

OC FAMILY

Inspired moms

THESE FIVE LOCAL WOMEN HAVE (ALMOST) MASTERED THE DREADED LIFE-WORK BALANCE THAT EVADES MANY MOTHERS.

BY SONYA QUICK
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

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

"Style a life you want to create around you."

That's what Brechtel, a "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 felt so alone," Brechtel said.

Brechtel 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 said. "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 giving birth to her daughter, Brechtel needed to go back to work. She enrolled Leighton in a Montessori school.

"I struggled with it in the beginning," Brechtel said. "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 own business.

Brechtel's background includes graduating magna cum laude with an art history degree from UCLA, and getting 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



Erika Brechtel is a "brand stylist" and entrepreneur and lives with her husband and daughter in Fullerton. NOEL BESUZZI

"You have to have discipline. You need to be organized and know how to schedule your time. But you also have to be flexible. Projects and clients are fluid."

Erika Brechtel

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 said. "But you also have to be flexible. Projects and clients are fluid."

In addition to managing her own company, which includes constant marketing and adminis-

tration, Brechtel volunteers; she is on the board of the Junior League of Orange County. As for finding personal time, Brechtel regularly goes to the gym and makes time to go out with girlfriends for drinks or on short trips.

"Sometimes it's really hard," Brechtel said of her busy 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

SEE MOMS • PAGE 6



SUZANNE BROUGHTON
STAFF COLUMNIST

Illness or ploy? To know isn't child's play

One morning when my daughter, Emily, was very young she woke me up early to tell me her ear was hurting. "This one, Mom," she whispered as she tugged on her left ear. "Maybe if you eat some breakfast, you'll feel better," I said. I don't know why I said it, maybe because this was the kind of thing my Mom used to say to me, or maybe it was the sleepiness talking, or maybe I really truly believe Honey Nut Cheerios have a magical healing power, and milk can be some kind of ear-pain elixir, but that was all I could come up with as I looked up at her sweet face from my pillow.

With advice like this, you can guess, "Dr. Mom" is never uttered in the our house. Why am I expected to know when to "ice," when to "apply pressure" and when to "just go lie down for a few minutes"? My medical advice seems like a dangerous mixture of WebMD, hasty logic and things my mom said to me ... and then there is always The Snow Factor to consider.

I clearly remember a time when I was Emily's age trying to fake a stomachache to my Mom to get out of going to school. Oh, the moaning ... the face-crushed grimace ... the dramatic pushing away of my breakfast ... I am sure it was a stellar performance. But, my Mom was unmoved, she looked me straight in the eye and said, "You're not trying to snow me, are you?" It was one of those moments as a kid when you genuinely believe your mom can see right inside you – into your deceptive, lying soul. Frightened by her clairvoyance, I backed off my claims and, with hunched shoulders, went to get ready for school.

The Snow Factor: It has so been done before.

Skeptical ... yes, I was. Emily's dubious epyrache could just be a ploy to stay in her PJs on a rainy day and watch "Boomerang." She could at least try to go to school. I don't want her forming any bad habits. Apathetically, I got her dressed, out the door and plopped her in the car, but by the time the marquee of her school was in sight, it was clear she was really, honestly sick.

At the doctor's office later that morning, she was clinging to her ear,

SEE BROUGHTON • PAGE 2



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MOMS

FROM PAGE 1

daughter play.

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

LINDA HORIST

Being a mother of 36 children isn't easy. But it is the best job in the world, Linda Horist said.

"I love the life lessons I can teach," she said. "Instilling in children that they can be anything and do anything - all they have to do is try."

No, Horist is not a birth mother to three dozen children. She is a proud Anaheim Hills mother of three and a second-grade teacher at Nohl Canyon Elementary who was named a 2014 California Teacher of the Year.

Horist has always been a teacher of sorts. Her brother and sister were born with special needs. The family was told to put them both in an institution, that they couldn't be taught to live in society. "That's not what my family was about," Horist said.

She spent her days helping her brother and sister learn to walk and talk.

"I fought for them to make sure they could get the same opportunities as everyone else."

In school, Horist always talked of some day being a teacher. At home, she would teach lessons to her siblings - as well as her dog and dolls. Never picturing a different career, she earned her bachelor's degree in education from Bowling Green State University in Ohio and her master's in curriculum and instruction from the University of Oregon.

Horist started as a high



Linda Horist, teacher and mother of three.

school teacher and then worked as a substitute teacher. She also had a few home-based businesses while her children - Alli, Daniel and C.J. - were young. Once her kids were in school, she went back to work full time, knowing she could teach while they were in school, and everyone could spend nights, weekends and summer vacations together as a family.

She says her "village" of friends and colleagues is what helped her through the busy life of a working mother. She still is inspired as she gets together with a group of moms she met when their kids were in kindergarten.

"We have helped each other through just about every joy, struggle and sorrow imaginable over the years," Horist said. "They are my inspiration, my village, my rock. I wouldn't have made it without them."

Horist has taught at Nohl Canyon since 2000. In many respects, she views her current students, and hundreds of former students, as her daytime children.

"I'm not presuming that I am their parent," she said. "But in second grade, I'm teaching how to give and take, how to make good choices, how to not fall prey to peer pressure - some of the same things I

instilled in my children in those same years."

Horist says being a teacher helps her appreciate her kids. And that helps her children appreciate putting family first, which today means advising each other on getting through college or applying for jobs.

"I'm blessed. My children are my greatest accomplishment," Horist said. "Not because of what I've done for them, but for what they've done and who I've seen them grow into."

AMELIA MARNEAU

Marneau says to not hold back on having children, and to try different flavors when cooking. It's something she learned from her mother-in-law. Just go for it.

And that's how she and her husband, Florent, approach life and work.

Marneau gets great joy out of cooking with her children. They'll put together a pot of clams with chorizo and corn. An orange blossom gateau.

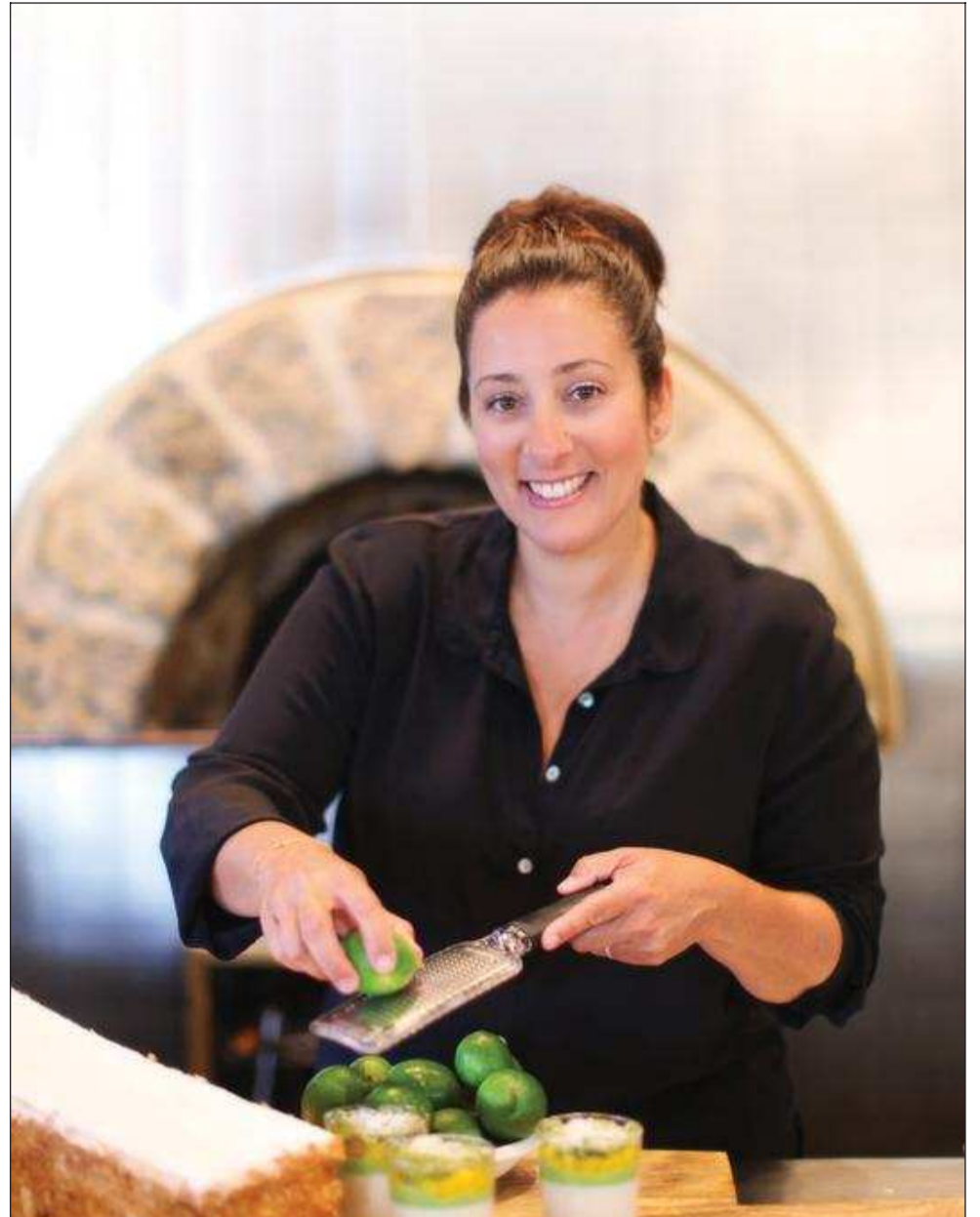
"It makes for a really warm family unit," Marneau said. "There's nothing else like spending time together in the kitchen."

And that also goes for spending time with her husband. Together, the couple started Marché Moderne, a French-style bistro in Costa Mesa.

Amelia, an American-born Italian who studied cooking in France, and France-born Florent met while working in a restaurant. Years later, the couple started a family.

And then, with their 5-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son, Amelia and Florent finally found the right location - in South Coast Plaza - and decided to open their own restaurant.

With Amelia serving as head pastry chef and Florent managing the rest of the food, the two opened Marché Moderne, a mod-



Amelia Marneau, restaurateur and chef and mother of two.

NOEL BESUZZI

ern restaurant that focuses on using the best in-season meats and produce.

"It was really a family effort," Marneau said. "Our children have a really big appreciation for cooking, and someday they can share that with their families."

But it isn't easy managing a restaurant and a household. Marneau says she stayed home when the children were younger, and now she feels refreshed going to work.

"I really enjoy working for personal gratification," Marneau said. "At home I love being with my children, and I have the best

time. And then I get to go off to the restaurant, and I have adult time."

Her answer to balancing both roles? Marneau focuses on being in the moment. Appreciative that she has a job she enjoys, she concentrates on her pastries and on creating a welcoming environment for guests. At home she makes the most of the time she has with her kids.

"I think that it's really made me focus on my children," Marneau says. "I see how precious my time with them is, and I sit back and observe how they are changing into adults."

Marneau says being a

mother has changed her as a chef. At the restaurant, she watches over customers to make sure they enjoy the experience. And her nurturing role with staff sometimes earns her an "OK, Mom."

Now, she is beginning to introduce her children, now 9 and 12, to the restaurant. Just as she watched her grandma work, Marneau is excited to show her children, especially her daughter, that women can be successful and support themselves.

"I saw that my grandma went to work every day

SEE MOMS • PAGE 7

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