

Adopted burger tycoon would help kids find home

BY JACKIE KLEIN
STAFF WRITER

Somewhere once asked Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's, if he'd give up selling one million hamburgers to give just one child a home and love. His answer was "I want both."

Thomas was at the Southfield Radisson on Monday to talk about adoption — the subject closest to his heart — as well as his book, "Dave's Way" and other meaty subjects before 75 high school journalism students from the tri-county area.

The same homespun, good natured, down-to-earth "Dave," seen pitching hamburgers on television, is the "Dave," who pitched the "Stay in School and Succeed" presentation to students at the press conference.

He's also the same man who's the national spokesman for President George Bush's White House Initiative, "Adoption Works for Everyone," an effort to encourage and promote adoption.

Thomas recently donated 500 copies of his book to Spaulding for Children, a Southfield-based adoption agency, to sell as a fundraiser.

Thomas himself was adopted at the age of six weeks by a couple from Kalamazoo. That was in 1932.

"I had no roots, no friends, no sense of belonging," Thomas said. "My adoptive mother died when I was 5. I stayed with my adoptive father through his many remarriages."

"I had my life to live over, I would meet my birth parents and

get a college education. I never had time for football, baseball or fire trucks. I believe family values are most important."

Thomas got his first job at age 12, delivering groceries in Knoxville, Tenn. He later worked 120 hour shifts at a restaurant in Knoxville. At age 15, when the family moved to Fort Wayne, Ind., he worked as a bus boy.

Thomas never finished high school. But the rags to riches entrepreneur tells young people to

get as much education as possible.

Thomas joined the Army at age 18, attending the Army's cook and baker school. After the service, he returned to Fort Wayne and took a job as a short order cook. He and his boss opened a barbecue restaurant. They acquired four failing Kentucky Fried Chicken carryout franchises, turned them around and sold them back for \$1.5 million.

"I was always drawn to hamburgers," he said. "In 1967, I opened the first Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburger restaurant in Columbus. I named it after my eight-year-old daughter, Melinda Lou, who was nicknamed Wendy by her brothers and sisters."

Wendy's and its franchises now operate 4,000 restaurants throughout the United States and in 29 countries and territories worldwide.

The high school journalists at

the Radisson Monday had a chance to grill Thomas. Courtesy of Wendy's, they'll also have the opportunity to win a \$1,500 cash prize to help pay for their college studies and \$1,000 for their schools in a nationwide journalism competition.

To the students, Thomas stressed honesty, integrity, hard work, total commitment and believing in yourself.

"You have to have a burning

desire to be successful," Thomas advised. "Get all the education you can. Know what you want to do. Find mentors. And get a job before you decide on a career. Don't give up. Don't quit."

"We all live here just so long as we might as well do the best we can. Nice guys can finish first. Be honest. If you mess up, you mess up. Everybody does. And remember, problems are opportunities if you do something about them."

Special needs kids waiting for adoption after years in foster care

BY JACKIE KLEIN

More than 2,000 Michigan children with special needs are waiting to be adopted by caring families.

The Southfield-based Spaulding for Children Permanency Planning Center focuses its services on the needs of children who have been in temporary care for years in the child welfare system.

They have been in foster care homes an average of seven years before being referred to Spaulding for specialized adoption services. Some are older kids, some are members of minority groups, some are emotionally or physically challenged.

"We share a growing state and national concern about the number of children entering foster care, drifting from place to place and staying in temporary care for endless periods of time," said Judith McKenzie, executive di-

rector of Spaulding.

"These children represent the least served in the system and the tragic irony is that most of them entered care as infants and preschoolers. Our goals and strategies are addressing this urgent problem on many fronts."

Children with special needs often have been abused physically, sexually and emotionally. They've been neglected and often abandoned by their birth parents.

They have no sense of belonging, center workers said.

Children without families often hit the streets at age 18, losing the chance to be nurtured by caring parents. Homelessness and trouble with the law are often consequences of their foster care drift.

Since 1968, Spaulding has placed more than 500 Michigan children for adoption. The agency serves more than 400 children annually with foster care, adoption

and family support services.

"Spaulding is absolutely committed to permanency in the least amount of time possible," McKenzie said. "We offer extensive training seminars and other

programs for those interested in helping children.

"Programs to train individuals to become foster or adoptive parents are available several times a year."

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YOUR OPINION COUNTS Pay of State Officers

The State Officers Compensation Commission, a seven member panel of citizens, currently is reviewing pay and expenses to be paid in 1993 and 1994 to the Governor, Lt. Governor, Justices of the Supreme Court, and State Legislators.

SOCN NEEDS YOUR OPINION!

Organizations and citizens are encouraged to express their views on this important matter.

On November 17, 1992 a PUBLIC HEARING will be held in the Detroit area at 6:30 p.m., Wayne State University, Kresge Library Auditorium.

The Commission is interested in views on:

- Should compensation be increased in view of the fact that pay has remained the same for 3 years?
- What are appropriate levels of pay to attract the highest caliber of citizens to these positions?

WRITE TO:

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