THANK YOU!
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear friends,

As you know, we are working on our strategic plan at Gemma. Much conversation has centered on those who come to us for help and whom we accompany as they navigate life’s challenges. Many of Gemma’s children and families, and our local communities, are grappling with violence, poverty, trauma, and other difficult circumstances. There are some days when the tragic stories all around us can feel daunting.

Despite this, my heart is also full of hope. Each day at Gemma, I hear uplifting stories of how our teams are living into the passionate belief that everyone matters. Each member of the Gemma community, which includes you, contributes in a unique way to achieving our goal of accompanying children and families in whatever way feels like help to them. When people come to us, whether clients, students, or employees, we say, “We’ve got you!” You help make this vital work possible.

It is an honor and a privilege to have you as part of Gemma. We know that there are many organizations doing good work for others that you could choose to support. Thank you for your continued commitment to joining us as we walk with children and families on their journey.

With gratitude,

Kristen E.M. Gay, Ph.D.
President and CEO
Why Gemma is Important to Me

By Nina V. Rogers
Chair, Gemma Board of Directors

Gemma Services is hope in action. Literally. Gemma’s goal is to promote hope and healing through mental health services, education, and specialized support for vulnerable and at-risk kids, teens, and families. Gemma exists to serve and empower children and families at a time when the conditions in the world around us are increasingly challenging.

The statistics are startling. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in six U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year, and suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people aged 10-34 in the U.S. In 2022, Mental Health America reported that 10.6% of kids and teens (over 2.5 million youth) were coping with severe major depression. Childhood depression is more likely to persist into adulthood if gone untreated, and 60.3% of youth with major depression do not receive any mental health treatment. These facts highlight the urgency of Gemma’s commitment to accompany more than 4,000 children and families each year on their journey.

Gemma’s work is imperative, and the staff members who carry the torch of its mission are exceptional. Their extraordinary dedication, loyalty, and willingness to go above and beyond every single day is inspiring and represents the spirit of Gemma’s commitment to showing each child they are precious and providing them with opportunities to grow, flourish, and shine.

I am proud to have served on Gemma’s Board of Directors since 2014 and currently have the privilege of serving as the Chair.

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”
– Nelson Mandela

Welcome to Valerie Colquitt Wright

Gemma is pleased to welcome Valerie Colquitt Wright as the Director of our new Family Support Program! Valerie comes to Gemma with more than 30 years of experience in social services and the non-profit sector. Previously, Valerie served as Director of Community Placement Programs at Carson Valley Children’s Aid (CVCA), which included supervising Supervised Independent Living, Foster Care, and the Community Homes Programs.

Valerie received a Master’s degree in Social Work at Temple University’s School of Social Administration, is a licensed social worker, and has worked clinically in various roles including with the elderly, and in probation and parole, drug and alcohol, and child welfare services.

“What drew me to Gemma was the opportunity to implement the Family Support Program and the opportunities for growth,” said Valerie. “I’m excited to reach out to families in Philadelphia with children between the ages of two to five to help identify their goals and utilize their strengths.”

Melissa Harvey, Vice President of Community Based Programs, stated, “I am so excited that Valerie has joined Gemma’s Community Based Division.” Harvey added, “With her leadership and expertise, Valerie is supporting the implementation of the Family Support Program, which is off to an amazing start! Let’s wish Valerie a warm welcome to the Gemma family!”
"Our team had a great time putting the bags together!" exclaimed one of many volunteers who assembled "Everything but the Turkey" bags for families this November. "We were so happy to do something to support families who are struggling during the holidays." These bags were chock full of ingredients for a delicious holiday meal, such as a pie plate, stuffing mix, and more, and a grocery store gift card for a turkey. We were able to give these gift bags to more than 90 families, with help from our caring friends.

Holiday cheer continued through December! Thanks to the generosity of those who contributed gifts and gift cards, we made the holidays bright for more than 385 kids and 130 families served by our Residential and Community Based Programs, and Martin Luther School as well.

The gym on our Plymouth Meeting campus was transformed into a winter wonderland for the annual holiday party for children in residence at Gemma. "This place looks like a fairy tale!" exclaimed one child upon arriving. The party included a tasty dinner, fun and games, and concluded with each child receiving a stack of gifts lovingly wrapped by volunteers. In a decades-long, beloved tradition, the evening concluded in the children's residence where every child picked a favorite new stuffed friend from dozens lining the staircase railing. The energy and joy of the evening was perfectly captured in the words of one child: "This was the best night of my life!"

Thank you to all who helped make these terrific holiday memories possible for the kids and families we serve!
We are grateful to all the volunteers who support Gemma’s mission! Since July 2022, more than 130 volunteers have participated in days of service or signed up for ongoing volunteer opportunities. Volunteers help keep our grounds beautiful, host fun activities for the children we serve, wrap gifts for children and families during the holidays, tutor students in Martin Luther School, and lend a hand in our Administrative offices. Thank you to friends from Accolade, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, REALTORS and The Trident Group (Blue Bell and Spring House offices), Inizio Engage, Evoke Kyne, Quaker Houghton, SEI, TruMark Financial, Vanguard, and many congregational partners for contributing their time to make hope shine for kids and families of Gemma!

Interested in volunteering at Gemma? Contact us at volunteer@gemmaservices.org.
Introducing the Family Support Program

"We're excited to get the Family Support Program started to serve families in Philadelphia," said Valerie Colquitt Wright, Director of Gemma’s newest program, a home-visiting program using an evidence-based model called Family Check Up. This is the first time Family Check Up is being used in Philadelphia.

Designed for families in Philadelphia with children ages two to five, the program helps families to identify and use their strengths to achieve their goals, access supports and services that promote their and their children's well-being, and enhance their skills. This program is supported by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) of Pennsylvania’s Department of Human Services (DHS) and Pennsylvania’s Department of Education (PDE). For more information, visit dhs.pa.gov and education.pa.gov.

“The Family Support Program is unique because families don't need a diagnosis or a referral to access services," explained Melissa Harvey, Vice President of Gemma’s Community Based Programs. “The program is voluntary, and we are providing extra parenting support for caregivers who have a desire to strengthen their skills as a parent.”

Each family works with a Family Support Partner through the Family Check Up curriculum, typically for about eight sessions. “We help caregivers increase their self-confidence as a parent, work to strengthen the child and caregiver relationship, and reduce challenging behaviors the young child might be exhibiting,” said Harvey.

Family Check Up includes: the initial interview, the family and child assessment, and the feedback session. First, Gemma's Family Support Partner meets with the family to identify what they consider their strengths and concerns. Then, in the assessment, the caregiver and child's interaction is video recorded and the parent completes an online self-assessment questionnaire. Finally, the Family Support Partner and family review the assessments, the video clips, and discuss feedback, including any community resources or referrals that might be helpful. Colquitt Wright shared, “When appropriate, the Everyday Parenting model may be suggested, which is the next phase of the program and focuses on positive behavior management, limit setting, and family relationship building.”

“We are hearing from so many community members and provider organizations about the needs in Philadelphia for this program," said Colquitt Wright. Harvey added, “By providing families with the supports they need, the hope is that we will reach children at a young age to prevent their out of home placement in the future.”

For more information about the Family Support Program, contact familysupport@gemmaservices.org or call (215) 730-2240.

STEAM: A Pathway to the Future

“Students explore STEAM concepts during project-based learning. Jensen connects STEAM to real-life career opportunities as well. "I want them to think about careers that apply to the challenge we are working on at the time," she explained. A recent project included designing a video game based on real life, presenting it to mock "investors," played by school administrators, and competing for prizes and bragging rights, too! Another recent project had students making roller coasters from construction paper and tape with the goal of learning about kinetic and potential energy. "I really like this class, it's fun," a sixth grader commented as he carefully constructed his roller coaster.

"The kids relate to the projects," said Jensen. The value of adding STEAM Lab to the curriculum is clear. "It's helpful for them to know the creative process has a place in real life. There are real jobs where you can apply this." This class has quickly risen to the top of students' lists, as apparent in the words of one, "My favorite classes are art, gym, and STEAM!"
Hope is on the menu at Chefs for Gemma 2023! Our upcoming annual benefit will highlight the talented chef, Amanda Shulman, of Her Place Supper Club in Philadelphia. Since opening her restaurant, Shulman has been named a semifinalist for the James Beard Award for Emerging Chef, received a nod from the Philadelphia Inquirer’s food critic, Craig Laban, for Best New Restaurant, Philadelphia magazine’s designation as #1 of the Best 50 Restaurants in Philadelphia, and one of Bon Appétit’s 50 Best Restaurants in America in 2022. The Chefs 2023 dinner will be a delicious and inspiring evening to support Gemma’s work.

We asked Chef Shulman about some of her favorites. Check it out!

**What is your favorite food or dish to eat?**  
Szechuan food. Anything mind-numbingly spicy.

**What is your favorite dish to make?**  
Anything bread or puff pastry based—it feels like making something out of nothing.

**Why did you want to open your own restaurant?**  
I wanted to open my own spot because I felt like I had a unique perspective to share. I think that I look at dining with an unfussy and genuine approach. I wanted to make an experience that really felt like going to a friend’s house for dinner.

**What is the best meal you have eaten?**  
The meal I ate at Joe Beef the week before I started there.

**Who do you love to cook for?**  
People who love to eat! My family.

**What are ingredients you can’t live without?**  
I cannot live without anchovy, olives, or tarragon. They seemingly find themselves into many of my dishes.

**What has it been like this past year to receive so many accolades for you and your restaurant?**  
A bit surreal and overwhelming. I’m so proud of what my team has built and it feels incredible that it has resonated with our community close and far.

**What are you most looking forward to this year?**  
Getting married and opening our new restaurant!*

**What excited you about signing on to be our featured guest chef for Chefs for Gemma 2023?**  
When I was approached about Gemma, and I was introduced to the work they do, it was pretty impossible to say no. I’m excited to be part of an event that will impact the lives of children who need assistance—I couldn’t think of a worthier cause to lend my time.

*Chef Shulman and her fiancé, Chef Alex Kemp Roussy, will be opening their restaurant, My Loup, in the Rittenhouse section of Philadelphia later this spring.

Grab your seat at the table for Chefs for Gemma on April 28th! Visit www.bidpal.net/chefs2023.

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**An Interview with Chef Amanda Shulman**

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**Did You Know?**

**Summertime Fun!**

You can create an opportunity for a child to have an amazing summer! Gifts to Gemma’s Campership Fund make it possible for children in foster care to participate in enriching experiences. “The Campership Fund enables children served by the program to have a fun and safe summer, and participate in special recreational activities throughout the year,” shared Shelley Spear, Director of Treatment Homes and Adoption for Gemma. Gifts can be made with the envelope enclosed or at www.gemmaservices.org.

**Thank you!**
PLEASE JOIN US! Friday, April 28, 2023 • 6 - 10pm
Green Valley Country Club 201 Ridge Pike Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

The Vogt Foundation's
15TH ANNUAL
Chefs for gemma
Where hope is on the menu

FEATURING
CHEF AMANDA SHULMAN OF
Her Place Supper Club
JAMES BEARD AWARD NOMINEE FOR BEST EMERGING CHEF

www.bidpal.net/chefs2023