

## **New York Times: Ohio: Children Sue Over Adoption**

*Associated Press*  
*October 22, 2009*

Two Ohio teenagers forced by their adoptive parents to sleep in cages have sued the couple and caseworkers who arranged the adoptions. The lawsuit was filed Tuesday in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court in Cleveland on behalf of Sharen Torrence, 18, and Michael Gravelle, 17. Their adoptive parents, Michael and Sharen Gravelle, named the children after them. The couple are now serving two-year prison terms for abusing some of their 11 adopted special-needs children. The suit also names caseworkers and the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services in Cincinnati. It said the Gravelles were unfit to be parents and should never have gotten custody of the children. Julie Wilson, a spokeswoman for the Hamilton County prosecutor's office, declined to comment.

## **Lorain Morning Journal: Two of 11 'caged kids' sue former parents for their abuse**

*By Richard Payerchin*  
*October 23, 2009*

CLEVELAND — Two of the 11 children in Huron County's "caged kids" case have filed a lawsuit against their former adoptive parents, who are now in prison.

The children, who were known as Sharen Gravelle II and Michael Gravelle II, this week filed a lawsuit against Sharen and Michael Gravelle, who each are serving two-year prison terms for child abuse and endangering convictions for the mistreatment of some of the 11 children when they were ages 1 to 15.

The children are seeking damages for the years of abuse they say they suffered at the hands of the Gravelles, including being "kenneled in alarmed cages instead of beds," food deprivation and humiliation. It accuses the Gravelles of negligence, recklessness, wanton misconduct and deprivation of rights, according to the lawsuit filed at Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court.

The children are seeking more than \$25,000, money that would be used to pay for education and therapy, their attorney, Jack Landskroner, of Cleveland, said.

"This is really the wake up call for every agency, social worker, adoptive parent or foster parent in the state, to make sure that they don't just process children

through the system, but they follow the safety rules that are put in place to protect these children from abusive and dangerous adoptive or foster environments," Landskroner said.

"You wouldn't treat a dog as these children were treated by the Gravelles," he said.

The Gravelle investigation sparked worldwide media attention starting in late summer 2005, when the Huron County Sheriff's Office began investigating a report of children sleeping in cages.

The lawsuit characterized the Gravelle household as a "mega family" in which people live off the money from adoption subsidies.

"To be sure, Michael Gravelle was once heard as saying, 'These kids pay pretty good.'" Before adopting their children, the Gravelles earned about \$46,000 a year; with 11 children in their care, both the elder Sharen and Michael quit working because they earned \$100,000 a year from state subsidies, the lawsuit stated.

The children also are suing the counselors and adoption agencies that they say should have noticed numerous "red flags" in the Gravelles' past that "made them dangerous and unsuitable adoptive parents," the lawsuit stated.

The younger Sharen Gravelle, now 18, is studying at a college out of state but maintains a residence in Norwalk, Landskroner said. The younger Michael Gravelle is in another adoptive family and is doing well, Landskroner said.

"These are wonderful children," Landskroner said. "They're not children any longer, they're young adults. Both of them have done a wonderful job overcoming the obstacles they have faced in their early life."

The younger Sharen and Michael are not biologically related, but both were removed from their biological families by the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services and placed with the Gravelles in July 1998. The Hamilton County agency is named as a defendant in the case. A spokeswoman for the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office declined to comment on the case.

The lawsuit recounts many of the details that came out in a Huron County Sheriff's investigation and in testimony in the Gravelles' trial.

The parents' attorneys argued the Gravelles did not abuse the children, but had to care for almost a dozen children with behavioral problems, handicaps or disabilities.

In the civil case, the younger Michael was forced to sleep in a wooden and wire cage about 21½ tall by 3 feet long, "resembling a dog cage," the lawsuit said. It was not long enough to lie down in without the boy folding his legs, and it had no bedding or blankets, according to the lawsuit.

The younger Sharen was deprived of food and placed in a cage as punishment.

"Sharen, as with all the children, was denied the love, guidance, support and compassion every child needs and deserves from their parent or guardian," the complaint said.

Also named as defendants were Elaine Thompson, of Associates in Adoptive/Foster Family Psychotherapy of Bedford; Collin A. Myers, of Fairhaven Counseling Inc., of Cuyahoga Falls; and the Adopt America Network offices, of Holland and Toledo. Representatives for those agencies were not available for comment yesterday.

The Gravelles' criminal defense attorney, Ken Myers, of Cleveland, also could not be reached for comment.

## **Norwalk Reflector: 2 oldest 'caged kids' sue Gravelles**

*By Cary Ashby  
October 22 2009*

CLEVELAND - A Cleveland attorney for the two oldest children kept in cages by Sharen and Michael Gravelle filed a lawsuit Monday against the former Clarksfield Township couple.

Attorney Jack Landskroner is arguing the Gravelles were not fit parents and officials never should have allowed them to take custody of the children. The lawsuit, filed Monday in Cuyahoga County, involves adoptive parents, caseworkers and the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services.

## **WHIO-TV (Dayton): Caged Kids File Lawsuit**

*October 22, 2009*

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Two Ohio teenagers who were forced to sleep in cages, are now suing their adoptive parents and the caseworkers who arranged the adoptions.

Michael and Sharon Gravelle are being sued by their adopted son and daughter.

They are now serving a two-year prison sentence for abusing some of their eleven adopted special needs children.

The lawsuit also targets the caseworkers. The suit said the Gravelle's were unfit to be parents and should have never gotten custody of the children.