



## **Making Room for Daddy**

*Parents Club, built on a model that originally excluded men, now welcomes fathers to ranks.*

By Dan Beighley

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In a league of their own, the Laguna Beach Parents Club is gaining popularity as it opens its doors to members previously ruled out by the former local chapter of the International Moms Club -- most surprisingly, dads.

The inclusion of mothers who work and same-sex couples is also part of the club's open-door policy.

Co-presidents of the new club, Christa Henry and Kris Thornton, said their group's numbers are increasing by three to five families per week.

"The club is a great resource for parents," Thornton said. "A lot of new parents or people new to the area can feel isolated. This a great way to network."

The community-based nonprofit group was founded last September and offers a host of networking opportunities for members.

With its roots in the Moms Club, Henry and Thornton liked the networking concept, but felt it would be better to expand with more members.

\$35-per-year membership fee gives members access to playgroups, book clubs, field trips, parties and other activities.

"There are lots of dads who are benefiting from this," Henry said. "We really wanted to expand things."

Club member Carl Winefordner feels the club's agenda has been a great success.

In recently hosting a now traditional Whining Mamas and Papas social event, Winefordner hosted 40 people in his home.

The name of the event is a play on words, with wine being a key ingredient for the event.

"It was fun. People that I never met before showed up," Winefordner said.

"The club is great for parents wanting to commiserate over their experiences. Loss of sleep is pretty common for new parents," he said.



Steve Leonard moved to Laguna six months ago and found out about the club from a downtown shop his first week in town. Leonard has a 14-month-old son, Jack.

"We do as many things as possible with the group," Leonard said. "It's a real casual way for everyone to get together on Fridays."

Leonard said there were no similar clubs in Studio City where he is from. "I wouldn't know nearly as many people without the club here," he said.

Single father Phil Krajeski said the club is very open and warmly welcomes people.

With visits every other week from his sons ages seven and 11, he has been able to build a social network.

"The club's calendar is filled with things we were already doing. This has the added perk of making friends," Krajeski said.

The success of the club has inspired interest from a group in Newport Beach that is considering starting a similar club, Thornton said.

The group's website is [www.lagunabeachparents.com](http://www.lagunabeachparents.com)



(Top row from left) Ian, Carl, and Whitney Winefordner, Christina and Felix Veski, Mehran and Gianluca Megerdichian, Cameron and Jett Hamil. (Bottom row from left) Holden and Rick Geary, Piero and Marco Wemyss, Jack and Steve Leonard.