

A photograph of two young boys with dark hair, smiling and hugging each other. They are wearing blue and white plaid shirts and blue jeans. They are standing in front of a large, leafy tree with green lemons hanging from the branches. The background is slightly blurred, focusing on the boys.

ncpg Parent Times

March 2016

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Phoenix Business Journal



26 years ago, my wife, MaryAnn, and I were members of NCPG. We attribute our positive parenting to the great teachers and friends we made while there! Sean and Juliann are 26 and 24 years today and were often used for my advertisements throughout the years.

Thank you NCPG!

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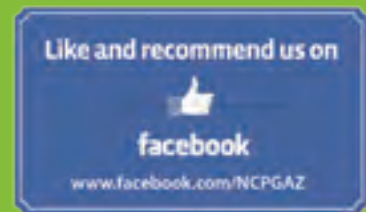
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Parent Times

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@nccpgaz.org**. Thanks for your help!

Editors – Laura Beardsley & Kelly Krueger

Designer – Neill Fox, foxnoggin, thinking@foxnoggin.com

On the Cover

George and Alex Pontikas, photographed by Sandra Tenuto.
See more of their work at **www.sandratenu.com**



President's Corner

Dear Members,

I hope you all are enjoying this beautiful weather with your little ones before the heat comes our way!

THANK YOU for coming out to boogie with NCPG! Our annual fundraiser raised over **\$35,000**, which according to the records we can find, is an NCPG record! We couldn't have done it without all of your support. And, congratulations to our raffle winner – Lonni Abromovitz – who won 3 cases of wine and a private chef dinner at her house!

Thank you to:

- Everyone who came to the event and dressed up (WOW — there were some amazing costumes!)
- Each class for putting together phenomenal baskets!
- Everyone who purchased raffle tickets.
- The members who participated in our Member Faire and donated to the silent auction.
- Everyone who donated and/or secured donation items to make this our most successful silent auction ever!
- The Fundraising Directors (Sarah Wolfswinkel, Tiffany Pondelik and Pele Fischer) for putting together a fabulous party.
- The NCPG Board for all of your hard work promoting the event, securing donations, setting up, working the event and breaking down.

We are looking forward to and are very excited about our **Spring Family Event on April 2nd!** We have planned lots of fun activities: a petting zoo, face painting, Kidtastics will be back with their gymnastics activity area and FROST Gelato w--ill be serving gelato and sorbet! And, be sure not to miss photographer Sandra Tenuto, who will be hosting mini-sessions during the event!

Although our year isn't quite over, we are already planning for next year. We will be voting on our fabulous new Board and starting registration for the coming year very soon. Because we continue to grow, we will be capping class sizes, so be sure to register early! More information regarding registration is included in this issue.

As always, please feel free to contact me directly with any questions, comments or feedback.

Sincerely,

Sara Snyder, NCPG President
president@nccpgaz.org

Ask the Expert

Reflection from a St. Francis Xavier Student

St. Francis Xavier Jesuit Elementary School
Preschool – 8th Grade, 4715 N. Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85012.

St. Francis Xavier Jesuit Elementary School is the only Jesuit elementary school in Arizona. As a Jesuit school we are very fortunate to be deeply rooted in Jesuit tradition and Ignatian spirituality, and our Student Learning Expectations (SLE's) reflect the same tenants as every Jesuit school. Our students aim to be Loving, Open to Growth, Intellectually Competent, Religious, and Committed to Doing Justice.

At the beginning of the school year, St. Francis Xavier holds a new parent retreat for new families. The retreat introduces parents to the mission and philosophy of St Francis Xavier and reflects on our heritage and spirituality and how this effects the education and culture at St. Francis Xavier School. As part of the retreat, the school's current 8th grade students reflect on their time at SFX, the best things about SFX and their advice to the new families.



LETTER TO A NEW ST. FRANCIS XAVIER FAMILY FROM AN 8TH GRADER (CLASS OF 2015)

Dear New Family,

Welcome to St. Francis Xavier! My name is Jessi, I am an 8th grade student, who has been here for 2 years. I am so glad that you have chosen to become part of this wonderful community. St. Francis has so many great things to offer. One thing that's great here is all of the activities offered. Their sports program is very competitive, but its participants learn and grow so much when they participate. They also have many leadership roles they can fill here, such as MAGIS, NJHS, Leadership Corps, etc. SFX's academics prepare you for each grade all the way to high school. They equip you with all the knowledge you need and more.

One of the biggest things I've learned here is leadership. I used to be very shy, and I never volunteered for anything. SFX has really pulled me out of my shell in so many ways. I've made so many friends here, I've participated in softball both years here, and I am a member of NJHS. These activities have provided me with a multitude of opportunities and I am so grateful to St. Francis Xavier. I would be my shy, quiet self still without the supportive teachers and students here, and I wouldn't have had so many doors open for me as they did here. It is all thanks to SFX.

My advice for a great experience here is to put yourself out there, and to participate in the fantastic community here: come to the mixers and dances and participate in the sports programs. Join as a member in at least one leadership role, audition for a part in the 8th grade play, and volunteer at whatever you can! There's so much to do here! Thank you for choosing our school and becoming a part of the SFX community.

Sincerely,

Jessi, St. Francis Xavier Class of 2015



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Ask the Expert

Tesseract School Students Give Back

By Steve Ouchi and Lynn Caccia

At Tesseract School, every grade level takes part in an annual service learning project. This year's third grade class decided at the beginning of the year that they wanted to do something related to animals and their well-being. After looking at numerous options, the class decided on Forever Loved Pet Sanctuary in Scottsdale whose mission is to promote the rescue, adoption, and well-being of senior animals, according to a press release.

One of the founders of Forever Loved Pet Sanctuary visited the classroom and introduced Ranger, one of the dogs in their care. The third graders also learned more about the mission of the organization. After the visit, students brainstormed a variety of ways in which they could help raise money. One of the ideas suggested was to collect spare change from families at the curb. The third graders made colorful posters and signs that they placed around campus to promote their cause. They also presented to grades K-4 during the Lower School's weekly morning meeting.

The students took turns collecting change at the curb during the morning drop off and afternoon dismissals. Each student also wrote a persuasive piece about one of the dogs at the sanctuary that they published in their grade level newspaper.

After two weeks, they raised \$1,112.86 which far exceeded their original goal of \$300.

"It made me feel proud that we raised all that money just to help the dogs," stated one student, Mila, in the release.

The third grade now plans to visit and meet some of the dogs at Forever Loved Pet Sanctuary.



Tesseract's third grade class meeting Ranger from Forever Loved Pet Sanctuary.

Tesseract School is a not for profit private school located at 4800 E. Doubletree Ranch Road in Paradise Valley. For more information, contact the school at 480-991-1770, or visit the website at <http://www.tesseractschool.org>.




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Nice Kids, Rude Parents

Does your playdate etiquette need a makeover? If your kid isn't exactly raking in playdate invitations, it might be time for you to brush up on your social skills.

By Marjorie Ingall from Parents Magazine

SOCIAL SLIP-UP: YOU'RE TOO COMPETITIVE

Are you worried that your child's juice-box-throwing habit or her refusal to share could be hurting her ability to make friends? Don't assume that her behavior is always to blame: Many parents are also guilty of less-than-perfect playdate etiquette. We've got solutions for some of the most common mistakes you might not realize you're making.

It's okay to secretly believe that no kid is as perfect as yours. But it's definitely not okay to announce it to everyone. I had to "lose" the phone number of a mom who constantly compared her son with my daughter. The last straw: We'd both given our babies deposit envelopes to occupy them while we were at the bank one day. As we left, my "friend" suddenly said, "Dammit! Leo just dropped his envelope and Josie's still holding hers. I thought his fine motor skills were superior." Um, hello? When you're turning who can hold an envelope longer into a contest, you need to get a hobby.

Acting this way guarantees that other parents will avoid you -- and your kid. Not only will you shrink your child's social circle, but eventually, he might think you love him just for his accomplishments. "Parents are very focused on achievement today," says Dan Kindlon, PhD, author of *Too Much of a Good Thing: Raising Children of Character in an Indulgent Age*. "They want to bask in the light of their brilliant kids." In other words, competitive parenting is about boosting your ego -- not being proud of your child.

THE FIX: The next time you're tempted to comment on whose toddler is crawling faster, "Ask, 'Why am I emotionally invested in another kid's progress?'" says Julie Holland, MD, assistant professor of psychiatry at New York University's School of Medicine. After all, you're still a good parent even if your child isn't as speedy as her pal. If you do have concerns about whether she's reaching her milestones, see your pediatrician. If you don't, replace the comparisons with actual adult conversation; talk about the novel you're reading or the vacation you want to take.

SOCIAL SLIP-UP: YOU DICTATE FOOD RULES

It's fine to be choosy about what your child eats. But unless he has a food allergy, you shouldn't dictate rules to other parents about what to feed your kid on playdates or comment on their food choices; otherwise, your child's social calendar may get lighter. "No one wants to have playdates with moms who say things like, 'He can only have whole wheat crackers!'" says Ann Douglas, author of *The Mother of All Parenting Books*. "You can't avoid junk food if you're going to let your kid have friends."

And if you rigidly try to control his diet, he'll never learn to handle real-world choices and temptations, says Ellyn Satter, author of *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense*. "For that to happen, kids need to learn to manage food when you're not around," she says. Depriving him of treats can backfire -- your child may become obsessed with the junk food you forbid.

THE FIX: First, relax: Munching on a few cookies at a friend's house won't undo your child's good eating habits. "The foods you serve at home will probably be the ones your child will like and choose to eat as he gets older," says Satter.

If he does have a treat, balance it out by making sure his meals are healthy. And it's reasonable to ask the playdate host to avoid giving your child a huge snack, or serving one too close to a meal, so he won't ruin his appetite, says Satter. "You won't seem too restrictive, and your child will still eat a healthy meal at home."

SOCIAL SLIP-UP: YOU MICROMANAGE PLAYDATES

Do you overplan every playdate? Do you swoop in at the hint of an argument and insert yourself relentlessly into the kids' play? Not only will the children think you're a pest (the little pal may not want to come back), you're also undermining an important learning experience. "Children teach each other friendship through play," says Michael Thompson, PhD, coauthor of *Best Friends, Worst Enemies: Understanding the Social Worlds of Children*. "If you're micromanaging the kids, it's not play-it's an adult-run activity."

Shadowing your kid hurts more than her friendships. "The more you hover, the less resilient she'll be," says Michele Borba, EdD, Parents advisor and the author of *12 Simple Secrets Real Moms Know*. "Children have to learn to problem-solve without you."

THE FIX: Teach your child to manage her playdates. Before her friend comes over, remind her to share and let her put away toys she can't part with. Then, step back. Unless the kids are in a physical fight, tell them that they have to work out their problem," says Dr. Borba. If they can't, you can offer some suggestions -- but they need to make the decision.

SOCIAL SLIP-UP: YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE

Parents expect bad behavior from kids on playdates -- it's The Parent Who Has No Manners that fills them with dread. "Too many moms see playdates as an opportunity for free babysitting or a chance to mess up someone else's house and not clean up," says Noel Claro, a mom from Queens, New York. If you're guilty of this crime, chances are your kid won't get many playdate invitations -- and he'll learn some terrible manners by watching you.

THE FIX: Remember the golden rule of playdates: Treat others as you'd want others to treat you. If you need a sitter, hire one -- a family shouldn't be left waiting for you to get your kid because your book club ran late. When you accept a playdate invitation, say thank you afterward and extend an invitation in return. And don't make yourself comfortable at the hostess's house when you pick up your child from a playdate -- she needs a break!

SOCIAL SLIP-UP: YOU'RE JUDGMENTAL

There are a million different ways to raise healthy, bright, resilient kids. We've all spent hours chatting about natural childbirth versus epidurals and co-sleeping versus cribs with our fellow moms. But when you start criticizing other people's parenting choices, you risk alienating them -- and limiting your child's social circle. You may think you're simply educating other people when you make these judgments, but it's not that innocent, says Dr. Holland: "You're trying to make yourself feel better about your parenting choices by putting other people down."

THE FIX: "Make a list of everything you've done right as a mom and everything you're proud of," suggests Dr. Holland. "When you see your accomplishments laid out like that, you may feel less compelled to critique other people." If you still have the jones to judge, pinch yourself before you say anything. "Just smile, knowing that you're making good parenting choices," Dr. Holland says with a laugh. "It's fine to gloat inwardly, just not outwardly!"

6 NCPG Parent Times

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6 lbs, 4 oz, 19 3/4 inches

Proud parents: Adam and Katrina
Big brother: Nixon





NCPG Mom to Meet Gretchen Schubert

Spouse: Ryan Schubert

Children: Jeffry (7), Scott (6) and Ross (3)

Born, Raised & Lived: Born in Wichita, Kansas. Raised in South Bend, Indiana until we moved to Phoenix in 1988.

City & years married: 11 years ago in Phoenix.

Career or previous career: I photograph families!

5 words to describe yourself: (exhausted...hah!) thoughtful, creative, a planner, loyal and generous.

Favorite vacation spot: Hands down...Park City, Utah. I absolutely love to snow ski and have been doing it since I was two. My husband and I started our boys skiing early and decided a couple of years ago to take them skiing at Deer Valley. We now go twice a year....to ski and to spend time there in the summer. I really don't know why, but when I get there....I completely un-wind. I just really, really love it there....and so does my family.

Favorite adult spot to dine in town: Do I really have to pick just one? I hate to say this because it just seems so obvious and we have so many great restaurants...but I'm going to say Houstons. Ryan and I just always end up there because we know exactly what we want and it's always the same and always so good. AND, they have a really nice pour of wine.....

Favorite children's book to read:

Again, do I have to pick just one? Every phase of my children's life definitely has a specific book, (and of course I love reading them the books).

Favorite family hangout:

At this point in our life (with 3 boys under 7) we don't really go out much! BUT, when we do, we usually head over to Arizona Country Club. My boys LOVE to swim there and play in their game room. My husband and I can actually kind of relax when we're there, so it's definitely a favorite at the moment. And we get to see a lot of our friends....which is another plus!

Rules to mother by:

1. Follow your gut! Not anyone else's....your own. When I finally became a Mom, I never realized how much advice and how many opinions I'd receive. I listen and appreciate all of it and then make my own decisions for my family and for what feels right. 2. This too shall pass - Everyday when I wake up (with my 3 little miracles), I never know what I'm going to get. On the hard days (sickness, tantrums, teething, picky eaters, school issues, exhaustion, you name it!) I just always remember that "this too shall pass". 3. Never compare - I was blessed to be pregnant with my first along with 3 of my best friends who were also pregnant with their firsts. We all had our babies within a month of each other. Our children are now best friends and it's been incredible to see them grow up together. But of course, it was so easy to compare them to each other (and to more kids along the way)....who slept through the night first, who crawled first, who walked, talked, ate solid food, pooped on the potty, read, rode a bike.....on and on and on. I fell into that for awhile with my first son Jeffry, but have finally realized that it's each to their own. Every child has a different personality and they each develop and grow up differently and do things on their time and at their own speed.

Most meaningful mom moment: For sure, each time I gave birth. I'm sure this seems like such an easy answer.... but for me, it's the truth. My husband and I struggled with fertility issues for years and I didn't even know if I would have kids. Because of this, I absolutely loved every minute of giving birth, being in labor and delivering my boys. And my births weren't all easy and perfect and without pain. There were some scary moments, but it's all worth it and you get to meet this amazing being. And, my husband always thought I was this amazing super-woman!

Best mothering advice given to you: I don't know if this is actually advice per se, but my own Mom has always said to me that "you're only as happy as your unhappiest child." It just always reminds me how connected my own self is to my kids and their feelings. My boys have started to really get into sports and it's really getting competitive in our house. It's so exciting to see one of my boys do really well, but then if the other doesn't do as well, then I can't fully celebrate and it's really really hard. My Mom's quote always pops into my mind during these occasions and it's something that I'm really trying to figure out because I know it's going to get harder as the boys get older. Not only with sports, but with many aspects in their lives.

Who introduced you to NCPG? I actually don't really remember, but I'm going to take a guess that it was my good friend Kyle Christensen.

Best thing learned in NCPG? There are definitely two

different lessons that have stuck with me through the last 7 years of being a Mom. The first lesson was from Monique in the pregnancy class that I took almost 8 years ago. I still have the notes from her class saved on my computer and have found myself going back to them year after year. If you'd like a copy, let me know and I can email you! She gave EXCELLENT sleeping advice, but the one major piece of advice that stuck out and remains critical in my mind is to "put your child to bed awake". That way they can learn to soothe themselves back to sleep when they may wake up in the middle of the night. It was so hard to actually do because you want to rock them and cuddle them and have them lay on your chest, but I've done it with all 3 of my boys and I DO think it was great advice.

Second, was something that I learned in one of the toddler classes....I think. I don't remember the teachers name (possibly Charlotte) because, let's face it, I was exhausted at the time (with 1 and 2 year olds) and anytime I got to just stop and sit down I would almost fall asleep. BUT, I remember the teacher telling me that kids have an "ebb and flow" that happens every 6 months. Now I'm paraphrasing here, but she basically explained how kids have 6 months on and 6 months off. They're good and then bad and it's totally natural. I swear....this is completely true in my household. My boys all go through this ebb and flow and I just always remember what that teacher said. I know that the good times will come and go and so will the bad. Thankfully for me, my boys seem to be on opposite 6-month schedules so they're not all bad all at the same time!



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Ask the Expert

Tips for Saving Space in Kids Rooms

By Armour Self Storage

When it comes to children's bedrooms, availability of space is a very common issue due to the large volume of items that kids often have, including books, stuffed animals, toys, puzzles and clothes. Without proper organization of these items, it is easy to see how they can pile up, creating a huge, cluttered mess!

In order to declutter your child's bedroom, and make the best use of the space, consider the following organization tips from Armour Self Storage, a premier Phoenix affordable self storage facility:

Get Rid of Unwanted Items.

Go through the entire room to locate items, such as books, toys and clothes that are no longer being used. Place any such items in trash bins, or donate them to a local organization. If there are items that your child no longer uses, but doesn't want to get rid of for reasons, such as sentimental value, consider placing them in climate controlled self storage.

Purchase Plastic Containers.

After you have cleared out all items that are being thrown out, donated or taken to a secure storage facility, you should then organize what's left into clear plastic bins or containers. Bins and containers are highly recommended for children's bedrooms as they can hold many items, and are easily stacked and stored against walls, under beds, in closets and on shelves. Using a permanent marker or other label, also make sure to list what belongs in each bin. This will help your child locate everything easily, and maintain an organized room.

Regularly Switch Out Toys.

If your family has multiple children, it is highly likely that there are too many toys to play with. Additionally, this is an easy way for clutter to accumulate. To help alleviate this issue, consider having your kids pick out the toys that they most want to play with. After they have made their selections, place all other toys in a plastic container or bin, and put them away in a closet, or take them to your storage unit. You can then swap out different toys every few weeks or months. This is a great strategy for use in the home as it ensures that children are never bored with their toys, and also reduces clutter.

Putting the above actions into effect will help to clear up some space in your child's room, creating a more enjoyable environment.



If you are interested in maximizing the space of your child's room or any other room in your home, consider renting a secure storage unit from Armour Self Storage. Our Phoenix indoor storage units are perfect for a variety of items from furniture to clothing to antiques to electronics. No matter what your secure storage needs, we are confident that our climate controlled self storage facility can deliver.

To learn more about rental of Phoenix indoor, climate controlled storage units at our secure storage facility, call Armour Self Storage at 602-285-0220. We are conveniently located at 3rd Avenue and Indian School Road in Phoenix.



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Armour Self Storage is a proud sponsor of NCPG because we know that Everyone Needs More Space, even growing families. Have you outgrown some baby items but you are not ready to give them away? Are you ready to clean out the clutter in your garage or attic? Store your possessions safely and securely at your neighborhood, family owned self-storage facility. **Stop by today to see the Armour difference!**

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News & Events

Dear Members,

We can't believe what an amazing success this year has been, and it's far from over! We now have over 220 families and thanks to you all we continue to add to that number each week. With such amazing interest in our organization this year, we have had to cap certain classes to ensure that our teachers can continue to provide top-notch education, which means we've unfortunately had to turn some people away for the first time in our 31 years!

With that said we wanted to start spreading the word about a few changes you can expect when registering for the 2016-17 year. A quick highlight of the changes are as follows: additional classes will be added, classes will be capped, and tuition will now include breakfast and teacher gifts.

April 1-30: Early registration at the discounted price of \$200 only for current members. Registering during this time will also ensure that you will stay with your current class group in the event that we have more than 1 class for your age group. *(Note: we have several age groups that will most likely have more than 1 class next year)*

After May 1st, tuition will be \$275, and spots in classes can not be guaranteed.

Registration forms will be available to all current members starting in April during breakfast and class, as well online. We will also share the registration link in the announcements. Please reach out to the membership department with any questions.

Ashley Blalock & Nathalie Estes, membership@ncpgaz.org



**NCPG
Comment
Box**

We want to hear your thoughts! Please send us any comments or compliments regarding your NCPG experience. Our members' happiness is a big priority of NCPG, so please, make yourself heard.

Email: commentbox@ncpgaz.org

We heard you!

Due to our recent feedback survey, instructors will promptly start class at 9:45. So, grab your breakfast burrito and coffee and don't be late to hear the hot topics of the week in your class.

SAVE THE DATE

Spring Family Event. April 2nd, 10am-Noon

Please save the date for our Spring Family Event on April 2nd from 10am-12pm at **All Saints' Episcopal Day School**. There will be a petting zoo, face painters, a bounce house and fresh made grill cheese sandwiches and hotdogs. Please come join in the fun!

*NCPG is not "hosting" the Mom's Night Outs.

Monthly Meet Ups!

The "NCPG Monthly Meet Ups" are a time for NCPG members of all classes to get together casually. Please feel free to attend any event that works for you, however, no event is mandatory.

Date	Time	Event	Location
March 9	6:30 p.m.	Mom's Night Out*	The Vig
March 16	9:30-11 a.m.	Playdate	Kachina Park
April 6	3:30-5 p.m.	Playdate	Granada Park
May 4	6:30 p.m.	Mom's Night Out*	El Chorro

18 NCPG Parent Times

NCPG Parent Times 19

Shamrock Drops

<http://family.disney.com/recipe/shamrock-drops>

Ingredients:

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1/4 cup milk
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon mint extract
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 oz confetti candy (multi-colored non-pareils)
- Green food coloring
- Powdered sugar

Helpful Tip

Variations: For a different flavor, substitute 1 teaspoon of vanilla or almond extract for the mint extract.

How To Make It

1. Mix butter and sugar until fluffy.
2. Blend flour and salt and add alternately to butter mixture with milk and extract. Add food coloring to milk so it gets into dough evenly.
3. Add in confetti and mix well. Dough will be stiff.
4. Roll into 1" balls and flatten slightly.
5. Bake on greased cookie sheets at 350° F for 15 minutes. Do not let them brown.
6. Cool and roll in powdered sugar.



St. Patrick's Day Straw Art

<http://www.messforless.net/st-patricks-day-straw-art-activity/>

Recently, I bought a bag of milkshake straws and since I'm a kid blogger, I had no intention of using them for milkshakes. I love milkshake straws because they are wider than normal straws and very sturdy. I wondered if we could paint with them. Since they had a large circle opening I thought they would make a cool print if dipped in paint. We tried this St. Patrick's Day Straw Art Activity and I think the results are so eye catching. Even more important, the kids had fun in the process and had their own take on creating straw art.

You will need:

- Large milkshake straw
- Green paint
- Small cup for paint
- Shamrock printable
- 12x18 sheet of green construction paper

I drew a shamrock on a piece of paper or you can download a pattern from the internet. Pour some green paint into a small cup. Your child will dip the straw into the green paint and stamp it onto the shamrock to make a small circle. Getting the straw to make a circle with the paint will take some practice. We had some fun practicing our straw stamping on a sheet of scrap paper. My daughter tried to fill as much of the shamrock as she could with small green circles. Kids can stamp outside the shamrock as well since the shamrocks will be cut out. When the paint dried, I cut out the shamrocks and glued them on some green construction paper. They now hang proudly in our kitchen, providing us with some luck o' the Irish!



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Please let all your friends and family members know about it too!

We Want Your Pictures!

Please send all birth announcements, cute pictures of NCPG kids and parents and professional photos to be considered for publication in the newsletter and your child may even end up on the front cover.



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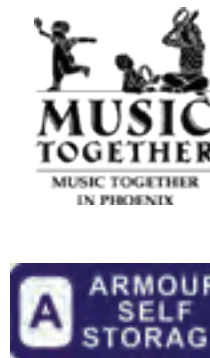
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