

Posted: Wednesday, November 19, 2014 5:11 pm

Home for the holidays

By Kimberly Sutton

More than a year ago, Jennifer Evans received a call from her first cousin to see whether she would care for his 9-month-old son. “He weighed 13 pounds and had failure to thrive,” Evans said. The baby had been in foster care and his birth mother was incapable of caring for him, she said.

Evans was one of the many families who gathered at the Montgomery County Courthouse Wednesday morning to adopt one or more children on the 10th Annual National Adoption Day. Each year, about 115 adoptions take place in Montgomery County, according to Terri Jagers, president of the Montgomery County CPS and Child Welfare Board. “We are a progressive county. We work really hard together,” Jagers said. “Not all counties are like that.”

“(My cousin) loved his son and knew I was dependable and stable,” Evans said. In his 20s, the baby’s father unexpectedly died of a heart attack in May, the mother relinquished her rights to the child and Evans was willing to adopt little Tyrese. “I stepped in and showed him all the love and all the care. God stepped in and made a way for me to have a child. He let me know, ‘This is your child,’” said Evans in tears. “Everything happens for a reason. You can’t question God.” Evans plans on raising the child, now 2, in a rural community near Woodville. “His father wanted his little boy to have permanence and stability. It was achieved today; and, most of all, he’s with family,” said Child Protective Services Case Worker Mildred Anderson.

Ginger Strange adopted her niece’s baby. “We’ve been in this process for two years,” said Strange, who changed her daughter’s name to McKenzie. “She is absolutely full of vim, vigor and vitality,” Strange said.

“This is an exciting day for our department,” County Attorney J D Lambright said. “It makes it all worthwhile for these kids.” “It’s one of the happiest days of our year,” said attorney Sarah Stallberg, who worked on many of the cases.

After County Court-at-Law 2 Judge Jerry Winfree conducted the adoptions, the families enjoyed a Christmas party and the children got to meet Santa. Some of Santa’s helpers presented the children with gifts, stockings and cookies, while others did face-painting and crafts with them. Each family posed for their first “official” Christmas photo together.

Jagers said the county has worked hard to place the children in permanent homes over the past 10 years. Infants and children under the age of 5 were adopted. However, Jagers said the children who were 6 and 7 years old a decade ago are now 16 and 17. “We still have many teenagers that need to be adopted,” Jagers said. “We’re looking to find homes for them.” Last year, 5,149 abused or neglected children and teenagers were adopted from state care, according to Leshia Fisher, CPS program administrator. “Although adoptions from Texas foster care have more than doubled over the last 10 years, there are always more children needing homes. “Today, more than 6,500 children and teens are waiting to be adopted. Many are older children

and teens,” Fisher said. Some of the children have special medical, physical or emotional needs. There is always a need for families willing to adopt African-American children who are over-represented in foster care, Fisher said. For more information about adoption, call Fisher at 936-525-2170.