

Playgroup Programme Newsletter

www.playgroupprogramme.org

Number 3: January/February 2008

A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Every new year brings with it the familiar urge to make some new resolutions. Each year I maintain that for the coming year I will become fitter and slimmer and more organized! However, this year I have also undertaken to become more "eco-friendly" and do my bit to save the planet.

I "googled" eco-friendly and was surprised to see the number of websites which provide easy and useful tips on how to run a more environmentally friendly household.



This year I will continue with what we have already done and put into action a few more. My action list will be:

REDUCE WASTE

- Continue with our recycling center. We've bought three handy large plastic tubs from Ikea which stack one on top of the other with flaps to access each tub. It makes a visit to the recycling bins very easy as everything is already separated into plastic, glass and paper. Be careful to see what is recyclable and what is not!
- Stop using plastic bags at the grocery store!

SAVE ENERGY

- Continue to switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs since they use 66 percent less energy than regular bulbs and last 15 times longer.
- Choose the 30 degree cold wash cycle for the laundry

USE NATURAL DETERGENTS

- Use baking soda as a natural surface cleaner. (Mix 1/2 cup baking soda with enough liquid dishwashing detergent to create a frosting like consistency. Apply mixture to a sponge as an ideal cleaner for any sink. Or, if you don't want to use a sponge, dip half a lemon in baking soda for a great sink cleaner—thanks Martha Stewart!).
- Make my own disinfectant spray with vinegar and any essential oil, such as lemon oil or tea-tree oil. Combine 1/4 cup vinegar, 2 cups water, and 10 drops lemon oil or tea-tree oil. Another good recipe is 2 teaspoons tea-tree oil and 2 cups of water mixed in a spray bottle. Shake well before spraying onto problem areas. (Another Martha Stewart idea!)
- Polish wood with olive oil. Mix 2 parts olive oil with 1 part lemon juice, and use a soft cloth to apply to wood.

I am convinced that a small step by all of us will result in a giant leap for mankind (to paraphrase that famous moon-walker) and hopefully help save the planet!

Karen van Dieren

PGP NOTICE-BOARD

Book Mark these dates:

- **Monday 28 Jan -** Mid-year Leaders Meeting @ 8pm—compulsory for all Leaders & Assistants. Come share your ideas, get tips & support, have some fun!
- **Monday 11 Feb -** 2nd Semester starts—please remember that fees are due.
- **Friday 21 March to Thursday 27 March -** Easter is early this year!

A BIG thank you to all the parents who helped make last year's Christmas Party a great success!



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My apologies for the short nature of this newsletter. This year Christmas seemed busier and, unfortunately, I didn't give my regular contributors sufficient notice. Stay tuned for the return of Dr Esson and the Soup Lady in the next Edition.

Deadline for the March/April issue is: Wed 26 February

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WHY I LOVE MOM

Mom and Dad were watching TV when Mom said, 'I'm tired, and it's getting late. I think I'll go to bed.'

She went to the kitchen to make sandwiches for the next day's lunches. Rinsed out the popcorn bowls, took meat out of the freezer for supper the following evening, checked the cereal box levels, filled the sugar container, put spoons and bowls on the table and started the coffee pot for brewing the next morning.

She then put some wet clothes in the dryer, put a load of clothes into the washer, ironed a shirt and secured a loose button.

She picked up the game pieces left on the table, put the phone back on the charger and put the telephone book into the drawer.

She watered the plants, emptied a wastebasket and hung up a towel to dry.

She yawned and stretched and headed for the bedroom.

She stopped by the desk and wrote a note to the teacher, counted out some cash for the field trip, and pulled a text book out from hiding under the chair.

She signed a birthday card for a friend, addressed and stamped the envelope and wrote a quick note for the grocery store. She put both near her purse.

Mom then washed her face with 3 in 1 cleanser, put on her Night solution & age fighting moisturizer, brushed and flossed her teeth and filed her nails.

Dad called out, 'I thought you were going to bed.' 'I'm on my way,' she said.

She put some water into the dog's dish and put the cat outside, then made sure the doors were locked and the patio light was on.

She looked in on each of the kids and turned out their bedside lamps and TV's, hung up a shirt, threw some dirty socks into the hamper, and had a brief conversation with the one up still doing homework.

In her own room, she set the alarm; laid out clothing for the next day, straightened up the shoe rack.

She added three things to her 6 most important things to do list.

She said her prayers, and visualized the accomplishment of her goals. About that time, Dad turned off the TV and announced to no one in particular, 'I'm going to bed.' And he did...without another thought.

Submitted by Laura Brady-Maguire



AN INTERVIEW WITH ...

In this edition of the Newsletter, we asked *Clarisse Mason, our PGP Secretary, to answer our questions.*

Tell us about yourself

I was born near Paris from Polish parents. I spent my summers in Wales with my grandmother. I studied International Business which took me to the States. I worked and married there. I lived four years in San Diego and then four in Salt Lake City where my son Anthony was born. We moved to the Geneva region on January 1st 2002. My daughter Nadia was born here shortly afterwards. Since our move, I have been taking care of the children and getting involved with the American International Women's Club, PGP, and the local French schools which my children attend.

Where do you like to do your grocery shopping? Why?

I usually go to the local Champion and Intermarche stores in St-Julien-en-Genevois. For specialty food, there is a good and rather large organic grocery store "La Vie Saine" in the center of St-Julien. For special dinners or treats I go to the caterer/butcher Presset in Collonges-Sous-Saleve. It is on the main road next to the railway. They have mouth-watering food, and even more so at Christmas time (millefeuille au foie gras, stuffed mini pineapples...). My favorite baker is Merveille de Pain, just off of the rue Grande in St-Julien. They are true "artisan" who really enjoy their work and try new "creations". They have a beautiful selection of breads and viennoiseries. They also have a new bread of the month. Their cakes and tarts are also delicious.

What's your favourite restaurant in Geneva or environs?

I really like le Relais de l'Entrecote which is across from the Jardin Anglais and the Mont-Blanc bridge in Geneva (the original one is in Paris). It is a no-brainer restaurant: there is only one thing on the menu: green lettuce salad for appetizer, entrecote meat and very thin French fries as a main dish. You just have to decide how you want the meat to be done. The meat comes in long thin slices covered with a delicious sauce. It just melts in your mouth. You get two servings of it. You may have a harder time to decide on the dessert as there is a dessert menu. We have gone there with our children a few times. It is quite tight and can be very crowded, but the service is very fast and we just love their meat.

What's your favourite summer holiday destination?

We have gone a few times to the Lago Maggiore region, both on the Swiss (Locarno) and Italian sides. We have been there in May rather than summer and we have enjoyed it very much. The climate is quite a bit warmer than in Geneva. There is a mini Switzerland vapor park by Lugano. The Ascona beach is nice and free. I recommend going by scenic trains from Montreux through the Alps rather than by car. You get beautiful views and the children love the train. Your vacation then really starts with the jour-

ney. This past summer, we went for the first time to Moliets et Maa, north of Biarritz, on the Atlantic coast at a Pierre et Vacances resort. It was a wonderful place and the children liked to learn to boogie board. The beaches are very large so you can always find a more quiet spot.

What's your favourite winter holiday destination?

Skiing!!!! We went only once so far for a three-day trip to Zermatt and loved it. As we live so close to the Alps, we end up going for day trips. Each year we seem to have a different favorite ski resort. Les Gets Chavannes, Sommand/Praz de Lys, and La Clusaz are great to go with little children learning how to ski. Avoriaz is wonderful when the rain level is high (like last year), as it is one of the highest ski resort within an hour's drive.

But if you have enough frequent flyer miles, I recommend taking a trip to Thailand. We just did that in December and we were totally charmed.

What's your favourite sport/activity & where do you do it?

I go to the local gym class offered by the MJC, just for convenience. In the summer, I enjoy swimming in the public pools and hiking in the mountains.

What's your favourite place in Geneva or surrounding France?

I really like the Plateau des Glieres. It is a beautiful plateau and a 2nd world war resistance landmark. The road to get there is very windy. In the winter it is great for cross-country skiing and sledging. In the summer, you can do some nice walks and stop for lunch at Chez Constance. Their potato beignets are fresh and delicious.

What's your favourite book?

I decided to read the last of the Harry Potter books when it came out this summer and I really enjoyed it. Pleasant readers have been "Ni d'Adam ni d'Eve", about a French woman living in Japan and having a relationship with a Japanese. I am not sure if this book is translated into English yet. It reminds me a little of the movie "Lost in Translation" because of the cultural differences.

What's your favourite movie?

There are two movies which marked me as a teenager. "Amadeus" which is about the life of Mozart. I saw it with my Dad in a special theater in Paris with excellent sound. It makes for an even better experience. I really liked Luc Besson's "Le Grand Bleu" or "Big Blue" in English. It is a story of a man's love for the sea.

What's your favourite music?

I have an old child's memory of Carmina Buranan. I enjoy its strong introduction. We used it at our wedding when the cake was brought in. Romeo and Juliet by Prokofiev is my favourite symphony.

My top pop group is A-ha. I saw all their concerts in Paris and I have all their records.

What's your favourite TV show?

Since I have kids, I don't watch TV very much. But I got hooked on Desperate Housewives when I got if for Christmas a couple of years ago. I do also enjoy Grey's Anatomy. The Swiss TV Channel allow you to watch movies or a series in English rather than dubbed in French. Unfortunately, the French TV Channels don't offer that feature.

Thanks Clarisse!

EVER HAD A BAD HAIRCUT?



We got wind of Ghislaine from one of our members, Catriona Charlesworth, who was thrilled with her new haircut and the convenience of having Ghislaine come to her house.

We decided to ask Ghislaine a few questions about how she got started and how her business works. Here's her fun reply -

"Life is an endless struggle full of frustrations and struggles, but eventually you find a hairstylist you like!"

When love brought me to Geneva I never expected to branch out on my own and go freelance. Several shocking hair cut experiences later, I felt the time was right to become 'Ghislaine Hairstylist' - a one-woman crusade to eradicate bad hair days in and around Geneva! Six months later, from a rather shaky start, with the support and encouragement of friends and clients, I am now happily cutting and colouring well over 50 loyal clients.

Hailing from Alsace, France. Trained at Amann & Bohn, Germany and Vidal Sassoon, London and having worked in the industry for the last eight years; hairdressing is still my passion. It sounds cheesy I know but nothing makes me happier than the smile on a clients face.

If you are interested in finding out more about Ghislaine and her hairdressing business, see her VERY GROOVY blog: <http://ghislainehairstylist.spaces.live.com/>

To make an appointment, contact her on: ghislaine4@hotmail.com.

PG TIPS



On Wednesday mornings at Playgroup our pack of little people in the 18 months-3 years group always make me laugh. At this age, they all are full blown personalities each with a twinkle in their eye. They each have boundless energy and a story to tell.

Perhaps I am ultimately taken in by the beauty of a spontaneous twirl in a new skirt from grandma or the overwhelming heartfelt absoluteness of a particular theory on why Spiderman is the coolest superhero ever. Whatever the reason, these kids amaze me.

So, as their leaders, my assistants Alex and Lucy and I try to inject our group with new ways of tapping into their wonderful world. We like to try new things, and try to give a new twist on the old in a way that engages their buzzing minds and hopefully teaches a small lesson. We do lots with colors and numbers and animals. Music also plays a big part in our group. Here are a couple of ideas which we recently tried that seemed to go over well.

SPOTTY & STRIPY (Thanks to assistant Lucy Brown)

Lucy brought in a book which was all about spots and stripes. After reading this story in the big room sitting in a circle with the children, she then asked the group to form three small groups of grown-ups and children. In the middle of each of the three circles of people sitting on the floor, she placed a large sack.

Lucy then asked the children to dip into the sacks and pull out the objects one at a time and study them with their group. The sacks were filled with all kinds of household objects with either spots or stripes on them. Participants were then asked to place the spotty items on the "spotty pile" and the stripey items on the "stripey pile."

This was a great exercise in sharing, taking turns, patience and sorting objects. You could do this activity with any kind of "sorting" such as big/small, fluffy/smooth, black/white, and on and on.

PARACHUTE AND ISLANDS

One day while playing with the parachute, Alex, Lucy and I set up a bunch of hula-hoops on the floor in an area just big enough for the parachute to cover. We had 3 hoops of each color with a total of 12 hoops, I believe.

We pretended that the parachute was waves on the sea and made the waves bigger and bigger with all participants holding on to the edges of the parachute. I then told the group that there was a huge storm coming and that each child must run under the parachute while the grown-ups made waves up high in the air.

The children were then instructed to run to an island (a hula-hoop) for safety until the storm died down. I then called out a color of an island such as green or blue, or red and each child had to find the corresponding hoop and sit in it. They could, of course, share their hoop with other children.

We then stopped the storm and began again, changing the island color each time. This was great for listening, color sorting and sharing.

Lisa Mc Carthy -Leader, Wednesday a.m. 18 mos.-3 years



LITERACY TIPS

CONTINUE THE LEARNING

If you have access to the internet, spend some time looking at the BBS Children pages CBBC and CBEBIES. They can be found on www.bbc.co.uk and have some great activities for the children that can help with their skills in reading, writing and spelling.

REMEMBER TO READ ALOUD

There is probably no more important activity for preparing your child to read than reading aloud together. Fill your story times with a variety of books. Be consistent, be patient and watch the magic work.

KID'S HEALTH

CYCLOSHOW

This programme is directed at teaching young girls between the ages of 10 and 14 years about their menstrual cycle. The programme is held during the day from 10.00am to 4.00pm and the young girls must be accompanied by their mothers. The price of the workshop is 80 Swiss francs per duo. The workshops will be held AT 20 CHEMIN DES Suzettes, 1233 Bernex on Saturday 2 February, 8 March, 12 April and 17 May. Please note that the workshops will be held in French. To enroll or for further information see www.avifa.ch "onglet" Cycloshow or call 022 757 68 12.

ORGAN DONATION AND TRANSPLANT—The Gift of Life

Organ donation and transplant received a lot of media attention following the untimely death, last year, of the young French singer Gregorie LeMarchal from cystic fibrosis.

Recently a new law regarding organ donation and transplant was passed in Switzerland allowing for the establishment of Swisstransplant. The purpose of Swisstransplant is to centralize and coordinate organ donation, provide information and raise public awareness, as well as be part of the international organ donation community.



If you are interested in being a donor, you can get the official donor cards at pharmacies, hospitals or your family doctor. You must then book your card in calling 0800 570 234 (free) or on info@swisstransplant.org. For further information see www.swisstransplant.org.

Family weekend trip to Leukerbad

Leukerbad, or Loeche-Les-Bains in French Swiss is a small bath and ski resort in Valais. It is about 2 and half hours away from Geneva. We went there twice for a nice long weekend.

The first time, in early September, we took our tent and stayed at the main camping. It is right at the bottom of the mountain, with beautiful views of the valley and the village. The camping is large so there is lots of room. It also gives you free access to the mini-golf, which is fun to do with children. You can walk from the camping to all the main activities in town. We took a tram to the Gemmi Pass which is 900 meters higher (or if you prefer you can just hike that mountain!!). You have stunning views from the top at 2300 meters. You can take a walk around a small lake or you can hike the river beds of streams from the glacier. The walks are fairly flat so it makes them possible with children.

In the winter, you can bring your sleigh, or you just rent one and then you can go down the sleigh slopes for about 2kms. A little tram lift takes you back to the top for a small fee. We had a blast doing that in the winter and our dog loved it even more!

In the afternoon we come back down to Leukerbad and go to the Burgerbad, the City baths. The pools are filled with thermal water from deep underground. There are three levels of pools, some inside, some outside. A section is reserved for babies and toddlers with slides in shallow water. The goal is to try all the different pools and the massage jets they have. You can just lie in the water and enjoy the gorgeous views of the surrounding mountains around you. It is even more special when the pool is surrounded by snow. The baths are open year round from 8am to 8pm. The entrance fee gets you in for three hours, but you can extend it. When we visited in the winter, we stayed at the Alfa hotel which included a pass for the Gemmi Tram and the City Baths. The main street of the village has many nice and family friendly restaurants. Going for a weekend makes for a very nice change of scenery and the baths are very relaxing. You can find out more about this village on the internet at: www.leukerbad.ch.

Clarisse Mason—Secretary

What's On In and Around Geneva: January/February 2008

JANUARY

Up to 13 Jan - Luna Park. Plainpalais is transformed into an amusement park/fairground for the holiday season. www.geneve-tourisme.ch/

Up to 31 Jan - Scènes de silence. An exposition that requires visitors to renounce noise and talking in order to discover other forms of communication. www.scenesdesilence.ch

Up to 16 Feb - An exposition on the theme of Swiss natural disasters at the Museum of Natural History. www.ville-ge.ch/mhng

Up to 17 Feb - Open air ice skating rink at La Praille on the second floor. Entry and skate rental are free. www.la-praille.ch

Up to 30 Mar - Patrimoine en danger De Véronèse à Picasso. A collection of masterpieces currently exhibited in the Museum of Art and History. www.mah.ville-ge.ch

Up to 12 May - An exposition dedicated to the **history of electricity** at the History of Science Museum www.ville-ge.ch/mhs

Up to 24 May - The 20th edition of the Spectacles Onésiens includes various shows in different locations and highlights laughter, song and music. www.spectaclesonesiens.ch

Up to 31 May - Children's art: books for children illustrated by artists. This exposition in the Library of Art and Archaeology in the Museum of Art and History addresses questions such as how do artists perceive children, how do they relate a story or their art to a younger audience. www.mah.ville-ge.ch

Up to 31 July - A group of exceptional crystals are on display at the Museum of Natural History. They were discovered in May 2003 in the Swiss Grisons and this is the first time they are exhibited in the Swiss French region. www.ville-ge.ch/mhng

1 Jan to 31 Dec - Guided walking tours of the Old Town. Departing from the Geneva Tourism Office, stroll through Geneva for two hours and learn about places such as the Jet d'eau and the Flower Clock. Commentary is presented in English, French and German. www.geneve-tourisme.ch

3, 9 and 24 Jan - Next visits of the A41 North construction site. Tours of the massive road works between Geneva and Annecy are offered on a regular basis, check the website for future dates. For additional information or to register call the Annemasse Office of Tourism at +33 (0)4 50 95 07 10. Digger lovers rejoice! <http://www.annemasse-agglo-tourisme.com/>

10 to 13 Jan - Yaël Tautavel ou l'enfance de l'art. A children's theatre production (by the Théâtre Am Stram Gram) about two brothers who decide to flee their polluted island. www.amstramgram.ch

12 to 16 Jan - Jack and the Bean Stalk. Marionette show in French for children 4 and up. www.regart.ch/croquettes

13 to 27 Jan - Roadshow Euro 2008. The Swiss Soccer Association is on the road with their Play Football Switzerland Tour. www.football.ch/ontour/fr/start.aspx

15 and 16 Jan - La bossa fataka de rameau. Contemporary dance production for children 5 and up set in the sky, the park of the Palace of Versailles, a farm and the zoo. www.forum-meyrin.ch

18 to 20 Jan - Disney on Ice. All your favorite Disney characters can be found at the Geneva Arena. www.disneysurglace.fr

19 to 25 Jan - Rien à jeter. Show for all aged 6 and up put on by the company Le Chat-Hutteur. The theme is garbage and recycling. A performance is also scheduled for the **6 Feb** at the Ferme Marignac. www.mqpaquis.ch

19 to 27 Jan - International Hot Air Balloon Festival, Château-d'Oex. This is the 30th edition with more than 80 balloons from 20 different countries exhibiting in the middle of the Alps. www.ballonsfestival.ch

20 to 23 Jan - The Magic Frog. A French show about a tsar who wants to retire. Which of his children should take over? A frog gets involved in the decision-making process. For children 4 and up. www.spectaclesonesiens.ch

22 to 27 Jan - Souliers de sable. A children's theatre production (by the Théâtre Am Stram Gram) about Elise and Léo who are trapped and live in fear of the unknown and time counted by grains of sand. www.amstramgram.ch

23 Jan to 10 Feb - Balthazar fait son bazar. Marionette show for children 4 and up put on by the Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève. The story is about Balthazar who is full of imagination and can build, tear down, and transform anything in the house. www.marionnettes.ch

26 to 30 Jan - Le voleur de pluie. Marionette show for children 4 and up. A tale about Yasmina and Salim who take on a powerful magician to save their village. www.regart.ch/croquettes

FEBRUARY

1 to 10 Feb - Black Movie Festival, a festival of films from other parts of the world. The films are to be shown in the Maison des Arts du Grütli, rue Général-Dufour 16 and other locales. The detailed programme can be found on the Internet. www.blackmovie.ch

2 to 6 Feb - Thumbelina. This marionette show in French tells the famous Danish fairy tale about a tiny-sized girl. For children 4 and up. www.regart.ch/croquettes

6 Feb - classical music at Victoria Hall from the Prélude series. The Orchestre de la Suisse Romande will perform works by Gabrieli, Dukas, Rota, etc. for brass and percussion instruments. www.osr.ch

6 to 27 Feb - Goûter des sciences: Un bol d'air et ça repart! Wednesday workshops about allergies for children 5- to 7-years old at the Hôpital Cantonal. www.unige.ch/science-cite

12 to 28 Feb - Ca tourne. For children 1 and up. A show about animals put on by the Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève. www.marionnettes.ch

19 Feb to 16 Mar - Poil de carotte. A children's theatre production about a mother and her son: two enemies. www.amstramgram.ch

21 Feb - Observation of the winter night sky. The History of Science Museum in conjunction with the Geneva Astronomy Society is offering this astronomical experience. www.astro-ge.net

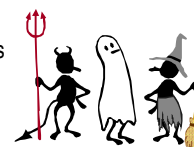
23 Feb - Carnival. Geneva celebrates Carnival for a single day. The programme is available on the Internet. www.carnaval-geneve.ch

23 and 24 Feb - 9th International Cat Exposition. Different breeds of cats will be presented. www.sfge.ch

24 to 27 Feb - Le chaudron d'Isabelle. An interactive musical for children 4 and up. Help the witch Isabelle reunite her friends for the big party she is organising. +41 (0)22 879 59 99

27 Feb - Do elves live in Iceland? This story is about the search for a real-life elf (in French). Story-telling to be held at the Catalyse. www.catalyse.ch

27 Feb to 2 Mar - Au royaume des elfes et des lutins. For children 4 and up. Two happy, young goblins want to offer their king a magnificent mushroom but a wizard interferes. www.regart.ch/croquettes



Compiled by Liz Stevenson—Assistant Newsletter Editor