

NOVEMBER 2015



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magazine

Art and Music



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Letter from the Editor: Creating Artists

By Kirsten Pflieger



Kirsten lives in the Castro with her husband, Karl, and their daughters Serenity (4) and Sierra (2), where she tries to instill a love of art while banning glitter from the house.

I love a good craft project. I don't recall making crafts much as a child, but as an adult I have embraced the pastime. While I'm not artistically skilled or particularly creative, I can follow directions and excel at purchasing supplies. I went through a cross-stitch phase and a scrapbooking phase. I was very excited when I learned to knit because I could complete projects very

quickly. I want to be a seamstress, but I find myself constantly trying to tweak patterns without the skill to do so.

When my older daughter, Serenity, started getting interested in art, it was easy to contain the mess. I stored supplies like markers, stickers, paint, and paper in a place she couldn't reach and only brought them out for her to play with. I am finding that much

While I'm not artistically skilled or particularly creative, I can follow directions and excel at purchasing supplies.

harder with two. Serenity is old enough to grab art supplies and create something without constant supervision and assistance; she is even old enough to clean up after herself. Sierra, however, cannot be trusted. While she may begin drawing on paper, eventually the dollhouse has received a paint job. Finding a

system that allows Serenity freer access to supplies and a structure for clean-up, while keeping the most abused items away from her younger sister, has proved daunting. On page 24, Shannon offers some solutions, as well as guidance on supplies you want to keep on hand, and what to do with the resulting creativity.

Art is not just visual. Many of us take our babies to music classes and wonder if it really matters. Then as our children grow up, we consider moving into more formal music classes, including actual instrument training. I can't play an instrument. I took piano lessons as a child, but I hated practicing. I would love for my girls to have a stronger musical background. Tara takes a look at when and how to start children on music lessons on page 20, and on page 10 David offers one dad's perspective on passing his love of music on to his children.

As my husband and I spend the fall touring schools around the city, we realize that our school choice will affect other decisions going forward. If our daughters go to a school with a strong arts program, we might not have to do anything except provide encouragement. If their school is not strong in the arts, we will be looking into after school programs. On page 16, Sarah takes a look at our public schools to see how the arts are funded, and how implementation of that funding varies.

The upcoming holiday season is a great time to introduce your children to performance art. See page 6 for age-appropriate shows. On page 39, KT Nelson shares with us how she came to choreograph the Velveteen Rabbit when her son was 3. This holiday favorite has become a family tradition, one that we are excited to be introducing to Sierra next month.

Wishing you all a creative end of year,

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.

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THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: Halloween costumes, preschool and kindergarten tours, family visits, pumpkin patches, bedtime cake, free hotel wi-fi, extended Oma and Opa visit, too much Chicago style popcorn, a disgruntled computer, fundraising for preschool, and coffee!

COMING NEXT: December—Simplicity; February—Home Sweet Home

CONTEST: Congratulations to Sarah Hembree Ramos, winner of the September parenting consultation with Kasey Balin, MFT.

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

Letter from the Board: Career Paths

By Cathy Tran

I have very traditional parents, which translated into them having very traditional goals for me when I was growing up. For the better part of my school years, I basically felt like I only had four possible career paths: doctor, lawyer, engineer, or professor (but only at an Ivy League university). I really tried my best to go down one of those prestigious paths and I feel like I succeeded, because now I'm a successful stay-at-home mother! (Kidding! Sorry I'm not a doctor, Mom and Dad!)

This month's issue is all about arts and music. I often wonder what career path I might have followed if more emphasis had been placed on the arts as a viable option when I was growing up. We hear so much about the value of STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) skills these days, but as someone who started her career at a nonprofit in the arts, I particularly appreciate the GGMG Magazine spotlighting arts and music and how to integrate them into our children's lives. Some of my best memories over the years have been made while experiencing or creating art or music, and I would be absolutely thrilled if one of my kids pursued a career in such a creative field.

Speaking of career paths, be sure to check out our brand new forum on BigTent dedicated to careers! This is a forum for all GGMG members—both working moms and stay-at-home moms—to discuss anything career-related, whether it be work/life balance, re-entering the workforce, questions about careers, job postings, useful career-related articles, opportunities to network and mentor each other, and more! We hope this forum will become a supportive and productive space for women to discuss anything work- or career-related and continue their professional development. Whether you are a working mom, a

mom taking a step back from her career who still wants to stay in the loop, or a mom thinking about re-entering the workforce, we hope that by providing this forum we are meeting our needs as women, mothers, and valuable members of GGMG.

To subscribe to the Careers forum:

- > Log in to BigTent
- > Go to Golden Gate Mothers Group
- > Click on your profile in the upper right hand corner
- > Click on Settings
- > Click on Email Options
- > Select Discussions
- > Choose Display Discussions for Golden Gate Mothers Group
- > Select how you would like to be notified of new posts in the Careers forum (web only, emailed each topic, email digest)

Some of my best memories over the years have been made while experiencing or creating art or music

Then you're all set! And don't forget about our other great forums: the Early Years, the Elementary Years, Caregivers, Events and Announcements, and Miscellaneous.



Cathy Tran is mom to Charlie and James. She has been volunteering with GGMG since 2012 and enjoys helping and supporting the wonderful GGMG community. She lives in the Parkside with her husband Pete and her two little troublemakers.

Volunteer of the Month



Congratulations to **Sasha Fahimi**, our November volunteer of the month! Sasha began volunteering in May 2015 as the GGMG Neighborhood Meetups co-chair. She is also an employment attorney, wife to Jahan, mother to 10-month-old Mila, and owner of rescue pup Norman Joe Biden Fahimi.

Her Favorite Pastimes: Reading has always been my absolute favorite indoor pastime, followed by cooking (at which I'm terrible); **Books:** *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier, *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt, and *Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafón; **Film:** *The Godfather*; **Restaurant:** Stone's Throw and Daigo Sushi; **Destination:** Anywhere in Argentina; **Parenting advice:** Stop Googling everything baby-related that you're freaking out about, unless you want to give yourself a heart attack.

Heather will enjoy a 60-minute massage at International Orange Spa (2044 Fillmore St.). Book yourself a massage today at www.internationalorange.com.

Show Time!

Can't-Miss Performances the Whole Family Will Love

By Stef Tousignant

Enjoy the feelings of togetherness that November brings by seeking out these family-friendly shows and spending the afternoon together laughing and singing (before all they can think about is presents!).

Bay Area Children's Theatre

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

UPCOMING SHOWS: now through Dec 20

Adapted from the movie, this family adventure is just perfect for 4 and up—with its catchy songs and pure silliness, it will be a sure hit!

Lemony Snicket's Lump of Coal

UPCOMING SHOWS: Dec 5 to Jan 3

Try out a new holiday tale about a lump of coal who is just yearning to become an artist—don't worry, even this unconventional story has its share of miracles and heartwarming moments!

www.bactheatre.org

Berkeley Playhouse

Peter Pan

UPCOMING SHOWS: now through Dec 26

Your child will never forget the thrill of witnessing Peter Pan magically lifting off the stage into flight as the three Darling children trail behind him fueled by pixie dust. Enjoy this wonderful classic with your family and head back to Neverland yourself.

www.berkeleyplayhouse.org

Marin Theatre Company

The Little Prince

UPCOMING SHOWS: Dec 12 to 20

A favorite for both adults and children, this classic tale weaves together a wild adventure with a quest for spiritual awakening. Brush up on the story and then head north for the show!

www.marintheatre.org

ODC/Dance

The Velveteen Rabbit

UPCOMING SHOWS: Nov 27 to Dec 13

Get your tickets ASAP so you don't miss this San Francisco holiday tradition—this touching tale of childhood and enduring love is told through music and dance and is a must see (tears and all!).

www.odcdance.org

SFJazz Center

Family Matinees

UPCOMING SHOWS: Nov 7 and Dec 12

Affordably priced and super interactive, these performances will introduce your children to the improvisational, toe-tapping, and exciting world of jazz.

P.S. Every once in a while there is a hands-on workshop after the performance, so check SFJazz's website for more details!

www.sfjazz.org

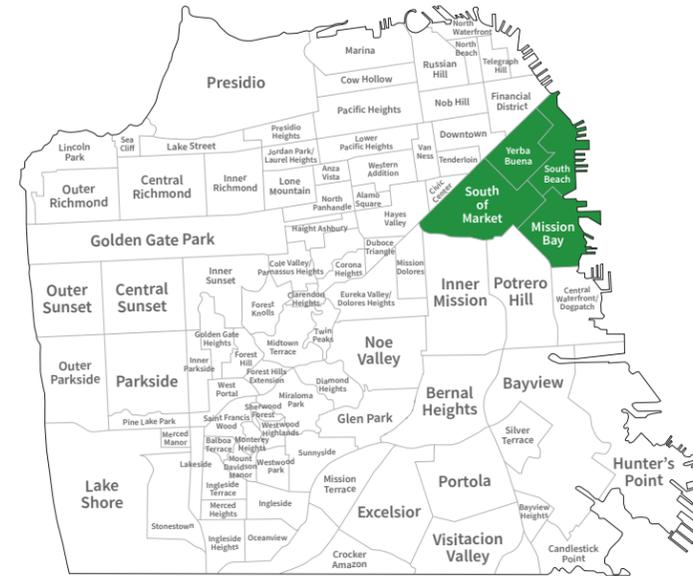
San Francisco Symphony

Disney in Concert

UPCOMING SHOWS: Nov 25 to 28

It is always a treat when you can watch a favorite movie accompanied by its original score—live! Enjoy Tim Burton's cult classic *The Nightmare Before Christmas* featuring music from Danny Elfman (and don't be afraid to come in costume!).

www.sfsymphony.org



Li'l Kid, Big City: SOMA and surrounding areas

By Shaheen Bilgrami

Love it or leave it, there's no doubt that buzzing, gritty, lively SOMA has a lot to offer families with kids.

First, grab some breakfast and feed your social conscience at super kid-friendly **Crossroads Cafe**. Or head to the **Mission Bay Library** for fun baby and toddler storytime.

For preschoolers and older kids, the amazing and innovative **Children's Creativity Museum** at Yerba Buena Gardens comes next. Check to see what's on in advance to make the most of your visit.

If your kids need to let off steam, head outside to the playground at the **Yerba Buena Children's Garden**, where they can climb, slide, and explore. Calm them down with a ride on the historic **Children's Creativity Carousel**.

Then, broaden your little one's culinary horizons as you grab lunch at the food trucks in **SoMa StrEatfood Park**.

Are your kids baseball fans? End your day on a high by heading over to **AT&T Park** for a game! If the team's out of town, you can visit the Fan Lot, with its Giant Glove, the Coca-Cola Superslide and the Little Giants Park, where your kids play with whiffle balls on the mini-diamond . . . for free! The stunning views from the park make it worth a visit even if you are not a fan! ❖

Shaheen Bilgrami is freelance writer and editor and is a contributor to www.blog.littlelane.com. She is also the mom of an energetic preschooler. Contact her through her website, www.shaheenbilgrami.com or her blog, www.girlinfofcity.com.

Get Your Tinker On

By Stef Tousignant

We all love to roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty. Here are a few places where your kids can flex their creative muscles.

Butterfly Joint

You won't find any power tools here! Just a focus on learning the craft of woodworking, from, yes, butterfly joints to proper tool use.

www.thebutterflyjoint.com

DIY.org

With DIY's website and app, kids learn more than 130 skills, build expertise, share their work, and even earn patches. Yes, it's online, but this is a great resource for you to share from the comfort of your own tinkering studio at home.

www.DIY.org

The FabLab, inside The Bay Area Discovery Museum

This high-tech makerspace is in the process of being built within the museum's newest renovated space (formerly the Wave Workshop) and will open in the spring of 2016. It will boast a 3D printer, laser cutter, and early childhood appropriate STEM projects and guided learning. We can't wait!

www.baykidsmuseum.org

MakeArtLab, inside the Museum of Craft and Design

This lab focuses on the art and design side of tinkering. Family Day is coming up on Saturday, November 7, so don't miss your chance to make duct tape designs together!

www.sfmcd.org/kids

Tinkergarten

Meet in Golden Gate Park for a hands-on, mixed-age group class that explores the natural world around us. Dive into topics like the changing seasons and paint-making from scratch. Ideal for kids ages 18 months through 5 years.

www.tinkergarten.com

The Tinkering Studio, inside the Exploratorium

Did you know your kids can make their own circuit, marble run, or scribble machine? Get over to the Embarcadero and check it out!

tinkering.exploratorium.edu

Stef Tousignant is head of marketing for the free mobile app Mommy Nearest. She lives in the Inner Richmond with her high school sweetheart and two boys (ages 3 and 7), who love to play air guitar and explore Golden Gate Park. www.mommynearest.com

Ask the Expert Childhood Movement

By Jessie Wesoky



My 18-month-old son didn't really crawl. He went straight from rolling over to pulling up to standing. Does that cause any problems with future coordination?

Babies have a lot of work to do in their first year, learning about themselves and the world around them. Some of the most important work

they do is integrating their primitive reflexes. Many of us are familiar with the Moro, rooting, and palmer grasp reflexes, but there are roughly 75 different reflexes which are activated in utero, during the birth process, and throughout the first five years of life. As some of these reflexes get integrated, new ones emerge. This allows your baby to survive and thrive by gaining control over their voluntary movements. Crawling helps babies integrate many reflexes, become strong in the core, shoulders and hips, get proprioceptive feedback (impact on joints) and build confidence by moving through the world. I encourage parents to crawl and do all the movements your babies do—it is a great way for you to experience what your baby is learning and doing. Ideally, all babies would spend at least five months hand and knee crawling. If that didn't happen for your son, you can still encourage him to crawl by challenging him to a crawling race, encouraging him to go through tunnels or other obstacles, crawl up stairs, or walk on his hands and feet (bear walk).

My baby hates to be on the floor. It is so much easier to just put her in the ExerSaucer. Is she really missing out on anything by not being on the floor?

Devices like an ExerSaucer are mama-helpers, not kid-helpers. When babies are on the floor on their tummies, backs, or sides, they are getting tons of sensory information, learning how to use their muscles to motor, manipulating objects, and maintaining balance. When your daughter begins to crawl and walk, you want her to be safe and be able to catch herself when she falls. By letting her find a vertical position of sitting and standing herself, not in a device, you are helping her vestibular sense develop and become strong. In other words, it is much better to have our kids sit, stand and walk a little later, but independently, rather than hold them in those positions. We are meant to spend lots of time on the floor: moving, balancing, weight shifting, and bonding with caregivers. Minimize the use of devices and maximize time on the floor for your little one's health and safety. Also, frustration leads

to new motor skills. When your daughter is mad that she can't get to the appealing toy across the floor, she's going to figure out how to get there. This is how we grow and develop throughout life.

My four-year-old doesn't seem as coordinated as her peers. I notice other children her age skipping and galloping, but she doesn't seem to be able to. Should I be concerned?

There are obviously variations and differences between kids, but I think you should pay attention to your feelings of concern. Skipping involves cross lateral motion, rhythm, balance, and strength. If your daughter is struggling, take a moment to reflect on her movement patterns as an infant. Did she belly crawl to develop differentiation between her body sides? Did she crawl to get practice with cross-lateral movement? I would bring this up to your child's teacher and pediatrician. There are so many wonderful resources in the Bay Area for occupational therapy and other services, and your daughter may really benefit from some intervention. I want to emphasize it is not just about the skipping, but the fact that a motor delay can indicate other issues. When reflexes are separately maintained but not integrated, there are a

...it is much better to have our kids sit, stand and walk a little later, but independently, rather than hold them in those positions.

variety of issues from sensory processing to toileting problems to motion sickness. She may be struggling in other areas such as emotional regulation or reading that would be helped by looking at the total picture.

How does movement factor into fine motor activities, like writing and drawing?

The body strengthens from the head to the toes and from the center to the extremities. When a child's shoulders and hips are strong and grounded, they will be able to execute fine motor skills with ease. When a child's hand muscles are strong from playing in the sand, cooking, and squishing clay, he should be able to hold a pencil correctly. To improve your child's mastery of fine motor skills, encourage him to partake in large motor, high-impact movement. Have a dance party, play outside, or do some yoga. Not only does it build core strength, but it also provides balance and control when it's time to focus. ❖

Prior to having her two kids, Jessie taught first grade at Charter School of Morgan Hill and dance at Thomas Edison Charter Academy in San Francisco. She now offers consultations about tummy time and movement in the first year and teaches weekly Developmental Movement classes for Babies and Toddlers. Find out more at www.jessiewesoky.com.

GGMG: Helping Others, Treating Yourself

Community Support

Give thanks and make it a happier holiday for a family in need!

From November 15 to January 2, GGMG will be supporting **Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP)** families during the holiday season. The holidays are a special time of year but can be difficult for families experiencing challenging circumstances. Did you know \$25 can provide a warm holiday meal for a HPP family of four? What a wonderful way to make a difference!



HPP is a truly remarkable organization that helps more than 3,500 local, low income, and homeless families every year. GGMG and HPP have formed a special relationship of moms helping moms. Please join us in continuing this remarkable tradition and consider making a donation to the HPP holiday drive. Any amount is greatly appreciated and will be put to good use supporting HPP families.

Donations can be made via the following link: <https://hpp.secure.force.com/donate>. Please choose "gmg gives" in the drop down menu when making a donation, and check the forums for additional ways you can support this drive.

Contest

The Ultimate Moms Night Out!

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The package (a \$570 value) includes:

- Two tickets to any of our evening events in our 2016 season, January 26, February 23, or May 3) at the Mill Valley Community Center, from 6:30 to 9 p.m.
- Signed books by Speak To Me speakers: *Maxed Out: American Moms On The Brink*, *The Watchman's Rattle: Thinking Our Way Out of Extinction*, *Spiraling Upward*, and *Playing Big*; video/audio presentations from Shasta Nelson, Debora Spar, Jim Steyer, Tara Mohr, and Rebecca Costa.
- Two \$50 New-to-You Gift Certificates from SkinSpirit Spa.
- Two luxurious Beauty Counter pampering gift bags.



Tickets only valid for 2015/16 Speak To Me Season and are non-transferable. RSVP to admin@speaktomevents.com to reserve your space for an event at least two weeks in advance.

TO ENTER THE CONTEST, SEND AN EMAIL WITH "THE ULTIMATE MOMS" IN THE SUBJECT LINE TO CONTEST@GGMG.ORG BY NOVEMBER 30.

DADLANDS

A Musical Education

By David Gibbons

I like to joke with my 4-year-old son, Dean, that he can learn how to play any instrument, as long as it is bass or drums, because we need to start working on our jazz trio—featuring Daddy on piano, of course. Poor Julian, not quite a year old, will be stuck with whatever Dean doesn't pick. Dean is leaning toward the drums, which he says he already knows how to play, as evidenced by his deft work with chopsticks on empty oatmeal cans.

Family trio aspirations aside, I've struggled a bit to find the best approach to Dean and Julian's musical education. When should they start? Should they start with piano lessons? How about violin? Maybe community parent-children music classes?

Well, what worked for me? My parents started sending me to piano lessons at age five. We were expected to practice every week. And for years we did practice every week—after being reminded, cajoled, bribed, or threatened. In the end, my brothers and I became pretty decent instrumentalists, and playing music is now a really important part of our lives. Plus, there are all those studies linking musical ability to linguistic facility, math skills, spatial reasoning, etc. So, I should find my inner tiger dad and get Dean and Julian into lessons as soon as I can and keep pushing them until they finally thank me for it, right?

Maybe not. Of course I want my boys to maximize their cognitive abilities, but that is really just a nice side effect of musicality. People don't choose to play and listen to music as a means to an end; they do it because they love it. It literally moves us! We experience intense feeling and find meaning in music that is impossible to fully articulate. I want Dean and Julian to learn to experience this too: the magic of the building ostinato in the Allegretto from Beethoven's Seventh, Miles Davis's unparalleled use of space on "All Blues," the mesmerizing polyrhythms in Radiohead's "Pyramid Song."

I think what really worked for my brothers and me was the musical environment my parents created for us—not the forced practice sessions. They played the piano and guitar, they sang at home and in the choir, they listened to all kinds of different music, and they took us to concerts. My dad would hear a song that he liked on the radio, pick up his guitar, and in a couple of minutes have that song down. I would watch in awe and think, "I want to do that!" When my brothers and I played brass instruments, he would arrange hymns and carols for organ and brass trio so that we could perform at church. Eventually, we

didn't need to be told to practice, because we wanted to practice. We wanted to be able to play new things, to hear and partake in the genius of the composers and bands we loved, and to even create our own music.

So, for now, we are not rushing Julian and Dean into lessons, but they are nevertheless well into their musical education. I try to avoid most children's music albums for my own sanity, so I've dug through my music collection to find songs that the boys enjoy. Julian is happy listening to any music at this point, but Dean prefers faster songs with a solid beat. Billie Holiday is barely able to offer one of her beautifully plaintive tones before she is interrupted with, "Daddy! Too

slow!" When I do find a tune he likes (Herbie Hancock's funky "Watermelon Man" has been popular lately), sometimes we'll simply listen, or maybe I'll ask him what instrument he thinks is playing, or I'll just point out some things I really like about the song: "Dean, listen to that cool bass line! Hear it?"

One of my favorite father-sons activities is our regular trek over to Revolution Café in the Mission to listen to jazz. Julian likes to bob up and down in my lap, and Dean enjoys seeing and hearing the real instruments so much that he'll even tolerate a slow ballad or two. We've also been to some great library concerts, and we have grooved to a number of Dolores Park drum circles.

At home, we've assembled quite a collection of instruments for the boys, and they do get a lot of use. We've had most success

We experience intense feeling and find meaning in music that is impossible to fully articulate.

with the hand percussion instruments: egg shakers, maracas, tambourines, and bongos. Oh, and oatmeal cans. The kazoos are also a hit (the ear-splitting recorder was a bad idea; I think we'll be misplacing it shortly). Every so often, both boys will be playing instruments at the same time, so I'll grab the ukulele and we'll sing and have a Daddy-Dean-Julian jam. Last week, Dean exclaimed over his bongo-playing, "Daddy! We're like a band!"

"Yes, Dean, we are a band—a trio!" ❖

David Gibbons lives in San Francisco with his wife and two boys. He plays piano in small jazz combos around the city from time to time. Go see him at Bird and Beckett on January 24th.



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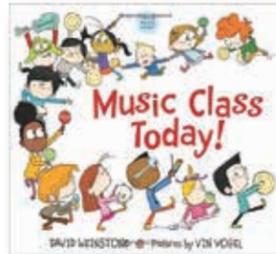


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Books for Kids **Art and Music**

By Laure Latham

The saying “music speaks louder than words” holds true for kids too. From nursery rhymes to classic rock, kids love listening to a good tune and playing (or banging) on musical instruments. In a parallel world, art is as wonderful to share with kids as music is, but it tickles young creative minds differently. Let these books inspire your family to (re)discover great music and art with a fresh eye!



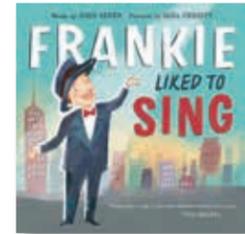
Music Class Today! *Written by David Weinstone, illustrated by Vin Vogel*
Following a funky music class, *Music Class Today!* is a cute sing-along book for your little ones. Kids will love this music class that gets silly, chaotic, or playful (depending on the child) but that’s always fun and enjoyable. You can grab your guitar and play along or

download the music from the book’s website. *Ages: 0 to 3 years*

One Bear Extraordinaire

Written by Jaime McGowan

The story follows a bear who wakes up with a song in his head, but it’s missing something. To find it, he roams the wilderness and encounters other musical animals who join his quest. A banjo! An accordion! A fiddle! Is that enough? No, something’s still missing and you’ll have to discover it, savoring the beautiful artwork that shines throughout and adds a whimsical note to the story of a bear extraordinary. *Ages: 3 to 7 years*



Frankie Liked to Sing

Written by John Sven, illustrated by Jana Christy

Frank Sinatra was a kid once too, but he wasn’t like the other kids. Why, of course he was always singing! Now an icon, Frank Sinatra worked hard to become the singer he was and this book retraces his steps, from his mother’s home parties to big theaters. With a voice “like a reassuring pat on the back,” Frankie followed his dream and never gave up. Hear that, kids? Always follow your dreams. Also, look for a list of the authors’ favorite Frank Sinatra songs for young listeners in the end pages.

Ages: 4 to 8 years

Bad Kitty Makes Comics...and You Can, Too!

Written and illustrated by Nick Bruel

“When I was in third grade, not only did I READ comic books, but I also MADE comic books,” writes Nick Bruel, author of the successful Bad Kitty series. Meant as an exercise comic book, this book can be photocopied page by page so that your budding artists can try their hands at drawing comics at home too. By the end of the book, they’ll be able to write and draw comics, sound effects included. This unconventional art book is so much fun that it should be all that’s needed to spur any school-age kid’s creativity. *Ages: 7 to 11 years*



Tagged

Written by Diane C. Mullen

Living in the projects in suburban Minneapolis, Liam O’Malley is a 14-year-old who wants to become a graffiti artist, but Irish gang wars and bad grades turn his life into a mess. When things go sour with a rival gang, his mother sends him to spend the summer with a sculptor friend of hers in Michigan. Written in short, clipped sentences, this novel follows the evolution of Liam as he transitions from a street vandal to a mural artist. While not shying away from exposing a street gang teenager’s fears and feeling of insecurity, the novel manages to show how he grows into a mature young man ready to face the world. Highly recommended for t(w)eens interested in street art, modern art, or just growing up. *Ages: 10 and up*

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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From Womb to World

Seeds of Creativity

By Kirsten Pflieger

Whether you are a naturally crafty person or the “nesting” period brings it out in you, celebrating pregnancy and early infancy with art creates memories and allows space for quiet contemplation.

Henna

Used for thousands of years to dye fabrics, skin, and hair, henna is traditionally applied to women’s hands and feet at times of celebration and rites of passage, including marriage and childbirth. The concept of applying henna to a pregnant woman’s abdomen, usually during the third trimester, is a fairly modern, Western concept. Women may incorporate this into a baby shower or blessingway (inspired by the Navajo traditional mother’s blessing). Any pattern can be used, but blossoming flowers and images considered to be protective are often incorporated. The most important question to ask when choosing a henna artist is what they mix into their henna powder. Most artists use some sort of essential oil, and not all of those are safe for pregnant women.

Birth mandala

In the vein of a vision board, a birth mandala is a powerful visualization tool that you can use as inspiration during your birth journey. The first step is to consider some words that describe what the upcoming birth and transformation from woman to mother means to you. Gather a group of your friends and release your creativity. Start with a circle of posterboard divided into wedges so that each person has



Create a beautiful art piece to provide strength when you need it most and adorn your walls for years to come.

a piece of the pie. Randomly assign each person a word and using magazine cut-outs, stamps, stencils, puffy paints, and, of course, glitter, create its visual representation. You assemble the circle on a canvas to create a beautiful art piece to provide strength when you need it most and adorn your walls for years to come.

Belly casting

Belly casting is exactly what it sounds like—using old-fashioned plaster gauze strips to create a lasting mold of your pregnant belly. The cast can include your breasts or a hand on your belly if you like, and can be done at home with a kit purchased on

Amazon. The process of applying the gauze and waiting for it to dry takes 30 minutes to an hour, and then the cast needs a day or two to fully dry. Once it is dry, you can call the project complete, or you can use gesso paint primer to ready the plaster for painting. At this point, you are limited only by your imagination and your Pinterest-surfing skills. What do you do with your completed cast? Hang it on the wall, use it in a newborn photo shoot, wait until your child is older and let him or her paint it, wear it around to remind yourself what it was really like to be pregnant. The choice is yours.

Tiny toes

All of the little parts of newborns are precious, but there is something special about their little fingers and toes. You can immortalize these tiny digits with casting or paint.

There are various kits available to create a clay impression of your child’s hand or feet. Kits often come with molds so that you can frame the impression for a wall hanging or desk decoration, or add a ribbon to create an ornament for a Christmas tree. Carmel Blue is hosting an ornament making event on November 20. See page 31 for more details. You can go one step further and create a 3D cast of your child’s hand or foot (or tiny bum). These do-it-yourself kits are readily available

on Amazon and claim to capture details down to fingerprints. Feel more comfortable using paint as your medium? Who among us didn’t turn her hand into a turkey for a Thanksgiving-themed art project at least once during grade school? A quick perusal of “hand and footprint ideas” on Pinterest shows that we have moved far past that once-a-year phenomenon, and that tiny limbs make for adorable art. Tiny toes can be turned into hearts, penguins, or a train. With some non-toxic paints, a paint brush (foam ones work good for this), and paper or a canvas, you can start creating art.

Tips for success for any art project involving a baby include making sure that everything is within reach of you but NOT the baby; starting with a well-rested, fed, and possibly naked little one; move fast and be willing to abort at the first sign of distress. ❖

Kirsten lives in the Castro with her husband, Karl, and their daughters Serenity (4) and Sierra (2), where she tries to instill a love of art while banning glitter from the house.

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Arts in San Francisco Schools

By Sarah Lai Stirland

Photographs by Albena Ilieva



It's an early fall evening at the American Conservatory Theater ("A.C.T.")'s jazzy new performance space in the Tenderloin, and 22 Bessie Carmichael Elementary School students are singing on the theater's main stage.

The kids' first piece, created by their musical theater teacher Peter Sroka, is a ditty welcoming audience members to the new theater; the other two are about the Philippines. Sroka has worked with these kids once per week for about a month to get them to where they are this evening. The performance tonight is an opening act for "Monstress," a two-act A.C.T. play adapted from a book of stories about the history of the Filipino immigrant community in California. Carey Perloff, A.C.T.'s artistic director, put it on as part of the theater's "San Francisco Stories" initiative, and as a tribute to the neighborhood—the Tenderloin has housed a large population of Filipinos for decades.

Bessie Carmichael is a Tenderloin school where more than 85 percent of the students are categorized by the school district as "socioeconomically disadvantaged." Yet, the kids have a high-quality music teacher and the opportunity to perform at a top theater venue. That is due to San Franciscans' belief in the power and importance of the arts.

Where the money comes from, and where it goes

San Francisco is often known as the epicenter for innovations in science and technology. Less known is the city's commitment to the arts—even if that commitment comes with caveats.

The local community's beliefs about the importance of the arts in education, and the district's organizing philosophy, are enshrined in SFUSD's Arts Education Master Plan (www.tinyurl.com/sfartseducationmasterplan). In laying out its approach, the plan

cites several studies that highlight the positive impacts of the arts on education. One study funded by the Arts Education Partnership, for example, found that students having a hard time at school improved their social skills when they studied drama. Another study documented what we might all intuitively assume—that students who actively engage in drawing, music, and other art forms to learn a subject actually find those subjects more interesting, and stay more focused. Teaching through "arts integration," or the practice of having students engage in projects that use various forms of art to communicate the ideas and knowledge that they are learning, is also one of the district's stated goals.

To make their vision a reality, San Franciscans have dedicated funding to arts education in the district, and have also sought to protect the city's kids from the vagaries of state funding and fluctuating economic cycles. Voters in 2004 approved the earmarking of specific streams of the city's revenues for arts education in public schools,

and renewed that commitment last year. The funding is part of San Francisco's larger educational finance package called the Public Education Enrichment Fund (PEEF), which in

To make their vision a reality, San Franciscans have dedicated funding to arts education in the district, and have also sought to protect the city's kids from the vagaries of state funding and fluctuating economic cycles.

addition to the arts, earmarks a portion of the city's yearly budget towards the funding of sports programs and school libraries.

However, the earmark doesn't mean that the arts curriculum and budget is exactly the same at every district school. The reasons boil down to parent expectations and finances, local school logistics, and principals' priorities.

While the district may provide a school some funding toward a specific discipline that its parent community wants, that funding may only pay for a few weeks of classes, or a

half-time teacher depending on the socioeconomic circumstances of the local community (schools with more kids on free or reduced lunches receive more resources).

The rest is up to the parent fundraising community, and the principal's budgeting skills.

Changes in the past few years to the arts curriculum at Lawton Alternative School, a K-8 school in the Sunset with mostly working class parents, illustrate just how the district, parents, and school administrators cobble together resources.

The school dramatically ramped up its music and visual arts classes in the past couple of years since Gina L. Ferrante took over as principal. Students learn hip-hop

techniques, ballet, and drama. And some of them even take their social studies classes from San Francisco Jazz musicians who come to class to perform. In an interview, Ferrante said that the shift resulted from Lawton parents' demand for more music instruction in their kids' heavily academic curriculum, and her own personal belief that arts education is important.

Today, all Lawton fourth graders have an opportunity to learn the flute, clarinet, trumpet, and violin during the academic year. Prior to Ferrante's arrival, students were given a demonstration of the instruments, and asked to pick just one to learn (younger students now play the ukulele and drums). Students can take their time, and specialize in one instrument as they grow older.

Ferrante accomplished the parent community's goal of boosting the kids' access to music and visual arts teaching by hiring a new music teacher who was willing to put in the extra work to train the students in all the additional instruments. She also earmarked \$7,000 in her general school budget to



increase the amount of time that both the music and visual arts teachers spend at the school. PEEF money pays for two days of music teacher John Mansfield's time while Lawton's school site budget pays him to teach at the school for the remaining three days of the week. For visual arts, PEEF pays for two-and-a-half days for arts teacher Sharon Ernst's time, and Lawton pays for the other two-and-a-half. Then parents chipped in by raising \$10,000 for instructional supplies so that all students can participate, not just ones who can pay for instruments themselves.

Acting, dancing, drawing, and constructing their way to understanding

Nowhere in the city is the practice of arts integration on more vivid display than at the K-8 Creative Arts Charter school, a parent-run school founded in 1994.

Katie Clay, a Creative Arts elementary school teacher and dance instructor, provides a good example of the school's teaching approach in action. It's Friday afternoon, and

she and about 20 fifth graders are talking about the kinds of activities that prospectors engaged in as they searched for gold. Clay is trying to elicit a list of action verbs from the students, which she then compiles into several columns on the whiteboard. After a while, the list includes verbs like: "vibrating," "throwing," "shaking," "swinging," and "rippling."

Clay and the kids aren't in a typical-looking classroom—they're in the school's dance studio. The fifth graders are learning about the Gold Rush with their regular grade teacher, but that exploration isn't limited to the whiteboard and textbooks. They're exploring the theme through their arts classes as well. In Clay's class, they're engaging with the subject matter by creating dance movements to illustrate what they're learning. Over a period of several weeks or months, depending on the project, Clay and her students will create full-on modern dance performances based on these methodical, weekly explorations of their academic studies. The dances can revolve around any

theme. Second graders, for example, are spending the year with a unit called "From Farm to Face." Clay will coach her students to create a dance that will explore the roles of the workers engaged in the process of food production. Last year, another grade created a dance that illustrated the human digestive system.

"It starts with a series of essential questions, and those questions are answered by the end of a 6- to 8-week study. And it's answered through all of these entry points: dance; visual arts; music; field trips; and writing," explains Brooke Nagel, a lower school administrator who works on the school's curriculum.

The school administration has adopted a teaching framework called "Teaching for Understanding," an approach championed by Harvard's Graduate School of Education. Teachers pick a theme, and then work with colleagues in the different arts disciplines to help students explore them. The grade school teachers themselves use the projects to teach math, geography, social studies, and English

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language arts. If students are assigned to study the question of what makes up a community, for example, the concept could be broken down into economic, social, and geographical sub-themes. Student activities could include building three-dimensional maps of the Western Addition, writing profiles of members of the community, creating theatrical skits about community workers, and creating dances. The idea is to use the disparate activities to create nimble thinkers who are integrating concepts and using them rather than merely memorizing facts.

"They really do have a solid academic focus, but we also really love the fact that my kids get an hour every week each of visual arts, music, dance, and theater," said Jennifer Gette (GGMG's former editor-in-chief and board vice-chair). Gette has a second grader and fourth grader at Creative Arts Charter. "They have 4 hours of instruction with arts specialists employed at the school, and on top of that, we have an arts director that coaches the classroom teachers on how to integrate arts into the classroom."

In addition to the themed projects, students learn the various arts disciplines in and of themselves. The fifth graders in Clay's class, for example, spent half of their class learning Frevo, a vigorous Brazilian street dance. In their music class, they're learning Samba-Reggae drumming with Artist-in-Residence, Alfie Macias. And on the day I visited, I observed first graders systematically learn abstract art techniques. School just looked like a lot of fun (and that's not an accident). The fun is a fundamental aspect of the school's approach—it received the California Distinguished School Award in 2014 for diminishing the achievement gap between its socioeconomically disadvantaged students and the rest of the student body. The school also received an award from the California Department of Education for running an exemplary arts program, and its school accountability report card (www.tinyurl.com/p5khzd7) shows that its students' academic performance ranks above the state average.

"If your child comes to Creative Arts, there's no fear that they're not going to get the

academic component," says Fernando Aguilar, the school's principal/director.

Creative Arts Charter's curriculum is unusual in that it places such a strong emphasis on the arts. But what it has in common with regular district schools is that the arts-heavy curriculum is there because parents got involved in setting the agenda for their kids' classes, and that is what everyone interviewed for this article said matters.

"When the parents get involved with school leadership, and they say, 'I want my child to be able to take advantage of the wealth of the arts that are available in San Francisco,' they have a direct impact on the decisions that school administrators make," says Susan Stauter, SFUSD's artistic director. "So the conduit for parents is that school site-based management council/PTA that they sit on, which help make those decisions." ♦

Sarah Lai Stirland is the mother of the very creative first grader, Sophia, and a freelance writer in Los Gatos. Comments or reactions? She can be reached at: stirland@gmail.com.

Photographs taken at San Francisco Public Montessori.

Let the Music Play

By Tara Hardesty
Photographs by Carolyn Soling

In our house, we have regular dance parties. They are small; just my son, my husband, and I rocking out in the kitchen to whatever music strikes us at the moment. This weekend it was Genesis, Bernard Fanning, and George Michael. Because my son really seems to like Latin music, there was also some Gypsy Kings and Buena Vista Social Club thrown in there. When he was 6 months old, we somehow started listening to Bob Marley during breakfast and we now have “Marley in the Mornings.”

While it is dance parties these days, music has been a big part of our lives ever since my son was tiny, and even before he was born. We played all types of music while he was on the inside, and Mozart was our go-to for the early months when soothing and driving. We’ve created sleep songs to the tune of “Summertime” by Ella Fitzgerald, and we are starting to teach him about participation through songs like “Clean Up.”

When we listen to music as a family, we dance and sing with abandon. And my son responds with pure joy. His chubby little body sways to the music as he hums and laughs. It is a sight we love to see, made even better by the fact that music is helping his little brain grow.

Benefits of music education

Music is a part of all children’s lives to some extent. Whether listening to music or making it, experts agree that the benefits of music to a child’s mind are significant.



Music benefits brain development. We know that a child’s brain continues to develop for years after birth. Studies show that music training develops the left side of the brain, the part involved in processing language, and can actually wire the brain’s circuits in specific ways.

Music benefits academic achievement, memory, and spatial intelligence. Studies show a correlation between academic achievements of children exposed to music. Music stimulates parts of the brain associated with reading, math, memory, and emotional development. There is also a link between music and spatial intelligence, the ability to form mental pictures and to visualize how things can go together. This can help with something as simple as packing a backpack to as complex as solving a math problem.



Music cultivates social skills. Whether you have a toddler in a group music class or an older child in the choir, experiencing music together can help your child develop social skills. Classes require an awareness and participation, which helps your child develop or enhance their ability to socialize.

Music aids in developing physical skills. Banging wildly on a drum, working on piano chords, or learning how to play the violin all require varying degrees of physical activity. Instruments help develop ambidexterity, encourage children to become comfortable in different positions, and assist with coordination.

Music can help build confidence. When taking a music class, children learn that they can do something on their own and, with practice, get better and better. Learning these new skills can encourage and motivate them.

Music is a great form of expression. Music provides a platform for children of all ages to express themselves. Whether it is dancing or singing, playing an instrument or joining a choir, music offers a place for children to creatively and emotionally express themselves beyond spoken words.

Music aids in developing discipline. Consistent attendance and practice help children improve. So, if your child is

interested in the class and the music, it can be a great way to naturally learn discipline.

Stages of music exposure

There is no doubt that music benefits children on many different levels, but how can you best expose your child to music as he or she grows?

We’ve all seen it happen: Babies will sway back and forth as soon as their little bodies can move. Lullabies or soothing songs go a long way to calm a fussy infant. With very young children, try to use simple, short songs in a high, soft voice. Try making up songs for everyday activities, like eating or sleeping.

As with many things, when it comes to toddlers, repetition is important. Try singing or playing the same songs repeatedly and providing instruments that they can use to tap to the rhythm.

There are few things more fun than the total abandon of a preschooler in action. Preschoolers are typically not self-conscious and will sing to hear their own voices. Play songs that repeat words and have melodies with a definite beat, and lyrics that encourage action (“If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands”).

Many school-age children are curious about songs and music that include things that they are learning, like counting or spelling. This is when children typically start to show a preference for certain types of music. It is also when they may express an interest in music classes.

When to start classes?

We are lucky to live in an area with dozens of options available for children of all ages, in many different formats. While the age range on when to start varies, some classes accept infants as young as 4 months old. If you want to expose your child to music outside of the home, group classes are a great option.

Group lessons are a great first

step to introduce your child to music and the benefits of participating in song and dance in a group setting. Classes can also help parents learn how to best support their children as they explore music.

“Sometimes the classes are as much for parents as for children,” says Tanya Wheeler, director of the Little Bears program at Blue Bear School of Music. “Children in a classroom look to their parents or caregivers for guidance on how to respond and react.

Whether just listening to music, or making it, experts agree that the benefits of music to a child’s mind are significant.

Sometimes kids need to get the ants out of their pants, so they may run around the whole time and that is okay.”

Wheeler stresses the importance of staying positive and nurturing, and allowing the child’s experience to unfold with low expectations from the parents. “If there is negativity, or a disengaged adult, the child is



more likely to take away negative feelings from the experience.”

She also encourages parents of children this age to keep a basket at home filled with things that make noise. This allows for the child to explore music more physically on a day-to-day basis.

If you are wondering about the right age for your child to start private lessons, here are a few questions to consider before seeking individual instruction in earnest. Is your child able to:

- Tell the difference between his or her left and right hands?
- Count to ten and recognize letters A through G?
- Wiggle each finger independently? Playing an instrument requires a certain level of fine motor coordination.
- Physically sit and reach piano keys or hold an instrument comfortably?
- Sit still and focus in a music lesson that is 20 to 30 minutes long?

In general, developmental experts believe children start to show they are physically and emotionally ready for private lessons when they are between 3 and 4 years old.

However, the criteria above are just a few things to keep in mind. Paul Godwin, executive director and founder of Music Together of San Francisco, looks at readiness in a different way. While he believes that exposure to music as early as possible is a benefit (starting during pregnancy if you are so inclined), the way his program evaluates readiness for private classes is based on a few considerations.

First, he looks for a basic level of music ability or competence: “If a child can finish the end of a song, or when they can sing with accurate rhythm and change key, then they may be ready for private lessons.” Godwin goes on to say that, “Music is physical before it is academic. Children need to be able to sing a little and feel the rhythm in their body first before taking private lessons.”

Instruments for beginners

The most common instruments for early music education are the violin and the piano. However, both Godwin and Wheeler see an increase in interest in the ukulele. The ukulele is becoming more popular because it works



well for kids, it is a smaller instrument, and the chords are simpler. If your child has a lot of energy, playing the drums may be worth considering, as it can be very physical and intuitive. Other options include smaller woodwind instruments, like the clarinet or flute. Talking to your child and paying attention to the direction their musical tastes run will help guide early instrument choices.

Everyday moments

This weekend I intentionally started doing a dance (think Elaine on “Seinfeld”) to a song that came on the radio. I exaggerated the singing and the movement and my son immediately stopped, stared, and joined in. It seems likely that, as parents, we have all done something similar to this when it comes to sharing music with our child.

As a parent, music takes on a whole new meaning. It is an art that can help our children learn and develop on many levels. It can become a vehicle for igniting creativity and expression. And, perhaps most importantly, music is an experience that can inspire joy in the entire family. ❖

Tara is a freelance writer and marketing professional who specializes in commercial real estate ventures. She blogs at TheDailyWrites.com about the things she is passionate about, the hairy underbelly of life, motherhood, and entrepreneurship.



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Making Room for Art

By Shannon Brennen

Photographs by Carmen Dunham



Art blooms where it is planted, which is why, if you're looking to sow the seeds of creative exploration in your kids, carving out space in your home to dedicate to creativity is so important.

No matter where you live, this can be daunting to tackle. It brings up questions such as: What stuff do you need to get started? How should you organize it? How do you keep age-inappropriate items out of the reach of younger kiddos? How do you dig in and get crafty if you're on a tight budget? What if craft stores give you hives? Or maybe you're worried about how you're going to tackle art supply clean-up on top of everything else you're already doing. And living in San Francisco, where space is at such a premium for so many families, adds even more complexity, as you might be wondering where in your tiny scrap of already-maxed-out space you can wedge a dedicated landing pad for art projects.

Fear not, would-be crafters! There is hope. Wherever you fall on the art-propensity spectrum—from a one-glue-stick-three-markers minimalist to an everything-is-an-art-supply hoarder—rest assured that none of it is as daunting as it seems, and you can tame your usual

craft nature to fit whatever space you're willing to relinquish.

To help the novices among us make headway, we turned to a couple of local, self-proclaimed craft-passionate moms to lend a hand and share their expertise.

Professionals can be helpful

Lesly Simmons, a Portola-based mom and president of Simmons Creative, is a master crafter who keeps her craft cup from running

Must-have staple materials

- ⇒ **Paper:** Sketch, construction, roll, grid, scrap, undersides of pantry cardboard, or pretty much anything else you can draw or paint on
- ⇒ **Glue:** Sticks, squeeze bottles, or homemade pastes
- ⇒ **Paint:** Liquid watercolors, tempera, or finger paints (don't forget spill-proof paint pots and chubby-handled brushes)
- ⇒ **Drawing tools:** Crayons, markers, colored pencils, or oil pastels
- ⇒ **Scissors:** With age-appropriate tips
- ⇒ **Protection:** Drop cloths, tablecloths, smocks, and other protective gear

Add-on materials for more fun!

- ⇒ **Contact paper**
- ⇒ **Clay**
- ⇒ **Colored tape**
- ⇒ **Tissue paper**
- ⇒ **Ribbons**
- ⇒ **Glitter**
- ⇒ **Pipecleaners**
- ⇒ **Random doodads**
(feathers, googly eyes, beads, pasta, beans, stamps, leaves, and pretty much anything else you can think of)
- ⇒ **Paint sticks**

over by instituting a disciplined approach to her own projects. "I can only work on a new project when I finish the current one," she explains. "This is actually one of my personal crafting rules, and it keeps me from keeping too many things going at once and having too much stuff around."

Simmons's crafty queue is always full. "I'm one of those people that actually makes a lot of the projects I find on Pinterest," she says. "But I don't gather or buy supplies until it's time to actually start working on it."

She once had a whole room dedicated to her crafty pursuits, but Simmons had to pare down five years ago when she moved from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco and her artwork was relegated to the kitchen table. "As a result, I didn't do a lot of creative making early on, but the desire came back with a vengeance when I got pregnant and hasn't subsided! Now that my daughter is a little older, it's great to have her creating something at the same time I am."

To help foster more co-creating, Simmons recently worked with an organizer to arrange the family's storage spaces and create a dedicated area for her and her 2-year-old

daughter's creative pursuits, an approach she recommends for those struggling to eke out space.

If you can't see it, you won't use it

Yoissy Thomas, a new San Francisco resident, mother of a 4-year-old, and founder of Messy

Art Lab, shared a strategic tip that should drive the organization of whatever space—closet, cupboard, corner, etc.—you're curating: you will use what you can see.

For this reason, Thomas suggests relying on clear storage containers to organize your art supplies. Clear shoe boxes are good for sorting and it's helpful if they're stackable. Ziploc bags are also helpful. Simmons is in agreement and describes a similar approach to organizing. "I did invest in some clear plastic closet organizers that hold a lot of tiny, easy-to-lose things so we can see them when we need them," she explains. "I let [daughter] Mia have a look and pick out what she wants to work on, and we go from there."

Thomas draws a distinction between which supplies to put within eyesight of her daughter—things she's allowed to grab and use on her own—and items like paint and sharp tools that are put behind closed doors or up high and deliberately out of sight. Having the off-limits items out of kids' lines of sight helps minimize frustration and keeps them focused on the great stuff that they are invited to explore and use.

Size doesn't matter

While having a dedicated studio or full-blown art closet is a wonderful, giddy dream, the reality for many is that art space is shared space, where art acts like an exciting, sometimes-present pop-up and needs to be



assembled and disassembled with ease. Thomas suggests using an art basket—think of a tool box with finger paints and paper pads instead of hammers and wrenches—that you can bring to the kitchen or coffee table along with a drop cloth and some imagination. Simmons deploys a similar strategy. “I don’t leave a lot out for [my daughter] to play with on her own just yet,” she explains. “So I keep a few things close at hand in the kitchen that my husband or I can grab quickly, with bigger project components in the closet.”

That said, if you do have some space that you can permanently dedicate to art time, you have even more options. “A small table and some accessible storage space for materials would be perfect,” Thomas suggests. “You can make a chalkboard with chalkboard paint and a custom-size wood panel or chalkboard contact paper, a light box with a big plastic bin and Christmas lights, or if you have space you might get an easel or a tabletop easel.”

Test drive before investing

Understanding what stuff you should have is almost as important as thinking about where to put it. So where is a burgeoning crafter to turn to know what supplies are essential? “Don’t go to a craft store first,” Simmons cautions. “It’s easy to get overwhelmed and end up with a lot of materials and supplies that don’t get used.” Instead, she recommends borrowing bits and pieces or taking kids to art studios so they can experiment, and then buying a few small kits’

When it comes to craft supplies, you will use what you can see.

worth of the supplies that they seem most interested in using.

Not all kids are interested in the same kinds of creating. Budding perfectionists might get frustrated by materials they can’t master. And while some kids love the squish and squash of messy supplies, others turn squeamish at

the idea of getting dirty for their art. So better to let your kids take the lead so you can avoid stockpiling supplies that don’t get used.

Invitations to play

“I believe that having too many materials in your mind at once can be overwhelming,” Thomas notes. “So especially for a small art space in a house, I suggest setting art invitations with few materials, and rotating art supplies.”

Invitations to play are all the rage with the crafty moms of Pinterest and Instagram. A

quick search on either of these platforms will yield enough prompts to keep your household busy for the foreseeable future. The basic premise is that the parent selects a small number of objects and leaves them to be found and explored with little guidance or structure.



If you’ve already graduated to a more advanced level of artistry in your household, setting a challenge for yourself to create an invitation to play every day for a week or every day for 30 days would be a good way to level up.

Live and learn

Lest you think our expert moms are too perfect to emulate—and to help boost your exploratory sense of adventure—they shared some examples of when things didn’t go quite the way they had planned.

Simmons figured out that her toddler daughter Mia wasn’t quite ready for chalk yet one day when “she traced her hand (a positive),” Simmons shares, “all over the hardwood floor (not so positive). So now we take out the butcher paper and cover the floor from time to time instead.”

Thomas also told us a “lesson learned” story: “One time on a very hot summer day in NYC, I gave spray bottles with colors to the kids. The idea was that the kids could use the spray bottles to paint on a canvas, but it was more fun spray each other. One of the bottles had too much blue food coloring, and my child’s friend ended up looking like a Smurf for three days.” Whoops!

Thomas also suggests that, when getting started, parents be especially mindful of kids’

short attention spans. “Don’t get frustrated,” she reminds us. “You WILL spend way more time organizing and cleaning than your child will spend making art, but it gets better, and you can always make the kids be part of all the setup and cleaning process.” She also suggests art at bathtime as a way to have some messy play that’s a little easier to clean up after. “I love to make shaving cream paint and let my child paint the bathtub walls during bath time, or to give her a squeeze bottle with water and few drops of liquid watercolor to mix colors in the bathtub” (Just be sure to learn from her mistake and use washable liquid watercolor and not food coloring, which has been known to stain kids Smurf blue.)

Now show us yours!

Do you have an art space or creativity station you’re particularly proud of? Snap a photo and either share it to the GGMG Facebook group or share it on Instagram and mention @ggmgf. ❖

Shannon Brennan lives in Noe Valley with her husband, 1-year-old son, and a French Bulldog named Fergus. She and her family enjoy long walks at Fort Funston, Sunday picnics in the Presidio, and socializing with their grown-up friends between baby nap times. She spends her days working in digital marketing in the wine industry.

Local Mom Yoissy Thomas’s Favorite (Cooked!) Playdough Recipe

Ingredients:

- 2 cups water
- 2 cups of flour
- 1/2 cup salt
- 4 tbsp cream of tartar
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- (optional) Food coloring or liquid watercolor

Instructions:

- Combine all dry ingredients in a pot and stir together. Add the water and stir until lumps are gone. Then add vegetable oil and stir.
- Once smooth, add food coloring or paint. Experiment and have fun with colors.
- Place over low heat and stir while heating, continually bringing up the cooked dough from bottom of the pot. As cooking progresses, a strong arm and a strong wooden spoon are helpful. Heating and stirring takes about 15 minutes.
- Once it is all in one big lump and not sticky, dump out of the pot, knead, and let cool. Fun for all and all for fun!



Archiving the Art Factory

By Shannon Brennen

Photograph by Carmen Dunham

It's inevitable: by the time children reach preschool age, they've morphed into highly efficient art production factories. Another inevitability is that, for every pride-inducing masterpiece they muster, there is also a trail of scribbles and doodles left in its wake. And that's OK. So much of the fun of making art is in the playful production, and not every creation should be a construction-paper opus.

So what is a parent to do with the creativity fallout, the heaps of kiddie-created artwork that are all-too-easy to hoard? Before you find yourself buried in crafty castoffs and artwork detritus, pinned under a mountainous heap of glitter, washi masking tape, and painted pasta, you need to plan an escape route.



1. Sort It

Art that enters your home should be immediately sorted into two piles. The stuff you can't live without, and the stuff you can't wait to sneak out to the recycle bin once your little Picasso goes to bed. (Hint: The "keep it" stack should be much shorter than the "toss it" stack.)

2. Recycle It

Aside from throwing art projects into the recycling bin, there are other approaches to reworking and reusing that turn finished products back into materials. At the simplest end of the spectrum, doodles on one side of a page can be flipped over and drawn on again. Paper colored on with markers can become a unique canvas for a painting project. Drawings can be cut and reassembled into larger mosaics or quilts. Essentially, if you can make it, you can remake it.

3. Organize it

There are lots of ways to organize artwork: use clear plastic bins with a hanging file folder for each year, compile three-ring binders with clear plastic sleeves, or use photo boxes, which will hold a stack of 2D artwork and still leave room for the occasional 3D object.

4. Frame It

Pick a few top favorites and frame them. Frames take your child's art from fridge-worthy to swanky, and deftly preserve the art in the process. A quick trip to Ikea (Emeryville and East Palo Alto), Cheap Pete's Frame Factory Outlet (4249 Geary Blvd.), or a thrift store will turn up affordable frames for kiddie art to inhabit.

5. Gift It

You know who wants to siphon off some of the overflow from your kiddie artwork factory? Grandparents. Maybe aunts and uncles, too. And if you're lucky, you have a non-nuclear extended family with grandparents, step-grandparents, godparents, and other doting

adults with stark, naked refrigerators just waiting for the next batch of artwork. Tuck in a few drawings with the next birthday card or thank you note for a cute addition. Adding a frame (see above) fancies it up a notch.

6. Showcase It

For 2D pieces, you can use a wire "clothesline" above your couch and clothespin in a revolving curation of pictures. For 3D pieces, an old fashioned curio cabinet or shadow box shelf does the trick. Anything to jazz up your home while showing off the mad art skills of your progeny will suffice.

7. Photograph It

Perhaps the simplest way to capture 2D artwork, without having to carve out space in your home, is to simply photograph or scan it. This provides a dated, digital archive without the hassle of managing the physical objects themselves. Capture the context, too, by snapping a pic of your kiddo with their latest masterpiece. You might not do this for every piece, but using these kinds of contextual photos can help ground the artwork in a specific time, place, and version of your child.

8. App It

There's an app for that. A few, actually. ArtKive, Canvsly, Keepy, and Art My Kid Made are all examples of free mobile apps that allow you to photograph and organize 2D artwork. Many of them allow you to sort by artist (helpful if you have multiple kids), and several also enable you to create bound, print books from the photos you capture.

9. Don't Sweat It

Last, but not least, sometimes it's OK to take an informal, non-approach approach. Gift this, frame that, toss that other thing in the neighbor's recycling bin, make an attempt to create a bound archive, get halfway there and quit, and next week try something else. There are at least nine other things you could be doing with the incoming onslaught of art, but whatever you do, you definitely shouldn't sweat it.

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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.gmg.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 to 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 November (no session on November 27)
TIME: 9:30 to 11 a.m.
PLACE: 2 Lake St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Drop in. All ages are welcome.

Weekly Playgroup at Calvary Presbyterian Church

A weekly playdate to enjoy mommy and baby camaraderie, music, stories, and more.

DATE: Wednesdays in November
TIME: 10 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 2515 Fillmore St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Drop in. All ages and caregivers are welcome.

Baby Boot Camp at Noe Basketball Courts

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

DATE: Wednesday, November 4
TIME: 9:30 to 10:30 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.

Parent Tot Music & Movement at JAMaROO Kids

Parents and children will dance and sing to music from around the world and play with a variety of simple instruments.

DATE: Thursday, November 5
TIME: 8:45 to 9:30 a.m.
PLACE: 388 4th Ave.
COST: \$10

REGISTRATION: Ages infant to 3 years. Introductory rate. Register at www.jamarookids.com or call 415.614.2001.

Yoga, Baby + Massage at It's Yoga Kids

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

DATE: Friday, November 6
TIME: 11:00 to 11:50 a.m.
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 [infant icon]

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

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

REGISTRATION: Ages newborn to 4 years. Drop-in.

JAMaROO Storytime Music at Pacific Heights Health Club

This class combines the joys of reading and music.

DATE: Tuesday, November 10
TIME: 10 to 10:30 a.m.
PLACE: 2356 Pine St.
COST: \$10

REGISTRATION: Ages 2 to 5 years. Introductory rate. Register at www.jamarookids.com or call 415.614.2001.

Baby Boot Camp at Crissy Field

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

DATE: Tuesday, November 10
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.

Kidshop: Fall into Peekadoodle Kidsclub

Join us for an afternoon filled with all sorts of fall treats. Your little one is sure to fall into the season!

DATE: Tuesday, November 10
TIME: 3 to 3:45 p.m.
PLACE: 900 North Point St., Suite F100
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 3 to 5 years. No parent participation, drop-off class. Space is limited; call 415.440.7335 to reserve your spot. Minimum enrollment is required for the class to run.

ChouChou French at seesaw

Join experienced French teacher Nathalie for a multi-sensory exploration of numbers, colors, feelings, animals, foods, shapes, and more.

DATE: Thursday, November 12
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.

Mommy & Baby Yoga at Carmel Blue

Mommy and baby yoga is a unique and meaningful way to connect with your baby while reconnecting with your body.

DATE: Thursday, November 12
TIME: 11 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: GGMG special: \$15 for mom and baby

REGISTRATION: Ages newborn to pre-crawlers. Register at www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=3309.

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, November 13
TIME: 9:30 to 10 a.m. or noon to 12:30 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.

Infant Massage with Kari Marble at Carmel Blue

A great class promoting hands-on, family bonding for parent and child.

DATE: Sunday, November 15
TIME: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: GGMG special: two parents for price of one (\$65)

REGISTRATION: Registration required at www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=3246.

Thanksgiving Art Class at JAMaROO Kids

Join us for a Thanksgiving-inspired art class.

DATE: Wednesday, November 18
TIME: 10 to 10:45 a.m.
PLACE: 388 4th Ave.
COST: \$10

REGISTRATION: All ages welcome. Introductory rate. Register at www.jamarookids.com or call 415.614.2001.

Ichi Ni San Music at seesaw

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

DATE: Thursday, November 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.

Holiday Baby Hand or Foot Print Ornament Making at Carmel Blue

It's the perfect holiday gift from your baby to friends and family. Join us in making ornaments with your baby's hand or foot prints.

DATE: Friday, November 20
TIME: 10 to 10:50 a.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: GGMG special: details provided with online registration

REGISTRATION: Registration required at www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=3311.

Pop-Up Holiday Photo Studio at Carmel Blue

Make your holiday cards quick, easy, and fun!

DATE: Friday, November 20
TIME: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$85

REGISTRATION: Registration required at www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=3310.

Music Jiggle Jam Drop-In Music Class at Carmel Blue

Bring babies and toddlers to join in the music-making fun!

DATE: Friday, November 20
TIME: 5:15 to 5:45 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: GGMG special: \$12 for one parent with child/\$5 for second parent

REGISTRATION: Ages 12 to 30 months. Registration required at www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2704.

Parent Tot Music & Movement at JAMaROO Kids

Parents and children will dance and sing to music from around the world and play with a variety of simple instruments.

DATE: Wednesday, November 25
TIME: 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
PLACE: 388 4th Ave.
COST: \$10

REGISTRATION: Ages infant to 2 years. Introductory rate. Register at www.jamarookids.com or call 415.614.2001.

JUST FOR MOMS

Mimosas and Manis at Milk

Come and get pampered with other local mamas while enjoying some bubbly and bites on us! We have chairs reserved at this popular nail salon for your mani/pedi at an unbeatable price for GGMG members. Can't wait to see you there!

DATE: Saturday, November 21
TIME: 10 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 2500 Polk St.
COST: \$15 plus the appropriate tip

REGISTRATION: Register on BigTent. Space is limited; registration required seven days in advance.

Old School Booze 101: Mad Men Cocktails, Date Night Edition

Need a new cocktail recipe for the holidays? Want to mix a drink like Don Draper? In this oldie but goodie mixology class at Workshop SF, you'll learn everything you need to know about making old school drinks with a fancy flair. GGMG members may bring one guest, but make sure to reserve a spot for both of you.

DATE: Saturday, November 21
TIME: 7:30 to 10:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1798 McAllister St.
COST: \$30 per person

REGISTRATION: Register on BigTent. Spaces are limited; registration required seven days in advance.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Light the Night Walk

Join GGMG parents and their children in a night of remembrance and hope. We will be honoring Caitlin Mullinix, a hardworking GGMG volunteer who lost her battle to leukemia earlier this year.

DATE: Thursday, November 12
TIME: 5 to 8 p.m.
PLACE: AT&T Ballpark Parking Lot
COST: Free to sign up, but donations suggested

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/92968552



PARENT EDUCATION

PARENT EDUCATION PRESENTS:

Creative and Critical Thinking and Young Children, with Darcy Campbell at St. Mary's Cathedral

DATE: Thursday, November 19
TIME: 6:30 to 8 p.m.
PLACE: 1111 Gough St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Register on BigTent.

Meet the Doula Night at Carmel Blue

Join us to meet local doulas, hear a short presentation about birth and postpartum doula services, and ask any questions. Facilitated by the San Francisco Doula Group.

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

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2600

Your Willful 3-Year-Old with Early Childhood Matters at Recess

Learn why three can be more difficult than two from a developmental perspective and helpful positive discipline strategies. Topics include engaging your child in problem-solving, strategies for transitions (like mealtimes and bedtimes), and ways to support your child's growing independence.

DATE: Tuesday, November 10
TIME: 7:30 to 9 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$38 individual or \$58 couple (save \$5 with code GGMG15)

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Building a Relationship with Your New Baby at Recess

This class is designed to make the transition from being pregnant to having a newborn as smooth as can be. Designed for mamas and papas to gain tools for connecting with a new baby and supporting their development.

DATE: Friday, November 13
TIME: 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$38 individual + baby, or \$58 couple + baby (save \$5 with code GGMG15)

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Toddler Sleep Solutions with Angelique Millette at Carmel Blue

Now that your baby is not a baby anymore, you have a whole new set of sleep challenges! Topics will include toddler sleep needs, transitioning from crib or family bed to toddler bed, potty training, nightmares, preschool, new siblings and room sharing, and how developmental milestones impact toddler sleep.

DATE: Tuesday, November 17
TIME: 7 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$30 (GGMG rate)

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2560

Playgroup Formation Event at Peekadoodle

Join us for the last playgroup formation event of 2015 and finish the year strong by connecting with a new network of moms. Wine and nibbles included.

DATE: Tuesday, November 3
TIME: 6:30 to 8 p.m.
PLACE: 900 North Point St., Suite F100
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/94407707



Introducing a New Sibling at Recess

Join Rebecca Walsh, Director of Early Childhood Matters and mother of two, to learn strategies for supporting your child in the transition to a new baby and laying the foundation for a lifetime of positive sibling relationships. We will also discuss self-care strategies to support both parents, and activities to keep older sibling engaged while you nurse, swaddle, or maybe even take a shower!

DATE: Tuesday, November 17
TIME: 7:30 to 9 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$38 individual or \$58 couple

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

New Mothers Group at Carmel Blue

Come share the highs, lows, and stuff in between in a casual social/support/information group with facilitation. Topics include sleep issues, traveling with baby, developmental stages, communicating with your partner, and much more.

DATE: Wednesday, November 18
TIME: 1 to 2:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: *Ages newborn to 6 months. Register at www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2985.*

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

Spotlight on Moms-Only Events



We all know the barriers that mamas face when trying to get out of the house for a baby-free glass of wine with friends. Luckily, the GGMG Neighborhood Meetups Committee is here to make it easier to get out and meet other moms in your community. There are currently 11 neighborhood meetup groups that organize events for GGMG members, and in addition to playgroups and events for the kiddos, they all organize moms nights out, which vary from wine nights for the ladies of **The Heights**, **NOPA/Alamo Square**, and **Bernal**, to a regular book club for members of **Sunset/West Portal**. Don't worry if you don't have time to read—making it through the book is not a requirement to enjoy adult conversation, snacks, and a little bubbly! Or, if you're a member of the **North Beach** subgroup, plan on joining in on movie nights at the host's home, where popcorn is required and pajamas are strongly encouraged.

The ladies of **The Heights** group host wine nights just for moms every other month. They try to take advantage of the endless potential offered in our great city by mixing up the types of venues—from Vietnamese family style at OTD to East Coast-style pizza at Pizza Inferno to burgers, beers, and milkshakes at Roam. The one constant is a great group of moms gaining a few more friends in the neighborhood. At the meetup held in late September, Heights mamas met up in a

community space at one of their member's apartment buildings—it meant they had the space to themselves, easy conversation, and as an added bonus, finding a seat was a snap!

Get involved

To find out more about the moms-only and other events and playdates hosted in your neighborhood, and to RSVP, join the neighborhood subgroup on BigTent for the neighborhood(s) you are interested in at www.bigtent.com/group/subgroup.

You are not restricted to only joining one subgroup and you are not required to live in the neighborhood in order to join. Many times, a neighborhood group will extend an invitation to the neighboring hoods, i.e., Noe Valley could include the Mission Neighborhood, and in those cases all Mission Neighborhood subgroup members can RSVP for the Noe event. *Tip: You can set up your settings in BigTent to have events and discussions from your neighborhood forum sent to your email—this way you never miss anything!*

If you have any questions or ideas for future meetups, please contact the co-chairs at sashafahimi@icloud.com and andreassen.tracy@gmail.com.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

How a Founding GGMG Mom Navigated Her Career from the Corporate World to Leading Successful Startup Le Tote



Ruth Hartman was one of the first members of GGMG and is now the chief merchandising officer of Le Tote, an innovative clothing rental service that makes it easy for women to feel and look good, always.

Join us to ask questions and learn how GGMG helped Ruth and her children form lifelong friendships, as well as how she successfully navigated through the corporate world and into the startup world.

DATE: Tuesday, November 17
TIME: 7:30 p.m.
PLACE: TBD
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Register on BigTent.

Relax and Restore with Amrit Yoga Nidra at Presidio Sports Basement

Looking to escape from the stress and rush of everyday life? Join us for a free session of Integrative Amrit Method of Yoga Nidra and a brief healthy lifestyle discussion. The topic will be counterbalancing the physical, mental, and emotional tensions and challenges. Bring a warm sweater or a throw to keep you warm while meditating, and feel free to bring your lunch.

DATE: Wednesday, November 18
TIME: 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
PLACE: 610 Old Mason St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Register on BigTent.





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This family-friendly event features a holiday concert with the SF Symphony and a fun party with face painting activities and games, lobby entertainment, letters to Santa, an original stage show, ending with a holiday sing-along, and more!

Upgrade your experience by ordering a VIP Angel Package which includes premium concert seating, pre-concert reception with gourmet treats, holiday crafts, games, and a photo with Santa!

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Committee Spotlight: *Community Support Drives and Events*

Describe the personality of your committee.

We are hardworking and compassionate and provide engagement in philanthropy through our drives program, plus education and inspiration through our events program.

Why do you do what you do?

“I want to motivate our members to give back to their communities through our volunteer and charitable events and be prepared to support their families through our educational opportunities,” says Beth Jansson. “I enjoy helping out other mothers and being a part of the wonderful community,” says Corinna Lu.

What types of activities or projects do you undertake?

Volunteer events such as the SF Food Bank and Coastal Cleanup Day and charitable events like the Homeless Prenatal Program Winter Party and the Light the Night Walk. We also offer CPR classes and other prep classes. The drives program promotes donation drives that support mothers and families in need.

How do you know when you are making a difference?

We get e-mails back from members who say how much they valued their time at volunteer events and other classes.

Who are your volunteers?

Beth Jansson and Corinna Lu are co-chairs, and our Drives and Events volunteers are Lisa Rice, Tiffany Shaw, and Faiza Shirazi.

What's next for the Community Support team?

We are looking for ways to deepen our impact with the agencies with whom we have donations programs. And we are looking for new ways to educate our members and engage them in volunteer programs.

How can interested GGMG members get involved in the Community Support Committee?

We take recommendations on partner organizations for charitable programs, nonprofits with which to volunteer, and class providers for educational opportunities.

The Recruiting Committee is thankful for all of our wonderful volunteers!

Are you looking for a way to give back to the community? Become a GGMG volunteer and join the team of 180 moms who lend their time and skills to make our organization great! There are a variety of different positions available now, so send an email to recruiting@ggmg.org to get started!

Current open positions

Kids Activities—Co-Chair

Neighborhood Meetup—

Ambassadors for Haight, Mission, Richmond, Sunset
Volunteers for Haight, Mission, Richmond

New Mommy Playgroups—Forum Support Volunteer

PR/Marketing—Social Media Chair, Social Media Volunteer

Recruiting—General Volunteer

Member Support

We can all appreciate the sense of community that comes from belonging to GGMG. Help foster that sense of community by joining the Member Support Meal Delivery subgroup. We all need a little help getting dinner on the table sometimes. Throw in a new baby or a medical emergency and that trouble is only magnified. Signing up to deliver a home-cooked meal couldn't be easier, yet means the world to the mom on the receiving end of your kindness. Don't love to cook? No problem. You can easily order a meal from Munchery or Luke's Local—GGMG even has a discount code!

To join the subgroup, simply sign in to BigTent and click on “Subgroups” under Resources (left side of page). Scroll down the list of subgroups to “Member Support Meal Delivery” and click on “Learn More & Join.”

Once you sign up, you will receive notices (depending on your BigTent email preferences) as new meal calendars are created. Click on the link in the BigTent post and you will be directed to TakeThemAMeal.com where you can select the date that you would like to provide a meal.

If you have any questions or trouble joining the subgroup, email us at member.support@ggmg.org.

Social Media

The Social Media committee manages all social media accounts for the Golden Gate Mothers Group (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn). Operating under the director of external communications, the team curates content to enhance the already vibrant online community of GGMG moms and to demonstrate our value to potential members. Additionally, the Social Media team shares news, promotes events, and draws attention to the ongoing work of other committees and GGMG as a whole.

Volunteers

Maysa Mohamedi recently joined volunteers Anna Gracia and Rutuja on the social media team. Maysa is primarily responsible for posting content to our Instagram page (don't forget to share your photos with us by using the #GGMGSF hashtag).

Promoting events

If you're a GGMG committee chair and need to highlight an event or activity on our Facebook page, email socialmedia@ggmg.org with the content you would like posted. Try to keep the content brief and include pictures to accompany the event whenever possible.

Follow us

Be sure to “Like” our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ggmgfsf) and follow us on Instagram ([@ggmgfsf](https://www.instagram.com/ggmgfsf)) to keep an eye out for upcoming events and contests. Congratulations to Briony Joshi, who won our September contest and was rewarded with a copy of *The I Love You Book* by Todd Parr and a nursery sound machine from The First Years.

Partnerships

GGMG Partnerships manages GGMG's relationships with the organizations that provide us with our membership perks.

For **business owners** who would like to work with GGMG, information about our partnership programs—including how to enroll—is now available at www.ggmg.org/partnerprograms.html

Partners of GGMG offer year-round, exclusive perks to every GGMG member. Remember to claim free fitness passes at the JCCSF, free access to play spaces at Peekadoodle and Recess, and more. For details, visit: www.ggmg.org/partnerships.html

Friends of GGMG is our new, revamped discount program. It currently features a variety of traditional and new innovative businesses, from spas and kids' clothing stores to subscription services for toys and books. For a public listing of businesses currently in the program, see www.ggmg.org/friends.html. GGMG members can see details of the discounts, and directions on how to claim the discounts, in the members-only area within BigTent. Look for the “Friends of GGMG Benefits” tag in the files section.

Lastly, remember to look for promotions from **Neighbors of GGMG** in the monthly Board Bulletin email, delivered to your inbox around the 15th of every month.

We are very excited about bringing these member perks to you! Send us feedback at partnerships@ggmg.org.

Membership: *Taking Advantage of Your GGMG Benefits*

Whether you are a new member or have been one for years, the Membership Committee wants to thank you for your loyalty to GGMG. Raising children takes a village, and without members like you, we would not have such a wonderful organization.

Remember to take advantage of ALL your membership benefits!

Partners & Friends of GGMG: For the amazing list of partner perks offered by Gymboree, JCCSF, Peekadoodle, Recess, UrbanSitter, and Wondersitter, visit www.ggmg.org/partnerships.html. Additionally, download the entire list of local business discounts in BigTent “Files” under the “Friends of GGMG Benefits” tag.

Events & Playgroups: Have you taken advantage of GGMG's wide variety of events? Meet other moms and families face to face and turn online connections into real-life friendships. Check this magazine and BigTent for upcoming events.

Networking & Volunteering: Want to keep in touch with the working world? Need help navigating both career and kids successfully? Look into Entrepreneurship Committee workshops and volunteer for GGMG with other talented moms. Email recruiting@ggmg.org.

Community & Member Support: These rock star groups facilitate donation drives and support members in need. Know another mom—even yourself—who could use a little help? Email membersupport@ggmg.org.

Thank you for being part of THE BEST mom community in the city. Questions? Email membership@ggmg.org.

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I ♥ Mom

Learning About Love from *The Velveteen Rabbit*

By KT Nelson

When my son was two, I heard a recording of *The Velveteen Rabbit* for the first time. I was 31. As someone who had just become a mom, I was struck with the realization that I, too, was going to age and die and that living could be terrifyingly wonderful if you actually *let* yourself live. In 1922, British author Margery Williams managed to address all of these big issues in a witty, fun, and easygoing way in her tale of *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

Through her story about a toy rabbit, Williams acknowledged issues that I valued—loyalty, commitment, and our capacity to change and be “real.” I loved her language, such as when Nana, who oversees the nursery, is overwhelmed and says, “Fancy all that fuss for a toy!” And when the Skin Horse and Velveteen Rabbit are chatting about what “real” means, the Rabbit asks, “Does it happen all at once, like being wound up, or bit by bit? Does it hurt?” The Skin Horse responds by saying “When you are real, you don’t mind getting hurt.” Innocence and profound existential understandings are snuggled up right next to each other.

My son and his friends were thoroughly obsessed with new toys—an obsession I felt was unhealthy—and Williams’ tale embraced a view of life I wanted my son and his friends to know about. Understanding that if someone else was saying it, there was a greater chance my son would actually listen, I took the story and choreographed it for the stage. *The Velveteen Rabbit* has since been performed to nearly 400,000 adults and children nationwide and continues to capture audiences with its timeless message.

Many people helped me do this. I often tell third graders that making a dance is like playing on a sports team where everyone has a different role. In dance, there is the choreographer, composer, scenic designer, costumer, and director. Each has a

Williams’ tale embraced a view of life I wanted my son and his friends to know about.

role with different responsibilities, and together as a team you make it all happen.

The Velveteen Rabbit returns to the stage at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts this November and December. As we prepare to give life to a new season of performances, I’ve been reflecting on how my own experiences and observations while raising a child have woven their way into the story. For example, in the Boy’s first solo, he dances with a pillow while his bottom is sticking up in the air. This movement was inspired by watching my son sleep, a sight familiar to many parents. There are many other aspects of the production that reflect my experience as a parent:

- When my son was 6-months-old, I went back to work. When returning home, I would careen through the house tidying up in one huge swoop. The 10-foot-tall Nana character (composed of two dancers stacked up on one another) does just this. I performed her role for 15 years and there were days when she and I were the same person on stage and off.



- Nana and the Fairy have always been performed by the same dancer. The Fairy represents pure love and Nana represents tough love. I am pretty sure all parents embody both kinds of love.
- From the time my son was born until he was 25, the only time that he was still was when he was reading. Because I realized that storytelling could grab the attention of a non-stop mover and guide him into a cuddly calm, the production is narrated throughout.
- In addition to a cast of professional dancers, *The Velveteen Rabbit* production has a children’s chorus. This is because I noticed that when I took my son to live performances, he would scoot to the edge of his theater seat when young people came out on stage.

Last weekend, that same little guy got married at the age of 31—the same age I was when I first heard the tale of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Today, I see a young man who values loyalty, love, and commitment. It turns out Williams’ tale really rubbed off on him.

ODC/Dance presents *The Velveteen Rabbit* from November 27 through December 13 at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater. For tickets and more information, visit www.odcdance.org.

KT Nelson is the co-artistic director of ODC/Dance. She danced with the company from 1976 to 1997. Since 1976, Nelson has choreographed more than 60 works and composed and commissioned numerous sound scores. In 1986, she created and directed ODC’s first full-length family production, The Velveteen Rabbit, which has since toured across the country. She founded ODC’s youth company, the ODC Dance Jam, and is a critical player in the development of ODC’s Educational Outreach Program.



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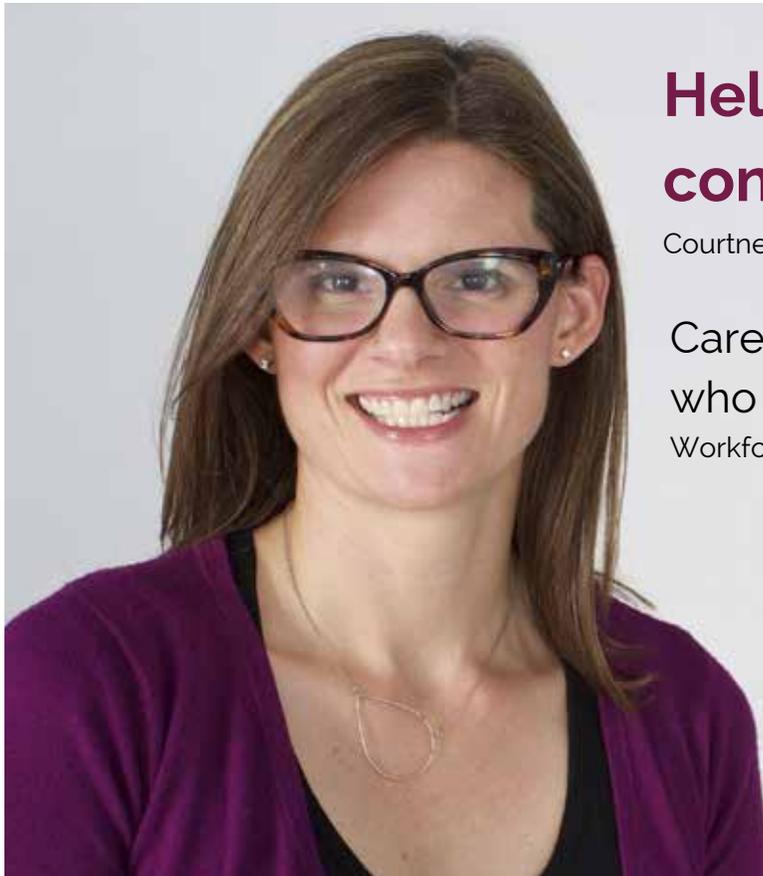
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