

# December Hero Profile 2021



**SLO County Help Me Grow** is a county-wide system that supports children and their families by providing free developmental screenings and linkages with community services to promote healthy growth and development for all children from birth to age five. Help Me Grow brings together families, pediatricians, early care and education, and human service providers to ensure that San Luis Obispo County's children reach their optimal potential.

## DECEMBER'S HERO

Jamie McGillis  
*Program Coordinator*  
*Help Me Grow*

### Jamie McGillis is a champion for children, with a passion for providing supportive services to some of the youngest among us and creating opportunities for equitable access to help, regardless of circumstance.

With more than 10 years of experience working with children and families, Jamie now leads the team at SLO County's "Help Me Grow" family resource center – a hub for information and coordinated resource referral related to early childhood development. In this role she pulls from her Master's Degree in Social Work and a strong skill set born from a variety of positions—including social worker, case manager, clinician, crisis responder and beyond. Jamie says she's always been drawn to helping others, particularly children. Her motivation comes from knowing that so much of our development and emotional growth happens in the early years of life, helping lay foundations for our path into adulthood. For Jamie, it's important to protect and support this critical stage so that our children can be in the best position to thrive.

Her reward, she says, is that moment when all the dots connect, parents feel empowered, children are matched with supports that fit their developmental needs, and life for the entire family unit improves. A personal story has served to fuel Jamie's ardor; her late husband, who struggled with a learning disability his entire life, once told Jamie that he wished more professionals like her had been present when he was a kid. He always felt he would've have had fewer challenges in school and in adulthood had his challenges been identified and addressed early in

his childhood. Jamie says his role as her biggest cheerleader further inspires her to carry out this work—something providers, partners and parents admire and appreciate. For them, Jamie is a go-to person who always answers the call, patiently listens, assesses concerns, gives relevant information, and navigates the right resources. Moms, dads and caregivers need to feel connected when seeking help, especially during times of stress, and Jamie offers a comfortable, safe space with her natural positive and engaging energy.

When describing Jamie, one colleague thinks of a quote from the book "The Lorax," by Dr. Suess. "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." Well, you might say Jamie cares a whole awful lot... enough to support families and children, both when they face adverse circumstances, and also through continued relationships far beyond times of need. The love and loyalty with which Jamie infuses our early-childhood landscape makes our community, our county, and our world a better place.

**Thank you, Jamie.  
You are a true Hands-On Hero.**



"Hands-on Heroes" is a recognition program, coordinated with partner agencies, that honors individuals making a difference in the lives of young children and families. The year 2021 highlights Heroes working in child growth and development. To learn more about "Help Me Grow" and "Hands-on Heroes," please visit [slohelpmegrow.org](http://slohelpmegrow.org) and [first5slo.org](http://first5slo.org).