

Foster and Adoptive Recruitment Goes Wild

By Dustin P. Pyeatt
Associate Editor

On any other day they are children who are all too familiar with the child welfare system, but for a few hours on April 1, they weren't foster or adoptive children. Thanks to some face paint and a day at the Oklahoma City Zoo, they became more. A lion in a red baseball cap, a leopard in pink shoes and a tiger in a striped shirt prowled and played during the Military Foster and Adoption Recognition Day.

"We started planning this event in November," said Robin Gibson, child welfare adoption specialist. "A lot of these families have members who have been deployed and a lot of moms are fostering when their husbands are away. And they spend so much time being formal, we wanted them to have time to relax with their families."

The event not only showed appreciation for military families who foster and adopt, but also helped recruit new foster and adoptive parents.

One couple, David and Kimberly, have been interested in adopting for some time, and found the event a great way to get to know people, gather some information and learn more about adoption.

"I think this is wonderful," said David, an Air Force Tech. Sgt.

His wife, Kimberly, who works in the Services Division at Tinker Air Force Base, was also happy to have been invited. "We've been interested in adopting for a few years now because we're not able to have children of our own. We went to a seminar about adopting from overseas, but it really scared us away with the price tag to adopt. This has been

a great opportunity to explain and find out more information."

And for a brief moment, while the laughter was silenced by hot dogs and lemonade, Director Howard Hendrick joined Rep. Mike Jackson of Enid to thank those who put the event together and to thank the foster and adoptive parents in attendance with Rep. Jackson calling them, "true role models in today's society."

OKDHS Photographer Jim Gumm took family portraits of the more than 110 people in attendance from all over the state. One foster family even brought the children's biological parents so they could bond and come one step closer to reunification.

As American flags waived in the breeze under an overcast sky, families grew closer, new families came closer to forming and thanks to a dedicated group of OKDHS employees, memories were made.



Director Howard H. Hendrick mingles with families.