



# PITTSBURGH MOMS CHAT

March 1, 2006

Volume 1, Issue 1

Welcome to our very first newsletter. We hope you find it enjoyable.

## Introducing... the Pittsburgh Mothers' Center!

Welcome to the Pittsburgh Mothers' Center (PMC)! We started in the summer of 2005 by joining the National Association of Mothers' Centers, and we're working hard to make a place for ALL mothers to learn, receive and give support to one another, and to provide activities for ourselves and other parents.

The Mothers' Center doesn't have a permanent space as of yet, but we are a very active group! Right now we are meeting at members' homes and coffeehouses around the city, as well as the Birch Center for Healing in the South Side. In addition to organizational meetings, we have quite a few gatherings for socializing and mutual support. Past and upcoming events range from craft parties to Mommy & Me groups, from a zoo trip to a book club. And many, many more great ideas keep coming! Most of these activities are open to the public, are inexpensive or even free, and child care is provided for a reasonable rate. We hope to make this a vibrant, active, supportive, and inclusive group for Moms to meet with (or without) their children.

There are lots of ways to get involved in the Mothers' Center. You can participate in one of our social activities, join a committee, volunteer at one of our events, or help to plan something totally new.

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### Committees:

- Steering: Overseeing PMC's programming, effectiveness, policies, finances, and general well-being
- Communications: Maintaining the PMC website, producing flyers and a quarterly newsletter, other PR
- Fundraising: Organizing fundraisers such as craft sales, bake sales, cookbooks, etc.
- Grants: Researching and writing grant proposals to support the programs and goals of PMC
- Location: Searching for a permanent home for PMC
- Social/Outreach: Welcoming new members, planning social events, organizing charitable events and community service

### Volunteer Opportunities:

The Pittsburgh Mothers' Center is completely run by mothers volunteering their time. If you would like to help us, we can find something to suit almost anybody! We are currently looking for someone to help with the following specific positions:

- Help with our upcoming kids' stuff sale: collect donations, price items, work at the sale. If you have experience planning a sale like this, let us know!
- Donate some time as a bookkeeper/accountant
- Provide child care at meetings or events
- Spread the word about the center to other parents you know: at playgroups, schools, La Leche League (LLL) meetings, etc. A brochure will be available to distribute soon.
- Sign up to represent the organization at summer festivals

### Recent and/or Upcoming Activities:

Most of these activities are open to the public, are inexpensive or even free, and provide childcare for a reasonable rate. Check one of our online calendars at the sites given at the end of this newsletter to see what's coming up!

- Monthly Craft Parties
- Zoo Field Trip
- Potluck Parties
- Fundraising Events (craft bazaars, kids' stuff sales, etc.)
- Movie Nights
- Mommy & Me Group
- Mothers' Book Bag (book discussion)
- Roller Skating Party
- Wine Tasting Party
- Unwind (monthly knitting group)
- Discussion Groups

## How to Capture Movie Magic

by Kat Lally

*How I would wait in anticipation to see Dorothy in beautiful Technicolor go dancing down the yellow brick road*

My husband and I are avid movie geeks. I can rattle off the cast of 1940's classics or discuss the "underlying meaning" in independent pulp cinema and he can hum spaghetti western soundtracks and pick out obscure bit players and name their entire oeuvre. Before we had our daughter we would frequently see two movies a week (when the pickings were ripe). But like most things that change when you have a baby, so did this fun obsession.

Oh, we tried to do the movie moms thing several times but once our daughter was sitting up and aware this too went out the window. I don't want her absorbing anything inappropriate and lets face it -- everything Hollywood has to offer is inappropriate for an 8-month old.

But when the time comes later in her life when we'll watch TV with her, I wonder -- how do we capture the movie magic of our youth?

If you're over 30 you'll know what I mean, when you had to wait to see "Sound of Music," "Wizard of Oz" or "It's a Wonderful Life" the one time of year they played it on TV. This was the time before TiVo, before cable and VCR or DVD players. If you wanted to see movies you had to see them in the theater or wait to see if network TV would feature them as a late, late movie. How I would

wait in anticipation to see Dorothy in beautiful Technicolor go dancing down the yellow brick road or Maria twirling atop the Alps! And then it was all gone, like a dream until the following year when it would play again. I think this sort of magic may be lost now that these dreams can be owned in multiple formats and viewed over and over and over. I once babysat a friend's child who watched "A Bug's Life" four times in a row. For him, it was how you savored a movie. But is it as magical if it is ordinary and everyday? I don't know. Maybe I'll tuck my daughter's favorite movies away and pull them out for special times so they remain fresh and inspire the same sort of wonder I had as a child. Or perhaps she won't enjoy movies at all.

Hmmm. So, how to make her a bookworm like me?

*Kat Lally lives in Squirrel Hill with her husband, Sean and daughter, Astrid. When she's not busy chasing after her new crawling and tottering peanut she enjoys books, movies (on DVD now), gardening and music. She has decided it's actually OK not to have her finger on the pop culture pulse anymore because motherhood is its own kind of hipness.*

## Movie Review: A Very Long Engagement

by Brigid Ferkett

*A Very Long Engagement (Un long dimanche de fiançailles)*

133 Minutes

Rated R for violence and sexuality

Romance, Historical Fiction, War Epic

*A Very Long Engagement* is a story about a woman searching for her fiancé who has

gone missing from the front lines of World War I France. Although it was produced by an American movie company (Warner Bros.), the dialogue is in French with English subtitles.

The acting is, for the most part, adequate. The main character, Mathilde, played by Audrey Tautou, has a great gift for portraying innocence, surprise and determination without words.

There is a great little part played by Jodie Foster that you might enjoy if you appreciate her.

The scenery feels very genuine, as do the costumes and sets. The director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, has a wonderful talent for highlighting the mood of the

film with filters, and creates a very dream-like quality with yellows and grays.

Jean-Pierre Jeunet also directed another wonderful French film, *Amelie (Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain)*, which I loved. In addition to having the same director, Audrey Tautou also plays the main character and the cinematography is similar to that in *A Very Long Engagement*.

I would recommend *A Very Long Engagement* for adults only, because of the strong violence. The dark gray scene of life in the trenches is realistic and disturbing.

*Brigid Ferkett considers herself an amateur movie critic and enjoys watching films with her husband when the weather is cold or rainy. During the warmer months when the weather is nice, they spend most of their time outside gardening, and playing with their daughter, Leila, and their dog, Cricket.*

## Pittsburgh Spotlight: Schenley Plaza

by Kat Lally

If you have visited Oakland lately, perhaps the main library or the museum, then you may have noticed the moving mounds of dirt taking place in what was once a 300-car parking lot between the Hillman Library and the Carnegie Library. Perhaps you even know it's the long-awaited \$10 million-plus transformation of Schenley Plaza that is taking place. I have to tell you how excited I am about the May 2006 unveiling. My love affair with this city started when I went to school in Oakland, but I lamented the lack of green space that goes along with an urban campus.

I know I'll love the European feel that this area will soon have as a public gathering place for students, families, residents and workers. I will stroll with my daughter on the 3-acre lawn and gardens enjoying live music and ethnic fare from the food kiosks. And we'll make our way towards the laughter as children enjoy the carousel complete with their

pick of horses, magical animals and even a triceratops to ride. Visitors will be able to enjoy wireless internet access, concerts

and food in a setting including hundreds of movable chairs and tables, a pedestrian promenade and fountain.

Nearly 100 years ago the plaza served as an entryway to Schenley Park, but in subsequent years, the demands for more and more parking gradually obliterated the public green space. It is such a gift to return to the original plaza so our families can enjoy all the amenities of Oakland: the park, the Carnegie Museums and Library, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens (currently expanding as well, with a planned future unveiling of a multistory tropical forest exhibit with indoor waterfalls and more).

I'll see you in the plaza in the spring! That will be me and my husband and daughter plunked down by the fountain sitting next to blue-haired punks and a busking jazz player while enjoying Thai food and a sunny spring day in Pittsburgh.

*Kat Lally is a Pittsburgh transplant who adores this city and all its hidden gems*

*If you'd like to feature your favorite family-friendly place in Pittsburgh, please submit a short article to*

*newsletter@pittsburghmotherscenter.org.*

*Photos are welcome!*

## A Fun, Chilly Day at the Zoo

Five moms and six kids bundled up and braved the snowy weather to visit the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium in December with the Pittsburgh Mothers' Center. Our visit started with a hands-on class at the education building where we got up close and personal with a snake, a hedgehog, a chinchilla and more.



Then we headed outside where the chilly, but sunny weather provided a perfect opportunity to get a glimpse of some of the elusive, cold-weather animals like the Siberian tiger and the snow leopard. Thankfully, the zoo has many indoor exhibits where we spent time getting warm, while watching the elephants eat and the monkeys and apes hang out. The kids especially loved the chance to run around the aquarium and crawl through the sting ray tunnel.

Everyone had so much fun, the outing turned into an all-day event. Late in the day we realized

that we spent six hours enjoying the zoo and the company of the other mothers and children. This outing was one of many monthly activities planned by PMC's Social Committee. Be sure to join us next time when the weather is warmer!



Photos by Brigid Ferkett

## The Light of a Child's Imagination

by Maggie Broderick

This morning I was awoken from a deep sleep by a little voice saying, "Lumiere! Lumiere! Wake up, Lumiere!" Very pregnant and wanting more sleep, I grumbled, "I'm not Lumiere..." and rolled over, trying to ignore the little voice. After more persistence from the little voice, I finally mumbled sleepily, "Megan, go find Daddy downstairs, and he'll get you breakfast." "Oh," she giggled, "My name is Belle. Call me Belle, Lumiere." Her tone was so sweet and hopeful that I melted. In my best overly-done French accent, I finally gave in and joined in her game. I rolled my pregnant body out of bed, and slowly followed her into her room. "Ah, Belle!" I said as enthusiastically as possible, "How niyeez to zee you in zee castle today!" As I sat down, I thought to myself that it was going to be a very long day.

You see, for the last several days, my three-and-a-half-year-old daughter has been engaging in a *Beauty and the Beast* fantasy. We listen to the soundtrack in the car and at home. She sings all of the Belle parts, and I always get to be Lumiere (you know--the boisterous French candle stick who sings "Be our Guest" in the Disney movie?) Playing the part of Belle is her newest obsession, and she does it for a large portion of each day. "Now it's up to you!" she says, as my part comes up in the music. (And, oh yes, I do know all of the words by now.)



My little girl, who never wanted to wear dresses and skirts, suddenly wants to look like a princess every day. This includes wearing summer dresses in the middle of winter, and wearing fancy hair styles when she usually won't even let me within an inch of her hair to brush it. While

playing with Lego and Play-Doh or going to the park used to be our favorite activities, now we have tea parties and dance around the living room, ballroom style.

While it might be fun to play along for a while, it's not terribly convenient for me as a grown-up. Being Lumiere definitely has its downsides. For example, Megan reminds me every morning that Lumiere can't take a shower, because his flame would go out in the water. It's also a bit scary when we're playing on the floor and Megan suddenly tells me to watch out because Lumiere's flame is going to set one of her toys on fire, or that Lumiere's candle wax is going to melt if I get too close to the stove. After several days of this game, I can truly understand why my alter-ego desires to break the spell and

become human again in the movie.

So, why do I play along? Why not just plug in the *Beauty and the Beast* DVD and forget about this game? Part of the reason is that I know from my experience and studies in education that children learn so much through dramatic play. They blur the lines of fantasy and reality and act out scenarios in order to deal with their emotions and to gain a better understanding of their world. That's why they will pretend to be Mommy or Daddy while playing in a play kitchen, or pretend to be a doctor while playing with a toy doctor kit. Simply do an Internet search on "dramatic play and early childhood development," and you will see plenty of research and articles for parents and teachers.

Sure, it's important for her development, but more importantly, my daughter's fantasy is important to her, and that's why I begrudgingly play along. Creating and acting out these roles are part of what it means to be human. So, while the fantasy may lose its delightful charm for me very quickly, I play along with as much enthusiasm as I can muster, because it simply means so much to my daughter.

The game isn't always fair, though. My husband's part in this fantasy is very minimal. He gets to play the double role of Gaston and the Beast, but both have turned out to be bit parts. For some reason, these roles require a male actor, while Lumiere is less gender-specific in my child's mind. When Megan asks me, "Where's the Beast?" I answer, "The Beast is at work." Somehow, the plot still plays on in her head just fine, even with the lack of this important character. I guess that's the beauty of a child's imagination.

My throat is hurting this week from portraying Lumiere in my over-the-top French accent, but I know that Megan has gotten so much out of her fantasy, and I know how important it is to her for me to play along. It's been a pleasure to see her imagination "light up" so beautifully. I'm also pretty impressed that she is now saying "Lumiere" with such a lovely French accent! Who knows what her next fantasy will be? I'll look forward to joining in, though, so I can see the world for a short time through her eyes.

*Maggie Broderick lives in Squirrel Hill with her daughter, Megan, and her husband, Don. They are expecting a baby in March. Maggie has taught for the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the University of Pittsburgh.*

## Breast Cancer and Breastfeeding

by Amy Lewis

As a woman, as a mother, and as a granddaughter of two breast cancer survivors, I wonder what causes breast cancer and what I can do to prevent it. The causes of breast cancer are not completely understood, but a number of risk factors and preventive measures have been identified.

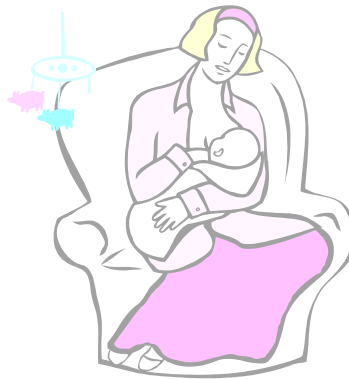
Some risk factors are controllable, while others, like age, gender, and family history are not.

In the search for causes of breast cancer, many researchers have considered reproductive factors. Menses, pregnancy, birth, and lactation all create hormonal shifts and seem to lessen the risk of developing breast cancer. Lactation is of particular interest because it is within a woman's control, it is free, and it doesn't require having more children than one wants.

Research has shown conflicting results about the effect of breastfeeding on breast cancer incidence. A group was created to analyze data from 47 epidemiological studies in 30 countries, hoping to find conclusive evidence of the connection between breastfeeding and cancer risk. The Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer published their findings in 2002. They looked at 50,302 women with breast cancer and 96,973 control subjects. They separated out effects of breastfeeding from other hormonal influences, and then compiled data from the numerous studies.

The group found that the relative risk of breast cancer is reduced by 4.3% for each year that a woman breastfeeds... (Collaborative Group, 191). The study highlighted the signifi-

cance of length of lactation, rather than a woman ever or never breastfeeding. Other studies that did not find a diminished risk with lactation were confounded by focusing on the ever/never issue, instead of looking at the effect of years of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is defined in different ways by different studies. In some research, "ever" breastfeeding could mean nursing one child for only one day, or a few weeks. Many women who have "ever" breastfed have discontinued breastfeeding after a few days or a week, which does not confer a protective effect against breast cancer.



By using results from developing countries, where women have a tendency to nurse for years instead of months, as well as developed countries, the Collaborative Group was able to see the significant effect of long-term nursing on breast cancer risk. In fact, if women in developed countries were to breastfeed for a lifetime duration similar to that which is typical of women in developing countries, "these findings suggest that the incidence of breast cancer would be reduced by 42%, solely by the longer duration of breastfeeding. Thus, the short duration of breastfeeding typical of women

in developed countries makes a major contribution to the high incidence of breast cancer in these countries. (Collaborative Group 193). It would be difficult for women in the United States to achieve a lifetime duration like this, because American women tend to have far fewer children. Still, increasing duration of nursing for the children they do have could make a significant difference. "...If women in developed countries had 2.5 children, on average, but breastfed each child for six months longer than they currently do, about 25,000 (5%) breast cancers would be prevented each year, and if each child were breastfed for an additional 12 months, about 50,000 (11%) breast cancers might be prevented annually." (Collaborative Group 193).

*Amy Lewis lives with her husband, Kevin, and 16-month-old daughter, Camille, in the East End of Pittsburgh. She finds it encouraging that she is serving her own health, as well as her daughter's, through extended breastfeeding, even during bouts of biting, exhausting night nursing and exuberant acrobatics.*

## 2006 Tax Changes

by Mary Mann

As April 15th gets closer the panic begins to collect our receipts, W-2s and any other documents that are needed to complete the IRS, state and local tax returns. In 2005 there are some important changes that took effect. This is just a summary, if you need more information or have any questions, you can contact the taxing authority in question or ME. Yes, I can make your taxes less taxing.



**Please feel free to contact me with any of your tax, accounting or software questions and/or concerns. Mary Mann's Business Consulting: 412-638-8602 or [jmjjmann@verizon.net](mailto:jmjjmann@verizon.net)**

### CITY OF PITTSBURGH

The Emergency and Municipal Services (EM) tax has a new exclusion for lower income individuals of \$12,000 or less in 2005. If an employee has total income of less than \$12,000 from all sources, the employee will be entitled to a refund of \$42 from the city after the employee has provided adequate proof of their earnings for the entire year. The employer will still be required to withhold \$52 so it will be up to the employee to file the refund request and supply their W-2's and Federal tax return.

An EM-1 refund form must be completed and submitted to the City. Forms can be obtained from the City's website

[www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/finance/html/forms-business.html](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/finance/html/forms-business.html)

### STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

Don't forget about the Tax Forgiveness that is offered in PA. Depending on your income and family size, you may qualify for a reduction in your tax liability with the state's Tax Forgiveness program. For example, a family of four can earn \$32,000 and get as much as \$982 in state Tax Forgiveness. And a single-parent, two-child family with income of \$25,500 may get \$783 in state Tax Forgiveness.

### FEDERAL

**Uniform Definition of a Qualifying Child**  
Beginning in 2005, one definition of a qualifying child will apply for each of the following tax benefits.

- Dependency exemption.
- Head of household filing status.
- Earned income credit (EIC).
- Child tax credit.
- Credit for child and dependent care expenses.

#### To Qualify all 4 tests must be met

- 1. Relationship test** -The child must be your child (including an adopted child, stepchild, or eligible foster child), brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, or a descendent of one of these relatives.
- 2. Residency test** - A child must live with you for more than half of the year. Temporary absences for special circumstances, such as for school, vacation, medical care, military service, or detention in a juvenile facility count as time lived at home. A child who was born or died during the year is considered to have lived with you for the entire year if your home was the child's home for the entire time he or she was alive during the year.
- 3. Age test** - A child must be under a certain age (depending on the tax benefit) to be your qualifying child.

#### Dependency exemption, head of household filing status, and EIC

A child must be under the age of 19 at the end of the year, or under age 24 at the end of 2005 if a student, or any age if permanently and totally disabled.

#### Child tax credit

A child must be under the age of 17.

#### Credit for child and dependent care expenses

A child must be under the age of 13

or any age if permanently and totally disabled.

- 4. Support test** -A child cannot have provided over half of his or her own support during the year.

#### Exception

For purposes of the EIC only, the *Support test* does not apply.

#### Tax incentives for saving energy

**Clean Fuel Deduction** - In 2005, those who buy new gasoline/electric hybrid-vehicles -- such as the Toyota Prius, Honda Insight, Honda Civic Hybrid and Ford Escape Hybrid -- earn a \$2,000 tax deduction.

**Home improvements** -Starting in 2006, homeowners can earn small tax credits for undertaking energy-saving home improvements. So keep this in mind for any home improvements in the coming years.

#### WEBSITES:

##### Pittsburgh

[www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/finance/](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/finance/)

##### Pennsylvania

[www.revenue.state.pa.us/](http://www.revenue.state.pa.us/)

##### IRS

[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

*Mary Mann lives in Franklin Park with her husband, John and two sons, John and Jacob. She is self-employed offering help with taxes, accounting, payroll and software issues in her Business Consulting company.*

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<http://www.pittsburghmotherscenter.org>

and pay with any credit card via Paypal.

### Family Recipes: From One Generation to the Next

The Pittsburgh Mothers' Center Cookbook

This cookbook represents a compilation of recipes following the theme "Family Recipes: From One Generation to the Next." In many cases, these recipes were passed on to the present generation of Pittsburgh Mothers' Center members and friends from an older generation.

And in other cases, these recipes have been created more recently, but will be passed on to the next generation.

Some Recipe Titles:

- \* Fresh Veggie Salsa
- \* Dilly Bean Potato Salad
- \* Rumblethumps
- \* Spinach Pie
- \* My Secret Scone Recipe
- \* Overnight French Toast
- \* Welsh Cakes





# Mothers' Center Calendar

The moment a child is born, the mother is also born. She never existed before. The woman existed, but the mother, never. A mother is something absolutely new. ~Rajneesh

## MARCH

Saturday 4th @ 2:00 pm Unwind — Affogato Coffee House  
Wed 8th @ 7:00 pm General Meeting — Birch Center for Healing  
Sunday 12th @ 2:00 pm Steering Committee Meeting —TBA  
Saturday 18th @ 1:00 pm Scrap booking—Mary Mann’s (See message board for details)

## APRIL

Saturday 1st @ 2:00 pm Unwind — Affogato Coffee House  
Sunday 9th @ 2:00 pm Steering Committee Meeting —TBA  
Wed 12th @ 7:00 pm General Meeting — Birch Center for Healing

## MAY

Saturday 6th @ 2:00 pm Unwind —Affogato Coffee House  
Wed 10th @ 7:00 pm General Meeting —Birch Center for Healing  
Sunday 14th @ 2:00 pm Steering Committee Meeting —TBA



*Where moms go to have fun*

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[WWW.PITTSBURGHMOTHERSCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.PITTSBURGHMOTHERSCENTER.ORG)

**Please check our calendars on our websites for more events or meetings**

### **Kids' Stuff Sale**

We're currently accepting donations for our first sale of gently used children's items, to be held this May at a location to be announced.

Write to: [fundraising@pittsburghmotherscenter.org](mailto:fundraising@pittsburghmotherscenter.org) or check the website for more details.

*The Pittsburgh Mothers' Center (PMC) is a not-for-profit outreach organization where mothers can find fun, friendship, support and work together to create a more child-friendly, mother-friendly society.*

### **Important Websites:**

Pittsburgh Mothers' Center Website: <http://www.pittsburghmotherscenter.org>

Yahoo! e-mail group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pghmotherscenter>

PMC Message board: <http://pghmothers.proboards59.com/index.cgi>

National Association of Mothers' Centers: <http://www.motherscenter.org>

*For more information email our Membership Coordinator at:*

*[membership@pittsburghmotherscenter.org](mailto:membership@pittsburghmotherscenter.org)*

*or*

*[info@pittsburghmotherscenter.org](mailto:info@pittsburghmotherscenter.org)*

*Donna Tarkett - 412-381-0322*

*Kristilee Williams - 412-381-085*

*Maggie Broderick - 412-421-9736*

## **Always looking for articles**

Please send your newsletter submission anytime to : [newsletter@pittsburghmotherscenter.org](mailto:newsletter@pittsburghmotherscenter.org)

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