

# Parent Times

September 2017

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north central parenting group  
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- ✓ Learn about the application process
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- ✓ Enjoy a light breakfast

**Open Houses will be held at All Saints' Episcopal Day School**  
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**9 a.m. - 11 a.m.**

# OPEN HOUSE

For Prospective Parents

**November 08**  
**December 06**  
**January 10**

### KEY DATES

Application  
Opens

**OCT 02**

Pre-K - Eighth Grade  
Application Deadline

**JAN 19**

Kindergarten  
Group Screening

**JAN 26**

Pre-K  
Play Date

**JAN 27**

First - Eighth Grades  
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**FEB 03**

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ncpg

north central parenting group

## President's Corner

*To the entire  
North Central Parenting Group community:  
Welcome!*

We are so excited to be back for our 33rd year and what better way than by celebrating in our brand-new, fabulous location! To all of our returning members and to the new parents joining us this year, we are looking forward to spending the year together learning and having fun.

We've been busy this summer getting everything set up in our new location, making tons of improvements to the organization, and creating some amazing experiences for you all this year.

We hope you will all be as thrilled as we are to welcome **Busy Bees**, as well as our new and returning top-notch teachers, the return of break-fast burritos, and a killer lineup of social events this year!

I know I can't wait to kick off the year with you all at our first **Welcome Back Mom's Night Out! @ Postino Arcadia** on Thursday, September 28th, 7:00-9:00pm

Also, save the date for the **Fall Fundraiser** on **October 13th** at the **Valley Field Riding and Polo Club**. You can find the rest of the year's event calendar in this issue of the magazine as well as online.

There are so many ways to get involved with NCPG, one of which is **joining one of our committees**, so if you are interested please reach out to me, and I'll happily get you connected. I am looking forward to spending this next year as your President, and am always available if you all need anything or have comments/suggestions on how to improve NCPG.

xo.

Ashley Blalock  
NCPG Board President  
president@ncpgaz.org



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

[www.ncpgaz.org](http://www.ncpgaz.org)



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## Parent Times

Members, this monthly magazine 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](mailto:communications@ncpgaz.org). Thanks for your help!

**Editors** – Laurie Ball & Chandra Petelin

**Designer** – Neill Fox, [foxnoggin@foxnoggin.com](mailto:foxnoggin@foxnoggin.com)

## On the Cover

Maggie photographed by Laurie Ball of Kidtastics.



# Welcome Back to the Nursery!

As you all know, there have been many changes and the nursery is no exception. NCPG is proud to welcome **Busy Bee's** into our new amazing space, complete with a functioning playground.

We are also launching our brand new **Nursery Website** where you will complete your online registration and bi-weekly check-in's. There will no longer be an opportunity to buy a year long package. You will simply log-on and request your spot for each class you will need childcare.

Here is some important info on registering (*there will also be an online tutorial on [ncpgaz.org](http://ncpgaz.org)*):

- Go ahead and register your child if you ever plan on using the nursery (you will only have to do this once, as it will keep all of your information for the year)
- You will only be able to sign-up your child ONE class at a time. There will not be an opportunity to sign up months in advance.



- You will be able to sign up for the next class following the end of the previous class. Say class is on Wednesday, September 13th. The online site will be open from Wednesday, September 13th-Monday, September 25th at midnight. This gives us Tuesday to prepare for your children's arrival on Wednesday, September 27th. This pattern will continue throughout the year, with the Monday (prior to class) closing at midnight being constant and firm.
- We will no longer be able to accept day of drop-ins for ratio and safety reasons. If for some reason you are in need of care last minute, please contact Busy Bee's for a sitter to come to your home.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions at [childcare@ncpgaz.org](mailto:childcare@ncpgaz.org).

We know this is a huge change and we want to make the transition as easy as possible on all of our members! Thank you for your continued support.

We look forward to a wonderful year in the nursery.





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# Meet Our Amazing Teachers!

NCPG is delighted to have an outstanding group of teachers returning to NCPG this year. We have also expanded our community with the fabulous addition of 4 amazing new teachers! We encourage you to get to know each of these highly educated and knowledgeable women. Also, our Class Reps will again be working hard to update you on the latest NCPG events and will be planning some great play dates throughout the year.



## Monique Nelson

PRE-INFANT (*Child Due October- May*)  
NEWBORN (*0-5 months*)

Monique is an Arizona native. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Arizona State University in biology/premed. She holds an additional degree in nursing with a clinical focus in pediatrics. Over the past 20 years she has enjoyed working in the field of pediatrics as a pediatric triage/advice nurse. She has also been teaching pregnancy, newborn, infant and toddler classes for the past 17 years. Monique teaches not only for North Central Parenting Group but Scottsdale Parenting Group as well. She also taught for East Valley Positive Parenting group before the group dissolved. Monique and her husband Dave just celebrated 20 years of marriage this past June and they are the proud parents of Taylor age 17 and Dylan age 12.



## Amy Stewart

CLASS 1A (*5-11 months*)

Amy has a Bachelor's of Science degree in Nursing and is currently completing her Masters in Nursing. She has worked as a Registered Nurse at Scottsdale Healthcare Shea for the past 12 years. After becoming a mother, Amy switched her nursing roles from adult care to pediatrics. She has earned her pediatric nurse certification. Amy has directed various programs and teaching projects throughout the hospital system. She has also led women, family, and children groups with her church organization. Amy feels her greatest accomplishments are found in her home. She loves being the wife to her husband Drew and mother to her son Merik (7) and daughters Sophie (5), Olivia (1), and Grace (3 months). Amy loves being active and enjoys competing in sprint triathlons.



## Lisa Kamps

CLASS 1B (*12-17 months*)

Lisa earned a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from the University of Arizona and a Master of Arts in Elementary Education from Northern Arizona University. She taught second grade at St. Francis Xavier Elementary School in Phoenix for six years before becoming a stay-at-home mom to Charlie(20), Annie(18), Maggie(14) and Samantha(8). Her experience in early childhood education includes eight years as a teacher at Cross Roads Preschool and Kindergarten-two years with three year olds and six years in the Time for Two class. She will be starting her second year at Christ Church School as a co-teacher in the Play and Learn program and will also be the assistant in their kindergarten class. Lisa is an NCPG alum and is looking forward to her third year as an instructor. This organization served her so well in her early years as a mom. She is excited to share parenting tips and talk through the challenges of life with a toddler. In her free time, Lisa loves to travel, play tennis, take walks on the Bridle Path and play Scrabble. Her greatest joy is being with Spencer, her husband of twenty one years, and having her whole family home together at the dinner table. She is looking forward to a great year!



## Debbie Hurst

CLASS 2A (*17-23 months*)

Debbie is a native of Arizona. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Brigham Young University in Elementary Education with a minor in Child Development and Family Relations, and her Ma.Ed from the University of Phoenix. Debbie has recently retired from the elementary classroom after twenty-nine years of teaching, specifically in grades one and three where she provided parenting tips and benchmarks of child growth and development in her weekly parent newsletters throughout the school year. She is currently under contract as adjunct faculty with Grand Canyon University in the College of Education, and received training this summer with the Rosemond Leadership Parenting Institute as a certified parent coach. As a teacher, Debbie has trained and mentored numerous interns, student teachers, and new faculty members in addition to serving on school advisement committees. She believes a nurturing environment containing love, leadership, communication, positive reinforcement, and mutual respect are paramount and fundamental in a child's life. Debbie has been married to her husband Craig for thirty-eight years and they are the proud parents of three children (including Amy Stewart, a fellow NCPG instructor) and six grandchildren. She enjoys traveling, cooking, playing the piano, and spending time with family!



## Kristin Klecka

CLASS 2B (*24-29 months*)

Kristin is an educator who has been working with children since the early 2000's. Trained in Elementary Education, she has worked full-time with two different grade levels (fourth and second) for six years and has also substitute taught in grade levels K-6, including leading gifted/honors classes. Teaching in both California and Arizona, Kristin has a firm grasp of critical early years teaching skills and methods such as Core Knowledge. Kristin's course work at the University of Arizona resulted in a Bachelor of Arts in Family Studies and she subsequently obtained a Master's Degree in Elementary Education at the University of Pepperdine in Los Angeles, CA. She also achieved her teaching credential in California. But, her greatest accomplishment has been being a wife and full-time mom to three children ages 10, 8, and 6. They have taught her more about love and life than anything else. Kristin likes to cook, exercise, spend time with friends, and travel.







## Amy Guido

CLASS 3A (29-25 months)

Amy is a masters prepared Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Her over 19 years of non-profit and for-profit behavioral health experience with children, teens and adults includes evaluation, case management, crisis intervention, counseling, program development, leadership and consulting with government and corporate clients. She's provided services in inpatient (Phoenix Children's Hospital), residential treatment centers, home, school, office and telephonic settings. She is comfortable addressing a variety of common parenting challenges. Her strengths include helping parents lead with intelligence, humility, awareness and playfulness. She is a grateful NCPG alumni and parent with her husband David and two sons ages 8 and 10. Privately, she enjoys walks with her goldendoodle, spending time with extended family and friends, school volunteerism, fitness and spirituality.



## Barb Grady

CLASS 3B (36-41 months)

Barb begins her 25th year teaching for NCPG. She is a nationally certified counselor and certified teacher. In 1999, Barb began her business, Parenting-Plus, where she offers parenting classes, personal growth groups, individual consulting and life/parent coaching for both adults and children. Barb has taught preschool, Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grades as well as high school and college. Barb has two daughters: Jody, who is a nurse and has two children (Carter 4 and Grady 3), and Annie, who recently finished her master's degree and is working as a farm to school program coordinator in California. Barb loves being an involved grandparent! She is delighted to return this year to share her passion and to motivate and inspire parents.



## Annemarie Mansour

CLASS 4A (41-47 months)

Annemarie has her bachelor's degree in Psychology and Child Development from Saint Mary's College of California, and her Master's Degree from Palo Alto University in Psychology. Prior to moving to Phoenix in 2011 her family lived in Maryland and California where she served on the board and worked at her children's preschool as well as worked as a Family Behavioral Specialist, helping families with children ages 0-6 manage behavior problems to ready their children for kindergarten. Annemarie was the Director at Cross Roads Preschool and Kindergarten for several years prior to joining Saint Thomas the Apostle School as their Preschool Director in 2016. Annemarie and her husband Nick have been married for 19 years and have four children; Nick (18), Isabelle (16), Marissa (13) and Joseph (10). Annemarie's favorite days are those spent with her children and husband relaxing at home, reading, cooking and making each other laugh. Annemarie is excited to join the NCPG community to help parents navigate this journey of parenthood.



## Lesley Isaak

CLASS 4B (48-53 months)

Lesley is a Licensed Professional Counselor, specializing in the treatment of children and teenagers (ages 4-18), as well as their families. Lesley graduated with a business degree from the University of Arizona and worked in administrative and management positions until becoming a stay-at-home mom. After 9 years of fun and exhaustion at home, which included enjoying classes at NCPG as a new mom, Lesley returned to school and earned her Masters in Professional Counseling from Ottawa University. For the last 6 years, she has focused on providing education, therapy, and ideas to assist families in creating a healthy, supportive environment at home. When she has free time, Lesley enjoys being outdoors – hiking, biking, working in the yard –

and most importantly, hanging out with her husband and their four boys (now ages 12, 13, 14, and 15 years old).



## Karyn Kapellusch

PRE K (enrolled in Pre-K or Junior Kindergarten)

Karyn's love is early childhood. She began her teaching career in 1995 at Shadow Rock Preschool in Moon Valley where her firm belief that children are unique and unrepeatable was forged. In 2003 she joined friends from Shadow Rock at Christ Church School in Paradise Valley where she created a successful Mini-Threes Curriculum, and helped launch the Early bird, Lunch bunch and After Care Programs which she coordinated for over 10 years. She also taught Fine Motor Skills, Science, Math, and Yoga during her 11 years at CCS. Karyn has 3 married children and 3 grandchildren. She loves to travel and read in her free time.



## Jemeille Ackourey

KINDERGARTEN (enrolled in Kindergarten)

Jemeille 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. Jemeille's greatest joy is her family. Her marriage to Karl has brought together a blended family of 5 children, their spouses, significant others, and 4 grandchildren.



## Michelle Cox

SCHOOL A (Grades 1-3)

Michelle has been married for 20 years and is the mother of four teens. She loves to spend time with her family as they discover new places and explore the outdoors. Michelle is the founder of Build Family Connection and has been coaching and teaching parents for the last 7 years. Michelle graduated with a BS in Education from Northern Arizona University, completed "The Choice in Coaching: Arbinger Mastery Training for Coaches," a graduate of the Coachville School of Coaching, and is a PCC certified coach with the Intl. Coaching Federation.



## Doreen Knight

SCHOOL B (Grades 4-6)

Doreen Knight MS., earned her bachelors degree in Special and Elementary Education plus her Master's Degree in Curriculum and Education from ASU. She has taught fourth grade, fifth grade, ESL (English as a second language) and gifted education in Scottsdale, Paradise Valley and Summit, NJ Unified School Districts for over 30 years. As a teacher, Doreen has mentored and trained numerous student teachers and faculty members, in addition to serving and chairing many school committees. She facilitated Rainbows, a counseling group for students dealing with divorce, death and personal hardships, as well as raising two children on her own for over ten years. This has provided her true insight into helping students through the important stages of becoming a teenager. She enjoys spending time with her husband Don, daughter Sedona (31), son Brett (25) and stepdaughter Falyne (24), as they become successful in their careers and life. She also enjoys hiking, gardening, biking, reading and spending time with family and friends. Doreen is excited to join the NCPG community to help parents learn, love and laugh through this journey through parenthood!

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# Class Descriptions

## PRE-INFANT *(Child due between October and May)*

This class provides the foundation for a successful transition into motherhood. There are many new things to learn about a newborn's development, behaviors, and most importantly needs. Please feel free to bring your infant with you to class if you should have him or her during the school year!

## NEWBORN *(0-5 months old)*

All the infant "firsts" are shared and cherished in these important first six months. Bedtime routines are established and new foods are introduced. Please feel free to bring your infant (0-6 months old) to class with you!

## CLASS 1A *(5-11 months old)*

The entirety of the first year is discussed and celebrated. The child is developing new behaviors and reaching milestones in crawling, walking and babbling.

## CLASS 1B *(12-17 months)*

Bye bye baby-hello toddler! Mobility and exploration are under way. In this class we cover discipline, napping, language development and social skills. We also discuss preschool readiness, preparing for siblings and potty training. The goal of this class is to help prepare parents for the many transitions that are a part of this stage of development.

## CLASS 2A & CLASS 2B *(17-29 months)*

Helping parents prepare and guide their children through the major transitions of this stage and year ahead. Preparing for preschool, potty training, moving from the crib to the bed, behavioral changes and social interaction are the goals of this class.

## CLASS 3A & CLASS 3B *(29-41 months)*

This class focuses on the struggle for power between child and parent, providing useful and effective parenting strategies while respecting the child's need for independence. Sibling interaction and the family are discussed as well.

## CLASS 4A & CLASS 4B *(41-53 months)*

This class devotes much time to children's social development, covering a variety of issues from anger management to conflict resolution to peer relationships. Additionally, topics in this class will include: establishing family rules, building self-confidence and self-reliance, and encouraging cognitive and physical development.

## PRE-K OR JR. KINDERGARTEN *(Enrolled in Pre-K or Jr. Kindergarten)*

Parents discuss and prepare for the next step into kindergarten, including but not limited to: choosing a school that meets their child's and family's needs, learning math and reading tools that will enhance kindergarten success, and finding ways to encourage self-confidence and independence. Also, every class features take home crafts and recipes that focus on kindergarten readiness skills.

## KINDERGARTEN *(Enrolled in Kindergarten)*

Come to this class for support, encouragement, and many laughs as we help moms and their children transition into elementary school. Topics will focus on nurturing a child's autonomy, helping them set appropriate boundaries, fostering their awareness, and encouraging responsibility.

## SCHOOL A AND SCHOOL B *(Grades 1-6)*

NCPG has added elementary classes to help Valley parents navigate the challenges of parenting increasingly independent children. These classes will cover topics such as: how to partner with your child's teacher and school, bullying recognition and prevention, nutrition for learning, deepening your relationship with your child as he/she gets older, parenting in the digital age, raising your child to be an innovator, and encouraging autonomy.



# NCPG Class Progression

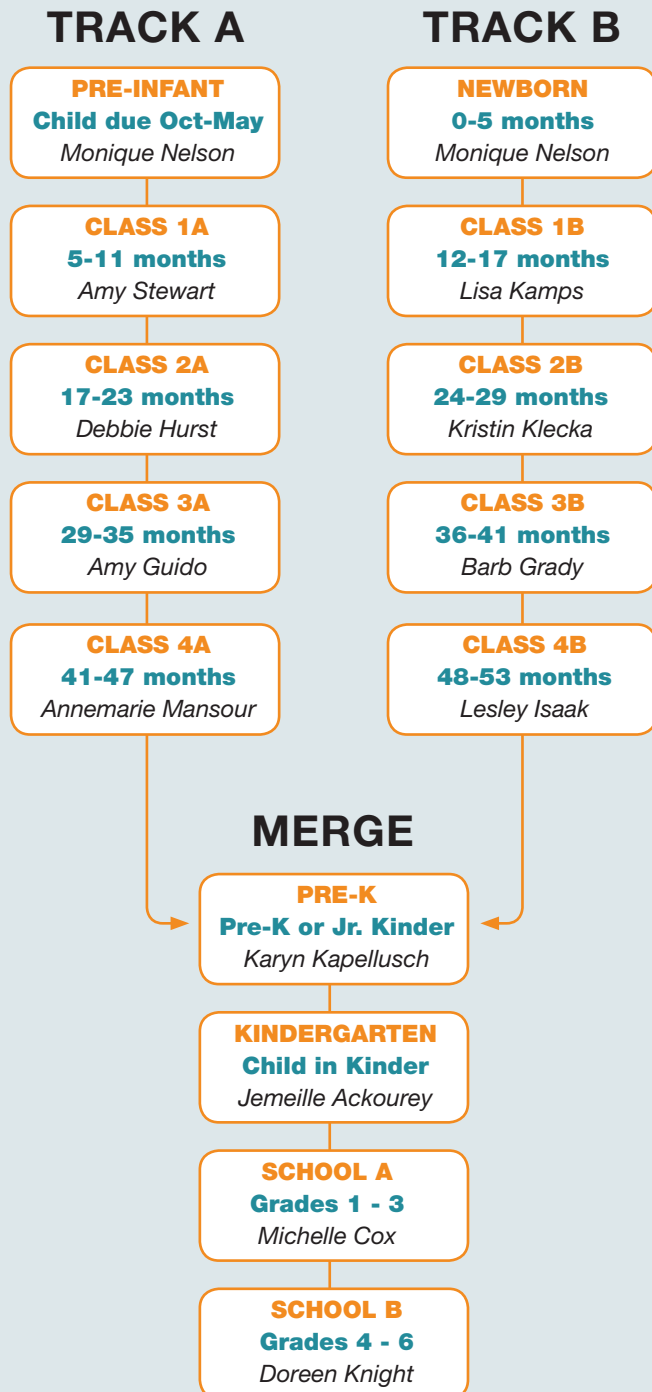
(Based on age of child on September 1st)

Due to the amazing growth and maturity of our NCPG Community, we have designed a new class progression starting in the 2017-2018 year. The progression will help with class size, consistency and age range. Our updated system also includes the addition of two new classes and focuses on a more seminar style of teaching as you advance through the program. Please reach out to the board with any questions.

1. Progression may vary depending on your child's birth date. If your child is the oldest or youngest in a class, you may not follow the same progression as other members.
2. Member enrollment also affects class progression as the Board strives to have no class be too big or too small.

If you have any questions about your class assignment, please contact [membership@ncpgaz.org](mailto:membership@ncpgaz.org). We can accommodate requests.

The information provided by NCPG instructors should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.



Class 4A will most likely move to Pre-K. Class 4B will most likely split, half to Pre-K, half to Kinder. Everyone will be placed in the class based on their child's school grade.



# Five FUN Ways Parents Can Help Their Children Be Musical

Most parents now understand the value of music for the development of young children. It is not only fun for their kids to listen, sing and dance along to, but it also helps children develop a host of important skills, such as language, concentration, social skills, confidence, and self-esteem.

According to music education expert Kenneth K. Guilmartin, Founder/Director of Music Together celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, "All children are naturally musical. Just as they are born with the potential to learn to speak and understand language, they have the ability from birth to learn music. And nurturing this innate talent early provides the foundation for later success with traditional music or dance lessons."

Unfortunately, many adults feel inadequate as music-makers themselves and, as a result, fail to make music with their children in everyday life. Parents and caregivers can contribute enormously to the enrichment of their child's music development regardless of parents' own music abilities.

Guilmartin explains, "It is not important that you sing or move well; it is important that you model singing and moving for your child."

Here are some tips to help you begin your child's musical journey:





**1** Simply sing and dance with your child! The best thing you can do to help set your child on the road to a lifelong love of music is to participate enthusiastically in music activities yourself. Have you ever noticed how instinctively children try to imitate older siblings and grownups? Imitation is an important part of how they learn. Children learn to talk this way, as well as to walk. If you read books, they'll want to read. If you sing and dance, they will, too. And don't just put on a CD. Sing, bang a drum, get up and dance. Your notes do not have to be perfect, and you may miss some words or some steps. It is about showing your child that you enjoy the music you are making.

**2** Sing a lullaby to your child before bed. Young children love to hear their grownups sing to them. The sound of your voice, even if it is not pitch-perfect, is precious to your child. A lullaby provides a time to be close to your child physically, emotionally, and musically. The lullaby can transform the bedtime hour into an oasis of loving calm. For babies and toddlers, it provides a comforting bedtime ritual. For older children, who are increasingly verbal, it is often the time they spontaneously confide their hopes and fears.

**3** Take cues from your child and respond musically. If your baby or toddler "coos" on a pitch, return the sound. If your child sings in the car or when you are out walking, sing with her. If your child brings an instrument to you, try to stop what you are doing and play along.

**4** Make it a family affair. Make music as a family. Have a dance party or a sing-along. Get out pots and pans and form a band. Gather around the piano. Imagine sitting around as a family and singing instead of watching TV or playing computer games. As technology increases, the importance of non-technical group interaction also increases, especially at home. Family music-making can be a wonderful activity shared by siblings, parents, grandparents, and other members of the extended family, including nannies and babysitters.

**5** Bring your child to an early childhood music program. Young children learn best in a non-formal environment free from performance pressure and undue interference with their natural sense of fun. A good class provides children with all the ingredients for music learning. It offers them a rich musical repertoire to actively explore, along with the pleasure and support of being with loved ones in a music-making community. A music class is a fun activity that the whole family can participate in. And, attending class might just bring out your inner musician as well as your child's.


Guilmartin adds, "All children can achieve basic music competence -- which we define as the ability to sing in tune and move with accurate rhythm -- provided their early environment supports such learning. And, it starts with parents' and caregivers' active and joyful participation, which is essential to a child's musical growth. So the next time your child is humming the theme to her favorite cartoon and rocking to the beat, make sure you join in and make some music together."

Since 1999, Music Together in Phoenix offers family music and movement classes throughout the valley (Phoenix, Scottsdale, Paradise Valley & Peoria). The Music Together curriculum is based on the recognition that all children are musical. All children can learn to sing in tune, keep a beat, and participate with confidence in the music of their culture, provided that their early environment supports such learning.

Music Together in Phoenix has programs for families (birth to age 7), schools, at-risk populations, and at retirement centers for an intergenerational music experiences. The program is passionately committed to bonding children and their caregivers through music and helping people discover the joy and critical educational value of early music experiences.

More at [www.musictogetherinphx.com](http://www.musictogetherinphx.com) and [www.facebook.com/MusicTogetherPhx](http://www.facebook.com/MusicTogetherPhx).

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# THE LIST: KID FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS!

## JOYRIDE TACO HOUSE

[JOYRIDETACOHOUSE.COM](http://JOYRIDETACOHOUSE.COM)

Tacos, burritos, chips, guacamole, and a spacious patio. The vibe draws you in, the food blows you away with its freshness and the cocktails are sublimely delicious. Everything is \$5 on the kids menu, yummy choices for kids.

## FLOWER CHILD

[IAMAFLOWERCHILD.COM](http://IAMAFLOWERCHILD.COM)

The healthy food options are endless here. The restaurant is thoughtfully decorated to reflect everything trendy today: green, eco-friendly, recycled decor, relaxed urban. You order at the counter, choose a place to sit, and wait for your food to arrive. The kids menu is super, including a gluten-free mac and cheese. You can't go wrong at this restaurant, especially if you maintain a gluten-free or paleo diet.

## ZINBURGER

[ZINBURGERAZ.COM](http://ZINBURGERAZ.COM)

At Zinburger, it's easy to be tempted by gourmet burgers. Plus, the menu features delicious salads and decadent shakes that you'll fall in love with. Bring the kids to enjoy the kid's menu and splash pad, or bring your date for a cocktail and a shake, there's something for everyone to enjoy!

## FROST

[FROSTGELATO.COM](http://FROSTGELATO.COM)

Frost Gelato at the Biltmore serves a rich variety of handmade gelatos and sorbetos every day. But there's more! FROST also offers other tasty treats: Frostbites, handmade gelato bon-bon's dipped in Italian chocolate, custom made Gelato cakes, and hot indulgences including several coffee drinks flavored with your choice of gelato. Staff and customers proclaim the best Gelato in the Valley can be found at FROST.

## BECKETT'S TABLE

[BECKETTSTABLE.COM](http://BECKETTSTABLE.COM)

Beckett's Table offers elevated modern American comfort food with an emphasis on locally-sourced ingredients. The restaurant also happens to be family friendly, offering a special kids menu featuring sliders, mac and cheese, pasta with red sauce or butter, PBJ with no crust, grilled chicken skewers, quesadilla or a hot dog. Kids plates come with fruit or fries, a beverage and a cookie.

## CHELSEA'S KITCHEN

[CHELSEASKITCHENAZ.COM](http://CHELSEASKITCHENAZ.COM)

Occupying a canal-side brick building, this neighborhood-casual restaurant is part of a local dynasty. The enterprise appeals to families and maintains a solid menu that capitalizes on premium ingredients. Families will love the inventive kid's menu at Chelsea's. It features original creations like the house PB&J sushi rolls.

## BARRO'S PIZZA

[BARROSPIZZA.COM](http://BARROSPIZZA.COM)

The lunch specials are incredibly low priced and the indoor play area is great entertainment for children. The seating around the play area offers parents the opportunity to enjoy a meal with friends while watching your children build with blocks, cook in the play kitchen, and eat pizza at a table just their size. Barro's Pizza is located throughout the Phoenix area.

## RUSTLER'S ROOST

[RUSTLERSROOSTE.COM](http://RUSTLERSROOSTE.COM)

The legendary steakhouse has a slide for guests to go from the top floor to the dining area below. The restaurant is located atop a butte in the South Mountains and offers amazing views of the city. In addition to their tasty steakhouse menu; the indoor playground, waterfall, and full windows is sure to keep your family entertained for a fun dining experience!

## GRASSROOTS-TOWN & COUNTRY

[GRASSROOTSAZ.COM](http://GRASSROOTSAZ.COM)

Grassroots gives us delicious "comfort" dining and a safe courtyard play space for kids!

## LA GRANDE ORANGE - CURBSIDE PICKUP

[LAGRANDEORANGEPIZZERIA.COM](http://LAGRANDEORANGEPIZZERIA.COM)

They come to you... in your car. Need we say more? Mouthwatering pizzas, salads, sandwiches and kid-friendly fare... and, lattes or rotisserie chickens can also be delivered via curbside.

## PITA JUNGLE

[PITAJUNGLE.COM](http://PITAJUNGLE.COM)

Aside from the wide variety of options for adults, the kids' menu is incredibly healthy, and it's all already cut up too!

## O.H.S.O. BREWERY

[OHSOBREWERY.COM](http://OHSOBREWERY.COM)

OHSO Brewery has a large shaded outdoor area that manages to remain comfortable, even in the Arizona heat, and offers corn hole and ping pong for adults and kids alike. The kids menu features a variety of choices, from mac and cheese to a pretzel dog, for \$4.99 each, including drinks. Parents can sample the extensive brew menu while the kids play.

## BUTTERS PANCAKES & CAFE

[BUTTERSCAFE.COM](http://BUTTERSCAFE.COM)

Don't expect a greasy spoon — the food here is prepared fresh with quality ingredients. Pancakes, fruit salads, fluffy omelettes, and fresh-squeezed orange juice, along with a special children's brunch menu, make this a good family destination.

## COCONUT'S FISH CAFE

[COCONUTSAZ.COM](http://COCONUTSAZ.COM)

A Hawaiian-style, fast-casual taco joint decorated with surfboard tables, bamboo, bright colors and a soundtrack of island music. The ambiance is fun, casual and friendly, but you'll come for the expansive menu of fish tacos, fish filets, salads, and fish and chip plates.

## BRAT HAUS

[BRATHAUSAZ.COM](http://BRATHAUSAZ.COM)

The Brat Haus may seem like an adult-only beer garden, but this popular Scottsdale destination for brats and craft beer is actually pretty kid-friendly. There is a kid's menu featuring all-beef hot dogs, grilled cheese, and chicken fingers, and families will appreciate the laid-back ambiance and comfortable outdoor patio at this lively Old Town spot.

## SUGARBOWL

[SUGARBOWLSCOTTSDALE.COM](http://SUGARBOWLSCOTTSDALE.COM)

This local favorite has been around for decades for a reason. Not only are their desserts the best, but also the atmosphere is a nice change of pace. Make sure to visit the game room, too!

## THE STAND

[THESTANDBNT.COM](http://THESTANDBNT.COM)

Fresh, drive through burgers (and milkshakes) that are fast, but not fast food! The owner grew up in Arcadia, and promises only the highest quality ingredients.

## SAUCE

[SAUCEPIZZAANDWINE.COM](http://SAUCEPIZZAANDWINE.COM)

Sauce is a true neighborhood family restaurant with pasta, pizza, salads and their "kid-famous" mac & cheese. Parents can enjoy a home cooked meal without cooking in just minutes. As service is fast at all the valley wide locations of Sauce, but without the junk. Their food has fresh Italian flavors and affordable wines.

Joyride



Frost Gelato



Flowerchild



Zinburger



Brat Haus



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# 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 magazine and your child may even end up on the front cover.



Please submit high resolution images at a minimum size of 5 x 7 at 300 dpi.

[communications@ncpgaz.org](mailto:communications@ncpgaz.org).



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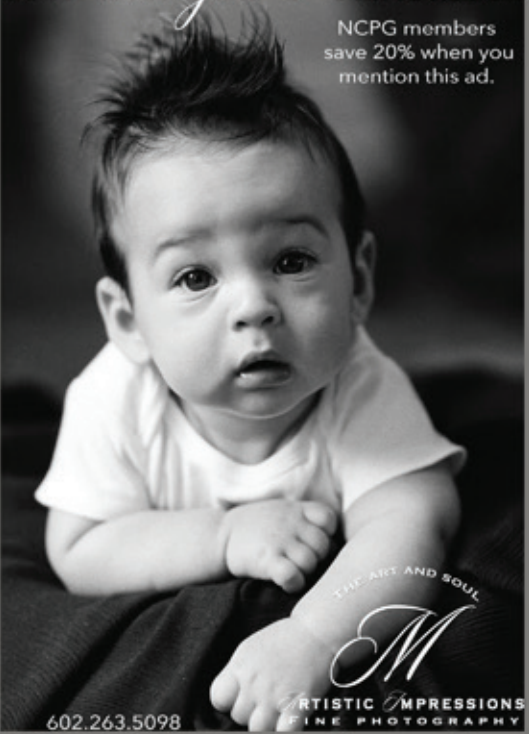
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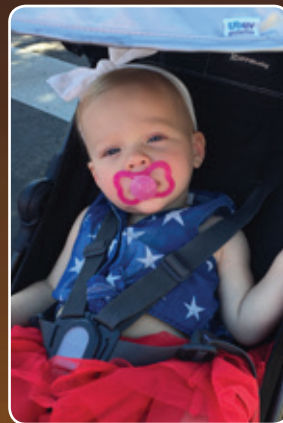




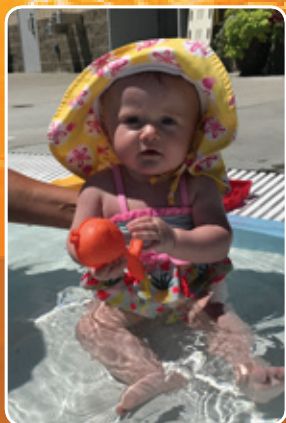
# S U M M E R







# L O V I N '







# 2017-2018 Calendar

## Class Schedule

<b>8:30 am</b>	Nursery opens
<b>9:00-9:40 am</b>	Refreshments served in Hutton Hall
<b>9:45*-11:30 am</b>	Classes are held <i>*Teachers will start promptly at 9:45!</i>
<b>11:45 am</b>	Nursery closes
<b>11:45-1:45 pm</b>	Pre-Infant Class

## Location

### Saint Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church

6715 N Mockingbird Lane  
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253

## Class Dates

September 13\* & 27  
October 11\* & 25  
November 8\*  
December 6\* & 20  
January 10 & 24  
February 7\* & 21  
March 28\*  
April 11 & 25\*  
May 9\*

*\*Monthly Parent Times magazine distributed.*

## Board Meetings

September 12th	February 5th
October 2nd	March 5th
November 6th	April 2nd
December 4th	May 7th
January 8th	

*Meetings are at 6:30 p.m.*

# Special Events



## Mom's Night Out

**Thursday, September 28th, 7:00-9:00pm**  
**Welcome Back Mom's Night Out**  
@ Postino Arcadia

**Sunday, November 19th, 9:00-11:30am**  
**Namaste and Brunch (Yoga Flow and Brunch)**  
@ Postino Highland

**Saturday, January 20th, 12:30pm**  
@ Barre 3

**Thursday, March 22nd, 6:00-8:00pm**  
@ Artistic Impressions by Mara, Fine Photography

**Thursday, May 17th, 6:00-8:00pm**  
**Happy Hour End of Year Celebration**  
Location TBD



## NCPG Play Dates

**Wednesday, October 4th, 4:30-6:30pm**  
@ Altitude Trampoline Park

**Saturday, October 21st, 10:00am -12:00pm**  
**Fall Festival**  
@ All Saints Episcopal School

**Wednesday, December, 13th 4:30-6:00pm**  
@ Childrens Museum of Phoenix

**Wednesday, February 28th, 3:30-5:30pm**  
@ McCormick Stillman Railroad park

**Saturday, April 21st, 10:00am-12:00pm**  
**Spring Festival**  
@ All Saints Episcopal School

If you have any questions regarding the play dates,  
please contact [specialevents@ncpgaz.org](mailto:specialevents@ncpgaz.org).



# New Philanthropy!

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

This new board position has been created as a way for NCPG to give back to the Phoenix community and to our own NCPG community as well. We will continue to do our annual philanthropy (picking a local charity and having our members contribute in some way...more details to follow this Fall). In addition, we will be partnering with some great organizations to provide volunteer opportunities for you and your littles throughout the year. And finally, we are creating "NCPG Cares", a program to help our own NCPG families in need.

## NCPG CARES

Do you know someone in our organization that could use a little helping hand? It could be anything from a family struggling with a sick child to a mom just having a rough go of it lately. NCPG would like to give back to our families to show we care. We can help with things like babysitting hours so mom can get one of her kids to a doctor's appointment, a hot meal for a family with a new baby, toys for a little one while they recover from a surgery, etc. If you know of someone that could use some support or a little extra help, please send an email to [outreach@ncpgaz.org](mailto:outreach@ncpgaz.org). We will also have a box at breakfast if you prefer to submit your requests anonymously. We are here to help! Because, It takes a village...



This is a simple and automatic way for us to support NCPG every time you shop, at no cost to you.

When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to North Central Parenting Group.

You use the same account on Amazon.com and Amazon Smile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

On your first visit to AmazonSmile, you need to select North Central Parenting Group as your charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Amazon Smile will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make will result in a donation.

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



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Scholarships

Our Treasurers would like to let our members know that NCPG continues to offer scholarship opportunities for both membership and nursery dues.

Some classes are filling up quickly, so please be sure to contact [treasurer@ncpgaz.org](mailto:treasurer@ncpgaz.org) if you, or someone you know, is interested to reserve your spot.

### Shirts & Hats!

Did you know NCPG has new Children's Shirts & Mom Hats.

**Kids T-shirts : \$20**

(Sizes 2T through 6T)

**Mom Baseball Hats: \$15**

We will sell them during breakfast in Hutton Hall.



### Facebook News

After some deliberation, we have decided to migrate our Facebook page to become a closed group. We take the privacy of our members and their kiddos seriously, and we want to make sure we are posting in the safest way we can online.

The closed group will be a benefit to members, and we are encouraging you all to become more actively engaged with our page. We are now opening the closed group up to members to be able to share advice, articles, deals, events and there is even a classifieds section. We just ask that we keep everything respectful and positive on the page.

All registered NCPG members will get an invite to the page sent via email. If for some reason it doesn't come through, you can simply request to join the group and you will be approved.



# Meet the Board



## Ashley Blalock

President

**Where are you from?** Born and raised in sunny Scottsdale, AZ

**Class:** Class 3B with Barb Grady

**Kids names and Ages:** Cash 3 years and Kenzie 2 months

**What drew you to NCPG?** I was drawn to NCPG when I was pregnant with my

son, knowing that I would need a way to find mom friends and find support! My husband, Tucker, and I at the time were young parents and only had 1 other friend who was pregnant at the time, and I convinced her to join with me. Without a doubt one of the best decisions I've ever made was joining NCPG.

**What is your most valuable/memorable NCPG experience?** My most valuable and memorable experience with NCPG is from my second class ever, which was about 3 weeks into motherhood, and I was so sleep deprived and having a terrible case of baby blues. The new friends I met (Jessica Phipps and Mandi Canter) pulled me out of the funk. They gave me support and friendship when I was at one of my lowest points and I will forever remember their kindness and hope I've repaid it somehow!

**What do you most enjoy about contributing to the organization?**

As a 3rd time board member and 2nd year into being President, my most favorite thing I've contributed to the organization is its continued success. NCPG is now the only parenting organization of its kind in the Valley and I feel honored that I've been able to do my small part in keeping it around for people to benefit.

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** The

most humbling thing about being a parent is the acceptance that it takes a village and it's ok to accept help as we can't do it all. This summer the birth of my daughter was extremely traumatic and we are both lucky to be here today. I was completely incapable of taking care of Kenzie for the first few days in the hospital and had to completely rely on the support of others to care for her, and for a control freak like me this was difficult to accept. I truly realized the meaning of "the village" and that "martyrs don't make good moms."

**If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** I'd love to have dinner with one of my closest friends, Maania, who lost her battle with a rare cancer this summer. She was an amazing person and always found the good in everything, even in her darkest hours. A true hero and an inspiration for me and so many others.

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** If Kelly Ripa sat next to me on the plane I'd do my damndest to convince her to let me be her next fan cohort. It is a lifelong dream and mission to share the desk with her!



## Lindsay Perry

Vice President

**Where are you from?** Phoenix, Arizona

**Kids names and ages, current class.**

Taylor, 11 years old and Georgia, 2 years old.

**Class:** I'm in class 2B.

**What drew you to NCPG?** One of my best friends, Sarah Ragland, spoke highly of NCPG. She shared with me that the community, the teachers, the resources and the support have all been an invaluable gift for her. So, I joined and she was right, NCPG is a gift.

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with**

**NCPG?** That while being a mom is AMAZING, it's also incredibly hard. I feel fortunate that I can share my struggles and ask for help without being judged. It has been the biggest blessing to have these incredible women who listen, understand, reassure, support and give you the resources you need to get through. I am a better mom to my kids because of it.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** It is hard for me to pick one thing, but it would probably be converting ideas into reality. This year I am really looking forward to watching the positive effect our community outreach program has on our members' lives.



**If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** It would be my grandmother; we called her Lele. She passed away when I was in college. She was the ultimate Southern Belle and one of my best friends. I miss her every minute of every day.

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** Faith Hill would become my new bestie and we would take a picture together.



## Caroline Keating

Treasurer

**What drew you to NCPG?** About 5 years ago, a friend of mine was a member in NCPG, and when I found out I was pregnant she told me all the wonderful things the organization has to offer and encouraged me to join. I was new to the area and looking to meet other Moms with babies the same age. The teachers

and classes really helped me navigate through the baby and toddler stages and I'm excited to have the support and professional insight as my oldest starts Pre-K this year.

**Where are you from?** I was born and raised in New Haven, Connecticut. After graduating from University of Connecticut I lived in Boston, MA before moving to Phoenix in the fall of 2011.

**What has been your most memorable/valuable experience with NCPG?** My most valuable experience with NCPG has been the camaraderie and enjoyment I've received from the seeing familiar faces at breakfast and class, and having the opportunity to talk about issues regarding our children and life in Phoenix.

**-As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** As a board member, I enjoy supporting an organization I deeply care about. I have experience in accounts receivable and payable within the insurance industry and have been able to apply those skills here. Thanks to that experience and the insight of past Treasurer, Anna Petermann, and alongside Jenna Hilton, the responsibility has been an enjoyable one.

**Kids names and ages, and current class:** Jack: soon to be age 5 and Hank age 3. I will be enrolled in the NCPG Pre-K class.

**What's your favorite thing about living in Arizona?** One of my favorite things about living in Arizona is the weather and the ability to be outside most of the time. The Mexican food doesn't hurt either!

**If you could have dinner with anyone who would it be?** I would love to have dinner with Kate Middleton. She has been able to navigate her royal family duties and provide a stable and loving family life for her children. Her style, elegance and grace will make her an icon for this generation and those to come.

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** If Kaley Cuoco sat next to me on a plane I would be so excited. Not only is she hilarious, she's a huge animal lover and equestrian. She seems very down to earth and approachable. I think the conversation would be non-stop.



## Jenna Hilton

Assistant Treasurer

**What drew you to NCPG?** Parenting is tough. I realized I needed more information on the "how-to" on parenting. Without having family in town, I also needed support from other moms to navigate this challenging/rewarding time in our lives.

**Where are you from?** Ankeny, Iowa

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** I appreciate how our organization is dynamic; we begin as new mothers, who question every move and decision. We evolve into more

confident, supported mothers. I enjoy meeting previous NCPG members who are parents of older children - they love our organization and are still connected with parents they met at NCPG. That is amazing!

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I have such a respect for NCPG and feel thankful that we are lucky enough to have this resource. I would do anything to make sure we can "pay it forward" to other new moms.

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Royce- 3, Kennedy- 22 months

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** You can have your "game-plan" ready to go, and then your child will throw you a curve ball and you feel completely out of control. Do I really know what I am doing?!

**What item of your partner's (that s/he refuses to part with) drives you most crazy in your home? What about it drives you crazy?**

My husband has some interesting jewelry he purchased 15 years ago. Somehow, we still own a bike-chain necklace!

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** I actually would love to tune into some of our toddlers little wandering minds. How do his thoughts always lead to, "Mommy, are the Bergens going to eat us like the Trolls?"



## Sarah Dworkin

Membership Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?**

I wanted to meet other moms who had kids around the same age as mine. As a new mom, I had so many questions and worries, and I was afraid our pediatrician was going to fire us as patients if I didn't stop calling!

**Where are you from?** Phoenix

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** I joined NCPG when my son was just a few months old, so it's been so fun watching all of these babies grow into wild & crazy toddlers together! I've loved sharing so many milestones with my class, especially the addition of new babies. My NCPG friends have been a wonderful resource as we try to figure out life with two sweet kiddos!

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** NCPG has been so valuable to me, so I'm excited to be able to give back as a board member. This is my first year on the board, and I've already learned a ton! I'm one of the membership directors, so I want to help spread the word about NCPG to new moms and make sure our current members are getting what they're looking for out of NCPG!

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Ben is 3 and Caroline is almost 9 months.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** I grew up in Phoenix, so it's really special to be able to introduce my husband and kids to some of the places that were important to me when I was little. I get really nostalgic any time we take family adventures to the places I loved as a kid. It's so fun to be able to have these experiences as a mom.

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** I am one of those crazy Oprah fans, so if I sat next to her on a plane (which would have to be her plane...Oprah doesn't fly commercial!), we'd drink champagne and have a really amazing talk. Actually, I'm not cool at all, especially around celebrities...so if by some amazing turn of events, I wound up sitting next to Oprah, I'd probably say something completely embarrassing and then spend the rest of the flight fighting tears and trying to pull my foot out of my mouth!

**What item of your partner's (that s/he refuses to part with) drives you most crazy in your home? What about it drives you crazy?** Nate still has some college era t-shirts I haven't been able to get rid

(continued on next page)

of...yet! I've made a lot of progress, but if you see a 38-year-old guy with two cute kids at the park wearing a University of Texas Delts foam party t-shirt from rush 1999, please stop and say hi! Or feel free to tell Nate it might be time to update his weekend wardrobe!



## Rebecca Hogan

Membership Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** Right around the time my twins were a year old I found out about the group and wanted to join right away. By this point I sorta had the hang of things with being a mom but wanted to find more of a community and social outlet. I only wish I had heard of the group sooner!

**Where are you from?** I was raised in Phoenix (my parents grew up across the street from each other in north central Phoenix) although I lived other places most of my 20s before moving back with my husband.

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** Easily the spring galas. I love how everyone goes all out in regards to the theme and lets loose. I always feel much more bonded to my class and the group after the event. It's also such a great date night!

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** This is my 2nd year as membership co-director and I really love introducing the group to parents. I get excited when a new member finds out about the group and has enthusiasm to join. I love connecting new members to their class and teacher - helping them find the "right" fit.

**Kids names and ages, current class.** My twins, Kate and Connor, turned 3 in July. 2 days later we welcomed their sister, Quinn. I'm going to be in class 3B this year.

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** That you never really have it figured out! Being a parent is a constant juggling act and I'm always trying to find the right balance between work, kids, self, and marriage. I thought I had it down and now with the addition of our newborn daughter it feels like I'm starting all over again figuring out the balance. Despite this, it amazes me how there is always time in the day for one more kiss, one more story, and unconditional love.

**Name your spirit animal, and why.** I asked my husband what he thought my spirit animal would be since I couldn't think of one and he said "something that never stops moving and needs little sleep." Not sure what that animal is but sounds like a description of most moms I know!

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** I would want to teleport my husband and myself to Brisbane, Australia. It's where we met when we were studying abroad in college and we always promised ourselves we would take a trip back. Despite now being married over 10 years, we haven't been back but it's definitely still on our to-do list.



## Ann Derksen

Education Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** I have heard about NCPG for many years through family and friends. They all had such positive experiences and I knew this was an organization I would love to be a part of.

**Where are you from?** Phoenix, AZ

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** Besides the very knowledgeable teachers that consistently boost my confidence, I have met some incredible mothers that I know will become lifelong friends.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** As a former teacher I enjoy helping the NCPG educators with their curriculum. It is wonderful to give back time to the teachers who are so dedicated and have helped me become a better parent.

**Kids names and ages:** Mary Jeanne Derksen (23 months) Timothy Peter Derksen (7 months old)

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** I think the most humbling part about being a parent is just the immense love I feel for my kids. Everyone told me it was amazing but you really don't understand until you have a child of your own.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** The month of March! I love going to Spring Training Games, watching March Madness (Bear Down) and enjoying the beautiful biking weather.

**If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** It would be my mom. I lost her the same time my husband and I found out we were pregnant with our first child. NCPG has been so supportive in helping me through that difficult time.



## Katie Morris

Education Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** As a new mom I wanted to join a parenting group to meet other moms and make new friends. I like that NCPG is both social and educational.

**Where are you from?** Phoenix, AZ

**What has been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** My most valuable experience with NCPG has been having other moms to laugh with, give support, plan play dates with, and watch our kids start some of their first friendships.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I enjoy supporting our amazing teachers!

**Kids names and ages, current class:** I have two beautiful daughters, Betsy Jean is two and Poppy is five months. I am currently in class 2B.

**What has been most humbling about being a parent?** What I have found to be most humbling about being a parent is having the patience to be present with my children when other things have to get done.

**What's your favorite thing about living in Arizona?** One of my favorite things about living in Arizona is that most of my family lives here.

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** I would rather be able to teleport for a day. I would teleport to a white sand beach with turquoise water.



## Carole Anne Cook

Childcare Co-Director

**Where are you from?** I am from the great southern city of Atlanta, Georgia!

**Kids names and ages, current class.** I have two boys, Lucien (9) and Watts (3) and I am currently in class 3B with Barb Grady.

**What drew you to NCPG?** I was drawn to NCPG because of how unique the organization is and what it offers its members. NCPG truly is one of a kind and I am so grateful for it.

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** My most memorable experience with NCPG had to be in Barb's class. Whatever the topic was that day, we were all in tears and I had never felt so close to a group of women in my life!



**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** As a board member, I just love being involved in helping this organization grow. It's amazing what we have accomplished since I first became a member in 2010 and it's only getting better.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** My favorite thing about living in Arizona is the winter! Isn't that why we all live here?

**If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** I would hands down do dinner with JFK. When I get to heaven, it's on John!

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** I would rather teleport to the 1950's. I would love to see my parents as children and those amazing clothes!



## Dana Holt

Childcare Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** When I was pregnant with my oldest daughter, Nora, I didn't have very many friends with kids and Ashley Blalock (who was also pregnant with her first kid) kept bugging me about joining this "amazing mom's group". I wasn't buying it and after what seemed like an entire pregnancy of being

nagged about joining, I finally agreed. I truly owe Ashley because joining has been hands-down one of the best decisions I have made since having kids.

**Where are you from?** Born and raised in Phoenix

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** I know everyone says the friendships - but for both me and my kids, it truly has been wonderful. I have made some of my very best mommy friends through NCPG and my kids have made some of their best friends there as well.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** As a co-nursery director, I love helping moms who have never left their kids with anyone (besides maybe their husbands) feel comfortable using the NCPG nursery. Leaving your kids with strangers for the first time can be scary and overwhelming and it's so fun to see mom's picking their kids up from the nursery with big smiles on their faces.

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Nora, 3, and Lucy, 1. I'm in Class 3B

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** I love being surrounded by my family, growing up I did not have any extended family close by and always really wished I did. Since my husband and I are both from Arizona, our girls are constantly surrounded by family, which I love!

**Name your spirit animal, and why.** According to my husband I'm a mule because I'm as stubborn as they come.

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** I would rather be able to teleport anywhere. I love to travel but hate those long plane rides, especially with kids. It would be ideal to see the world in one summer and skip all those security lines.



## Chandra Petelin

Communications Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** Several of my mom-friends had consistently recommended it to me, but VP Lindsay Perry finally convinced me after my daughter was born. I didn't know many people with kids the same age as mine since I'm not from Arizona originally. Being able to

have a constant conversation with other parents in the same stage of life always leaves me feeling recharged as a mother.

**Where are you from?** I was born and raised in Laguna Beach, California, but went to college in San Francisco and lived there for almost a decade too. I moved to Phoenix in 2011 with my husband who was born and raised here.

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** I love how much we all laugh together during class-time. Someone's always got a hilarious story about what their kid did that week or how they responded to them.

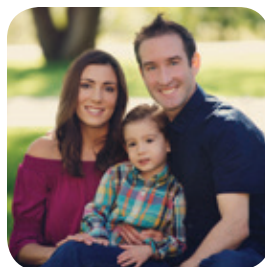
**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** As a stay-at-home mom, being a board member gives me the opportunity to have people over 3' tall rely on me for something. It's rewarding to have a start and finish for a project as parenting is not something that's ever "complete."

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Dane Anthony is 3, and Avalon Marie will be 2 in October. I'm in class 3B this year.

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** People always tell you that each child will be different. I assumed this meant that one would be into sports, while the next was artistic. It's so much more than that! It blew my mind once I realized I had to be a different kind of parent to each child. The same reward or discipline tactics I have used for my first child do NOT work for my second. I'm still figuring her out.

**If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** I would love to have dinner with my parents, both of them have passed away and not having them in my children's lives anymore is the most painful part about losing them. On second thought - I would give up the dinner with them so that my children could be with them for an evening.

**What item of your partner's (that s/he refuses to part with) drives you most crazy in your home? What about it drives you crazy?** My husband keeps the boxes from all major purchases. Why do we still have the original packaging from his 2nd generation iPod? I don't even know where the iPod is!



## Laurie Ball

Communications Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** I went to my first meeting at NCPG to find out more info about becoming a mother. I found Monique's classes filled with more info than I could have ever imagined and quickly realized I didn't need to read any motherhood books as Monique would steer me in the right direction. I became

a member and loved it ever since.

**Where are you from?** Tucson, AZ; yep T-loc. But went to ASU and I'm never going back to Tucson.

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** Besides the friendships, it's been that each teacher I've had has made me a better mom. I really value that they taught me that everything is "just a phase".

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I'm proud of how hard the board members work all year long and feel lucky to work with such a great set of women.

**-Kids names and ages, current class.**

Evan 3yrs old + Baby Ball #2 due in October, and I'm currently in 4A.

**-What have you found most humbling about being a parent?**

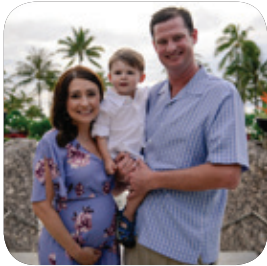
I never knew that I would have a hard time balancing my work, family and "me" time. I thought that would be easy, but the struggle is real when you're trying to find that balance - however you have to do it without guilt. And remember a happy wife/mama makes for a happy life. Despite that, the love you receive from your child(ren) makes any

(continued on next page)

struggle better and worth it. Unconditional love from my child makes my world go 'round.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** The weather; some say the summers are tough but since I teach swim in the summer months its actually bearable for me. The rest of the year is about the most perfect weather you can ask for. And I love that we don't have natural disasters; makes life simple.

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** I would be sitting by Will Smith. I have a crazy childhood crush on him. I've always said that if I met him I would go right up and kiss him and deal with the aftermath as it came. I'm sure Jada would slap me.



## Kendall Chester

Special Events Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** The community of support that many other women I knew had experienced and the mom friends they gained through NCPG drew me to NCPG.

**Where are you from?** Cincinnati, Ohio originally, but I have been in the Valley for

over 16 years.

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** Too many to choose just one! I have created so many great memories with the amazing friends I have made through my class.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I enjoy being a part of a team that helps create fun and memorable events for our members.

**Kids names and ages:** Bradley, 2.5 years; and baby girl Harper born this August.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** The smell of Orange Blossoms in the spring.

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** I'd like to believe that I would play it cool and strike up casual conversation, but in reality I would probably silently geek out while trying to subtly Insta-story the whole thing.

**What item of your partner's (that s/he refuses to part with) drives you most crazy in your home? What about it drives you crazy?** My husband's baseball hats. I swear all of our missing socks turn into hats and are determined to take over every last bit of counter space in my house.



## Deanna Sheedy

Special Events Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** The support from other moms experiencing the same thing and being able to relate and bond.

**Where are you from?** Phoenix

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** The honesty and help from the teachers.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** As part of the special events, I enjoy organizing events that provide moms with opportunities to spend time with other moms and their families

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Madeleine, almost 2 years old, Toddler 1

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** There is so much more to parenting than anyone would think previous to having them.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** Being

from Arizona, I have always enjoyed the summer monsoons and watching them with my family.

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** I would teleport and visit as many places in the world that I could.



## Tiffany Kaufman

Social Co-Director

**Where are you from?** I'm originally from Chicago but moved to Arizona in 2010.

**Kids names and ages, current class.** I have one daughter, Emery, and she is 20 months old. I will be in class 2A this fall.

**What drew you to NCPG?** As a new mom and fairly new to Arizona, I was hoping to expand my network of mom friends.

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** I'm so fortunate for the friends I've met and the support I've received. I know I can always call or text a friend to vent, ask questions or to plan a play date.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** It's nice to give back to an organization that has benefited so many mothers.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** I love the weather, being outdoors and having an excuse to travel during the summer months.

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** Sadly, I would probably freeze up and not do anything.

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** I love to travel but I hate the process of getting there so I would use my power to teleport around the world.



## Colleen Fillion

Social Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** After we moved back to Phoenix, it was recommended to me as a great way to reconnect, and to meet new moms that were at the exact same stage as our family. It seemed like everyone was in NCPG and loved it.

**Where are you from?** Born and raised in Phoenix

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** During the summer, after my first year in NCPG, I had our youngest Burke, and it was amazing how much love and support we received from NCPG. The moms in my class have been a true source of friendship and guidance.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I had such an amazing first reception into NCPG, so I love any opportunity to help new members feel welcome.

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Madeleine Howell Fillion 3.5, Burke O'Malley Fillion 14 months, and I'm in Class 4A.

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** Everything. I could never have prepared for wondering what I am doing at every step of the way, but with that it has been nonstop surprises and excitement.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** There isn't much I don't love about living in AZ, even the summers. Growing up here, I have so many fond memories of being outdoors, and AZ offers it all. It's a wonderful place to raise a family.



**Name your spirit animal, and why.** My spirit animal would be a wolf. They are loyal, protective of their family pack, adventurous, and somewhat unruly.



## Kristen Reardon

Public Relations Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** The sense of community between all the women. I was the first out of my friends to have kids, so I loved the idea of forming a group of friends where you could talk about your kids without annoying them.

**Where are you from?** Longmont, Colo-

rado

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** So many valuable experiences! I have learned a tremendous amount from the teachers and have felt supported by all of my classmates as I go through raising my girls.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I enjoy contributing support to the other women and giving my own perspective on things.

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Josephine – 2 and Margaret - 5 months, class 2B

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** Oh my gosh, so much! What other job in the world do you have spit up, poop and pee on you on a daily basis—and after a few months you barely care! Also, that a toddler can seem like they own you sometimes.

**What item of your partner's (that s/he refuses to part with) drives you most crazy in your home? What about it drives you crazy?**

Pretty much his entire wardrobe (besides what I have bought him). He still has clothes from college (that he hasn't worn since) in his closet that he won't let me get rid of. Think frat boy pastel Polos.

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** Teleport anywhere. Obvious answer after traveling all summer with two kids under two! I would travel to see our family all the time with this power...oh and probably around the world for vacations!



## Catherine Western

Fundraising Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** I was a bit late joining NCPG my oldest was 3. I had heard great things from friends and felt like I was the only one that was not a member and really missing out on something great!

**Where are you from?** I grew up in Phoenix since the age of 5. Met my husband in high school and we went off to college in California together. We stayed there for about 10 years and then headed back to Phoenix a few weeks after our oldest was born to be closer to family again.

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** All the information we have learned in class and the overall support group has been the most valuable for me. It is great to hear other moms' stories/perspectives to know you are not the only one going through the craziness of raising little ones.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** NCPG is such a great organization and a great group of parents. I am looking forward to helping support the organization and hopefully plan some entertaining nights for parents to get out and have some fun.

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Grace 4, Anna 3

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** When traveling kid-less I usually take the time to catch up on sleep

before we even take off. I would definitely stay awake and probably smile but not have the guts to say anything.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** I love the weather, minus the summers. But the most important part of living in Arizona for me is that we are near family. Getting to watch our girls have such a strong bond with their Grandparents makes the summer heat all worthwhile.

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** I would teleport to Europe with my family and avoid having to do a 12-hour trip with kids on an airplane.



## Monica Brown

Fundraising Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** I had heard so many incredible things about NCPG, and finally joined when my twin girls were 2. I wish I had joined when they were born, but better late than never! I want to make sure I am raising strong, confident young women and the tips/tricks/lessons from NCPG are helping to make sure that

happens.

**Where are you from?** Chicago, Illinois

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** I was so pleasantly surprised with how open and honest everyone is about the struggles of parenting – which is amazing and so incredibly exhausting at the same time. I can be honest about my struggles and what I needed help with, without being judged.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I want to make sure every member feels support. Parenting is 24/7. It doesn't end at the end of the day. We need to help each other and realize that we are all doing the very best we can with our littles.

**Kids names and ages:** Rory and Riley, 3.5

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** We love to swim, hike and explore. I also love the desert skies and monsoon season.

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** My favorite celebrity is Brian Urlacher, former linebacker for the Chicago Bears. I even named my dog after him. If he sat next to me on the plane, I would honestly probably lose my mind.

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** Without a doubt, I would want to teleport. My family lives all over the country, and I would love to be able to see them all.



## Stacy Medeiros

Fundraising Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** I loved the idea of being in a group with other moms to learn about parenting strategies and having a true support system of moms that understand what we are all going through.

**Where are you from?** Scottsdale, AZ

**-What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** Every class with Barb! She was my first teacher and a wealth of knowledge. I'll never forget her saying, "What would you do if the 20/20 cameras were rolling?"

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I love feeling like I'm giving back time and energy to help this organization grow. Its the least I can do for an organization

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that came into my life at a truly challenging time with my twins when I needed support from other moms!

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Carly, age 3.5 (preschool), Ashley and Madelyn, age 2 (preschool)

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** The most humbling thing I've experienced being a parent is having twins. The first 6 months I put everything in my life on hold except for tending to those special little babies.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** My favorite thing about AZ is the weather! We love being outside and I love that you can do that for 10 months out of the year.

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** I would love to be able to read minds for a day! I would read my husband's mind so I could understand what he thinks when he constantly walks by clean laundry sitting on the floor. I'd also love to know what my kids are thinking when they see us in the mornings or after we get home from work, just that pure joy.



## Natalie Thimsen

Sponsorship & Advertising Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** My family moved to Arizona four years ago, and I was referred to this group by my fabulous neighbors. I wanted to meet some new mom friends and of course gain a few parenting strategies along the way!

**Where are you from?** Born and raised in

Los Angeles.

**What has been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** I truly value the time our teachers put in each month to make sure that we get the most out of every class. NCPG gives me the boost of confidence that I need when I've had a rough day at home or feel that my parenting skills are lacking.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I enjoy knowing that all the hard work that we do late at night and between naps are going towards continuing to make this group a success and a wonderful outlet for parents to get together and discuss everyday issues.

**Kids names and ages:** Gia (4) and Jayde (2)

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** I have come a long way from my clean hair and weekly manicured self. Life with kids is definitely unpredictable, and it has taught me how to embrace this beautiful mess and that sometimes I might show up late and in sweats and a ponytail.

**If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** My friends know that I have a passion for cooking and entertaining. I think it would be amazing to sit down with Julia Child, specifically in her Paris apartment at one of her dinner parties.

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** Something I miss the most that comes with having young children is the ability to drop everything and take off on a plane somewhere. I would teleport all over the globe, shopping for different ingredients at local farmers markets, stopping for a quick local bite, and then return home with a wonderful international dinner ready to go!



## Katrina Stuart

Sponsorship & Advertising Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** In addition to the incredibly positive experiences I repeatedly heard from friends, I loved the concept of a moms' group that didn't end when the babies entered toddlerhood.

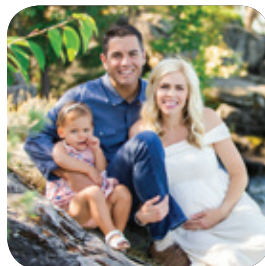
**Where are you from?** Issaquah, WA

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** My most valuable experience has been the close friendships that have been formed, and prior friendships that have been strengthened, through NCPG. It is amazing how quickly bonds form when you share the experience of motherhood with other moms similarly situated.

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I've really enjoyed working with our sponsors and seeing how excited they are to partner with NCPG. They truly believe in our organization!

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Cole (22 months), Class 2A

**If your favorite celebrity sat next to you on a plane, what would you do?** I'd say hello and then pretend to be cool and keep to myself. However, if the celeb seemed chatty, I'd certainly oblige.



## Alyson Kennedy

Sponsorship & Advertising Co-Director

**Where are you from?** Mesa – Arizona native!

**Kids names and ages, current class.** Avery – 2 years old and Emma – due September 8th, Class – 2B

**What drew you to NCPG?** My sister-in-law was really involved in NCPG, which is how I initially heard about it. Then when I had Avery, I had a few friends who had joined the year before and had nothing but great things to say about it so I couldn't wait to join!

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** I love how the class structure is set up based on age. As a first-time mom, being surrounded by other mom's going through the same thing as you are is SO helpful! Every stage is new so I love always having a group of moms (who have become amazing friends) that I can always reach out to and are who going through the same thing I am. It creates such a bond between the classes that is truly invaluable!

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** This is my first year on the board and I am really excited to be able to give back to an organization that I get so much out of. And an excuse to have more time with other moms is an added bonus!

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** Learning that you can't control everything.

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** Seeing the sun almost every day!

**Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day? What would you do with your power?** Definitely be able to read minds. Having a toddler in the house, I think the thought crosses my mind almost every day... I wish I knew what she was thinking right now!



## Jessica Phipps

Community Outreach Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** Being a new mom is the most exciting, terrifying experience I had ever felt. When I heard of NCPG my youngest was only weeks old and I was definitely in need of support from other women going through the same thing I was. I loved the idea of instruction at each stage too, because

lets be honest, half the time I have no idea what I'm doing.

**Where are you from?** Born in Southern California, but was raised for my entire life in Kingman, Arizona. It north of Phoenix... you've probably passed through on your way to Vegas!

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** My most valuable experience has been all of the amazing mamas I have met in my 3 years with the organization. I have gotten so



many awesome parenting ideas and met some of my best friends!

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** Being on the board has been a great opportunity to meet the most diverse group of women as well as attend all of the wonderful events NCPG hosts. I likely would not have attended as many had I not been on the board because honestly, I'm not always the best at branching out of my comfort zone. I am also super excited to be taking on the new position of Community Outreach! Our main goal is to give back... give back to the community through hosted NCPG volunteer events and drives, as well as give back to our NCPG families.

**Kids names and ages, current class:** Harlow (3) and Ainsley (1), in Class 3B

**What have you found most humbling about being a parent?** I am a huge planner! I like lists and research and in general being prepared for everything I do so I am not caught off guard. Absolutely nothing about parenting can be planned. Or if it is, there will likely be a curve ball or two... that I likely didn't think about!

**What's one of your favorite things about living in Arizona?** Having lived in Arizona my whole life I feel I have really been able to embrace all the different landscapes and lifestyles the state has to offer. I was raised in a small desert town where our entertainment was what we made of it. I spent my college years in the beautiful mountain town of Flagstaff. It snowed, there was a crazy diverse culture, but it was also a very low-key vibe. Since then I have lived in Phoenix for 13 years. It still has the most beautiful landscape, but there is a never a shortage of things to do and pace of life is much quicker. The diversity of the state is amazing!

**If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** Jimmy Fallon! Or really any comedian that makes me laugh!



## Jessica Lewis

Community Outreach Co-Director

**What drew you to NCPG?** Having a network of women, all going thru the same things in life, to share the craziness of raising a family with. And to learn how to care for my children... because I had no idea in the beginning!

**Where are you from?** Originally from Des Moines, Iowa! Moved to AZ to go to ASU and never looked back.

**What's been your most valuable/memorable experience with NCPG?** By far, the friendships I've made. I've met some of my best friends through NCPG and my daughter has met some of hers too! And the invaluable information I've learned about raising kids (especially Monique's class... I'm still using her tidbits for my 2nd kiddo today)!

**As a board member, what do you most enjoy contributing to the organization?** I'm co-chairing the newly formed Community Outreach position this year and it feels good knowing you're making an impact in our community and with our families directly. It's a lot of work, but it's so worth it.

**Kids names and ages, current class:** Alexis (Lexi) - 3 and William (Will) - 6 months. I'm in class 3B

**If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** Michelle Obama, without a doubt. I aspire to be a fraction of the role model for my kids that she's been for all of America's kids. She's a boss.

# New Arrivals



## Carl Hayes Fischer

April 28, 2017

7 lbs 9 oz, 21 inches

Parents: Pele & Nic

Brother: Court (2.5)



## Grace Stewart

June 12th, 2017

Parents: Amy & Drew

Sisters: Sophie (6) & Olivia (1)

Brother: Merik (8)



## Kenzie Scott Blalock

June 30, 2017

10 lbs 10oz, 22.5 inches

Parents: Ashley & Tucker

Brother: Cash (3)



## Reese Kathryn Kunde

July 3, 2017

7 lbs 7 oz

Parents: Josh & Chelsea

Sister: Harper (3)



## Quinn Anne Hogan

July 9, 2017

7 lbs 7 oz, 21.5 inches

Parents: Rebecca & Kevin

Sister: Kate (3)

Brother: Connor (3)



# CRAFT

## Easy, Homemade Playdough

Erika Bragdon, [www.livingwellmom.com](http://www.livingwellmom.com)



This playdough uses common kitchen ingredients, is cheaper than store-bought playdough, is less crumbly, and takes less than 10 minutes to make! I made 6 batches in 30 minutes. Pretty awesome, huh? And in my experience, it doesn't crumble and make as big of a mess as the stuff from the store. It's also harder and lasts longer – I have a batch from well over a year ago that's still going strong! And of course, it's non-toxic.

### Materials:

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar (I highly recommend buying a large container; it's much cheaper than the tiny ones from the grocery store!)
- 1/3 cup salt
- 1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
- For dood coloring I prefer to use AmeriColor Soft Gel Paste Food Color

This easy homemade playdough recipe makes a large amount, probably equal to 2-3 containers from the store. So you might want to halve it or make it in 2 saucepans.



### Instructions:

In a 2 quart saucepan, add 1 cup of flour, 2 teaspoons of cream of tarter, and 1/3 cup of salt. Yup, that's 1/3 cup of salt. Don't make my mistake and misread it to mean teaspoon. Apparently the salt keeps it from sticking and also helps preserve it, so you definitely want that in there. Add 1 cup of water and 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil. Turn your burner on medium/low and stir. It will be a little lumpy. That's okay. Keep stirring until it starts getting a little solid. If there are still a few lumps, that's ok – you can work them out later. If your stove is already hot, this may only take 20-30 seconds, but it may take 2-3 minutes if it's still heating up. Once it reaches that point, add the food coloring right away. It will be much easier to mix up if you do it now. Stir in your food coloring. Now the dough will start getting thicker and a little lumpy. Just keep stirring. Once the dough starts gathering together around the spoon you know it's done. This may be 20 seconds or 2 minutes from the time you put the food coloring in, again depending on how hot your stove is. Remove your homemade playdough from the saucepan and put it on some waxed paper or a plate to cool. Once it's cooled, I like to knead the playdough for a minute or two to get out any lumps and to get it to a better consistency.

### Storage

I have the kids put their homemade playdough in a ziploc bag. It seems to be harder than the store bought stuff and doesn't dry out as easily. If it does become dry, you can work a few drops of water into it.



# RECIPE

## Creamy Garlic Butter Tuscan Salmon

Karina, [www.cafedelites.com](http://www.cafedelites.com)

Erika Bragdon, [www.livingwellmom.com](http://www.livingwellmom.com)



*Creamy Garlic Butter Tuscan Salmon (or Trout) is such an incredible recipe! Restaurant quality salmon in a beautiful creamy Tuscan sauce!*

**Servings:** 4

**Calories:** 582 kcal

**Prep Time:** 5 mins

**Cook Time:** 20 mins

**Total Time:** 25 mins

### Ingredients

- 4 salmon fillets, skin off (or Trout or any white fish)
- Salt and pepper, to season
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 6 cloves garlic, finely diced
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1/3 cup dry white wine (OPTIONAL)  
(Do NOT use a sweet white wine!)
- 5 ounces (150 g) jarred sun dried tomato strips in oil, drained of oil
- 1 3/4 cups half and half \*SEE NOTES
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 cups baby spinach leaves
- 1/2 cup fresh grated Parmesan cheese,  
(do not include for dairy free option)
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch (cornflour) mixed with 1 tablespoon  
of water (optional)\*\*
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley chopped

### Instructions

1. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Season the salmon filets (or fish if using) on both sides with salt and pepper, and sear in the hot pan, flesh-side down first, for 5 minutes on each side, or until cooked to your liking. Once cooked, remove from the pan and set aside.
2. Melt the butter in the remaining juices leftover in the pan. Add in the garlic and fry until fragrant (about one minute). Fry the onion in the butter. Pour in the white wine (if using), and allow to reduce down slightly. Add the sun dried tomatoes and fry for 1-2 minutes to release their flavours.
3. Reduce heat to low heat, add the half and half (or heavy cream), and bring to a gentle simmer, while stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to your taste.
4. Add in the spinach leaves and allow to wilt in the sauce, and add in the parmesan cheese. Allow sauce to simmer for a further minute until cheese melts through the sauce. (For a thicker sauce, add the milk/cornstarch mixture to the centre of the pan, and continue to simmer while quickly stirring the mixture through until the sauce thickens.)
5. Add the salmon back into the pan; sprinkle with the parsley, and spoon the sauce over each filet.
6. Serve over pasta, rice or steamed veg.

### Notes

\* Half and half is an American product, made from equal parts light cream and milk. Feel free to use half light cream and half 2% milk (or full fat if not worried about calories and fat counts), in place of half and half. Alternatively, use all light cream or heavy cream.

\*\* For a gluten free option, find GLUTEN FREE Cornstarch where available.

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