

Parent Times

February 2018



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Phoenix
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President's Corner

To the entire NCPG Community,

Hope you all have had a fabulous start to the New Year! 2018 has gotten off to a pretty amazing start for me personally. I always enjoy reflecting on the previous year, counting my blessings and setting intentions for the year in January. One thing I know for certain is that since joining NCPG 3.5 years ago, my life has been truly enriched. The support system and friendships I've gained have been truly life changing. My hope is that you all are starting to form connections with each other, within your classes and perhaps outside of your intimate group. One amazing way to get to know people better is to join a committee or the Board of Directors. Please feel free to reach out to me if you're interested and even if you need a little help connecting with others in the group.

Now to move on from the sap and into the really good stuff... we've got a fun rest of the year planned for NCPG! Here are a few highlights for the next 2 months...

- **February 21st**
All NCPG breakfast speaker, Breon Michel, further details in the magazine as well to come.
- **February 28th, 3:30-5:30 pm**
Playdate at McCormick Stillman Railroad Park.
- **March 10th, 7-11 pm**
NCPGs 33rd Annual Gala at Arizona Country Club.
Grab your favorite denim & diamonds and join us for a fun night out!
- **March 20th, 6-8 pm**
MNO hosted by Artistic Impressions by Mara.

As always, I am available if you all need anything or have comments/suggestions on how to improve NCPG.

xo.

Ashley Blalock
NCPG Board President
president@ncpgaz.org



2017-2018 Board of Directors

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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

 ke us on Facebook: NCPGAZ

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. Thanks for your help!

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On the Cover

Burke and Maddie Fillion by Courtney Lively Photography.
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Paradise Valley 85253

Thursdays: 4:00* to 4:45
Jan 11th - May 17th

*Ages 3 - 6

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7321 N. 10th St.
Phoenix 85020

Fridays: 10:30*, 11:15, 12:00*
Jan 19th - May 18th

*Mom & Me Class



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Financial Security

By Melissa Ahearn Lange, Financial Advisor

As a Mom, my to-do-list is never ending, just like yours! The urgent day-to-day matters are always taking over. Whether it's dealing with a sick kid, preparing for a summer trip, running to Costco for the third time this month, or returning fourteen [of thirty] emails during baby's nap time — it's never ending. Sound familiar?

Fitting in, what I'd argue is the most critical conversation between parents, can often be placed on the back burner: our financial security.

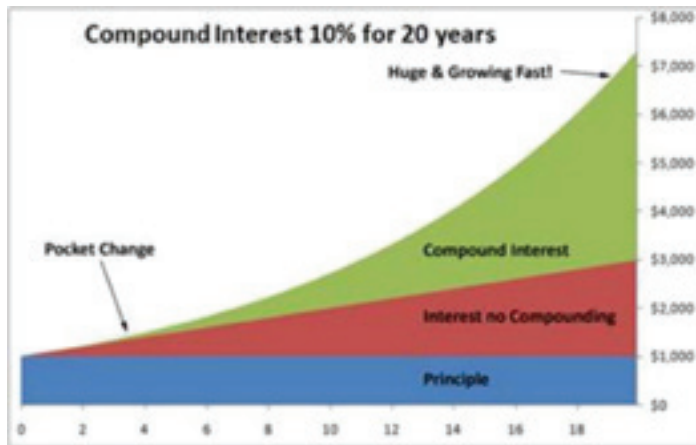
What is financial security? Financial security can “feel” different for each of us. Ultimately it means to be free from harm and sheltered during life's unforeseen circumstances. One could say financial security is not only mathematical calculations, but psychological views and reactions to unpredicted events throughout life. Having enough money should one of us die prematurely or become disabled long term; or enough money to take that big trip every year so our kids can see and explore the world; or feeling prepared

to help fund college so we don't have to decline when they show us their acceptance letter to University X. What about having to provide physically and financially for aging parents who never saved? These, and other life events, can take a toll on us emotionally and certainly financially.

Prioritizing these longer term and important issues entails deliberate focus and coordination. It requires a calendared appointment just like our visit to the dentist or gyno! Just as we see a professional when we require medical attention, financial planning often involves a specialist to bring clarity around our goals, discuss potential risks we may have not considered, and create a specific plan with prioritization. After all, pretending we can tackle everything at once, and on our own, can occasionally create more paralysis.

When paralysis and distractions begin to prevent us from a financial planning discussion, even at the start of a New Year when we have well intended resolutions on this topic, consider this: what is the cost to waiting?

One significant and irrefutable cost is known as compound interest. Question moms: would you rather have a million dollars today or a penny that doubles every day for 30 days? If you chose the former, you'd be short changing yourself by (no joke ladies) over \$4M!



That's the power of compounding—essentially you receive interest not only on your original funds, but also on any interest or dividends that accumulate; just as you cannot reclaim time, there is no making up for starting to save later. Consider the impact that has on our kid's college fund or our own retirement funds...especially compounding without taxes!

***Quick tip: if you have relatives or friends asking what's on your child's birthday or holiday gift-list, ask them to contribute, instead of toys, to your baby's college fund! Also, there are specific vehicles you can use which allow for tax benefits too!*

Spring and summer are on the horizon, which means spring training games, the Phoenix Open, and the annual summer trip. It would be very easy to ignore the fact you've been meaning to update your will, revisit your insurance levels, or run scenarios to determine how much and where you really need to start saving to secure a more confident retirement. The first step is to calendar the time today. Even if it simply begins as a conversation with your husband, at 8:30pm, when your kids go down (and all you want to do is watch a show and hit the pillow). You never know, you might just sleep sounder than ever that night knowing you're on a path towards financial security.

Schedule a financial security consultation this year!

Melissa Ahearn Lange

Melissa.a.lange@nm.com • 602-808-3406

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Nursery

Don't forget: We open the website at 8 AM on the Thursday following each class. If you happen to be registering in one month for a class that falls into the next month, your confirmation total will show \$0. You will then be charged the 1st of the month in which the class falls. We will be sending confirmation emails in addition to the automated e-mail you receive from the website. We want to have the best communication possible, so please email us if you see a charge on your card that you don't understand or an automated e-mail that is unclear.

Lastly, we are utilizing ALL available space provided to us by the church. Our main goal is to keep your children safe and to stay within fire code. This happens by having a small Bee-to-Child ratio and not overcrowding any of our nursery rooms. Thank you all so much for your continued support of the nursery and our new website.

As always, contact us with any questions at childcare@ncpgaz.org.



10 Tips & Tricks for Selling your Home with Ease

Follow these tips & you'll put yourself in a good position to sell your home fast & for a great price!

Always be ready to show ~ We all have mornings where we forget to make our beds & leave dishes in the sink, but when your house is listed, this is a big no-no. Buyers don't want to know (or smell) what you had for dinner last night, so take the extra time each day & make sure your house is looking its' best!

Keep closets half full ~ Decluttering your home doesn't mean shove everything into closets! Storage is something we all need & can never have too much of. Rather than hide your extra belongings, box them up to store (nicely) in the garage or invest in a short-term storage unit while your home is on the market.

Let there be light ~ Good lighting is one of the most important things buyers cite they look for in a home. Open the blinds & shutters, remove or tie-back heavy drapes, clean the windows. A bright & cheerful home will sell quicker!

Take the home out of your house ~ Minimize personal items such as photos & knick-knacks. Remove your kids (adorable) drawings on the fridge, plus personal medications & valuables.

First impressions DO matter ~ For most Buyers, the decision to buy a home is based on emotion, not logic. Buyers react to what they see, hear, feel, & smell. So, clean, clean, clean...then clean some more!

Curb appeal - Make sure your home looks tidy & manicured from the street.

Maintenance matters ~ Walk around in search of all the little things you simply ignore daily (aka. cracked grout in the shower, leaky sinks). Remember, you're not just competing against other resale homes, but new ones too.

Kitchens sell homes ~ The fastest & most inexpensive kitchen updates include paint, new cabinet hardware & a modern backsplash. Leave countertops clean & tidy, placing small appliances in the cabinets. Include the refrigerator in your organization.

Make the price right ~ Listing your home too high can hurt you in the long run. Buyers & agents can view you as an unrealistic Seller & not take you seriously.

Hire a REALTOR ~ Your home is most likely your largest asset, so working with a real estate professional that is familiar with your area will help you sell your home quicker & for top dollar.

If you are thinking of selling your home, contact me!



Allison S. Mikes
Associate Broker

602.791.3481

Allison@
AllisonSellsHouses.com

5225 N Central Ave, Suite 104, Phoenix, AZ 85012



I sell real estate . . . but my business is people.

Born and raised in the Biltmore area, I am a 3rd generation Phoenician with 15 years of real estate experience throughout Maricopa County. It can definitely be said my heart is where my home is, and my home is in my heart. Whether you are buying or selling — I know what your home means to you. Building my own family keeps me fully aware of what it takes when it comes to you and your family's real estate needs. I have been in your shoes and possess the experience needed in growing family situations.

Allison S. Mikes
Associate Broker



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RULES TO LIVE BY FOR A HAPPIER MORE FULFILLING LIFE

Be comfortable in your own skin

Appreciate what you have

Listen to your inner voice

Be understanding

Live simply

Eat healthy

Exercise

Meditate

Do what you love

Believe in yourself

Expand your comfort zone

Travel

Embrace your 'me' time

Self-reflect

Live with passion

See the positive in every situation

Learn from mistakes

Cherish your loved ones

Be nice

Show appreciation

Let go of your need to control

Spend time with nature

Live in the moment

Be kind

Have an open mind

Avoid overthinking and worrying

Be authentic & genuine

Drop the resentment within

Learn to accept & let go

THANK YOU FOR THE **AMAZING** PARTICIPATION IN OUR HOLIDAY CHARITY!!

200 Angels • Over 755 Toys Collected • \$12,500 Value



A special thank you to the families who supported the Red Kettle Initiative and rang bells in December.
A huge thank you to every single mom that selected an angel or angels from our tree!!

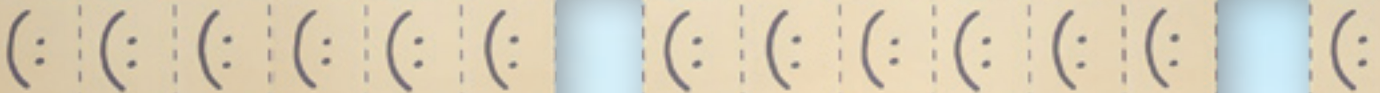
Random Acts of Kindness

IF YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE SOMEONE HAPPY, DO IT!

Let's run with the season of love and provide an opportunity to engage our little ones in creating a culture of compassion, acceptance, unity, and respect!

1. Smile at everyone you encounter today.
2. Take a treat to your local firefighters.
3. Do a household chore without being asked.
4. Donate something to an animal shelter.
5. Entertain someone with a happy dance.
6. Create a family gratitude jar.
7. Cheer for every player on both teams.
8. Make a new friend or welcome a new neighbor.
9. Hold the door open for someone.
10. Learn to say "thank you" in a new language.
11. Go a full day without complaining.
12. Embrace your family with a big hug.
13. Teach something to a younger sibling or friend.
14. Write or draw a loving note for someone.
15. Make and display a "Kindness Matters" sign.
16. Raise funds and donate to your favorite cause.
17. Watch the sunrise or sunset together.
18. Cut out 10 hearts and leave them on 10 cars.
19. Donate needed school supplies.
20. Leave a flower on someone's doorstep.
21. Be kind to yourself and eat a healthy snack.
22. Call your grandparents.
23. Bake cookies and share with your neighbors.
24. Pick up and recycle trash in your neighborhood.
25. Write a thank you note to your mail carrier.
26. Volunteer in your community.
27. Write a happy message on the sidewalk with chalk.
28. Paint a kindness rock and randomly place it.
29. Sincerely compliment 5 people.
30. Let someone go ahead of you in line.

Take a Smile!



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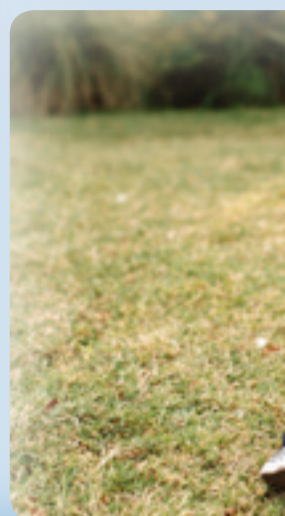
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Winter Fun





2017/18



2017-2018 Calendar

Class Schedule

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

Location

Saint Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church

6715 N Mockingbird Lane
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253

Class Dates

February 7* & 21
March 28* (slate vote)
April 11 & 25*
May 9*

**Monthly Parent Times magazine distributed.*

Board Meetings

March 5th
April 2nd
May 7th

Meetings are at 6:30 p.m.

Special Events

Wednesday, Feb. 21st
9:45 am & 10:45 am

Guest Speaker:
Breon Michel

Right here at St. Barnabus!



Combat Motherhood Stress with Mindfulness & Self-Compassion

Did you know that a mother's well-being is the strongest predictor of a child's well-being? Equally important, mamas who prioritize their well-being experience more peace and happiness in daily life. As convincing — and simple — as it may sound, it's easy for moms to forget about their own well-being in the throes of daily life. That's why it's important to deepen your understanding of what works and where to begin.

There will be 2 sessions in order for everyone to fit comfortably.

1st Session: 9:45-10:30, Newborn to 2B

2nd Session: 10:45-11:30, 3A - School B

What participants will learn:

- The science of motherhood stress
- How a focus on well-being makes mothers more capable of managing stress
- Simple, effective tools for cultivating presence and ease based on the science of mindfulness and self-compassion
- Age-appropriate practices for your children

SPRING GALA

SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2018



This year our annual Spring Gala will be held at **Arizona Country Club**. We can't wait to see your outfit with this year's theme of **Denim and Diamonds!**



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Scholarships

Our Treasurers would like to let our members know that NCPG continues to offer scholarship opportunities for membership dues. Classes are filling up quickly, so please be sure to contact treasurer@ncpgaz.org if you or someone you know is interested to reserve your spot.

Swag for Sale

Did you know we have NCPG shirts for your kids and hats for you? NCPG T-shirts range in size from 2T-6T. Available for purchase during breakfast in Hutton Hall.

Shirts: \$20 Hats: \$15



Membership

We've reached a record number of members this year with nearly all classes at capacity. There are currently a few slots left in Pregnancy, and all other classes are full! We are still welcoming prospective members to visit a class and will be accepting applications for our waitlist. If you have friends who would like to visit or join our wait list, please tell them to reach out to membership@ncpgaz.org. If you have questions please contact Rebecca Hogan and Sarah Dworkin at membership@ncpgaz.org.

Facebook News



After some deliberation, we have decided to migrate this 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.



Mom's Night Out

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

Please join us for hosted small bites and wine, with a short presentation by Mara on how to organize your family photos and create beautiful photo walls & photo books on any type of budget. More details to come!

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



NCPG Play Dates

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

Choo-choo! Join us for an afternoon at one of the Valley's favorite kid-friendly attractions! Train rides, snacks, and an extra set of hands from the ladies at Busy Bee's Babysitting will be provided.

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

More details coming soon!

If you have any questions regarding the play dates, please contact specialevents@ncpgaz.org.

4-to-1

Student/Teacher Ratio



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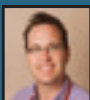
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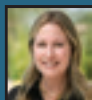
- ✓ Newborns & Infants
- ✓ Well Child Exams
- ✓ Immunizations
- ✓ Sports/Camp Physicals



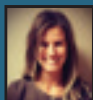
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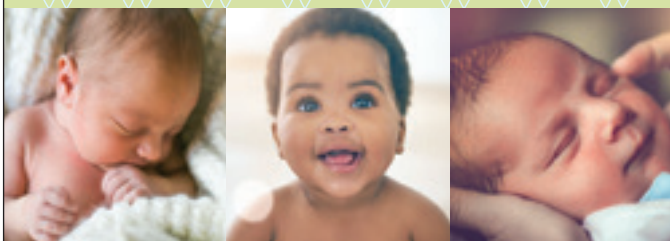
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UNDERSTANDING SUPERHERO PLAY

Investigating Power and Autonomy

By Mindy Sobraske, PVUMC Preschool Director



As part of superhero play, preschoolers experiment with roles that explore all sides of the power equation. They become heroes, victims, and bad guys. They try out being tricksters, rebels, monsters, champions, bullies, babies, clowns, kings, and queens. They try being powerful alone and as part of a team. All of these roles allow children to practice different ways of taking control of their lives and their feelings.

Preschoolers like to imitate powerful people – real people who make things happen like parents, firefighters, and doctors, and fantasy characters, like superheroes, fairy godmothers, and dragons. They love stories that show characters like Cinderella or the Three Little Pigs, who start out powerless but use their physical strength, wit, or beauty to overcome danger. They want to hear tales of people and animals who transform into powerful beings. And they love to use the tools of power these stories spotlight – guns, swords, secret potions, magic wands, fantastic vehicles, jewels, capes, and crowns.

Learning about power also means trying out a variety of ways to take charge with friends and family. Toddlers and preschoolers will use any physical, verbal, or mental approach that works

to get what they want, especially in the middle of superhero play. Some of their strategies may be hurtful. They have not yet developed an internal set of moral standards to guide them, so they need adults to help them learn strategies that are safe for everyone.

Balancing the Desire for Power with the Need for Friendship

Does this interest in control and autonomy mean that preschoolers won't show any regard for anyone else's feelings or safety? Certainly not. Children also want people to like them, care about them, and play with them. They want relationships with adults who will help them and teach them. They like to help others feel like they are a good friend. But sometimes this need for relationships conflicts with their desire for power.

The need for relationships with other people, and the struggle to balance those connections with the desire for power, is another major theme underlying superhero play. One of the primary challenges of this age is for children to use their devel-



Power is important to American preschoolers. Family, teachers, media, and peers tell children that independence is essential. Children want to know how to take control, and how to use that control to get what they want. Children want to know who is in charge, who makes decisions, and who gets attention. They want to check out what is an acceptable use of power, who gets to make the rules, and how those rules will be enforced. While they still want someone to take care of them and keep them safe, they don't like feeling powerless or humiliated.

Power can be tricky to understand. Every culture and social group has its own intricate and often unspoken rules about it, and these rules are rarely logical. Young children learn them by observing, testing, and imitating. They are not interested in abstract ideas; they are looking for practical information. How do adults act when they have power? How do behaviors, posture, and speech change when they don't? How do they get what they want when a more powerful person says no? Preschoolers are continually observing and investigating the question of power.

oping ability to predict, plan, and control events in order to support their friendships rather than destroy them, by learning how to negotiate, cooperate, and compromise. Many well-meaning attempts at friendship end in frustration and disaster. Blending relationship and autonomy is a challenge that doesn't ever go away. Superhero play helps children explore this challenge.

Testing Physical Limits

Many children get involved in superhero play because they want to test and expand the limits of their physical abilities. As preschoolers grow, walking and running is now a bore. Children want to twirl, kick, roll, jump, throw, punch and display speed, strength, accuracy, coordination and balance. Roughhousing is another common component of superhero play.

Exploring Feelings

Children often choose superhero play when they want to focus on feelings. Preschoolers don't talk about feelings in abstract terms, they need to turn them into concrete images that can be manipulated through play. When children pretend to cook

or drive a car, they are imitating adult actions. When they battle bad guys, they are not necessarily practicing future acts of violence. Fantasy monsters are most often symbols that represent children's fear, worry, and anger. Magic wands, weapons, and superpowers are the symbolic tools they use to take control of those emotions and feel safe, powerful, and alive. Children use superhero play to figure out how to overcome fear, handle anger, create joy and pride, and live with passion. They explore when to be assertive and when it is more appropriate to be passive. They create a road map of their emotions, and discover acceptable ways to communicate them. All of that is necessary before children can learn to empathize with the feelings and points of view of others, an ability that is crucial for children to develop if they want satisfying friendships.

Answering Big Questions

Along with a desire to explore their feelings, preschoolers are ready to tackle some major intellectual and spiritual questions.

Young children want to figure out the difference between right and wrong. Trying out good guy, bad guy, and victim roles;

testing limits, pretending to do noble and evil deeds; helping others; and allowing others to come to your rescue fosters moral development by giving preschoolers experiences on which to build abstract concepts. As children learn more about power and about right and wrong, they become interested in the related issue of justice, what is fair and what is not. A preschooler's sense of justice is often quite self-centered: I can change the rules of a game if it helps me win; I can divide a cookie unevenly if it means I get the portion I want; if I don't like what you are doing to me, then that's not fair, even if it is exactly what I just did to you. Superhero play allows children the opportunity to develop a more mature concept of justice, one that respects the perspectives and needs of others.

"Playing dead" is one of the great traditions of children's play, and superhero play provides lots of opportunities for it. The definitions of life and death are not clear to children. How do you know when something is alive? Children look for clues based on what they can see and hear. Is something alive when it moves, such as rocks rolling down a hill, or a clock ticking, or the wind blowing? Is something dead when it is very still, like a sleeping dog, or a car when the engine is turned off? And what about dolls and puppets and characters on a TV program? As with any exploration that they do, young children think out loud about these tricky issues through play, and superhero play is full of research opportunities.

While infants and toddlers explore the world primarily through their senses, preschoolers must navigate another world as well – the world that opens through their imaginations. As their mental abilities expand, children develop inner lives that can be both exhilarating and confusing. Monsters, good guys, bad guys, ghosts, spirits, angels, and imaginary friends spring to life. Children strive to create clearer and more lifelike images in their minds, but the dividing line between reality and fantasy gets blurred. Re-creating these images in the physical world through superhero play is one way children can assert control over them and get a better sense of the boundaries. Children today have another factor that makes reality difficult to define. The ever more realistic special effects on TV and in movies have blurred what is possible and what is impossible. Can people fly? Many preschoolers believe the answer is yes. Can they change shape? Of course. And can people get punched, kicked, shot or electrocuted, crash their car, smash their head – and recover within seconds with no ill effects. Certainly. Just watch the *Home Alone* movies. In the past, most children were able to learn the difference between fantasy and reality without adult intervention, but today's children need a little help.

Superhero play is valuable, but it needs to be monitored and guided by the important people in your child's life.

Learn. Play. Grow.



Contact us for a private tour!



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Need to drop off a meal to your friend who just had a baby or maybe someone who had surgery? Or maybe busy weeknights call for make-ahead convenience. Find easy freezer recipes in these meals.

A FEW TIPS ABOUT FREEZING MEALS:

- Divide soups and stews into smaller portions instead of freezing a big batch. Measure out amounts for one, two, or four servings -- whatever works best for your household.
- To fill a resealable freezer bag neatly, place the bag in a bowl or glass, cuffing the top over the edge of the vessel, then ladle in the cooled soup or stew. Don't overfill -- it makes the bag too bulky.
- Label the container with the food name and the date frozen -- and don't forget to add cooking instructions as necessary. Permanent markers are great for labeling bags and foil; freezer tape is better for reusable containers.
- To save space, lay bags flat in the freezer until they're frozen. Then you can stack or stand them on end to store them.
- Fresh herbs — like basil — don't freeze well, so add them just before serving dish.



BLACK BEAN TURKEY ENCHILADAS

INGREDIENTS

- 1-1/4 pounds lean ground turkey
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon reduced-sodium taco seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 package (8 ounces) reduced-fat cream cheese, cubed
- 1 cup shredded Mexican cheese blend, divided
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1-1/2 cups frozen corn, thawed
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) fire-roasted diced tomatoes, drained
- 2 cans (4 ounces each) chopped green chilies
- 1/4 cup salsa
- 14 whole wheat tortillas (8 inches), warmed
- 2 cans (10 ounces each) enchilada sauce
- Minced fresh cilantro
- 3/4 cup reduced-fat plain Greek yogurt

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375°. In a large nonstick skillet, cook turkey, onion and seasonings over medium heat 6-8 minutes or until turkey is no longer pink and onion is tender. Stir in cream cheese and 1/2 cup Mexican cheese blend until melted. Stir in beans, corn, tomatoes, chilies and salsa.

Place 1/2 cup turkey mixture off center on each tortilla. Roll up and place in two 13x9-in. baking dishes coated with cooking spray, seam side down. Top with enchilada sauce; sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Bake casseroles, uncovered, 15-20 minutes or until heated through. Sprinkle with cilantro; serve with yogurt.

Freeze option: Cool unbaked casseroles; cover and freeze. To use, partially thaw in refrigerator overnight. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Bake casseroles as directed, increasing time to 20-25 minutes or until heated through and a thermometer inserted in center reads 165°.

Yield: 14 servings.



MINI MEATBALLS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 2 slices bacon (2 ounces), finely chopped
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon plain dried breadcrumbs
- 1 large egg
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Coarse salt and ground pepper

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, combine beef, bacon, parsley, garlic, Parmesan, breadcrumbs, egg, nutmeg, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Shape mixture into 40 meatballs.

Arrange in a single layer on a baking sheet or on 2 large plates. Freeze 1 hour. Once frozen, transfer to an airtight container or resealable plastic bag; label and date.

To use the meatballs straight from the freezer, preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place meatballs on a rimmed baking sheet and bake until cooked through, about 15 minutes.

Freeze Option: Frozen mini meatballs can also be used in soup or sauce: Simmer meatballs, covered, in liquid until cooked through, about 10 minutes. For equal-size meatballs, scoop out meat mixture with a teaspoon, using 2 scoops for each meatball. Then roll between your palms to shape into balls.



SLOW COOKER PEPPER STEAK

INGREDIENTS

- 1 beef top round roast (3 pounds)
- 1 large onion, halved and sliced
- 1 large green pepper, cut into 1/2-inch strips
- 1 large sweet red pepper, cut into 1/2-inch strips
- 1 cup water
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/3 cup cornstarch
- 1/2 cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 8 cups hot cooked brown rice

DIRECTIONS

Place roast, onion and peppers in a 5-qt. slow cooker. Add water and garlic. Cook, covered, on low 6-8 hours or until meat is tender.

Remove beef to a cutting board. Transfer vegetables and cooking juices to a large saucepan. Bring to a boil. In a small bowl, mix cornstarch, soy sauce, sugar and ginger until smooth; stir into vegetable mixture. Return to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir 1-2 minutes or until thickened.

Cut beef into slices. Stir gently into sauce; heat through. Serve with rice.

Freeze option: Freeze cooled beef mixture in freezer containers. To use, partially thaw in refrigerator overnight. Heat through in a saucepan, stirring occasionally and adding a little water if necessary.

Yield: 12 servings.



FONTINA CHICKEN & PASTA BAKE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 package (16 ounces) uncooked spiral pasta
- 4 teaspoons olive oil, divided
- 2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 1/2 pound sliced fresh mushrooms
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cans (10-3/4 ounces each) condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted
- 1-1/2 cups chicken broth
- 1-1/2 cups shredded fontina cheese, divided
- 4 teaspoons minced fresh oregano or 1-1/4 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 2 packages (6 ounces each) fresh baby spinach, coarsely chopped

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°. Cook pasta according to package directions for al dente.

Meanwhile, heat 3 teaspoons oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add chicken in batches; cook and stir 3-5 minutes or until no longer pink. Remove from pan.

In same pan, add mushrooms to remaining oil; cook and stir over medium-high heat 3-5 minutes or until tender. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer. Stir in soup, broth, 1 cup cheese, oregano and pepper. Add spinach and tomatoes; return chicken to pan. Drain pasta; add to soup mixture and toss to combine. Divide between two greased 8-in. square baking dishes. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake, covered, 15-20 minutes or until heated through.

Freeze option: Cool unbaked casseroles; cover and freeze. To use, partially thaw in refrigerator overnight. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Preheat oven to 350°. Cover casseroles with foil; bake as directed, increasing baking time to 1-1/4 hours or until heated through and a thermometer inserted in center reads 165°.

Yield: 2 casseroles (4 servings each).

BUILD A HEART ROCKET WITH YOUR LITTLE VALENTINES

Adapted from LittleBinsForLittleHands.com



This Valentine's Day candy structure is a great STEM activity! And what kid doesn't love an excuse to break out the holiday candy. These heart candies are similar to gumdrops and are awesome for building structures of all kinds.

We loved this activity because of its use of several of the STEM pillars — kids can try out both engineering and

math skills. Plus it's an amazing way to encourage fine motor skills through play. Kids are so busy designing, building, problem solving, and having fun to notice all the fine motor work! A fun activity for any age and it only requires 2 materials.

Supplies: Candy Jelly Hearts + Toothpicks

There are lots of ways you can enjoy this Valentine's Day structure building activity. Whether you want to create animals, towers, cars... you can cater it to the developmental level of your child and build in 2D or 3D. We loved the rocket shown here.

Start the base with a hexagon shape. Each row has two toothpicks into each heart. Next use pieces of toothpicks {easy to break} to stabilize the structure as you build upwards. The design comes to life as you move along. Keep adding layers with the same pattern. Towards the top, you'll have to adjust the amount of toothpicks per heart as the design gets tighter.

The bigger the base, the taller it will be and the more hearts you will need to use. This one used the whole large bag. This makes a terrific open-ended invitation to build for kids of all ages! Plus, it's a great way to spend an afternoon.



New Arrivals



Walter Scott Kaufmann

October 18, 2017

7lbs 6oz, 20 inches

Welcomed by Scott & Brittney,
and sister Evelyn



Sadie Margaret Davis

December 1, 2017

8lb 10oz, 21 inches

Welcomed by Kathleen & Matt



Ascher William Van Der Werf

December 7, 2017

7lbs 8oz, 19.5 inches

Welcomed by Ehren & Michelle





Member to Meet Brooke Cramer

Where are you from?

Henderson, NV

Kids names and ages, current class.

I have 2 boys: Jack 2 and Joey 7 months

What drew you to join NCPG?

I was encouraged to join NCPG by some fellow mom friends when I was pregnant with my first and I'm so glad I did! It has been invaluable to have this as a resource as my kiddos get older.

Tell us about an area where you struggled as a parent that a topic covered in your NCPG class has helped you with.

An area I struggled with is just being a new mommy. There are no books that provide all the real world situations that come up daily. It's so nice to have a forum to bring questions and get answers from teachers and other mommies going through the same thing.

What has been most surprising about being

a parent? Biggest surprise about being a parent is realizing how much you can love a child. I feel like life began when I had my first and it just keeps getting better (and harder, ha!)

If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?

My dad. I recently lost my father shortly after I had my second son. My NCPG classmates have been so supportive through this difficult time.

Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere, or read minds for a day?

What would you do with that power? I would rather teleport to a tropical location with a drink in my hand and have a mommy break!

Do you know someone in our organization
that could use a little helping hand?



These are just a few examples of the issues we deal with
each and every day, and there are so many more!

NCPG wants to HELP...

with meals, babysitting hours, toys, and more importantly, kindness.

If you know someone who could use a hand,
please send nominations to outreach@ncpgaz.org
or stop by the submission box that can be found near the
breakfast table and nominate anonymously.

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