

Baby Nicole Scores Limo, Home



NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT (Allan Appel)

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by Allan Appel, New Haven Independent Staff

Nine months after she was abandoned at a hospital, baby Nicole got a permanent home and a limo ride to Evan's Toy Shoppe.

Nicole was formally adopted Friday morning by Silvia (at left in photo) and Nick, a New Haven area couple, during a happy and gurgle-filled legal proceeding at New Haven Regional Children's Probate Court on State Street.

She became the eighth baby to be adopted under the Safe Haven for Newborns Act that was passed in 2000. The act permits a parent voluntarily to give up custody and without facing prosecution as long as the infant is under 30 days old and is brought to a hospital.

At two days old Nicole was brought to live with Nick and Silvia (they asked not to have their last name used) by officials with the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

"I was afraid to touch her, she was so small and fragile," said Nick. "Now we roughhouse with her all over the rug."

He pronounced the child a miracle. Although he and Silvia have been foster parents to eight children, including a two-and-a-half year old boy who currently lives with them, Nicole will be their first adopted child. Silvia said they'd been married for 18 years. They really wanted a baby of their own, and, yes, there was pressure from family members. No longer.

No fewer than a dozen relatives and friends filled the courtroom of Judge Michael Albis (at left in photo) to celebrate. The judge said that he creates a family, legally, with the stroke of the pen, but the parents do so with their selflessness and their love. This day was by no means a certainty. Once he decided to try to adopt Nicole, "I felt on pins and needles," said Nick. He was referring to the process under the Safe Haven act whereby the state chooses the right family to adopt the child. Once that decision is made, the parental rights of the biological mother transfer to the adoptive parents.

That takes months. What's more, Nick and Silvia knew there was competition. By June, however, the caseworker called and indicated that they, who were chosen as the presumptive adoptive parents, were indeed the lucky ones. Thirty-five other families were on DCF's list.

Nick says his life is changed. "She's my love," he said, adding that he comes home every day from his job as a field technician in industrial and commercial equipment, to Nicole's smile and delights.

The new momma is no less proud. She said Nicole says "Dada," "Mama." When she wants more food, she says, "Mo'." She is easy, usually hungry, loves Dora the Explorer on TV. She devours books in both senses, in both English and Spanish. DCF was also proud. With the permission of the new family, officials opened Friday's proceedings to the public in order to promote the importance of foster parenting and adoption.

The family's social worker in the adoption, Renata Tecza, offered hugs all around, as well as a handsome teddy bear that was wearing a blue shirt with the slogan, "Adoption Is Great." It could not be determined if she presented the bear to the child or to the parents.

DCF Communications Director Gary Kleeblatt said the occasion was also the state's way of marking National Adoption Month. Statewide today, 10 babies are being adopted, but only one Safe Haven baby, he said.

Asked for her comment, Nicole said, "Grrwww, aaarghaa," which was widely interpreted as meaning, "Take me in the limo to the toy store."

With that, she was whisked away in a Hy's Limo Service limousine, headed for Evan's Toy Shoppe in Hamden. Next, she'd enjoy a festive family lunch at Rustic Oak Steakhouse in North Haven. All those services were all contributed as gifts, said Kleeblatt.

The party was set to continue tomorrow, when more than 100 guests are expected to hail the new arrival at the family home.