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DAVE THOMAS FOUNDATION AND NEW YORK CITY ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES EXPAND SIGNATURE ADOPTION PROGRAM

\$11.3 million program will focus on adoptions of older youth, those with special needs

New York, NY - The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) today announced a major partnership that will significantly expand the Foundation's *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* (WWK) adoption program in New York City.

The Dave Thomas Foundation and ACS have invested \$11.3 million to fund a three-year agreement that will increase the number of WWK adoption recruiters in New York City from two to 43. Skilled child welfare professionals will be charged with finding permanent, loving families for older youth and children with special needs. The program aims to find life-long homes for more than 1,300 New York City children in foster care through adoption and kinship guardianship.

Through this innovative program, the Foundation provides funds to public and private agencies that hire specially-trained recruiters. Most of the children in the *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* program are older, part of a sibling group, or have special needs. Many have been in foster care for more than five years.

"This partnership with New York City is an exciting step in the Foundation's plan to scale the *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* program nationally," said **Rita Soronen, President and CEO of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption**. "Right now we have *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* recruiters working tirelessly across the country, but we need more to serve all the waiting children, particularly in jurisdictions like New York City. This is a very significant step in that process."

"This public-private partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation will provide specialized recruiters that will bolster our work to connect children with permanent, loving families," said **Administration for Children's Services Commissioner David Hansell**. "ACS is proud to be

one of the first agencies chosen for the major scaling of the Wendy's Wonderful Kids initiative, which is a proven model for securing permanent homes for children in foster care. Though fewer children remain in foster care today compared to previous years, we remain committed to helping every foster child find a permanent home. We are very excited about this incredible expansion, and look forward to being able to help even more children find adoptive families.”

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption began working with ACS in 2015 and is committed to dramatically increasing the number of adoptions from foster care. ACS has embraced evidence-based programs throughout its portfolio of services, including the Wendy's Wonderful Kids partnership.

The expansion in New York City is one of the first steps in an aggressive 12-year plan being spearheaded by the Foundation. The ultimate goal is to finalize more than 58,000 adoptions in the United States.

Earlier this year, ACS released the ***2016 Year-End Foster Care Strategic Blueprint Status Report***, which highlighted the significant progress that ACS made to improve case practice and outcomes for children and families in the foster care system. The report indicated a 25% increase in children achieving permanency through kinship guardianship, and a 5% increase in children adopted from 2015 to 2016, even as the overall number of children in foster care continued to decline. This partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation will help to significantly advance that work.

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