



# Legacy of Care

100 YEARS OF HELP, HEALING & HOPE

For Immediate Release

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## **Good Morning America Features Oklahoma Agency Working To Keep Foster Siblings Together**

**(Oklahoma City, OK)** — Good Morning America has produced a three-part series titled Home Sweet Home spotlighting foster care issues nationwide, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of which aired October 11, 2019. This 2<sup>nd</sup> story involves the work of local nonprofit, Oklahoma United Methodist Circle of Care.

Circle of Care was founded in 1917 as an orphanage and today serves children and families in crisis through foster care, transitional living and independent living programs across Oklahoma.

As part of its Centennial Celebration in 2017, the agency launched a \$5 million Legacy of Care campaign to address the needs of sibling sets in foster care amid the state's severe shortage of foster homes for sets of three or more children. Larger sibling sets are most often separated, not for lack of willingness on the part of foster families, but because of space.

There are nearly 8,000 children in Oklahoma state custody. As of September 1, 2019, 651 of those children were siblings in traditional or supported foster care who are separated from one another (excludes kinship or higher levels of care). Sibling sets with 3 children have only a 65% chance of being placed together while in care. With five or more children in the set, their chance of being placed together is zero.

With 80% of the money raised, the Legacy of Care campaign is funding the construction and endowing the long-term support of eight (8) large, custom, single-family homes and four (4) clubhouses throughout the state to accommodate up to 48 foster children concurrently. A total of

(more)

four homes have been completed in Alva, Enid and Woodward, with construction underway in Shawnee for two more. The final two homes are slated for Elk City and Coweta. The clubhouses will be used for training, awareness events, supervised visits and other supportive activities.

Each home is designed to accommodate up to six (6) foster children with trained, certified foster parents. “Separating siblings causes unnecessary trauma, hinders visitation and reunification efforts with the biological parents, and prolongs the length of time the children are in state custody,” stated Keith Howard, President/CEO for Circle of Care. “The goal of this project is to keep foster siblings together while in state custody, and/or to reunite sibling sets who have been separated upon entering state custody. We expect long-term benefits of healthier children, stronger sibling connections and improved relational and academic skills,” he explained.

All of this is made possible by churches, foundations and local communities coming together to raise funds to match Circle of Care’s investment, dollar for dollar.

Watch Howard and his “Party of 8” share about the impact of separating siblings at [goodmorningamerica.com](http://goodmorningamerica.com). Contributions to the Legacy of Care Campaign are gratefully accepted online at [legacy.circleofcare.org](http://legacy.circleofcare.org).

About Circle of Care:

Oklahoma United Methodist Circle of Care is a 102-year-old faith-based child welfare agency serving children and youth through three programs. Their Foster Care service recruits, trains and supports volunteer foster parents to care for foster children. Support includes clothing allowance, equipment co-op, respite care, community activity funds, support groups and ongoing training. For more information, contact Sarah Steffes, Vice-President of Development, at [sarah.steffes@circleofcare.org](mailto:sarah.steffes@circleofcare.org) or 405-215-5054.

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