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## Adoptive family of the year honor wasn't a subtle hint

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By Leon Lagerstam, llagerstam@qconline.com

DAVENPORT -- When she told her husband they had won Adoptive Family of the Year honors, he wondered if it was her subtle way of suggesting they adopt another Ethiopian child.

"But that was not my ulterior motive," Teri Klipsch, of Blue Grass, said.

She and her husband, Zach Klipsch, parents of five kids, including three boys from Ethiopia, will be honored as this year's "Ruth Evelyn Katz Adoptive Family of the Year" at a Family Awards Celebration Thursday, Nov. 7, at Modern Woodmen Park, 209 S. Gaines St., Davenport.



**Photo:** Zach Klipsch, at left, and Teri Klipsch, far right, pose for a family portrait with their kids, Binyam, 7; Trysten, 10; Dailah, 7; Tariku, 8; and Tomas, 9.

It will begin at 6 p.m. with heavy hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar, followed by the awards presentation at 6:30 p.m. Guests should RSVP by Friday, Nov. 1. The cost is \$25 per person for the Bethany for Children and Families event.

Modern Woodmen of America is the presenting sponsor. Other sponsors are American Bank & Trust, Fontaine Consulting, Whitey's Ice Cream and Jeff's Car Corner.

For information, to RSVP or to make a donation, contact Jamie Hendry at (309) 736-6642 or [jhendry@bethany-qc.org](mailto:jhendry@bethany-qc.org).

Other awards to be presented are:

- Foster family of the year:** Byron and Pam Keefe
- Leadership family of the year:** Clyde and Donna Schoeck
- Community-focused business or employer of the year:** IBEW Local 145, Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 25, Sheet Metal Workers Local 91
- Youth volunteer of the year:** Eric White
- Community service group of the year:** John Deere Cylinder Group Internal Platform.

The Klipsch family was nominated by 2011 winners Beth and Jared Johnson.

"Beth knows how conscientious we are about bringing up our boys to recognize their identities and Ethiopian cultures," Ms. Klipsch said. "They know they are adopted, and we talk about it, but in our day-to-day lives, they are so much a part of our lives, we forget they're adopted."

Adoption has become a big part of their family story, she said. "My husband and I always wanted to adopt. It was always on our radar, so after we had our second biological child, a daughter, we decided to do the adoption thing."

They adopted their first Ethiopian boy, Tomas, in 2008. He's now 9. Two years later, they adopted two of his siblings, Tariku and Binyam, now 8 and 7 respectively, she said.

Trysten, 10, and Dailah, 7, round out the family.

"They're all such amazing little humans, and I'm lucky to be their mom," Ms. Klipsch said. "It's enormous fun, and my husband and I are young enough to really enjoy it." Both are 31.

Ms. Klipsch generally stays home, but teaches classes at the North Y in Davenport while her kids attend Monroe Elementary School. Mr. Klipsch is executive director of the Y's Camp Abe Lincoln, where the family resides, meaning the kids have 285 acres to explore and play, Ms. Klipsch said.

Mornings are spent packing five lunch boxes and getting everybody off to school on time, she said. "We have five homework stations set up for them. And they're all active in extracurricular activities, so it seems we're always going to some practice or event."

They all plan to attend the Family Awards Celebration, "but there's a good chance someone will go without socks," she said jokingly.

Ms. Klipsch also is busy planning an annual "Wine and Water" fundraising event to benefit an Adventure Project, a non-profit focused on humanitarian issues affecting global poverty, and presenting innovative, low-cost solutions to help, according to [theadventureproject.org](http://theadventureproject.org).

This year's "Wine and Water" event will be held from 7 to 10 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 16, on the third floor of the Redstone Building, 131 W. 2nd St., Davenport.

The public event will feature wine and dessert tastings and artwork by local artists. Proceeds will be used to train people in Uganda to be water-well mechanics, she said.

It's a cause made dearer to her heart because of her adopted children, Ms. Klipsch said. "My three boys were sick because of dirty water. And my oldest remembers carrying 45-pound water things on his head. My brother's a chiropractor and can see how my boy's spine is messed up because of that."

Her kids are helping make commemorative rubber bracelets for the "Water and Wine" event.

Watching her kids make those bracelets and get so involved in other activities helps endorse the decision to become adoptive parents, Ms. Klipsch said.

"They have made us better humans for coming into our lives," she said. "It feels weird, though, to be recognized for something that's just so part of our everyday lives. We're super thankful to be identified as the adoptive family of the year, because we know of so many good adoptive families in the Quad-Cities area."