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## A Total of 49 Children Are Adopted At Separate Adoption Day Events In The Sixth Judicial Circuit

CLEARWATER - At the Sixth Judicial Circuit's two celebrations of National Adoption Day this year — one in Pasco County on Nov. 2, a second in Pinellas County on Nov. 9 — a total of 49 children were adopted into 35 families.

At the Pasco celebration, held at the New Port Richey courthouse, the featured speakers were Attorney Tonya Oliver-Valdes, who has been involved in dependency court as a foster parent and a Guardian ad Litem for 22 years, and Megan Truesdale, who decided to adopt when she and her husband Shane realized they couldn't have children of their own.

Last year, a little girl by the name of Mackenzie came into the life of Tonya and that of her husband Ricardo. It was only supposed to be temporary until her biological parents were able to be reunified with her. Ultimately, that did not happen and Mackenzie was available for adoption. Tonya and Ricardo did not want Mackenzie to spend more of her life in a home that was not permanent, so they made her one of the family. She is now the youngest of eight children.

After Megan and Shane realized that they were unable to have children of their own, they turned toward adopting, not just once, but again and again. They adopted Katie when she was two days old, then Emma when Katie was 4. Recognizing there was a dire need for older children to be adopted, the couple switched gears. They adopted a 15-year-old boy and finally a 17-year-old girl.



Tonya Oliver-Valdes with adopted daughter



Megan Truesdale speaks of her family's decision to adopt four children

The Pinellas celebration was held one week later, on Nov. 9, at the County Justice Center in Clearwater, and it featured one family whose members offered to speak of their experience. Rachel and her husband Rick decided they wanted to adopt through the foster care system. Three years ago, the day they were cleared as foster parents, they took in Mattie, then 12, and then, later, Mattie's brother, Zane, then 9. After the Adoption Day ceremony, the Reumanns officially adopted them, in a move that keeps one set of siblings together. But there's another set the Reumanns are keeping together too. That would be Anna, now 13, and Nikki, now 17, who the Reumanns adopted last year. The couple recently purchased a home in Palm Harbor so each child would have their own room.

Both Pasco and Pinellas Adoption Days were well covered by local media. Fox 13 aired a segment for Pasco Adoption Day and The Tampa Bay Times ran an article on Pinellas Adoption Day.



Rick Reumann comforts one of his two adopted daughters who spoke, as she recounts her experiences