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## Niles couple adopts seventh child on Michigan Adoption Day

SHERRY VAN ARSDALL  
Tribune Staff Writer

CASSOPOLIS -- Seven times, Mike and Faith Cameron have sat in the courtroom of Judge Susan Dobrich's Cass County Family Court.

Seven times, the judge has asked the same question, "Do you love..." each time inserting a different child's name.



Tribune Photos/GENE KAISER

**Cass County Family Court Judge Susan Dobrich holds 9-month-old Bella Cameron after she made the adoption for Mike and Faith Cameron family official Tuesday during the fifth annual Michigan Adoption Day at the**

Tuesday afternoon, they answered "yes" to the question, "Do you love Bella?"



For the seventh time, the Niles couple has provided permanency for a foster child -- by adoption.

And 9-month-old Bella's last name became legally changed during the fifth annual Michigan Adoption Day.

"We're blessed," said Mr. Cameron, 47. "We can't imagine giving her up."

One of Bella's two new 3-year-old sisters, Mary, became restless during the official proceedings and swung the gate in the courtroom open to get to her grandparents, Bonnie and Tom Meador.

Just moments later, Mary proceeded to crawl under the same gate and handed her dad a piece of gum.

Mr. Cameron nonchalantly chewed the gum, turned and waved to some of their other children, ages 11, 10, 8, and 5, behind him.

They were getting restless after sitting and were anxious to be moving again.

"Their house is a home that moves, even though the house doesn't move," said Tamela Phillips, adoption specialist for Cass County, who has handled six of the adoptions for the Camerons.

"Not only are they a wonderful adoptive family, they're a fantastic foster family," Phillips said. "This is their second round of kids and they have two grandkids."

The couple has been married for 27 years and have three biological children ages 26, 24 and 21.

It was smiles for everyone in the courtroom and that means a lot to the judge.

## Cass County Law and Court Building in Cassopolis.

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## More Information

### Adoption Day

The fifth annual Michigan Adoption Day is sponsored by the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Michigan Supreme Court and the respective Family Courts.

Last year, 36 courts participated in Adoption Day 2006 with more than 230 children having their adoptions finalized.

Michigan celebrates adoptive families and efforts to place children into adoptive homes. During the five-year period, more than 13,000 children have been placed into adoptive homes out of foster care.

For more information on adopting a child, visit the Web site at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org) or [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs).

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"The only time I see happy faces is during an adoption and one of my favorite families are here today to finalize another adoption," Dobrich said.

Then it was time for the celebration with a cake to create new traditions and make memories.

Little Bella wiped her hand over her mouth and spread white frosting on her chin. A large wet spot on her tights indicated it was time for a change of clothing.

Mrs. Cameron, 47, just smiled and took it all in stride.

After all, her parents fostered 31 children and only adopted one.

"I think Faith just wanted to beat us," said Tom Meador. "I love it. The children come from different backgrounds. Faith and Mike are very sharing."

People who know the couple make comments about how special they are for what they do.

"We don't feel special," Mr. Cameron said. "We just feel good that we can do something that's right, and it's right in front of us. A lot of people can do the same. The challenge is to do good. We're just a big family."

Eight-year-old Nelly likes being part of the family.

"If you're bored, you have someone to play with," Nelly said. "Bella is going to be just like the rest of us."

One of the Camerons.

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