



## Families become families

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**MICHAEL GREENLEE**

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At this time last year, Janice Reason of Saginaw watched her great-nephews jump for joy when a judge cleared the way for her to adopt them.

Actually, the youngsters did more than jump; they flipped.

"My kids, they can stand in one spot and jump in the air and turn a somersault," said Reason, 38. "So once we were leaving, I gave them the OK. They just started flipping."

Reason could have done acrobatics herself, because she was able to reunite Tony Reason, 13; Deondre Reason, 10; and Nehemiah Reason, 8; under her roof. They attend the Saginaw Preparatory Academy, a charter school in Buena Vista Township.

"Their parents' rights were terminated, and they weren't together," Reason said. "Sometimes when you're in the foster care system, they spread you apart."

Tuesday -- the fourth annual Michigan Adoption Day -- Saginaw County Probate Judge Faye M. Harrison will finalize 13 adoptions for 10 families. The ceremony will take place at the Hart State Office Building, 411 E. Genesee.

Harrison said what is a typical day of work for her could well prove a turning point in a child's life.

"We have 13 scheduled for Tuesday, but we do adoptions all through the year of children that have been in foster care," Harrison said. "For everything we do dealing with child abuse, that's the payoff -- to see a child safe and loved and protected."

Anne Shea, children's foster care and adoption supervisor at Saginaw's Department of Human Services office, said her job isn't confined to just one day, either.

"Adoption is special year-round. We use this one day to bring it forward to the public," Shea said. "There are still children in waiting."

As of last week, 217 Saginaw County children were awaiting adoption, Shea says.

"There's no shortage," Shea said. "There are about 4,000 children available in Michigan with the goal of adoption."

Last year, Saginaw's Department of Human Services office completed 74 adoptions, including the Reasons. However, 159 children became available for adoption during that time, Shea said.

"There's always a need for more families. You never catch up," she said. "Ninety-nine percent of adoptions in this agency are children adopted by family or foster parents."

Toni Prabucki, a Human Services foster care and adoption supervisor for 12 years, said her agency is licensed to complete adoptions only for abused and neglected children who become court wards.

"The Department of Human Services provides services to abused and neglected children who are unable to live in safety with their biological parents," Prabucki said. "Our main focus is to provide them with the most permanency."

Prabucki said permanence is the key, which is why most foster parents are relatives.

For the Michigan adoption day this year, they're pairing with three agencies -- Schwartz Adoption Attorneys and Child Placing Agency Inc. of Saginaw, Adoption Option Inc. of Midland and Catholic Family Services of Saginaw.

Harrison sat down last week to review all of the documentation and sign preliminary papers so that the court can finalize the orders of adoption. She has served as a family court judge for more than 25 years.

Reason said her children brimmed over with positive energy last year as they officially gained a new dimension to their identities.

"It was exciting," she said. "For a long time, they were part of the system. To actually bring closure and say, 'Now you're officially Reasons,' that's exciting." v

Michael Greenlee is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9682.

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