

## **IT TAKES A LOT OF LOVE AND COMMITMENT**

KELLY and Patti McGOWEN are adoptive parents to seven children ranging in age from preteen to early twenties. KELLY, a native of California, described how he grew up in a family with 8 children and played in the neighborhood with many cousins. KELLY and Patti have been married for 29 yr., but early in their marriage they realized that they could not have children. This was frustrating to both of them. When they were married Patti asked KELLY how many children he wanted, and he told her nine! They eventually focused on adopting children, but first they became foster parents. This required an extensive preparation of training and paperwork. Even then a year passed before the first opportunity to be foster parents. Patti explained that they received their first child after seven years of marriage and months of nervous anticipation.

KELLY and Patti eventually became foster parents and then adoptive parents to seven children. Patti explained that they chose to be foster parents to children that had special needs, who were not likely to be returned to parents, and who had been treated poorly and had a poor home environment. Thus their adoption chances were greater for the children they chose. Patti noted it takes a lot of commitment with sacrifices to be adoptive parents. Each child is different with respect to needs and abilities. The abilities of some are impacted by substance abuse of their biological parents. Their first adopted child, Sheena, has a flair for writing and has published a book of poetry. The McGowens distributed book copies at the end of their presentation.