

November 17, 2012 in City, Health

Love, multiplied: Local families expand on National Adoption Day

Chelsea Bannach



Dan Pelle photo

Tammie White, right, hands her newly adopted baby, Eliam, to Superior Court Judge Linda Tompkins after a ceremony Friday in the courtroom on National Adoption Day. White's two other sons, Sojo, left, and Ayden participated in the process. Tammie said she has cared for the child since Eliam was 2 minutes old.

Robert and Tammy Fritz love children.

So much so that they've fostered 28 children over the last four years and adopted two, in addition to their two biological children. On Friday, they finalized the adoption of their family's newest arrival, a 17-month-old boy named Jay, in Spokane County Superior Court.

"Our whole family loves him," Tammy Fritz said. "He's just such a little blessing."

About 20 children were adopted in Spokane during Friday's celebration of National Adoption Day, which aims to raise awareness of the many foster children in communities across the country that need to be adopted.

"It's so rewarding," Fritz said. "There's a lot of kids out there that need homes."

As of Oct. 15, there were more than 1,600 Washington children in foster care who had legally lost their parents – meaning parental rights had been terminated by the courts or relinquished by parents – and were waiting to be adopted, according to the state Department of Social and Health Services.

Nationwide, there were more than 408,000 children in the foster system and about 107,000 available for adoption in 2010, the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System shows.

Friday's celebration included treats and activities for kids and their parents. Local photographer Erin Hudson donated her time to take family portraits after the adoptions were finalized.

“I think everybody needs to have great pictures,” Hudson said. “It’s kind of the first official family day, so I think it’s fun to capture that.”

Buddy and Tammie White finalized the open adoption of 2-month-old Eliam on Friday.

“This is the official paperwork part,” Tammie White said. “I think we adopted him the moment we saw him.”

The Whites met Eliam’s biological mother through a friend when she was 17 weeks pregnant. She invited Tammie White into the operating room for the birth, a planned cesarean section, and White was the first person to hold the newborn.

“It was quite the honor,” she said. “It was just such a precious moment.”

Eliam’s new siblings told the judge they are excited to pitch in – even when it comes to changing diapers – and that the family’s newest addition gives them yet another common bond.

“I think we’re more close-knit as a family,” said their son Sojo Bergman, 16. “I think we get to engage more now that he’s here.”

In court, Judge Linda Tompkins joked she might run off with the baby if they let her hold it.

“You’ve been advised that the judge may steal your baby,” attorney Mirisa Bradbury told the family.

Friends, family and others involved in the adoption process gathered in the courtroom to speak on behalf of the Whites.

“They are an amazing family,” said case manager Linda Hankey of Antioch Adoptions. “Truly, this little baby has the best home.”

At the end of the hearing, the judge ruled the family was fit to care for Eliam and the adoption – one of about 900 that will take place in Spokane County this year – was official.

“Quite often, decisions like yours save little lives,” Tompkins said.