

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



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***National Dog Bite Prevention Week Kick-Off Event***

**\*Houston City Hall**

**901 Bagby St., Houston, TX 77002**

**Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**9:00 AM**

The not for profit organization Prevent The Bite of Palatine, Illinois sponsors National Dog Bite Prevention Week, May 15th – 21st, 2011, along with the American Academy of Pediatrics, U.S. Postal Service, American Veterinary Medical Association, Insurance Information Institute, American Society of Plastic Surgeons, American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery and the American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons. Representatives from several of these organizations will be speaking about the epidemic of dog bites in America and will be available for interviews.

*The latest statistics show a troubling trend with dog bites:*

1. According to the study "Emergency Department Visits and Inpatient Stay Involving Dog Bites, 2008". <http://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb101.pdf> *the overall trend through the 16 year time period between 1993 and 2008 showed an 86.3% increase in dog bite-related hospital stays. The average cost of a dog bite-related inpatient stay was 50% higher than the cost of the average injury related hospitalization.*
2. According to the Insurance Information Institute, *dog attacks accounted for more than one-third of all home owners insurance liability claims paid out in 2009, costing \$412 million and up 6.4 percent from 2008.*
3. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, *32,961 reconstructive procedures to repair dog bites were performed in 2010, up 8 percent from 2009.*
4. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, *from 2001 – 2009 dog bites were the ninth leading cause of unintentional injury to children ages 5 – 9 (425,443) and the tenth leading cause of unintentional injury to children ages 10 – 14 (339,775).*

In 1999, Kelly Voigt, then seven, was seriously injured when a neighbor's dog attacked her. She received approximately 100 stitches in her face and throat and later required treatment for post traumatic stress disorder and depression. Kelly's recovery came with a determination to help keep other children safe from dog bites. With the help of a school psychologist and animal assisted therapist, Kelly started Prevent The Bite in order to recover from trauma, regain her love of dogs and keep other children safe from dog bites. She started giving dog bite prevention presentations in her school one year after her attack. Within a few years, Kelly's program became so wide spread that the nonprofit organization Prevent The Bite was formed.

To this day, Kelly continues to provide children with the educational information necessary to be safe from dog bites through presentations, a lesson plan, an educational packet and more. She recently filmed a video with the American Veterinary Medical Association using PTB's tips to educate children on safety techniques with dogs (see link below). "Sometimes something bad has to happen in order for something good to happen," said Kelly. "I'm grateful that I have had the chance to help so many children be safe. I used to think that if I could help keep one kid safe it would be enough, but not anymore. All children need this information." Prevent The Bite information has been sent to all 34,000 Post Offices in the U.S. every year since 2004, and has been shared with all 60,000 members of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Prevent The Bite is working with the above mentioned organizations to spread the word that dog bites are preventable. Leading studies conclude with a need for educational programs, especially directed at children. PTB's educational program provides children with vital dog bite prevention techniques, a basic understanding of canine body language and responsible dog ownership guidelines. "Our goal is to drastically reduce the incidence of dog bites while maintaining a happy and safe bond between children and dogs", said Kathy Voigt, Kelly's mother and Prevent The Bite President.

[American Veterinary Medical Association dog bite prevention video featuring Kelly Voigt:](#)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LT-4WbOQhUw>

Twitter hashtag: #dogbite

*Kelly Voigt has appeared on Oprah, the Today Show, in People Magazine and more. Prevent The Bite's mission is to prevent dog bites to children through education. For more information, visit:*  
[www.preventthebite.org](http://www.preventthebite.org).

Prevent The Bite

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\*The Postal Service released statistics highlighting the nation's top 25 dog attack cities with Houston topping the list at number one with 62 letter carriers attacked in 2010. Nationwide, 5,669 postal employees were attacked last year, yet that pales in comparison to the 4.7 million Americans bitten annually — the majority of whom were children.