

2018 Fall Newsletter | ArmsWide.org

The Kohrt Family

"Van has seen Times Square, Niagara Falls, the Santa Monica Pier . . . but he says his carefree son is the best sight in the world."

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Attend A Greater Houston Information Meeting

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Are you or someone you know interested in foster care or adoption? Don't know where to start? Attend one of our bi-monthly Information Meetings!

During the Information Meeting, an Arms Wide Coordinator will walk you through the process of fostering or adopting a child or children in foster care. You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about fostering or adopting a child or children in need, in addition to meeting other families who are interested in becoming foster or adoptive parents.

Arms Wide Adoption Services offers Information Meetings at least twice a month. Meetings are typically held on Wednesdays at our Houston office and start at 6:00 p.m. Upcoming meeting dates include: October 3rd, October 17th, November 7th, November 28th, December 5th, and December 19th.

Visit armswide.org/events for more details!

Save The Date Holiday Party

Arms Wide Adoption Services is set to host its annual Holiday Party for families on **Saturday, December 8, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** at Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church. To learn more or R.S.V.P., contact Kristina Wyatt at 713-681-6991 or kwyatt@armswide.org.

Share Your Story Fuel Our Mission

Have a story to share? We are looking for adoptive families and children to speak about their Arms Wide family and experiences. We are always looking for new ways to share our mission!

In addition to sharing your story with us, we are also looking to expand our connections in the workplace. Would you be willing to connect us with your human resources department? Invite us to send one of our Arms Wide Adoption Services team members to talk more to your coworkers about how they can transform lives through adoption.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact Development and Marketing Coordinator, Melissa Neeley, at mneeley@armswide.org.

Stay In The Loop Follow Us

Arms Wide Adoption Services posts updates regularly!

Stay in loop by following us on social media @**ArmsWideTX**, visiting our blog at armswide.org/blog, and registering to receive our online communications at armswide.org/get-our-newsletter.

Fulfilling Families Luncheon

With your support and the leadership of our Event Co-Chairs, Cari Gill and Caroline Simons, more than \$180,000 was raised to further our mission to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing adoptive families.

The 2018 Fulfilling Families Luncheon benefiting Arms Wide Adoption Services started with a Houston Country Club crowd of 300 Houstonians chanting, "Go, Pack, Go!" It was all in great fun, as Lisa H. Montgomery, mom of Green Bay Packers Running Back, Ty Montgomery, took the stage as the keynote speaker. Lisa's keynote explored her intimate journey in fostering 17 young men as a single mother. She explained how her boys, like all kids, just wanted her to be there for them. Now, Lisa celebrates her sons' successes and their own growing families.

This year's luncheon served as a huge milestone for Arms Wide Adoption Services, bringing in a record amount of guests and funds thanks to the leadership of Co-Chairs, Cari Gill and Caroline Simons, and the Luncheon Host Committee.



Event Co-Chairs, Cari Gill and Caroline Simons, at Houston Country Club



Lisa H. Montgomery getting a room of Texans to chant, "Go, Pack, Go!"



Learn more about this event at armswide.org/annual-luncheon

All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament

On Thursday, November 15, Arms Wide Adoption Serivces will host its annual All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament at River Oaks Country Club.

All In For Adoption is one of Houston's premier poker tournaments and helps transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing adoptive families. In addition to the tournament, All In for Adoption will also feature delicious food, an exciting silent auction and high-end door prizes! Special thanks to our Event Co-Chairs, Steve Kennedy, Will Maxwell and Michael Tsang, for their dedication to making this event a success!

For more information, contact Arms Wide Adoption Services' Development and Marketing Coordinator, Melissa Neeley, at mneeley@armswide.org or 713-681-6991. We hope to see you there!



Learn more about this event at armswide.org/all-in-for-adoption



2017 All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em winners with their trophies



Co-Chairs, Will Maxwell, Michael Tsang, and Steve Kennedy, with emcee, Lisa Malosky, at last year's event

The Kohrt Family: The Best Sight In The World



Ready To Be A Dad

As a Big Brother volunteer and a firefighter, Van Kohrt has encountered his share of painful situations. He quite literally runs towards the kinds of terrifying places that most others run from. But when it came to adoption, the seemingly fearless firefighter was taken aback. Was he ready to be a dad?

Seeing his passion for the Big Brother program, his friends encouraged him to adopt. He brushed them off—his work schedule was hectic and he didn't feel prepared to be a single dad. However, his friends didn't stop suggesting adoption, and, after years of positive peer pressure, he finally looked into Arms Wide Adoption Services (then Spaulding for Children) on the recommendation of a friend. He liked how Arms Wide Adoption Services had such positive name recognition, and, as a prospective single dad, he was welcome at Arms Wide.

Learning The Adoption Process

The adoption process was stressful in its own way. Learning how the foster care system works was overwhelming, but luckily Van had caseworkers who walked him through each step. Reading the files of kids available for adoption was a lot to take in—hearing about the kids' struggles, behavioral difficulties, and past abuse or neglect was incredibly disheartening. Van remembers how some kids' files were so thick that he was immediately afraid of considering the child. However, he asks prospective adoptive parents to be brave when reading through a file, and to remember that the kid represented in the paperwork is desperate for a forever home.

"Don't run when you see that file," he says. "It's a child. It's still a kid regardless of the file."



Matching With Logan

When he was matched with Logan, an 11-year-old boy in foster care, he was eager to meet him and discover whether the two could become father and son. He distinctly remembers driving up to Logan's foster home for the first time. Logan looked so small, sitting on the front porch steps of the little house waiting for Van. Before he got out of his car, Van took a photo of the boy on the steps to capture the very first moment he saw his son. He still has that picture to this day.

Their first visits together were full of fun—they played at an arcade and visited the Cadillac Ranch. Van recalls writing their names on one of the cars at Cadillac Ranch, cementing their bond in spray paint. Van and Logan seemed to belong together.



When Logan moved in with Van, their first few days were full of fun. They set up Logan's room, and got him ready for his first day at his new school. Though they soon settled into the routine of everyday life, plenty of seemingly ordinary things were incredibly exciting for Logan. He had never traveled by plane or ridden on a carousel, so these innocuous things were a big deal in his eyes. In particular, Logan loved (in fact, still loves) when Van volunteered at his school as a Watch Dog, the school volunteer program for fathers. For a boy who spent years without a forever family, hearing "Logan's dad is today's Watch Dog" announced over the loud speaker was a thrill in itself.

"What do you want me to be?"

Although they've had a lot of fun together, Logan and Van have had their struggles. Logan missed kindergarten and first grade, placing him behind in school. Thankfully, he had a dedicated teacher who helped him catch up and Logan's now enrolled in AP classes. With the support of biweekly visits with their caseworker, Rod, and support from a counselor, Holly, Logan blossomed in his forever home. He has plenty of friends (and always asks for them to come along on whatever adventure he and his dad embark) and plays on the school football team. Each summer, he looks forward to Frontier Camp (a Christian sleepaway camp) and YMCA camp (which he attends on a scholarship provided by Arms Wide).

Van told how recently he chided his son for being a "pain-in-the-neck teenager." Frustrated, Logan responded: "what do you want me to be?" Van smiled when he repeated his reply: "Nothing else. You're a normal, pain-in-the-neck teenager. That's what you're supposed to be."

When Logan entered Van's life, the boy carried the stigma that come along with lacking a forever family. He struggled with the constant changes in schools and living situations that are commonplace for kids in foster care. At 11 years old, he was laden down with worry. Now, when Logan runs around with his friends, he's doesn't seem to have a single care.

Van has seen Times Square, Niagara Falls, the Santa Monica Pier . . . but he says his carefree son is the best sight in the world.



Fostering Hope

University of Houston Tour



On August 8, Arms Wide Adoption Services took many of the children enrolled in our child-specific recruitment program to tour University of Houston.



We hope they always remember no matter where they have been or where they are now, they can still achieve their dreams.



Arms Wide Adoption Services is proud to partner with UH programs like Foster HoUSton and the Urban Experience Program (UEP), which help transitional students graduate college. Go Coogs!

Some Summer Fun

Arms Wide Adoption Services had an eventful summer with our kids and families. We painted, sailed, and supported each other.



Our South Texas Post Permanency group found therapy in Painting with a Twist



Our Fort Bend Post Adoption and Post Permanency groups went Sailing with the Angels



Our Fort Bend Post Adoption group hosted monthly peer support sessions on self confidence



Meet Corey, 16 Years Old

Corey loves sports and can play and talk about them anytime, but he absolutely loves basketball. This young man knows his stats and can tell you a thing or two about Lebron James. Besides his passion for basketball, he cares about people. Even though he is a typical teenager who likes video games, pizza, and any type of technology, Corey thinks about others and cares about the people in his life.

Corey believes that adoption is possible and is constantly encouraged to not lose hope. He is a smart young man who has a good head on his shoulders and strives to make the best out of situations. Corey's nurturing personality is what makes him the sweet kid he is.

Corey needs a family who will be patient with him as a teenager and who has a strong male role model present that he can look up to and learn from.

He needs someone to teach him what it really means to be a young man of character and integrity, because Corey has the potential to be a great leader.

If you are interested in getting to know Corey better, please contact our Child-Specific Recruiter, Maristel Aguilar, by phone at 713-681-6991 or by email at maguilar@armswide.org.



Companies Who Give Back

This summer, Arms Wide Adoption Services received generous donations of backpacks, toiletries, and school supplies.



Chase Auto delivery to our Angel Room



Ascend Performance Materials delivery to our child-specific recruitment program

Troop 15026 Project Comfort

In July 2018, five 6th grade young ladies from the Girls Scouts of San Jacinto delivered blankets and cookies for our foster families, earning their Bronze Award.



2018 Coastal Bend Day of Giving

Mark your calendars for **Tuesday, November 13, 2018** as Arms Wide Adoption Services participates in Coastal Bend Day of Giving, a 24-hour charitable challenge.

Arms Wide Adoption Services is proud to participate in Coastal Bend Day of Giving, a 24-hour charitable challenge. This year's agency fundraising goal is \$17,500. Thanks to the generosity of many South Texas foundations, the fundraising goal will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$17,500, enabling us to raise \$35,000! This is great way to make a gift to Arms Wide Adoption Services and have each dollar doubled.

Taking place on **Tuesday, November 13, 2018**, donations will be accepted through the Coastal Bend Day of Giving website for 24 hours, starting at midnight on November 13 and ending at 11:59 PM on the same day.

Thank you for your support!

How can you help us?

- **Preschedule a gift!** You can preschedule a gift between November 4 and November 12. Visit coastalbenddayofgiving.org/armswide and click the "Donate Now" button. Your credit card will not be charged until November 13.

• Donate to us on November 13!

- **Post about Coastal Bend Day of Giving on your social media page(s).** Let your friends and followers know how they can give and how their donations will help us meet the matching goal.

Forever Families



The Garza Family
May 2018



The Golden Family
May 2018



The Fiumara Family
August 2018

Rebrand Rewarded

Just one year after launching an organizational rebrand, Arms Wide Adoption Services took home an American Marketing Association of Houston Crystal Award for Best Rebrand.





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 adoptive families. Arms Wide Adoption Services is funded by private donations, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, and the United Way of Greater Houston.



Give While You Shop:



Blizzard of Giving - Gift Card Drive

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 and Amazon tend to be the most versatile and useful for Arms Wide families. American Express and Visa gift cards are also wonderful and incredibly versatile, too! Gift cards from any business would be much appreciated by the children and families we work with.

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 in time for the holidays, the deadline for 2018 contributions is **Friday, December 14**. Thank you for your support and for making the holidays brighter for the children and families we serve!