

Moms Club

naps, Llorin did research on the Internet to find a way to connect with other stay-at-home moms. One website she came across was called MOMS Club, which stands for Mothers Offering Moms Support. "MOMS Club was one of the things that came up, and when I read about what their goals were and their values were, it completely matched up with what I was looking for," Llorin said.

The non-profit international organization was started in 1983 for women who have worked and decided to stay home, said MOMS Club Assistant Regional Coordinator Marcia Thompson. "You can work too, but most of our events are during the day--that's really the focus of the whole organization: daytime support, networking for other moms and getting together so they don't feel isolated, especially if they don't know people or the area," Thompson said.

Llorin noticed there was no Manhattan Beach chapter, so she sent an e-mail to get information about creating one. She said MOMS Club has been very supportive, mailing her a binder of information about starting a new chapter and recruiting members. She was also given contact information to reach moms throughout the organization if she had questions or ideas.

The club has been officially meeting for about a month and so far roughly 20 moms are meeting for a few hours every week, with a different person hosting each week. The moms talk and network while the babies play with each other. "It gives you as a mom a place where you can network with other moms, develop friendships and watch your children grow up together," Llorin said. "It's really about supporting moms and making connections; not only for moms, but also for their kids."

Trish George stays home to take care of her 16-month-old son, Hunter, and has another baby due in January. She decided

to join the club after learning about it from a friend she met through the Mommy and Me Club. George said she enjoys both clubs, but appreciates MOMS because it is more casual than informational. "It makes me a happier person when I get to socialize with other people, because it's more fun than being at home alone with the baby," George said. "It's a really good opportunity not only for the baby to socialize, but also for the moms to socialize."

There are three playgroups forming, separated by age, with plans for "play dates" at a certain time and day of the week. One will be for infants, and the other two for babies born in 2007 and 2008, with the possibility of more groups forming.

Llorin explained that by separating the groups by age, children get more out of their play dates and the moms are able to better relate to each other and share ideas on childrearing. Isabella is in the 2009 group. "The biggest conversation is nap and food because they're transitioning from two naps to one nap and some of them are experiencing different types of food," she said. "So we swap recipes, ideas— anything to get your child to eat something, so it's really nice."

Suzanne Manning was a member of a MOMS Club in Santa Monica and has been involved in the organization in the year-and-a-half since her son was born. She contacted Llorin before moving to Manhattan Beach three weeks ago. Manning thinks it's a great way for her to get acquainted with her new community. "I've met some really nice women and their babies and I've also been introduced to some fun parks, so it's been really welcoming as well," Manning said. "Just to have a number of people I can recognize if I run into them at the park ...I already feel part of the community even though I'm so new."

Manning feels the organization is a great

way to exchange information about good pediatricians, preschools, parks and other information relating to raising her child. "That happens a lot," Thompson said. "People are moving to another place and before they move, they contact the MOMS Club where they're moving. So when they arrive there that week, they know where there's a park and where they can meet other moms and kids," Thompson said.

Thompson recalled somebody living in Africa who called her about moving to Ventura and joining a MOMS Club there. "You already have friends before you move somewhere because you're already in the MOMS CLUB community," Thompson said. "And if you've been working, you don't necessarily have friends with young kids, so it's a great way to meet other families that have kids your kid's age."

Having been a self-described workaholic, Llorin says she has a lot more time and energy to spend time with her husband Dylan now that she is at home rather than at work. "I can be with my daughter, help her discover new things, experience her firsts and share those things with my husband when he comes home," Llorin said. "And he sees that I'm happy, which makes him really happy too."

Although she loved her old job, Llorin wants to expend her energy on her family rather than at the office. "And to be honest, as a first-time mom, there's not a lot of energy that you have, because you're up all night with the baby and nursing," she said. "For me it was a personal choice. I felt that I just really wanted to focus on my family and my kids."

For more information, call (310) 489-3927, or e-mail Momsclub90266@hotmail.com. •



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snow-capped Mt. Hood in the background is picture postcard perfect, a scene that nourishes the soul.

Wine tours are available just as they are in Napa, Sonoma, Santa Ynez and other wine areas, but the Fruit Loop is unique, a step back into a simpler time where people stop to pick flowers from private growers, and shop for homemade quilts, homemade jams and jellies, homemade ice cream and freshly baked pies. Though fresh peach is my favorite, I asked why the huckleberry pies were a good bit more expensive than blueberry. I was told that the huckleberries only grow wild and have to be searched out and picked. Some locals have their favorite locations and keep them a secret.

Farm tours, annual festivals from cherry blossom in April to flower picking and lavender festivals in the summer, and cider pressing and pumpkin festivals in October, make this lovely area a showcase for local products. In Hood River fashion, Kate and Nate's wedding was a charming homespun event, with the participation of local friends, at a park along the Fruit Loop.

Continuing past the Fruit Loop, one passes through miles of dense, thick pine forest on the way to Mt. Hood. The tree huggers should be happy; I have never seen so many trees in any state as in Oregon. At Mt. Hood is the splendid Timberline Lodge. It reminds one of the Ahwahnee in Yosemite. A WPA project, President Roosevelt attended its opening.

After being only 10 minutes out of the Portland airport on the way to Hood River, one is surrounded on one side by Oregon forests and on the other by the Columbia River, without a single traffic jam or confusion about where to turn. So if you have occasion to be in the Portland area of Oregon or up at Mt. Hood, Hood River is worth a stop.

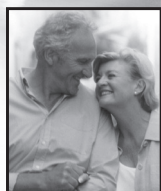
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