

## Leaning on My Village

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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 one of our monthly Information Meetings, where an Arms Wide Coordinator will talk through the process of fostering or adopting from foster care and answer any questions you may have. Visit [armswide.org/events](https://armswide.org/events) for more details.

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## Connect With Us Fuel Our Mission

We are always seeking new ways to share our mission, and we 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, adoption, kinship care or post adoption services. If you are interested in helping us share our mission, please contact Development and Marketing Coordinator, Emily Person, at [eperson@armswide.org](mailto:eperson@armswide.org).

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## 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) and visiting our blog at [armswide.org/category/blog](https://armswide.org/category/blog). You can also register to receive our online communications at [armswide.org/get-our-newsletter](https://armswide.org/get-our-newsletter).

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## Share Your Story

Are you a foster parent, adoptive parent, or kinship caregiver who wants to share their story? We love helping families share their stories to raise awareness of the needs of children in foster care. To be part of our advocacy efforts by sharing your story, please contact Development and Marketing Coordinator, Emily Person, at [eperson@armswide.org](mailto:eperson@armswide.org).

# 45 Years of Fulfilling Families

Arms Wide Adoption Services' mission is to transform the lives of children who need safe, nurturing permanent families. Over the last 45 years, with the help of generous supporters like you, Arms Wide Adoption Services has helped more than 2,260 children join their forever families.

November is **National Adoption Month**, so it is the perfect time to celebrate these families fulfilled. Meet a few of the newest Arms Wide families:



The Green Family

*April 2022*



The Fontenot Family

*May 2022*



The Gutierrez Family

*June 2022*



The Burch Family

*July 2022*



The Floyd Family

*August 2022*



The Peoples-Castlow Family

*September 2022*

# Post Adoption & Permanency Support

Arms Wide Adoption Services' vision is for all children to be loved within a home and all families to feel supported. Post adoption programs and permanency support can be important in helping children overcome past trauma and in giving families tools to thrive. This summer, we had a great time with families pairing parent training opportunities with fun in the sun, artistic expression, and jumping around at the trampoline park!



*In South Texas, families enjoyed a day of fun in the sun at Hurricane Harbor while parents joined a workshop about child development and behavior.*



*Families enjoyed painting together at The Rustic Brush while hearing a presentation about internet safety by Crime Stoppers.*



*Art therapist Julie Riley led a discussion about building relationships through art-making while families painted together at Painting With A Twist in Houston.*



*Children bounced around at Sugar Land's Trampoline Park while parents enjoyed a presentation about sensory processing.*

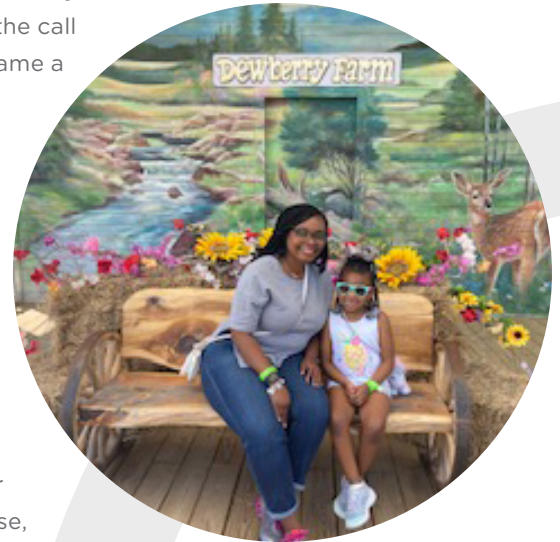
# The Green Family Spotlight: Leaning On My Village

*Aronda Green first considered adoption after battling infertility issues. When she heard good things about Arms Wide from a colleague at work where she is a school principal, she took the first step by attending an Arms Wide information meeting. Aronda shares her story because she wants people to know that it is possible to foster or adopt as a single parent and that a strong village of support makes all the difference.*

## Getting Started

After starting her adoption journey in 2021, Aronda's home study and training went quickly. But then she waited several months before getting a call to be matched with a child through foster care. Finally on September 17, 2021, Aronda got a call about a 4-year-old girl, Harper. "I got the call on a Friday, Harper came on Saturday by 9:30 a.m., and she never left. I became a parent in less than 24 hours," Aronda said.

From Day 1, Aronda says that having Harper in her home just felt right. Harper was open about what she expected, wondering "when does dad come home?" and "where are my brothers and sisters?" They had honest conversations about how it was just the two of them. "She began to understand that this is our family and she's loved and cared for, even if it doesn't look like her past families," Aronda said.



## Finally a Forever Family

After finalizing the adoption on April 26, 2022, they both knew this was their permanent family, and Harper was excited about her name change. Otherwise, Aronda says that things feel the same, minus all the paperwork! "Everything feels the same because if I have a question I can still call or text my Arms Wide coordinator and she picks up the phone. I have the same level of support from Arms Wide as I did before finalizing."

Now, the Greens spend time enjoying a variety of activities: play therapy, tumbling, swim, family therapy. Life is structured around what Harper needs. "My goal is always to give her a new experience at least once a month," Aronda shared. New experiences so far include Children's Museum Houston, Dewberry Farm, water parks, and fishing with grandparents.

## Leaning on My Village



Even as a single mom, Aronda says that she has never felt alone during her adoption journey. There has always been a village of support surrounding her, whether through Arms Wide's programs or her own personal village. "I was coming into the process as a single parent. Having the support of a team of family and coworkers was vital," Aronda said. "My daughter is my school's child because my coworkers were so much part of the process, part of the village. They wanted to know every aspect of what was going on and were a crucial part of her welcome shower and first birthday party. They helped make sure she had all the things she needed."

Throughout her adoption journey, Aronda has learned that there's not a formula or a right or wrong way to do it. "Trust your instincts to lead and guide you," Aronda said. "At the end of day, your goal is to be the best parent for your child. You will need to ask questions, it's okay to reach out and ask for help." And that's what it means to lean on your village.



## Volunteer Spotlight: Leslye Traylor from JustUs Beauty

African American haircare requires a different approach than caring for other hair types. Recently, as part of our It Takes a Village initiative, Leslye Traylor from JustUs Beauty joined us for a training session where she shared her top tips for caring for natural hair.

Arms Wide's It Takes a Village initiative addresses the disproportionality of African American children in foster care and provides resources to foster and adoptive families. Leslye believes that haircare is an important part of this village. "Caring for African American hair builds self-esteem and even helps behavior," Leslye said. "Sometimes kids get teased for how their hair looks. It builds confidence when children can experiment with their hair and find hairstyles that makes them feel proud of how they look."

Education is the first step in addressing haircare in this village. "We can all use more education," Leslye said. "What one parent knows, another parent might not know." Sharing resources and knowledge with each other—for the sake of the children in our care—is what this community is all about.

## Caring Community

We are so thankful for community partners who invest in our mission!



*Ascend Performance Materials* donated dozens of game night baskets for National Foster Care Month in May to help our families bond through game nights.



*KPMG LLC* celebrated their 125th anniversary by supporting Arms Wide through an employee Bingo fundraiser on their Community Impact Day in August.



*Half Associates* decorated and donated Sweet Cases—duffel bags filled with toiletries and comfort items—for our children in foster care.

# 2022 Coastal Bend Day of Giving

Mark your calendars for **Tuesday, November 8, 2022** as Arms Wide Adoption Services participates in Coastal Bend Day of Giving, a 24-hour charitable challenge.



Arms Wide Adoption Services is honored to participate in Coastal Bend Day of Giving, a 24-hour charitable challenge. This year's agency goal is \$24,000. Thanks to the generosity of the Coastal Bend Community Foundation, this fundraising goal will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$24,000, raising a total of \$48,000 for Arms Wide Adoption Services!

**Early Giving starts October 31!** Make your donation and **double your impact** between October 31–November 8 by visiting [coastalbenddayofgiving.org/armswide](http://coastalbenddayofgiving.org/armswide).

## All In for Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament

Tickets are still available for the 2022 All In for Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament on **Thursday, November 10!** In addition to lively hands of poker, All In for Adoption features delicious food, and exciting silent auction and high-end door prizes.

**Tickets available at [armswide.org/all-in-for-adoption](http://armswide.org/all-in-for-adoption).**



Brian Romere and Co-Chair Michael Tsang. Photo Credit: Stephen David Photography



Co-Chair Trace Williams, Carson Cone and Co-Chair Luke Cone show their hands at the poker table.



Co-Chair Steve Kennedy poses with the Texans Cheerleaders. Photo Credit: Stephen David Photography



6925 Portwest Drive, Suite 110 • Houston, TX 77024  
Phone: **713.681.6991** • Fax: **713.681.9089** • Toll-Free: **1.800.460.6298**

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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 and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. To join our family of donors, scan this QR code and contribute to our mission today.



## Blizzard of Giving – Gift Card Drive

Gift cards are the perfect gift for teenagers! Each holiday season, Arms Wide conducts a gift card drive called **Blizzard of Giving**. Gift cards collected during Blizzard of Giving are used as holiday gifts for older children involved in our foster care, adoption, post adoption, and post permanency programs. Any excess gift cards are distributed and given to families in crisis throughout the year to help with emergency expenses. Gift cards from Target, Walmart, Amazon and Visa cards tend to be the most versatile and useful for Arms Wide families. If you want to send some holiday cheer to one of our families, gift cards can be directed to:

**Arms Wide Adoption Services**  
**Attn: Blizzard of Giving**  
**6925 Portwest Drive, Suite 110**  
**Houston, Texas 77024**

To ensure we are able to provide gifts to our families in time for the holidays, the deadline for 2022 holiday contributions is **Friday, December 9**.

**Thank you for your support and for making the holidays brighter for the children and families we serve!**