

The Crib Sheet



Mothers and More Chapter 230

February 2010

Mothers & More Mission

Mothers & More is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of mothers through support, education and advocacy. We address mothers' needs as individuals and members of society, and promote the value of all the work mothers do.

Our Website

<http://www.momsofwestchester.com/>

National Website

<http://www.mothersandmore.org/>

If you are interested in joining Mothers and More, please send an e-mail to newmemberinfo@momsofwestchester.com.

Chapter Board Members

Book Club Coordinator- Abbie O.
Chapter Meetings & Discussion Events Planner- Whitney B.
Game/Wine Night Coord.- Dana Z.
Leader- Robyn V. **CO-LEADER NEEDED!**
New Member Coord.- Amy M.
Newsletter Editor- Bridget B.
Playgroup Coord.- Dana Z.
Public Relations Coord.- Camille M.
Special Events Coord.- **VACANT**
Treasurer-Laura P. **REPLACEMENT NEEDED!**
Website Coord.- Christine M.

Letter from Your Editor

Dear Moms,

The months always seem to race by between newsletters. I enjoy corresponding with many of you by email as the newsletter takes shape- thank you to all the contributors! Sometimes I even get to meet some of you in person. My goal this spring/summer is to meet MORE of you! Like many of you, I am a working mom and do not have a lot of time to spare. But I enjoy attending M&M events to get out of the house, do something fun, meet other local parents, and expose my children to new playgrounds/spaces and new kids.

I hope to be able to continue to enjoy M&M events, but our chapter leadership is quickly shrinking and without some new volunteers, it will be very hard for us to continue. We desperately need members to join our board and help lead and plan events. It truly does not take a lot of time and you can join in the capacity that fits you- but please, think about giving back to a group that has given you playgroups, events, advice, and fabulous parties. We really need your help.

Thank you, and stay warm!

Bridget, mom of Maxwell, 3.5 years old, and Lila, 22 months

Welcome New Members!

Welcome to the new members (and their offspring) who joined us recently! We are so glad you have joined our chapter. If by any chance you were left off of this list, please forgive us! We welcome you wholeheartedly anyway!

Cheryl B. and her son Nathan (7/08) from Scarsdale
Courtney R. and her son Charlie (7/08) from Mt. Kisco
Erin A. and her son Elias (4/09) from Fleetwood
Jenny C. and her baby due in May from Bronxville
Kelly W. and her daughter Annika (4/06) from West Harrison
Maggie M. and her children Lucie (6/05) and Tommy (4/09) from Rye
Mary O. and her daughter Vivian (10/08) from Croton-on-Hudson
Maya K. and her daughter Kayla (12/08) from Ardsley
Megan C. and her children Eoin (12/02), Aidan (7/04) Ellie (2/06) and Declan (5/08) from Dobbs Ferry

Welcome New Babies!



Congratulations to all the proud parents! (If your baby is not listed here, please email Bridget for inclusion in the next newsletter.)

Lila Grace (July 09), born to Lisa D.
Hope Amelia (Nov. 09), born to Dana Z.
Kayla Ann (Dec. 09), born to Christine M.
Kieran Francis (Dec. 09), born to Allison P.

Playgroups



Chapter 230 has many wonderful playgroups, mainly organized by year of birth. We also have occasional all-ages playgroups. If you are interested in joining a playgroup, please contact Dana Z. Any member is always welcome to host an open playgroup at her home or a public spot!

Reflections of a Working Mom

On August 17th, 2009, I went back to a full-time job after 3 months of maternity leave. On August 17th, 2009, my 3-month-old son rolled over for the first time. Fifteen minutes before I got home. I spent most of my maternity leave vacillating between overwhelming anxiety at the thought of going back to work, and a longing to do something besides change diapers and nurse. The irony of my child reaching a major developmental milestone just minutes before I returned to him, after what felt like the longest day of my life, was not lost on me.

Being a working mom has become a little easier since that difficult first day. My boss has been flexible with my hours; I have gotten used to the new routine; and I try to remind myself of the benefits of spending some of my time with adults, doing concrete tasks, and easily accomplishing things. It has helped immensely that my husband, Mike, is usually the one who is home with our son Elias. He is a doctoral student, so he has been able to manage a flexible schedule of studying and teaching. Of course, reversing the traditional roles in this way has brought on an entirely new set of concerns for us.

It's almost comical, sometimes, to come home to a husband who just wants to get out of the house and get a break, while I am complaining that I'm tired from work and not terribly excited to tackle a sink-full of dishes. I am half expecting to come home one day to get a summary of the conversation on "The View" that morning. In fact, as I write this, Mike is with a group of stay-at-home dads attending a taping of the Martha Stewart show (granted, his only motivation was to get free stuff).

At times I am incredibly jealous of the amount of time that Mike gets to spend with Elias. And Mike would sometimes rather be a more laid-back dad, the kind who is there for play-time and doesn't have to soothe the baby to sleep. Generally, we both seem to be comfortable with the "traditional" roles given to us, but we recognize that it works best right now to reverse them, and we make do. We are especially excited about how much the two of them have already been able to bond—something that will hopefully continue for a long time, no matter what the caregiving situation is later. We talk to other parents about what they do to make things work, and of course each family has their own unique setup: parents with no other option than full-time daycare, reluctant stay-at-home parents, satisfied stay-at-home parents, and everything else in between. And as I reflect on our own arrangement and think about the struggles and joys that we experience in parenthood, I find that what really bonds all of us, no matter the situation, is that we are experiencing what every parent has experienced since the beginning of time: endless anxiety and worry, the necessity of sacrifice, and happiness like no other.

Erin A. is mom of Elias, 10 months old

Book Club



Book Club is held on the first Friday of every month at 8PM. Our January meeting, which about 6 people attended, was on Jan. 8 at Maryann F's.

We discussed "The Summer Kitchen" by Karen Weinreb, a book about a privileged wife and mother of 3 small boys living in Bedford, NY whose world falls apart when her husband goes to prison for a white-collar crime and she loses most of her money, possessions and social circle. She finds a job as a baker and develops a relationship with her nanny, ultimately opening their own cafe/bakery together. Her circumstances force her to learn to support her family and change her way of thinking about life, family, money, and romance. Only a couple of us had a chance to read the book. We agreed that the book was not particularly well-written, and that the main character was not particularly sympathetic - although she faced hardships, she was able to overcome them all fairly easily and despite how much she lost, she was still had so much more than most people. The next meeting is Friday, March 5. Contact Abbie O. for more information.

Birthday Party Venue Round-up

Thanks to so many members who contributed great reviews of birthday party options!! I decided to just include the bulk of their emails below. If you would like more information from one of the contributors, feel free to email her or Bridget if you need her contact information.

Bruce Chung's Tae Kwon Do, Harrison

My son's party was fantastic! They did a lot of relay races, an obstacle course and games with the kids, then a really cool tae kwon do demonstration for the kids. Then we had pizza (which they provided) and cake, and then there was a little time left over and they set out these fabric hats that the kids could decorate. Each kid received a tae kwon do headband. The staff was so attentive and they had so many staff members for the kids. They did everything- set up, clean up, serving the kids' food and cake, etc. They gave such special attention to my son and made him feel really special on his birthday. I would highly, highly recommend it. There are 2 packages for parties- one without any paper goods or food, and one with the paper goods, beverages, and pizza. I did that package (the deluxe package) and I believe it was around \$500 for 15 kids then about \$15/child over the 15. The only downfall is that they only offer the party on Saturdays from 3:30pm-5pm so they book up very quickly! Sarah P. www.brucechung.com

Chef Central, Yonkers

Attended a birthday party there. Unsure of costs. I thought it was just OK. I believe the party includes up to 10 children. Any additional child costs extra (I believe \$20-25 extra per extra child). The party we attended started at 3pm. The children "made" cupcakes. There were 2 tables set up for the children. They each took turns putting ingredients into a bowl and mixing it. The staff there premade cupcakes, so once the kids were done mixing batter, real cupcakes appeared at their seat. At this point, they made decorations, iced and ate the cupcakes.

Pros: The kids had a great time.

Cons: No food other than cupcakes and juice. This may have been because it was a 3pm party. It also could have been how the parent set it up.

You do have the option of making cupcakes, pizza or pretzels. This parent chose cupcakes for the kids. I also found the staff to be a bit "short" with the children- they didn't appear to have "fun" with the little ones. I'm not sure I would host a party there. I wasn't impressed. Erika M.

Greenburgh Nature Center, Scarsdale

We had our sons 5th Bday party here and were very impressed. A naturalist did a presentation with the animals (approx 1hr). He really involved the kids and they loved it (the positive). We had to provide all food (the negative). The cost was average to high considering we

Upcoming Events

(contact is listed after the event)



Fri March 5- Book club (Abbie O.)
Fri March 19 – Mom's Night Out-
Chocolate Tasting party! (Dana Z.)
Mon, March 29- All Ages Playgroup,
10:30am (Dana Z.)

Save the date for a fabulous Mom's Night Out! Dana Z. will be hosting a Dove Chocolate Tasting party. Come relax, enjoy some delicious treats, chat with other moms, and maybe, just maybe, bring home some chocolate for your honey.

provided the food and did all prep and cleanup. We spent approx. \$400 with food (including GNC membership). We felt the party was a success, so it was worth it. There are two different levels based on size of party/room you need- \$310 for smaller room and \$400 for larger room. Mary Ann B.

www.greenburghnaturecenter.org

JW Tumbles, Rye Brook

We did a party at JW Tumbles in Rye Brook and have also gone to a ton of parties there. They do a great party. I think the price is around \$500 or so and they have a few packages to choose from depending if you want to use their paper goods/have them order pizza etc. The kids all love it and the teachers really get them involved. It's a high energy party. The only negative is the space. It's kind of small, so it gets crowded with parents there. Parents usually filter into the perimeter of the gym space too. Also I would say it's only good for really 2, 3, and maybe 4 year olds. Would not do it for kids older than 4. They need more space! Overall a good party for the little ones! Sarah P.

(Another member perspective) We had my daughter's 3rd birthday at jw tumbles. They did a great job keeping the party going. The kids had a great time. They did age appropriate activities and kept the kids interested. It really was the perfect party. Exceeded my expectations. Several mothers in this group had recommended it to me. Robin W.

<http://jwttumbles.com/parties>

KidsU, Pleasantville

Cost: \$399 for 15 kids, then \$18 for each additional kid.

Activities: time in the 4 story playquad, then open time in the gym with supervision/guidance/music

Food: you provide. Most folks order pizza from local place.

Pros: great for large parties. CLEAN facility. FUN place, easy for parents as the kids play by themselves. Closed to public. Had great party favors for \$5 each.

Cons: can be expensive, especially as food isn't provided and they weren't 100% clear with me ahead of time about the charges for extra kids

Recommend: yes! Suzanne F.

www.kidsu.com

Leapin Lizards, Port Chester

I've had Ryan's last 2 parties at Leapin Lizards, and it's reasonable, convenient, and Ryan's favorite place in the world. The kids run around and play in the climbing/slides/ball pit area for an hour, then they have lunch (pizza or hot dogs), and ice cream cake, and then they get tokens and use the arcade area for a while. The parents don't have to do anything. You can also order extra food/drinks for the parents if you want. The basic package is \$340 for up to 10 children (each additional child \$25) plus tax/tip. The "Super Iguana Theme Party" package includes themed paper supplies and a themed ice cream cake (Dora etc), more arcade tokens, and a t-shirt for the birthday kid. That package is \$380 for 10 kids (each additional child \$26). One drawback is that you don't have exclusive use of the venue, so there will be dozens of other kids running around the climbing area

Have you been to an M&M FAMILY FUN DAY?

It's a day at a local playground or park with food, new and old friends, and fun, including bouncy castles! Kids and parents alike always have a great time.

But we need help to plan our next one in early summer! It doesn't take a big time commitment from any one person- ***many hands make light work!***

Please volunteer to help plan our next Family Fun Day- email Bridget or another board member for more details.

at the same time as your party. It gets a little loud and chaotic, but the kids all seem to love it. Meredith Z.

www.leaplizards.com

Little Gym, Scarsdale

My daughter had her 3rd birthday party at Little Gym in Scarsdale. The length of the party is short at 1 1/2 hours. 1 hour for play and 30 minutes to eat (pizza and cake). The "play" time is a lot of fun and the kids get a huge kick out of it. For 5 or 10 minutes, it's free play. When most of the guests have arrived, they start the festivities. They sit in the circle on the mat and explain the rules, then they do a fun warm up. I've been to 4 birthday parties there. The structured "activities" they typically do are: Parachute time (sing songs, put birthday child in middle of parachute while the kids twirl him/her in circle, make a tent, etc), then they blow up the "blow up" trampoline and the kids get to jump on it to music (big hit with the kids), zip line. If the children are young, they have a swing that attaches to the zip line. If they are older, the children hang on while spotted by an instructor.

The eating area is a bit small. It looks larger than it is when considering a birthday party for 3 year olds. If you don't have a drop off party, then there are lots of adults. Between the adults watching over their children or coming into the room to get their own food, it can get pretty tight. I had the staff set up an "adult" table outside the party room, so that adults weren't wondering into the other room for food.

The staff there are GREAT! I have nothing negative to say about them. They're super cute and have a fun time with the children.

Cons:

- They ask you to pay in cash as they don't want to incur the credit card fees. This is a bit ridiculous since the fees compared to the expense is SO LOW.
- The # of children included in package is 12. That is VERY low. The Little Gym in Stamford includes 20.
- Any child over 1 year of age participating in the activities counts towards your numbers. So if parents bring a baby sibling, and he/she is walking, you're most likely paying for him/her.
- The party room (where you eat) can get really tight, the more kids you have. I think a comfortable number is 15-17. Anything over that number starts to get tight.

Price: \$425 for up to 12 children.

\$15 for each additional child (Any child who is walking and playing in the gym counts), max 30 kids

A 15% gratuity is also added on.

Price Includes: Structured activity in gym, pizza for children, apple juice, and balloons to attach to favors.

Extra costs: Cake, pizza for adults (they'll order this for you), drinks for adults, and some kind of crudite for kids and adults (most parents put out some vegetables and fruit), paper goods for adults (plates, napkins, utensils).

NOTE: When having parties where children are not dropped off you run into 2 issues:

- Adults: Both parents come to party to watch child have fun. (if

Our Chapter Needs YOU!

If you haven't noticed, we need some new volunteers! Please review the job descriptions below and think about whether you can spare some time.

Co-leader:

Ideally a chapter of our size (100 members) deserves two leaders. A one-year commitment is asked for positions on the board but many serve longer. The co-leader job description focuses on two areas.

- Preside over monthly planning meetings to ensure we have regularly scheduled daytime mom-and-tot events and moms-only evening events
- Report periodically on chapter to regional and national organization through surveys and conference calls

Treasurer position:

- Maintain bank account
- Deposit checks from national office
- Reimburse member expenses
- Develop annual budget
- Track expenses and complete year-end national report
- Check weekly online membership reports for new, renewing members and expiring members
- Communicate with national office

Special events Coordinator:

- Be the point person for special events like Family Fun Day, Halloween party, and more
- Recruit, coordinate and delegate to a team of volunteers

paying for adult food, this can add up.)

- Siblings: Parents who have yet to host a party for a 3 year old usually don't know of the hidden cost of younger siblings attending a party. Make sure you know which children have younger siblings. When parents RSVP, they only RSVP for the person invited but often bring the younger sibling.

<http://www.thelittlegym.com/scarsdaleny/pages/default.aspx>

The Nature of Things/ Home party

Its not a venue, but we used The Nature of Things for my daughter's 4th birthday party at home. They come to the house with 10-12 animals selected by the birthday child and do a 45min - 1hr session with the kids on the animals. We had 17 kids and it cost \$290 (plus tip). We found it very reasonable compared to other party options because we could control the rest of the costs. They took a count on the day and charged accordingly, so I didn't have to pay for more children than actually showed up on the day (or pay extra for a bigger space than I actually needed). In terms of having 12 animals in our house, including a boa constrictor, rooster and duck, it was fine. The presenter (Carrie Marshall) brought a mat for the animals to be on in the middle of our playroom and just took one out at a time to talk about it and then walk it around to each child to pet, if they wanted to. We only had one animal pee on the mat and she cleaned it up immediately! I was really surprised at how well she kept the kids quietly sitting in a circle for so long. The last 15 minutes or so (the program was 1hr) they got restless, but she was wrapping it up by then so it was fine. I just couldn't believe 17 four year olds lasted as long as they did! Anyway, I would definitely recommend it for kids who love animals and because it's something a bit different from the regular gym-style party. Kate B.

<http://thenatureofthings.com>

Simply a Terrific Time, New Rochelle

I rented a party space in downtown New Rochelle. It was a great space and very affordable. The women who runs it is lovely. We had The Nature Of Things bring animals and they too were great. Kerry was great with 3 year olds and it was the cheapest company I could find that travels (I was on a tight budget and had 30 kids!). Simply a Terrific Time does birthdays from invitations to cake. They have organized art projects. Some examples include making treasure chest/jewelry boxes, oil painting on canvas, tie dying. It was really fun. It was right around \$300 for the animals. I can't remember the exact cost of the party space. I think around \$200, pizza included. Yes I would definitely do it again! Nicole Z.

<http://simplyaterrifictime.com/>

Stew Leonard's, Yonkers

I had my son's 3rd birthday party at Stew Leonard's. The party lasts for an hour and a half and includes pizza and juice, ice cream with toppings, birthday cake, paper supplies, invitations, decorations, face painting, a craft for each kid, games, and a visit from the Cow. The price is \$240 for 10 kids, and \$13 for each additional kid. What I really liked about Stew's was the ability to add on food and drinks for the adults, and to pick which craft the kids created. We selected sand art, but there were 5 or 6 choices for the craft. Some of the games were

limbo, and using the parachute. The party is very organized with time frames for each activity. The only con, in my opinion, is that I would like an extra 30 minutes for the party but that is not an option. My son still talks about his party (which was in July), so I would definitely have another birthday party at Stew's in the future. Christine M.
http://www.stewleonards.com/html/kids_party_yonkers.cfm

Wee Play, Nanuet

Our party was great - really perfect for Matthew's age (3). The cost was \$270 for 10 kids, we had 16 and paid \$15 per head for the additional children. We also had extra pizza and soda for the adults @ \$18 for one pie and one bottle of soda. The party fee included party coordinator; use of party room for entire time of party (2 hours); invitations and thank you notes; pizza, chips, pretzels, popcorn and juice; paper goods; unlimited play for duration of party; balloons for each guest; free gift (a backpack) for Matthew.

The kids got run around the whole time. They came in the party room for Pizza, and then played some more and then came back in for cake. There were other children there, so it was not exclusively our party. But since the party was from 3:30-5:30pm on a Saturday, it was not very crowded. I like that that they didn't try to force games or activities on the kids (I think he is just too young for that). The area is fully enclosed, so kids can play without parents having to be right on top of them. We also hung around until they closed which was 6:30. Debra J.
<http://www.weeplayusa.com/about.php>

Again, thanks to everyone who emailed me their party venue reviews. If you have any ideas about articles/information you'd like to see in this section or any other newsletter section, let me (Bridget) know!