

Wed July 23, 2008

New program makes family a vital mission for state troops

By Sheila Stogsdill, State Correspondent

JAY — Sitting on a bench outside a courtroom, six children fidgeted nervously, waiting for their turn before a [Delaware County](#) judge.

Soon, their names would be called, and all six would enter the courtroom, draped under the arms of Ed and [Donna Scott](#).

Inside a sterile courtroom, the Scotts and their two biological daughters were about to become legally bound as a family with the four children who accompanied them to the courthouse.

It took just one question for [Associate District Judge Barry Denney](#) to approve this trial adoption: Did the four children want the Scotts to be their parents?

Their resounding answer — "Yes!" — brought a chuckle from the judge and grins and tears from others in the courtroom, including relatives, social workers and the children's foster parents.

The new family will be monitored until December, at which point the Scotts will return to court to have the adoption made permanent.

Until then, they will live at their permanent home: Hohenfels, [Germany](#), where [U.S. Army](#) Sgt. Ed Scott is stationed.

A new way to serve

The Scotts are part of a new trend in Oklahoma known by the [Department of Human Services](#) as military adoptions. The process involves military families living outside the state adopting children from Oklahoma.

Last year, [DHS](#) processed 19 such cases, mostly involving adoptive parents living in [Germany](#), said [Linda Foster](#), a [DHS](#) adoption manager. She said Oklahoma was the first state to actively pursue military adoptions. Other states have begun contacting Oklahoma officials to find out how the process works, [Foster](#) said.

During a recent trip where [Foster](#) accompanied two children to their new home in [Germany](#), [Foster](#) spoke to an adoption support group on base. Some of the families told [Foster](#) their home states rejected their adoption requests because they live outside the [United States](#).

"The families were hurt by the rejection and said, 'We are Americans serving our country. What children do you think we would want to parent or help the most?'" [Foster](#) recalled.

Process wasn't easy

The Scotts have Oklahoma ties but lived in Alabama before being stationed in [Germany](#).

For a military adoption, their case is unusual in that they are related to the four adopted children. Typically, the adoptive parents and their new children have no biological connection.

[Scott](#) said all the children, including the family's two biological daughters, were so excited and nervous about the hearing.

"They just wanted to get started with their new life," [Scott](#) said.

The Scotts' new children include three boys, ages 13, 10 and 8, and a girl, age 11. They joined the Scotts' biological daughters, ages 11 and 8.

Most details of the children's past and current circumstances remain confidential, the Scotts' attorney said.

The adoption process took a year.

In order to have personal contact with the children, they flew from [Germany](#) multiple times. The Scotts even purchased a special cell phone so the children could call overseas and talk to them.

"They never once said they didn't want to come and live with us," Donna said.

Throughout the adoption process, one child was adamant about not returning to their biological parents. The other three were torn.

[Donna Scott](#) explained their ambivalence this way: "I think no matter how bad it was, children have this amazing forgiveness and would have gone home."

Extra costs

The Scotts' attorney, [Chris Ramsey](#), said an average military adoption costs about \$10,000 for a sibling group, or less for one child. Half that amount goes to a private agency in [Germany](#) contracted by [DHS](#) to monitor the new family's progress overseas.

The Scotts' costs far exceeded \$10,000 because they traveled twice from [Germany](#) and had to buy a larger house and larger vehicle.

"God provided us money every time we needed money," [Donna Scott](#) said.

One month later

The Scotts' court hearing was in June. In an e-mail exchange Tuesday, [Donna Scott](#) said the entire family is adjusting nicely, even with extra work and time needed to prepare meals and get the children bathed and in bed.

Two issues she's noticed: her new children aren't used to being treated equally, and they aren't used to eating fruits and salads.

She's heard the phrase, "You're mean. I hate you," more than once in the past month. Still, she considers the adoption a blessing for the entire family.

"We know they are loved, safe, cared for and tucked in at night.

"No matter how hard it may get, we are all one big family, and we are together. That's what matters in the end," she said.