

## Van Gogh Inspires Students at Mothers' Club

"I felt like we were in high school again, investigating, discussing, explaining and presenting!" exclaimed Laura Bernabe, mother of two. She was one of ten students in her ESL (English as a second language) class who researched the life and art of Vincent van Gogh and conquered her nerves to give an interactive PowerPoint presentation in English to over 40 fellow students and Mothers' Club staff.

Nabeela Hanna, the ESL teacher, challenged her students by giving them an in-depth team project on a topic they knew little about. The students had to work together to decide how to divide up the project, perform online research, and create their PowerPoint presentation. "Everyone in the team brought different abilities and strengths, and we helped each other improve and got inspired to speak in front of people," commented Lorena Olvera, mother of one.

Like all programming at Mothers' Club, the Van Gogh project reflected its two-generation learning philosophy. While mothers learned about Van Gogh, their children worked on Van



Gogh-inspired paintings. "It was wonderful watching the children explain their paintings to their parents," beamed Monica Cabrales, lead teacher in the 3-4 year-old preschool class.

Cabrales said the children especially loved learning about Van Gogh from their parents who did a version of their ESL presentation for the children's program. "The children were so proud of their mothers who seemed to know so much."

- Ashley Sim, *Volunteer*



*A mother presents on Vincent van Gogh's painting "Starry Night"*

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Family Learning Center**

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## New Writing Workshop Helps Moms Connect with their Many Selves

To the visible relief of her students, the first line of Pat McClelland's course description reads, "This writing workshop won't tell you when to use a comma or help you spell better. It aims to open your heart to the world."

When I first sat down with Pat to discuss volunteer opportunities, her passion for writing and experience working with vulnerable women quickly became evident. So we asked her to come up with an eight-week writing course to give the young mothers in our afternoon program a chance to express themselves in a meaningful way - and she most certainly delivered!

"New motherhood is a dramatic, emotional, and often isolating experience. It forces women to put themselves last and alters all of their relationships," explains Pat. "My major goals were to help each student connect to the woman she was before motherhood, connect to the woman she is now beyond her mother self, and connect with others like her."

- Jason Wurtz, Program Manager



*This group of mothers in First Connections are taking a creative writing class with volunteer Pat McClelland.*

## A Story by Vidya Kamalapoura, Mother of Two

As the word kitchen comes to my mind, it reminds me of the smell of spices like cinnamon, pepper, garlic, cloves, red chillies, and lentils, which my mother used to fry in butter and the smell used to spread all over the house. Sometimes the smell woke me up from my sleep. From these spices she used to make a rice recipe mixed with vegetables and lentils, which is my favorite.

As I go back to those days, I remember that my mom would ask me the day before my birthday, "Honey, what do you want to have on your birthday?" Without even wasting a second, I used to yell, "I want that bisi bele bath" that I was talking about. My mom used to make a face like she already knew that because I asked for the same thing every year. She always said, "You know what - I already got the vegetables for that."

In those days I was always busy, first because of school, then college, then work. So we used to have it for dinner. As soon as I got home, I



would go straight to the kitchen to help her. I am cutting the vegetables, like potatoes, carrots, beans, and tomatoes, and I always want them to be small pieces. In the meantime my mom would prepare the spices by frying them in butter, one after the other - cinnamon, cloves, garlic, pepper, cumin seeds, fenugreek seeds, red chillies, and cardamom. As these spices were giving a nice and strong aroma. I could tell what spice she was frying just by the smell, without looking.

After they were fried, we had to grind them and make a paste. Then take a pressure cooker, put in the rice, lentils, ground spices, tamarind juice and vegetables and cook until the pressure cooker whistles and it is ready to eat. We had a big cooker as we were 5 people in the house (me, brother, mom, dad, and grandmother). We always invited relatives for dinner as it was my birthday.

I still remember those days when we all sat together for dinner. Everyone gave me presents for my birthday.

Now after all those years, my mom and dad are here to help me with my baby. Last week I asked her to make the same dish and we both remembered the old days when we used to prepare it together. This time I could not help her as I was either feeding my baby or playing with my older daughter. Regardless, the meal tasted the same and I enjoyed eating it, now not only with my parents but with my husband and my daughters.

## From the Executive Director: This Will be the Last Time

This is the last newsletter article that I will write as Executive Director of Mothers' Club. It is a wonderful blessing to know that you are doing something for the last time. Even though I am sad at times, I feel I have been given this tremendous gift that helps me to savor each milestone that marks the end of my tenure. This year has been full of such moments, but as I get down to the last two months I find I want to make sure I mark each one, to hold onto it so I will be able to remember all of the wonderful experiences I have had at Mothers' Club.

Recently I was at the supermarket, and as I was picking out mangos I glanced at the woman next to me and we both recognized each other - from Mothers' Club. Lupe Hodge was a parent at Mothers' Club more than 25 years ago. Her two daughters, Amber and Honey Mae, are now 30 and 32. Amber is a librarian in Chicago; Honey Mae has a son and lives in Portland. Lupe told me, "You taught me to be a mother. I didn't know anything until I went to Mothers' Club." I know that won't be the last time I hear that story!

Next year a mom and her child will come to Mothers' Club for the first time. She will be shy, even scared, and her child will not know what to make of this new place. Maybe it will be the first time the child has ever played in the sand, or painted with

colored shaving cream, or listened to a nursery rhyme. Maybe it will be the first time that anyone has asked the mother "what do you want to accomplish with your life?" Next year, like every other year, a family will find a new beginning at Mothers' Club. And years later, she will be able to say, "I learned so much at Mothers' Club."

So for one last time I want to say thank you to everyone who makes it possible for Mothers' Club to reach out to lonely and isolated parents and their children. Thank you to our volunteers who bring their sunny faces and their special talents to share with our families. Thank you to our board members who take their responsibility so seriously and who work hard to make the best possible decisions for the future of this organization. And a very special, completely inadequate, thank you to the people who work at Mothers' Club, from our incredibly talented and dedicated leadership team to our gifted and hard working teachers to our hard working and multi-faceted support staff. Day in and day out, these are the people who touch the lives of our families.



*Sue Kujawa at Leo Carillo beach, Malibu, CA.*

And finally, thank you to our donors. Thank you for believing in Mothers' Club, for believing in me, and for giving me the opportunity to play a role in such meaningful work. I know that this isn't the last time that you will make a gift that will change the life of a family, because you know that tomorrow will be someone's first visit to Mothers' Club.

*- Sue Kujawa, Executive Director*



*Sue seen here in her new Chalet trailer, which was given to her at Mothers' Club's annual gala on April 10, 2011 (see page 4).*

### Recent Grant Awards

The Atlas Family Foundation  
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# Honoring a Cherished Leader - Mothers' Club 2011 Gala

Mothers' Club honored long-time Executive Director **Susan Kujawa** at our annual gala on April 10th at Descanso Gardens in La Cañada Flintridge. At Sue's request, **Dr. George Regas** served as Master of Ceremonies - a first in his long career of public speaking. He gracefully acknowledged Sue for a lifetime of service to disadvantaged children and reminded guests of the important work ahead as we try to improve the educational outcomes of our future leaders.

Surrounded by her closest friends, four sons and many colleagues, Sue exuded humility while eloquently acknowledging the board members, friends, volunteers and staff who have supported her and Mothers' Club over the years. Her speech was framed by an elegant analogy:

*"Mothers' Club is like a basket that is made up of many, many strands of fibers, each one connected to another, and each one important. Mothers' Club remains a lively, vibrant organization because of the work and commitment of many, many different individuals. At Mothers' Club we like to remind ourselves that 'everyone has something*



*Sue Kujawa looks on as George Regas praises her dedication at our annual gala on April 10*



*Sue was joined by her four sons, including the surprise appearance of her oldest son Joe who flew in from Hawaii for the celebration*



*Event Chair Judy Brown with Dr. George Regas and wife Mary Regas*

*to give and everyone has something to learn.' All of you in this room are strands in the basket that is Mothers' Club."*

*In closing, Sue reminded guests of the gift that Mothers' Club is: "About my analogy of the basket. At first I thought that Mothers' Club was the basket, and the families, the moms and children, were being safely carried in the basket. But then I realized that, no - the families - the moms, the dads, the children - they are also the strands of the basket. And they are in some ways the most necessary strands. And if some of the strands are not so strong, even if some of the strands are broken, still they are many, and so together they are strong.*

*So if the families are part of the basket, what does the basket hold? I want to leave you with this image. That the basket that is Mothers' Club, holds the love, and the hope, and the future. And that is why it is so important, and why it has lasted so long, and why it will continue to last into the future. And I am not the basket - I am one of the strands."*

*As a final gesture of gratitude for Sue's dedication to Mothers' Club, she was presented with a surprise gift which she can use to explore the Southwest and her love of Native American culture - a mobile Chalet Folding Travel Trailer, which thanks to Descanso Gardens, had been rolled right up to the hall for all to see.*

## Gala Acknowledgements

Thanks to **Bonnie Valles**, who generously created a **tribute video** for Sue, guests were reminded of Mothers' Club's evolution through Sue's story. This video is now available in the "Video" section of our website at [www.mothersclub.org](http://www.mothersclub.org).

Special thanks to the event planning committee, chaired by **Judy Brown**, for planning the celebration: **Susan Futterman, Jil Sheldon, Bonnie Valles, Heather VanMeter and George Wiley.**

And of course, thank you to all of our **patrons and sponsors**, whose generous donations have funded our 2011 programs for low-income children and families, and three distinct honors for Sue: **The Susan Kujawa Legacy Fund** for leadership and staff development; a **Preschool Arbor** permanently named in recognition of Sue's love of nature; and the **Chalet LTW folding trailer** for use in her future adventures.



*Board President John Carlton (upper left), Mayor Bill Bogaard (upper right) Toby Osos, Senator Carol Liu, Board member Susan Futterman*



*Top: Past President Mary Lois Nevins & Silvana Casalegno (Program Director)*

*Bottom: Board member Fran Scoble with Past President Judy McDonald and Steve McDonald*

*Photos courtesy of James MacPherson, Pasadena Now*

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The *Guardians* provide sustaining support for our programs and operations by donating \$1,000 or more to our annual fund.



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## Leave a Legacy to Future Generations, Remember Mothers' Club in Your Will

All gifts to Mothers' Club provide you with the personal satisfaction of providing critical services to our community's most vulnerable children and families. Planned gifts can give you even more in return.

By including Mothers' Club in your will or living trust, you can ensure that Mothers' Club will remain a valuable resource for generations of families to come. We can refer you to professionals who can help you design a charitable gift plan that benefits Mothers' Club and enables you and your family to fulfill your personal financial goals.

If you would like to learn more, please contact our Development Office at (626) 792-2687, ext. 122.

Thank you for partnering with us to meet the needs of future children and parents.

## Thank you to Our Program Partners

*Mothers' Club programs are funded in part by the following agencies:*

California Department of Education, Even Start Family Literacy Grant

Center for Community and Family Services, Early Head Start

First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative

Los Angeles Universal Preschool

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program

City of Pasadena, Community Development Block Grant

Pasadena City College Community Education Center

United Way of Greater Los Angeles

## From the President: Passing the Flame

In the half century of its existence, Mothers' Club has known only one Executive Director - Sue Kujawa. For twenty-five years, her vision, leadership and very persona have been inseparable from Mothers' Club itself, and instrumental in fashioning it into the organization we all know and love.

But more than a year ago, Sue notified the Board of Directors that the time had come for her to step aside. Every successful organization eventually arrives at this point, where those who were instrumental in its creation must pass the flame to a new generation of leaders. It is a uniquely important transition. True to form, Sue has laid a strong foundation for success in this, as in so many other things. So, on July 1, 2011 a new era will begin at Mothers' Club. On that date, Hector La Farga Jr. will become its new Executive Director.

Hector's life and career have prepared him well for his new role. He grew up in a low income, at-risk environment, and credits his mother as the most important force in his life. Through her attention and sacrifice, he believes, he received strong values, a good education and a positive future. He has dedicated his life to helping others who come from similar backgrounds, and enthusiastically supports our mission to reach out to isolated families and prepare them for success in school and in life.

Hector comes to Mothers' Club from Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Greater Los Angeles and the Inland Empire, where he was the Vice President, Mentoring Programs. For fourteen years prior to that, he worked in various positions at INROADS, a national non-profit organization with a mission to develop and place talented minority youth in business and industry, and prepare them for corporate and community leadership roles.

In his last position with INROADS, he was the Regional Director for the Pacific Southwest Region, where he was responsible for overseeing operations, budget management, board relations and development, strategic planning, community and corporate partnerships, training programs, fund development and public relations strategies. Before that, Hector taught at Don Bosco Technical Institute and

Salesian High School. He has a degree in Sociology from the University of California at Berkeley.

Hector will start at Mothers' Club in an informal capacity on June 1, spending a month working with Sue and our wonderful staff to become more familiar with our personnel, operations, policies and procedures. In order to assist in the transition, Sue has agreed to remain, on a part-time basis, throughout the coming fiscal year. For that and so much else, she has our thanks.

Challenging as it may be to take on this position in the wake of such a beloved figure as Sue, I have no doubt that Hector is up to the task. He arrives respecting the culture and accomplishments of Mothers' Club and its staff, with a leadership style that is collaborative and inclusive. A natural listener, he is also comfortable making decisions, and brings a broad range of experience in complex situations. In short, he should be a good fit. Under his leadership, we can all look forward to a future in which Mothers' Club will continue to thrive.

- John Carlton, *President*

## Join us for a Tour of our Two-Generation Learning Program

The best way to learn about what happens at Mothers' Club is to visit our Center and take a guided tour with staff.

### **Upcoming Tours:**

Thursday, June 9- 11:30 am

Tuesday, June 14 - 9:00 am

Tuesday, July 12- 9:00 am

To provide a courtesy RSVP or for more information call (626) 792-2687 ext. 122

Tours are conducted year-round, except in August. View a schedule on-line at [www.mothersclub.org](http://www.mothersclub.org), "Events"

## Support Mothers' Club and Local Businesses with "Townloop"

Townloop is a new local company that is applying the retail innovation pioneered by *Groupon* to benefit our community. Townloop offers "Deals that make a Difference" - with 20% of each deal going to a local public school or nonprofit of your choice.

If you like *Groupon*, you'll love *Townloop*! Recent Deals were offered by the Langham, Euro Pane Bakery, Lineage Dance, Tip Top Cleaners, and Papillon Café & Creamery.

To sign up and designate Mothers' Club as your charity of choice, enter the following link into your browser: <http://townloop.com/partners/mothers-club>. Sign up today and help us prepare children for success in school and in life!





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## Our Mission & Guiding Principles

Mothers' Club Family Learning Center prepares families living in isolation and poverty to succeed in school and in life. Our programs are built on two guiding principles: in order for significant, long-term change to occur within a family, you must reach both parent and child and educate them together; and, the most critical time to reach a family is when children are proven to be most vulnerable and impressionable, between birth and 5 years-old.

## The Power of Two-Generation Learning

We fulfill our mission by providing FREE programs to disadvantaged families with children ages 0-5. Our two-generation learning model helps mothers and children gain the knowledge, skills and confidence they will need to break out of poverty. National research and our own evaluation results confirm that increasing the education levels of both a parent and their child is an irrefutable way to promote long-term, positive change within a family and a community.

**Donate On-Line & Learn More at [www.mothersclub.org](http://www.mothersclub.org)**

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### **The Power of Two**

May 2011

Editor: Sarah Orth

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