

# Preschool Life ...in this together!

A publication for parents of preschoolers in the Madison area

## Heading to School on Peaceful Terms Easing your way out of the house with preschoolers

Fall/Winter 2008  
Volume 1, Issue 1

If raising your voice and rushing your child to the car is a familiar scene as you head to school or childcare, you're not alone. If you want to make a change, try following some of these tips to ease your child out the door on more peaceful terms.

**Have a routine for breakfast that your child expects.** This will avoid arguing over choices and wasting time scanning the refrigerator and cupboards.

**Have your child get dressed before certain privileges.** Whether they anxiously awake to watch cartoons, or play with their favorite truck, this is a good *first-things-first* discipline for young children to practice.

**Tell your child the plan for the day in small pieces.** Use terms your child will understand, such as, "You get to go to school today! First you'll eat breakfast. Then, after you get dressed and watch Blues Clues, it will be time to get in the car." Give them updates after each event as to how much time they have before leaving home.

**If your child has a special toy to take in the car, place it in front of the door.** By placing the toy in this special 'don't forget' spot, it keeps your child from carrying it around the house and being distracted when it's time to put on their coat, go potty, or when you need their cooperation

In a life with small children; 'on-time' means allowing for your kiddo to get a seatbelt unbuckled, the backpack gathered, stopping to complain that their shoe has a rock in it, or less-than-perfect cooperation from them or a younger sibling.

for last-minute grooming.

**Be careful not to condition your child to being told six times to do one thing, like putting on shoes.** Surely, they will begin to think they don't need to take you seriously until the sixth time. Rather, oversee your child putting on their shoes after being told the first time. Make your

instructions clear and clarify that it was heard, then instruct your son or daughter to let you know when the shoes are on. This sends a clearer message to your child that you have an expectation, and that they have a mission to complete.

- continued on pg. 6 -

## Treasure Pile, or Circular File?

### How to keep up with the year's incoming artwork

You probably remember the first few "masterpieces" your child delightfully handed to you which you proudly hung on your refrigerator, or maybe you even framed it. Perhaps it was the first smiley face they sketched with a crayon, or their precious handprint you helped them make with bright blue paint.

Yes, it's all precious—until they bring home a ripped up piece of recycled paper with a strand of yarn glued to it and proudly gleam, "Look what I made today!"

It doesn't take long before all the paper treasures accumulate faster than you can sort them. But how do you keep up?

How you choose to store or

dispose of your child's creations will vary by every adoring parent. Until you establish your method of saving your treasures or gently recycling others in the 'circular-file', simply designate a plastic bin for all incoming projects for the year. This is especially useful during a preschool year.

Be sure the box is big enough for some three-dimensional work, but small enough that you can keep it stored where it's convenient for you. Then you can discreetly transfer those precious papers from the kitchen counter to this special box. This will allow you more time to decide if the projects are long-term keepers.

With some rearranging, you might find room on a shelf in a

closet, on a kitchen island or bakers rack. If you're fresh out of available shelf space, then try creating space in a hallway or near the kitchen table by purchasing a small bookshelf, which can usually be found at discount retailers or office stores, for under \$25.00.

Having plenty of different storage boxes and baskets on-hand not only helps to relieve you of keeping up with mounds of papers, but also protects some of your child's fragile work that you'll wish to preserve.

■ For more tips on saving and organizing your child's masterpieces, visit: [www.preschoollife.com/organization-tips](http://www.preschoollife.com/organization-tips)

## MORE INSIDE

Tot-Sized Chores

Fitness for Tots

Nip Boredom in the Bud

Area Open-Play Schedules

Organizing Help

Valuable Coupons  
Hurry! Expire Soon!

## In This Together

From the Publisher



As a busy mom of three young children, I'm always inventing new ways to keep my chaotic life organized, from time management to toy and clutter management. In between the clutter, of

course, also lies a heavy burden of raising a family with appropriate discipline and love.

Through trial and error, I have found that having a game plan for household organization, basic discipline techniques and ways to nurture relationships with my children and spouse can make a significant difference to the peace and confidence I feel as a parent.

This publication was conceived from a passion to gain all the wisdom I can and pass it on to others on this same journey – life with preschoolers.

I chose the tagline “in this together” because whatever our differences, everyone who has raised kids has put in their time—years of chaos! It’s a reminder that we are all struggling in many of the same ways. With preschoolers, often getting out of the house is hard. Dinnertime is hard. Bedtime is hard. Discipline is hard. Giving our children the quality time they deserve from us is hard. Marriage is hard.

Whether serious times or fun times, our children’s preschool years are very precious and special and meant to be enjoyed—even celebrated.

Through this newsletter, and with even more content at [Preschoollife.com](http://Preschoollife.com), I hope you’ll find many useful tidbits of insight for your journey, and ideas to enjoy life with your family and our kid-friendly community.

*In this together,  
Kelly Rush*

## Getting Acquainted with Other Preschool Parents

By Kelly Rush

Our child's preschool can be a great social outlet for us -- moms and dads alike. We smile as we regularly come and go, and our children are intimate playmates for hours each week throughout the school year. What a wonderful opportunity to get to know other parents. It's a chance to develop relationships with someone who may also be concerned for your child, or may eventually exchange babysitting or carpooling. There's one problem. Most of us lack the confidence to start a conversation beyond “Hi, how are you?”

I have observed that most conversations happen when siblings tag along and someone will ask, “Oh, how old is he?” It's a great way to make a connection, realizing that perhaps your preschoolers also have a sibling the same age. Once you break the ice, it's easy to take off from there -- except for remembering the name of the parent you just introduced yourself to...and what elementary school did they say their oldest child went to?

I found an easy solution for remembering basic information about parents and children I meet. You can use your child's class directory and make a point of jotting down the information you just learned, like

the names and ages of siblings of your child's classmates, or where a parent works, or said they are from.

*Your child's preschool can provide a wonderful opportunity to get to know other parents and develop lasting relationships.*

As you chat and gather information about your fellow preschool parents, you'll better determine with whom you might make the most effort to form a relationship. It might be the family with the same ages or gender of your own children, or the family that will eventually at-

tend the same elementary school with your child.

Keep in mind that your family life doesn't have to mesh perfectly with everyone you meet and perhaps the person that's just been the friendliest makes a good candidate for a long-term mom-pal.

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# Mom! I'm Bored!

Nip boredom in the bud by posting a list of activities

By Kelly Rush

It was an odd time to enroll my daughter in preschool. It was February, and I didn't think I could take another conversation in my home that went something like this: "Mommy, are we going somewhere today?" "No." "Is someone coming over?" "No, sweetie." "Are we doing nothing, Mommy?"

My daughter was almost four-and-a-half. She was very outgoing, creative, enthusiastic, and eager to learn, yet she was stuck at home all day with me, her baby sister, and nothing on our calendar other than her ballet class once a week.

My phone call to a nearby preschool was awkward. "Hi. Is it unheard of to enroll a child in preschool, beginning in March? My poor daughter needs to get out of the house before we both go crazy."

Just a week later, we decorated her first backpack and settled her into a part-time preschool class. I was so excited for her afternoons of dedicated attention and fun activities. I was certain this would keep her from pleading at home; "Mommy, can we make some jewelry?" or, "Can I watch a video?" or, "Can we go somewhere?"

But these familiar questions seemed to be getting more frequent and annoying, despite several great weeks at her new preschool. I was perplexed. Then it finally made sense to me. In the short time of two-and-a-half hours of class, she was getting almost undivided attention and constantly changing activities. It occurred to me that this was almost too much of a good thing and she wanted more of it! How could I keep up, or how could I keep saying "no" to such a darling and deserving little girl?

Finally, I grabbed a piece of paper and wrote down any minor activity that she could do at home. When I couldn't slow down and focus, this list reminded my daughter and me what she could be doing on her own.

Even though they don't always ask for it, children continually need guidance. Just like us, they can get overwhelmed with all of the choices in life and a specific recommendation will usually get them on the right track.

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Play-Doh  
Coloring books  
Puzzles  
Building blocks  
My First Leap Pad  
Look at books  
Make a tea party  
Draw a picture

---

I specifically call this list the "The *I'm Bored* List" because it is intended only to be a reminder of the little things my kids can do on their own that don't require my assistance.

Have fun coming up with your own list and make sure to

keep it somewhere at eye level.

*Need more ideas? See 'Tot-sized Chores' (pg 6) which lists little jobs around the house your little-one may be capable of. The next time your child whines because he doesn't know what to do, it can be the perfect time to enlist him to help out.*



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## Confessions of a Real Household

Have you ever wanted to know how other parents are managing life with children?

Recent survey responses from local moms visiting PreschoolLife.com showed that:

- 20% take medication for depression
- 25% live paycheck-to-paycheck
- 45% feel they have a good relationship with their spouse
- 40% feel they can't get it together with household clutter
- 40% feel they could improve the quality time they have with their children

Note: 100% of those surveyed indicated being married

What's going on in your home?

Please take a moment to contribute to our survey by visiting us online at [www.preschoollife.com](http://www.preschoollife.com)

## Preschoolers Need Fitness Too

Starting physical exercise early offers many benefits

By J. Orkowski

with Katie Spanel

**L**ike many parents, when I look at my preschooler, it's easy to assume that just normal romping around in the backyard is enough exercise during the early childhood years, especially because my child is a typical, high-energy, four-year-old little boy. However, while backyard activity is a good place to start, there are many benefits to a more organized activity at an early age.

Scientific studies, including those by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, prove that children benefit from early physical activity in many ways. For starters, good programs for fitness and sport will result in an increase in a child's strength, flexibility and endurance. Also, good physical condition at an early age has been shown to improve learning and retention during the school years. Most importantly, regular exercise reduces the risk of disease and depression. In contrast, young children who lead more sedentary lifestyles are at a higher risk of negative health problems, such as being five to six times more likely to develop heart disease.

Today less than 40% of children get any organized physical activity outside of their schools. With the record high numbers of obese and unhealthy children in our country, it is more imperative than ever that parents are intentional about getting kids involved in physical activity. So how do we get them moving?

First, we need to look at ourselves as role-models. Kids are not as likely to develop good active habits if parents don't believe in their importance. There are several ways parents can be intentional about setting a good example:

**Stay involved in their activity** simply by asking what they did and how they felt after exercising. Make it interesting for them by sharing the excitement of being fit and playing.

**Exercise along with your child.** Pilates or yoga videos can be done at home, and they're perfect for doing a physical and constructive activity together. As adults we sometimes get tired and might want to let a day go by without our "workout", but children can be tough task-masters, helping to motivate you as they insist you not forget to "play" with them and do your exercises together, a gift they can return to you as they develop healthy habits.

**Be aware of the time your kids spend in front of the television or on the computer.**

You might find that this will free up some time to get involved in a regular activity. My mother used to shut off the TV and take me for a walk. It was a great chance to talk with her and get a little exercise as well.

**Create challenges around the house** that are fun and encourage kids to be active. Time the room clean-up. Ask, "how fast can you get your shoes on?" Challenge them to see how fast they can run outside and pick up their toys, "ready, set, go!" Anything that gets a child's heart beating faster is giving them a cardio workout and exercising the most important muscle in their body.

**Enroll them in a class geared specifically for their age group.** Kids love to play, and fitness at an early age should be play-oriented. Many children's activity centers in the area offer programs for young kids and give them the opportunity to learn in a safe environment with trained instructors and a group of peers.

By being intentional about getting your kids involved in physical activity, you are giving them the gift of a healthy lifestyle that will benefit them well into their adult lives.

*J. Orkowski wears many hats at Gymfinity Children's Activity Center in Fitchburg, including that of Owner and Coach.*

*Katie Spanel can also be found at Gymfinity where she works as the Fitness Director.*

### Heartfelt thank you's...

To Shelley Soceka, for your constant encouragement, for believing I could do this, and for your skillful and generous editing help.

To my dad, for my laptop computer(s). I never would have pulled this off in the middle of my kitchen with your three granddaughters tugging at my leg. More importantly, thank you for always being my #1 fan and assuming I can make my ideas happen.

To my husband, for supportively filling in for me at bedtime and baths when I needed to leave the house (often) to concentrate.

To Chris at Great Graphics of Middleton, for your time and patience.

To the many local business owners that encouraged my efforts through your words of affirmation and—several of you, for trusting me with your advertising dollars, allowing me to finally launch this for our community.



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## Quick & Tasty

### Chicken Quesadillas

2 flour tortillas (soft-taco size)

2 oz of pre-cooked chicken pieces (such as Oscar Meyer Deli Fresh grilled chicken sold in 6 oz packs)

1/4 to 1/2 c. of shredded cheddar cheese

Olive oil

Cumin (optional)

Garlic powder

Salt (optional)

Use a paper towel to lightly rub in oil on one side of tortilla, then very lightly sprinkle with salt. Place tortilla oiled side down in a skillet on med-high heat while evenly placing the chicken pieces and shredded cheese on top.

**Very lightly** sprinkle cumin and garlic powder over all, then top with remaining tortilla, oil and lightly sprinkle with salt. Once browned for 2-3 minutes, firmly flip over with spatula and brown for 1 minute, then turn off heat and leave in pan for another minute. Transfer to a plate to cool, then slice into quarters with a pizza cutter.

The building blocks for your child's future start with a good foundation

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## Is Household Clutter Stealing Your Joy?

By Kelly Rush

Are you an "Innie" or an "Outie"?

I once heard a presentation from a woman with a professional organizing firm who explained that most people fall under two categories: Innies or Outies. She further explained that Innies (that'd be me) like to have all of their stuff put away *in* a drawer or *in* cupboards - behind closed doors, neatly tucked away somewhere and not seen out in the open.

Outies, while seemingly messy, can be just as functional as Innies, but they are usually more comfortable having everything out in the open where it can be seen when needed. If you're an Outie, or you know one, you can probably attest to the fact that Outies can find what they need in a matter of seconds, just as an Innie will proceed quickly to their tidy filing drawer! It's simply two different styles, not necessarily a strength or weakness.

If you are an Outie by nature, your home probably isn't as orderly as you'd like it to be when company visits, but clutter probably doesn't cause you much stress. However, if you are an Innie who can't seem to find a home for everything, or you tirelessly put everything where it belongs, just to have a three-year-old (or your spouse) leave a trail behind them - clutter is probably robbing you of your joy, even if you don't realize it.

That's why it's important to get a handle on clutter in your household. A little organization goes a long way toward keeping you and your family functioning smoothly.

If you could use some help getting your home organized, visit us online at [www.preschoollife.com/organization-tips](http://www.preschoollife.com/organization-tips).

Hopefully some basic tips will get you started without having to hire a professional organizing firm!

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## Heading to School...

Continued from front cover

**Set a kitchen timer.** Use it to alert everyone that it's time to leave.

**Start with the end in mind.** The typical stress of rushing out the door is usually caused by the last-minute little things. Is it your child's snack day? Put it in the car as soon as you can. Will the baby need a sippy-cup for the ride? Fill it and set it in the car seat early on, etc.

**Plan to arrive at the mini-van convention early.** In a life with small children; 'on time' means allowing for your kiddo to get a seatbelt unbuckled, the backpack gathered, stopping to complain that their shoe has a rock in it, or less-than-perfect cooperation from them or a younger sibling.

**Set the tone for the morning.** Be happy yourself and speak to your children in a calm manner and an encouraging attitude.

**Be careful what you expect of your child.** No matter how advanced your little-one is in many areas, children this age do not comprehend urgency. More than likely, being rushed or yelled at will slow them down even more.

Getting young ones ready for the day and out the door is a challenging task, but careful preparation, a few extra minutes and a patient attitude can go a long way to make your morning routine a positive experience for your family – and for you.

## Tot-sized Chores

- **Stock the bathroom cupboard with toilet paper**
- **Refill the family pet's food dish (scooping out a serving of hard food)**
- **Make their bed (the best they're capable—is good enough)**
- **Carry stacks of folded laundry to their room or dresser**
- **Help with laundry by shaking out wrinkles, or finding matching socks**
- **Dust the TV or computer monitor (while the power is off)**

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# Local Open Play Schedules for Preschoolers

## EAST

### **BounceU**

Ph: 244-4386  
Location: 4009 Felland Rd, Madison  
Venue: Open Bounce, ages 7 & under  
When: Tue, Wed, Thur 9 to 11am

### **Madtown Twisters—East**

Ph: 245-9565  
Location: 808 Walsh Rd, Madison  
Venue: Open Gym, ages 6 & under  
When: Mon thru Fri 11am to 12:45pm  
Saturdays 3pm to 4:45pm, also mixed-ages  
welcome on Saturdays 1pm to 2:45pm  
Sunday family/mixed-ages 11am to 12:45pm

### **Warner Park Community Rec Center**

Ph: 245-3669  
Location: 1625 Northport Dr, Madison  
Venue: MCSR Parent/Child Play, ages 5 & under  
When: Mon, Wed & Fri 9:30 to 12pm  
Note: family ID required

## FITCHBURG / NEAR-WEST

### **Gymfinity Children's Activity Center**

Ph: 848-FLIP  
Location: 6300 Nesbitt Rd, Fitchburg  
Venue: Open Gym, ages 6 & under  
When: Tues, Thurs & Fri 11am to 12pm  
Mon & Wed 2pm to 3pm

### **Legacy Academy**

Ph: 270-9977  
Location: 2881 Commerce Park Dr, Fitchburg  
Venue: Youngsters Open Gym  
When: Mon thru Sun 10am to 12pm

### **Pump It Up**

Ph: 442-6386  
Location: 2911 Marketplace Dr, Madison  
Venue: Pop-In Playtime, ages 2 to 6  
When: Tuesday 10am to 11:30am, also  
Family Bounce Night (mixed-ages welcome)  
Thursdays 5:30pm to 7pm  
Note: must be 34" tall

## FAR WEST

### **Keva Sports Center**

Ph: 662-7529  
Location: 8312 Forsythia St, Middleton  
Venue: Open Play, ages 7 & under  
When: Mon, Tue & Thur 9:30am to 1pm  
Saturdays as per schedule

### **Madtown Twisters—West**

Ph: 829-2922  
Location: 7035 Old Sauk Rd, Madison  
Venue: Open Gym, ages 6 & under  
When: Mon thru Fri 11am to 12:45pm  
Saturday 3pm to 4:45pm, also mixed-ages  
welcome Saturdays 5pm to 6:45pm  
Sunday family/mixed-ages 11am to 12:45pm

### **YMCA—West**

Ph: 276-6606  
Location: 5515 Medical Cir, Madison  
Venue: My Y Gym, walkers thru preschool  
When: Wednesdays 10am to 11am

**Note: All schedules are subject to change. It is recommended you contact the activity center for schedule confirmation, fees, other requirements, restrictions or additional venues not posted here.**

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March, 2009

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**Preschool Life, LLC** was founded in 2008 as a small publishing business to offer a quarterly newsletter and local website, especially for families raising children ages two to six years old in the Madison area.

The goal of Preschool Life, LLC and its publications is to be a resourceful avenue to share tidbits of wisdom, ideas and insight for the journey of raising preschool-age children. Further, through our publication, we are excited to create more awareness of the many businesses and services that help make Madison, Wisconsin a great community to raise a family.

The content of this newsletter and website does not reflect a specific parenting style, and strives to be practical and general in nature. However, if the tips and resources do not suit your family life, please take a moment to let us know the type of topics and resources that would enhance this season of your life.

Distribution of this newsletter is limited. If you or someone you know would like to keep informed of upcoming issues of Preschool Life, please log onto our website [www.preschoollife.com](http://www.preschoollife.com) and sign-up to receive an email each time a new issue becomes available.

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