



SMART LOVE[®]

NEWSLETTER

SMART LOVE OFFERS CHILD-FOCUSED SUPPORT WITH HEPHZIBAH PARTNERSHIP

Building upon its pilot program work with Hephzibah, an Oak Park-based social services organization, Smart Love continues its mission to help at-risk families and children build happier, healthier lives. We spoke with Dr. Pascale Moise about how Smart Love works with the children of families enrolled in the Intact Families program, which provides support families during times of crisis.

A unique feature of the program, which has helped over 60 adults and children, is that it *includes support for the children* while their parents attend their monthly parenting class led by Dr. Carla Beatrici, Vice President of Clinical Services, and Dr. Paula Ciccarone. In addition to the on-site staff and meals Hephzibah provides, Smart Love therapists conduct activity-based sessions with the children that are led by Dr. Moise, along with fellows Sydney Mesker, Kaelyn Pineo, and Shani Samuel. As Dr. Moise notes, "It's important for these families to be able to access childcare, which can be a barrier to attending parenting services and keep them from getting the help they need."

What makes these sessions so valuable is that they include a *therapeutic component*. The therapists engage with the children by leading discussions that match the topics being discussed in the parent group. The sessions generally start with an introduction so that the children can get to know each other. Therapists also lead a play-based activity, which give the children opportunities to share their feelings and experiences with the group. Examples include talking about sibling rivalry and creating a vision board for their summer.

Dr. Moise looks forward to Smart Love providing even more therapeutic support for the children. She has witnessed the positive effects of the program, which she describes as follows, "I've enjoyed seeing the children become more comfortable with opening up and engaging with the group because of the trust that develops and the care they receive, which speaks to the power of the positive relationship they can build with the therapists."

A survey of the program participants found that 90% of the children felt cared for and parents



reported that the program helped them to develop close relationships and feel more confident in handling parenting challenges.

"Because of the valuable support of our donors, Smart Love is able to make tangible impacts in the lives of children, parents, and families," explains Smart Love President, Lauren Joyce Hensel.

Smart Love Expands Hephzibah Offerings

Smart Love is starting seminars designed for Hephzibah's foster care program, led by a Smart Love fellow and intern. The seminars will give foster parents an opportunity to connect with each other and receive guidance and support for parenting foster children using the Smart Love approach.

Smart Love Launches Lunch & Learn Sessions for Hephzibah

Smart Love has started providing monthly consultations with approximately 18 Hephzibah caseworkers, therapists, and program administrators who work in their residential treatment setting for children ages three to 11, foster care program, and community outreach programs. The goal of the program is to provide support and guidance by helping the Hephzibah staff understand the unique benefits of applying Smart Love principles to support an accurate and compassionate understanding of children's and caregivers' needs in times of crisis.

Ilinka Novakovic, LCSW, a senior staff therapist and supervisor with expertise in child development and parent education, leads the sessions. She reports that the Hephzibah staff is eager to explore and understand how Smart Love can help them more accurately understand the constructive motives their clients have for support despite the hardships and trauma they have encountered.

Most importantly, Smart Love can help the Hephzibah staff understand the often puzzling behavior of children who respond negatively to therapy. As Ms. Novakovic describes, "We can explain that children's unhappiness, behavioral difficulties, and, at times, their rejection of positive care is a result of learned needs for unhappiness due to trauma and

show how to respond to unhappiness with compassion and care. As a result, children and parents will gradually come to prefer and accept the genuine care and support the staff provides."

Getting to share the insights Smart Love provides about human relationships is something Ms. Novakovic values in her work. As she describes, "It's wonderful to provide the hopefulness that Smart Love embodies about what's possible through constructive caregiving relationships. I am always delighted to offer these insights to others, especially other caregivers, mental health providers, social service, and child welfare workers who have similar caregiving ideals."

For information on Smart Love trainings, workshops, and consultations, email access@smartlovefamily.org.



Smart Love's Clinical Training Program Welcomes New Training Class

Our 2024/2025 clinical training program has commenced, welcoming four new members to our community. Over the course of the year, our training team will provide comprehensive theoretical and clinical training designed to equip trainees with the knowledge and skills needed to provide quality clinical care. As Dr. Marian Sharkey, Director of Training, explains, "We believe that in order for our trainees to provide good care for their clients, it is essential that they receive significant training and support." The program includes extensive supervision, clinical consultations, seminars, and professional development support to ensure interns and fellows are well-prepared and supported in their roles.

Join us in welcoming our new training class: Alec Bennett, Psychology Extern and doctoral student at the Illinois School of Professional Psychology at National Louis University; Maureen Powell, Counseling Intern and graduate student in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Adler University; Hope Robinson, Counseling Intern and graduate student in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Loyola University Chicago; and Shani Samuels, MSW, Social Work Fellow and recent graduate from the University of Michigan School of Social Work. "We are delighted to have a group of trainees who are so passionate about learning and committed to providing the best care for their clients," states Dr. Sharkey.



Alec Bennett
Psy.D. Candidate



Maureen Powell
M.A. Candidate



Hope Robinson
M.A. Candidate



Shani Samuels
MSW

Early Childhood Updates

Free Webinar – *The Happiest Preschool: Fostering Playful Learning and a Curious, Cooperative, Joyful Classroom*

Webinar Registration

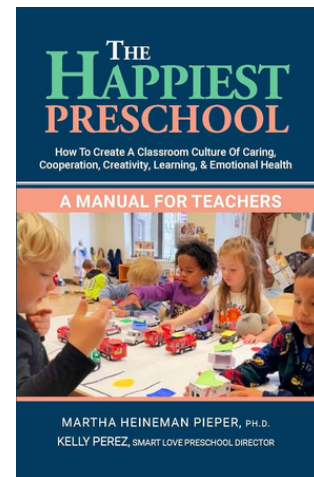


Thursday,
Nov. 7, 2024
1:00 p.m. CST

This fall Dr. Martha Heineman Pieper and Preschool Director, Kelly Perez, will present a webinar for early childhood educators based on their well-received book, *The Happiest Preschool*. Educators will learn how Smart Love’s innovative approach to preschool provides a progressive understanding of human development that makes it easier to teach, promotes children’s happiness in the classroom, and helps teachers feel good about teaching.

Topics will include social-emotional learning, classroom management, play-based learning that is truly play-based, the role of the teacher, and understanding and interpreting fantasy play. Kelly thinks that educators will be surprised to learn that a preschool doesn’t need extensive rules and regulations for children to learn, cooperate, or develop a close community with one another. As she explains, “Children are happier, and teachers can be more effective when the preschool experience feels as close to children’s development as possible.”

To purchase *The Happiest Preschool*, visit www.thehappiestpreschool.org.



The Happiest Preschool: Transforming Early Childhood Education

Childhood Education Innovations’ September issue features Dr. Martha Heineman Pieper’s article where she delves into the heart of nurturing a happy early childhood classroom. Scan the QR code to read it today!

Read the article



Smart Love Preschool - A Fantastic Beginning!

Smart Love Preschool’s 2024/2025 school year is off to a great start with 40 students overall including 13 new students and the addition of three new teachers to our preschool team. As Karen Hermach, Smart Love Preschool teacher shares, “I am thrilled to begin my third year here at Smart Love and I am really looking forward to teaching kindergarten for my second year. We have a fantastic teaching staff with many new and wonderful additions to the team. With our strong teaching team and amazing ratio of teachers to children, we have a unique opportunity to create and build strong relationships with all of the children using the Smart Love approach.”

To learn more about the *Natalie G. Heineman Smart Love Preschool*, visit www.smartlovepreschool.org.



Kaylee Belletynee



Elizabeth Griffin



Sophie May



Children in our Playschool classroom exploring the sand table.



SMART LOVE® FAMILY SERVICES

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

Smart Love Programs

Counseling Services

- 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
- 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.smartlovefamily.org
www.smartlovepreschool.org
773.665.8052

Applying the Smart Love Approach to Postsecondary Planning



The Smart Love Futures program offers high school students a unique and effective approach to postsecondary planning. Because this stage of life can often feel overwhelming for students, our postsecondary counselors help students address any emotions, such as anxiety, uncertainty, or excitement, as they explore their options for after graduation. Our approach offers validation and support, which is crucial as students begin to make important choices about their post-high school options.

One of the key strengths of Smart Love Futures is our emphasis on individualized support. Whether a student is applying to college, seeking scholarships, or exploring non-college options such as vocational training, apprenticeships, or gap years, Smart Love counselors provide one-on-one weekly guidance to support students as they consider the path that is right for them. By focusing on each student's strengths and offering a compassionate ear, our counselors help reduce the pressure students can feel during this transitional period.

Olivia Tinati, a Smart Love therapist and Futures counselor, describes how this approach made a significant difference for a student who was feeling overcome by the postsecondary process. "He was so overwhelmed, he was ready to dump the whole process, but after expressing how he felt, we helped him recognize his own goals and get back on track," she says.

Smart Love Futures' holistic approach ensures that all students can find a path that fits their aspirations and capabilities. The goal is to ensure that students feel supported and confident as they plan for their futures and aim to lead happier, healthier lives.