

New Haven Register

Foster parents gushing with joy on adoption day

Saturday, November 21, 2009

By Pamela McLoughlin, Register Staff

NEW HAVEN — When Probate Judge Michael Albis went on a little too long Friday about the virtues of adoption and child-rearing, one member of his courtroom audience directed loud raspberry blowing sounds his way and let out a few shrieks. Albis didn't mind the distraction, or the smudged drool on the glass-top courtroom table, because the rabble rouser was 9-month-old Nicole, and she was the special girl of the day.

This was her court hearing to finalize adoption by a New Haven County couple who cared for Nicole through foster care since she was only days old.

"This is formally a hearing, but the paperwork is done, more than anything, it's a celebration," Albis told the adoptive family and close friends who gathered for the event. "I'm happy too, because I get to create a family. ... She'll always be yours."

Nicole came to the childless couple, Nick and Silvia, after being left at a hospital under Connecticut's Safe Haven law that allows parents to bring a child 30 days old or younger to a hospital emergency room and avoid prosecution for abandonment. The law is rarely used in Connecticut, with only eight cases since its enactment in 2000. The couple, who are withholding their last name to protect their family, first took the baby as foster parents and have fostered many in the last two years. When they were told she'd go up for adoption, they jumped into the line. Why did they want to adopt her? Silly question.

"Once you look at her you'll see why," said Nick, who waited nervously before the hearing Friday on a sidewalk in front of New Haven Regional Probate Court for Children's Matters. His wife, baby daughter-to-be and close friends were in a nearby stretch limousine provided by the state's Department of Children and Families DCF through a donation.

Named with her adoptive dad in mind, Nicole was dazzling in her flowing white silk jumper, pink shirt, pink tights, white patent leather shoes and sparkling pink headband. She's a big smiler, has the facial features of a baby doll and, by a close family friend's account, is quite friendly and doing her baby talk and first words in both Spanish and English, as her parents are bilingual.

Betty, a close family friend who says she calls every day to check on Nicole, said the baby couldn't go to a nicer couple or a better family. She said the couple is not only loving, but has a beautiful home to share. "This is wonderful," she said, gushing during the event.

Nicole's formal adoption drew a lot of media attention and even DCF Commissioner Susan I. Hamilton, because it was one of many around the state held in open court to highlight National Adoption Day, which is today and National Adoption Month. Hamilton said the agency wanted to highlight "how beautiful it is to create a family through adoption."

Mom Silvia didn't hedge on her feelings.

"This is the best day of my life," she said, after the hearing.

The adoption Friday had an especially sweet twist for Nick and Silvia and their family because the couple have been married for 18 years and despite many fertility procedures, have been unable to conceive.

When Silvia assured him years ago, 'We'll adopt children,' Nick said he told her, 'No way' because someone else's kid could never feel like a son or daughter to him. Then two years ago, the couple began doing foster care and Nick quickly changed his mind.

"I didn't think I'd feel that same bonding (without the biological link), but once you get these little guys in your house, you realize it's your kid," Nick said. "It's a lot of fun — they put a whole new meaning in your life."

They've cared for about eight foster children; Nicole is their first adoption. Nick said it's quite rewarding to give love, attention and a family experience, not just a physical home, to children going through a rough time in their lives. It's also hard to say good-bye, he said, noting he's not really over their first foster child, who came to their home as an infant, but was later reunited with his mother. Nick said he and Silvia are still in touch with that child and mother, and have a relationship.

Nick said that, hopefully, Nicole won't be their only adopted child. The couple also will continue to care for foster children.

"Over and over again, parents who adopt say that adopting their child is the most wonderful thing they have ever done," Gov. M. Jodi Rell said Friday. "Many Connecticut families experience this joy in their lives, and anyone who is considering adding to their family should think about adopting a child from foster care and call 1-888-KID-HERO."

Pamela McLoughlin can be reached at pmcloughlin@nhregister.com



NEW HAVEN REGISTER

Newly adopted Nicole sits with her parents, Nick and Silvia, at New Haven Regional Probate Court for Children's Matters Friday. The parents asked that their last name not be disclosed. (Peter Casolino/Register)