

washingtonpost.com

At the End of a Long Road, A Family Finally Is Formed

New Parents Celebrate National Adoption Day

By Theola S. Labbe
Washington Post Staff Writer
Sunday, November 20, 2005; C05



Adam Nolan, right, the oldest adoptee at 17, pats his new sister, Jessica, 11, on the head after becoming the son of Joy, left, and William Nolan.
Photo Credit: Photos By Bill O'leary -- The Washington Post Photo

Patricia Moton, 56, listened to her daughter pose the same question over and over as months stretched into years and she was still living in her District home as a foster child.

"When am I going to get adopted?" Moton recalled her asking.

Moton said the worst part wasn't the repetition but that she simply didn't have an answer. There were papers to fill out, questions from social workers to answer, lawyers to meet with and court hearings followed by more court hearings. At one point, Markia's relatives stepped back into the picture and it was unclear whether the adoption would ever go through, Moton said.

Wearing a lime-green track suit, Markia Patrice Moton, now 11, finally got her answer yesterday in an adoption ceremony at D.C. Superior Court. More than two dozen families had the adoptions of 30 children made final as part of National Adoption Day. Across the country, including in the Maryland

and Virginia suburbs, more than 3,300 adoptions were celebrated with events ranging from bowling and pizza parties to a candle-lighting ceremony.

The District's 19th annual adoption day featured the necessary aspects of any court proceeding: a call to order, judges in robes and a court stenographer who took copious notes. But pink and purple balloons decorated the normally sober court atrium and a court employee, himself adopted, belted out two songs.

"There will be days that are easy and days that are hard," said D.C. Superior Court Chief Judge Rufus G. King III, speaking to the dressed up and excited families both as a jurist and an adoptive parent. "But I promise you, you will never regret the step you are taking today."

Adoption cases are confidential by law, but of the 411 D.C. adoptions completed this year, the families featured yesterday volunteered to participate, allowing stories to flow freely as lawyers, judges and social workers shared what they are normally required to keep private -- the compelling personal details of adopted children and the families who received them.

There was Tyree Donnell Torney, 7, who likes swimming and is in the second grade. And siblings Helen, 9, and Victor Burton, 12, who went to live with their foster parents, Virginia and Jasper Hardy, in 2003, changed their last names to Hardy as part of the adoption.

WRC-TV news anchor Barbara Harrison, who features foster children in a weekly segment, called the name of each child, their parents, social worker and attorney. When it was time for 4-year-old Ricki, Daryl Johnson stood with his wife, Sheila, and watched the flourish of Judge Robert Morin's pen make their family legal.

"It's been a rough 3 1/2 years," said Johnson, of Oxon Hill, describing the waiting for the legal hurdles to be cleared. "I was glad it was over."

Jerry Feil, 48, of the District and his longtime partner, Dominic Sharp, 35, say they can't forget the effort it took to get their son Phat, 5, whom they adopted in Cambodia. They sought assistance from the office of Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.) to have the adoption approved.

"It's all worth it," Feil said, beaming.