

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

Finding a new home: 225 kids taken in across state on Adoption Day

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

DETROIT -- Even at 17, it wasn't too late for Ki'Esha Moncrief to find her "forever" home.

The pretty, soft-spoken teen and her five siblings were among 225 Michigan children adopted Tuesday in recognition of Michigan Adoption Day -- a day meant to encourage adoption by showcasing families that welcome foster children into their families.

In Wayne County Circuit Judge Mary Beth Kelly's courtroom, 23 children -- all dressed in their Sunday best -- were adopted by seven families in a festive event that included teddy bears for the kids and roses for their parents. The youngest, 6-month-old Frank King, cooed happily in a blue terrycloth sleeper.

Advertisement Similar celebrations took place across 30 Michigan counties including Oakland, where 24 children were adopted by 22 families; and Macomb, where eight became part of six adoptive homes.

"I know who my parent is now," said Ki'Esha, who was adopted by her grandmother, Sheila Rogers Starghill, 61, who also adopted siblings Michelle Moncrief, 15, Markus Rogers, 14, Christine Rogers, 12, and 10-year-old twins Carmen Rogers and Shawn Rogers.

"She is mom and dad and grandma," Ki'Esha said. "I'm happy."

Starghill, of Detroit, said the occasion was joyous but tinged with sadness knowing her grown son was not able to care for his children. The grandmother has cared for the kids since child protection workers removed them from their home four years ago.

"It's a happy-sad day," Starghill said. "Obviously you want your kids to be with their own parents."

Kelly praised Starghill and other relatives who have worked hard to keep families of grandchildren or nieces and nephews together.

Children over 14 must give their permission to be adopted. When Kelly asked Ki'Esha, her sister Michelle, and brother Markus for their consent, they said yes, and tears rolled down the girls' cheeks.

"I can tell you teenagers need a permanent home too," Kelly said. "It's hard for 16- and 17-year-olds not to be adopted."

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Carmen Rogers, 10, center, was adopted Tuesday along with her siblings by her grandmother, Sheila Rogers Starghill of Detroit. (John T. Greilick / The Detroit News)

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The Michigan Adoption Day events were 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.

Michigan has 4,125 foster children waiting for adoptive homes, said Ismael Ahmed, director of the state Department of Human Services, who witnessed the adoptions in Kelly's courtroom.

Ahmed said he was there to encourage more families to adopt children lingering in foster care, many of whom will age out of the system never having found a family to adopt them.

"I'd like to come here a year from now and have this proceeding be for 4,125 children," Ahmed said.

Christopher and Tanya Fowler of Livonia said their lives have been filled with love since they took in 6-year-old Kyler Beatty as a foster child about six months ago. They'd been married 10 years but had no children. Now they're Kyler's adoptive parents.

"Everybody focuses on what a blessing it is for the kids," Tanya Fowler said. "But it's been a huge blessing for us.

"I love being a mom, and it's added a whole new dimension to our lives."

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whose parents' rights were terminated
About 4,125 of those children have the goal of adoption
For adoption information, contact: the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange at (800) 589-6273 or visit www.mare.org
Source: Department of Human Services

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