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Fairfield dog-bite victim gets settlement

Brooke-Ann Boyd's attorney said the civil settlement was made amicably

By Mark Walters

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A Fairfield girl bitten by a pit bull three years ago when she was 6 was awarded a \$300,000 settlement Tuesday in an Adams County civil suit.

Brooke-Ann Boyd was attacked by the dog in April 2011 when she walked to a neighbor's house to play with a friend, according to court filings. After the girl was told to just let herself in, the dog, Chaos, pushed through the front door and attacked her on the front porch.

The dog bit off a portion of Brooke-Ann's nose and inflicted a deep cut on her cheek.

The dog's owner, Richard Sprouse, was found guilty of unlawful confinement and control of his dog and harboring a dangerous dog. He was fined about \$300.

Melissa Boyd, Brooke-Ann's mother, said her daughter was traumatized by having to testify during the October 2011 criminal hearing.

"We're just happy it's over," Boyd said. "When we walked out of court on Nov. 5 after the judge said he'd grant the settlement, we told Brooke we'll never have to go to court again for this issue."

Surgeons were initially able to re-attach a portion of her nose that was found on the Sprouse's porch, said Thomas Newell, the attorney representing the Boyd family. But after 23 hyperbaric treatment therapy sessions, doctors were unable to save the re-attached nose after necrosis set in.

Since then, Brooke-Ann had her first reconstructive plastic surgery in June 2012, Newell said, noting that more are scheduled for the future. He said the second phase of her reconstructive surgery cannot be done for at least another four years, when Brooke-Ann's facial features have matured.

Boyd said her 9-year-old daughter still loves animals, but she tends to have a trepidation around larger, louder dogs. She said her daughter's positive attitude through the traumatic experience has been encouraging for her family.

"She's been an amazing strength for us," Boyd said. "At times she would ask why she had to go through it, but then she says 'maybe I'm here to help someone else.'"

Newell, a Pennsylvania attorney with a specialty in dog-bite cases, said Chaos' owners, Richard and Joyce Sprouse, had the pit bull euthanized.

Newell said the payments are being made through the Sprouses' home insurance agency, State Farm Fire and Casualty Company.

Efforts to reach the Sprouses on Wednesday were unsuccessful.

Newell has represented many other dog-bite cases, 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 2012 and Ajia was awarded \$508,613 by Travelers Insurance, the insurance company representing the dog owner.

The Boyds read about Ajia's case and felt it necessary to bring Newell into Brooke-Ann's case, the lawyer said.

Mark Walters covers Adams County for The Evening Sun. Contact him at 717-637-3736 ext. 147.

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