

Currents

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The Option of Adoption

Local couple adopts four children, two from Russia

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
WILLIAM R. TOLER

Adoption was about the only option Jason and Debby Stanley had in order to be parents.

After returning home from Operation Desert Storm, the couple attempted to have children to no avail. Debby gave birth to two stillborn infants before the doctor suggested adoption. Having been adopted himself, Jason was open to the idea.

Debby Stanley said, "We tried to adopt domestically," but every agency they tried said that she was too old, then at the age of 37.

The couple has since adopted four children, including two from Russia. "We've got two that are brilliant and two with special needs," she said. "You can't imagine your life without them."

The first of those was 8-month-old Graham, who they adopted in 1997 from Kurgan. "He had some medical needs, but those are resolved," Stanley said. "He's healthy, does well in school." Recently, the 9-year-old third-grader made honor roll at Bridgeton Elementary.

In October 2002, the couple became foster parents to 4 1/2-year-old Nicole and 11-month-old Kaytlyn. Two months later, the Stanleys decided to go back to Russia, where they adopted Nicholas. During that trip, the girls were temporarily placed with another family.

Also that year, the couple was named Foster Parents of the Year for Craven County.

The following February, the girls' biological mother relinquished her parental rights and their father soon followed suit, asking the Stanleys to adopt them. The adoption of the girls was finalized in October 2003. Letters and pictures are still sent to the father twice a year. Nicole is now a 7-year-old second grader and Kaytlyn, who will turn 4 on Dec. 21, is in the Pre-K program.

Nicholas, now 5, was from Ulan Ude, near the Russian-Mongolian border. Like a number of Russian adoptees, he wasn't without health problems. "We knew he had a heart murmur," said the mother. They have since found more medical conditions that are orphanage related, including cerebral palsy.

Stanley said people have asked why they would adopt a child with so many special needs. "No matter what the

turmoil, we just knew it would be worth it," she said. "Do we regret it? No. Never."

She then went on to explain the difficulty in domestic adoption. "Options here in the states are so bleak," she said. "We really believe that every child should have a mother and a father and be loved." She said that prospective parents can be placed on a waiting list for years.

"People think that adoption is so expensive," she added. She said that it cost them \$22,000 for Graham and \$24,000 for Nicholas. "Here in the States, they range from \$30,000 to \$50,000."

Stanley said that the expense is like a trade-off. "Do you want a brand new car, or a child?"

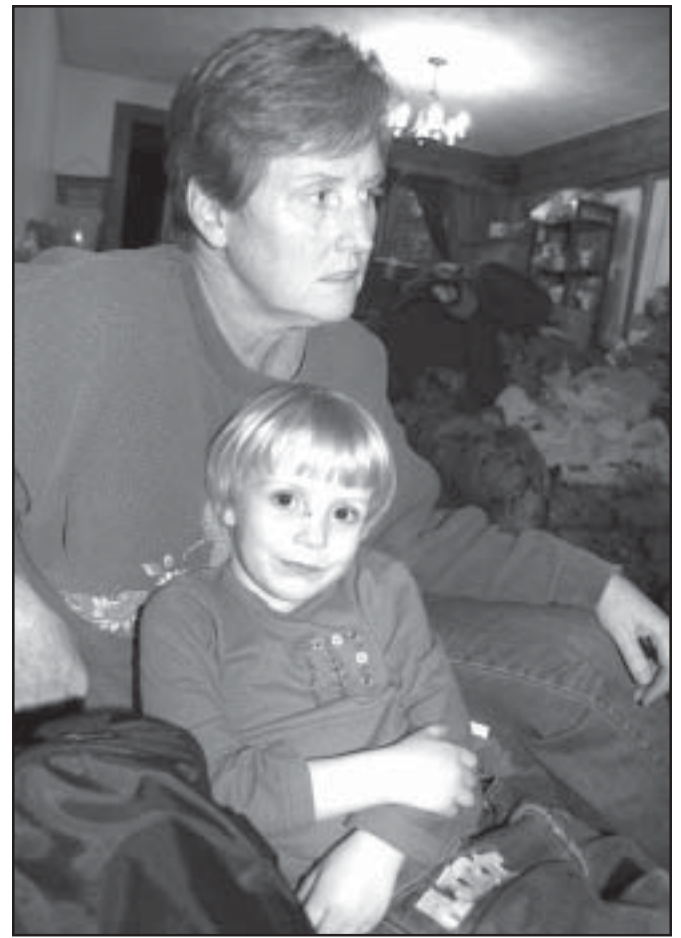
She said that they are probably going to adopt again, but domestically next time. "Jason has put a cap at 7... 'cause that's all that will fit in the car," she said jokingly.

All of the children know that they are adopted. "We talk about it openly. To be fair to them, you have to discuss it," she said. One of the items regarding the adoption that the Stanleys have shared is a letter from Graham's birth mother, which they had translated from Russian.

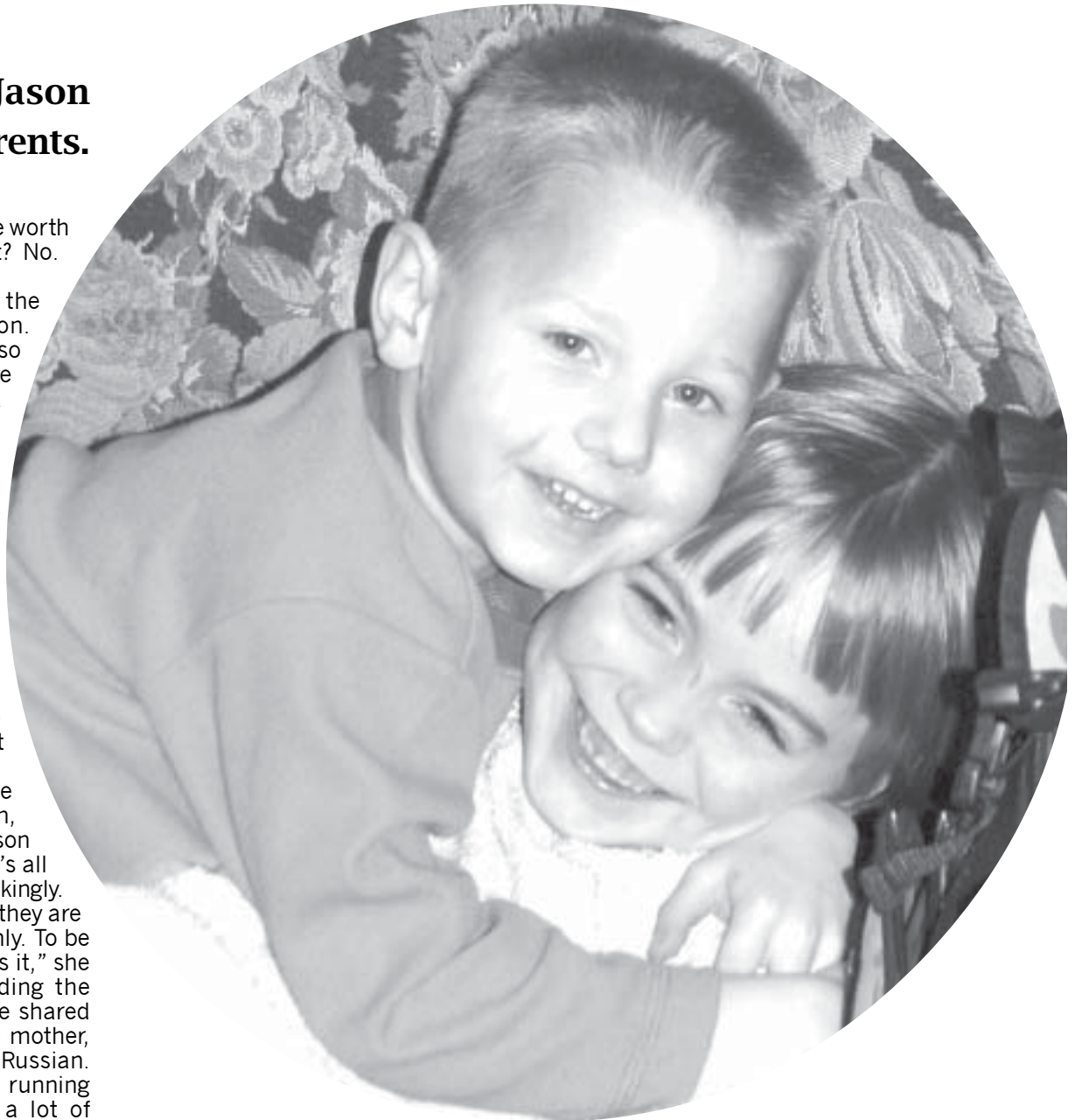
Kids aren't the only things running around the house. "We have a lot of animals," Stanley said. There are five dogs, three guinea pigs, three cats, two chickens and a duck to be exact. "Animals are very therapeutic," she added.

This will be the second Christmas in a row that the children won't have their father around. Last October, the Army Reserve sergeant was deployed to Iraq. He recently came home on a 30-day leave for Thanksgiving, but has returned for another six months.

Stanley said that friends and her church family have been helpful while her husband has been away. She stated, "When you've got family support, friendships and church support, you can really do anything."



Little Kaytlyn snuggles up with adopted mom, Debby as she corrects one of the other children.



Nicholas shows his love for sister, Nicole.



Nine-year-old Russian adoptee Graham poses with his pet chicken, Muffler.



Jason Stanley (right) is spending his second Christmas in Iraq, away from home.



INDEPENDENT REGISTER/WILLIAM R. TOLER

Ernul native Timmy Ray Hawks returned home from Nashville, Tenn. to perform a benefit concert for local cancer patient Sherry Dunn at the Woodmen Hall Dec. 9. More than \$900 was raised, through donations and concessions, to assist Dunn with her treatment.

Band-Aid

Supporting Local Music

Dec. 21
Flames Over Broadway
Hello Romeo
The Vaginal Vigilantes
From Battles to Ballads
 Salty Dawg, New Bern
 9 p.m.

Dec. 23
Barefoot Wade
 Salty Dawg, New Bern
 9 p.m.
Side Project
 Mickey Milligan's, New Bern
 10 p.m.
Matt Lee
 Theo's, New Bern
 10 p.m.

Dec. 30
Black Sky Radius
 Salty Dawg, New Bern
 9 p.m.
Bearfoot
 Theo's, New Bern
 9 p.m.
Sean McKenna
 Mickey Milligan's, New Bern
 9 p.m.

Dec. 31
Confused Illusion
Management w/
PG 23
and 3 other bands
 Salty Dawg, New Bern
 9 p.m.

Dec. 31 cont.
Side Project
 Mickey Milligan's, New Bern
 10 p.m.

Tuesday Nights
Eddie Kwasnick
 Open-mic Night
 Harvey Mansion,
 New Bern
 10 p.m.
 Free

Second Tuesday Nights
 Irish/Celtic Sessions
 Gallery Cafe, New Bern
 7 p.m.

Wednesday Nights
Stretch
 Island Grille,
 Bridgepointe Inn
 New Bern
 Free

Thursday Nights
 Open-mic Night
 Theo's, New Bern
 9 p.m.

Friday Nights
 Bluegrass/Country
 Jam Sessions
 Twin Rivers Mall,
 New Bern
 Free

All shows at the Salty Dawg are for all ages with a \$5 cover

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