

For Immediate Release

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PIT BULL MAULS OWNER'S MOTHER AND MOTHER'S BOYFRIEND

MOUNT CLEMENS, MI -- A one-year-old pit bull terrier attacked the owner's mother, requiring extensive stitches, only to attack the mother and her boyfriend days later, this time causing major injury requiring several surgeries.

Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith today charged the dog's owner, Robert Laughton, with two counts of Owning a Dangerous Animal Causing Serious Injury, a felony punishable by up to four years. Laughton, 29, of Roseville, had purchased the pit bull 'Bruce' from a Craigslist advertisement a year before.

According to police and prosecutors, the owner's mother, Suzette Laughton, suffered another in a series of attacks by Bruce on April 19. In that incident, Bruce opened a wound on Suzette's hand requiring thirty stitches to close. Police were called to the Roseville residence, and issued Robert Laughton a citation for unlicensed dog and harboring a vicious animal. Laughton also executed a ten-day order prepared by the Macomb County Animal Shelter whereby Laughton agreed to quarantine the animal prior to its being surrendered to the Shelter for euthanization on May 1.

On April 30, Bruce attacked Suzette again when she attempted to let the dog out of his cage. Her boyfriend, Michael Mager, attempted to stop Bruce and instead was mauled extensively himself. Suzette ran to a neighbor's to summon the police. When police arrived, they viewed Mager face-down within the house, covered in blood, with the animal circling him. A team of officers subdued the aggressive animal and oversaw Mager's transportation to University of Michigan Hospital. Paramedics initially feared that Mager would lose both arms from the injuries sustained in the attack. In addition to other injuries, Mager had a severed artery and lost the tops of both of his ears.

Suzette Laughton stressed to detectives that Bruce was not being provoked or agitated prior to the attack. Nor was food out to trigger any food-aggression in the animal.

"I'm the same as most of you," said Prosecutor Smith. "I grew up with dogs and love them dearly. But as owners we bear complete responsibility for the training and behavior of our animals, especially regarding their interaction with the humans they encounter.

"With these powerful breeds, that responsibility is particularly acute. A single aggressive episode can result in life-ending tragedy. Our office shows zero tolerance to owners who fail to safeguard their animals and the people around them from vicious aggression."

Robert Laughton will be arraigned at 39th District Court, Roseville.

For arraignment information, please contact 39th District Court at 586.773.2010. For further information regarding the case, contact Prosecutor Eric Smith at 586.469.7282.