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Posted: Friday, August 15, 2014 3:00 am | Updated: 4:45 am, Fri Aug 15, 2014.

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Lawmen like happy endings.

Forest County sheriff Robert Wolfgang and his wife Teresa found three children who were missing for nearly five hours Wednesday night from a campsite in Forest County.

And there was much joy amid the crying and hugging.

"It was a very, very happy ending," Robert Wolfgang said Thursday. "You don't always get to see those in law enforcement so when you do, it's just phenomenal.

"I didn't think my wife would ever stop hugging them," he said.

Marienville state police trooper Ben Bell said the three went for a walk and their parents became concerned after dark and began searching for them. They called state police about 9:30 p.m. Wednesday and a larger search was started.

The three children, who were from Greensburg and staying at a family camp near Greenwood Road in Barnett Township, had hunkered down where they would eventually be found about 12:30 a.m. Thursday.

Wolfgang said he and his wife drove to a road near the camp and began walking down it, calling out that they were from the sheriff's department.

He said the state police helicopter had flown over and afterwards his wife stopped him.

"She said, 'Listen, listen, I heard something,'" Wolfgang said.

Then she stopped him again as they continued on.

Soon enough, the two girls and one boy came out of the woods toward them.

"We tried to warm them up as quickly as we could," Wolfgang said, noting they were dressed for summer daytime temperatures.

He said the kids had been terribly frightened by the sounds of coyotes around them.

And when an all-terrain vehicle had driven by - one with a firefighter driving it looking for them - they had hidden behind a log fearing it was a night-time poacher.

Wolfgang said the kids reported they had stayed in place once the sun set because it had been pitch dark and they couldn't see where they were going.

Bell said about 25 people aided the search, including state police from three barracks and the police helicopter. Marienville and Farmington Township firefighters and the Forest County sheriff's department also aided in the search.

Bell said the children were in good condition but were just a little cold as the weather had turned chilly overnight.