



Meet Our Administration Staff



Paula Wolsted
Church Office Manager

My family and I have lived in The Woodlands since 2000. I have one son and one daughter, both grown and married. I am also a proud grandma!

I joined the staff of Spirit of Joy! in 2009.

I enjoy walking my dogs, gardening and spending time with my grandchildren.



Kristi Allen
Financial Director

I have a Bachelor's degree in Accounting from Oklahoma State University. I moved to The Woodlands in 2004 from Longview, TX, I am originally from Oklahoma. I have three children, two girls and a boy, two are in college and one is at The Woodlands High School.

When I am not at COJ!, I am a full time dance and cheer mom! I also enjoy baking, crafting and shopping!

My youngest daughter began at Children of Joy! Preschool in the fall of 2004 in the Ladybug Toddler classroom. She went all the way thru COJ! to the Butterflies. I began working at COJ! in the spring of 2007 as the Financial Administrator. I have seen many COJ! families come through the program and witnessed many changes. I have thoroughly enjoyed my years here!



Holly Werner
Assistant Director / Curriculum Coordinator

I began working at Children of Joy! in 2012. Before moving to Houston in 2011, I lived in Pittsburgh, PA and taught First Grade. I graduated from Clarion University with a dual degree in Early Childhood/Elementary Education and then received my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Gannon University. My husband and I live in Magnolia with our three children, two of which attended Children of Joy!. I love baking and spending time with my family traveling to the beach, riding bikes and swimming!

I believe all children have different learning styles and I help teachers incorporate them into their classrooms. My goal at COJ! is to continue to assist the teachers in giving the children the best possible learning experiences possible to help them develop skills for Kindergarten and life.



Yvonne Avocato
Speech Therapist

My name is Yvonne Avocato and I am licensed Speech-Language Pathologist. My husband and I are both from New Orleans but we have lived in The Woodlands since 2006 after he got out of the Navy. We have two boys who attend school in the area. I graduated from the University of New Orleans with a Bachelor's in Psychology and earned a Master's in Communication Disorders from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. I have worked and treated pediatric patients since 2003 in a variety of settings (private practice, school system, and home health). My passion is helping toddler/preschool age children to make gains towards age-level speech, language, and social communication. When I am not at work, I love spending time with my boys and my husband. I also love reading, listening to live music, participating in our church's marriage ministry, and cooking.



Meet Our Specials Teachers



Music and Movement



Lesly McRae

I am a long time COJ parent and have been actively involved in the school through serving as a Room Mom and as president of the Preschool Team Board before finally becoming a member of COJ staff. I have always loved teaching and knew I wanted to be a teacher when I was in the 3rd grade. I received my BS in Early childhood and Elementary Education with emphasis in Math and Language Arts from the University of Alabama in 2002. I worked as a 3rd grade teacher in the public school system for 7 years before taking time off to raise my kids.

My family and I have lived all over the United States and moved to Texas in 2011. I have 4 awesome kids, all of whom are COJ graduates. In my spare time, I teach piano lessons to elementary aged children. For fun, I enjoy weight lifting and being outdoors at the beach or hiking in the mountains. I love working with kids and watching them grow and explore their world. I get so excited seeing them achieve their goals and become amazing little people. My goal is to instill a love of learning!



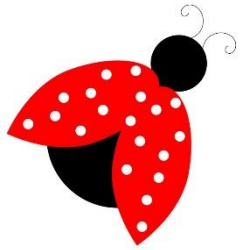
Ms. Kelsi
Spanish Teacher

I am thrilled to be teaching Spanish at COJ! I received my B.A. in Spanish Language and Literature from North Carolina State University in 2008. I am very passionate about languages, and excited to be back in the classroom as my youngest enters elementary school.

Originally from North Carolina, my husband and I spent 5 years abroad in Canada where our two sons were born. Our experience with COJ! began in 2015 upon our return to Texas. Since then, I've had the opportunity to serve on the COJ! Preschool Board as Fundraiser Chair, as well as substitute teach at the preschool.

As the Spanish teacher, my goal is to introduce the concept of Spanish foreign language by engaging the children with stories, music and art to teach basic, everyday Spanish vocabulary. Above all else, I want to make it fun!

When I'm not at work, I play a lot of tennis, and enjoy spending time with my family both in the area and through our travels.



Meet Our Toddler Teachers

TTH Ladybugs



Ms. Anne Marie

I began working at Children of Joy! in 2009. Before moving to The Woodlands in 1998, I lived in Australia. I spent most of my life in New Zealand.

My husband and I have one daughter who is away at college in Florida. My daughter and I are members of the National Charity League (Mothers and Daughters serving communities together) and we like to volunteer at many different philanthropies in and around our area. Our family loves to travel and explore new places and experience new cultures and delight in tasting new foods. My favorite way of traveling is cruising. In 2012 I received my CDA specializing in Toddlers and Two's. I love children, especially this age group.



Ms. Lynne

I began working at COJ! in 2012. I love teaching the 3's, they are so inquisitive and eager to learn and explore their environment! They love coming to school and the smiles on their faces make my day! Each child is an individual and should be seen and treated as such. They all learn and grow at their own pace. I believe it is my job to guide them in a loving and patient manner while nurturing their love of learning.

I grew up and lived in Northern Virginia before moving to The Woodlands in 2005. I graduated from Shepherd University in West Virginia with a degree in Elementary Education. While living in Virginia I taught preschool, Transition Kindergarten and First Grade at a small private school. In 2005 I moved to The Woodlands with my husband and 2 daughters. Before coming to COJ! I was an aide at Bush Elementary. Since moving here, my family has become involved with fostering dogs for the Montgomery County Animal Shelter. I also love vacationing at the beach. I feel blessed and very fortunate for my daughters to have grown up in the community of The Woodlands!



Meet Our Two's Teachers MWF Ladybugs



Ms. Anne Marie

I began working at Children of Joy! in 2009. Before moving to The Woodlands in 1998, I lived in Australia. I spent most of my life in New Zealand.

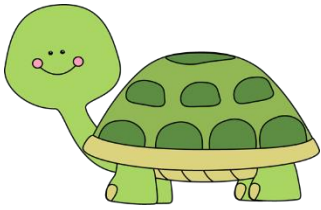
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Ms. Lorena

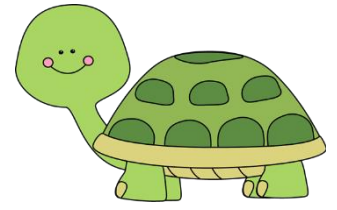
My name is Lorena Ayala and I am from Venezuela. My husband is from Houston, and we have a son attends school in The Woodlands.

I have my diploma in Business Administration. In Venezuela, I worked as a teaching assistant for several years. For many years I've worked as a teaching assistant here in the Woodlands. It is so much fun to teach, learn and be around the children.



Meet Our Two's Teachers

TTH Turtles



Ms. Crystal

In 2017, my family moved to The Woodlands/Conroe area where my son started Children of Joy! I immediately fell in love with COJ and quickly became part of the COJ family by subbing and being a paraprofessional in one of the Pre-K classrooms.

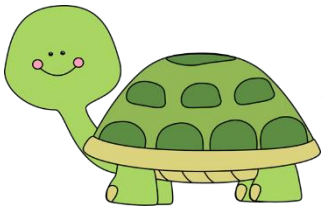
Originally from North Carolina, I moved to Texas in 2002, graduated from the University of Houston-Clear Lake in 2004 and then obtained two teaching certificates for the state of Texas in both General and Special Education.

I have enjoyed working as an Early Childhood Educator for years and I feel very blessed that GOD led me to COJ. I am looking forward to creating a joyful learning environment that allows your child to grow in both academics and spiritual growth.

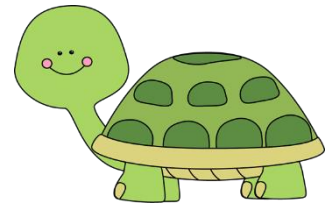


Ms. Alyssa

Growing up my family moved every 2-3 years because my father flew in the U.S. Air Force. I lived in Korea, Germany, England and all over the USA. That experience gave me a zest for adventure and travel. I studied abroad for a semester in London, England and received a BBA from Texas Tech University. I worked in Marketing for several years and met my husband, Graham, while I was working for an oil company. I was fortunate to be able to stay at home with my two precious children, Catarina and Kylan for 8 years. I started at COJ in 2016 as a "shadow" to an adorable little boy in the Ladybugs class.



Meet Our Three's Teachers MWF Turtles



Ms. Lynne

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Meet Our Three's Teachers MWF Bees



Ms. Stephanie

I am blessed to call Children of Joy! home since the 2012-13 school year. I bring with me a love of working with children and their families and so many blessed years of experience working in Christian settings. After graduating with a B.S. in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education, I was lucky to have taught preschool, kindergarten and second grade in Catholic schools in Pennsylvania and then Ohio when Mike's (my husband) work took us there. When we found ourselves in this area, again due to Mike's work, I was so blessed that Children of Joy! found me!

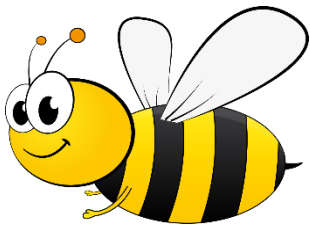
In addition to loving every minute of working with the children and families at our wonderful school, I try to make it on time to practices and music lessons and make each day special for our son, John. I also love volunteering at our church, St. Anthony of Padua.

I am honored that God has gifted with me with the love of helping children build a foundation for their learning not only in school but throughout their lives. Through Him and with Him, I try to make a difference for our school community by providing a safe, loving and creative environment that allows us to learn and grow at our own pace and in the ways that we learn best!



Evelina Moore

I am from Venezuela and I moved to Texas 20 years ago. I have been working in the pre-school field for over 15 years. I started working at Children of Joy as a substitute teacher for the past two years. I am so excited to work Ms. Stephanie this school year. I feel so blessed to be part of this school.



Meet Our Three's Teachers TTH Bees



Ms. Stephanie

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Karina Weir



Sarah Fohey

I am originally from the UK where I worked for the City Council in both the Equality & Diversity team and the Policy, Improvement & Performance team within the Chief Executive Directorate.

My husband is Steve and together we have 4 boys, Lochlan, Dalton and the twins Mitchell & Chase.

We moved to Texas in 2012 and I have been fortunate since to be able to stay home with my boys. This allowed me to be an active volunteer in their schools the last 7 years whilst simultaneously running my yoga business. I'm currently a member of the PTO at Bush Elementary.

Our family moved to The Woodlands in 2018 where my youngest son attended Pre-k in the Owls class at COJ. We quickly fell in love with the preschool and I started the 2019 school year working in a shadow position for an adorable little girl in the turtles.

In my spare time I enjoy travelling, yoga, and my favorite thing to do is grow vegetables and tend to my garden.



Meet Our Three's Teachers

TTH Frogs



Ms. Jackie

I was born in Lima, Peru. Since I was a teenager, I knew I wanted to work with young children. It has always been a passion of mine to teach young age groups. I majored in Early Childhood Education in Peru. Once I graduated, my family decided to move to the United States in 1989. I met my husband in Los Angeles, California and have been married for over 25 years. We now have 3 wonderful children, Jacqueline,

Aaron, and Esteban.

Throughout the years, I had the opportunity to teach homeschoolers, worked in school districts, daycares, and volunteer in my church. I taught Spanish, Reading and Writing. I have been a preschool teacher at COJ since 2015! I obtained my Child Development Associates (CDA) in 2016. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to teach your child and see them progress socially and academically.



Ms. Lorena

My name is Lorena Ayala and I am from Venezuela. My husband is from Houston, and we have a son attends school in The Woodlands.

I have my diploma in Business Administration. In Venezuela, I worked as a teaching assistant for several years. For many years I've worked as a teaching assistant here in the Woodlands. It is so much fun to teach, learn and be around the children.



Meet Our Four's Teachers MWF Frogs



Ms. Ingrid

I live in Alden Bridge with my husband and three teenaged children, Daniel, William, and Ellie. I began at COJ in 2011 as a Frog teacher, and previously as a substitute and when my two younger children attended preschool. We have lived in The Woodlands for over ten years. I graduated from Miami University of Ohio with a degree in Special education and taught many years in Washington and Arizona, until staying home with my young children. I was happy to return to teaching as my kids went off to school and have enjoyed being part of the wonderful community at COJ. I am involved in many activities around the community through my children's and family's activities.



Ms. Donna

I began working at Children of Joy in 2014. I am originally from Aberdeen, Scotland and moved to the Woodlands in 2011 with my husband Iain and my two sons Connor (21) and Kieran (19). We all love the Texas way of life and all the outdoor activities and sports that the Woodlands has to offer. Before moving to Houston, we were fortunate enough to be based in Baku, Azerbaijan. There we enjoyed 5 years of a wonderful expat life where the boys attended The International School of Azerbaijan (TISA). I worked there as an assistant teacher and homeroom mom, which I loved. I love spending time with my family and traveling. I also love cooking and wine tasting! I am fascinated by children and find so much joy in teaching and being around them. I love their wild imaginations and curious minds! I love that it keeps my brain young allowing me to continue my own journey as a student and lifelong learner. I personally want to thank you in advance for sharing your children with us.



Meet Our Four's Teachers MWF Butterflies



Ms. Sondra

My husband Dwayne and I have two children, Riley and Landon. In my free time my kids keep me very busy! I enjoy just staying home and spending time with my family. I have been a teacher at COJ! since 2014. I have always wanted to work with children and feel truly blessed to be a member of the staff at COJ!



Ms. Shannon

Preschool is my jam! I am a native Texan and have been with COJ! since 2005. I taught (too many to count) years in the Turtle class before becoming the Chapel Teacher. I founded my non-profit, FUN FIT, in 2014 and implemented a before school gross motor program here at COJ! I am a certified DRUMS ALIVE instructor. I am currently teaching the MWF Butterflies. I absolutely LOVE nurturing children. My husband, Chad, and I live in Magnolia (Go Dogs!) with our two amazing kids, Zak and Taylor and our crazy dog, Scout. I love sweet tea, baseball, soccer and the Michigan Wolverines. Go Blue!



Meet Our Four's Teachers TTH Butterflies



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Ms. Kellie

I began working as a sub at COJ! in 2014 and I am now very happy to be teaching Pre-K with Ms. Donna.

I was born and raised in New Zealand where I graduated from The University of Otago with a BA and postgraduate diploma in TESOL. I spent several years teaching English in Japan before I met my husband there and we moved to the US in 2009. We live in The Woodlands with our 2 young daughters - both who attended COJ! Our family loves the park, traveling, movies, swimming and going out for dinner.

I love the philosophy and culture at COJ! I believe that our children are gifts and my goal is to teach in a fun, safe and nurturing environment so each student can enjoy learning and thrive to be their best.



Meet Our Four's Teachers MTWTH Owls



Ms. Heather

I began teaching at COJ in 2014, and have been teaching Pre-K in the Owls since 2016. I am from Scotland and have a Bachelor's Degree in Education. I taught for many years in Scotland, mainly working in a 2nd grade classroom.

I live in The Woodlands with my husband and two daughters, both of who are at college. In my free time, I love to garden and watch Rugby.

I love working at COJ and look forward to being her for many years to come.



Ms. Karine

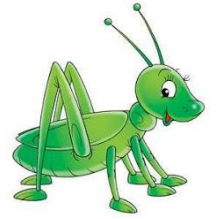
I began teaching at Children of Joy in 2016 in the 3's and since 2017 in Pre-K, after being a stay-at-home mom for ten years. I studied Foreign Languages at university in France, and hold a diploma in Early Childhood Teaching from the London Montessori Centre in the UK.

I worked in the UK teaching a class of 3-6 years and then taught a 6-9 years class in a Montessori school in Paris, France. I am originally from France and have been living in The Woodlands for the past 13 years with my husband and my two children. In my spare time, I like swimming, gardening, going to the movies and reading.

I am looking forward to working here at Children of Joy and watching children learn how to become independent, to grow at their own pace and to learn new skills in a welcoming environment.



Meet Our Four's Teachers MTWTH Grasshoppers



Ms. Laurie

I have been working as an early childhood teacher for over 20 years. I attended college in Moore, Oklahoma and in Bryan, Tx. In 2016 I completed my Child Development Associate Credential. I joined Children of Joy! Preschool as a Pre-K teacher in 2015. My husband and I live in The Woodlands and we have a son who attends Lone Star Community College. In my spare time I enjoy reading, walking on the trails or driving to College Station to catch an Aggie basketball game with my family.

I believe that children learn through play and that they are ready to learn when they are interested and engaged. My goal is to provide an active learning environment for children so that they are ready to play, explore, and learn.

Ms. Alicia

I am so excited to be working with preschool children at Children of Joy! I graduated from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana with a degree in Elementary Education and moved to Houston from Indiana to be a 5th grade math and science teacher. After teaching a few years, I was a missionary to college students in Paris, France for 2 years before moving back to minister to college students at Rice University. We moved to The Woodlands in 2002. For the last 15 years I have homeschooled my 2 sons and provided a home daycare caring for infants through school-aged children. I have one son at Texas A&M and 1 who is a junior in high school. Along with my husband, we love traveling together and watching lots of sports.

Getting to work with preschool children brings me such joy as I get to watch them discover how God uniquely created each of them and the world around them.



Meet Our Transition Teachers MTWTH Geckos



Ms. Linda

I began working at Children of Joy as a Pre-K teacher in 2001; I did this for three years. After moving overseas, I came back to COJ in 2012, taught Pre-K for one year, and then moved to the Transition class. I have been in this position since 2013. I first began working in the preschool setting when I lived in Louisiana in 1996. We were transferred around quite a bit, so I worked off and on as a teacher.

I graduated from the University of Texas Medical Branch with a bachelor's degree in Health Care Information. I obtained my CDA in 2002. I went back to school and received my teaching certificate and ESL certificate in 2008. I have been in the teaching field for over 20 years.

I have two grown children that live far away. I love to travel and see new places, but especially love to visit my children.

I believe that it is our job as teachers to create a nurturing environment and help children develop a love of learning as we prepare them for Kindergarten.



Ms. Amy

I grew up in a small, southeast town in Missouri called Poplar Bluff. I attended Arkansas State University and graduated in '95 with an Early Childhood Education Degree. I then married my husband, Brian Collins, and started teaching 6th grade. Within the next 2 years, we moved to Texas and had our first daughter. I decided to stay home with her but still had a passion to teach so I taught Sunday School for 7 years. I have been teaching at Children of Joy since 2012. I have 3 beautiful children, and a husband of 20 years. I am blessed beyond measure and so incredibly thankful for everything God has given to me.



Meet Our Fun Friday Teachers



Ms. Nita

My name is Nita Peterson and I am originally from Indonesia. My husband is Mark and we have two children. We moved to the Woodlands in 1996. I started working at COJ in 2008 in the Bees Class (3 years old) where I was for 6 years and then moved to Butterflies (Pre-K) for 2 years. I then worked as a sub for 2 years. I was so excited that I could work again in 2017 in the Fun Friday class. My passion is giving my love to these little children and seeing their precious smiles. Getting their hugs always makes my day. Children of Joy are my family and I am so glad to be part of it.



Ms. Kellie

I began working as a sub at COJ! in 2014 and I am now very happy to be teaching Pre-K.

I was born and raised in New Zealand where I graduated from The University of Otago with a BA and postgraduate diploma in TESOL. I spent several years teaching English in Japan before I met my husband there and we moved to the US in 2009. We live in The Woodlands with our 2 young daughters - both who attended COJ! Our family loves the park, traveling, movies, swimming and going out for dinner.

I love the philosophy and culture at COJ! I believe that our children are gifts and my goal is to teach in a fun, safe and nurturing environment so each student can enjoy learning and thrive to be their best.



Meet Our Support Staff



Ms. Kellie

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I love the philosophy and culture at COJ! I believe that our children are gifts and my goal is to teach in a fun, safe and nurturing environment so each student can enjoy learning and thrive to be their best.



Ms. Kerrie

My name is Kerrie and I am originally from England, UK. We moved to the USA in 2006 for my husband's work. I originally started out my working career in the Insurance Industry but after 17 years, I learned a new profession and ran my own business as a beauty therapist until we moved here and I became a mom.

My husband Richard and I have one daughter, Mia whom we adopted right here in the USA along with 2 cats and a dog. I love all things active, creative and love to get my hands messy.

My daughter is a COJ Alumni and she loved her time here. When she started Elementary, I found I had too much time on my hands and came back to COJ as a sub. In 2017, I started as a 2-day Floater. I assist teachers and staff with a variety of duties. Over the years, I have spent lots of time in each classroom and love watching the little ones develop through the school year.