

Smart Love® Newsletter

SMART LOVE'S 2023 GALA

Celebrating 22 Years of Leadership



On March 10, 2023, we celebrated Smart Love's Founder, President, and Executive Director, Carolyn Stolper Friedman on her 22 years of leadership and service during Smart Love's Annual Benefit at The Metropolitan in the Willis Tower.

The elegant setting was the stage for an uplifting and joyous evening that resulted in Smart Love's highest grossing Gala, with over \$165,000 raised. The event proceeds will assist families in accessing Smart Love's counseling, preschool, therapeutic tutoring, and *It Takes A Village* support program for families of color.

Carolyn, who plans to retire this June, notes that the Smart Love community's incredible generosity is a testament to their commitment to our mission. "Support from the community is vital to sustain and grow any non-profit and Smart Love is fortunate to have such dedicated, loyal, and generous supporters."

To that end, this year's Gala was one of our largest both in attendance and also in volunteer participation due, in large part, to

our preschool community's involvement. All three co-chairs, Mari Fair, Jen Fisher, and Laura Tanaka, plus the auction committee were made up of preschool parents and as Carolyn asserts, "Their dedication to helping promote Smart Love and bringing it to more families shows how meaningful our approach is to them personally." Carolyn further explains that preschool parents experience firsthand how the Smart Love philosophy and approach has such a positive impact on their children and, in turn, influences their own parenting. The Smart Love approach comes alive in a very visible and relatable way to our Preschool community.

The evening featured our programs for parents, highlighting the primary reason Carolyn decided to start the organization two decades ago. Proceeds from the gala will be set aside in Carolyn's name to increase access for parents to services, such as parent coaching and counseling, *It Takes A Village* parenting groups, and In the Pursuit of Happiness online offerings.



PROGRAM UPDATE

Smart Love's Parent Guidance – Offering Real Change to Families

When Carolyn Friedman, Smart Love's Founder and Executive Director, discovered the Smart Love approach and philosophy, she was inspired to share it with the broader community. From the beginning, the aim of Smart Love Family Services has been to offer support to parents. Since then, Smart Love Family Services has worked with hundreds of parents providing insight into child development and guidance on how to nurture and strengthen happy and healthy families.

Jill, a parent of two children, came to Smart Love almost five years ago when she and her family were dealing with significant losses. Her oldest child is moderately autistic and he was struggling with anxiety and acting out in both physical and verbal meltdowns. It was impacting her whole family including her younger daughter. Jill turned to Smart Love not only to get help for her son and for her daughter, but also support for herself as a parent.

With the help and guidance from a Smart Love Parent Consultant, Jill gained insight about what her children's behavior was communicating. She learned different ways to respond to her children and how her care in turn helped them to navigate troubling or unhappy feelings.

"I started by talking about his feelings and then would move on to loving regulation. Providing him a choice, and a voice, and ownership, and autonomy has been really helpful."

With consistency and time, Jill began to see change. "My son comes to me almost always with his feelings if he's upset with me. He's great about telling his sister if he's upset with her. And I cannot honestly name the last time in terms of a physical meltdown that I've seen, or even an emotional one. He'll get upset, but for the most part he'll take time for himself on his own to just calm down. My daughter is also better at expressing her feelings and her anxiety has come down significantly as well."

Jill's time with her parent consultant offered a model for how to engage with her children, which in turn provides the model for how her children treat themselves and each other. "Being a single parent, struggling with different issues with different kids, [Smart Love] has helped me get up more times, and just keep going. It has brought a lot of peace to our house. I am super appreciative of their help."

New Parent Orientation & Support Program

Designed for parents of children in Child & Adolescent Therapy, our new *Parent Orientation & Support Program* provides multiple avenues for parents to receive support and insight into their child's therapy. Because parents are an essential piece in the therapeutic process, ensuring that they understand our process and structure and are able to get their questions answered in real time is a key component to their child's therapy. As Dr. Carla Beatrici, Vice President of Clinical Programs, explains, "It takes a lot of trust for parents to ask for help and to bring their children to therapy. We want parents to get to know us and understand how we uniquely

and effectively care for children so they can feel comfortable and confident in our process. And when parents are a part of the process, including getting support and guidance on how to help improve things at home, they can enjoy having a more successful, positive outcome for their child and their family. As the VP of Clinical Programs, I always welcome hearing from parents."

The multi-pronged program consists of:

- *Understanding Child and Adolescent Therapy*—Short videos with Dr. Beatrici and Dr. Michael Zakalik, Clinical Supervisor, answering frequently asked questions about Smart Love's philosophy and approach.
- *Monthly Q&A Webinars with Dr. Beatrici*—Parents can ask Dr. Beatrici specific questions about our approach and receive immediate feedback. Parents are welcome to attend as many webinars as needed.
- *Parenting Sessions*—One-on-one consultations with one of our parenting counselors.
- *Parenting Tips*—Access to our many resources and information found on our website.

For more details on the program, visit www.smartlovetfamily.org/parent-orientation.



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

The Annual & Program Fund

Smart Love is deeply grateful for the generosity and dedication of all the individuals, foundations, and businesses who contributed to our 2022–2023 Annual & Program Fund.

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Our deepest thanks to all who so generously contributed to our 2023 Gala!

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PRESCHOOL UPDATE

Smart Love Summer Camp Creating Curriculum That Sparks Curiosity

Smart Love Preschool is gearing up for another summer of fun with our camp programs for Playschool for 2s & 3s and Preschool (ages 3 to 6) students. The children experience our play-based curriculum both indoors and out, with a specially designed curriculum that keeps them playing, exploring, and learning in a day camp setting. But summer camp at Smart Love isn't only about heading outside to play. It's much more!



Smart Love's summer curriculum is unique among summer camp programs in that it is an extension of our regular early childhood education programming and is taught by Smart Love teachers. The process starts with Smart Love teachers' knowledge of their students; they consider the age range of their group of children and their accompanying attention spans. From there, they focus on selecting activities that will stimulate the children's curiosity.

Weeks before camp Smart Love teachers and Kelly Perez, Smart Love Preschool Director and Vice President of Education Programs, meet to discuss ideas for activities and utilize Smart Love's curriculum database. The teachers work together and collaborate to refine the activities, even testing them out beforehand to anticipate how they will work and adjusting as needed.

Kelly and the teachers then meet weekly to discuss the curriculum and consider what they've learned from the children's experience. This makes Smart Love's curriculum development an ever-evolving process, with teachers learning not only from each other but also from the children themselves. "When the children play, the teachers learn from the children; they can see their curriculum ideas in action," says Kelly. It's a process that benefits both the teachers, who garner valuable experience developing the curriculum, which is Continuing Education for them, and the children themselves.



Smart Love Preschool Graduates – Where Are They Now?

At the end of each school year there is much to celebrate—a year of fun-filled discovery, exploration, and growth. But every year Smart Love Preschool must also say goodbye to the children who have grown into kindergartners or elementary students. It is a bittersweet occasion as we will miss each child, but are excited for their learning journeys to continue.

To keep in touch with our alumni, we launched the *Where Are They Now?* campaign at the end of 2022. We reached out to the Smart Love Preschool alumni community to learn how their children are doing and the response has been incredible. As Kelly Perez, Smart Love Preschool's Director, explains, "To learn how the children are doing after they leave Smart Love only reaffirms and inspires our work!"

Neela S. (2011–2015) and Samir S. (2014–2015)

"I truly believe that Smart Love makes a difference for both children and parents. I felt like my questions and concerns about behaviors and development were met with a kind ear and practical guidance that resonated with me. I truly believe that both of our children were given the opportunity to grow and explore on their own terms at their own pace without judgment, empowering them to be curious."

—Neela and Samir's mother



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

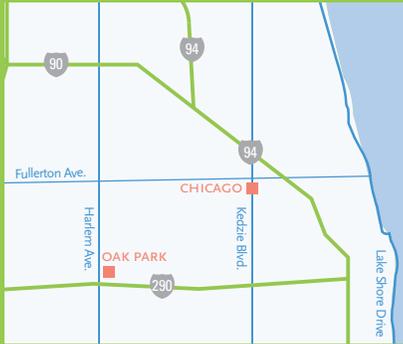


courtesy of Sarah Ewert

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www.smartlovetfamily.org

www.smartlovetpreschool.org

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- 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

Therapeutic Tutoring: A Teacher's Perspective



Emily Artinian, a Smart Love Therapeutic Tutor and middle school teacher, has seen first-hand how Smart Love's approach benefits both students and her teaching inside the classroom, helping students increase their confidence, abilities, and learning. As she explains, "The power of leaning into the social and emotional aspect of therapeutic tutoring helps tutors find ways to reframe approaches to work, homework, strategies, and skills." For example, if a student is avoiding their math homework or stopping mid-problem, a tutor can approach the issue from an emotional standpoint by saying something like, "I wonder if a part of you feels that it's too hard to do this right now." This allows for reflection and insight as to what may be causing the avoidance.

Another aspect of Therapeutic Tutoring is that it allows students to celebrate their progress in their own ways and on their own timetable. Emily describes this process as follows, "This can look like the transition from avoiding math like crazy, but then being willing to speak on why they are avoiding math, exploring ways to bring math in (games, practice, creativity), and then seeing glimmers of 'That wasn't so bad' or 'I'm glad I tried/worked through that!'" This is very different than a student's experience in the classroom, which is generally more structured and time bound.

Emily has also found that the Smart Love approach has strengthened her teaching in the classroom by helping her handle certain challenges or emotional outbursts in a smoother way. As she explains, "I have been able to listen and cater to students' needs within the classroom space in a more tender way with Smart Love's approach."

Working as a therapeutic tutor has given Emily an appreciation for the Smart Love approach and its effectiveness. "What is exciting is that you are able to see a level of comfort students reach in their learning where they feel it is okay to open up and share about their challenges," she says. From there, therapeutic tutoring is able to bridge the gap outside of the classroom, with the student, tutor, parents, and teachers working together so that the student can feel successful in and out of school. This is an experience Emily describes as "rewarding in so many ways for so many people."

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