

The Washington

AFRO

American

DECEMBER 2, 2006 - DECEMBER 8, 2006

Giving a child a permanent home

By Valencia Mohammed
AFRO Staff Writer

The D.C. Superior Court and the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency held its 20th Annual Adoption Day in Court on Nov. 18. The ceremony involved 49 adoption decrees signed before the audience, as the children and their new families celebrated their union.

Authorities said the celebration is designed to share the joy of adoption and encourage area residents to consider

Continued on A4



Courtesy Photo

Two-year-old Joi Victoria Lewis was one of 49 children adopted on Nov. 18 in the D.C. Superior Court and the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency 20th Annual Adoption Day.

Giving a child a permanent home

Continued from A1

adopting or fostering a child.

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La), an adoptive parent and sponsor of the D.C. Family Court Act was on hand to give encouragement to the families who have given children in foster care a permanent home.

D.C. Family Court Presiding Judge Anita Josey-Herring said this year was the largest ever. "Why? Because we are doing a better job in following the guidelines to move the children into permanency," said Herring.

According to court officials, there are nearly 300 children in the District in foster care awaiting adoption.

After living in the same foster care home for the last 11 years, Yvette Smith, 21, became an official member of the Smith family. "It matters now mainly because it really represents a milestone for the family. It was a celebration for

"I encourage families to take a child into your home to help grow, develop and nurture."

our family becoming whole," said Smith. "Adoption creates families for children who would not have an opportunity a family is the important aspect for any person in the world to succeed. It makes all the difference in the world."

Darlene White, an activities coordinator for adults with learning disabilities, adopted 9-year-old Jewel Dews last weekend. Dews requested that she keep her original family name to remain connected.

"We wanted her to be happy," said White. Dews has been with the family for over two years.

"We are very happy to have her in our lives. She is a joy to be around. She is very active and wants to become an

actress. We will support her in whatever she wants to do," said White.

White also has an 8-year-old foster child. "I encourage families to take a child into your home to help grow, develop and nurture," said White. "There are benefits in knowing that you helped someone in need. No matter what happened to these children was not their fault. Being around them makes me feel healthier and good inside."

Agnes and Joseph Lewis adopted their third child at the ceremony. The first two were adopted in 2000. The twins, JaNai and Joseph Lewis were "drug syndrome" babies. "God gave them to us to raise. They are healthy now," said the loving mother.

Their third was a little girl named, Joi.

Joi has been with the family since she was abandoned 10 days after she was born.

"I want people to know although it is a complicated process, it must be that way. It takes a village to adopt a child because there are so many parties that have to be addressed in order for justice to be served for everyone involved," said Lewis.

"Open your heart, mind and soul to a child who needs love. Give it freely and you will receive freely so many bountiful blessings in their smiles, the glow in their eyes, hugs and kisses."