

American Nanny

The power of the family meal

By Tasha Donahue

I sometimes wonder if I am becoming an old fuddy dud, stuck in the mores of the past. So it was with particular delight that I stumbled upon "The Surprising Power of Family Meals" (How Eating Together Makes Us Smarter,



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Stronger, Healthier and Happier) by Miriam Weinstein. The author could not have sanctioned more the power of the family meal.

According to Weinstein, eating together: 1. links a lower incidence of teenage drug and alcohol abuse, 2. promotes emotional stability, 3. discourages obesity and eating disorders, 4. helps family members to stay more connected, 5. teaches manners, and 6. importantly, establishes family traditions.

Joy Jacobs, PhD, a clinical psychologist at UCSD, who specializes in eating disorders, childhood/adult obesity, and body image totally agrees: "Family meals can make a significant contribution to the emotional connections within a family." What Dr. Jacobs finds is that by the time children and adolescents come in for eating disorder treatments they

are eating separately from the family. Often times they decide what they eat and have little input from adults. Everyone has busy schedules and so each person in the family eats on their own schedule..." It has become the norm in our country" Jacobs states. She encourages parents to band together at their local schools to minimize after school activities such as sports, rehearsals or tutoring that will interfere with the family dinner.

According to Weinstein much is lost in families who do not dine together regularly; it is harder, for instance, to relate to each other. A subliminal message is sent of what/who is valuable enough to take up time. It is all about time, isn't it? Time is how we measure our lives, suggest Weinstein.

Rituals, Weinstein states, are important because they define and illustrate what we believe is important. Weinstein goes on at great length about the importance of rituals to each family member. Good rituals reinforce our connection, our bond. Bad rituals: controlling parents (watch your posture! Don't talk unless spoken to"), will be taken along into adult life, as well, but as a dark memory.

Each of us can remember our childhood meals. In my family we were expected to be home seven nights a week until, as working high school students, we were unable to be there every night. We said grace. We shared our day. We thanked our mother for dinner. We sat in our assigned seats. We

sang to our father silly songs. We set the table and did the dishes.

In my adult family one of our rituals, beyond saying grace, was the bestowing of a red, Amish plate that stated: "You Are Special Today". The plate was brought out when someone accomplished something, got a good grade or even was just feeling low and needed to be recognized as important. Those are memories my children will take forward forever long after that ritual was exercised.

But let's face it, this is 2009 and we cannot all be The Brady Bunch. So then what? Both Weinstein and Jacobs suggest that if a daily ritual is impossible try to observe then find two or three nights a week where you get together for thirty minutes without the TV, the phone, and share a nutritional meal together centered on each other. We send a tremendous message to the ones we love when we make it clear that the dinner-time ritual is important because it defines us to the world. It is our legacy to our children.

What legacy you will leave your children?

Tasha Donahue is a professional nanny, a resident of Del Mar and a freelance writer. You may contact her through this publication.

Grauer School graduates receive higher ratio

The Grauer School recently announced that the 16-student graduating class of 2008 was offered over \$1.7 million in academic scholarships from prestigious educational institutions for collegiate studies including University of Massachusetts at Amherst, University of California at Berkeley, Boston University, Cornell University, Emerson, Emory University, George Washington University, Marymount College, University of Minnesota, University of California at Davis, Michigan State University, University of Notre Dame, Tulane University and University of California at San Diego. The 16 students who accepted one of the total \$1.7 million scholarship offers equates to an unprecedented \$106,250 in unsolicited merit scholarships per student, approximately five to ten times the expected range for top performing college preparatory schools.

The Grauer School is renowned for its academic excellence and concentrated efforts in maintaining a low student/teacher ratio, providing highly individualized attention to each and every student. According to Head of School, Stuart Grauer, "In a year where nationwide, college acceptances are at an all time low, The Grauer School really surpasses academic programs of its counterparts throughout the world, which is quite evident given this year's number of scholarship offers. Our seniors graduate with the most comprehensive, diverse education available, and it's reflected in their grade scores. I attribute this to the quality of our students, teachers, staff and environment, where we teach the students to learn by discovery. We also have an unusually high number of teachers per student, as well as hands-on participation from parents and alumni; all this contributes to the overall academic excellence these students achieve, therefore attracting attention from a large majority of the top college admissions directors."

As The Grauer School excels in personalized, engaged learning across the community and around the world, there is a unique offering of subjects currently available through their 2008 Summer School. For-credit courses that are being offered are: "Camp College": Preparing High School Juniors for the College Application Process; "Cracking the SAT" Prep Course; Middle School "Boot Camps" for Math and Study Skills; Creative Writing Camp for Students; Readers' Theater - Reading, Writing and Performing Plays; Multimedia Camp; Summer Music Workshop; Summer Art; Making Conversation - Mastering Communication Skills and Surf Camp. There is limited enrollment and courses traditionally fill up fast, but parents who wish to engage their students in activities that will help them prepare for the college application process, or who wish to broaden their academic, interpersonal and athletic skills throughout the summer months, are encouraged to call. Adult courses such as Writing are also popular.

The Grauer School, founded in 1991, is a grades 6-12 private, college preparatory day school. The school is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the preeminent accreditation organization in the western United States. To learn more about The Grauer School experience, please visit www.grauerschool.com or call the school at 760-944-6777.

Cancer survivors celebrate while learning on June 8

Kicking off at 11 a.m. on Sunday, June 8, at Bloch Cancer Survivors Park, will be a day full of fun and meaningful activities for cancer survivors, loved ones, families and anyone who wishes to learn more about prevention, treatment advances and living with cancer. The free event is the 11th Annual Celebration of Life, hosted by Cancer Survivorship: San Diego!

Festivities will be co-hosted by Susan Taylor, news anchor, NBC 7/39, and Dani Grady, cancer survivor and co-founder of Cancer Survivorship: San Diego! Upbeat live music - performed by a dixieland band, a large community band, and popular singers - is bound to get the audience revved up. Opening ceremonies also include presentation of an award in memory of the late local entrepreneur, humanitarian and cancer survivor Bill Otterson, comments from Antonio Grillo-Lopez, M.D., former chief medical officer at then IDEC Pharmaceuticals, and inspirational stories from cancer survivors.

In addition to a large health fair, demonstrations of integrative therapies, and cancer screenings, noted area physicians and other healthcare professionals will give talks in small breakout sessions on topics such as advances in treating particular cancer types; managing treatment side effects; nutrition; patient: doctor communication; and finding hope. A parallel program in Spanish also will be offered. There will be opportunities for participants to talk to other survivors of a similar cancer type. Refreshments will be served.

It's definitely a family affair, with activities for everyone, including children, all provided in

GARDEN CLUB DIGS

RSF Garden Club announces scholarships/donations

By Ginger Bord

The Rancho Santa Fe Garden Club has been an integral part of the Rancho Santa Fe community for over 82 years and the Garden Club also gives back, through the philanthropic program, to the community at large.



The RSF Garden Club

This year the Rancho Santa Fe Garden Club's board of directors is proud to announce the recipients receiving funds from the Garden Club for the year 2008-09. Director La Verne Schlosser is responsible for the research and proposals that were brought to the board for consideration.

For more than 70 years Mira Costa College has been providing a supportive and challenging environment for students of all ages, enhancing their lives through education. The Garden Club endowed a scholarship to an outstanding student in the horticulture field. The board believes this gift supports the goals of the Garden Club's charter.

The second recipient of the Garden Club's philanthropy program is the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy. The preservation of this 55-mile open corridor in the San Dieguito River Valley is crucial to the San Dieguito Lagoon Restoration Project, currently under way. The project will re-establish a 450-acre wetlands area and maintain an open river mouth for the tidal flushing essential to a healthy lagoon ecosystem. The board recognizes the importance of the preservation to all surrounding areas.

The third project La Verne brought before the board was the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy. The board had no problem agreeing to fund this worthwhile and important operation. The San Elijo Lagoon is one of the largest coastal wetlands in San Diego County. The lagoon lies along the coast between Solana Beach, Encinitas and Rancho Santa Fe and covers approximately 1,000 acres of diverse habitat. La Verne feels that the lagoon conservancy project has a quality of life enhancement for our community.

The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy is a public-spirited nonprofit citizens group founded in 1987 with the mission to preserve, protect and enhance the natural resources of the Reserve and the watershed. We are proud to be part of this endeavor and give support to the volunteer board of directors in keeping it the treasure that it is.

STREET

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inlays — part of the Rancho Santa Fe Association's streetscape improvement plan — that aim to enhance the pedestrian character of the village.

"By enhancing the crosswalks we're hoping that it makes it easier for everybody to negotiate the village intersections," Arnold Keene, a planner with the RSF Association, said of the improvement project. "People have a better point of reference where to stop and slow down because of that."

If all goes according to plan, Graul's parking will be restored

by the time you read this — though the intersection will still be under heavy construction for another 10 or so weeks.

The changes to the intersection near Graul's pharmacy are a continuation of the project that began with the extension of the Paseo Delicias median in February. That work also irked nearby business owners by taking away street parking for several weeks.

Graul says even when the spaces outside are usable again, the pop-outs will result in about seven street spaces being lost.

"The number one problem in the village is parking," Graul said. "And this project reduces parking."

a positive atmosphere. At the end of the day event organizers hope survivors will be better able to make informed decisions about their healthcare.

Cancer Survivorship: San Diego! was established in 1997, to unify the survivorship community and magnify benefits individually-sponsored events had provided previously. The resulting organization has grown to include almost every cancer-related treatment center, research institution, and patient support program in San Diego County. Its annual Celebration of Life is planned and carried out by volunteers from member organizations, with grants from businesses and others that are obtained to cover the event's expenses. Cancer Survivorship: San Diego! also receives support from San Diego County supervisors and the Unified Port of San Diego.

Cancer Survivorship: San Diego!'s Celebration of Life will be held at Bloch Cancer Survivors' Park, 4100 N. Harbor Drive, across from San Diego's Lindbergh Airport. The event, which begins at 11 a.m., and runs until 5 p.m., is free and open to the public, but registration is encouraged. For more information or to register, visit www.cancersurvivorshipSD.com.

Circle of Life Fashion Show to benefit Scripps Memorial Hospital Encinitas

Unique, sophisticated fashions will be a highlight of the Fourth Annual Circle of Life 100 Luncheon and Fashion Show, on Tuesday, August 5, 2008, at the Four Seasons Resort Aviara in Carlsbad. The stylish affair will support leading-edge digital mammography equipment at Scripps Memorial Hospital Encinitas, to enhance early cancer detection and treatment. The event will feature an elegant luncheon, a live auction and a high-society fashion show presented by Peaches En Regalia and Ryan's Collection. Mary Ellen Grant will be honored for her continued service to Scripps Memorial Hospital Encinitas. Tickets are \$130 per person or \$1,300 for a table of 10. To learn more about the Fourth Annual Circle of Life 100 Luncheon and Fashion Show, please call Suzanne Swanson at 858-678-6364.