

The Nelson Family

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New Look, Same Feel

Arms Wide Adoption Services thrilled to publish its first newsletter under new name.

Looking to convey a warmer and more accurate description of our mission and focus, Spaulding for Children rebranded as Arms Wide Adoption Services. Our name change is part of a 40-year anniversary celebration and an exciting effort to increase awareness of our services and successes, as well as further assist even more children and families throughout Houston and South Texas.

Just as under the Spaulding for Children name, Arms Wide Adoption Services will continue to focus on finding permanent families for children in foster care, including those more difficult to place, such as older children or siblings wishing to be adopted together. Despite decades of success guiding and supporting these children and adoptive families through the often long journey from foster care to forever homes, we felt the community had not always made the connection to the Spaulding for Children name. We believe the name Arms Wide Adoption Services makes it easier for prospective families and those in the adoption services industry to find us.

“We are incredibly proud of our 40 years as Spaulding for Children,” said Vikki Finley, President and CEO of Arms Wide Adoption Services. “We have been a witness to so much love and joy while helping these children find their place with incredible families. We are committed to continuing that exact same work and thrilled to do so with a name that clearly expresses and embraces our mission.”

A new logo and website accompanied our name change. The new website, found at armswide.org, launched in conjunction with the official announcement. The logo features a lighter version of the purple used in Spaulding for Children’s materials, and using simple shapes, creates the likeness of a knot to represent a bond made. The logo also resembles a person with their arms out in a welcoming gesture.



The announcement of the change was made during our Forty Years of Families Luncheon held Tuesday, May 9, 2017. Arms Wide Adoption Services will continue Spaulding for Children’s work with the same staff and process on which we have built our reputation as a credible and compassionate resource.

“Thank you for your continued support and dedication to Spaulding for Children and to the children in our community who need help.” Finley said. “We may have a new look, but with your help, we can continue to leave families feeling the same: fulfilled.”

Forty Years of Families Luncheon

With your support and the leadership of our Event Co-Chairs, Robin Klaes and Tany Jeter Klaes, more than \$100,000 was raised to further our mission to transform the lives of children in need of safe and nurturing adoptive families.

At our Forty Years of Families Luncheon, KPRC-TV Channel 2’s Dominique Sachse served as emcee for the afternoon and shared how there are many ways to define family. She even called our keynote speaker, Frank Billingsley, the brother she never had. Luncheon guests were the first to hear about and have the opportunity to purchase Frank Billingsley’s book, *Swabbed & Found*. Adopted himself, Frank’s heartfelt keynote explored his DNA journey to find his biological parents – pictures, videos and family tree diagrams included.

In addition to celebrating our 40th anniversary, the luncheon also covered a very special announcement: This was our last event under the name Spaulding for Children. We are now Arms Wide Adoption Services. Thank you to everyone who made our luncheon and this special announcement a huge success!



Event Co-Chairs, Tany Jeter Klaes and Robin Klaes at Houston Country Club



KPRC-TV Channel 2 Chief Meteorologist Frank Billingsley signs copies of his new book



Arms Wide adoptive parents, Mayor Annise Parker and Kathy Hubbard, were two of many who came to support our mission

All In For Adoption Texas Hold ‘Em Tournament

On Thursday, November 16 at 5:00 p.m., 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, Steve Kennedy, Will Maxwell and Michael Tsang, for their dedication to making this event a success!

For more information, contact Arms Wide Adoption Services’ Director of Development, Annie Richardson, at arichardson@armswide.org or 713-681-6991. We hope to see you there!



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



2016 All In For Adoption Texas Hold ‘Em winners with their trophies



Kelly Herrera putting her best cards forward at last year’s event

The Nelson Family: “It Was A No-Brainer”



Choosing Arms Wide

Kaysie had always been open to adoption, but her husband, Jady, wasn't sure if that was the right path for their family. After Kaysie was diagnosed with PCOS, she realized it'd be very difficult to conceive naturally and started talking to coworkers who had adopted. When Kaysie heard about Arms Wide through a coworker, she persuaded her husband to come along to an Information Meeting in March 2015. That first meeting sealed the deal for The Nelsons! They decided fostering to adopt was the way they were meant to grow their family, and filled out their application that very night. Throughout the process of preparing to be foster parents, Kaysie and Jady liked how Arms Wide made each step simple and accommodated them when they had to miss a training event. Arms Wide helped The Nelsons remember paperwork deadlines, and set Kaysie's mind at ease when she learned support services for their kids would continue long after their adoption was finalized.

Finding Their Three

On August 17, 2015, they received a call about an emergency placement of two sisters, 22-month-old Lesly and 10-month-old Samantha. The couple had been waiting to receive a call that felt right, and, after talking it over, The Nelsons knew that Lesly and Samantha were meant to be their daughters. They agreed to foster them with the hope of adopting them in the future.

The first few weeks were exhausting, to say the least. Lesly struggled to sleep because she was afraid of cribs, and both girls found it difficult to understand a forever home after being moved so frequently. As the girls were still settling in, Kaysie and Jady learned that Lesly and Samantha's birthmother was pregnant. The Nelsons decided they wanted to keep the siblings together, and their caseworker helped them move forward in plans to foster and adopt the girls' little sister. On December 8, 2015, Ginny was born, and she joined The Nelson household on December 11th. Kaysie says they were excited to pick up Ginny at the hospital:

“She was wrapped up like a Christmas present,” Kaysie remembers. “She was just so cute.”

Officially Nelsons

Though the three sisters hadn't officially joined The Nelson clan, Kaysie, Jady, and their extended family poured all their love into the girls while the couple fostered them. On April 27, 2017, Samantha, Lesly, and Ginny officially became Nelsons!



Kaysie and Jady are grateful for support through Early Child Intervention services. Their caseworker referred them to the service, which evaluates and helps kids with whose development has been delayed. Kaysie especially liked how both CPS and Arms Wide made sure that her girls were getting the right care by keeping track of their progress.

Their daughters might be young, but The Nelsons talk to them about adoption. They tell them about their other biological siblings, who weren't part of their adoption, and point out when characters in books or movies were adopted just like them. Kaysie says that Lesly likes to proudly exclaim “I'm adopted!” even though she still is too young to grasp the full meaning of her words. Nevertheless, they are glad that their girls hear adoption talked about openly and know that it's a beautiful way of growing a family.

Adopting From Foster Care

Kaysie says that other people often make comments about her and Jady, praising them for being “so brave” for adopting, especially adopting three young children out of foster care. But Kaysie looks at the situation differently, explaining:

“Once we heard at an Arms Wide training about all the kids in foster care, it was a no-brainer. Knowing what my kids came from makes it a no-brainer.”

Sometimes The Nelsons are on the receiving end of stares since their kids are a different race than them, and sometimes they're asked intrusive questions like, “Would you love a biological child more?” Kaysie knows her answer: “I don't know how I could love these kids any more. I don't know how my family could love these kids any more.”

To other people considering foster care and adoption, Kaysie wants to dispel concerns. Questions like: “Will these kids love us back?” “Will they be good kids?” “Will all the work and stress and heartache be worth it?” ended up being non-issues for The Nelsons.

“It's drops in the bucket compared to the family we built,” says Kaysie.



Knocking Down Barriers Bowling Match Event



On August 12, National Bowling Day, children enrolled in Arms Wide's child-specific recruiting program were able to attend an adoption match event.



Prospective adoptive parents and families were able to join in on bowling and games in a fun, low pressure environment where our children could be themselves.



We are excited to announce this bowling event resulted in five matches!

Day of Mentoring Fun

Thanks to the Al Rucker Foundation, young men from our foster care and post adoption programs were able to attend a day of mentoring and fun at BH Ranch.





Meet Kamion and Treasure

Sisters Kamion and Treasure are both sweet and smart, and love animals and all things “girly.” That’s about where their similarities end — they are as different as night and day. Nevertheless, their bond is unbreakable and they could not imagine being apart from each other.

Big sister Kamion (16) is quiet and respectful, always thinking carefully before she asks a question or joins a conversation. She loves participating in faith-based activities and enjoys learning new things at school, especially in her history class. A talented athlete, she loves playing volleyball and running track. Kamion likes hanging out with her friends at school. She’s an excellent judge of character, choosing her friends as thoughtfully as she chooses her words. Although she can come across as reserved when someone first meets her, she has a wonderful smile that lights up a room.

Treasure (13) is the yin to Kamion’s yang. Treasure does not hesitate to chat with new people or speak up for herself. She’s a strong, opinionated firecracker of a young lady. Her feisty personality also means she’s a self-starter — she will advocate for herself and work hard when she’s passionate about something. When it comes to fulfilling her goals, it helps that Treasure always thinks ahead. Just check her purse — there will always be a snack “just in case!” Treasure has a beautiful voice and loves to sing.

Treasure and Kamion hope to find a forever family together. Their ideal parents will be disciplined yet understanding, knowing that they will not be able to fix everything these sisters have experienced, but willing to love them and be there for them consistently. For more information about these sisters, please contact Maristel at maguilar@armswide.org.

Eliana’s Salon Gives Back



In August 2017, Arms Wide Adoption Services picked up a generous donation of backpacks and school supplies from Eliana’s Salon.

During the month of August, any client who brought in a backpack with school supplies was entered to win a spa package.

We are grateful for community partners doing their part to ensure our state’s most vulnerable children have access to what they need to be successful in school.

Turning Lemons Into Lemonade



In May 2017, the Lyons siblings hosted a lemonade stand in our honor and used the proceeds to buy toys for children in our programs.

2017 Coastal Bend Day of Giving

Mark your calendars for **Tuesday, November 14, 2017** 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 \$17,000. Thanks to the generosity of many South Texas foundations, the fundraising goal will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$17,000, enabling us to raise \$34,000! This is great way to make a gift to Arms Wide Adoption Services and have each dollar doubled.

Taking place on **Tuesday, November 14, 2017**, donations will be accepted through the Coastal Bend Day of Giving website for 24 hours, starting at midnight on November 14 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 5 and November 13. Visit coastalbenddayofgiving.org/armswide and click the “Donate Now” button. Your credit card will not be charged until November 14.
- **Donate to us on November 14!**
- **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 40 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 Hutzley Family
June 2017*



*The Fillingim Family
March 2017*



*The Smith Family
June 2017*

Attend An Information Meeting

Are you or someone you know interested in adoption? Don’t know where to start? Attend one of our 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 on Wednesdays. Meetings are typically held at the Arms Wide Adoption Services office and start at 6 PM.

Share Your Story, Spread Our Mission

Have a story to share? We are looking for adoptive families and children to speak about their Arms Wide family and experiences. With our new name and logo, we are 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 faith community. Do you worship somewhere? Do they have a foster care or adoption ministry? Invite us to send one of our Arms Wide Adoption Services team members to talk more to your group about how they can change a life through adoption from foster care.

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



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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 2017 contributions is **Friday, December 15**. Thank you for your support and for making the holidays brighter for the children and families we serve!