

# Finally Forever

Over the last 43 years, Arms Wide Adoption Services has placed more than 2,200 children with their forever families. Meet a few of the newest Arms Wide Adoption Services families below:



**The Pelt Family**  
May 2020



**The Musquiz Family**  
October 2020



**The Taylor Family**  
June 2020



**The McCarty Family**  
September 2020



**The Merlo Family**  
June 2020



**The Anderson Family**  
June 2020



**The Mattaway Family**  
June 2020



**The Hodes Family**  
September 2020



**The Dunson Family**  
May 2020

# South Texas Updates

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Riz Amanullah - *Chair*  
Shannon Kinney - *Vice Chair*  
Amelia McKnight - *Secretary*  
Angela Dunlap - *Treasurer*

Andrejka Bernatova  
Julie Comiskey  
Whitney Cox  
Chris Dodd  
Katie Bailey Grahmann  
Kurt Hueni  
Kristen Lyons  
Anthony J. Nocella  
Marla Oates  
Dylan Parker  
Peter C. Retterer  
Daria M. Russell  
Jeff Sinda  
David Thaxton  
Mindy Vela  
Amanda Venta, Ph.D.

## ADVISORY COUNCIL

Kathy Schenck - *Chair*  
Mary Banks  
Robert Barker  
Mark Dobbins  
L. Paul Gerson, M.D.  
Pat Kiley  
Elizabeth Labanowski  
Lance Loken  
Samuel Luna  
Tricia Miner  
Melva M. Meronek  
Ramona Ortiz  
Corine Prieto  
Brian Romere  
John Seo  
Lee Vela

## PRESIDENT AND CEO

DeJuana S. Jernigan, MSW

## LEADERSHIP STAFF

Annie Richardson  
Director of Development  
Arianne Riebel, LMSW, LCPAA  
Director of Foster Care and Adoption  
Services  
Rachelle Webster, LMSW, LCPAA  
Director of Compliance, Post Adoption  
and Post Permanency Services



*The Hernandez Family finalized their adoption in South Texas in February*

## Expanded Services - Now Offering Foster Care In South Texas

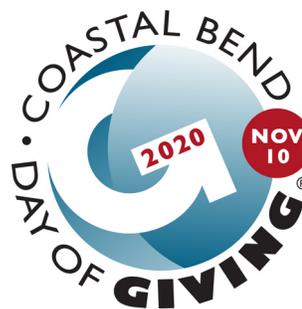
In response to an urgent need in the Rio Grande Valley and Coastal Bend communities to build local foster parent capacity, Arms Wide Adoption Services recently announced an expansion of programming in South Texas to include foster care and foster-to-adopt services. This expansion aims to help meet the demand for foster care placements to address an urgent shortage of local families so children can be placed in a family in their own community. The further away children are placed from their home community, the more likely they are to lose important connections with their biological family, schools, and community supports like doctors, coaches and therapists.

According to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS):

- 41% of children in DFPS Region 11 (Coastal Bend and Rio Grande Valley) are placed outside the county of removal
- In Corpus Christi, 65% of children are placed outside the county of removal; 22% are placed outside the region
- In Hidalgo County (McAllen and surrounding areas), 37% of children are placed outside the county of removal; 24% are placed outside the region

Through Arms Wide Adoption Services' recently-announced expansion, the agency aims to partner with DFPS to ensure more children in the Coastal Bend and Rio Grande Valley can be placed in families within their community and avoid being placed in a different county or in a different region of Texas all together. We are excited to meet this need!

## Coastal Bend Day of Giving is November 10th



Arms Wide Adoption Services is excited to participate in Coastal Bend Day of Giving 2020 - a 24-hour charitable giving campaign administered by the Coastal Bend Community Foundation. On **Tuesday, November 10**, our community will come together to help Arms Wide Adoption Services reach our fundraising goal. We need YOU to join us!

With donations matched dollar-for-dollar, up to \$22,00, help us raise \$44,000, in 24 hours! Now, more than ever, we need your help, so please spread the word! For more information or to donate, visit [coastalbenddayofgiving.org/armswide](https://coastalbenddayofgiving.org/armswide).

## The Solis Family:

*“Be patient, the best things in life don’t come easily.”*



Mr. and Mrs. Solis came to Arms Wide Adoption Services in 2017 with the hopes of adopting a sibling group. The couple always knew they wanted to adopt, because they have hearts for caring for children. Feeling like their home felt empty, they pursued foster care adoption. They believe every child deserves to feel loved.

Although the family had prior knowledge about the foster care system from their professional careers, they still found the journey to adoption to be a difficult one. They want others to understand the process of adopting a child from foster care can feel mentally and emotionally draining at times. Nothing is going to happen overnight, even though you would like it to! They knew their children had already been through a lot, so they knew the lengthy process was to ensure the children will have a permanent family and home well-suited for them.

*“Adoption to us means family and endless love.”*

In September of 2018, Mr. and Mrs. Solis met their two daughters for the first time and began bonding as a family. Months later, in May of 2019, the couple finalized the adoption of their seven-year-old and 15-year-old daughters. Though the family endured many challenges and struggles along the way, they faced these challenges as a family and with the support of the Arms Wide Adoption Services team.

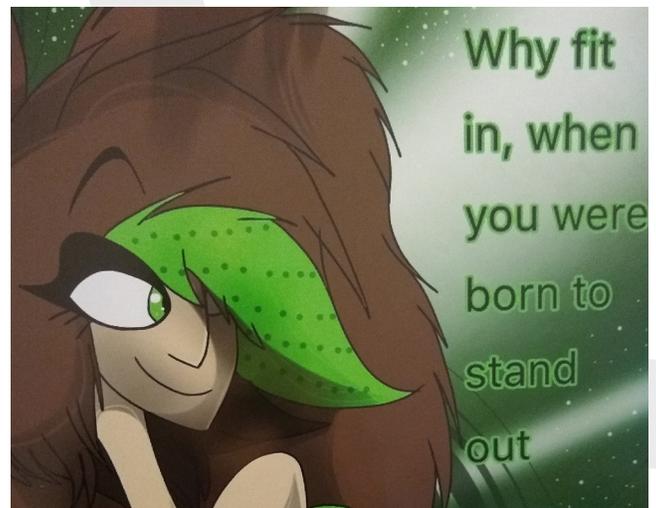
*“Our favorite part of our journey was meeting our children and spending time getting to know them.”*

The Solis family felt a sense of relief following their finalization. As a family, they enjoy BBQing outside, swimming, and traveling. The couple describes their youngest daughter as witty, sassy, and funny and describes their oldest as a smart and incredibly talented artist. Both girls are the most loving and affectionate children they could have asked for. They feel thankful to be able to be their parents and to give their daughters the love they want and deserve.

*“If you adopt, don’t expect to adopt a perfect child as there is no such thing as a perfect child.”*

Mr. and Mrs. Solis’ biggest advice for others is to have patience. Just like adults, children will have good days and bad days. Having a loving family and a safe home is all new to children who have been in foster care. It takes time for children to adjust and for the family to adjust.

Adoption is also a very lengthy process, but one that is always worth it in the end.



Art by Jayla Solis



6925 Portwest Drive, Suite 110 • Houston, TX 77024  
Phone: 713.681.6991 • Fax: 713.681.9089 • Toll-Free: 1.800.460.6298

NON-PROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT #8327  
HOUSTON, TX

Arms Wide Adoption Services' mission is to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing permanent 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:



# Thank You!

Thanks to your support, our work to transform the lives of children in foster care has not slowed down even as our organization adapted to these challenging times.



*That precious moment when you're finally forever*

Since social distancing began, our staff has remained dedicated to supporting children and families through the foster care and adoption processes and beyond. We have developed new ways to serve our families virtually, but with a continued commitment to compassionate care and personal attention. **Because of you, we have a lot to celebrate, including the finalization of TWENTY adoptions this year!**

We have also been offering virtual therapy services to our post adoption and post permanency families, including family bonding and art activities.

**You make all of this possible.** On behalf of the children and families we serve, thank you for believing in the work Arms Wide Adoption Services is doing every day to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing permanent families.