



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 6, 2016

Important Announcement

Montco Public Health Officials Seeking Good Samaritan Who May Have Been Exposed To Rabies

Norristown, PA (February 6, 2016) – Officials at the Montgomery County Health Department are requesting that an unidentified male Good Samaritan, who came to the aid of a young girl being attacked by a rabid raccoon on Thursday in Lower Merion, come forward and identify himself, because he may have been exposed to rabies.

The Good Samaritan came to the aid of the young girl when she was walking home from school on Thursday, February 4th at approximately 4:00pm through a wooded area on the Bridlewild Trail near Dodds Lane in Gladwyne. While the young girl was being attacked by the raccoon, the man, who was driving by, stopped his car and came to her aid using a hockey stick to beat the raccoon until it released the girl's leg. The man then drove the girl home to her parents, but left before anyone found out his identity.

The raccoon was later captured by the Lower Merion animal control officer and submitted for rabies testing. Earlier today the Montgomery County Health Department was notified that the raccoon tested positive for rabies at the State Public Health Laboratory.

The Good Samaritan was described as a white male in his 50s or 60s and approximately six feet tall. He was driving a small tan or bronze SUV. The Health Department wants the man or someone who might know who he is to come forward so health officials can assess whether he has been exposed to the raccoon's saliva. If a rabies exposure is confirmed, the Health Department will recommend post-exposure prophylaxis, also known as the rabies shots. The vaccine can prevent an exposed individual from getting potentially fatal rabies disease.

The Montgomery County Health Department may be reached by calling 610-278-5117 and following the after-hours instructions to speak to the on-call staff from the Health Department.

The Health Department does maintain 24/7 assistance to its county residents and public health partners.

The young girl who was attacked started post-exposure prophylaxis for rabies on Thursday evening at a local hospital immediately following the incident and is recovering at home.

Rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The vast majority of rabies cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each year occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes.

The rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. The early symptoms of rabies in people are similar to that of many other illnesses, including fever, headache, and general weakness or discomfort. As the disease progresses, more specific symptoms appear and may include insomnia, anxiety, confusion, slight or partial paralysis, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, hyper-salivation (increase in saliva), difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia (fear of water). Death usually occurs within days of the onset of these symptoms therefore it is important that persons begin the rabies shots immediately to prevent the disease.

NOTE: Frank Custer, Montgomery County Director of Communications, can be reached at 215-527-5928.