

The Wright Family

Rebecca and Chris want families to know adoption means accepting someone with no expectations.

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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: October 16, November 6, November 13, December 11, and December 18.

Visit armswide.org/events for more details!

Save The Date Holiday Party

Arms Wide Adoption Services is hosting its annual Holiday Party for families on **Saturday, December 14, 2019 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 always want to hear from Arms Wide Adoption Services families about their experiences. In addition to sharing your story with us, we also need your help! Would you be willing to connect us with your human resources department, neighborhood association, or church group? Invite us to send one of our Arms Wide Adoption Services team members to talk more to your coworkers or friends about how they can transform lives through adoption.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact Development and Marketing Manager, Melissa Neeley, at mneeley@armswide.org. With your help, we can connect more children in foster care with loving families.

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.

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Fulfilling Families Luncheon

With your support and the leadership of our Event Co-Chairs, Michele Mendenhall Buckley and Emily Kelley, more than \$125,000 was raised to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing adoptive families.

The 2019 Fulfilling Families Luncheon started with a crowded Houston Country Club ballroom listening to KPRC-TV Channel 2's Chief Meteorologist, Frank Billingsley, talk about the importance of family. Billingsley turned it over to keynote speaker, Dr. Jay Tarnow, M.D., a board-certified Child, Adolescent and Adult Psychiatrist and a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and of the American Psychiatric Association. Dr. Tarnow spoke on the importance of attachment, how mothers and infants form this emotional bond, and its implications on the development of personality, future relationships, and society as a whole. This fifth annual event raised more than \$125,000 in support of the organization, thanks to the leadership of Co-Chairs, Michele Mendenhall Buckley and Emily Kelley, and the Luncheon Host Committee. The funds raised will allow Arms Wide Adoption Services to finalize at least 10 adoptions and celebrate more families fulfilled. Stay tuned for 2020 details coming soon!



Event Co-Chairs, Michele Mendenhall Buckley and Emily Kelley, at Houston Country Club



Arms Wide Adoption Services President and CEO, Vikki Finley, with keynote speaker, Dr. Jay Tarnow



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

All In For Adoption Texas Hold 'Em Tournament

On Thursday, November 14, Arms Wide Adoption Services 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, Luke Cone, Brittany Hildebrand, 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 Manager, 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



2018 All In For Adoption winners, Glenn Mealey, Camille Mikhail, and Jeff Sinda



2018 Co-Chairs, Will Maxwell, Steve Kennedy and Michael Tsang, with Texans cheerleaders

The Wright Family: Acceptance With No Expectations



Rebecca and Chris Wright knew they wanted to adopt long before they were married. After raising two biological daughters, then three and six years old, Rebecca and Chris decided the timing was finally right.

The Wright's journey was not easy. After three years waiting working with another agency, Rebecca and Chris began to lose faith in the process. Luckily, before calling it quits, they turned to Arms Wide Adoption Services. They took a chance on a different agency, one who promised to be there every step of the way.

"Adopting from foster care is a challenge, but having someone on your side is essential to making it a success," Rebecca said. "I truly believe Arms Wide Adoption Services wants the best for each family. It's not just a job for them, and you can tell by every action they make."

After attending eight adoption festivals, where you can meet children waiting to be adopted, Rebecca and Chris were not excited when Arms Wide Adoption Services sent a flyer for another festival in October. But something inside pushed them to attend.

After walking around the adoption festival and reading profiles of children there, Rebecca and Chris thought it was another dead end. Then, Rebecca noticed a lanky kid with glasses and a bandaged wrist. He was laughing and shooting basketballs one-handed. She couldn't put her finger on it, but she knew he was special.

"I asked my husband, 'What about that kid?'" Rebecca said. "To which my husband lovingly replied, 'That guy is like 20.'"



Rebecca and Chris journeyed back to the child profiles and found him. His name was Aaron, and he was 17 years old. As they were talking with his caseworker, Aaron came up to ask her to hold his jacket. Before he could go back to playing basketball, she said, "Wait! These people want to talk to you."

"His exact heartbreaking words were, 'You want to talk to me?'" Rebecca said. "I shot my husband a look, which said I was already invested. Aaron sat down with us, and we chatted for two solid hours."

Rebecca and Chris were impressed by Aaron's openness and self-awareness. They immediately became excited about the opportunity to be his parents. The Monday following the event, Rebecca called Arms Wide Adoption Services to express interest in adopting Aaron.

"Then, we waited. One week. Two weeks. Three weeks. Nothing." Rebecca said. "The phone rang, it was Arms Wide Adoption Services. Our worker called to tell us Aaron's caseworker didn't think adoption was a good fit. They suggested we mentor instead."

Rebecca's heart shattered. She knew Aaron was meant to be with them. Over the next 15 weeks, Rebecca and Chris kept Aaron on their minds, and they continued to fight for him any chance they got. For Christmas, they purchased gifts for Aaron and delivered them to his caseworker. Rebecca and Chris wanted to show Aaron's caseworker they could be the parents he deserves.

With a prior failed adoption and 17 placements, Aaron's caseworker was excited and hopeful for him, but time was running out. Aaron's 18th birthday was just six months away. His caseworker expedited a review for Aaron and the Wrights. The next weekend, they were able to have their first visit.

"I was terrified my first intuition may have been wrong, but thankfully it wasn't, and the conversation was natural," Rebecca said.

Two days later, Rebecca and Chris picked up Aaron, so he could meet their daughters, who were instantly in love. Five days later, Aaron moved in. There were ups and downs, but they slowly worked through each one. Rebecca and Chris quickly realized Aaron didn't need someone to tell him what to do. He needed someone to listen. Months passed, and the Wright family embraced life with Aaron. He started doing well in school, got his driving permit, secured a job, and asked if he could change his last name to theirs. On May 28, 2019, two months from his 18th birthday, his wish became a reality.

Now, Rebecca and Chris want families to know **adoption is accepting someone with no expectations**, and letting them grow at their own pace.

"Our initial age limit was 13," Rebecca said. "Don't be afraid to look beyond your original thoughts. Remember where these kids came from and how a loving home can overcome many things."



Saturday Fun

at Emancipation Park



Before our kids in foster care had to go back to school, we provided one last opportunity to have fun.



In addition to playing basketball, the kids drew with chalk, danced, played games, and bonded with one another.



Arms Wide Adoption Services knows the importance of just letting kids be kids for a day. They deserve to get down with their silly selves!

Some Summer Fun

Arms Wide Adoption Services had an eventful summer with our kids and families. We hosted so many fun activities through our Post Adoption Program!



Our Post Adoption families enjoying a Sugar Land Skeeters game



Post Adoption families were also invited to enjoy a Houston Astros game on "dollar dog night"



Our kids definitely had fun at the waterpark inside Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park



Meet Corey, 17 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, Stephanie Griffith, by phone at 713-681-6991 or by email at sgriffith@armswide.org.



Organizations Who Give Back

This summer, Arms Wide Adoption Services received generous donations of family care packages, knitted items, and a check to further our mission.



In June 2019, employees from Ascend Performance Materials stopped by to assemble and donate care packages for our families.



In May 2019, the "Knitzvahs" from the Houston Congregation for Reformed Judaism stopped by to donate hand-knit blankets and booties for our Angel Room.



In August 2019, the PLUS Foundation stopped by with a \$2,500 check to help us further our mission to transform the lives of children in foster care.

2019 Coastal Bend Day of Giving

Mark your calendars for **Tuesday, November 12, 2019** 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 \$19,000. Thanks to the generosity of many South Texas foundations, the fundraising goal will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$19,000 enabling us to raise \$38,000 in a single day! This is great way to make a gift to Arms Wide Adoption Services and have each dollar doubled.

Taking place on **Tuesday, November 12, 2019**, donations will be accepted through the Coastal Bend Day of Giving website for 24 hours, starting at midnight on November 12 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 3 and November 11. Visit coastalbenddayofgiving.org/armswide and click the "Donate Now" button. Your credit card will not be charged until November 12.
- **Donate to us on November 12** by visiting coastalbenddayofgiving.org/armswide
- **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

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



April 2019



May 2019



May 2019



May 2019



June 2019



July 2019



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 2019 contributions is **Friday, December 13**. Thank you for your support and for making the holidays brighter for the children and families we serve!