

# Family of young Pa. girl who lost portion of nose in dog attack secures \$300K settlement

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By Jon Campisi



A suburban Philadelphia attorney has secured a \$300,000 settlement for the family of a young girl whose nose was partially bitten off by a neighbor's dog two-and-a-half years ago.

Thomas J. Newell, a lawyer from Perkasie, Bucks County, recently announced the settlement in a case initiated by Andrew and Melissa Boyd, of Fairfield, Pa., who sued on behalf of their daughter, who is now 9 years old.

According to the lawsuit, which was filed this past April at the Adams County Court of Common Pleas, the young girl had gone to the home of Richard and Joyce Sprouse on April 13, 2011, with the intention of playing with the couple's daughter.

At first, the girl knocked on the screen door, at which time Richard Sprouse told her to come into the house, the complaint states.

As the girl began to open the door, Chaos, one of the defendants' three pit pulls, charged at the young girl, biting off a portion of her nose and causing a severe laceration on her right cheek.

The local police chief was able to save the nose, and the girl was transported to a hospital in Maryland for surgery, according to Thomas J. Newell, the Bucks County lawyer who represented the plaintiffs.

Newell, who said his practice niche is dog bites – he has represented attack victims from 19 different counties in Pennsylvania – said he filed suit after the defendants' homeowners insurance company failed to respond to his demand for compensation.

Following the filing of the complaint, the insurer agreed to pay out the policy limit of \$300,000 sought by the plaintiffs.

Punitive damages, Newell noted, are rarely paid by insurance companies.

“A significant portion of [the girl's] nostril was amputated, bitten off in the attack,” Newell said in a phone interview.

The portion of the nose was eventually attached, although the girl had to undergo 23 separate, two-hour sessions in a hyperbaric chamber designed to regrow the damaged tissue, Newell said.

Newell said the nose isn't fully formed at that young age, so the reconstruction process can't be completed until the girl becomes older.

A third surgery is scheduled to take place a few years down the road, the attorney said.

"Obviously, every time she looks in the mirror she sees it," Newell said of the injury. "She's been asked more than once or twice, 'what's the story with your nose.'"

Newell said the plaintiffs and defendants were once close, but "the relationship between the families became quite strained after the attack."

Fairfield is located in Adams County, near Gettysburg.

Newell said the plaintiffs would receive a total of \$287,650 after attorney's fees, medical expenses and subrogation costs are taken care of.

He said a structured settlement annuity would be set up whereby the young girl would receive that money in payments given out over a four-year period beginning when she turns 18.

The money will hopefully be used to pay the girl's college education, he said.

The settlement was approved on Nov. 5 by Adams County Common Pleas Court Judge Thomas R. Campbell.