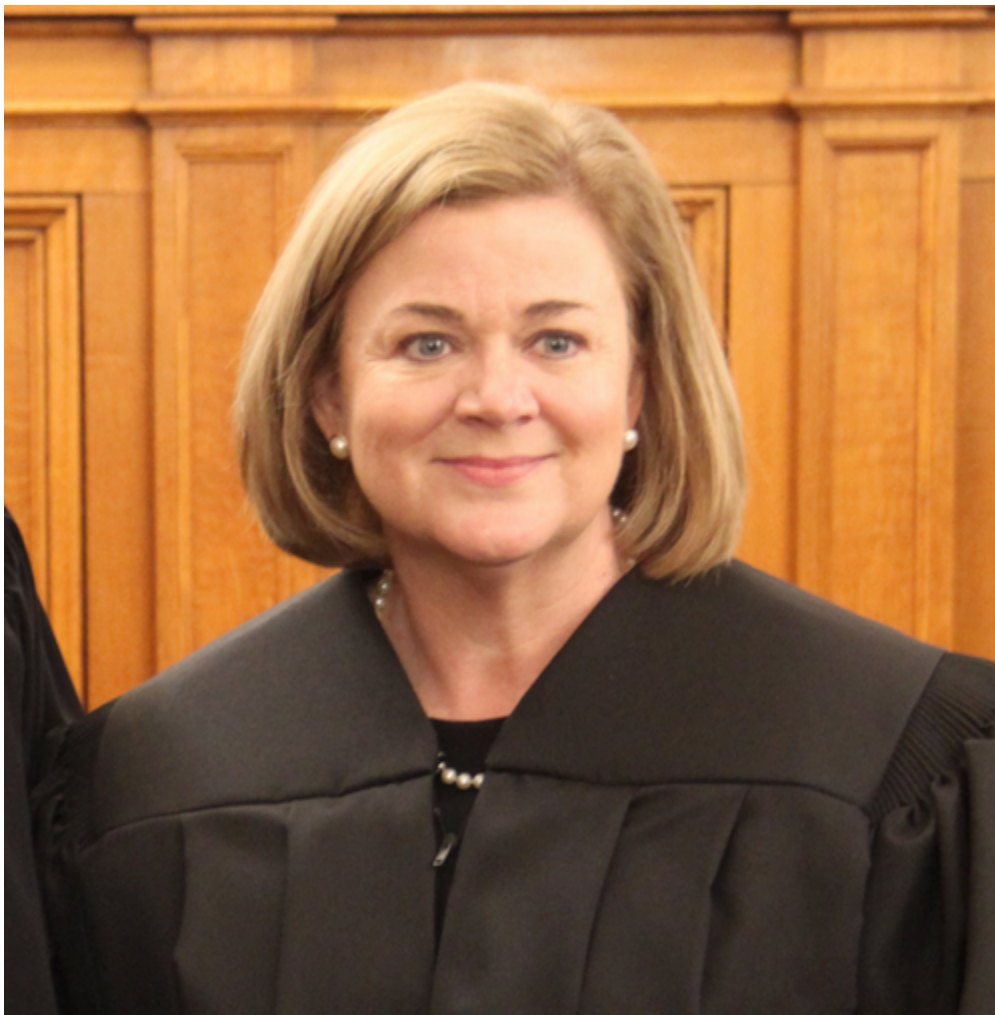


Madison County Courthouse Creates Forever Families for 25 Children During Adoption Day

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EDWARDSVILLE – Today 24 children in foster care joined their forever families as their adoptions were finalized at the Madison County Courthouse in Edwardsville during the court's sixth annual Adoption Day celebration.



Third Judicial Circuit Court Judges Amy Maher, Amy Sholar, Christopher Threlkeld, and Associate Judges Andrew Carruthers, Angela Donohoo, Martin Mengarelli, Ron Motil, Emily Nielsen, Maureen Schuette, and Justin Zimmerman presided over the

adoptions. Staff from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Hoyleton Youth and Family Services, Brightpoint, Lutheran Child and Family Services, CASA and the Restore Network were also in attendance to make the day memorable for these new families.

The finalizations began at 9 a.m. and were followed by a celebration that included a balloon arch, balloon animals, a magician and t-shirt decorating. Disney characters, superheroes and even Santa Claus made special appearances to join the festivities.

“Today, we are celebrating 24 children who are going home to their forever families just in time for the holidays, **said Illinois DCFS Director Marc D. Smith.** “It is such a special day, and I am thrilled to celebrate these families and this joyous occasion; I encourage Illinoisans to join these families by considering becoming a licensed foster, adoptive or guardianship parent to children who need them.”

“Watching these children, especially the older ones who truly understand that they have a permanent home to call their own, is an honor unlike any other to witness,. “To know there are people who are opening their hearts and homes to children who want nothing more than a family is profound.”

Last fiscal year, 1,939 Illinois children were adopted into permanent families. Today, there are 19,835 youth in care waiting for a family and a place to call home. To learn more about some of them, visit the Heart Gallery of Illinois at <https://greenlightfamilyservices.org/heartgalleryofil/>. For more information about becoming an adoptive parent, visit dcfs.illinois.gov and click on “Loving Homes” then on “Become a Foster or Adoptive Parent.”

Adoption is a serious and permanent commitment to a child. DCFS offers a range of supports to adoptive families, including reimbursement for attorney fees and court costs, a monthly subsidy, a medical card and other benefits which assist in defraying expenses associated with raising a child. Many considering adoption become licensed foster families first, giving them a better understanding of the needs of children from disrupted families before making a life-changing decision.

About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to reports received by the Child Abuse Hotline at childabuse.illinois.gov (non-emergency situations) or 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing guardianship or adoption by loving families

to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.