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## RAK Momprenneur

### BARBARA DEPPISCH

#### A great way to learn as you play

By Brooke Mortensen, photo by Daniel Friedman  
 © 2011, Raising Arizona Kids



Barbara Deppisch of Chandler, along with her husband, Rich Iwanski, own **Great Play**, an interactive fitness center for kids.

#### What made you want to start Great Play?

My husband and I both have master's degrees in education and enjoy working with children. We are also both passionate about health and fitness and

seeing children get a good start at building healthy habits from a young age. Great Play combines many of our interests and allows us to provide a valuable service to our community as well. I enjoy the challenges and triumphs of being self-employed and also all the wonderful people you meet along the way.

#### How is Great Play different from other child fitness-focused businesses?

There are at least four key differences between Great Play and other kids' gyms. The curriculum is one. At Great Play, we give younger children a more well-rounded physical foundation than typical kids' programs because most kids' gyms follow a gymnastics-based approach that focuses only on locomotor and stability development. Besides locomotor and stability skills we work on manipulative skills to form the foundation for overall athleticism and fitness as kids get older.

The equipment is also different. Our equipment is state-of-the-art. Many items come from pediatric physical and occupational therapy, and we are able to rearrange it many times in a single class period so every session is unique, dynamic, and fresh. We also have an interactive arena. Our innovative curriculum is supported by new patent-pending technology consisting of half a dozen computers controlling eight projectors and our sound system. This helps make every visit to Great Play unique and exciting. For our youngest players we can create, for example, a scene from the beach, or the farm, or of our lovable animated mascot Buddy. And for our older players the gym turns into a cheering stadium or scenes including sports or fireworks. Our coaches are also different. Our Great Play coaches love what they do and it shows in how they engage with children and create a fun, supportive, and safe environment.

#### Tell us about your kids.

I have three beautiful boys who are the joy of my life. Nick is 12 and in sixth grade, Joey is 9 and in third grade, Jake is 6 and in first grade.

#### How have they inspired your work?

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I was inspired to remain self-employed ever since Nick was born so that I would be able to maintain flexible hours to attend their school events and also be able to volunteer at their schools. And they've also inspired my passion for health and wellness in order to keep them healthy and happy.

**Any changes in store for Great Play?**

We recently began hosting Parents Night Out on the first Friday evening of the month and the kids absolutely love it. We play some of their favorite games and we cap the night with a movie "under the stars." We will also be starting a "drop and shop," where parents can drop their kids off for fun at Great Play while they shop at the stores in our plaza and take advantage of special discounts we've arranged with our business neighbors for these events. And, as always, we are continually updating and creating new curriculum and interactive scenery.

**Anything else you want people to know?**

Great Play really needs to be experienced firsthand to fully appreciate our uniqueness in the industry. So we encourage anyone with children 6 months to 12 years old to call us and schedule a no-obligation free trial. From a personal standpoint, I have a bachelor's degree in Montessori and elementary education and a master's degree in special education. I have been an educator for 20 years and have extensive knowledge of child development.

Learn more about **Great Play**.

*If you know of a Valley mompreneur we should feature, write to [editorial@raisingarizonakids.com](mailto:editorial@raisingarizonakids.com).*

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