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MOMS Club Offers Support, Friendship to Area Mothers

Kids, Especially During the Pandemic, Find Supported Moms are Better Moms



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Four-year-old Aiden Thomas runs circles around his mom, Lisa Thomas, at a MOMS Club of Yelm event at Longmire Park.
DANIEL WARN/ NISQUALLY VALLEY NEWS



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By Daniel Warn / dan@yelmonline.com

As inspired by Dr. Seuss’ “The Cat In The Hat,” last Friday’s MOMS Club event could be summarized as: “The sun did not shine. It was too wet to play, (but the moms went to the park) all that cold, cold wet day.”

Luckily, the rain died out before the MOMS Club of Yelm descended on Longmire Park Friday, April 30, for their monthly Meet and Greet, but the weather was still less bright than the week’s previous days.

Dauntless of the weather, the women dutifully brought their children to the park for some much-needed playtime for the kids and support for their fellow moms. And like during a reading in the club’s regular Zoom storybook time, the kids were primed to find nourishment and joy from the activity.

“The support I’ve gotten from MOMS Club is really good,” said Lisa Thomas, club president. “When we moved here, we were new to the area and I was a new mom. The club was my way to meet people. I don’t know if I would have met hardly anybody if I hadn’t joined the club. That’s been really nice.”

MOMS Club of Yelm is a nonprofit organization, a local chapter of MOMS Club International that serves Yelm, Rainier, Roy, Mckenna and Tenino. It offers support to moms, mostly those who stay at home, but is open to all mothers in the community.

The club offers a monthly “Mom’s Night Out,” playdates, park dates, hikes, and outings that would be interesting to both kids and moms, like a tour of the local fire station.

“We meet monthly for our ... membership meeting and our biggest thing is to give back to the community, especially for the moms in the community,” Thomas said. “We do a lot of service projects in the area and try to give back to not only Yelm, but all the other areas as well.”

For instance, the club donated a swingset to Longmire Park two summers ago. It also sponsors a family every Christmas and Thanksgiving and is currently organizing an effort to bring a “Little Free Library” box to a local park.

But it’s the human interaction and the camaraderie found in doing life with others, those who are facing the same struggles, that keeps the mothers coming back.

“Before I even joined the MOMS Club, which I’ve been part of the club for two years now, I joined because I was so lonely,” said Isabella Armenta, membership vice president for the club. “Just being at home with your kids, you don’t have that adult conversation. You can talk to your baby, but they can’t really hold a conversation back with you.”

Conversation with actual adults is a big pull for members, it seems, as seen with the case of new member Brooke Leslie, mother of 2-year-old Bradley Leslie.

“I’m hoping to get great conversation with other mothers, that’s really what I’m looking forward to, and children to interact together,” Leslie said. “It’s those two things that I want, and I’m already finding that they’re happening.”

Armenta said her ability to build friendship with the other moms through her interactions with them has not only been valuable to her, but the interaction with the other kids has been valuable to her soon-to-be 3-year-old daughter Ellerie Armenta as well.

“I just really enjoy the MOMS Club ... to just have that support group and friends,” she said. “And for my daughter to have friends and those social interactions, which are super important at this age.”

Armenta said she formed real friendships with other moms in the club, relationships that she takes with her outside of club events. The moms are all so supportive of one another, she said, helping each other in a myriad of ways.

“If someone needs help, like, babysitting, or anything like that, or has an appointment and has no one to watch their kid, I have helped some of our moms in the MOMS Club with that, and they’ve helped me too,” Armenta said. “I had a dentist appointment and had no one to watch (Ellerie). It’s kind of difficult to bring a baby to a dentist appointment and get what you need done ... so it’s super helpful to have friends to be there when you need them.”

Then the pandemic hit, and like the kids in “The Cat In The Hat,” the area’s youngest citizens may have been saying: “Too (much virus) to go out and too (unsafe) to play ball. So we sat in the house. We did nothing at all. So all we could do was to sit, sit, sit, sit. And we did not like it. Not one little bit.”

Indeed, times got especially hard for moms with younger kids during the pandemic, Thomas said.

“Being a mom in the pandemic has been frustrating, especially with an active kid,” she said of her 4-year-old Aiden Thomas. “(COVID-19) didn’t shut down our club, but it made it so we couldn’t get together in person. Now that things are opening back up, the kids — especially the ones who were born in the pandemic — they need to see other kids and have fun and play.”

During the lockdown, the moms supported each other virtually, with Zoom activities like crafts and storybook time where books like “The Cat In The Hat” were read, but Thomas said it wasn’t the same as true, in-person social interaction.

“You just get cabin fever, and you want your kids to play and have fun,” she said. “For me, the hardest part is (my son is) only little for so long, and I want him to play and have those experiences, and I’m missing out on seeing him enjoy those experiences at this age. He missed his friends, so that was really hard to explain why he couldn’t see his friends (during the pandemic.)”

Leslie leaned into that point as well, saying the pandemic-born isolation of both herself and Bradley was a challenge she thinks MOMS Club can help them overcome. It’s why she joined.

“It’s been difficult in the sense that we don’t get out with other people very much, so I want (Bradley) to be more social, just teaching him those social skills,” Leslie said. “I’ve been most saddened that I haven’t gotten to see him interact and laugh and run and play, so that’s where we’re really hoping to get something great out of this.”

Other moms can join the club by going online to www.momsclub.org and searching for a local chapter or by messaging Armenta at the “MOMS Club of Yelm” Facebook page.

“And even in hard times, too, just to have those connections to just vent or talk to somebody and have that group behind you is really valuable,” Armenta said. “Like a village. It takes a village to raise a baby, they say, so yeah, you have your village right here.”

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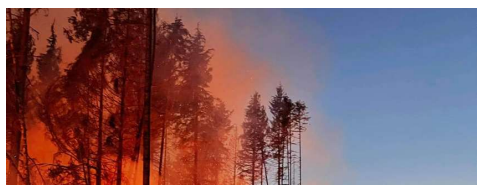
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