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Adoption; new family, new adventures

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IONIA - Family and friends of 7-year-old Josh Robach came to the Ionia County Courthouse Tuesday morning to witness the beginning of a new chapter in his young life.



Wearing a child-sized judge robe, Robach,

Judge Robert Sykes lets 7-year-old Josh Robach slam down the gavel at his adoption hearing Tuesday afternoon. Robach's adoption was one of four adoptions at the Ionia County Courthouse and one of over 200 across the state. Sentinel-Standard/ALEX DOTY

after making a few modest requests with the help of Judge Robert Sykes for ice cream and staying up late, signed his new name to his adoption papers, finalizing his adoption.

"It feels great," adoptive mother Kelly Robach said about the finalization. "I'm very happy."

According to her, work on getting the adoption done had been a long process, which began in about 2004.

"It has been a long time," she said, adding that they plan on celebrating the adoption every year.

Josh Robach's adoption was just one of four taking place at the Ionia County Courthouse Tuesday in recognition of Michigan Adoption Day.

"It's been a while coming, so I am glad it is done," said Ben Bookie, a foster care worker who worked with Josh Robach.

He said he was very happy for Josh Robach and will remember the games of Candyland they played together.

Bookie wasn't the only one who was happy for Josh Robach, either, as plenty of many other came out to give their support.

Among them was neighbor Steve Lampman, who said Josh Robach comes and plays in his yard from time to time.

"They are a good family, and I think it's a nice thing to see it done," he said.

Following the adoption proceedings, Kelly Robach said she was having a get-together with cake and ice cream to celebrate the finalization.

As part of Adoption Day, more than 200 adoptions were expected to be finalized across 30 counties in Michigan.

Sykes said they try to have several adoptions during Adoption Day, and this helps get the message out about many other children who need assistance.

Adoption Day allows the public to see the adoption process firsthand, as many finalization hearings are usually private events.

In the five years Michigan has celebrated Adoption Day, more than 13,000 children have been positively affected.

Sykes, who presided over the Robach adoption, said adoptions are the most enjoyable aspects of his job.

"Often in my court, families walk away upset," Sykes said. "To be able to preside over something meaningful and not worry about people walking out and slamming a door is a nice thing."

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