



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Please open hearts and homes to children

Wednesday, November 21, 2007

This Thanksgiving, eight local families will have so much more for which to be thankful.

On Tuesday, the families adopted children through the Family Division of the Kalamazoo Circuit Court. Their adoptions were confirmed in open court, part of Michigan Adoption Day events being held around the state.

About 19,000 children are in foster care in Michigan, more than 4,300 of whom are waiting for loving families to adopt them.

Michigan Adoption Day is designed to make prospective adoptive parents aware of the children in Michigan awaiting homes.

At a time when prospective parents are going overseas to adopt children, there are thousands of children right here who need them.

Unfortunately, many have waited for years. Children who are older, who have siblings in the foster care system or who are racial minorities are the most likely to be waiting for permanent families. Many children with physical, mental or emotional handicaps -- often the result of past abuse or neglect -- have difficulty finding families.

Healthy white infants may be in high demand among prospective parents, but children with special needs, too, are blessings to the right families.

It's not impossible for these children to find homes. In the 2006 fiscal year, nearly 2,590 children were adopted by parents who have big hearts. About 80 percent of those were adopted with at least one of their siblings. Ninety-three percent of them were adopted by relatives or foster parents.

Last year, 36 courts participated in Michigan Adoption Day around the state. On that day, more than 230 children were made permanent members of their very own families. This year, about 220 adoptions were formalized at events in 33 counties.

In the five years since Michigan Adoption Day was started to promote the practice, more than 13,000 children have moved from foster care into adoptive families.

But many children continue to wait in foster care, hoping someone will take them home permanently.

We hope events such as Michigan Adoption Day will encourage more families to open their hearts and their homes.

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