



First Lady Nelda Cassell Announces 2019 Project

First Lady Nelda Cassell has announced adoption awareness as her national project for 2019. Her special project is one that is dear to her heart. First Lady Nelda is the proud grandmother to four grandsons. Two of these grandsons were adopted. As you read this article, you will read the moving and personal adoption story of President Larry and First Lady Nelda's daughter Emily's and her husband JT's description of the adoption of their two sons.

After several years trying to have a family, JT and Emily decided to consider adoption. They turned to their local chapter of Children's Home Society (CHS) of Florida. CHS is a non-profit agency that works closely with children and families. There had been some connection to this organization from family and friends.

Within nine months, a long awaited call came from CHS. A new life was about to join their family. As per request from the birth parents, JT and Emily met them in a room full of love and tears of joy and sadness. Receiving this gift of life, they and their extended family and friends immediately fell in love with this amazing boy.

It only took a short while before all realized that JT and Emily had more love to give. To grow the family by one more was clear so that the children could share the same path of being adopted. After contacting CHS, it only took 5 months before they received a call that there was a baby safely surrendered at a local hospital through the Safe Haven Law that needed a forever family. With the second boy, some health challenges were evident. However, this did not impede their decision. Over time, only positive things occurred. Their family grew in love for these two young boys. They are growing, learning and exploring more every day. The boys have taught JT and Emily patience, trust, fear and how to love unconditionally. There is a special bond between the boys. While they may not look alike, they have the bond of brotherhood. There have been moments where the boys have corrected adults when it was assumed they were friends. Both boys are quick to respond to those assumptions by stating clearly, "we are brothers." Knowing the birth parents faced challenges, JT and Emily have never faulted either for their choices, but love them for their decision to choose adoption. These birth parents have given the most treasured gift possible to another family.



Today, about 135,000 children are adopted in America every year. These children are adopted from private domestic agencies, from other countries, and from the foster care system.

Here are some surprising facts that you may know about adoption supplied by Adam Pertman, Founder of the National Center on Adoption and Permanency.

One out of every 25 U.S. families with children has an adopted child.

Roughly 40% of adoptions are from the U. S. foster care system.

There are 107,918 foster children eligible for and waiting to be adopted.

81.5 million Americans have considered adoption.

The United States adopts more children than any other country.

How can your Ruritan club be a part of Nelda's adoption awareness project? Consider:

*Having a speaker from your area on the subject of foster care or state adoption

*Working with foster care workers to assist children in foster care by providing clothing, school supplies, and gifts on birthdays and special occasions

*Holding a picnic, party, etc. for children in foster care

*Having parents who have adopted children from other countries visit your club

Supporting 5K runs or other fundraisers for state domestic adoption agencies.

Learning more about adoptions from other countries by inviting parents who have adopted to visit club meetings and share the process involved in adoption.