

## Five Sisters Adopted by Single Mom in Rockland Family Court

It was a heartwarming moment, to say the least, in Rockland County Family Court last November, when five sisters were adopted by a single mom. The children, Yazmine, Nieasia, Briana, Tyaja, and Ayanie ranged in age from 4 to 11 and had spent the past year and a half in the foster home of their new adoptive mother, Deborah Lynn Thomas.

It didn't start out that way. Briana became Deborah's first foster child in January 2009. When she heard that Briana had 4 sisters living with different relatives, she made arrangements for them to visit. The rest, as they say, is history. The sisters loved being together and didn't want to leave. Ultimately, the relatives decided they couldn't care for the girls, so Deborah became their foster mom.

"I love children", Deborah told Ninthline. "Watching the girls play together, laugh together, and dance together gives me such pleasure. Their love for each other is so endearing to me. I wanted them to stay together, and the best way to make sure that happened was to adopt them all, so I did." And, to make the family complete, all the girls took Deborah's middle name as well as her last name.

Deborah has four older children of her own—three boys and a girl. And living together in a small house isn't easy. "Yes, we are a little crowded and somewhat cramped, she said, " but you know what, all together, it works. And, if it works for me, it can work for others as well."

It's extremely rare and very special when multiple siblings are adopted by one person. Usually the children have to be separated, because it is not easy to find a person who is willing to take on such a big responsibility.

The girls are all in various schools—from daycare to nursery to elementary school—and Deborah works full time. She doesn't want to be a role model for others, but she did say that she hopes her experience can help other foster children be adopted. Her message: "There are kids out there who need help. If you think you don't have the time, you do; If you think you can't afford it, you can."

All 9<sup>th</sup> District Family Courts take part in National Adoption Day each year. It provides an opportunity for the courts, adoption advocates, and volunteers to come together with the adoptive families to celebrate adoptions and raise awareness. It is part of the focus in recent years to promote more adoptions of foster care children, whose parents, for a variety of reasons, can no longer care for them.



Pictured above: Deborah Lynn Thomas, 5 sisters and Judge William Warren