

Smart Love® Newsletter

Building on a Strong Foundation: New President Sees Opportunity to Expand Smart Love's Reach

In July, Smart Love Family Services welcomed its new president, Lauren Joyce Hensel. Lauren has extensive experience managing nonprofit organizations and a passion for and commitment to helping children and families. As a former independent education consultant, Lauren brings over 15 years of experience guiding students through their educational journeys and growing nonprofit organizations. She succeeds Smart Love's founder and Executive Director, Carolyn Stolper Friedman, who retired after 22 years of guiding the organization.

It's fitting that as Carolyn moves on to her next endeavor, a Caring Tree was dedicated in her honor at the Smart Love Family Services headquarters in Logan Square. The symbol of the Caring Tree is guiding Lauren's transition to leading the organization. As Lauren says, "Smart Love's roots and principles are strong, innovative, and life-changing. It is imperative to bring these principles to areas of impact to ensure we are fostering a happier and more compassionate society."

This illustrates her view that the roots of the tree represent all the work and dedication that has gone into making Smart Love a strong, vibrant, and growing organization over its 20 years of existence. This growth flourished under the "canopy" of the Smart Love approach, which guides all Smart Love's offerings to serve families and the larger community.

The metaphor of growth within this context is what excites Lauren about the journey ahead. In her first few months in her new role, her outlook on the future of Smart Love is full of enthusiasm and hope for expanding Smart Love's reach. As she explains, "With the strong foundation laid and the capabilities of Smart Love's staff, I believe



we can put the Smart Love approach in the hands of families and schools locally, domestically, and internationally in the coming years. I am delighted to lead Smart Love into its next chapter!"

As a former independent education consultant and founder of her own company, LAUNCH Education Advisors, Lauren has dedicated her professional career to mentoring and advising neurotypical and neurodivergent students and those with diverse backgrounds about post-secondary educational options. She brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the management and growth of nonprofit organizations from her roles leading admissions and marketing at several secondary and post-

secondary schools and her educational consulting company.

Most importantly, as a parent and with her enthusiasm for the principles of Smart Love, Lauren believes that she can be an innovative, forward-thinking advocate for the ways Smart Love can positively impact lives and set Smart Love on a prominent path for its next 20 years.

Smart Love's Growth

Clinic

21% increase in sessions since 2019

Preschool

65% increase in enrollment since the 2022 school year

Tutoring

327% increase in tutoring sessions since 2022



PROGRAM UPDATE

Empowering Parenting with Hephzibah

In collaboration with Hephzibah, Smart Love is proud to provide monthly parenting classes to families enrolled in their Intact Family Services program. This program, designed to provide support to families during times of crisis, offers a comprehensive range of services aimed at addressing the intricate challenges that families face such as homelessness, substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health concerns.

Recognizing the distinct nature of each family's circumstances, the Intact Family Services program tailors its support services to meet the specific needs of individual households with the overarching goal of keeping the children in their home of origin. Although participation in the program is voluntary, a significant majority of families find immense value in the assistance provided.

Leading the parenting classes are Smart Love professionals: Dr. Carla Beatrici, Vice President of Clinical Services, and Dr. Paula Ciccarone, Ph.D. They will also be joined by postdoctoral fellow Dr. Pascale Moise, Psy.D., and counseling intern Sydney Mesker. These classes provide parents with support as well as effective parenting tips so they can feel better equipped to respond to their children in developmentally sensitive ways that promote inner happiness and close, enjoyable parent-child relationships.



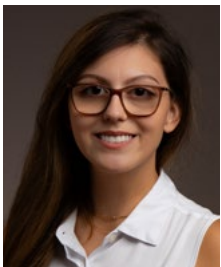
Smart Love views its role in this program as a privilege. Through this collaboration with Hephzibah, we extend our assistance to families who are in the greatest need. "At Smart Love, we recognize and understand how challenging and stressful parenting can be, and yet most parents do not receive the support they need and deserve. All parents do the best job they can but often struggle. So, it's a true privilege to partner with an organization like Hephzibah and be part of the solution. It truly takes a village to raise a child and we want to be part of that village!" says Dr. Beatrici.

Smart Love's Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Smart Love remains steadfast in its commitment to providing clinical training for students and recent graduates specializing in counseling, social work, and psychology. As the demand for our counseling services continues, our efforts to recruit and train promising therapists persist, ensuring the delivery of Smart Love's exceptional care. As such, we are pleased to welcome our doctoral staff members: Pascale Moise, Psy.D., *Postdoctoral Fellow*, and Paula Ciccarone, Ph.D. Additionally, we extend a warm welcome to a group of dedicated graduate students pursuing their master's degrees in counseling or psychology: Valerie Canet, Sydney Mesker, and Kaelyn Pineo.

Furthermore, at the beginning of this year, we proudly re-launched a new and improved Committee on Racial and Social Equity (CORSE). This initiative supports Smart Love's overarching mission to improve

the lives of individuals, children, and families by addressing racial and social justice through ongoing self education and collegial and community engagement. The increased depth of training, staff input, and community engagement will lead to continuous improvement and strengthening of our agency's culture and diversity of leadership as well as enhanced culturally-informed clinical practice. The committee meets monthly to engage in conversation encompassing assigned activities involving relevant literature and media, formal training facilitated by external experts in the field of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and participation in community events that advocate for social and racial justice. Through these collective endeavors, Smart Love is at the forefront of meaningful change.



Valerie Canet



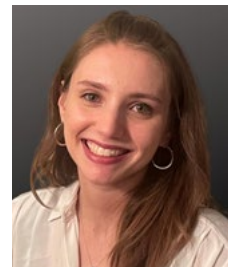
Paula Ciccarone, Ph.D.



Sydney Mesker



Pascale Moise,
Psy.D., Postdoctoral
Fellow



Kaelyn Pineo

PRESCHOOL UPDATE

Growing for the Future: The Appeal of Smart Love Preschool & Playschool

Katie Dixon Wohlgenant desperately wanted her three-year-old daughter to attend preschool after being sequestered for much of her young life due to pandemic protocols. So as soon as possible, Katie enrolled her in a preschool program. Unfortunately, it was a negative experience. As Katie explains, “It was overwhelming for my daughter after not being around people for so long. The teacher told me that she was having difficulty with transitions and following rules, and that I should work on those things with her at home.” Katie really wanted her daughter to be around other kids but knew the preschool just wasn’t the right fit.

After speaking with Kelly Perez, Smart Love’s Vice President of Education Programs and Preschool Director, she realized that Smart Love was a much better choice for her child. “I love that my daughter is in a school that not only supports but also encourages her freedom, which has made her a much more confident child.”

Katie finds Smart Love’s approach unique and effective. She has seen it at work when her daughter is given a “supported choice.” One example of this involved joining “lunch bunch.” As Katie explains, “She really wanted to experience being part of the group but wouldn’t eat her school-provided lunch. Kelly suggested that I pack my daughter’s lunch.” Kelly realized that Katie’s daughter wanted to eat at home with mom, so packing her lunch gave her the comfort she needed to continue at lunch bunch while also having a reminder of home and mom.

The recent growth of the preschool, with the opening of the third classroom, isn’t surprising to Katie, who thinks that Smart Love’s approach resonates with today’s parents of young children. As she explains, “In general, I think a lot of today’s parents are embracing the concept of accepting a child’s emotions even when they are having a meltdown or temper tantrum, as opposed to following a more traditional style of parenting.”



Katie thinks there is another key reason why interest in Smart Love continues to grow. She believes that Smart Love offers a lot of support, understanding, and guidance for parents.

This type of care and support helps nurture the parent-child relationship while also respecting the child’s individuality.

Katie describes her experience with Smart Love as follows, “What I’ve learned from Smart Love is that there are three relationships to tend to — yours with your child, your child’s with herself, and yours with yourself. Smart Love respects and embraces the uniqueness of each child and allows them to learn and grow at their own pace. To know themselves first and not expect them to do things on a set schedule or timetable. Doing so helps them become happy, healthy, curious, and kind children — the goal of parenting.”

Smart Love Preschool Graduates – Where Are They Now?

With our ongoing campaign, *Where Are They Now?*, we are checking in with Smart Love Preschool “alumni” to keep in touch with the many families who are part of the Smart Love community. The community has been very receptive to this initiative, and we look forward to hearing more stories about how our “graduates” are doing and what they’ve been up to since leaving our classrooms. If you’d like to share stories of your own children, please contact Amber Guenther at amber.guenther@smartlovethefamily.org. We’d love to hear from you.

Here’s one profile of a Smart Love alumna, who is starting her freshman year of high school at DePaul College Prep:

Caroline B. (2011–2014)

“From the start of her preschool years to the present, Caroline has embraced school and learning. Caroline’s time at Smart Love gave

her a solid foundation of being comfortable at school, curious about the world, and nurtured her kind heart. All of which have helped her succeed in school and become a much-loved friend to many. Because of her time at Smart Love, Caroline began her school years with an openness to ideas, a trust in herself, and a love of the school community.”



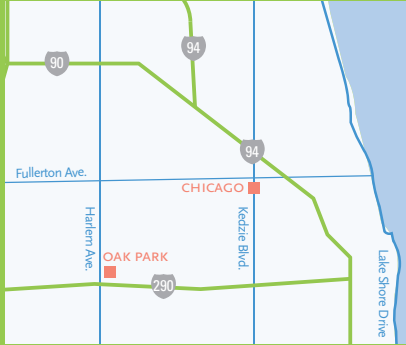
To learn how other Smart Love Preschool graduates are doing, visit www.smartlovethefamily.org/preschool-wherearetheynow.



SMART LOVE[®] FAMILY SERVICES

Natalie & Ben Heineman Smart Love Center
2222 N. Kedzie Blvd., Chicago, IL 60647 | 773.665.8052, ext. 130

Expanding Therapeutic Tutoring



OUR LOCATIONS
Chicago • Oak Park



TO LEARN MORE VISIT
www.smartlovetfamily.org
www.smartlovetpreschool.org

Smart Love Programs

COUNSELING SERVICES

- Therapy for Children, Adolescents, and Adults
- Play Therapy for Young Children
- Support Groups for Children and Adults
- Neuro-Psychological and Psychological Testing
- Couples and Family Counseling

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Natalie G. Heineman
Smart Love Preschool

- Preschool and Kindergarten for Children 3-6 years
- Playschool for Children 2-3 years
- Summer Camp

LEARNING SERVICES

- Therapeutic Tutoring
- Psycho-Educational and Learning Assessments
- Customized Parent Consultation

PARENTING & COMMUNITY

- Parent Coaching and Counseling
- Webinars
- Publications and Resources
- Parent and Youth Groups



In the upcoming months, our range of therapeutic tutoring services is set to expand to encompass comprehensive post-secondary counseling, Smart Love Futures. This valuable addition is geared toward offering a well-rounded support system for students as they navigate the intricate path of post-secondary options. Within this framework, our staff will not only assist students in the application process but also address any emotional barriers that may be interfering with their goals. Whether it involves academic direction, career mapping, or managing mental well-being, our integrated, holistic approach is designed to help students grow their sense of agency and look forward to their next chapter.

SAVE THE DATE

Smart Love's Annual Benefit Gala

March 8, 2024

The Smart Love approach was developed by Martha Heineman Pieper, Ph.D., and William J. Pieper, M.D., and is described in their book *Smart Love: The Comprehensive Guide to Understanding, Regulating and Enjoying your Child* (2011). Smart Love Family Services is an Illinois-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. ©2023