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*ERIKA BRECHTEL
FULLERTON MOM
DESIGNER AND
BRAND STYLIST

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5 women living lives
that reflect their
values, passions and
love of family

These five local women have (almost) mastered the dreaded life-work balance that evades many mothers.

INSPIRED MOMS

by Sonya Quick
photographs by Noel Besuzzi

A happy family. A fulfilling job. Good health. Having it all seems easy – if you could double the hours in each day. But it's not that simple. We chose five Orange County moms who don't pretend to always have everything, but have harnessed their passion and intelligence to create an inspired life. These working women make mothering a top priority while striving to find the best personal balance in their lives.



Erika Brechtel

Brand Stylist and Entrepreneur
Lives in Fullerton
Mom of Leighton, 5
@erikabrechtel

“Style a life you want to create around you.”

That's what Erika Brechtel, brand stylist and entrepreneur, suggests on her website. And it's also something she works to do in her own life.

“But styling life is sometimes challenging, with many factors out of our control.”

Brechtel and her husband, Justin, wanted children, but they suffered three miscarriages. “I remember when I was going through it, I really felt so alone,” Brechtel says.

Brechtel later became pregnant a fourth time. She worried they wouldn't see it to full term. Nine months later, the couple welcomed Leighton.

“We were thrilled,” Brechtel says. “She is a huge blessing for us. A gift.”

And then another obstacle presented itself. Just as Brechtel and her husband were self-employed, the recession hit. Four months after birthing her daughter, Brechtel needed to go back to work. She enrolled Leighton in a Montessori school.

“I struggled with it in the beginning,” Brechtel says. “But at the same time I feel good that I'm paying professionals who can help her along each developmental stage.”

Finding the right school gave Brechtel peace of mind that her daughter was not just OK; she was happy and nurtured. That trust allowed her to thrive in managing her business.

Brechtel's background includes a magna cum laude art history degree from UCLA and an interior design degree from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising. She has worked in interior design for a small Web design firm and as an art director for an international corporation.

When Brechtel moved with her husband to New York so he could attend grad school,

she started freelancing. As she sought potential jobs with New York companies, she eventually decided that she preferred working for herself. The couple moved back to the West Coast and bought a home in Fullerton seven years ago. She continues managing her own business.

“You have to have discipline. You need to be organized and know how to schedule your time,” Brechtel says. “But you also have to be flexible. Projects and clients are fluid.”

In addition to managing her own company, which includes constant marketing and administration, Brechtel volunteers; she is on the board of the Junior League of Orange County. As for finding personal time, she regularly goes to the gym and makes time to go out with girlfriends for drinks or on short trips.

“Sometimes it can be really hard,” Brechtel says of her busting schedule. “My key is not trying to work too much into one period of time.”

For her, that means focusing on her job during work hours and focusing on her daughter in the morning, at night and during weekends.

With her husband constantly busy as an architect, the family has to work at carving out time for each other. Having dinner together is the answer, along with a date night thrown in every few weeks. But Brechtel's favorite time comes in a certain temperature: right around 80 degrees. On beautiful, sunny days, Hawaii-born Brechtel and her daughter go to China Cove in Corona del Mar. Leighton loves to play in the water and build sand castles. Brechtel reads and watches her daughter play.

“The ocean is a huge part of my life,” Brechtel says. “It's just nice to take a few hours out of my crazy schedule to connect with my daughter and the surroundings.”