

Everyone has a story

Local mom finds strength in numbers

Mothers & More offers activities, advice and friendship

By **MELISSA RIGNEY BAXTER** Special to *The Freeman*

Karen Eidem of Pewaukee was strolling through a rummage sale last summer when she made an unexpected find – a network of friends, activities and support she didn't know existed.

Eidem joined the nonprofit organization Mothers & More last summer, and this year, she's helping spread the word about the group and its advantages for all kinds of moms.

"It's really great. I've met so many new friends, and it's just a wonderful resource. I wish I knew about it sooner," Eidem said.

As the mother of Alex, 3, and Karl, 18 months, Eidem has enjoyed the organization's twice-weekly meetings as well as the host of other activities available.

"They have something going on every single day," she said.

The group meets at St. John Vianney Church in Brookfield although Mothers & More is not religiously affiliated. Mothers & More is part of a large national organization, and the Milwaukee West Chapter is the largest in the country.

The advantages are numerous, including special interest groups like cooking clubs, book clubs and play groups as well as an e-mail loop where moms can get good references, advice and referrals from the 160 members, Eidem said.

"We have a lot of people who buy and sell things through the loop," she said.

Beyond the opportunities for mom-to-mom bonding, Mothers & More participates in community outreach to help mothers like themselves who may be in need of a helping hand. In May, the group organized a donation drive, collecting baby items and donating them to birthing centers at Waukesha Memorial Hospital and Elmbrook Memorial Hospital. They also participated in Habitat for Humanity's Women Build project, constructing a home for a local mom in need of affordable housing.

The national organization is headquartered in Elmhurst, Ill., and several local members have been involved on the national level, Eidem said.

The group is not just for stay-at-home moms, she said, adding that all mothers are welcome to join. Stay-at-home moms, part-time and full-time working moms and mothers who run home-based businesses are all included.

This month, Eidem will mark her first year anniversary with the group as she participates in the annual rummage sale, which serves as a fund-raiser for the organization.



Melissa Rigney Baxter/Special to The Freeman Kathy Kussow and Karen Eidem of Mothers & More Milwaukee West Chapter presented the staff of Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – Elmbrook Memorial Hospital's birthing center – with gift bags to distribute to new moms in need.