

# AVEDIS FOUNDATION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Lauren Roth

[laurenroth925@gmail.com](mailto:laurenroth925@gmail.com)

405.606.9798

## **AVEDIS FOUNDATION AWARDS GRANT TO BUILD FOSTER HOMES IN POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY**

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**(Shawnee, OK)** — The Avedis Foundation and Oklahoma United Methodist Circle of Care, a statewide foster care agency, have announced plans to collaborate on a building project to provide homes for sibling sets in foster care in Pottawatomie County.

The Shawnee-based foundation has approved a grant of \$450,000 to Circle of Care, to help advance the agency's "Legacy of Care" campaign, a \$5 million capital campaign to address the needs of sibling sets in foster care amid the state's severe shortage of foster homes for sibling sets of three or more children. The project will create new, and enhance existing, foster care campuses in Woodward, Elk City, Enid, Alva, and Shawnee.

Contracted by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Circle of Care strives to increase the number of foster parents in Oklahoma. Additionally, the agency places a priority on keeping siblings together while they are in foster care. The Legacy of Care campaign is designed to fund the construction and support of eight large, custom, single-family homes and five clubhouses/activity centers throughout the state to accommodate up to 48 foster children.

The Avedis grant will allow for the construction of two such foster sibling homes, in addition to a clubhouse/activity center in Shawnee. Both homes will be designed to accommodate up to six foster children with trained, certified foster parents. Additionally, the clubhouse will be used for recruiting, training and supporting foster parents from Pottawatomie County and surrounding communities.

"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 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.

"We know that siblings, who have experienced abuse or neglect, often share a deep bond," stated Dr. Kathy Laster, Avedis Foundation President/CEO. "The separation of siblings is a deeply traumatic experience. Avedis Foundation is pleased to have a role in helping these children maintain their family connections and live more stable lives. We are pleased to partner with Circle of Care to bring these needed resources to our community." Laster added.

(more)

## About Circle of Care:

Oklahoma United Methodist Circle of Care is a 101 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, support groups and ongoing training and education. For more information about fostering, contact Keith Howard at [keith.howard@circleofcare.org](mailto:keith.howard@circleofcare.org) or call 405-530-2081.

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