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KinderJam classes offer instructive play for preschoolers



Suzanna Vik holds pom-poms used in her KinderJam classes. Robert Walch

Written by **Robert Walch** For Off 68

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Suzanna Vik was so impressed with how her young children responded to the KinderJam play program that she asked its founder if she could one day become a teacher in the program.

The mother of two youngsters, Vik first encountered KinderJam at a play group at Fort Ord conducted by El Brown.

When Brown decided in 2010 to franchise KinderJam, Vik got her wish and became one of the first women to purchase a franchise. There are now 11 franchises throughout the U.S. and Japan.

Vik, a Toro Park resident, launched her franchise in

November by offering classes at the Jeanne

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ms.suzanna@kinderjam.com or call Suzanna Vik at
253-732-6235.

Robinson Dance Studio on Monterey Street
in Salinas. She also signed a contract to
conduct classes for military families at Fort
Ord as well.

A former elementary school teacher, Brown designed the play
program for her own son.

She wanted something that would hold the boy's attention and at
the same time expose him to useful tools for future academic and
social success.

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The end product was KinderJam, an activity program that employs
upbeat contemporary music, creative movement and a variety of
fun and colorful "manipulatives" to instill an enthusiasm for learning
in preschoolers.

"This is a music and motion program that emphasizes kinesthetic
learning and it keeps the child and me in motion for the entire
session," Vik said. "The play list is changed on a regular basis and
all the songs, in one way or another, assist in developing various
basic skills."

For example, there are songs that involve color and number
recognition, as well as parts of the body. As the children participate
they not only sing or respond to the songs, but have objects to
shake. Along with the rainbow streamers, egg shakers or pom-
poms they wield, the children will verbally identify or point to
various things and, of course, they dance.

In other instances they may pretend to be various animals or
assume other roles.

"When we are finished the children are worn out," Vik said with a
big smile. "When they get home, it's nap time!"

In designing each session, Vik also makes sure that the closing
activities quiet the children down. She'll end with a slower "Good-
bye" song where the participants receive stamps and exchange
hugs.

"As we slow things down we always end on a positive note with
positive recognition so everyone goes away happy," she said. "I
don't want the kids to be hyper when they get in the car with mom
or dad."

The Salinas KinderJam class, which is open to children between
the ages of 1 and 5, is open to the general public and is held each
Wednesday at 9:25 a.m. Each session lasts 45 minutes.

Vik said that although the classes she conducts at Fort Ord have
drawn a lot of youngsters and done well, the Salinas session is less
well-attended.

"It has been a little slow getting the Oldtown class started, although
the children who have attended love it," she said. "When parents
see the program and how children positively respond, they are
really impressed. The trick is getting people to stop in."

With a month-to-month tuition option available for the weekly class,
Vik explained that a family need not make a long-term commitment.
She invited any parent who might be interested in the program to

drop by with her child or children for a free, introductory session any Wednesday.

Vik would like to get her Salinas classes established this spring and summer before she inherits Brown's classes in Monterey and at Fort Ord. Because Brown is a military wife, the founder of KinderJam will be moving within the next year when her husband is reassigned.

In addition to group classes, Vik also offers 30-minute KinderJam sessions for birthdays, family parties or play dates.

"I have a song list, but I also ask parents if there are any special songs they'd like me to use," she said. "I have my own audio equipment, so that's not an issue."

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