



Adoption Day  
Co-Chairs  
Janet Story and  
Kathy Pidgeon



## Homeward Bound

For more information, go to [www.nationaladoptionday.org](http://www.nationaladoptionday.org).

BY TIM EIGO

More than 200 children in Phoenix were connected with their “forever families” on November 15, when the local version of National Adoption Day was celebrated in Arizona. The event—Arizona’s ninth annual—represents a collaboration among many individuals and agencies, all aimed at raising awareness of the almost 130,000 children in foster care nationwide.

The day dawned sunny and cool at the Durango Juvenile Court Center, and balloons, clowns and sports mascots all signaled a special day at the Maricopa County Superior Court. Thousands of people passed through the courthouse doors to welcome their new family members or to learn more about the adoption process. By the time the day was done, the county event ranked for the first time as the largest in the country.

A visitor to court that day would be pleasantly surprised at the festival atmosphere. For this one day of the year, all courtrooms were open to the public. Many came to observe the process as they considered adoption for their own families. Lawyers and court personnel were available for questions about adopting a child.

Inside the courtrooms, the process was streamlined. Months of advance work left only the finalization of adoptions to complete. Lawyers abided by the accepted standards of courtroom etiquette—requesting permission to approach the bench, for example—as children strolled about and all but climbed onto the laps of court personnel. One boy gazed curiously at a court clerk’s computer screen as she typed; a young girl—in a princess dress, no less—peered cautiously around the steps leading to the judge’s seat. Cameras flashed throughout, and judges all invited family members to gather for photos around the bench when the proceedings were complete.

Steering this massive effort were two lawyers, both solo practitioners. **Kathy Pidgeon** and **Janet Story** have co-chaired the event for at least

four years. Try to give them credit for anything, though, and they recite a list of others who have contributed to the success: the Juvenile Division of the Superior Court (including the staff and the 21 judicial officers who presided on that Saturday); a committee comprised of staff from Child Protective Services and the Department of Economic Security; the Maricopa County Attorney’s Office and Office of the Attorney General; and various adoption agency employees.

In addition, says Pidgeon, there are hundreds of volunteers, not to mention the other “attorneys who happen all to be solo practitioners.”

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge Eileen Willett calls the event “a celebration of the heart,” one requiring the efforts of many in the community.

Pidgeon seconds that.

“This underlines the incredible generosity, commitment and caring spirit that these juvenile law practitioners display every single day. This is a great example of what great work these lawyers and the court do for children in our county and our state.”

And hundreds of children would agree. **AZ**

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