

Going All In

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Take the First Step Attend an Orientation

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 a monthly virtual orientation. You can meet our staff and learn about the process to become a foster and/or adoptive parent. Orientations are on the third Wednesday of every month at 6 p.m. CST and open to anyone living in the Greater Houston or South Texas regions.

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

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 and keep up with our families.

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 one of our staff to come and speak with your network about how the work we do at Arms Wide transforms lives through foster care and adoption.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact our 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.

Serving Families with Summer Support!

Our Post Adoption and Post Permanency teams in Houston and South Texas use summer to their full advantage, providing fun, informative, and supportive events to families participating in our Permanency Support services.



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This summer featured our first annual partnership event with Reigning Strength, a Richmond-based organization that offers therapeutic horsemanship and equine-assisted learning. Fifteen families joined us at this amazing facility to learn how specific interactions with horses can promote emotional regulation and enhance life skills.



Going All In

THE BENSON FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

Sarah and Scott Benson always knew that, due to medical challenges, they would grow their family through foster care and adoption. When the time was right, Sarah began researching and reaching out to child placing agencies, and Arms Wide was one of the few that responded.

“I’m the type of person who has a lot of different questions, and the staff at Arms Wide took the time to answer all of them, rather than send me a link to an FAQ page,” she recalled. “I later realized these questions are answered at the Orientation, but it’s that personal touch that I really wanted.”

Although adoption was always their ultimate goal, Sarah and Scott chose not to limit themselves and instead pursued the Foster-to-Adopt path. This allowed them to provide temporary care for children while remaining open to the possibility of adopting a child who would become part of their forever family.

“We didn’t have a specific idea of what this journey looked like for us, we just wanted to make a kid’s life better for however long they were with us,” Sarah told us.

Our Foster Care Adoption team first matched the Bensons with Jacob, a child who needed a temporary family through foster care. A month later, Jacob was reconnected with his aunt and uncle, who had become licensed providers of foster care. When it was time for Jacob to leave, it hit Sarah and Scott harder than expected. Jacob left their home on a Wednesday, and the new foster parents decided they would take the weekend to process and grieve. But



the next day, Foster and Adoption Supervisor Jennifer Roderick called them, explaining that there were two young boys, Noah and Levi, who needed a family. While Jennifer acknowledged that it was sooner than they would have liked, she truly believed Sarah and Scott would be a great match for them.

“After she got off the phone with Jennifer, Sarah called me and explained the situation,” Scott said. “I reminded her that we promised we were going to go all in on this, and this is what it means to go all in.” Scott then told his boss he had to leave immediately to pick up two new kids.

Within five minutes of meeting Levi and Noah, only four months and 18 months at the time, the Bensons were attached. Noah was sweet and shy, and Levi was friendly and cuddly. Transitioning from no children to parenting two in just over a month was undoubtedly a challenge, but every moment with the boys was worth it. Although the circumstances surrounding their separation from their birth family suggested the possibility of adoption, nothing was legally certain yet.



“We both knew we wanted to adopt them from day one, but we had to manage our expectations and guard our hearts,” Sarah said.

Though Sarah and Scott felt well prepared by Arms Wide’s training, they quickly learned that parenting often brings unexpected situations without a clear roadmap. Thankfully, their caseworker, Yajaira, was always just a call away to offer guidance and reassurance. They also leaned on their supportive parents and sisters, who eagerly stepped in when parenting felt overwhelming, as it sometimes does for any parent. Sarah even found encouragement through colleagues at work who had walked their own journeys as adoptive and foster parents.

“My favorite part of that first year was getting to throw Noah’s second birthday and Levi’s first birthday,” said Sarah. “The joy on their faces was priceless.”

Just over a year later, parental rights were officially terminated, and Sarah and Scott were finally able to adopt Noah and Levi. The couple was overjoyed, especially knowing that the process could have stretched on for years. The Bensons’ Adoption Day took place on May 2, 2025 at a courthouse in Houston.

“It was very emotional for me,” said Sarah. “Everyone was telling me how proud they were that the kids didn’t cry, but I was crying the whole time!”

“We knew that they would become our forever children for a while, but hearing that judge confirm it put a huge, genuine smile on my face,” Scott recalled.

If you or a loved one want to support youth experiencing foster care, learn more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent on our website at armswide.org. You can also turn to page 7 to learn about upcoming fundraising opportunities that will benefit the children and families participating in our programs.



Empowering Students

Arms Wide is proud to announce the recipients of the 2025-2026 David and Jacque Holland Scholarships. Each year, this life-changing scholarship program supports youth who have been served through our Foster Care, Adoption, and Permanency Support Services, helping open doors to educational and career opportunities that pave the way for brighter futures. This year, over \$50,000 in scholarship funding has been awarded to nine outstanding young people pursuing higher education and vocational training.

- Tabitha Clay
- Hailie Coreathers
- Keith Dokes
- Mary Edie
- Jada Fenley
- Rafael Gutierrez
- Jada Johnson
- Michael Pope
- Morgan Thornton

Scholarship Recipient Spotlight

Michael Pope is studying Health Communication at the University of Houston with a minor in Marketing. He plans to go into nonprofit work after graduation and later return to school to gain more business knowledge, with the goal of leading his own nonprofit.

On campus, he is on the Orientation Team, which supports incoming freshman, and he serves as the Social Media Manager for Meditation Mondays, an organization that supports stress relief for college students. He is also a member of the American Conservation Coalition, which works to make Houston cleaner and safer, and is part of the Council of Cultural Activities, which provides events showcasing the diversity and inclusivity of UH.

“Scholarships like this keep me on track to fulfill my true desire - giving back to my community,” Michael told us.



Pursuing Excellence



Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter Heather Jones and Recruitment & Home Development Supervisor Amanda Leal attended the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Summit in Ohio.



Arms Wide leadership attended the 2025 Texas Child Care Administrators Conference in San Antonio.



We hosted our 2nd Annual Staff Development and Training Retreat, with the theme “One Band, One Sound.”

Support Children Experiencing Foster Care This Fall

Double your donation to Arms Wide on November 4!



Mark your calendars and set your reminders for the Coastal Bend Day of Giving, an annual 24-hour charitable challenge which benefits our programs serving families in the South Texas region. All gifts will be doubled up to \$25,400! Early giving opens on October 27. Visit coastalbenddayofgiving.org to support Arms Wide!

Join us for the **19th Annual All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament** on Thursday, November 20, at River Oaks Country Club. Secure your sponsorship or purchase your ticket today!

This beloved event has become one of Houston's premier charity poker tournaments, drawing community leaders, philanthropists and card sharks from across the region. In addition to a lively poker tournament, All In for Adoption also features delicious food and drinks, an exciting silent auction, and high-end door prizes. It's an evening of fun and philanthropy you won't want to miss! Visit armswide.org/all-in-for-adoption for more information and to register.



2024 Tournament winners Steve Kennedy (3rd), Karl Brensike (2nd) and Austin Standley (1st)



Christopher Wan, Kathy Ko, Chris Hui, and Marshall Holmes



Blair Bertron, Alexandra Maxwell, and Mayleen Tsang



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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

One of the best ways to directly impact the lives of children and families involved in the Texas foster care system is to join in on our annual Blizzard of Giving Gift Card Drive! We are so grateful for all the toys and clothes we receive every holiday season, but gift cards fill in the gaps for the older children and parents we serve. Get your church, business or organization to join in on the holiday cheer, and contact info@armswide.org for questions and support to help you get started.

