

Meaningful Connections Create Lasting Community Impact

Pathways Family Spotlight Series



This edition spotlights a family whose annual holiday project brings joy to hundreds of Houston children experiencing foster care.

In 2016, while living in San Antonio, Brice Gaston and his husband, Gerald, began fostering a six-month-old baby boy named AJ through St. Jude's Children's Home. Both were serving in the US Air Force and had been fostering AJ for just a few short months when they learned they would be transferred to Abilene.

Because St. Jude's did not have a child placing agency in Abilene, the family transferred to Pathways-Abilene. The new parents were anxious about what the process would entail and worried about keeping their new family together. The Pathways team jumped in and helped navigate the transfer, start to finish.

Pathways first walked Brice and Gerald through their biggest hurdle – getting their new home in Abilene recertified – and continued support throughout the process to ensure that the burden wasn't placed on the family, who was already juggling a big move with a small child. Brice and Gerald were both dedicated and enthusiastic.

“Gerald and I just wanted a kid. We were clear in our message: Whatever kid gets placed with us will be adopted. With Pathways, everything was so easy.” - Brice Gaston, Foster/Adoptive Parent



The Gaston-Porter family in September 2024.

AJ's adoption was finalized just a year and a half later, and he has thrived. Today, AJ is nine years old, in the 3rd grade and is a defensive lineman and kicker on his local youth team.

Proud parents report that *AJ is the epitome of a people person. He makes instant friends anywhere he goes, whether at the skatepark, the playground, or the classroom.*

Through the fostering and adoption process, strong ties were created between the Gaston-Porter family and Pathways. And the connection didn't end with AJ's adoption. In fact, Pathways became the primary beneficiary of Brice's desire to give back to his community.

In the winter of 2021, Brice was deployed to Saudi Arabia and unable to spend the holidays with his family. Reflecting on how much he missed his family during the holidays while deployed, he decided to devote time to ensuring all children felt supported during the holidays. Blending eight years' worth of quilting skills with his dedication to helping others, a new project was born.

For the past two years, Brice has organized a volunteer event at Dyess Air Force Base where the children of military personnel made stockings for both themselves and children in foster care. Partnering with Pathways in this project just last year, Brice's event produced over 375 stockings for children in foster care. Through this project, he was able to share the holiday spirit with hundreds of local children and families.



Holiday Stocking Event at Dyess Air Force Base in December 2023.

Today, Brice and his family have relocated to Houston where he is busy combining his love of quilting with his passion for helping veterans with PTSD while also continuing his holiday stocking project for the benefit of children in Pathways' care.

**“The bigger my company gets, the more support Pathways will receive.
Pathways will always have a special place in my heart.”
- Brice Gaston, Foster/Adoptive Parent**

Through their longtime dedication to community support, Brice, Gerald, and AJ are collectively building a better Houston community for us all. Join Brice for this year's event on December 7th in Old Town Spring. For more information, visit his [website](#) or contact Brice at brice@menstextilecollective.com.

Read ahead to learn of other ways Pathways programs are addressing crucial Houston needs.

Support a Child in Foster Care

Hundreds of Houston children served through Pathways Child Placing Agency

With your support, last year, Pathways served 328 Houston children and youth through its child-placing agency, with 276 foster placements and 103 finalized adoptions. Some children were supported through both our foster and adoption programs. In this case, they were represented in both categories.

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Additionally, Pathways Houston licensed 76 new foster homes, making 99 new foster beds available to Houston children. These programs ensure our most vulnerable youth are placed in loving, supporting homes, bringing systemic change to Houston.

New Programs Address Community Needs

Pathways launched its Treatment Family Foster Care program last year, a specialized foster care program that ensures children with high emotional and behavioral needs are placed in supportive, stable homes. Through this program, foster parents with additional training and 24-hour support provide crucially needed temporary placements where children can stabilize, improve coping skills and successfully transition to a permanent home.

In addition to Treatment Family Foster Care, Pathways addresses critical needs through its Mosaic Behavioral Health program that broadens access to psychiatry, counseling, targeted case management, and skills training. Pathways provided these crucial services to 364 Houston children, youth, and families last year.

Most importantly, Pathways forges lifelong relationships with engaged families and volunteers that directly impact the lives of Houston youth and families and build stronger, more resilient communities.



To those looking to start their family, Brice shared some words of advice:

“It is much easier than you think. Pathways support made the process straightforward and help was always offered along the way.”