



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Families Celebrated at Statewide Michigan Reunification Day

LANSING, MI, June 20, 2019 – The pathway from foster care back to a reunified family is not easy, and families who have been reunified were celebrated today at a Michigan Hall of Justice ceremony. Eleven children, representing five families from Clinton, Gratiot, and Mason counties, joined Justice Elizabeth T. Clement, Justice Megan K. Cavanagh, Chief Judge Jeffrey Nellis, from Mason County Probate Court, and Judge Michelle Rick from the 29th Circuit Court at the fourth annual statewide Family Reunification Day.

“We are honored to highlight parents and professionals who demonstrate the compassion and perseverance to keep families together,” said Justice Clement. “The families present today have worked incredibly hard to accomplish the goals required for reunification with their children, and I am very proud that Michigan has stepped up as one of 27 states to hold Reunification Day events. We hope courts statewide will follow our lead in the years to come.”

In a typical year, more than 8,000 children leave foster care. Almost half are reunited with their families, a quarter are adopted, and a quarter either age out of foster care or enter adult foster care. Michigan’s Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) offers intensive services to help families address problems such as substance abuse.

“I am proud to honor parents across the state who have made the commitment to work toward reunification with their children,” said Justice Cavanagh. “These parents, despite obstacles, didn’t stop working on what they had to do to show their children what it means to be a family. My heartfelt thanks go out to everyone involved in reuniting these children with their parents.”

[Michigan Reunification Day](#), which is part of the [American Bar Association’s annual Reunification Month celebrations](#), recognizes the important accomplishments of parents, and the many professionals who support them, in having their children safely and successfully returned home from foster care. The goal of Michigan Reunification Day is to reunite children with families and recognize the vital role that community partners such as mental health and substance abuse professionals play in making it possible for families to stay together. Reunification Day is also intended to encourage courts to hold similar events statewide.

Tracie Kress, MDHHS Family Preservation and Reunification Program Manager, JooYeun Chang, MDHHS Executive Director of Children’ Services Agency, and Sean de Four, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Office, Wellspring Lutheran Services attended the event and presented the MDHHS Guy Thompson Worker Achievement and MDHHS Guy Thompson Champion for Reunification awards.