



Dave Thomas
Foundation
for Adoption®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jhonny Mercado Joins Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Board of Trustees

**Foundation committed to finding adoptive homes for the more than
155,000 children waiting in North America's foster care systems**

Columbus, Ohio — The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, a national non-profit public charity, today welcomed Jhonny Mercado as a member of its board of trustees, serving a three-year term. Mercado is co-chairman of JAE Restaurant Group, which owns and operates 210 Wendy's® restaurants across the United States.

“I have been a proud supporter of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption for many years,” said Mercado. “It is an honor to be chosen to serve on the Foundation’s board and to help advance such a life-changing mission on behalf of the tens of thousands of children in foster care waiting for a loving, permanent home.”

Mercado opened his first Wendy’s in 1998 and soon became a multi-brand franchisee in his native Venezuela. In 2007, he ventured into the U.S. market with the purchase of five Wendy’s restaurants in Florida as JAI International Investment. Mercado continued to grow his business throughout the United States, Venezuela and Panama until 2014, when he merged with another Wendy’s franchisee to become JAE Restaurant Group. The company has become the fifth-largest Wendy’s franchise organization in the United States, with additional locations in the pipeline.

“Jhonny embodies the legacy of Dave Thomas in his commitment to quality in his restaurants and dedication to giving back to those in need,” said Mary Schell, Chief Public Affairs Officer for The Wendy’s Company and chair of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption’s board of trustees. “His leadership, experience and philanthropic heart are a tremendous addition to the Foundation’s board.”

Through its signature program, Wendy’s Wonderful Kids®, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption provides funding to adoption agencies to hire recruiters who implement an evidence-based, child-focused recruitment model.

A rigorous, five-year evaluation revealed that the model is up to three times more effective at serving children who have been in foster care the longest, including teenagers, children with special needs and siblings.

To date, more than 475 Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters have found adoptive homes for more than 9,500 children in foster care across North America.

"Jhonny is a visionary leader and passionate champion of the Foundation's work," said Rita Soronen, President & CEO of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. "I look forward to working with him in expanding the Foundation's work to serve the growing number of children waiting to be adopted from foster care."

Mercado lives in Florida with his wife, Gabriela, and four children.

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About the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is a national nonprofit public charity dedicated exclusively to finding permanent homes for the more than 155,000 children waiting in North America's foster care systems. Created by Wendy's founder Dave Thomas, who was adopted, the Foundation implements evidence-based, results-driven national service programs, foster care adoption awareness campaigns and innovative grantmaking. To learn more, visit davethomasfoundation.org.

Attachment: Jhonny Mercado photo

