
NEWSLETTER

SMART LOVE
FAMILY SERVICES



THE HEART OF SMART LOVE

Board of Directors

David Friedman
Katherine L. Knight Ph.D.
Thomas Kuhn
Margo Murvay
Martha Heineman Pieper Ph.D.
Cecelia Pikul
Richard H. Sanders
Robert J. Stone

Director of Operations

Laura Bentley



*Vice President &
Preschool Director*
Kelly Perez



*President &
Clinical Director*
Carla M. Beatrici, Psy.D.

Dear Friends and Family,

Every child, family, and individual deserves the opportunity to thrive, supported by a community that cares about their well-being and believes in their potential. Our organization is committed to making that a reality by providing compassionate mental health services for all ages, quality early childhood education, community parent support programs with a special focus on underserved families, and therapeutic tutoring. We hope you enjoy learning more about these valuable services in our Fall Newsletter!

The coming year holds special significance for our organization. In 2027, we will celebrate 20 years of our mental health clinic— a meaningful milestone that represents two decades of providing care, support, and hope to individuals and families in our community. As we celebrate this history, we are also looking ahead to the future and the opportunities it brings to continue growing and responding to the needs of the community.

Your generosity helps make this work possible. A gift of any size can help ensure that children have the strong foundation they need and that individuals and families can access compassionate, quality mental health care when they need it. Your generous donations may support Smart Love's mission and purpose in a variety of ways that may include scholarships to help offset counseling and tuition costs for families, teaching and therapist training stipends, parent support programs. The leadership team and Smart Love Board oversee the careful stewardship of these gifts to ensure they maximize community impact.

We are especially excited to celebrate this milestone at our 20th Anniversary Gala on April 30, 2027, at The Ivy Room in Chicago. We hope you will save the date and join us as we celebrate 20 years of the clinic and look ahead to its future.

Thank you for being part of our community and for supporting the work we do. We are truly grateful for your generosity and for the many ways you help us continue to serve children, families, and individuals in our community.

With Gratitude,



Carla M. Beatrici, Psy.D.
President & Clinical Director



Kelly Perez
Vice President & Preschool Director

| Diversity and Belonging

Caring for Our Smart Love Community

At Smart Love, one of our core principles is helping everyone feel valued, respected, and cared for. We believe that principle extends beyond the families and students we serve—it includes every member of our Smart Love community.

Our Belonging Initiatives are designed to help staff feel connected, valued, and cared for. Because our work is centered on caring for others, we believe it is equally important to care for the people who do that work every day. We create opportunities for staff to build connections, nurture their well-being, celebrate one another, and make space to care for themselves, too.

Sometimes, belonging is created through the simple act of showing someone that they matter. We take an interest in



Yesenia Garcia, LPC, Diversity and Belonging Co-Coordinator

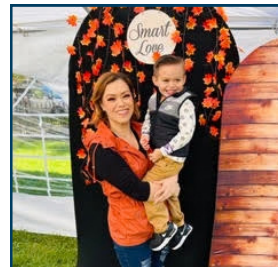
our staff members' lives and celebrate the milestones that are meaningful to them—from birthdays, weddings, and baby showers, to other moments worth celebrating. These shared celebrations help create a workplace where people feel seen, supported, and genuinely connected to one another.

We also look for creative ways to bring people together outside of their everyday responsibilities. Each year, our staff gathers for an annual celebration where employees can bring their loved ones and enjoy time together outside of work. Throughout the year, we make room for fun and

connection during the workday, too, with activities such as guessing games, team competitions, our February Smart Love Self-Care Challenge, and March Madness competitions—with plenty of friendly competition and prizes along the way!

We're continually finding new ways to strengthen our culture of belonging. Our goal is to create a workplace where every

person feels included, valued, represented, connected, and genuinely cared for—because the people who care for others deserve to experience that same care themselves.



| It Takes a Village

Bringing Smart Love Parent Support Into the Community

Our community work continues to grow! Building on our It Takes a Village Parent Support Program, which we launched more than 10 years ago, we've expanded our partnerships with local agencies to reach families we might not otherwise see in our clinic—especially families who are marginalized, under-resourced, and underserved.

We are deeply grateful to the Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park Township (CMHB) for its grant and resource support, and proud to partner with New Moms, Hephzibah Children's Association, The Infant Welfare Society's Children's Clinic, and WonderWorks Children's Museum.

Together, we're bringing

Smart Love's knowledge, support, and trauma-informed approach directly into the community. Here's a snapshot of our work:

Parent & Child Support Groups

We lead monthly parent support groups at New Moms, a nonprofit organization that supports young mothers and their families through housing stability, job training, and family support services.

We also lead monthly parent and child support groups through Hephzibah's Intact Families Program, which serves families involved with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and provides support designed to strengthen parenting skills and help families remain safely together.

Many of the families we meet are navigating significant stressors, including economic hardship, single parenthood, and the ongoing effects of racism and systemic inequities.



Paula Ciccarone, Ph.D., *Director of Community Parent Programs*

Our trauma-informed approach helps build trust, offers hope, and gives parents practical tools to strengthen their relationships with their children.

Workshops & Seminars

We offer free online and in-person programs for parents and caregivers, including family-friendly events at WonderWorks. Recent and upcoming offerings include “The Normalcy of ‘No!’: Celebrating and Managing Your Toddler’s Healthy New Superpower,” as well as our

rotating Smart from the Start parenting workshops for every stage of childhood, including new and expectant parents.

We also offer informal, one-hour Parenting Conversations, such as our upcoming “From Homework Hassles to a Love of Learning.” These programs are open to the public, and we’d love to see you there! Visit our website to learn more and register.

Training for Caregivers

We support foster parents through Hephzibah’s Foster



Kaelyn Pineo, LCPC, Community Partner Specialist

Families Program, providing practical tools for navigating challenges and strengthening caregiver-child relationships.

We also train staff in Hephzibah's After School program to help create supportive, positive environments for more than 800 local children and the adults who care for them.

The response has been incredibly encouraging

Among surveyed participants, 100% reported feeling satisfied and supported,

learning new information, and feeling more connected to others. Many parents return for additional support, sometimes bringing friends along to share the Smart Love message.

One parent told us, "I never thought about my child's point of view this way— this really helps me and makes me feel like everything I do as a parent is so important!"

Another parent simply said, "It feels good to know I'm not alone."

And one child perfectly captured the experience by asking, "It's already over? Aww."

There is still so much work to do

We're energized by the growth of our community programs, while also recognizing how much more support families need. Parental stress remains high across the nation, and parents need and deserve support that is accessible, practical, and responsive to the realities of their busy and often stressful lives. It truly

does take a village to support healthy, happy families. Your generosity helps make that village stronger.

Because of your support, we can bring Smart Love's knowledge and compassionate approach beyond our clinic and into the community— meeting parents where they are and helping them feel more confident, connected, and supported.

Thank you for helping us make accessible support for parents a reality.



Christina Carper, MA, New Moms Group Co-Facilitator

| Committee on Racial and Social Equity

Continuing to Learn: Committee on Racial and Social Equity at Smart Love

Several years ago, we created the Committee on Racial and Social Equity (CORSE), a regular training series designed to help our clinicians continue developing their skills in cultural humility and deepen their understanding of the diverse experiences, identities, and perspectives of the families we serve.

Our CORSE Mission

At Smart Love Family Services, we value the healing power of relationships. We are committed to ongoing learning about racism and oppression and recognizing their impact on all of us. We believe it is important to be intentional about creating a culture of inclusion and belonging— both among our colleagues and within the broader community we serve—that celebrates our differences

and uniqueness while recognizing our shared humanity.

Through CORSE, our clinicians have ongoing opportunities to learn, reflect, and engage in meaningful conversations about race, culture, identity, and social equity. This continued learning helps us approach each family with curiosity, respect, cultural sensitivity, and an openness to understanding their unique experiences— so that we can provide thoughtful, responsive, and high-quality care to every client.

We are grateful for the opportunity to learn from experts in the field who bring their knowledge and experience to our Smart Love community. This past year, Dr. Karen Thames from The



Julia Wright, LCSW, Leader of Smart Love's Committee on Racial and Social Equity

Juniper Center led several excellent trainings on implicit bias, including the importance of recognizing and regulating our own biases when working with clients. Dr. Hector Torres from Colibri Counseling provided invaluable training on delivering culturally sensitive and informed care to our LGBTQ+ clients.

We are proud to continue creating opportunities for our clinicians to learn and grow. We know that cultural humility is an ongoing practice, and we are committed to doing that work together so that every family who comes to Smart Love feels respected, understood, and welcomed.

| Program Updates

Full-Day Preschool Is Here!

We are excited to announce the introduction of our very first Preschool Full Day program! After receiving many requests for an extended preschool day from parents, we're thrilled to offer classes until 4:30 pm, Monday through Thursday, expanding our preschool day by over 2 hours.

Prior to launching our Full Day program this fall, we piloted the program with three children last spring. At Smart Love, the most important criteria for preschool is that children love it and can't wait to return each school day. With this in mind, we shaped every aspect of the Full Day program through our Smart Love lens and found that the children still wanted to stay even after 4:30 pm! With this result and feedback from children, parents, and teachers alike, we decided to offer it as a

part of our entire program this year.

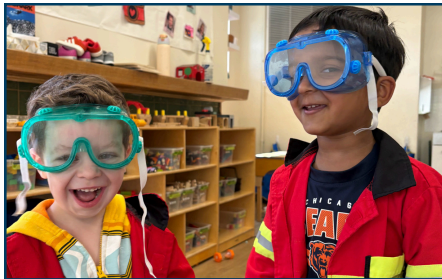
We are happy to report that the Full Day program has been received with enthusiasm! With a strong teacher-to-child ratio and a program designed to meet children's emotional, social and physical needs, it's meaningful that even after eight hours of school, these children asked to stay longer. Their eagerness to remain at

school speaks to how happy and connected they feel— clear evidence that the positive effects we saw in our pilot program are continuing over time.

The Full Day class includes additional magic basket (curriculum) projects created uniquely for Full Day children, additional outdoor exploration, and extended time

with Smart Love teachers, which is absolutely the best!

We are so grateful to our entire community for the opportunity to offer our Full Day program and spend even more time helping children experience the joy of school and learning through play, while strengthening their confidence, relationships, and emotional and social well-being.



The Natalie G. Heineman Smart Love Preschool
Where school is fun and learning is enjoyable.

| Continued Education

Teacher
Training &
Mentorship

When it comes to the Smart Love approach, we don't just talk the talk—we walk the walk by offering comprehensive and ongoing teacher training second to none. Training and mentorship directly provided

by Smart Love's Vice President and Preschool Director, Kelly Perez at Smart Love includes:

- Weekly:
 - One-to-one Smart Love training during the first year on staff
 - Team meetings for each classroom
 - Review of teachers' written observations in consultation with Dr. Martha Heineman Pieper
- Newsletter publication consultation for each classroom
- Curriculum consultation for each classroom
- Ongoing consultation to foster parent communication through the smart love lense
- An open door policy to provide teachers with ongoing access to support
- In-classroom support, modeling, and

individualized feedback from Director of Training, Maddy Perez

- 15 clock hours of DCFS in-service training annually
- Biennial pediatric CPR & first aid training

We are fortunate to provide such extensive professional training and are delighted to introduce our dedicated and exceptional staff:



Ashton Amsden,
Administrative Coordinator



Kaylee Belletynnee,
Teacher



Emma Church,
Teacher



Elizabeth Griffin,
Teacher



Caren Jurina,
Teacher



Kailey McMahon,
Teacher



Kelly Perez,
VP & Preschool Director



Maddy Perez,
Director of Training



Olivia Rogers,
Teacher



Stephanie Stoffel,
Teacher

| Clinical Training

Welcoming Our New Training Class: Investing in the Future of Smart Love



Marian Sharkey, Ph.D.,
Director of Training



Kari Terrill, Psy.D.,
Assistant Director of Training

At Smart Love, we believe that one of the most meaningful ways to strengthen the future of children and families is to invest in the next generation of therapists.

Each year, Smart Love offers a year-long clinical training program for master's- and doctoral-level students in psychology, counseling, and social work from a range of Chicago-area universities. Our trainees receive in-depth education in Intrapsychic Humanism psychotherapy, the approach at the heart of Smart Love's clinical work, along

with intensive supervision, hands-on clinical experience, and support as they develop their skills as therapists.

We are committed to providing our trainees with the highest quality training and mentorship as they prepare to serve children and families in their own future work.

We also recognize that our trainees are graduate students who are balancing demanding academic programs with their clinical training. With support from our donors, we are able to provide small training

stipends to help make this opportunity more accessible to students. Your generosity helps us not only train excellent therapists today, but also carry the Smart Love approach forward to the families who will need it in the years ahead.

We are delighted to introduce

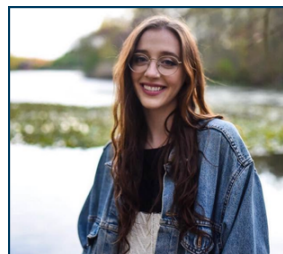
this year's training class! Please join us in welcoming these emerging clinicians to Smart Love. We're excited to support them as they learn, grow, and begin their journeys as therapists. We look forward to seeing the many children and families they will touch through their work.



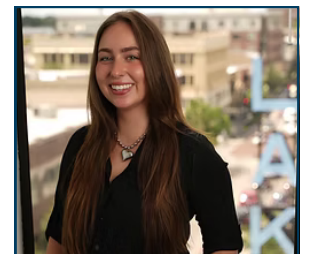
Darcy Barkal, pursuing a
Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling & Master in Sport & Human Performance at Adler University.



Grace Melon, Pursuing a
Master's of Education in Community Counseling at Loyola University.



Allison Nash, Doctorate
Candidate in Clinical Psychology at Roosevelt University



Jane Wilkie-Ashner, Pursuing a
Master's of Social Work at University of Chicago.

| Natural Learning

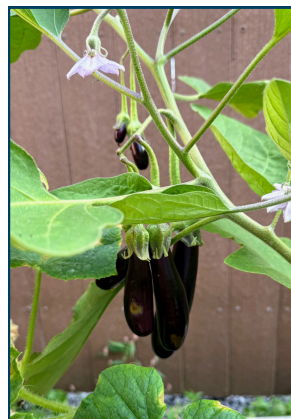
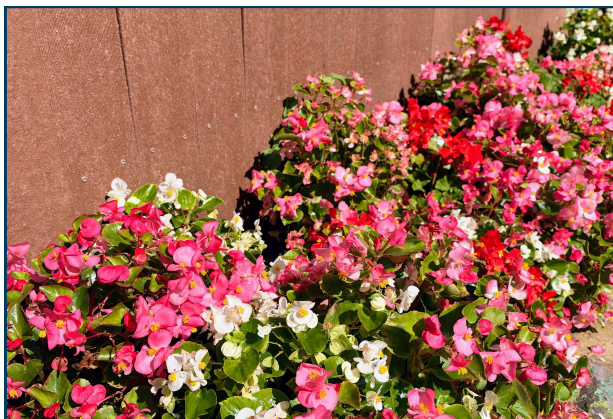
Preschool Garden Program

From tiny seeds and starters planted in late springtime, to an abundant autumn harvest, our garden has provided our preschoolers with exploration, knowledge, and delight! From May through October, our preschoolers have been enthusiastically involved in planting, watering, and observing the garden. Like the children, there is so much meaning in how giving exactly what each plant needs promotes flourishing growth, how analogous it is to what we do with the Smart Love approach and the children.

This year, our gardening enthusiasts have been excited to grow and enjoy munching on strawberries, blueberries, kale, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, melon, cherry tomatoes, celery and even some unusual combinations such as pineapple sage and Queen of

the Night tomatoes! Our greenhouse extends our growing season with cooler weather tolerant plants such as spinach, leaf lettuce, herbs and arugula.

When children have hands-on experience with all the fun of the garden, they are curious and exposed to the symbiotic relationships of plants and animals, solar energy, plant life-cycles, food and nutrition, photosynthesis, environmental stewardship and ecological awareness. The key is bringing the garden in a Smart Love way where the meaning of exploration and discovery is filled with joyful inspiration-leaving the children eager to learn more.



| New Roles

Meet Our Parent Engagement & Support Specialist

Smart Love Family Services recently created a new role, Parent Engagement and Support Specialist, to provide additional support to the parents who entrust us with the care of their children through our therapy services.

Learn more from Ilinka Novakovic, LCSW:

In my role as the Parent Engagement and Support Specialist, I have the privilege of welcoming new parents to Smart Love and helping them feel informed, supported, and confident from the very beginning. I provide parent orientations and guidance to help families understand how Smart Love therapy works, why our approach is effective, and how they can support their child's progress while also finding greater enjoyment and confidence in their own parenting.

“I have tremendous respect and admiration for parents who seek help for their children—and for themselves.”



— **Ilinka Novakovic,**
Parent Engagement & Support Specialist

I have tremendous respect and admiration for parents who seek help for their children—and for themselves. It is a privilege to meet families with that same level of care, respect, and commitment. Parents entrust their children to our care, and I want them to know that we recognize the significance of that decision and never take it lightly.

As both a therapist and a parent, I have a deep appreciation for the unique insights Smart Love offers into child development, parenting, and emotional well-being. It is deeply gratifying to see the positive impact these uniquely optimistic and effective principles can have on both children and parents.

The Piepers, authors of Smart Love, encourage parents to use their heads while following their hearts. I embrace this same philosophy in my work with parents, helping them feel more confident, connected, and supported as they navigate the joys and challenges of parenting—and build happier, more fulfilling relationships with their children.

| Giving Back

Share Our Spare Diaper Drive!

Share Our Spare helps provide the essentials for underserved children ages birth through five in the Chicagoland area. Smart Love Preschool has been a great supporter of this organization in the past and we are so very grateful to our preschool alumni parent, Christa Chavez Martay, who serves on their board and invited us again this year to join in the cause to raise awareness and address this important need in our community.

One in two American families with children experience

diaper needs. This public health crisis has lasting impacts that cause physical and emotional harm. Many families report skipping meals to afford diapers and leaving their child in soiled diapers for longer than advisable, putting children at risk. Diaper need can even affect preschool attendance, causing parents to be absent from work and children to forgo early education.

After reaching out to the Smart Love community for their support, we were thrilled to be able to collect over 1,600 diapers through our campaign! We are so grateful to everyone who helped to make this campaign a success and ensure that local families have access to the essential resources every child deserves.



| Milestones

Celebrating 25 Years of Intrapsychic Humanism!

The Intrapsychic Humanism Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing professional continuing education programs on Intrapsychic Humanism— the therapeutic approach at the heart of Smart Love— is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2027!

To mark this special milestone, we invite you to join us for a celebratory luncheon, professional development program, and public lecture, co-sponsored by The Chicago School and Smart Love Family Services.

Our featured program is: “Caregiving That Helps Children Develop Inner Self-Worth and Builds a More Caring Society: Incorporating a Developmental Lens in Supporting Parents and

Join us for a celebratory luncheon, professional development program, and public lecture!

Saturday, May 15, 2027
The Chicago School

Caregivers.”

Whether you are a mental health professional, parent, teacher, coach, nanny, or simply someone who cares about helping children thrive, we invite you to join us and discover how you can sprinkle a little Smart Love into your own caregiving relationships.

Come celebrate 25 years of Intrapsychic Humanism with us and leave with practical ideas you can put into practice with the children in your life!

To learn more or register, go to intrapsychichumanism.org.