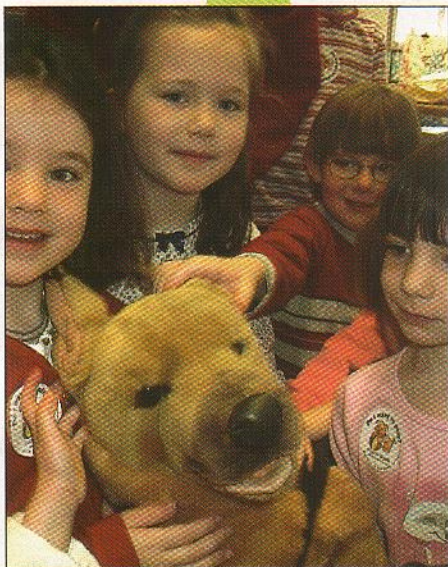


BE A TREE

by Andrea Cleary



Child Safety Checklist:

- 1 Never ever talk to strangers.
- 2 Look both ways before crossing the street.
- 3 Don't play with matches.
- 4 Be a Tree.

f&h Be a Tree? While the first three points above may be cardinal safety rules for children, and rules that every loving parent constantly reinforces to protect their own against known dangers ... number four may seem a wee bit out of place. Yet, as I have become familiar with the 'Be a Tree' program, it has also become perfectly clear that this message is as important to a child's safety as every other point on that crucial checklist!

One of my favourite early morning

weekend rituals is reading about current events while my little lapdog snoozes contentedly. Unfortunately, some of that enjoyment has been marred in the past few years as I take in more and more news stories about people --- most notably and horrifically young kids --- getting seriously injured from dog attacks.

While the pit bull-types of the dog world have shouldered their fair share of the blame for these vicious incidents that blare from the front pages, it's safe to say that all dogs --- even my beloved little lapdog Spence --- need to be treated in a manner that is respectful of the fact that they are animals first. Secondly, no person is more susceptible to being badly hurt from a dog bite than a child ... and that makes the 'Be a Tree' program even more significant.

'Be a Tree', developed by Doggone Safe, is endorsed by the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians (OAVT). "Be a Tree is proactive, and a solution to an ongoing problem," says Julie Jones, Registered Veterinary Technician and OAVT Community Outreach Coordinator. The program is geared to pre-Kindegarten and older grade school kids, generally combining an in-classroom presentation led by a personable instructor with an activity keepsake children and parents can review and reinforce together. In a nutshell, the 'Be a Tree' program teaches kids in a fun and informative way how to behave around animals. It's all about dog safety, demonstrated by the instructor in a way that kids will want to use in their daily

lives ... which should spell a huge relief to all parents too!

While the in-class program covers an essential and extensive list of 'do's and don'ts of dog safety', the catchy name 'Be a Tree' comes from this:

To be safe around a strange dog:

1. Fold your branches (hands).
2. Watch your roots grow (feet).
3. Count in your head until the dog goes away or help comes.

Every parent and teacher will find value in the dog safety lessons for kids in the 'Be a Tree' program. Julie Jones welcomes your emails for more information on the 'Be a Tree' program in your child's classroom.

To reach Julie, please email her at juliejones@rogers.com or visit www.oavt.org or www.doggonesafe.com for additional details on the 'Be a Tree' program today! ■



Be safe around a strange dog.