

Pa. dog-bite victim seeks damages

By JOE SYLVESTER, Wilkes – Barre Times Leader 4/13/2013 ,

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HANOVER - A dog bite that led to the partial amputation of a 6-year-old Fairfield girl's nose is continuing to make its way through the legal system. After a 2011 criminal trial found the dog's owner guilty of violating the Pennsylvania Dog Law, the girl's family is pushing forward with a civil lawsuit.

The attack occurred in April 2011 when 6-year-old Brooke-Ann Boyd walked to a neighbor's house to play with a friend, according to court filings. After knocking on the front door of the home of Richard and Joyce Sprouse, she was told to just let herself in, the civil complaint states. The Sprouses' male pit bull, Chaos, pushed through the front door and attacked Brooke-Ann on the front porch, according to the complaint.

The dog bit off a portion of Brooke-Ann's nose and inflicted a deep cut on her cheek, according to the complaint. Brooke-Ann was then rushed to Meritus Medical Center and underwent emergency surgery. At the time, surgeons were able to re-attach a portion of her nose that was found on the Sprouses' porch, said Thomas Newell, the attorney representing the Boyd family.

Brooke-Ann underwent 23 separate hyperbaric oxygen treatment therapy sessions, but doctors were not able to save the re-attached portion of the nose and several facial reconstruction surgeries were scheduled, Newell said. The first took place in June 2012 and more are scheduled in upcoming years.

Because of the nature of the injury, Newell said, it has taken almost two years to better understand the full extent of Brooke-Ann's recovery and needs. That is why the family did not file a civil suit until now, he said, despite the fact that a criminal trial was completed in October 2011.

At that criminal trial Richard Sprouse was found guilty of unlawful confinement and control of his dog and of harboring a dangerous dog. He was fined about \$300. Contacted for this story, Sprouse noted the matter is still in litigation and declined comment.

Newell said he has been in contact with the Sprouses' home insurance agency and that he hopes the issue can be resolved amicably. For the Sprouses' part, Newell added, they did voluntarily put down their dog one week after the incident.

A Pennsylvania attorney with a specialty in dog-bite cases, Newell has represented many other dog-attack victims in the past, including Ajia Brown, an 8-year-old who was attacked by two pit bulls in Hanover in 2010. The dogs ripped off a portion of Ajia's scalp and pieces of both of his

ears. The case was settled in October of 2012 and Ajia was awarded \$508,613 by Travelers Insurance, the insurance company representing the dog-owner.

With the Boyd case, Newell said, he is also looking for a high-end pay out in order to cover the high costs of multiple surgeries as well as damages for Brooke-Ann being forced to live the rest of her life with the scars from the attack.