

The Caffrey Family

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Attend A Greater Houston Information Meeting

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: April 17, May 1, May 15, June 5, June 19, July 10, July 17, and August 7. Visit armswide.org/events for more details!

Check Out Our 2018 Annual Report

At Arms Wide Adoption Services, we're committed to transparency. Check out what we accomplished in 2018, including our lean and program-focused financials at armswide.org/about-us/newsletters.

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/category/blog, and registering to receive our online communications at armswide.org/get-our-newsletter.

All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament

With your support and the leadership of our Co-Chairs, Steve Kennedy, Will Maxwell, and Michael Tsang, a record-breaking \$226,000 was raised to further our mission to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing adoptive families in November 2018.

Event co-chairs Steve Kennedy, Will Maxwell, and Michael Tsang put all their cards on the table for the 12th Annual All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament benefiting Arms Wide Adoption Services. The record-breaking event raised \$226,000 to support Arms Wide Adoption Services and its mission to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing adoptive families. In addition to the poker tournament, the event featured high-end door prizes, a silent auction, delicious food, and entertainment by emcee, Lisa Malosky. For those new to the game of poker, Arms Wide Adoption Services provided "cheat sheets" when guests checked in, and offered Texas Hold 'Em lessons early in the evening before tournament play began. Tension was high when tournament play started, as players collected chip bonuses for knocking out previous tournament champions. In the end, Camille Mikhail took home first place, Jeff Sinda received the second place trophy and Glenn Mealey came in third.



Co-Chairs, Will Maxwell, Steve Kennedy, and Michael Tsang with Texans cheerleaders



Glenn Mealey, Camille Mikhail, and Jeff Sinda showing off their trophies



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

Fulfilling Families Luncheon

On Thursday, May 2, 2019, Arms Wide Adoption Services will host its annual luncheon at Houston Country Club thanks to the help of Co-Chairs, Michele Buckley and Emily Kelley.

Donations to the Fulfilling Families Luncheon help ensure Arms Wide Adoption Services can continue to help even more children in foster care connect with the loving adoptive families they need and deserve. We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Jay Tarnow as our keynote speaker. Dr. Tarnow is a board-certified child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist and considered a leading national expert on childhood and family stress. His eye-opening keynote will discuss the importance of attachment, how primary caregivers and infants form this emotional bond, and its implications on the development of personality, future relationships, and society as a whole. We are also elated to have Frank Billingsley, KPRC Channel 2's Chief Meteorologist, back as this year's luncheon emcee. Special thanks to our Event Co-Chairs, Michele Mendenhall Buckley and Emily Kelley, for their dedication to making this event a success!



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



2019 Emcee, Frank Billingsley of KPRC-TV Channel 2 giving remarks at the 2018 event



2019 Co-Chair, Michele Buckley, with 2019 Host Committee members, Cari Gill and Caroline Simons at 2018 event

The Caffrey Family: Divine Signs and Destined Sisters



Christy and Leo Caffrey have always wanted a family. When they married 21 years ago, the thought of family was at the forefront of their marriage. A family didn't seem out of reach when Christy got pregnant right away - two months into being married. Christy and Leo were ecstatic! Over the next 37 weeks, Christy and Leo did everything they could to prepare for the arrival of their little one.

But their dreams of starting a family felt distant when Christy went into early labor and their daughter was stillborn with no identifiable cause. Christy and Leo will always mourn the loss of their daughter, but she filled their hearts with more than unconditional love and loss. She filled their hearts with an even stronger desire to be the best parents they could. Christy and Leo did not lose hope, and over the next couple of years, they welcomed two sons into their family.

A Divine Sign

Over the years, the idea of adoption would pop into their heads, but the busyness of life and raising two boys distracted them from pursuing it. That is until a fateful night in November 2015. Leo was up late watching TV by himself. While flipping through channels, he came across a show on adoptions. That night, Leo prayed for God to give him a sign if it was His will for their family to adopt. The next morning, Christy and Leo were scheduled to go to the courthouse in Rosenberg. As soon as they walked in, there was a banner that said "National Adoption Day." The sign was there in big letters for them to pursue - literally, figuratively, and spiritually.



Together, Christy and Leo discussed the idea of adoption with their teenage sons, and they were both in favor of growing their family through adoption. The boys did not want their parents to wait until they were in college, because they wanted to get to know their sibling(s) as soon as they could. After learning about different kinds of adoptions, Christy and Leo began to pursue foster-to-adopt. They were referred to Arms Wide Adoption Services, attended an Information Meeting in May 2016, and officially started the process.

Forever Seems So Far Away

Over the course of the next two years, Christy and Leo fostered two sets of siblings in their home. Although they would not be their forever family due to no fault of their own, Christy and Leo provided the support, love, and care the kids needed. They connected them to resources, calmed them down after tantrums, and taught them new things. With both placements, Christy and Leo grew attached to the siblings, so with each move, they were left heartbroken.



Even though they trusted in the system and their journey, Christy and Leo wanted time to get over these losses. With their eldest son about to graduate high school, they

decided it was the right time to take a break. They asked Arms Wide Adoption Services to inactivate their profile for the time being.

Destined For Forever

Typically, the Arms Wide Adoption Services team would never make a call like this, but when we heard about the perfect match for the Caffrey family, we took a leap of faith and called them - even while they were inactive. The potential placement was a sibling group of two sisters, who were five and six years old at the time. Without hesitation, Christy and Leo trusted in Arms Wide Adoption Services, and said they were interested. They were approved quickly, and the girls moved into their home within 30 days.

The girls quickly and perfectly fit into their family. They look up to their new brothers, who are not afraid to be silly with them. The girls devour their mom's spaghetti and race to their dad with smiles when he comes home from work. It's been an adjustment, but one everyone agrees is completely worthwhile.

"Overall, I'd say the journey was a roller coaster of emotions," Leo said. "It has been one of the greatest challenges, yet one of the greatest sources of satisfaction in our entire lives."

Throughout the process, there were little reminders, which revealed to Christy and Leo that God was leading them the entire way.

Becoming Caffreys

The girls officially became Caffreys in December of 2018, just in time for Christmas! Christy and Leo are so happy to give the girls what they have always needed most: Stability and a chance to heal.

"The girls are still guarded but healing," Christy said.

And that's what this work is all about.



Celebrating National Adoption Month



In November 2018, one of our families was featured on CW39's Morning Dose to talk about Adoption Month, and what it means to grow your family through adoption.



We also worked with our families on giving back to the community. They created holiday cards for seniors in assisted living facilities. The activity reminded us all how much we gain through adoption.



Lastly, thanks to funding from The Junior League of Houston, Inc., we hosted "Camp Boo" at Camp For All. The weekend including family bonding and many outdoor activities.

Holiday Party Fun

Thanks to all who helped make our annual family holiday party a huge success. Special thanks to KPMG, SWE Homes, and Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church for making it a great morning and joyful season!





Meet Dai-Ren, 14 Years Old

Dai-Ren does it all: plays trombone in the school band, runs track, plays football and basketball, dances, writes poetry, and composes and sings his own raps and songs. All that's missing is someone to watch his football games and read his poems. He's hoping to find a forever family who will be there for him.

Dai-Ren is a deep thinker, and his creative pursuits often serve as an outlet for his ideas. When he writes poetry and lyrics, he says: "I write about my feelings." He hopes that his songs and poems help someone who's experiencing the same feelings.

When he was younger, Dai-Ren struggled with his behavior and taking direction from authority figures. However, he's matured and is a totally different boy, acknowledging:

"I realized my behaviors weren't helping me be the best me."

He adds: "I know parents will have moments they will need to discipline me, but I don't mind as long as they're permanent."

He does well in school, especially when he's being tutored, and is always improving academically. His extracurricular activities are his favorite part of school, and he'll need a forever family who will allow him to be a part of after school activities.

If you're interested in learning more about Dai-Ren, please contact WWK Recruiter and Adoption Coordinator, Stephanie Griffith, at 713-681-6991 or sgriffith@armswide.org.

Family Activities We Cherish

Thanks to special funding through the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies, Arms Wide Adoption Services has been able to provide fun activities to our families. Not only do our families get to bond over new experiences, but they receive additional trauma training to help them better navigate their adoption journey.

Since October of 2018, we have been able to offer Painting With A Twist classes, tickets to Monster Jam, a weekend-long retreat at Moody Gardens, and more!



Doyle Family Spotlight

From training to pre-placement to finalization to every day in between and after, you do not want to miss our online four-part series on The Doyle Family.



"My heart will never be the same again."

-Heather Doyle during first week of adoptive placement



The Doyle Family on finalization day

Read more at armswide.org/children/family-spotlight

Mad Potter Fun

In March 2019, our Post Adoption families gathered for a morning of pottery fun.



Forever Families

Over the last 42 years, Arms Wide Adoption Services has placed more than 2,100 children with their forever families. Meet a few of the newest Arms Wide families below:



The Caffrey Family
December 2018



The McCrimmon Family
January 2019



The Leger Family
February 2019



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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.



United Way of Greater Houston

Give While You Shop:



A Family That Plays Together Stays Together

Whether you have little ones or pre-teens, family bonding is important to create a strong family foundation. Here are three reasons why families should spend even more time together:

- 1. It's a Great Workout Routine!*
- 2. Laughter is the Best Medicine*
- 3. It Increases Your Child's Self-Esteem*

Read more at armswide.org/category/blog/

