

BY [ADRIELLE HARVEY](#)

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"Today is sunshine and balloons," Peggy Martin said Saturday at the Shawnee County Courthouse.

Martin, chief executive officer for TFI Family Services, was referring to the nearly 20 families who finalized the adoption of 32 children on Saturday.

TFI held adoption celebrations statewide this week leading up to a proclamation Saturday by Gov. Mark Parkinson in recognition of National Adoption Day.



Seven months ago, Rebecca and John Hurla took three toddlers under their wings with plans of doing foster care.

"Our hearts got taken by them so we jumped right into adoption," Rebecca Hurla said.

The couple adopted 3-year-old twins, Aaron and Anthony, and 2-year-old Michael.

"(They've) brought so much beauty and joy to our entire family," she said.

Hurla described them as "three typical toddler boys" who are "full of energy."

Jeanette Jackson-Henderson and her husband, Waddie Henderson, adopted their three grandchildren -- Tyrell, 17; Ty'Vaire, 11; and Ta'Nia, 3.

"It gives the children something they don't have to worry about anymore," Jackson-Henderson said. "These are our grandchildren, and we are extending our love. They are family."

Henderson said he hopes by adopting the kids, he and his wife will be able to provide a stable home that "will make them good, productive citizens."

Tyrell, a senior at Highland Park High School, plays football, wrestles and runs track. He plans to join the Coast Guard or go to college for preveterinary studies.

Ty'Vaire has dreams to play for the National Football League. His favorite team is the Atlanta Falcons.

The Henderson family enjoyed watching other families in their common bond of adoption.

"It's a joy to see everybody so happy," Henderson said. "Everyone that's doing it is doing it for the love of the kids."

And Jackson-Henderson didn't hesitate to give God the glory for the joyous occasion.

TFI typically tries to reintegrate children with their own families, but at some point situations lead them to become legally separated and they become available for adoption, said Lisa Bozarth, public affairs supervisor.

When legal separation occurs, families who choose to adopt provide "permanency" for the children, Martin said.

"The state of Kansas and our agency don't raise children," she said. "Families do."

A wide range of families adopt -- couples who can't conceive, couples who want more children, older parents who aren't ready to be empty nesters, grandparents and relatives who want to keep children in their family, and single parents.

After a ceremony at the courthouse and finalizations by District Court Judges Daniel Mitchell and Frank Yeoman, the families could join other TFI families who have adopted in the past year for lunch and activities at Gage Park.

Bozarth said chili was being provided by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Thomas adopted his daughter, Wendy, and founded the fast-food chain Wendy's.

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