

SMILE 4 Special Needs | AYLUS Pearland

[top of page](#)

[HOME](#)

[ABOUT US▼](#)

[About AYLUS Pearland](#)

[Officers](#)

[Members](#)

[History](#)

[Sponsors/Partners](#)

[TRACKS▼](#)

[City and Neighbor Support](#)

[Youth Entrepreneur](#)

[Achieve Together](#)

[SMILE 4 Special Needs](#)

[STEM n Tech](#)

[Healthy Future](#)

[EVENTS▼](#)

[Event Calendar](#)

[Event Report](#)

[Event Statistics](#)

[Future Events](#)

[RESOURCES▼](#)

[Feature Stories](#)

[Volunteer Hour Lookup](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

[Video Gallery](#)

[Testimonials](#)

[Plant Catalog](#)

[CONTACT US ▼](#)

[Leadership Opportunities](#)

[Donation/Feedback](#)

[Membership/Waiver](#)

[More](#)

[Use tab to navigate through the menu items.](#)

[Log In](#)

[Youth SMILE 4 Special Needs](#)

Youth SMILE 4 Special Needs

Initiated in the summer of 2021 by then-junior members

Aila Jiang

and

Kara Li

, the SMILE 4 Special Needs track has evolved from a simple youth buddy system into a comprehensive youth-led initiative aimed at serving and advocating for the special needs community. Through these programs, youth volunteers not only contribute to building a more inclusive community but also gain invaluable skills in leadership, empathy, problem-solving, and teamwork, enriching their own personal growth in the process. The track now encompasses four key programs, closely partnered with Hummingbird Community Outreach (HCO), each designed to promote inclusion and provide meaningful, skill-building experiences for individuals with special needs.

WHAT WE DO

Youth-Led SMILE Camp

Bucket Drumming for All

Pearland My PlayClub

SMILE Inclusive Play & Learn

Youth-Led SMILE Camp

Originally a basic buddy system, Youth-Led SMILE Camp has grown into a dynamic, youth-driven summer camp where volunteers assist with instructing arts and crafts, music, computer skills, and life skills lessons. By 2024, the camp transitioned to a fully youth-led format, with volunteers developing an innovative curriculum in collaboration with professionals from the center. This curriculum includes multi-skill integrated lessons, a mini-market simulation, mini-Olympics, AI teaching, and a healthy living workshop. The program has earned high praise from both participants and the center's professionals for its inclusive approach and impactful learning experiences.

Pearland My PlayClub

Pearland My PlayClub is a monthly inclusive play event launched in July 2023 to promote community awareness and inclusion. Sponsored by the City of Pearland and organized by AYLUS Pearland volunteers, the program builds on AYLUS Pearland's longstanding commitment to inclusivity. Since supporting Pearland's first inclusive park in 2021 with a donation and ongoing fundraising efforts, AYLUS Pearland has co-hosted 17 events. The program partners with local organizations and the city to foster inclusive play and is now raising funds for the city's second inclusive park.

Feature Story

SMILE Inclusive Play & Learn

SMILE Inclusive Play & Learn is a semi-structured program that blends play and learning for children with special needs. AYLUS Pearland, in partnership with HCO, has helped youth organizations outside Pearland establish similar programs. Pearland volunteers have shared their experiences and curriculum with youth in Katy, West Houston, and Plano. To date, over 30 SMILE Inclusive Play & Learn sessions have taken place, providing opportunities for children with special needs to engage in enriching and fun activities.

Bucket Drumming for All

This youth-led initiative teaches bucket drumming to individuals of all ages with special needs. Starting with SMILE Summer Camp, AYLUS Pearland volunteers played bucket drums with adults with special needs and performed across Greater Houston. In the summer of 2024, AYLUS Pearland formally joined HCO's Bucket Drumming for All program, contributing expertise to teach individuals across different age groups. The lessons not only teach rhythm and music but also foster confidence, teamwork, decision-making, and leadership among participants.

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bottom of page

