



Media Advisory
Nov. 14, 2023 – 3:30 p.m.

Media Contact:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Johns County Clerk's Office to Host National Adoption Day Ceremony on Nov. 17

When: Friday, Nov. 17, 2023, 10 a.m.

Where: Courtroom Annex, Richard O. Watson Judicial Center, 4010 Lewis Speedway, St. Augustine

What: The St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller's Office will celebrate St. Johns County National Adoption Day with a special ceremony. Eight children will be adopted that day by four local families.

Who: Scheduled speakers include **Vice Chair Sarah Arnold**, District 2, St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners; **Judge Howard Maltz**, Administrative Judge, St. Johns County; and **Deputy Kelly Kemp**, Chaplain, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office; **Nicole Hamilton**, Family Law Clerk, St. Johns County Clerk's Office; **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; **Shawna Novak**, CEO, Family Integrity Program.

Why: St. Johns County Adoption Day is a culmination of the adoption process and helps finalize and celebrate adoptions from foster care with local families. Our office's Family Law Clerks support the court proceedings that help many Florida families grow. This will be the first St. Johns County National Adoption Day since 2019. This event is an opportunity for the local community to celebrate the new families brought together on Adoption Day. Family Court proceedings can often be contemptuous, but our local judges say St. Johns County Adoption Day brings them joy. 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 is collaborating 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. November is National Adoption Awareness Month across the United States. While the main point of National Adoption Day is to finalize adoptions, it is also a day of celebration for those children who have found their forever families and for the parents who have made it through the lengthy adoption process. For more information, please watch the [St. Johns County Adoption Day video](#).

Media Op: The ceremony is open to all media and the public, with opportunities to interview program participants after the ceremony. Additional photos and video are available upon request from St. Johns County Public Affairs.

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