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[From DeWitt-Bath Review]

Adoption Day gives children homes

By SUE LOUNDS
Lansing Community Newspapers

ST. JOHNS — Three Clinton County families have extra reasons to be thankful this Thanksgiving.

On Nov. 20 the families finalized the adoption of five children as part of Michigan Adoption Day. The event is one of more than 30 similar ceremonies taking place in Michigan.

National Adoption Day is celebrated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Last year more than 3,300 children from foster care were adopted as part of Adoption Day nationwide.

"This year all of the children (being adopted) have come through the foster care system in Clinton County," said Probate Judge Lisa Sullivan

"I think this is significant because these are special children and the families have really opened their hearts and their homes to some special needs in a special way, so I really want to thank them."

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Judge Sullivan said 6,200 children are in the foster care system in Michigan, and 4,200 of them are waiting for adoption.

"It is wonderful that we can see that permanency come to fruition today," she said.

Judge Sullivan quoted Pablo Casals in her opening comments:

"The child must know that he is a miracle, that since the beginning of the world there hasn't been, and until the end of the world there will not be, another child like him."

"In 15 years, nationwide, 13,000 children have been adopted through Adoption Day," said Judge Sullivan.

Henry and Kristin Amama of DeWitt adopted 19-month-old John David. He is their first child, but the Amamas have three other foster children at home.

"When I have to place children in foster care, it really helps to know I have foster parents like you," Judge Sullivan told the Amamas.

"It's a good feeling," Henry Amama said following the ceremony.

"A pitfall of foster care is that they (the children) won't be permanent. We've had him (John David) eight months, and it felt permanent. Now it is."

Henry Amama said he and Kristin hope "to repeat this" and adopt more children in the future.

"This is absolutely wonderful," said Lori Wheeler, John David's new official grandmother. "We are so blessed. He melted our hearts the first time we saw him."

"We got to see his first steps and hear his first words," Henry Amama said.

Rick and Debbie Smith of Ovid, who have four adult children between them, adopted two of their grandchildren as part of Adoption Day.

Keagon, 11, and Akeyla, 17 months, join the Smith household which includes four other children — three grandchildren and one child of the Smiths.

"I love them both," said Debbie Smith. "If we could adopt more, we would."

She said she hopes to adopt the other three grandchildren next year.

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"We have had them for nine years," Debbie said, "but this adoption became more of an emergency."

Rick and Debbie brought Akeyla home right after her birth and have had her ever since.

"I'm just as happy today as the day I gave birth," Debbie said.

Karen and Carter Weslock of DeWitt adopted siblings — Anna, 7, and Tyler, 3. They join Justin, 8, and Alison, 9, who are biological brother and sister.

"It's really an exciting day," said Karen Weslock. "The kids have been looking forward to this forever."

Karen marked Adoption Day on the calendar.

"They kept asking when the day was," said she said.

All four of the Weslock's children were their foster children first, and the couple still has foster children. These four are now official, permanent members of the Carter family.

"Alison said, 'They can't leave now after today, right?'" said Karen Carter. "I told that's right, they're here forever now."

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