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### **Partnership Will Identify Permanent Homes for Children in Foster Care**

COLUMBUS, OHIO – A partnership between the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption will help identify permanent homes for children awaiting adoption.

ODJFS Director Michael Colbert announced this morning that the agency plans to spend \$2.3 million, including \$1.1 million in state funding, to hire specialized, child-focused recruiters whose sole mission will be to find adoptive families for older children in foster care.

The announcement came at the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids Summit, an annual event that draws hundreds of adoption professionals from across the U.S. and Canada.

“Governor Kasich and I strongly believe that there is a family out there for every child in foster care,” said Colbert. “This partnership will provide the resources necessary to identify those families and give more children the joy, sense of belonging and support system that a happy, healthy family provides.”

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption will train and oversee the recruiters, who will follow the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids child-focused recruitment model. Recruiters will be assigned a small number of children, all of whom are available for adoption, and will focus exclusively on finding a permanent home for each child.

“We are thrilled that Ohio is taking the lead on this important program that will invest critical funds to find homes for the children most at risk of aging out of care without being adopted,” said Rita Soronen, president and CEO of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. “We know this program works and are looking forward to joining forces with the state of Ohio to bring it to scale.”

Last October, the Foundation released the results of an empirical five-year research study on the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids program, conducted by Washington, D.C.-based Child Trends. The research showed that children in the program are up to three times more likely to be adopted.

Initially, recruiters will work in selected Ohio counties where at least 20 children between the ages of 9 and 17 are available for adoption. Currently, more than 1,000 young Ohioans in that age group have been in foster care for more than two years.

Ohio currently has 11,851 children in foster care. Governor John R. Kasich has proclaimed May 2012 Foster Care Month in recognition of the state’s foster and kinship families.