

The Schultz Family

Parents have to be vulnerable and willing to put themselves out there for their child, because the payoff of a family fulfilled, for the child and the parents, more than makes up for all the anxiety and heartache.

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Attend A Greater Houston Information Meeting

Are you or someone you know interested in foster care or adoption? Don't know where to start? Attend one of our bi-monthly Information Meetings!

During the Information Meeting, an Arms Wide Coordinator will walk you through the process of fostering or adopting a child or children in foster care. You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about fostering or adopting a child or children in need, in addition to meeting other families who are interested in becoming foster or adoptive parents.

Arms Wide Adoption Services offers Information Meetings at least twice a month. **Meetings are typically held on Wednesdays at our Houston office and start at 6 PM.** Visit armswide.org/events for more details!

Check Out Our 2017 Annual Report

At Arms Wide Adoption Services, we're committed to transparency. Check out what we accomplished in 2017, including our lean and program-focused financials at armswide.org/about-us/newsletters.

Share Your Story Fuel Our Mission

Have a story to share? We are looking for adoptive families and children to speak about their Arms Wide family and experiences. With our recent rebrand, we are always looking for new ways to share our mission.

In addition to sharing your story with us, we are also looking to expand our connections in the workplace. Would you be willing to connect us with your human resources department? Invite us to send one of our Arms Wide Adoption Services team members to talk more to your coworkers about how they can transform lives through adoption.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact Development and Marketing Coordinator, Melissa Neeley, at mneeley@armswide.org.

Stay In The Loop Follow Us

Arms Wide Adoption Services posts updates regularly!

Stay in loop by following us on social media @ArmsWideTX, visiting our blog at armswide.org/blog, and registering to receive our online communications at armswide.org/get-our-newsletter.

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All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament

With your support and the leadership of our Event Co-Chairs, Steve Kennedy, Will Maxwell, and Michael Tsang, more than \$180,000 was raised to further our mission to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing adoptive families in November 2017.

Event co-chairs Steve Kennedy, Will Maxwell, and Michael Tsang put all their cards on the table for the 11th Annual All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament benefiting Arms Wide Adoption Services, formerly Spaulding for Children. **The greater Houston event raised \$184,000 to support Arms Wide Adoption Services** and its mission to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing adoptive families. In addition to the poker tournament, the event featured high-end door prizes, live and silent auctions, delicious food and entertainment by emcee, Lisa Malosky.

Tension was high when tournament play began, as players collected chip bonuses for knocking out previous tournament champions. **In the end, Russell Brown took home first place, Jeremy Ham received the second place trophy, and Mike Dignam came in third.**



Co-Chair, Will Maxwell, and Keith Maxwell putting all their cards on the table



Jeremy Ham, Russell Brown, and Mike Dignam showing off their trophies

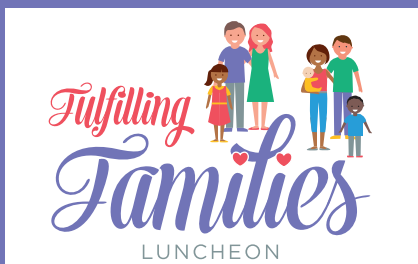


Learn more about this event at armswide.org/all-in-for-adoption

Fulfilling Families Luncheon

On Tuesday, May 8, 2018, Arms Wide Adoption Services will host its annual luncheon at Houston Country Club.

Donations to the Fulfilling Families Luncheon help ensure Arms Wide Adoption Services can continue to help even more children in foster care connect with the loving adoptive families they need and deserve. We are thrilled to welcome Lisa Montgomery as our keynote speaker. Lisa, mother of Green Bay Packers Running Back Ty Montgomery, will explore how she not only gave Ty his dream of having brothers, but managed to foster 17 children as a single mom. Special thanks to our Event Co-Chairs, Cari Gill and Caroline Simons, for their dedication to making this event a success! For more information, contact Arms Wide Adoption Services' Development and Marketing Coordinator, Melissa Neeley at mneeley@armswide.org or 713-681-6991. We hope to see you May!



Learn more about this event at armswide.org/annual-luncheon



2018 Emcee, Frank Billingsley of KPRC-TV Channel 2 giving his keynote at the 2017 event



2018 Co-Chair, Caroline Simons, with 2018 Host Committee members, Ting Bresnahan and Cory Greenberg at the 2017 event

The Schultz Family: How Tammy Found Timmy



Choosing Arms Wide

At only nine years old, Tammy Schulz told her mom she would adopt someday. As an adult, her passion for adoption was just as strong. She started pursuing adoption in earnest after her friend adopted a daughter through Arms Wide Adoption Services, and recommended Tammy look into the organization. Tammy researched Arms Wide, and liked that they welcomed all different types of families. As a single mom, she appreciated that Arms Wide accepted her and treated all families equally.

A Call To Motherhood

Tammy completed her paperwork, attended classes, and went through all the processes to qualify for fostering and adopting a child. Although she was ready, she still had to wait for Arms Wide to find the right child to place with her. After waiting for quite some time, she decided she needed a break from the anxiety and anticipation. She called Arms Wide, telling them to discontinue looking for a placement for her for a while. Then, she bought tickets to London for a vacation. She had no idea that her son was being born that very day. The day after she told Arms Wide she was taking a break, they called and asked if she would be interested in taking in a one-day-old boy. She could foster him with the hope of adopting him in the future. Tammy immediately said yes, cancelled her vacation plans, and became a mom with only 26 hours' notice.

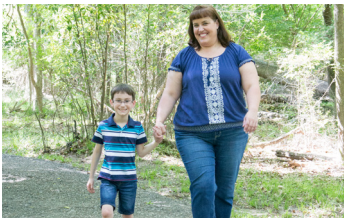


Finding Timmy

When she arrived at the hospital, she met her son, whom a caseworker had named Timothy. The name seemed to be a fateful sign, since Tammy's sister was hoping to conceive a second child and had chosen the name Timothy if the baby were a boy. After checking with her sister, who gave her blessing to use the name, Tammy kept the name Timothy for her son, saying this was the Timmy her family was meant to have.

Finally Forever

Her first few months with her son, who she fostered before the adoption was finalized, were incredibly special. Whenever anyone complimented her on how well she was doing after just having a baby, she would laugh and tell them about her "26-hour pregnancy." Throughout his life, Tammy has talked to Timmy about his adoption and about the Arms Wide staff. Something that Tammy cherishes about adopting through Arms Wide is the welcoming and supportive environment. She describes visits from the Arms Wide staff as fun, like a visit from a favorite relative. Timmy has always known he was adopted, and loves all the staff members who work with him and his mom. In true eight-year-old fashion, he especially loves the gifts they've brought for him over the years. Tammy appreciates a different type of present she received — the community Arms Wide gave her. She still gets together with the other families from her training sessions, and points out how special it is to have a group of people who understand what it's like to be an adoptive parent.



Worth The Heartache

While she treasures her friends who have adopted, not everyone is as sensitive or knowledgeable about adoption. Some people have asked Tammy if she loves her son as much as she'd love "her own child." Her response is always the same: "He is my child." And though the foster and adoption processes can be stressful, she wants parents to know every class, inspection, and home visit is completely worth it. Parents have to be vulnerable and willing to put themselves out there for their child, because the payoff of a family fulfilled, for the child and the parents, more than makes up for all the anxiety and heartache.

Giving Back To Their Gift

The Schultz Family came to be through the gift of adoption. However, Tammy and Timmy know there are lots of kids who are still awaiting forever homes. Timmy wanted to do something to help them, so together they planned a fun run. With the help of their church and the Kingwood community, they hosted Timmy's Fun Run for Foster and Forever Families on March, 4, 2018. The event featured a running course and activities that parents and kids could do together. The event brought in more than 150 people and raised over \$1,000 for Kingwood United Methodist's Oasis Ministry, which provides help and support to Kingwood area adoptive and foster families. After seeing the event's success, Timmy is determined to host his fun run every year!

More Families Fulfilled

Tammy and Timmy know the magic that happens when a parent takes a chance and opens his or her heart to a child in foster care. They're determined to keep sharing their story so that more and more families can be fulfilled, and more and more kids can finally come home.



Celebrating Our Girls On Galentines Day



On February 24, just ten days after Valentine's Day, we gathered some of our favorite girls together for a "Galentine's Day" celebration at Backstreet Cafe.



The girls were encouraged to wear their best cocktail dress, and come with an open mind to great food and mocktails. In addition to eating and playing games, they were also able to do some painting.

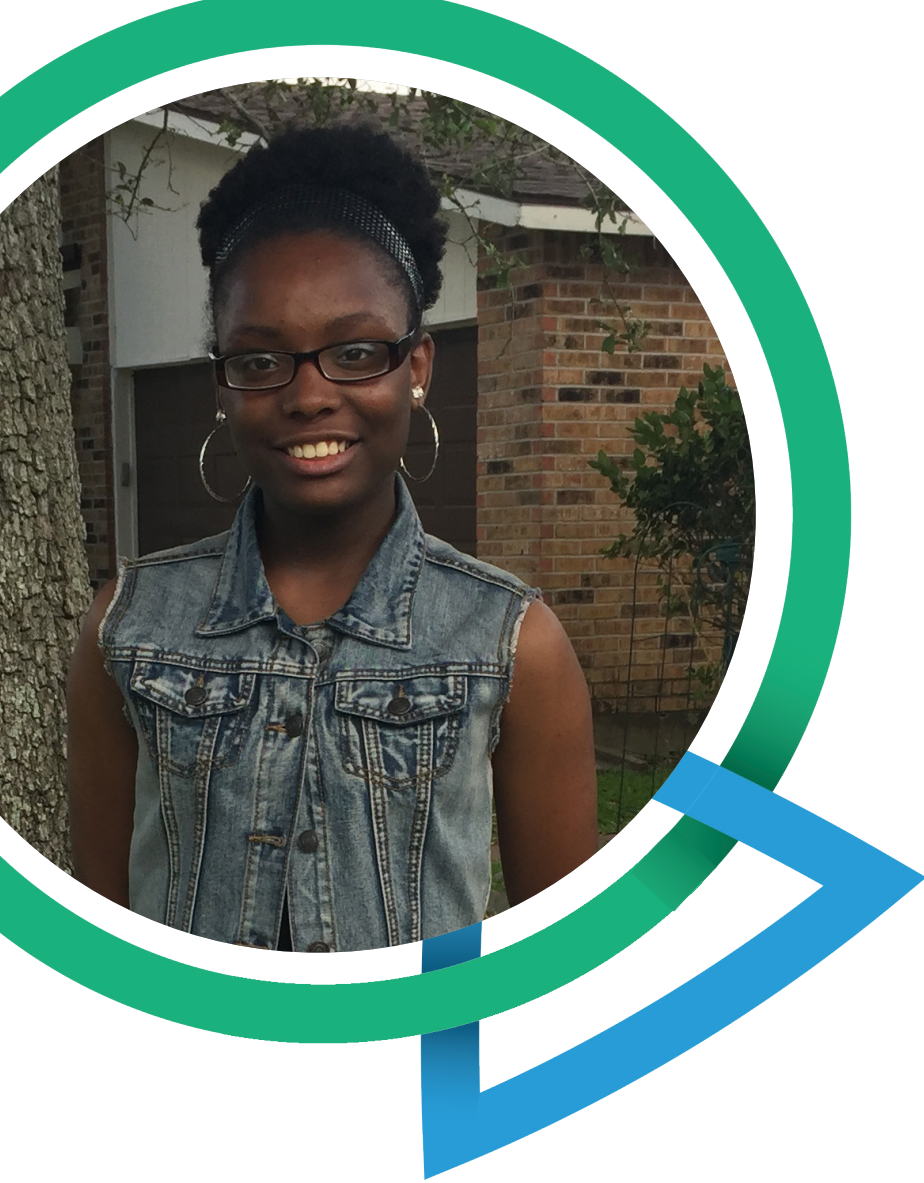


The day allowed siblings to reunite, the girls to meet other girls in foster care, connect with mentors, and celebrate being strong, loved young women.

Holiday Party Fun

Thanks to all who helped make our annual family holiday party a huge success! Special thanks to KPMG, H-E-B, and Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church for making it a great morning!





Meet Destiny, 15 Years Old

Destiny is one of the most caring people you may ever meet.

Her life goal is to do something where she impacts the lives of others and makes a difference in the lives of those who have no voice.

Her contagious smile and spunky personality are just the things that will help her achieve every one of her dreams, which include wanting to be a counselor or life coach.

Besides wanting to change the world for the better, Destiny loves all types of music. On her playlist, you'll find anything from 90's R&B to country to everything in between.

Destiny also loves to try different foods and will never say no to a dish even if it seems weird to others.

Destiny is someone who likes to listen to others and also appreciates being listened to.

She desires to have a family who will want to come down to her level and understand her as a teenager, while still teaching her how to be the best she can be.

Destiny once said:

“Everyone deserves to have a family they can depend on, and I believe mine is somewhere out there.”

To get to know Destiny better, please contact Maristel Aguilar by email at maguilar@armswide.org or by phone at 713-681-6991.

HALO Branded Solutions Gives Back



In February 2018, HALO Branded Solutions dropped off a generous donation of rodeo tickets for our families to enjoy! These just weren't any tickets either - many were located in lower sections and some in the Action Seats.

We are grateful for community partners doing their part to ensure kids enrolled in our programs can just be kids again!



Scholarship Spotlight

For more than 20 years, Arms Wide Adoption Services has provided scholarships to children adopted through our agency thanks to The Holland Scholarship Fund.



Jamie Perello, Graduated December 2017

"I could not have done this without the continued support I received from everyone at Arms Wide."



Veronica Suzio, Graduated December 2017

"I will never forget what you have made possible for me. I will be sure to pay it forward."

Adopting to Advocating

An excerpt from a recent family story written by Arms Wide mom, Natalie.

In my line of work as a psychologist, I frequently have speaking engagements. Typically, I speak about child development, autism spectrum disorder, etc. Over the past year, [my son] Elijah has been asking me if he could speak with me. When I asked him what he wants to speak about, he said, "Trauma. What happened to me. All of it... everything." I encouraged him to wait patiently while we searched for the right time and place. After all, the audience drives the topic.

An opportunity presented itself when Elijah and me were invited to speak at the 2018 National Conference on Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools in Washington DC. Elijah was able to speak to the crowd of 50 people about how shame has impacted him negatively and still interferes in his daily life. He also talked about how sharing his story and receiving empathy has helped him to combat his feelings of shame.

Teachers, administrators, and even superintendents asked him questions about how to respond to students who are experiencing or have experienced trauma. They were particularly interested in his thoughts on connecting with students that are difficult to connect with - those that don't volunteer their problems and may not be accepting of support.

Elijah told them one of his favorite quotes:

"The best thing you can do is the right thing. The next best thing you can do is the wrong thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing." He added, that they should not say that it will be okay, or that they understand, because it might not be okay, and they may never understand. Instead, he recommended that teachers empathize with the student and just say something, even if it is "I don't know what to say."

It was a really validating experience for him to educate the educators on something so personal to him. The participants raved about how helpful it was to hear from him what has and has not worked for him.

Read more at armswide.org/children/family-spotlight

Forever Families

Over the last 41 years, Arms Wide Adoption Services has placed more than 2,100 children with their forever families. Meet a few of the newest Arms Wide families below:



The Foster Family
October 2017



The Max-George Family
November 2017



The Garza Family
March 2018



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Arms Wide Adoption Services' mission is to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing adoptive families. Arms Wide Adoption Services is funded by private donations, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, and the United Way of Greater Houston.



United Way of Greater Houston

Give While You Shop:



Jonathan and Kara's Story

Jonathan and Kara started their adoption journey in 2014 after the difficult loss of their twins at 22 weeks. This heartache led them to think about children in foster care who need homes. They decided that adoption might be the right journey for them. Kara began researching into Houston-based adoption agencies and found Arms Wide Adoption Services. She loved how Arms Wide works with all types of families. After speaking with someone on the Arms Wide family recruitment team, Jonathan and Kara decided to attend an Information Meeting on October 15, 2014. **Kara said she will always remember the meeting date, because it is the same date as her daughter's birthday.**

When Jonathan and Kara received the call about their soon-to-be daughters, they didn't let anything stand in the way. Despite Kara battling a broken ankle, the pair found a way to provide a safe and nurturing home for the three-year-old and 15-month-old girls. After a long journey, taking two and a half years to finalize the adoption of their girls, Kara said her family feels happy and relieved. Although she admits it can be a difficult journey, Kara has some advice to others considering foster care and adoption:

"There are going to be times when you want to pull your hair out or cry yourself to sleep because of the unknown," Kara said. "But in the end, it will all be worth it."

Read more at armswide.org/children/family-spotlight