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ADOPTION OF FIVE CLEARED BY COURT RUSSIANS HURDLING LANGUAGE BARRIER

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Forget about five golden rings. Yesterday, Justin and Carol Kuo of Brookline got a judge's final word that they have five new kids. A mother lode of Christmas cheer came their way when Probate Court Judge Christina L. Harms signed the adoption papers for the Kuos to become the parents of five Russian-born siblings from 2 to 10 years old. They had brought the children to Brookline from a Moscow orphanage in April. "It is an amazing Christmas gift," Justin Kuo said of the court session yesterday morning, which was witnessed by the Kuos and their five children, Yevgeny, 10; Yuri, 9; Anatoly, 7; Anna, 5; and Masha, 2; and Kuo's brother, brother-in-law and a few close friends.

"Having our family and friends join us made it neat," he said.

While the signing was little more than a formality, it was something the Kuos eagerly awaited and did not think would happen until January.

"We're somewhat relieved," said Kuo, a computer programmer for Meditech in Cambridge. "We knew this was going to go through, but it is now finalized and the kids are legally ours. After all the searching and various heartbreaks related to adoption and infertility we have a family we can call our own."

Justin and his wife, a nursery school teacher, made headlines last spring when they flew to Moscow to get their family after buying five beds and five toothbrushes and labeling virtually everything in their house with yellow Post-Its in English and Russian.

The Kuos began discussing adopting children when they were married four years ago and decided to look for children outside the United States because of recent court battles over adopted children in this country. They were hopeful of getting two children, preferably siblings, but all early possibilities fell through until a social worker called Carol a year ago and asked if they would consider five children from Russia.

Within days they said yes.

While their parents crammed like college freshmen to learn Russian, the clear winners in learning a new language have been the children, all of whom, with the exception of Masha, attend Lincoln Elementary School in Brookine.

"The real part of the adoption is having them, and raising them, and having them learn English," Justin Kuo said. "They are doing really well," he said with obvious parental pride.

"When they first came here they did not speak any English," he said. "Now they speak English almost exclusively. They rarely speak Russian, even among themselves."

"Yevgeny is in the fourth grade and is reading at a third grade level already, which is amazing; Yuri is in the third grade and is somewhere above a first grade reading level. Spelling is his favorite subject and he is picking up words fast, and Anatoly will be reading soon."

However, the Kuos also want to make sure their children do not lose their Russian skills.

"We want them to maintain their cultural identity," said Justin Kuo, who is half-Chinese.

For the children, the timing could not be better.

"I am very happy; it is a good Christmas," said Yevgeny.

Aside from a wonderful Christmas gift, there is an added bonus to the timing of yesterday's event: The legal action supersedes any citizenship issue that could have prevented the Kuos from claiming five new dependent exemptions

on their 1994 1040 forms, an IRS spokeswoman said.

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