

Chronicle Books

Trisha Ashworth (left) and Amy Nobile are Marin County authors who interviewed 100 mothers across the country for their book.

## Postcards from the mommy track

### I Was a Really Good Mom Before I Had Kids

Reinventing Modern Motherhood  
By Trisha Ashworth and Amy Nobile

CHRONICLE BOOKS; 175 PAGES; \$18.95 PAPERBACK

By Regan McMahon  
CHRONICLE DEPUTY BOOK EDITOR

It's hard to believe that a book about motherhood, a subject so culturally laden and potentially divisive, could not only ring true on every page but also brim with fresh insights and searing candor.

Marin County authors Trisha Ashworth, married mother of three, and Amy Nobile, married mother of two, genuinely have their fingers on the pulse, having interviewed 100 mothers across the country, working and stay-at-home moms alike, who enjoy having kids but struggle with their role. The magnitude of maternal responsibility and the depth of their own expectations can leave mothers feeling rarely satisfied or content about the job they're doing. The authors' mission is to help moms "begin to love motherhood as much as we love our children."

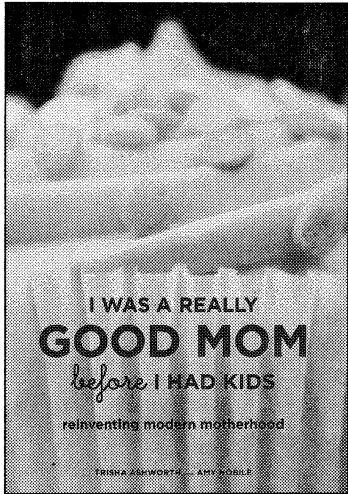
Mothers don't like to complain too much, even with friends, because they don't want to sound like bad moms or let on that they're having trouble handling everything. But the authors get mothers to open up and tell the truth. "Because if we can talk honestly," they write, "perhaps we can lose the notion that we can and should do it all. And if we can lose that notion, then perhaps we can get a grip on our insane expectations. And if we get a grip on our insane expectations, perhaps we can stop judging ourselves and other moms, learn to say no when we need to, embrace our daily lives, nurture ourselves and our husbands, and maybe, just maybe, relax and find peace."

The authors somehow strike a perfect tone. They tackle psychological factors without sounding clinical and offer practical steps to avoid pitfalls without smacking of goopy self-help. The book is full of wry humor but never snarky.

Ashworth's background is in advertising and Nobile's is in public relations, so they know a catchy phrase when they hear one. This makes them particularly adept at pulling out clever comments from mothers' revealing quotes for chapter titles and section headings such as "I Love Being a Mom; I Just Hate Doing It" and "Am I a Bad Mom If I Don't Buy Organic SpaghettiOs?"

The book's bright, bold graphic design offers whole pages of blown-up mom quotes that crystallize the kinds of can't-win, often self-imposed internal dilemmas moms wrestle with. A mother of three in Houston says, "If you have time to shave one leg, it's a miracle. If you have time to shave two, you feel guilty."

Sprinkled throughout are quotes labeled "Dirty Little Secret." Among them: "I like to go to Starbucks alone. I like the adult sippy cup. I get to drink the whole coffee while it's still hot without interruption. My 'latte name' is Kim, and in my mind she's still single and living in the city with no kids."



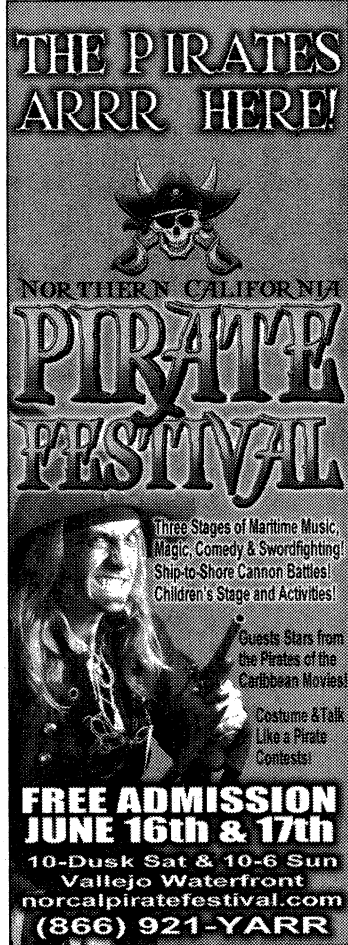
#### REVIEW

The book covers topics one might expect, such as conflicting feelings over quitting work or staying at work after having children, how children affect a couple's sex life, the difficulty in saying no to one's kids. But there are other fresh angles as well, including the difficulty of declining requests for a mother's time from schools and other groups ("Our obligations need pruning, and saying no is the shears") and modern mothers' tendency to compare themselves to other moms, thereby feeding feelings of inadequacy.

The book has a decidedly heterosexual, married viewpoint; it doesn't focus on the specific stresses faced by single moms, divorced moms and lesbian moms. A particularly illuminating chapter is devoted to the husband's perspective. Conflict and miscommunication between spouses often arise from mothers' frustration that fathers aren't doing what the mothers think they should be. The chapter title sums it up succinctly: "Just Give Us a Rule Book, We Can't Read Minds (Tell Him What You Need)."

Lively, smart, incisive and insightful, this attractive paperback has more substance than one might assume at first glance. And with all its quotes, checklists and "easy steps," it's perfect for digesting in short bursts — which may be the only way busy mothers can manage to read it.

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# DATE LINES

News, notes and updates from the Bay Area arts and culture scene

#### Download 'Hell'

Jake Heggie's "To Hell and Back," the one-act opera he composed with a libretto by Gene Scheer, is now available for downloading through Magnatune.

The recording features Philharmonia Baroque, conducted by Nicholas McGegan, and Broadway star Patti LuPone and Canadian soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian.

The opera is an updated version of the rape of Persephone myth, setting the story in modern-day Appalachia and focusing on a young woman in an abusive marriage. There are only two characters in the 40-minute piece, the young wife, played by Bayrakdarian, and her mother-in-law, played by LuPone.

The work received its world premiere by Philharmonia Baroque last fall.

Go to [magnatune.com/artists/albums/pb-heggie](http://magnatune.com/artists/albums/pb-heggie) to purchase a download of the opera.

— David Wiegand

#### Hoofers aid homeless

An admirably wide range of performers — break, swing and tango dancers, musicians and prose poets — will let it rip this weekend at Street Beats, a two-day fundraiser for the Gubbio Project, the homeless shelter at San Francisco's St. Boniface Neighborhood Center in the gritty Tenderloin. The show folk include ballroom dancing star Valentia, the Argentine tango troupe Libertango, swing dancer Alison Hurwitz and hip-hop hooper Christiane Crawford.

The shows are at 8 p.m. Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday at St. Boniface, 133 Golden Gate Ave. Tickets are \$25 — a C-note for you VIPs — and include a salsa dance lesson, a reception and a tour of the Gubbio Project facilities.

For tickets and more info, call (415) 861-5848 or visit [www.sbrnc](http://www.sbrnc).



LIZ HAFALIA / The Chronicle 2006

Isabel Bayrakdarian performs Jake Heggie's "To Hell and Back" on a recording now available for downloading.

[wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com).

— Jesse Hamlin

#### A break for Journey

Despite the incredible buzz generated by having their 1981 power ballad "Don't Stop Believin'" played during the last scene of the finale of "The Sopranos," the members of Journey have decided to dismiss their latest lead singer, Jeff Scott Soto, and take the rest of the year off.

The replacement vocalist joined the band less than a year ago, making his stage debut at a July 7 concert in Bristow, Va. His last performance with the band was May 12, in Leesburg, Va. Soto had replaced Steve Augeri, who left reportedly because of a medical condition. In a statement, Journey guitarist Neal Schon said, "We appreciate all of Jeff's hard work and we can't thank him enough for stepping in when Steve Augeri got sick last year. He did a tremendous job for us and we wish him the best. We've just decided to go our separate ways, no pun intended. We're plotting our next move now."

While this has raised the inevita-

ble question as to whether the group will now reunite with Steve Perry, the musicians insist nothing will happen until at least 2008. Meanwhile, "Don't Stop Believin'" has climbed into the iTunes Top 40.

— Aidin Vaziri

#### LGBT voices onstage

Youth, sexuality and gender identity fuel the fire tonight at "Queeriosity," an evening of spoken word, dance and music. It will feature 15 performers, ages 15 to 30.

"It's not a slam, in that it's not a competition, but it does carry the same kind of energy," said James Kass, founder and executive director of Youth Speaks, a nonprofit that promotes spoken-word performance, creative writing workshops and the annual Teen Poetry Slam.

Kass, 38, started Youth Speaks in 1996. "It's so important for an organization like ours, that is so seeped in hip-hop culture, to put queer voices center stage," he said, "and also to create a space for young queer people of color to find voice in a larger festival and communi-

ty."

Most of the "Queeriosity" participants are gay, lesbian or queer identified, Kass said, but not all. "They go out of their way to invite what they call 'queer allies.' So you'll have some transgender people and you'll have some completely hetero. It's more about communication around the issues than anything."

Vosimar Reyes, 18, is one of the performers. Born in Mexico, Reyes immigrated with his family when he was 3, and at 16 came out to his family and community. His first "Queeriosity" was two years ago, when he read a poem about Gwen Araujo, a transgender teen from Newark who, in 2002, was murdered when her attackers discovered she was a biological male.

"I was shocked to hear that something like that could happen in the Bay Area," he said.

Reyes lives in San Jose with his grandparents and goes to school at National Hispanic University in San Jose. "In my work I try to capture the essence of the multiple layers I am as a person," he said, "whether that's Mexican immigrant, queer or Latino. It varies. Right now I'm working on a huge piece, a monologue about immigration."

The event is 7 to 10 p.m. in the Rainbow Room of the San Francisco Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Center, 1800 Market St. Admission is free.

— Edward Guthmann

#### Camp reunion

Cazadero Performing Arts Camp will hold a reunion this summer at its Sonoma County site.

The camp has been turning out professional musicians and music educators for five decades. Among its famous alumni are Stephen "Doc" Kupka of Tower of Power; Joe Alessi, principal trombone for the New York Philharmonic; and Doris Fukawa, a violinist who has played with all the major Bay Area orchestras and is now executive director of the Crowden School. The date for the reunion is July 22. For information, go to [www.cazadero.org](http://www.cazadero.org).

— David Wiegand

OPENS SATURDAY  
SNEAK PEEK FRIDAY NIGHT 5-8:45 P.M.

### Nan Kempner's rules for stylish living:

"Spend the money."  
"Dress for lunch."  
"Make the effort."



Nan Kempner

### American Chic

takes a look inside her amazing closet. Come and see why, in Nan's words, fashion is "a great deal of fun."

Kempner was born in San Francisco and became the toast of the New York social scene. She was known for her sharp wit and love of parties; her legacy is one of the finest private couture collections ever assembled.

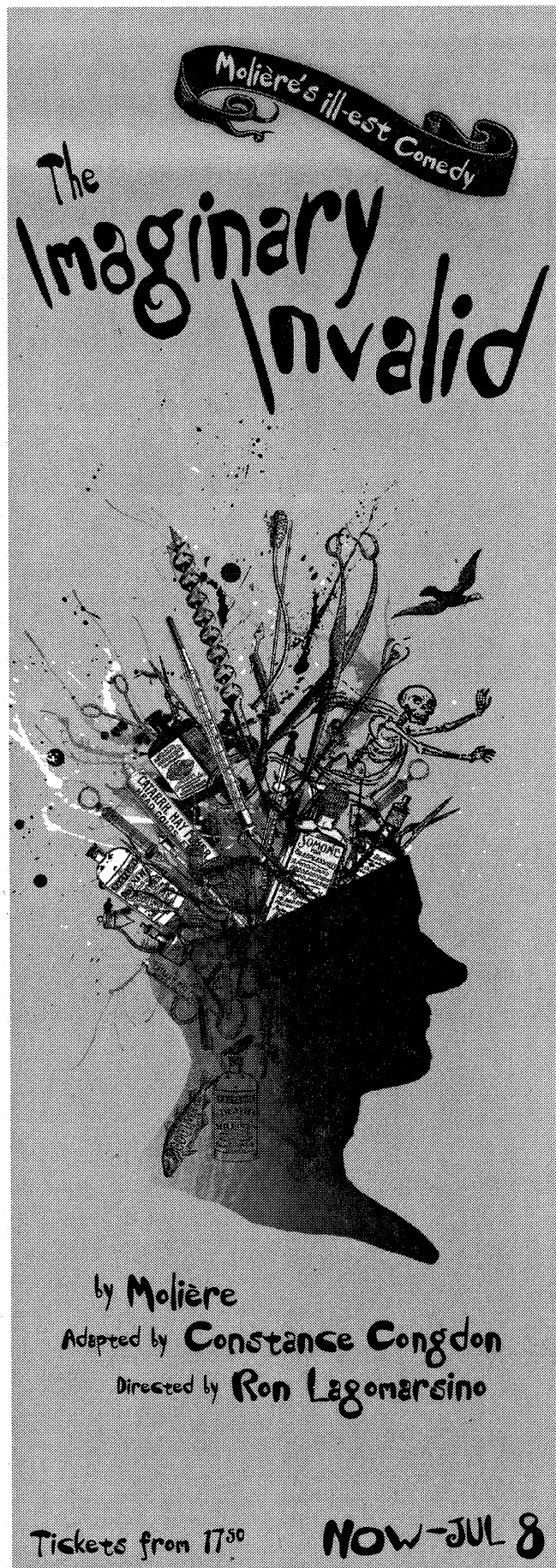
June 16–November 11, 2007

This exhibition originated at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. This presentation is sponsored by the Private Banking and Investment Group at Merrill Lynch, Bonhams & Butterfields, and the Museums' Couture Circle. Photo by Bruce Weber.

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