

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**OAKLAND COUNTY CELEBRATES MICHIGAN ADOPTION DAY**

**Oakland County, MI** – Oakland County Circuit Court made the dreams of 17 families come true on November 20, 2007 as judges, attorneys, and advocates worked together to finalize adoptions in celebration of the sixth annual Michigan Adoption Day. Sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court and the Department of Human Services (DHS), Adoption Day was observed to raise awareness of Michigan’s nearly 19,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent homes and loving families.

Activities kicked off at 9:00 a.m. in the Board of Commissioners Auditorium of the Oakland County Courthouse, 1200 North Telegraph Road in Pontiac, with an award ceremony to recognize the outstanding performance and lasting contribution the members of the Adoptions Unit of the Family Division of Oakland Circuit Court have made in placing children with adoptive families. Under the direction of Lauran Howard, Chief of the Juvenile Adoptions, the unit is responsible for the legal processing of every adoption in Oakland County. Approximately 400 adoptions are finalized each year.

The Circuit Court presented Lauran with the “Arthur Eugene Moore Champion of Children Award,” named in memory of former Oakland County Judge Arthur Eugene Moore, who served the Probate Court from 1938 to 1963 and the Circuit Court from 1963 to 1976, and who was instrumental in the development of many programs geared to the special needs of children and the prevention of delinquency. Certificates of recognition were given to Adoption Department staff for their “outstanding performance and lasting contribution” to the adoption process: Palmer Sesti, Supervisor; Laura Roman-Christman, Office Assistant II; Brenda Kelly and Debby Anthony, Deputy Registers; and Gabrielle Osooli, Julie Berz, and Marilyn McAllister, Caseworkers. The ceremony concluded with the finalization of two adoptions by Family Division Judges James Alexander and Elizabeth Pezzetti.

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In addition, six other Family Division judges: Judge Eugene Arthur Moore, Judge Linda Hallmark, Judge Joan Young, Judge Martha Anderson, Judge Cheryl Matthews, and Judge Leo Bowman heard adoption cases in their courtrooms following the event. Newly adoptive families, along with their extended families and friends, were joined by the judges, Adoptions Unit staff and DHS administrators for refreshments afterwards.

There are approximately 6,200 new foster care cases in Michigan each year and, while all adoptions are important, the Oakland County Family Division wants to bring special attention to the fact that foster children need permanent families. The Family Division courts, in participation with the Department of Human Services, finalize approximately 475 adoptions each year, 40% of which are children from abused or neglected homes. Over the past five years, the number of cases reported to the Court has doubled and there have been growing numbers of children placed under the Court's supervision to protect them from further abuse. Currently in Oakland County, there are 523 children whose parental rights have been terminated and are permanent wards of the Court, some of which are now available for adoption.

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