

DEC 2016/JAN 2017



GGMG | GOLDEN GATE
MOTHERS GROUP®

magazine

Inclusion



A few random things I have actually done for my clients...

Went to my sellers' house at midnight to let them in after they locked themselves out. Recommended a service provider who successfully removed a spirit from a house. **Talked buyers OUT OF buying a home that was entirely TOO RISKY for them.** Cleaned poop (dog, I hope) off of the sidewalk before an Open House. **Hiked up my skirt and climbed over a fence IN MY HEELS to access a poorly-placed lockbox.**



One thing is certain... the real estate market in San Francisco is unpredictable! Sherri knows that being a great Realtor is more than opening doors and writing contracts. It means providing her clients with an amazing array of services that goes above and beyond what is expected. Sherri does whatever it takes to ensure her clients' happiness and financial success.

Whether you are venturing into the market for the first time, or you are a real estate aficionado, Sherri has the proven expertise and enthusiasm to guide you to a solid investment decision.

Sherri Howe
REALTOR® & GGMG Mom
a.k.a askhowe — look for me on the GGMG message boards

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For questions or comments regarding all other aspects of GGMG, including how to advertise an event to our membership, please contact feedback@ggmg.org.

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Cover Photo by Lindsay Lovier Photography;
Cover models: Reid (3), Miles (5), Rose (8)

Letter from the Editor: Welcoming All

By Kirsten Pflieger



Kirsten is currently trying to help to distinguish the difference between making friends and exclusionary behaviour as she and her daughter navigate the elementary school waters.

Inclusion is the concept that all persons have the same inherent rights. Although often used in reference to access to education and services for persons with differing abilities, the term can also be used when discussing differences or inequality related to gender, race, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Not just a fad or a box to check, inclusion is a way of life. It

requires us to stop, take a look around us, and notice not only who is there, but who is missing, and to take steps to invite and support persons who may not have felt included.

The volunteers who put together this magazine have been working on noticing who is missing from our magazine over the

Not just a fad or a box to check, inclusion is a way of life.

past year. We realized that our photography subjects had become primarily white, and we have made a conscious effort to change that and represent the diversity of GGMG and San Francisco in our images. If you or members of your family are interested in participating in a photo shoot for the magazine, please let us know at <https://goo.gl/forms/yNIFoZvuG2GHgKUz2>.

This month, SFUSD celebrates inclusion week, a nationwide initiative designed to bring about more inclusive school practices. Jennifer Butterfoss provides an overview of the week's events and goals on page 20. On page 24, Bobby Shukla looks at how a “put people first” attitude at home and in schools is the first step in creating an environment that welcomes people of all colors, religions, and abilities. Leah Van der Mei from the California Academy of Sciences discusses how the Academy works to include all guests on page 8.

The need for improving inclusion does not end in the classroom. On page 28, Neha Mandal Masson looks at how tech firms in Silicon Valley are struggling to increase diversity in their workforce. Shaheen Bilgrami reflects on how motherhood has increased the diversity in her group of friends on page 14.

Although it feels like school has just gotten going and the holidays have barely begun, it is not too early to start thinking about summer plans. The lottery for San Francisco's Camp Mather opens next month. If you haven't been to Camp Mather with your family, Megan Bushnell gives you a peek into this San Francisco tradition on page 16, including information about Mather's own inclusion week.

Many of us have spent the past month processing the election. The outpouring of strong emotions following the results has brought into sharp focus deep divisions in our country. As we turn our attention toward gathering together during the holidays, and possibly reuniting with family or friends with different viewpoints, being inclusive is more relevant than ever. And might prove to be a path to healing.

Housekeeping

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

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

THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: Successful preschool auctions and learning to say “no, thank you” when offered volunteer “opportunities”, stress eating, shock and betrayal followed by a trip to Istanbul, the five stages of grief (notably denial), Valium, fetal position, my child's kisses, burying

myself in the distractions of parenthood, a lot of booze, #PantsuitNation, ice cream and chocolate, Prop 64, Kamala, Tammy Duckworth, Ilhan Omar, Stephanie Murphy, and Angela Merkel, empowerment, unopened champagne now awaiting the midterm elections.

COMING NEXT: February/March—International; April/May—Fertility

CONTEST: Congratulations to **Justinia Gardiner**, the winner of the gift certificate from Munchkin et Moi.

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

Letter from the Board: Looking Back and Looking Ahead

By Laurel Kellam and Cathy Tran

The holidays are upon us and the year is winding to a close. This is the time and the season to take stock of the past year and evaluate accomplishments and opportunities for improvement. We thought, as an organization, we should do the same. In 2016, we celebrated 20 years as a mothers group! We continued to do our part in the community, thanks to the generosity of our members. The Homeless Prenatal Program received diapers year-round, Halloween costumes to be used next year, holiday meals, and a large donation of almost \$10,000. We hosted numerous amazing events, including a great Member Mixer, a fantastic Halloween Spooktacular, and a fun makeover and professional headshot event. Our neighborhood playgroups grow larger each day, are incredibly vibrant, and host fun activities. We hosted our first date night drop-off for older kids—it was sold out and a big success.

We also see areas where we can improve and we hope to do so in 2017. We know the organization needs a new website and volunteers have been working hard to make that happen. We should be transitioning off of BigTent to our amazing new site in the new year. We have budgeted money for events for older kids

This is the time and the season to take stock of the past year and evaluate accomplishments and opportunities for improvement.

with more date night drop-offs and additional events to come. We'd also like to expand the number of local nonprofit organizations that we support.

In our reflection, we realized that in order to pay for these exciting new programs and our new website, we would need to reallocate some of our existing funds. In addition to reductions across the organization, we have made the difficult decision to cut the number of magazines we produce each year from ten to six. The magazine is an integral part of GGMG and we applaud the unpaid volunteers who spend countless hours each month putting together a product that can rival any professionally put

together magazine in the business. Although the number of magazine issues will be decreasing, our new website will include a blog. GGMG will still be providing you with amazing and insightful content. The magazine committee was recently designated Committee of the Year by the board, and it was well deserved indeed!

We've also heard your requests that the organization become more inclusive. In 2016, we formed a Diversity Committee with that end goal in mind. We are still in need of volunteers for this committee to help us accomplish your wishes. Please contact recruiting@gmg.org if you are interested in volunteering with the Diversity Committee.

This is also the season to spend a few moments on gratitude. We're thankful for all volunteers who make our organization function. We would especially like to give thanks to the following volunteers who were all nominated for Volunteer of the Year by their fellow volunteers: Tracy Andreassen, Sabrina Kaburaki, Heather Beckstead, Karen Brein, Nellyn Hechtman, Molly Agarwal, Kaitlin Kertsman, and Vicky Keston, who won Volunteer of the Year. Congratulations Vicky! Lastly, a thank you to all our board members who work tirelessly throughout the year to guide and support GGMG and its volunteers.

We are also thankful for our Community Support team, specifically our Member Support group. Thank you for your unending support of our members.

Wishing you and yours a healthy, wonderful holiday season and joyous 2017!



Laurel and Cathy are the chair and vice chair of GGMG. They have been volunteering since 2011 and 2012 respectively and previously both served on the GGMG Membership Committee before joining the board.

The Holiday Bucket List

What the Bay Area lacks in snow, it makes up for in events chock full of good cheer.

By Stephanie AuWerter

The Holiday Ice Rink at the Embarcadero

Lace up the skates to glide (and slide) on the largest outdoor rink in the Bay Area.

TIME: Through January 8

PLACE: Justin Herman Plaza

COST: \$11 for adults, \$7 for age 8 and under; skate rental \$5; 90-minute session

www.embarcadero.org

’Tis the Season for Science at the California Academy of Sciences

Catch snow flurries on your tongue, say hello to reindeer, explore the Northern Lights.

TIME: Through January 8

PLACE: 55 Music Concourse Drive

COST: Free December 11 and for members; otherwise \$34.95 for 18+, \$29.95 for ages 12 to 17; \$24.95 for ages 4 to 11, free for age 3 and under.

www.calacademy.org

Macy’s Great Tree and Holiday SPCA Windows

Gaze at the 83-foot Christmas tree adorned with 33,000 lights and coo at the adorable dogs and cats available for adoption.

TIME: through January 1 (windows), January 2 (tree)

PLACE: Union Square

COST: Free

www.tinyurl.com/z79a6ct

Fancy Nancy Splendiferous Christmas at the Bay Area Children’s Theatre

Nancy navigates the glitz of the holidays only to discover that it’s family time that really (or at least mostly) counts. Recommended for ages 4 and up.

TIME: December 3 through December 29

PLACE: 2055 Center Street, Berkeley

COST: \$25 adults, \$20 age 14 and under
www.bactheatre.org

Holiday Family Fun at the Presidio Officers’ Club

Make a winter bird hand puppet, decorate cookies, and learn about park wildlife while enjoying free snacks. First 100 families receive a gift bag.

TIME: December 3

PLACE: 50 Moraga Avenue

COST: Free

tinyurl.com/holidayfamilyfun

Have a Holly Jolly Peekadoodle Christmas!

Enjoy a baking and art craft, snacks, music, photos with Santa, and festive family fun.

TIME: December 10

PLACE: 900 North Point Street

COST: \$50 for members, \$55 for GMMG members, \$60 for all others; for a family of 3; additional siblings \$20
www.peekadoodle.com

Mark Foehringer’s Nutcracker Sweets at Cowell Theater

This 50-minute live music version of the classic holiday ballet welcomes all ages and attention spans.

TIME: December 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20

PLACE: 2 Marina Boulevard

COST: \$21 to \$31

www.nutcrackersweets.org

Fairy Winterland at Children’s Fairyland

Celebrate several winter holidays including Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa, via crafts, storytelling, performances, and a festival of lights parade.

TIME: December 16 to 23

PLACE: 699 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland

COST: Adult or child over age 1 \$10; members \$5
www.fairyland.org

Lighted Boat Parade

Dozens of boats, decked out in their holiday finest, tour the waterfront.

TIME: December 16

PLACE: Views from Aquatic Park, Pier 39, Marina Green, and Crissy Field

COST: Free

www.tinyurl.com/Lighted-Boat-Parade

ZooLights at the San Francisco Zoo

View the zoo at night, while enjoying twinkling lights, carolers, reindeer, seasonal treats, a holiday marketplace, and the big guy in red.

TIME: December 16 to 30 (Closed December 24 and 25)

PLACE: Sloat Boulevard at the Great Highway

COST: Adults \$8; \$6 for ages 4 to 14; free for members and age 3 and under

www.sfzoo.org

Hanukkah Candle Lighting at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco

Enjoy candle lighting, story telling, singing, and festive treats.

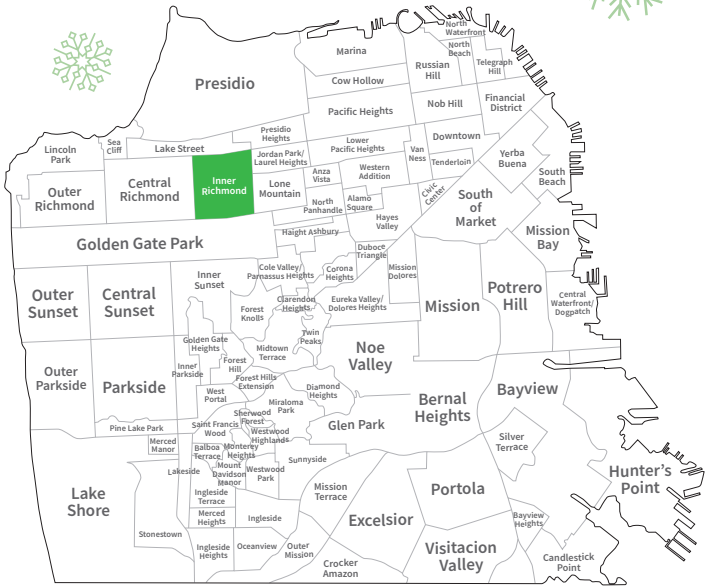
DATE: December 26 to 30

PLACE: 3200 California Street

COST: Free

tinyurl.com/sfjchanukkah

Stephanie has written personal finance articles for numerous publications, including Money Magazine, SmartMoney Magazine, Real Simple Magazine and Parents Magazine.



Li'l Kid, Big City: Inner Richmond

By Jenny Shaw

You may know it as “mini Chinatown,” but the Inner Richmond offers myriad global cuisines, both casual and fancy. Head to bustling Clement Street for a culinary stroll with eateries and shops to delight everyone in the family. Locations not on Clement Street are noted.

Start the day with coffee and a croissant at **Arsicault**, *Bon Appetit’s* #1 bakery in the nation (397 Arguello Blvd.). Browse hip and design-focused wares at **Seedstore** and **Park Life**, and toys at **Sparky’s Fun and Joy**, before re-fueling at local fave **Blue Danube Coffee House**.

Lunch options abound. Kid-friendly **Giorgio’s Pizzeria** offers calzones bigger than your head. Grab some **Good Luck Dim Sum** or Vietnamese takeout from **Cafe Bunn Mi** or **Little Vietnam Cafe** to eat at the parklet in front of **Cumaica** coffee shop. Nosh on Turkish and Mediterranean fare at **Kitchen Istanbul**. Newbies must try **Burma Superstar** for the fabulous tea-leaf salad; put your name on the list and browse goods by local designers at nearby **Foggy Notion** (275 6th Ave.).

Enjoy ice cream from **Toy Boat Dessert Cafe**, then walk off that food coma in the cozy aisles of **Green Apple Books** with its extensive kids section, or let your little ones work off their sugar highs at the **Richmond library playground** (351 9th Ave.) ♦

Jenny is a former Inner Richmond denizen who treks back from across the city to get her fix of dim sum, Asian groceries, and quiet moments in the aisles of Green Apple Books.

Supporting All

By Shaheen Bilgrami

San Francisco has a variety of organizations that can provide support if you have a child or family member with a disability or developmental difference. For listings of vetted professionals or organizations who can further help you, or who can assess your child, please contact GMMG member support or refer to the resource pages on GMMG.org.

Golden Gate Regional Center

www.ggrc.org

A first port of call for families with concerns over their child’s development, this is a great place to get information about assessment as well as eligibility for services.

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities

www.supportforfamilies.org

This free resource is for families of children with any sort of disability. Services provided include a warm line, multiple support groups, parent training, and general advice. This organization also hosts fun events for children with disabilities and their families.

SF Inclusion Networks

www.sfinclusion.org

This new nonprofit provides professional development support for professionals and families of young children with disabilities. This is a particularly useful resource to introduce to your daycare or preschool if you are finding that they are struggling with inclusion.

Kids Enjoy Exercise Now

www.keensanfrancisco.org/about-us

This organization provides free recreational activities for adults and children ages 5 and up with any kind of disability.

Project Commotion

www.projectcommotion.org

This inclusive community space offers classes and workshops for all children and their families, including those with special needs.

Magical Bridge Playground

www.magicalbridge.org

Located in Palo Alto, this innovative and unique inclusive program supports all children including those with physical and cognitive differences. A second playground is due to open in Redwood City in late 2017 or early 2018.

Shaheen Bilgrami is a freelance writer and editor and is a contributor to *blog.littlelane.com* when she isn’t trying to keep up with her energetic 4.5-year-old! Contact her through her website, www.shaheenbilgrami.com

Ask the Expert

Inclusion at Cal Academy

With Leah Van der Mei

Over 1.3 million people visit the California Academy of Sciences each year. Although this already represents a diverse pool, the Academy continues to strive for even more inclusive programming and access.



GGMG: *What does inclusion look like at the California Academy of Sciences?*

LV: The Academy is focused on several “big ideas” for the next decade, the closest to my heart being an initiative we call Academy for All. It’s a huge push to break down science learning and engagement

barriers—whether they be cost, access, language, or a cultural roadblock. We believe we can help transform the scientific literacy of children in the Bay Area. But first, they must have access to the Academy.

Beyond offering free admission days, field trips, and teen science programs, we also focus on workforce inclusion with inspiring partners. The Academy actively recruits individuals who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)-related fields. Partners like the Arc of San Francisco and AccessSFUSD help match us with a range of employees with developmental disabilities using a model that combines unique training programs, academic credit, workforce development, and museum career exploration.

We also work closely with Sunset Youth Services and Larkin Street Youth Services to provide work opportunities to young adults eager to develop professional skills. Adding to the diversity of our workforce, we also work with custodial vendors that provide job training and support to staff who have recently immigrated.

I can talk all day about why this inside-out approach to inclusion is so effective, but briefly: we believe that by reflecting our community with our staff, we better connect with our community as a whole.

GGMG: *Why is inclusion important in museums and other public settings?*

LV: Museums are trusted institutions within the community, and because of that, they’re a treasured resource for educating our

children. The Academy takes this responsibility very seriously—we make every effort to serve the 1.3 million guests who pass through our doors each year. Access and inclusion (what we call good customer service) are at the core of everything we do.

GGMG: *How can families get involved with and support inclusion efforts at the Cal Academy?*

LV: We’re grateful to have so many families visit the museum every year! Just by visiting us, you’re supporting the Academy’s inclusion programs and helping us secure those efforts for years to come. Whether you become a member, encourage your teen to apply for Academy volunteering or internships, donate to our school field trip efforts, or simply visit for the day, your support helps us think bigger and do better.

I hear an often-repeated sentiment from guests that always sticks with me: visiting the Academy feels like more than just a simple visit to another museum—it feels like an action that supports access to science.

GGMG: *What are some of the challenges in implementing inclusion?*

LV: Inclusion is an ever-changing landscape. We’re constantly evolving and learning how to continue to improve access for families. A steady stream of feedback from guests, members, and

Just by visiting us, you’re supporting the Academy’s inclusion programs and helping us secure those efforts for years to come.

organizational partners is our best defense against weakening inclusion efforts. So please, when you visit the Academy, let us know what you think! ❖

Leah Van der Mei is the director of guest operations at the California Academy of Sciences. She oversees daily operations and is instrumental to the overall guest experience for the museum. As the Academy’s ADA coordinator, Van der Mei is a passionate advocate for individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

GGMG: Helping Others, Treating Yourself

Community Support

GGMG is partnering with the Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP) to host our annual fund drive.

HPP works to break the cycle of childhood poverty by finding housing for homeless families, providing prenatal and parenting support, community health worker training, and stabilizing families by addressing issues related to mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse in their clients’ lives. HPP also responds to basic emergency needs and child care issues, provides access to a community technology center for clients, and gives families the tools to build financial stability.

Last year we raised more than \$20,000. Help make this year’s fund drive even more successful. Please donate funds directly to HPP via its website: www.homelessprenatal.org/donate

Please be sure to choose "GGMG Gives" in the gift designation scroll down. This will help us track donations.

Contest

Date Night—At Home



This month, one lucky mom will receive a 4-month subscription to SaloonBox (saloonbox.com), a craft cocktail kit delivered to your door with everything you need for four great cocktails per month. It’s the perfect treat for Mom and Dad after the kids go to bed. The 4-month SaloonBox subscription prize (valued at \$220) includes:

- Four monthly kits containing two recipes that each serve two people (four cocktails per box)
- Recipe cards with easy-to-follow instructions and backgrounds on the mixologists and featured cocktails
- Top-shelf spirits, from large brands and small batch distilleries across the U.S.
- Unique, artisan ingredients like infused syrups, bitters, and shrubs
- A letter describing each ingredient and an inventory checklist

Additionally, we are offering all GGMG Moms 50 percent off the first month’s box when signing up for a monthly subscription. Use coupon code GGMG50, valid until January 31, 2017.

TO ENTER THE CONTEST, SEND AN EMAIL WITH THE SUBJECT LINE “SALOONBOX” TO CONTEST@GGMG.ORG BY DECEMBER 31, 2016.

This prize is subject to the terms and conditions outlined at saloonbox.com/termservice_privacypolicy

DADLANDS

Daddy's Kinda Different

By Bobby McMullen

It was my turn to keep “eyes” on my daughter Ella. My wife Heidi and I were at a barbeque, with lots of noise and distractions, and Ella was a handful as she scrambled about. I was having a ball, head down, closely following her. Suddenly a woman shrieked loudly, and all took notice. I pulled Ella close, comforting her, attempting to sort out what was happening. “That’s my baby!! That’s my baby!!” she screamed. A friend grasped my arm and said, “That’s not Ella.” Feeling confused, I tried to explain, guiding the tiny girl to her mommy. It hit me immediately: “I’ve lost my daughter!” I barely heard our friend explain to the woman how I could make such a mistake. I moved through the house, around blurred shapes, yelling for Ella and Heidi. Heidi’s calm voice came over the din, “What’s going on? You OK?” She was close enough for me to realize Ella was with her. This was the first time as an adult that I felt true fear and vulnerability. The moment I thought my disability caused me to lose my daughter. My name is Bobby, and I am blind.

I was 29 and in law school when I lost my sight to Type 1 diabetes. I’m blind in my left eye and 20/1200 out of my right. Close your left eye and look through a toilet paper roll with your right. Now imagine Vaseline smeared over plastic wrap on the end. That’s how I see the world. I’m also a double organ

Acceptance of others begins with acceptance of oneself.

transplant recipient (kidney and pancreas), had a few years of dialysis, had heart surgery, went a few rounds with cancer, and rock a pacemaker. I’m held together by more spare parts, pins, rods, and duct tape than I can remember. None of that makes me special or defines me. I don’t speak of them unless asked nor do I wear bracelets or other identifiers of my challenges.

My parents helped me to develop an unwavering sense of self, positive self-image and attitude. That solid foundation established by my parents allowed me to work through instances of bias towards my disability, and I managed the transition from a sighted world to that of the visually impaired better than expected. Exclusion has never been a factor in my life as an adult, and I’m lucky for it. For children, inclusion—being accepted unconditionally in any environment—can be everything.

Inclusion is a new classroom paradigm to improve education

for those with disabilities. It is a cooperative learning process that recognizes the significance of social interaction, allowing students to learn from each other, ask questions, and embrace and explore diversity using positive daily interactions as a tool to grow. Inclusion voids the archaic notion that exclusion and separation were best for persons with disabilities. For those



individuals or for parents who have a child with cognitive or physical challenges, this is an educational benchmark. Placing students in special education (“special ed”) programs based on different physical and learning abilities sends a clear message of exclusion, affirming that singling out individuals for being different, for any reason is OK. A caveat to this is that some disabilities are extremely complex. In these cases, an individualized approach to education and socialization are key.

Parents can be vehicles of change. Differences and diversity in all walks of life are to be celebrated and learned from, but

acceptance of others begins with acceptance of oneself. We can help our children develop a positive self-image, so that they have the emotional intelligence and confidence to see the best in others.

I strive to live the life I am lucky to have to the best of my ability, and not let abnormal circumstances dictate my outlook. Every day I work to be the best man, husband, and loving father I can be. I have a remarkable wife and brilliant daughter, so I’ve done all right so far. Growing with them is a privilege with huge responsibilities often complicated by real life, illness, and being blind. I have never used my lack of sight or health as an excuse. Long ago I established high expectations for myself, and when not met, I learn from that experience and forge on. All life philosophies that I share with Ella. Our daily conversation always consist of moments explaining that “Daddy’s eyes don’t work as well as yours,” and sometimes I need help finding things or getting around. With time, she will understand my differences and with time this will become our normal. Recently, while we were out running errands, Ella said, without prompt and matter-of-factly, “Daddy, hold my hand. I help you down the steps.” My 2.5-year-old is leading the dialogue. I hope other parents and children follow suit. ♦

Bobby is a professional mountain biker who considers his marriage to wife Heidi and raising daughter Ella his greatest achievements. Read more about him at www.rideblindracing.com.

PLAY and CLASSES

FREE FOR GGMG MEMBERS



Peekadoodle
kidsclub

All GGMG Members receive free access to the Play Space on Thursdays from 2-4pm and on the first and third Saturday of each month from 9am - Noon, a \$100 discount on birthday parties hosted at Peekadoodle, and \$25 day passes anytime. GGMG members who are new to Peekadoodle will receive two months free membership, including 8 consecutive enrichment classes for one child. If purchasing a membership immediately after the free 2 month trial, the initiation fee is waived. GGMG volunteers receive a discounted membership rate (\$50 per month) for 12 months. To sign up, simply swing by the Kidsclub with a copy of your GGMG card or the most recent newsletter (addressed to you)!

WWW.PEEKADOODLE.COM

Books for Kids Holidays and Winter

By Laure Latham

Can you feel winter coming? With (hopefully) fresh snow in the Sierras and the Pacific Ocean cooler than ever, this is a festive season! Have fun with these books and remember to read to your kids as often as you can to create fun memories together. Happy holidays!



The Brave Little Puppy (A Wish Book)

Written by Lori Evert, illustrated by Per Breiehagen

Set in a wintry forest world, this book follows a little girl's curious puppy who gets lost in snowy woods. Fortunately, many forest animals help guide the puppy back to the little girl. Illustrated with gorgeous photographs of a real little girl and her puppy in Norwegian landscapes, this

wonderful book is a heart-warming Nordic tale. *Ages: 2 to 5 years*

Snow Bear

Written by Tony Mitton, illustrated by Alison Brown

This lovely story of a small lonely bear who just wants to find a home during an icy blizzard will melt more than one heart this winter. Both the fox's den and the owl's nest already have inhabitants. What about a small farmhouse, inside of which is a little girl? The pair snuggle together by the fire. This is a perfect bedtime book, to be read while snuggling, of course. *Ages: 3 to 5 years*



Gingerbread Christmas

Written and illustrated by Jan Brett

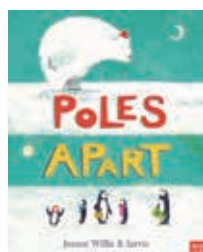
Jan Brett's beloved character the Gingerbread Baby returns in this seasonal story, featuring Gingerbread Baby's singing performance in the Gingerbread Band at the Christmas festival. When the audience realizes that Gingerbread Baby and his friend Matti are

cookies, they chase the pair who desperately need to hide in a great spot. Your kids will have to open the festive Christmas tree pop-up to find where they're hiding and they will love the luscious gingerbread and icing decorations on every page. Not quite edible, but almost. *Ages: 3 to 5 years*

Poles Apart

Written by Jeanne Willis, illustrated by Jarvis

As everybody knows, penguins are found at the South Pole. But what would happen if a penguin family took the wrong turn during a picnic at the snowman and drifted so far that they reached the North Pole and an adventurous polar bear? Maybe they would travel together around the world and see wonderful places, despite the young penguins' constant plea to have their picnic "now." With cute pastel illustrations, this book will delight preschoolers and probably settle, once and for all, the South Pole/North Pole wildlife debate. *Ages: 3 to 7 years*



Gnorman the Gnorwegian Gnome—Hope for the Gnew Year (Paperback and Kindle)

Written and illustrated by Jim Prock

Gnorman the Gnorwegian Gnome lives pretty up Gnorth in Svalbard, Gnorway, and he's got a problem. As he's at the end of Santa's route, he hardly ever gets anything on Christmas. Barely a few Gnicks and Gnacks. This year, Gnorman has a plan. Crafted to be read out loud to a young and old audience, this book will tickle you funny with its tongue-in-cheek humor. *Ages: 3 to 5 years*



Christmas for Greta and Gracie

Written and illustrated by Yasmeen Ismail
Greta and Gracie are two bunny

sisters. While Greta is chatty, Gracie loves listening to her sister. However, sometimes being the youngest and the shortest is intimidating. In the bustle of days leading to Christmas, Greta acts like the overbearing big sister and knows everything about every topic or activity. On Christmas Eve, though, it's little Gracie who hears a noise in the little room and tiptoes downstairs. Children with siblings will recognize the dynamics of sisters or brothers as well as the excitement of the holidays.

Ages: 3 to 7 years



Hanukkah Bear

Written by Eric Kimmel

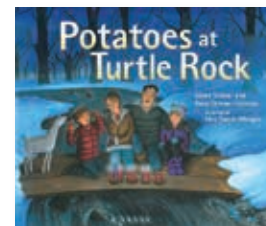
Bubba Brayna makes the best latkes in the village, but since she can't see or hear well, she doesn't know that the wonderful smells of her cooking have attracted a bear to her house. Mistaking the bear for her rabbi, she starts playing dreidel, lighting the menorah, and eating latkes. This lovely story about Hanukkah ends with a latke recipe and is perfect for young children. *Ages: 4 to 8 years*

Potatoes at Turtle Rock

Written by Susan Schur, illustrated by Alex Steele-Morgan

Young Annie leads her family on a nighttime adventure around their snowy farm to celebrate Hanukkah. Stopping at various places to create new traditions or honor old ones, Annie explains the story of Hanukkah through lanterns (to emphasize the darkness) or makeshift potato menorahs. Finally at Turtle Rock, Annie cuts the remaining potatoes and her family eats them with butter, salt, and fresh snow drizzled with maple syrup. This book will inspire families to stay together to celebrate the holidays.

Ages: 4 to 8 years



The Storm Whale in Winter

Written and illustrated by Benji Davies
Noi, who once rescued a baby whale, lives by the sea with his fisherman father and six cats. One winter, the sea freezes over and Noi's father is trapped at sea. Little Noi hopes that the baby

whale can help save his father. With biting cold illustrations, this friendship story is a wonderful bedtime read. *Ages: 4 to 8 years*

The Poet's Dog

Written by Patricia MacLachlan

Two children are caught in a blizzard, stranded in a car as their mother has gone for help. When a dog rescues them, they head to the dog's cabin to ride out the blizzard and learn about his life and Sylvan, the recently departed poet who rescued him. This beautiful read discusses loss and love in simple words and beautiful language. *Ages: 6 to 12 years*



The Coloring Book of Cards and Envelopes: Christmas

Written by Nosy Crow, illustrated by Rebecca Jones

Including 24 festive designs, this coloring book will inspire kids to get their best pencils and markers to decorate adorable pages filled with woodland animals, gingerbread men, Christmas trees, and festive decorations. Parents might even be tempted to give it a go, as this book is truly charming and full of holiday spirit. Detach the cards from the book, fold the envelopes, and send your personalized greetings to family and friends. *Ages: 4+ years*



The LEGO Christmas Ornaments Book: 15 Designs to Spread Holiday Cheer

Written by Chris McVeigh

If you have boxes of LEGOs at home, this illustrated activity book will keep the whole family busy in the run-up to the

holidays. Whether you go for a burger (yes, you can), a gingerbread house, or a present, this book with LEGOs lists (like in the instructions manuals) and step-by-step ideas will inspire every young builder at heart. *Ages: 8+ years*

Moominland Midwinter

Written by and illustrated by Tove Jansson, translated by Thomas Warburton

Moomins usually sleep through the winter, but when Moomintroll wakes up early, he finds strange white stuff around their home. Who is this Winter? The descriptions of Moomintroll finding new friends and learning to enjoy winter activities are a wonderful read for all ages. This classic children's book from Sweden has a timeless feel and will delight the whole family. *Ages: 8 to 12 years*



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

From Womb to World

Making Mom Friends

By Shaheen Bilgrami

After becoming mothers, many of us seek out fellow moms as a way to maintain our sanity. Once you get over the initial awkwardness of exchanging contact information with random strangers at baby-friendly gatherings, the process of making mom friends gets easier, and you realize you often have an instant connection based on the shared experience of new motherhood.

Unlike looking for a partner or friends before kids, women often have different criteria for mom friends. Often this results in mom friends being a much more diverse group than non-mommy friends. The shared experience of new parenthood forges a bond that overrides personality and lifestyle differences that you may have shied away from or not even encountered with pre-baby friendships.

Pre-baby, my sphere of friends was a fairly homogeneous group. My initial mommy friend circle included a pastry chef, a games developer, an audiologist, and a realtor, representing a wide range of socio-economic circumstances. Despite these differences, I found the mommy bond made these friendships develop and intensify more quickly than my pre-baby friendships.

Through this process, I found that the best mom friends were those I could count on in an emergency or vent to without judgment even if their values differed from mine. In these cases, differences gave me a wider perspective which continues to enrich my life.

Mom friends you really want in your corner:

1. The Super Organized Mom

She manages to stay on top of her home and work life while scheduling play dates. She has all the important dates and phone numbers at her fingertips. And she probably did 50 kindergarten tours, so hit her up for information!

2. The SAHM Career Mom

This mom's new career is her kid. She does a lot of research on parenting, preschools, and anything else related to her kids. Her almost encyclopedic knowledge of different methods of sleep training, weaning, parenting styles, and preschool philosophies are a wonderful resource for her less informed friends.

3. The Experienced Mom

This mom has older children and really knows not to sweat the small stuff. She's great at helping you tame your first-time-parent angst when you feel like you're drowning.

4. The Chilled Out Mom

Nothing will ruffle the feathers of this meditating Zen mom. Hang out with her and soak in some of those calming vibes...and maybe a mommy and me yoga class.

5. The Crafty Mom

This Pinterest-addicted mom makes her kids Halloween costumes and has a craft cupboard worthy of Martha Stewart. A useful friend when you need birthday party décor help, crafting advice, or if you run out of art supplies.

6. The Free Range Mom

This mom lets her kids explore independently as much as possible, and allows them to learn through their mistakes. She lets Junior trap his fingers in the drawers because it will teach him a valuable lesson. She might inspire you to loosen up.

7. The "Gets You Out of the House" Mom

There is always one friend who can easily motivate you to get dressed and out of the house for kid-friendly days out, as well as much needed moms' nights out. She is crucial to your sanity!

I found that the best mom friends were those I could count on in an emergency or vent to without judgment even if their values differed from mine.

8. The Prepared Mom

This mom is a great one to have close by in an emergency! She has a diaper bag full of spare supplies and snacks that she's happy to share. Her earthquake kit is up to date (and she may even be willing to make one for you!).

On the flip side, here are some mom friends you might want to keep at arm's length (if possible):

1. The Controversial Mom

This mom's parenting style and life is the complete opposite to yours and she's constantly pushing her strong views on vaccinations, nutrition, and discipline on you.

2. The Critical Mom

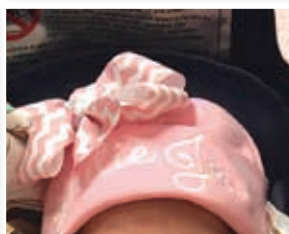
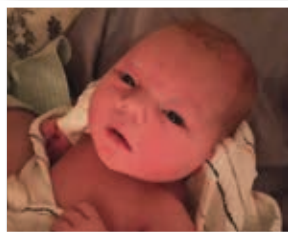
We have all met at least one mom who leaves us feeling bad about ourselves or inadequate as a parent. As if sleep deprivation wasn't making us feel bad enough.

3. The Bragging Mom

This is the woman who managed to lose all her baby weight overnight and whose kid hit all her milestones months earlier than yours. You know about all this because she told you... multiple times! ❖

Shaheen Bilgrami is a freelance writer, editor, and a contributor to blog.littlelane.com, when she isn't trying to keep up with her energetic 4.5-year-old! Contact her through her website, shaheenbilgrami.com.

New Arrivals



To announce your new arrival in the magazine and for a chance to win a Babyganics gift set, fill out the form at www.ggm.org/community.html.

Julie Stewart **Baby Jennifer Marie**
Giuliana T. **Baby Ruth**
Kari L. **Baby Beatrice**
Lisa C. **Baby Roxanna Catherine**
Carolina S. **Baby Lila Isabela**
Sharon C. **Baby Lucia Catherine**



Congratulations to **Sharon C.**! She will be pampering her little one with products from Babyganics. These plant-based, tear-free, hypoallergenic cleansers and lotions clean and protect skin from head to toe.

Volunteers of the Month



Congratulations to **Rachel Watson** (September), and **Dru Garza** and **Nellyn Hechtmann** (October), our volunteers of the months! Dru is co-chair of the Social Events Committee and director of Neighborhood Meetups for Sunset/West Portal. Nellyn is co-chair of the Social Events Committee and an ambassador for Neighborhood Meetups in the Marina. Dru and Nellyn were the driving force behind GGMG's fantastic Fall Festival this year. Rachel is an active member of the Community Support Committee, and has been crucial to the committee's success since 2011.

DRU, WE WANT TO KNOW YOUR FAVORITE...**Pastimes:** Karaoke and brunch...do those count? **Reading Material:** *When Things Fall Apart* by Pema Chodron; **Film:** Anything with Steve Martin or Johnny Depp; **Restaurant:** In SF, Slanted Door. Outside of the city, anything seafood; **Destination:** Anywhere by the beach. Preferably close to an incredible spa and fabulous restaurants; **Parenting Advice:** Treat your first child like he/she is your third. Makes life less stressful.

NELLYN, WE WANT TO KNOW YOUR FAVORITE...**Pastimes:** Bravo TV; **Reading Material:** *The Corrections* and *All The Light We Cannot See*; **Film:** *Up, Enchanted April*; **Restaurant:** Ozumo; **Destination:** Maui; **Parenting Advice:** Try to be consistent!

RACHEL, we want you to know how important you are to GGMG!

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

Take Your Family to Camp

Camp Mather offers San Francisco families an escape from city life and an opportunity to re-engage with nature in a supportive community.

By Megan Bushnell



Have you heard of Camp Mather? Soon after I moved to San Francisco, I started to hear mutterings about this mystical “family camp.” I was immediately intrigued because as a kid, I lived for summer camp. As a newly minted Californian and mom, I wanted to learn more: Could I really share my love of camp with my children years before sending them off to camps of their own? Does a place actually exist where I can sing campfire songs with other parents and kids and not worry about what we are going to eat for breakfast in the morning? Yet a part of me wondered if this so-called family camp was merely a vestige of a bygone era, a last holdout in the San Francisco hinterlands celebrating peace and love through drum circles. I decided to find out more.

Your chance to experience a little bit of history

It turns out that Camp Mather, located on a 337-acre site west of Yosemite National Park, originally housed laborers during the construction of the nearby O’Shaughnessy Dam. Reincarnated as a family camp, this beautiful wooded oasis in the middle of Stanislaus National Forest has hosted up to 1,500 families every summer for the past 90 years. Generations have grown up attending Camp Mather, and its importance to the San Francisco community cannot be overstated. Regina Jenkins, GGMG mom of two, has attended Camp Mather both as a child and a parent. Attending Mather as a kid meant she had “relationships with other kids for [that] week unlike any I had at home. The freedom and independence of walking arm in arm with my new best friends was a feeling I’ll never forget.” She plans on taking her children back to experience the same summer magic whenever she can.



The camp is managed by San Francisco’s Recreation and Parks Department and gives priority to residents of the city. Families stay Sunday through Saturday in either tents or cabins, and eat meals in a communal dining room. The cost of a week’s stay ranges from \$247 (campsite) to \$1,048 (six-person cabin), plus an additional \$239 per person for food

worry about your kids the whole time you are there—it’s a safe environment to have fun every day in nature.”

The family camp experience also enables and fosters friendships between families in a way that’s unique to the location. Those camp activities that keep the kids entertained (archery, swimming, canoeing) allow mom

City kids are typically not allowed to roam free unsupervised by adults, but at Mather this is the norm.

(2016 rates). There is a pool, a lake, horse stables, a ropes course: all the trappings of your typical summer camp, but sized appropriately for adults, little ones, and everyone in between. Veterans tell me that anyone can stay at Camp Mather, but kids over 4 will be able to participate in most physical activities and handle the rough terrain.

The family that camps together stays together

Perhaps the most important part of being at camp is the opportunity to unplug from the modern, high-tech San Francisco lifestyle while recharging a connection to the natural world. Camp cabins provide electric lights, creaky wooden dressers, cots, and mattresses. There is exactly one electrical outlet per cabin, but no wifi or cell service. At home, city kids are typically not allowed to roam free unsupervised by adults, but at Mather this is the norm. As former GGMG mom Sonia Weiss put it, “You don’t have to



But what will we eat?

You may be wondering how on earth little Bobby will survive without organic granola and freshly squeezed pomegranate juice in his earthenware cup each morning. This is where camp mentality kicks in: it’s classic camp food, and one week of it won’t kill you. Sure, you may miss a few antioxidants, but think of the social benefits of having your entire family eat the same food that everyone else at the table is eating, at the same time. The concept of sharing meals and conversations with others is one many of us are unable to emphasize during our day-to-day existence in the real world. Besides, to dull the pain of forgoing typical foods from home, you can always bring your own alcohol.

Although communal dining is meant to be a simple, one-size-fits-all solution, Camp Mather is very accommodating to attendees with medically restricted diets or food allergies. Marni Rosen is a mom of 5-year-old twins, one of whom must follow a very strict diet that requires Marni to bring food prepared at home wherever they go. She said the staff was extremely accommodating and made “everything possible” so that her family’s experience was not hindered and they could also enjoy the communal eating concept.

Everyone sing “Kumbaya”

Everyone is welcome at Camp Mather every week, but during the first week of the summer, the camp provides additional programming for Inclusion Week. Extra staff members, including two Certified Therapeutic



Recreation Specialists, are on hand during this week to ensure the full camp experience is available to everyone. Thanks to this program, Marni's son was able to go on a canoe ride and participate in other camp activities which would have been impossible in almost any other setting. And the camp's ASL class gave her whole family an activity to do together that related directly to something her son was gaining in proficiency at home.

If you check the box on the Inclusion Week application to indicate that a member of your family has a disability, a specialist will check in with you once you are registered, to offer a therapeutic recreation assessment and ensure that any/all specific needs are met. In the weeks leading up to her first stay at Mather, Marni admitted that she talked on the phone to her liaison "at least six or seven times" during which she was able to discuss all the details about her son's special diet and mobility challenges so that they were prepared for the week. During Inclusion week, the staff plans special field trips (to the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, for instance) that will accommodate families with children with disabilities.

One particularly important feature of the week is that camp staff members arrange to give parents of children with disabilities a respite from childcare if they so choose. After a connection has been established between a camp caregiver and child, parents can sign up for a time slot during which a staff member will participate in activities with the child while the parents do their own thing at camp.

Marni's family of four has attended Inclusion Week two years in a row, and has been thrilled with the experience. She said the first week of any summer camp can be "bumpy" (one year the pool wasn't usable because it needed additional maintenance, and another year horseback

riding classes were delayed), but "the fact that Camp Mather even has an Inclusion Week makes it a special kind of place you can't find just anywhere." Inclusion Week is a 4-year-old program, and the staff is always looking for feedback and suggestions to improve the experience. Lucas Tobin, supervisor for therapeutic recreation and inclusion at SF Recreation and Parks, said that some of the most positive feedback regarding the week "is from the families who don't have a [family] member with a disability, because they love the exposure their kids receive and the community it builds." It is truly a special week to stay at Camp Mather.

Saving Camp Mather

In August of 2013, the catastrophic Rim Fire burned over 400 square miles in the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Fire crews went to heroic efforts to save Camp Mather, ultimately using a risky but effective backfire to save it. Unfortunately, other nearby camps, including the city of Berkeley's Tuolumne Family Camp, did not survive. The fire has served as a reminder to friends and loyal attendees that Camp Mather is truly part of the wilderness, which is why it remains such a unique and precious gift to San Franciscans. Third-generation campers like Sonia's kids will continue to spend a week at Camp Mather every year that the lottery allows them, and those of us who have yet to visit will surely join them soon.

So start filling out your application today—the lottery begins January 2017! ♦

Megan is a former marine biologist who spends her time trying to get two little girls to experience as much of the outdoors as possible. Her kids would LOVE Camp Mather. She should take them.



How to "win" the lottery

The application for Camp Mather appears overly complicated. Our insider tips can make it less of a headache.

NOTE: The lottery starts at the beginning of January and ends around the first week of February. See www.tinyurl.com/sf-rec-and-parks for 2016 rates, rules, and regulations

REGISTRATION

- You must have an active SF Rec and Parks account and pay a \$100 application fee to enter the lottery.
- Step-by-step instructions on how to fill out the lottery application can be found at: www.tinyurl.com/camp-mather-lottery.
- You cannot change the primary reservation person; that person must be there at check-in.
- The application asks you to list everyone who is coming. You can make changes to this after you receive your assignment until 2 weeks before your check-in day, and people can come for partial weeks.
- Remember: if you don't get a reservation via the lottery system, you may still get one from the waitlist, so don't give up hope!

CHANGING YOUR RESERVATION

- To make a change to your reservation, email matherreservations@sfgov.org the name, age, date of arrival, and date of departure for each guest that you are changing.
- Each time you make changes to your registration it costs \$18, whether you are making one change or many.

PRO TIPS

- Children under 2 years don't count towards the headcount in cabins or tents.
- You can select two cabin choices and three week choices. The more flexible you are, the greater your opportunity to get a cabin through the lottery.
- The six-person cabins are least often requested, likely because they are the most expensive option; a six-person tent site is the cheapest option.
- You can choose Lakeside or Dining Hall side; the walk from the dining hall to the pool and lake is less than half a mile, and is very easily traversed using bikes/scooters.



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School for All

Inclusive Schools Week in San Francisco public schools both celebrates all students and educates about overcoming the challenges inclusiveness poses.

By Jennifer Butterfoss Photographs by Aviva Roller Photography

It was my first day as a 7th grade teacher in East Palo Alto. Fresh bulletin boards, newly sharpened pencils and cheerful signs welcoming my new students hid any anxiety I felt. In walked Jordan, with a slow rocking shuffle, the beaming smile of a Cheshire cat, and a long string of drool dangling from the corner of his mouth. Jordan was nonverbal and communicated with various gestures, finger pointing, and a giant grin. The students behind him let out exasperated sighs as they waited for him to make his way into the classroom. I swallowed hard. It was going to be an interesting year.

Determined to reach each and every child, I quickly discontinued the preschool-age worksheets Jordan’s aide was used to having him complete. Instead, I created opportunities to include Jordan in the typical activities of the classroom. Group projects became opportunities for him to glue down images, hold up the finished poster while his classmates presented to the class and help put materials back where they belonged. Jordan might not have been able to produce a summary paragraph of the social studies text we read aloud, but he demonstrated comprehension with astonishing accuracy

through picture drawings and gestures. As my own teaching confidence increased, so did numerous little micro moments of social skill building for both Jordan and his peers. The highlight of our year came when we caught Jordan secretly passing a note to his school crush. He received detention that day, the way any other middle school boy in my classroom did for the great infraction of note passing. The “A is for Alligator” worksheets were now replaced by the tortured angst of unrequited middle school love poetry.

These little sparks of understanding and pushing the boundaries of societal expectations happen across U.S. public schools every day, thanks to the improvements in education policy pertaining to students with disabilities. Many of us may remember those mysterious classrooms of our childhoods in the more isolated halls of our school buildings, a portable classroom on the yard, or maybe an entire different building altogether, where the “other kids” went to class. However, our own children are more likely to share a book with a classmate

on the autism spectrum, eat lunch with a student who communicates using an iPad, or play a modified game of kickball with a friend in a wheelchair. While efforts to build more inclusive schools have been a slow, ongoing, and challenging process, many schools in San Francisco proudly hold the identity of being a full-inclusion school with great pride.

The origins of Inclusive Schools Week

Inclusive Schools Week, launched nationwide in 2001, was developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs. San Francisco officially adopted the week under Mayor Gavin Newsom in 2010. The event seeks to “celebrate the progress that schools have made in providing a supportive and quality education to an increasingly diverse student population.” By disseminating lesson plans, celebration ideas, and informational resources to schools and families nationwide, this week provokes discussion to bring about more inclusive school practices.

The idea of including all students in public schools, regardless of ability level, is not a recent one in San Francisco. The creation of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act in 1975, and then years later the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990, guaranteed that every child with a disability would have access to a public education in the school they would normally attend if not disabled. In 2011, SFUSD underwent a redesign of the student assignment process for students requiring inclusion services. Prior to this, students with

disabilities may have been limited due to some schools identifying themselves as able to provide specific inclusive services and others not. Now SFUSD and the schools themselves determine the appropriate supports to make the school inclusion assignment work, regardless of placement, to include all students.

Breaking down barriers and labels

Kevin Truitt, the chief of student, family, and community support for San Francisco Public Schools, gave me a glimpse into the evolving state of inclusive practices in SFUSD schools. As a former principal at Mission High School, the issue around inclusion struck a very personal chord with him. “When I was at Mission [High], we had a large special education population of around 18-22 percent. There was a tendency to isolate,” Truitt said. “I kept thinking, *so now 20 percent of my student population has a label?*” The label shouldn’t come before the student. Instead, we should be saying ‘That’s Carina. That’s Timothy.’”

The school worked first to first remove the Special Education hallways. “We wanted to be a full-inclusion school,” he continued. “The kids at Mission were so accepting and so wonderful. They’ve had their own challenges in life. When you get kids that have had their own share of challenges, they recognize this and can be very sensitive.” Truitt credits an outstanding staff of special education teachers in initiating Inclusive Schools Week. “Before we



started district-wide, my teachers would tell me [when] it was Inclusive Schools Week. They kept pushing our thinking and asking the tough questions, such as, *Are we creating more boundaries than we actually need? Are we creating more walls than necessary?*”

These recent reform efforts in SFUSD schools differ greatly, with a number of challenges along the way. Most parents and school staff want all children to be included and receive the same educational benefits as others, but many are fearful. Teachers worry they won’t be able to meet the needs of a child who may not be able to communicate verbally in the same classroom as a child reading several years above grade level. Parents worry their child might not get the kind of personalized attention and differentiation needed to thrive. Inclusive Schools Week attempts to tackle these fears and insecurities in a light and playful way, with silly events like “Mismatch Sock Day” where everyone is encouraged to wear mismatched socks to show that being different is okay, or creating paper chains to decorate the classroom with commitments from students to be more inclusive, or classroom read alouds where kids can hear stories of overcoming difference and accepting all.

“I’ve seen some great school-wide celebration and activities,” reports Truitt. “School communities really use this week to welcome everyone. Kids start mixing with other kids that perhaps they wouldn’t normally talk to....Hopefully the participation itself helps schools realize why is this just one week, and what about this can we do every day?”



Celebrating in our schools

The details and extent of celebration varies. Across SFUSD, many students complete special art projects depicting their hopes for inclusion and celebrating their communities. Students attending Miraloma Elementary School benefit from some major efforts school-wide to celebrate inclusion, taking part in a school writing project, exchanging symbolic necklaces that represent everyone's unique gifts, and attending an assembly with guest authors like Sarah and Ian Hoffman, creators of the children's book *Jacob's New Dress*. Stop by Alvarado Elementary School and you may notice students and parents learning how to use American Sign Language to sing school favorites during morning circle or participating in Abilities Awareness Stations where students use oven mitts to try and cut paper, or run relay races in oversized shoes. Each activity is followed by some reflection and discussion on how this might fuel empathy for classmates who have disabilities.

Beyond one week

Inclusion goes beyond a simple week-long celebration. The intent is to promote reflection to determine how inclusion efforts are going, and what more might be needed to

make inclusion a normalized practice year-round. For many schools, the process is one that is constantly evolving, taking things stepwise to dismantle outdated practices, build understanding, and move into an era that will no longer tolerate the isolation and segregation of students with disabilities from their more typical peers.

Alvarado PTA President Fred Spitz, a long-time advocate for Inclusive Schools Week planning and preparation at his children's school, reflected on his favorite moment from last year's event. "During one session of the Ability Awareness Stations, there were only two classrooms signed up: the grade 3-5 Special Day Class and the third grade General Education class across the hall," he said. "The kids in the General Education broke up into small groups and each adopted one student from the SDC class. They spent 30 wonderful minutes interacting and communicating. The teachers remarked about how they'd spent several months separated by just 12 feet but hadn't taken the time to let the kids get to know each other. It was really special."

The hope is that through small events and ideas sparked by this special weeklong celebration, bigger ideas can transform into year-round efforts. Sign language becomes a regular part of morning circle time and the normalized way all students signal their need to use the restroom or grab a drink of water in a noisy cafeteria. Kids begin to notice the student sitting alone at recess, hesitant to join in on a game of four square due to a disability, and make the adaptations needed so he can participate. General Education teachers realize the child who might otherwise spend the day in a separate classroom could easily be included in their next field trip or class performance because they visited a classroom for an art project where the accommodations needed to make the event successful were demystified. Parents remember to include students with special needs on their child's next birthday invite



because they shared a meal together during a school-wide potluck event.

"I feel really proud of the job my teachers do of including our kinder students in the special day classes where they learn about different abilities and ways of learning during Inclusive Schools Week and then beyond," remarked Luis Rodriguez, principal of Fairmount Elementary School. "The biggest highlight is that the development of empathy does not happen with these students just one week a year; it happens all the time when fifth grade students go to the special day classes on a weekly basis and work with them, or when fourth grade students partner up with first graders as their reading buddies."

Truitt advocates for Inclusive Schools Week as a kind of litmus test. "If you have to make a ton of adjustments to your school to make this happen, if this is such a monumental task, then it's something to think about," he said. "If schools find themselves in a situation where it becomes a mammoth undertaking and so very different than the norm, it needs to give the school some pause and time to think, why is that? Maybe the walls and barriers exist for no reason."

Inclusive Schools Week takes place this year from December 5 to 9. Learn more about it at inclusiveschools.org/inclusive-schools-week. ❖

Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss is an SFUSD administrator and a big supporter of Inclusive Schools Week. She has the mismatched socks to prove it.



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It Takes a Village

People with disabilities are vital members of society who should be embraced, not dealt with separately.

By Bobby Shukla Photography by Anna Psalmond

An August 2016 Bloomberg poll asked participants to rate which behavior by then-Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump bothered them the most. The answer involved the incident in late 2015 when Trump made hand gestures and facial expressions mocking investigative reporter Serge Kovalski, who has arthrogryposis. Statistics of this kind reveal a general empathy towards people with disabilities in our culture; other statistics, however, reveal more difficult truths about the lives of many with disabilities.

Continued discrimination

A 2014 annual report by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics cites that almost 30 percent of working age Americans with disabilities in 2013 were living in poverty. Only 34 percent of Americans with disabilities aged 18 to 64 were employed, compared to 74 percent of people without disabilities. In California, a report by the Department of Fair Employment and Housing covering the years 2011 through 2014 shows that disability discrimination was the most common basis for complaints of housing discrimination and the most common basis, along with retaliation, of employment discrimination. People with disabilities also remain exempt from federal minimum wage laws that were passed in the 1930s as a result of a system that placed them to work in sheltered workshops and factories, paying on a per item basis instead of

per hour like everyone else.

To combat such rampant disability discrimination, experts believe inclusive education can go a long way in improving the quality of life for many. Inclusion in schools is accomplished when all students fully participate and learn alongside their same-age peers in general education instruction and curriculum, yet this rarely happens. Inclusive environments have been proven to better prepare all students for adult life. Studies show that time spent in the general education curriculum is strongly and positively correlated with math and reading achievement for students with disabilities.¹ Studies also show that students without disabilities made significantly greater progress in reading and math when taught in inclusive settings.² Students who

provided peer support for students with disabilities in general education classrooms demonstrated positive academic outcomes such as increases in academic achievement, assignment completion, and classroom participation.³

Associate Professor at University of Missouri Saint Louis's Department of Educator Preparation, Innovation and Research April Regester underscores the utility of inclusive education even beyond school years. "Every child in America eventually ages out of our educational systems," she says. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law that recognizes a free, appropriate public education for all, that age is 22. At that point, people are expected to participate in the world as adults. "If we have segregated school systems, the realities of adult life won't match those experiences," Regester states. While inclusive education in schools goes far in preparing young people for adult life, much more can be done to support inclusion in the community and beyond school years.

Inclusion starts with the little things

According to Regester, supporting the work of inclusion begins at home. "Often families of a person with a disability are focused on therapy and intervention with an emphasis on overcoming or treating the disability, and forget about the benefit of soft skills learned in everyday life." Soft skills are day-to-day

People with disabilities also remain exempt from federal minimum wage laws that were passed in the 1930s... paying on a per item basis instead of per hour like everyone else.

behaviors in ordinary settings, like knowing not to speak too loudly at a restaurant. "A child with a disability should be included in typical family activities and outings. Kids taught from experience, versus curriculum and targeted interventions only, understand nuances better. A thoughtful combination should be considered that embeds generalization (applying the learned skill in natural settings) into interventions and therapy. If a skill taught via therapy and intervention treatment is not generalized to natural environments where the skill is needed, it will have no meaning or relevance to that individual," says Regester. Greater inclusivity of people with disabilities in daily activities will also increase overall understanding and acceptance. Regester states, "the more we have people with disabilities involved in everyday life, the more everyone is prepared for the diversity that truly exists in the world."

Eileen Medina, who is retired from the Santa Barbara County Education Office,

Special Education Division, agrees that in order for people with disabilities to succeed, communities need to be reminded that this is another group of people that can be disenfranchised and needs community acceptance to succeed. Medina believes this starts with visibility and is furthered by physical access for people with disabilities in the community, at events, and in private establishments like restaurants.

Medina also emphasizes the value of keeping an eye on the future in promoting inclusion more broadly. Medina is a mother of three adult children and her youngest child Matthew has Down Syndrome. Matthew is an accomplished young man who has his own business providing cleaning services. He is the recipient of the Mary Falvey Outstanding Young Person Award and sits on the board of CalTASH, a disability advocacy group. "I always asked myself: how does what Matthew is learning now relate to his future goals? It may take longer for someone with a disability to get there due to the nature of the disability," Medina says. She encourages parents and students to discuss future goals with teachers and mentors, even if the teachers have not asked. This will enable them to start engaging students now in the ways that will prepare them for adult life.

Utilize and strengthen community support systems

Regester stresses the importance of utilizing support systems built into the greater community to increase the success of students at school and beyond. These resources exist in any consistent community organization or extracurricular activity, like faith-based organizations, the YMCA, neighborhood organizations, or community classes like cooking or painting, etc. "These groups involve people that are not being paid to be with a child with disabilities [like therapists or aides at school] who can teach important soft skills and flexibility, since the interactions are not limited to trained personnel. Relationships are developed based on similar interests and interdependence, that are more reciprocal in nature and creative in their formation," Regester says. In her work as a researcher, she has found that community support systems



help prepare people with disabilities for “generalization,” an academic term used to describe the ability to use learned skills in different settings. These resources also provide longer term support for success. Regester shares the sobering fact that people with disabilities have a higher risk of being shot by police, have higher rates of depression due to loneliness, and higher rates of depression than members of the general



public. Community support systems help people with disabilities engage with a wide variety of people, develop support systems that increase their quality of life, and support learning that prevents the perception of threatening behavior and difference by others. In addition, the community at large can benefit from the relationships formed, recognizing the strengths of people with disabilities and learn naturally about how to members can assist by ensuring resources are welcoming and accessible to all.

Value contribution and interdependence

Regester and Medina emphasize the importance of recognizing each individual as a contributor. Medina says that inclusion is not just about acknowledgment, but about seeking each person’s contribution. She describes it as “realizing that no one is [totally] independent; everyone has strengths, and communities get stronger when we utilize everyone’s talents.”

She states that each activity at home or in the community opens up opportunities for everyone to be a valuable contributor, such as passing the donation basket or passing out

the bulletin during religious services. She cautions against assigning less valued tasks to people with disabilities. “I remember someone saying he had a ‘job for the kids with disabilities’ and it was the least desirable one, involving trash pick-up.” On the contrary, she adds, a school recycling club, though it also involves trash, is a good opportunity for kids of all abilities to work together in a way where each is regarded as an equally valued contributor.

Regester encourages us to frame ideas of contribution in terms of equity versus equality. “People with disabilities often need different things to get access to the same success and opportunities as others.” She notes that there is a common misconception that people with disabilities need something “special.” In reality, practices of segregating people with disabilities and not recognizing the ways each person may uniquely benefit the family, a business, or the community limits access to the advantages the rest of the population takes for granted.

To raise awareness about interdependence, Medina co-founded Project Interdependence in Santa Barbara County, which was born out of a national project. Its purpose was to break barriers, myths, and stereotypes about people with disabilities. The project had year-round activities, but its pinnacle was a week-long camp where students with and without disabilities would together be given various challenges where by design, no one felt comfortable. The challenges often seemed impossible and could only be navigated by reliance all participants in the group. One example was to get each member of the group across a large obstacle course by taking turns on a gigantic ball that was rolled by the rest of the group. The rules during the challenges would also abruptly change; one could suddenly be told she could not speak or had to wear a blindfold, which forced quieter students to take action and lead.

“The students had a change in viewpoint and saw how they were stronger when they utilize everyone’s talents,” Medina recalls. This proved true even when the ultimate goal of the activity was not achieved. The exercise engendered feelings of community through group reliance and the collective experiences of victory or loss. Regester, who was a

teenage participant of Project Interdependence, devoted her doctoral dissertation to its analysis and regards it as influential in her career choice.

Put people first
Regester, a mother of school-aged children, offers some practical advice on being an ally in the work of inclusion. She teaches her kids to put people first, both in language (refer to “a person with a disability” rather than naming the disability first, as in “the autistic guy”) and in regard, as in a disability is just one part of someone and should not be the only way to think of that person. She encourages her children to find the many points of common ground and interest that they will inevitably find in any other person, such as hobbies or taste in music. She also advises that a disability is not something that has to be ignored. She hopes for children to feel comfortable asking questions while doing so respectfully. “It’s important not to make assumptions about whether someone with a disability wants your help in a given situation. It’s important to ask first and feel comfortable asking a question like that.” Medina agrees that children should be encouraged to forge friendships and not merely be urged to provide assistance or be helpers to people with disabilities. Ultimately, putting people first helps us see all people as they should be seen: multifaceted, intrinsically valuable, and deserving of leading full and self-determined lives. As Regester reminds us, the best support for the work of inclusion is to start with the basic premise that “inclusion is not about disability rights, it’s about human rights.” ❖

[1] Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, & Theoharis, 2013.
[2] Cole, C. M., Waldron, N., & Majd, M. (2004). Academic progress of students across inclusive and traditional settings. *Mental Retardation*, 42(2), 136-144.
[3] Cushing, L. S., & Kennedy, C. H. (1997). Academic effects of providing peer support in general education classrooms on students without disabilities. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 30(1), 139-151.

Bobby Shukla is a lawyer who represents employees in employment law, including disability discrimination. She participated in Project Interdependence as a teenager. It changed her for the better.

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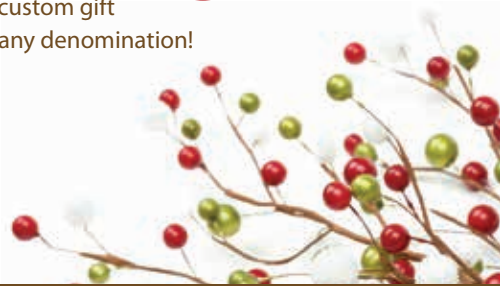
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Where Have All



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Gone?



While there is growing awareness that addressing Silicon Valley's lack of diversity is crucial, progress is slow.

By Neha Mandal Masson

Silicon Valley is widely known as the innovation engine of the world. The Bay Area's own local industry is the gathering place for the best and brightest to invent new technologies that impact and even define parts of our daily lives. On top of that, we live in an incredibly diverse part of the country. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the majority of Bay Area inhabitants (54 percent) come from Asian, Latino, and African-American backgrounds, and more than 50 percent of the population is female.

Then how could it be that these illustrious tech giants have a serious lack of gender and ethnic diversity in their workplaces?

Why diversity matters

A 2014 report by Mother Jones entitled "Silicon Valley Firms Are Even Whiter and More Male Than You Thought" states that American tech workers are overwhelmingly male (83 percent), and the majority of them (94 percent) identify as white or Asian. Two years later, the picture hasn't improved much, especially when looking at employees in leadership positions. Google is still nearly 70 percent male (globally) according to its latest diversity report, with only 2 percent of its workforce identifying as African American. This trend continues to hold true across most major firms in the Valley. Apple reported that in 2016 a mere 28 percent of employees in

Having a diverse workforce means having a wider range of perspectives, ideas, and experiences to tap into, which has been shown to foster stronger teams and ultimately more successful companies.

leadership positions were women, a 3 percent decrease over the prior year.

Some say that companies should hire the best person for the job regardless of race, gender, orientation, or anything else. However, there is a growing amount of research now showing that diverse workplaces, in fact, perform better overall. Just this year, a report by Morgan Stanley called "Why it Pays to Invest in Gender Diversity" found that companies with high gender diversity produce better returns on equity and lower overall volatility than peer companies that lack diversity. Having a diverse workforce means having a wider range of perspectives, ideas, and experiences to tap into, which has been shown to foster stronger teams and ultimately more successful companies.

More companies are making diversity a priority. Companies including Apple, Google, Facebook, and Twitter have appointed heads of diversity and inclusion, and tasked those leaders with using data-driven approaches to tackle core issues. By publicly committing to annual diversity goals, company leaders hope to effect change by measuring progress and holding themselves accountable. Twitter, for example, published goals for 2016 including increasing women overall to 35 percent of the

workforce and underrepresented minorities to 11 percent of employees in the U.S. While these numbers still seem far too low, they need to start somewhere. "We want the makeup of our company to reflect the vast range of people who use [our platform]," Janet Van Huysse, Twitter's former head of diversity and inclusion, wrote on the company's blog in 2015. "Doing so will help us build a product to better serve people around the world."

The issue of bias

Many organizations are focusing on one central issue: unconscious bias in the workplace. "Most of us believe that we are ethical and unbiased," writes Harvard University researcher Mahzarin Banaji in the *Harvard Business Review*. "We imagine we're good decision makers, able to objectively size up a job candidate or a venture deal and reach a fair and rational conclusion that's in our and our organization's best interests, but more than two decades of research confirms that, in reality, most of us fall woefully short of our inflated self-perception."

These hidden preferences may lead us to unconsciously believe that a male candidate for an engineering role is more qualified than an identically qualified female candidate. It's

also the principle that impacts who we befriend and who we trust. People generally gravitate towards people like themselves who adhere to their cultural norms and what they believe to be true. Companies are taking steps to address bias, including training employees on the concept, restructuring hiring practices, and making promotion criteria more concrete. The idea is to make people aware of their biases, but to also redesign processes to reduce or eliminate the opportunity for bias to creep in.

That's the good news. The bad news is, the actual impact so far has been underwhelming. Self-published diversity reports in August revealed that Apple and Facebook (among others) have not seen significant increases in gender and ethnic diversity in the past 12 to 24 months.

How diversity slips through the cracks

Another core issue is the "pipeline problem." It's not that there are zero viable candidates representing a range of backgrounds; the issue is that these candidates are often overlooked. Tech firms rely heavily on referrals when hiring new people—great employees know great people just like themselves. But therein lies the problem: predominantly white male workers who went to a small selection of elite schools draw from a largely homogeneous pool of talent. You can't get a job you are not even being considered for.

To alleviate these issues, tech recruiting is now happening at a wider range of colleges and universities, including historically black and Hispanic institutions. Companies are also partnering with organizations that support underrepresented minorities, women, and the LGBTQ community. Despite slow progress, these important steps are necessary to make an impact. And it's not just about diversity; the world needs more people in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics' National Employment Matrix shows that by



2020, jobs in computer science are expected to grow nearly two times faster than the national average, creating some 5 million jobs.

Then there is the other end of the spectrum. Maxine Williams, Facebook’s global director of diversity since 2013, spoke to Business Insider for an article on this subject in January. “We know from research that in Latino and black communities, you’re less likely to have computer science taught in your school. So therefore you’re less likely to be the people graduating with degrees and with the skills we need to hire.”

While blaming the pipeline problem for not having diverse talent is a lazy way to excuse the problem, there is some truth to the fact that diverse talent pools need to grow. Providing access to STEM education to youth in underrepresented communities is a critical piece of the puzzle if we want to set up future generations for success. Last year, Facebook launched the TechPrep program, an online hub that introduces underrepresented minorities to computer science. Google and

organic diversity, some postulate, is rooted in inclusion and male-dominated culture. *Forbes’* contributing writer Bonnie Marcus wrote in August 2015 that “the reality is that gender and racial bias is so ubiquitous in the technology industry that it forces talented female and minority employees to leave. Companies can hire more minorities and women but without addressing this critical issue, they will not experience improvement in diversity.”

The same article cited a study where more than 700 women who held tech positions across hundreds of companies in 43 states were interviewed. On average, these women worked in tech for seven years before choosing to leave. Some women (27 percent) cited discomfort with company culture; others were fed up with discrimination related to age, race, sexuality, gender, and motherhood. Many women found that lack of flexible work arrangements, unsupportive environments, and inadequate pay to cover childcare costs made it very hard for them to stay in the workforce.



Twitter host groups of high school-aged girls every summer through the Girls Who Code program and teach them programming skills. These are a few promising examples of how companies are engaging to build the more balanced talent pools of the future.

Cultural inclusion is required

Let’s not forget the “inclusion” part of “diversity and inclusion.” The buck doesn’t stop at diversifying the workplace. Equally important is creating a culture of acceptance and fairness, and allowing for diverse needs and lifestyles. The core issue preventing

An example of progress: family leave

There is one area of inclusion where Silicon Valley is slowing setting the standard for the rest of the country. Bay Area tech firms have taken the lead in creating generous parental leave policies to support working parents. Too often, women leave the workforce or opt out of larger roles due to the imbalanced burden many shoulder at home. According to a 2008 *Harvard Business Review* report, 52 percent of women in STEM jobs ultimately leave their respective fields, and many of them do so because they cannot find the right

work/life balance. Google set the tone when it introduced its unprecedented 18-week paid leave policy for new mothers. In January, Susan Wojcicki wrote an article for the Huffington Post entitled “Closing the Tech Industry Gender Gap” that stated, “It may sound counterintuitive, but the research—and Google’s own experience—shows a generous paid maternity leave actually increases retention.” Wojcicki has risen through the ranks at Google, starting as its sixteenth employee. She is currently the CEO of YouTube and mom to five children, all of whom she had while working for the company. Google’s maternity policy was introduced when she became the first employee at the company to need it. “When women are given a short leave, or they’re pressured to be on call, some decide it’s just not worth it to return,” she said.

Firms including Facebook, Microsoft, and Netflix have followed suit by extending already generous parental leaves, allowing for 20 or more weeks of paid leave. Netflix recently removed limits to allow salaried workers “unlimited” parental leave for up to one year following the birth or adoption of a child. Policies like this have become the norm and even an expectation in Silicon Valley, a great sign of progress.

Many are also committing to equal work for equal pay. Apple recently announced that it has completely closed the pay gap in the US, compensating women \$1 for every \$1 earned by their male counterparts. Google has been working on initiatives such as closing the promotion gap between men and women by addressing issues that may cater to one gender over another in the promotion process.

Building and fostering diversity is finally becoming a priority for Silicon Valley companies, and with good reason—diverse workforces lead to better business outcomes. While progress on many fronts is slow, it’s encouraging to see efforts being made to create fair and healthy environments where women and people of all backgrounds can grow, learn, and build fulfilling careers. ❖

Neha lives in Hayes Valley with her husband and their delightful 15-month-old boy. She is a tech nerd that has worked for some of the Valley’s largest companies over the last 10 years.

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NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS: HOLIDAY FUN

If you haven’t already spent the past two or so months getting fully into the spirit for the holidays, GGMG’s Neighborhood Meetups is here to lend a hand! We are sure that your calendar is chock full of fun holiday parties for both you and your kiddos, but don’t forget to find out what is happening in your neighborhood, or in a neighborhood near you.

The ladies of the **Sunset/West Portal** are planning a Moms-Only Holiday Night at one of their houses and you’re invited to join in on the fun. There will be wine, holiday cocktails, and a gift exchange; and there may even be a cookie exchange thrown in there.

The **Sunset** Family Holiday Party will also be taking place this month. GGMG will provide crafts and breakfast/snacks and drinks, and the rest will be potluck style. Join or check in with the Sunset Neighborhood Meetups subgroup for all the fun details.

The mamas of **Bernal/Glen Park** are busily planning another rockin’ good time for their Moms-Only Holiday Party with dinner and drinks.

The ladies of the **Heights, Noe Valley**, and the **Marina** are also working on a fun and festive event or two, so make sure to join their subgroups so you won’t miss out on the fun.

To RSVP or find out more about this year’s holiday events and other events and playdates hosted in your neighborhood, join the subgroup on BigTent for the neighborhood(s) you are interested in at www.bigtent.com/group/subgroup.

You are not restricted to joining only one subgroup and you are not required to live in the neighborhood in order to join. If you have any questions or ideas for future meetups, or if you’d like to get involved as a neighborhood meetup volunteer, please contact the committee co-chair at yanina.markova@gmail.com.



KIDS ACTIVITIES

Holiday Family Fun at Presidio Officers’ Club

Come out to the Presidio Officers’ Club for kid-friendly holiday crafts and fun family activities! Make winter hand puppets, decorate cookies, learn about park wildlife at the Roving Ranger truck, and explore the Presidio Nature Lab, an all-ages, hands-on exhibition that brings the great outdoors to life. Good for children up to age 11. Free snacks will be available for all—and the first 100 families will receive a special Presidio goody bag!

DATE: Saturday, December 3
TIME: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
PLACE: 50 Moraga Ave.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/99138116



PARENT EDUCATION

Positive Discipline for Preschoolers

Am I expecting too much or too little from my preschooler? Do time-outs work? How can I be kind and firm at the same time? What do I do when my child has a tantrum? Aki Raymer of Parenting Paths will answer these all-too-common questions and arm you with the tools that you need to foster cooperation instead of chaos. Learn how to support your child’s curiosity and need for independence without letting your little one walk all over you!

DATE: Tuesday, December 6
TIME: 7:30 p.m.
PLACE: Recess Urban Recreation, 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$38 individual/\$58 couple—SAVE \$5 with promo code GGMG16

REGISTRATION: www.recessurbanrecreation.com/workshops/

Best Practices for Employing a Nanny or Childcare Provider

When we seek the support of a childcare provider or nanny, most of us aren’t prepared to suddenly become someone’s “boss.” Hand in Hand brings parents together to support each other in the process of becoming employers. We provide tools, tips, and resources to help all of us build the positive, mutually respectful employment relationships we seek with workers in our homes. At the workshop, we’ll explore what it means to employ a nanny or child care provider—as the sole employer or in a nannyshare.

DATE: Tuesday, December 13
TIME: 7 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: Community Room, 200 Brannan St.
COST: FREE but RSVP to reserve your spot

REGISTRATION: [See BigTent](#)

PLAYGROUPS

Playgroup Formation Event at Sports Basement Presidio

Here’s your chance to find that special circle of moms to help you survive motherhood. Get connected and start building friendships for you and baby.

At GGMG Playgroup Formation Events, you will meet moms with similarly aged children and learn how to launch your own playgroup. The program starts with introductions and time to get to know each other, then parents can schedule playdates to continue the fun. We’ll also be sharing information about member benefits, neighborhood meetups, and other playgroup activities available through GGMG.

This event is ideal for mothers of young infants (age 0-12 months). Expecting moms and moms with older children are also welcome to attend. We’ll make the morning fun with breakfast nibbles, juice, coffee, and fruit.

DATE: Saturday, December 3
TIME: 9 to 10:30 a.m.
PLACE: 610 Old Mason St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/99026439

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Join us for Tea and a Tour at Homeless Prenatal Program

This event is a chance to get to know this wonderful organization better as GGMG kicks off our annual holiday fundraising drive for HPP. Executive Director Martha Ryan will give you the grand tour, and there will be time to enjoy some tea and chat.

DATE: Thursday, December 1
TIME: 11 a.m.
PLACE: 2500 18th St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/99388718

Committee Spotlight: Magazine

Describe the personality of your committee.
We are a group of women dedicated to producing a top-notch publication. We are creative, passionate, and fun-loving, and very appreciative of a night out without the kids.

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

Although we all avail ourselves of other benefits of GGMG, for most of our team, the magazine has been one of the most important and useful perks of being a GGMG member. Seeing behind the curtain and helping to shape the content makes it even more special.

What types of activities or projects do you undertake?
Our end product is obviously the magazine. In the creation of each issue, we strive to bring greater depth to discussions that members are having and educate members about how GGMG operates.

How do you know when you are making a difference?
When our readers write to us! We love feedback, and appreciate suggestions for improvements as well as praise.

Who are your current volunteers?
Sonya Abrams, Stephanie AuWerter, Shaheen Bilgrami, Sarah

Brandstetter, Megan Bushnell, Jennifer Butterfoss, JoJo Rhee Chevalier, Ho-Ming So Denduangrudee, Emily deGrassi, Jessica Franklin, Anna Gracia, Virginia Green, Arwen Griffith, Tara Hardesty, Sherri Howe, Laure Latham, Lindsay Lovier, Neha Masson, Kirsten Pfleger, Anna Psalmond, Jesse Recor, Aviva Roller, Lani Schreiberstein, Jenny Shaw, Bobby Shukla, Carolyn Soling, Catherine Symon, Lora Tomova, Sandy Woo

What’s next for the Magazine Committee?
Continuing to produce a high-quality magazine, but decreasing from 10 issues per year to 6. Working with the board and the webteam in some capacity to produce website content.

How can interested GGMG members get involved in the Magazine Committee?
We are currently looking for photographers and graphic designers. If you are interested, email a CV and portfolio to editor@ggm.org. Openings for writers and copy editors come up periodically. Email editor@ggm.org if you are interested in being considered for the next open position.

How to Get Along with Your Mother-In-Law

The holidays are fast approaching and for many of us that means visiting family. Though spending time together often brings happiness and pleasure, it can sometimes cause hurt feelings as well. One relationship that can be fraught with conflict is the one with your mother-in-law. Here are some quick tips on how to improve your relationship with your partner’s mother, no matter how challenging it can be.

- Respect her age, generational, and cultural differences. Sometimes it's hard to break away from your own views on raising children.
- Invite her to participate and to help out, especially with her grandchild.
- Ask for her advice once in awhile. Even if the two of you have significant differences, she can provide a unique perspective on parenting.
- Listen to her concerns and ideas, even if you disagree with them.
- Recognize that she’s going to be a part of your life for a long time. As such, make an effort to compromise when possible.
- Remember that nobody is perfect and that all relationships need to be nurtured; sometimes a little empathy goes a long way.

Classy Classifieds

We are no Craigslist, but the ability to sell, find, and purchase gently used baby gear and household items from a fellow GGMG mom is remarkable. So let’s keep our marketplace a place worthy of a visit.

If looking for an item, you have an option to receive emails about new listings containing a certain keyword. Under “classifieds,” on the “search & browse” page, click “Change email options.” Input keywords next to “Email me when a classified listing contains any of the following keywords” and click “Save.”

If selling an item, please respond promptly to a request. Arrange a meeting and be sure to follow up with details. Change status to “Closed” if the sale has occurred. To do so, in BigTent, under the “classifieds” tab, click on “my listings.” Choose the listing, then click on red link “Edit.” Change status from “Active” to “Closed.”

Disclaimer: GGMG is not responsible for the transactions that occur between a buyer and seller.

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

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Are you trying to find a way to give back to the community? There is nothing more rewarding or fun as volunteering with GGMG! GGMG is a completely volunteer-run nonprofit. Without our wonderful volunteers, we simply would not be able to keep the organization running. And don’t forget that volunteers also receive benefits like free GGMG membership after one year of service, and deeper discounts at many of our partnership organizations (including UrbanSitter, Gymboree, and others). If you have a few spare hours a month, please consider becoming a volunteer. Contact us at volunteer@ggm.org for more information.

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- Neighborhood Meetups:** directors for Haight, NoPa/Alamo, Mission; ambassadors for Haight, Mission/Castro, Nob Hill/North Beach, Noe, Bernal/Glen Park

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I ♥ Mom

Tagging Along By Anna Gracia

“Good news,” I recently told my 5-year-old daughter. “Sophie’s mom invited you over for a playdate after school.”

“Yay!” her 3-year-old brother excitedly cheered. “We’ve never been to Sophie’s house before.”

“Oh, um” I stammered. “About that...”

Youngest children have the toughest spot in the birth order—just ask us. As the youngest of five girls, my childhood consisted of a wardrobe filled with hand-me-down clothing, the middle position on the bed in hotels, and the last sip in the Coke can (aka the backwash). My mom, having all but given up on active parenting by that point, strongly encouraged (read: insisted) my sisters bring me along to play with their neighbor friends.

My sisters were fairly good-natured about it when we were young, and I have many happy memories of playing flashlight tag, Marco Polo, and Nintendo’s *Duck Hunt* with neighbors far older than me. Once, I was invited by my sister’s friend Annie to jump on her trampoline with her while my sister was away at camp (Annie later denied the whole thing). It wasn’t until we were teenagers that my fourth sister realized having a younger sibling hanging around all the time wasn’t cool, at which point she promptly stopped giving me rides to places and rolled her eyes any time I showed up at the same party as her.

With two years between them, Tigerlily and Bear have the same age gap as my sister and I. They are best friends, like we were at that age, mostly because their lives are inextricably intertwined. They have no memories of life without each other. They share everything—a room, friends, even clothes (my son looks stunning in her empire-waist Elsa dress). They spend every night not just in the same bed, but so close together that one is usually sleeping atop the other. They don’t even go to the bathroom without each other. Once, Tigerlily woke up around midnight and came upstairs to use the bathroom. Seconds later, we turned around to see Bear

stumbling up the stairs, half asleep, just to make sure he was there to hand her the toilet paper.

Whether it’s stickers at the doctor, after-dinner dessert, or pennies found on the street, the first words out of Tigerlily’s mouth are always, “What about Bear?” She has always been concerned about making sure he is not only included but given an equal share of everything she has. Not until she started kindergarten had they ever actually been separated for a full day.

So when the day of her playdate with Sophie finally arrived, it



was difficult to explain to Bear that for once, he wasn’t going to be included. He didn’t understand the concept that Tigerlily might have friends who weren’t also automatically his friends too. Remembering my own childhood, I momentarily panicked about the domino effect this would have on their relationship: first playdates, then birthday parties—we were only one sleepover away from them never being best friends again!

As it turned out, my daughter had a much firmer grip on reality. She turned to her brother and said, “Don’t worry, Bear. You can play with us next time Sophie comes over.” And just like that, he was included again.

Though my third is just a baby now, he’ll probably always be the odd one out. (I told you being the youngest sibling is the toughest!) I guess we’ll have to get him a dog or something. ❖

Anna is a freelance writer and that person who makes jokes in awkward situations. Her spirit animal is Chandler from “Friends”. You can read her thoughts about recent movies at www.TheSnarkyReviewer.com.

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