

Smart Love® Newsletter



Nurturing Mental Health during the Pandemic

Like everyone, Smart Love is impacted by the COVID-19 crisis that continues to cause havoc across the country. While the numbers in Illinois are starting to stabilize, the social and economic costs are still accumulating and their effects will likely be long-term.

This is powerfully true in terms of mental health and well-being. Many families have been significantly affected by multiple factors, from job and health insurance losses to worries about the future and the overall emotional toll of the crisis. Parents are anxious about their children's learning and the need to keep them safe while also earning a living. Children are suffering. They miss their friends, their teachers and their grandparents, as well as fun activities that are on hold. So many people are coping with loss, anxiety, fear and depression—and without care, many of them will experience sustained negative impact on their lives.

In the face of all these stressors, Smart Love is both honored and challenged to be responding to the community's needs and providing care for more children and families than ever before. We served nearly 1200 counseling clients in the

fiscal year that ended June 30, and our service figures continue to grow. In order to meet this demand, thanks to both our incredibly skilled and adaptable clinical team and the ability to provide telehealth services, we have extended our service hours and even added new clinicians to our staff.

Converting from an in-person model and bringing on new clinicians were the right choices—but doing so required significant investments of time and resources, just at a time when our capabilities were being stretched to their utmost. The generosity of our foundation, corporate and individual supporters has enabled us to rise to the challenges. The enthusiasm for our Virtual Gala in June and the response to our spring fundraising appeal enabled us to pivot swiftly to the current operating model, as different as it is from how things had been. Grants such as the one we received from the Illinois COVID-19 Recovery Fund through the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation have ensured that Smart Love has had effective and secure technical tools, staff training, and other essential equipment and supplies that have allowed us to sustain and even expand our services virtually.

The impacts of the community spread of COVID are many and continuing to be felt. Many parents and children are going to face ongoing mental health challenges and issues caused or exacerbated by the pandemic and all its complications. As much as all of us want this to be over, we have a ways yet to go. As of this fall, we are prepared for the possibility that we may well be providing counseling virtually for more months ahead. And even though our Preschool is now back on-site in Logan Square, any changes in the public health guidelines could require us to return to virtual teaching.

Our operating model demands flexibility from us so we can successfully serve all those who are depending on us. This is why the support from our donors and funders is so important. Their generosity helps us meet the ever-increasing requests for help and provide the best for everyone in need. Insuring our staff and organizational capacity to adapt and develop new methods and approaches means that Smart Love can and will be a vital and nurturing community resource for years to come.

PROGRAM UPDATE

Promoting Health Equity



As we seek to contribute to building a more just and equitable society, Smart Love is ramping up its efforts to directly address and grapple with issues relevant to our work and organizational life. Building on our strategic plan, we are examining all that we do and how we are structured to ensure we can better reflect and provide the best care for the entirety of the community we serve.

Progress is continuing on every level, but we are pleased to report some of the changes already in place or underway.

Having a racially/ethnically diverse clinical team is always something Smart Love strives to sustain. As a first step in a focused recruiting effort, we have recently welcomed a new therapist, Katherine Ford, MSW, who has been working with clients and in the Minority Family Program since July. And this fall we are seeking several additional diverse therapists to join the clinical team.

We are focusing additional efforts to reach Black and Latinx residents through new marketing initiatives, social media vehicles, and new collaborations with school and local religious institutions in and around our primary service area.

New Faces at Smart Love

We are excited to announce that we have added a new board member and welcomed several new counseling staff members

Robert J. Stone was elected to our board in February 2020. He has extensive business experience in marketing and sales after having worked for several engineering firms for over 30 years, most recently, Franklin Electric Europa. He has also served as a non-profit board member for several agencies that help adults with developmental and physical disabilities live as independently as possible.

In July, we welcomed several new staff therapists. Katherine Ford, MSW who recently graduated from Erikson Institute with a master's degree in social work. Joshua Ollswang, MA has joined our counseling staff after having trained with us last year as the Walter D. Miller Social Work Intern. He has master's degrees from both the University of Chicago and the European Graduate School in Switzerland focused on psychodynamic theory. He has been working with children and families for over 10 years including at the Harlem Children's Zone and Heartland Alliance Health.

We also welcomed a new trainee class in July that includes doctoral candidate Michelle Giuffre, an intern from the Clinical Psychology program at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, and Blaire Paulsen, currently working towards her M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Adler University.



Katherine Ford, MSW



Joshua Ollswang, MA



Michelle Giuffre



Blaire Paulsen

New Webinar Series: In the Pursuit of Happiness

Our newest community service program, *In Pursuit of Happiness* has been created by our clinical team to offer mental health information free to members of the public in response to the high rates of mental health distress in the Chicago area.

Senior clinicians, Dr. Michael Zakalik, Dr. Carla Beatrice, Director of Clinical Services, and Dr. Felicia Owens presented two webinars via Zoom earlier in the year to enthusiastic response from the public. These included was a very well-receiving panel discussion on how to talk to kids about race to a virtual audience of more than 100.

In September we delivered the first offering in the new series, **Preparing for a School Year Like No Other**, providing parents with knowledge,



tactics, and techniques for ensuring their children will have a positive learning experience during what will surely be a time of change and confusion for many—whether they're at school or learning remotely.

UPCOMING WEBINARS FOR 2020-2021 INCLUDE:

Distant Celebrations - How to Handle the Holidays during the Pandemic
Friday, November 20, 2020

Race Part II - How to Raise Children Not to Hate
Friday, January 22, 2021

Keeping Seniors Connected
Friday, March 19, 2021

Kids & Technology
Friday, May 21, 2021

Pre-registration is required for the 2:00 p.m. CST Zoom sessions.

Visit <https://www.smartlovetfamily.org/smart-love-webinars> to register.

PRESCHOOL UPDATE

Back in the Classroom!



Having implemented extensive health and safety protocols, the Natalie G. Heineman Smart Love Preschool re-opened at the end of August at our Logan Square campus for the 2020–2021 school year. We are delighted to welcome the children and families back.

Safeguarding the health and well-being of the preschoolers, their families, and our staff is our greatest concern. We have made numerous changes and adaptations that have affected some of the routines and required substantial investment of time and resources. But importantly, our core Smart Love curriculum remains in place to stimulate children’s learning. A longstanding hallmark of our approach has been helping children process their emotions, and during this unprecedented time, this is especially important.

To ensure the safest possible environment and to comply with state and city public health

and licensing standards, these changes have taken several forms. Among those has been construction of a new controlled-access inner door in the entry way at 2222 N. Kedzie to create an area where families certify their non-exposure to COVID risks, take and log temperatures, secure masks and sanitize hands and surfaces touched. These new protocols have now become a standard daily habit, the newness and sense of disruption has faded, and the focus is once again fully on the learning and fun of the Smart Love Preschool experience.

The teachers are making full use of the classrooms on the first and second floors, and maximizing every opportunity to be outside. The one element that hasn’t yet returned to 100% is the Preschool’s garden and nature curriculum. Due to the inability to tend and maintain the plantings, greenhouse and raised beds in the spring and summer when the school was closed,

we had to suspend the edible garden activities for the fall. Fortunately, though, our pollinator garden in the front yard has grown lush and verdant this year, with 25+ species of flowering plants that attracted everything from orioles and hummingbirds to bees, butterflies and a litter of baby rabbits. Over the winter, lead gardener (and Preschool teacher) Sarah Fink will work with the children on indoor gardening projects and learning about nature. By Spring, 2021, we hope to have everything in order for the edibles garden to be planted and operational once again.

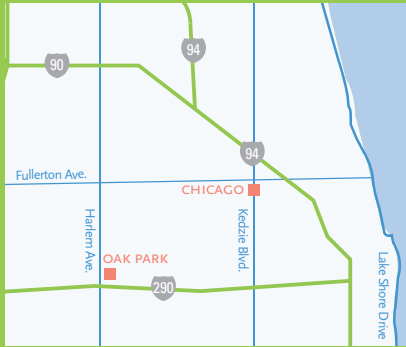
Smart Love is grateful for the incredible enthusiasm, patience, support, and resilience of the Preschool teachers and all the families. We look forward to seeing more of our friends and colleague once the COVID crisis has been resolved.



courtesy of Sarah Ewert

SMART LOVE[®] FAMILY SERVICES

Natalie & Ben Heineman Smart Love Center



OUR LOCATIONS

Chicago • Oak Park



TO LEARN MORE VISIT

www.smartlovetfamily.org

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
- Minority Family Program

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Natalie G. Heineman
Smart Love Preschool

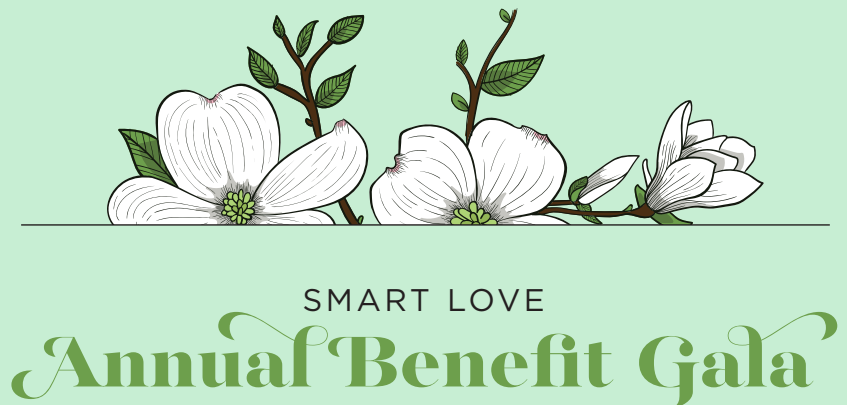
- Preschool and Kindergarten for Children 2-6 years
- Parent and Child Toddler Explorations for Children 12-36 months
- Toddler and Parent Play Times
- Summer Camp

LEARNING SERVICES

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

PARENTING

- Parenting Guidance and Counseling
- Parenting Seminars and Webinars
- Publications and Resources for Parents



SMART LOVE Annual Benefit Gala

**SAVE THE DATE
JUNE 11, 2021**

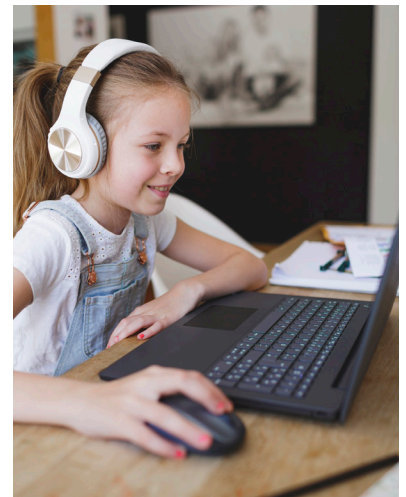


Therapeutic Tutoring— More important than ever!

Smart Love's Therapeutic Tutoring provides students with a uniquely effective blend of traditional academic tutoring within a therapeutic context—helping them understand and manage their feelings about school and themselves in order to improve their learning.

Therapeutic Tutoring is available virtually and we have immediate openings. Learn more here: <https://www.smartlovetfamily.org/smart-love-therapeutic-tutoring>.

For more information or to sign up for a tutoring consultation contact Julia Wright, LCSW at julia.wright@smartlovetfamily.org or 773-665-8052 ext. 225.



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. ©2020

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