

Cheerful Helpers Child and Family Study Center



2022 2023

ANNUAL REPORT

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MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS

Reflecting on the 2022-2023 year there is so much to be proud of. Our school is flourishing and growing, and families are joining once again for events on-site. We have dedicated our beautiful building, welcomed Jaclyn Zeccola as our Clinical Director, and expanded our summer camp program to include Family Camp.

In addition to the school community, our BEIG team has provided our earliest intervention for several families, and we continue to look for new opportunities to serve children and their families.

Looking forward to the year ahead, we are so excited to celebrate our 65th anniversary! We are continuing to build our programs and add new support for families. We are in the early stages of providing community social skills groups on Friday and Saturday for alumni and community kids and we can't wait to see how these programs grow.

Because of the generosity and consistent support of our donors, we are able to keep growing and imagining more ways to provide resources to families and young children. Cheerful Helpers has always been a place of hope and growth, and our future plans hold this legacy in mind with the added goal of expanding our reach to a wider population. Keep an eye out for our "invisible string"

JANET UPJOHN, LCSW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JACLYN ZECCOLA, PhD
CLINICAL DIRECTOR

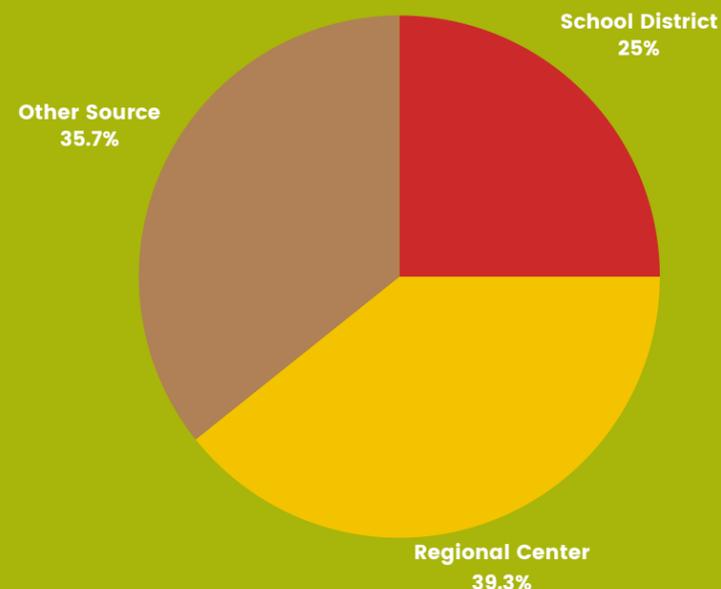
WHO WE SERVE

Celebrating 64 years of service, Cheerful Helpers helps children and families connect and grow. Since our inception, Cheerful Helpers has worked to provide hope to families with young children experiencing significant developmental, social, and emotional challenges.

This year, like every year, Cheerful Helpers had the privilege to work with children and families, each unique in their own way.

This year, we proudly served 28 families across all of our programs

Our families found us in different ways



For years, families have referred to Cheerful Helpers as "the best kept secret in Los Angeles."

Through different sources of referrals, we are working to be known far and wide!

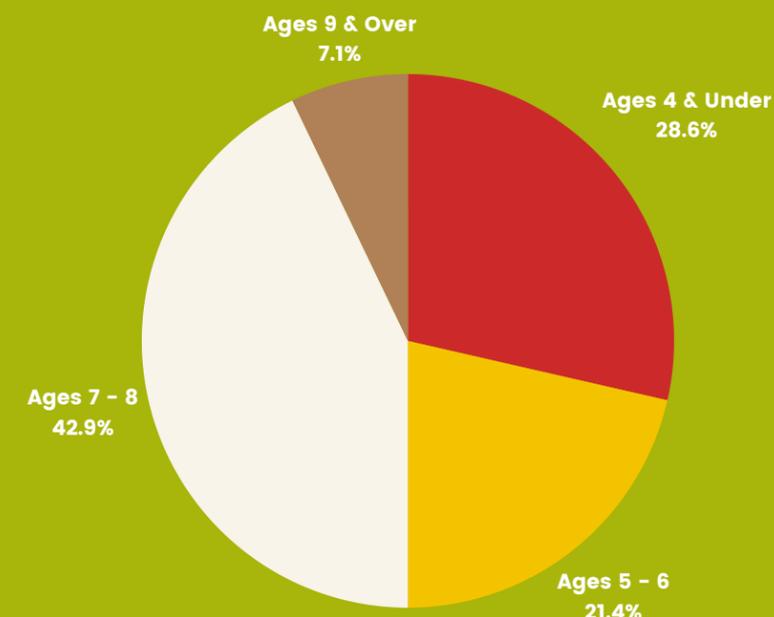


1 IN 22

children will be diagnosed with ASD by the age of 8 (CDC, 2023).

We recognize the importance of early intervention services that are beneficial to empowering families and their children's life-long growth.

We served a wide range of ages



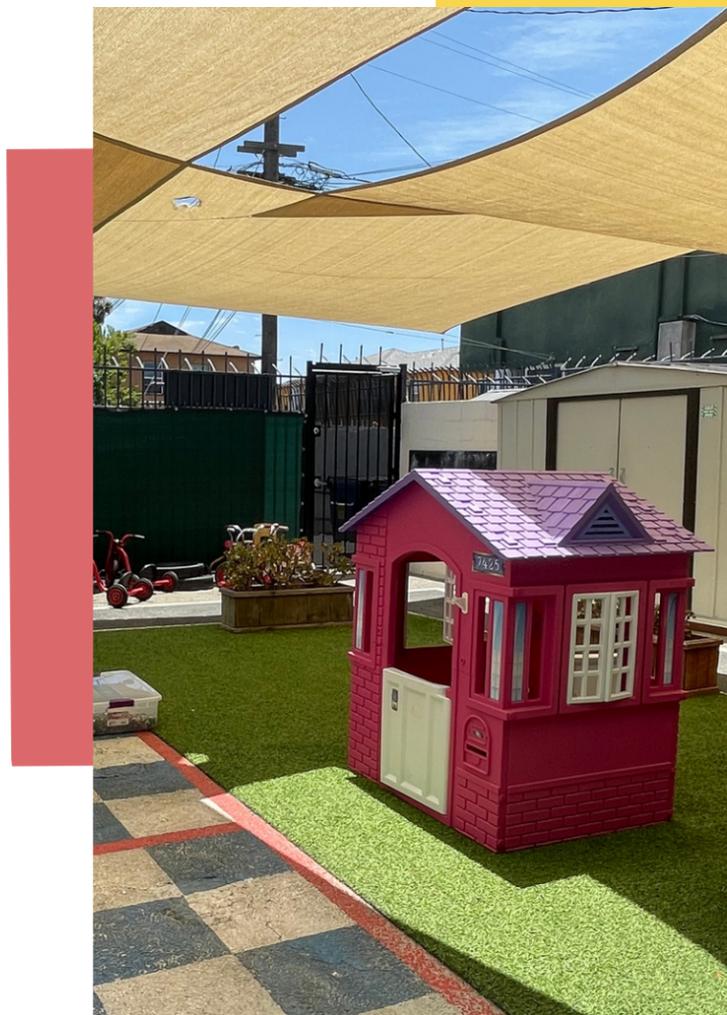
OUR PROGRAMS

THERAPEUTIC SCHOOL

Cheerful Helpers is a fully accredited non-public school serving children ages 3-10. Attending schools five mornings a week, children are under the guidance of our special education teachers and clinicians. The class curriculum follows the Common Core State Standards of education. This year, Cheerful Helpers proudly served 11 families in our Therapeutic School program. Throughout the school year, teachers were supported by licensed child and family therapists and student trainees, maintaining a small 2:1 student to staff ratio.

BRIEF EVALUATION AND INTERVENTION GROUP (BEIG)

At Cheerful Helpers, the Brief Evaluation and Intervention Group, known as BEIG, is often the first step for families. BEIG is a 15-week program designed for children ages 2-6. It is structured as a “parent-and-me” group in which both the child and the parent(s) attend the group twice a week. This year, Cheerful Helpers held the traditional length BEIG program and introduced a shorter, 8-week “mini-BEIG.” With a total of 3 rounds of BEIG, Cheerful Helpers supported 10 families facilitating the development of the tools necessary to support language, development, and interactive play.



SOCIALIZATION TRAINING GROUP

Socialization Training Group, also known as “Social Skills”, is a program that is hosted on-site at Cheerful Helpers. Through participation in Social Skills, children gain basic skills, such as sharing ideas and listening to others. These skills allow children to feel successful on the playground, in the classroom, and at home with family. Meeting twice a week, our school-based Social Skills group extends the school day. Students learn and practice lifelong social skills such as turn-taking, active listening, and conflict resolution. A second Social Skills group is open to Cheerful Helpers alumni students and children from our neighboring communities.

This group offers students the opportunity to attend Social Skills while remaining enrolled in their own school program. This year, Cheerful Helpers has provided approximately 180 hours of Social Skills!

PLAY THERAPY

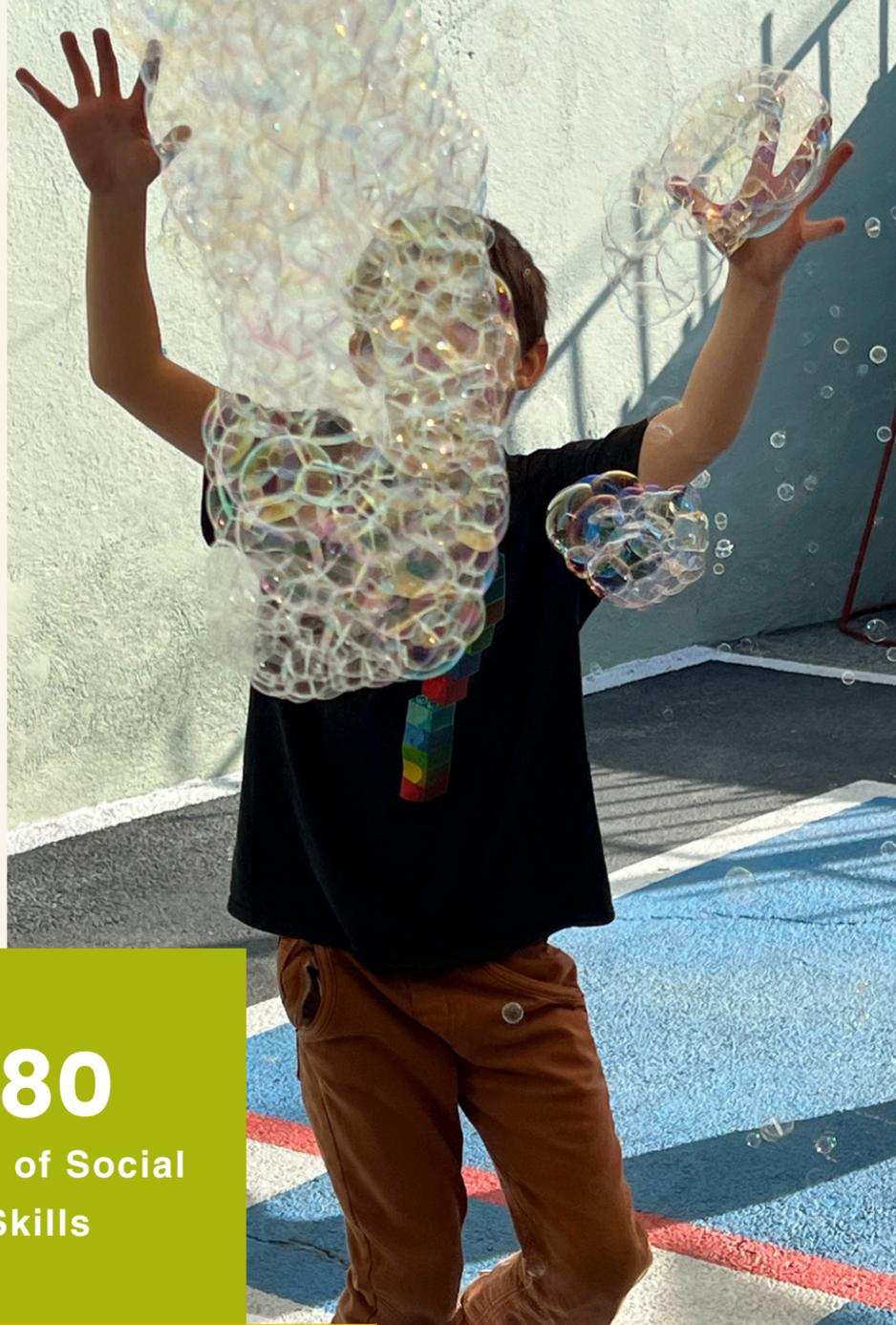
Cheerful Helpers' play therapy services are provided both to augment our therapeutic school and to support children from the community. Play Therapy allows children to explore and work through challenging aspects of their lives through symbolic play. In a comfortable and safe space created by a clinician, children use toys and other play items to express their emotions and share ideas that are otherwise difficult to express directly to others. Through their play and reflection, along with guidance from a therapist, children in play therapy can begin to heal from traumatic or distressing experiences, expand their self-expression, and develop coping skills.

OUR IMPACT

Cheerful Helpers services are family-focused. Each hour of service is carefully planned with each child's growth, enjoyment, and learning in mind. Working with the whole family, our services provide holistic support to parents while meeting each child where they are and according to their specific needs. First, we build a relationship with each child, by focusing on their individual interests and personality.

We are proud to provide a diverse array of both group and one-to-one services in addition to classroom activities so our students can have the school experience they deserve.

This academic year, Cheerful Helpers delivered approximately:



180

hours of Social Skills

4,000

hours of Classroom Services

250

hours of BEIG

145

hours of Play Therapy

EACH SERVICE AT CHEERFUL HELPERS AIMS TO MEET A SPECIFIC NEED FOR STUDENTS

"At Cheerful Helpers, this means working with students one-on-one and in groups to help build the skills for them to access their curriculum. Sometimes this means working on foundational skills like grip, visual motor coordination, or bimanual hand use and sometimes it means modifying the activities to be accessible to the student. Every OT session looks different!"

Etta Iannaccone
Occupational Therapist

2022- 2023 Highlights

The academic year 2022-2023 was a momentous one at Cheerful Helpers. This year brought many changes, new beginnings, and celebrations.

Cheerful Changes

Cheerful Helpers experienced a change in Clinical Directors this year with the hiring of Jaclyn Zeccola, Ph.D. Jaclyn was promoted following Mary Harris, LMFT's big goodbye. Jaclyn has provided tremendous stewardship of all Cheerful Helpers programs along with wonderful well-rounded and supportive supervision for interns and staff. A brilliant resource for all, Jaclyn consistently brings a new, positive perspective to the staff, encouraging all to serve our community to the best of our abilities.



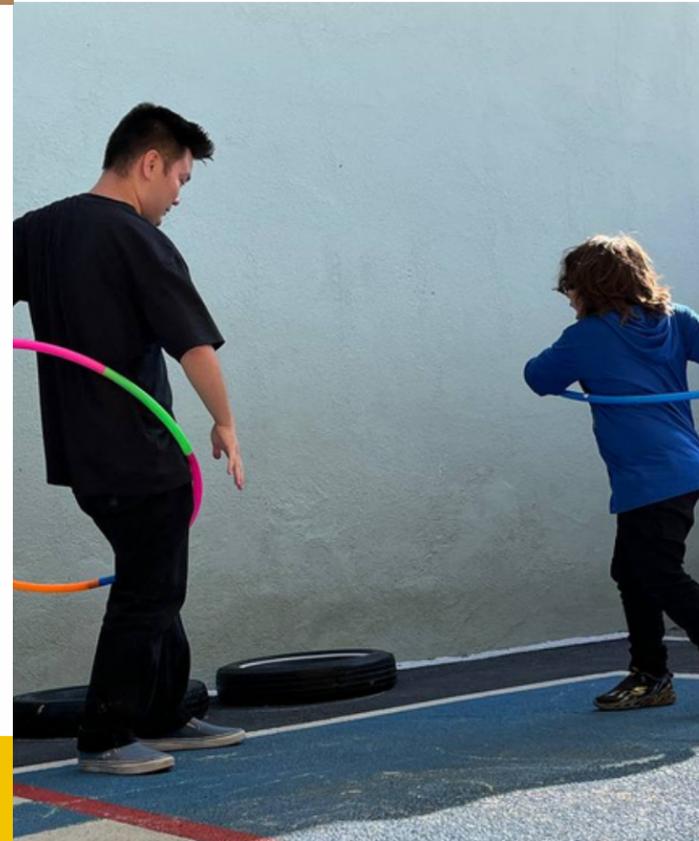
Building Community

In September we proudly hosted an official naming ceremony for our new space. The Stockel Building, named in recognition of Susan and Eric Stockel and Ruth Waddell, marks a new and important chapter for Cheerful Helpers, providing the agency a place to call home for all the children and families we serve.

In February, we organized an Open House event. Attendees included prospective parents, child specialists, and other professionals. Our visitors heard from staff and alumni families who described our early intervention services and the profound impact these services have on families.

Back to School

This academic year brought the return of in-person schooling. While there is a role for Zoom, nothing can replace in-person teaching, and we are delighted to have been back fully in-person during the 2022 - 2023 school year.



Cheerful Nights Out!

Pre-pandemic, Cheerful Helpers started a fundraising platform--"Cheerful Nights Out". The goal was to host mini-community fundraisers, allowing us to introduce the work of Cheerful Helpers far and wide. This academic year, as things have opened up, we were able to host more in-person Cheerful Nights Out. For example, in April, we held an event called Body, Mind, and Spirits at HYPE Silver Lake. With 25 total attendees, we shared a night of a spin and mobility class, followed by a cocktail reception.



CHEERFUL HELPERS IN THE COMMUNITY

For over 65 years Cheerful Helpers has helped children and families connect and grow. In January 2021, Cheerful Helpers relocated to its current location in the historic Jefferson Park, a neighborhood in South Los Angeles.

In 2022, Cheerful Helpers focused its outreach efforts on Jefferson Park and the surrounding neighborhoods. Through these relationships, Cheerful Helpers piloted its first-ever Community Social Skills group.



Similar to the existing Social Skills program, the goal of the Community Social Skills group is to create a secure space for children to connect. For children who often struggle to form peer connections, the Social Skills group is a time to build interpersonal relationships.

In an effort to better serve the predominantly Spanish-speaking community of Jefferson Park, screenings for this group as well as parent sessions are conducted in both English and Spanish. This ability has helped us broaden access to service.

MILO'S STORY

Alumni, Class of 2002

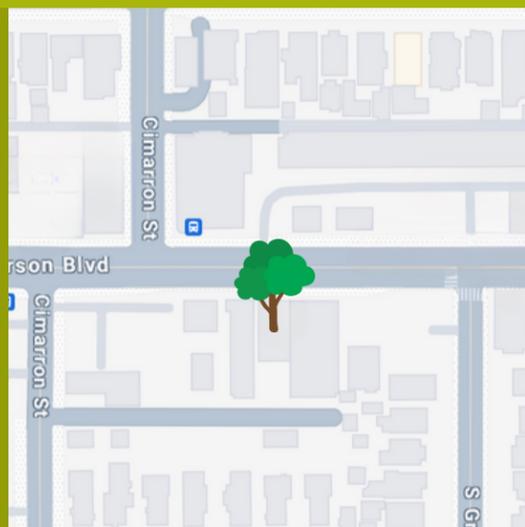
“I graduated from UC Berkeley in 2019 and joined the tech industry as a software engineer soon after. About six months ago I asked my boss and mentor what I would need to work on to become more senior and take on more responsibilities. I was expecting an answer related to hard technical skills, like coding knowledge or system design skills. But instead, he answered, “social skills.” In particular, he emphasized presentation skills and the ability to communicate with both technical and non-technical coworkers.

As usual, when I'm anticipating social interaction, I get a small knot in my stomach. But it wasn't just my boss telling me that. Everyone else I asked at my company gave some variation of the same answer, as well as everyone online.

Having been taught at Cheerful Helpers to persevere through the discomfort of working on things that don't come easily to me, I decided to become more social. I promptly joined Toastmasters a few days later and began participating in a daily remote “Tea Time” with coworkers, where we get to know each other outside of work.

Fast forward to a few weeks ago, and my boss told me I'm being promoted to Senior Site Reliability Engineer in January, just over a year into my current job! Suffice it to say, that practicing my social skills paid off. Having a job that I love, supporting myself financially, and living on my own were all things that neither my parents nor I would have dreamed possible when we first walked into Cheerful Helpers.

Cheerful Helpers allowed me to see what makes me different as a strength and something to be proud of.”



WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED

As Cheerful Helpers continues to grow, our ongoing goal is to expand access to our unique family-focused services. In the 2022-2023 school year, we accomplished the following in our efforts to remove barriers:

ADMISSIONS

This year, we refined our intake process for the Brief Evaluation and Intervention Group (BEIG). Understanding that our BEIG program is an effective feeder for our school program, we streamlined the intake process from initial contact to onboarding. These efforts have enabled us to start groups more quickly.

In response to calls from families inquiring about Cheerful Helpers' services, we have identified a negative pattern preventing access to service. As we look to the 2023-2024 school year, we want to close this gap by expanding our continuum of care as follows:

SATURDAY PROGRAMS

A Saturday Social Skills group allows families who are unable to participate during the work week. We are thrilled about the possibilities Saturdays offer. In addition to Social Skills and Play Therapy, we see an opportunity to create a father-and-me and a sibling group.

FRIDAY GROUP

Introducing a Community Social Skills group that meets on Friday evenings opened the door for more families to participate in our services. The group's start time enables us to serve children who attend school in the community.



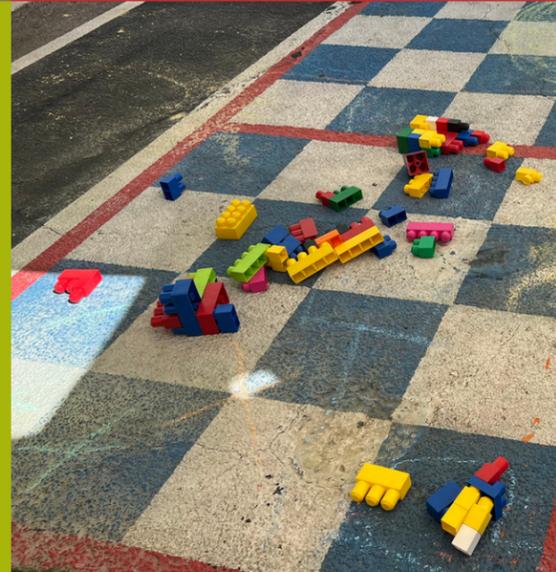
SOCIAL SKILLS

Expanding the Community Social Skills program at Cheerful Helpers presents an exciting opportunity to extend our reach and impact. By broadening our program's age range, we widen the reach of children we can serve within our community



FAMILY CAMP

This year our summer camp program included our first-ever Family Camp. During the month of August, campers and their family members participated in a week full of fun. Family Camp provided a holding space for the extended family (moms, dads, cousins, etc.) to play together while receiving support from our clinical team.



PLAY THERAPY

Cheerful Helpers can reach more children through Play Therapy, both as a stand-alone program and as support while children prepare to join our school or other auxiliary programs. Investing our time and consideration into our Play Therapy program creates a holding space for children and strengthens our continuum of care.

WHERE WE'RE HEADED

OUR DONORS

We are deeply grateful for the generosity of the Cheerful Helpers community in helping us to meet our fundraising goals.

We are grateful to have received funding in part from:

Stockel Family Foundation
Rose Chorna Endowment Charitable Fund
Sidney Kohl Family Foundation
Evelyn M & Norman Feintech Family Foundation

This year, our own Cheerful Helpers community was able to raise a total of \$102,625 – an unprecedented amount, and one which allows us to open up even more services to students who might need them but who might not be able to afford them under other circumstances.

With a total of **57** donors, we celebrate having **19** new donors and **23** donors who have donated to our cause for **10 or more years!**

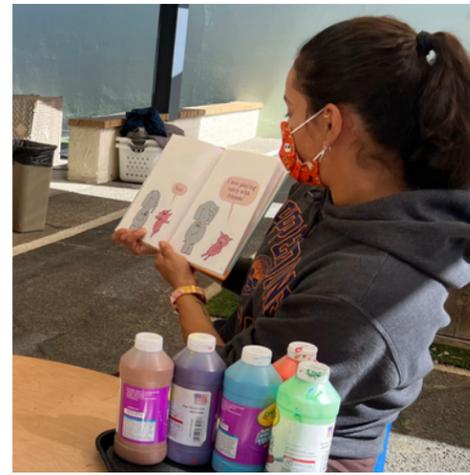


BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We are grateful for the generous support of our Cheerful Helpers Board of Directors:

Jackie Sloan, President
Eric Stockel, Vice President
Susanna Lovell, Secretary
Peter Foster, Treasurer

Steve Barlam; Sarah Bloom; Carrie Cannon; Kate Colleary; Ben Decter; Dana Ostroff; Ellen Pearlman; Ellen Reinstein; Arlene Schneir; Victoria Sonu Song; and Sandy Throop.



2022-2023 Staff & Interns

Thank you to our Cheerful Helpers Staff, Clinical and Educational Consultants, and current Interns who provide invaluable support.

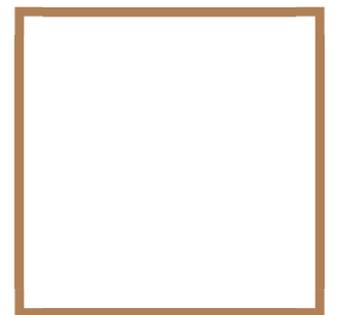
Trainees and Associates

- Eliza Amory, BA, Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee
- Floresita Arcari, AMFT, Child and Family Therapist
- Lexie Barrow, BA, Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee
- Kelly Broffman, AMFT, Child and Family Therapist
- Taryn Cantorez, BA, Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee
- Jason Cho, AMFT, Child and Family Therapist
- Emma Christie, BA, MSW Trainee
- Denise Duval, AMFT, Child and Family Therapist
- Sierra Dyer, BS, Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee
- Emily Glickman, AMFT, Child and Family Therapist
- Angel Herrera, BA, Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee
- Eileen In, BA, Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee
- Carolina Maranian, BA, MSW Trainee
- Muge Meisenholder, MA, Child and Family Therapist
- Alex Moradians, BA, Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee
- Rony Norcia, AMFT, Child and Family Therapist
- Tatiana Padovan, MA, Child and Family Therapist
- Jude Radwan, BA, Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee
- Tatum Schwartz, BS, MSW Trainee
- Matthew Simino, BA, Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee
- Samantha Zarate, BA, MSW Trainee

- Janet Upjohn, LCSW, **Executive Director**
- Jaclyn Zeccola, PhD., **Clinical Director**
- Reyna Alvarez, **Administrative Coordinator**
- Etta Iannaccone, **Occupational Therapist**
- Alyssa Fye, SLP, **Speech Therapist**
- Erika Wilson, SLP, **Speech Therapist**
- Karina Marroquin, LMFT, **Child and Family Therapist**
- Erin Angle, BA, **Special Education Teacher**
- Rebeca Quinto, MA, **Special Education Teacher**
- Richard Vieville, MA, **Special Education Teacher**

Clinical and Educational Consultants

- Mickey Butnik, **LMFT**
- Quint Paige, **LMFT, RPT-S**
- Ellen Reinstein, **LCSW**
- Diana Georger, **LMFT**
- Mary Harris, **LMFT**
- Yana Sercarz, **LMFT**



GET INVOLVED

The mission of Cheerful Helpers cannot be accomplished alone; it requires a collaborative team with staff and volunteers to ensure child success. Please join us and take part in our mission! There are three ways to help; by donating, becoming a partner, or joining our team.

1. Donate

In financially supporting Cheerful Helpers, you are providing hope to families and their young children. To donate, simply click this link: <https://www.cheerfulhelpers.org/how-to-help/>

2. Partner With Us

For over 60 years, Cheerful Helpers has focused on building relationships not only with families, but also with organizations, corporations, and fellow non-profits, to enrich the lives of our community.

Throughout the year, these partnerships have helped us develop meaningful experiences for our students, families, and extended community.

Hype Silverlake
Pica + Sullivan Architects
Stoller Barakat Design
Stewart Design and Antiques

3. Join Our Team

Cheerful Helpers has a Clinical Intern Program for graduate students and postgraduate students who are interested in early childhood and want to gain hands-on clinical skills in our school. Associates registered with the B.B.S. may earn hours toward licensure (e.g. LCSW, LMFT), and local educational institutions grant academic credit for the training program. Interns are welcomed year-round. Be sure to email your resume to jaclyn.zeccola@cheerfulhelpers.org.

Hear what our MFT Trainee, Taryn Cantorez has to say:

I have been with Cheerful Helpers since September 2022, though I did some observations in May and June so that I could jump right in with the new school year. I was drawn to Cheerful Helpers because I want to work with people who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities. Autism and ADHD are along those lines, if not the same, and very close to my heart, as an autistic myself. Moreover, CHPS is not a behaviorally based site, and that is incredibly rare, as well as incredibly needed. I feel I learn so much here regularly. In the time I have been here, I have learned how to push kids to reach their limits when they don't think they can. I have learned how to really communicate with kids on their own level. I have learned which instincts to trust, and which to let go of. Most personally important perhaps, I have learned and gained confidence in advocating for kids when I believe they need something. I am so grateful to be able to work at Cheerful Helpers.

Hear from our AMFT Child and Family Therapist, Kelly Broffman:

Kelly Broffman, Associate Marriage and Family Therapist, 5 years with Cheerful Helpers: I started at Cheerful Helpers as a trainee while I was still in graduate school at Antioch University, Los Angeles. I knew that I wanted to work with children and families, and when I heard about how amazing Cheerful Helpers is from a friend of a friend who had been working there I decided to apply there for my traineeship. My first year at Cheerful Helpers supporting Rebeca's class and BEIG was life changing. Saying the real thing, flexibility, slowing down, it all made so much sense and I saw kids and their parents grow together in the most beautiful way. I was fortunate to be offered the opportunity to continue with the agency once I graduated and here I am one big pandemic, one big move, a few big goodbyes, countless big feelings and five big years later. If I were to distill all that I've learned into three lessons, they would be: 1) Flexibility is a two-way street, you have to model it to teach it, 2) Making mistakes and not knowing are both great opportunities to connect with others rather than retreat, 3) Saying the real thing is the hardest and bravest thing a person can do.

Rony Norcia, AMFT, 2.5 years with Cheerful Helpers:

I have worked professionally with kids since I was 17; first as a swim instructor for 7 years, and now as a child and family therapist at Cheerful Helpers. Before my time as a swim instructor, I often found myself drawn to working with younger kids in mentorship/Big Sister type roles. Before going down the path of a child therapist, I originally dreamed of working as a teacher in all levels of classrooms. Cheerful Helpers has an incredible early intervention model, wherein therapists work closely with kids in the classroom environment and are free to experiment with and implement new methods of working with the kids, to meet them where they are in the moment. As someone who finds herself constantly looking for new ways to work through problems and express her creativity, Cheerful Helpers made the most sense to me when it came to choosing a practicum internship site.

I began my MFT traineeship at Cheerful Helpers in January of 2021, while the agency was still working remotely via Zoom due to COVID-19. Shortly after beginning, we transitioned back to in-person meetings, which brought the unique experience of navigating kids coming back for the first time, new staff being introduced, and settling into a new building, the now-dedicated Stockel Building. During that time I gained so much knowledge as a first-time therapist. The most important things that I feel I learned during my time at Cheerful Helpers include the knowledge that there will always be time – I can fumble and fall down and make mistakes, both with the kids, professionally, and in my personal life, and there will always be another chance for me to try again. I learned that I can do hard things, that I can say the real thing, that I am enough and exactly where I need to be, and that I will always have someone to help me when I need it, both when I feel ready to ask for it or when I may not have even yet realized I needed it.

From working on Zoom 3 days a week as a supporting classroom clinician to balancing being in charge of Social Skills for the school and community, being a 1-1 three days a week, and starting up the school-wide kid-curated art galleries;, I have grown in ways that I wouldn't have even thought of when I was first applying and interviewing for grad schools, much less when I first realized my calling as a therapist. I hold all of the times I get to work with the kids close to my heart, regardless of whether it's a hard or easy time, and I find myself growing alongside the kids every day.

