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ALERT FEATURED TOP STORY

## Herrin artist captures weathering of time across Southern Illinois landscapes

Makayla Holder

Jan 4, 2022



Natalie Rotramel pictured with her art on Dec. 27 in Herrin.

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**H**ERRIN – Natalie Rotramel, 33, of Herrin, has been interested in art since her early childhood.

Her biggest fascination is the passage of time both through nature and through everyday life, and this can be seen through many of her works and mirrored in her own life.

## **Carbondale roots**

Rotramel's art started in early childhood with her Carbondale roots.

Growing up in the college town, Rotramel has always been keenly aware of the ebb and flow of the students arriving and leaving town.

This is where she first recognized her interest in time.

“Part of growing up in a college town is noticing when the students leave and when they come back,” Rotramel said. “It made me pay attention more to the seasons. Even though a lot of my friends moved to different towns for college, I felt rooted here. I decided to keep growing, though I didn't want to feel stuck. It's kind of like a tree. You're rooted in place and you can watch the time pass and still keep growing.”

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Since then, Rotramel's roots have grown to encompass all of Southern Illinois.

She has spent years documenting the ever-changing landscape from Garden of the

Gods on canvas to backwoods trails on leaves.

However, this fascination with time didn't develop into art until she noticed a constant, yet changing, staple of her commute to school.

“It all started with that barn,” Rotramel said. “On my way to school every day, I would look at it and kind of notice how it looked different depending on the lighting and weather. Ever since then I've just been noticing how things change.”

She has gone through seasons of wood, miniatures, postcard art and a dozen other canvas types and paint since then.

Currently, she is working on a few projects where she paints local birds, trails or wineries on leaves.

Her 5-year-old daughter is a personal fan of this series as she starts to grow her artistic roots in Southern Illinois as well.

Mother and daughter paint side by side in their studio — yet another example of the ever-present and fast passage of time.

“It's nice to build that connection,” Rotramel said. “She helps me stay playful and not think of things as too precious. As far as looking back on the passage of time, that is something that really gets driven home when you're a parent. It is crazy how time changes so quickly. It's a cliché but it's true they grow up so fast. That's a thing I think about when pressing these leaves — preserving these memories. The journey is not over yet. We just keep growing.”

## **Winter turns to spring**

As each year goes through seasons, each person will go through several seasons in their own lifetime, Rotramel believes.

Her art has helped her and others through their hard times especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It’s definitely been therapeutic having these projects to keep me busy,” Rotramel said. “I did a 100-Day project where I just looked outside this window and kind of documented how spring was coming back each day. That was a fun project. It was something to keep my mind off of the news and keep connecting with people through my art.”

She also did a project throughout the pandemic called "Bloom Where You Are Planted," where individuals sent photos of things in bloom around them, and Rotramel would send “happy mail” of the drawings created from them.

Rotramel’s art has helped her through more than just COVID-19.

Just as the local landscapes like Garden of the Gods have withstood time, her art is a method by which she withstands all hardships in her life.

“A lot of these local landmarks have really endured the passage of time,” Rotramel said. “So thinking about that and highlighting that with the different strikes from different times of day is a good reminder of perseverance. Being able to look at these (her art) really drives home the point that this is just a season. It will pass. There are dark times and winter where we kind of withdraw, but then it’ll change into spring eventually.”

## **Inspire art always**

Rotramel had a huge support system growing up involving her art, and she hoped to create the same space for her daughter.

However, not all children or people have the luxury.

Najjar Abdul-Musawwir, a SIU Carbondale professor who encouraged Rotramel, said this support is really important for artists.

“It’s very important for people to realize that art and engaging in art is not one-dimensional,” Abdul-Musawwir said. “It’s a way of analyzing the internal world in

our external world. Everything that we engage in is impacted by our engagement with the visual arts. Artists are not just someone who entertains. They are more than entertainers. They bring something to the world that allows the imagination to become endless. That's why it's so important to help children maintain their imagination throughout their lifetime.”

An artist Rotramel is inspired by, Emily Jeffords, mirrored a similar sentiment in her motto "do it for the process," Rotramel said.

That is some of the best advice she could think to give to young artists who don't receive support for loved ones for their creations.

“Do it for you,” Rotramel said. “You don't have to do it for anybody else. Do it for yourself and how it makes you feel. I get a lot of inspiration just driving the backroads to work. You just have to find beauty where you are at. Appreciate what is in front of you. It's a good metaphor for not only finding inspiration but happiness too.”

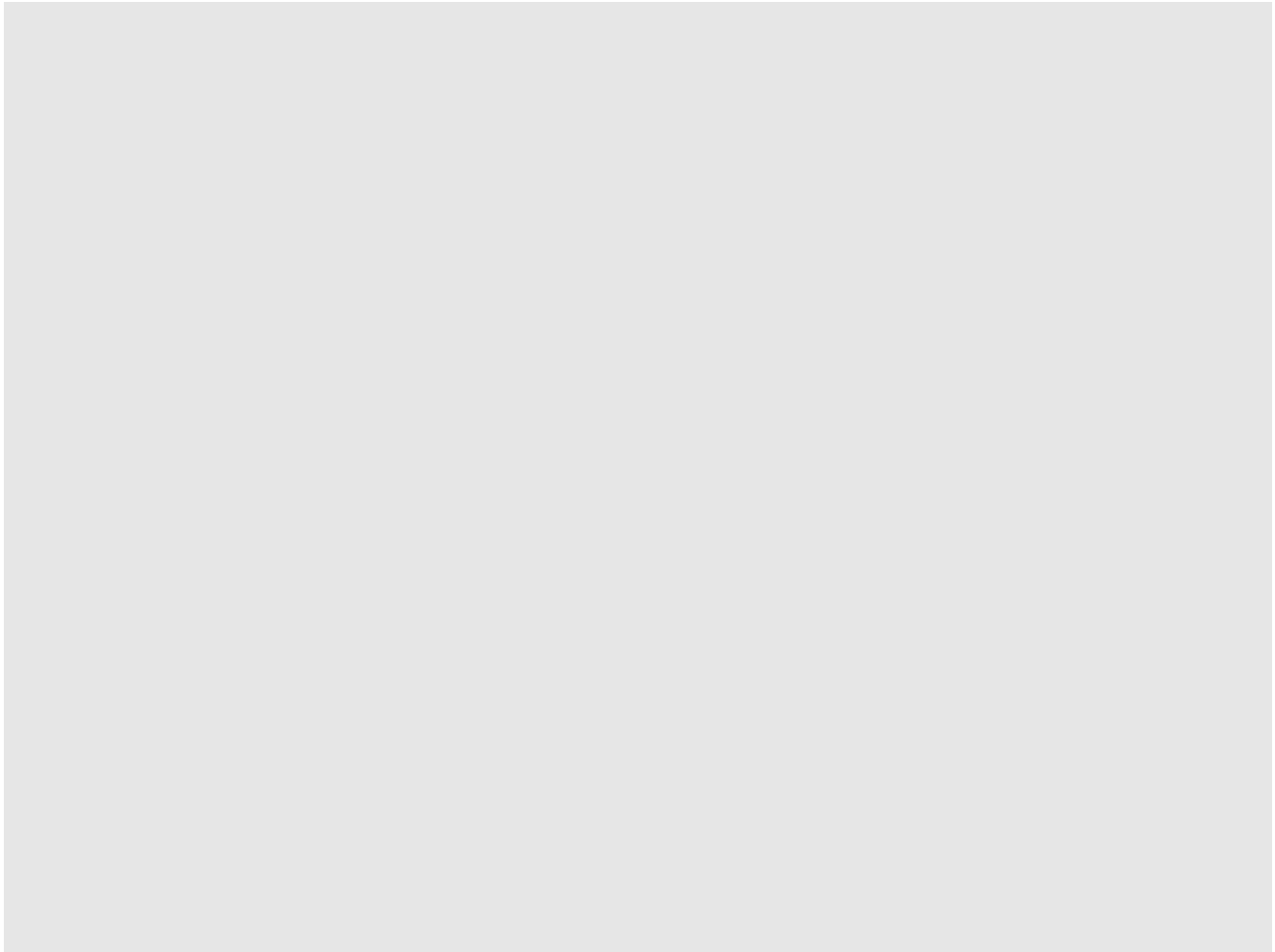
You can follow Rotramel's artistic journey **here**.

A retired Marine veteran who lost people in the Vietnam war has partnered with descendants of a long line of military folks to produce a mural memorializing the military and first responders.

Makayla Holder Clips Provided

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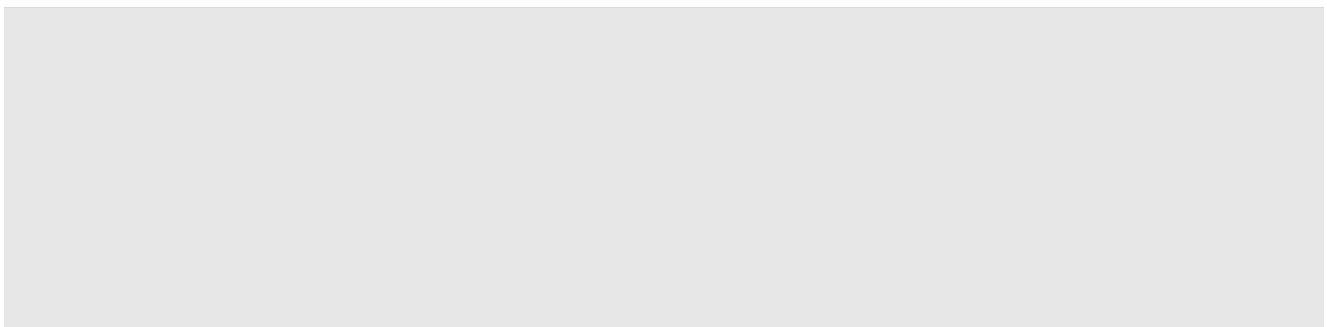
## **Photos: 23 children gain families in National Adoption Day ceremony in Marion**

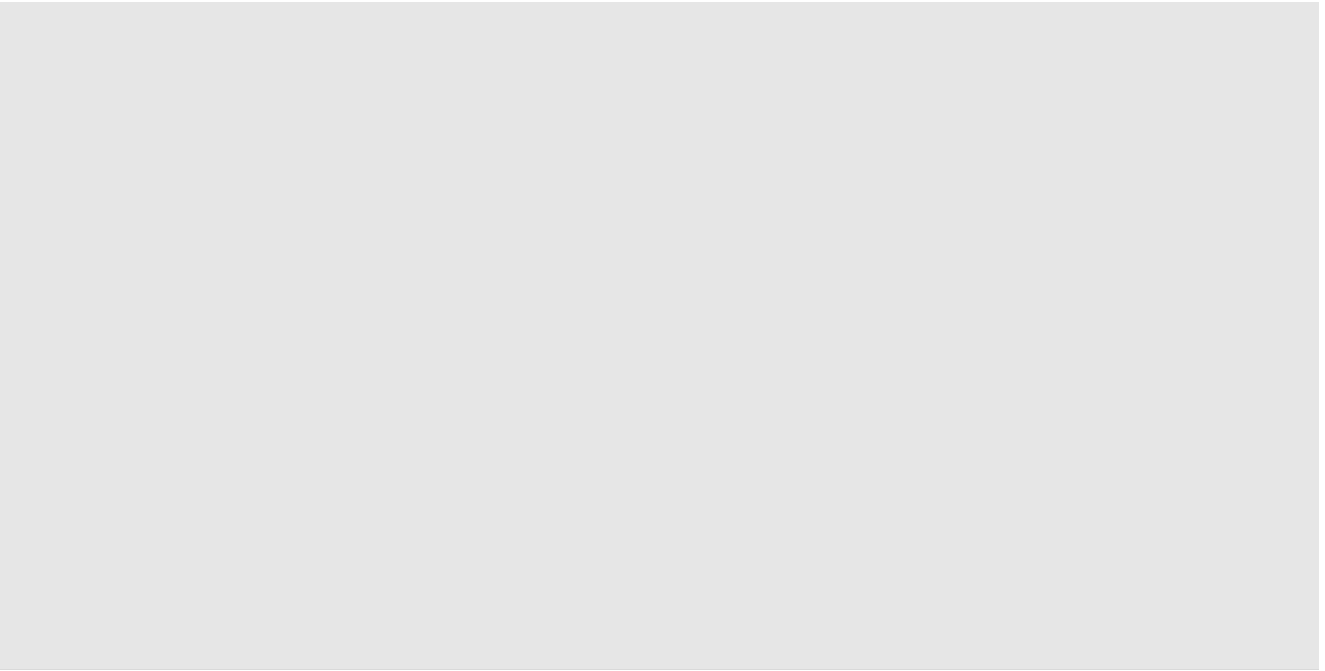


Katlyn Kennedy, (center right), of Massac County, shows off photos of her soon-to-be-adopted children on her cell phone to Caritas foster care case employees Amy Corder and Kelsie Arp on Friday. Kennedy and her husband, David, were among the families who had their adoptions finalized that day at the Williamson County Courthouse in Marion.

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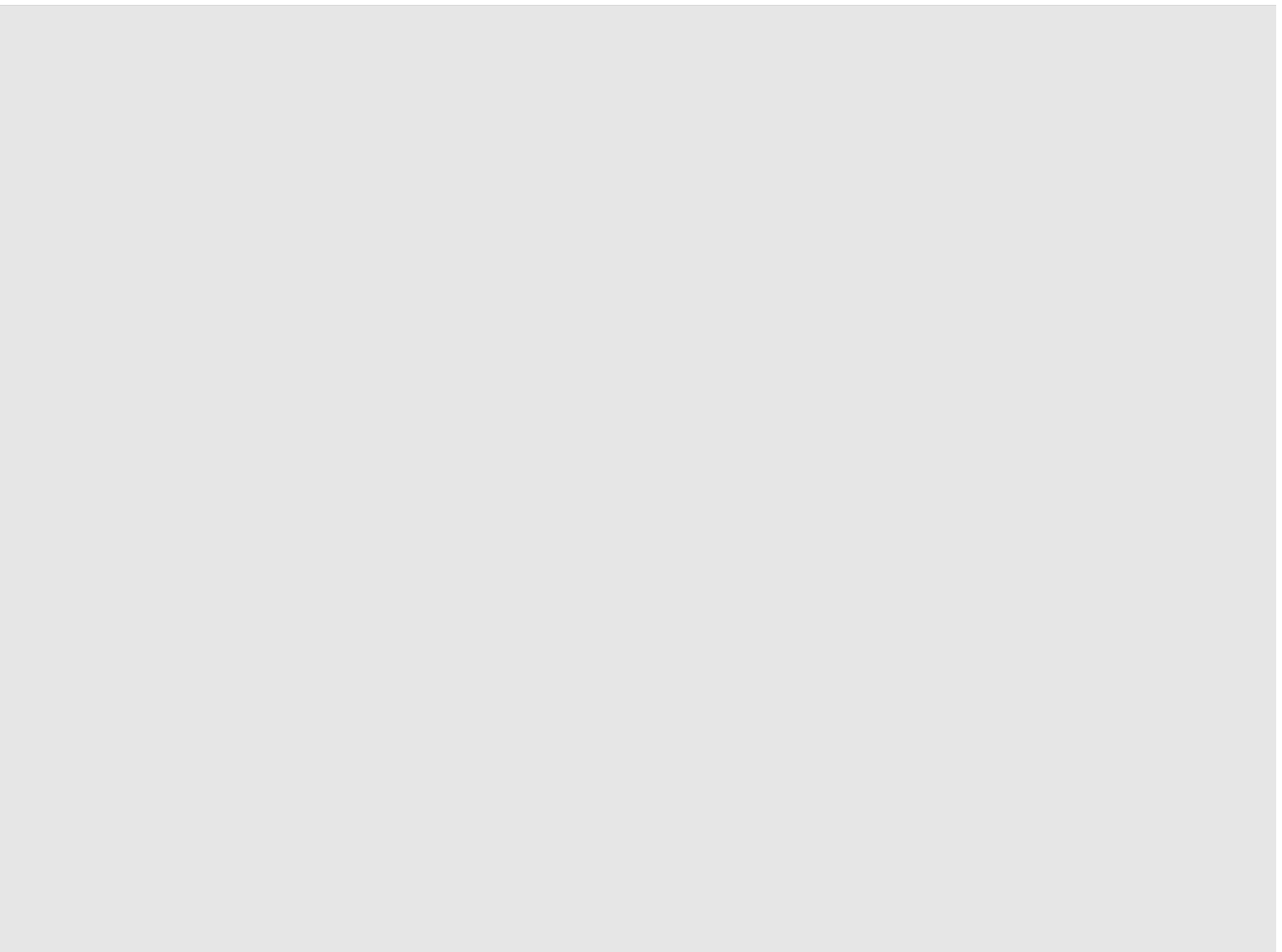




Darla Jeralds, left, sits next to her grandson Isaac and their guests prior to her adoption of Isaac Friday at the Williamson County Courthouse. The Jeralds' adoption was one of more than 20 held in observation of National Adoption Day.

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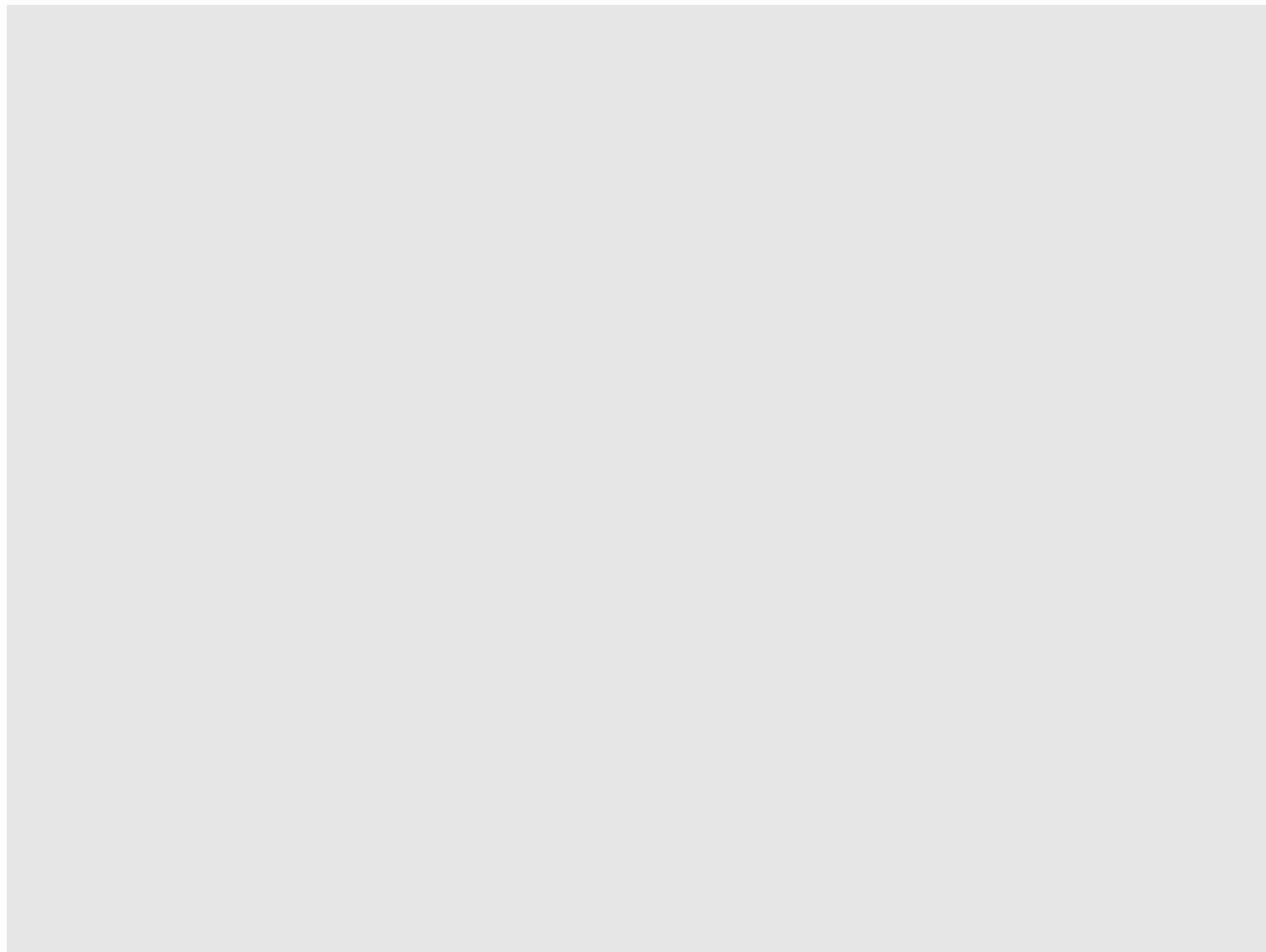


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Moments after a Williamson County Court judge approved her family's petition for adoption on Friday, mother Katlyn Kennedy, of Massac County, smiles at her 3-year-old daughter, MaLeigha, as her 5-year-old daughter, Haven, looks on.

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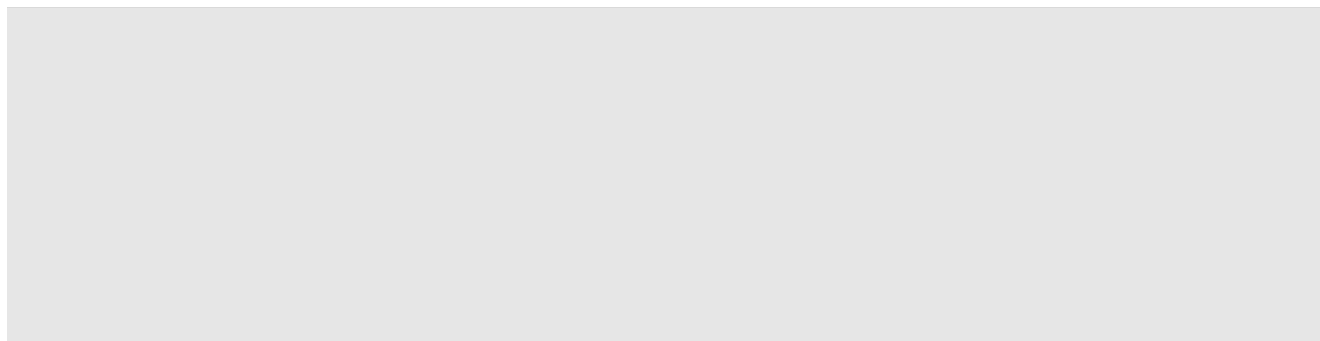
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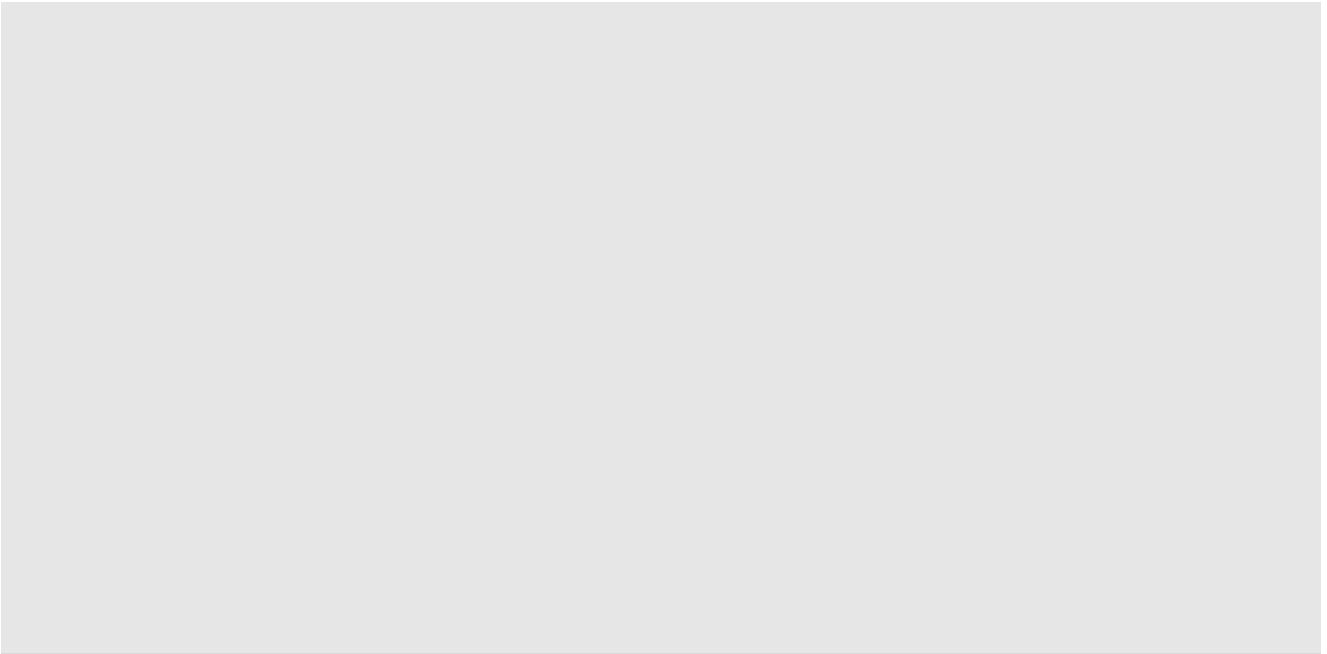
From left, Kelsie Arp, foster care supervisor with Caritas Family Solutions; mother Katlyn Kennedy; and attorney Andrea McNeill share a moment shortly after Kennedy's adoption petition was approved by a judge on Friday. Kennedy and her husband, David, were among the families who had their adoptions for foster children finalized that day at the Williamson County Courthouse in Marion.

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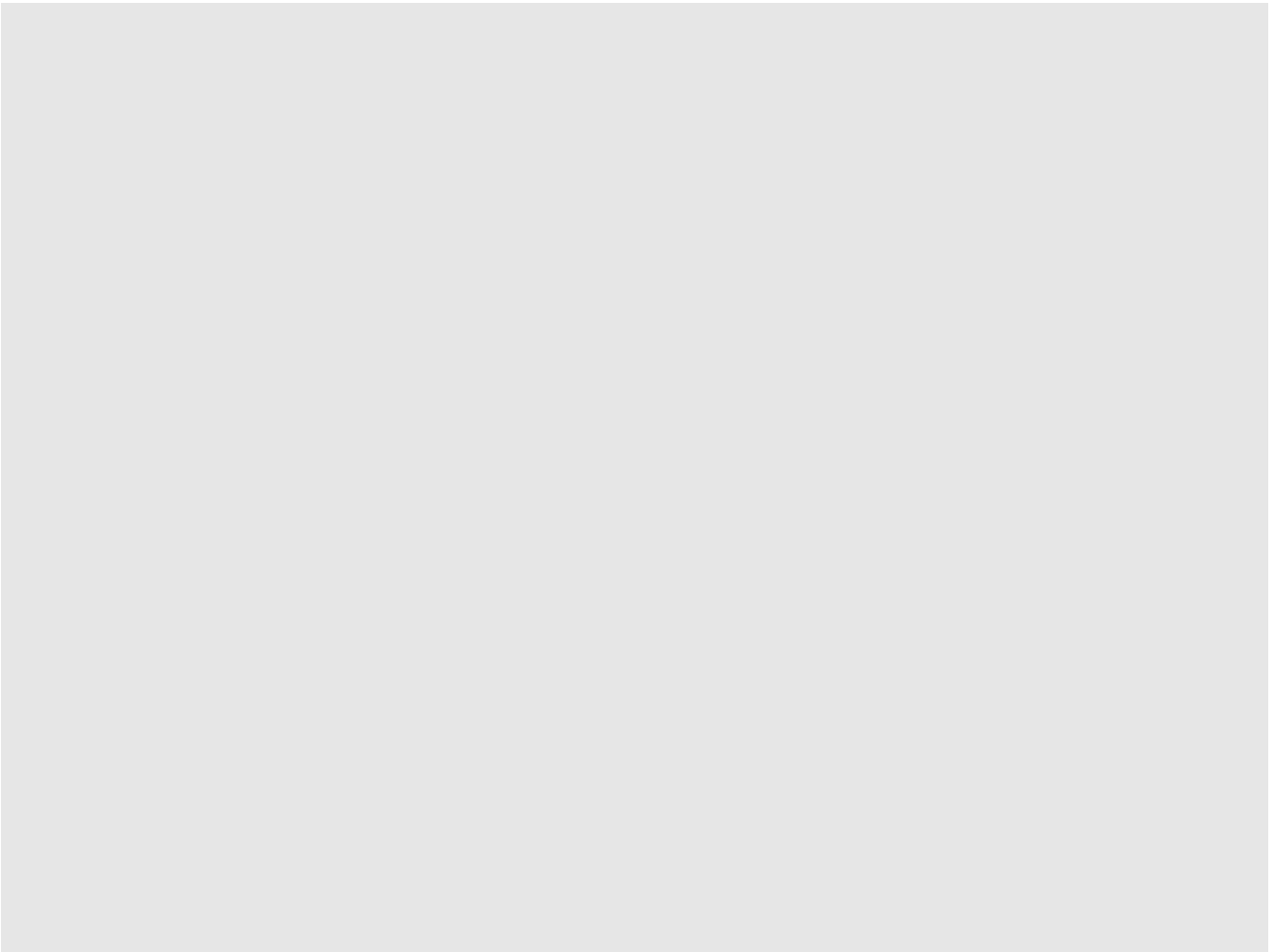






From left, Kelsie Arp, foster care supervisor with Caritas Family Solutions; mother Katlyn Kennedy; and attorney Andrea McNeill share a moment shortly after Kennedy's adoption petition was approved by a judge on Friday. Kennedy and her husband, David, were among the families who had their adoptions for foster children finalized that day at the Williamson County Courthouse in Marion.

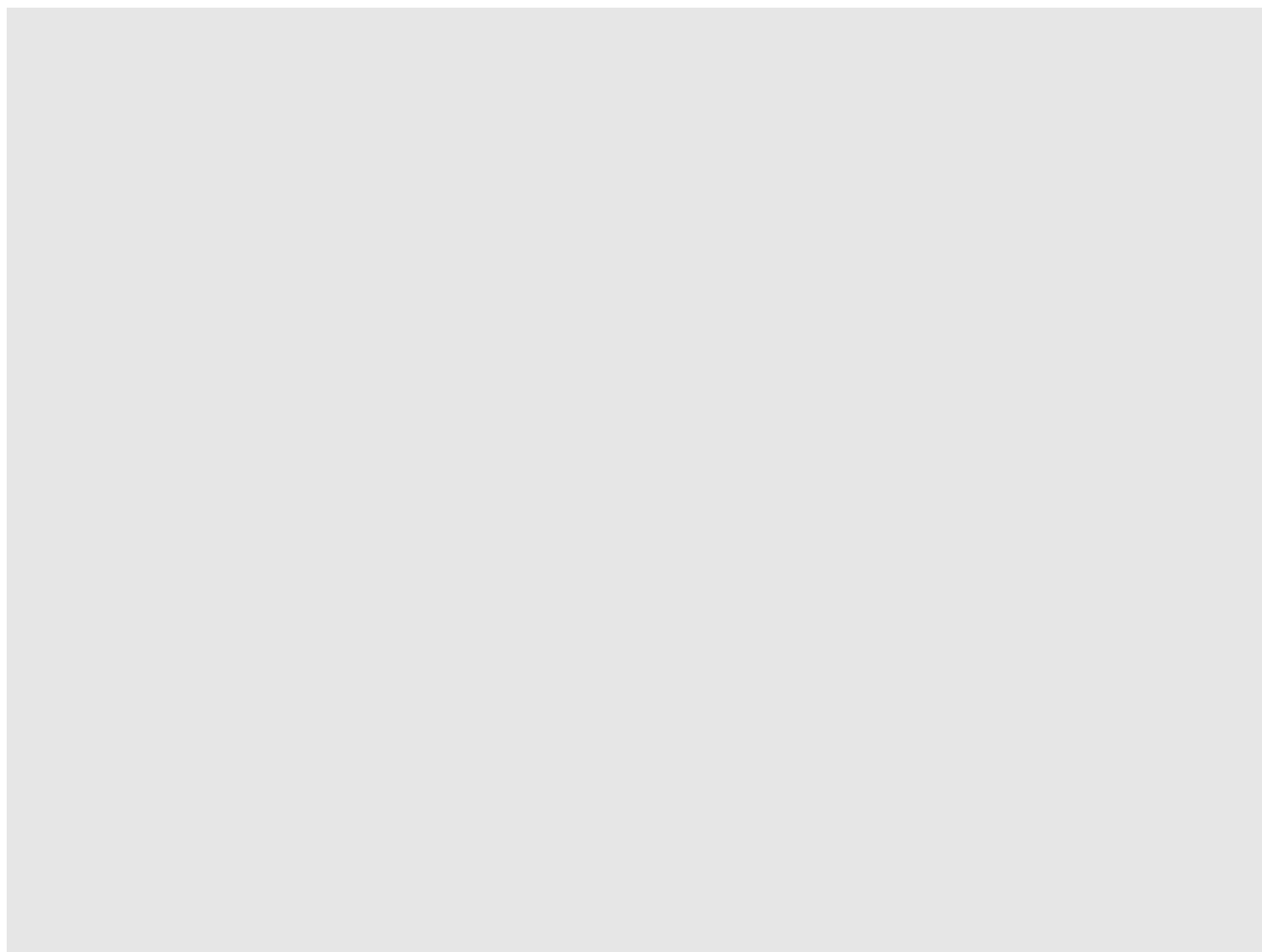
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Katlyn and David Kennedy, of Massac County, walk out of a courtroom at the Williamson County Courthouse on Friday as new parents to their adopted children MaLeigha, 3, and Raven, 5. They were among the families who had their adoptions finalized that day in Marion.

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Marion attorney Andrea McNeill takes a picture of the Jeralds family of Herrin moments after Isaac Jeralds, 15, was adopted by his grandmother Darla, second from left. The family was one of more than 20 participating in National Adoption Day proceedings Friday at the Williamson County Courthouse.

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