

Class Action Settlement Helps Support Foster Children Through CASA of Western Oklahoma

A class action settlement in Roger Mills County regarding interest on late oil and gas payments alleged to be owed under Oklahoma's Production Revenue Standards Act will now help children in foster care across western Oklahoma.

The lawsuit was brought on behalf of Suzanne Broadbent and others who were similarly situated. Broadbent and the Class were represented by attorneys Randy C. Smith and David R. Gleason of Oklahoma City. After the case settled, payments were made to class members. When some settlement money remained unclaimed, Broadbent, as class representative, asked the Court to approve CASA of Western Oklahoma as the recipient of the approximately \$55,000.00 in remaining funds to support children who need a voice.

For Broadbent, the request was about making sure the settlement continued to do good in the same communities connected to the case. Broadbent has strong ties to western Oklahoma, going back four generations. Her grandparents settled here before statehood. She grew up in Roger Mills County and graduated from Leedey High School.

"This money was derived from western Oklahoma resources. When there was money left over, I wanted it to go somewhere meaningful to the betterment of western Oklahoma. CASA of Western Oklahoma helps children who are going through some of the hardest moments of their lives. This felt like the right place for those funds to go."

CASA of Western Oklahoma recruits, trains, and supports community volunteers who advocate for the best interests of children in foster care. These are children who have often been abused, neglected, or removed from their homes through no fault of their own. A CASA volunteer may be the steady adult who keeps showing up, listens, checks in, speaks up in court, and helps make sure the child is not forgotten in the system.

The organization serves Dewey, Beckham, Roger Mills, Custer, and Washita Counties. Each year, CASA of Western Oklahoma advocates for approximately 200 children across those five counties, with about 55 trained volunteers serving in five local courts.

CASA of Western Oklahoma currently reaches about 60 percent of the children in foster care in its service area, compared with a statewide average of about 26 percent. The organization's goal is simple but important: to reach 100 percent, so every child in foster care who needs a CASA volunteer can have one.

CASA of Western Oklahoma is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and does not receive state or federal appropriations to operate. It relies on grants, fundraising, and community donations to recruit and train volunteers, complete background checks, support staff, and keep volunteers in the field for children who need them.

The support CASA provides is not limited to the courtroom. Sometimes a child needs something immediate and practical - football cleats, clothing after arriving with nothing, bunk beds so siblings

can stay together, bedding, a baseball glove, or other everyday items that can make a difficult situation feel a little more stable and a little more normal.

Those small things matter. For a child in foster care, they can mean being able to play on the team, sleep in a safe bed, stay with a brother or sister, or simply feel like someone noticed what they needed.

CASA of Western Oklahoma's work depends on local support and local volunteers. Its volunteers give children something that cannot be replaced by paperwork or court orders: a consistent person who knows them, cares about them, celebrates with them, and stands beside them when life is uncertain.

Community members who want to learn more about CASA of Western Oklahoma or support its work can visit <https://casawok.org/>.