



DAILY CAMERA

Boulder County's newspaper

AUGUST 29, 2005

Group gaining its own moxie

Local moms organization spreads around country

Kathleen Jones, For the Camera

Boulder mother Mary Gaylord relies on her membership in Moxie Moms for everything mom-related — from fitness programs and fun mother-child activities to discounts at 90 local businesses.

"It's such a diverse organization. There's something for everyone," Gaylord said. "Whether it's discounts or social interactions or finding out about things you can do with your child, it's made a huge difference to us."

That's just what Susan Lavelle, founder of Moxie Moms, envisioned when she started the limited liability corporation in Boulder nearly two years ago. The success of her "mom's network," which has grown to more than 1,000 card-holding members in Colorado, recently inspired Lavelle to expand nationwide.

"We're incredibly excited about going national and it's happened rather quickly," Lavelle said.

After two months of planning, Moxie Moms is up and running in 17 communities outside of Colorado, in addition to the eight area managers who help coordinate the network in communities throughout the Front Range. Besides Colorado, Moxie Moms now has a presence in Arizona, California, Florida, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Washington.

"We've been looking for moms in other communities, kind of entrepreneurial moms, that are looking to bring it to their city," Lavelle said.

One of the ways they've found those entrepreneurial moms has been through franchisee programs, such as Stroller Strides and StrollerFit, "because they've already got an established business happening and this kind of adds a perfect mix to it," she said.

Area managers are paid a commission and they receive a starter kit and training assistance to get started. The commission is percentage-based, increasing each time memberships and advertising partnerships reach new levels.

For now, Lavelle said she and her husband, Joe, who handles the financial side of the business, suggest the new area managers use the proven combination of working with local businesses and providing a variety of events and activities for members — but she's open to different ideas as the mom's network flourishes in other communities.

"Communities are different," Lavelle said, noting that the Boulder group tends to schedule a lot of hikes, while a community close to the ocean might go to the beach. "Also, when it comes to businesses, there's different markets."

Members pay \$57.50 a year to join Moxie Moms, although if two or more moms sign up together, they receive a 25 percent discount.

Lavelle distinguishes between Moxie Moms, which she calls a "mom's network," and traditional moms' groups that meet for playgroups, fitness or social activities, although she said Moxie Moms incorporates those things.

"I think that there's nothing else like Moxie Moms anywhere that taps all the different things that we do, from fitness to events, and then of course the thing that's most unique about us is that we partner and work with the locally owned and operated businesses, and the whole idea

behind that is not just to get a discount for the moms — it's how can we help the businesses market to moms."

The Boulder group, which Lavelle considers the flagship organization, counts nearly 750 members and 90 business partners, including standard partners and advertising partners. Most fall into the standard partnership, which is a no-fee relationship, Lavelle said.

"It doesn't cost them anything to partner with us, except we ask them to offer a minimum 15 percent discount to members."

In return, standard partners receive exposure through a page on the Moxie Moms Web site.

For the advertising partnership, the business pays between \$50 and \$150, depending on the size of the Moxie Moms group, but has a choice of what discount to offer. Advertising partners also receive a fixed logo on Moxie Mom's Web site and their brochure is included in the introductory packet given to every new member.

Probably the biggest advantage for advertising partners is exclusivity, Lavelle said.

Kristy Fraley, owner of Boulder's Gymboree, said the partnership with Moxie Moms has paid off well for her business primarily through exposure. Gymboree offers classes geared toward children under 5 years old.

"I have noticed that so many people here are involved with Moxie Moms," Fraley said. "Susan's really good at informing people about it."

Gaylord, the Boulder mother who joined Moxie Moms shortly after her first child, James, was born in December 2003, said she initially was attracted by the fitness activities and hikes, but quickly came to value the opportunity to talk with other mothers about parenting issues.

"It's easy to feel isolated," she said. "You have



to create a new network of friends. And being home on a full-time basis, it's really important for him as well as me to get out and socialize."

Her membership in Moxie Moms also has helped with the many purchases that come with having a baby, said Gaylord, who's expecting a second child in November.

"We've more than paid for the membership fee in discounts," she said.

