Sitting nervously in the lobby of an adoption center, several exhausted and anxious parents-to-be waited for the arrival of the new children. With sweaty and shaking hands, new mother Nancy Kasparek took the crying baby into her arms for the first time ever.

Adoption could be a long and grueling process, but according to Kasparek, it was well worth the time.

“I had always wanted to be a mother and as an older woman, there were not many options available to me,” Kasparek said, “but adopting internationally was still an option.”

Little did she or any other adopting families know, the process would change her entire life.

“Being adopted is really great,” sophomore Maggie Kasparek said. “It gives me a really fantastic connection to life and I want to share my story with everyone.”

Maggie was born on a street in India, and given up for adoption by her birth parents. Six months later, she was adopted into a new home. Being the youngest of four girls, Maggie always kept a place in her heart for her family that she didn’t know.

“I love being able to see the expressions on people’s faces when they say ‘Wow, you’ve been through that’ or ‘Wow, you’ve done this,’’ Maggie said. “I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for adoption.”

Maggie was appreciative of her family bringing her into their lives.

“All my family is really supportive of me and everything I do,” Maggie said.

Connecting to their new families took plenty of patience and time. Like any other family, bonding didn’t happen instantly. It took time to show consistency and acts of love. In school, being adopted had not taken a toll on sophomore Caleb Coleman, but connecting to his adopting family had not always been easy.

“When I was little, I used to kick my parents, spit on them, and pull their hair,” Coleman said, “but now I isolate myself and think what my life would be like if it wasn’t for them and I thank God I was adopted because of them.”

Caleb’s mother, Trish Coleman, was also very appreciative of being able to adopt.

“There are so many children in the world who need a family, a home, food, and love,” Trish said. “We had all of those in abundance and wanted to share it with the children in need.”

Trish accepted the responsibilities of being an adoptive mother to three children, all from Asia. She knew that in order to make her children the most comfortable in their new home, she would have to devote herself thoroughly.

“Keeping them involved with celebrating various holidays helped carry their culture with them,” Trish said. “Visiting Asia helped as well.”

Adjusting to a new life, new home, and new family, was a difficult endeavor–especially when tackling the many other challenges that come with high school. Embracing the fact of being adopted took time, but it was an essential part in growing as a person.

“Helping them adapt to our family took a lot of one on one time, a lot of listening, and family activities,” Trish Coleman said. “Patience is an important virtue.”

Having two sets of parents could interfere with how the child associated with the family, but to freshman Lizzie Fischer, her adopting parents were her only real parents. Being adopted with her birth siblings helped her connect to her adopting family.

“When I say ‘my parents’, I’m talking about my parents,” Fischer said. “The ones who adopted me, and that take care of me.”

Adjusting to a new family was a hardship that many children had experienced. Being accepted is a feeling that is both relieving and life– changing.

“I’ve grown by getting used to the fact that I have new parents that care for me,” Fischer said. “I won’t be going back.”

Through the hard times and the many positive ones, Maggie, Caleb and Lizzie embraced their adopting families as their own. Accepting adoption as a part of their life was not the easiest thing to do, but it has helped them develop into their own individual identities.

“Adoption is how they joined our family,” Trish said. “It does not define who they are.”