

MARCH 2015



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magazine



Activities



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Cover Photo by Allison Busch Photography;
Cover model: Carson Shinn (3)

Letter from the Editor: The Extracurricular Tightwire

By Kirsten Pflieger



When my girls were younger, it was easy for me to decide on activities. We mostly just took walks or went to the park. However, if I enrolled them in a class, I had two criteria. I wanted them to move their bodies in an environment that focused on unstructured exploration,

and for there to be an easy system for make-ups or not paying for missed classes. No class was worth an interrupted nap. Now, my older daughter is approaching her fourth birthday and many of the classes for her age group are more structured, instructional, and outcome orientated—soccer, dance, art. I struggle with this. While I think that organized sports are fine and I love a beautifully performed dance, I wonder if imposing how things should be done at this young age is necessary. I read Peter Gray’s *Free to Learn* a couple of years ago and began to really consider the difference between being taught

I love watching my girls learn something new—when you see that special light come into her eyes as a previously incomprehensible idea makes sense, or when she can finally do a skill that had previously eluded her.

something and learning something. I love watching my girls learn something new—when you see that special light come into her eyes as a previously incomprehensible idea makes sense, or when she can finally do a skill that had previously eluded her. I find it especially inspiring when she figures it out for herself or by watching another child. Serenity started preschool this year. Since this was a huge shift in the structure of her days, we chose to not enroll her in any additional activities. For our family, this was the correct choice. We have all gone through growing pains adjusting to the new demands on our time. Next year, we are increasing the number of hours that she is at preschool, and then the following year she will be in kindergarten—all big changes with progressively increasing time commitments. Deciding how much is enough will be an ongoing conversation. “The Perfectly Scheduled Child” on page 14 speaks to these concerns, and shows how different families find different balance points. Many of us feel that we have activities figured out, and then a younger sibling enters the picture. On page 16, “Sibling Revelry” provides tools for navigating those turbulent waters and keeping everyone engaged. We asked our expert, Gina Hassan, for suggestions of what to do when you make the decision to slow down. See her answers on page 8. And once you have decided how much time you want to commit to organized activities, Stef Tousignant provides guidance on page 18 on what to look for in a class depending on the age of your child. Finding balance is hard and an ongoing process. We hope that this issue helps your family through this process.

Kirsten Pflieger lives in the Castro with her husband, Karl, and their two daughters, Serenity and Sierra. They are currently waging a take back the sidewalk campaign with sidewalk chalk. Stop by and add a doodle.

KPflieger

Housekeeping

Opinions expressed in this issue are those of the contributors. Acceptance of advertising does not constitute endorsement by GGMG of any products or services. The editors reserve the right to accept, edit, or reject any content submitted to the magazine.

ADVERTISING: Advertisements are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. For submission information, email advertising@ggm.org.

THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: The long weekend, the flu, shingles, strep throat, ants, bacon, test drives, croissants, Girl Scout cookies, date nights, last-minute preschool applications, a botched surprise birthday, non-contagious-yet-scary rashes, a rat infestation, and finishing the first draft of a book.

COMING NEXT: April—Civic Engagement; May—Taking Care of Mom

CONTEST: Congratulations to Molly Phelps, winner of the ThirdLove lingerie gift card.

Have an idea for an issue theme or article? Please email editor@ggm.org.

Letter from the Board: From Our Past, to Our Present, to Our Future

By Ashley Koch

Recently, Sarah Soto, the Chair of the Board, and I received an email that I found to be incredibly inspiring. GGMG founders Wynn Burkett and Faith Anaya reached out to share photos of their two children at their first day of college. They told us the day was as big as the one when they dropped their children at kindergarten. In Faith’s words, “*Wynn and I thought that it would be fun to send you the photos of our kids now—here is what happens, an elusive moment when it ‘gets better,’ when you realize why you have been a parent. The things that change and the things that never change are all in the photo of your baby’s first day of college.*”

Their email went on to show appreciation for what the GGMG community has become. They were excited to hear about the membership changes announced last month to expand our age limit to include mothers with children up to 11 years old and allow members who move out of the San Francisco area to continue their membership. Connecting with the founders was a refreshing reminder of why our many volunteers spend countless hours building and strengthening this community and why our members remain present together in this parenting experience. It was the ultimate honor to hear how proud they are of this community, and to learn where their journey of life has taken them beyond this organization. Their message rooted me even more firmly into our mission: “Nurture ourselves, our children, our partners, and our community.”

Next month, I will be stepping down as Vice Chair of the Board and beginning a new chapter in my life as I pursue a master’s degree. As much as I would like to continue this journey within this role, I have come to understand that I can do it all...just not at the same time! It has been an honor supporting our 4500 members and 180-plus volunteers over the past year, and I am incredibly proud of all we have accomplished together. I will greatly miss participating in this capacity but look forward to watching from the sidelines as a member and general volunteer. From here on you might find me buried in books in one of the

local public libraries—please, don’t be a stranger as I always love when you say hello. I am preparing to pass my seat to someone I know is beyond equipped to carry this organization forward. Laurel Kellam, our previous Board Director of Membership, will be stepping into my role as Board Vice Chair. She is someone I have so much respect for and I could not imagine anyone being better suited to the position. I greatly admire her commitment to this organization and her professionalism. Laurel also happens to be



Their message rooted me even more firmly into our mission: “Nurture ourselves, our children, our partners, and our community.”

the kind of person that any of us would be happy to be stuck in a room with for countless hours and will continue to bring great energy to the Board. I leave you with these pictures that capture the past and the present of this great organization. Meet Max and Elizabeth, our co-founders’ children, as toddlers and on their first day of college. Talk about perspective! I hope you enjoy every moment with your family. Thank you for supporting this great organization that has allowed me to serve you. I would not be where I am today without GGMG and am forever grateful.

Ashley grew up in Pittsburgh, PA, and moved out to San Francisco in 2005. She loves SF’s progressive views on food, health, and wellness. Ashley lives in Noe Valley with her husband, Michael, their 3-year-old daughter, Zoey, and 1-year-old daughter, Sloan.

A.koch



Date Night Drop-off Spots for Your Child

By Jessica Bernstein-Wax

Ready for a night out that's more stiletto than sippy cup? Your child will have a fun evening too at these date night drop-off spots.

ACROSPORTS

639 Frederick St.
Every second Saturday, 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Ages 6 to 12
\$35 per child, pizza dinner included
Your kids will have an active night of games, zip line, and bungee rides.
www.acrosports.org

DESTINATION ART

900 Filbert St.
Every second and fourth Friday, 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Ages 2 and older, though exceptions may be possible for younger kids
\$15 for one child,
\$25 for a family of siblings
Arts and crafts, games, and a movie will make this a great evening out for your kids.
destinationartsf.wordpress.com

HABITOT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

2065 Kittredge St., Berkeley
At least once per month, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Ages 2 to 7
\$39 for one child, \$29 for siblings, pizza dinner included
This fun night at the museum may be worth a trip across the Bay!
www.habitot.org

MY GYM

901 Minnesota St.
Approximately once per month, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Ages 2 to 8
\$45 for members (\$55 non-members), \$25 for member siblings (\$30 non-members), dinner included
Your kids will enjoy an evening of games and activities with My Gym teachers.
www.mygym.com/sanfrancisco

PEEKADOODLE KIDSClub

900 North Point St., Suite F100
One Friday per month, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Ages 2 and older
\$45 for members/GMG, \$55 for non-members, \$20 for additional siblings, pizza dinner included
The night's activities include art projects, storytime, and a movie.
www.peekadoodle.com/san-francisco

PLANET GRANITE

924 Mason St.
Two Fridays per month, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Ages 6 to 13
\$40 per child, includes gear rental and dinner
This evening of climbing will tire out your child—in the best possible way.
www.planetgranite.com

PRESIDIO COMMUNITY YMCA

63 Funston Ave.
First and third Fridays, 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Ages 2 and older
\$25 for Presidio or San Francisco-wide members; \$50 for program members; third sibling is free (non-members interested in participating should contact creed@ymcasf.org)
The evening consists of free play, a story, art, movie time, and often basketball for older kids.
www.ymcasf.org/presidio

SAN FRANCISCO GYMNASTICS

1405 Fillmore St.
Every third Saturday, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Ages 4.5 and older
\$30 for members/\$35 for non-members (\$5 discount for additional siblings), pizza dinner included
Kids can use the gymnastics equipment and play games before watching a movie.
www.sanfranciscogymnastics.com

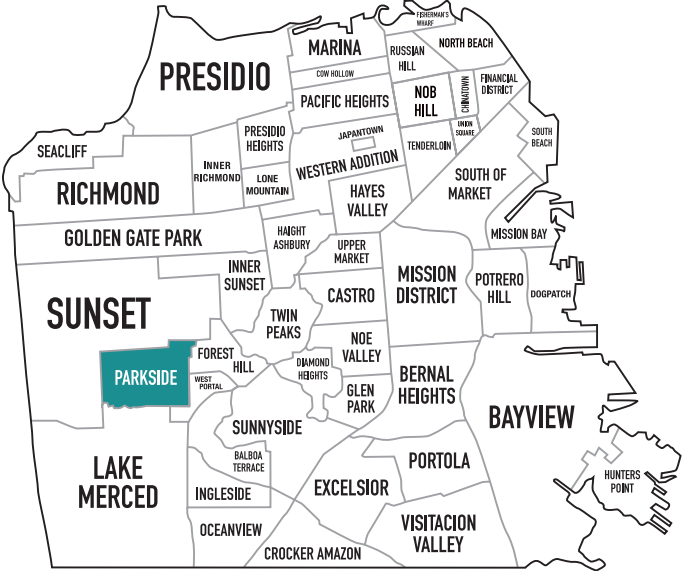
STONESTOWN FAMILY YMCA

3150 20th Ave.
Second and fourth Fridays, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Ages 3 to 10
\$28 for Stonestown, San Francisco-wide, and Bay Area-wide members; \$35 for program members; dinner included
This fun event features a craft project, movement activity, and movie; pajamas and sleeping bags are welcome!
www.ymcasf.org/stonestown

TREE FROG TREKS

2114 Hayes St.
Saturdays, 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Ages 4 and older
\$35 for one child, \$25 for each additional sibling, dinner included
Not only will your kids do science and art projects and watch a movie, they'll also get to hang out with lizards, snakes, and tortoises!
www.treefrogtreks.com

Jessica Bernstein-Wax is a former newspaper reporter who works as a Web editor for UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital. She grew up in the Richmond District but defected across the park to the Sunset, where she lives with her husband and son.



Lil' Kid, Big City: Parkside

By Shaheen Bilgrami

Parkside is a fog-filled neighborhood tucked between Sunset and Forest Hill. Its parks, open spaces, and easy parking make it very family-friendly.

First, grab a pastry at the hole-in-the-wall bakery, **Rolling Out** (1722 Taraval St.), and a drink from one of the many bubble tea shops on Taraval. Then head over to the **McCoppin Square**. Your kid can safely run about the gated toddler playground which boasts great views of the Taraval L-trains (great for train-obsessed toddlers).

Next, take a leisurely stroll down to **Stern Grove** where a music festival is held in the summer months. The KidStage at noon provides family fun. If you (and your kid) have the energy, stay for the main performances, which begin at 2 p.m. If not, return back up the hill to Taraval (your workout for the day), and check out **Copper Kettle Irish Café and Bakery** (2240 Taraval St.) for brunch or to stock up on British or Irish groceries. Your little one can nibble on some delicious soda bread while you nosh down some traditional Irish fare.

For dessert, head over to **Marco Polo Italian Ice Cream Parlor** (1447 Taraval St.). Let your little one work off the sugar at **Parkside Square Playground** (26th Ave. and Vicente St.) before heading home. ❖

Shaheen Bilgrami is a freelance writer and editor, and is a contributor to www.blog.littlelane.com. She is also the mom of an energetic 2-year-old daughter. Contact her through her website, www.shaheenbilgrami.com or her blog, www.girlinfo.gcity.com.

Indoor Play Spaces to Let Off Steam

By Shaheen Bilgrami

Are you bored with trekking your kids to the same old places when the weather is too uncooperative to play outside? Recess and Peekadoodle offer perfect indoor play spaces for tots if you are a member, but what if you aren't? The following spaces don't require membership, but some have specific play times and limited spots for drop-ins, so check their websites before visiting.

CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY MUSEUM

www.creativity.org
221 Fourth St.
Not formally a play space, but this hands-on interactive museum might as well be!

HOUSE OF AIR

www.houseofair.com
926 Old Mason St.
An indoor trampoline park at Crissy Field. The main space is targeted to the 7+ crowd with some provision for 3- to 6-year-olds.

KINDER FUN CLUB AT JCCSF

www.jccsf.org
3200 California St.
The JCC gymnasiums transform into fun play spaces for the under-3 set. Check out their website for specific details and timing.

OPEN JUMP AT PUMP IT UP

www.pumpitupparty.com
201 Mendell St.
Pump It Up's inflated play structures are open to the public on Wednesdays and Fridays. \$5 entry on first Friday of the month for GGMG members.

PEEK-A-BOO FACTORY

www.peekaboofactory.com
2 West Portal Ave.
Full of fun structures to climb, swing, jump, and slide on.

THE COVE AT THE CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

www.calacademy.org
55 Music Concourse Dr.
Fabulous toddler play area for under-5s with toys and plenty of pretend play props.

TODDLER TREE HOUSE AT THE RANDALL MUSEUM

www.randallmuseum.org
199 Museum Way
The Randall Museum is one big indoor play space, with lots of ramps to run up and down and plenty to see. The Toddler Tree House is a dedicated playroom for toddlers.

Ask the Expert: Slow and Mindful Parenting

By Gina Hassan



With so many varieties of classes for toddlers and young children—music class, language class, art class—what advice do you have for parents about how to balance these classes with their child's needs, and is it all right for our kids to be bored?

Children have an amazing capacity for creativity. In fact, they are wired for exploration. If we flood them with programming, no matter how fabulous that programming is, we interfere with their natural capacity to explore and learn through play. Turning a bowl into an instrument or a scarf into a cape does not require instruction. It occurs because children are wired to explore, and learn about the world and themselves through creative play. There is nothing wrong with offering your child a class that allows her to learn a skill or provides her with an opportunity for socialization, but as parents, we can get caught up in a more-is-better mentality. It is helpful to check our motivation for choosing a class. Is it an offering that will provide our children with exposure to something they could not learn otherwise, an opportunity for building community, for

Mindfulness involves four primary elements: awareness, acknowledgment, acceptance, and compassion. While we are not able to always be mindful, cultivating the ability to practice mindful awareness intermittently throughout our day brings increased ease to our own and our family's sense of well-being. In contrast, when we are overly stressed or simply functioning on automatic pilot, we are more likely to be reactive. At these times, sensitivity and attunement to our own needs or those of our children are diminished. If we can pause throughout our day to notice what we are feeling and sensing, to acknowledge our experience and those of our children with acceptance and compassion, then we are likely to experience our interactions and the world around us with greater presence and ease. When we are able to remain calm and connected, we help our children learn to manage their own levels of stress in constructive ways. Try choosing a designated mindful awareness cue that will occur throughout your day (washing hands, sitting down to your computer, answering the phone) as a reminder to check in with yourself. This is a simple and invaluable tool for supporting slow and mindful parenting.

What are some slow and mindful activities that parents can do with their children?

Going for a walk outdoors, ideally in nature, is one of the best slow and mindful activities. Being outdoors provides us with fresh air where we can walk, skip, and run; it teaches us coordination, and supports us in staying connected to our bodies. There are countless ways in which nature can teach us, fascinate us, soothe us, and amuse us. Cooking or baking with your children is another wonderful activity. If you have the ability to grow some kind of food, such as carrots in a pot on your deck or porch, this helps children learn how we are all interconnected and how what we do, how we interact with the world, and what we take into our bodies are all important. Finally, engaging in simple mindfulness practices, even with younger kids, can be useful in teaching them to slow down when they are over stimulated. One such technique is the Teddy Bear Meditation where both of you lie on your back placing a teddy bear or other stuffed animal on your tummy and observing together the slow movement of the bear rising and falling with the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. ❖

Dr. Gina Hassan is a psychologist and mother with 20+ years of experience working with pregnant and postpartum women. She is co-founder of Perinatal Psychotherapy Services. She is interested in incorporating mindfulness into her work with new moms and offers Mindfulness-Based Mothers' Groups. Her writing on motherhood and the postpartum transition appears in Kindred, Mamalode, PsychCentral & Birthways. www.ginahassan.com

teaching the benefits of hard work or cooperation? Or, is it motivated by a worry that our child will not be a successful and happy adult if she is not enrolled in ballet, karate, Spanish, and violin, all by age seven?

Can you define slow/mindful parenting, and give some examples of how we can incorporate these parenting skills in our daily lives?

Mindful parenting is really about parents who cultivate the practice of bringing present moment awareness into their parenting. A widely accepted definition of mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment on purpose without judgment.

There is nothing wrong with offering your child a class that allows her to learn a skill or provides her with an opportunity for socialization, but as parents, we can get caught up in a more-is-better mentality.

GGMG: Helping Others, Treating Yourself

Community Support

Drives



Raising a Reader Bay Area Drive

Thank you to everyone who participated in the **Raising a Reader Bay Area Drive** during the month of January. GGMG collected many books and hundreds of dollars for the organization's local chapter. With your help, Raising A Reader will be able to continue their amazing programs that help build early literacy and interactive book sharing within Bay Area families. Thank you!

It's not too late to support Raising a Reader! Please visit their site for ways to donate: www.rarbayarea.org/donate-to-rar



Contest

NewboRN Solutions: Ultimate In-Home Services

Win an Hour-Long Massage in Your Home

This month, one lucky mom will receive a 60-minute, in-home massage* (valued at \$150) from a highly vetted expert with NewboRN Solutions.

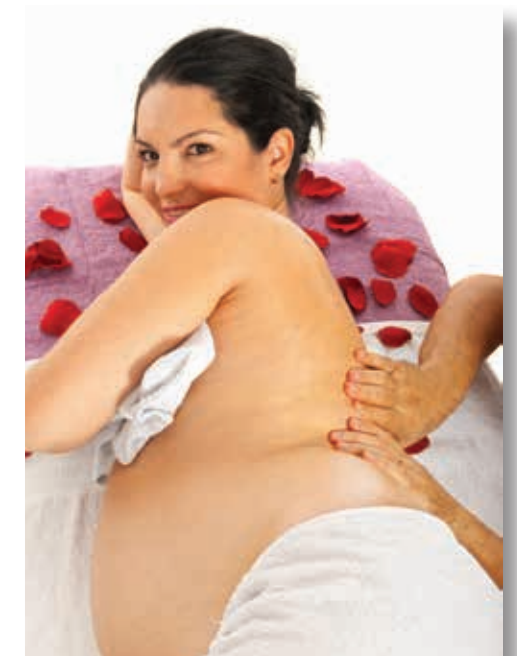
Founded by two local moms who are nurses and realized that it really does take a village to raise a child, NewboRN Solutions brings that village to you. With more than 75 personally vetted experts ready to provide education and comfort services, NewboRN Solutions aims to be a one-stop solution for your family.

We serve the extended Bay Area, Marin, South, East, and the North Bay, offer gift certificates, and are able to create customized group events. With our 22 five-star Yelp reviews, we know that you will be satisfied.

* Massage is subject to availability. Certificate is non-transferable, non-refundable, and may not be combined with other offers.

TO ENTER THE CONTEST, SEND AN EMAIL WITH THE SUBJECT LINE "NewboRN Solutions" TO CONTEST@GGMG.ORG by March 31, 2015.

www.newboRN-solutions.com



DADLANDS

The Annual Ski Vacation

For many people living in the Bay Area, winter means taking off a week or weekend for a ski break somewhere in Tahoe. Skiing with small children is like a lot of things during this long stretch while your kids are young—someday, we’ll all be able to bike together, play tennis together, and ski together with ease, but for now we spend a lot of energy and time waiting for everyone to catch up.

I grew up in Minnesota, where the hills were short but plentiful. Within half an hour of our house, there were ski areas where we could take four-minute runs in minus-50 degree windchill. Given that experience, the biggest challenges of a Northern California family ski vacation aren’t the weather or the black diamond slopes, but the logistics of getting a crew of four, including a 4-year-old and an 8-year-old, to the mountains and successfully home again without tears, broken legs, or snow chains.

To avoid the deflating experience of renting skis on the first day at the mountain, we try to rent ours before leaving San Francisco. The kids find this frustrating and boring, but it’s so much better than shuffling through a crowded ski lodge full of stressed-out renters.

The major event of any ski holiday is the drive to Tahoe. Some optimists love to say it’s only four hours away, but every year we seem to hit the same winter storm that turns the trip into a nearly seven-hour journey. The ride is full of fun games like car bingo and the alphabet game, and we’re all laughing and having a grand old time. This excitement usually lasts all the way to the Treasure Island exit on the Bay Bridge, when the amusement

price you pay to learn a new skill, but they never think this is a good tradeoff. “Why can’t we just ski with you, Daddy?” they implore. Because, I think, you fall down every two minutes and I have the patience of a 20-year-old ski bum working off his hangover from the party the night before.

Though Squaw Valley has ski school every day, each day feels like it’s their first day in business. It usually takes half an hour or more just to pay and get your child in the class. Then, after a teary interlude of separation anxiety, Mommy and Daddy pry themselves away from the crowded room. We stupidly go outside and wait another 45 minutes just to see the little down-covered bundles come out to start their lessons. Mommy and Daddy usually take about 40 photos of each barely recognizable child before retreating to Starbucks to energize for some adult ski time.

Later, we go to pick up the kids, praying that they will have had a good day, which will allow us to repeat the schedule the following day. Inevitably, however, the playmates the kids have found on Day One won’t be back on Day Two, which brings them back to the same question, “Why can’t we ski with you?”

On the last day, we all ski together, representing the full human spectrum of skiing prowess. My son is fearless in his command of the bunny hill snowplow. My daughter is holding her skis, in ski school parlance, more like french fries than pizza, but she can’t ski when it’s snowing. My wife and I ski around the kids but never pick up any meaningful speed. They won’t let us get too far ahead of them, and as with so many things, we have to wait until they catch up.

It’s a fun day nonetheless, and we never tire of watching our children experience things that for us lost their novelty long ago. While we teach them and help them learn all these things so they do catch up, I dread the day when they no longer scream, “Daddy, slow down,” or “Wait for me.” Inevitably, one day they will blow right by us on the ski slope, and in tennis, and on their bikes, and in everything else we have taught them to do. ❖

Paul Banas is the founder of GreatDad.com, a parenting website with dads’ point of view, and the publisher of Pregnancy Magazine. He lives in San Francisco with his wife and two children.



By Paul Banas

You can enjoy great benefits from GGMG partners!

GYMBOREE PLAY & MUSIC

gymboreeggmg.weebly.com

From January 1, 2015, to June 30, 2015, all GGMG members receive four weeks trial membership to attend one weekly class (play, music, art or school skills). Current Gymboree members can redeem four weeks of a second weekly class.

Email Issfca@gymboreeclasses.com to schedule your classes. GGMG Magazine showing name & address is required as proof of membership.

URBANSITTER

www.urbansitter.com

From December 1, 2014, to June 30, 2015, all GGMG members receive 25% off UrbanSitter fees. GGMG members who are new to UrbanSitter will also receive a \$45 credit towards fees. GGMG volunteers receive an additional \$45 credit towards fees. Visit www.urbansitter.com/promo/ggmg to redeem your GGMG member benefit.

JCCSF

www.jccsf.org

The following promotions are available for GGMG members who are new to JCCSF:

- One free three-pass card to KinderFunKlub program
- 50% off the first three months of group swim lessons when enrolling in the swim program
- 15% off any JCCSF birthday party package
- 15% off catering for a birthday party held at and programmed by the JCCSF
- Two passes to the JCCSF Fitness facility
- \$100 off registration fee for new Fitness Center Memberships
- Zero additional registration fee to upgrade from an Individual to a Family Fitness Membership
- \$40 card toward childcare services for new Fitness Members
- \$5 off one purchase of \$15 or more in the JCCSF café
- 50% off preschool application fee
- 15% off the ticket price of family performances

Visit the JCCSF to register in person.

PEEKADOODLE KIDSLUB

www.peekadoodle.com

From January 1, 2015, to June 30, 2015 all GGMG members receive \$100 off birthday party packages and free access to the Peekadoodle playspace every Thursday 2 to 4 p.m., and 9 to 11 a.m. the first Saturday of every month. No advance signup is required.

GGMG members who have previously used a GGMG/Peekadoodle trial membership will have access to a GGMG-exclusive enrichment class once a year. Space is limited, and advance registration is required. Call or visit Peekadoodle to sign up.

GGMG members who are new to Peekadoodle enjoy two free months of access to Peekadoodle’s charming indoor play space and eight consecutive classes! Call 415.440.7335, or visit Peekadoodle to reserve your child’s spot now. Class descriptions and times can be found on the Peekadoodle website. Upcoming schedules can also be found on BigTent.

For a complete list, visit www.ggmg.org/partnerships.html

The biggest challenges of a Northern California family ski vacation aren’t the weather or the black diamond slopes, but the logistics of getting a crew of four to the mountain and successfully home again.

dries up, leaving us with that sinking realization that we still have at least four more hours left to find a “G” and an “M.” Any remaining warm feelings end with tears roughly 30 miles short of Truckee. I never drink and drive, but this is one time I drive and then drink.

Our first day in Tahoe means registering for ski school. Our kids hate ski school because it means they have to make new friends. We try to explain to them that the pain of social interaction is the

Preschool – Grade 12

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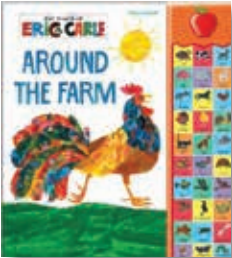
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Books for Kids: Extracurriculars

By Laure Latham

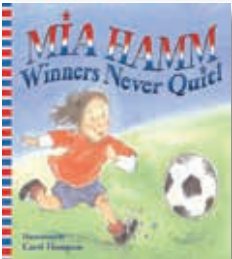


How do you keep your kids busy outside the house? What do they like to do? What makes them happy? Whether they're regulars at library storytime, learning music with other kids, engaged in after-school sports, or crazy for farm trips, kids love activities. With these books, let your children take a peek at a few of the most popular activities for the newborn-to-tween set.

Eric Carle: Around the Farm: Play-a-Sound *By Eric Carle*

Beautifully illustrated in bold colors, this book includes illustrations of common farm animals with realistic recorded animal sounds. You and your child can read the simple text together, listen to the sounds, and learn new names! This book is an invitation to plan a visit to your local farm.

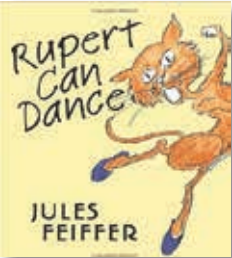
Ages: 9 months+



Winners Never Quit *By Mia Hamm*

Soccer time! Written by soccer superstar Mia Hamm, *Winners Never Quit* tells the story of a little girl who loves soccer but hates losing. Soon enough, Mia realizes that being part of a team is as, if not more, important than winning the game. If your little ones are into team sports or team activities, this lesson is a great one to learn early on.

Ages: 2 to 5 years



Rupert Can Dance *Written and illustrated by Jules Feiffer*

Rupert has a big secret. When his owner Mandy is fast asleep, he likes to slip on her dancing shoes and dance the night away. When Mandy finds out, Rupert is mortified that she suggests he take dance lessons. Lessons are for dogs! Will you guess how Mandy manages to get Rupert dancing again? If you have young dancers at home, this might just convince them to take lessons.

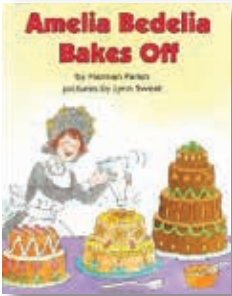
Ages: 2 to 5 years



Secret Garden: An Inky Treasure Hunt and Coloring Book *By Johanna Basford*

Perfect for school-age children who have a passion for art, "Secret Garden" is both a book to color and an I-spy book filled with hidden garden creatures and objects to spot. Whether your kids decide to follow the intricate ink drawings or to create their own world between the lines, they will no doubt be inspired to look at nature with a different eye.

Ages: 4 to 7 years



Amelia Bedelia Bakes Off (I Can Read Book 2) *Written by Herman Parish, illustrated by Lynn Sweat*

The ever-enthusiastic and comically clumsy Amelia Bedelia is no match for a cake baking contest. Will she make a big mess? Oh yes. Will she cause great commotion and take things so literally that you will crack up at every mishap? Most certainly. This book is a natural choice for all those budding chefs and bakers.

Ages: 4 to 8 years



My Robots: The Robotic Genius of Lady Regina Bonquers III *By Johan Olander*

Calling all tinkerers! When Lady Regina Bonquers III, a talented inventor and reclusive genius, disappeared mysteriously, she left behind 23 robot sketches with personal notes, newspaper clips, and brochures. Young robot-lovers will undoubtedly be taken by the impossibly complicated sketches and the extravagant inventions.

Ages: 8 to 12 years

Laure is the author of the mommy blog Frog Mom (www.frogmom.com), as well as the book Best Hikes with Kids: San Francisco Bay Area. She writes for several parenting websites and lives in London, where she peppers adventures with her husband and two daughters with compulsory cream tea stops. You can reach her at info@frogmom.com.

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The Perfectly Scheduled Child

By Suzanne Barnecut
Photographs by Lindsay Lovier Photography and Becky Scott

From her hotel window, Becky Scott and her daughter Emma watch as a man twirls fire batons on the Waikiki beach. They're not on vacation. Rather, they've travelled to paradise from their home in Belmont, California, for several days of training that will culminate in a gymnastics meet over the weekend. Back at home, Becky's husband and son Ryan will attend a meet in Palo Alto. "We're in divide and conquer mode," she said.

At age 10, Emma trains 23 hours a week during the school year. Ryan, age 7, also a rising gymnast, trains 6 hours each week. Their family story is not one of being overscheduled, per se, but of being tightly scheduled—as evidenced by the complex carpooling matrix that covers pick-ups and drop-offs six days a week. "It takes a village," Scott said. "There's a lot of cooperation between the parents at this intense, competitive level. You try and make every other parents' life the way you want yours to be. The parents get really close, as well as the kids."

The Scott family may be an exception. Emma is a level 8 gymnast and part of a talent and search program for young gymnasts who may go on to compete at the national level. She began gymnastics as a toddler, along with swimming and music classes.

As Emma got older and tried different activities, however, it became clear that she was a gifted athlete. In addition to swimming and gymnastics, she played soccer and took karate lessons. Even now, she squeezes in musical theatre once a week. "We didn't push competitive sports on our kids," Scott said. "We just want them to be happy and healthy, but my daughter has found her passion."

Their approach to extracurriculars was what Scott referred to as the spaghetti method: "Throw the spaghetti at the wall and see what sticks." Her son has also tried swimming, soccer, chess, and baseball, and now studies Mandarin in addition to the gymnastics.

For the Scott family, the spaghetti method worked. Their children are thriving, and yet they hardly could have foreseen the road (or roads, as the case may be) they'd one day travel, years after signing up for toddler gymnastics.

A look back in time

If we go far enough back in time, we know that children accompanied their parents at young ages in hunting and gathering. During the Industrial Revolution, children were exploited for cheap labor, and on homesteads across the Dust Bowl, everyone had to earn their keep. The work was difficult, but there was something that even the youngest among them could do. That's still true today. Children living below the poverty line turn over their hard-earned babysitting, lawn mowing, or can-collecting efforts to help fill the family coffers.

Most of us in San Francisco these days don't allow our children to work in the traditional sense. Still, we may work our children somewhat hard—at playing, at sports, at building language, music, and fine motor skills. In fact, from a purely historical perspective, most of us have joined the bourgeois. Though we may not be modern-day aristocrats, it's quite possible for even the average among us to sign up for horseback

riding, Latin, and fencing, not to mention something more commonplace, like piano or painting.

This type of childrearing is a definite shift from the Baby Boomer generation, who tend to wax poetic about upbringings that were almost completely unstructured and unsupervised. Gen-Xers, reputed latch-key kids, were also awash in unsupervised downtime (the silver lining of which, according to a 1986 study by the National Council of Family Relations, created more self-reliant kids than peers who were always supervised). So it was sometime between 1980 and 2000, perhaps, when things began to change.

More dual-income families, rising safety concerns, increasingly competitive schools, and the advent of "screen time" all play a role in the ratcheting up of kids' enrichment activities and achievement levels—not to

Oftentimes I see parents who are really well-intentioned, and children who want to connect with their parents, and they just miss each other.

mention the generational pendulum, always in motion. Parents in the late '90s and early 2000's were feeling pressured to exact more control, compete with the Joneses, get into the best schools, and otherwise not ruin their children's lives. This phenomenon, which has as much to do with the psychology of the parent as with the well-being of the child, gave rise to a number of books in the new millennium: *The Over-Scheduled Child: Avoiding the Hyper-Parenting Trap*, *The Pressured Child*, and *Pressured Parents, Stressed-Out Kids*.

Today, perspectives are softening—or becoming as well-rounded as our children. In 2013, Bruce Feiler, author of *The Secrets of Happy Families*, followed up with the authors of the aforementioned books in a piece for the *New York Times*, to see how their views held up. According to Feiler, Alvin Rosenfeld, M.D., co-author of *The Over-Scheduled Child: Avoiding the Hyper-Parenting Trap*, "distanced

himself from the notion that extracurricular activities are bad." Instead he explained that it's really about achieving balance between enrichment activities and downtime.

Striking the right balance

Today we know that the right amount of activity is going to be different for every child.

"It's important to read the individual child's temperament and 'engine' so to speak," says San Francisco-based psychologist Stephen Lugar (drstephenlugar.com). "Some high energy kids really do benefit from early team sports. Sports and engaged athletic activities like martial arts can give kids an outlet for their physical energy, build self-esteem, and encourage pro-social behaviors." On the flip side, he said, there are quieter children who need more individual encouragement, and who don't like being in a group pressure situation.



"I have certainly seen the trend toward parents feeling like kids need multiple extracurricular activities in a week," Lugar admitted, but he said the sense of urgency usually comes up in later middle school, as parents start looking toward high school and college. "This is the time I really try to encourage parents to think about their child's individual temperament and thresholds." He cautioned that if a child is overwhelmed by a combination of activities, they are not likely to excel in any of them. "I like to help parents think about the quality of engagement over quantity," he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Sibling Revelry

By Gail Cornwall

Photographs by Carmen Dunham Photography

Since kids and families constantly grow and change, effective parenting is often the ultimate moving target, and planning extracurricular activities is no exception. I remember well the frustration that came when I finally sorted out an ideal schedule of outings for my first baby, only to have her suddenly become a veritable plague upon our mommy-and-me yoga class and react to her beloved “musical storyteller” with abject disgust. I adjusted for the changing winds, but was quickly thrown off again by the arrival of our second child. Oh, brother (literally). With two kids, the activities sweet spot is even more elusive as not only do each child’s needs and abilities transform over time, but the dynamic between them continuously shifts as well. What works well for a baby and a toddler becomes impossible when dealing with two toddlers. Then the first develops impulse control, and a new world of possibility opens.

Further complicating matters, the kiddos aren’t the only ones with changing requirements and capacity. As a new mom, I succumbed to marketing that induced ambition and threatened guilt: “When you’re a parent, you want to give your young child the very best. You want to expose them to every possible opportunity to learn and grow. At Music Together, this starts with creating a bond through music.” Yet as the months passed, I realized that my primary goal in planning our days wasn’t building neural pathways or encouraging prosocial behavior through dopamine release. Sure, I wanted a smart and well-adjusted kid, but of more immediate concern was filling up the seemingly endless hours of the day, preferably with some adult interaction. Once I began juggling a baby and a non-napping toddler, I maximized for time to read a book or clip my fingernails in peace. After both kids regularly slept through the night, I had the energy and desire to explore the world alongside them, but finances were tight and a 20 percent sibling discount felt downright laughable. Then I got pregnant for a third time and the ability to keep an eye on two kids while sitting in one spot became paramount.

Successfully planning extracurricular activities with multiple kids is all about recognizing and honoring the whole family’s perpetually evolving ages and stages.

As we passed through each of these phases, I had to reconceptualize the extracurricular activity bullseye. Rather than shooting for one perfectly orchestrated lineup of events, I learned to aim for a persistently reevaluated and rearranged schedule (or lack thereof) that minimizes stress and maximizes enjoyment for everyone involved.

An infant and a toddler

After the birth of a new baby, many parents need more flexibility. Frequent feedings, unpredictable naps, and random fussiness can make arriving at a certain place at a specific time challenging. Yet in some ways newborns are the most portable kids, and pre-walkers can be comparatively easy to manage.

If you can keep the trains running on time with ease:

- Carry on with your toddler’s pre-existing schedule, and bring the baby along. Most

businesses won’t charge for or exclude a second child for quite a while, and the continuity will help your toddler through this big transition.

- In order to obtain both enrichment for your older child and a little me-time, plan a drop-off class during the infant’s nap. If sleep isn’t predictable enough or the baby won’t snooze on the go, try scheduling the drop-off class at a venue that engages the little one too. For infants, this can mean an old aquarium in the corner (forget the fish—a bubble filter alone can buy enough time to catch up on email). For older babies, try a spot that features both drop-off classes and a playroom such as Recess Urban Recreation, Peek-a-Boo Factory, or the Randall Museum.
- Alternatively, plan a drop-off class for your toddler anywhere and plan to spend the hour lavishing attention on your new arrival without the older child’s resentful eye.

If getting out the door on command brings a family member to tears:

- Consider swapping enrollment for a more flexible enrichment plan: attending drop-in classes, such as those offered by SF Rec and Park, JCCSF’s KinderGym, and JAMaROO Kids; museum programming, such as Toddler Circle Time at the Bay Area Discovery Museum; and story times.
- Take advantage of a pre-walker’s transportability by loading him into a front pack or stroller and allowing your toddler to lead you around a large, open venue such as the Exploratorium, the California Academy of Sciences, or the SF Zoo.
- For older babies, look for playgrounds where the little one can sit while the toddler roams. Smaller, bounded parks with high visibility and baby swings are ideal. If you’ve got a baby who crawls and puts everything she touches in her mouth, sand-free venues can eliminate stress. Try Sue Bierman Park Playground or Betty Ong

Rec Center Playground.

- Although it can be difficult to find, a gym child care center with a creative caregiver can allow you to reclaim much-needed endorphins while leaving both kids in an environment that’s as stimulating as a tot music class. The JCCSF, the Bay Club, and certain 24 Hour Fitness and YMCA locations in the city feature kids’ programs.

Two or more toddlers

When one parent attempts to mind two kids who are both up and running yet neither is capable of stopping on command, taking them to a large, open, and crowded museum is like entering the 10th circle of hell. Instead, try one of these strategies with twins or two toddlers of different ages:

- The enclosed play room or play space—with almost all areas visible from one vantage point—can be a godsend. Private, carefully curated spaces such as Recess, Peekadoodle Kidsclub, and Peek-a-Boo Factory, are ideal and sometimes come with enrichment experiences, but they’re awfully pricey. Some similar, though not as swanky, indoor playgrounds are open to the public. First Christian Church on Duboce Park and the Eureka Valley Rec Center play area are two options.
- If you can afford it, in terms of both money

and energy, look for concurrent classes—drop-off for the older child and mommy-and-me for the younger one—at large operations such as American Gymnastics Club, AcroSports, the YMCA, and La Petite Baleen.

- Mixed-age classes also work well. Businesses such as MyGym, Music Together, and Breakfast with Enzo that offer broad age-range classes manage diverse abilities and interests exceptionally, but they charge for each child. For a more affordable route, enroll one child or the other in a class that allows siblings to tag along free of charge. For example, the SF Rec and Park computer system won’t accept payment for a child who is technically too old, but “Simply Fun” instructors generally allow decently behaved big sibs to join.
- Those with organizational energy can arrange co-op classes by pairing affordable spaces with energetic parents. Mission Soccer at Parque Ninos Unidos is a great example of a parent-run class that welcomes siblings.

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Enrichment Classes: When Will They Be Ready?

By Stef Tousignant Photographs by Allison Busch Photography

You see them in any city, little matching T-shirts running through a sea of green grass, pint-sized swimmers walking to the car snuggled in a towel, tiny paint-stained hands carrying their prized creations, and moms chatting as they pack up gear: the class goes. And let's be honest, seeing them gives you a moment of panic, doesn't it? *Should I be signing my kids up? But for what classes and when—and are they even necessary?!*

The pros and cons of enrichment classes vary from age to age. Babies don't really need to learn how to dance, but new moms need the camaraderie of other moms. And an elementary-aged child with two

working parents who is already in after school care may not need anything else. It all depends on your child's age and your family's lifestyle and values.

No matter the age, downsides to classes can include the added monthly expense, extensive travel time, and packed schedules that don't leave much time for free play. There are a few overarching benefits to enrichment classes though, from bonding and socialization in the early years, to playing a part in one's community and meeting like-minded families as your child grows.

WHAT CLASSES TO TAKE AND WHEN:

Babies 0 to 12 months

- DEVELOPMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Bonding with parents or their caregiver is number one
 - Physical skills like rolling, sitting, and crawling
 - Receptive language skills
 - Predictability of routine and environment are important

Look for a class that...

Focuses on interactions between the caregiver and baby. The perfect classes will focus on sharing fun ways to interact with your baby when you are on your own or teach you how to communicate with him or her more effectively.

Babies do not require socialization, but parents do, so finding a class in your neighborhood that includes other like-minded parents will be the most beneficial to you or your caregiver.

Some local programs appropriate for babies:

- **GGMG Playgroups**—get a jump start on meeting neighborhood friends with two different types of playgroups: New Mommy (moms with babies younger than 9 months) and Neighborhood Meetups (focusing on moms with toddlers 9 months and older, but open to all local moms).
- **Tum e Time at The Sun Room**—yoga, massage, signing, songs, plus tummy time for the pre-crawling baby. (Mission)
- **Developmental Movement with Jessie Wesoky at Little Artistas**—a class for you and your baby to learn methods to encourage a foundation for all future movement. (Glen Park)
- **Touch Blue Sky**—Interactive Baby Sign Language classes for parents, caregivers, and their babies. (Carmel Blue, Sprout SF, Natural Resources, Recess Urban Recreation, DayOne Baby, Kaiser Permanente SF)

Toddlers 12 to 24 months

- DEVELOPMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Bond is strong enough with caregiver to take small “risks”
 - Drive for independence
 - Physical skills like walking, running, and better balance
 - Early language development
 - Strong routine with less time taken up by naps

Look for a class that...

Focuses on the primary interaction between the caregiver and baby, but introduces peer to peer interactions. A class with a small number of attendees and a consistent teacher will be more manageable for your young toddler and allow him or her to feel comfortable enough to leave your side, enter into group interactions, or try out new skills.

Local programs appropriate for young toddlers:

- **Blue Bear Music**—real musical instruments, great tunes, and teachers who really get toddlers. (Fort Mason)
- **Messy Play for Toddlers at DayOne Baby**—dig in, get messy, and skip the clean-up with sensory offerings just perfect for the youngest of toddlers! (Laurel Heights)
- **Japanese, Arabic, or Mandarin Playgroups at Seesaw**—encourage early bilingual language development with these fun immersion playgroups. (Hayes Valley)



JCC SWIM CLASS

Toddlers 2 to 3 years

- DEVELOPMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Fiercely independent and opinionated
 - Working on self-help skills like potty training and “me do it” type tasks.
 - Pretending and imaginative play begins
 - Blossoming language development
 - Down to one nap

Look for a class that...

Fits your schedule and offers a class time that is not when your tot will be tired or hungry. Most toddlers at this age like more physical classes like tumbling, swimming, and building. Drop-off classes can be appropriate for the second half of age two, if you believe the teacher really understands toddlers, but classes that still involve a caregiver can offer a great way to learn more about your child's social and emotional development.

Local programs appropriate for toddlers:

- **Wonderbug Adventures**—search the woods, sing songs, and create, all while enjoying nature and the freedom to run, if needed. (Multiple locations)
- **Gymboree Play & Learn**—designed just perfectly for your toddler's specific age, enjoy a creative yet active class together. (Outer Sunset)
- **GGMG Neighborhood Meetups**—(focusing on moms with toddlers 9 months and older, but open to all local moms) and meet other toddlers in your neighborhood.
- **Tumbling Toddlers at Recess**—this is the perfect beginning drop-off class with a strong focus on gross motor skills and social interactions. (Potrero Hill)




SOCCERKIDS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

About GGMG Events: Events listed on these pages are either exclusive to GGMG members or are offered to GGMG members at a discount. Generally, registration is required and can be completed by following the REGISTRATION instructions listed under the event details or at www.ggmg.org/events.html (BigTent). Rules and policies vary. GGMG members and their families only.

GGMG volunteers may occasionally take photos during our events for use in this publication or on the GGMG/BigTent website. Please understand these photographs may include images of all attendees (including children).

Vendors who would like to partner with GGMG, please contact the appropriate committee. Email addresses are listed on page 3.

 Indicates events appropriate for infants (0-12 months). Many also welcome toddlers and preschoolers (see registration rules for more details).

KIDS ACTIVITIES

Unless otherwise noted, parent participation is required for all Kids Activities events.

Mazel Tots, Bagels and Babies at Congregation Emanu-El

A weekly playdate to enjoy music, stories, and puppets as we prepare to welcome Shabbat on Fridays and celebrate Havdalah on Mondays.

DATE: Mondays and Fridays in March
TIME: 9:30 to 11 a.m.
PLACE: 2 Lake St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Drop In. All ages are welcome.

Family Hike with Parks Plus Creation at Andy Goldsworthy's Spire

Let's go on an adventure in the Presidio. We will meet at the Spire and hike around the park to show you some of our favorite spots!

DATE: Sunday, March 1
TIME: 10 to 11:45 a.m.
PLACE: Bay Area Ridge Trail, Presidio
COST: \$7 per family

REGISTRATION: Register on BigTent.

Infant Sensory Exploration at Recess

Interested in incorporating sensory play into your baby's schedule but don't know where to start? Parents and caregivers will join their child in exploring sensory play through light, texture, sound, scent, and taste. Come ready to play, investigate, and get messy.

DATE: Monday, March 2
TIME: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
(class 11 to 11:45 a.m;
free play 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.)
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$15 per participating child

REGISTRATION: Ages 6 to 18 months. Email info@recess-sf.com. Play space time included.

Playgroup with a Purpose at Calvary Presbyterian Church

Join us for playtime, music, movement games, and storytime all focused on early childhood development. Parents, nannies, grandparents, and other caregivers welcome.

DATE: Every Wednesday
TIME: 10 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 2515 Fillmore St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages newborns to three years old. Register at www.tinyurl.com/n82q5vn.

Understanding Your Toddler: Play-n-Learn Series at Carmel Blue

These structured toddler playgroups include circle time, quiet observation, and weekly readings and discussion on important toddler topics.

DATE: Tuesdays, March 3 to April 14
TIME: 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$180 for six weeks
(GGMG special rate)

REGISTRATION: Ages 14 to 30 months. Register at www.carmelblue.com or call 415.362.2583.

BeAraby Arabic at seesaw

Arabic story time, sing along, arts and crafts, music, and movement.

DATE: Wednesday, March 4
TIME: 10 to 11 a.m.
PLACE: 600 Octavia St., Suite A
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 6 months to 3 years. Introductory rate. Register at www.seesawsf.com or email info@seesawsf.com.

Tie Dye Daze Kidshop at Peekadoodle Kidsclub

We will start things off by whipping up a batch of tie-dye cookies, then break out the shirts and rubber

bands as we twist things up to make a one-of-a-kind t-shirt.

DATE: Wednesday, March 4
TIME: 4 to 4:45 p.m.
PLACE: 900 North Point St., Ste. F100
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 3 to 5 years. Call 415.440.7335 to reserve your spot. Space is limited. No parent participation, drop-off class.

Yoga, Baby + Massage at It's Yoga Kids

Enrich your baby development with songs, yoga, and infant massage.

DATE: Friday, March 6
TIME: 11 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 569 Ruger St.
COST: \$15 cash; \$18 credit card

REGISTRATION: Ages newborn to pre-crawlers. Introductory rate. Register by emailing info@itsyogakids.com.

Playdate at Congregation Sherith Israel

Enjoy playtime, singing, puppets, bubbles, parachute games, and parent discussion in our large, cozy playroom.

DATE: Monday, March 9
TIME: 10:30 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 2266 California St.
COST: \$3

REGISTRATION: Ages newborn to 4 years.

Baby Boot Camp at Noe Basketball Courts

Try this innovative stroller fitness program to help regain or enhance pre-pregnancy fitness levels.

DATE: Wednesday, March 11
TIME: 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
PLACE: 24th and Douglass streets
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Participants must be at least 6 weeks postpartum. Register by emailing kathleen.laipply@babybootcamp.com.

Mixed-Age Class at My Gym

Come have fun at this one hour mixed age class.

DATE: Wednesday, March 11
TIME: 4:40 to 5:40 p.m.
PLACE: 901 Minnesota St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 6 months to 5 years. Register online through Big Tent events calendar.

BABY Sign Language Play-group Series at Carmel Blue

This six-week playgroup is a fun opportunity for you to build your signing vocabulary with themes like mealtime, animals, colors, family, bedtime, and more.

DATE: Fridays, March 13 to April 17
TIME: 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$120 for one parent, \$160 for two parents (GGMG special rate)

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com or call 415.362.2583.

Intro to Solids and Baby Food Cooking Class at Carmel Blue

Join nutritionist Virginia Watkins and the women from Fresh Baby Bites in an interactive cooking class all about making the best, easiest, and most nutrient-rich foods for your little ones. Ideal for parents of babies 3 to 10 months. Babies welcome!

DATE: Friday, March 13
TIME: Noon to 1:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$39 (GGMG special rate)

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com or call 415.362.2583.

It's Yoga, Movers at It's Yoga Kids

Developmentally appropriate yoga movement with song and play for young movers with adult participation.

DATE: Friday, March 13
TIME: 9:30 to 10 a.m. or 12:15 to 12:45 p.m.
PLACE: 569 Ruger St.
COST: \$15 cash; \$18 credit card

REGISTRATION: Ages crawlers to 2 years. Introductory rate. Register by emailing info@itsyogakids.com.

Trial Class with Parks + Creation

Children connect to the natural world through play-based experiences in this urban nature-based program.

DATES: Monday, March 16 in Presidio,
Friday, March 20 in Presidio,
Friday, March 20 in GG Park
TIMES: 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the Presidio,
9 a.m. to noon in Golden Gate Park
COST: FREE for new families

REGISTRATION: Ages 3 to 6 years. New families only. Drop-off class. Space is limited. Register by emailing parkspluscreation@gmail.com.

Trial Class at San Francisco Music Together

Make music in a fun, experiential, loving environment. For newborns to 5 years.

DATE: Monday, March 16
TIME: 3 p.m.

PLACE: 1350 Waller St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Space is limited. Drop-ins not allowed. Pre-registration online only using free trial link at www.tinyurl.com/lrbctpp. For families interested in Haight-Ashbury and Inner Sunset locations only. All adult caregivers welcome.

Baby Boot Camp at Crissy Field

This innovative stroller fitness program helps moms regain or enhance pre-pregnancy fitness levels.

DATE: Wednesday, March 18
TIME: 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
PLACE: 99 Yacht Rd. (meet at the landing to the west of the parking lot)
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Participants must be at least 6 weeks postpartum. Register by emailing kathleen.laipply@babybootcamp.com.

Ichi Ni San Music at seesaw

Children will sing, dance, and play a variety of musical instruments. Taught in Japanese and English.

DATE: Thursday, March 19
TIME: 11 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 600 Octavia St., Suite A
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 6 months to 3 years. Introductory rate. Register at www.seesawsf.com or email info@seesawsf.com.

Trial Infant Class at San Francisco Music Together

Babies music class for newborns to 9 months and their adult caregivers. Jamming, dancing, singing, and community!

DATE: Friday, March 20
TIME: 1:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1350 Waller St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Space is limited. Drop-ins not allowed. Pre-registration online only using free trial link at www.tinyurl.com/lrbctpp. For families interested in Haight-Ashbury and Inner Sunset locations only. All adult caregivers welcome.

Baby Sleep Solutions for 3- to 12-Month-Old Babies at Carmel Blue

This in-depth workshop by sleep expert Angelique Millette helps parents understand how to establish good sleep habits and a healthy schedule for their babies and for themselves.

DATE: Saturday, March 21
TIME: 2 to 4 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$50 for one parent, \$70 for two parents (GGMG special rate)

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com or call 415.362.2583

Introduction to Baby Sign Language at Carmel Blue

This workshop introduces basic baby signs based on American Sign Language (ASL) and is designed for parents with pre-verbal babies, birth to 24 months old.

DATE: Saturday, March 21
TIME: Noon to 1:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$35 for one parent, \$65 for two parents (GGMG special rate)

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com or call 415.362.2583.

ED SERIES

Judy Y. Chu from Stanford University presents “When Boys Become Boys”

Based on a two-year study that followed boys from pre-K through first grade, Judy Y. Chu's presentation reveals boys' early ability to be emotionally perceptive, articulate, and responsive in their relationships, and how these “feminine” qualities become less apparent as boys learn to prove that they are boys primarily by showing that they are not girls.

DATE: Thursday, March 5
TIME: 7 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: Recess Urban Recreation
470 Carolina St.

COST: FREE

Mindful Parenting with Darcy Campbell

To parent or teach mindfully means that we commit to being aware of our own thoughts, beliefs, and actions and to parent and teach from facts. By removing fear and fantasy from our parenting and teaching we become more able to accurately and lovingly guide, empower, and protect our children. This workshop provides tools and questions so that you may mindfully, responsively, and respectfully be in the presence of children.

DATE: Tuesday, March 24
TIME: 6:30 to 8 p.m.
PLACE: St. Mary's Cathedral
COST: FREE

Music with Friends at Natural Resources

Join in some musical fun designed for young children (0-5) and the adults accompanying them.

- DATE:** Mondays, March 2, 9, 16, and 23
- TIME:** 10:30 to 11:15 a.m. or 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1367 Valencia St.
- COST:** \$20 per class

REGISTRATION: *Space is limited; reserve in advance.* www.tinyurl.com/Music-with-Friends

Potty Training 101 at Recess

Think your little one is ready for potty training? Come to this informative talk led by Aki Raymer of Parenting Paths to find out how to make the transition to diaper-free living. Learn how to tell if your child is developmentally and emotionally ready to potty train, and learn concrete strategies for reaching this big milestone.

- DATE:** Tuesday, March 3
- TIME:** 7:30 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 470 Carolina St.
- COST:** \$38 individual / \$58 couple; save \$5 with promo code GGMG15

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Meet the Doula Night at Carmel Blue

Are you interested in learning what a doula is, how to hire a doula, or what a doula can offer your birth and new parenting experience? You will get a chance to meet local birth and postpartum doulas, hear a short presentation about birth and postpartum doula services, and ask any questions that you might have about pregnancy and birth resources. This is an informal, family-friendly event, so feel free to bring partners and or friends who might be at your birth. Following the doula presentation there will be an opportunity to mingle and talk to doulas and other expecting families.

- DATE:** Thursday, March 5
- TIME:** 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1418 Grant Ave.
- COST:** FREE

RSVP: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2592

New Home Buyer Q&A Session at Zephyr West Portal Office

Claudia Siegel and Ying He, two realtors from the market leader in the city, Zephyr Real Estate, answer your questions about the home purchase process. To better address everyone's questions, we are going to limit the event to 10 participants.

- DATE:** Saturday, March 7
- TIME:** 10 a.m. to noon
- PLACE:** 215 West Portal Ave.

REGISTRATION: yinghe@Zephyrsf.com

Introducing a New Sibling at Recess

Rebecca Walsh, director of Early Childhood Matters and a mother of two, presents strategies for supporting your child in the transition to a new baby and laying the foundation for a lifetime of positive sibling relationships. She will also discuss self-care strategies to support both parents in this transition and how to keep older siblings engaged while you nurse, swaddle, or take a shower.

- DATE:** Tuesday, March 10
- TIME:** 7:30 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 470 Carolina St.
- COST:** \$38 individual / \$58 couple; save \$5 with promo code GGMG15

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Yoga for Baby + Infant Massage at Natural Resources

Introduce your baby to the many benefits of yoga from the beginning of life. This sweet program includes yoga movement for your baby, songs, and the added benefit of infant massage.

- DATE:** Wednesdays, March 11 through April 1
- TIME:** 11 to 11:45 a.m.
- PLACE:** 1367 Valencia St.
- COST:** \$60 series or \$20 drop-in

REGISTRATION: www.tinyurl.com/Yoga-for-Baby

Pregnancy, You, and Your Yoni at Natural Resources

Liz Miracle, MSPT, WCS, will lead an open-format discussion on the pelvic floor muscles and their role in childbirth.

- DATE:** Friday, March 13
- TIME:** 12:15 to 1 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1367 Valencia St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.tinyurl.com/Pregnancy-You-Yoni

Toddler Talk with Early Childhood Matters at Pacific Primary School

Did you know the brain develops more in the first five years than it will over the rest of a lifespan? Join Rebecca Walsh, director of Early Childhood Matters, as you enjoy wine and cheese while learning more about your child's rapidly developing brain, positive discipline techniques for challenging toddler behaviors, and Early Childhood Matters' new course offerings. There will be time allotted for a Q&A session, so bring your pressing toddler questions!

- DATE:** Wednesday, March 18
- TIME:** 7 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1500 Grove St.
- COST:** \$10

REGISTRATION: www.tinyurl.com/l69yl5n

Baby Sign Playgroup Series at Natural Resources

Our six-week playgroup is a fun opportunity for parents to build their signing vocabulary with themes like mealtime, animals, colors, family, bedtime, and more.

- DATE:** Fridays, March 20 through April 24
- TIME:** 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1367 Valencia St.
- COST:** \$145

REGISTRATION: www.tinyurl.com/Baby-Sign-Playgroup

Expectant Moms Meetup at Carmel Blue

Meet a great group of expectant moms. Our get-togethers are casual and a great place to find support, advice, and to meet other expectant moms from all over San Francisco.

- DATE:** Saturday, March 21
- TIME:** 4:15 to 5:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1418 Grant Ave.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=3095

Schools and Real Estate in San Francisco and Marin County at McGuire Real Estate

Three real estate professionals and moms share knowledge about choosing schools in San Francisco and Marin, housing prices and trends, and how buying real estate will tie into the school process. Hosted by Jamie Comer and Liz McCarthy with McGuire Real Estate, and Julie Shumate with Stearns Lending. Dads welcome. Parking available at Lombard Street Garage, 2055 Lombard St.

- DATE:** Monday, March 23
- TIME:** 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 2001 Lombard St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: shumate.julie@gmail.com

Your Willful 3-Year-Old at Recess

3-year-olds are full of imagination, budding social skills, and no-holds-barred disobedience. Find out why 3 can be more difficult than 2 from a developmental perspective, and learn strategies to meet the three-year-old challenge heart open and head on. Join Rebecca Walsh of Early Childhood Matters in this enlightening workshop.

- DATE:** Tuesday, March 24
- TIME:** 7:30 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 470 Carolina St.
- COST:** \$38 individual / \$58 couple; save \$5 with promo code GGMG15

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Toddler Sleep Solutions with Angelique Millette at Carmel Blue

Now that your baby is no longer a baby, you have a whole new set of sleep challenges. Join baby sleep expert for a talk about your toddler's sleep.

- DATE:** Tuesday, March 24
- TIME:** 7 to 8:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1418 Grant Ave.
- COST:** \$35

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2558

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

Below is a sampling of mommy-only and special events in March. Registration on BigTent is required to ensure seat availability and adequate refreshments.

To join your neighborhood group visit: www.ggm.org/playgroups.html. Then for a complete and up-to-date list of all Neighborhood Meetups, including playdates, check the "events" tab for your neighborhood subgroup on Big Tent.

BERNAL/GLEN PARK

SPRINGTIME FAMILY PLAY DATE

Bring your entire family for a fun Saturday at a GGMG member's house. There will be arts and crafts inside and water table fun outside. GGMG will provide snacks and beverages.

- DATE:** Saturday, March 14
- TIME:** 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** RSVP for Address
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/90411857

MOMS NIGHT OUT AT DARK HORSE INN

Come enjoy the company of moms from Glen Park/ Bernal and other SF Southern neighborhoods at the Dark Horse Inn for a relaxing evening. GGMG will provide appetizers.

- DATE:** Friday, March 20
- TIME:** 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 942 Geneva Ave.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/90412045

MOMMY BOOK CLUB

Join us for a lively discussion about The Art of Racing in the Rain by Garth Stein. GGMG will sponsor wine and apps. Please come even if you haven't finished (or started) the book!

- DATE:** Monday, March 2
- TIME:** 8 to 10 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1246 Kirkham St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/90419102

THE HEIGHTS

ST. PADDY'S DAY PLAYGROUP AT HAMILTON REC CENTER PLAYGROUND

Join us for St. Paddy's crafts and treats, and meet parents and kids in your neighborhood. We will meet inside the gated area of the playground.

- DATE:** Wednesday, March 18
- TIME:** 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1900 Geary Blvd.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/90500566

MISSION/CASTRO

The Mission/Castro Neighborhood Meetup recently made some exciting changes! We still offer a standing Tuesday afternoon playground playdate, a monthly Moms' Night Out, and a monthly arts playdate at Eureka Valley Arts (moved to first Tuesdays).

The big news is that our Thursday morning playground has been revamped with great success! Instead of meeting at the same location each week, a core group of awesome area mamas with kiddos of varying ages meets at rotating venues (all accessible to the Mission/Castro on foot or by public transportation).

Thus far we've been to the Eureka Valley Rec Center, the Children's Creativity Museum, the Randall Museum, the Noe Valley Branch Library, and the California Academy of Sciences! It's great because the kids have the continuity of seeing the same mothers and little ones each week with the excitement of a new play opportunity. We love when new mamas join the group. Please come check it out! (Details posted on BigTent.)

MOMS' NIGHT OUT AT HI TOPS

Join us for some grown-up time spent chatting in complete sentences. The Hi Tops is supposed to have a fun vibe (dirty puns on the walls) and superb food (apps on GGMG).

- DATE:** Thursday, March 12
- TIME:** 6 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 2247 Market St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/90430770

FIRST TUESDAYS AT EUREKA VALLEY ARTS
Come enrich the kiddos while we chat at the fabulous Ms. Kat's super fun art studio in the Castro (close to Noe too). Toddlers and bigger kiddos engage with lots of different types of arts and crafts, and there are spaces and supplies to stimulate babies as well.

- DATE:** Tuesday, March 3
- TIME:** 10 to 11:30 a.m.
- PLACE:** 4400 20th St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/90429053

NOPA/HAIGHTS

ST. PARTICK'S PLAYGROUP AT PEEKADOODLE KIDSClub

Enjoy drinks, snacks and arts & crafts while we have free access to this fun play area. Bring siblings and your partners. Space is limited so register early.

- DATE:** Saturday, March 28
- TIME:** 10 to 11:30 a.m.
- PLACE:** 900 North Point St., Ste. F100
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/90452642

MOM'S NIGHT OUT AT WINE KITCHEN
Let's kick off 2015 with our first wine night. Appetizers provided by GGMG.

- DATE:** Tuesday, March 10
- TIME:** 8 to 9:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 507 Divisadero St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/90452774

SUNSET

KIDDIE MOVIE NIGHT

Bring your tot to watch a pre-bedtime movie on a big screen in a member's home. This month we'll watch Wallace & Gromit. Feel free to dress your little one in PJs. Popcorn for all and wine for moms provided by GGMG. Space is limited so register early.

- DATE:** Friday, March 20
- TIME:** 6:45 p.m.; movie starts at 7 p.m. sharp
- PLACE:** RSVP for Address
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/90483498

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Networking Event: How To Start A Business Without (Completely) Losing Your Sanity

At the Home of Lauren Hirshfield Belden

Have you ever dreamed of starting your own business only to let finances, motherhood, or a general fear of the unknown stop you from bringing your dream to life? If so, you won't want to miss this event! Please join Lauren Hirshfield Belden for an evening of wine, wisdom, and war stories as she discusses her transition from full-time employee at a large brand strategy firm to freelance innovation expert and co-founder of Belden Barns wines. This event is perfect for working and stay-at-home moms eager to learn more about the pros and cons of starting your own business and the small steps you can take to make the whole process less daunting. Attendees looking for feedback on their own new business ideas will have an opportunity to share them with the group.

DATE: Tuesday, March 24

PLACE: 527 Alvarado St.

TIME: 6 to 8 p.m.

COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: See BigTent

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Self Defense Workshop at One Martial Arts

Back by popular demand! Community Support and Just for Moms co-present an empowering and practical self-defense workshop for moms. This class fills up quickly so be sure to RSVP early. Limited free childcare included.

DATE: Sunday, March 22

TIME: 1 to 2:30 p.m.

PLACE: 850 Taraval St.

COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: See BigTent for event invitation; childcare free (space limited)

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Baby Wipes vs. a Shower?

In an effort to be "Green", would you ever consider using just baby wipes to cleanse your body? Would you dine at a restaurant that only uses baby wipes to wash the dirty dishes in an effort to be "Green"? Of course not! Well the shocking truth is- that is exactly how most "Green" carpet cleaning companies are cleaning your carpets and rugs.

Today in order to be considered "Green" in the cleaning industry means: To conserve natural resources. That means that "green" cleaning companies must conserve water. If a cleaning company uses chemicals instead of water, then this is considered "green": which in turn means to leave behind more contaminants and chemicals in the home; just like the baby wipes example.



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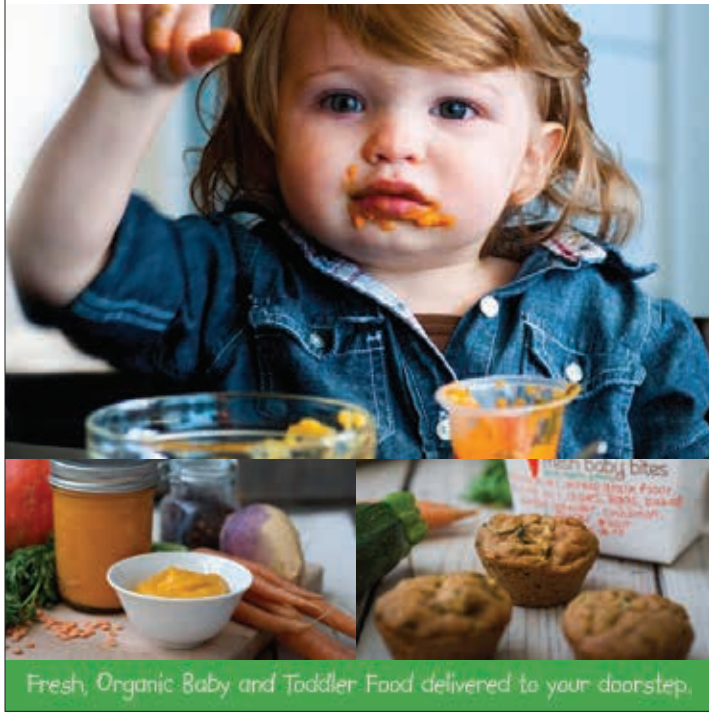


Each week we blend local, organic, seasonal ingredients by hand in small batches and deliver them to your baby's highchair. From purees with spices, to finger foods, and now toddler bites- we offer lots of yummy options for your wee ones. Our little eaters rave about the pear, persimmon & cardamom puree, white bean pesto with farro, chicken-carrot meatballs, and butternut squash-apple muffins, to name a few! We also whip up healthy and delicious snacks for preschools.

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Committee Spotlight: *Kids Activities*

With Co-Chairs Laura Gibson and Sanny Kataoka

Describe the personality of your committee.
We are a diverse group of women who enjoy scouting out new activities for our little ones. Many in the group are new volunteers, so there is a lot of new energy and enthusiasm for 2015!

Why do you do what you do?
We joined the Kids Activities Committee because we love the variety of events offered (especially the demo music classes and GGMG special or free events) that allow our children to try out different classes and activities. An unexpected benefit of being involved with the committee is connecting with other moms and being inspired by the work and dedication of all the GGMG volunteers.

What types of activities or projects do you undertake?
We try to offer a wide variety of classes and activities by partnering with vendors such as Peekadoodle, Carmel Blue, and Golden Gate Music Together. We also plan a few large events around holidays, such as the

Lunar New Year event, where there is something for everyone. Also, based on the 2014 member survey responses, we will be offering events requested by members, such as the upcoming Parks Plus Creation hike in the Presidio (see page 20).

How do you know when you’re making a difference?
Getting feedback that our members enjoyed an event tells us that we’re making a difference.

Who are your current volunteers?
Rachel Kim Euretig, Lisa Faulkner, Laura Gibson, Kimberly Harris, Sanny Kataoka, Caitlin Khurshid, and Anna Selfe.

How can interested GGMG members get involved in Kids Activities?
Email us at activities@ggm.org. We look forward to hearing from prospective volunteers and are always open to suggestions for new activities!

Member Support

We all have unique sensory needs and preferences. For example, one person may start her day with a cup of coffee while another prefers to go for a run. Similarly, children have sensory preferences that help them play and learn.

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is the condition of having difficulty processing information received through the senses. Difficulties may arise when a child is unable to appropriately respond to the sensory input they receive. The Member Support team worked with the occupation therapy staff of Kalmanowitz Child Development Center at CPMC to provide some insight into SPD.

The behavior of a child with SPD may present itself in many different ways, such as struggles learning new motor tasks, over-sensitivity to sensory stimuli (touch, vision, sound, or movement), or the child may be easily over-stimulated or distractible. This can affect a child’s learning, confidence, social participation, self care, and ability to navigate different environments.

If your child is having difficulty in these areas it may be beneficial to seek help from an occupational therapist with specialized training in sensory processing, either through the Kalmanowitz Child Development Center or a private-practice occupational therapy clinic.

If you or someone you know are experiencing difficult circumstances, please reach out to Member Support at member.support@ggm.org.

Recruiting:
Volunteer with GGMG!

Are you looking to meet new moms, take some time for yourself each month, get better discounts, and give back to this awesome community?

A great way to accomplish all of the above is to volunteer with GGMG. We currently have a number of positions open, that range from working from home to meeting weekly at local parks.

We work with applicants’ personal schedules, knowing that we are all moms, and will find a position that accommodates each one’s availability. Volunteers meet monthly to exchange ideas and support the growing GGMG community.

Roles are currently open on the following committees:

- Community Support
- GGMG Magazine
- Just for Moms
- Membership
- Neighborhood Meetups
- New Mommy Meetups
- PR/Marketing
- Recruiting
- Web Team

Interested in learning more? Simply email volunteer@ggm.org.

Forum Tips:
How can I share information about an event with other members?

Question:
How can I share information about an event with other members?

Answer:
Please match your event type to 1 or 2 below and follow the corresponding guidelines.

- 1.** Is your event a fundraiser or an open house benefitting a school, library, park, or similar child-related non-profit organization? Is your event sponsored by the city? Is your event free and open to the public? If you have answered yes to any of the three questions, you may post your event to either the “Parenting Questions” or “Miscellaneous Questions.”
- 2.** Are you advertising a business, service, website, or blog that you own or have financial or other interest in? If you answered no, advertise your event on “Parenting Questions” or “Miscellaneous Questions” forum. If you answered yes, you may not start a new topic, but may post a response with your event information given it is relevant to the conversation and you disclose your affiliation (for example: you are the owner, employee, or receive any sort of payment or commission).

* Do not post to the “GGMG Events & Announcements” forum. It is reserved for GGMG volunteers to post information on GGMG-sponsored events.

As always, feel free to contact webmaster@ggm.org directly for help with questions about online forums or the GGMG website. GGMG Forum Guidelines can be found at www.ggm.org/Forum_Etiquette.html.



What about toddlers? In addition to temperament, it's also about striking the right balance between activity and childcare arrangements. Children in full-time daycare or preschool, for example, may not benefit from additional stimulation, whereas structured classes can offer socialization for children (and moms) who are home during the day.

Parissa Sayar, a stay-at-home mother of two, said, "I wasn't into paying for structured activities right from the start. When my kids were little, it was too difficult and stressful to try to get anywhere on time without losing my cool." But now that her children are 5 and 7, the family follows this rule of thumb: no after school activities until first grade.

Her firstborn, she noted, is high-energy but introverted, and needs quiet, unstructured time at home after school. "Our reasoning was that kids have a lot of work to do adjusting to kindergarten, and it's best not to overwhelm them with anything else on top of it. I always stressed to my firstborn that his main job was to go to school, and that he

didn't have to focus on anything else until he was older. This idea made him feel relieved."

Where does downtime fit in?

Jessica Hegedus, Psy.D., who practices individual, couples, and family therapy in Laurel Heights (www.modernfamilysf.com), stressed the importance of downtime. "People have built these resistances to struggle," Hegedus said, "but it's good for kids to learn how to ask themselves, 'What do I need right now?'" instead of automatically reaching for the phone or the remote.

"Oftentimes I see parents who are really well-intentioned, and children who want to connect with their parents, and they just miss each other," Hegedus said. "The kids don't have the words to communicate what they're feeling, and the parents feel hurt."

She says balance is the magic word. Structured activities can be great, but downtime—even boredom—is critical for learning to deal with feelings of frustration and to cultivate imagination.

Downtime means time without screens or TV. Key to this downtime, however, is parent interaction. When things get too routine, Hegedus explained, there's often no checking in to see how kids are managing activities, and even downtime benefits from check-ins. Ask your kids what it's like feeling bored, she said.

Even toddlers can be encouraged to play on their own, nearby. "Let kids as young as 2 or 3 know that they can go out and try things

and then come back to you," Hegedus advised. "Narrate what they're doing, and what you're doing, and encourage them to keep playing. It's just about having more frequent contact and letting them know they're safe."

Another GGMG mom, Rio Dluzak, creates downtime for her three kids by having a once-a-week technology-free day. She encourages her kids to come up with their own creative activity using things around the house.

She's taken a middle path of having her children participate in two formal activities a week until kindergarten, and then holding off on any extracurriculars throughout that first year of school. She also allows her children to pause activities when they're feeling overwhelmed or unsure that they want to continue.

How much is too much?

If you're not sure you've struck the right balance for your child, Hegedus shared some warning signs that may indicate your child is not managing or adjusting well:

- Obsessive worries that the child can't control
- Difficulty falling asleep, or waking up more often during the night
- Major changes in appetite, up or down
- Ongoing crankiness or severe temper tantrums
- Becomes withdrawn
- Makes extreme statements, or is overly negative or pessimistic

In general, some worry and complaining is normal, but when the worries become repetitive, even after assurance, or the complaining ratchets up after the child has had time to adjust to the activity, it's definitely time to check in with the coach or teacher.

It's also important to remember that busy schedules affect parents too. As Dluzak put it, "We can only do what we can do." ♦

Suzanne Barnecut is a Bay Area native, and has lived in San Francisco since 2001. Lately, she can be found helping her daughter ride her tricycle around the Inner Richmond. You can read more of her writing at www.suzannebarnecut.com.





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Getting Schooled in All Things Baby

By Juli Fraga

Any mama-to-be becomes a student as she educates herself about pregnancy, childbirth, newborn care, and parenting. Living in the Bay Area, we are fortunate to have a cornucopia of parenting preparation classes at our fingertips. Here are a few that might interest you.

- **Mindfulness-Based Childbirth & Parenting (MBCP):** Most pregnant women know the benefits of breathing during labor, but this class teaches the life-skills of mindful breathing and meditation that are beneficial for labor and beyond. www.mindfulbirthing.org
- **Infant Massage:** This class teaches parents the healing aspects of infant massage and is recommended for women after 20 weeks of pregnancy. Learn techniques that can help with sleep, colic, and emotional soothing for

your newborn baby. www.whrc.ucsf.edu/whrc/gex

- **Emotional Aspects of Pregnancy:** Maternal mental health concerns, such as perinatal depression, are the single most common medical complication of pregnancy. This workshop teaches women the importance of self-care as well as how to recognize the symptoms of perinatal depression. www.whrc.ucsf.edu/whrc/gex
- **Prenatal Yoga with Kari Marble:** Yoga can be powerfully beneficial for mom and baby resulting in a more conscious pregnancy and a healthier birth. www.welcomeom.com ❖

Juli Fraga is a psychologist, mom and writer in San Francisco. Her essays about motherhood have appeared on The Washington Post, The Huffington Post, and Mamalode.



Getting Out

By Emily deGrassi

It can be challenging to transition from a social, active life to a quieter existence with a baby. However, getting out and about again, now with your tiny sidekick, can make the adjustment to your new life easier. Keep a bag packed with diapers, wipes, and clean clothes so you're always one step closer to being out the door. Here are some ideas to help make it happen:

- Look for Mommy and Me yoga classes in your neighborhood (check the GGMG events on page 20).

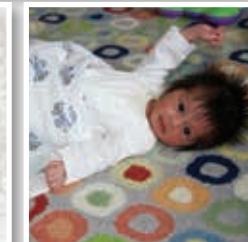


- Locate and reach out to other moms in your neighborhood and go for a walk or have coffee while enjoying a rare adult conversation (GGMG neighborhood playgroups are a great resource).

- Grab a blanket and head to a local park, where you may meet other families in your community; if your baby is already into playing, throw in some labeled "toys" from your kitchen, such as Tupperware or measuring cups.
- If you have a baby carrier, strap your baby on and take a solo stroll. Talk to your baby about where you're walking, what you're seeing, and who you're seeing. Just because he can't talk doesn't mean he can't listen to you. Babies love to hear mom's voice.
- Look for free days at places like the San Francisco Zoo and California Academy of Sciences, that way you won't feel so bad if you don't spend a whole day there trying to get your money's worth. This can be a great option if you also have a toddler to entertain.
- Don't let the weather stop you. If it's raining (unlikely, we know), put on some rain gear, grab an umbrella, and go for a walk with your baby in the stroller or carrier. This is also fun for toddlers who can splash in the puddles. Bring extra clothes! ❖

Emily deGrassi lives in North Beach and is currently a stay-at-home mom to an active and energetic 17-month-old girl.

New Arrivals



Tricia Miller **Baby Penelope May**
Jill Gilbert **Baby Brody Alan**
Lianne C. **Baby Gweneth Fong**
Pauline H. **Baby Alexa Chelsea**
Theresa B. **Baby Sonia Amol**
Elena Zehr **Baby Agnes Michelle**
Jenny Bogard **Baby Sienna Jules**

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- Bounded playgrounds with high visibility are still necessary but not necessarily sufficient; try to find ones that fit that bill but also feature a small structure as well as a large such as Mission Playground, Franklin Square Park, and Duboce Park Playground. Avoid large, crowded playgrounds, and ones with a layout that makes it difficult to keep an eye on two kids such as Koret Children’s Quarter, Helen Diller Playground, and Kid Power Park.



- Free open gyms such as the one at Eureka Valley Rec Center are surprisingly toddler-friendly. Grab a basketball from the bin and let the kiddos run themselves in circles rather than run you ragged.
- Story times that take place in a separate room with one exit work well. Good examples are the Main Library, the Mission Bay Branch Library, and the Noe Valley/ Sally Brunn Branch Library. Others, such as the ones at Harvey Milk Memorial Branch Library and Folio Books, often don’t fly at this stage, because there’s nothing separating the storytelling activity from shelves of books ripe for throwing on the floor or computers just waiting to be banged.
- Some museums offer the opportunity to effectively corral two kids by segmenting spaces effectively and limiting exit points. Try the Randall Museum, the Bay Area Discovery Museum, and the tiny Railway Museum. Call Pump It Up to see whether the door between Arenas A and B will be closed; if it is, you can keep an eye on two

- kids from one spot.
- Playgroups in private homes or in bounded public spaces also work well for two toddlers. Check out GGMG Neighborhood Meetups as well as get-togethers organized via *Meetup.com* and Facebook.

A toddler and a child

As soon as one child transforms into a fairly reliable listener, much more of the world becomes your oyster:

- Before her fourth birthday, my daughter learned to respond to my call of “Code Stu!” by dropping everything and chasing after me so that I could tail Stuart. If something similar will work for your older child, most museums, story times, and playgrounds become doable again.
- Classes that take place at a museum at no additional cost allow for enrichment of two kids without per capita enrollment fees. For example, \$119 a year affords you and up to four kids’ entrée into the fabulous Children’s Creativity Museum and its twice-weekly Early Birdies music and movement class.
- As Alyson Schafer suggests in *Honey, I Wrecked the Kids*, parents with the means to do so can sign siblings up for drop-off classes at different venues in order to help them develop distinct identities and interests that reduce sibling rivalry.
- Letting the kids loose in unbounded outdoor areas such as Ocean Beach, Kite Hill Open Space, Crissy Field, or Golden Gate Park, became much less stressful for

me at this stage. Playgrounds with adjoining open fields that are separated from the road by a fence such as Douglass Playground, Glen Park Playground, and Midtown Terrace Playground, provide a half-measure in that you can allow the older kid a long leash while cabining the younger one.

Two children

Once my oldest could reliably stay close to her younger brother, very few venues remained closed to us. However, when he too developed the ability to resist an attractive nuisance, a few more options and considerations came into play:

- Help maturing kids whittle down their activities to focus on the ones that best suit their individual needs. For example, in *Redefining Girly*, Melissa Atkins Wardy argues that art classes and sports help young girls resist gender stereotypes and the sexualizing of girlhood by “showing [them] that our bodies are instruments, not ornaments.”
- Museums that protect tantalizing climbing and tactile opportunities from kids with a mere “do not touch” sign or a rope no longer terrified me and tortured the children.
- Similarly, playgrounds that lack fencing or visibility finally worked for us.
- Two words: Movie. Theater.

Of course, the most important consideration in mixing and matching experiences like these is the comfort of the individuals involved. As you draw back the bowstring, accept and work with the limitations facing you. While you shouldn’t let sudden movements throw you, try to stay nimble and be willing to modify your stance. At the end of the day, successfully planning extracurricular activities with multiple kids is all about recognizing and honoring the whole family’s perpetually evolving ages and stages. ❖

Gail Cornwall is a former public school teacher and recovering lawyer who now works as a stay-at-home mom of three and writes about motherhood. You can read more at joidevivi.wordpress.com (maternal musings) and readymommy.wordpress.com (book reviews for moms).

Preschool Age 3 to 4 years

DEVELOPMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- Social interactions with peers are based on parallel play
- Focused on school readiness and self-help skills
- Fine motor skills in development
- Physically stronger and more coordinated
- Emotions are like a roller coaster

Look for a class that...

Prepares them for preschool, if they do not already attend, or complements their preschool type. For example, if they attend a half-day preschool that is project-based and does not have any outside time, then an afternoon soccer class or movement class would be a great way to round out their schedule. Drop-off classes are most common. Class type will depend greatly on your child’s opinion and the classes his or her close friends take.

Local programs appropriate for preschool aged kids:

- **Jamboodas**—mindfulness mixed with song and dance, your creative and expressive 3 year old will love this sometimes rockin’ class! (Outer Sunset)
- **It’s Yoga, Pre-K**—support your child’s mind and body through poses and songs that encourage emotional regulation and creativity. (Presidio)
- **Busy Bees at SF Gymnastics**—learn to take turns and follow directions all while stretching and moving in this active class. (Presidio)
- **Smart Cookies at Peekadoodle**—discover some of the basic concepts needed for kindergarten, plus try a little cooking too! (Ghirardelli Square)



STEPPIN’ OUT SF

Pre-K Age 4 to 5 years

DEVELOPMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- Focus on friendships and peer interactions
- Beginning stages of emotional regulation
- Love to play pretend and imagination-based games
- Have strong opinions and preferences
- Emotionally ready for formal music instruction

Look for a class that...

Introduces the concepts of teamwork and a little bit of competition. Classes that include friends from their school or neighborhood will be more appealing to them as well as classes in which they can role play and create. Most classes are appropriate at this age, but free time to play and rest is valuable as well. Now that they are at school for longer periods of time, make sure that your weekends are kept simple and limited to perhaps only one class, allowing imaginations to blossom and giving them a chance to connect with you. For an older 4-year-old, trying out summer camp will also help him or her to get used to the demands of kindergarten, as well as the longer days away from home.

Local programs appropriate for pre-k aged kids:

- **Golden Gate Discovery Days at the Bay Area Discovery Museum**—learn about the ecosystem of the bay with NatureBridge and BADM. (Marin Headlands/Sausalito)
- **Junior Movers at the ODC**—choose from ballet or contemporary dance classes designed to lay the foundation for future dance classes while working on the basics of rhythm and dancing as a group. (Mission)
- **Old School Meets New School at Little Artistas**—your child will learn a little art history while working with corresponding painting techniques. Class is offered in both Spanish and English. (Glen Park)

Stef Tousignant is the founder of the popular family event, The Great Baby Romp, and the nanny from www.AskaNanny.com. She lives in the Inner Richmond with her high school sweetheart and two boys (ages 3 and 6), who love to play air guitar and explore Golden Gate Park! #askstef

School-Aged Kids 5+ years

DEVELOPMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- Focus on social emotional development
- Interactions with peers more complex
- Reading and writing skills developing
- Gender roles affect activity preferences and hobbies
- Need tension outlets for increasing energy levels

Look for a class that...

Covers skills they do not yet have mastery over, like swimming, musical instruction, cooking, or soccer. Or classes that delve deeper into favorite subjects, like science and math. Younger kids will benefit from the outlet that classes on the weekends provide, as well as restful and open evenings after school when they can process the day’s events and the social and emotional skills learned in the early years of schooling. These are also the years in which summers are filled with camp fun, so don’t forget to sign up this month!

Local programs appropriate for school-aged kids:

- **Farmer’s Market Brunch Class at Y.U.M Chefs**—tour the Farmers Market, pick the freshest ingredients, then head back to the kitchen to cook up an awesome brunch! (Mission)
- **Camps at Tree Frog Treks**—the most happy children, spouting nature and science-based knowledge, come home from these hands-on adventure camps. (Hayes Valley)
- **The Butterfly Joint**—coming soon to SF, this classic woodworking studio is sure to become a staple in the years to come for all of our budding tinkers and builders. ❖



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I ♥ Mom

Is It Good Enough to Be Good?

By Anna Gracia

There is a theory, popularized by Malcolm Gladwell in *The Outliers*, that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to be great at something. Some cultures and parents more readily adopt this, believing children can excel at anything if practiced enough. It's also the basis of the parenting culture war set off by *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, where Amy Chua tells of threatening to burn her daughter's stuffed animals unless she practiced the violin.

While my parents never threatened to harm any of my toys, I was raised with this belief that excellence was expected in everything I did and that if I didn't excel, it was simply because I didn't try hard enough. As a result, much of my free time growing up was spent doing schoolwork and practicing tennis. From the time a racquet was put in my hand at the age of five, my dad would repeat "Title IX" to me over and over again—the NCAA regulation that, among other things, ensures equal scholarship money for men and women's sports. It was a goal that made it clear from the beginning that tennis was not going to be something I played just for fun, but an investment in my future.

My 10,000 hours of practice and the journey toward my eventual scholarship were littered with sweat, tears, and more than a little resentment toward my parents. I often missed being able to play with friends after school and weekend sleepovers because of lessons that consumed the afternoons and out-of-state tournaments. I was embarrassed when friends had to sit on the stairs and watch my dad feed me volleys in our basement before I could leave the house. I remember the torture of having to jump rope in the corner of our kitchen while my mom prepared dinner—counting aloud to make sure I didn't try to skip ahead in the pre-printed regimen she had taped to the wall. I begged my parents to let me quit.

As the years went by, I gave up pleading to quit and instead refused to be compliant in their quest for excellence. I stood motionless throughout hour-long private lessons week after week, refusing to hit a single ball, until the teaching pro gently told my parents it was time to find a new instructor. I broke every single tennis racquet I owned, whacking them against the court repeatedly until they cracked and splintered. I purposely tanked matches. My parents never once wavered. They found me new teachers. They refused to buy me new racquets and made me continue to play with the cracked ones.

Despite my sullen attitude and contempt for the sport, I began to see myself improve. With improvement came the fun. I wondered if perhaps tiger parents pushed so hard because they knew something their kids didn't: that activities become vastly more enjoyable when you're great at them. And you can only

become great through practice—lots and lots of practice. Still, I assured myself that I would be less heavy-handed about excellence and focus on cultivating the joy of playing sports in my future children.



When my daughter was assessed as "advanced" in her motor skills at 18 months, however, I could feel the tiger mom inside of me awaken. I bought her a tiny racquet and started showing her matches of Serena Williams. I brought her to the local courts, only to find she was happier retrieving my balls than hitting her own. I signed up for SoccerTots in a concerted effort to diversify, but I found myself frustrated at my daughter's interest in building the cone towers rather than knocking them down with the ball. I tried to make her work on dribbling in our living room on the days leading up to her next practice. She seemed to comply with my requests only with the intention of pleasing me.

In my saner moments, I would remind myself of what it felt like to try and satisfy a results-oriented parent: of the day my mom told me to stop talking to my opponents as if we were friends on the court and to focus on competing; of all the times I was lectured for losing a match to a player my dad believed I was

I wondered if perhaps tiger parents pushed so hard because they knew something their kids didn't: that activities become vastly more enjoyable when you're great at them.

superior to, the first of which came when I was ten. I reminded myself how nerve-racking it was to play, knowing my dad was silently calculating my errors, ready to discuss my weaknesses regardless of whether I won or lost. And that despite all of this, all I ever wanted was for my parents to be proud.

When SoccerTots ended, I didn't sign up for another session. My daughter hasn't set foot on a tennis court in months. But we still watch Serena and I keep her racquet in plain view, just in case she decides to pick it up. I hope one day I will be able to find the balance in myself to teach her the sport with which I have so much history, and that she might find joy—and success—in it. ❖

Anna now channels her competitive energy into coaching high school tennis and beating her two small children in foot races. When not watching sports, she blogs about movies at www.snarkymovie reviews.blogspot.com.



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