

From Mentor to Motherhood

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Finally Forever

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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 Recruiter 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 once a month. Visit armswide.org/events for more details.

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 us at info@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.

Preserving & Fulfilling Families

Over the summer months, Arms Wide families enjoyed enriching activities paired with family training and educational workshops. This summer, both Houston and South Texas Post Adoption and Post Permanency families had the opportunity to bond over painting, waterpark adventures, Botanical Gardens and arcades while accessing tools and resources to help their families thrive.



Houston families exercise their creativity at The Mad Potter after a family training



South Texas families enjoy fun in the sun at Hurricane Harbor after an educational workshop



In June, families in our Foster Care Adoption and It Takes a Village programs enjoyed Family Day at River Oaks Park! Kids of all ages enjoyed crafts, games, and Chick-fil-A lunch generously sponsored by Ascend Performance Materials.

The Bolling Family: From Mentor to Motherhood



Kenyetta Bolling always knew she had motherly instincts. She came from a community-oriented family and has played the role of mentor, auntie, and godmother. So when she came to a point in her life that she realized she was not going to have biological children, she decided to approach motherhood another way. She knew that going from mentor to motherhood would give her the purpose she was seeking in her life.

In 2020, Kenyetta officially became a licensed foster parent with Arms Wide. That fall, she said “no” to two different matches because something in her said that it wasn’t the right time.

The third call came in December that same year. “I was sitting on my couch drinking cocoa, and I received a call about an emergency placement for a five-year-old girl.” As she sat next to the decorated Christmas tree by her warm fireplace, she felt like should say “yes” this time. So she said “yes,” hung up the phone, and began waiting the several hours that felt like an eternity.

Meanwhile, a 5-year-old girl named Jayda had just left an abusive home in Galveston and was riding in a caseworker’s car. “I didn’t know where they were taking me, but it was a long drive. Then, we hit a curb and I woke up,” remembered Jayda. “I was confused, but the happy thing is that I was at a new house.”

“Full of excitement and nervousness, I opened the door,” said Kenyetta. “There stood a tall gentleman who was the caseworker, and the little 5-year-old girl.

“In my heart and in my eyes, she was absolutely beautiful and perfect in every way.”

Jayda remembers her first impression of Kenyetta as well. “I saw this lady with a big smile, so I felt so much better,” said Jayda.

At first, Kenyetta thought that Jayda’s stay with her would be temporary. She saw foster care as an opportunity to serve in a motherly role for a child who needed her most, whether that was six days, six months or forever. Knowing that the goal of foster care is family reunification, she was ready to give Jayda love and care until she went home.

“This was not about me; it was about her.”

“This was not about me; it was about her,” Kenyetta said, recalling how she overcame her initial anxiety of the possibility of saying goodbye to Jayda. “I had five short-term goals for her to make a lasting impact on her life. She was going to learn how to ride a bike, tie her shoes, and be able to read 100 words. She was going to know that she is a Black Girl, and she was going to know who God is.” Over the next few years, however, it became clear that reunification was not an option for Jayda. On May 10, 2023, Kenyetta and Jayda became a forever family and finalized her adoption.



From Kenyetta's perspective, life isn't much different now that they have finalized. But for Jayda, having that clarity was important. "Children need signs of closure, and the finalization gave that to Jayda," Kenyetta said. "She seems to have more confidence, and she speaks with assurance like she's part of a family."



As a single mom, Kenyetta navigated the uncertainty of foster care adoption with the help of her village of support. "I grew up in Houston, and we have a very small family that is very community service oriented. So early on, I learned the importance of having a village." Kenyetta realizes that she is one person, and it is okay to ask for help. That's why Jayda has certain people who have different functions in her life: from Kenyetta's educator friends who nurture her during summer vacation to her male cousins who serve as positive male role models.

She encourages other foster parents to join a foster care community, stay connected with your network, and take advantage of training resources. For other single parents, her message is that you don't have to be superwoman to give a child what they need. "Don't feel like you have to do everything above and beyond all the time. Kids don't need Disney vacations - they are happy with your time and attention." Simple things and quality time can go a long way.

Finally, Kenyetta wants people to know that you can be part of a village for a child in foster care, even if you don't plan to adopt. "Just because you foster, that doesn't mean you have to adopt," said Kenyetta.

"Everybody's purpose is different, and you can still fill an important role for kids no matter where you are in life."

And that's something that has rung true for Kenyetta throughout her journey from mentor to motherhood.





Healing Through Game Nights

Authentic communication is a constant challenge for families. Arms Wide Fort Bend Post Adoption and Post Permanency Program Manager, Dr. Annette Williams, drew on her years of experience working with families to create a series of board games to help families navigate communication challenges.

On May 28, 2023, Dr. Williams hosted a Game Night event for families in Arms Wide's Post Adoption Program. During this event, families tested two board games: Googly Moogly and Unpack That Stuff. In Googly Moogly, players discussed scenarios that may have occurred in their foster or adoptive homes. As they learned to see things from both the child's and the parent's perspective, children developed critical thinking, empathy and communication skills. In Unpack That Stuff, questions helped players unpack emotions and learn to support others. "The game helped me bring a lot more feelings to the table that I've been having on my back for quite some time," said one female teenage participant.

To learn more about Dr. Williams' board game series, email awilliams@armswide.org.

Caring Community



Zachary Garza from Troop #147 dedicated his Eagle Scout project to building an Angel Room for Arms Wide's South Texas office.



Ascend Performance Materials provided crafts, goody bags and lunches for our summer Family Day in the park in June.



KPMG LLC employees used their annual Day of Caring to decorate duffel bags filled with comfort items for our children in foster care.

November is National Adoption Month

November is National Adoption Month, where we raise awareness of the need for adoptive families for children and teens in the U.S. foster care system. At Arms Wide, we celebrate every family fulfilled through foster care adoption. This National Adoption Month, we are especially thankful for stability and permanence that children can gain through adoption. Meet some of Arms Wide's newest forever families:



The Ballard Family

February 2023



The Garza Family

May 2023

Arms Wide Family Events

For National Adoption Month in November, Arms Wide will host two events about parenting and transracial adoption.. On **November 3 at 6:15 p.m.**, Stephanie Stanley (COAC Texas) will join Arms Wide President and CEO, DeJuana Jernigan, for a discussion about transracial adoption and supporting the cultures of children in transracial families. See the talk show broadcast at @realtalkradio100 on YouTube or Facebook.

Join us on **November 4, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**, for a workshop on African American hair care. The workshop covers the cultural significance of hair in African American communities and will offer hair and skin care education for transracial adoptive families. Email Annette Williams at awilliams@armswide.org to RSVP.



Going 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. Tickets are still available for the annual event! In addition to lively hands of poker, All In for Adoption features delicious food, an exciting silent auction and high-end door prizes.



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



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



Co-Chair Michael Tsang and Keith Maxwell (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:



Blizzard of Giving

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, foster care adoption, kinship care and 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
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 2023 holiday contributions is Friday, December 8. Thank you for your support and for making the holidays brighter for the children and families we serve!