

## Meet the Robinsons

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WEST OLIVE TOWNSHIP — John and Christy Robinson spent four years trying to have a baby, and came away with two miscarriages and a lot of heartache.

Now to say the Robinsons have a full house would be quite an understatement. Since 1996, they've adopted Matthew, Marie, Anthony, Lizzie, Sammy, Jessie, and finalized James' adoption on Tuesday.



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James is their seventh child, but not their last. Christy, at age 38, is two months pregnant with what will be the couple's first birth child. Although Christy and John are ecstatic to have another little one, they are just as joyful to have each of their adopted children.

"These are all our own children," Christy said during the Adoption Day Celebration Tuesday at the Ottawa County Fillmore Complex. "That's what I want anyone who is being adopted to know, is that you're just as important as any other child."

The Robinsons live in Dorr, but all of their children were adopted in Ottawa County. Even with the Robinsons around, however, there's still a need for more parents willing to adopt.

In 2006, 146 children were eligible for adoption in Ottawa County, and there have already been more than 100 so far in 2007. Eight of those adoptions were finalized Tuesday.

At any given time, there are 19,000 in Michigan's foster care system, and approximately 4,300 with the goal of adoption.

Mitch and Charlys Boucher of Grand Haven finalized the adoption of their son, Aiden, at last year's Adoption Day, and this year they brought in their daughter, Elizabeth.

"We always wanted to adopt, but never got around to it," Mitch said while Charlys chased Aiden around the Probate Court entranceway.

A friend of the Bouchers' family was thinking about putting a baby up for adoption a few years back, spurring both Mitch and Charlys to call about it on the same day,

without each other knowing.



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They didn't adopt that newborn, but soon contacted Bethany Christian Services to inquire about the adoption process. Only a month after completing all the necessary paperwork, the Boucher's received a call from Aiden's birth mother. Mitch said he knows people who have adopted from abroad, and this was much easier.

Both the Robinsons and the Bouchers have open adoptions, which allows the birth mother to stay connected with the child.

"I was a little bit hesitant of the openness at first, but it turned out really well," Mitch said.

Ottawa County Adoption Specialist Diane Prisby said she would like to see more parents participate in open adoptions.

"It's very important for these children to know their birth families, and they've allowed it to happen," she said.

Prisby also said there is always a large need for parents to adopt older children, siblings and minorities.

Judges Mark Feyen and Jon Hulsing confirmed the eight children during Ottawa County's Adoption Day Celebration. Judge Feyen also read a statement issued by Michigan's seven Supreme Court justices, which they had unanimously agreed upon and signed.

"They almost never all agree," said Feyen jokingly. "From the 2-year-olds and toddlers of this room, all the way up to the state Supreme Court, we all want to celebrate Adoption Day."

County commissioner Joyce Kortman has five adopted nieces and nephews and three adopted grandchildren.

"I'm just delighted to be here, to be with you and to celebrate with you," she said.