



PEOPLE LIKE US

THE CENTER OF FAMILY LOVE STORY

PRESS KIT



OVERVIEW & SYNOPSIS

Illuminating the Gifts of the Developmentally Disabled: A Center of Family Love Film

Igniting a path to a brighter future through film, the Center of Family Love (CFL) challenges the world's marginalization of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Their transformative documentary, *People Like Us*, uncovers the hidden strengths and talents of this often-forgotten community.

This captivating film not only shares the inspiring 40-year history of the Center of Family Love, but also acknowledges their own past shortcomings in maximizing the potential of those they serve. With unwavering belief in the power of change from within, the center is dedicated to doing better. Through intimate interviews, personal stories, and glimpses into daily life at the center, viewers gain a profound understanding of the challenges faced by those living with IDD. However, the film goes beyond that, highlighting the immense potential within these individuals and showcasing how CFL is harnessing that potential to create a brighter future.

Focused on the construction of a cutting-edge facility, the Center of Family Love envisions a world where every individual with IDD can thrive and reach their full potential. Leveraging innovative learning methods and tailored programs, CFL is forging a new era of compassion and understanding, where diversity is celebrated.

Through the lens of this groundbreaking film, we are transported to a world bursting with hope, untapped potential, and fearless optimism. As we witness the resilience and beauty of the human spirit, we are inspired to make it our mission to create a future that is brighter, more inclusive, and filled with boundless opportunities for all.





STATISTICS

1 in 6 children

in the United States have a developmental disability, and yet there is still a pervasive stigma and marginalization of this community.

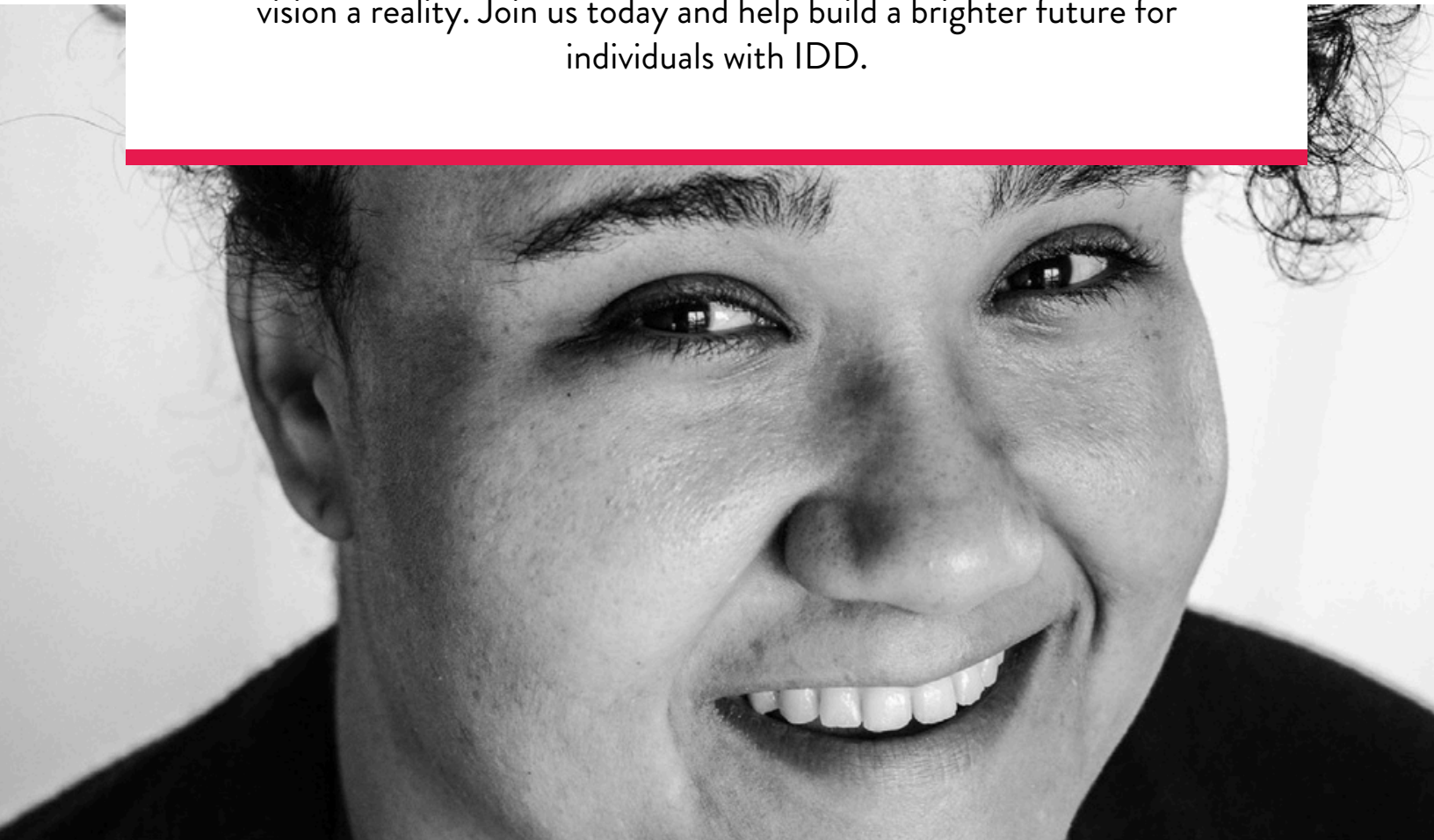
Studies show that
over 80% of individuals
with IDD are unemployed or underemployed

Over 6 million

people in the US have an intellectual or developmental disability

The new facility will provide cutting-edge vocational, healthcare, and programming services to individuals with IDD, creating a true **community hub.**

The Center of Family Love relies on donor support to make its vision a reality. Join us today and help build a brighter future for individuals with IDD.





PRESIDENT **and** CEO STATEMENT

As the President and CEO of this extraordinary organization, I am humbled to be part of a movement that transcends individuality. For four decades, we have tirelessly backed individuals with IDD, witnessing firsthand the extraordinary possibilities within this community. Their determination, ambition, and passion to succeed fills us with awe every day, as they overcome adversity with unwavering strength.

Our film, *People Like Us*, is not only a tribute to our residents, but also a powerful call to champion this community. It serves as a reminder that together, we can create a future where they can achieve what is seemingly impossible.

Now, we are embarking on a groundbreaking journey to establish a new training and development center to ignite the flames of empowerment within each resident. This facility will set new standards in care, opportunity, and innovation for those we serve. By equipping them with the necessary tools and relentless support, we will unlock the limitless potential that resides within each and every one of them.

At our new education center, cutting-edge resources and personalized paths will be at the disposal of each individual, tailored to their unique learning style. We believe in maximizing their abilities, recognizing and embracing the diverse needs of each person.

Success will not come without effort, and we cannot accomplish this monumental task alone. We need the unwavering support and enthusiasm of all who stand beside us. Together, we have the power to reshape the trajectory of this community, transforming their dreams of independence and contribution into tangible realities. In doing so, we will forge a future that is brighter, more compassionate, and resoundingly inclusive for all. Join us on this momentous journey towards progress, as we strive for a new era of thinking and a bold future of boundless potential.



BIOGRAPHIES



Linda R.
RESIDENT

Linda R. is an enthusiastic and passionate resident of the Center of Family Love, who was born and raised in Lexington, Oklahoma. Following her formative years in school, she attended a VoTech to hone her skills in Food Service. Here, Linda found something that she had been lacking--her love for cooking and baking. This started with a middle school project to make scrambled eggs with cheese; since then she has not looked back! She particularly enjoys cake decorating and cookie decorating, which she indulged in heavily after moving to CFL in March 2021. On top of this, Linda has been able to work closely with the chef at the Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club for the Center of Family Love Grand Dinner held in Fall 2022.



Tanner B.
RESIDENT

Tanner B. is a resident of Center of Family Love from Seiling, Oklahoma who has faced more adversity in his short life than most will ever experience. At just 13-years-old he was injured in a serious car accident with his brother on a slippery road, and at 15 he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Fortunately, with the care of Children's Hospital in Bethany, OK, he was taken to remission and made the most out of his childhood, even meeting Bob Stoops, The University of Oklahoma Football Head Coach, where Coach Stoops gave him an autographed football that now hangs proudly on his wall. Rather than become disheartened by this dark start to life, Tanner's bright future vision remains steadfastly intact and alive. He dreams of becoming a researcher in proton radiation and works towards perfecting the craft every single day. His basic rights to independence have been granted at CFL, enabling him to pay bills and complete tasks on his own terms, something which has further buttressed his confidence. This inspiring go-getter is even experienced as an emcee for CFL events, showing off both his vibrant character and unwavering determination. Despite having already endured such seemingly insurmountable odds from two brain tumors, Tanner B. plans for an even brighter path ahead filled with compassion, progressive work ethic, wise decision making, tireless thrill-seeking spirit - all while giving back through volunteerism at the same Children's Hospital that helped save him so many years ago.



Natalie S.
RESIDENT

Natalie S. is an optimistic soul who was born and raised in the small town of Kingfisher, Oklahoma. She had a knack for learning from a young age, often achieving honors at school, and she took this aptitude to VoTech during her last two years of high school where she studied Health Sciences. In 1998, Natalie ventured outside her home and began working at the Center of Family Love with their vocational program. Ever since then, she has been the welcoming face behind the front desk of Filters for Life production facility's reception area. Natalie loves to be professionally dressed as she greets customers and visitors while answering phone calls and taking filter orders. Her infectious smile radiates positivity in everything that she does and her message to the world is loud and clear: keep looking forward with faith and gratitude, no matter what life throws your way.



BIOGRAPHIES



Debbie Espinosa

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF
CENTER OF FAMILY LOVE AND
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF
PEOPLE LIKE US

Debbie Espinosa has served in numerous leadership positions throughout her career, including the Executive Director for Deaconess Hospital's Health & Wellness Center and then Executive Director of Deaconess Pregnancy & Adoption Services, where she expanded the agency by doubling the number of clients served, and tripling the number of successful adoptions during her first year. She served as CEO of New York Operations for The Olive Branch/One Accord Initiatives, Inc., a nonprofit organization helping chemically dependent women with children to be free from drug addiction. Later she served as the Administrator at Integris Medical Center, leading their Home Health Agency from a failing business entity to become a profitable agency with over one million dollars in net revenue each year. The home health agency was ranked 25th in the nation.

Debbie's greatest passion and joy has been serving for 11 years as the President and CEO at the Center of Family Love, a long-term residential care facility serving 130 adults with physical and developmental disabilities. These residents remain under the care of the Center of Family Love, free of charge, for their lifetime. The Center of Family Love's purpose is to celebrate the value and dignity of every human life and ensure that those with disabilities can discover their talents as they reach for and achieve their dreams. During Debbie's tenure, CFL has raised over 34 million dollars, which has enabled the organization to expand its vision, programs, and services.

Today Debbie's vision is an expansion of services with the launch of a second campus, building a new platform for their residents. This future includes expanding the Center of Family Love to serve more individuals with disabilities and learning differences. The Center's newest initiative is to launch a capital campaign to raise \$40 million to build the Oklahoma Institute for Cognitive Development. This 70,000 square foot training and education facility will enable CFL to serve an additional 500 individuals with developmental disabilities through programming services. These future students will receive professional training that is matched with their inherent abilities to create a new workforce of gifted culinary artists, computer technology assistants, veterinary technicians, and other specialists. Debbie has received numerous awards and accolades, including, "2019 Person of the Year" award from the Notre Dame Club of Oklahoma City, "Transformational Leader in Aging Services Award" from LeadingAge Oklahoma, and the "2023 Chief Justice Kane Civic Award" by Chief Justice Kane Assembly 848 4th Degree Knights of Columbus. She was also chosen in 2023 as "Woman of Influence" by LUXIERE Magazine.

Debbie Espinosa is a lifelong resident of Oklahoma City. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Oklahoma University. She is a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator and Licensed Home Health Administrator. She and her husband Sid have three children and seven grandchildren.



PRODUCTION NOTES

Experience the start of a powerful journey. In Fall 2022, what began as a simple meeting blossomed into a profound conversation lasting two incredible hours. The outcome? A film that shines a spotlight on the tireless opportunities provided by the Center of Family Love, *People Like Us*.

Originally intended to focus on the opportunities created by CFL, the filmmakers found themselves inspired by a new concept. Venturing out into the world, they captured candid, heartwarming moments of individuals speaking for themselves. From Linda and Chef Mark baking delicacies at OKC Golf & Country Club to Travis narrating his comic book at home, each story offered a glimpse into their unique worlds, paving the way for a fresh direction in the film.

But in Feb 2023, the journey took an unexpected turn. A chance encounter with Tanner, Mary, Christine, Natalie, and Ashley, representing People Like Us, changed everything. The filmmakers captured the essence of their struggles, listening as they bravely shared their stories and vowed to be a voice for the voiceless. It was a transformative experience, revealing the pain, vulnerability, resilience, hope, and unwavering spirit of People Like Us.

Prepare for an immersive experience like no other. This production will take you on a journey of discovery, shining a light on the opportunities and battles that People Like Us face every single day. The film team are passionate, compassionate, and driven in their mission to let People Like Us tell their own stories. The result is a visually stunning masterpiece that challenges the audience to think, empathize, and embrace hope for a brighter tomorrow.





AWARDS & RECOGNITION

CROWNED WINNER:

OCTOBER 2023



ACHIEVED 2023 FINALIST STATUS AT THE ESTEEMED:



GARNERED 2023 OFFICIAL SELECTION NODS FROM:



2023 BESTOWED HONORABLE MENTION:



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Can you provide more details about the Center of Family Love and their mission to challenge the world's marginalization of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities?

A: The Center of Family Love is a 40 year strong non-profit organization dedicated to providing care, support, and opportunities for individuals with IDD. Their mission is to raise awareness about the enormous potential that lies within this community and to help create a more inclusive and equitable world. The Center of Family Love challenges the stigma and marginalization that surrounds individuals with IDD by highlighting their strengths, talents, and contributions to society.

What are some industry challenges that care providers, including CFL, experience in caring for those in the community?

A: In our journey of advocacy and support, we acknowledge that we haven't always been able to offer our community the fullest range of opportunities for their development and growth. Our focus on exceptional day-to-day care limited us – and in hindsight – limited our residents. As the industry discovers its true potential, we too have been learning how to provide not just excellent care, but also foster education and greater independence. Now, armed with four decades of insight, we are resolute in our commitment to bring about a transformative change for this community.

How is the Center of Family Love addressing these challenges?

A: The Center of Family Love is dedicated to fostering a more inclusive and equitable society by providing innovative learning methods and tailored programs for individuals with IDD. With the construction of a cutting-edge facility, CFL aims to provide vocational, healthcare, and residential services that create a true community hub. The center is forging a new era of compassion and understanding, where diversity is celebrated, and every individual can thrive and reach their full potential.

Can you share some alarming statistics about the mistreatment of those with IDD in society?

A: Shockingly, 1 in 6 children in the United States have a developmental disability, yet this community is often marginalized and stigmatized. Furthermore, over 6 million people in the US have an intellectual or developmental disability, and studies show that over 80% of these individuals are unemployed or underemployed. These sobering figures highlight the immense barriers faced by those with IDD in society.

What makes People Like Us stand out from other documentaries?

A: People Like Us is not just an informative film; it is a transformative experience. Through powerful personal stories, intimate interviews, and glimpses into daily life at the center, viewers are transported to a world bursting with hope and untapped potential. We invite our audience to see the world differently and to embrace diversity and inclusion. Our film is a celebration of humanity at its best, touching hearts and minds long after the credits have rolled.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What impact do you hope *People Like Us* will have?

A: Our hope is that *People Like Us* will help to destigmatize and normalize IDD, encouraging society to recognize the unique strengths and perspectives that individuals with IDD possess. We also hope that the film will inspire viewers to act, whether that means becoming a supporter of the Center of Family Love, supporting other IDD nonprofits, or simply becoming more inclusive in their daily lives. Ultimately, our goal is to empower individuals with IDD to reach their full potential and to create a more equitable and just society.

How can individuals and organizations get involved with the Center of Family Love?

A: We rely on donor support to make our vision a reality. Individuals and organizations can become a supporter by [making a donation](#), volunteering their time, or simply spreading the word about our mission. We also encourage individuals and organizations to join us in advocacy efforts, promoting policies that create a more inclusive society. Together, we can create a brighter future for individuals with IDD.





TRAILER



PRESS RELEASE

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A Visionary Film Journey into a Brighter Future for Individuals with IDD

March 4, 2025, Okarche, OK – Unleashing the power of film, the Center of Family Love has crafted an awe-inspiring masterpiece, *People Like Us*, that has captivated hearts worldwide. This groundbreaking documentary challenges society's tendency to overlook those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). It unveils the hidden reservoirs of strength and talent within this often-underestimated community, presenting a visionary blueprint for a world that embraces inclusivity and equity, ensuring that everyone is valued and can flourish.

In the United States alone, there are over 8 million individuals living with intellectual or developmental disabilities. *People Like Us* shines an unyielding spotlight on the daunting challenges they face. Shockingly, studies reveal that over 80% of individuals with IDD are either unemployed or underemployed, exposing the pervasive stigma and marginalization they experience. Beyond that grim reality, this film showcases the immense potential that lies within these individuals and how the Center of Family Love is harnessing that potential to shape a brighter future.

Through intimate interviews, personal narratives, and captivating glimpses into daily life at the Center, viewers are offered a profound understanding of the Center of Family Love's 44-year history, as well as their reflections on past missed opportunities to maximize the potential of those they serve. Driven by an unwavering faith in the power of internal transformation, the Center of Family Love is committed to doing better. With a clear vision of a cutting-edge facility, they imagine a world where every individual with IDD can thrive and fully realize their capabilities. This innovative career training and development center will provide unparalleled vocational, and programming services, becoming a true hub of community and support. "We are thrilled that our film has garnered such widespread recognition. It is a testament to the power of individuals with IDD and our unwavering belief in their potential," said Debbie Espinosa, President and CEO of the Center of Family Love. "We want *People Like Us* to inspire a sense of hope and optimism in a brighter future for individuals with IDD, where the power of diversity builds a stronger sense of community and belonging. We invite viewers to join us on our mission and help build a brighter future where individuals with IDD are empowered through transformative education."

People Like Us has garnered widespread acclaim, receiving prestigious awards and recognition, including the Critics' Choice Award at the Dubai International Cine Carnival, the Best Film accolade at the Green Mountain Christian Film Festival, and the coveted Best Feature-Length Documentary award at the Crown Point International Film Festival in Chicago, and six time Best Documentary. Through the transformative lens of this film, we are transported to a world brimming with hope, untapped potential, and unflinching optimism. Witnessing the resilience and breathtaking beauty of the human spirit inspires us to make it our mission to create a future that is brighter, more inclusive, and teeming with limitless possibilities for all.

Join us on April 15, 2025, for a full red-carpet experience for the Oklahoma Premiere of *People Like Us* at the historic Rodeo Cinema. 6:00 pm-7:00 pm for VIP purchased tickets of \$125 for a happy hour experience, hors' d'oeuvres, and a meet-n-mingle with the featured residents or purchase general admission tickets for \$75. Be a part of the journey with Center of Family Love. You can also support their mission by donating online at www.centeroffamilylove.org/donate.

About CFL's Future: The Center of Family Love is transitioning into the largest and most exciting development phase in the organization's 43-year history. CFL is building a new career and training development center that will serve an additional 500 individuals, per year, with career development and placement services. This initiative will tap into strengths of individuals with neurodiversity and developmental and physical disabilities, aligning each individual with a career of their choice. Beginning with strength-based assessments, students will engage in classroom training, on-the-job training, and certifications, preparing high school students and adults for rewarding careers. CFL's new initiative will empower individuals through transformative education and embodies the three core pillars of Oklahoma's Unlock Student Potential Task Force recently launched by Governor Stitt and Secretary of Education Sanders. These pillars include: Discovery of Individual Potential, Development of Essential Skills, and Deployment of Talent, and will help reshape the Oklahoma workforce with individuals never before given the opportunity to thrive in Oklahoma industries.



About Center of Family Love

For more than 40 years, The Center of Family Love has provided lifetime care to adults with physical and intellectual differences. The care is provided through workforce opportunities, group homes and intermediate care facilities. The Center of Family Love has recently expanded their offerings to individuals with neurodiversity by providing education and family support. Based in Okarche, OK, the Center of Family Love serves Oklahomans statewide.



**For more information, please visit
centeroffamilylove.org or call 405-263-4658.**