

The Pelt Family

“Everything just fell into place”

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Take the First Step Information Meeting

Are you interested in learning more about how you can transform the lives of children in need through foster care or adoption? Take the first step by attending our Information Meeting. During the Information Meeting, an Arms Wide Coordinator will talk through the process of fostering or adopting a child or children in foster care. You will be able to ask any questions you may have about fostering or adopting, in addition to meeting other families who are interested in becoming foster or adoptive parents.

Arms Wide Adoption Services offers Information Meetings once a month. Meetings are typically held at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays at our Houston office, but in response to COVID-19, we are currently offering virtual Information Meetings. Visit armswide.org/events for more details.

A Year in Review 2020 Impact Report

Although the COVID-19 pandemic brought many unexpected challenges, we are thankful that we were safely and responsibly able to provide quality services to the children and families who need us. Check out what we accomplished in 2020, including our lean and program-focused financials at armswide.org/about-us/newsletters.

Share and Connect Fuel Our Mission

Have a story to share? We are looking for foster and adoptive families to speak about their Arms Wide Adoption Services family and journey. We are always seeking new ways to share our mission.

In addition to sharing your story with us, we also want to expand our connections in the community. Would you be willing to connect us with your workplace, place of worship, or another group? Invite us to send one of our team members to talk more to your network about how they can transform lives through foster care and adoption.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact Development and Marketing Coordinator, Emily Person, at eperson@armswide.org.

Stay In The Loop Follow Us

Arms Wide Adoption Services posts updates regularly!

Stay in the loop by following us on social media [@ArmsWideTX](https://twitter.com/ArmsWideTX), visiting our blog at armswide.org/category/blog, and registering to receive our online communications at armswide.org/get-our-newsletter.

Child Spotlight: Teri and Sheila



Meet Teri, Age 11

Teri can be shy at first, but once you get to know her you will learn that she loves to shop for new clothes and accessories. She also likes to stay home and do arts and crafts. Teri's favorite classes in school so far have been art and science, and she loves to get creative and try new experiments.

Teri has a close relationship with her older sister, Sheila. With only a year age difference, Teri sees her sister as her best friend and cannot imagine life without her. Their favorite pastime is turning on music and dancing together. Teri will appreciate a family that can be silly with her but more importantly a family that will value her relationship with her sister as much as she does.

Meet Sheila, Age 12

Sheila may not always show it, but she cares deeply for others. She holds family close to her heart and more than anything, she wants to be adopted with her younger sister, Teri. Sheila is very adventurous and loves being outside and playing sports. Between volleyball, basketball, track, and soccer she cannot pick a favorite. She loves them all! Sheila would do well in an adoptive home that is patient and loving, all while giving her the necessary tools to succeed in life.

To learn more about how to give Teri and Sheila a forever family, contact WWK Recruiter and Adoption Coordinator, Stephanie Griffith, at 713-681-6991 or sgriffith@armswide.org

Could you be their forever family?

The Pelt Family: “Everything just fell into place.”

The Pelt Family’s journey to adoption was not a straight path. They realized along the way that they needed to have patience to persevere through the setbacks they experienced. Now that their family is fulfilled, they believe all life’s curve balls were meant to be.

Andrew and RaKeesha had been married for nine years when they considered adoption. After much prayer and thought, they decided adoption was best for growing their family. One of RaKeesha’s sorority sisters recommended Arms Wide Adoption Services because she had a good experience with the agency, having gone through the process herself.

“We found that Arms Wide Adoption Services was a small group of people that were willing to help families like ourselves who were wanting to grow,” RaKeesha said.



Andrew and RaKeesha were almost to the home study stage when Hurricane Harvey hit in 2017. Damage to their home delayed their adoption process and sent them back to square one. Then, a family illness set back their adoption process a second time. “They say third time’s the charm,” Andrew said. “We finally got everything done and made it to the home study.”

The very first photo Andrew and RaKeesha received was of Cameron. Andrew recalls sharing it with his colleagues and celebrating the possibility of adopting him, but then so much time went by they started considering other options. When a potential match with a sibling group fell through, they started to get discouraged. Then out of the blue, they received a call from Arms Wide about Cameron. If they were still interested, Cameron was ready to join their family. Andrew and RaKeesha officially finalized Cameron’s adoption on May 13, 2020. Since the pandemic prevented indoor gatherings, they celebrated with a car parade outside their home.

“Everything just fell into place,” said Andrew. “...and it brought joy to our souls.”

Andrew and RaKeesha offered some sound advice for future foster or adoptive parents. “I would want them to know to just be patient,” RaKeesha said. “A lot of times it’s easy to feel anxious and want to zoom right through the process.”

Sometimes life throws a curve ball and things don’t work out the way we think they will. If Andrew and RaKeesha had gone through their process in 2017 before Harvey hit, they would not have met Cameron: at that time, he had not yet been born. “We don’t know what child would have been in our life had Harvey not hit or sickness not happened,” RaKeesha said.

“We feel right now that this was totally divine.”



Thanks to the Community

for caring creatively

We are thankful to community volunteers who made creative contributions this year.

Volunteers from **Ascend Performance Materials** donated their time to improve the look and feel of the Arms Wide offices. On their Day of Caring, they helped us organize our Angel Room and hang photos around the office.



Ascend Day of Caring



Chapter AE, P.E.O brightened our kids' Easter with over 50 Easter Baskets



Children trying on their new formal wear, generously provided by Macy's

Our Angel Room is used by families as a resource to make sure children have access to basic necessities like clothing and toiletries. Many children arrive to their foster family with only the clothes on their backs. The Angel Room also gives comfort items and holiday treats to children in our foster and post permanency programs to brighten their days.

Angel Room Gifts

Other Creative Ways to Give Back



Make Arms Wide your preferred charity on Amazon Smile, and Amazon will donate a portion of your purchases to us.



Avoid capital gains tax and get a bigger deduction. You can support the mission of Arms Wide by donating appreciated stock at donatestock.com/arms-wide.



Link your Kroger Plus card to Arms Wide, and Arms Wide will earn Kroger Community Rewards

For more information, visit armswide.org. Have a creative idea for giving back? Email Emily Person, Development and Marketing Coordinator, at eperson@armswide.org.

Spring 2021

Family Retreat

In April 2021, families in our Fort Bend Post Adoption and Post Permanency Programs attended a Family Retreat at Camp For All. During this weekend getaway, nearly eighty family members bonded through water sports, ziplining, archery, horseback riding and more!

We know the importance of quality time for families, and we're thankful for the generous support from the community that makes this possible.



Camp for All



Fulfilling Families Luncheon

On **Thursday, September 30**, Arms Wide Adoption Services will host its annual luncheon at The Briar Club thanks to the help of Co-Chairs Jill George Bomar and Alison Powell.

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. After a successful virtual event last year, we are so excited to be back in person for this event. We are thrilled to welcome April Dinwoodie as our keynote speaker. Dinwoodie's podcast *Born in June, Raised in April: What Adoption Can Teach the World!* helps facilitate an open dialogue about race, class, and culture. As a transracially adopted person raised in a predominantly white environment, Dinwoodie has lived this experience. We are also elated to have Frank Billingsley, KPRC Channel 2's Chief Meteorologist, back as this year's luncheon emcee. We look forward to seeing you in September!



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



April Dinwoodie, 2021 Fulfilling Families Luncheon Keynote Speaker



2019 Luncheon at the Houston Country Club

Save The Date For November Events

On **Thursday, November 18**, Arms Wide Adoption Services will host its annual All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament at the River Oaks Country Club.



2021 Co-Chair Steve Kennedy with the Texans Cheerleaders at the 2019 event



Each game played supports Arms Wide Adoption Services' mission of transforming lives of children in need



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



Mark your calendars for **Tuesday, November 9**, as Arms Wide Adoption Services participates in Coastal Bend Day of Giving, a 24-hour charitable challenge.



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Arms Wide Adoption Services' mission is to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing permanent 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:



Finally Forever

Over the last 44 years, Arms Wide Adoption Services has placed more than 2,200 children with their forever families. Meet a few of the newest Arms Wide Adoption Services families below:



The Anderson Family
June 2020



The Key Family
November 2020



The Williams Family
January 2021