

LIBERTY CALL

Parents share ideas

Toddlers play and learn at Playmorning activities



Toddlers and moms have a chance to enjoy social interactions and share ideas at Playmorning at Moanalua Terrace Community Center. Left to right: Denver Lemke (14 months), Sarah Jones (18 months) and her mom Kathryn Jones, and 12-month-old Kai Hughes and his mother, Lymari. Playmorning activities are held at various parks and community associations in Navy housing and other military communities. The activities are sponsored by the Armed Forces YMCA. Erica Newton is the Playmorning coordinator at the Moanalua Terrace Community Center.



Grinning from ear to ear, 4-year-old Laura Buczynski helps to put away toys as the children finish free play and prepare for circle time. Top right: Denver Austin Lemke attempted to retrieve a toy from the bottom of the plastic toy bin before running off to join other toddlers at one of the free play areas. Sarah Jones, 18-month-old, perched on the edge of a play table as she took a brief respite from her coloring activities. Kai Hughes, 12 months old, laughed and giggled as he whirled and twirled and clapped his hands to the songs.

There's a good reason why they call it Playmorning and youngsters at a recent Playmorning session in Moanalua Community Center in Navy family housing enjoyed various activities and the opportunity to interact with other children.

Playmorning, a mobile parent-child playgroup that visits community centers and parks in family housing areas, offers an opportunity for tots and their parents to share ideas, learn through play, make new friends and just have fun. Open to military families and their children up to the age of five, the playgroup is led by a trained coordinator.

Playmorning sessions are free and are focused on junior enlisted families, although other grades are welcome.

The playgroup started by the Aliamanu Military Reservation/Pearl Harbor branch of the Armed Services YMCA was located at AMR and premiered in 1983. The program was expanded in 1998 with the help of grant funds and at the urging of Pearl Harbor Navy commands. Four additional sites in Navy housing community centers from Pearl Harbor to Pearl City were added.

There are now eight play morning sites per week, including Navy housing locations at Pearl City Peninsula Community

Center, Manana Community Center, McGrew Community Center, Moanalua Community Center and Catlin-Halsey-Radford-Miller Community Center. Play morning activities are also held at Aliamanu Military Reservation, Red Hill Community Center and Fort Shafter Super Playground.

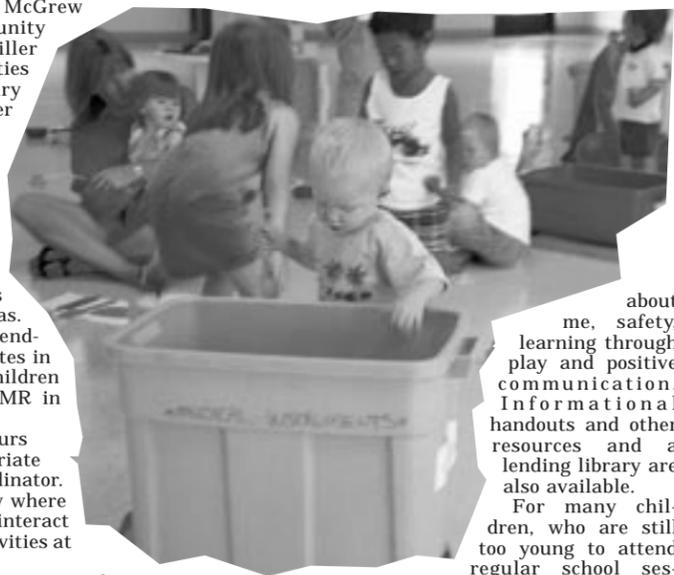
According to Lise Peacock, director of the Aliamanu Family Branch of the Armed Services YMCA, the program goals of the playgroup are to increase positive parent-child interaction, to increase parents' knowledge of child development and to reduce the stress and social isolation experienced by military families. Parents have a chance to interact and to share ideas. More than 2,200 children and parents attended playmorning events at Pearl Harbor sites in 1999. An additional 3,293 parents and children attended the playmorning sessions at AMR in 1999.

The sessions last for one and a half hours with a variety of developmentally appropriate activities set up and led by a trained coordinator. The first hour of Playmorning is free play where youngsters are able to participate and interact with other children in age appropriate activities at a variety of centers.

Centers are filled with toys and activities, geared to teach hand-eye coordination, for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers. For infants, there is also a crawling tunnel. A craft project, requiring parent and child interaction, is also featured during the first part of play morning. The projects chosen can be readily adapted to different age groups and can be easily duplicated or built upon at home.

After the first hour, the children learn to help pick up the toys and to clean up their areas. Circle time, with all of the children and parents participating, takes place during the last half hour of each session. The entire group listens to a story, plays games and/or sings songs together.

Themes change each month; the parenting theme for August is positive disciplining while people and careers is the focus of the craft theme. Other playmorning themes have featured such topics as ocean/local life, all



about me, safety, learning through play and positive communication. Informational handouts and other resources and a lending library are also available.

For many children, who are still too young to attend regular school sessions, Playmorning affords the chance to develop social skills and to learn. And to sing songs about itty, bitsy spiders and dinosaurs...and to do the hokey pokey...and...

Playmorning schedule

(Call 833-1185 for information)

Monday	ASYMCA/AMR	9-10:30 a.m.
	Pearl City	9-10:30 a.m.
	Red Hill	10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
	McGrew Point	11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Tuesday	Moanalua	9-10:30 a.m.
	Ft. Shafter	9-10:30 a.m.
	Super Playground	
Wednesday	ASYMCA/AMR	9-10:30 a.m.
	Manana	9-10:30 a.m.
Thursday	Catlin-Halsey	9:30-11 a.m.
	Pearl City	10:30 a.m.-noon
Friday	ASYMCA/AMR	9-10:30 a.m.

Top left: Laura Buczynski, 4, helps to put away toys as the children finish free play and prepare for circle time. Top right: Denver Lemke, 14 months, tries to retrieve a toy that he has caught his interest during free time at Playmorning. Toys that teach hand-eye coordination are used for various age levels. Bottom left: Mary Schwartz and her one-month-old son, Daniel, also attend the Playmorning group at Moanalua. Playmorning provides an opportunity for parents to share ideas while toddlers learn socialization skills. Bottom right: Thomas Steele, 3, and Laura Buczynski enjoy play and learning activities with other youngsters. At the end of free play time, children gather in a circle to sing songs and listen to a story.

Story and photos
by Karen S. Spangler