Local Adoption Record Broken On National Adoption Day

BY JALESSA CASTILLO
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The organization, Children’s Rights, noted that on any given day, there are nearly 438,000 children in foster care in the United States. On average, a child will remain in state care for two years before being adopted, however, six percent will remain for five or more years. Not to mention, in 2016, almost half of the children entering the U.S. foster care system were children of color.

November is National Adoption Awareness Month. The goal is to raise consciousness on the adoption of children who are currently in foster care.

The history of the observance can be traced back to 1976, when Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis announced an Adoption Week. Nearly 10 years later, in 1984, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the first National Adoption Day. It would be another decade until President Bill Clinton would expand the awareness week to the entire month of November in 1996.

Since then, National Adoption Month has been recognized and celebrated every November in communities across the country.

According to Child Welfare, many national, state, and local agencies as well as foster and adoptive family groups use this month to educate their communities through programs, events, and activities that help raise awareness about the thousands of children and youth currently in foster care who are waiting for their own permanent, loving families.

In addition, the month of November includes National Adoption Day, which is typically observed on the Saturday before Thanksgiving.

The first National Adoption Day was held in 2000 by a coalition of national partners which included Children’s Action Network, The Alliance for Children’s Rights, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and Freddie Mac Foundation. In 2002, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute and Casey Family Services joined the coalition.

This year, Judges in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties officially united 66 children with their new parents during adoption ceremonies on November 16, setting a local record for National Adoption Day.

“Our kids and families are excited for this day because it means a new start,” said Glen Case, president and CEO of Community Based Care of Central Florida (CBCCF), the lead agency overseeing foster care and adoption services locally. “Children yearn to feel safe and loved, and we’ve helped nearly 3,000 children find those families since our inception in 2004.”

Forty-two children were adopted in Orange County.

“It’s one of the best feelings in the world knowing I got to be part of joining these children with their forever families,” said Judge Alice Latimer, Orange County. “Many factors play into how we got here, but love is the one that radiates the greatest.”

One of the adoptive families from Orange County is the Grier Family. In 2015, Jordan and Amy Grier became foster parents. The original plan was to foster one child at a time, but that changed the minute they learned how many little ones needed to be placed.

Since their journey began three years ago, the Griers have fostered nine children. They say the experience has taught their two biological children to be giving.

In February 2017, twins came to them, struggling to survive. The Griers were scared, but thanks to their consistent care and nurturing, the twins are healthy and thriving. On November 16, they adopted them.

CBCCF hopes National Adoption Day will remind people about the number of children who still need permanent, loving homes. There are 115 children across the tri-county area currently in foster care and available for adoption.

For someone interested in adopting, they should contact CBCCF. The steps in the approval process are: attending an orientation, completing a 10-week training and preparation course, undergoing a home study, health evaluation, background checks, references, and counselor visits. Once a person passes the approval process, they can look at available children and notify a counselor when interested in a child, establish a match, and participate in required pre-placement activities, have monthly placement supervision, and then a counselor provides a “consent to adopt” form to the interested person’s attorney. There is a finalization in front of a judge.

Most adults, married or single, of all backgrounds who can provide a stable, loving home, are eligible. Interested ones can be ready to adopt in 6-8 months, in some cases. Additionally, it usually costs $1,000 to adopt, however, one could possibly be reimbursed by the state. It is suggested that those who have a sense of humor, measure success in small steps, and are committed to apply if interested.

To learn more about foster parenting or adoption, prospective families can visit www.ProtectandInspire.org.