

Enid News & Eagle

Tuesday, 20 March 2018

Breaking ground

By Ryan Miller, Staff Writer

Oklahoma United Methodist's Circle of Care broke ground on its new specialized foster care home Monday afternoon.

The site is next to the Holsinger Home on Oakwood, which first opened its doors in 1999. The home currently houses seven children — two adopted children and five siblings — said Circle of Care CEO Don Batson. The new home will be modeled after and built next to the Holsinger Home.

"The Holsinger Home provides care for children who have been removed from their home due to problems such as physical or sexual abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, and family problems. The coordinators of the home are licensed by the state of Oklahoma, Department of Human Services (DHS) as foster parents for children in DHS custody," according to Circle of Care's website.

Both the new home and the Holsinger Home are designed for live-in foster parents to be able to take multiple siblings from the same family, and avoid splitting up families of foster children in a specialized type of foster care.

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Circle of Care CEO Don Batson speaks during a groundbreaking ceremony in Enid on Monday. (Ryan Miller / Enid News & Eagle)

"The Circle of Care and our legacy campaign is planning to build eight homes across the state ... to help keep children in their communities and to help keep (these) boys and girls together."

~ Don Batson, Circle of Care CEO

FOSTER CARE

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"It's because of the efforts of the church, the community that we're able to keep those kids together. We know that when boys and girls, brothers and sisters are apart it's extra punishment on them and they didn't do anything to deserve it," Batson said. "So the Circle of Care and our legacy campaign is planning to build eight homes across the state ... to help keep children in their communities and to help keep (these) boys and girls together." The Legacy of Care campaign's objective is to raise \$5 million to build eight new homes in several communities across the state for large sibling sets. So far \$3.2 million has been raised with plans to add the new home and a clubhouse to the Enid Holsinger Home site, one home in Alva, one in Elk City, two in Woodward, one in Coweta and two in Shawnee.

Campaign Chair Jerry Perryman provided scripture during the ceremony and Bishop James Nunn gave a blessing for the land and building. VP of Programs Keith Howard performed the benediction for the site. "I just appreciate the vision so much," Nunn said. "The people that will be served for this, not just the children living in the homes. This



is a generational impact ... thank you all for coming and being here today and your interest and your support, and all the good things that are happening in this place."

The Holsinger Home was Circle of Care's fourth campus, and made possible by and named after Galen and Juanita Holsinger. Recently, in 2016, the organization received a \$250,000 gift from the Holsinger Estate in addition to a \$4 million endowment to support its foster

care services in the Enid area. About 10,000 children are in Department of Human Services care, according to Circle of Care. With three siblings, there's a 65 percent chance of sibling groups being together in foster care while the number goes down to 45 percent with four siblings, 20 percent with five and 0 percent with six or more. Circle of Care aims to keep those siblings together in a safe, family-oriented environment.

"Children who experience parental loss, neglect and abuse depend upon one another to survive. They turn to each other for support leading to bonds that are stronger than those of siblings from well-adjusted families. Being with siblings in foster care helps to mitigate the impact of separation and loss and offers continuity, support and sense of safety and security," the website said. More info is at legacy.circleofcare.org.

Circle of Care VP of Programs Keith Howard recites a benediction during a groundbreaking ceremony for a new foster care home in Enid on Monday. (Ryan Miller / Enid News & Eagle)

Downloaded March 30, 2018.

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