



DAVE THOMAS  
FOUNDATION  
FOR ADOPTION®



**Rita L. Soronen**  
**President & CEO**  
**Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption**

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

At the helm of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption since 2001, a national non-profit public charity, Ms. Soronen works to find loving adoptive families for each of the 137,000 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 strategic signature initiatives that act on the urgency of the issue. In 2010, the Foundation dedicated more than \$11 million to grants and award-winning national awareness activities, including *Wendy's Wonderful Kids*, Adoption-Friendly Workplace and the 100 Best Adoption-Friendly Workplaces list, National Adoption Day, national foster care adoption attitudes research, poster and PSA campaigns and *A Child is Waiting: A Step-by-Step Guide to Adoption*. Since 2005, the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program has grown from seven pilot site grants to 122 active sites across the U.S., the District of Columbia and five provinces in Canada dedicated to aggressively and effectively moving children from foster care to permanent families. More than 3,200 children have been adopted or placed in pre-adoptive homes 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 led 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, the Ohio CASA/GAL Association, the Public Education Committee of the National CASA Association and is a fellow of the Jefferson Fellowship for Executive Leadership. Ms. Soronen is a recipient of the Angels in Adoption Award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, the National CASA Association Kappa Alpha Theta Program Director of the Year Award and the Ohio CASA/GAL Association Statewide Leadership Award. She is a requested national speaker on the topic of children and the child welfare system.

A graduate of the University of Louisville with graduate work completed at The Ohio State University, Ms. Soronen resides in Columbus, Ohio, and has two wonderful daughters.