

# She Is Not A Statistic

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Natasha (left) and Ann Reilly stand together after “signing the decree” to make Natasha’s adoption official. (Credit: Robin Diemel)

**On this frigid November Saturday before Thanksgiving, Natasha Reilly was officially able to call Ann Reilly, “Mom.”**

Natasha and Ann were greeted by a thundering applause as they proceeded to “sign the decree” with a judge to make Natasha’s adoption official in front of the packed Moultrie Courthouse atrium for the 28th Annual D.C. Adoption Day ceremony held on November 22nd of this year.

“I feel like a brand new person today,” says Natasha in an interview following the ceremony.

Barbara Harrison, a morning news anchor at NBC4 and the master of ceremony today, joked about Natasha’s height as she made her way to the stage with Ann, saying “you’re taller than me in those shoes!”

As the crowd laughed along with them, it was clear Natasha’s case was different.

Although 38 other foster infants, children and young adults were officially adopted during the ceremony today, 19 year-old Natasha’s case seemed to strike home for Ann’s coworkers at the Child and Family Services Agency, where she works as a CFSA supervisory social worker.

As of September 2014, CFSA calculated 1,120 children are in out-of-home foster care, and almost a quarter of them are, like Natasha, between the ages of 18-21, of which only a small percentage of them are adopted. The statistics were not in Natasha's favor.

Nevertheless, they met accidentally in 2013. Natasha says she was ill and being cared for at her former social worker "Miss Molly's" home when Ann stopped by. They got to know each other that day, and from then on Natasha says her and Ann had an "unbreakable bond."

Nearly half a year later, Natasha says she was surprised when Ann told her she had cut through all the CFSA "red tape" prohibiting her from adopting within the system. Natasha was finally getting adopted.

To help other children in the D.C. foster system, Natasha says she plans to start a nonprofit called "Voice," where kids can have a place instead of the streets. She says she wants to help and inspire children who are going through the same "mental, physical and emotional abuse" she went through before she found Ann.

"This is a close-knit community," says Natasha of the D.C. foster care system. David McDermott and Charles DeSantist, who adopted 22 month-old twins Lily and Jasmine today, actually helped Natasha find the job she she has now cleaning houses in northwest D.C.

Today, Natasha has her high school diploma, a job and a future, three things she says she didn't think she'd have before meeting her adoptive mother.

*Written by Robin Dienel, Journalism Graduate Student, American University*