



### Media Contact:

Kassandra Ortiz, Communications Director for  
St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller  
Phone: 904-819-3641  
Email: [kortiz@stjohnsclerk.com](mailto:kortiz@stjohnsclerk.com)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Four Local Families Adopt Eight Children in National Adoption Day Ceremony Held by St. Johns County Clerk's Office

**ST. JOHNS COUNTY, Florida, November 17, 2023** – Today, the St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller's Office [celebrated St. Johns County National Adoption Day with a special ceremony](#) in the Courtroom Annex of the Richard O. Watson Judicial Center. Four local families adopted eight children, completing the unification of these families in time for the Thanksgiving holiday.

"Thank you so much for opening your hearts and your homes to these children," Commissioner Sarah Arnold said. "I am so excited to be here to see these parents and children all become families today."

November is National Adoption Awareness Month. St. Johns County Adoption Day is a culmination of the adoption process and helps finalize the adoptions from foster care with local families. It is a day of celebration for those children who have found their forever families and for the parents who have made it through the long adoption process. The Family Law Clerks of the Clerk's Office support the court proceedings that help many Florida families grow.

"This event is one of the best days of the year for our office," Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller Brandon J. Patty said. "The adoption process is a long journey for both the children and parents. We are honored to play a role in this process and to commemorate this joyous occasion with the families."

Last year, 60 children were adopted in St. Johns County. So far this year, 44 adoptions have been filed in St. Johns County. The Clerk's Office coordinated with the Family Integrity Program, the Department of Children and Families, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners, and the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Florida to hold the ceremony. For more information, watch the [St. Johns County Adoption Day video](#).

Ceremony speakers included **Judge Howard Maltz**, Administrative Judge, St. Johns County; **Deputy Kelly Kemp**, Chaplain, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office; **Ashanti Austin**, Chief of Staff, St. Johns County Clerk's Office; **Vice Chair Sarah Arnold**, District 2, St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners; **Amanda VanLaningham, Esq.**, Director of Partnerships and Prevention, Department of Children and Families; **Cassandra Ludwig**, Guardian ad Litem; **Judge Christopher**

**Ferebee**, Circuit Court Judge, Unified Family Court Division; and **Shawna Novak**, CEO, Family Integrity Program.

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Photo: Four families stand with eight newly adopted children after the National Adoption Day Ceremony at the Richard O. Watson Judicial Center on Nov. 17, 2023.