

## LONG ISLAND PLASTIC SURGICAL GROUP, PC HELPS U.S POSTAL SERVICE KICK OFF NATIONAL DOG BITE AWARENESS WEEK

May 20-27, 2007 Garden City, NY

It's a common problem, especially in the warmer weather – dog bites. Last year, four-year-old Matthew Henriques, of East Meadow, was brutally attacked and bitten by his neighbor's three dogs. His ears were nearly ripped off and he sustained dog bites all over his face and body. Sandra Sacks, MD, a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon from Long Island Plastic Surgical Group (LIPSG) performed a five-hour surgery to stitch up and repair his injuries.

Eight months earlier, seven-year-old Shealynn Gelderman, of Dix Hills, was bitten by her neighbor's dog. LIPSG physician, Kaveh Alizadeh, MD, MS, FACS, performed several surgeries over the past year and a half to rebuild and repair her right cheek, which was bitten off in the attack. She just went back to school a few weeks ago.

Sixty percent of the 4.7 million dog bite victims annually are children. Shealynn and Matthew are two cases out of the thousands of dog bites seen by Long Island Plastic Surgical Group doctors over the years. The practice, which is the first and the largest plastic surgical group in the country, estimates that 10 percent of the lacerations they see are dog bite-related.

"The most common risk of dog bites is infection," said Barry K. Douglas, MD, FACS, Long Island Plastic Surgical Group. "Even a small puncture could become infected, so seek out medical care immediately if you're bitten," he added.

According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) of which all LIPSG physicians are members and candidate members, nationwide, Plastic Surgeons did reconstructive procedures in 30,585 dog bite cases in 2006. Those cases ranged in severity from repair of puncture wounds to reconstruction of damaged or torn soft tissue to extensive surgeries – sometimes requiring replanting or reattaching ears or other body parts. In extreme cases where soft tissue defects result, sophisticated reconstruction may be necessary to optimize the esthetic and functional outcome.

The ASPS has created an outreach program, called "Beware the Bite!" to educate the public about the issue of dog bites and how to prevent them. Some tips include:

- Never approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Never run from or scream at a dog.
- Be "still like a tree" when an unfamiliar dog comes up to you.
- If a dog knocks you over, roll into a ball and stay still.
- Never play with a dog unless supervised by an adult.
- Tell an adult if you see a stray dog or a dog acting strangely.
- Don't look a dog right in the eye.
- Don't disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating or caring for puppies.
- Don't play with a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first.
- If a dog bites you, tell an adult right away and seek medical attention immediately.

Dog bites can be very serious. Be sure to request a Plastic Surgeon if you are faced with a dog bite injury. Long Island Plastic Surgical Group, located in Garden City, can be reached at [www.lipsg.com](http://www.lipsg.com).