



By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

“I’m thankful for a nice, caring family that loves me.”

That’s Dakota Colton’s thought this Thanksgiving, his first as Charley and Carla’s newest son. The couple adopted their former foster child Sept. 17 at the Chase County Courthouse in Imperial.

The 11-year old is the third child the Coltons have adopted. Besides their own four adult children, the couple has provided a home for 152 foster children. They currently have two boys living with them.

Dakota was born in Clinton, Iowa. He lived in Wauneta and “all over” in different homes. Besides living with the Coltons twice as a foster child, he also resided in three other foster homes.

He first came to Imperial in 2006. Then Dakota was moved again, but Carla told his case worker that she knew he’d be back.

When the fifth grader moved back Oct. 6, 2008, he said the other kids were surprised to see him. He was so glad to be back.

“Living here is kind of like being yourself,” Dakota commented. “In the other houses I couldn’t be myself.” He explained that he couldn’t be a kid before, as he had so many responsibilities.

Was it hard getting used to living with the Coltons? Carla prompted him. “It was different having someone to take care of you rather than you taking care of other people, wasn’t it?”

“Mom makes me feel like a kid, her own son,” he said. Of Charley, he said, “When I have somebody I need to talk to, I can go right up to him and talk.”

The rest of the family “spoils you rotten,” he said. “They act like they’re my sisters and brothers.”

That family includes adult children Nick, Ashton, Holly and Bryant, and adopted girls Shakota and LaRenia, who live at home.

Carla and Charley decided to adopt Dakota, in part, because of a telephone call.

“When he came this time around,” Charley said, “he was here less than a week when we got a call from HHS (Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services), asking us to get his picture taken to put on the adoption registry. You can’t have someone live with you and have their picture stuck on a website shopping list. You can’t have someone else take him.”

Carla added, “I bawled. I called Charley and said I couldn’t set up an appointment to have his picture taken. It was a wake-up call.”

So now, Dakota is looking forward to Thanksgiving the way a normal 11-year old does. He’s eager for food, family and pumpkin pie.

LaRenia piped up, “Am I going to stay here for Thanksgiving?”

Carla laughed, “Where else would you go?”

It will be a full and happy table at the Colton’s this Thanksgiving.

**November is National
Adoption Month**

Governor Dave Heineman said it's a privilege and an honor to recognize the caring families who are choosing to adopt children who are state wards. November is National Adoption Month.

Heineman also thanks "the families who have opened their hearts and homes to children in foster care who are looking for forever families."

Last year there were 572 children adopted from foster care in Nebraska, a record high in the state. Adoptions of former state wards have increased more than 92 percent in the last five years.

Heineman said many of the foster parents have adopted the children in their care, as have the Coltons. "They have made a life-long commitment that will absolutely transform the lives of children in our state," the governor stated.