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Season's Greetings

Teens Take Charge and Build Community

The Sport of Motherhood Newsletter - Holiday Edition

December 2006 / January 2007

Hard to believe, but Christmas bells are in the air. Roasted chestnuts mix with the flavors of home cooking. Cash evaporates quickly into glittering packages with big pretty bows.

We have a terrific holiday idea for you: [The Sport of Motherhood](#) book is now available to preorder online through [Barnes and Noble](#) and [Amazon](#). Our first book signing is at the River Oaks Bookstore, 3270 Westheimer at River Oaks Blvd in Houston, TX 77098 on December 23rd from 11 am - 12:30 pm.

Amidst the holiday madness, we took a look at a very important topic: how teens get involved in building their communities. My article discusses some of the main themes of the show.

Our artists for December are teenagers from East Palo Alto's College Track program here in California. Click [here](#) to view their work as showcased in the show.

December TV Show "Teens Take Charge and Build Community" times are as follows: Tuesdays at 3:30 pm, Channel 15 in Mountain View, Los Altos and Cupertino, and Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday on Channel 30 in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Atherton, Woodside and Stanford. [Click here for complete TV schedule.](#)

Our December/January sponsors are [Christine Leffler, Massage and Yoga, Curves, Palo Alto](#) and Sarah Gish with [Gish Creative](#). Scroll down for special offers only for Sport of Motherhood!

Our monthly column for entrepreneurs "I Love What I Do, But How Do I Make Money?" will appear again in our next issue. Who wants to think about business during the holidays, anyway?

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Holiday Woes



by Sarah Claytor

*My children weren't nestled all snug in their beds
Since visions of grandeur danced in their heads
With Mama in her stocking cap jumping through hoops*

Teens Take Charge



Sport of Motherhood emphasizes teamwork at home, but not all skills can be learned at home. Kids benefit from having other key adults in their lives who offer consistency, support and accountability. Two Bay Area non-profit organizations that provide this kind of mentoring are on our December show. Both College Track and Youth Community Service want their students to develop life and leadership skills through service learning and civic involvement. Both want to help their students become problem-solvers in their communities.

Our guests are first generation college-bound teens from the East Palo Alto College Track program, as well as the district Director of Youth Community Service.

Youth Community Service works with schools and after school programs such as The Boys and Girls Club. They focus on problems within their community such as Hunger and Homelessness, Crime, etc. and come up with manageable projects that can address one problem area. For example, at one of the schools, Drug and Alcohol Prevention was identified as a priority. The students decided to educate the student body through a multi-media presentation about alcohol and drugs.

*To meet expectations of each and every group
As in-laws and family and friends all abound
She found that her husband was nowhere to be found!*

Oh dear, it's not even Thanksgiving and already I'm starting to feel that cynical edge creep into my aspirations for the perfect holiday season. Wait. That's it, isn't it? It's that accursed word, "perfect." Somewhere along the line, I must have bought into that materialistic vision of the "perfect holiday." The dilemma now, of course, is how to reverse this unrealistic approach and replace it with something healthy and fun. In our home, where we celebrate Christmas, the children begin to anticipate the holiday season as early as September (perchance to coincide with the onslaught of print and television media commercials). However, they have always had to limit their "lists" to three items since that was the number of gifts which Jesus received from the Kings upon his birth. You'd think that would simplify matters, but still I find myself setting my own expectations at a level which is simply unattainable. Really, the look of wonder on their little faces is worth nearly everything, but this year, I might just skip the handmade candycanes slipped into their sleeping fingers and hope that just being together and creating gifts for others will fill their hearts with the love the holiday intended.

As I searched for answers to my dilemma of holiday simplification, I discovered that there are those who have found ways to keep the holidays from running out of control. Ellen, a friend who has the daunting privilege of celebrating both Hanukkah and Christmas, mentioned that even after years of practice, she still finds Christmas overwhelming. She keeps her family's Jewish celebrations simple, full of light and love. On one evening the children get to choose their favorite meal; prepare those taste buds as the delectable combination of peanut m & m's, potato chips and ice cream are set before you. Now, just imagine the smiles! And she and her husband, Bill, added another tradition that keeps the holidays in check; throughout the year, they and their children collect the solicitations for charitable donations that arrive at their home. During the holiday season, the children allot a sum of their own money (which their parents match); they then investigate and choose the foundations they would like to support, and send donations in their own names to these organizations. It creates a sense of responsibility, greater community and pride for the kids. What a gift to give to our children; the understanding that giving to those whose need is greater than our own creates hope and brings our world community closer together.

Holly, an energetic mother of three, has engaged her children in the greater world community by introducing them to the Essentials Pantry, a resource which gives to those in need goods which are not covered by food stamps – toothpaste, laundry detergent, diapers, etc. They also provide coats, kitchenware and other much needed items to approximately 150 families each week. These families include a large number of refugees who have arrived in our country with nothing more than hope. Holly's children join her in organizing and distributing donations on days which they might have off from school. They have also collected and donated many of their outgrown toys, an act which is especially appreciated at this time of year. The reluctance which naturally arises from trying to part with a once loved toy is quickly overcome by the joy of seeing that same toy given a new life in the arms of a child whose need is greater than her own. Now, in addition to clearing out the many unused toys which tend to accumulate in the playroom closet, the children have taken a leadership role in bringing toys, and thus, laughter, to others. And they see the positive impact which can be

Since the teenagers come up with the project, they are invested in it. Adults and mentors assist and trouble shoot as needed.

Though College Track provides its students with tutoring and additional classes to help them succeed, it also emphasizes long-term service learning projects. Two of our teen guests organized Club Run. The goal: to reunite the streets of East Palo Alto since it has lived with the reputation as the number one murder per capita city in the U.S. What happened? Everyone was excited about the project at first but then they ran into lots of red tape with city planning and hit walls due to lack of funding. Alejandra said, "No one in East Palo Alto had ever done anything like this before. They were also worried about gangs and violence."

Did they give up? No, their team of 50 teens lost members and momentum so the core team went back to the drawing board. Esmerelda said, "We had to slow the pace down, and it helped keep the fun. Even though the meetings turned out smaller, we felt good support with each other." They developed a more realistic plan given their new data. Then they got creative with PR and recruitment. The students promoted the run by wearing running clothes to their own high schools and passing out tons of flyers. They also recruited kids outside of College Track in exchange for community service credits at their respective schools. They made presentations and wrote letters to city council members, the police, and multiple organizations. The community began talking and funding opportunities began coming in!

Project REACH, an acronym for "Reading English After Class Help," involved reading to kindergarteners, many of whom spoke English as second language. The College Track students work with the kindergarteners on reading skills. In addition, they track student progress. The project has bought up interesting discussions back at College Track since many of the teens also learned English as a second language. Jesenia's parents do not speak English. So she learned to reach out and ask teachers for help and took the initiative to teach herself English. Sarait moved to the United States from Mexico about 7 years ago. She vividly remembers being the only one in the class who did not speak English. "It's

made one person at a time as those who are finally able to support their families on their own return to the Pantry to offer their own volunteer service. While the Essentials Pantry is here in Portland, Maine, there are refugee settlement programs in every state.

So this year, we are adding a few new traditions to our holiday season and, if I can stick to my plan, we'll be removing some of the expectations as well. As we dip candles and make candy and cookies, I look forward to sharing with others a little bit of that warm family feeling we are so blessed with at home. Perhaps it won't be the "perfect" Christmas, but who knows, maybe I'll begin to enjoy this magical holiday season with the untainted enthusiasm of the children. Happy Holidays to all!

Making Merry Memories

by [Shana McLean Moore](#)

We all have memories of Christmases gone by. Whether it's a tradition that we excitedly keep alive by dragging ourselves, Benadryl and all, up the windy mountain roads to cut down our own tree, or frosting cookies and eating the broken ones until we experiment with Benadryl for other nausea-inducing instances, we do our best to create memories for ourselves and for our children.



The problem is, of course, that some of these events are best off repressed.

While I hope my daughter has, in fact, deleted last year's holiday shopping experience from her memory banks, I force myself to re-live it to avoid letting history repeat itself. In fact, this year I plan to hit the toy stores only after I have detoured for a soothing latte and some serious self-talk. For the sake of our family name, I just can't repeat the horrendous social faux pas I committed there last year.

As I waited in a line more serpentine than any at Disney World, I just couldn't contain myself. There it was mid-December and there were just two cash registers open for business. It was a scene right out of a Christmas Gone Bad movie, with frowning parents and whining babies demonstrating anything but the holiday spirit of lore. But, wouldn't you know it, even all the frenzy couldn't drown out the perky Christmas carols.

I managed to keep my Scrooge-like thoughts to myself -- until they had the audacity to play "It's the most wonderful time of the year!" The lyrics left me cackling like a woman just shy of all her board game pieces. When my daft display received more attention from my fellow shoppers than the season's must-have toy displays, I tried to explain myself by shouting "Doesn't anyone see the irony here?!"

We all know they did, but no one appeared to want to go on record by aligning themselves with the mentally unstable. This, somehow, was particularly true for my daughter. The moment actually had to be recorded in her baby book as the first time I embarrassed her to her very core.

And even Benadryl couldn't help me with that.

Shana McLean Moore is a columnist for The Almaden Times and is the author of Femail: A Comic Collision in Cyberspace and Caffeinated Ponderings on Life, Laughter & Lattes. Visit www.caffeinatedponderings.com to sign up for her free newsletter.

Dress Your Home For The Holidays



by [Jennifer Duchene](#)

The holiday season is fast approaching, and now is the time to organize your design to achieve a coordinated, festive look.

First, decide on your style. Are you going for glitzy? Country? Do you have a collection you highlight each year?

Next, choose a color scheme; one or two colors work well together without becoming overwhelming and

why I joined Project REACH – because I related to the struggle with language and where they came from." So she pushes her kindergarteners gently and keeps reading to them in English even if they want to slip into Spanish. The teens want to "get them wanting to read in a different language." They can share their experience, struggles and hope with the next generation.

Some of the life skills they have learned? Sarait: "I have always been shy and quiet, but I learned to speak in front of large groups of people. This was a real opportunity to help the community." Braulio: "Getting others educated and organized." Jesenia: "I learned to ask for help and how to be a leader."

Kids get self-esteem by doing esteemable acts. These teens have made a difference in not only in their communities, but also in others. They have learned some valuable life skills along the way. With support, encouragement, and accountability, our teens can become active problem-solvers in our communities and have an impact on the future. Our future. Click [here](#) to view the TV show.

Do you have a story or a personal experience that you'd like to share? Write to me at gen@sportofmotherhood.com.

Quick Links

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More Destinations

adding a dash of a third might even enhance your look. If you have a neutral palette in your home, bring out the browns and neutrals with gold and bronze touches using candles, bronze glass beads in transparent bowls, metal lamps, and cushions.

Repetition is the key. Group items for impact. Don't put decoratives everywhere. Rather, introduce them strategically and repeat your theme in a centerpiece or on the mantle – wherever you want to highlight your festive look.

Enhance your entrance! Don't neglect the front door; this is the entrance to your home, a suggestion of what is to come. Wreaths with fragrant herbs and spices, theme items or color, decorated plants in pretty containers, all give life to the entry.

Decide what your time and budget constraints are, pick a theme and work within that framework. Make a list, and shop only for what you need after reviewing your existing collections. I have listed a few fun, inexpensive ideas below that might just help make this year's holiday décor simple, festive and fun. Happy decorating!

- Try a twist on red and green using pink and acid green – from dull to shiny.
- Collect a single item with which to decorate your tree. We collect Santas, and buy a new one each year.
- Make beautiful fruit using plastic or balls using Styrofoam and roll in glitter or paint with metallics.
- Punch a hole in cards, pull through ribbons, and hang over matle or on back of doors in strips.
- Toss shiny colored balls into a bowl; an inexpensive bowl can be sprayed in a metallic gold, silver or bronze and add a sparkle to your home. Fill it with theme items.
- Look for beaded or velvet pillows, plenty to choose from at every price point.
- To add glamour to the dining room, add chair covers in color or a shiny, transparent fabric. Or hang an ornament on the back! Wrap matching napkins with beaded bracelets, ornaments or bows using hair elastics or wrapped wire in a coordinating color.
- Put some large hurricane candles on the table. Ikea has some fabulous silver ones in various sizes. Nestled among greenery and white flowers with white candles creates a stunning look.

Famous Mothers: Abigail Adams (1744-1818)

by Joanie King

Abigail Smith was a sickly child, the daughter of a clergyman

Eighteenth century men of the cloth were very learned men.

Too frail to go to school was she; she learned to read at home

And outstripped all her school-aged peers before she was half-grown

She married young John Adams, an up-and-coming lawyer

The next ten years he was gone a lot, which sometimes would annoy her

But oh, the letters she would write, they show her intellect

They tell of life in the colonies, the company she kept.

She bore one daughter and three sons, one of whom would be

Another famous patriot in U.S. history

But first, the revolution, and all that that entailed

With husband John's eloquence against the Crown he railed

The Declaration signed at last that brought us independence

Meant international postings for John and Mrs. Adams

First Paris, then to London, where they were not befriended

For the King and Queen were not amused at how the war had ended.

But back at home the new VP to Washington was lauded

As elegant and courtly, what all those years abroad did

And when John Adams won the vote as second president

Toward the end of his term, off to DC they went

The nation's capital had moved, a wilderness at best

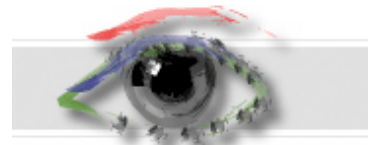


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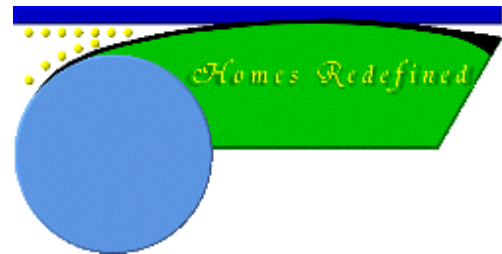
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But Mrs. Adams entertained in style, always finely dressed
 She lent some class to office, this bright colonial dame
 And spawned a second president, another claim to fame.
 She died before John Quincy Adams took the seat of power
 But Abigail, in every way, had lived her finest hour.

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The Birth of MothersClick

by Andra Davidson

When my daughter was born last year, I began to search for parenting information and discovered an overwhelming amount of content available, albeit not all applicable to my needs. I also joined a couple of mothers groups in my area. After I started receiving the group emails, I soon learned that some of the best parenting advice was being passed between us, from mom to mom. No one knows better about the challenges of motherhood than someone who's been there, done that – or is currently experiencing it.



As the group emails grew daily, I found the problem. Email is great, but not when it becomes redundant, or massive. On a group basis, the system becomes unmanageable and unhelpful. That's when the idea of MothersClick was born. I wanted to help groups of moms everywhere by organizing, sharing and recording knowledge for future, new and expecting mothers.

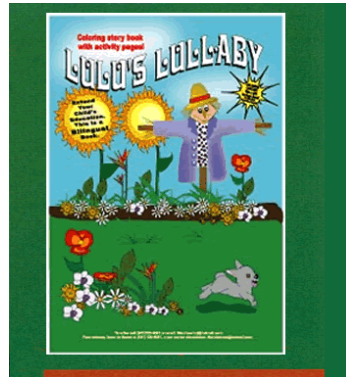
Our service launched 7 weeks ago and it's been an amazing experience! The rewards have far outweighed the hard work and lack of sleep. When I go to the site and see the daily new growth of groups, I know we are making a difference.

[Click here to continue reading](#)

Book Review: Lulu's Lullaby by Marnie Ernst

by Susan Kraft, Gallery Director for Sport of Motherhood

A young bunny named LuLu gets her ear bitten by a dog on the neighboring farm. The pain is bad enough, but then the nightmares begin and every night she relives the trauma. Lulu's mother knows what to do; she sings a lullaby every night to help Lulu get to sleep. But then, Lulu's mother has to go away for a few days, and all the fear comes back. Poor Lulu can't sleep.



This simple story reflects a universal childhood dilemma: the world is a scary place and children need the support of their parents to overcome their fears. But the story doesn't stop there. Parental support is essential, but we all know the saying, "Give a man a fish, you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish, and you have fed him for a lifetime."

Marnie Ernst, the author of Lulu's Lullaby, has a lot in common with Lulu. She was a young girl when she lost both of her parents, triggering recurring nightmares and fears. It was her good fortune to have a wise grandfather who understood that it wasn't enough to help her go to sleep; Marnie needed the tools to help herself.

And so, in Lulu's Lullaby, when her mother goes away, Lulu's father takes it one step further and teaches Lulu to sing the song to herself and Lulu is able to sleep soundly on her own.

As an adult, Ms. Ernst recognized the power of this simple lesson



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and wrote Lulu's Lullaby to pass on this precious gift to children everywhere.

Lulu's Lullaby is a coloring book with oodles of educational activities and inspiring messages and even a coloring contest. It comes with both English and Spanish verses on each page. Lulu's Lullaby is a positive and fun story-based activity your child can enjoy with or without you. You can order this charming and beautiful book at www.marnieernst.com.

Marnie Ernst is an artist and an animal welfare volunteer. She lives in Corvallis, Oregon where she adopted Lulu the rabbit from the Humane Society. Lulu's life and death, and Marnie's childhood experience in overcoming personal trauma, inspired the story of "Lulu's Lullaby." Illustrated by Patricia Caprio.

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glowfish enterprises(tm) is an educational company founded by two moms whose mission is to empower and better equip communities and families through workshops, consultations, and educational materials. Sarah Gish is a twenty-year marketing guru and Mary Ellen Wolf is a twenty-five year international education expert and together they have created a series of workshops for parents and caregivers entitled "Piecing Together a Well-Rounded Global Citizen." For more information, log onto www.freewebs.com/glowfished. "The Sport of Motherhood" readers get a "Buy One, Get One Free" discount for the book [The Giving Book: A Young Person's Guide to Giving and Volunteering](#) which sells for \$10 each and was used in their most recent workshop, "The Reason for the Season: Teaching Kids to Give and Receive During the Holidays." Contact Sarah Gish for this deal!

[Contact Sarah Gish](#)

Offer expires: January 31, 2007

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