed, had only taken something "like 20 minutes," Tony said.

She spent the next few days in the hospital.

"Her face was all chewed up and now it's back to normal," her mother said.

"That hospital over there is

Attack A4 >

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Self-esteem boost

Program gives cancer patients new outlook

By Angela Holman
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OCEANSIDE — Eight women who are fighting cancer by undergoing chemotherapy had their spirits lifted Monday afternoon by the Look Good — Feel Better program they attended at Tri-City Medical Center.

During the hands-on workshop, the free program teaches female cancer patients — who often lose their hair, eyelashes and eyebrows due to the chemotherapy treatments — how to restore their appearance through the use of makeup, wigs, scarves and hats. The patients are given free \$300 cosmetics kit to take home.

Clara Martinez, a 70-year-old Carlsbad resident who is

undergoing chemotherapy for lung cancer, said she was so depressed Monday morning she didn't want to attend the workshop. Monday was the first time Martinez cried since finding out in August that she has cancer.

During the workshop Martinez sat laughing, smiling and joking with the other women who were present. Martinez said getting done up with makeup helped her feel better and she is glad she went.

Vista resident Ann Graham, 72, said she didn't want to attend the workshop because she was so tired Monday morning.

"But I'm glad I came, it made me feel better," Graham said. "I hate to get up and get dressed and stuff, but it was worth it, it was really worth it."

Graham said she is glad she attended the workshop because it got her out of the house, taught her how to cover her bald head in new ways and the women who attended were dolls.

Cancer A4 >

WHAT

Look Good ... Feel Better is a free program for women who are undergoing treatment for cancer.

WHERE AND WHEN

Tri-City Medical Center
4002 Vista Way, Oceanside

• July 25, 1 to 3:30 p.m.

• Sept. 26, 1 to 3:30 p.m.

• Nov. 28, 1 to 3:30 p.m.

Palomar Medical Center
555 E. Valley Parkway, Escondido

• June 27, 5 to 7:30 p.m.

• Aug. 29, 5 to 7:30 p.m.

• Oct. 24, 5 to 7:30 p.m.

CONTACT

The American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

Carlsbad fourth-grader wins \$1,500 scholarship

By Janet Ryan
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CARLSBAD — When 10-year-old Magnolia Elementary School student Davin Curtis was given the task of finishing the sentence "My hero is ..." as part of the Optimist Club's speech contest, thoughts started flowing through his head.

His first considerations were popular comic-book heroes Superman and Captain America. He then thought of former presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. He also pondered everyday heroes such as firefighters and police officers.

After recently reading a version of "The Iliad," Davin related the novel's over-looked hero Odysseus' wife Penelope, to families awaiting the return of loved ones fighting overseas — just as Penelope waited 20 years for Odysseus to come home.

"But what did they all have in common?" he wondered. That question became his prize-winning focus.

After rising through the ranks in the

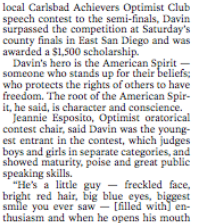
local Carlsbad Achievers Optimist Club speech contest to the semi-finals, Davin surpassed the competition at Saturday's county finals in East San Diego and was awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.

Davin's hero is the American Spirit — someone who stands up for their beliefs; who protects the rights of others to have freedom. The root of the American Spirit, he said, is character and conscience.

Jeanie Esposito, Optimist oratorical contest chair, said Davin was the youngest entrant in the contest, which judges boys and girls in separate categories, and showed maturity, poise and great public speaking skills.

"He's a little guy — freckled face, bright red hair, big blue eyes, biggest smile you ever saw — (filled with) enthusiasm and when he opens his mouth to speak, you'd think he was a 35-year-old," Esposito said. "It's completely at ease on the platform. He's a natural."

Contestants had to give a 4 to 5 minute



Ten-year-old Davin Curtis, a fourth-grader at Carlsbad's Magnolia Elementary, won a \$1,500 scholarship in the district finals of the Optimist Club's Oratorical Contest.

Scholarship A4 >