



DAVE THOMAS
FOUNDATION
FOR ADOPTION®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care



Rita L. Soronen
Executive Director
Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

For more than 25 years, Rita Soronen has worked on behalf of abused, neglected and vulnerable children. Ms. Soronen has provided leadership for local, state and national efforts working to improve the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, while striving to assure safe, nurturing and permanent homes for North America's children.

As Executive Director of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, a national non-profit public charity, Ms. Soronen works to find loving adoptive families for each of the 150,000 waiting children in the United States and Canada's foster care systems. Under Ms. Soronen's leadership, the Foundation has significantly increased its grant-making and awareness commitments, while developing signature initiatives that underscore and act on the urgency of the issue. In 2007, the Foundation dedicated more than \$12 million to grants and award-winning national awareness activities, including Wendy's Wonderful Kids, Adoption-Friendly Workplace, National Adoption Day, national foster care adoption attitudes research, *A Child is Waiting: A Beginner's Guide to Adoption*, national poster campaign, PSAs and educational videos. In three years, the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program has grown from seven pilot site grants to 109 active sites in all fifty states, the District of Columbia and three provinces in Canada dedicated to aggressively and effectively moving children from foster care to permanent families. Over 400 children have been adopted as a direct result of Wendy's Wonderful Kids.

Immediately prior to joining the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Ms. Soronen served as the Executive Director of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Franklin County, a partner in the national network of more than 900 CASA programs, and one of the 20 largest urban programs in the nation. During that time, she also served as the President of the Board of Trustees of the Ohio CASA/GAL Association and was instrumental in the passage of specialty license plate legislation benefiting CASA programs throughout Ohio, as well as the design and implementation of model program standards assuring consistent application of effective advocacy for children involved in court proceedings at the local and state levels.

Ms. Soronen serves on the Board of Directors of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute and the Ohio CASA/GAL Association and is a fellow of the Jefferson Fellowship for Executive Leadership. Ms. Soronen is a recipient of the National CASA Association Kappa Alpha Theta Program Director of the Year Award, the Ohio CASA/GAL Association Statewide Leadership Award, and the Angels in Adoption Award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption.

A graduate of the University of Louisville, Ms. Soronen resides in Columbus, Ohio, and has two wonderful daughters.