

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Northern Rivers Receives funding from Dave Thomas Foundation and OCFS for Program Expansion

ALBANY, NY — Northern Rivers Family of Services has been awarded a \$182,900 Wendy's Wonderful Kids grant from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption to expand Northern Rivers Wendy's Wonderful Kids adoption programming.

For the past two years, Northern Rivers has provided Wendy's Wonderful Kids services to Albany and Schenectady counties. Through the program, a dedicated adoptive parent recruiter works to find homes for children ages 9 and older who have spent at least two years in foster care and are in need of a permanent home.

The new grant, part of \$5.1 million in grants statewide awarded by the Foundation and an additional \$4 million from New York State, will allow Northern Rivers to expand Wendy's Wonderful Kids services to Columbia, Orange, Rensselaer and Saratoga counties through two new recruiters. The \$182,900 will fund the two new positions and two prior positions through June 30, 2018; to be followed by an annual \$300,000 grant to fund all four recruiters beginning July 1, 2018.

"Wendy's Wonderful Kids gives our recruiters the time and resources to give each child the attention they deserve. These recruiters employ aggressive practices and proven tactics focused on finding the best home for a child, beginning with family, friends and neighbors, and then reaching out to the communities in which they live," said Damarise Alexander-Mann, Director of Foster Care at Northern Rivers member agency Parsons Child & Family Center.

"We are grateful to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption for this award. Every child deserves a loving family, and our Wendy's Wonderful Kids program gives our recruiters the resources needed to make that happen," said William T. Gettman, Jr., Northern Rivers CEO.

Lynne Ross and Nicole Riggs have joined Northern Rivers' Wendy's Wonderful Kids programs, joining existing recruiters Chivon Howard and Kathleen Czajkowski.

Ross will serve Columbia, Rensselaer and Saratoga counties. She has served the organization as a clinician and social worker in the foster care and education programs since 1996. Previously she worked at Berkshire Farm as a foster care social worker and clinician, and held several child welfare positions with Saratoga County. She earned her bachelor's degree from SUNY Plattsburgh and her Master of Social Work from the University at Albany.

Riggs will serve Orange County. She joins the organization from Astor Services for Children and Families in Rhinebeck, where she worked as a foster care case manager. She previously served the Town of Walkill Boys and Girls Club as a program leader. She earned her bachelor's degree from Mount Saint Mary College.

Czajkowski will continue to serve Schenectady County, as she has since 2016. She previously served as a case manager for the YWCA, and as a counselor and family planning specialist for Planned Parenthood. She earned her bachelor's degree in human services from Empire State College.

Howard will continue to serve Albany County, as she has since 2015. She previously worked as a community support supervisor for Catholic Charities, and as a support worker for Liberty Enterprises in Amsterdam. She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University at Albany.

About Northern Rivers Family of Services:

Founded where the Mohawk and Hudson meet, like the rivers that shaped our region, Northern Rivers Family of Services helps change lives by shaping the future of those we serve throughout the Capital Region and beyond. Comprised of parent company Northern Rivers and member agencies Northeast Parent & Child Society and Parsons Child & Family Center, we are a family of human service agencies who work together and are committed to helping children, adults, and families. Our quality of care, depth of programs, combined size and passion for the mission make us a leading provider. Informed by our 188-year heritage, our 1,400-strong workforce provides services for 16,000 children, adults, and families throughout 35 counties in New York state. For more information, call 518.426.2600 or visit northernrivers.org.

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