

Copyright © 2008 Post-Newsweek Media, Inc./Gazette.Net
 Contact Us | About Us | Privacy Policy | FAQ | E-Letters | Place Classified ad |
 The Gazette is a 2008 Pulitzer Prize Winner for Best Local News. Call 301-670-2565, classifieds: 301-670-2500
FitzMall.com **SINCE 1966**
All vehicles have discounted, delivered, no haggle prices. Shop now!

AFI Silver
Summer movie schedule
 FIND A MOVIE

Gazette.Net

Maryland Community Newspapers Online

Now 91° Thu 88°/67° Fri 86°/65° 5-day forecast Traffic Search [Advanced Search](#)

Montgomery | Prince George's | Frederick | Carroll | Sports | Politics | Business | Entertainment | Speak Out | Jobs | Autos | Homes | Classifieds

More News

- Worman's Mill residents not yet sold on developer's town center
- Rocky Ridge woman wins big money
- Senior centers serve important function in Frederick County
- Love of table tennis keeps local legend competing
- An activist takes an advisory role

Strumming their stress away

Guitar lessons offer moms solace from daily tension

Wednesday, May 31, 2006

by Stephanie Siegel
 Staff Writer

In an hour that is part guitar lesson and part gossip session, a group of Bethesda moms have found the most precious, yet elusive treasure a mother can find — time for themselves.

The women, some stay-at-home moms and some professionals, make up the Wednesday morning guitar class taught by Sally Pessin, a Bethesda mom herself.

“It’s the only thing I do that’s just for me,” said Connie Cantrell, one of the students. “It’s not volunteering at the school, it’s not for fitness, it’s not seeing the same people I see in my neighborhood everyday. There’s no pressure. You really enjoy it.”

Inspired by their children who were taking guitar lessons with Pessin, several women approached her about starting a moms’ class, she said.

“I said I’d love to teach moms,” Pessin said. “It’s so much calmer than kids.”

Pessin started teaching the class of eight women in January. It quickly became more than just a music class. In the one-hour-and-15-minute lesson, women gossip about neighbors, teachers and school events. They trade names of doctors over tea and, of course, they pick up their guitars and strum away.

Elizabeth Margolis became interested in lessons after her 11-year-old daughter learned guitar from Pessin.

“It was partly to do something together,” Margolis said. “It was a way to share music.”

But what began as an activity meant to form a bond with her daughter became something Margolis now does for herself.

“If I’m having a real stressed out day, I’ll just go into another room and play guitar for a



Click [here](#) to enlarge this photo
 Laurie DeWitt/The Gazette
 Sherril Walsh (left) and Ellen Rogers strum a Mary Chapin Carpenter song during a guitar class for moms at guitar teacher Sally Pessin's home in Bethesda on May 24. The women in the class say the lessons are a break from their stressful lives.

TOP JOBS

Gazette & Star's ONLINE Job Fair September 15th - 26th Attention Employers! Finally.....the [More](#)

GOT JOB? The

Gazette & Star's ONLINE Job Fair September 15th - 26th Attention Employers! Finally.....the [More](#)

CLASSIFIEDS

- Jobs
- Homes
- Autos
- Merchandise
- Apartments
- Legals
- Announcements
- Place an ad



Find out where to be and what to see.

Search right this second

Gazette.Net

Getaway.
 AS U LIKE IT.

SHOPPING EXCURSION
 CULINARY ADVENTURE
 HISTORY & HERITAGE TOUR
 ARTS & CULTURAL ESCAPE

STAUNTON
 VIRGINIA

Call today for your Free Visitor's Guide
 1-800-342-7982
 www.VisitStaunton.com

while,” she said. “It’s real therapy.”

For the mothers, whose lives are dominated by chauffeuring kids to soccer, ballet, orthodontist appointments and a date book full of other events, it’s rare to schedule their own extracurricular activity.

**Learn to play
For more information
about guitar lessons
with Sally Pessin,
e-mail
guitarfun@comcast.net
or call 301-897-4090.**

[Kids Guitar Lessons](#)

Kids can learn to play guitar online with easy video lessons.

www.jamplay.com/Kids-Guitar-Lessons

[Suck at Guitar?](#)

Our guitar teachers review the top home-study courses. Some are great!

www.musiciansinfo.org

[Video Guitar Lessons](#)

24 Free Sample Lessons Learning Guitar Made Easy

Video.GuitarTricks.com/Lessons

Ads by Google

“It’s for you,” said guitar student Sherril Walsh.

“It’s the strangest feeling. At first I felt guilty about it.”

Pessin offers eight-week sessions culminating in a recital for friends and family. The lessons teach guitar basics for beginners.

“I want to give them a skill they can walk away with,” Pessin said. “My goal is to give them the tools to pick up any piece of popular music and play it.”

They are supposed to practice at home during the week. That doesn’t always happen.

“It’s funny to have your kid tell you it’s time to practice, or that you’re not doing it right,” said Cindy Szparaga. “Ellen [Rogers, another student] and I used to practice at home with a bottle of wine. Then it became too hard.”

Pessin started her business, Guitar Fun, just over a year ago. She has taught about 70 students in that time. At first she only taught children 9 and up, but has now expanded. In addition to the moms’ class, she gives semi-private lessons to several teenagers and two dads.

Students learn songs from the parents’ generation as well as the kids’. The tunes range from Green Day to the Eagles and Van Morrison.

Walsh said she sometimes practices with her 16-year-old daughter who also takes guitar lessons with Pessin.

“It’s nice to share that,” she said.

Other moms also say that the guitar lessons have benefited the whole family.

“Since my son started to play, it’s been great to bring live music into the home,” said Felice Laird. “It’s very harmonizing in the home. It’s an alternative to screaming at each other.”

Still, for the women in the class, learning to play is not about others, it’s about them.

“I always wanted to learn [an instrument],” said Seemeen Hashem. “I thought, ‘I want to do this. Why can’t I? I’m not too old.’”

Laird agreed.

“You get to a stage in life where you don’t really care what people think,” Laird said. “The consequences of failure don’t even apply.”

And while their lives may be busy and hectic, moms find needed peace — if not quiet — in the class.

“I’ll turn my life around to make it to class,” Cantrell said. “I’m really doing this for the enjoyment of playing..”