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Parent Times

April 2015



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President's Corner

Happy Spring Ladies!

I hope you all had a wonderful spring break with your families. Thank you to everyone who came to our fabulous Spring Family Event. Not only was it tons of fun, we were able to raise money for a fabulous charity, Wiggled Out. Thank you for your support & generosity.



I can't believe our year is almost coming to an end, but we are so happy to have three classes remaining! We also will host our **"End-of-the-Year Play Date" on April 22**, so we can all get together one last time before the 2014-15 NCPG year wraps up. Finally, don't forget...

- **Pre-Register for our 2015-16 year for only \$200!**

You won't want to miss out on all we have planned for next year! Yes, we've already started planning next year!!!!

-Still wanting to get more involved?!? Think about being a Social Rep for your class! Please reach out to **director@ncpgaz.org** if you are interested!

As always, please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks!

Molly

ncpg

north central parenting group

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NCPG is a non-profit, non-denominational organization providing classes to parents of infant to kindergarten age children.

www.ncpgaz.org



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Parent Times

Members, this monthly newsletter is for your benefit, so we want to ensure our team is publishing content that is valuable, useful, informative, and fun! Please let us know if you have suggestions, comments, concerns, or any input that would help us to improve this publication. Shoot us an email at **communications@ncpgaz.org**. Thanks for your help!

Editor – Kelly Vasbinder

Designer – Neill Fox, www.foxnoggin.com

On the Cover

Twins George and Alex Pontikas (3) are photographed by Danielle Martin with Parkle Photography. See more of her work at www.parklephoto.com

How My Daughter's Food Allergies Changed our Family for the Better

By Heather Sheptenko, Reprinted from Scottsdale Moms Blog"

Only after a frightening trip to the emergency room, that included a shot of epinephrine, did we discover my daughter's severe food allergies. At the tender age of 6 months (in an attempt to gain some semblance of freedom), I wanted to supplement a bottle of formula every now and then for my breastfeeding daughter. Unfortunately, my first attempt led to an anaphylactic response that left me (a total rookie mommy at the time) tear-filled and shell-shocked.

Within days of that terrifying incident an immunologist administered a full round of allergy testing to my daughter, the results of which showed a dangerous allergy to dairy and eggs. My jaw visibly dropped...dairy and eggs?

A brief slide show played through my mind of every delicious and delectable food my sweet little girl would never have the opportunity to eat. Visions of pizza parties and birthday cake left untouched on her plate, with all the other little children happily eating and frolicking around her. Halloween with no chocolate, Thanksgiving without my aunt's famous broccoli-cheese casserole and Christmas (gasp) with no twice-baked potatoes or chocolate mousse pie? Could it be?

Okay, I admit, I sound a little dramatic. I realize to some moms this is just food and there are way more terrible diagnoses for a child. These points are valid, I totally get it — but for me (at least initially) there was some private mommy mourning going on.

So what's a mom to do? Fortunately, at the time, I was still breastfeeding and barely introducing solid foods so my daughter's diet remained, for the most part, unaffected. This bought me time so that I could scour books, articles and the internet for as much information regarding kids and food allergies as possible. I even visited a pediatric nutritionist that specialized in helping kids with allergies.

As a result of all this research, our family's nutritional regime improved considerably. We were never horrible eaters per se, but nutrition became a new focus for us. Processed foods became cumbersome because of the vast list of ingredients I would have to carefully pore over. Picking up fast food on the fly just wasn't an option for us anymore, or was the children's menu in any restaurant we visited. (Really, why is it that macaroni and cheese, pizza and breaded chicken fingers seem to be the only kid food options chefs can come up with these days?)

Meal-planning is my best friend. We don't go to any playgroup, party or event without bringing our own food — which, invariably, means she rarely eats random, sugar-filled treats or greasy, fried-finger foods. At home, instead of chicken parmesan it's grilled,

garlic chicken, steamed veggies never get doused in butter or cheese and seasoning is always used in place of creamy sauces.

My husband (who used to discreetly roll his eyes at any of my healthy-eating sermons) actively participates in serving our family good, healthy meals. He tee's up the BBQ to grill chicken and veggies, bakes sweet potatoes and has even taken to using olive oil or vegan butter. Crazy, I know.

Of course, there are negatives to having a child with food allergies. The fear when dropping her off at preschool or leaving her with a babysitter is palpable. Explaining to temporary caregivers what she can and can't have, how to recognize the signs of an anaphylactic response and finally, the gory details should they have to administer a shot of epinephrine...could drive any mom to never leave her child's side.

Nevertheless, I choose to believe the positive impact has far outweighed the negative. She has developed into a healthy little eater and, thankfully, our family's food habits have followed suit.





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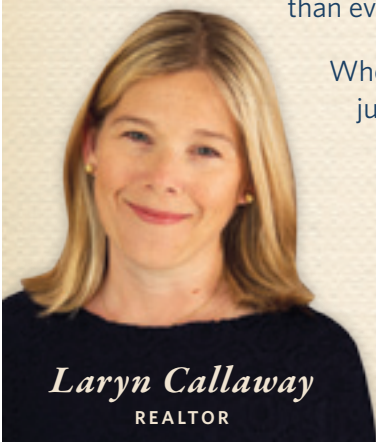


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Upcoming Events



NCPG End-of-Year Play Date

SATURDAY APRIL 22, 2015

Arcadia Park, 3402 N. 56th St., Phoenix

3:30 pm-5:00 pm

Let's all get together one last time before the 2014-15 school year closes and have some fun at the park! Activities and entertainment will be provided by Gymboree!

Registration now open for the 2015/16 NCPG Year!

Register before June 15, and pay the early-bird discounted rate of only \$200. On June 15, tuition will return to \$250. **Please find a tear-out registration form on the last page, or visit our website ncpgaz.org.**

September 9

September 23

October 7

October 21

November 4

November 18

December 2

January 6

January 20

February 3

February 17

March 2

March 30

April 13

April 27

Don't forget about our Kindergarten class!

We've had rave reviews this year, and are thrilled to continue it with our instructor, Jemeille.

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Topics include:

- * Socialization
- * Building resilience
- * Motivating your child
- * Conflict management
- * Self-regulation and control
- * Partnering with the school
- * Making the Technology connection



Jemeille Ackourey is a Licensed Professional Counselor and has a master's degree in counseling. She provides services to individuals and families at her North Central Phoenix office. Her compassionate assistant is Ellis, a golden doodle and certified therapy dog. Jemeille served the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Phoenix for 23 years before retiring in 2005 as their Vice President of Operations.

Throughout her professional career, Jemeille has been volunteering her time and expertise at various community agencies, associations and schools where she trains staff, educates students, mentors youth, and advises on program and organizational development. She has served on numerous educational and community boards and advisory committees.

Join Us in Welcoming and Congratulating the 2015-2016 NCPG Board of Directors!

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EXCITING NEWS! NEW IN 2015-2016: A class for Elementary (grades 1-3) School Moms!

After many strong hints, nudges and requests... NCPG is excited to announce the opening of our primary class, which will focus on issues affecting children in grades 1-3. The class will cover pertinent topics such as:

- Creating a safety net for your child
- Teaching your child to set boundaries with their teacher and peers
- Building relationships with teachers
- School organization in your home
- Communicating effectively
- Empowering your child
- Homework/Reading strategies

More information will be available soon! Keep checking Facebook and your email to stay up to date with this helpful and exciting addition.

To give you a sneak peak, have a look at the helpful article to the right focusing on elementary success! >>>>

Meet your new Primary teacher: Susie Garlick!



Susie Garlick earned a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from the University of Arizona and a Master of Arts in Professional Counseling from Ottawa University. She began her career teaching fifth grade at Sequoya Elementary,

followed by first grade at Desert View Elementary. For the past fifteen years she has enjoyed being a stay-at-home mom to her now 15-year-old son, 12-year-old daughter and 9-year-old daughter.

During this time she completed her masters degree while writing and publishing the book DiddleDots. She has appeared more than a dozen times on Arizona Midday to promote her book and share parenting tips with the community. Susie is a Licensed Associate Counselor and is currently pursuing a career in counseling. In her free time, Susie enjoys journaling through art, practicing yoga, travelling, and spending time with Mike, her husband of almost twenty years, her children, and her two dogs.

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8 Tips for Elementary School Success

By Suzanne Koup-Larson and Susan Stopper, *metrokids.com*

Research shows that parent support is more important to school success than a child's IQ, economic status or school setting, according to the U.S. Department of Education. But how can you most effectively nurture your budding young student? Here are Delaware Valley educators' tips for elementary school success.

1. Think Long Term

We know students need to learn reading, writing and math skills in elementary school, but to succeed throughout their school years, the two things they really need to know are study skills and how to learn. "As a parent, help your child develop effective study skills and strategies for time management," says Kelly Goula, Lower School Director in Moorestown, NJ. This will help her learn any subject.

2. Have the Right Attitude

Parents should show excitement and enthusiasm for their child's school, says Jarrettown (PA) Elementary School Principal Cheryl Arena-Malfi, EdD. "This will put the child in a positive frame of mind to come to school and be successful," she says. Conversely, unkind words about the child's school or teacher can have a negative effect on a young student's mindset.

"If you want your children to be interested in their school, you have to be interested in their school and in the subjects they are studying," says MaryKat Parks Workerger, editorial director at Edu-Guide, a national non-profit organization that provides resources to support student achievement. Volunteer in their classroom if you can. But more importantly, ask your children what they're doing in school, discuss the topics they're studying and talk about how they're handling assigned projects.

3. Communicate

"It is critically important to build a relationship with your children's teachers," says Workerger. Try to meet with teachers briefly in the first few weeks of the school year.

"Communicate with the teacher often," says Debbie Panchisin, EdD, a director of elementary curriculum in Odessa, DE. You can get in touch by e-mail, notes, phone calls or face-to-face.

A parent might recognize a problem sooner than the teacher. "Teachers truly appreciate things being brought to their attention," says Beth Kessler, a 4th grade teacher in Bucks County, PA. "There are sides of the educational experience that come out at home that teachers might not see. The most important thing is that the parents approach the education of their child with the teacher as a team effort and a common goal."

4. Stick to Routines

In the morning, make sure your children wake up at a consistent time every day and eat breakfast. Strive for consistency in their nighttime routine too. Advise your children that "if you make sure your backpack is ready the night before, you're not scrambling the next morning and you start the day off right," says Vicki Dugan, a

1st grade teacher in Lumberton, NJ.

Kids benefit from a consistent homework routine, including a regular time of day and comfortable workplace. Keep school supplies in a small box near the child's homework spot, Dugan suggests.

5. Support Strengths

"Recognize and encourage strengths," says Genes Marquez, a teacher at the Montessori Academy of New Jersey in Delran, NJ. There is a tendency sometimes to focus only on areas where children need extra help. Emphasizing children's strengths and helping them develop their areas of interest builds self-esteem and keeps kids motivated.

"Support their interests," says Marquez. "That's when great things happen." Look for opportunities to expand on learning outside the classroom. If your child is interested in space, take him to a museum with a space exhibit or a planetarium. If he is interested in animals, take him to the zoo.

If you devote time to a problem learning area, continue emphasizing your child's strengths. It is important that a child understands that struggling in one area doesn't mean he is a poor student.

6. Be a Reading and Writing Role Model

It's important to show students that adults use reading and writing skills every day. Demonstrate those skills by reading, even if it's just street signs or directions; write for your children, even if it's just a note tucked in with lunch. "Let them see that schooling goes beyond 8:30am to 2:30pm," advises Patricia Scott, EdD, principal of St. Edmond's Academy in Wilmington, DE.

"When the foundations of reading are in place, everything else falls into place more easily," says Kessler. "Read with your child, alongside your child, and even on your own to model the importance of it."

"Take your children to the library from a young age," says Alexander. "The kids who are comfortable with books tend to be the successful kids."

7. Demonstrate Relevance

Help your children see that what they learn in school is useful and relevant to their life. Workerger says, "If they are studying fractions, the next time you are baking, show them how measuring cups and spoons divide ingredients and talk about how important it is to know the difference between a quarter cup and two-thirds of a cup — the difference between delicious and yuck!"

8. Support Homework Independence

"I don't advocate parents sitting with their child to do homework," says Goula. Learning independence and responsibility is an important lesson of the elementary school years, and homework is key to this process.



NCPG Spring Family Event

Benefitting Wiggled Out, Inc.

Thanks to the money raised through NCPG, Wiggled Out has been able to help Annette (26-year old with Alopecia,) Patricia (55-year old with Colon Cancer,) and Ann (46-year old with Breast Cancer,) buy wigs! This money truly makes a difference, and it feels great to help these women out.



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NCPG Mom to Meet Sarah Wolfswinkel

Spouse: Ashton

Children: Vivienne, 1 yo, and a baby due in August.

Born, Raised & Lived:
Phoenix.

City & years married:
Victoria BC, Canada, 3 years

Career or previous career:
Previously, medical device sales.
Today, Vivienne is my boss!

5 words to describe yourself: Pretty sure this question was my demise on a few college apps! Strong-willed, loving, balanced (working on this one), daredevil, old-soul.

Favorite vacation spot: Napa

Favorite adult spot to dine in town:
Virtu recently blew me away, but my go-to's are Rokerij and Hillstone.

Favorite children's book to read:
Corduroy and Tikki Tikki Tembo

Favorite family hangout: Our backyard — at least this time of year!

Most meaningful mom moment:
The first time I heard Vivienne laugh out loud. It melted my heart while I cried from laughing so hard with her. Thanks to Piper our dog!

Best mothering advice given to you:
Be yourself in every way – children learn more by your example and through experiences shared with you than they do through your words.

Rules to mother by: Happy children start with a happy marriage and happy parents.

Who introduced you to NCPG?
My friend, Kara Hatch.

Best thing learned in NCPG?
I'm not in this alone! There have been a few "what the hell did I do to myself?!" moments during mom-hood, and having had a group of women in the same boat to share with has been invaluable.

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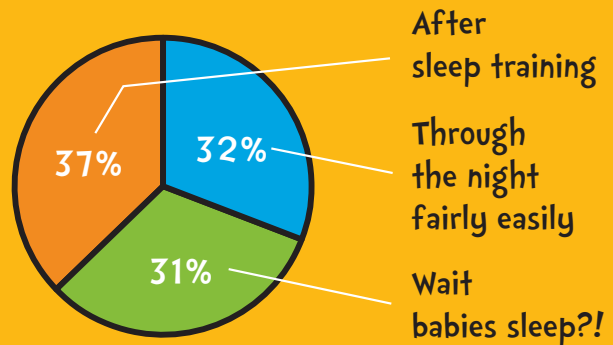
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NCPG Member Poll

Words NCPG Moms use to describe Motherhood:

Transformative, Juggling, Worthwhile, Exhausting, Fun, Selfless, Humbling, Hard, Amazing, Unexpected, Challenging, Tiring, Spiritual, Ever-changing, Adventurous, Enlightening, Blissful, Sacred, Scary, Stressful, Joyful, Rewarding, Incredible, Chaotic, Meaningful, Rewarding, Intense, Life-changing, Blessing, Crazy, Fullfilling, Boring, Exhilarating, Frustrating, Happy, Consuming, Silly, Persevering, The Best Thing Ever!

My baby slept:



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- A Small Caddy
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- Some Rags (one cotton, one micro fiber)
- A small Dust Pan and child-sized Sweeper
- A Sponge
- A "Dust Bunny" made from a partner-less gym sock and some sharpie marker embellishment!

Happy cleaning!



Banana Chia Breakfast Muffins

Makes 12 servings, Source: toneitup.com



INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups of oat flour*
**Make it yourself by pulsing whole oats in a blender, coffee grinder or food processor until the consistency of flour.*
- 8 dates, pitted
- 1/2 cup of boiling water
- 1 ripe banana
- 1/4 cup of maple syrup
- 1/3 cup coconut oil
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup almond milk
- 1/2 cup chia seeds
- 3 Tbs unsweetened cacao powder (for color!)
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 cup of Greek yogurt

PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350° degrees.
2. Combine flour, baking powder, salt, cacao and chia seeds in a large bowl and set aside.
3. Pour boiling water on top of the dates to soften — or place dates & water in a microwave safe bowl and heat for 30 seconds. Add softened dates and hot water to a blender or food processor and pulse until smooth. Add banana, beaten eggs, maple syrup, almond milk and coconut oil and continue to blend until well incorporated. Add wet ingredients to the dry, a little at a time as you mix. Next, add the yogurt, but don't over mix.
4. Pour batter into pre-sprayed muffin tins and bake for 20 minutes depending on size (we used standard size muffin molds). If you like, sprinkle additional chia seeds on top before baking. These babies will rise a good amount, so pour about 1/2 an inch from the top.
5. Once cooled, keep covered in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.





Educating Children
Head to Soul



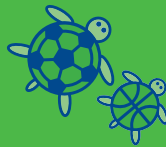
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Annual Nursery Fees: • First Child (\$300) • Second Child (\$50) • Additional Child (no charge)

Please Note:

- No refunds on registration and/or nursery fees after 9/30/15.
- Guests are welcome to attend one meeting. Please make reservations with the Membership Director. The guest nursery fee is \$25 per visit, per child. Space is subject to availability.
- Financial assistance for tuition and/or nursery costs is available to those for whom the fees are prohibitive. Confidential inquiries are handled by the Membership Director.
- There will be a \$25 charge for returned checks.

Name: _____ Spouse's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Child's Name*: _____ DOB: _____ Nursery (Y / N)

Child's Name: _____ DOB: _____ Nursery (Y / N)

Child's Name: _____ DOB: _____ Nursery (Y / N)

**You will be grouped by your oldest child's birth date unless you indicate otherwise.*

• How did you hear about us? ☐ Current Member ☐ Friend ☐ Newspaper ☐ Hospital ☐ Online

☐ Other (please explain): _____

• Would you like to be on a committee? ☐ Fundraising ☐ Special Events ☐ Communications

By signing below I acknowledge that neither North Central Parenting Group (NCPG) or Church of the Beatitudes (CB) carry insurance to cover any injuries to NCPG members or their families. As consideration for participation in the NCPG program, I hereby release, remise forever, discharge, and agree to save and hold harmless and indemnify NCPG and CB, and the employees, officers, directors, and agents of each, of and from all liability, claims, demands, causes of action and possible causes of action whatsoever, arising out of or related to any loss, damage, or injury that including negligence of any of the foregoing. I agree to defend and indemnify NCPG from and against any and all liability or claims arising out of any loss, damage or injuries sustained by myself, my minor child or family member participating in any function of NCPG.

Signature _____ Date _____

PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARD:

Class Registration \$250 (or \$200 before June 15, 2015)

Nursery (First Child) \$300

Nursery (Second Child) \$50

Credit Card Usage Fee 4% of Total

TOTAL: \$ _____

Credit Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____ Security Code: _____

Check One: ☐ Pay in Full ☐ Two Equal Payments*

***Terms & Conditions**

Credit card will be charged for half the total registration/nursery fee(s) upon registration. The second payment will be automatically charged to the credit card on January 30th regardless of whether member continues with membership or nursery usage unless the second payment is received prior via cash or check. Policy of no refunds on registration and nursery fees after 9/30/14 remains in effect. Credit card processing fees apply. Credit card information will be kept secure on file until second payment is made, after which it will be securely destroyed. Must register by December 1st to utilize payment plan.

I acknowledge that I have reviewed and accepted the Terms and Conditions of the Two Equal Payment Plan and authorize NCPG to charge my credit card upon registration and on January 30th, 2016.

Signature _____ Date _____

(Signature & Date Required)

PAYMENT BY CHECK:

Class Registration \$250 (or \$200 before June 15, 2014)

Nursery (First Child) \$300

Nursery (Second Child) \$50

TOTAL: \$ _____ Check # _____

(If paying only the first half of the total registration/nursery fee(s), you are required to fill out credit card information above and sign/date after the Two Equal Payment Plan Terms & Conditions.)

Please mail payment and registration form to: **NCPG, P.O. Box 32644, Phoenix, AZ 85064**

A Final Heartfelt Thank You to Our 2014-2015 Sponsors

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