



Dave Thomas  
Foundation  
for Adoption®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption Expands Foster Care Adoption Program Statewide in Michigan

### Public-private partnership aims to find adoptive families for longest-waiting youth

**Columbus, Ohio** — The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, a national nonprofit public charity, is proud to announce an expansion of its signature program, Wendy’s Wonderful Kids®, to find adoptive homes for children in Michigan’s foster care system. This unique public-private partnership between the Foundation and the State of Michigan will fund 37 adoption professionals to serve youth at highest risk of aging out of foster care, including teenagers, children with special needs and siblings.

Orchards Children’s Services and Judson Center Child & Family Services employ adoption resource consultants who are being trained to implement the Foundation’s evidence-based, child-focused recruitment model. Including three positions already in place at Spaulding for Children and St. Vincent Catholic Charities, 22 Wendy’s Wonderful Kids adoption professionals are now working across the state, with plans to fill the remaining positions as soon as possible.

“We look forward to working with the State of Michigan as well as Orchards and the Judson Center to serve more children in foster care who are often overlooked and need our help more than ever,” said Rita Soronen, President & CEO of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. “No child should face the COVID-19 crisis, or any other, without the stability and support of a permanent, loving home.”

“Each day a child spends in foster care waiting for a permanent family is too long,” said JooYeun Chang, Executive Director of the Children’s Services Agency within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. “Wendy’s Wonderful Kids has demonstrated success at finding families for children who have waited in foster care the longest, and we are thankful for the opportunity to expand this program in Michigan.”

A rigorous, five-year national evaluation revealed that a child referred to the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids program is up to three times more likely to be adopted. Based on this evaluation and a successful pilot of the program, Ohio became the first state to expand Wendy’s Wonderful Kids statewide in 2012. In 2017, the Foundation launched a 12-year business plan to fully scale the program across all 50 states and Washington, D.C. Nearing the end of phase one of the plan, statewide expansion is underway in Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Utah, Washington and now, Michigan.

To date, Wendy’s Wonderful Kids has helped to find adoptive homes for more than 9,500 children across the United States, including 195 youth in Michigan.

“We are dedicated to finding forever families for children in foster care,” said Rhonda Parker, Director of Development of Orchards Children’s Services. “Partnering with the Michigan Department of Health and

Human Services and the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption in these challenging times will allow us to help even more children and adoptive families.”

Khadija Walker-Fobbs, Chief Strategy Officer of the Judson Center added, “Judson Center is elated to be able to expand the crucial work of Wendy’s Wonderful Kids. Any time we can deepen supports for children in Michigan through partnerships, it is cause for celebration.”

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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](http://davethomasfoundation.org).