

FREE

Issue 21 Summer/Autumn 2017

London Mums



Happy
10th
Anniversary



Garth Jennings



Annabel Croft

**Star
mum**

**REESE
WITHERSPOON**
talks about her
SINGing career

www.londonmumsmagazine.com



*"Thanks to First Aid for Life
I knew what to do
when it really mattered"*



Gain the confidence to help

www.firstaidforlife.org.uk

e-mail: emma@firstaidforlife.org.uk

Tel: 020 8675 4036

Fully Regulated and Approved

THE BIG INTERVIEW



This issue is very special for me personally as I celebrate 10 years since founding the London Mums' organisation. Our mums' community network would have not been possible without amazing mumpreneurs who have actively supported our organisation for the past 10 years. From this issue I have started a series of interviews about my unsung heroes, who have contributed to make London Mums' lives easier over the years including Maria Johnson, Rita Kobrak, Karina Grassy, Elaine Halligan, Emma Hammett and Stella Bataille. You will feel truly inspired!

I also feel very honoured that for the next three issues guest illustrator and celebrity author Alice Tait has designed a new logo inspired by the character from her latest picture book *No, Nancy, No*.

And who better than star mum and Hollywood royalty Reese Whitherspoon to make us all happy in our special chat about her role as yummy mummy Rosita in the animation *Sing*.

I could not miss the opportunity to interview *Sing* writer and director Garth Jennings who reveals more exclusive behind-the-scenes gossip from this masterpiece by Illumination/Universal (the same filmmakers behind *Despicable Me 3* out soon).

Former tennis champion and London mum Annabel Croft tells me her predictions about Wimbledon 2017, her views on fashion on the tennis court, how to deal with teenagers and her tips to be successful in sport.

Check out more celebrity interviews on our dedicated YouTube channel www.youtube.com/londonmums including a recent one with handsome British actor Luke Roberts as well as US author Jeff Kinney (*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*).

Last but not least, you can find out the latest Summer essentials in the London Mums' shopping pages filled with lots of inspiration for trendy toys, games, party supplies, travel and camping essentials. For additional gift ideas check out London Mums' offers' site londonmumsmagazine.entstix.com where you can get up to **60% OFF tickets** for **West End shows** and lots of London attractions.

I hope you will enjoy reading this Summer/Autumn issue as much as we have loved making it!

Spread the word – London Mums is totally and utterly FREE!

Monica

Monica Costa

Editor in Chief, Founder of London Mums and mum of ten-year-old Diego. Let me know what you think of this issue at monica@londonmums.org.uk or on Twitter @Londonmums

THE BIG INTERVIEW



REESE WHITHERSPOON

Editorial

London Mums magazine is produced by London Mums Limited

Editor and publisher: Monica Costa
monica@londonmums.org.uk

Editorial Assistant: Carolina Kon
info@londonmumsmagazine.com

Illustrators: Irene Gomez Granados (chief), Alice Tait (guest illustrator)

Contributors: Stella Bataille, Karina Grassy, Elaine Halligan, Emma Hammett, Rita Kobrak, Maria Johnson, Diego Scintu

Photography credits: Cover Photo of Reese Whitherspoon and images of the *SING* movie interviews are from the *SING* red carpet and performance at the Toronto International Film Festival courtesy of Universal Pictures.

POST: London Mums Limited,
74 Dowdeswell Close, London SW15 5RL
CALL: 07900088123

© Copyright London Mums Limited 2017

Advertisers & Sponsors

To discuss your advertising needs fill in the contact form online or email info@londonmumsmagazine.com

NEXT ISSUE: The Winter 2017/2018 issue will be out at the end of October 2017 – Deadline for advertising: 4 September 2017

DESIGN: Urban52 Ltd,
mark@urban52.com

PRINTED Bishops Printers Contact:
martin.rowland@bishops.co.uk

Views expressed in articles are strictly those of the authors. Every effort is made to ensure that all the information given is correct but London Mums Limited accepts no liability for any inaccuracies, errors or omissions that may occur or their consequences. This publication is copyright and may not be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form without written permission from the publisher. Unsolicited materials cannot be returned.



IN THIS ISSUE

Summer/Autumn 2017

- 06 REESE WITHERSPOON** talks about her SINGing career
- 10 GARTH JENNINGS** reveals behind-the-scenes gossips from his big animation debut SING
- 14 ANNABEL CROFT** on Wimbledon, parenting and working in sport
- 16 LONDON FUN** The Secrets inside Mill Hill School NW7
- 18 MUMPRENEUR'S TESTIMONIAL** Karina Grassy on creating sleeping bags for a new generation
- 20 CLUB PETIT PIERROT** is awarded full GOLD Accreditation by Children's Activities Association
- 22 FIVE MINUTE CHAT** with successful mumpreneur Maria Johnson, co-founder and owner of Eddie Catz
- 23 CHILD SAFETY**
- 24 TRAVEL WITH KIDS** Adult Time vs. Family Time in the Mountains
- 26 INSPIRATIONAL MUMS** Rita Kobrak and her Italian holidays for mums
- 27 TRAVEL WITH KIDS** Holidays for MUMS run by MUMS
- 28 ASK THE EXPERT** Elaine Halligan – MEAN GIRLS
- 30 SUMMER ESSENTIALS WISH LIST**

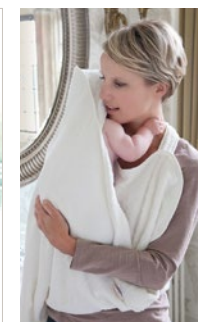


the
original **cuddledry**®

award winning hands-free baby bath towel
for **safe** baby bathtimes



Voted '**Mumsnet Best Gift**' for a Newborn
9 years running



The Original **Cuddledry**® is the 'hands-free' babysafe bath towel loved by thousands of parents and their babies since the day it was born. With the **Cuddledry**®, every baby bathtime is special and happy.

New
Packaging
for 2017



Tel: +44 (0) 1823 323363 | Email: customer@cuddledry.com

www.cuddledry.com

15% discount on all products at
www.cuddledry.com with code LONMUMS

A full-page photograph of Reese Witherspoon and Matthew McConaughey. Reese is on the right, wearing a grey patterned dress, and Matthew is on the left, wearing a grey suit and a gold tie. They are both smiling at the camera.

REESE WITHERSPOON TALKS ABOUT HER SINGing CAREER

By Monica Costa

REESE WITHERSPOON Images from the *SING* red carpet and performance at the Toronto International Film Festival are courtesy of Universal Pictures.

These last couple of years have seen Reese Witherspoon blooming as an actress and the world cannot seem to get enough of her. She has just finished working as a producer and actress on the popular HBO drama *Big Little Lies* and on 29 September she will be back on the big screen in a new romantic comedy called *Home Again* playing the most adorable character. We all started loving her when she played the sweet legal student in *Legally Blonde* but then she earned icon status thanks to her appearance in *Sweet Home Alabama* and *Wild*. But the one role she will be universally remembered for is Rosita, the singing sensation and mummy to lots of little piglets in animation *SING*, one of the best children's movies in 2017. Here is what she had to say to *London Mums* about her experience voicing this yummy mummy with a passion for music.

Q. Were you looking forward to working with Illumination Entertainment?

RW: Oh yes, I was excited about the idea of working with Chris Meledandri and Illumination. We are big fans of *Despicable Me* in my house and *Minions* is my youngest son's favorite film, so we watched that a lot, too! I just think they do a great job at making movies that are likeable to grownups and kids of all ages. And I loved being a part of a quality family film that is about joyful things and that celebrates life.

Q. Having done it before on numerous occasions, what is your favorite thing about voicing a character in an animated movie?

RW: That it's so freeing and creative. There are endless possibilities! That experience of having no boundaries is kind of magical.

Q. Like in your Oscar-winning performance for *Walk the Line*, you sang all your songs. How was that experience this time around?

RW: It was really good. We had great musical producers like Harvey Mason, who was amazing and really encouraging. He let me sing *Firework* and *Shake it Off* a million times! They just really helped me with the whole performance aspect of it all.

Q. Those performances say a lot about your character, Rosita.

RW: Yes, because they let you know how she is feeling: strong, weak...

Q. Mothers all over the world are going to love Rosita.

RW: I hope so, because the truth is that she is that invisible mum that no one really values or realises has a song in her heart. I think mothers everywhere can relate to her and hopefully kids will appreciate that their mums were real people before they were mothers and that they had their own dreams.

Q. It takes a while for her husband to appreciate that too...

RW: Yes, which is precisely why I find the moment so beautiful when Rosita's husband runs up on stage and kisses her.

Q. How important is it for Rosita to be selected for this singing contest?

RW: It's very important because I think she feels invisible. And I think that a lot of women feel that way too when they become a mom, as they stop working and then don't know how they are going to get back to what they wanted to accomplish. Some women have a loss of identity. So, I think it's great that Rosita gets this opportunity because she is thrilled to be a part of this group of people.

Q. There is a lot of strength and courage in her.

RW: Yes, although she does feel a bit defeated when she can't get her steps right. Then, she has her great breakthrough moment in the grocery store when she thinks no one is watching. I love watching people dance and enjoy themselves without fearing the judgment of others. There is something really beautiful about that.

Q. And we can all relate to her fear of failing.

RW: For sure! I have been scared many times in my life, but sometimes you just have to do it and be brave enough to try. And it certainly helps when it works out well, because then you are willing to take an even bigger leap.

Q. What do you like about this story?

RW: I like that it has such a hopeful message and also that there are all these multi-generational characters in it. There are a lot of great aspects of family represented in the film.

Q. Why do you believe Garth Jennings, who makes his directorial debut in animation with *SING*, was the right filmmaker for this project?

RW: I think Garth does a great job at being compassionate about each character. He would tell me why he related to Rosita and who she was in his life. It's just great to approach character with humanity and an understanding of where you want him or her to end up. You could sense that he was a real ►



leader and he does that with a lot of benevolence and kindness. You just want to do anything for someone who is so supportive.

Q. In addition to this, Garth is the voice of Miss Crawley, Buster Moon's secretary.

RW: I love Miss Crawley and I think she is so funny! The way she walks in her little orthopedic shoes just cracks me up.

Q. At its core, *SING* is about relationships. The film is also a love letter to music. What part does it play in your life?

RW: Yes, and I like how the movie sets up these conflicts and is capable of resolving them by the end. It's a lot!

Music is a big part of my life. Growing up in the South, I listened to a lot of country music, which made me want to be a storyteller.

Q. What did you think of *SING* when you finally saw it?

RW: It was a great cinematic experience. There was real tension and I was surprised by how emotional I got at times.

Q. Did your kids enjoy it too?

RW: They loved it! And it's nice for them to participate in something I am in. They heard me rehearsing the songs around the house all the time, so they felt very invested.

I was stunned by how many popular songs the film has from incredible artists like The Beatles, Elton John, Stevie Wonder and many more. It's just great to hear these songs you love in a different way.

SING is available on Blu-Ray™, DVD and digital download now, courtesy of Universal Pictures (UK).



ALWAYS
AHEAD
OF THE
GAME



Junior
Gunnery
MEMBERSHIP
2017/18



WELCOME
TO OUR
WORLD
0-3 YEARS OLD



- Free family events
- Membership pack – stuffed with goodies
- Chances to meet players
- Experiences of a lifetime

JOIN NOW!

SIGN UP YOUR YOUNG ARSENAL FAN
FROM JUST £10 TODAY!

ALWAYSAHEADOFTHEGAME.COM/JUNIOR

GARTH JENNINGS TALKS ABOUT HIS BIG ANIMATION DEBUT WITH SING

By Monica Costa

Images from the SING red carpet and performance at the Toronto International Film Festival are courtesy of Universal Pictures.



Essex-born Garth Jennings started out making music videos for bands (Blur, Fatboy Slim, REM and Radiohead) before moving into the big screen with *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Son of Rambow*. *SING* is his first animated musical comedy as a screenwriter and director.

Q. Can you talk about the genesis of *SING*?

GJ: It all started with the producer Chris Meledandri (founder and CEO of Illumination Entertainment behind the *Despicable Me* films). He had seen my film *Son of Rambow*, really liked it, and got in touch with me. So we met in a London and he told me his idea to make a movie about a singing competition with animals. We talked about the films that would fit that idea and came up with *The Commitments*, where the songs were in the characters' lives. We started to get excited about those kinds of movies in his animation world. I went away and wrote a treatment that consisted of dozens of animal characters and their stories. They were all basically human stories that just happened to have an elephant or a mouse in them.

Q. Interestingly enough, having animals instead of humans almost helps you relate to them easier.

GJ: In the same way children books use animals to tell stories because they become a sort of caricature and allow you to be more expressive and less literal, having a gorilla go to jail instead of a real guy becomes more illustrative and helps you detach a bit.

Q. What appealed to you about the idea of putting together a singing competition with these animals?

GJ: I liked watching the journey of having a regular person getting a shot at singing, to then see what happens when he gets accepted – for better or worse, with the small ramifications that follow.

Q. Can you relate to the character of Meena (played by Tori Kelly), who has a great voice but is too shy to perform?

GJ: Yes, although unfortunately I do not have the voice of Tori Kelly to carry it off. But I get her, because in movies you are always at some point at that make or break moment where it just has to work. So in the first public showing of *SING* I was as terrified as Meena is in the film because, like with performers, after doing all this work it all comes down to that moment.

Q. Speaking of the characters, it all starts with the koala Buster Moon, who comes up with the idea of putting together this singing contest as a last bid to save his theatre.

GJ: Buster is the eternal optimist, who walks that fine line between his optimism and being slightly deceitful to bend the truth enough to get things done. As he makes things out of thin air, he has to pretend they are there. He is an exaggerated form of the ultimate showman who says, "It's going to be great, so follow me!" when there isn't really anything there. But he is hoping that by the time they arrive, it is there.

Q. What did an actor like Matthew McConaughey (who plays Buster Moon) bring to that role?

GJ: Matthew was key because, not only did I need the right character design for the role, but also an actor that could convey an optimism that was infectious as opposed to irritating. There is just a warmth to that man, apart from his hyper energy. And he was a joy to work with because he was so into being Buster Moon that you couldn't stop him! So, more than trying to get something out of him, it was more about fielding this great wave of options and ideas that he gave us. I loved our recording sessions!

Q. The pig Rosita (voiced on the screen by Reese Witherspoon) is another wonderful character.

GJ: She is based very much on my wife, who is an amazing fashion designer that quit her job when we started having children. I don't think she was too thrilled about me making her into a pig, but the truth ►

is that I love that character. We have four kids, so sometimes I would record our dinners to inspire me, even though we don't have 25 children like Rosita.

Reese completely understood her and sang all those songs. Actually, they all did! And I loved pairing her character with the pig Gunter, voiced by the great Nick Kroll, who is just very happy with himself and has these preposterous dance moves.

Q. The mouse Mike, played by Seth MacFarlane, is not that nice...

GJ: He isn't! And I love that no one made me turn him nice in the end, even though you are kind of expecting Mike to learn the error of his ways. Right from the very first treatment we decided that we wanted someone in there who was really talented and awful, because there is always one of those people around. There is always that rude, callous and deceitful person that does really well. And I know a lot of children despise this mouse, especially when he sends Meena off the stage, which is bullying, but I love the fact that we kept him as he was and didn't try to have him say something in the end like, "You know what? You guys are great, and I was wrong about you." He still thinks they are all awful and not that talented. And Seth enjoyed playing him because he has the right sense of humor and that spooky gift with his voice. He would come in to record and just nail it!

Q. You had Scarlett Johansson give life to the teenage porcupine and rock talent, Ash.

GJ: The good thing about having animals is that you can have a porcupine break down singing a song and shoot quills everywhere because it's so fun and illustrative. And Scarlett really enjoyed it and sang all her stuff too.

Q. Why did you choose the stage-frightened Meena to be an elephant?



GJ: Because I thought if you had a character that suffered from having crippling nerves, it should be the biggest. She was a lovely character to write, especially in those family moments when you see how they are trying to help and push her, even though the grandfather may be a bit too much. I love all that stuff! And Tori brought so much to that role. Seeing her perform Hallelujah made me think of gymnastics in the Olympics, when you wonder as you see those guys on those hoops, "How can that be so effortless?" Like them, she was capable of making something I think is impossible graceful and artful.

Q. The gorilla Johnny is another powerful character with a beautiful arch.

GJ: I am very proud of that simple story of a gorilla who is scared of his dad and doesn't want to let him down, but who at the same time wants to sing. And I love that it has resonated so well with both adults and children, as there is that universal trait of parents trying to make their kids be like them. And who knew Taron Egerton could sing like that!

Q. Was it fun to voice the character of Buster Moon's assistant, the lizard Miss Crawley?

GJ: So much fun! Miss Crawley is a terrible mess, but she is loyal and loves Buster. I couldn't resist playing her.

Q. So, what music do you listen to?

GJ: I literally listen to everything! My mom and dad had the most eclectic music collection, and we went to all kinds of concerts and listened to everything from Eric Clapton to Pavarotti. I think all of that is in SING, where we wanted to be as broad and embracing as possible instead of trying to be cool or hip.

SING is available on Blu-Ray™, DVD and digital download now, courtesy of Universal Pictures (UK).



La Scuola Italiana a Londra is the only fully bilingual and bi-curricular Italian school in London. It is a charity run school that opened in 2010.

The school offers:

- Fully bi-lingual and bi-curricular nursery
- Fully bi-lingual and bi-curricular primary school
- Fully bilingual Scuola Media

Registered Office: 154-156 Holland Park Avenue, London W11 4UH
A Company Limited by Guarantee Registered England no. 6046404
Registered Charity No - 1119966

T. 020 7603 5353 • E. info@scuolaitalianalondra.org
www.scuolaitalianalondra.org

www.scuolaitalianalondra.org



ANNABEL CROFT ON WIMBLEDON, PARENTING AND WORKING IN SPORT

By Monica Costa

Q: What have you learnt from your experience as a professional tennis player to pass onto children aspiring to become pros in a sport?

AC: Probably the discipline and dedication required to be a professional sportsperson. Never waste a single session messing about and not focusing. However hard you think you are working, there will always be someone out in the world willing to work harder.

Q: You have created the ACTA to help children develop tennis skills. What is the uniqueness of your academy versus other tennis clubs?

AC: I like to think we are high energy and slightly different. We keep numbers low in the groups so that the kids don't waste time trotting on the spot at the back of the court or picking up balls. Our drills are designed to make the kids move and hit rather than be stationary so there is an emphasis on footwork which replicates a more realistic situation on a tennis court.

Q: What natural abilities does a good tennis player need to have?

AC: Good eye-hand coordination, good footwork and a strong mind which is probably the most important! Staying positive and fighting for every ball to make opponents work for their points.

Q: Who is your favourite tennis champion of all times and why?

AC: I grew up when Bjorn Borg was winning Wimbledon and I admired and adored him. But more lately I am a huge Roger Federer fan – he is the most elegant and beautiful tennis player whose movement is almost balletic around the court. Also off the court he is charming, charismatic and a fantastic ambassador for the sport.

Q: Wimbledon 2017 – can you identify some fashion trends on court? How strict is the Wimbledon dress code?

AC: Fashion is so much better than when I played tennis. The fabrics are fabulous and athletic and the designs so much more fashionable and feminine with a touch of glamour! Players are more daring with what they wear and bring a touch of theatre to the court.

Q: What were your toughest challenges as a pro tennis player?

AC: Losing and loneliness! There is a lot of it and you have to be strong mentally to get through it. It's impossible to win every match so it's about how you pick yourself up from defeats. A bit like any setback in life.

Q: What would you recommend parents should do to motivate their children to work hard if they show sport talent?

AC: I don't believe in pushing children because it's pretty obvious whether a child wants to do something or not. It's more about inspiring and motivating. Unfortunately, today's kids are distracted by screens, tablets and quick fixes. When I was on the tour, computers and mobile phones didn't exist. I do believe it's important to take children to live sporting events or theatre to smell and taste the atmosphere. It's something that you can't see or feel through the TV and I was lucky my uncle took me to Wimbledon when I was 11 years old, which inspired me to want to play there.

Q: Who is a favourite for Wimbledon 2017 and why?

AC: I think what Serena Williams has achieved over the last 20 years is extraordinary and she will definitely be motivated to keep going for more records (after having her baby). In the men's game after what happened at the Aussie Open I would not rule out Roger Federer even at the age of 35 and then of course defending champion Andy Murray to win another or even Novak Djokovic. But there are also some exciting new stars emerging like Dominic Thiem, Alexandre Zverev and Nick Kyrgios but maybe not this year.

Q: You seem to enjoy yourself as a TV presenter and commentator. If you hadn't become a pro tennis player what career would you have chosen?

AC: I absolutely LOVE my job and pinch myself every time I am working (I don't really call it work). If I had not done this I think I would like to work in the alternative health space, which is a real passion of mine. I love yoga and homeopathy and looking for alternative treatments.

Q: You have grown up children now. What's your parenting style?

AC: I like to think I am very loving and caring as a mum but with a relaxed style. I do have my boundaries though and am not afraid to say when they have overstepped them. I love to cook fresh homemade meals which we enjoy together as a family regularly and I take "special time" with them individually so that they feel they have me to themselves and I can listen to what's going on in

their lives. I am useless at remembering their friends' names which annoys them. My brain can only take on board so much information! They call and contact me a lot so I see that as a good thing and I love our time together. I never pressured them at school as I always struggled myself and have never forced them to eat things as I think they have a love of good food themselves. Hopefully they look fondly at their early years growing up.

Q: How do you deal with your teenagers? Any advice for mums who will be facing that phase in their children's lives?

AC: It's quite a shock initially as they want to start dictating their schedule to you and also go to lots of parties etc. We all become a taxi service. A very good friend told me to remember how I felt at that age and that friends and peers are their world and more important than hanging out with mum and dad. (Same as we want to spend time with our friends) She told me to give some slack and then they will always come back and tell you what's going on. It's important to keep an open line of communication. If we ban them completely they will go anyway and then not tell you anything. I hear a lot maybe because I gave a bit of slack.

Q: If you were Queen of Britain what would you do first?

AC: Ban all egos! They are the root cause to most of the problems in the world!

Q: What are you up to next?

AC: I am following the tour until the end of the year in my media role for Eurosport, Sky and BBC and will keep trying to improve my yoga! I am also continuing to grow our Tennis Holidays' business and coaching programme.

The former British No 1 women's tennis player Annabel Croft gave up the game at 21 and went on to become a TV and radio presenter and a BBC commentator. Amongst other things of course: she is in fact a successful entrepreneur and a busy London mum. I met her at the Lawn Tennis Association for an end-of-term presentation of tennis achievements to children who attended her tennis academy and she came across as a warm and kind lady with a great passion for tennis. Born and bred in London and at home in the Wimbledon area (of course), Annabel will be back at Wimbledon soon for her usual cunning commentary. I look forward to that!



THE SECRETS INSIDE MILL HILL SCHOOL NW7

Mill Hill School may look grand and imposing sitting on the Ridgeway overlooking our capital city, but did you know that the sports facilities are open to the public, the swimming pool runs lessons every evening and weekends and the halls are available to rent?

Engaging with the local community is important for the School and activities are also run by pupils, with



This is what else we have to offer:

- 25m indoor heated swimming pool
- Halls for badminton, 5-a-side football, basketball, netball, table tennis, cricket & Tennis courts
- Astro turf for football & hockey
- Classrooms and exercise classes

The beautiful buildings & grounds have hosted some spectacular weddings and film shoots

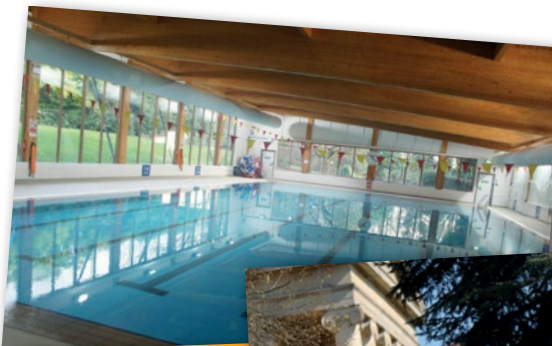


the assistance of staff, for Age Concern, Oak Lodge School and other local groups. The grounds are also populated by St Pauls Church & School, St Vincents & Goodwin School.

The Sports Centre and pool is an RLSS Lifeguard approved centre and lifeguard and first aid courses are regularly run for both pupils, staff and the public.

And we are proud to be supporters of local charity Teens Unite. We provide accommodation for them to offer a short break with workshops for teenagers with life limiting illnesses.

Sports Centre usage is easy, we offer users a pay as you gym, swim or play or monthly pass option with no hidden extra charges. It has been called one of London's Best Kept Secrets!



Public opening times call 0208 906 2322
mhsenterprises.org.uk



@millhillevents • Please follow us!



Mill Hill School Sports Centre & Mill Hill School Enterprises • Please like us!



Mill Hill School Enterprises



PAY AS YOU GYM, SWIM OR PLAY!
at the Mill Hill School Sports Centre NW7

Best Kept Secret in North London



Sports centre includes:
Swimming pool,
tennis courts,
badminton courts
and more!

State of the art Star Trac and Human Sport Equipment with iPod connectivity, inbuilt TV screens

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR
£20 MONTHLY PASSES!
& NO JOINING FEES

www.mhsenterprises.org.uk

PLANNING A WEDDING or PARTY?



We pride ourselves on our high quality catering and wedding service
0208 959 8131



Mill Hill School SportsCentre



@millhillevents

mhse@millhill.org.uk

0208 906 2322

MUMPRENEUR'S TESTIMONIAL: KARINA GRASSY ON CREATING SLEEPING BAGS FOR A NEW GENERATION

By Monica Costa

Karina Grassy has come a long way from when I first met her in East Sheen 10 years ago as a single mum with big ideas. Not different from the famous JK Rowling, Karina has started small and grown her career steadily. After setting up her first business Not Just Pink selling quality baby products from Germany to the UK, she acquired the baby sleeping bag company Slumbersac. In a quiet corner of Dorset Slumbersac is now making big waves with new innovations and continued success with their exceptional quality baby and children sleeping bags at affordable prices.

Since the acquisition of Slumbersac, Karina has grown the sleeping bags manufacturing business globally with online presence in the UK, Ireland, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Australia and the USA. The company has full control over the design, pricing and manufacturing across the entire product range. Without wholesalers or retail stores involved the savings are passed directly on to the consumer, bringing them quality products at the best possible price, combined with consistent innovation and development of unique products.

The range includes sleeping bags with sleeves or feet and travel wrap. 'Sleeping Bags with Feet', which allows active toddlers to move around without being restricted or tripping over when learning to walk, remains one of the most popular styles. Now with 'Design My Slumbersac' parents can customise their own sleeping bags with a range of fun appliques and elegant embroidery – all in three simple steps.

Last year Karina launched the Bamboo Cotton range, made from super-soft, gentle to touch bamboo, perfectly suited for delicate skin types. They are lightweight yet incredibly durable and available in three classic colours with fun embroidered designs.



Despite expanding internationally and growing so fast, Karina Grassy has managed to maintain a family-owned business culture, backed up by a team of 30+ enthusiastic individuals who share the same core values. Karina has ambitious plans for further expansion into new territories such as South America, India and Canada to mention but a few.

Charity also plays a large roll in Karina's life, with the strong believe in doing 'business for good' and thus forming significant partnerships with charities both here in the UK and abroad. This ethos was reinforced in 2016 when Karina joined BUY1GIVE1 (www.b1g1.com), a global business giving initiative that makes it easy for small-medium sized businesses to give and support great projects from around the world. Slumbersac was recently acknowledged for making 120,390 giving impacts in 2016, reinforcing that you don't have to set up your own foundation to making a huge difference.

With growth, expansion and ambitious plans on the horizon, Karina is more determined than every to make bedtime the best time of the day for children and parents.

Karina is one of London Mums' biggest supporters having sponsored our organisation and magazine since 2009. I will always be grateful to her for believing in me and in what London Mums stands for.



Beautifully designed SUMMER SLEEPING BAGS

Available in lighter togs - perfect for warmer nights and summer holidays!

TOG:
0.5 & 1.0

SIZES FROM
NEWBORN TO
6 YEARS!



Left to right: Teal Stars, Forest Friends Muslin, Blue Stripes, Owl with Feet, Boats with Feet


slumbersac
WWW.SLUMBERSAC.CO.UK

Club Petit Pierrot is awarded full GOLD Accreditation by Children's Activities Association

Parents and children who have attended Club Petit Pierrot, London's Premier French club, will not be surprised that they have been awarded the CAA GOLD accreditation, who noted their work to be "outstanding".

They have been teaching French to literally thousands of children in London since 1993, and remain as ever-popular and dedicated today. They have been instrumental in championing both the immersion method and in developing Parent & toddler programmes for babies as young as 8 months old. It is now widely accepted, and indeed scientifically proven, that learning a second language should start as early as possible in life. Club Petit Pierrot's lessons, which are totally in French, are innovative, ground-breaking, creative, artistic, musical, active, absorbing, stimulating, authentically French and above all great fun!



Club Petit Pierrot offers fun French lessons for children 8 months to 8 years (beginners to bilingual levels), using its unique immersion programmes across London.

- Parents & babies sessions
- Parents & toddlers sessions
- Drop-off groups from 3 yrs old up to 8 yrs old
- Drop-off "Maternelle" classes for French speaking children
- Action-packed Holiday Clubs from 3 yrs old up to 8 yrs old
- Programmes for schools
- Private tuition at home
- Events & Parties



Their lessons will give your child an excellent headstart in French and launch them on a wonderful journey to bilingualism.

Club Petit Pierrot is highly recommended by BBC, Daily Telegraph, Daily Express, Time Out & Angels and Urchins magazine.

Call 020 7385 5565 to book your place or
e-mail admin@clubpetitpierrot.co.uk www.clubpetitpierrot.co.uk



Fun French Lessons

Innovative immersion programme

Highly recommended by BBC, Daily Telegraph, Daily Express and Time Out

Venues across London



Club P. Petit Pierrot®
Est. 1993

020 7385 5565

admin@clubpetitpierrot.co.uk

www.clubpetitpierrot.co.uk



Bedtime Battles?
Sibling Squabbles?
Homework Horrors?
Fussy Eaters?

Skills and strategies for parents to bring out the best in your kids.

Call now for a FREE taster class.

020 8673 3444 | www.theparentpractice.com



FIVE MINUTE CHAT WITH SUCCESSFUL MUMPRENEUR MARIA JOHNSON, CO-FOUNDER AND OWNER OF EDDIE CATZ

What made you start your own company?

MJ: I was working as a management consultant responsible for large European clients and had 2 children under the age of 4 and really did not want to travel internationally and work the incredibly long hours away from my family. It hit me one day that the nanny had a car, a phone and my kids and I was overwhelmed with guilt and pure exhaustion. Little did I know I would end up working more hours at less pay! But on the positive I can manage my time as I please.

What is it like to run a company in this economy?

MJ: We are in uncharted territory. When we wrote our business plan we did not factor in the risks of 2 recessions, the effects of a changing retail landscape or even political uncertainty. Running a high street business in the current economy is incredibly difficult. Costs of labour, business rates, utilities and café supplies are rising sharply year on year yet customers are more price sensitive than ever so we are squeezed.

How do you manage your time and what takes the most of it?

MJ: Although my children are late teens there is still a household to run. Sleep deprivation and other tricky phases of the early years are replaced with other stresses such as being a bank and seeing your children through the tricky path of GCSE's, A levels and big life decisions. So there is still little or no "me" time.

The two key things that have sucked more time than anything are social media – which can be a double edge sword – and working with Millennials. Consumer behaviour has changed in so far as gone are the days of voicing a complaint or suggestion in store. Having customers message us via FB, write a review or threaten to write a review if something is not quite perfect can be very stressful on a small family owned company and young staff. It is very easy to sit down and share a bad experience on a Mums group and as we all know people believe 80% of what they read on FB. This can turn sometimes into a very personal attack.

The second thing is working with Millennials and all the well documented challenges of how that is so different to the way my generation acted in the workplace. Staff retention is a challenge.

What makes you proud?

MJ: Aside from still being married (no small feat after 12 years of working together) I am proud that from an idea we have built a brand, we have a well-loved character and we've been able to serve over a million children and make some very happy memories. When I meet people and they say, "what you actually OWN Eddie Catz?" I always am surprised. In my head and heart we are still a small family owned business.

CHILD SAFETY

By Emma Hammett

Every year, around 2 million children attend A&E due to accidents. Over 76 000 of these require admission to hospital—that is nearly 1 500 children a week. Emma Hammett, First Aid for Life and Author of Burns, Falls and Emergency Calls gives sound advice on accident prevention and first aid.

How common are serious childhood accidents?

Accidental injury is one of the biggest single causes of death in the UK for children over the age of one. More children die each year due to accidents than from Leukaemia or Meningitis and a third of parents have had to rush their child to hospital at some point*.

What are the most common causes of injury?

1. Choking, suffocation and strangulation
2. Falls – from furniture, down stairs
3. Poisoning – from medicines, household chemicals, batteries
4. Burns and scalds – from hot drinks, pans, bath water
5. Drowning

How can you prevent accidents?

The best thing to do is take some time to identify potential risks in your home. There are basic safety steps you can take to keep your children safe and give yourself peace of mind.

- Fit fire and radiator guards
- Use corner covers for sharp corners
- Use door stops to prevent them slamming
- Secure furniture e.g. bookcases, chest of drawers and TVs to the wall. They can easily topple and crush a child if they're climbing up them.
- Don't put pot plants, chairs or furniture by windows or on balconies. Children will climb on anything.
- Keep plastic bags, packaging, small items, batteries and medication out of children's sight and reach.

Surely most parents have basic first aid skills?

The national Save a Life survey reported that 82% of parents would not know what to do if their child started choking or was burnt*. Both are life-threatening and dealing with them is relatively simple.

What should you do if your child is choking?

If your child starts choking, it is vital to stay calm. First, encourage them to cough. If this doesn't dislodge the obstruction, start giving them back blows – carefully supporting their chest and hitting them firmly between their shoulder blades up to 5 times. Check between each blow to see if the obstruction has cleared. If the child is still choking, call an ambulance and start abdominal thrusts – lean the child forward, make a fist and pull in and up in a J-shaped motion between their tummy button and under their rib cage.



Would you do the same with a baby?

If a child under 12 months old is choking, support them across your legs to undertake back blows and give chest thrusts instead of abdominal thrusts.

Alternate between back blows and abdominal/chest thrusts until the paramedics arrive. If at any point the baby/child loses consciousness, start CPR.



*Stats from the national "Save a Life" survey involving over 2,000 people. It is strongly advised that you complete an online or attend a practical first aid course to understand what to do in a medical emergency. Visit FirstAidforLife.org.uk or OnlineFirstAid.com for more information about our courses. First Aid for Life provides this information for guidance and it is not in any way a substitute for medical advice. First Aid for Life is not responsible or liable for any diagnosis made, or actions taken based on this information.

Adult Time vs. Family Time in the Mountains



Family holidays can be a master class in juggling priorities. We want it all! Time to ourselves, time with our partner and time with our children. We often like to do something active... but we also fancy a nice chunk of time taking it easy. We have no desire to book in to a glorified kid's play centre, but accommodation must be child friendly.

A family skiing holiday in the French Alps may provide a solution that balances out these seemingly conflicting wants and needs. Family skiing specialist Ski Famille has been providing holidays in the mountains for over 25 years and is one of a handful of companies focussed on making a winter sports holiday relaxing and hassle free.

The starting point is well located catered chalets with in-house childcare. Accommodation is high quality, close to the slopes and chefs and hosts take care of all of the cooking and cleaning; they'll even serve pre dinner bubbly and canapés in front of the fire. Children and parents have separate evening meals to ensure adult time post children's bath and bed is safeguarded!

Ski Famille's flexible childcare options are based in the chalet you stay in, so no snowy trudge to an impersonal central crèche. The nannies come to you and take children from three or four years old to and

from ski school as part of the service. You can choose for children to stay in Ski Famille's afternoon club, or pop back to chalet after your morning on the slopes to spend time together en famille.

Chalets are in La Plagne, Les Gets and Les Menuires (3 Valleys). All have family suites, whereby parents and children have separate rooms behind one door, a hot tub and a dedicated playroom. The most luxurious chalets even have their own private cinema rooms. All three resorts offer fabulous facilities for children, world class skiing and a traditional mountain ambience.

Taking children up a mountain may seem an extreme way to track down the elusive perfectly balanced family holiday, but done right it could tackle the whole family's wish list.

Ski Famille 7 night packages start from £579 per adult including Gatwick Geneva flights and airport transfers.

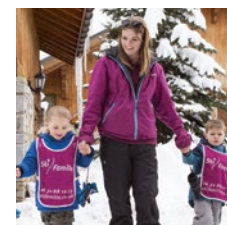
**FIND OUT MORE AT
WWW.SKIFAMILLE.CO.UK
OR CALL 01252 757 438**

family skiing at its best



The team at Ski Famille has one simple aim, to make your family skiing holiday as enjoyable and hassle free as possible.

- **EXCLUSIVE À La Carte Childcare** 0-12 years all in your own beautiful chalet. No snowy trudge to a central crèche: just pop on your skis and leave the rest to us
- **Superb ski schools and exhilarating activities for children of all ages**
- **Fabulous catered chalets in world class ski areas offering hot tubs, saunas, steam rooms, boot warmers and even cinema rooms!**
- **Nationwide flights, Eurostar from London direct to the Alps**



skifamille.co.uk | 01252 757438

ATOL 10863



ABTOT 5141

INSPIRATIONAL MUMS

Rita Kobrak & her Italian holidays for mums



HOLIDAYS FOR MUMS RUN BY MUMS

Q: Tell us about yourself and family?

RK: I have lived in London for 10 years and just moved to Italy (my mum's country) with my two children, Alessia (9) and Sebastiano (3). My husband Mike and I bought and restored a Tuscan farmhouse where we do weekly rentals and organise mum and baby breaks.

Q: Why did you set up mum and baby holidays?

RK: When my daughter was a baby, some weekends I visited my husband, who worked as a tour guide across Europe. By the time Alessia was two, she had been on 50 flights. Lots of mums said they would love to travel more but didn't feel confident enough. I worked in the travel industry before and felt there was a need for organised holidays where mums could relax while also spending quality time with their babies.

Q: What was your first mum and baby break like?

RK: My first mum and baby break back in 2009 was full and I was so nervous. I adapted our family home in Italy to make it child-friendly with the help of lovely local ladies from the village. It all went well but I made very little money as I had charged too little! I bet the mums kept saying what good value it was!

Q: How have you developed the holidays over the years?

RK: Over time I have adapted the holidays and added activities for older children such as Italian lessons,

pizza making, dance classes and yoga. Many of my first customers still come back with all their children.

I have also included more for mums such as massage sessions, a shopping trip to the local shoe outlet and wine tasting. This year we are doing a new social media workshop retreat with London mums' founder Monica!

Q: What is your advice to anyone wanting to start a business?

RK: Don't think too much about it, just do it. Write down your passions and where you want to be in the next five years. Make a list of what you have to do to achieve this. Talk to people about your idea as you never know who will be interested or who can help. A mum who came on two of my yoga breaks decided to retrain as a yoga teacher. We stayed in touch and she now works for me. We have also become good friends.

What do you love most about your job?

RK: I enjoy sharing our Italian home with mums and children. Each group is different and my kids are happy to have our house full of kids to play with. I like to work while staying in our house in stunning surroundings. I have made many friends along the way too. I look forward to welcoming you to our Tuscan home.



Relax, get fit and learn new skills in the stunning Tuscan countryside with your children

We have a variety of different breaks such as yoga and cooking holidays, Fitness/weight loss breaks, baby massage and energy healing weekends.

Accommodation in a beautiful Italian country villa with pool, trampoline and plenty of toys to keep the little ones entertained.

All meals and activities included and will pick you up from local airport or station.

Babysitting provided while you enjoy yoga and fitness classes, eat healthy fresh Italian food, drink local wine, learn to make pasta and pizza using our wood fired outside oven and visit the local Medieval town and market. You can shop in the outlets and enjoy a massage knowing that your children are being looked after and are happy.

Fun activities for kids, art, dancing, Italian lessons and baby massage for babies under 12 months



Visit mum-and-baby-experience.co.uk to see what our guests say. We have many returning Mums!

Holidays suitable from 3 months to 10 years!

Contact Rita on 0039 3495018679 or 0778 557 1292 or send email to ritakobrak1@aol.com

How to book your family holiday in Italy
Email Rita ritakobrak1@aol.com or call her on
tel 07785571292 or 0039 3495018679

mum-and-baby-experience.co.uk Weekly rentals Holiday-villa-in-tuscany.com

ASK THE EXPERT

Our expert is Elaine Halligan, Director of The Parent Practice, an organisation enabling parents to bring out the best in their children theparentpractice.com



Mean girls

My daughter aged 6 (year 2) has recently become part of a group of three friends but now finds that the other two girls who are the popular ones, have become mean to her and started to exclude her from their group and play dates. How do I help her and do you suggest I speak to the other mums?

These kinds of friendship issues at this age are commonplace and are not a sign of social failure, but a glimpse of social development in progress. Your daughter's goal at the age of 6 is to work out how to handle conflict respectfully, how to make up, how to appreciate others, apologise when wrong and learn how to share. These are a complex set of social skills and she can learn as much from the 'mean girls' as the 'nice ones'.

It does not mean your daughter is a victim if she's being excluded, nor does it mean the other girls are monsters. However your daughter will feel sad, upset and even a little confused at how the girls are behaving towards her so it's important you listen to her and validate her feelings, without jumping in with advice too quickly. It's common to want to hang out with the so called 'popular girls' but sometimes 'popular' gets confused with 'powerful' and powerful girls often derive their social power from being mean. It may be that she is drawn to these powerful girls and it's safer to try and be friends with them than have them as enemies.

I don't advise you to speak to the other parents. This conversation rarely goes the way you want it to, as parents generally become defensive. Far better to focus on strategies to help your daughter:

1. Ask her what makes a good friend – let her work out that someone who is not kind, not supportive, who does not respect you and who talks about you behind your back, is not be a good friend.
2. Nurture friendships outside of school. At the age of 6 parents will need to engineer this, but day trip outings, group activities outside of school and lunch with family friends are essential.
3. Encourage your daughter to stand up for herself and be assertive by brainstorming with her for some quick non-confrontational comebacks e.g. "Whatever", "Really I didn't know that", "That's your opinion not mine," "Hmm...that's not such a kind thing to say, not sure you would like that if I said it to you." Practice these as otherwise it will be hard to deliver these in the moment.
4. Teach her how to be supportive if she sees others being targeted – the most powerful strategy is for the bystanders to support the target by saying "you can come and play with us" or "that's really not a kind thing to say."
5. Give her lots of approval and descriptive praise so her self-esteem is strong and she does not become too dependent on peer approval.
6. For the time being she may need to remove herself from the mean girls.

Remember at this age all friendships involve being close and having distance from time to time and it's normal to have these ups and downs.



FUTURE HEALTH
BIOBANK

Storing your newborn's stem cells could prove a lifesaver

Why store your baby's umbilical cord blood?

Stem cells from cord blood can treat **85** diseases including Leukaemia

40,000 transplantations have been performed worldwide since 1988

300+ clinical trials underway globally

Why choose Future Health?

World's most accredited stem cell bank

UK's largest bank; storing over **125,000** samples

Trusted by over **75,000** families

Text **BABY** and **YOUR NAME** to **60777** for more information

Texts are charged at your standard network rate

0115 967 7707 | custcare@fhbb.com | www.futurehealthbiobank.co.uk

HTA Licensed

aa Accredited

swissmedic
LICENSE



MHRA Accredited

SUMMER ESSENTIALS » » » WISH LIST

The most sought after toys, party supplies, baby products and travel essentials to keep children entertained during the holidays and make this Summer fun for the family

"Cubetto" from Primo Toys



Cubetto is a friendly wooden robot that introduces children aged 3-6 to the basics of coding through adventure and storytelling.

RRP £175
www.primotoys.com

Great British Sewing Bee Studio suitable for 6+

Inspired by the popular TV show this has a fully working sewing machine, mains adapter, measuring tape, two spare needles, a sewing needle and threader, two metal bobbins, two thread reels, 20 headed pins, one pattern for a clutch bag AND assorted fabrics!

RRP around £49.99
www.wiltonbradley.co.uk
Available from Argos, Amazon, Toymaster



Fidget Spinners from HGL

Yes they are everywhere and HGL have the best, spins smoothly for the longest time! Suitable for ages 8 to 80

RRP from £2.99 up according to design (many designs available)
www.ozbozz.co.uk
Available from Toymaster, Smyths and all good toy retailers.



PARTY TIME

Mi-Mic

Perfect party entertainment. Suitable for ages 6-96! This wireless microphone speaker has a ten metre range and seven led colours which flash along to the beat of the music. Using Bluetooth technology the Mi-Mic has up to four hours of play time, high capacity re-chargeable battery and that all important - echo function! Available in black, silver or pink.

RRP Around £24.99
Available from Smyths, Toymaster, The Range, Argos, Very
www.wiltonbradley.co.uk



Monster Smash-Ups (Age 3+)

Radio controlled mayhem, these high speed trucks are designed to crash and rebuild with their turn/tilt suspension, ejector seat and re-chargeable battery pack. There are three in the range, Rhino, Viper and Raptor, this is Rhino. Perfect plaything for your little monsters!

RRP £34.99
www.wiltonbradley.co.uk
Available from Toymaster, Hamleys, The Range, Argos, Amazon

Orchard Toys Mini Games

RRP £4.99 each
www.orchardtoys.com



Disney party

Disney Party has officially launched! Brought to you by disneystore.co.uk, Disney's new party site is a one-stop destination where parents can be inspired, plan their party and purchase the best selection of Disney, Marvel and Star Wars products, all designed to help parents give their little ones an unforgettable party...with a sprinkle of Disney magic.

Products start from RRP: £0.95
www.disneystore.co.uk/disney-party-index.html



Slumbersac Sleeping Bags for Camping

RRP from £14.99
www.slumbersac.co.uk/camping-with-children-sleeping-bags/

Softplay

Come in and play!



Softplay * Toddler Classes



Holiday Workshops * Birthday Parties



T: 0203 4755268 E: info@eddiecatz.com

www.eddiecatz.com

Earlsfield * Leeds Mothercare
Putney * Newbury * Wimbledon