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Lamorinda Moms Celebrate Life with Babies

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Lamorinda Moms members, from left: Alexander Bartoli, Reed Lusch, Angel Johnson, Samantha Johnson and Nadine Lusch. Photo Cathy Dausman

Mom's Club. According to the Lamorinda Moms' website, the mothers envisioned "a group of women who could help each other out, make active friendships, and get to know others in the community." Today, Lamorinda Moms has a membership of nearly 700. Each member pays \$55 annual dues (\$30 for "alumni" status-those with children over 5) and volunteers for at least two hours a year. The organization serves local charities like Families First, the Bay Area Crisis Nursery, and the Contra Costa County Food Bank.

Lamorinda Moms takes care of its own with "Mom Dins," a gift of four to six meals delivered to new mothers. Members can be involved in Lamorinda Moms' monthly meeting, an online community, a play group (including special groups for mothers of multiple births and working moms), neighborhood activities, annual seasonal events, and sub-groups like Mom's Night Out, and gardening. But it's not all about the big picture. Small weekly playgroups may be the organization's heart and soul.

The recent gathering included Angel Johnson with Samantha (nine months old), Nadine and Reed Lush (one year) and Yrueta and daughter Ava. Bartoli said her group has met since their children were just "little blobs." The mothers collectively decided which day and time worked best for them. Each had learned about Lamorinda Moms either online (<http://www.lamorindamoms.org/>), or by meeting members at local fairs or talking to friends and neighbors.

As the two-hour session ended, and moms and babies packed up to leave, some were already planning their next meeting - a stroller walk - for that same afternoon.

The "class" of mid-2011 is changing faster than you can change a baby's diaper. That's because this class is actually composed of babies born last year and their doting mothers. Lamorinda, meet Lamorinda Moms, supporting mothers and parents of children age five and younger.

A recent gathering hosted by Laura Bartoli and her one-year-old son, Alexander, had a small turnout; their group sometimes swells to 15 mothers with children, said Bartoli, who joined Lamorinda Moms last August after moving to Orinda. Tiny walkers happily roamed from mother to mother while the younger ones sat or crawled from toy to toy. Adult conversation came in spurts between caring for the children, and touched on changes in a child's routines, naps, reference books and comfort food.

Each mother, a first-time parent, was asked about her plans this Mother's Day. The question elicited a quick laugh from Kate Yrueta, mother of seven-month-old daughter Ava. New dads take note: these mothers' wish list was for a bit of pampering, like a picnic, a massage, a spa or facial. The group says they love to watch each other's babies grow and that the group benefits both children and parents.

In 1995, 15 Lamorinda mothers met at Moraga Commons to establish what was then known as Lamorinda

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