



## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Learn more about adoption on Tuesday

Sunday, November 18, 2007

BY MARY HASKAMP

The Michigan Supreme Court has designated Nov. 20 as "Michigan Adoption Day."

This event is co-sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court, the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange and the Family Services Division of the State Court Administrative Office.

With more than 30 counties participating, Michigan Adoption Day is poised to be the nation's largest Adoption Day event for the fifth year in a row.

Locally, Kalamazoo County Courts will observe Michigan Adoption Day from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Crosstown Center, at 150 East Crosstown Parkway in Kalamazoo. The Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services, Bethany Christian Services, Family & Children Services Inc. and Lutheran Adoption Service will have personnel available throughout the day to answer questions and provide information.

Families participating in the day's events have generously agreed to allow the public to view their adoption confirmation hearings. Because adoption court proceedings are confidential, this is the only time the court doors will be open to the general public to witness the emotional satisfaction and joy of finalizing an adoption. Several confirmation hearings will be held.

Even as we celebrate with these young people and their families, we are mindful of the many others who want and need permanent homes.

Consider these statistics:

- v Today there are approximately 6,200 children in the foster-care system whose parents' rights have been terminated.

- v The goal is adoption for approximately 4,300 of those children. The remaining children are either older youths who are satisfied with their placement and do not wish to be adopted (children 14 years of age and older have that option) or youths in other living arrangements where adoption is not appropriate. As a result, these young people will simply "age out" of the system. Compared to their peers in stable homes, these former foster children are at an increased risk for homelessness, unemployment, teenage pregnancy and other negative outcomes.

- v 2,589 children were adopted through the Department of Human Services' offices and private adoptions agencies between Oct. 1, 2005 and Sept. 30, 2006.

- v A relative or foster parent adopted 93 percent of those children.

- v 80 percent of children who had siblings in foster care were adopted with at least one of their siblings.

- v Preliminary data for fiscal year 2007 indicates 2,481 children were placed into adoptive homes out of the foster care system between Oct. 1, 2006, and Sept. 30.

Many children who are available for adoption qualify for adoption assistance to help families with some of the costs of bringing children into their homes. Adoption assistance may consist of support subsidy (financial support), medical subsidy (payment for certain remedial services) and assistance with the administrative costs of processing and adoption. For eligible children, adoption assistance continues until the child turns 18 years of age. Currently, more than 25,000 adopted children are receiving ongoing support subsidy.

For more information about adoption, please plan on attending our local event or feel free to contact the Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services or any local private adoption agency listed above. Information on children awaiting adoption in Michigan can be obtained at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org). For more information on public adoption policies and data, go to [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs) and click on "Adoption."

Although Nov. 20 is Adoption Day here in Michigan, many other days need to be "adoption days." You do not need to be rich to adopt. Character, love and stability are the most precious commodities you can offer a child.

Please join us on Nov. 20.

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