



## **Recruitment Model Proves Success in Substantially Increasing Adoption Rates from Foster Care**

*Five-year U.S. study finds child-focused recruitment results up almost three-fold in adoption among youth in foster care*

**Toronto Children's Aid Society, October 2011** - The most comprehensive evaluation ever conducted on family recruitment practices for children in foster care was released recently from the United States based, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA). The five-year study, found children served by a child-focused recruitment model experienced substantially higher rates of adoption than children not served by this model.

Child-focused recruitment is a model used by DTFA's signature program, *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* (WWK), which provides local adoption agencies with grants to hire dedicated adoption recruiters who spend 100 percent of their job focused on finding waiting children forever homes. The study found older children and children with mental health disorders achieved even higher rates of adoption, providing new hope to the many children who enter foster care and often languish for years or "age out" of foster care altogether without the support of permanent, loving families.

"We are very encouraged by the results of this research developed by the Dave Thomas Foundation. Finding permanent loving families for children - especially for older children and those who were previously considered unadoptable is a priority for us," said David Rivard, CEO of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

In Ontario there are 8,000 children and youth available and waiting for a permanent adoption placement

"We have participated in the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program since 2006, and have two full time Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters," said Janie Ryan, Director, Foster Care & Adoption Services, Children's Aid Society of Toronto. "We strongly believe in this program and have seen the difference it has made, and will continue to make, in the lives of the children and youth we serve," Ryan added.

The WWK model is unique. The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption issues grants to adoption organizations, both public and private, to hire adoption recruiters who dedicate 100 percent of their time to finding permanent, loving families for children in their local foster care system. With relatively small caseloads of up to 15 children, WWK recruiters develop an individualized plan for each child based on the child's background and specific needs. Recruiters also build one-on-one relationships with each child to determine the child's strengths, challenges, desires and preparedness for adoption. The recruiters conduct diligent searches for family members that may be a match for the child, meet regularly with the child and all important players in the child's case, and measure their progress against quantifiable goals for adoptions.

The Foundation commissioned the five-year study of Wendy's Wonderful Kids to evaluate the effectiveness of the program's child-focused recruitment model. The research shows that:

- Children in foster care served by WWK recruiters are more than 1.7 times more likely to be adopted than those not served by WWK.
- For older children, the impact of the WWK model is greater and increases with age:
- For children referred to WWK at age 8, the likelihood of adoption was one-and-one-half times higher
- For children referred at age 11, the likelihood was two times higher; and
- For children referred at age 15, the likelihood of adoption was three times higher.
- Children with mental health disorders served by WWK are three times more likely to find forever families than those not served by WWK.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) is a philanthropic commitment between Wendy's, its customers, individual donors and the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. WWK recruiters are active at 122 locations in all 50 states and four provinces in Canada. To access a summary the study, *The Impact of Child-Focused Recruitment on Foster Care Adoption: A Five-year Evaluation of Wendy's Wonderful Kids*, and to see a video released to support the research visit [www.torontocas.ca](http://www.torontocas.ca)