

# OUR LITTLE NEWS

SPRING 2019



## Life at Our Little Academy

Meet Casandra & Learn about Our Program

## Spring Gala

Mark Your Calendar for April 28th



**our little haven**

CARING FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES. MIND. BODY. SOUL.®



## Contents

### PROGRAM STORIES

#### 4 Life at Our Little Academy

### OUR LITTLE HAVEN HAPPENINGS

#### 6 The 26th Annual Spring Gala

#### 7 Our Year in Review

#### 8 Upcoming Events

### *On the Cover*

The Our Little Academy Team

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#### OUR LITTLE HAVEN MISSION

*Our Little Haven is relentlessly committed to providing early intervention services for children and families. Our community of professional caregivers create a safe, secure, and healing environment for those impacted by abuse, neglect, and mental or behavioral health needs. We make the hurting stop, the healing begin, and the love last, one family at a time.*

# KIDS, COOKIES, & COMMUNITY



Our Little Haven believes that when we're born, God gives us a Cookie Jar and with each positive experience – every hug, each high-five, every success – we get a cookie in our Cookie Jar.

At about ten years old (the ending of our formative years) our Cookie Jar gets sealed up and what we have in our Jar is what nurtures us for the rest of our lives. Now, most of our Cookie Jars are pretty full. The Haven kids do not have any cookies in their jars and it's our honor to invite the community to fill them.

**That's what YOU do - YOU help fill Cookie Jars!**

## OUR LEADERSHIP

**P. Scott Hummel, MSW, PhD (hon), Executive Director**  
**Kathleen Hummel, MSW, PhD (hon), Therapeutic Director**  
**Michael P. Bahlinger, Director of Finance & Operations**  
**Dr. Lizette Smith, PhD, Director of Clinical Programs**  
**Chris Muñoz, CFRE, Development Director**



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## LEAVE A LEGACY OF HOPE

Leave a legacy of hope for generations to come.

For more about Our Little Haven's legacy giving, including tax-wise options call Mike Bahlinger  
 (314) 669-9320, [mikebahlinger@ourlittlehaven.org](mailto:mikebahlinger@ourlittlehaven.org)



# LIFE AT OUR LIT

## Meet Casandra!

It was August of 2018, Casandra's last day at Our Little Academy Day Treatment Therapeutic Preschool at Our Little Haven. Having just turned six, Casandra was ready to move onto Kindergarten thanks to the care she received at Our Little Academy.

The day was filled with celebrations, hugs, and a new backpack full of supplies needed for her first day of Kindergarten; it was still bitter sweet for all. During the last two years, Casandra grew very close to her classmates and her Day Treatment Therapists, who were there for all of her ups and downs - good days and bad.

Rewind to Summer of 2016, Casandra's foster parents were running out of options for preschool due to her behavior. Her previous schools were not properly equipped to manage Casandra's outbursts and developmental delays. She was constantly pulling her friends' hair, biting, yelling at her teachers,

and significantly behind in school lessons. These behavioral challenges stemmed from the early childhood trauma she experienced before coming into foster care.

After talking with the pediatrician, Casandra's foster mom was referred Our Little Academy. Casandra and her foster parents were welcomed by Program Manager, Sarah Thomas, MSW, LCSW. Ms. Sarah explained how the program focuses on mental and behavioral health treatment for the whole child, all while following a preschool curriculum. Casandra's family was overwhelmed with emotions; their Casandra would receive the proper care needed to overcome the obstacles they thought would hinder her for life.

Every day Casandra worked with her therapists; learning how to recognize her feelings and express them properly. Instead of using her fists and feet, she started to use her words to express her feelings. Casandra started focusing better on her school lessons and building friendships. After a few short months, Casandra's foster parents started to see a huge improvement in her daily life. Casandra was happier and able to grow her connection with her family. Her time at Our Little Academy was not always easy. There were struggles and setbacks, but with the care provided by her therapists combined with the continued support by Casandra's family, she grew into a happy and healthy six-year-old. Casandra was ready for Kindergarten!

\*Our Little Haven works to protect the privacy and rights of the children and families we serve. Casandra's story has specific changes to protect her and her family's privacy and all identifiable information has been removed.

### **Make a gift to Kari's Kids Scholarship Fund!**

Most families helped by Our Little Academy do not have the resources to address the mental and or behavioral health challenges associated with their diagnosis. The scholarship fund assists families seeking assistance with the care provided by Our Little Academy.

Established by the Schooley family in honor of their daughter and long time member of the Our Little Academy Team, Kari Schooley. For seven years, Kari shared her time and compassion with the children at Our Little Academy. She impacted countless lives and her memory lives on through the scholarship created in her honor.

# TITLE ACADEMY



*Clockwise from the top left: Leisha Guterman, MS, Sarah Thomas, MSW, LCSW, Program Manager, Susan Villasana MAEd, LPC, Lizette Smith, PhD, LP, Director of Clinical Programs and Keystone Program Manager, and Danielle Farnam, MSW, LMSW*

## A small program, for small people with a BIG mission.

Developed by Our Little Haven to specifically meet the needs of children just like Casandra, Our Little Academy is a one of a kind program unique to our region. Combining professional mental health therapies along with compassion and dedication, it is the only program that meets mental and behavior health needs for preschool aged children over an extended period.

Led by Program Manager, Sarah Thomas, MSW, LCSW, the professional team provides individual and group psychotherapy, social skills activities, speech and occupational therapy. The Our Little Academy team is made up of masters level mental health professionals all trained to meet the specific needs of the children they serve.

## Check Out Our Therapeutic Spaces!

Our Little Academy's classroom is specifically designed to meet the therapeutic needs of the children enrolled. At Our Little Academy, it is important each child has their own space. This space, which is individually marked and assigned a color, gives the children a place to feel safe, rest, calm down, and play with their classmates and therapists.

The Therapeutic Garden is a tool used in care, to teach children about proper nutrition, give them an understanding of where food comes from, real hands-on gardening, and therapy. Facilitated by our friends at the Missouri Botanical Garden, the garden provides nutrition, lessons, and delicious kale, carrots, tomatoes, and peppers every spring and summer.



THERAPEUTIC GARDEN



KID'S CUBBIES

# THE 26TH ANNUAL *Spring Gala*

## YOU'RE INVITED!

Join us for our Annual Spring Gala, hosted by Washington University Chancellor Dr. Mark Wrighton and Mrs. Risa Zwerling-Wrighton. The Gala will take place on Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in the Khorassan Ballroom at the Chase Park Plaza. Help us celebrate the impact we continue to make in the St. Louis community.

Dance to the legendary music of Theo Peoples, bid on your favorite silent and live auction items, sponsor a book for Our Little Academy's new library, and enjoy dinner and drinks all while supporting the children and families of Our Little Haven.

Dr. Mark Wrighton and Mrs. Risa Zwerling-Wrighton's support began over 20 years ago, when Risa joined our team as a volunteer in 1993 – the year our doors opened.

"Risa's leadership continues through her service as a member of the Executive Board of Directors. Through the years, she has guided our organization through transitions, challenges, and celebrations. We are proud to know Risa as a community leader, advocate for children in our community, and a trusted friend. We thank Mark and Risa for sharing their time with us this year through their participation as Chairs for the 2019 Spring Gala." - Scott Hummel, Executive Director



*Dr. Mark Wrighton & Mrs. Risa Zwerling-Wrighton*

**“Risa’s leadership continues through her service as a member of the Executive Board of Directors. Through the years, she has guided our organization through transitions, challenges, and celebrations.”**

*— Scott Hummel, Executive Director*

Individual tickets and tables of 10 are available. Reserve your spot today at [ourlittlehaven.org](http://ourlittlehaven.org). For sponsorship or ticket information please contact Chris at [cmunoz@ourlittlehaven.org](mailto:cmunoz@ourlittlehaven.org) or (314) 669-9386.



Xavier Alumni Association Group decorate Christmas trees for every program building.



The Iovaldi Family of Pietro's accepts our gratitude for the *Pietro's Gives Back* days in October.



▲ The third graders at Visitation Academy gather gifts and make picture frames for Holiday Hugs at the Haven.

# KIDS. COOKIES. COMMUNITY.



▲ Congratulations to Scott and Kathleen Hummel recipients of the 2018 Rockhurst Magis Award for their service to the St. Louis Community. Accompanied by Frank Cusumano and Olympian Jackie Joyner Kersee.

▲ Haven Club Young Professionals complete their annual work day, repainting and revamping the kitchen at the Taylor Family Care Center.



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Visit [ourlittlehaven.org](http://ourlittlehaven.org) and  
 subscribe to our e-newsletter  
 to receive the latest news.

## Upcoming Our Little Haven Events

<b>APRIL</b> 28	Annual Spring Gala The Chase Park Plaza	<b>OCT</b> 18	<i>icon</i> Mechanical Clay Day St. Louis Skeet & Trap
<b>JUNE</b> 1	Haven Club Brew Fest Das Bevo	<b>NOV</b> 8	Topgolf Tournament Topgolf St. Louis
<b>JUNE</b> 5	Annual Card Party Westborough Country Club	<b>NOV</b> 16	Chic Boutique St. Nicholas Family Life Center
<b>SEPT</b> 23	28th Annual Golf Tournament presented by <i>Enterprise Bank &amp; Trust</i> Sunset Country Club	<b>DEC</b> 1	Holiday Hugs for the Haven Our Little Haven



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