

Parenthood's for bachelors too

U.P. man adopts 2 boys

ONTONAGON, Mich. — (UPI) — Allen Briggs has a good job, a beautiful home with lots of room and a big yard, and now he has two sons. What he doesn't have is a wife.

That fact didn't bother the Ontonagon County Department of Social Services and Probate Judge Charles Willman who made Briggs the first bachelor adoptive father in the Upper Peninsula and one of a handful in Michigan.

Briggs, the county prosecutor and a practicing attorney, officially became the father of 13-year-old Fabian and 11-year-old Ricky Haataja, now Briggs, when Willman signed the adoption papers.

"I WAS present in court while the judge signed it to make sure there was no question about it," Briggs said. "The boys went over too. We wanted to make sure.

Early this year, the Social Services Department brought Fabian and Ricky to Briggs, who is licensed to operate a foster home. "After they'd been with me for a while, we talked over adoption and I was agreeable and they seemed to want me, so we went ahead with it," Briggs said.

"It gives them stability and assurance that they'll know they now have a home and won't have to move again. They've been moved something like eight times in the last 10 years and it's about time they got a stable home."

BRIGGS THINKS it's "a hot time" the state changed its attitude against allowing singles to adopt children. "Any single parent is better than, no parent," he said.

Briggs, 39, said he stopped worrying about not finding a wife when he turned 29. "Now I'm pretty well adjusted to it," he said. "It looks like it's single life from here on out but I'm always looking."

"BUT FOR NOW, Briggs is just concentrating on being a

good father. "I have a beautiful home with three bedrooms and entire basement rec room, a good-sized yard, golf course right across the street, and it's right near the school," he said. "It's almost a shame not to have the kids under those circumstances."

Ricky and Fabian lost their mother five years ago in an automobile accident and the father "couldn't take care of them" or their two brothers

and two sisters, all of whom previously were placed in foster homes.

The boys, one-quarter Chipewewa Indian, have already asked whether they qualify for the unrestricted fishing rights granted the Indians under a recent Michigan Supreme Court decision. "They want to know if it affects them and I think it does," their father-lawyer said.

WHAT REALLY pleases Briggs is that the relationship

between himself and Ricky and Fabian has become so warm in just a few months.

"At first when they came, they started out calling me Mr. Briggs and then they started calling me Al and then when we took out adoption papers they started calling me Dad," he said. "The teachers at school say they call me that there. It's good to hear that they were that pleased."

Briggs came to the U.P. from Mt. Clemens five years ago.

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