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Message from Gina, CEO of Mothers & More



Happy autumn! It's still toasty here in Boulder, but we are certainly easing into the shorter and cozier days of fall.

Mothers & More has launched Mothers' Voices, a blog by members, with postings on current events, relationships, turning points, work, and more. Catch our first few [blog posts](#). This blog is important – it is the voice of mothers everywhere, a place for moms to find the kind of voices and people they would like to meet in person. It's another way to connect with mothers across

the country and remember that we are a part of something bigger – an incredible like-mindedness across the country.

Read about the [color yellow](#), about the [devastating famine](#) in Somalia, and about how [life derails us](#) more often now that we are mothers. I hope you find them as interesting as I do. Please comment on the posts – share your own stories and share when you agree and when you don't. We can start a great dialogue.

Another exciting area we are working on is *workplace transitions*, a set of offerings to explore our personal relationships with paid work, with our home lives and the juggling of it all. A large percentage of you are considering back-to-work options or will be soon, or maybe you are looking to change or balance your relationship with your work in some way. Please read both the brand new article “Work For Free” and the classic article, “Working Vacation” and tune in next month for new programming to support your efforts and your planning, even if it feels impossible to find the time to think about it.

Fall is a great time to be a member of Mothers & More. Chapters' Moms' Night Outs, Topic Nights and Open House Events are in full swing. Every member who recruits two new members is entered into a monthly drawing for a chance to win her very own iPad. Not a member yet? Take advantage of our limited time ‘Two for \$70’ deal and join with a friend for a savings of \$10 each. We love to expand our circle of smart, funny friendly moms.

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FORUM is publically published monthly by Mothers & More. The views represented in it are not necessarily those of the editors or of the Mothers & More membership.

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Working Vacation

Kim Moldofsky

There was painful fallout when my husband's employer went bankrupt a few years ago. We decided that he could use some time to set a new course while I would be the temporary bread-winner in our family. I had been home with my boys, 1 and 3, all their lives, but there was nothing I did that he wasn't capable of doing. In fact, quite the opposite – he was capable of keeping the house neat and orderly, whereas I'm a slob.

Although I knew that my children would be well cared for and that the role reversal was short-term, I had concerns about being catapulted back to the "real world." Returning to the world of paid work would be like traveling to a distant land with an out-of-date travel guide. I could barely remember what it was like to have an uninterrupted conversation. Could I even pass for a normal adult? What if I hated it? What would I wear?

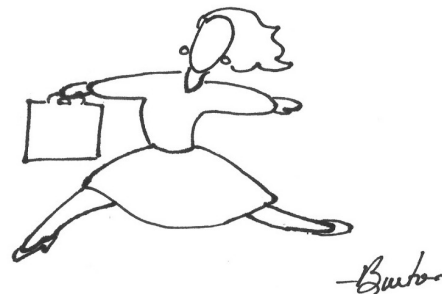
While my husband broke out the sweatpants, I pieced together a few reasonable, if dated, professional outfits, packed a few resumes in my dusty briefcase and headed to a temp agency.

My journey into the Land of Temporary Employment began at a financial services firm. The assignment was an ego boost from Day One. People have such low expectations of temps that it's easy to impress them. Indeed, the last temp to hold the position I was filling left in tears midway through the afternoon. I was practically a hero just by making it through an eight-hour day! Nobody had ever praised me for successfully making it through a much longer day with my little ones. I realized that this new job was not a punishment, but a working vacation. An all-expenses-paid break from diapers, crumbs, and clutter.

Granted, office life was not quite as breezy as a day at the beach, but it was more relaxed than my time at home. I enjoyed the clear expectations. I relished the ability to accomplish tasks without interruption. And, my gosh, I got two breaks each day! Nobody asked to share or looked at me longingly when I nibbled a candy bar. I couldn't believe someone was paying me to sit and read or write without interruption. Speaking of sitting quietly, nobody accompanied me to the bathroom, either.

After a few months, however, reality set in. I was feeling homesick and ready for a change. While plugging away in my cubicle, I anticipated the state's approval of my passport to the future – a substitute-teaching certificate. Actually, a passport may be more difficult to attain than the subbing credentials. Beyond a college

CLASSIC FORUM



Submissions

Forum accepts first-person essays of any length, humor, poetry, photography, and art from **members**. We also accept any ideas or topical clippings you many want to send for our use. To contribute to the Forum, please send electronic submissions by email to info@mothersandmore.org or printed submissions by mail to P.O.Box 31, Elmhurst, IL 60126. Indicate "Forum Submission" on the subject line or envelope. We do not accept faxed or handwritten submissions.

Note: Mothers & More is not intended as a substitute for medical and/or psychological care of those in need of such care for themselves or their children.

Although every measure has been taken to make the information in the Forum as complete and accurate as possible, no Mothers & More member, past or present, shall be liable for any damages resulting from the use or misuse of information contained herein.

degree, Illinois law requires only the ability to pass a criminal background check, a negative TB test and a pulse.

Once I received the papers, I quickly applied to several local schools. Shockingly, just days later, one of them called me in to work despite the fact that the receptionist was the only district employee I'd actually met. Because I'd spent almost no time in an elementary classroom since, well, elementary school, I was nervous.

Preparing for my first assignment, I packed my bag with a koosh ball and some stickers. I faked my way through the math and reading with a class of well-behaved fourth graders. Outwardly I looked confident and in control, but inside I was amazed that when I told them to do something, they actually did it. And, thankfully, one of the other teachers tipped me off prior to the fire drill. Even with the alarms buzzing overhead, I was cool and collected. My charges exited the building with the precision of a German tour group.

My working vacation lasted about six months, after which time I returned to my role as primary caregiver. The experience was eye-opening and mostly enjoyable. I saw new places and experienced new cultures, and my trip was a confidence-builder as well. I know that some day I'll return to this place of "real working adults," but, for now, there's no place like home.

Kim Moldofsky currently works from home as a social media consultant and blogger. You can connect with her at www.reluctantrenovator.com.

She's Gonna Blow!

Barbara Grosh

I'm a notorious multi-tasker. I write novels while sitting in the carpool lane. I talk on the phone while I unload the dishwasher (my mom hates listening to me clang pots and pans together, but I swear I can't do either one of those things without also doing something else). But I've got a guilty pleasure. I stopped carrying computer manuals or book club books with me when I go to doctors' offices and instead I feast on *People* magazine. I never buy it, but I do enjoy it, and I usually don't like whatever situation has sent me to a doctor, so I treat myself and indulge. Yeah, I really know how to have a good time.

Recently I went in for my annual pap smear and discovered that my OB-GYN doesn't have *People*. (What's wrong with her, anyway? Maybe the other patients

CLASSIC **FORUM**



Our Mission

Mothers & More is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of mothers through support, education and advocacy. We address mothers' needs as individuals and members of society, and promote the value of all the work mothers do.

Our Beliefs:

- A mother is more than any single role she plays at any given point in her lifetime. She is entitled to fully explore and develop her identity as she chooses: as a woman, a citizen, a parent or an employee.
- All the work mothers do – whether paid or unpaid – has social and economic value.
- Caregiving work is real work with real social and economic value.
- All women deserve recognition and support for their right to choose if and how to combine parenting and paid employment.
- All mothers, all children and all families are unique. We respect the wisdom of each mother to decide how to care for her children, her family and herself.
- Mothers have the right to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities without incurring social and economic penalties.
- The transitions women make into and through motherhood are challenging and can be difficult.

Together, mothers are powerful.

stole them.) Since she's mostly an OB rather than a GYN, most of her magazines are about pregnancy and babies. Since I'm past menopause and my daughter is 12, those don't hold my interest like they used to, so I was left with *Good Housekeeping*, not normally anything I'd pick up.

But I was pleasantly surprised when I found an article about how to minimize housework. It had hints for occasions I can relate to. For example, it asks, "Do you ever put some clothes in the washing machine and then don't get back to them soon enough and they smell a little funky?" Well, yeah! It suggests pouring some vinegar in and setting the machine on rinse. News you can use! I was hooked.

There was a discussion of sheets. According to the magazine, it's OK if you only change your sheets every other week. I loved reading this because my husband has recently been nagging me for clean sheets more often than my natural inclination, which is closer to once a month. I quoted the article to him and his response was, "Was the author thinking about dogs?" Because we have three of them and they like to sleep on our bed.

So I said, "Good point. With dogs you probably don't need to wash the sheets as often, because if any crumbs or bodily fluids get on the sheets, the dogs lick them off, so it probably is OK to go a month." Don't know why he looked so grim.

But there was another hint about laundry. If you have some particularly stale-smelling laundry chore, like a throw rug (or maybe sheets that three dogs have been sleeping on), it suggests adding baking powder to the wash. That made sense to me. We've all heard how good baking powder is at absorbing smells. But I'm thinking, if you leave that throw rug in the machine for a week and it starts smelling mildewy and you add the vinegar per their earlier hint, do you get one of those volcanoes, like they make in kids' science classes?

And then I thought *maybe that's the point*. Maybe the editors of *Good Housekeeping* realize what a beautiful metaphor a volcano is for a mom who's so pressed by all the demands the world puts on her - she has stale-smelling sheets, a nagging husband, so many things to do that she leaves laundry in the washer for days and she forgets that *that* load of laundry has baking powder residue because she's returning phone calls while she returns to the laundry room finally and something's gotta give and she's gonna blow! So my theory is that it's a sort of sub-rosa performance art script that the editors of *Good Housekeeping* have given us. I have very much enjoyed thinking about the performance art, but I've decided to pass on performing it, because I'd be the one to clean up the volcano. Anyway, it would require a trip to the grocery store to get laundry-worthy quantities of vinegar and baking soda and I've got too many other things to do.

Barbara Grosh is a cat-lover, perhaps because she admires their nine lives approach to life. She had a life as a professor of economics, then as an at-home mom, then as a website developer and has lately become quite a community activist as well as a caretaker for her aged mother. She still multitasks, sometimes with less than great results.

Work For Free

Gala Wandschneider

The interviewer glanced up from my resume and looked me straight in the eye. “I think you are going to have to work for free.” Work for free? That is music to any mommy’s ears. Only it is less like a lullaby and more like the annoying purple dinosaur’s theme song. “With a great big hug and a kiss from me to you, won’t you let me work for you?”

After all, haven’t I been “working for free” for the past five years while I raised my two small children? While being able to be a SAHM was a rewarding and wonderful experience for me, it does not appear that prospective employers see it that way. I left a successful information technology career to spend more time with my children. I now want to return to the paid workforce and am having a difficult time finding work.

Trying to find a job is challenging enough, but searching for a job in a down economy after a five-year gap from employment is like stopping a temper tantrum before the child is done. But that is the challenge I am facing. I have faced many challenges on my journey as a mother. I prevailed in my desire to breastfeed my son despite it being painful and difficult before it became something we both enjoyed. When my water broke with my daughter on leap day, 9 weeks before my due date. I was able to work with my doctors and managed to deliver a healthy, baby girl at almost 34 weeks — 3 weeks after my water breaking!

Mothers face challenges every day, starting the moment our children wake up and not ending until their heads hit their pillows. Could I build on those experiences and prove to potential employers that I was the best candidate? Nowadays most job postings read like a litany of employer wants and desires.

Must be great communicator — I could do that. Like many moms of our day, I taught my babies sign language and they used it with a vengeance.

Must like a fast-paced environment and be able to multi-task — who doesn’t? I am capable of holding a child in one arm, stirring dinner with the other, all while talking on the phone with a repairman.

Need to be highly organized — that’s me! After all, didn’t I manage to get two kids to school on time, despite having to dash back into the house four times for loveys, hats, show-and-tell items, and even shoes?!?

I have been on countless interviews over the past year. The interview experience has varied greatly. I’ve had 15-minute interviews and 6-hour interviews! They have included questions about what type of animal I’d like to be or required me to complete personality and intelligence assessments.

I have gotten to final rounds of interviews, only to then be told that the position has been given to an internal candidate or the filling of the position has been put on hold. The particularly helpful interviewer who mentioned I should *work for free*, did

not understand that those words were like suggesting using a white noise machine to help a crying infant go to sleep. That suggestion originally seemed harsh to me, just as it now seemed harsh to hear that I would need to work for free. But just as the infant did indeed need that white noise to self-soothe to sleep, perhaps I did need to hear that I needed to volunteer in order to fill my resume gap.

I know I am ready to re-enter the paid workforce. My journey through motherhood has prepared me for any challenge I may face. Now I just need to demonstrate my readiness to prospective employers. I am now looking to volunteer at a local hospital to gain current experience.

Gala Wandschneider is a member of the Milwaukee West, WI Chapter 46.

Chocolate Memories

Susan Harrison

My mom was not a bad cook. She was a pretty good cook. Her problem was, my Grandma Wood was better. Everything Gram made tasted like magic — delicious magic. That woman could take shoe leather, spend a few hours with it and the people she presented it to would be none the wiser. Some of it is probably a result of growing up during the Great Depression and starting her married life during the war. No doubt, spending years cooking for her family of seven, in an era where the biggest convenience food was Jiffy corn bread mix played a role, as well. Whatever the reason, that lady can cook. Even now, at 87, when she can gather the gumption to hit the kitchen, more often than not, magic happens.

Whether smearing penuche icing on a German chocolate cake or pouring brownie batter into a greased and floured tin, I feel a tangible connection to my history. I grew up eating those brownies with my grandpa at camp, between dragging roads and hauling firewood. I spread my icing the way she did, swirling it like her mother before her. I am not simply making her recipes, I am inviting her memory into my kitchen, whispering a thank you to the universe for giving me her.

She helped me discover therapy that can be found in beating eggs, tensions released in chopping onions and endless emotional boo-boos soothed with the magical mixture of sugar, butter and chocolate. She didn't give me the secret of the universe, but she did give me tips for a masterful meringue and a killer coconut cornflake cookie recipe. And, if her apple cake with lemon sauce can't bring about world peace and family harmony, there's also that Bloody Mary recipe I can pull out!

The inspiration for this column comes from my belief that all good recipes have good stories and those stories connect who we once were to whom we are now. They bridge miles and years, bringing us closer to loved ones we no longer share meals with. No, a good brownie recipe won't solve the world's problems, but they serve as a nice backdrop when you are discussing "the worst day of second grade, ever!"

While the thought of making brownies from scratch may seem daunting, this recipe is virtually as simple as a box mix, and I promise you, so much better. These

are among my most requested dishes at any gathering. I'll share both Gram's version — thinner and more traditional in its finished consistency and my version, which has a thicker, fudgy, cake-like consistency. The only things that cause these to differ are the pan size (which alters the bake time) and the toppings. Both are delicious and which one becomes your “go-to” brownie recipe depends only on your preference.

Gram Wood's Brownies

4 squares unsweetened chocolate	1 c. (2 sticks) butter
2 c. sugar	4 eggs
1 c. flour	1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla	finely chopped walnuts (optional)

Melt chocolate and butter over low heat in a 2 qt. saucepan. When completely melted, removed from heat and stir in sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. (After the second one, the mixture will get smooth and shiny.) Add flour, vanilla and salt and mix well.

Grease and flour a 10" x 18" pan. Pour the brownie mixture into the pan. If desired, sprinkle walnuts on top. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 15-20 minutes.

Caramel Chocolate Brownies

4 squares unsweetened chocolate	1 c. (2 sticks) butter
2 c. sugar	4 eggs
1 c. flour	1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla	1/3 c. chocolate chips
11 Kraft caramel squares	1 tsp. milk

Melt chocolate and butter over low heat in a 2 qt. saucepan. When completely melted, removed from heat and stir in sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. (After the second one, the mixture will get smooth and shiny.) Add flour, vanilla and salt and mix well.

Grease and flour a 9" x 13" pan. Pour the brownie mix into the pan. Bake at 350 degrees for about 25 - 30 minutes checking with a toothpick starting at 20 minutes. **ADD CHOCOLATE CHIPS AT THIS POINT** and let them melt on the warm mixture. Set aside. Unwrap caramels, place in a small bowl in the microwave with milk. Cook at 20 second intervals on high, stirring after each cooking session. Smooth melted chocolate chips over brownies. When caramels are completely melted, drizzle with spoon onto the brownies.

Susan Harrison is a member of the Summerville, SC Chapter 15.