

http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2010/11/nj_parents_unite_with_children.html

Families across N.J. grow a bit larger on National Adoption Day

Published: Saturday, November 20, 2010, 8:00 AM

Bob Considine/The Star-Ledger



Tony Kurdzuk/The Star-Ledger

Newly adopted 7 year old Adonnis James of Rahway poses for the camera in the rotunda of the Union County Courthouse this afternoon as his new mom Therez James pauses to talk for a moment.

ELIZABETH — Eight-year-old Emma-Rose Hastrup had a lifelong dream fulfilled yesterday. "I always wanted a sister because all mom had before were boys," she said. "I wanted a sister to play with."

A week before Thanksgiving, the priceless gift of family was provided by Emma-Rose's parents, Laura and Wayne Hastrup, as the adoption of new daughter Mily was finalized Friday, National Adoption Day, at the Union County Courthouse.

Two-year-old Mily, a developmentally disabled child, will join the Hastrup's three biological children. Mily's need for a stable, permanent family combined with the Hastrup's experience and desire to do right made for a perfect fit. The Hastrups have previously been foster parents to 16 children.

"We always want to do something to give back, and we've always had a love for children," said Wayne Hastrup, 44. "Adoption just seems like a natural progression."

"We really feel that God has called us to do this," Laura Hastrup, 34, added. "We just feel like this is something we should be doing."

Some 220 foster children were expected to be adopted this week, including 13 Friday at the courthouse in Elizabeth and another 60 scheduled at the Essex County courthouse today in

Newark, according to Lauren Kidd, spokeswoman for the state Department of Children and Families. There were commemorations in 18 counties in the state this week.

Edward Thompson, Union County area director for the state's Division of Youth and Family Services, said another 803 children had been adopted in New Jersey through October — including 53 in Union County.

Thompson said the process of terminating the parental rights of natural parents due to various circumstances is initially a sad affair. But the connection made between foster parents who adopt brings a happy ending to the story.

"Once these adoptions are finalized, these children have a forever family," Thompson said. "In some cases, you have adoptive parents who are related to the birth parents. That can be an ideal situation."



Tony Kurdzuk/The Star-Ledger
Newly adopted 1 and a half year old Kristina Lopez smiles as she sits in the arms of her new mom Kiana Lopez of Irvington at the Union County Courthouse.

That was the case with Therez James of Rahway, who finalized her adoption of 7-year-old Adonis Friday. Adonis' natural birth mother is James' sister. James has cared for Adonis for more than two years.

"It's always a good thing if you can keep it within family members," she said. "You can hold on to your family."

Adonis was in a celebratory mood Friday because he "got teddy bears and cake." But beyond the material gifts, he was able to appreciate what his mother is providing.

"She's great because she takes good care of me and she feeds me every day," he said.

New Jersey has fared well in the recruitment of foster parents — or resource families — of late. In 2009, 2,123 new resource families were gathered, the second highest number for the state in a single year.

Laura Hastrup said establishing and maintaining relationships with the birth parents of adoptive children has been a benefit to all involved. She encouraged potential foster or adoptive parents to take the plunge to stabilize the lives of children in need, while also enriching their own lives.

"It's so rewarding to be able to help someone else and help another family," she said. "Don't wait to do it. If you say, 'I'm going to wait until we have enough money or we have a bigger house,' that opportunity might never come.

"Just do it if you feel your heart is being pulled in that direction. It's a wonderful opportunity."