Get Moving!
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For questions or concerns regarding all other aspects of GGMG, including how to advertise an event to our membership, please contact feedback@ggmg.org.
Letter from the Editor:

Away We Go

By Kirsten Pfleger

When you read this issue’s title, Get Moving!, did you view it as a challenge, an admonishment, or just a reflection of your life? Our lives are constantly in motion. Not only are we moving our bodies through exercise, play, and transportation, we are endlessly reevaluating our schedules and making major life choices.

One of the biggest decisions we make for our families is where we will live. Most of us will move our children at least once, whether within San Francisco, across the country, or internationally. Moving house is a major life change, no matter what your age. Children experience the fear of the unknown and a disruption of their comfort zone. Adults deal with those issues on what your age. Children experience the fear of the unknown and a disruption of their comfort zone. Adults deal with those issues on what your age.

[We] all seeking to find our stride.

Housekeeping

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This issue made possible by: End of summer travel, night-time potty training, Trader Joe’s pickles and popcorn, Trader Joe’s pickles and popcorn, and early bedtimes.

M&M, Breyer, procrastination of Olympic proportions, cold brew coffee, Trader Joe’s pickles and popcorn, and early bedtimes.

COMING NEXT: October—Tough Talk; November—Technology

CONTEST: Congratulations to Brandi Hewlett, the winner of the package of three facials from Jennifer Clark Skincare.

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Letter from the Board:

New Beginnings

By Cathy Tran

How is it already fall and the start of another school year? While it was fun to have the kids around a little more for the summer, I, for one, am very glad that we will be getting back into the routine of school and the advent of fall activities, including the annual GGMG Fall Festival. Save the date of October 8 for a fun-filled Halloween spectacular. The event will be held in Sharon Meadow in Golden Gate Park, and we have activities planned for all ages, including Music for Aardvarks, bounce houses, a pumpkin patch, live music, yummy treats (including coffee for adults!), and much, much more. Keep an eye out for the link to RSVP on BigTent.

Speaking of BigTent, the GGMG Board of Directors is incredibly excited to announce that we will be launching a new and improved GGMG website toward the end of the year! We know you have not been happy with BigTent’s hosting of our forums and events, so we have been working toward our own full-function website. We will have complete control over the site, allowing us to quickly adapt to the organization’s needs and requests. You will no longer need to switch between www.ggmg.org and BigTent.com; everything will be located at www.ggmg.org.

The GGMG Board of Directors is incredibly excited to announce that we will be launching a new and improved GGMG website toward the end of the year! The site will also be mobile-optimized so you can use it easily on your phone. I’ve been fortunate to get a preview of the site and I think you will be really pleased with how beautiful and easy it is to navigate.

I want to take a moment to thank the hardworking volunteers who gave so much of their time to the website redesign project. A group of dedicated volunteer moms have been meeting weekly with developers to build out the new site. The new website would not be possible without them and I want to extend my deepest gratitude.

And finally, on a very happy note, I want to thank everyone who attended or donated to the GGGMG 20th Anniversary Benefit for the Homeless Prenatal Program. Because of your generous support we were able to raise almost $10,000, which will go toward providing housing and resources for low-income and homeless families. Be sure to check out the GGGMG page on Facebook to see photos from the event. It was a fun and inspiring night of laughter and friendship, and the perfect way to celebrate our milestone anniversary.

Volunteer of the Month

Congratulations to Sonya Abrams, our September volunteer of the month! Sonya started volunteering with GGGMG in 2013 and currently serves as Managing Editor of GGGMG Magazine. She and husband Mike are parents to Noah (4), Austin (2), and Keira (1).

WANT TO KNOW YOUR FAVORITE... Pastimes: Exploring nature here and abroad, and trash-talking the Real Housewives in my pajamas and fuzzy socks; Reading Material: Anything by David Sedaris; Film: Memente: Restaurant: With kids? Padrooco. Without? Benu; Destination: New Zealand, South Island; Parenting Advice: This too shall pass.

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

Is your kid obsessed with trains, planes, and automobiles? Take her to one of these transportation hubs to foster a greater appreciation for the big, the old, and the noisy.

By Megan Bushnell

Cable Car Museum

Check out San Francisco’s famous cable cars. View the huge engines, winding wheels, and cable lines in action.

OPEN: Daily (closed holidays)
ADDRESS: 1201 Mason St.
COST: FREE

www.cablecar.org

San Francisco Railway Museum

Celebrate San Francisco’s streetcars and trolleys inside this ode to early public transportation. Then hop onto the F-line, an actual “museum in motion,” which stops right outside for a tour down the Embarcadero.

OPEN: Daily (closed holidays)
ADDRESS: Pier 45, Fisherman’s Wharf
COST: Pier 45, Fisherman’s Wharf
ST: SS Jeremiah O’Brien - $20 (children under 4 free), USS Pampanito - $16 (children under 6 free)

www.streetcar.org/museum
www.maritime.org/pamphome.htm

SFFD Fire Museum

Nestled in the Presidio, this quaint museum is run entirely by volunteers, so call ahead (415.563.4630) to confirm the schedule; they may close if understaffed. Find lots of cool memorabilia on display, including the first fire engine built in California.

OPEN: Thursday through Sunday (1 to 4 p.m.)
ADDRESS: 655 Presidio Ave.
COST: FREE

www.guardiansofthecity.org

SFO Museum

Did you know that there is a museum inside the airport? Exhibits displaying the history of commercial aviation are scattered throughout SFO’s terminals. Of the 25 gallery sites, only nine are located behind the security checkpoint.

OPEN: Daily (closed holidays)
ADDRESS: San Francisco International Airport (SFO)
COST: FREE

www.flysfo.com/museum

Space Station Museum

Come see U.S. and Soviet space exploration artifacts in an unlikely location: this volunteer-run, privately funded museum is housed in a storefront within a shopping plaza.

OPEN: Friday through Sunday
ADDRESS: 464 Ignacio Blvd., Novato
COST: FREE

www.spacestationco.org

USS Pampanito and SS Jeremiah O’Brien

At Historic Pier 45 you can tour the inside of both a submarine and one of two remaining Liberty warships. Learn about San Francisco’s role in WWII as you imagine what it was like to live and work on these ocean-going vessels decades ago.

OPEN: Daily (closed holidays)
ADDRESS: Pier 45, Fisherman’s Wharf
COST: SS Jeremiah O’Brien - $20 (children under 4 free), USS Pampanito - $16 (children under 6 free)

www.streetcar.org/museum
www.maritime.org/pamphome.htm

Li’l Kid, Big City: The Cable Cars

San Francisco’s three cable car lines have serious kid appeal: steep hills, noisy clanging, and a thrilling lack of seatbelts. They offer fun hop-on/hop-off adventures, provided you’re game for potential lines, crammed cars, and surly conductors—and you are willing to pay $20 for an all-day pass (children under 5 ride free).

The most touristy lines—Powell-Hyde and Powell-Mason—start at Market Street (at Powell Street) and end near Fisherman’s Wharf. Powell-Hyde is arguably more scenic and has several kid-friendly pit stops: you can grab lunch at 1905’s charmer Leop’s Diner (500 Sutter St.) and then hit the Cable Car Museum (1201 Mason St.). Visit Swenson’s Ice Cream (1999 Hyde St.) and work off that sugar buzz at Helen Hills Playground (1401 Broadway St.). You’ll end up near Ghirardelli Square, where you can refuel at Le Marais Bakery (500 North Point St.), and then chase seagulls at Aquatic Park Beach (599 Jefferson St.).

To beat the crowds, try the California Street cable car line, which starts a few blocks away from the Perry Building and Sue Bierman Park Playground (230 Drumm St.). Jump off at Grant Street to visit Chinatown’s Dragon Gate (400 to 498 Grant Ave.) and then check out the labyrinths at Grace Cathedral (1100 California St.), and don’t deny yourselves Bob’s Donuts (1621 Polk St.).

Stephanie AuWitter, the former tennis champion, is a freelance writer and editor, who, thanks to her 2-year-old daughter, has ridden more cable cars, puffer trains, and carousel horses than she previously thought possible.

In Search of Adventure

By Shaheen Bilgrami

Escape the back-to-school doldrums this fall by taking your family on an adventure! Here is a selection of both well-known and under-the-radar Bay Area parks and play spaces that will liven up your week (or weekend).

Adventure Playground

Kid-designed play structures make this one of the best and most creative play spaces in the country. Targeted to children aged 7 and above, younger children can play if accompanied by an adult.

ADDRESS: 160 University Ave., Berkeley
COST: Free

www.cs.berkeley.edu/adventureplayground

California’s Great America

With its gentler rides, shows, visits from Peanuts characters, and entry into Boomerang Bay water park, there is never a dull moment at this huge theme park.

ADDRESS: 4701 Great America Pkwy., Santa Clara
COST: $43.99/person (ages 3 and up) when purchased online

www.cagreatamerica.com

Happy Hollow Park and Zoo

This charming little park is perfect for younger children. Highlights include unlimited rides, a petting zoo, playgrounds, and puppet shows. Visitors with SF Zoo membership cards receive a discount.

ADDRESS: 1300 Senter Rd., San Jose
COST: $14.25 (children under 2 free)

www.hhpz.org

Pixieland Amusement Park

This small, independent theme park is well-suited for ages 2 and under. Attractions include a miniature train, carousel, roller coaster, games, and a duck pond.

ADDRESS: 2740 E. Olivera Rd., Concord
COST: Free to enter, but individual tickets, discounted ticket books, or an unlimited ride wristband are available for purchase.

www.pixieland.com

Safari West

Take your family on safari to this 400-acre wildlife preserve where you will have a chance to observe some of its inhabitants “in the wild.” With more than 900 mammals and birds including zebras, giraffes, and cheetahs, animal-loving kids and adults alike will enjoy this outing. There are some age restrictions, so check online before setting out.

ADDRESS: 3155 Porter Creek Rd., Santa Rosa
COST: Prices vary depending on time of year

www.safaribest.com

Shaheen Bilgrami is a freelance writer and editor and is a contributor to www.bkg.com. She is also the mom of an energetic preschooler. Contact her through her website, www.shaheenbilgrami.com.
Ask the Expert

Where Can I Take My Transportation-loving Child?
With Candace A. Sue

Do you have a transportation-obsessed kiddo? Download the SFMTA’s San Francisco on the Move! Transportation Activity Book at www.tinyurl.com/sfmtaactivitybook.

GGMG: Why did the SFMTA publish a transportation activity book for kids?
CS: We are always looking for fun, entertaining ways to engage the communities that we serve. In December 2014, Potrero Kids Preschool asked the SFMTA to conduct a presentation on transit safety for their school children. It was this community-generated request that germinated the idea for the transportation activity book, which would share important safety messages in a way for kids to enjoy.

GGMG: Why do you think children are so fascinated by cable cars and buses and other things that go?
CS: I think kids love cable cars, trains, and buses for the same reasons adults do—they are fun ways to get around town! Riding San Francisco’s cable cars are like taking a ride back in time. They are as iconic to the city as the Golden Gate Bridge, and searched reality. Both big and small kids are as iconic to the city as the Golden Gate Bridge, and searched reality. Both big and small kids enjoy the history of Muni’s boat cars and the entire historic streetcar collection by visiting the Market Street Railway Museum (www.streetcar.org), located near the Ferry Building.

I think kids love cable cars, trains, and buses for the same reasons adults do—they are fun ways to get around town!

There’s also the Cable Car Museum (www.cablecarmuseum.org), located at the Cable Car Barn at Washington and Mason streets. For a Friday evening outing, my family rides the new hybrid buses on the 44-O’Shaughnessy line into Golden Gate Park to take part in Friday Nights at the De Young Museum (April 15 through November 25). For an enriching cultural experience, families can also take a red carpet ride on the 14-Mission line to grab a tasty burrito at La Taqueria in San Francisco’s Mission District. With so much variety, residents and visitors can take Muni’s uniquely diverse fleet of cable cars, streetcars, light rail trains, trolleys and clean, green buses to get to family-friendly destinations across the city. ♦

Candace A. Sue is a Director of Communications and Marketing at SFMTA, which manages Muni, parking, traffic, and taxis in the city. A Bay Area native, she and her family reside in San Francisco.

The Perfect Video Keepsake of Your Baby’s First Years

GrandVideo creates adorable keepsake videos by sifting through your mountain of digital media. Imagine five, ten, twenty years from now, sitting with your family and pulling up your child’s most precious moments at the touch of a button. No more digging around for DVDs, scrolling through your social media history, or watching five minutes of raw footage waiting for that one laugh—let GrandVideo make it easy to enjoy your best memories.

This month, GrandVideo is offering a free Baby GrandVideo Deluxe, a keepsake of your little one valued at $340. You may also redeem the value on any of GrandVideo’s other family video offerings.

GrandVideo will find the first smiles and cutest hicups, set them to the right music, and produce a one-of-a-kind, cinematic home video. Your finished product will be a perfectly shareable, absolutely adorable, talk-of-the-town compilation delivered via private link, flash drive, and DVD upon request.

TO ENTER THE CONTEST, SEND AN EMAIL WITH “GRANDVIDEO” IN THE SUBJECT LINE TO CONTEST@GGMG.ORG BY SEPTEMBER 30, 2016.

All GGMG moms will receive $20 off any GrandVideo order during September with the promo code GGMG2016 at GrandVideoSF.com.

GGMG: Helping Others, Treating Yourself

Teach a Child to Read Today

GGMG encourages its members to volunteer with Reading Partners to help a child learn to read. Reading Partners mobilizes communities to provide students with the proven, individualized reading support they need to read at grade level by fourth grade. Research shows that students who read at grade level by fourth grade have a greater opportunity to succeed in school and in life.

That’s why Reading Partners works with under-resourced schools and engages volunteers to work one-on-one with students who struggle with reading.

Volunteers work with students for 45 minutes twice per week, following a structured, research-based curriculum. The minimum commitment is one hour per week.

For more information, see the FAQ page at: readingpartners.org.

Sign up to volunteer today at: sfbatutoring.my-trs.com.

There will be an event associated with this drive (date and location TBD). Email drives@ggmg.org with questions or for more information.

Community Support
Into the Woods

By Vladimir Gusiatnikov

When I was 12, my PE teacher suggested I join the orienteering club as an extracurricular activity. Orienteering is a sport combining navigation and racing, generally taking place in the woods. It’s very popular in Europe and Russia, where I’m from. Participants are given a map with a series of points marked and clues to help them determine which feature—such as a stream junction, boulder, or hilltop—they are looking for. It’s up to the individual to choose his route, which is what makes orienteering both a physical and mental challenge, and what has kept me orienteering for over 30 years.

Another sport that I participate in is rogaining. Rogainers use a map to navigate to marked points like orienteers, but the rogaine participants choose the order in which they run to the checkpoints in a given amount of time. Whoever gets the most highly valued checkpoints without going over time wins.

I compete in orienteering, rogaining, and trail runs throughout the year, and there are several ways my daughter Beatrice is able to experience these sports with me. My goal is to share with her my love of running, fresh air, forest scenery, and the joys of traveling.

Both orienteering and rogaining can be done solo or as a team. I take Beatrice to local orienteering meets as well as competitions in other states (and even Canada). In some races, I enter us into the “control” and waiting for the beeping sound—an unsurprisingly enjoyable task for a little one.

I want to share with [my daughter] my love of running, fresh air, forest scenery, and the joys of traveling.

She gets very excited about putting the “e-punch” (a finger stick with a chip inside it that records your time at each checkpoint you pass) into the “control” and waiting for the beeping sound—an unsurprisingly enjoyable task for a little one.

I稣e to travel with her in the Ergo during some of the races. Beatrice spent some of the time awake and alert and a couple of hours sleeping (did I mention that rogaines can be 6 to 24 hours long? We did the 6-hour-long run). For most of this year, I’ve run in a race on Saturday and volunteered at an aid station for a different trail run on Sunday. Volunteerism has become great father/daughter time for us.

Beatrice enjoys eating the race treats but also jumps in to help by handing out water. I usually take her on a run at the end of our shift, as she surveys the scene from the comfort of her BOB stroller.

One of the trail-running companies recently started holding children’s races, which are about 100 meters long, and every kid gets a racing bib that says “Kids Run for Fun.” Beatrice ran her first race when she was a little over 2 years old. Since 2012, I’ve made a habit of running at least 15 minutes a day as training, and Beatrice now accompanies me once or twice a week. At age 3, her endurance is enough for about two kilometers, and when motivated to run, she is only slightly slower than my training pace. Once she becomes tired, I carry her for a bit of extra strength training!

I don’t know if Beatrice will become a runner, an orienteer, or a rogainer, but I know that I have shared with her experiences that many Americans may not—exploration of beautiful forests, running off-trail, and observing interesting natural features. Navigation sports are all about self-reliance, both physical and mental, and at this early age I notice Beatrice has no shortage of confidence.

For anyone interested in trying orienteering as a family, check out Terraloco (www.go-terraloco.blogspot.com) or Bay Area Orienteering Club (www.booc.org). There are events throughout the year. And look for me and Beatrice!

NEW! Private Kindergartens too

San Francisco’s Largest Preschool & Kindergarten Exhibition
Showcasing over 100 Schools
Wednesday, September 28, 5:30 – 7:30 pm
County Fair Building in Golden Gate Park
(9th Ave. and Lincoln entrance)
REGISTER NOW!
www.parentsplaceonline.org/ppn
From your own imaginary wings to trains and cars in space, transportation is a fun and relatable topic for kids of all ages. Do you have a little train maniac at home? Or perhaps roller-skating tweens? Whatever takes you from point A to B can become an amazing story of grit, engineering, or friendship. There are no shortage of books exploring this diverse topic.

The Big Blue Thing on the Hill
Written and illustrated by Yuval Zommer
When a VW minibus stops on top of Howling Hill, the local animals are terrified of the Big Blue Thing. It’s big and loud and plain scary. How will the animals get rid of it? In turn, all of them try to scare it away by growling and roaring. When none of them succeed, the animals seek out the Wiest Owls. Kids will love the humor and silliness of this book about an iconic vehicle. Ages: 3 to 7 years

California, the Magic Island
Written and illustrated by Doug Hansen
This book tells 26 stories explaining why Queen Calafia, the main character in a 16th-century Spanish romance novel, should accept that California is worthy of her name. Each story is inspired by the history and folklore of California, including “transportation” tales such as that of the Pony Express, the wild horses of Death Valley and the Twenty Mule Team. This wonderful book combines magic, legends, history, and facts for a memorable masterpiece of storytelling and design. Ages: 8 to 12 years

War Horse
Written by Michel Morpurgo
This young adult novel follows Joey, a half-thoroughbred farm horse, who gets separated from his 15-year-old owner Albert and taken to France during World War I. Too young to enlist, Albert decides to join the war to find his horse. Follow the atrocities of war from the point of view of the horse in this wonderful plea for peace that will change the way readers look at horses. This book was made into a movie by Steven Spielberg and is classic historical fiction, for both tweens and adults alike. Ages: 11+ years

Roller Girl
Written by Victoria Jamison
Girl power and a roller derby make this graphic novel a winner for tweens eager for athletic adventures mixed with tales of friendship. The book follows 12-year-old Astrid as she joins a roller derby camp for the summer. She grows apart from her BFF Nicola for the first time since they were kids—Nicole goes to ballet camp instead. Struggling to find her place in this new world, Astrid learns to navigate through new social circles and a rough-and-tumble sport. Over time, she comes into her own, which is the best message that readers can take away from a great book. Ages: 9 to 12 years

The Journeys (Guardians of Ga’Hoole, Book 2)
Written by Kathryn Lasky
In this second book of the popular series, Soren and his three owl friends escape the St. Aegolius Academy for Orphaned Owls to look for the fabled Great Ga’Hoole Tree. In the journey to the Island of Hoole, the friends discover wondrous places in the Southern Kingdoms. When they finally find the tree, they must also face their destiny. Main character Soren also worries a lot about his younger sister Eglistane, who had just hatched from her egg when he fell out of the nest. Older kids will love this epic series with lovable characters and an owl world that seems more real than life. Ages: 9 to 12 years

Whizzy Wheels: My First London Taxi
Written and illustrated by Marion Billet
Scenes and tea lovers, rejoice! The famous London black cabs take center stage in this taxi-shaped board book that guides young readers around the famous sights of London. If you’re planning a trip to the city across the pond, this book can even double as a mini travel guide—Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, and Trafalgar Square are all in there. Note that this book is also sold as a cloth taxi-shaped mini-book that you can strap on to strollers (Buggy Buddies) for reading fun on the go. Ages: 0 to 2 years
From Womb to World

A Tale of One City and Seven Strollers

By Lynn Perkins

A couple of years ago, our apartment building was going through an inspection and the inspector needed to see the furnace. As the garage door rolled open, he turned to me and said, “Let me guess, you run a daycare center?” I can see where he got that impression. My garage looked like the carousel stroller parking area. We’ve owned seven strollers over the past decade. I know—it’s crazy. But with twins first, followed by a singleton, and friends eager to pass on their gear, we became the used car lot of strollers.

Our first stroller was the stretch limo of strollers, the double snap-and-go. When my twins were little, this was the most convenient stroller to use when going somewhere in the car. They stayed in their car seats, and unlike other strollers, the frame was light and fit into my trunk.

(Tip #1: Make sure you can easily collapse and lift the stroller. Also, make sure it fits in your trunk.) Plus, the storage area underneath it was large enough to fit an entire shopping trip of groceries. (Tip #2: Get a stroller with adequate storage space.) However, when I tried to stroll down the sidewalks of San Francisco, trouble ensued. Uneven sidewalks would cause us to come to a sudden halt, because I couldn’t see over the top. Forget about taking sharp turns, and watching out for cars pulling out of driveways was impossible. (Tip #3: Test for maneuverability.)

Once my twins could sit up, I rotated between a top-of-the-line double jogger, a double side-by-side umbrella stroller1, and two (single) umbrella strollers2. To be honest, I wasn’t doing a lot of jogging, but man, that fancy jogging stroller was light and had a hand brake, perfect for conquering San Francisco hills. Throw on some workout gear and no one would raise an eyebrow. For me, jogging, but man, that fancy jogging stroller was light and had a hand brake, perfect for conquering San Francisco hills. Throw on some workout gear and no one would raise an eyebrow. For me, jogging, but man, that fancy jogging stroller was light and had a hand brake, perfect for conquering San Francisco hills. Throw on some work...
At my daughter’s preschool, the children are taught basic rules: don’t hurt people’s bodies, don’t hurt people’s feelings, and walking away from atoy makes it available for others to use. But the most interesting rule to me is one that is not shared explicitly with the kids: there is no time limit on the swings. This may seem like a disaster in the making, but swinging is actually a powerful brain-building and brain-organizing activity that prepares children for play, school, and life. How? It has to do with the information a body in motion sends to the brain.

Our “other” senses

Humans are designed for movement. At birth we have the raw materials we need to run, jump, and play. But because we are born so physically immature (a tradeoff for our ability to walk upright—our narrow pelvises require us to give birth to our babies well before their brains have matured) human newborns aren’t ready to do much of anything. In fact, newborns aren’t even aware that they have bodies and have no control over their movements.

As soon as a baby is born, she is bombarded with information from the five commonly known senses: touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. These senses feed her brain information about the external world. But our brains also need to learn about our bodies and how they relate to the external world. Proprioception, kinesthesia, and vestibular sense are lesser-known senses that teach the brain about our physical selves. Unlike more passive senses like sight and hearing, these “other” senses require physical movement to produce and send signals to the brain.

Proprioception is the awareness of your body position in space without having to look at it. It’s what allows children to feel secure when they are being carried (they know they’re not falling) and older children and adults to know whether they are sitting or standing. Proprioception works even as we sleep, preventing us from falling out of bed. As we move, special sensors in our joints and muscles teach our brains about the makeup of our bodies and our physical size. Every time a child adopts a new position, their brain receives more information. For infants who don’t know that they have a body, proprioceptive input is critical in generating a body map. Only after the infant is aware of his body parts can he start to control his physical movements.

Kinesthesia is the sensation of our body parts moving in space without having to look at them. It helps us know how to move our bodies in order to do something. A pianist knows how far to extend his arm to reach the keys he wants to play, just as you know how far to extend your arm to turn on a lamp in a dark room. Young children, on the other hand, are more likely to knock over a cup when they reach for it because their kinesthetic sense is still maturing. Repeated movements help kinesthesia to develop.

Vestibular sense is the awareness of whether and how your entire body is moving in space. It tells you if you are spinning, swinging, moving fast or slow, standing still, etc. Vestibular sense also governs balance and helps us to manage the effects of gravity on our bodies. As your head moves in space, fluid in your inner ear moves and sends signals to your brain about your movements. The gentle tug of gravity on inner ear fluid also relates to the brain which way is “up” or “down.” Balance is something we are not born with; we have to learn it. So repeated and varied stimulation of the vestibular sense through full body movement teaches us to stay upright without falling.

Automaticity and school readiness

One of the more interesting things about our “other” senses is how they unlock the brain for learning. The human brain can only focus on one conscious task at a time. So while a child is mastering her physical body, she will have less attention available for higher cognitive functions. According to Gill Connell and Cheryl McCarthy in A Moving Child Is a Learning Child, it’s not that other areas aren’t developing at the same time, but movement is a priority for the brain and takes most of a child’s attention. But the brain can perform one conscious task at the same time as multiple automatic tasks. Engaging all of the senses by moving one’s body frequently is what makes walking, writing, and even sitting still automatic tasks; this frees up the brain to focus instead on listening and learning.

To get a sense of what young children are challenged with, imagine going to a lecture and being told to take copious notes. Easy, right? Here’s the catch: you have to use your non-dominant hand and write the letters in reverse. Could you absorb what the lecturer was saying and take decent notes at the same time? It’s more likely you would get caught up trying to form the letters and miss most of what was said. Similarly, it’s hard to fault a child for not being able to listen to the teacher if she is busy thinking about how to hold a pencil properly. Abundant and varied movement builds muscle memory, which makes holding a pencil and taking notes automatic and frees up the brain to listen and learn.

In addition to unlocking the brain for learning, movement helps the brain become more efficient by determining which sensory inputs need attention and which do not. This helps with focus. In her book Four Child’s Motor Development Story, Jill Howlett Mays, MS, OTR/L, writes, “stimulation from the [proprioceptive, kinesthetic, and vestibular] senses turns on ‘inhibitory neurons’ in the brain. These nerve cells act to ‘extinguish’ or switch off the nerve signals from input entering the brain that is not useful at any given time. The more of these inhibitory nerve cells that are activated, the more efficient and organized the brain becomes in processing all of the sensations bombarding it.”

What it all means for parents

So what does this mean for us parents? The most important thing for young children is physically active play and exploration from a very early age. In The Science of Parenting, Margaret Sunderland writes that 90 percent of the brain’s growth takes place in the first five years. This is when the brain is the most malleable and receptive to the widest range of information. At about age 7, the rate of growth slows as the maturing brain goes from generalist to specialist. By moving a lot, children feed their brains tremendous amounts of sensory information about their bodies and environments.

One of the biggest impediments to movement is what Connell and McCarthy call “containerization.” Many children spend too much time in car seats, backpacks, bouncy seats, slings, jumpers, high chairs, and other “containers” that constrain movement. Infants should ideally have lots of exploratory floor time and experience a wide range of body positions, with help from a caregiver as needed. For older children, it’s all about self-directed free play.

San Francisco-based occupational therapist and co-creator at Connecting Occupational, Aerial and Speech Therapies (COAST), Michelle Kemper, MS, OTR/L, RYT, suggests making movement a family activity:

Physically active play and exploration teach a child’s brain about our physical selves; developing these senses early actually frees up the brain to focus on listening and learning.

By Catherine Symon

Photographs by Lindsay Loyer Photography

Want to Learn? Get Moving!

Many children spend too much time in car seats, backpacks, bouncy seats, slings, jumpers, high chairs, and other “containers” that constrain movement.

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“Engaging in activities that are intrinsically fun and playful for everyone is a must; children know when adults are feigning enjoyment. So for some families, movement that works is an after-dinner dance party. For others it means a rough and tumble game of soccer. I am a strong advocate for ‘gentle rough housing’, which is wonderful motor play but also teaches cooperation and fairness.”

When a child needs extra support
For a variety of reasons, some children don’t quite achieve the physical balance, strength, and coordination they need to successfully navigate their environments. These children are often mislabeled as clumsy, extremely shy, lazy, or hyper. In fact, these behaviors may indicate a deficit in certain types of movement that could be hindering the brain’s ability to correctly process information. For many children, occupational therapy (OT) can help by supplying the required movements. The earlier a child takes part in OT, the easier it will be to undo his compensatory habits and strengthen any weak areas. But it is never too late; occupational therapists work with and strengthen any weak areas. But it is never too late; occupational therapists work with everyone from premature babies to elderly patients. The goal of OT is to help clients perform daily actions (their “occupations”) to the best of their abilities. In the case of children, this means helping them build life skills through movement. According to Kemper, “Occupational therapists can support children, parents, and teachers in myriad ways. When a child is having a hard time, we don’t limit our lens to differences in their bodies and minds. We also look at the environments the children participate in, and at the tasks we are asking them to do to create the best fit and feelings of self-efficacy.”

Five more minutes!
All types of movement are important. But when it comes to school readiness, some occupational therapists give vestibular sense extra. According to Connell and McCarthy’s A Moving Child is a Learning Child, “three of the most important elements of school readiness are the abilities to sit still, pay attention, and stay focused. The vestibular system governs all three. [Sitting still is one of the most advanced demonstrations of vestibular maturity…] kids don’t learn to sit still by practicing sitting still. Kids develop their stillness as their vestibular system matures, and that requires moving.”

MOVEMENT AND THE ADULT BRAIN
EXERCISE MAKES YOUR BRAIN BIGGER…
Movement isn’t only important for children’s brains. For years, scientists believed people were born with a fixed number of neurons. But research demonstrates that physical exercise increases the level of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that has been called “Miracle-Gro” for the brain. Not only does BDNF stimulate the production of new neurons, it also increases the number of synapses (neuron-to-neuron connections) and strengthens them. This makes your brain more receptive to learning.

...BUT “USE IT OR LOSE IT” STILL APPLIES
Of course, the body doesn’t like to waste energy on maintaining cells that aren’t doing something useful. Unused synapses soon fade away and idle neurons, even newly-grown ones, are killed off. So use them or lose them! Learn a new language, a new instrument, or, better yet, a new sport (more movement!).

SOURCES: SPARK: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain by John J. Ratey, MD, The Brain that Changes Itself by Norman Doidge, MD

HEALTHY MOVEMENTS FOR KIDS

INFANTS
• Rolling
• Tummy time
• Floor play
• Pulling

TODDLERS & OLDER CHILDREN
• Swinging
• Running
• Jumping
• Hanging upside down
• Dancing
• Spinning
• Bouncing
• Throwing and catching a ball

five more minutes on the swing—say “yes” if you can. His brain will thank you for it.  

ADDITIONAL SOURCES: Scientist in the Crib: Minds, brains, and how children learn by Alison Gopnik; The Well column in The New York Times by Gretchen Reynolds; Why Motor Skills Matter by Lara Losquadro Liddle, MPT with Laura Yorke

Catherine is a medical writer. As a child she couldn’t get enough of riding down grassy hills. But now any form of running makes her ins-a-u-e-u-u. On many weekends she can be found growing neurons and synapses at her hip hop dance class.

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ADDITIONAL SOURCES:
by Norman Doidge, MD
The Brain that Changes Itself
by John Ratey, MD;
SPARK: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain
by Lara Losquadro Liddle, MPT
Why Motor Skills Matter
by Gretchen Reynolds

FOR KIDS

• Throwing and catching a ball
• Spinning
• Dancing
• Jumping
• Running
• Swinging

TODDLERS & OLDER CHILDREN

• Floor play
• Tummy time
• Rocking

INFANTS

• Rolling
• Tummy time
• Floor play
• Pulling

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Adventures in Transportation

Rail, boat, and air travel options in the Bay Area can't be beat, offering enjoyment for all ages.

By Tara Hardesty

When I was young, my dad would load our family of five into a royal blue Country Squire wagon for adventures on the open suburban road. He would look for ways to weave excitement into our ride whatever our destination. A family favorite was the nearby Lucky Supermarket loading ramp where there was a big u-shaped dip. He would accelerate the wagon to the top, slip it into neutral, and let the car go up and down repeatedly until it eventually came to a stop at the bottom. We would put our hands up and sway our bodies forward and back, trying to keep the car going. I'm still disappointed that most supermarkets no longer have dipped loading ramps.

Modes of transportation are especially fascinating for children. Trains, boats, buses, and trolleybuses all render my 2-year-old motionless while he stares with wonder and excitement. Between the tramway and the trolleybuses, there is no shortage of transportation adventures available. Here are just a few.

**Trains, trains, trains**

Who doesn't love a train? Muni, BART, Amtrak, steam trains—we have choices of rail travel coming out of our ears. Whether staying in the city for a trip to the Ferry Building or headed to Tilden Park to ride the steam train, there are dozens of rail options to experience within a one-hour drive of San Francisco.

Muni's F Line runs from Fisherman's Wharf to the Castro, with stops along the Embarcadero and Market Street, and is completely aboveground. Turn your trip on the F Line into an education about the car you're traveling on. The city's active streetcars originated in places as far away as Melbourne, Portugal and Italy, so this won't be hard to do with a little background research. Did you know that you can actually charter the antique streetcars and build your own adventure? Rates and information are on the website. The F Line can get packed like a sardine can, so plan accordingly.

www.streetcar.org/streetcars

Something that makes it onto almost every San Francisco “must do” list, the cable cars are another fantastic way to see the city. With three lines—the Powell/Hyde, the Powell/Mason, and the California—you can cut through the city over steep hills to several fun attractions. The cable cars get crowded and can be tricky to ride while standing, so plan your ride at off times to avoid the masses.

www.streetcar.org/barn.html

With three stops in San Francisco, Caltrain is yet another way to create a day trip by rail with your little one. Mom Sara Werner Costa rode Caltrain regularly with her son to visit family. “I loved taking the train when he was little because I would wear him in the baby carrier and push his stroller with the car seat base clicked on the stroller. It worked really well for overnight trips or weekend trips to see my family. It was so much easier when I was on my own to take the train and not have to worry about a crying baby in the back seat while I drove.” There are two types of cars, one with single-file seats upstairs and another with two sets of seats facing each other, which is an ideal option for family travel. Caltrain is perfect for catching a show at SAP Center, to explore Palo Alto, or to connect to some of the great trails on the Peninsula for walking or biking. www.caltrain.com/main.html

If you really want to thrill your child, try an extended trip on Amtrak. There are three lines to choose from: the California Zephyr travels east from San Francisco all the way to Chicago, the Capitol Corridor travels San Jose to Auburn, and the Coast Starlight originates in Seattle and travels south through San Luis Obispo and into Santa Barbara that you can't experience even by car.

Moreover, a sleeper or family cabin on the Coast Starlight route includes exclusive access to the Parlour Car for first class passengers. The Parlour Car has an old-fashioned bar, dining area, and even a mini-movie theater downstairs, and offers some of the best views and comfortable seating (plus very average food). “Entering the Parlour Car feels like living in a James Bond movie. Minus your tiny sidekick whining about apple juice, of course,” says Megan.

www.amtrak.com/california-train-routes

Megan Bushnell, a GGMG mom, took a family trip on the Coast Starlight in 2014 and is planning another trip soon. While her oldest is certainly a train fan, her husband not-so-secretly enjoys them too, which was definitely a factor in trip-planning. “We chose to go south from San Jose on the Coast Starlight for two reasons. First, the timing: the train from San Jose departed at 10 a.m. and arrived at our destination at 5 p.m., so we didn’t have to sacrifice nighttime sleep to travel. The second reason is the view: there are beautiful coastal views starting southward of San Luis Obispo and into Santa Barbara that you can’t experience even by car.”

Another benefit of traveling by train is the physical freedom, with space and opportunity to walk around for the duration of the trip. Sleeper/family cabins offer even more space to occupy your little ones with games and toys, though they come at a significantly higher price. “As the mother of two whirling dervishes, I definitely recommend the sleeper cabin. You get a nice home base to spread out, play iPad games, and do all sorts of things frowned upon in general public,” says Megan. The Superliner bedrooms (on the upper floor) also have their own bathroom, a convenient option for potty-trained kids. The family bedrooms are larger than the sleeper cabins, sleep four instead of two, do not have a bathroom, and are on the lower deck.

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My family and I recently visited the Tilden Park Steam Train and it is one fun ride. The train is one quarter the scale of an Old West-style steam train. The ride lasts 15 minutes or so, winding through redwoods and canyons, over trestles and through canyons, over trestles and through
tunnels, and the staff is friendly and engaged with the children. Perhaps the most economical ride of its type, single tickets are only $3 each. Hours range from 11 a.m. to around 6 p.m. depending on the time of year. Visit the website for more details. www.redwoodvalleyrailway.com

Established in 1968, Sonoma TrainTown is about an hour’s drive north. The train rides go through tunnels, over bridges, and make a stop in a miniature town complete with a petting zoo, providing a great addition to a family trip to wine country. www.traintown.com

The combination of animals and a ride on the Little Puffer steam train may be the perfect pairing for some kids. The SF Zoo steam train is a short ride, but it takes you near some animal exhibits and through a brightly lit tunnel. However, the Little Puffer isn’t always operational so make sure to check with the zoo before making a special trip. www.sfzoo.org/explore/rides.htm

Adventures on the Bay
Watching San Francisco Bay from land is exciting, and being on a boat adds a whole new level of fun. There is no end to the sights that will captivate your family when out on a ferry ride.

Relaxing is not a word I often use to describe traveling with my toddler, but my last trip on a ferry from San Francisco to Jack London Square was just that. Buying tickets at the Ferry Building and boarding was easy and quick, and the ride over and back was just the right length. We spent most of the time outside on the back of the boat, appreciating the sights and sounds. The ride rendered both my son and husband speechless, a momentary joy for any mom. From San Francisco, there are two services—the San Francisco Bay Ferry with routes to Oakland, Alameda, Vallejo and South San Francisco, and the Blue and Gold Fleet, offering trips to the previously mentioned locations as well as Angel Island, Sausalito, and AT&T Park. www.sanfranciscobayferry.com/sfbf-rider-info and www.bluelandgoldfleet.com

The Maritime Historic Park near Fisherman’s Wharf offers tours of historic ships, sailing trips on a national landmark schooner, and a museum to learn about our Bay’s rich maritime history. www.nps.gov/safr/index.htm

For those who love airplane rides, Vintage Aircraft of Sonoma offers 20-minute flights over Sonoma. They also offer a 40-minute flight to Napa, the coast, or Marin with a stunning view of the Golden Gate Bridge and the city skyline. Children 10 and under must ride with an adult and kids must be over 48 inches to fly. www.vintageaircraft.com

Another great way to experience the Bay is by way of a seaplane. Taking off from Mill Valley, there are several options for trips, including one over our very own San Francisco Bay. Children as young as 3 can fly with an adult. www.seaplane.com

Living in the Bay Area, we are lucky in so many ways, with myriad transportation options at our fingertips. Whether your child is fascinated by trains, boats, or airplanes, the choices available for a transportation adventure abound.

Take to the sky
Mention air travel to a parent and most of us imagine commercial flights and survival techniques for traveling with children. But there are other options, for those who may be a little more adventurous.

A hot air balloon ride is an exhilarating and beautiful way to take flight for children over the age of 6 (or those tall enough to see over the basket). In wine country, there are several hot air balloon options taking off from multiple locations, all guaranteed to thrill your whole family. www.nvaloft.com

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Tara is a freelance writer and marketing professional. She blogs at Thediaryofa.com about the things she is passionate about, the hairy underbelly of life, motherhood, and entrepreneurship.
Planning your move

There are timing considerations beyond the basics of closing dates and school calendars. Movers charge more at the end of the month. You want to be in your new house before Thanksgiving? So does everyone else. It’s just like air travel. So think carefully, get on the calendar, and lock in your estimate before moving companies start blacking out dates; they simply run out of trucks.

Interview movers. Get estimates. Go with a national outfit if you are moving long-distance. This is not the time to take a chance on the little guy. The estimator goes through your house counting your stuff, then enters it all into a program that spits out an estimated weight. That is when you say to yourself, “Game on. I can lose 1,000 pounds in three months, no problem.” My estimates ranged from $14,000 to $21,000 for about the same weight, and I didn’t have them pack for me. And yeah, that’s a lot of money, but keep your receipts: at tax time, a long-distance move is deductible.

Moving in San Francisco will require special parking signs, which some outfits will get for you, but you can get them by calling 311. You will also likely need a “shuttle” (small truck) within the city, which costs extra. My guys showed up with a shipping container on an 18-wheeler semi-truck and could not get into our new driveway, so they spent the day shuttling back and forth. That means my stuff was moved at least four times: house to shuttle, shuttle to semi, semi to shuttle, shuttle to house. Check to see if the shuttle at destination is included or not. If you suspect you might need one, let movers know in advance. Pack well, and get the good insurance.

Lastly, think about your cars if you are moving far away. We donated one and shipped one. Neither is complicated but both require planning. That also meant that we needed a car for two weeks while we waited for the shipped car, so we bought a car on the East Coast upon arrival.

Long distance or local?

There are differences between an in-town move and a long-distance move. First, and most simply, moving companies charge by weight for long-distance moves and by the hour for local moves. So if you are moving far away, think about whether you really need those old economics textbooks. When you are moving locally, you can carry stuff back and forth in your car, you can supervise painting and closet outfitting, you can look at that bottle of hazelnut oil and say, “You will live to fight another day.” Of course, that means there is a lot of schleppping across town.

Kids, though, make “quick errands” twice as long and twice as frustrating. What if your painter needs more paint? Maybe it’s time for prayers at the mosque across the street from the paint store, so you can’t get a parking spot for love or money, and your 2-year-old announces he needs to poop while you are circling the block for the seventh time. I have dozens of these stories from my last in-town move.

When you are moving across the country, though, you callously pour out the open bottles of hazelnut oil. Stop buying toiletries and use up the samples. Start sacrificing maraschino cherries and chickpea flour while there is still space in the compost. Invite your friends over to drink down the bar and eat all those olives. Otherwise, your recycling bin will look like some bizarre hand soap, olive, and Midori party happened at your house in the last week. Or worse, there is no more room in the bins.

Speaking of packing...

People will tell you to get packers. It is, indeed, easier—sort of. They will pack the trash if you aren’t watching, and they don’t give a trike’s damn about your grandmother’s trapezoid. I have unpacked things with my heart in my throat and a curse in my mouth. Know whether you are more comfortable blaming yourself or somebody else if something breaks.

You can always do a hybrid and pack everything but the kitchen and the breakables. I have unpacked professional packing so I know how to pack a china barrel, and I am confident in my ability to do it well, but not everyone is. Again, there is a difference between long-distance and local movers on this. Most local movers charge by the hour for packing, while long-distance movers charge by the box.

I chose to pack myself this time because I’m a masochist. Just kidding. I chose to do it myself because I had time (both kids were in school), and because I wanted to touch everything and reassess its value to me. I made six full carloads of donations in the months before my move. I sold things on Craigslist. I lost that thousand pounds. Last but not least, I saved us a few thousand dollars by investing sweat equity.

If you want to pack, there are some things to know. Rule number one: you will need three times as much paper as you think you do. Paper is for more than just wrapping up china to make sure it doesn’t break. You can crumple it up to cushion the bottoms and sides of a box of electronics, and wrap up your cooking utensils in groups so they don’t clang around in the boxes.

Movers will charge you more for boxes and delivery than it will cost to get boxes yourself. Your moving estimate is your shopping list; call up Box Brothers and ask for a delivery of the number and type of boxes your estimator thought you would need. They are located on Geary Avenue and you will need to know this because you won’t order enough paper the first time.

If you are moving long-distance, and if there is a chance your stuff will require shuttling more than once, definitely get new boxes instead of used ones. My boxes look like....
they have been through a war and they were new just a few weeks ago.

Unpacking
If you are moving locally, bring an emergency kit in the car. If not, buy essentials when you arrive. If there is something you need on a daily basis, don’t pack it in a box. Make sure that you have several box cutters, because you will lose a couple.

Unpack the kitchen first. Use post-it notes to move around on the cabinet doors until you find the best configuration. Don’t let anyone rush you on the kitchen. It’s better to do it well now.

As you start unpacking, you will accumulate a huge pile of paper. Remember all that paper we talked about before? Flatten it out. It’s an extra step, but if you crumple it up, you will be filling up your recycling and compost bins until doomsday.

What about the children?!
I was lucky in that my kids were in school for most of the time I was packing. If you don’t have a formal plan for the kids, hire babysitters and take your friends up on offers for help.

The last week in our house was a bit of a nightmare. I had to pack the kitchen, my kids were out of school, and my husband was called to New York. The kids watched a lot of TV and I hired babysitters. I was running on fumes and couldn’t blow off the packing to take them to the zoo one last time.

If you move during the summer like I did, try to find day camps in your new locale. Again, I lucked out that our new school in Virginia has a summer camp so I didn’t have to do research. Just make sure that you get your health forms and birth certificates all sorted out in advance and bring them with you in your suitcase, even if you mailed copies. You don’t want any hiccups in this; what if the truck is late and your documents are on it?

We were in limbo for two weeks, staying with friends and family. We had just a few books and the kids grew tired of the same bedtime stories. I grew tired of entertaining them in someone else’s house. They watched a lot of TV. We made forays to Target for new games and toys. It was hard on them living out of a suitcase. They didn’t believe me at first when we got to our new house.

Anything else?
My last weeks in San Francisco felt a lot like college exam time. There was a lot of takeout and not enough hours in the day. I had a decade’s worth of friends to say goodbye to. I hired a dozen babysitters in the last three weeks alone. I had so many loose ends to tie up. I had a legal pad covered in lists. I had to hand over volunteer commitments. I had a business to close. I had to call and cancel and start services and utilities in both places. The kids didn’t have summer clothes. There were large-item pickups to schedule with Recology and donations to deliver.

Then, poof, just like after college graduation, we scattered. We got on a plane. I stopped caring about the recycling being so full or whether the new owners would know what to do with my garden. It was over. But it wasn’t. Now that we are here, I am still going. I spent 90 minutes Sunday morning at the grocery store because we had nothing to eat but granola bars and peanuts and no laundry or dish soap. I spent two days in big box retail getting things like shower curtains and trash cans.

While you are at it, buy yourself some extra underwear. Mom’s clothes will be unpacked last, because the ultimate lesson in moving with kids is that the buck stops here. You can’t eat tuna out of the can and push off unpacking the kitchen; kids need familiar meals. You need to push through your own exhaustion and find the nightlights and towels and sheets because your babies need a warm bath and their own soft beds. But if you played your cards right, kids are in camp, and you can unpack in peace.

Sallie Hess has retired to the Virginia countryside, where her children are slowly acclimating to thunderstorms and wildlife. She is probably still unpacking.
Leave Your Car Behind

Outside-the-box thinking and a little research into car-free alternatives create opportunities for new adventures, healthier lifestyles, and saving money.

By Kirsten Pfleger  Photographs by Aviva Rollover Photography

Mom's without cars: they do exist!
Some by necessity, some by choice. Last fall, Addie Bjornsen realized that she only drove her car nine miles a week. She sold her car, uses City Car Share or Uber when she needs a vehicle, and saves almost $500 per month. Adele Sallerno and her husband own a condo that doesn't have parking. By avoiding the headaches intrinsic to street parking, they take pride in their car-free existence. Jesse Wesoky has a car, but her husband drives to Foster City for work every day. Although he usually drops their young son manage afternoon pickup and the daughter off at preschool, Jessie and her husband drive to Foster City for work to street parking, they take pride in their car-free existence. Jesse Wesoky has a car, but her husband drives to Foster City for work every day. Although he usually drops their young son manage afternoon pickup and the daughter off at preschool, Jessie and her husband drive to Foster City for work.

Public transportation

When you are ready to get out of your immediate neighborhood, San Francisco's buses and trains provide an easy exit. They are also a wonderful source of cheap entertainment—my daughter and I spent countless mornings riding the bus without a destination in mind when she was younger.

Children 0 to 4 are free on all Muni and BART lines. Once your child reaches his fifth birthday, he has to pay $1 on Muni and $7 for BART within San Francisco. You can pay cash on the buses and aboveground trains, purchase single-ride tickets from station vending machines, or carry a Youth Clipper Card ($7.00). Strollers are allowed on all buses and trains. You are not required to collapse your stroller or remove your child, but the stroller brakes should be locked and she should be strapped in. Position yourself and your stroller so that other passengers' movement is not obstructed, and be prepared to secure a wheelchair if available given need. You can request use of the lift to get on and off of the bus. Dilek Barlow, mom to 22-month-old Zeki, recommends waiting for the less crowded local buses, especially during rush hour. Adele found a lightweight stroller indispensable, allowing her to lift the stroller with her daughter in it onto the bus. When riding trains with a stroller, you can use the wheelchair access ramps at the aboveground stations, but not all stations are accessible. For a list of accessible stops, visit tinyurl.com/Accessible-Muni-Stops. All below-ground stations have elevator access. Signs posted on the concourse level direct you to the elevator that will take you to the platform. When Muni and BART share a station, there is one shared elevator from the concourse to platform levels. You must pay before entering these elevators.

Biking

Biking is faster than walking, but not beholden to schedules or route lines, and parking is a breeze. If you are already comfortable biking in the city and your child is at least 12 months old, getting started can be as easy as selecting an appropriate child seat or trailer setup. If you are new to urban biking, you might want some training before setting out. When Dilek moved to San Francisco four years ago, she took an urban biking 101 course offered through the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC). Her son was 12 months, she and her husband added rear seats to their individual bikes, purchased a well-fitting bike helmet for Zeki, and they were good to go. The SFBC continues to offer free bicycle safety courses for the whole family. For information on upcoming classes and a copy of their extensive Family Biking Guide, visit www.sfbike.org/resources.

As your child gets older (and heavier), or you envision toting multiple children at once, you may want to consider a cargo bike or a tandem system. Cargo bikes include front loaders that hold up to four children and rear loaders that hold up to two children, or the occasional adult. These bicycles are heavier than regular bicycles and carry greater loads, so many families in our hill city add a pedal assist or electric motor. Bay Area stores that offer test rides include the New Wheel (www.newwheel.net), Velobikes (www.velobikes.com), and Blue Heron Bikes (www.blueheronbikesberkeley.com).

Taxis and ridesharing

Safety is the biggest difficulty when riding in cars that you don’t own. A car seat or booster seat is legally required for all children ages 8 and under, and many children should be using a booster until age 12. When Dilek was researching car seat options, she discovered that rear-facing car seats with the European belt path (tinyurl.com/w4dh5V) are easier to install safely and quickly when not using a base. Addie now has three booster seats for her 5-year-old, depending on where she is going—an inflatable one that fits easily into her purse, a backless one she uses when she has storage at her destination, and a high-back version for longer trips. The Car Seat Lady (tinyurl.com/Taxi-Car-Seats) offers suggestions on the best car seats for taxis and ridesharing.

Know how to install your seat quickly, and make sure that your driver knows you need to install a car seat before you are ready to go. Unless there is a safety concern, leave your door open as a signal until your child is properly restrained, so that the driver won’t just start driving.

If you are heading to the airport and don’t need to bring your car seat for the trip, www.airporttaxiscooservices.com will pick you up at home or at the airport with the appropriate type of car seat installed.

As your child gets older (and heavier), or you envision toting multiple children at once, you may want to consider a cargo bike or a tandem system. Cargo bikes include front loaders that hold up to four children and rear loaders that hold up to two children, or the occasional adult. These bicycles are heavier than regular bicycles and carry greater loads, so many families in our hill city add a pedal assist or electric motor. Bay Area stores that offer test rides include the New Wheel (www.newwheel.net), Velobikes (www.velobikes.com), and Blue Heron Bikes (www.blueheronbikesberkeley.com).

Whether you choose to go car-free or just to leave your car at home more often, embrace the opportunity to explore our beautiful city at a slower pace.

Kirsten Pfleger moved to San Francisco without a car in 2003. She enjoyed getting to know the city via bike and public transportation. Although she gained a car when she got married, both she and her husband continue to navigate the city by alternative means.
September is Emergency Preparedness Month! Living in California or anywhere Mother Nature unleashes her wrath, it’s extremely important to be prepared. This year why not consider giving the gift of an Emergency Kit or give yourself peace of mind with your own custom kits. We can help!

Contact Us Today
415-255-9395
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Speech & Language Therapy Programs
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Autism spectrum disorders
Auditory processing disorders
Oral motor and feeding disorders
Stuttering disorders
Reading disorders
The Richmond Neighborhood Meetup subgroup is ramping up activities in 2016, thanks to several new volunteers who have joined the team. In March, we took over a small restaurant for a sushi + sake dinner. In April, we joined forces with the NOPA Neighborhood Meetup subgroup for a spring event for little ones to do messy art and play games. In July, we had a movie-out just for moms.

We now have a weekly playgroup in Golden Gate Park! We meet at the “blue playground” on Fulton (at 8th Ave.) on Mondays from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Additionally, we have a regular book club that meets every six to eight weeks, plus other spontaneous events for moms and families. Check BigTent for more information and updates.

If you are looking for fun family outings, some of the neighborhood favorites include paddle boating on Stow Lake, going for a hike at Land’s End, and dancing alongside the roller skaters at Skatin’ Place in Golden Gate Park. If you live in the Richmond or one of the surrounding neighborhoods, please join us at one of our events. You can also find many of us on Facebook by joining the group called “Richmond Playgroup.”

The Richmond Neighborhood Meetup volunteers are Grace, Karen, Stacey, and Shelley. We are always looking for new volunteers to join our group and help plan fun events in the neighborhood. Contact recruiting@ggmg.org if you are interested in learning more. We hope to see you around!

GET CONNECTED

Connect with other moms in your neighborhood by joining your Neighborhood Meetup subgroup on BigTent. From wine nights to playgroups, there are 11 neighborhood hosting events every week! Contact Tracy at andreassen.tracy@gmail.com for more information on what’s happening in your neighborhood.

KIDS ACTIVITIES

**Evening Play Date at Recess**

Need a night out? Your little one will enjoy the run of the entire playground, have dinner with his buddies, and even participate in an art project! Our friendly, knowledgeable staff will provide child care so you can enjoy yourself. Accepting children 2- to 7-years-old.

- **DATE:** Friday, September 23
- **TIME:** 5 to 8 p.m.
- **PLACE:** 470 Carolina St.
- **COST:** Special GGMG rate $12/bab/child (+$15 siblings)
- **REGISTRATION:** email info@recess-sf.com

**Make Potions with Tinkergarten at Peacock Meadows in Golden Gate Park**

Tinkergartners thrived to team up with GGMG Kids. Activities to make potions—a timeless pursuit, and for good reason. Making potions engages a child’s senses and fosters creativity. Stirring, mixing, and mashing ingredients activates universal behavior patterns that promote brain and body development. It’s drizzling at its best. Snacks and supplies will be provided. Appropriate for ages 18 months to 5 years.

- **DATE:** Tuesday, September 6
- **TIME:** 10 to 11:30 a.m.
- **PLACE:** 240 John F. Kennedy Dr.
- **COST:** FREE
- **REGISTRATION:** www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/9811128

**Toy and Book Swap at Sue Bierman Playground**

Meet some new playmates for your little one and bring gently used books or toys to trade or donate. Any leftover toys/books will be donated to the Homeless Prenatal Program. We will also have snacks and water. Looking forward to seeing you there!

- **DATE:** Friday, September 30
- **TIME:** 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- **PLACE:** 253 Washington St.
- **COST:** FREE
- **REGISTRATION:** www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/9803118

**Smart Play at Creperie Saint Germain**

Moms, come relax and mingle while kids play smarter... the French way! Blue Orange invites kids 3 to 10 to play with the game makers outside Creperie Saint Germain at The Yard at Mission Rock. Kids learn memory, strategy, and dexterity, while moms can enjoy the comfortable at fresco lounge with crepes, wine, and champagne.

- **DATE:** Tuesday, September 27
- **TIME:** 7:30 to 10 p.m.
- **PLACE:** Recess, 470 Carolina St.
- **COST:** $75
- **REGISTRATION:** www.recess-sf.com/workshops

**WEBINAR**

**Webinar on Cultivating the Bilingual and Multilingual Child**

What are effective formal and informal methods to improve your child’s foreign language skills? How can you as a parent help to keep the learning process going outside of school even if you don’t speak the language? Tune in to discover tools and techniques that will keep your child interested and on the path to mastering a language beyond English. Registered attendees will receive a free interactive “Intro to Spanish” child’s eBook, compliments of Language Twist.

- **DATE:** Tuesday, September 13
- **TIME:** noon to 1:15 p.m.
- **PLACE:** Webinar
- **COST:** FREE
- **REGISTRATION:** www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/9818852

**PARENT EDUCATION**

**Get Ready for Preschool Applications**

Irene Byrne, director of Phoebe Heard Preschool, will provide an overview and advice on navigating the preschool process. Bring your questions!

- **DATE:** Tuesday, September 20
- **TIME:** 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- **PLACE:** 1111 Gough St.
- **COST:** FREE
- **REGISTRATION:** see BigTent for more information

**Infant, Child, and Adult CPR**

CPR is one skill we should ALL have in our repertoire. This 2.5-hour class will give you the skills to save lives. Join a CPR instructor (a registered nurse) to get hands-on practice with mannequins and develop muscle memory of what to do should your child or partner choke or stop breathing. A two-year certification is included.

- **DATE:** Tuesday, September 27
- **TIME:** 7:30 to 10 p.m.
- **PLACE:** Recess, 470 Carolina St.
- **COST:** FREE
- **REGISTRATION:** www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Mommy’s Play Date

Put down the diaper bag and call the kids! We’re gathering in a moms-only space to talk about sex and pleasure at Good Vibrations. Join staff sexologist Carol Queen, PhD for a fun mixer for mothers who want to put the spice back in their sex lives. Get a special store tour to learn more about pleasure products, learn tips for thriving sexually, and get support for overcoming the barriers that keep so many moms undersexed and over-stressed.

- **DATE:** Thursday, September 22
- **TIME:** 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- **PLACE:** 1620 Polk St.
- **COST:** FREE
- **REGISTRATION:** www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/9818852

**MEMBERSHIP**

Moms-Only Evening Picnic at Off the Grid

Grab your blanket, hit up the food trucks, and join GGMG for a moms-only evening picnic. Come with old friends and meet new ones!

- **DATE:** Thursday, September 29
- **TIME:** 5 to 8 p.m.
- **PLACE:** Presidio Main Post (Montgomery St. at Sheridan Ave.)
- **COST:** FREE
- **REGISTRATION:** www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/9820273

**PLAYGROUP/ NEW MEMBER**

Playgroup Formation Event at Play Haven

Playgroups... more than play and much more than just a group. Playgroups are about forging new connections, finding an outlet to share and grow, and exploring kid-friendly spots. Most importantly, it’s about building a support network. Come meet moms with similarly-aged children and learn how to launch your own playgroup. You’ll also be sharing information about member benefits, neighborhood meetups, and other activities available through GGMG.

- **DATE:** Thursday, September 27
- **TIME:** 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- **PLACE:** 254 Laguna Honda Blvd.
- **COST:** FREE
- **REGISTRATION:** www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/98214707
GGMG would like to thank the generous sponsors and donors of our 20th Anniversary party to benefit the Homeless Prenatal Program.
Committee Spotlight: Kids Activities

Describe the personality of your committee.

Our committee is full of volunteers with creative ideas on how to entertain kids of all ages.

Why do you do what you do? What has been an unexpected benefit of being involved with the Kids Activities Committee?

We organize fun events for kids because this is what we want for our own kids. The unexpected benefit of being involved with the Kids Activities Committee is the joy it brings to the kids and families who participate.

What types of activities or projects to you undertake?

We’ve organized a fun Earth Day event and a visit to a local farm. We have really exciting future events planned too, including apple picking and a pumpkin patch visit in the fall, as well as a holiday event in the winter. We have also started regular playgroups in different neighborhoods where members can bring lightly used toys and books to trade with other members; unclaimed items are donated to the Homeless Prenatal Program.

How do you know when you are making a difference?

When we have members come to our events and tell us that we deliver more than they expected through fun giveaways and activities.

Who are your current volunteers?

Our amazing crew consists of dedicated moms who want to add some extra cheer to our children’s everyday schedules and create lasting memories. Volunteers include Emily Beaven, Mariana Gava Black, Liannan Chan, Carol Chen, Emily Jenks, Sabrina Luh Kaburaki, AJ Selfe, Justine Simpson, and Brooke Spillberg.

What’s next for the Kids Activities Committee?

We plan to continue to organize events that make members want to come back to year after year.

How can interested GGMG members get involved in the Kids Activities Committee?

We are always looking for creative activities for events, so members can send us ideas they have at activities@ggmg.org. We will try to make them happen. Aside from that, just come check out our events and have fun!

Committee Spotlight: Moms Supporting Moms

We are dedicated to supporting other moms in their own community.

Is It Time to Renew Your GGMG Membership?

They say that raising children takes a village, and without members like you, we would not have such a wonderful and supportive organization.

No longer living in San Francisco? That’s OK, you can still renew and maintain access to the forums, receive the magazine, and attend GGMG events. GGMG has also raised the age limit to include moms who have a child 11 years or younger.

Have friends moving to SF? If you are interested, please contact the GGMG Volunteer Recruiting Committee at volunteer@ggmg.org.

If you are interested, please send samples of your work and a CV to editor@ggmg.org. If you are interested, please send samples of your work and a CV to editor@ggmg.org.

GGMG's Annual Fall Festival

Kick off the fall season at Sharon Meadows in Golden Gate Park on October 8 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Summer's Over, and It's Back to School!

Now that your kids are headed back into the classroom, are you finding yourself with a little more time on your hands? Come volunteer with GGMG! With volunteering comes a great opportunity to meet other moms and make new friends. It’s also an easy way to build your resume, and volunteers receive additional GGMG member benefits.

There are many different types of positions available, with a wide variety of time commitments and responsibilities.

If you are interested, please contact the GGMG Volunteer Recruiting Committee at volunteer@ggmg.org.

Examples of currently open positions:

- Partnerships: Co-chair, Volunteer
- Parent Education: Volunteer
- Membership: Volunteer
- Magazine: Writer, Photographer, Graphic Designer
- Playgroups: Volunteers
- Neighborhood Meetups: Volunteers
- PR/Marketing/Branding: Volunteer (PR)
- Recruiting: Co-chair

If you love this magazine, come work with us!

The GGMG magazine staff is looking for talented, enthusiastic moms who want to contribute to one of the best parts of GGMG. Like all of GGMG, the magazine staff is made up entirely of volunteers.

- **Staff Writer:** Writers contribute at least eight 2,000-word feature articles per year, plus various smaller memoir or list-style articles, and collaborate with editorial staff at monthly meetings. Professional journalism experience desired but not required.
- **Photographer:** Photographers are responsible for shooting photos for feature articles and/or covers for each issue of the GGMG magazine. You will be responsible for all stages of production including: scouting locations, securing models, providing creative direction to models, executing shoots, and all post-processing workflow using Lightroom or Photoshop. Photographers are also responsible for collaborating with editorial staff at monthly meetings.
- **Graphic Designer:** Designers create the visual layout of the magazine and are expected to answer to tight timelines. Designers are also responsible for collaborating with editorial staff at monthly meetings. Experience with InDesign required.

If you are interested, please send samples of your work and a CV to editor@ggmg.org.
M
y first flight, at 3 months old, left no impression on me. My parents decided that a fifth floor Manhattan walk-up they shared with a friend was no place for an infant, so they bundled me up and sent me on a plane to Taiwan where my paternal grandmother (nai nai) would care for me. I was the baby girl my dad’s mother never had, and she adored me. When nai nai returned me to mom and dad at 2 years old, I clung to her, suspicious of the pair. When I was 3 years old, my mother whisked me away again to Taiwan, this time to my maternal grandparents’ home. I remember the events surrounding this flight well. Sick of my father’s philandering, mom picked me up from preschool with a few hastily packed prized possessions. We boarded the plane, only to deboard minutes later when there was a mechanical problem with the aircraft. I’ll never forget my mother’s eyelid unnaturally twitching from stress and anticipation. We finally took off, much to her relief. The rest of that trip was a complete blur for me, but it foreshadowed a life in transit and an oftentimes turbulent existence. I was eventually reunited with my father. But the “abduction” took a toll on me. Sleep became synonymous with Night of the Walking Child as I aimlessly haunted our hallways after bedtime. Not long after, my mother, either antsy or fed up with the physical spats with my father, gave me a choice one night—to leave with her for good, or stay. I blame my favorite show “The Incredible Hulk” (which I was watching alone that night) for my choice. Moving away with her was far more terrifying than passively sitting on the couch watching that angry green monster, so I stayed. I couldn’t comprehend what was being asked of me that night, only that mom was interrupting my show. As I grew up, planes became my ally. At 5, I started taking flights by myself to see my mother. At that time, it was more unusual to be a girl living with her dad and nai nai in suburbia than to be flying alone to see my mom in Los Angeles. Oddly, my parents’ separation fostered a closer bond between mom and me. I couldn’t wait to see her. My father and I kept moving, about every two years for a while. His peripatetic ways had nothing to do with the military and everything to do with wanting to start over; his was the age-old tale of seeking opportunity, yet unable to settle for one. A rolling stone gathers no moss, my stepmother would say with an air of resignation. Movement provided escape, an avoidance of our problems, an excuse to be a commitment-phobe. My escape always involved an airplane ride, and over the years, I began to pine for those trips.

As a mother now, I wonder if there can be too much movement too soon. I want to go back and self-righteously scold my parents. How disruptive! So much movement, so little stability. Yet, here I am all grown up and possibly addicted to movement myself. I have my parents’ antsness, that inability to commit. I watch TV while reading the newspaper, and check the GILT app for sales while doing yoga stretches. Focus is not my forte, and wanderlust is part of my DNA. I fantasize about my next adventure when our bags are barely unpacked. My husband admonishes both our son and me to sit still. For me, being still is akin to stagnation, something I irrationally fear. I must constantly remind myself that my son needs a stable mother, and that stability does not automatically equal stagnation. Movement has always held a dichotomous meaning for me—the roar of jet engines has meant both disruption and curiosity. Through their haphazard movements in my formative years, my parents inadvertently taught me about resilience, the importance of journeys, and self-discovery. I have come to realize that they did the best they could with what they had. Sometimes, we all need a little disruption to grow and change. My husband and I are experimenting with the right mix of disruption for our son. Perhaps we take his comfort (and ours, for that matter) a bit too lightly; we never want him to get too comfortable. We imposed disruption and adventure on him at an early age, and it has often been a bumpy ride. At 3, my son has already traveled to six countries. Initially, the crying banshee we experienced on our flights was enough to consider curtailing travelling. Now, he asks for plane rides and is obsessed with them. Jet lag has evolved into a late-night bidding for mama to sleep with him, an ephemeral sweetness I cherish. I wonder if he’ll look kindly upon his mother’s flights of fancy for him. I can dream.

Sandy Woo is a genetics geek by day and a wanderer by night, dreaming of the next destination to whisk her 3.5 year-old and husband off to.
Are you a San Francisco mom?
Want to receive this magazine?
Join GGMG today at www.ggmg.org.

Golden Gate Mothers Group
P.O. Box 475866
San Francisco, CA 94147

statement of purpose:
nurture ourselves, our children,
our partners, and our community;
create an environment of support,
information sharing, and connection;
learn, teach, create, have fun, and
provide balance in our lives and in
the lives of our growing families.

Helping Bay Area families improve fertility,
pregnancy and postpartum health.

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20% OFF Initial Acupuncture Consult and Treatment

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