



PLYMOUTH'S Mary and Richard Ridley picnic with their young family that includes two adopted children. The youngsters are (from left) Aaron, Krista, Lee and Ken.



THE WILLIAM SCHOFIELDS OF Farmington include (from left) Jay, Debbie and Karen. Jay is a Korean boy they adopted 18 months ago.



MELVIN AND PAT EVANS OF WESTLAND enjoy a cool stream with the adopted members of their clan, 18-year-old Sandy and small Lisa and Jeffery.



HELEN CORTRIGHT OF MILFORD had adopted youngsters with handicaps, Rosemarie and Chris.

Families Understand -- 'Other Children Need Homes, Too'

Observer Photos By Mauthe

By MARGARET MILLER
Women's Editor

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ridley of Plymouth wanted a household of children but thought they should not have more than two of their own.

Last year brought the Ridleys two more babies, Aaron, born to them, and Krista, adopted in November when she was five weeks old.

Mr. and Mrs. A. Schofield of Farmington had two daughters and thought a son would round out the family nicely, so they added Jay from Korea.

Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Evans of Westland "just love kids," and they have foster children as well as five of their own, including recent adoptees Jeffery, whose mother had muscular dystrophy, and bright-eyed Lisa, a bi-racial child.

Helen Cortright and Kathy Rogan, who live on a farm near Milford, are single women who are making a home for handicapped children.

ALL ARE MEMBERS of the Western Wayne chapter of the Council on Adoptable Children, more familiarly known as COAC, and all are interested in whatever action is needed to find homes for as many children as possible.

COAC was founded in Ann Arbor in 1966. Mary Ridley said, out of the need many people felt to place in families the children who might not be adopted because they were racially mixed, or beyond babyhood, or handicapped.

Members of several years' standing, the Ridleys decided after the birth of their daughter Lee in 1967 that they wanted to adopt a child of another race, because, as Mary put it then, "we know there are plenty of parents for the blonde babies and the other children need homes too."

Their son Ken came to them not long after that, and his bright smile and fearless outlook on life stood them all in good stead as they battled his early difficulties with cerebral palsy.

"BUT HE'S doing well now," said Mary glancing around the park where COAC families were getting together for a picnic, "and you'll probably find him in the tallest tree in spite of his cerebral palsy."

And their home turned into a giant playpen has made both Mary and Rick more interested in the work done by COAC.

"IT'S INTERESTING to note," Mary said, "that in the last few years, more and more people have been interested in adopting, so now there aren't many bi-racial babies left."

Other COAC families living in this area present a cross-section of the joys in adding a new family member by the adoption route.

Mei and Pat Evans have had a variety of foster children in their Westland home and find that small, dark-skinned Lisa is now the pet of the neighborhood.

"I suppose it's because she's more outgoing than Jeffery," Pat said. "We'll have to watch him closely until he's five or six, but so far he has shown no sign of dystrophy."

The Evanses also have two children of their own and Sandy now 18, who they adopted years ago because "she was a foster child and we couldn't give her up."

THE SCHOFIELDS and their daughters Debbie and Karen have found life pretty exciting since Jay came to live with them 18 months ago.

"We wanted a boy to fill the gap," Mrs. Schofield said, "and he has—he's all boy."

Language was the biggest hurdle, she added, but special speech tutoring has helped him do well in kindergarten and he's now ready for first grade. "He didn't know any English when he came to us,

and he still fractures grammar," said Mary glancing along very well."

Helen Cortright and Kathy Rogan are among the relatively few single adoptive parents in the state, and Helen is symbolic of the new type of adoptions because she had two handicapped children.

Rosemarie is a beautiful little Mexican-American girl who is somewhat retarded and it was thought at first she had epilepsy. "But she doesn't," Helen said, "and she now is entirely off medication."

Christopher, Helen's new son who recently came to live at the farm, has no hands. Kathy's daughter, Katie, is dark-skinned.

They don't see themselves as pioneers of anything, and they are hoping to adopt more children.

"These kids just need homes," Helen said, and a single parent is far better than an institution or a series of foster homes.

OTHER Observerland families active in COAC include Joan and Ed Schroeder and Joanne and Glen Tuffnell of Plymouth.

The Schroeders had only sons so they adopted a little girl when she was five. "She had vision problems and some emotional ones, but I think that's pretty standard, and she's doing well now," her mother said. "We're trying now to get her a sister."

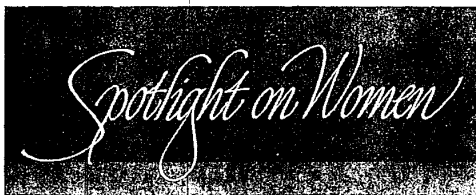
Joanne Tuffnell said theirs was the "typical story of a family with two boys, and we wanted more children but didn't think we should add any more to the world. So after a

long thinking process, we decided a bi-racial child would be fine, and now we have little Martha."

Then there are Bill and Betty Hutton of Farmington who have two daughters and have adopted bi-racial Nathan now three, and Andrew, eight, who has muscular problems but loves to play baseball.

COAC PARENTS meet once a month—the first Friday at 8 p.m.—in St. Peter Lutheran Church on Pennington west of Main in Plymouth. The next meeting is scheduled Sept. 3, and the group is hoping in the future to schedule speakers to go into various aspects of adoption.

All interested in the rewarding project of finding homes for children are invited to attend.



LADIES representing five generations in one Observerland family gathered for our photographer recently. In the center is Mrs. Ellen Richey of Westland, holding her eight-month old great-great-granddaughter, Wendie Parre of Garden City. Around them (from left) are Mrs. Patricia Parre, Wendy's mother; Mrs. Nancy Pinkston of Westland, her grandmother; and Mrs. Helen Osier of Garden City, her great-grandmother. (Observer photo by Harry Mauthe)



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