

# Smart Love® Newsletter

## Helping Students Reach Their Potential in School



Since starting in 2019, Smart Love's Therapeutic Tutoring program has been growing steadily, with increasing enrollments and interest in the program. As a result, Smart Love has expanded its tutoring staff, which now includes four tutors.

Therapeutic Tutoring combines traditional academic tutoring in core subjects with therapeutic responses that help students in grades K-12 identify and acknowledge their emotions surrounding learning and school, leading them to be better able to focus on their studies. Smart Love tutors encourage students to engage in academic activities and are trained to listen and watch for when students express emotions about school or their homework. When children are able to identify and understand their feelings, it helps to alleviate the burdens of those emotions, freeing them so they are more available to learn.

We are seeing an increasing need for our tutoring services, especially due to the adverse effects on children's mental health caused by pandemic-related disruptions to school life. As Alison Pildner, Therapeutic Tutoring Coordinator, explains, "Children are still feeling anxious and many are falling behind academically." Even students who were never behind now find themselves struggling, which causes them anxiety. As a result, Smart Love's approach is even more in demand. Tutors work closely with students to set goals and find ways to achieve them; the child takes the lead and then the tutor works with parents and teachers to identify ways to support them. Alison describes the process this way, "The child tells you what they need, which informs how the tutor helps the child."

You can learn more about this effective approach to tutoring on our website at [www.smartlovefamily.org/smart-love-therapeutic-tutoring](http://www.smartlovefamily.org/smart-love-therapeutic-tutoring).

### Smart Love's Therapeutic Tutoring Team

We are excited to welcome new tutors to our Therapeutic Tutoring Team. Led by coordinator and tutor, Alison Pildner, the team includes Katie Majko, a special education teacher at a therapeutic day school who is beginning her second year as a tutor with Smart Love. New to the team is Emily Artinian who has been in the education field for four years, including at the high school level, and Jenna Jeon, who has experience teaching in Chicago Public Schools and is currently pursuing a Master's in Instructional Design.



Emily Artinian, M.A.



Jenna Jeon



Katie Majko, M.A.



Alison Pildner

Offering free trial sessions for new students!

**CONTACT US TODAY!**

773.665.8052 ext. 278

## PROGRAM UPDATE

# Smart Love Clinical Training Program Welcomes New Clinicians

Smart Love continues its long standing commitment of providing clinical training to students and recent graduates from area graduate schools in counseling, social work, and psychology. With demand growing for counseling services, we have recruited and are training many early career therapists to provide and sustain the very best in care and support to all who seek our services. In addition, we have strengthened our professional development program for all Smart Love therapists to ensure that their clinical work respects, incorporates, and responds to diversity factors and individual differences in their clinical work.

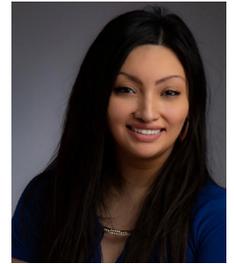
We are delighted to welcome Dr. Nieves Esquivel who recently received her doctorate in psychology from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology at National Louis University, Chicago. She joins us as the William J. Pieper Post-Doctoral Fellow and will be providing counseling in both Spanish and English as well as facilitating *Mi Familia*, a group for Spanish-speaking parents. We are also pleased to welcome several graduate students who are earning hours toward their master's degrees in counseling or psychology. They are Isabella Boccia, Christina Bolis, Dana Fenceroy, Kathryn Gadowski, and Haley Rosenthal.



Isabella Boccia,  
M.A. Candidate



Christina Bolis,  
M.A. Candidate



Nieves A. Esquivel,  
Psy.D.



Dana Fenceroy,  
M.A. Candidate



Kathryn Gadowski,  
M.A. Candidate



Haley Rosenthal,  
M.A. Candidate

## *It Takes A Village* (ITAV)—Kicks Off with New Program Year!

ITAV's 2022/2023 schedule has begun with groups meeting every other Saturday since August. On September 29, 2022 the ITAV staff provided a Back-to-School webinar, free to the community, where they offered insight into what it's like for children to return to school, discussed the feelings children may be experiencing with the changes in their routines, and provided advice to parents on best ways to respond to children so that they feel supported and cared for. The webinar was conversational in style which allowed viewers to get a chance to "meet" ITAV staff. The video is now available on our website in our Video Library ([www.smartlovetfamily.org/parenting-support-videos](http://www.smartlovetfamily.org/parenting-support-videos)) where you can also find other webinars on various parenting topics.

ITAV is Smart Love's free-of-charge support for families of color and is now offering monthly topics for the 2022/2023 program year to help guide discussions. Topics include fostering self-esteem, managing transitions, managing and interpreting difficult behavior, and coping with bullying, fear, and trauma. Smart Love's dedicated professionals lead Group meetings and provide a safe space for parents and youth to share their experiences, ask questions, and express their hopes.



**ITAV offers 3 groups that meet every other week:**

- *Finding Strength Together* for African American parents – Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
- *Mi Familia* for Spanish speaking parents – Saturdays from 1:15 to 2:30 p.m.
- *Youth Group* for children ages 6 to 18 – Saturdays from 1:15 to 2:30 p.m.

Find group dates and registration information here:  
[www.smartlovetfamily/fsp](http://www.smartlovetfamily/fsp)

## PRESCHOOL UPDATE

# Smart Love Preschool is Off and Running!



Our 2022/2023 school year is off to a busy start! We are excited to see so many families enrolling their children in our supplemental programs, such as Kindergarten, Extended Day, and Lunch Bunch – the most in our 12 year history!

### Curriculum Supports Gentle Transitions

Because preschool is often children’s first time inside a classroom, Smart Love Preschool goes the extra mile to ensure that children feel welcome and comfortable as they enter Smart Love’s doors. From drop-off to pick-up, the entire orientation process and school day is thoroughly examined through a Smart Love lens to ensure that the transition to school is positive. As Kelly Perez, Smart Love’s Preschool Director, explains, “We think about how children will experience their first days and then we tailor [our program] to that experience.” An aspect of this planning is our gentle separation policy where parents stay nearby in case their child needs them. Our activities, toys, and materials are designed and chosen not only to support children’s learning, but also to help them practice making choices about what to play with and who to play with. When they first walk into

the classroom, they are greeted by their cubby space and photos of their own family, introducing the first topic in the curriculum “All About Myself!” It’s a topic that children are already experts in and helps them learn about their classmates, which is the building blocks of community in the classroom.

### Teachers’ Relationships with Children are Key

The foundation of our approach to early childhood education is the relationship that Smart Love teachers cultivate with each child. It’s through this relationship that children come to understand that school is a place they want to be and, as a result, their love of learning flourishes. Our teachers are extensively trained to guide learning and enrich each child’s development. As Kelly articulates, “We are after the engine of trying and learning. Our approach is designed to be an ignitor to get the children engaged in learning by making the experience pressure-free and fun. It’s

about the effort, not the outcome. It’s about the learning process.”

Because children communicate their feelings and experiences through their behavior—we are able to evaluate our program by studying their behavior. Kelly explains the process this way, “We know our approach works because we don’t see children upset when they need to say goodbye to their parent. At the end of the day, children don’t want to leave, which tells us they are eager and excited to be at school—affirming our approach.”

Every month Smart Love Preschool hosts a Virtual Open House on Zoom where Kelly provides a slideshow filled with images of the classroom and the activities that take place inside. She also goes into further detail on how the Smart Love approach helps children to feel happy, confident, and curious at school—the formula for future school success. Register here: [www.smartlovefamily.org/open-house-registration](http://www.smartlovefamily.org/open-house-registration)

## Welcoming our new teachers!

Smart Love Preschool has welcomed two new teachers this year. Ms. Karen Hermach received her master’s in early childhood education from Concordia University Chicago after she earned her bachelor’s in business administration from Aurora University. She has a passion for teaching young children and has been working with children since 2014. Ms. Ashley Marchan received her bachelor’s degree in human development and learning from the University of Illinois at Chicago. For three years while in college, Ashley was a Child Life volunteer working with children at UI Health ensuring children’s emotional well-being through play and supporting families.



Karen Hermach, M.A.

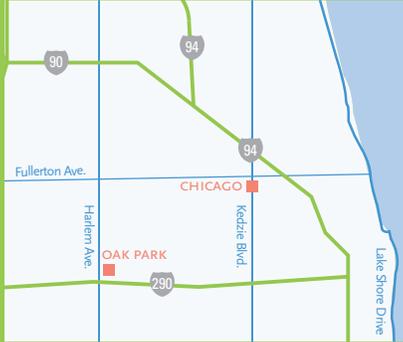


Ashley Marchan



# SMART LOVE<sup>®</sup> FAMILY SERVICES

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



## OUR LOCATIONS

Chicago • Oak Park



## TO LEARN MORE VISIT

[www.smartlovetfamily.org](http://www.smartlovetfamily.org)

[www.smartlovetpreschool.org](http://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

**SAVE THE DATE**

# Smart Love's Annual Benefit Gala

The Metropolitan Club in the Willis Tower  
March 10, 2023

## *In the Pursuit of Happiness* Webinars— 'Ask a Smart Love Therapist'

Our 2022/2023 webinar series is offering a new format providing parents an opportunity to ask questions and get answers from a Smart Love therapist. Instead of discussing one topic at a time, each webinar will focus on a developmental stage, allowing parents to get help with what they are experiencing at home. Over the past two years our clinicians have seen a significant increase in anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues for children due to the impacts of the pandemic. This format will let parents address specific issues and get answers in real time.

- Toddlers & Preschoolers – November 17, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.
- School-Aged Children – January 19, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.
- Teens – May 18, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

Our webinars are free and open to the public. Learn more and register here: [www.smartlovetfamily.org/smart-love-webinars](http://www.smartlovetfamily.org/smart-love-webinars)



Carla Beatrice, Psy.D.,  
Director of Clinical  
Services

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. ©2022