

Every Step of the Way

"Arms Wide's services were essential for us to build a successful foundation as a family after adoption."

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Take the First Step Contact Us

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 contact us at **713.681.6991** or through our website at **armswide.org/family-inquiry** to get started. An Arms Wide Coordinator will talk through the process of fostering or adopting from foster care.

Have you adopted a child or are you in a permanent managing conservatorship? We can also provide support for you! Our permanency support team provides case management, respite care, support groups and more to help your family thrive.

A Year in Review 2023 Impact Report

Last year, we made big strides in expanding and evolving our programs to meet the needs of children and families. Since our beginning in 1977, Arms Wide has matched more than 2,300 children with safe, nurturing permanent families and supported thousands of families through our permanency support programs. Read our 2023 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 Communications and Development Specialist, Nikolai Robinson, at nrobinson@armswide.org.

Stay In The Loop Follow Us

Arms Wide posts updates regularly! Stay in the loop by following us on social media @ArmsWideTX, visiting our blog at armswide.org/category/blog, and registering to receive our online communications at armswide.org/get-our-newsletter.

Bettering ourselves everyday...

A key to the growth of any organization is investing in ourselves professionally and personally so that we can continue to show up and do the work that supports children and families.



Lorraine Vargas-Townsend (pictured with President and CEO DeJuana S. Jernigan), member of Arms Wide's Board of Directors, offered staff leadership a full-day Insights Discovery workshop in February, through which we learned about how we can better communicate, relate, and work with each other!

Our team spent three days working together and building their skills at our three-day staff development retreat in June. This included a presentation on Trust Based Relational Intervention, facilitated by **Clarissa Traylor** (pictured right), our lead trainer and recruiter.



...So that we can continue to support our community.

From community outreach to supporting our existing community of families, we meet those who need us most where they're at.



School Career Day



Relatives As Parents Conference



Free Spa Day for Moms in our Permanency Support Program

Every Step of the Way: The Wiltz-Martin Family



Here at Arms Wide, we understand a family's journey doesn't end after they achieve permanency. Emotional scars from the neglect or abuse that led the children to experience foster care in the first place can last years after being connected with a permanent family. Extraordinary amounts of love, nurturing and commitment are sometimes needed before the child can heal. This is why we provide support services for families who have adopted or are in a Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC).

Years ago, Danielle Wiltz and Trent Martin adopted DJ, Brea, and Houston through the state of Texas, but they understood that they needed additional support to help their children navigate and process complex emotions and trauma as they grew up. They received post adoption support services through another organization ever since but sought Arms Wide's help after the other organization discontinued their program.

"We both agreed to reach out to post adoption services after our first adoption," Danielle told us. "We were not too proud to accept any and all the help we could get!"

Although Danielle and Trent adopted all their kids at a young age, issues stemming from their early years continued to manifest as they grew into adolescence.



“The teen years hit hard at our house!” they told us. “When children have experienced trauma at early ages, sometimes the battle between nature and nurture gets exhausting - for the child as well as for the parents.” And while it seemed like they had reached a breaking point a few times, the Permanency Support team at Arms Wide was always just a phone call away to guide them through whatever situation their family was facing.



“Our Arms Wide case manager, Sharon Carter, was with us every step of the way,” said Danielle. “She guided us towards additional resources when our family was in crisis and always leant an ear when I was struggling. She listened without being judgmental and supported us endlessly. We consider her a part of the family.”

With Arms Wide’s support, the Wiltz-Martin family were able to access therapeutic family counseling, support groups, respite care, and more. As of June 2024, all three kids have graduated high school and are making their own way in the world, with DJ and Brea starting families of their own, and Houston beginning bootcamp for the Navy.

“Arms Wide’s services were essential for us to build a successful foundation as a family after adoption,” Danielle told us. “When speaking to others who are considering adoption, I always remind them how essential these services are.”

These programs are available to any family with a child formerly in Texas foster care who has been adopted or a family that has assumed Permanent Managing Conservatorship of a child who was in Texas foster care. For more information on our Permanency Support services, contact us today at 713.681.6991 or through our website at armswide.org/contact.



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Fulfilling Families Luncheon

On **Thursday, May 2**, Arms Wide hosted its 10th annual Fulfilling Families Luncheon at The Briar Club thanks to the help of Co-Chairs Sarah Barrett and Michele Marandi.

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 \$225,000 for Arms Wide's programs!

Keynote Speaker Tori Hope Petersen inspired the guests by discussing her experience in foster care. Although she aged out of the system after being placed in 12 foster homes, Petersen recounted the support and guidance she received from parental figures in her life. She reminded the audience that, outside of directly fostering and adopting children, supporting organizations like Arms Wide can help break the cycle of abuse and neglect for children by connecting them with a loving family and supportive community.



(From left to right) Foster and adoptive mother Debbie Muery, keynote speaker Tori Hope Petersen, and host Frank Billingsley



Event co-chairs Sarah Barrett and Michele Marandi



Catherine Nwodo and Renee Rhoten Morris



Kristen Lyons, Ali Donnelly, Alifiya Pareja, Chea Kelly

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you to all our sponsors, donors and attendees who made this luncheon a success!

(All photos are by Jenny Antill Photography)

Caring Community



Houston Public Library donated brand new books to families participating in our South Texas programs.



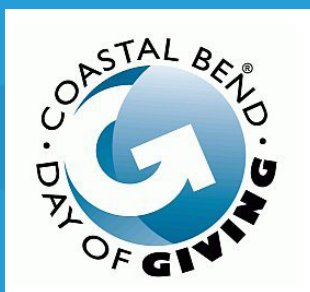
Chapter AE PEO provided 50 beautiful Easter baskets for children in April.



James Avery Artisan Jewelry hosted a Shop for a Cause event in May, which benefited Arms Wide's programs.

Save The Date For Fall 2024 Events

We are excited to return as a beneficiary at MSR Houston Charity's Drive For Kids on **Saturday, September 28** at MSR Houston!



Save the date for **Tuesday, November 12**, as Arms Wide participates in **Coastal Bend Day of Giving**, a 24-hour charitable challenge which will benefit our programs serving families in the South Texas region. We have a fundraising goal of \$25,000 this year!

On **Thursday, November 14**, Arms Wide will host our beloved annual All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament at River Oaks Country Club.



*2023 Tournament winners Joey Kieval, Daniel Mayerfeld and Babak Roozbeh
(Photo credit Steven David)*



Each game played supports Arms Wide's mission of transforming lives of children in need of safe and nurturing permanent families.



*Luke Cone and Gerrit and Brittany Van De Graaf
(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 47 years, Arms Wide has matched more than 2,300 children with their forever families. Meet a few of the newest Arms Wide families below:



The Muery Family
November 2023



The Shalack Family
November 2023



The Payne Family
April 2024