



While Destry admires his new high-top shoes, parents Derek and Amber Russell relax, and baby Adilynn sleeps. (Republican photo)

Russells want safety for young family

■ **Editor's note:** This is the first in a series of feature stories about people who have returned with their families to their hometown of Imperial, after living and working in other communities.

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THE IMPERIAL REPUBLICAN

A small town is a good place in which to safely raise children.

And in Imperial's case, it's also a progressive community. Those are reasons given by Derek and Amber Russell for moving back to his hometown last fall.

The Russells have two children: Destry, one and one-half, and Adilynn, two months.

Derek grew up in Imperial, graduating from Chase County High School in 2002. Amber grew up in Omaha, graduating from Benson High School in 2003.

They were married in 2006, and started talking about having a family and raising it in a small town in 2007. Amber's parents both come from small towns.

However, it was a combination of violent acts in Omaha that pushed them to make the final decision.

First, there was the shooting

childhood growing up here. We have a lot of family here, and that factored in, too."

Derek was working as an operations coordinator at Union Pacific Railroad. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in administration and small business management from the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Amber attended college for almost four years before receiving a cosmetology license from Zenon. She worked at Beauty First in Omaha.

Basically, they had been living and working in Omaha from 2002-08.

The couple moved to Imperial in September of 2008, when they were expecting Destry. It wasn't as big a move for Derek as it was for Amber.

"I'd visited here, and liked it. But visiting and living here are two different things." Amber said Derek already had his ties and friends, and she felt a bit left out at first.

"Is this the right thing to do?" she wondered. Getting used to grocery stores that aren't open 24 hours a day, and leaving friends were hard for her.

While Derek accepted jobs at Frenchman Valley Coop as a grain originator and at Colson Agency

ing," she remembered thinking.

"You can tell people care about you and their town. It makes us want to care about our yard, the kids next door," she said.

She observed that in Omaha people are used to doing things on their own. In Imperial, people live closer together, and become more involved in their community.

Speaking of involvement, Derek is a member of the Imperial Community Foundation board, Jaycees, Imperial Golf Course and plays town team baseball.

Amber is focusing on raising the children at this point, in addition to working at Bella. They attend the Berean Fundamental Church.

When living in a small town as opposed to a city, Derek said, "You need to be more open to stuff like joining the golf league, going to the bullriding (to be held this weekend)."

He sees Imperial as a progressive, safe community. "It's awesome to see different groups work together to get a new pool, track, school, park equipment. You can tell the residents are good at coming together and getting things done and looking to the future."

The Russells also took into

