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### Babies 101

Program helps answer parenting questions and brings new moms together

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If you're looking for a fun and educational way to spend time with your newborn, then pencil in Babies 101, a six-part series of educational luncheons beginning Tuesday. The idea for Babies 101 was conceived by first-time moms and career women Loretta Jay and Danielle Gollinger, both of Fairfield, during a playgroup Jay started back in 2001 to help mothers meet mothers. "Frequently when women come out of the work force, their peers are still in the work force and it's difficult meeting people like yourself," said Jay, who left her full-time job at Connecticut's Department of Children and Families to be a full-time mom.

The women essentially took the concept for a playgroup one step further with Babies 101 by adding educational speakers and lunch.

"Our goal is to get you out of your house with your baby and involved with new parents," said Jay, who is expecting her second child. "Many women are in the same situation and this program is designed to help build a support network and make friends."

Each luncheon will be held at a child-friendly restaurant in Fairfield or Westport, and will feature professional guest speakers like pediatrician and founder of Breastfeeding Resources, Dr. Christina Smillie and Fairfield's head children's librarian, Barbara Hawkins. For dessert, there will be an open discussion where parents can share their questions, concerns and experiences.

Some of the topics that will be addressed are child development, breast-feeding, child safety, scrapbooking, starting a playgroup and maintaining a marital relationship.

Babies 101 is the first program for Jay's newly formed company, Parasol. The company's goal is to provide useful programs for parents and children.

Fairfield resident Jane Capua, mother of a 3-month-old son, has signed up for Babies 101.

"I'm looking forward to seeing what folks are doing and how they are getting back to life after having a little one," said Capua, who is preparing to go back to her career. "It's nice to hear about a group [like this]."

Dollinger, who has experience in human resource training and development, knows first-hand how a course like Babies 101 should work.

"When I had my son Jake, I attended something like this in [New York City]," said Dollinger, who moved to Fairfield in December. "I found it really enjoyable because it got me out of the house, gave me something to do and I met some really good friends."

The luncheon topics will run the gamut from toys to health, Dollinger said. Children, and dads, will of course be welcomed. "We're trying to foster an environment where you can really be yourself," Dollinger said. "If you need to breast-feed your child or your child is crying it's no big deal."

Babies 101 is a series of six educational luncheons for new parents with newborns through 6 months of age. The sessions will take place on Tuesdays from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., starting Sept. 10, and will run through Oct. 15 at selected restaurants. Each session is \$30 and includes lunch. To register, call 371-6826 or visit [www.parasolservices.com](http://www.parasolservices.com).

[Photo: Babies 101](#)