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Chop Chop Go and Uwithus - Two New Services for Busy Parents

By Sophie Braccini



Chop Chop Go founder Un Kwon at Whole Foods.
Photo Sophie Braccini

Two local entrepreneurs, and their friends, created online services geared toward making busy parents' lives a bit easier in the Lamorinda area, while creating more time for their own family lives.

Gary Hill, with friend Gregory Edelin, developed Uwithus.com which brings organization, coordination and efficiency to local kids' activity planning; Un Kwon, with the help of chef and high school friend Karen Eddy, launched Chopchopgo.com, a total shopping/meal-planning service for families who want tasty and healthy meals, but who don't always have the energy to plan for a week, create the menus, and do the shopping.

"I have two kids in preschool, live in Orinda and have a full-time job, like my husband, in San Francisco," says Kwon. "We wanted so much to eat healthy, but in the long run, with everything else in our lives, we just could not sustain the planning, shopping and cooking." Eddy is a personal chef with Kwon's same business knack and drive. It was a match made in heaven.

"Karen (Eddy) knows what people want to eat, she knows what's in season and can create menus using recipes that should not take more than a half hour for the novice

[cook to prepare]," says Kwon. The user chooses recipes online, indicates the number of people who will eat the meals, and the site generates a shopping list that is sent directly to Whole Foods; all of the ingredients are delivered to the user's door the next day.

"The shopping list is, of course, 100 percent customizable," says Kwon. "You can remove or add items, and specify whatever you want, such as organic only, a price range, or a brand." Kwon is partnering with Whole Foods, which already offers a personal shopping service for either pick-up or delivery.

"I was the tester of our first round of recipes," says Kwon. "I love the way Karen uses herbs and spices; it makes me feel like a great cook." Kwon is also discovering new products, such as Israeli couscous, that she had never used before. "I checked my menu for the night and saw that ingredient. I reached into my cupboard and there was a little brown bag marked Israeli couscous, and it was just the amount I needed for my family."

Kwon says that the system eliminates waste, because some ingredients like fresh herbs are combined in different recipes throughout the week, so she gets just the amount she needs for her family, unless she decides otherwise.

The service is currently available online. It costs \$45 a month, plus the cost of food, to have the recipes and ingredients delivered within Lamorinda; it costs \$5 for a recipe alone.

"We plan to expand to other local stores for shopping, and add special dietary items," says Kwon, "it's just a matter of time."

With dinner in the bag, Lamorindans can turn to another online service, Uwithus.com, to help find great activities for their kids and friends. Gary Hill, a busy dad who works for The Motley Fool from his Moraga home, spent hours organizing his 8-year-old son Charlie's recreational life.

"One day I came across a basketball camp organized by the city of Lafayette. My son was interested, but he also wanted to do it with his friends," remembers Hill, "so I emailed about 12 of his friends' parents and after a series of back and forth emails, 10 of them registered for the class." Hill saw that everyone won: the kids were happy playing with their friends; the parents could organize carpools; and the city of Lafayette gained 10 new customers. "So I looked for a more systematic way to do this, a way to be more efficient at sending word-of-mouth referral and plan activities with my son's circle of friends."

Hill and Edelin developed Uwithus.com, a private social media network. "In the way that Pinterest has helped people collect, organize and share the things they love in one place online, Uwithus is focused on helping parents collect, organize and schedule (and keep a history of) their kids' activities, with the added benefit of being able to easily share and coordinate those activities with a select private circle of parents, all within the service," explains Hill. On Uwithus, parents create simple Pinterest-like "activity cards" for all their kids' activities (or find activities in the database), share their cards with their circle, track who's interested in the activities, and see, on their dashboard, what activities their kids' friends are planning to do so they can also join them.

Hill believes that the way for the service to grow is to partner with activity providers. "I started talking with Saint Mary's College's Adam Kennedy who is in charge of the summer camps," he says. "When you sign up your child, SMC can send an email to four of their friends. Our service is the same idea, just multiplied. We provide service providers a link, in the form of our logo, that people can click (as you would 'like' a site on Facebook) and

refer that activity to their circle of friends in the form of an invite."

"What I needed was more organization and coordination in the planning of my first son's social life," concludes Hill, "so my wife and I can really just enjoy those years and get involved in their lives."

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