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County, state celebrate Adoption Day

Michigan is the largest Adoption Day state, with about 250 adoptions taking place in 33 counties.

By [Phil Johnson](#)

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ADRIAN — Judge Margaret Noe of the Lenawee County Probate Court looked at the youth and asked, “Is this what you want?” before issuing her final orders.

Six-year-old Mikala Keller wasn’t in trouble, though; she was being adopted.

“Today we celebrate happy law,” Noe told the crowd assembled in the courtroom. “It’s not always fun to be in court, but it is today.”

Tuesday was Adoption Day across the state. Michigan Supreme Court Justice Marilyn Kelly, who was present at the hearings, said approximately 250 adoptions would take place Tuesday in 33 counties across the state, which she said makes Michigan the largest Adoption Day state. Six children were adopted into four families in Lenawee County.

Children sat with their adoptive families in front of the bar, where they would likely sit if on trial, except there was no one opposing the action being taken and no witnesses to cross-examine.

A jury of the adoptive parents’ peers watched from their box, but offered smiles and gifts instead of scowls and judgments. Representatives of local businesses and adoption officials watched as their gifts were presented to the new families.

Each adopted child was offered a \$1,000 annual scholarship and season tickets to athletic events and theater productions from Siena Heights University, a \$100 savings account from the Lenco Credit Union and a personalized gavel, adoption memory book and stuffed teddy bear from the Probate Court. Representatives from Wendy’s restaurant and the Department of Human Services were also on hand as Noe announced that the two were hosting a celebratory gathering for adoptive families, with a free meal and cake, following the adoption procedures. Each child also left the courtroom with a family.

Following one of the procedures, Noe lauded the community and the county’s adoption network for



ADOPTION DAY: Tyler Keller, left, and Mikala Keller, right, help Lenawee County Probate Judge Margaret Noe sign their adoption order into effect Thursday afternoon at the Judicial Building. — Telegram photo by [Lad Strayer](#)

their involvement and support.

“They’re probably one of the most active groups in the state,” she said.

During the proceedings the children were asked by Noe if they wanted to be adopted and responses ranged from shy nods to an affirmative “yes.”

“That’s what I want too,” Noe responded. “We know today is the most important day for you and we are more thankful for that than anything else.”

Noe said after one of the hearings that Adoption Day is always one of her favorites.

“Yeah, it’s a lot of fun compared to some of the other stuff,” she said.

She said she wasn’t sure whether it was coincidence that the day falls just before Thanksgiving, but said it traditionally is close to the holiday. Despite the happy mood, the county could always benefit from additional adoptive parents, Noe said.

“We need about 2,000 more,” she said.

Noe, an adoptive parent herself, said when adoptions are processed it is often the goal to keep the child within the same county as their biological parent, to allow the parent to rehabilitate their parental relationship with a child. Keeping children within their biological family is also a goal of the court, she said, but only if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child.

“As adoptive parents we try to teach the children that they were loved but that the parent just couldn’t care for them,” Noe said.

All of Tuesday’s adoptions were staying within the county, Noe said, except for Mikala Keller and her sister Tyler Keller, who were adopted by their grandmother Anna Keller of Ohio.

To make the proceedings official, Noe asked each child to help her sign their final adoption order. With their hands on top of the judge’s, each child struck the gavel on the bench, officially ending the procedures.

“This is really kind of a special day,” said Jim Criste, an adoption specialist for the Lenawee County Department of Human Services. “It shows the positive side of what we do.”

-- CLOSE WINDOW--