

Cassopolis Vigilant



ONLINE EDITION

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Bella's home

By MARCIA STEFFENS / Cassopolis Vigilant
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CASSOPOLIS - "One of my favorite families is here to finalize another adoption," said Cass County Family Court Judge Susan Dobrich last week on Tuesday afternoon.

The day was special also in that it was the fifth annual Adoption Day In Michigan, with a special cake for Mike and Faith Cameron's family, as Isabella Claire - "Bella" - became the seventh adopted child for the Niles couple.

Tamela Phillips, the adoption specialist for the County's Department of Human Services, told the court of the loving home the Camerons offer their children. "They parent with love," she said. She worked with the couple on all but the first adoption.

The Camerons live in Niles. Their three natural children are grown, Ashleigh, 26, Jenni, 24 and Scott, 21 and they have two grandchildren.

Mike is a salesman for Express Press "by day," he said and "father by night." Faith is homeschooling the four eldest of their second family.

All the family seems in love with the newest and youngest addition, nine-month-old Bella.

When I have a bad day I just go over and hold that baby," said Melody Kline of Niles, Mike's sister.

With 220 adoptions taking place in Michigan Tuesday, "It was the largest Adoption Day in the United States," said Dan Wright, who was representing the Michigan Supreme Court administration office at the Law and Court building in Cassopolis.

Before Bella's adoption, a private adoption of two boys joined them permanently with their grandparents.

State Rep. Rick Shaffer added in Michigan there are "plenty of kids who need adoptive families. There are 4,300 children in foster care awaiting permanent homes.

"In all cases, the goal is permanency - a stable, loving and emotional secure home," said Dobrich.

They would like to bring a child home to their natural parents, but "Reunification doesn't always happen. Then we move to adoption," she added.

Each adoption is finalized with a celebration and cake. "Sharing food is an important part of family," she said.

Felpausch in Dowagiac supplies a large cake and the Cass County Commissioners authorize the purchase of an individual cake for each family.



With their three natural children now adults, the Cameron family has continued to grow with the adoption of seven more, including Isabella Claire on Tuesday in Cass County Family Court. Shown from left, Mike tries to hold Tommy, 3; Tyler, 11; "Mere" Meredith, 3 held by Nicole, 10; Nelly, 8; Faith holding 9-month-old "Bella" and Tara, 5.