

November 23, 2014



MARK RANDALL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Crystal Robinson, of Miramar, rejoices as the adoption of her daughter, Allison Marie Morales, 2, by she and her husband, Farouk Morales, was made official by Judge John Bowman on Saturday.

37 kids get permanent homes at adoption event

BY ARIEL BARKHURST
Staff writer

FORT LAUDERDALE — When asked during the adoption hearing for her 2-year-old nephew Tijwuan why she wants to take on the boy, 23-year-old Theara Edwards answered, “Because I love him dearly and I want him all to myself.”

Caring for him while her sister could not, she “fell in love with him and wanted him to have a better life,” despite the fact that she was only 21 at the time, she said.

Edwards’ home on Saturday became one of 29 across Broward County to have a new permanent resident, after five judges presided over 29 families adopting 37 kids ages 1 to 17 in an event to mark National Adoption Month.

Online

To watch a video report on the adoption ceremony, go to SunSentinel.com/AdoptionDayBroward

ChildNet, the Florida Department of Children and Families and Broward County have held the event for at least a dozen years, if not longer, representatives from the organizations said.

Tijwuan sat on Edwards’ lap through the short hearing, playing with a red balloon and grinning.

Kids ran up and down the Broward County Courthouse hallways with balloon swords and face paint. Families stood in smiling groups, many wearing color-coded outfits.

Families adopt kids throughout the year in Broward, but the

annual adoption month event helps to raise awareness of the need for good families to adopt, said Emilio Benitez, president and CEO of ChildNet.

“It’s to really emphasize to the community the importance of adopting, of adopting children out of foster care, because they are not there through any fault of their own,” he said.

There are 60 kids in need of adoption in Palm Beach County. There are 1,800 in the child welfare system in the county.

Friday, an Adoption Month event in Palm Beach saw 16 families adopt 24 children. The adoptive parents at the Broward courthouse on Saturday told similar stories: They took a child into their home, for one reason or another, and

See **ADOPTION, 2B**



MARK RANDALL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Theara Edwards, of Miramar, poses with her newly adopted son, Tijwuan, 2, and Judge John Bowman on Saturday.

ADOPTION

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came to love them too much to let them leave.

If Edwards hadn't been willing and able to adopt Tijwuan, he might have been in foster care for a long time, Edwards said. She couldn't handle to even think of that, she said.

"He had nowhere to go," said Edwards, who said her sister struggled to provide a stable home for Tijwuan and recently signed away her rights to him.

"I've had him since he was 10 days old. At first, when I found out he was going to go into foster care, I told my sister I would take him for a while until she got her head together. But he started growing on me, and I couldn't imagine giving

him back."

Some families told similar stories of falling in love with a child they took on because relatives would otherwise have put the child into foster care.

Others were trained foster families that just fell in love with the kids placed in their homes.

"He's a good match for our family," said Shanti Veters, of her newly adopted son, Benjamin. Veters and her husband Joseph got involved with foster parenting through their church. "God knew he was supposed to be ours."

To become a foster or adoptive parent in Palm Beach County, call ChildNet at 561-352-2500.

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37 kids get permanent homes at adoption awareness event



Thirty-seven children were adopted Saturday in Broward County at a National Adoption Day event held at the Broward County Courthouse.

By **Ariel Barkhurst**,
Sun Sentinel

NOVEMBER 23, 2014 | FORT LAUDERDALE

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Edwards' home will be one of 29 across **Broward County** to have a new permanent resident Saturday, after five judges presided over 29 families adopting 37 kids ages 1 to 17 in an event Saturday to mark National Adoption Month.

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Families adopt kids throughout the year in Broward, but



Crystal Robinson, of Missouri, gets a pinch on the cheek from her soon-to-be daughter, Altona Marie Morales, 2, before their adoption hearing with Judge John Browman on Saturday, National Adoption Day and Altona's Birthday. (Mark Henshall / Sun Sentinel)

the annual adoption month event helps to raise awareness of the need for good families to adopt, said Emilio Benitez, president and CEO of ChildNet.

"It's to really emphasize to the community the importance of adopting, of adopting children out of foster care, because they are not there through any fault of their own," he said.

Last year, 130 kids were adopted in **Broward County**. There are 100 kids in need of adoption in the county now. There are 2,700 kids in the child welfare system in Broward, and some of those will end up in need of adoption.

There are 60 kids in need of adoption in **Palm Beach County**. There are 1,800 in the child welfare system in the county.

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To become a foster or adoptive parent in **Palm Beach County**, call ChildNet at 561-352-2500.