

'Disney' adoption hearing makes girl's day

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(Photo: WZZM-TV, Grand Rapids-Kalamazoo-Battle Creek, Mich.)

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Adoption finalization hearings are typically straightforward. There's a [legal template the judge and all other participants](#) involved in the adoption follow closely.

That wasn't the case Wednesday at the Kent County's 17th Circuit Court in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jim and Sarah Koning were at the courthouse to adopt two children. Danielle Ross, 5, was one of them, and she is big into Disney princesses.

To make her day even more special, Judge Patricia Gardner took off her robe and revealed she was dressed as Snow White.

“I was happy to see all the princesses who came for me, and I really liked what they said to me.”

Danielle Koning, 5

And then, before the proceedings began, all the rest of the Disney princesses, and Prince Charming — all dressed in costumes — entered the courtroom to support Danielle and her adoption.

Soon after, Danielle Ross became Danielle Koning.

Disney World is known as the "Happiest Place on Earth." On Wednesday, that was Courtroom 9-D. Samaritas Foster Care Program and Child and Family Services of Grand Rapids organized the event. [Samaritas said](#) it is Michigan's largest private foster care organization.

"It was a lot of fun," said Danielle after the hearing concluded. "I was happy to see all the princesses who came for me, and I really liked what they said to me."

Gardner said she has never seen such a creative adoption finalization hearing in her career on the bench.

"Never, never have I seen so many princesses in the courtroom before," Gardner said. "It was child centered to make a kid feel special, and at ease at what can be a difficult hearing."

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