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Healthy Moms provide mutual support, information

Submitted by Anonymous on Thu, 11/13/2008 - 10:03

By: Hannah Disch

A year ago several area moms got together and formed a group to discuss healthy living ideas. The group, which came to be known as Healthy Moms, is designed to allow anyone who is interested in healthy living to share their knowledge and to learn more in an open and supportive environment.

Jackie Liebel, one of the founding members, explained, "I think we're often shy about bringing up 'real' issues - our choices for our own health and that of our kids. We don't want to be considered the crazy granola family."

At the monthly Healthy Moms meetings, participants are free to share information they have gathered, ask questions, or make suggestions on any relevant topics. Group members have a variety of backgrounds, and are all at different places in their personal journeys to a healthier and more natural lifestyle.

The format of meetings varies widely. Topics are decided by group members in advance. Often meetings consist of members sharing their expertise on the selected topic. At other meetings, outside guests are invited to share their knowledge. Past speakers include holistic nutritionist Tracie Hittman, who spoke on the topic "Whole Foods, Go Local."

Master Gardener Anne Walker, who discussed organic gardening, and Amelia Royko Mauer, creator of FreeMarketOrganics.com, explained the prevalence and the dangers of the chemical Bisphenol-A. Other meeting topics included green cleaning; water quality, fluoride and safe-drinking vessels; risks, benefits and options for immunizations; and a fermented foods demonstration. While some meetings are conducted in a roundtable format, all meetings present opportunities for discussion and member participation.

"My hope with starting Healthy Moms was that if a mother does a lot of research on a certain topic, why should she not share that with like-minded moms and not let them jump thru all the hoops, spend the money on inferior products, or worst of all, make mistakes with their children, when someone's already crossed those bridges before them?" Liebel said. "I spent over a year researching and making green cleaning products before I found ones that really worked and were truly green. Cleaning safely is one of my passions. I became irate when I found out that typical grocery-store brand household cleaners, window cleaners, all-purpose sprays, and even laundry detergents, contained toxic substances. Once I made the

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switch for my own family, I wanted to share what I learned with others."

Many mothers joined the group because they are generally concerned with the dramatic increases in chronic childhood diseases and illnesses and are interested in creating a healthier environment for their families. Sara Downie is one of them.

"I am a nurse and an environmentalist and have always been concerned about the health effects of the thousands of chemical mixtures that we and other living things are exposed to daily," said Downie. "My own research over the years into these matters has convinced me that not only are the dangers real and most people unaware of them, but also that there are better, healthier ways to live that won't destroy ourselves or the environment. I joined the Healthy Moms' group to learn more, get support, and become more active in reaching out to the community with positive solutions."

Other members joined because they have children with health problems and hope that a healthier lifestyle will benefit their children's specific issues.

Michelle Frederick said she read about the group in the Oregon Observer.

"I had to check it out," she said. "I have a son who was diagnosed in 2004 with a disease, and I had to take a better look at what I was feeding my family and how I needed to change a few things in our lives. I have been gradually making changes to our eating habits, what we put on our skin, what cleaning products we use, etc. What better way to do this than to join these ladies and get all kinds of ideas and tips? My only regret is that I hadn't started making these changes years ago, when my kids were much younger."

Another such member is Jennifer Hanner. She said, "I joined after hearing that our kindergartner (now in second grade) was labeled having ADHD. We did not want to medicate a 5-year-old on Ritalin, so we went looking for options. Turned out that her little body could not process wheat. In light of all this, we realized the horrible things going into our bodies and made a choice to become more healthy. I have learned a ton from everyone, and the best thing is that I feel comfortable asking questions and getting 'healthy' answers."

Besides holding monthly meetings, Healthy Moms also maintains a Yahoo Group site at www.health.groups.yahoo.com/group/healthy_moms_group/ (http://www.health.groups.yahoo.com/group/healthy_moms_group/). This site and the optional mailing list are used in between meetings to share questions, ideas and discoveries, as well as to plan future meetings.

"I encourage local moms, and anyone else who is interested, to attend a meeting with us if they have interest or expertise in healthy living and become a part of this supportive group," Liebel said. "We meet once a month on Tuesdays in the Sue Ames Room of the Oregon Library from 6:30 - 8 p.m. Babies are welcome. We ask that moms make other arrangements for childcare for smaller children."

She can be contact with any questions at 882-6383 or jacquelineliebel@hotmail.com (<mailto:jacquelineliebel@hotmail.com>). This month's meeting will be held Nov. 18. The topic will be personal care products.

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