



# Annual Report

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2025



## Who We Are

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The Heart Leaf Center opened in May 2021 to serve children and families of Northern Virginia with high quality mental health care services. We provide play therapy with a focus on expanding access to care for those who face financial or logistical barriers. As part of our mission to support children's mental health, we also train and equip new therapists with the skills to work effectively with children.

Since 2021, The Heart Leaf Center has served more than 525 children. 136 of these clients were from military families and approximately 65% were from lower income families.

## Our Mission

Improving access to high quality play therapy mental health counseling for children and families through low-cost services and professional education



## Letter from the Executive Director

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I can't believe we are now in our **fifth year of operations!** The Heart Leaf Center (THLC) is proud to be recognized for our unwavering commitment to ensuring that every child and family in Northern Virginia can access high-quality, affordable mental health counseling.

This year alone, we provided mental health services to **over 225 children and families**, bringing our total number served to **526 since opening in 2021**. We remain dedicated to early childhood mental health, with **75% of our clients aged 10 or younger**. THLC is also the **only Medicaid provider in Northern Virginia** specializing in play-based mental health therapy for children, and **50% of the families we serve use Medicaid** or pay our **minimum rate of \$10 per session**. We are honored to support **military families**, who represent **28% of our clients**. Today, THLC is actively providing therapy to **130 children**, many of whom would otherwise go without care.

To meet the community's growing needs, we expanded our team by **hiring four new therapists**, including **three former interns**, reflecting our belief in developing and retaining emerging clinicians. We also strengthened our partnerships with local universities by training **nine graduate clinical interns and two macro social work students** this year. Interns are an essential part of our model, and we take pride in offering them a rich, specialized learning environment focused on working with children, adolescents, and families.

This year brought meaningful growth to our **Community and School Therapy (CAST) Program**, which provides in-school mental health services through our partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools. We now serve **six elementary schools and two preschools**, ensuring that children can receive therapy directly within their school community—removing the transportation, financial, and scheduling barriers that often prevent families from accessing support.

We were also grateful to engage our community through three fundraising events, which together drew more than **180 attendees**:

- **The Heartfelt Tea Party**
- **The Golf Tournament**
- **The Playful Heart Training Conference for mental health professionals**

In addition, our virtual silent auction in June and fall fundraiser in October played an important role in sustaining our mission. We extend our **heartfelt thanks to every volunteer, donor, and sponsor** whose generosity makes our work possible. Your support directly impacts the availability of mental health services for children who urgently need them.

We believe deeply that an investment in a child creates a lifetime of benefits—for the child, their family, and our entire community. The needs for early intervention are great, but so is our opportunity to make a lasting, positive difference. As we prepare to celebrate our **fifth anniversary in May 2026**, we look forward to expanding our reach and continuing to support the children of Northern Virginia in growing into healthy, confident, and resilient adults.

Sheri Mitschelen, LCSW, RPT-S  
Co-founder and Executive Director



# Board of Directors



**Rick Leichtweis, PhD**  
**PRESIDENT**



**Mark Gardner, LCSW**  
**SECRETARY**



**Richard Walker, MBA**  
**TREASURER**



**Dawnee Tate Giammittorio,**  
**Esq.**



**Rick Pallen**



**Kathy Precht,**  
**LCSW**

## ADVISORY BOARD



**Dr. Alison Gardner**



**Holly Martinson**



**Suzanne Norton**



# Counseling Team

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**Executive Director**

**SHERI MITSCHELEN**  
LCSW, RPT-S



**Program Director**

**TRACEY WILSON**  
LPC

## Counseling Staff



**ROHINI AADIPUDI**  
M.ED



**MARIAM  
ABDELWAHAB**  
M.ED



**MATT BEEBE**  
M.ED



**IRENE FANOUS**  
MSW



**LIZA FITZGERALD**  
MSW



**ARIEL GONZALEZ**  
MS



**MAKEEZ QADERI**  
M.ED



**DIVA ROJAS**  
MSW, ACSW



**ANASTASIA  
SCHLAEFER**  
MSW



**ERIKA SOBEL**  
LCSW



**XIALOU ZHANG**  
M.ED

## Interns



**NICOLE  
BOHNETT**



**DEVIN  
CALDWELL**



**ALYSSA  
LACEY**



**AMY  
PRESTIDGE**



**HEATHER  
SCHILDGE**



# Community and School Therapy (CAST) Partnership Team

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**Executive Director**  
**SHERI MITSCHELEN**  
LCSW, RPT-S



**Program Director**  
**TRACEY WILSON**  
LPC



**CAST Coordinator**  
**MATT BEEBE, M.ED**  
RESIDENT IN COUNSELING



## Counseling Staff



**ROHINI**  
**AADIPUDI**



**NICOLE**  
**BOHNETT**



**MAKEEZ**  
**QADERI**



**DEVIN**  
**CALDWELL**



**XIALOU**  
**ZHANG**



# Our Clients

**227 clients served in 2025**  
**104 new clients in 2025**  
**34 future clients are waiting for an available therapist**

| Age     | %   |
|---------|-----|
| 0 - 5   | 20% |
| 6 - 10  | 58% |
| 11 - 14 | 12% |
| 15 - 18 | 5%  |
| Over 18 | 5%  |

| Rate Type     | %   |
|---------------|-----|
| Tricare       | 25% |
| Medicaid      | 28% |
| Commercial    | 7%  |
| Min. Rate     | 24% |
| Sliding Scale | 11% |
| Full Rate     | 5%  |

| Race/ Ethnicity  | %   |
|------------------|-----|
| White            | 30% |
| Hispanic/ Latino | 30% |
| Black            | 20% |
| Asian            | 2%  |
| Multiracial      | 9%  |
| Other identity   | 3%  |
| No response      | 6%  |

- **78% are 10 years old or younger**
- **61% are from racially underserved communities**
- **52% pay with Medicaid or pay our minimum rate of \$10 per session.**
- **11% pay reduced rates based on income.**
- **25% of clients are from military families.**



# Client Outcomes

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## OUR APPROACH IS WORKING.

**AFTER 3  
MONTHS OF  
TREATMENT:**

**CLIENT  
FUNCTIONING  
INCREASED ON  
AVERAGE BY  
20%**

**AFTER 3  
MONTHS OF  
TREATMENT:**

**CLIENT  
PROBLEM  
SEVERITY  
DECREASED ON  
AVERAGE BY 21%**

**CLIENT/FAMILY SATISFACTION AFTER 6  
MONTHS OF TREATMENT: 85%**

**CLIENT/FAMILY SATISFACTION AFTER  
ONE YEAR OF TREATMENT: 96%**



# CAST School Partnership

Bailey's Lower

Bailey's Upper

Daniels Run

McNair Lower

McNair Upper



Providence

Kid Stretch

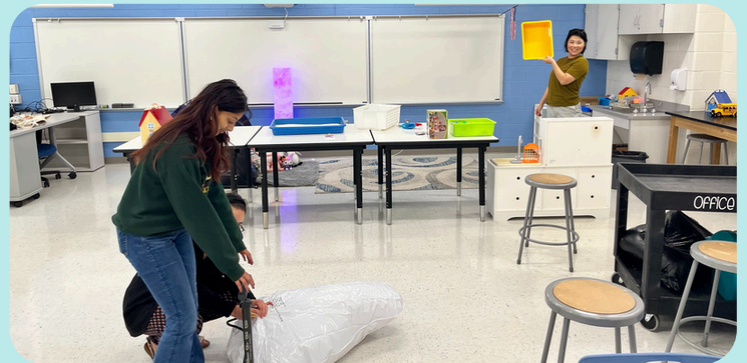


Main Street Development

Expanding access to mental health care by serving children in their environment – school!

*– In 2025 we grew our partnership into 4 new Fairfax County Public Schools.*

*– Now work in 6 elementary schools and 2 preschools.*



**41 children currently served.**  
**87% from racially underserved communities**  
**79% use Medicaid or self-pay the minimum rate.**

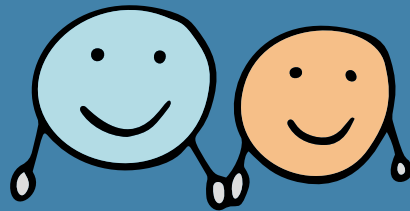
***“Working with THLC has been an exceptional experience for our school. They are professional, knowledgeable, and a much-needed resource for our young students and their families.” - School Counselor -***



# Group Services in 2025

## ADHD Group Therapy for Kids 8-10

- Learn about ADHD
- Build social skills
- Increase self-esteem
- Build problem solving skills



## GROUP THERAPY FOR CHILDREN SOCIAL SKILLS



## *Summer Group Therapy for Children K-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade*

Learn about Emotional Regulation,  
Effective Communication &  
Strong Social Skills



# THERAPEUTIC DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS GROUP



# Recognition

THLC is the only non-profit organization in Northern Virginia focusing on play therapy for children. Now in our fifth year, we are proud to be recognized in the community and region for our work to increase access to mental health care and reduce health disparities.

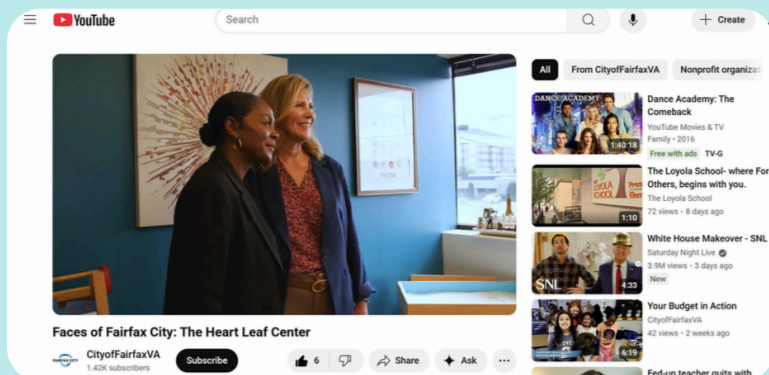


*THLC's Executive Director, Program Director and CAST Director at Fairfax City Hall. The Mayor of Fairfax City celebrated the work of THLC in proclaiming May 2025 as Mental Health Awareness Month and May 7, 2025 as Children's Mental Health Day*

*THLC is honored to be considered a "critical local non-profit" and featured in Spur Local's 2025 class.*

*We were identified as a critical non-profit for children, youth, and families in the DMV area.*

*<https://spurlocal.org/2025-class>*



*The Fairfax City Economic Development Office selected THLC to feature in Faces of Fairfax in October 2025. Watch the video!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACPdsyBh2tM>*



# Parent Feedback

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**“My therapist has helped my children with their emotional regulation by teaching them about feelings and how to talk about and identify feelings. She has used games and crafts to connect with my children and enable them to open up and be receptive to talking about how they are feeling.” - Parent of 10-year-old -**



**“It has been a wonderful experience working with THLC. We had been looking for months for help with our foster son. He looks forward to the appointments and we have seen progress with his challenges... I love how child centered they are.”  
- Joanna -**

**96% of our families report satisfaction with their services at the Heart Leaf Center after one year of treatment.**



# Professional Development

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**THLC CONTINUES TO BE DEDICATED TO OFFERING TRAINING AND SUPERVISION FOR MENTAL HEALTH CLINICIANS WORKING WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES.**



- **THLC PROVIDED INTERNSHIP AND SUPERVISION EXPERIENCES FOR 11 GRADUATE-LEVEL STUDENTS.**
- **WE SUCCESSFULLY HELPED 5 STUDENTS COMPLETE THEIR GRADUATE PROGRAMS AND ENTER THE MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE.**
- **WE HAD 3 INTERNS TRANSITION INTO STAFF MEMBERS**
- **WE CURRENTLY HAVE 5 GRADUATE-LEVEL INTERNS.**
- **THLC PROVIDED APPROXIMATELY 800 HOURS OF CLINICAL SUPERVISION AND PLAY THERAPY SUPERVISION TO GRADUATE STUDENT INTERNS.**
- **THLC PROVIDED SUPERVISION TO 8 STAFF MEMBERS WORKING ON THEIR CLINICAL LICENSURE.**
- **THLC PROVIDED 20 HOURS OF SPECIALIZED PLAY THERAPY SUPERVISION.**
- **THLC PROVIDED 46 HOURS OF PLAY THERAPY TRAINING TO ALL STAFF AND INTERNS.**
- **THLC PROVIDED 12 HOURS OF CLINICAL SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT TO ALL STAFF DURING A MONTHLY CASE CONSULTATION**



# The Playful Heart Conference



## The Playful Heart Conference

Our 4th Annual Play  
Therapy Conference

September 26-27 2025

Hosted in partnership with Crossroads Family  
Counseling Center

### Learning and Growing Together

Listening with the Heart: Intentional Responses to Play Themes, presented by Michelle Walker, LCSW, RPT-S

Sandplay with Neurodivergent Young People, presented by Jennifer Glacel, LCSW, RPT-S

Expressive Arts and CCPT: Bringing Art-Based Interventions and Creativity into CCPT  
and

Art and Healing in the Playroom: Expressive Modalities for Trauma-Informed Play Therapy.  
presented by Lula Lambert, Masters of Art Therapy, LPC, ATR-BC, RYT-200





# Fundraising

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**The Heartfelt Tea Party**  
**March 22nd, 2025**

**Silent Auction**  
**June 2-30, 2025**

**3rd Annual Golf Outing**  
**June 9th, 2025**

**The Playful Heart Conference -**  
**September 27th and 28th, 2025**

**Fall Fundraiser**  
**October 1-31, 2025**

**All event proceeds fund counseling for  
local children and families**



# 2025 Tea Party





# 2025 Tea Party





# 2025 Tea Party

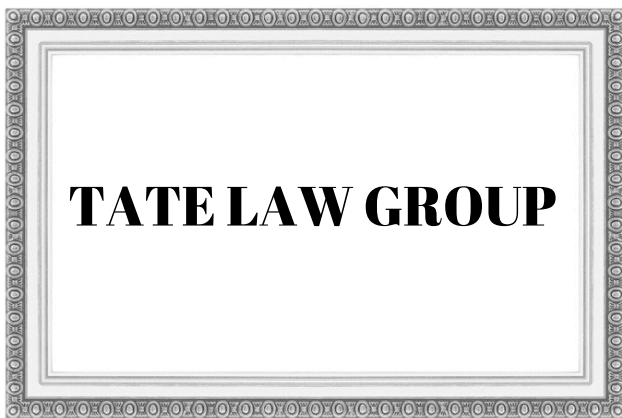
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*Thank you to our Sponsors!*



Cabush, Paul  
& Associates, PLLC





# Golf Tournament

## THIRD ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

JUNE 9, 2025

CHANTILLY NATIONAL COUNTRY CLUB  
14901 BRADDOCK RD  
CENTREVILLE, VA 20120





# Golf Tournament Sponsors



*Thank you!*



**TLG**  
**TATE LAW GROUP**

**Questor Realty, Inc.**



**JDS**



# 2025 Playful Heart Conference



- **4** training sessions
- **70** participants

Thank you to our Sponsors!





# Marketing and Outreach

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**We love to get out and meet our community!**

*Sharing the power of play!*



***THLC at the Community Changemakers event in Washington, DC, hosted by Spur Local***

***THLC at the Fairfax Community Engagement Expo, October 2025***

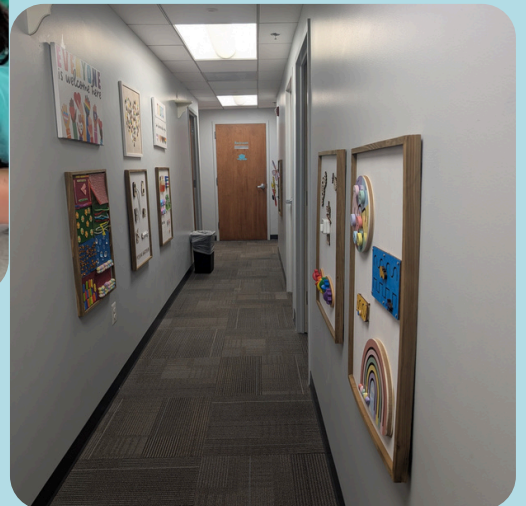




## Community Partnership Spotlight: Kids Give Back

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THANK YOU to KIDS GIVE BACK!  
(A non-profit in Fairfax that  
engages kids in volunteering!)  
Our clients love the sensory play  
boards that you made that  
brighten THLC's hallways!





# Getting Involved

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THLC is a labor of **LOVE** and a commitment to our community and to the future. We could not do what we do without **YOU**, your **ENGAGEMENT** and **SUPPORT**! Please join us in building a better tomorrow.



## Donate

Your generous contribution enables us to continue our mission, providing vital services and support to children and families in need. Every donation makes a meaningful impact!

## Fundraise

Support our fundraising efforts by attending our events, sharing our social media posts, and advocating for support from your network. Join us today!

## Volunteer

Our volunteer efforts are key to our success, and there is a role for you! Consider offering support for our events, participating on committees, engaging on social media, or providing clinical support like supervision. We would love to collaborate with you!



**703-397-8163**



**Info@heartleafcenter.org**



**@heartleafcenter**

