



DAVE THOMAS  
FOUNDATION  
FOR ADOPTION®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

adoption  
friendly workplace®

A Signature Program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DAVE THOMAS FOUNDATION FOR ADOPTION ANNOUNCES  
TOP 100 ADOPTION-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES IN AMERICA  
Wendy's International climbs 20 spots to top the list at #1**

(Dublin, OH – May 1, 2008) It's the list that prompted policy change. After the first Best Adoption-Friendly Workplaces in America list debuted in 2007, more than 50 organizations nationwide established or enhanced their adoption benefits for 2008. As a result, employers who made the top 100 list released today by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption offered more robust adoption benefits packages this year to make it. Wendy's International, Inc. ranked #1 and was among those who expanded benefits in response to the 2007 rankings. (Editor's note: The foundation is not an affiliate of Wendy's International, Inc.)

The benefits package that has Wendy's topping the list offers employees up to \$23,300 in financial reimbursement and six weeks of paid leave per adoption. In 2007, the company provided \$7,000 and the same amount of paid leave.

"Supporting adoption and helping find permanent, loving homes for foster children was the vision of our founder Dave Thomas," said Kerri Anderson, chief executive officer and president of Wendy's International, Inc. "There is no finer cause than the support of families who are trying to adopt children, and we're proud that Wendy's has been recognized for our efforts. Many of our employees have adopted children, and we hope to empower more employees in the future with meaningful benefits and support."

Michelle has worked for Wendy's for eight years. She and her husband adopted two teen sisters from foster care in 2006. Michelle said if more companies offered adoption benefits, more people would consider adopting. "The expense of adopting children can be determining factor for many people," she explained. "If more businesses offer financial assistance, more forever families will be formed. Employers can change the life of a child by simply offering adoption benefits."

The Best Adoption-Friendly Workplaces in America list includes the top 100 organizations that provide exceptional support to employees who adopt. Rankings are based on the amount of financial assistance and paid leave provided. The foundation compiled the results from survey data collected from 919 U.S. employers. Several survey partners helped extend the survey's scope even further by asking their subscribers/members to participate: *Employee Benefit News*, a SourceMedia publication that is the leading source of information for benefits decision makers; the National Restaurant Association; and the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to ranking the top 100, the foundation also recognized the top 10 by size, the leaders of each industry, and companies who support the cause of adoption and adoptive families in other ways. Wendy's also ranked #1 among large businesses and in the food, beverage, and restaurant industry. Go to [www.AdoptionFriendlyWorkplace.org](http://www.AdoptionFriendlyWorkplace.org) to view each of the lists.

Rita Soronen, the foundation's executive director, said 157 additional employers participated in this year's survey, and 26 of them are honored on the Top 100 list. "For years we've known employers care about helping employees and their families, but this year we learned they also care about being competitive," she explained. "We found

companies genuinely want to help families formed through adoption, but they also know it's important to maintain a competitive benefits package. Further, we saw the list actually prompted some employers to enhance their adoptions benefits packages.”

### **National Trends**

Adoption benefits are voluntary, employer-provided and include some combination of financial assistance, paid leave and unpaid leave. According to the foundation's 2008 survey results, the average adoption-friendly employer has had a policy in place for eight years, offers up to \$5,000 in financial assistance and five weeks of paid leave. The foundation, now celebrating its 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary, has seen a significant increase in the number of employers offering adoption benefits over the years, which mirrors an annual survey conducted by Hewitt Associates LLC, a global outsourcing and consulting company providing human capital management services. Of the 1,000 major U.S. employers surveyed, Hewitt reports a steady increase of companies offering financial adoption benefits, from 12 percent in 1990 to 47 percent in 2007.

Soronen noted another new trend among employers. “Now we're seeing support for relative adoptions,” she said. “When a child is adopted by a grandparent or other relative, it is usually an emergency situation in which the employee can benefit greatly from financial help and paid leave.”

### **National Misperceptions**

A national survey commissioned by the foundation and released in November 2007 by Harris Interactive reveals that the majority of those considering adoption are considering foster care adoption. In fact, 48 million Americans have considered adoption from foster care, yet the majority has misperceptions about the process and the children who are eligible for adoption. These misperceptions include the following:

- 67 percent of people considering foster care adoption are unnecessarily concerned that biological parents can return to claim the children. Once the court finalizes the legal termination of parental rights, the parents can never return to claim the child.
- 46 percent mistakenly believe foster care adoption is prohibitively expensive, when in reality there is very little cost to adopt from foster care, and there is financial support available for all adoptions.
- 45 percent believe children in foster care have entered the system because of juvenile delinquency, when in reality, the vast majority entered the system through no fault of their own, as victims of neglect, abandonment and/or abuse.
- 48 percent believe a single parent raising an adopted child can definitely provide a healthy and loving environment. However, 32 percent of children adopted from foster care in 2005 were adopted by single parents or unmarried couples.
- 37 percent believe a person over 55 can definitely provide a healthy and loving environment for a child, when in reality 23 percent of adopted children live with an adoptive parent 55 years or older.

“Misperceptions about foster care adoption create barriers that keep wonderful children from loving adoptive parents,” Soronen said. “We need to inform potential adoptive parents about the need, the affordability and the finality of foster care adoption so we can make strides toward connecting more waiting children in foster care with forever families.”

## **Survey Methodology**

The Best Adoption-Friendly Workplaces in America list was compiled using data collected from 919 U.S. employers. The foundation mailed survey invitations to 40,000 business leaders, surveyed human resource professionals at conferences and collected data from the online survey on the foundation's Web site.

Survey rankings are based first on the maximum amount of financial reimbursement per adoption, which includes any additional support for special-needs adoption, and second on the maximum number of weeks of paid leave per adoption. Employers who offer both are ranked higher than those providing only monetary support. Employers who have identical ranking criteria are listed alphabetically.

The foundation offers free toolkits and technical assistance for employers who wish to create a policy and for employees who wish to propose one. The toolkit includes a sample proposal, policy, reimbursement form, frequently asked questions, news release and tax summary. Thirty-three of the survey participants established new adoption benefit policies in 2008, and 26 used the foundation's free resources. Go to [www.AdoptionFriendlyWorkplace.org](http://www.AdoptionFriendlyWorkplace.org) to order the toolkit.

## **About the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption**

This non-profit 501(c)3 public charity is dedicated to dramatically increasing the adoptions of the more than 140,000 children in North America's foster care systems ready and waiting to be adopted. Created by Wendy's founder Dave Thomas, who was adopted as a child, the foundation spearheads programs such as Wendy's Wonderful Kids, which puts adoption recruiters in all 50 states and Canada to find permanent, loving families for children in the foster care system, and Adoption-Friendly Workplace, which encourages employers to offer adoption benefits to their employees.

The foundation also works with adoption advocates and officials to streamline the adoption process and make adoption more affordable for families. As the only organization dedicated exclusively to foster care adoption, the foundation is driven by Dave's simple value: Do what's best for the child. To learn more about the foundation's work, go to [www.DaveThomasFoundationforAdoption.org](http://www.DaveThomasFoundationforAdoption.org).

### **Media Contact:**

Rita Soronen, Executive Director  
Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption  
(614) 764-8482  
[rita\\_soronen@davethomasfoundation.org](mailto:rita_soronen@davethomasfoundation.org)

Yvonne Pentz  
Paul Werth Associates  
(614) 224-8114  
[ypentz@paulwerth.com](mailto:ypentz@paulwerth.com)