

## Dave Thomas

*"If there are things you don't like in the world you grew up in, make your own life different."*

How about a man, who was adopted, never finished High School until after many people retire, and had a dream of starting his own chain of restaurants? The founder of the Wendy's International hamburger chain restaurants was known as a humble man with great charisma. He was seen for over a decade on television advertising Wendy's hamburgers and poking fun at himself and his industry.

Born in 1932 in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Dave was adopted by a family in Michigan when he was less than two months old. For years he hid the fact that he was adopted, but as more people found out, he felt free to talk about it. "When I found out I was (adopted), I didn't want to talk about it, and as I talked to people as I grew older ... I got really a lot of encouragement. They said, "Why don't you talk about it?"

Talk about it he did. He founded the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. He was particularly passionate about helping children through the foundation. "I thought, well, I'll do it if, you know, I could just help one boy or one girl get a home...If we can get just one child adopted, it will be worth it," Dave said.

Dave began working in a restaurant in Knoxville, Tennessee when he was 12 years old. Even then, he had a dream of owning a chain of restaurants. This began a journey that took him to a management position with Kentucky Fried Chicken where he met the famous Colonel Harland Sanders. He sold the first "bucket" of chicken with Sander's picture on the side. His acquaintance with Sanders led him to quit KFC in 1968 and open his first hamburger restaurant. He named the business for one of his daughters, "Wendy" (actually, her nickname).

Amazed? Dave was voted most likely to succeed by his High School graduating class in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. What's amazing is that he graduated in 1993 at age 61! In his graduation address, Dave told young people to never stop learning and don't give up. "It's easy to throw in the towel when things aren't going your way. Nothing good comes without hard work. Be willing to invest the time and energy to achieve your goals."

Dave Thomas' life is an example to people everywhere that no matter where you come from, no matter what limits the world may put on you, you can overcome by staying focused on your dream. You, too, can Live With Spirit!

***Permission is granted to reprint this article provided the following paragraph is included in full:***

**Jim Mathis is an international Speaking Professional, executive coach and Best-Selling author. To subscribe to his free personal and professional**

development newsletter, please send an email to: [subscribe@jimmathis.com](mailto:subscribe@jimmathis.com) with the word SUBSCRIBE in the subject. An electronic copy will be sent out to you every month. For more information on how Jim and his programs can benefit your organization or group, please call 888-688-0220, or visit his web site: [www.jimmathis.com](http://www.jimmathis.com).