

## SMILES OFFSPRING OF NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

A courthouse ceremony brings a fresh start for 32 children and their parents Saturday.

At 47, Gloria Tanner had watched her three children grow up, sent them off to college and seen the birth of her first grandchild. She wasn't planning to raise any more kids. But then she fell in love with a set of Guatemalan twins. The single mom was working as a case manager at Place of Hope, a nonprofit that provides homes to homeless children, when she met Yolanda and Israel. "Yolanda used to come up to me and tell me, 'You're mommy,'" Tanner said. "I would have to tell her no, but inside I'm going, 'I want to be your mommy.'"

On Saturday, the glowing siblings officially became her children. Yolanda and Israel, 8, were among the 32 children adopted during National Adoption Day ceremonies at the Palm Beach County Courthouse.

Many of the children were abused or neglected before finding their new parents. "As a judge we deal with so much sadness to get to this point," Circuit Court Judge Peter Blanc told a courtroom of children and parents waiting to finalize the adoptions. "Our sadness pales in comparison to that of these children," he said. "Today is a new day. For the judges it's a happy ending. For all of you, it's a new beginning." As Circuit Judge Thomas Barkdull declared the twins' adoption final, he said, "When is your Birthday?" "January 16," Israel responded with a bit of doubt. "This is your adoption birthday," the judge said. "You need to always remember that, too. You get two birthdays each year." All the children received a teddy bear, and Barkdull let them pick a book from a pile on a table in his courtroom.

There also was a party in the courthouse cafeteria with a magician and clown. Despite the festivities, 2-year-old Andrew was content sitting in a double stroller with his new sister.

His two other new siblings were off enjoying the party atmosphere. Although Rodney and Marianne Brimlow have three children, they always have wanted to adopt. "We thought, we'll never be wealthy, but at least we can help kids," Rodney said.

The couple, who is white, met Andrew, who is black, in June and immediately fell in love. Andrew, who weighed 1 1/2 pounds when he was born, instantly bonded with the rest of the children.

Marianne said occasionally people will ask her if one of her children is adopted. Her response: "We say one of them is, but we can't remember which one."

To inquire about volunteering for the guardian ad litem program, call(561)355-2773. For information about becoming a foster parent or adoption, call the Children's Home Society of Florida, (561) 868-4300.