

November/December Newsletter

Playgroup Programme

New Year's Inspirations

This is typically the season for giving and merrymaking. It is also a time for reflecting upon the past year, your current state of being (relationships, health, happiness, finances,...) and existing dreams. One of the changes I would like to make in 2009 relates to clearing clutter. A husband who likes to collect and hates to throw away adds a whole other dimension to the challenge. In anticipation of my future projects, I recently read the book *Feng Shui Your Life* by Jayme Barrett. In it I discovered the following list of ideas for getting the most out of life:

- Expect grace in every moment.
- Become a force for good.
- Write down your blessings.
- Laugh, giggle, and be goofy.
- Pray or meditate as a daily ritual.
- Trust your instincts.
- Create alone time to just "be".
- Eat scrumptious and healthy foods.
- Plan a dream vacation - a dream life.
- Keep good company.
- Breathe slowly and deeply.
- Sit quietly under a tree.
- Skip down the road.
- Go barefoot in the soft grass.
- Swim in the sea.
- Plant a colorful, sweet-smelling garden.
- Don't rush!
- Relax into a good book.

- Take a soothing salt bath.
- Be silent.
- Stay present.
- Ask for guidance.
- Listen to the whisperings of your soul.
- Follow your dreams.
- Smile.
- Make extraordinary decisions.
- Visualize your outcome.
- Soak up nature's healing energy.
- Rejuvenate your body with loads of water.
- Cherish your family and friends.
- Honor and express your feelings.
- Let go of expectations.
- Create boundaries and be honest.
- Forgive yourself and others.
- Don't take things personally.
- Try being loving instead of being right.
- Remember happy times with happy pictures.
- Worry less, play more, and play big.
- Stay positive and have faith.
- Step out and take a risk.
- Summon childlike enthusiasm.
- Explore new situations and opportunities.

If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again
Diane Loomans

If I had my child to raise all over again, I'd do less correcting, and more connecting, I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes. I would care to know less and know to care more. I'd take more hikes and fly more kites. I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play. I'd run through more fields and gaze at more stars. I'd do more hugging, and less tugging. I would be firm less often, and affirm much more, I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later. I'd teach less about the love of power and more about the power of love.

Submitted by Claire Dorey (Newsletter Assistant)

Move your body...dance and sing!
See beauty everywhere you go.
Make a spiritual pilgrimage.
Create a cycle of giving and receiving.
Delight in small miracles.
Let your spirit fly.

Best wishes for an inspiring New Year.

In the next issue: The Annual General Meeting Report.

By Liz Stevenson Haefliger
(Newsletter Editor)
Henry and Paul's Mom

Three Month Calendar

Wed 5 Nov	Usborne Children's Book Sale	Fri 12 Dec	Nov/Dec Newsletter Deadline	Thu 1 Jan	New Year's Day
Thu 6 Nov	Back to School in France	Sat 13 or Sun 14 Dec	Christmas Party	Mon 5 Jan	Back to Playgroup
Mon 10 Nov	Board Meeting	Mon 15 Dec	Start of Playgroup Break	Mon 5 Jan	Back to School
Tue 11 Nov	Armistice Day (Veteran's Day)	Mon 22 Dec	Start of School Break	Mon 19 Jan	Board Meeting
Mon 24 Nov	Literacy Parent Information Meeting	Thu 25 Dec	Christmas Day	Mon 26 Jan	Midyear Leaders Workshop
Thu 27 Nov	Thanksgiving Day	Fri 26 Dec	Boxing Day		

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Playgroup Programme

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France

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We are a registered non-profit organisation.

Christmas Ideas from the Craft Coordinator

By Kerry McCance
Kim's Mom

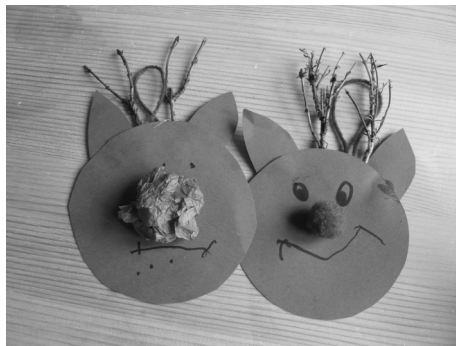
I used to be a bit of a perfectionist about Christmas. I liked my Christmas table just so. I liked my tree decorated just so. I couldn't stand a shoddily wrapped present. Then I discovered the joys of Christmas crafts with my daughter. Since she was old enough to hold a paint brush, we've enjoyed crafting together. Admittedly, the products of our sessions may not be the most tasteful, or most perfect decorations but the stars we cut out of a cereal packet and covered with glue and glitter and then strung together the first year she was able to do anything crafty are still one of our family's favourite decorations. True, I've had to bite my tongue at the sheer volume of glitter or cookie decorations she uses, but as Nigella Lawson so succinctly puts it, in her book *Feast*, "This is not the time to try and keep their vulgarity in check. Let them get it out of their system: better too many shimmering sprinkles now than a diamond navel stud later. Save your energies for then." If you think you can handle it, I have some Christmas craft ideas you might like to put to use.



I'm not sure they'll thank us, but our family will enjoy Kim's homemade look for the Christmas table. You could use the same idea to make some unique and recycled Christmas cards too.

Rudolph Decorations for the Tree

This one is super easy. Take a circle of brown paper, add a red pom pom or some scrunched up tissue paper for Rudolph's nose, then glue or draw on two eyes. Cellotape on some ears, then, for his antlers, add some twigs. Attach a piece of appropriately Christmassy thread to hang him on the tree.



Christmas Placemats

For some reason, I had kept a lot of our Christmas cards, so one evening, while watching Eastenders, I set about cutting out all the nice pictures and some of the wording. The next day, I got a piece of red A3 paper and armed with a glue stick, Kim went at it, sticking her favourite pictures however she felt all over the paper. When she was finished, I sandwiched her artwork between two sheets of clear contact paper and voilà – a Christmas placemat was created. She has great plans to make more for all her relatives.

Staple-less Paper Chains

Last year we had ready gummed strips to make our paper chains, but a lot of last year's Christmas memories involve my husband balancing on a stool, after a couple of whiskies, stapler in hand, fixing the paper chains that broke every evening. I'm not sure my nerves can take it this year, so I thought we'd try some staple-less paper chains. They will require some preparation, but look great.

Rather than try and describe them in great detail, I direct you to the following website where the instructions are clear and easy to follow. I may even recycle some of Kim's artwork to do these. She is touchy about throwing out her countless creations,



but I thought that seeing them on display as Christmas decorations may appeal.

<http://worldpreschoolmom.blogspot.com/2008/07/stapleless-paper-chains.html>

Christmas Cookies

What tree would be complete without some Christmas cookies hanging on it? We use Nigella Lawson's recipe (see http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/database/christmas_84679.shtml) and I let Kim decorate however she wishes, usually with some icing gel pens and lots of those wee silver balls. You can pick up some Christmas cookie cutters in Migros for not very much money – just remember to make a hole for the ribbon in the top of your biscuit before you bake it. A straw works perfectly for this. Then, when the decorating is done, string some ribbon through the hole and hang it on your tree.

Have fun Christmas crafting!

There's an Artisan in Your Playgroup

By Sam Cox
Annabelle and Emily's Mom

Green Gecko Designs

I'm currently volunteering as the Assistant for Literacy 3 on Wednesdays. I've been with the Playgroup Programme for about seven years with my two daughters and with it we've all made lots of great friends!

Although I have worked for both the Red Cross and the World Wide Fund for Nature during our eleven years in Switzerland, recently I felt the time was right to leave the office environment and go it alone and do something creative that I really enjoy. Hence, Green Gecko Designs!

I've always loved buying jewellery and one day I thought "I could make that!" So I tried and I could and the rest, as they say, is history. My husband got fed up with tripping over the stuff and suggested that maybe other people might like to have it instead, so I have been making it to sell ever since.

To keep my fingers busy in the evenings (and out of the biscuit tin) I took up knitting scarves which I sell alongside my jewellery. In addition to the various sales I have during the year I also offer Tupperware-style evenings where I bring my stock to someone's house. So over a glass of wine or two, you and your friends can stock up on presents for yourselves and your loved ones!

Speaking of loved ones, ever been stuck for a birthday party idea? I offer the chance for your birthday girl and her friends to get creative themselves (boys have been known to enjoy it too!) All we need is a table - I bring along the rest. Several Playgroup families can testify to its success!

I'll be at Crossroads on Wednesday, November 5 along with the Usborne Book Ladies if you would like to browse my creations or have a chat. Don't forget, Christmas is not all that far away!

To contact me please feel free to call me at home on +41 22 776 8088 or my mobile on +41 76 569 2601 or email me at samjcox1@yahoo.co.uk.

How to Get a Tax Refund: Hire a Babysitter

By Denise and Laurent Caudéran
Mia and Livia's Parents

Housekeepers and Babysitters or House Cleaners and Child Minders: If You Live in France, You Can Get a Refund for These Services

If you are new to this region frontier of France, you might still be surprised at how many people here use regular babysitters, nannies, au pairs, housekeepers, or just someone to help with the ironing. Getting help with the perpetual management of family chaos is a must when you are far from helpful lifelong friends and family. Yes, you can do it all on your own – but would you rather read a story to your child or unload the dishwasher? Would you rather kick the soccer ball around the yard or mop the kitchen floor? The good news is, though life here is expensive, household services become very accessible with a little bit of paperwork. I know, I know, you're thinking "ENCORE DE LA PAPERASSE!*" – even if you haven't learned French yet – but I promise this is worth the effort!

Basically, if you can pay a legally declared housekeeper, babysitter, or mother's helper (a babysitter who works with you while you are home) in a given fiscal year, you can get 50% of what you spend back from the French government regardless of how much you or your spouse earns – **even if your family does not pay taxes in France**. The catch is, you have to wait a year for the rebate. The minimum wage in France is currently 6.84 € per hour (it changes every year traditionally on the 1st of July). This means if you

pay a child minder in your home at that rate in a declared situation, you are only paying 3.42 € per hour (after getting your rebate check). In other words, drinks, dinner and a movie with your partner will ultimately set you back about 20 euros in babysitting fees. You also have a happy babysitter who made 40 euros for the evening.

Here are three steps to take and one condition to meet:

1. Make sure you hire an EU citizen or someone who has the legal right to work in France. This person must file his/her own tax declaration in France as well. You might have to help your employee file his/her taxes (we have a non-French babysitter who will need some help with filing this year as she is still learning French). To make it advantageous for the employee you can keep the annual amount earned below the taxable amount. In 2007, a single person had to make more than 12,500 euros in order to have to pay French income taxes.
2. Make sure you file your tax declaration in France, whether or not you actually have to pay taxes in France (if you are a resident of France you are required by law to file each year with the tax authorities).
3. For childcare, make sure your kids are registered with the CAF (Caisse d'Allocations Familiales). Again, even if your family income level is too high for their basic benefits, you can still take advantage of the rebate on childcare and housecleaners.

The one condition to be eligible for this money is: **If you are a single parent**, you have to have

worked or have been officially declared as an unemployed person in the French unemployment system (listed with the ANPE) for at least 3 months of the year concerned.

If you are part of a couple, filling in a joint French tax declaration, **BOTH** of you have to have worked (The actual text of the law about the condition mentioned above is "avoir une activité professionnelle.") or been legally enrolled in the French unemployment system for at least 3 months of the year in question. Part-time employment is acceptable in order to meet this condition.

Remember, if you are currently a full-time mother and you live in France, you are allowed to register with the French unemployment system through the ANPE. The local office is in the Zone Industrielle of St. Genis-Pouilly.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about how to declare your household employees and get your rebate. This process allows you to stay in compliance with labor laws, keep your employees covered by insurance, help your employees save for retirement, and save money! If the amount of your annual rebate is more than you would make in about two to four hours (the time it takes to get the paperwork sorted out) then it is well worth the effort. Good luck!

denise_nickerson@yahoo.com

An Interview With Joanna McMahon

Editor's Note: Joanna is the longtime Special Events Coordinator.

Tell us a little about yourself, i.e. where you were born, where you live, how many children you have (their playgroup/literacy class), your work, etc? I was born in West Germany in an RAF hospital. My father was in the British army and he and my mother were living posted. I was actually "made" in Bavaria though (southern Germany) on a cheese farm where my father used to spend the winter with my mother, living in a caravan in a barn with 90 soldiers. His winter job was a ski instructor and he taught them all to ski! I have lived in Geneva now for 11 years and in Bellevue for 8 years, behind the Country Club. I am married to Graham, a banker and have 3 boys; Jack (11), Max (8) and Jed (5). The younger two are in literacy. I have been involved in Playgroup since 1999 and have been on the Board since 2001 and responsible for Special Events. Before joining Playgroup I ran the CERN Mother and Toddlers group for 3 years. I returned to work last year as a secretary at the WHO.

Where you like to do your grocery shopping?

Why? Most weeks, I shop online at LeShop. I order the night before and it is delivered to the door the next day. My boys keep an eye out for the "shopping man" and they help carry the bags in. Working almost full time I find that I don't have time for routine supermarket shopping, however, if I am at Chavannes then I pop into Manor (for Sushi, rare sliced roast beef and the delicious bread) and you'll see me at Champion for the Hello magazines. I am also a great believer of supporting your local commerce and so frequently visit the alimentation in Bellevue and the BP petrol station!

Your favourite restaurant in Geneva or environs?

For something really special then it has to be Domaine de Châteauevieux. It is quite amazing. The best table is in the kitchen (for 4 max) and has to be reserved one month in advance. The food is really quite something. Each dish is exquisitely presented on tableware depicting the theme of the dish. The chef, Philippe Chevrier is charming and to watch him and his team work in the kitchen is pure theatre.

For something less formal, plat du jour with the husband or early evening supper with the boys then my favourite is the Auberge de Collex-Bossy. Their specialty is Buffalo "Bison" and it is a great meat. I particularly enjoy the carpaccio of Bison and their "fish n'chips" are great. There is a small play park next to the restaurant.

Your favourite summer holiday destination?

Anywhere on a cruise ship with my family - as long as the sun is shining, there is a kids club, some rest and a glass of wine.

Your favourite winter holiday destination?

Anywhere on a cruise ship! The best winter cruise destinations are in the Caribbean and I love St. Barts, Dominica, Barbados, Grenada and Antigua.

Your favourite sport/activity and where you do it?

I was a county backstroke swimmer at school but rarely get near a pool these days and I love to play tennis if I can find the time. I love skiing and it is a big sport in our family.

Continued on Page 6

From the Playgroup Leader Trainer and Representative

By Trish Clements
Hugh and Ronan's Mom

Sneak Peak at the Playgroup Forum

The Playgroup Leaders and Assistants have a new tool at their disposal this year to support them in running their groups. In the past as each Leader and Assistant went about their weekly sessions it seemed a shame that ideas and techniques could not be shared more readily between groups. Now a 'virtual' meeting place called the Playgroup Forum has been created where they can do just that - all from the comfort of their own home.

- The Playgroup Forum is a web-based discussion group/chat group currently hosted on Yahoo! Groups. It is an unlisted forum (i.e. ex-directory) and is also a closed forum (by invitation only), so we are pretty confident that even the British tabloids will not be able to find us – sincerely hoping that they never want or need to!
- Current content includes a number of open discussions, a photo album of Big Toy set-ups, activity and song downloads, web links, weekly announcements from both Kerry McCance, the Craft Coordinator, and from myself, and much more.
- One of the discussions recently included an interesting exchange of ideas on a Dinosaur Theme that resulted in many ROARS of approval from the children when implemented in a number of sessions afterwards.
- Another wonderful benefit has been highlighting suitable activities or songs from external educational websites. To have access to such tried and tested activities from professional educators is definitely inspirational and opens up a whole world of possibilities (a few favourite links follow).

PGP_PlaygroupForum · Playgroup Programme, Ferney Voltaire

Stay up to speed on the latest Groups news and updates, visit the [Groups blog](#) today!

Home

Activity within 7 days: **8** New Messages

Description

Welcome Leaders and Assistants,

This is your virtual meeting place where you can exchange information and ideas about running your playgroups. I hope that it will be fun, friendly and informative.

FORUM GUIDELINES
To see all Topics currently being discussed, go to the Message Page from the menu bar on the left. Below here, you will find just the most recent posts, so you may miss out on something important that has been posted earlier.

CREATING NEW TOPICS:
Click on 'Start Topic' found on this page or on the Message page. Please indicated in the Subject what the topic refers to. IE. "SESSION THEME – DINOSAURS", or "SESSION THEME – AUTUMN", or "BLOG – WHERE CAN I BUY CHILDREN'S BOOKS?"
Then you can Preview and then Send the message to be posted.

ADDING POSTS TO EXISTING TOPICS:
Please try to keep the Topics in tact. If you have a comment to make on a Topic already open, you should post your comment within that Topic rather than create a new Topic. This makes it more coherent for other readers to follow and contribute. If you want to post a comment on an existing Topic, please Click the relevant Topic, and hit "Reply" to post a reply to that particular topic.

MEMBERS ACCESS:
Members can currently: Create New Topics, Post Messages, Add Links, Upload and Download Photos & Files, Add dates to the Calendar and take part in Polls.


SPECIAL NOTICES:
If you have something that you would like to communicate urgently to the group, either contact Trish to send the information out as a Special Notice, or send an email to the group the old fashioned way (You should have all L/A emails from previous emails sent by me, or from the Leader Update).

Hope that you enjoy your visits to the Forum,
Trish

PHOTO OF WED, THURS AND FRI VOLUNTEERS:
Back Row: Jess, Jo, Rebecca, Natalia, Juliette & Alex.
Seated: (Oficala from LIT), Berenice, Sharon & Katharina (Fadia, Sam and Kate are absent)

Most Recent Messages
(Group by Topic)

Search: [Start Topic](#)



- From the point of view of the PGP organisation, the Forum ensures on-going support to volunteers. Also, by having more and more PGP documentation available online it will significantly reduce the need for producing costly printed materials – a very important saving.

So, there you have your Sneak Peak of the Playgroup Forum, but whatever you do, DO NOT tell the British tabloids where to find us!

Favourite Websites from the Playgroup Forum

These links have activities or crafts that are ideally suited to the home too – especially on those rainy days when you need to have something up your sleeve to counteract the 'Mummy, I'm bored' cries.

www.preschoolexpress.com
www.perpetualpreschool.com
www.everythingpreschool.com

Miscellaneous

Mother-to-Mother Group

Please spread the word to expecting mums or mums with newborns up to 9 months. This group meets every Friday morning from 9:30 to 11am at Crossroads Church. Gay Richard (midwife, lactation consultant and newsletter contributor) leads discussions about health and parenthood topics. Whether it's your first or your fifth baby, each experience is unique to you so it's reassuring to know that your feelings and concerns are normal and that others might share them to.

Opportunity to do Community Service

The next **Soup Kitchen** will be held on Friday, December 5. We will be preparing a Christmas lunch at the Carrefour Rue soup kitchen near Cornavin station. All volunteers are welcome. No special skills are required. If you would like to participate, please contact Bill Morin at bill.morin@wanadoo.fr.

By Joanna Gill
Kayleigh and Zoe's Mom

Holiday Greetings

Are you a procrastinator? You never seem to get those holiday cards into the mail on time. Smilebox (www.smilebox.com) enables you to send news and photos to family and friends BY EMAIL. The designs are clever and elegant. Depending on what you opt for, the service is free or minimal compared to overseas postage. Easy to use, good for the environment and the messages are well-received!

Make your own music videos at animoto.com.

From the Literacy Coordinator

By Jane del Pozo
Anna and David's Mom

I hope by now everyone has settled into their classes and is enjoying themselves. To help you find out more about what your child is doing, the Literacy Information Evening will take place on Monday, November 24. The evening will be an opportunity for you to meet the Literacy team, see in more detail what the children are doing in their classes and ask any questions you may have. Your child will bring home a reminder of the date and details of how the evening is structured nearer the time.

As part of the evening we would like to give some ideas for supporting and continuing class work at home. To get started here are some ideas for creating a "literary-rich" home environment where reading, writing, talking, and listening are a natural part of daily life.

- Establish a regular time and place for daily reading aloud, such as before bed or during bath time. Children who are read to at home learn to read more easily, have a higher vocabulary, and are more likely to develop a love for reading than those who are not read to on a regular basis. At appropriate times point to the words as you read them or focus on certain words in particular books.
- Have a place in your home for a family library. Keep a variety of materials - reading books, picture, books, magazines, dictionaries etc.
- Also encourage personal libraries. Children like to have their own place to keep books that have special meaning for them and learn to respect their books. As often as possible, let your children choose the books they want to add to their collection.
- Share your love of books and reading - "This was my favourite book when I was your age," or "I can't wait to start my new book."
- Discuss what your children are reading and encourage them to think, solve problems, and make predictions. Ask questions such as, "Did you ever...?" or "How would you feel if that happened to you?"
- Have plenty of books, paper and writing tools accessible in places children can reach on their own.
- Have frequent conversations with each child, as well as with the family as a whole. Encourage everyone to express their ideas, opinions and feelings.
- Reinforce language and literacy skills by doing puzzles and playing games such as Lotto, Scrabble, and Trivial Pursuit.
- Encourage reading and writing for pleasure and for specific uses, such as making a shopping list, writing a Christmas list.
- Label items around the house, change the labels on a regular basis; let your child choose them and write the labels.
- Listen to audio books – children will learn these stories off by heart and then can read and follow the story for themselves, thus creating a sense of an independent reader.

Pre-Literacy Competition Winner

Congratulations to Mathieu Begnin for his prize-winning drawing.

Usborne Children's Book Sale

DATE: Wednesday, November 5
TIME: 9:30am to 2:30pm
WHERE: Crossroads Church

Laraine Tural (greeting cards) and Sam Cox (jewellery) will also be selling on site. If you cannot be present on the day of the sale, complete the order form before Friday, November 7. PGP's library benefits from every book purchased by a member.

Children's Corner

By Jane del Pozo

Literacy 1 Competition

The first mention of autumn in our household seems to prompt a countdown to Christmas. As I have also seen the first Christmas adverts on UK television and received our annual reminder that the Hameau de Père Noel in Andilly is already open, perhaps we can help the Literacy 1 classes get excited.

Draw a Christmas tree decorated with these objects:

angel
star
tinsel
snowman

Write the words underneath the decorations. Add something yourself. Try to learn to recognize the words by Christmas time.

The entries can be given to teachers by Wednesday, December 3 and, as usual, there will be a small prize for the winner who will be announced in the next newsletter.

Autumn Word Search

Circle the 14 words listed below in the grid.

rake
scarecrow
brown
yellow
squirrel
leaves
apple
red
bonfire
harvest
fall
pear
orange
acom

R	G	M	B	O	N	F	I	R	E
Y	N	B	R	O	W	N	B	Y	V
E	S	C	A	R	E	C	R	O	W
L	H	Z	C	A	A	R	Q	D	F
L	A	R	O	N	P	E	K	L	A
O	R	W	R	G	P	D	G	E	L
W	V	N	N	E	L	Q	X	A	L
K	E	R	A	K	E	H	L	V	V
M	S	S	Q	U	I	R	R	E	L
F	T	Q	K	P	E	A	R	S	C

Snowman Jokes

What did one snowman say to the other snowman?
Can you smell carrot?

How does a snowman lose weight?
He waits for the weather to get warmer!

Where do snowmen go to dance?
A snow ball!

What do you call an old snowman?
Water!

By Amy Webster
Certified Raw Food Coach

How to Get Started with Raw Foods

In a previous article you learned about the many health benefits of a high raw diet and all the reasons why this eating program is so much better for us. Today's article will show you, in a few basic and simple steps, how to get started with raw foods.

Before you embark on a new eating program, it is always a good idea to take stock of where you stand. In fact, knowing where you are today is a good place to begin. What foods do you eat right now? What foods do you crave and what time of day do you consume them? How do you feel when you eat particular foods? These are all questions we'd do well to ask ourselves and try to answer as honestly as possible. This process will be an eye-opener in understanding what works for you and what doesn't. Most of us don't take the time to listen to our own needs, our moods, let alone our general state of well being. But it is not until you do that you will begin to put your finger on what is not right for you and what you can change.

A food and mood diary is the best nutritional tool you will ever have. Yes, this may sound simplistic, but have you ever tried keeping a regular food and mood diary? You will be amazed by what that will reveal. Simply take a text book you enjoy looking at, and commit to writing in it daily. You will need to write down everything you eat and drink, and when. Don't forget those mid-morning or afternoon snacks and binges, the drinks, cocktails or glass of wine. And all the liquids you take. Also write down the way you feel – your mood, emotions, state of mind, general energy level. This should not take too much time, you can make it as simple or thorough as you want. The secret is to really stick to it daily (even if you fill it out on the following day). Do this for a minimum of one week, longer is even better.

You will be amazed at how this will automatically affect the way you eat (in a positive way) and what you will find out on your own about your needs and your relationship with food.

Start introducing raw foods at your own rhythm by simply adding raw items to your normal routine. This may mean simply adding a fresh juice to your daily food intake. Fresh fruit and vegetable juices are a fantastic way to bring much needed vitamins and nutrients into your body. Make it a daily ritual which all members of your family can partake in. Start with a blend of fruits (orange, which is best pressed or squeezed, adding anything seasonal like apple, pear, nectarine, peach, prune or grapes, for example). Choose fresh, juicy and seasonal fruits, preferably organic, to make your own juice at home. There is no comparison in terms of taste and nutritional content between a fresh, home-made juice and the pasteurized ones that fill supermarket shelves. You may also be brave enough to introduce high energy vegetable juices. Green ones are the most alkaline and beneficial, such as cucumber, celery and lime. All of these are best consumed on an empty stomach.

Smoothies are another great way to get started. Smoothies have become very trendy of late and retailers have now introduced a variety to fulfill the needs of health seekers. But again, those found in supermarkets are poor cousins to their fresh counterparts. Believe me, there is nothing easier than making a smoothie: mix different fruits together in a blender, add water if necessary, and voilà! Bananas are a great basis for smoothies, add any juicy fruit of your choice and enjoy. Add green leafy vegetables if you want to benefit from a fantastic energy boost, but it may take time to get used to the color and/or taste! Another thing to remember: unlike juices, smoothies are a whole food, as the pulp is not discarded. When properly covered, this thick drink can be kept in the refrigerator during 24 hours without losing too many nutrients.

Snack on fruit or crudités. This is another simple way to increase your raw intake. It is something most health conscious people do already and it can become a daily habit. Especially for children who love the colors and textures of prepared fruit and vegetables which are fun to munch on and lovely to look at. Can anyone resist a plate of freshly cut fruit or crudités? It does take a bit of time to prepare but the result is a tasty and healthy snack for the whole family to enjoy. Of course, **salads make great nutritious meals.** Just remember to add healthy fats such as nuts, seeds, avocado or cold pressed organic oils, as well as plenty of protein-rich live sprouts, and you will have a wholesome meal. There is really no need to add animal protein or starches to make this filling and satisfying.

Start with these few simple steps and observe how you feel as a result. Listen to your body and your natural instincts. Chances are you will be consuming less of the foods you need to avoid, and more of the healthy ones, all of this naturally. You will begin to feel increased energy, fewer mood swings and enhanced well being. Then you will be in a position to go one step further if you are so inclined. In the meantime, remember to always enjoy your food, give up on guilt and constraints, find inspiration in books, informative websites or support groups, and the results will be amazing!

To learn more about raw food and attend raw food classes, go to www.blog.simplyraw.ch. This blog is published in both English and French. The next Simply Raw Level 1 introductory class to raw food is taking place in Morges on Saturday 29 November.

www.simplyraw.ch
To inspire you, help you regain energy and optimal wellness, thanks to a healthy, delicious and fun high raw food diet! Find information, classes, recipes, practical tips and personal coaching.

An Interview With Joanna McMahon

Continued from Page 3

Favourite resorts in the past have been Wengen, Savognin and Val d'Isère but for the past 4 years we have skied in the Valais, in La Tzoumaz in the 4 Vallées on the north side of Verbier. My other favourite sport is Nordic walking - anywhere I can. The vicinity of my home, walking home from work or round a cruise ship! I always pack my telescopic poles.

Your favourite place in Geneva or surrounding France? By the Château de Genthod looking down over the vineyards towards the lake and the jet d'eau with Mont Blanc in the background or on the hill in Pregny (Chambesy) where you can park and look out over the lake. There is a big map there pointing out all the mountains.

Your favourite book? I'm not really a book person now. My attention span must be short as I find it difficult to concentrate on anything these days. I used to love authors like Daphné du Maurier and Susan Howatch and quite different, Patricia Cornwell. I guess my favourite book would span a number of decades, classes, have a big scandal and sex thrown in. I am an eternal Jilly Cooper fan.

Your favourite movie? Breakfast at Tiffany's. George Peppard was so gorgeous then in the days before he piled on the pounds, put a cigar in his mouth and headed up The A-Team. I once wore a black dress like Audrey Hepburn's (that was my mother's) to a Ball in London with my hair piled up, cigarette holder and elbow length gloves.

I think I was all of 16 and thought I was terribly sophisticated. I love the end of the film when it is pouring with rain and she is walking down a New York alley calling for her "cat".

Your favourite music? Brought up on Abba, Boney M, Elton John and ELO. As a teenager I was a new Romantic and loved Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet, David Bowie. In my twenties, 80's Northern Soul and Disco and when I met my husband the older stuff - Rolling Stones, Chris Rea and Queen. I love listening to music in my car and having a little bop behind the wheel.

The Joy of Soup

By Soupylady
The Masked Mom

Posh Soups for the Yuletide Season

Well, it's definitely turning into weather for soup! Cold, crisp mornings (or even cold damp mornings!) make my soupy taste buds start to tingle. I come home from dropping my daughter at school and straightaway get out my trusty soup pan. Most of our weekends have been spent consuming soup-based meals. These taste even better on return from a walk in the autumnal woods. Our favourite tattie soup has been consumed in great quantity, as has pumpkin, carrot and coriander and Scotch broth. There's a story behind the Scotch broth, but I'll save it for another day! While plain soups have their place, what with the Yuletide season approaching, I thought I'd share some of my most posh soup recipes this month. I have made them both to try and impress my in-laws, and while they don't rank amongst my top favourites, they are definitely a talking point. If you try them, I hope you like them!

Cream of Lemon Soup

This comes from a charity shop book find – *Best-kept Secrets of the Women's Institute – Soups by Grace Mulligan and Dilwen Philips*. Catching sight of it on my recipe shelf certainly doesn't make me feel all sexy and Nigella-like, but it is a font of knowledge when it comes to soups!

25g butter
2 onions, chopped finely
80g carrots, grated
80g celery, very finely chopped
2 lemons, zested and juiced
15g plain flour
1.1 litres vegetable stock
2 bay leaves
150ml carton of single cream, to serve

Melt the butter and sweat the onion, carrot and celery, covered, for 10 – 15 minutes without browning. Add the flour, mix well and cook briefly. Stir in the stock, making sure the flour has blended smoothly. Add bay leaves and lemon zest. Cook until vegetables are soft (15 minutes or so). Remove the bay leaves, then add 20ml of lemon juice. Add more if you think it needs it. Stir in the cream, reheat gently and serve.

Chestnut and Cranberry Soup

This recipe comes from the same source as the previous one. It's a little unusual and is certainly Christmassy.

6 shallots, chopped
3 celery sticks, chopped
1 litre vegetable stock
a sprig of thyme
450g frozen or jarred chestnuts
115g cranberries
60ml port
10ml lemon juice

Soften the shallots and celery in 30ml of stock over a low heat. Add the remaining stock and thyme and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the chestnuts and cranberries. Bring to the boil and simmer for a further 5 minutes. Remove the thyme, and liquidize. Stir in the port and add lemon juice to taste.

Mother-to-Mother

Your Amazing PLACENTA

While we all marvel at the miracle of life and the wonders of birth, we very often fail to think about this amazing fantastic disposable organ that makes a baby possible, the placenta.

How does it look? Not pretty...but I was at a birth and the mother thought it 'sounded' pretty and named her daughter 'Placenta'! It is a bloody, dark red, round flat mass about 20cm in diameter and 2.5cm thick at its centre. It weighs approximately one-sixth of the full-term baby's weight. Attached at the centre of the placenta is the umbilical cord, average length 50cm, which then attaches to the baby's umbilicus (the baby's tummy button). There are membranes called the 'amniotic sac' which are attached to the placenta like a bag. This is where the baby is safely kept and protected in the amniotic fluid. This is the bag that breaks when your 'waters break' and the amniotic fluid escapes.

So what does it do? The placenta is an organ, rooted to the lining of the womb which links your baby's blood supply to your own, while also keeping the two separate. By linking to your blood supply the placenta carries out functions that your unborn baby can't do for itself like:

- passing oxygen and nutrients from your blood supply into the placenta, from there the umbilical cord carries the oxygen and nutrients to your baby
- excreting carbon dioxide which is a waste product from the baby
- allowing antibodies to pass to your baby to protect against infection and most bacteria
- producing hormones that help your baby to develop and grow.

On the downside:

- viruses can cross the placenta freely (i.e. German measles) which can cause miscarriage and birth defects

- alcohol, nicotine and other drugs can cross and may cause damage to the unborn baby.

At the birth? Just when you think labour is all over with the delivery of the baby, uterine contractions help expel the placenta down the vagina to deliver it as well. I would urge you to look at your placenta, no it's not weird, it's amazing and has given you the gift of life. Respect it. The midwife checks it very carefully to ensure it looks normal and is complete. If fragments are left behind you can get clots, heavy bleeding or a postnatal infection.

Then what? Most of the time it is medically disposed of, used in research or sold to cosmetic companies for use as a common ingredient in beauty products. Some women choose to eat it, fried, baked or just plain raw...my dad planted mine in the rose garden!

By Alexandra Gay Richard
Midwife and Lactation Consultant

Go Local

During this holiday season, consider giving a gift made regionally. Here are a few suggestions:

Vilac

Vilac has been manufacturing wooden toys since 1911. Their factory is located in Moirans-en-Montagne (nestled in the Jura). Go to www.vilac.com to shop online or to locate a boutique near you.

Azimut Junior (Geneva) sells Vilac toys including several cute umbrellas and pull toys.

BSZ Laden Sinnvoll

This Swiss-German company makes three-dimensional puzzles by hand that are works of art and a challenge (costly too). The toys are crafted by disabled persons. For more information see www.bsz-sinnvoll.ch (in German).

If you are lucky, you can find one of their wooden puzzles in stock in Globus.

Caran d'Ache

Caran d'Ache is a well-known company that offers "Swiss made" drawing and writing tools for both the big and little kids in your life. My own budding artists love the Neocolors for their rich and smooth texture. Their website is www.carandache.ch.

What's On In and Around Geneva

By Claire Dorey (Newsletter Assistant)
Lucy's Mom

NOVEMBER

25 Oct to 2 Nov **FILM FESTIVAL**: P'tits Yeux Grand Ecran Film Festival (Small Eyes Big Screen film festival) with the theme of Africa. Catch the tail end of this great film festival for our little ones break during the autumn school holidays in France. Check out the program at www.ville-gex.fr

1 Nov to 31 Dec **INDOOR PLAY**: Espace Junior. Let your children have a big go in this great indoor area. Bouncy castles, car tracks, trampolines etc...Open during school holidays and bank holidays. At Palexpo, Geneva. www.espacejunior.com

1 to 2 Nov **LIVE SINGER FOR CHILDREN**: Henri Dès. Try to catch this winning concert of joyful and inventive songs written and performed by this famous French children's song writer (France's Raffi basically). If it's too late, check him out next time! Théâtre du Léman, Geneva. www.theatreduleman.ch

Until 13 Dec **EXHIBIT**: Superconductivity: Science or magic? Discover everything behind superconductivity. What is it? How did this liquefied helium revolutionize technology and our lives? How is it used in the magnets in the LHC created at the CERN? Interactive station to see just how levitation created by this scientific revolution works. www.cern.ch

Until 24 Dec **VISIT**: Le Hameau du Père Noël (Father Christmas' village). Don't miss a chance for your young children to visit his home, see what preparations are going on and listen to his wife tell stories (some Sats.) Watch Santa leave with his reindeers on Christmas eve. (5pm) Lights and magic guaranteed. www.andillyloisirs.com

Until 1 Feb **EXHIBIT**: Akhénaton and Nefertiti. Discover and marvel ancient artifacts and art work from this very important time in Egyptian history. Family visits every Sunday. www.adp-mah@ville-ge.ch

1 to 16 Nov **MARIONNETTE SHOW**: Un Os à la Noce- (A Bone at the Wedding). A children's adaptation of Antigone. With the help of hand held marionettes Antigone comes alive on this inventive stage set. The adaptation accentuates its main themes that are important to older children and teens: revolt, refusal of authority, ... Starting age 7. www.marionnettes.ch

2 to 30 Nov **PLAY**: Sept Corbeaux sur les Planches (Seven Crows on Stage). An adaptation of the famous Brothers' Grimm tale The Seven Crows. The sad fate of a group of children who turn into crows. www.theatre-topffer.ch

4 and 5 Nov **MUSICAL SHOW** for our littlest ones: Ciné-Baby: Symphonie Bizarre (Ciné-Baby series: Bizarre Symphony). A musical for tots starting age 2 not to miss in the Vélodrome theater in Plan-les-Ouates. Program at www.plan-les-ouates.ch. Reservations: reservation@plan-les-ouates.ch

4 and 5 Nov **PLAY**: Ali Baba et les 40 Voleurs (Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves). A stage interpretation of this exciting classic performed at Forum Meyrin for children ages 7 and up. www.forum-meyrin.ch

5 Nov **CONCERT**: A Classical music concert "just for kids". Children and their parents will enjoy a short concert entitled "Planets" in Geneva's famous Victoria Hall commented by the conductor. Orchestre de la Suisse Romande will offer a series of young public concerts called "Prelude" that will be performed throughout the year. Check out program at www.osr.ch

5 Nov **SHOW**: Otto, Autobiographie d'un Ours en Peluche (Otto, the Autobiography of a Stuffed Teddy Bear). Watch your child "become" this teddy bear and empathize with his emotions and feelings. Starting age 7. Usine à Gaz, Nyon. www.usineagaz.ch

7 Nov **CIRCUS & MORE**: Hors Piste (Outside the Ring). A modern circus with trapezists, jugglers, acrobats, dancers, story-telling and musicians. Don't miss this explosion of talent and fun for the whole family! Starting age 5. www.esplanadedulac.fr

9 Nov **MUSICAL**: Oui-Oui (Noddy) Musical about a favourite cartoon character put on at the Arena. Starting age 3. www.geneve-arena.ch

14 Nov **PLAY**: Le Pont des Pierres (The Stone Bridge). An older children's play about two boys and their struggle and joy in many tough adventures. Starting age 10. Théâtre Am Stram Gram, Geneva. www.amstramgram.ch Book in advance!

14 to 17 Nov **FAIR**: Salon des Vins et de la Gastronomie du Pays de Gex (Wine and Gastronomy from the Pays de Gex Fair). Come and taste and enjoy many local specialties and see some cooking demonstrations. Don't forget to taste the famous "Bleu de Gex" cheese made with the milk from the cows from Gex. Espace Perdtemps, Gex, France. www.pgpa.assoc.cc-pays-de-gex.fr

14 to 23 Nov **FAIR**: La Foire de Genève (The Geneva Fair). This year's enormous fair in Palexpo is dedicated to the Xi'An Pavillion, the Chinese megapolis. Its 2000 sq meters will draw you into a Chinese world and atmosphere with its food, culture and more. Visit its many themed area: the ever famous daily animal shows, a Design area, and an area dedicated to sustainable development with activities for children and the Florales flower and vegetal show to take your breath away. 19 Nov. Free entrance for children under 16. www.foiredegeneve.ch and www.florales.ch

10 Nov to 10 Jan A giant crèche (Crib) of Old Paris. Come and admire a beautiful collection of saints and in the automated characters Old Paris of 1495. 421 statuettes and 50 automated dolls with a 20 min story told by Jean-Pierre Coffe. A sheer joy to see before Christmas. www.la-praille.ch

14 Nov to 31 Dec **EXHIBIT**: Medusa in Africa: the Enchanting Sculpture. The MEG (Geneva Ethnographic Museum) has decided to put together an exhibit of several sculptures and masks to initiate its visitors to African art. www.ville-ge.ch/meg

17 to 23 Nov **FAIR**: Fête de la Science (Science Fair) in Pays de Gex. Science galore for children in various cities in the Pays de Gex. Through hands-on manipulation, activities, demos and simple explanations catered to a young audience, children will have a chance to understand more about renewable energy, the vast environmental changes going on and the so-much talked about particles that they work with at the CERN. Check out www.fetedelascience.fr or call the CERN's Science and Innovation Globe: +41 22 767 7676, Divonne-les-Bains' Esplanade du Lac: +33 4 50 99 17 70 and Annemasse's daycare center: +33 4 50 92 64 97.

22 Nov to 4 Jan **CIRCUS**: Cirque de Noël (Christmas Circus). This big annual circus will be held as always at Plainpalais in Geneva. www.cirque-de-noel.ch

Until 23 Nov **EXHIBIT**: Les Caisnes à Outils de Jean Tinguely (Jean Tinguely's toolbox). Check out a selection of this famous and world-renown sculptor's zany and inventive works. Offers a lot of questioning and enjoyment for the whole family. Espace Nouveau Vallon, Chêne-Bougeries www.chene-bougeries.ch

23 Nov to 24 Dec Christmas Market at the Place de la Fusterie. A large selection of artisan crafts and objects sold in little wooden chalets. Food and hot drinks to warm you up. www.wwsa.ch

28 Nov **MUSIC FESTIVAL**: Tambour Battant Festival (Beating Drum Festival). The ateliers of Ethnomusicology of Geneva organize several music (and dance) of the world festivals each year. Most shows take place in the famous Alhambra performance hall.

The building was saved from being torn down a few months ago. This festival takes in all the drum percussions from Africa and will offer an explosion of talent and joy on stage. Special program for young children too. Check it out at www.tambourbattant.org

28 Nov to 4 Jan **FESTIVAL**: Arbres et Lumières (Trees and Lights). Watch all of downtown Geneva's trees dress-up and shine with lights. A nice time to take a stroll in the evening to check out all these illuminations. www.arbreslumieres.ch

29 to 30 Nov **FAIR**: The Franco-Swiss Chocolate Fair. The second edition of this friendly and successful chocolate and gourmet fair will take place at the Esplanade du Lac at Divonne-les-Bains. For all chocolate lovers big and small. www.iletaitunefee.org

29 Nov to 21 Dec **SHOW**: La Sorcière du Placard aux Balais (The Witch from the Broom Closet). A Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève production which tells the tale of a man that suddenly makes a fortune and buys a house. Unfortunately, the house is haunted and he meets a witch in one of its closets. Funny, burlesque, amazing décor and ingenious puppetry. A must! Starting age 5. www.marionnettes.ch

30 Nov to 4 Jan **CHRISTMASTIME** in Carouge. The streets of this beautiful village will be filled with decorated trees, horse drawn buggies, poneys and Father Christmas should pop by Midnight mass with the Jordan Spiritual Singers. Check out program: www.carouge.ch

DECEMBER

2 to 24 Dec **VISIT**: Father Christmas' home. Every day but Mondays, the Hôtel Montbrillant next to Cornavin train station greets children to come and see some of Father Christmas' enchanting rooms. Geneva, +41 22 733 7784.

3 Dec 'Soucis de plume'. Marionette show for children 4 to 7 years old at the Théâtre de Château Rouge in Annemasse. www.chateau-rouge.net

6 Dec **FAMILY RACE**: Course de l'Escalade. Enjoy this annual evening race in the Old Town. Deadline to sign-up Nov 1st. Fun to watch and warm and exciting atmosphere. www.escalade.ch

7 to 9 Dec Fête de l'Escalade (Escalade Historical Remembrance). Geneva's commemoration of the victory over the Savoyards in 1602. Parade in traditional costumes takes place on Sunday evening. www.compagniede1602.ch

11 to 14 Dec International Horse Show. Equestrian jumping at the Palexpo. www.concours-hippique.ch

11 to 14 Dec **PLAY**: Mascarade- A series of very clever sketches and about changing identities. Starting age 9. www.amstramgram.ch. Book in advance!

14 Dec **MUSICAL PLAY**: Gulliver et fils (Gulliver and Son). A theatre and song performance taken from the famous piece of literature "Gulliver's travels". Children will enjoy seeing life through the eyes of the young Jonathan Gulliver and his imaginary friends from Lilliput. For more on this play: www.lestrottoirs.com. Reservations at www.esplanadedulac.fr

27 to 31 Dec **SONGS**: Les Fabulettes et Moi (Tales and Me). Am Stram Gram theatre invites children and families to a joyous holiday moment of songs and laughs. www.amstramgram.ch. Book ahead!

31 Dec Genève en Fête. Check out the program for New Year's Eve. In Geneva. www.geneve31decembre.ch

The January/February Newsletter

Deadline is Friday, December 12.

Please send your submissions to

newsletter_pgp@yahoo.com.