

As Graduation Approaches, Moms Retrace Their Journeys and Mark Their Destinations

"Mothers' Club taught us that we are women and can have our own dreams and goals," explains Isabel who recently completed our ESL program. "I want to own my own business. I have ideas, but they are secret!" For moms like Isabel, graduation can be bittersweet. It means leaving the program that has nurtured and encouraged them and their children. But like their children, it's time for these moms to take on new challenges.

"Before Mothers' Club, I thought being a mother, this is my life. But now I have goals. I'm going to take classes in the fall to get my high school diploma and then go to college," explains Araceli, who like Isabel, completed our ESL program this year. "It's time to spread my wings and make room for other moms to come to Mothers' Club and change like I have."

For some moms, moving on means staying put. Marina graduated from Mothers' Club in May 2008 and is well on her way to becoming an early childhood teacher. She is currently volunteering as a Teacher's Assistant in the Toddler classroom at Mothers' Club and is taking classes at Pasadena City College.

"Oh, I thought I'd just learn English and have time to make friends," Marina reminisced about her first impression of Mothers' Club. "But it's more than that. I learned how to be patient with the children and how to help them believe in themselves." Like all of our moms, Marina volunteered one day a week in the children's program at Mothers' Club. She learned a lot from watching the teachers and realized that she wanted to be an early childhood teacher, too.

"I didn't think I was ready to get my high school diploma, but I needed it to become a teacher. Julie (Family Literacy Coordinator) really motivated me and helped me believe I could do it," said Marina. "Renu and Pam [volunteer GED tutors Renu Bhat-Hansen and Pam Schwarz] also encouraged me and helped me study for two years." Marina received her General High School Equivalency Diploma in 2008.

Thanks to the programs, staff, and volunteers at Mothers' Club, moms like Marina are setting goals to build better futures for their families and to realize their own aspirations as women.

- Jason Wurtz



Marina Bendy with her General High School Equivalency Diploma

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Mothers' Club Family Learning Center

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Visit our website at
www.mothersclub.org

Mothers' Club has a **Facebook fan page!** Log into your Facebook account and search for Mothers' Club Family Learning Center

New Volunteer Programs Help Mothers' Club Make New Friends in the Community



A Disney VolunteER works on a project with a Mothers' Club preschooler.

In our children's program - VolunteERS, Disney employees who donate their personal time - have recently participated in three service projects. The VolunteERS helped our children make Valentine's Day and Mother's Day cards for their parents and helped with a project that is being featured this season on KCET's program, "A Place of My Own".

"I had an incredible time volunteering at Mothers' Club!" exclaimed Disney VolunteER Audrey Ma. "It was so fulfilling to have a hands-on experience with the children and teachers. It was amazing to watch the instructors work with the kids - their patience is unparalleled!"

We begin all service projects by educating volunteers about our mission, programs, and services and how to work with young children. Our two-generation learning approach has really resonated with the VolunteERS.

"I was very surprised to learn about the holistic approach Mother's Club uses," said Disney VolunteER Cynthia Ferguson-Villa. "Its programs nurture and guide children while training and encouraging their mothers in a way that will allow the mothers to support their children's growth and efforts far into the future."

Other new volunteer programs have been developing in our adult

education program as well. We've matched our intermediate and advanced English-learning mothers with other moms in the community to trade pen pal letters. The program has provided an excellent way for our mothers to practice their literacy skills in a real-world situation, while providing volunteer pen pals insight into the families that benefit from the programs and services we offer.

"I thoroughly enjoy knowing that I am, in some small way, helping out other moms as they learn the English language," explained volunteer Kathy Kottaras. "I've enjoyed getting to know the moms through the letters, and I can't wait to meet them!"

The pen pal program has also connected moms whom otherwise may have never met. "I'm surprised by the immediate connections you feel when you receive a letter from your pen pal," observed volunteer Cynthia

Recent Grant Awards

Thank you to the following funders for their recent support of our programs for children and their parents in Northwest Pasadena:

The Ahmanson Foundation
 The Emanuel Bachmann Foundation
 Buddha Jones LLC
 Edmund A. & Margarite L. A. Burke Foundation
 California Community Foundation
 Crail-Johnson Foundation
 Charles & Henrietta J. Detoy Foundation
 Pasadena Community Foundation
 Pasadena Tournament of Roses Foundation
 The Fletcher Jones Foundation
 Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc.
 Yes! Virginia Fund

Copeland. "It's wonderful to hear about their lives from their perspective and of course, so much is shared since we're all parents.

We are very grateful for all of our wonderful volunteers. They touch the lives of not only our families, but the staff as well. We look forward to growing the Mothers' Club family by involving even more volunteers in our quest to help families succeed in school and in life.

- Jason Wurtz



Family Literacy Coordinator Julie Espinoza helping a mother with her pen pal letter.

Moms Emerge as Leaders in Tough Economic Times

For the fifth consecutive year, Mothers' Club parents presented a workshop at The Annual Family Literacy and Health Parent Conference, sponsored by the Family Literacy Support Network.

Carmen Tiscareno, Adriana Martinez, Maria Vargas and Marisol Vacio gave a presentation about the stress that many families are experiencing during the economic recession. Our moms explained, to an audience of other parents, the effects of stress on families and how parents can help children understand and cope with stress. They also gave tips to parents for keeping their families strong and united as they ride out the tough economic times.

This year's presentation was especially difficult because our moms shared painful stories about the struggles their families are facing during the recession.

They talked about the heartbreak caused by leaving a crying child with a babysitter because mom has to work; about the shame and anger a husband feels because he cannot support his family; and the anxiety caused by being kicked out of your home and trying to comfort two young children through the upheaval.

Presenting at the Parent Conference is the most challenging leadership role we provide through our Parent Leadership Program.

Other leadership opportunities include joining committees to plan projects and events, volunteering as classroom leaders to facilitate cooperation between parents and teachers, and getting elected to the Parent Advisory Board to provide leadership among all the parents and help voice parent needs and concerns to Mothers' Club staff.

Mothers' Club believes that above all else, parents must have the confidence and courage to lead their families through good and bad times. It is our goal to coach our parents to become leaders for the sake of their families and their community. These four young women clearly demonstrated their abilities to inspire and lead.

- Silvana Casalegno
Parent Program Director

Welcome New Guardians

Thank you to following individuals for joining the Mothers' Club *Guardians*; a group of individuals who provide cornerstone support for our programs by donating \$1,000 or more to our annual fund.

Phillip "Ted" Atalla
Marcia Goodstein & Bill Gross
Sandra Guerrero
Mariko & Martin Howard
Charles Hubay & Kathleen Shields
Marge Leighton
Sandra & Charles T. Osaki

Shanna & Michael Rosengarten
Elsa Ruiz-Balle
Susan & Mitch Sawasy
Nan & Howard Schow
Lorraine Triolo & Jeffrey Burke
Connie & Arthur White

Our Continued Thanks to All Mothers' Club Guardians

Judy Smith Asbury & Greg Asbury, Gwen & Guilford Babcock, Carole & Mike Babcock, Ann & Olin Barrett, Renu Bhat-Hansen & Alex Hansen, Claire & Bill Bogaard, Jeannine Bogaard, Barbara Campbell, Marie Campbell, Nancy & John Carlton, Mary Anne Cunningham, Leslie Dennis, Dorlys Devereux, Bonnie & John DeWitt, Anne Esbenschade & Michael Miele, Helen Minton Farley, Christine & Ira Felman, Jean & Louis Fleming, Susan Futterman & Arnold Siegel, Jennifer & Mark Giles, Stephanie & J. Dale Harvey, Deborah Heitz & Shaw Wagner, Tracy & Richard Hirrel, Adelaide Hixon, Ellen & Harvey Knell, Annette Kunzman & Douglas Soloman, Valerie & George Leiva, Linda Lopez & Harold Perera, Maria Low Way, Kathy & Tony Magistrale, Judy & Stephen McDonald, Pat & Jim McLaughlin, Margaret & David Mgrublian, Norah Morley, Janice & Richard Morris, Wendy Munger & Leonard Gumpert, Jennifer & E. David Murphy, Nanette & Henry Nevins, Mary Lois Nevins, Beth & Christopher Orndorff, Kathleen & Donald Orth, Claudia & Ramon Pack, Sylvia & Benjamin Paz, Manny Perera, Marsha V. Rood, Aty & Howard Rotter, Pam & Tony Schwarz, Carol & Carl Selkin, Jil & Joel Sheldon, Victoria & John Tongish, Maxine Tongish, Heather & Michael VanMeter, Judith & John Whiting, Cindy & George Wiley, Judy & Randy Wilson



Mothers' Club moms Adriana Martinez, Maria Vargas, Marisol Vacio, and Carmen Tiscareno presented at the 5th Annual Family Literacy and Health Parent Conference

From the Director...

Mothers' Club Learns and Grows Alongside Its Children

I have been thinking a lot about my early days at Mothers' Club - 20 years ago. We had fewer families enrolled and fewer class offerings. And the facility we rented at the time severely limited our ability to serve more families in need.

Our toddlers didn't even have a classroom! They spent all day outside in the play yard! Well, we certainly have grown. We now have five full classrooms, two adult education classrooms, two beautiful kitchens, and a library with books and computers for our families to use.

After we moved into our wonderful new facility, the Board of Directors and staff thought long and hard about how to best use our new resource. We knew that our donors strongly believed in our mission to reach isolated mothers and their young children during their earliest years, so we agreed to reach out to even more of these vulnerable families.

With grants from the Atlas Family Foundation and Confidence Foundation, we implemented an afternoon pilot program for mothers with children from birth to three-years-old. We named it *First Connections*.

First Connections started small,

with just three moms and four children. But just like the old days, the appeal of becoming a better parent, meeting other mothers and supporting a better life for their children drew more and more moms to the program.

We now have 20 mothers with 24 children attending three days a week. *First Connections* is still small compared to our morning program, although small is proving to be a good thing in these difficult economic times.

And as we know, small things often grow into bigger things. We are learning, alongside the families, from *First Connections*. We are discovering new ways to connect with families, re-affirming some of our long-held beliefs, and getting energized by the afternoon activities. We have faith in the basic tenets of Mothers' Club and the deeply rooted need for human connections. And we have faith that times will improve.

In the meantime, we are taking what we know and imagining how we might grow in the coming years - a program for working parents, a Saturday program, trainings for home child care providers and other professionals. With your continued support, we can meet the needs of even more isolated families and their young children.

- Sue Kujawa
Executive Director

From the President...

Everyone has something to give and something to learn.

At a recent board meeting, one of our board members remarked, "What is it about Mothers' Club? My life is so busy, yet I find myself spending so much time and energy here!"

I have pondered that very same question at times. The last two years as Board President have diverted significant time from my family and business. And yet I am more passionate than ever about Mothers' Club. How can that be?

The answer can be found in a simple saying at Mothers' Club, "Everyone has something to give and something to learn."

I have come to truly understand this elegant statement and realize the power it has. It assumes both acceptance of each individual and also the responsibility of each individual. It empowers each of us - and breaks down all sorts of false barriers between us.

The mantra also reminds us that while our families receive much needed programs and services from Mothers' Club, they contribute to the vitality and strength of the organization, too.

No one person dictates how to run the organization - the staff, board and families provide meaningful input to help Mothers' Club grow and prosper. Every individual contributes to our success, whether by money, time, expertise, or caring. This is the reason why I am so drawn to Mothers' Club.

I have witnessed, and personally experienced, tremendous personal and professional growth among the board and staff over the last two years. It was no simple act to uproot from our limited space at the Orange Grove Meeting house, where we had been for 45 years, to our new state-of-the-art learning center on Fair Oaks Avenue. We stretched ourselves to meet our capital campaign goal. We learned to communicate and work together more effectively to chart a new course for our future.

It has been my privilege to be board president during such a dynamic time in Mothers' Club history.

Fondly,
Judy Smith Asbury
President



Long-time Mother's Club Early Childhood Teacher Nydia Rivero seen here with a "First Connections" toddler.

Mothers' Club Honors Sandra Tsing Loh and Sapphos Environmental, Inc. at Annual Fundraiser

On May 3, more than 200 of Mothers' Club's friends, supporters, Board members and others came together to raise much needed funding to support the agency's services for families in need.

The event, which was held at the lovely Twin Palms restaurant, honored **Sandra Tsing Loh** for continually giving voice to the challenges facing our public schools and the families attending them; and for actively seeking to increase community and government support of California's public schools.

Also honored, was Pasadena-based **Sapphos Environmental, Inc.** and its founder and President **Marie Campbell** for their leadership in corporate responsibility.

Ms. Campbell, who also serves on the Board of Mothers' Club, accepted the award on behalf of the company, stated, "Our company is very grateful for the opportunity to help families improve their readiness to participate in our community through education and developing a support network. All of our employees at Sapphos Environmental, Inc. have experienced these gifts and appreciate the opportunity to pay this forward to other families."

Ms. Loh, commentator for KPCC's "The Loh Down on Science" and "The Loh Life", and author of her bestselling memoir Mother on Fire, entertained guests with her story of personal



Board President Judy Smith Asbury, Sandra Tsing Loh, Marie Campbell, Executive Director Sue Kujawa, and Event Committee Chair Linda Lopez (Photo by Adam Emperor Southard - AESPhotoLA@yahoo.com)

transformation from Mother on Fire into Burning Mom, aka: an activist for public schools.

Ms. Loh finished her talk by reminding guests how valuable the work is of our "unsung heroes - mothers" and urging them to give generously to support Mothers' Club - an agency committed to serving and honoring mothers in need in our community.

After a moving video, which portrayed the story of a family in our program, Board member George Wiley finished the evening by asking guests to pledge their support for an array of direct services. He explained, "Now more than ever, we are being asked to do more with less. So tonight, every donation goes straight to our bottom line and ensures that we can continue to provide our preventive, holistic services to families who need them."



Sandra Tsing Loh speaking to guests about education and motherhood.

We are grateful to the event planning committee, led by Board member **Linda Lopez**, for making the event a great success. Each committee member made their own contribution, and we thank them for their time and talent: **Judy Brown, Tom Coston, Leslie Dennis, Susan Futterman, Pat McLaughlin, Sarah Orth, Jil Sheldon, Bonnie Valles and George Wiley.**

All in all, the event raised over \$55,000 to support our two-generation learning programs for low-income children ages 0-5 and their parents - programs that have *The Power to Shape Lives* and break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy.

- Sarah E. Orth
Development Director



Executive Director

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The Power of Two

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Jason Wurtz

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About Mothers' Club

Founded in 1961, Mothers' Club prepares families living in isolation and poverty to succeed in school and in life. We promote strong parent/child relationships and encourage friendship and mutual support among mothers through our educational programs and social services, thereby creating a stronger community for all families. Since our inception, we have evolved in direct response to the needs of families in our community. Today we are a model family support and education center.

Learn more at www.mothersclub.org

Community Open Houses

Please join us for a tour & conversations
with staff and Board members.

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

June 9

July 14

There will be no open house in August

Please check our website for new dates
and times starting in September:

www.mothersclub.org - click on
Community Open House Schedule

To provide a courtesy RSVP,
or for more information, please call us
at (626) 792-2687 ext. 122

Have You Considered a Legacy Gift to Mothers' Club?

All gifts to Mothers' Club provide you with the personal satisfaction of providing critical services to our community's most vulnerable children and families. Planned gifts can give you even more in return.

By including Mothers' Club in your estate plan, you can insure that Mothers' Club will remain a valuable resource for generations of families to come. We can refer you to professionals that can help you design a charitable gift plan that benefits Mothers' Club and enables you and your family to fulfill your personal financial goals.

We hope you will consider making a legacy gift to Mothers' Club through your will or living trust. A provision in your estate will touch the lives of many families for generations to come. If you would like to learn more, please contact us at (626) 683-5677, ext. 122.

Thank you for your continued support of our programs and services for at-risk families.



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