



Dave Thomas
Foundation
for Adoption®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

SURVEY: MORE AMERICANS ARE CONSIDERING CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE WHEN LOOKING TO ADOPT

Columbus, Ohio – By the time Olivia was 10 years old, she'd spent more than half her life in foster care. "It was painful because I never knew what was going to happen," she said. "I never knew if I was going to get to stay or if I would have to move again."

Unfortunately for Olivia, she was forced to move from house to house for seven years while living in foster care. Just as she was getting settled, she'd have to pick up and leave. Until the day she met Dwain and Lorie Hargis.

"I had never even imagined adoption, not at any point in my life," said Lorie. "But this felt absolutely natural, like she belonged here and was meant to be a part of our family."

The transformation that took place in the Hargis home in Cecilia, Kentucky, reflects a shift in attitudes across the country when it comes to adopting children in foster care.

According to a new national survey conducted by Nielsen on behalf of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, 25 percent of people who have not adopted in the United States have considered adoption. Of those individuals, nearly 80 percent have considered foster care adoption, which is up 7 percent from 2012 and an all-time high.

"There is a much more robust conversation in this country about children in foster care than in the past, which is giving more children hope," said Rita Soronen, President & CEO of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. "These children are just like any other child. They've simply had a rough start in life, but they are available for adoption and deserve a permanent family and a safe home."

Currently, there are more than 110,000 children in foster care in the United States who are waiting to be adopted. Sadly, each year more than 20,000 children age out of foster care without a family, putting them at risk for negative outcomes like homelessness and unemployment.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is unique in that it focuses on finding adoptive families for children in foster care, specifically older children, sibling groups and children with special needs. Most of the children served by the Foundation have been in foster care for more than five years.

"Our caseworkers do an extensive analysis of these children, talking to their teachers, social workers who've had interactions with them and even former foster families, trying to match the child with the perfect family," said Soronen. "It is a very thorough approach, but one that's extremely rewarding when we're able to find them a permanent home."

Among the other findings from the survey, 80 percent of Americans understand that children are in foster care because of abuse or neglect, and through no fault of their own. Fifty eight percent also agree that every child is adoptable, up from 51 percent in 2012. The Foundation is thrilled to see this particular shift in attitude and will continue its long-standing and passionate awareness campaign that is helping Americans to see that unadoptable is unacceptable.

“Every child is adoptable,” said Lorie Hargis. “Every child deserves to have a family to love and care for them. I don’t know where I would be without my adopted children because they have enriched my life so much.”

In a few short years, Dwain and Lorie Hargis, who had never even considered adoption, now have a home full of adopted children. And Olivia, who’d spent most of her life moving from house to house, has never felt more at home.

“I now have my own family,” said Olivia. “And with the support of mom and dad, we can all achieve what we want to achieve. We can climb mountains.”

“The Hargis family really personifies not only our mission, but the findings of the survey we conducted,” said Soronen. “The change in attitudes we’re seeing when it comes to adopting children in foster care is encouraging and life changing.”

For the first time, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption also included survey questions about attitudes toward foster care in general. The [results](#) are available on the Foundation’s website.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is a national nonprofit public charity dedicated exclusively to finding permanent homes for the more than 130,000 children waiting in North America’s foster care systems. Created by Wendy’s® founder Dave Thomas who was adopted, the Foundation implements evidence-based, results-driven national service programs, foster care adoption awareness campaigns and innovative grantmaking. To learn more, visit davethomasfoundation.org or call 1-800-ASK-DTFA.

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