

# KENT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

HEALTH PROMOTION/DISEASE PREVENTION DIVISION



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Dear Parent,

Each year, more than 4 million people are bitten by dogs. Approximately 800,000 of these injuries are severe enough to require medical attention. It's estimated that more than half of those bitten are under the age of 13, and children are at least three times more likely than adults to sustain a serious injury.

To reduce dog bites in our community and keep our children safe, your child's class took part in a dog bite prevention program developed by the Kent County Health Department and Kent County Animal Shelter. Through a presentation which included slides, worksheets, and coloring pages, students learned how to stay safe around dogs and avoid dog bites. We encourage you to take a look at the completed work that your child brought home. After all, the tips can help keep you safe around dogs, too!

Perhaps the most important lesson of the dog bite prevention program is the need for everyone to take responsibility for their pets. Just as important as teaching children how to stay safe around dogs is our responsibility as adults to make sure that we reduce the chance that our dogs will bite. Here are some important tips from the Kent County Animal Shelter and the Humane Society of the United States.

- Don't tether or chain your dog outside for long periods of time. This can cause dogs to feel isolated and become aggressive. Dogs are motivated to protect their territory and may bite when someone comes within reach of their chain.
- Remind family members and others not to disturb dogs that are sick, sleeping, eating, nursing puppies, or guarding territory or property, such as a car, toy, or yard.
- Spay or neuter your dog. Dogs that have not been spayed or neutered are three times more likely to bite than dogs that have been spayed or neutered. Spay/neuter operations also help stop pet overpopulation and can provide significant health benefits for pets.
- Train and socialize your dog so that he or she is comfortable around people.
- Never allow your dog to roam.
- To report suspected cases of animal cruelty or neglect, contact the Kent County Animal Shelter at (616) 336-3210.

Thank you for your help in making our community safer for all—and a happier place for our canine friends!

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