

COLUMBIA BASIN HERALD

Grant County families celebrate adoptions

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Daisy Koehn enjoys a cookie as her adoptive mother Angel talks with family at National Adoption Day held Nov. 19. Daisy was formally adopted by the Koehns after living with them in foster care.

EPHRATA — Six children found new homes as three Grant County families finalized their adoptions at Grant County's first ever National Adoption Day celebration.

By noon, Judge John Knodell finalized the adoptions so the children are no longer in foster care, but with permanent families.

"Kids can be in the system for months or years," said Division of Children and Family Services adoption specialist Mike McAtee, "It's definitely a long journey and one we're trying to make shorter."

"My husband and I just wanted to be parents," Angel Koehn said. "If it was for two weeks, two years or a lifetime, we thought we could do a lot as a foster family."

Angel and Ryan Koehn celebrated the adoption of their fourth child, Daisy, during Friday's ceremony. Daisy joins two brothers and a little sister as part of the Koehn family.

Just before the court session began, ten-year-old Alexis Gilley turned to her adoptive parents Shelton and Edith Gilley and said, "Now you have five daughters!"

The Gilleys adopted Alexis, as well as her sisters Aleah, 8, Alesia, 6, and Aleena, 5.

“You sure don’t get bored. I am always busy,” said Edith. “The main thing is that we keep the girls together.”

Justin and Kathy Morris were foster parents to 40 children before they decided to adopt Chance James. Chance is five years old now, but was in the Morris’ care for three years before his adoption was finalized Friday.

“We couldn’t love him more if he was our own,” Kathy Morris said.

Yvonne and Frank Cardwell began fostering children in the 1970s, and came to support Chance as his unofficial grandparents.

“I couldn’t count the number of children we’ve had through our home,” Yvonne said. “I’m so happy for Chance.”

Families wanting to become foster parents must pass an inspection to ensure they can provide a healthy environment for kids. Among other things, this includes passing a criminal background check and agreeing to visits from a social worker.

“Foster care can be difficult,” McAtee says. “It’s a difficult job that’s asked of foster families. They are asked to help in addressing the special needs of kids they didn’t have a role in making.”

Superior Court Judge John Knodell says he hears around four adoption cases each week.

“I love it,” Knodell said, “It’s the best part of the job. It’s so encouraging to see people getting together and building families.”

Washington families have adopted more than 800 foster children since 2005.