



SMART LOVE[®]

NEWSLETTER

SMART LOVE'S 2024 ANNUAL BENEFIT GALA



Looking Forward

On March 10th nearly 200 guests gathered to celebrate Smart Love's 2024 Annual Benefit Gala, an event filled with energy and excitement. Co-chaired by Smart Love Preschool parents Katie Dixon Wohlgenant and Christa Martay Chavez, the gala was held in the beautiful Ovation space in Chicago's West Town neighborhood and marked the welcome of Smart Love's new President, Lauren Joyce Hensel.

The gala featured a VIP cocktail hour, allowing guests the unique opportunity to mingle with Lauren and other Smart Love leaders while enjoying a special performance by Smart Love Preschool teacher Ashton McGregor and her husband, Phillip Amsden.

The formal program commenced with Dr. Katherine Knight, Chair of Smart Love's Board of Directors, introducing Lauren to the Smart Love community. Lauren conveyed sincere appreciation to all donors, sponsors, supporters, and staff, recognizing their contribution to the organization's achievements. She outlined her vision for Smart Love's future and unveiled Smart Love's new logo and branding, signaling a fresh chapter for the organization.



The keynote speaker, Kathryn Gadomski, delivered an inspiring speech recounting her journey from a preschool teacher at Smart Love Preschool to returning as a licensed professional counselor and therapist, thanks to the influence and inspiration of the Smart Love approach.

The evening also celebrated the dedication of Smart Love's staff. Kelly Perez, Vice President of Education Programs and Preschool Director, alongside Carla Beatrice, Psy.D., Vice President of Clinical Programs, brought all clinical and preschool staff to the stage, acknowledging their tireless efforts and incredible work.

Thanks to the generosity of sponsors, guests, volunteers, and donors, the Gala raised over \$180,000. There are many to thank for the success of this year's Gala, including staff and Smart Love Preschool parents who donated their valuable time and talents to help further our mission of promoting inner well-being, fostering closer relationships, and building happier, healthier lives.

Smart Love's Parenting Support for Hephzibah's Intact Families

Smart Love's Counseling Services monthly parenting support classes for families enrolled in Hephzibah's Intact Family Services program has been a success since launching last fall. The classes, led by Dr. Carla Beatrici, Vice President of Clinical Services, and Dr. Paula Ciccarone, Ph.D., take place at Hephzibah and include the families' children. (Smart Love counseling staff lead activities for the children during the classes.) At the meetings, Drs. Beatrici and Ciccarone discuss "loving regulation," the emotions behind children's behavior, and other parenting topics.

After seven sessions, both Smart Love and Hephzibah have been pleased by the success of the classes. In response to a survey, parents provided positive feedback, especially when asked about the importance of having a close, positive relationship with their child and its importance to a child's inner happiness. Parents also indicated that they felt more confident when handling parenting challenges. Hephzibah case workers have seen this progression firsthand, reporting that the families have made significant progress.

Another measure of the initiative's success is that families who have graduated from the Hephzibah



program want to continue coming to the parenting classes. Smart Love is looking for ways to create a bridge program for these families. Hephzibah has also asked Smart Love to expand their involvement with the organization. They will soon start monthly consultations with Hephzibah staff to assist them with their cases and integrate both organizations' missions.

For Smart Love, the Hephzibah partnership has been beneficial in several ways. It's provided an opportunity to do more community-based outreach, which in turn has helped attract new training students who value community involvement and want to gain experience working with diverse populations. Dr. Ciccarone describes the experience as follows, "It's been such a valuable experience and I hope the program continues to grow. Getting to work as a team and collaborate with other Smart Love therapists and the talented staff of Hephzibah and use each other's gifts and creativity in fun ways has been a joyful experience."



The Access Team, a new initiative launching in July 2024, will improve access to Smart Love's counseling services for both existing and new clients and increase collaboration among practice groups. Intake will be a component of the new program, with the Access Team acting as an entry point into Smart Love Counseling Services and gathering information about a client's needs and referring them to the appropriate practice area. The team will also focus on building relationships with other agencies, social service providers, and schools.

Smart Love Counseling Expands Its Reach

The team will include staff from administration, clinicians, and interns, along with Laura Bentley, Clinical Coordinator. Smart Love's Counseling fellows and interns will play a key role in this initiative because of their knowledge of recent developments in the field of mental health and their familiarity and savviness with social media platforms. This knowledge will enable them to reach varied audiences and support Smart Love's marketing efforts.

Laura summarizes the impetus for creating the Access Team as follows, "It's our effort to care for people, besides a way to set certain ideas into action. The team will help us determine not only how we make sure we meet the needs of those who would benefit from our services, but also how we take care of our staff so that they feel supported and can do their best work."

The Annual & Program Fund

Smart Love extends sincere appreciation to all the individuals, foundations, and businesses who showed generosity and commitment by supporting our 2023-2024 Annual & Program Fund.

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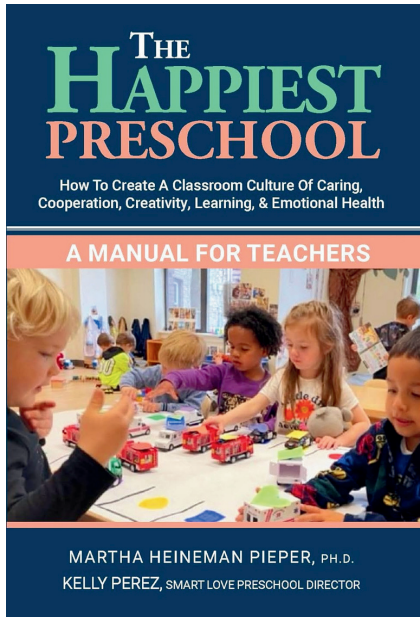
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The Happiest Preschool Explains the Smart Love Approach to Early Childhood Education



The Happiest Preschool has garnered positive feedback from reviewers, such as Publisher's Weekly, which called the book "a positive, persuasive resource guide filled with practical advice, big-picture thinking, and helpful scenarios . . . for calm, productive classrooms for years to come." The book has also been endorsed by Arne Duncan, former U.S. Secretary of Education and CEO of Chicago Public Schools, and by Dan Gartrell, author of *The Power of Guidance: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills in Early Childhood Classrooms*. In addition, Dr. Pieper was interviewed by Deepa Fernandes on NPR's *Here & Now* to discuss the book, toddler development, and early childhood education.

The book discusses how Smart Love's positive classroom approach works and includes real-world

examples and explanations. Based on the experiences of the preschool teachers, who have implemented the Smart Love principles in the classroom, it explains how modeling positivity, kindness, the acceptance of feelings, loving regulation, and supportive relationships produces a classroom culture that is cooperative, caring, and sparks children's curiosity and love of learning.



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Smart Love FUTURES

with any feelings they may be experiencing as they begin to consider their future options.

Smart Love provides individualized attention which allows our counselors to build a distinct, one-to-one relationship with their student. This creates an environment filled with understanding of a student's needs, whether it be proper accommodations for students with disabilities to ensuring students find options in which they will thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Led by Smart Love's President, Lauren Joyce Hensel, who is a IECA Professional Member with International Designation, FUTURES is equipped to provide domestic and international students and their families access to current postsecondary knowledge, a positive, caring student-consultant relationship focused on a student's strengths, and a worldwide network of professionals.

Smart Love's newest offering - FUTURES - is now accepting clients both domestically and internationally. Our first clients come from Brazil, Columbia, and the Netherlands, including two student-athletes seeking to continue their careers at U.S. universities.

Our services provide personalized care and guidance to high school students during a pivotal time in their lives as they consider next steps after graduation.

Unique to Smart Love, FUTURES assists students in discovering the wide range of postsecondary possibilities from vocational and technical education to a four-year college program while also helping students





SMART LOVE® FAMILY SERVICES

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

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- Therapy for Children, Adolescents, and Adults
- Play Therapy for Young Children
- 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
- Smart Love Futures Postsecondary Counseling
- Psycho-Educational and Learning Assessments
- Customized Parent Consultation

Parenting & Community

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

Our Locations

Chicago & Oak Park



To Learn More Visit

www.smartlovetfamily.org
www.smartlovetpreschool.org
773.665.8052

Therapeutic Tutoring: New Services and Membership Plan



This fall, Therapeutic Tutoring is expanding its services to include specialized support for Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) students. This new offering provides high-quality academic tutoring and emotional support to help high school students navigate the rigor of these programs.

In addition to the AP/IB tutoring, we are also introducing a new membership fee structure to help make our services even more accessible. Families can now pay a monthly fee, which grants regular access to their tutor, additional monthly sessions, monthly parenting support, and, for high school students, two Futures sessions with a Smart Love postsecondary guidance counselor. This approach offers continuous, holistic support, fostering academic and emotional growth for both students and their families.

For more information, please email us at tutoring@smartlovetfamily.org or visit our webpage at <https://www.smartlovetfamily.org/smart-love-therapeutic-tutoring>.