

Becoming Forever Parents

“We were all working in collaboration for the child.”

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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 and attend our Information Meeting, where an Arms Wide Coordinator will talk through the process of fostering or adopting from foster care. You will also be able to ask any questions you may have and meet other families who are interested in becoming foster or adoptive parents.

Arms Wide offers Information Meetings approximately once a month. Meetings are typically held virtually at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. Visit armswide.org/events for more details.

A Year in Review 2022 Impact Report

Last year, we celebrated 45 years of preserving and fulfilling families. Since our beginning in 1977, Arms Wide has matched more than 2,280 children with safe, nurturing permanent families and supported thousands of families through our permanency support programs. Read our 2022 annual report 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 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 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.

We Are Arms Wide.

Over the past few years, the Arms Wide team has watched the child welfare landscape shift at national and state levels to focus on preserving families. Our priority is to ensure each child we serve has a safe, permanent family, no matter what their journey to permanency looks like.

To this end, we have made the decision to remove “Adoption Services” from our name and add the tagline “Preserving and Fulfilling Families”. Our commitment remains the same as it has for 46 years: every child, every family, wherever their paths lead, Arms Wide is there to guide, support, celebrate and make a positive impact on the whole family.

Our decades of expertise along with our intimate size provide for unparalleled, personalized support. We embrace each family we serve with warmth and compassion and hold their hand throughout their journey – whether that be foster care, foster care adoption, kinship care, or permanency support services.

Arms Wide will continue to find the right permanent family for children who need our services while aiming to prioritize family connections for children most at-risk of languishing in foster care without a sense of belonging and connection: sibling groups, older children, children of color, and children with complex needs.

We Are Arms Wide. We are dedicated to preserving and fulfilling families.



Preserving & Fulfilling Families

The Phan Family: Becoming Forever Parents



Chiara and Tim Phan considered foster care adoption even before they were married. They saw it as a way to grow their own family while helping other families along the way. Through their journey of becoming forever parents, they gained firsthand experience of meeting the needs of children in foster care.

They began their journey committed to sharing their hearts and home with children in foster care and quickly discovered the beauty and impact in extending that love and support to the children's families. They understood that this love can exist regardless of whether they adopted the child or helped them reunite with their biological family.

Chiara and Tim got their foster care license in 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic. They agreed to open their home to children who needed them most by signing up for emergency foster care. They knew the urgent need for children to have a safe, nurturing family right away when they enter the foster care system.

Soon, they had the opportunity to parent two young children. One stayed only a few months, while another stayed for a year and a half before reuniting with their biological family. "We learned about parenting in a team structure," Chiara recalled. They wanted to support the children's connection to their biological families.

"We were all working in collaboration for the child."

Even though saying goodbye is difficult, they knew they provided love and stability to the children when they needed it most. By being willing to work with the child's entire family, they gave the child the utmost love.

In February of 2022, the Phans' world changed. They learned about a child named Legend who needed a forever family. It was a whirlwind from the time they were chosen to parent Legend until he joined their family in May. Chiara remembers that Legend was quiet and reserved when they first met for lunch at a local restaurant. "Legend's foster parents told us that his favorite toys were balls and cars so we brought him a ball or car each visit. Over the long drives from The Woodlands to Missouri City, he started to warm up and point out the trucks and cars on the highway."

Chiara and Tim officially adopted Legend in November of 2022. The biggest adjustment was switching from the foster parent mindset and into the "forever parent" mindset. "We have done a lot of 'binge parenting,'" Chiara said. "We always did a lot of activities, trips to the zoo, museums and other outings when children moved in." Then, they wanted to seize the moment and make sure children in foster care had access to these normal childhood experiences. After finalizing with Legend, they knew they had time to give him these memorable experiences at their own pace. "Life is slower now," Chiara said. "We are able to take it easy and explore things together."

Chiara encourages families to think of foster care as a way to love a child in a parent role regardless of the child's path to permanency. Even though uncertainty is uncomfortable for foster parents, the children just deserve love.

"The difference you're making is meaningful. When you see children start to trust themselves after all the love you pour into them, it helps you cope with the uncertainty."

Kinship Care



*Meet Johnnietre Elam,
Arms Wide Kinship Navigator/Home Developer*

While foster care adoption continues to be an important path for some children in foster care, child welfare practice seeks to reunite children with their families as quickly as possible after they have been separated from them when it is safe to do so. One option for some children is to stay with next of kin (i.e. grandparents or other relatives/significant adults) while they are in foster care. We know that children who are in kinship living arrangements often have better permanency outcomes than those who are in non-kin living arrangements. As a result, Arms Wide recently hired Johnnietre Elam, our first Kinship Navigator/Home Developer, to help connect kinship families to critical resources.

“I started working with Arms Wide because the mission aligns with my passion and purpose,” says Johnnietre. “My passion and purpose lie in advocating, providing support and educating children and families.” We are excited to have Johnnietre on board to give kinship families the support they deserve.

Permanency Support

Arms Wide’s vision is for all children to be loved within a home and all families to feel supported. Permanency support can be important in helping children overcome past trauma and in giving families tools to thrive.

This spring, Arms Wide families participated in family trauma-informed training paired with fun family activities, including games at Dave & Buster’s and the Botanical Gardens!



Our Permanency Navigators are also here to answer any questions about permanency support or kinship care. We want to support you wherever you are in your family’s journey. Give us a call at 713.681.6991 to speak to an Arms Wide Permanency Navigator today.



Volunteer Spotlight: Zachary Garza, Troop 147

As a Life Scout (Kingsville, Texas, Troop 147), Zachary Garza, age 15, is a model for community service. Arms Wide was fortunate to be the beneficiary of his Eagle Scout project this year.

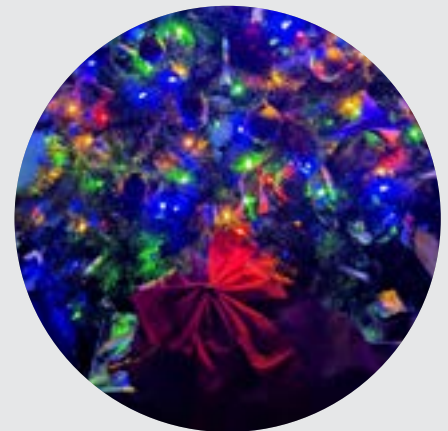
The Garzas have been part of the Arms Wide family for years, so when Zachary began thinking about his Eagle Scout project, he wanted to give back to Arms Wide. Children in foster care often move from house to house with their belongings in trash bags, and Zachary wanted to do something to give children the dignity they deserve.

The Angel Room is a resource for children in foster care and their families. Families can visit the Angel Room to pick out new clothing, toiletries, toys, duffle bags and other essentials. Zachary decided to outfit the Angel Room at Arms Wide's South Texas office with the infrastructure it needs to help even more children long-term. He built shelving and set up storage for the Angel Room and contributed clothing, tennis shoes, and other supplies for children in need. "I want to make sure kids in foster care know they have resources available," Zachary said. We appreciate Zachary and his friends from Troop 147 for supporting our children!

Caring Community



Ascend Performance Materials sponsored a catered breakfast and provided Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus and photography for our annual family holiday party.



KPMG LLC provided holiday gifts for 350 children in our foster care, kinship care and permanency support programs.



Prince of Peace Catholic Church parishoners donated diapers, clothing, toiletries and more. One special member, Tatiana, even donated to Arms Wide in lieu of having her 11th birthday party.

Fulfilling Families Luncheon

On **Thursday, April 27**, Arms Wide hosted its 9th annual Fulfilling Families Luncheon at The Briar Club thanks to the help of Co-Chairs Sydney Eifler and Kelley Scofield.

Donations to the Fulfilling Families Luncheon helped ensure Arms Wide can continue to help even more children in foster care connect with the loving permanent families they need and deserve. This year, the Fulfilling Families Luncheon raised more than \$160,000 for Arms Wide's programs. Keynote Speaker Gaelin Elmore inspired the guests by speaking about the importance of helping youth develop a sense of self-love and belonging. He reflected on the hardships he faced within the foster care system and the caring adults who showed up for him along the way, ultimately leading him to an NFL contract with the Cincinnati Bengals. His journey of self-discovery and belonging reminded the audience of the important services that Arms Wide provides to our community's most vulnerable children.



DeJuana Jernigan, Arms Wide President and CEO with Keynote Speaker Gaelin Elmore (Photo credit Jenny Antill)



Co-Chairs Kelley Scofield and Sydney Eifler (Photo credit Jenny Antill)

Save The Date For All In For Adoption

On **Thursday, November 9**, Arms Wide will host its annual All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament at River Oaks Country Club.



2022 Tournament winners Taylor Wilson, Ryan Valera, Dan Kohl (Photo credit Steven David)



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



Alex Lin, Marshall Holmes, Chris Wan, Co-Chair Steve Kennedy (Photo credit Steven David)



Co-Chair Michael Tsang and Keith Maxwell (Photo credit Steven David)



Co-Chair Steve Kennedy poses with the Texans cheerleaders (Photo credit Steven David)



Co-Chair Trace Williams, Carson Cone and Co-Chair Luke Cone (Photo credit Steven David)



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Arms Wide’s mission is to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing permanent families. Arms Wide is funded by private donations and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Give While You Shop:



Preserving & Fulfilling Families

Over the last 46 years, Arms Wide has matched more than 2,280 children with their forever families. Meet a few of the newest Arms Wide families below:



The Phan Family
November 2022



The Roy Family
March 2023



The Bolling Family
May 2023