

# Smart Love® Newsletter

## It Takes a Village



### Staff Team for It Takes a Village:



**Felicia Owens, Psy.D.,  
LPC, Founder**



**Daniece Townsend, M.A.,  
LPC, NCC, Facilitator**



**Silvia Rosman, MSW,  
Facilitator**



**Katherine Ford, MSW,  
Facilitator**



**Jessica Hudnall, M.A.,  
Facilitator**

Smart Love is pleased to announce the renaming and expansion of our Minority Family Program to *It Takes A Village* (ITAV). As a kick-off for ITAV, we invited families who've been participating in the program to join us as our guests for a day at Brookfield Zoo on June 12. More than 25 children and parents participated and their feedback has encouraged us to find more ways to bring the families together than just through their biweekly group meetings and individual sessions.

Remaining centered on the core of Parent and Youth Groups, Parent Coaching, and Individual Youth Therapy for families and children of color on the West Side and around the greater Oak Park area, ITAV represents a deeper focus on specific communities in response to requests

from program participants. While the Youth Group remains multicultural in focus, welcoming children of color from 6 to 18 years, there are now two Parent Groups.

Under the overall heading of ITAV, the program now has: *Finding Strength Together* for Black parents; *Mi Familia* for Latinx/Spanish-speaking parents, and our *Youth Group* for children of color from diverse racial and multiracial identities. We are really excited to help ITAV families go deeper into the questions and concerns that more specifically affect their individual personal situations than was feasible in the prior format.

Response from participating families have been positive and enables us to expand the reach of the program and offers the opportunity to

enhance Smart Love's efforts to build greater equity in local mental health care and increase our capacity to serve diverse children, parents, and families.

For the July 1 start of Smart Love's new program year, we have launched an expanded network of active partnerships with a wide range of school districts, social service agencies, public libraries, park districts, local media, and other organizations in order to reach more families.

Smart Love is delighted to expand a program in which we deeply believe and know will continue to move from strength to strength in the months and years ahead.

## PROGRAM UPDATE

# Summer Fun Exceeds Expectations!



Summer Camp at Smart Love Preschool was a huge hit! Thanks to the many families looking for a Smart Love experience for their children, our summer camp program was the largest ever and we were thrilled to have so many new and returning families and children engaged!

Per the new Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and U.S. Centers for Disease Control regulations, children and our vaccinated staff were able to safely be outside without their masks—which made it all the more rewarding to see the smiles on the children’s faces as they experienced our curriculum and had a great time.

Every week at Smart Love Summer Camp brought a new adventure for the children to discover. In the first week children explored the Mesozoic era and “Discovered Dinosaurs.” They were busy creating fossils with Play-Doh, designing dinosaur habitats, and painting a gigantic triceratops mural!

Outside of the classroom children became paleontologists and dug for bones before giving the dinosaurs a bath and a “proper” meal made up of grass and other treasures found in our backyard, all of which lead to some fascinating conversations about what dinosaurs ate!

The following week children swam in the ocean during the “Under the Sea” adventures and learned about sharks, orcas, sea turtles, whales... and goldfish! Through art explorations, children created their very own jellyfish, pufferfish, starfish, oysters, clams and sea shells. Our large outdoor sandbox became the seashore of course, filled with an abundance of seashells to collect and identify.

Our Garden and Nature program, a permanent fixture in all of our early childhood programming, blossomed during summer camp! Children eagerly looked forward to harvesting the fruits and vegetables that they grew from seed or young plants. Preschoolers and playschoolers observed the ripening of cherry tomatoes, blueberries and strawberries! The children were also excited to plant a vegetable and herb garden where all the plants were PURPLE: basil, cabbage, cauliflower, onions, carrots, peppers, eggplant and even purple green beans!

And while each week at camp offered a new theme, our specially designed classrooms brought joy and discovery at every turn. Children became chefs in our play kitchen, builders with our blocks and magna-tiles, artists at our painting station, engineers with our trains, and train tracks, and so much more!

Summer Camp is a time for exploration and discovery, and at Smart Love we help children explore their curiosity with confidence!



## New Grant Supporting Services for Diverse Families

Smart Love is honored to announce a grant of \$10,000 in support of our *It Takes A Village* program from the Women Leaders in Philanthropy (WLIP), a major giving group of the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation.

The WLIP has a distinguished history of making grants to fund a wide array of projects and organizations addressing critically important issues that affect Oak Park, River Forest, and adjacent communities. A completely volunteer-led initiative, WLIP sets its own priorities, invites applications from organizations in its focus areas, and conducts the entire proposal review and grantmaking processes.

Providing families of color with a supportive, culturally-sensitive, and engaging opportunity to learn, grow, and care together, ITAV is helping care for people who have long been disconnected from services and programs due to both a lack of customized programming and longstanding stigmas about seeking mental healthcare. Guided by a culturally diverse team of Smart Love clinicians, participants build peer-to-peer networks that carry on beyond the biweekly gatherings, empowering the Black, Latinx and multiracial families who are the focus of the program to build community, learn together, and find their voices about issues they face as they raise happy, healthy children.

Smart Love is deeply grateful for having been invited to apply for this WLIP grant, and all the more so for the thoughtful and careful stewardship that resulted in our award. We are honored to sustain our relationship with the OPRF Community Foundation and to deepen our services to all the communities it supports.



**OAK PARK-RIVER FOREST  
Community Foundation**

## COMMUNITY UPDATE

# Smart Love's Annual Benefit Gala was a Virtual Success!

On Friday, June 11, 2021, Smart Love Family Services held the second Annual Benefit Gala on Zoom—and it was a spectacular success! This year's event focused on Smart Love's initiatives to serve Chicago's diverse communities and included entertainment, speakers, silent and live auctions, and a paddle raise.

The evening's entertainment included mixologist Revae Schneider, an *Eater Chicago* bartender of the year nominee, who provided interesting and fun facts about spirits and cocktails as she demonstrated how to create 'The Generous Spirit Cocktail'. Funkadesi, Chicago's award-winning Indo-Afro-Caribbean music ensemble, delighted attendees with several great pieces of engaging music with videos, including one with dance cameos by Smart Love preschoolers, (both current and alumni) and children of staff members!

Dr. Carla Beatrici, Smart Love's Director of Clinical Services, reviewed how important our work has been during the pandemic and the ways our services provided crucial care to many children and families in the Chicago area. An important expansion of our efforts has been in our services for racially and culturally diverse families. Dr. Beatrici introduced Dr. Felicia Owens, Silvia Rosman, Katherine Ford, and Veda Simmons who offered moving testimony as to their work in our *It Takes a Village* program with Black, Latinx, and multiracial families.

Following the program, Bill Cospier, Smart Love's Director of Program and Resource Development, began the Live Auction with exciting trips as far away as Mexico! All the while our Silent Auction was open and filled with incredible prizes like live performances, jewelry, golf, and more! The Auctions were followed by the tremendous generosity of so many of our guests and friends in the paddle raise.

In every aspect, the event was a fantastic success! With over 100 guests logged in, we were able to raise over \$80,000 in funds!

Many thanks to our donors and to our Sponsor, First American Bank for their generous support of the important work we do at Smart Love.

We hope to see everyone (in-person) next year!



**Thank you to all those who so generously supported this year's Gala!**

### PLATINUM

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### GOLD

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## COMMUNITY UPDATE

### The Annual and Program Fund

Smart Love is deeply grateful for the generosity and dedication of all the individuals, foundations, and businesses who contributed to our Annual and Program Fund during FY 21.

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Ben W. Heineman, Jr.

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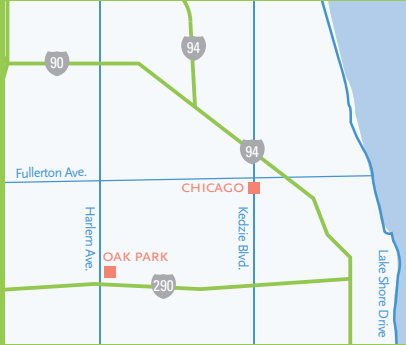
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# SMART LOVE<sup>®</sup> FAMILY SERVICES

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.smartlovefamily.org](http://www.smartlovefamily.org)  
[www.smartlovepreschool.org](http://www.smartlovepreschool.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

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

### PARENTING & COMMUNITY

- Parent Guidance and Counseling
- Webinars
- Publications and Resources
- It Takes a Village

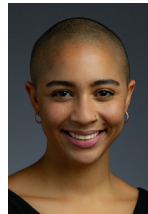
## Welcome New Staff

We are delighted to announce our new teaching team at The Natalie G. Heineman Smart Love Preschool! The team is in place caring for children enrolled in the largest class of summer campers to date. Our new team includes Sandie Gonzalez, a director-qualified educator with nearly 10 years' experience; Jordan Hicks, a preschool teacher with experience working with young children in a variety of settings; Glenny Perez, an assistant teacher who

will support classroom teachers where needed; Madelyn Perez, an experienced teacher in the toddler classroom; and Daisy Rojas, preschool teacher with five years of teaching experience. Supporting Kelly Perez, preschool director and Carolyn Friedman, executive director, is Mike Conway as administrative coordinator who has over 20 years of experience working with a variety of businesses in client service as well as in school settings.



Sandie Gonzalez



Jordan Hicks



Glenny Perez



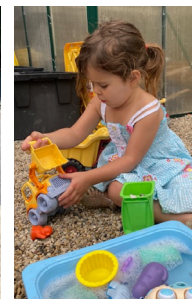
Madelyn Perez



Daisy Rojas



Mike Conway



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. ©2021