



THANK-YOU, THANK-YOU, THANK-YOU!

Judy Grout, Executive Director

As we hit the mid winter blahs what better way to celebrate than our very own, '**Girls Just Wanna Have Fun**' evening. This year was the third time we ran this type of evening fundraiser and it only gets better every time! An amazing variety show made-up of all MumNet talent, an outstanding silent auction with a variety of items, a draw for the coveted raffle prizes, not to mention the chi-chi reception at the beginning and end of the evening! I know I felt recharged after this wonderful evening of fun, ready to take on the second half of winter!

On behalf of the whole network, I would like to thank all those on the **Organizing Committee**:

- *Lizzi Jones*: Show Producer and Fundraising Director
- *Sara Anderson*: Pre-Show Producer/Co-Fundraising Director
- *Mimi Doherty*: our very talented in-house Choreographer
- *Briar Boake*: ever reliable Stage Manager
- *Kristine Laco, Laura deSouza, Kate Brundage, Monique D'Sa, and Jennifer Churchill*: Silent Auction Team
- *Robynne Ostry and Marlene Stothers*: Raffle Team
- *Susan Wild, Brian Fischer* (Susan's amazingly talented husband), and *Karen Walker*: Print and Promotion team
- *Sue Houston*: Liquor/Bar Co-ordinator
- *Leanne Colligan and Jennifer Smith*: Liquor/Bar team
- *Angela Brooks and Deborah Lamb*: Loot Bag Co-ordinators
- *Connie Wong and Susan Dmowski*: Finance

Thanks also to all our **Fundraising Rep's** in all 17 groups. Without all of you we could not make it happen:

In the east end: *Gillian Evans, Erin Boyd, Martha Wallace, and Nancy Botelho*. In the west end: *Angela Brooks, Kelly Margani, Kristine Laco, Samantha Boardman, Laura de Souza,*

and *Mary Koumantaros Vescio*. And in the central area: *Tamar Kagan, Jill Strapp, Kim Reeve, Hillary Rosenberg, Leigh Ashworth, Anita Davis, Victoria Switzman, and Racheal McCaig*.

A great big thanks to all the **Performers** in the big show!

- on guitar: *Racheal McCaig*
- the Boogie Shoes disco mamas: *Mimi Doherty, Rena Bone, Lisa Weiler, Anita Davis, Lisa Davies, Ruth Ley, Sharalyn McCambridge and Laura William*
- returning to the MumNet stage *Maria Thorburn* singing with her sister, *Helena Janik*
- returning to the stage performing her very own style of vocals and humour, *Ilana Waldston*
- dynamic duet of *Laura Hay* (returning for the second time to the MumNet stage) and *Elizabeth Stinson*
- our own mothership (board): *Deborah Hickey, Cathie Henderson, Michele Hopper, Connie Wong, Carmen Lopez-Folan, Anna Kriewald, Lizzi Jones, Susan Devine, and Aleks Vasic; Five Sexy Mama Piggy's, Angela Brooks, Tanya Willmott, Liza Overs, Kim Corrado, and Anu Bentley*
- and last but not least, four brave men (MumNet husbands to boot) who were truly entertaining! *Albert Vitols, Dan Jaciw, Chris Hopper and Graham Jones*

Thanks also to our wonderful **musicians** Will Jarvis, Craig Warner, and David Cohen.

Without the talent, hard work, creativity, and dedication of all these amazing women and men, we would not have had this successful, fun-filled event and fundraiser all rolled into one. It was a pleasure to be part of such a wonderful night! I hope all of you enjoyed it as well.

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QUOTES

A mother is she who can take the place of all others but whose place no one else can take."

-- *Cardinal Mermillod*

Don't walk behind me, I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend.

-- *Unknown*

SPRING REGISTRATION

The *Spring term* runs from the week of March 27th through the week of May 29th.

In order to secure a space, members must:

- provide a cheque to their group Finance Representative (\$160 with childcare or \$110 without childcare) by no later than **March 6th**. Post-dated cheques are accepted.
- initial the sign up sheet

Those who do not pre-register and pay by March 6th risk losing their space to women on the waiting list (these spaces will be filled the week of March 6th).

Please contact your group Finance Rep for more information.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FROM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Deborah Hickey, President

In November of 2003 at MMN's annual general meeting the membership approved the following vision statement:

"We envision a revitalized Mumnet, with dynamic Board, operations and administrative teams actively and efficiently serving the needs of its members, and positioned to meet the growth demands of the future."

In our 16th year, we are maintaining a large and growing membership, with 17 groups across metro Toronto serving 396 members. The board table has been filled with a group of truly dynamic volunteers. We are so fortunate to have our executive director, Judy Grout who is in her 7th year with us. Judy dedication and drive are the force that keeps MumNet thriving. We continue to deal with many challenges and celebrate many of our accomplishments all vital to the smooth operation and future of MMN.

We continue to struggle with ever increasing rents and insurance. Our churches continue to raise rents as they are feeling financially pinched due to their own rising costs which may be due to both increased heating and insurance costs.

We are nearing the end of receiving city grant money, as we no longer fit the city of Toronto's criteria. We must find alternate sources of funding. Various new funding sources are being investigated by our board. A registration fee was introduced last fall to help cover our increasing costs.

Our top priorities, which initially were generated from strategic planning, have been narrowed to: childcare; volunteer recruiting; exploring new funding sources and communications.

These issues have been the focus of our board and our grant application. At the board development day held last spring, we focused on corporate funding opportunities, the future of communications and volunteer recruiting. We have taken great strides forward. It has become evident that childcare must be our #1 priority. Our childcare ratios have kept our finances tight, as we have more young children attending with their mothers. Larger families seem to be a growing trend. In

many locations, our childcare spaces are filling up more quickly than our member spaces.

Aleks Vasic has worked diligently on our Trillium Grant application. The initial draft work plan has been completed, and we hope to have the application finalized and submitted by the end of the year.

Rena Bone, who has an extensive recruiting background, has stepped into a newly created board position dealing with volunteer recruiting and relations. As we all know volunteers are the heart of Metro Mother's Network. To all those who give their time to this great organization...THANK YOU!

Our electronic "Newslink" continues to be sent out 4 times a year. This method seems to be well received by our membership. Carmen Lopez has taken on the initiative of further developing the website for MMN and continues to move our communications into the future.

Our second membership survey results were compiled last spring to help guide us thru the next phases and stages of MMN. Members were open in discussing their views and issues pertaining to the running of MumNet. Everyone's input is great valued as this helps the board planning for MMN's future.

Bev Peake and her fitness team reintroduced the fitness event this fall. The Wellness fair was a new addition to the event and was well received.

A new and fun fundraising event was introduced by the vibrant Lizzi Jones. We hosted a variety/ talent show on Thursday February 23 which showcased many of our members' hidden talents. This social event was well attended and well received!

Over the past sixteen years, Metro Mother's Network has continued to grow and evolve. We remain focused on our mission statement "helping women face the challenges of motherhood by fostering their emotional, mental and physical well-being in a mutually supportive, community based environment." Just think of how many women's lives we have touched and we will continue to be there for mothers.

GOOD NEWS FROM COMMUNICATIONS

Carmen Lopez-Folan, Director of Communications

I have been cautiously optimistic talking about the changes to our website. It has been a long, technical road, but I think it's safe to say that we are hoping to launch our *new and improved* website at www.mumnet.ca this spring. We have been able to update some of the information that hasn't been touched since 2003, so when you check us out you don't feel like you've hit a time warp. We've also been busy redesigning and overhauling the site to make it more interactive and user-friendly. You'll be able to see these exciting changes when we go live sometime in May 2006. Look for more news about this soon!

In the meantime, feel free to share your ideas about what would make our website helpful to you. As an organization of moms that support one another, we want to know what you'd like to see when you're amusing yourself at 3am with a cranky toddler or looking for a last minute dinner idea...Do you want ideas, recipes, chats? Or, would you rather see health news and program options? Please share your ideas. You can email me at clopezfolan@yahoo.com and let me know what information you could use.

Thank you to all of the communication representatives who have helped us out in Communications so far, this year. We count on you to help get important information out and sometimes that's hard with a few kids underfoot! As a volunteer run organization, it's nice to know we have so many moms committed to keeping us going!

GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN! 3

Sara Anderson, Pre-show Producer & Co-Fundraising Director

On Thursday night, February 23rd, the smash hit winter fundraiser, **Girls Just Wanna Have Fun 3**, rocked the house at the Al Green Theatre in the Miles Nadal Community Centre in downtown Toronto. Many moms got up on stage and performed with heart and soul for the audience. Some wore really fake hair, others wore platform shoes, and some even wore curve-hugging leopard-skin jumpsuits! I don't know about you, but I was quite shocked to discover what the Mother Ship has been up to at all those late-night "Board Meetings"!

Racheal McCaig's opening number was refreshingly hilarious. Mocking our most beloved children's cartoon characters, she sung us through chorus after chorus of gut-busting laughter. It was such a relief to learn that I'm not the only mom who wants to throttle that whining cartoon kid, Caillou! The Disco Mammias from Fairlawn Friday and the 4 Little Piggies from Humbercrest Thursday shook their booties, and comedienne Ilana Waldston made us all laugh in recognition of our non-stop talking toddlers with her rendition of "Dat dere?" and "My Messiest Things". The duets of "Bosom Buddies", Laurie Hay and Elizabeth Stinson, and "If Mama Was Married" Helena Janik & Maria Thorburn showed us that we have quite a few talented closet singers in the Network. Maria Thorburn, the multitasking diva-mom, wowed us again with her vocal talent

while holding a microphone in one hand and a 30-pound toddler in the other!

Not only is mom Maria a multitasker, but also is her husband, Alberts Vitals, who played Mr. Multitasker in the "I am what I am" husband's number. Chris Hopper played Mr. Couch Potato to perfection; obviously, he had a lot of practice time at home! Graham Jones played Mr. Tardy and just showed up in time for the final chorus of the number, mumbling something about traffic being terrible. In the end I asked myself, what was the highlight of the show for me (maybe not only for me, judging by the hoots and hollers)? It was most definitely during this act when the four courageous MumNet husbands unleashed their testosterone for the audience. After having strutted brazenly on stage in his bunker suit, Dan Jaciw, the "Hero" fireman suddenly threw his helmet across the stage and ripped off his jacket!!! I hope his favourite part of the show was when I jumped out of my seat screaming "That's my husband!" I know I'm not alone when I say, "I just love a man in uniform!"

Thanks to everyone who performed, organized and attended the event, especially to Mimi Doherty who basically choreographed the entire show. Thanks to the band and to all the staff at the JCC. It's a night like this that makes being a part of MumNet so much fun!

A HELLO FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR

Marlene Stothers, Administrative Co-ordinator

It has been almost two months now since I took over the position of admin coordinator from Robin Black. It has been quite a learning curve but with the support of Judy Grout, all of the wonderful leaders, Area Coordinators, and the Board members, I am beginning to feel more confident in my new position.

I first joined MumNet at Humbercrest over 3 years ago after my son was born. I had worked full time after my daughter was born so now that I was staying home with my son, it was a wonderful opportunity to be able to meet Moms in my area. It was a bit stressful at first as my son was not happy to be left downstairs - but the workout, discussions, and coffee was worth it. It is hard to believe that my children will be 4 and 8 this spring! After my first few months with MumNet, they asked for volunteers to lead and I jumped at the chance to get more involved. I led at Humbercrest for the following two years and continue to be a member at Humbercrest MumVet. I have also been involved with planning a workshop for leaders and this past fall headed up the fundraising campaign.

I am excited to take my involvement with MumNet to a new level. I feel fortunate to be working closing with Judy as I know that her expertise and continuing support will enable me to learn the skills required in my new position. Thanks for all your support with this transition and I look forward to meeting and working with you all in the future.

ADVERTISING WITHIN MUMNET

Tara Sweeney, Newslink Marketing Manager

During the Fall and Winter terms, you have received advertising fliers from our ad partners as part of our advertising policy for direct mail fliers. We hope that the information is useful and relevant to your life as a new and/or veteran mom. We have built some wonderful relationships with businesses in the GTA and are excited to bring their information direct to you. We hope you consider utilizing some of these fabulous services and, if you do, please let them know you heard about their business through MumNet. Our demographic at MumNet is so specialized that we provide a key target audience for their advertising needs; in turn, they provide MumNet with revenue that helps keep our costs down. If you have or know of a business that would benefit from advertising with us please let me know. I can be reached at dmts@rogers.com.

GROUP NOTES

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH (FRIDAY) – MumNet Central

Joanna Gillespie

We were happy to resume our meetings after the holiday break that was relaxing for some, hectic for others. Some of our veteran members bid us a fond farewell in December but we are happy to welcome all of our new MumNetters who bring with them energy and new perspectives as well as some awesome snacks!!!

Anita and Maria continue to do a great job as leaders, providing us with fun and interesting ways to get to know one another and provoking some excellent discussions. In one session we attempted to match photos of our 'significant others' with the appropriate MumNet member (harder than you might think). We also had an extremely interesting discussion about the impact of television and other electronic media on our children and family life. Anita and Maria have also arranged an interesting array of guest speakers for the winter session. Sarah Hopen from **Becoming a Mother** ran a wonderful activity in which we explored some of our daily parenting issues through art. We discovered the cathartic release of putting paint on paper to express our emotions and reflect our experiences. Many of the participants were surprised and amazed at both the resulting artwork and the value of the process that left us feeling open and refreshed and gave us insight into the complexities of life as a parent. Check out Sarah's website www.becomingamother.com to learn more about the workshops she provides for parents and expectant mothers. We also enjoyed our presentation by Theresa Albert-Ratchford who provided us with lots of useful information about food and nutrition. We were also impressed by the account of her success - her idea to teach people how to get nutritious meals on the table for their families led to an internationally published cookbook and recently to a TV series that will be broadcast soon on the Food Network.

Each week we appreciate Marnie's efforts in coming up with fun and motivating fitness classes. We always look forward to being 'put through our paces' with such diverse offerings as Pilates, Boxercise, muscle conditioning, aerobics and circuit training.

On the social scene, we had a good turnout for the **Girls Just Wanna Have Fun** variety show. Everyone agreed that it was a fun and entertaining night out that showcased the talent and daring of both the performers and everyone who worked so hard to put the show together. In March we are also planning a wonderful spa evening at **The Art of You** on Yonge street. Finally, we would like to send out a big congratulations to Catherine deBeer on the birth of her new son, 6 weeks earlier than expected!

MANOR ROAD UNITED (THURSDAY) – MumNet Central

Shannon Quesnelle

I wish I had known about MumNet sooner. I am on my second maternity leave and have only recently joined MumNet. I have long been a bit shy of aerobics classes because bumping into people while I hyperventilate really didn't sound like a whole lot of fun; a friend assured me I would not feel too ridiculous here and she was right. There are women who seem right at home in their Lulu Lemons and there are others who are more comfortable in their husband's old sweats. Some have abs of steel while others look like,,,well, they look like they just had a baby! Those who are better at this help to push me harder while those who are as awkward as me make me feel better about the number of push ups I can do. And my kids are right into it: Katie exercises to Barney in the toddler room and Ian flies around on the exersaucer with the other infants. We all sleep well on Thursday afternoons!

I imagine that the news from our branch is similar to that of the other groups: some members returned to work, new members have joined and one of our members just had a new baby. We have had two really interesting guest speakers: parenting expert Alyson Schafer and a speech pathologist. It was great to have these professionals available to us to discuss our specific questions about our children (Alyson's show is on Rogers Television on Mondays at 4pm). We don't always have to look far for expert advice: the women in our group have a wealth of knowledge. Andrea Papamandjaris talked to the group about nutrition for us and for our children. That was the same day that my sister-in-law, a pastry chef (www.flakytart.com) made the post-workout treat for our group. We could see the chocolate pecan squares while we lunged down the room. Talk about motivation! Andrea assured us that treats are an important part of a balanced diet. We couldn't agree more!

We are planning another manicure/pedicure night as the one last session was such a success and we are all trying hard to read the book we have chosen to read together for our mini book club.

After one short month with this group I feel more coordinated, can do a few more pushups, and I got some really helpful advice about what to feed my kids and how to get them to sleep. But the most special thing that has happened to me so far was on my first day. As a get-to-know-you exercise we shared with each other the proudest moments in our lives (other than giving birth to our wonderful children!). I had never met these women before and I was astounded and touched by their accomplishments. I knew immediately that I was in the company of some incredible women who had done some wonderful things. Some accomplished major goals, others helped people close to them in time of need and others were proud of hurdles they had overcome. We are varied and we have had many different experiences and yet here we all are in the basement of the church in our sweaty clothes, trying to eat more fruit than cookies, hoping that we are raising good kids. It gave me more strength and confidence. As I said, I wish I had joined a long time ago.

GROUP NOTES**MANOR ROAD UNITED (WEDNESDAY)** - MumNet Central*Lisa Ruus*

Hello fellow mummies! Well our session started out with the addition of many new faces whom, I must say, are all doing amazingly well for first time moms! Over the holidays our group sponsored 2 families, each newly immigrated single mothers. The sponsorship was through Birkdale shelter and we hope our gesture of giving made the holidays and winter a little warmer for all. Our group pulled together a substantial amount of canned goods, toys, books and clothes for both families.

After indulging over the holidays, we were motivated by Alex Savva of Circuit Fit to evaluate our nutrition and fitness routine. I guess it would be a good idea to throw out all those chocolates from Valentine's Day!

Socials are always fun and relaxing, especially when the kids are at home and you can kick up your feet! We did exactly that when we had a manicure/pedicure night out. The word bliss comes to mind when your feet are being pampered and you have a glass of wine in your hand! Our most recent social was held at Auberge du Pommier...I know what you are thinking, and yes it was amazing!

During Winterlicious, Auberge did an outstanding job of serving our group a three-course meal with many extra little touches. A highly recommended way to chase away the winter blues! Thanks to Val and her husband Adrian for organizing the evening.

To help preserve our most treasured pictures we had Carly from Creative Memories do a workshop on scrapbooking. I thought you had to have a ton of time to scrapbook but Carly showed us you can do it very quickly.

Wow, we sure have done a lot in such a short time! We still have two more fun events coming soon they are: Discovery Toys coming to talk to us about toy trends and an evening at The Flying Dragon bookstore to discuss books for our children and ourselves. Thanks to our leaders Val and Nancy and all the rest of our group for a super session!

FAIRLAWN HEIGHT UNITED (THURSDAY) - MumNet Central*Dagmar Berndorff*

Thanks to the arrival of her new baby our communications rep, Michelle, has missed too many sessions to report on, so one of our new fearless co-leaders (that would be me) is reporting here. Maria and I have taken over the reins of power (is being a co-leader going to my head?) from longtime MumNet leader Louise (Wheeze) Colley. A hearty warm cheer of thanks for Louise's tireless efforts over the years! This term, we have a solid core of veteran MumNetters and a few new faces in our group. New pregnant bellies and a few now nonpregnant bellies have joined the ranks. Sue Nash our exercise maven has been putting us through our paces. I feel that winter fat melting right off of me.

Registered nutritionist Jill Hillhouse gave a wonderful presentation about how to feed our children and ourselves healthy, life-giving foods. She began by saying "the foods we give our children are by far the most powerful healing tools we can use on a daily basis." Now that is food for thought. One of our moms Jennifer Saunders and her sister Stephanie, owners of Surroundings Home Styling, gave us great advice on how to organize and decorate our homes. Beverley Cathcart-Ross spoke to us about how to build self-esteem in our little ones. We were all inspired and immediately put our newfound knowledge into practice.

One of the programs that stands out the most for me was the sharing of our birth stories. It was impressive to hear about the challenges, emotional and physical, that many of our members underwent in birthing our babes. Listening to the women, I felt gratitude for the medical profession without which many of us would not be here today. Finally, some raunchy conversation was saved for a potluck dinner social (amazing what happens when you get a little wine into us). Well sustained by food, drink, and conversation, we headed off to the now infamous "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" show. Congratulations to all the women who put themselves in front of and behind the limelight!

FAIRLAWN HEIGHT UNITED (FRIDAY) - MumNet Central*Mimi Doherty*

It has been an eventful winter at Fairlawn Friday, especially because of our involvement in the "Girls Just Want to Have Fun 3" fundraiser. Our wonderful Fundraising Rep., Anita Davis, came up with an idea to do a 70s disco number in the show, and we got eight ladies from our group together to be in it. Anita, Lisa W., Lisa D., Rena, Ruth, Laura (a very brave new member), Sheralyn, and myself put on our "boogie shoes" and disco attire and danced away to the two minute number from the "Saturday Night Fever" soundtrack. The best parts were coming up with costumes, and getting together at each others houses many mornings (with our kids dancing at our feet!) to rehearse. We also had huge support from our group in the audience that night with eight other ladies attending the show to cheer us on. Laura Williams and I also joined Lizzi, Elizabeth, and Laurie (west-end MumNetters) in the opening number "Mom's the Singular Sensation". Now that the fundraiser is over, our group can get back to work, exercising, eating snacks, and chatting!

We have had some great socials already this term, including a Winterlicious dinner at Herbs on Yonge St., as well as scheduled monthly pub nights at Safari or other pubs in the area. We have also had some great speakers this term. Beverly Cathcart-Ross came to give us some of the best parenting advice available in Toronto. Earlier this term, we all had a blast listening to fashion expert and past Mumnetter, Diane Daccord. She shared all of her tips with us, so hopefully you won't see any fashion victims from this Mumnet group! Have a great spring everyone! Let's hope it comes quickly!

GROUP NOTES**GLENVIEW PRESBYTERIAN (WEDNESDAY)** – MumNet Central*Andrea Fry*

Glenview Wednesdays topped off the year with a fabulous Holiday potluck dinner. The group gathered together to enjoy (as usual) each other's company as well as a delicious spread of culinary delights. In lieu of a traditional gift exchange we entertained ourselves with a "re-gift" exchange and decided to make a group contribution to a charity. A Gift Catalogue published by the charity World Vision inspired us. As a group we raised enough money to donate two hens and a rooster for two families, two rabbits for two families and a goat. In addition we were able to provide funding to immunize a community of children, our \$100 was matched by contributions from Canadian government grants so in fact our \$100 was worth \$500 of immunizations! Special thanks to member Susan Jennings for organizing this wonderful gift.

The winter session has also been choc full of treats, especially our Valentine's Day FUNdue. We indulged in chocolate fondue while we spoke of and reminisced about best friends. We also had our very own "Cityline" Design Day with a very special panel of current MumNetters who discussed design trends and our members design queries. Our resident book club is still going strong with good turnout (whether you've read the book or not!) and a new scrap-booking club has evolved which meets regularly. As a final note our group is experiencing a mini baby boom, there are currently five babies due this year!

GLENVIEW PRESBYTERIAN (TUESDAY) – MumVet Central*Liisa Freure*

Second term already? How can that be? But already we have covered a lot of ground and managed to fill our sessions with more than just chat and coffee. We have shared our best tips on organization - look out Rubbermaid and IKEA! Patty introduced us to Reiki (pronounced ray-key) which is a Japanese word literally translated to universal-energy. It focuses on finely tuning the flow of life energy through our bodies (and it has nothing to do with the flow of energy caused by coffee!) We welcomed new members, Ann and Leslie, with 3-week old baby, Michelle. We pampered ourselves on Valentine's Spa Day and we are eagerly looking forward to future programs including finding out what clothes are hot for spring, sharing our favourite children's books, and discussing The Tipping Point at our next book club meeting. Jill R has once again ***generously*** volunteered to host the annual Skating Party with all family members invited! Keep in mind that there are 32 of us and we average 3 kids each... and you will see why I stress the word generous! We are just crossing our fingers and hoping that winter will arrive in time for ice to freeze. Did I really just say that I was hoping for winter? I suppose that even I am missing the snow a little bit - or maybe just wishing for

some on behalf of my kids who have yet to try out the toboggans that Santa brought. I should be careful what I wish for, I know...

BETHANY BAPTIST (TUESDAY) – MumNet East*Sam Vrakking*

Someone asked me the other day what I, as a stay-at-home mum, did to keep myself sane and connected. One of the most important things I realized was MumNet and clearly I am not alone in this. Every Tuesday, regardless of how we feel and regardless of the weather, we trek out with our kids to meet and while our group has some of the best bakers I've come across, there is more to it than the food. One of the things that typifies our group is laughter. Sure, sometimes we have tears but every week our laughter echoes through Bethany's basement. The other thing our group has in spades is support. Week after week we share our concerns and thoughts and every week without judgment and with a good helping of humour, we suggest, support and try to help. We don't always find answers but we always feel better for the conversation.

Despite having to say goodbye to some old friends, winter has been a great session for us. Our new, or rather renewed, leaders Gillian and Karen have hit the ground running and the group is thriving in their care. The new women and babies have enriched us too. We've had a slightly less regimented session with fewer speakers and more focus on our group and concerns and I think this has been good for us. It is not surprising then that the highlight of our year so far has been 20 of us taking on Myth for Winterlicious. We're looking forward with anticipation to the Spring session and all the things both on Tuesday mornings and beyond that it will bring us.

ST. JOHN'S NORWAY (THURSDAY) – MumNet East*Lawrie Hopkinson*

Our winter session brought some new faces and tiny new babies - no one minds when they need to come in for a feed! It's been fun getting to know each other and bond as a group. One get-to-know-you game produced some fascinating information. We have world travelers, mountain climbers and juvenile delinquents among us! Guest speakers have been interesting and helpful, from a post-partum depression seminar to a Pampered Chef demonstration. A Life Coach reminded us how to take care of ourselves, and was truly inspirational. I think there was one other thing...oh, right. Our spa day! Leaders Laurie and Darlene organized the most amazing day for us. We had a facialist and makeup artist, a hairdresser, massage therapist, and a chiropractor. We did yoga for our workout, had candles everywhere, trashy magazines, and chocolate cake. In short, the most perfect morning imaginable. I would definitely encourage any group who hasn't done this to give it a try - it was such a relaxing and fun experience. We're a busy bunch so our socials are still in progress, but we did kick off the session with a martini party that definitely set the right tone! We're lucky to have such a great group of women, terrific leaders and dedicated volunteers. Thank goodness for Thursday mornings!

GROUP NOTES**ST JOHN'S NORWAY (WEDNESDAY)** – MumNet East*Monica Whitten*

The Wednesday St. John's Norway group is thriving and expanding! Welcome to our newest members, Julie and 3 month old Oliver!!!! The winter session is in full swing and we've managed to keep up our spirits in spite of the recent nasty weather. When the weather gets tough our members head to warmer waters... an informal survey indicates that our yummy mummies are testing out their new bikinis in all kinds of fantastic get-a-aways in Florida, Barbados, Hawaii, Georgia, and the Caribbean to name a few... And thanks to our weekly fitness sessions with Karen, we are toned and mummylicious!! (Or so our husbands tell us!)

For those of us who have stayed to brave the chilly temps our weekly MumNet sessions have been kept us informed and armed with lots of things to do with the kids. Some of our fabulous speakers include the ever-popular Lawrence from the Art Garage, Richard from U Can Do It - Carpentry classes for kids and adults, and Nathalie Prezeau author of Toronto Fun Places -- a book with terrific ideas about where to go when the weather doesn't want to co-operate.

Our fearless leaders, Claire and Stephanie have provided us with plenty of opportunity to get to know each other better with a fun and informative Dear Abby session, a question day that tested our scruples when we answered a variety of questions picked from a basket, and a valentine discussion for those members who are looking for a little romance...

And speaking of ROMANCE....

We have a little surprise in store for the ladies when Jen, from Secrets from your Sisters pays us a visit to talk about lingerie... (I'm already blushing!) Socially, we've had a successful scrap-booking night and are already planning our next sweet and savoury night complete with manicures!!

ST. JOHNS NORWAY (FRIDAY) – MumNet East*Connie Crane*

Cruel winds. Cold and flu season. Frozen parks, and kids with energy to burn. Winter is hard on moms and don't we know it. This term, many thanks go to our leaders Susan Dmowski, Emma Nichols and new leader Lesley Sargla for warming things up. Even if all else fails, we know that come Friday morning we can count on a good workout, lively, supportive discussions and gallons of high-octane coffee.

This term the focus was on arranging interesting speakers for our morning get-togethers. The lineup included Lawrence from the Art Garage who showed us how easy it can be to get crafting with the kids. With Melissa, an interior design specialist, we fingered gorgeous fabric swatches and talked about our homes and the potential lying underneath all those

toys. We've also still got a date with a rep from the Body Shop to look forward to. But let's face it no one could top our pre-Valentine's visit from Carlisle Jansen of Good For Her. What can we say? Well, not much in a family publication, to be honest. Let's just say Carlisle kept everyone's attention with a selection of adult toys, her deadpan but torrid running commentary and down-and-dirty product demonstrations. Even at 37 weeks pregnant, she was going strong, rolling around on the floor—definitely not anyone's idea of your average soccer mom. Group leader Lesley said the session really broke down barriers between group members who started sharing a few stories about what goes on at home behind closed doors. We're still teasing each other about what people are going to do on Saturday night!

In comparison, our evenings out were pretty tame, but social reps Nancy Botelho and Jennifer Linton arranged some great ways to beat the cold. Kicking off with a welcome back drinks night at Jennifer's, we also went to the movies to see the acclaimed Brokeback Mountain. The highlight this term was probably our wine tasting with the passionate and knowledgeable Hirayr Berberoglu. We spent an evening sampling heady wines and oozing cheeses from around the world, educating our palates, and letting Hirayr take us far, far away from the world of night feedings, temper tantrums, and mac 'n cheese lunches. Looks like we've just about survived winter together. We look forward to more fun in the Spring.

RUNNYMEDE UNITED (FRIDAY) – MumNet West*Jennifer Crespi*

Winter term got off to a great start with a pancake breakfast cooked by our team leaders Liz Felgueiras, Robin Thorsteinson and Sheri Wideman. Turning out a hot meal for 27 women in a church basement is no mean feat but they pulled it off with style! Post-snack activities this term have been just as fun. Our own Alison Cooper, who counts professional training as a patisserie chef among her many talents, taught us all about chocolate and helped us make sinfully delicious chocolate puddings to take home. Another member, Kelly Margani, hosted a Design Dilemma session and helped us to solve our most perplexing home décor problems. Personal trainer Jane Brown (yes, also a member!) taught us the top 10 ways to get and stay fit, and also showed us what we should look for when choosing a personal trainer. We've also had entertaining visits from acclaimed cookbook author Mairlyn Smith as well as the dream team from Organized Solutions, who showed us how to manage our time better, cut our clutter and deal with procrastination.

The social highlight of this term, of course, was the annual fundraising gala, and a number of our members were present to cheer on our own Maria Thorburn. Brava Maria!

GROUP NOTES**HUMBERCREST UNITED (THURSDAY)** – MumNet West*Kim Preston*

We got down and dirty right away at Humbercrest Thursday, revealing personal details about ourselves to get reacquainted after the holiday break and to welcome a few new members. It would seem that we're not a shy bunch as a favourite fact to disclose was the most interesting place we've had sex! We turned the heat up even further just before Valentine's Day when we talked about ways to put the romance and sizzle back in our relationships. One group titled their list, "Sex It Up!" But sentimentality overcame us as we shared what we loved most about our significant other. We continued to open up to each other as we marveled how our lives have changed since becoming moms. We talked about the challenges when two becomes three or four (or more!) and shared inspirational coping and thriving strategies.

They say you learn better if you're relaxed and enjoying yourself. If that's the case, we learned a lot from Dr. Timothy Hughes, a local chiropractor. We enjoyed amazing massages from his expert massage therapists as Dr. Tim enlightened us on how our nervous system impacts most functions in our body. Apparently the not-at-all-hard-to-look-at (can I say that?) Dr. Tim can also help you get pregnant – but you'll have to call him to get the details on that offer! His help was obviously not needed by four of our Mums who have new bundles of joy already on the way.

Has the cold gloomy winter weather got you cooped up inside and going stir-crazy with your wee ones? MumNet to the rescue! Creative and fun suggestions abounded as we brainstormed Winter Boredom Busters. Apparently, there's a serious dance party going on about 5 pm every night just down the street! In honour of our Olympic athletes, we unleashed our competitive side with a games day. Fortunately, fair play and fun won, judging by the laughter heard in the room.

Last but not least, we're very proud of our sexy diva piggies from Humbercrest who shook their cute curly tails on stage at the winter fundraiser event. We had a large contingent there to cheer them on. They were absolutely fabulous, darling!

HOW TO CONTACT US

For further information about the Metro Mother's Network, please contact us at:

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Email: info@mumnet.ca

Website: www.mumnet.ca

Address: 50 Melrose Avenue, Toronto, ON M5M 1Y5

MORNINGSIDE PRESBYTERIAN (WEDNESDAY) – MumNet West*Jane Starr*

Thanks to the members, leaders, executive, and caregivers at Morningside MumNet, for another term of fun and inspiring sessions. We all fought the Canadian elements to get out of the house to enjoy fitness, food, and fun every Wednesday morning. It was worth it! We shared our problems and stories, listened to each other, and tried to provide support. With little turnover this term, we welcomed only a few new faces, and a few newborns too. (Hello babies Mia, Tyler, Julia, Toby, and Wini!).

Speakers included Mairlyn Smith, the hilarious home economist who urged us to eat our M&Ms, a Body Shop makeup artist (to brighten up our tired faces), a sleep coach, and a rep from Invest in Kids. In other sessions we shared our own knowledge, experiences, and personal backgrounds.

Erin kept us sweating in workouts, kicking it up a notch by keeping the music very loud – a good way to minimize the talking and motivate the slow movers. We love to hate her "Killer 50," Circuit Training, and Boxercise, to name a few. We also love yoga with energizing and relaxing fellow member Carolyn.

Our extra-curricular schedule included a night out at lingerie shop Secrets from Your Sister (where one can go from a 34B to a 32DD – who knew?), more Lazy Gourmet dinners, a craft night, and ongoing chats on our group website. In Morningside tradition, we had superb representation at the Girls' Night Out fundraiser, and we provided two of the major raffle prize winners.

MumNet is a wonderful place to find friendship and escape from the everyday – I am truly thankful for it! See you in the spring.

HUMBER VALLEY UNITED (WEDNESDAY) – MumNet West*Laura McLevy-Scott*

Being a group of veteran Mums seems to allow us to pick up pieces easily. Whenever they falter – like our leader Christine Comi who recently had knee surgery with a lengthy recovery – no problem! Previous leaders are there to pick up and follow through on a program. Snack lists forgotten – no problem! Someone just drives to the local Loblaws for goodies or fruit. No fitness instructor? Well, that hasn't happened but if it did you know we'd sweat it out somehow (maybe with just some extra hot coffee). Speaking of which – our coffee did go missing recently – no problem! Off to Loblaws again! So inevitably the group always goes forward and conversation happens.

This term our topics included the following: A visit from the author Kathy Buckworth and her book "The Secret Life of Supermom"; Laughter is the best medicine – a collection of jokes and funny stories; crafts to do and places to go with the kids during March break; a Dear Abby Tea Party; how to survive the winter blahs; and an impromptu session on the challenges of in-laws.

So here's to an early spring!

OUR CHARITABLE ORGANISATION!

A lot of groups have made helping others a priority in their membership. Whether it's helping a fellow Mum, providing items to a charity or donating time and money to a worthy cause, our group is doing so much to help others. Here's a few examples of our charitable organisation:

- North York Harvest Food Bank: In December, an email was distributed asking for our help. Many Thanks to **GLENVIEW WEDNESDAY** for donating a collection of items and **MANOR ROAD THURSDAY** for donating \$360 worth of formula! [The North York Harvest Food Bank has worked for 20 years towards the relief of hunger in communities throughout northern Toronto, collecting, sorting and distributing food to a network of more than 60 community programs that provide food to approximately 250,000 people annually.]
- Birkdale shelter: **MANOR ROAD WEDNESDAY** sponsored 2 newly-immigrated single mothers, supplying canned goods, toys, books and clothes for both families. [Birkdale Shelter is a family shelter located in Scarborough].
- WorldWorld Vision: **GLENVIEW WEDNESDAY** raised money to donate 2 hens, a rooster, 2 rabbits and a goat for families as well as provide funding to immunize a community of children. [Word Vision is an international Christian relief and development organization working to promote the well being of all people - especially children].

Most of all, we help each other with our support and friendship. That's what MumNet is all about! Thanks to our membership for helping others!

ASK AN EXPERT

Why Is Hand Washing So Important?

Kids may not always listen when you tell them to wash their hands before eating, but it's a message worth repeating. Hand washing is by far the best way to prevent germs from spreading and to keep your kids from getting sick.

The First Line of Defense Against Germs

Germs - such as bacteria and viruses - can be transmitted several different ways, especially by touching dirty hands or changing dirty diapers. Other ways germs spread include through droplets released during a cough or a sneeze, through contaminated surfaces, through a sick person's body fluids, and through contaminated water and food.

If kids pick up germs from one of these sources, they can unknowingly become infected simply by touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. And once they're infected, it's usually just a matter of time before the whole family comes down with the same illness.

Good hand washing is your first line of defense against the spread of many illnesses - and not just the common cold. More serious illnesses such as meningitis, bronchiolitis, influenza, hepatitis A, and most types of infectious diarrhea can be stopped with the simple act of washing your hands.

How to Wash Your Hands Correctly

Here are some simple steps for scrubbing those germs away.

1. Wash your hands together with your child several times a day so he or she learns how important this good habit is.
2. Wash your hands in warm water. Make sure the water isn't too hot for little hands.
3. Use soap and lather up for about 10 to 15 seconds (antibacterial soap isn't necessary - any soap will do). Make sure you get in between the fingers and under the nails where uninvited germs like to hang out - don't forget the wrists!
4. Rinse and dry well with a clean towel.

When to Wash Your Hands

To minimize the germs passed around your family, make frequent hand washing a rule for everyone, especially before eating and cooking, after using the bathroom, after cleaning around the house, after touching animals (including family pets), after visiting or taking care of any sick friends or relatives, after blowing one's nose, coughing or sneezing, and after being outside (playing, gardening, walking the dog, etc.)

Don't underestimate the power of hand washing! The few seconds you spend at the sink with your child could save you trips to the doctor's office.

From the American Academy of Family Physicians on www.familydoctor.org

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Irene Cook, Newslink Editor

"THANK YOU" to all of our contributors for the Winter 2006 Newslink! If you'd like to contribute any articles, parenting tips, etc., or if you have any comments and suggestions, please contact me at 416-485-1944 or iskcook@aol.com. Our next issue (Spring 2006) will be distributed in May 2006.

If you'd like to submit a question to "Ask an expert", please forward your question to either your Communication Rep or to me. Remember that Daylight Savings time ("spring" forward) begins on Sunday April 2, 2006.

Enjoy the March break, St. Patrick's Day, Easter and Passover holidays!

MEMO FROM THE SAMPLE QUEEN

Racheal McCaig, Manor Road Thursday

If music be the food of love, play on. But if samples be proffered instead, please, take only one...

Back in December, I was helping some friends with their pastry booth at that big craft show in Toronto. You know the ONE I mean. Many of you were there -in fact I may even be writing about you, so please, read on.

I was given the dubious honour of playing 'the sample girl', handing out tastes of my friends' hand made delectables. That first day I donned my vinyl gloves with pride, polished up my silver tray and carefully laid out 12 rows of little paper cups. I smiled as I displayed my perfect little offerings. I was ready for the crowds to be wowed by these tasty morsels. I was ready for the converted taste buds to be lining up at the till with their money and purchases ready.

I was not ready for the onslaught, rivalling the Rams Offensive Line's tackle practice, which would instead befall me. I've never seen such ugliness. Hands grabbing from everywhere. People were pushing their way to the front of the queue and rudely demanding their little paper cup. And if that were not enough, they would then openly mock me for not giving them a big enough piece. The word is SAMPLE not FREE LUNCH.

2 hours later, I was disgusted with humanity.

People behaved as if I was invisible. I would be in the midst of cutting samples, knife in mid-chop, and hands would swoop in grabbing whole fistfuls of food. Now this, I must admit, was primarily the work of men. The women were much more subtle. If my sample tray dared to be empty, they would hover over me, breathing loudly, glaring, but not saying a word. I deliberately began to take my time. The bigger the scowl on their face, the longer I'd make them wait. And oddly enough, they would wait. But there was nary a 'thank you' among them.

I don't know exactly what it is about samples. Is it that people feel they work hard in this life ergo they're owed free stuff? Hey, I understand that the public had to pay a fair penny just to get in the front doors of that craft show, but believe me, the vendors paid even more. The admission charged does not pay for the samples that are doled out. The vendors themselves do. And that is on top of all their other fees. And yes, I understand that to buy a food product you must be able to sample it first, however, as I said before, the word is 'SAMPLE' not 'ALL YOU

CAN EAT SMORGASBORD'. I mean, I don't ever recall seeing someone walk into Sobey's and demand a center cut Beef Tenderloin to sample before they continued shopping...but I digress...

By day 2, I had resigned myself to loathing humankind and, having assumed the posture and apathy of a GAP sales clerk, had promoted myself from 'Sample Girl' to 'Sample Queen'.

By day 4, I had mastered the fake yet sincere smile generally reserved for Flight Attendants, and learned to talk through gritted teeth. The former was required because I had no polite answer for those who insisted upon critiquing not only the product I was sampling but all the foods in general, which were never as good as Mom or Grandma or Auntie Mame used to make. The latter was a direct result of having to bite my tongue and cordially answer the question "what was that?" This may seem an innocuous request, but you must understand it was continually asked after someone had pawed their way through the sample tray and crammed a fistful of food into their mouth. Call me crazy, but I would never eat something unless I knew what it was first.

By day 7 the show had raised 2 big questions for me: 1. What happened to common courtesy? And 2. Does anyone remember that gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins?

I was half way through day 11 of my reign as Sample Queen, and still disgusted with the human race for their brute piggishness, when my revelation came. Amid a throng of pushy adults elbowing each other like all-star night at the W.W.E., I heard a small but steady voice say "Excuse me, may I try some?" I looked up and saw before me, amidst a halo of golden curls, the cherub like face of a ten-year-old boy. He was smiling and waiting patiently for my reply. I only paused a moment before I spoke. "Of course, you may," said I. "Would you give me a moment to bring out some fresh samples?" "Oh yes," said the little angel. I purposely brought out a more delectable morsel and placed it in this young person's hand. His eyes grew wide as if I had given him manna from Heaven, instead of a plain ole' scrap of cake. "Thank you very much!" he cried, smiling widely. 'No, thank you,' I thought to myself.

I was barely able to call out "You're welcome" before he disappeared into the crowd. I smiled through the rest of that day, and no matter how greedy people got through the duration of the show, I kept on smiling. That child had just single handily restored my faith in humankind.

CLASSIFIED ADS

LOOKING FOR:	WANTED:	FOR SALE:	
Looking to purchase a baby backpack carrier. If you have one for sale please contact Sarah at 416-932-8325 or at ks_nichols@rogers.com .	WANTED: Used, in good condition, toddler wagon (Radio Flyer, Step 2). Please contact Kim Preston 416-767-5443.	A 6-speed Graco baby swing for sale. \$30. E-mail jen@jenniferlinton.ca or phone 416-406-5977.	Gently used Graco Swingomatic 6-speed swing in Windsor print \$75; Evenflo Little Town Exersaucer (turns into a track!) \$50; Fisher Price Kick 'n Drive gym \$25; FP Infant to Toddler Rocker \$40; Lamaze play mat \$25. Pics available. E-mail nancy.botelho@rogers.com or phone 416-690-4486.
	WANTED: Reasonably priced crib to take to Grandma's house. Will pick-up. Call Mandy 416-252-7739.	Still in box, never been opened Safety First pressure mount or hardware mount Swing'n'Lock safety gate. \$30. Please contact Kim at 416-767-5443.	