Judge Rhonda Burgess calls annual event her favorite day of the year

Dominic and Danielle Small (above) welcomed four new family members last week when they adopted four siblings (in the audience below) they had fostered.

By Amy Sylvestri

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It’s the time of the year for families to get together and last week 19 foster children were officially adopted into their permanent families at the Juvenile Justice Center.

Judge Brenda Harbin-Forte calls herself the “mother of adoption day,” which began in the year 2000 and highlights the importance of the county’s foster system.

“I want to tell the children how lucky they are to have people who love them unconditionally and will protect them,” Harbin-Forte told the crowd. “It doesn’t matter how they started out, they all have a bright future.”

Dominic and Danielle Small were singled out among the adoptive families.

They had agreed to take in two children when they decided to become foster parents, but when a call came in saying that four siblings needed a home, the Smalls decided to foster all of them.

A year later, the Smalls have now officially adopted Ryan, 9, Ray, 8, Frederick, 6, and Cecilia, who will turn 4 in January.

“It hasn’t always been easy, but it has been worth it,” said Dominic Small.

“We have been truly blessed with these four,” Danielle Small added.

The kids played with stuffed animals and balloons while the adults dealt with the paperwork. Judge Rhonda Burgess called the annual event her favorite day of the year.

“When we help support and nurture children, we strengthen our community,” Burgess said. “We are so happy today to build forever families.”