

the important things

The Pajama Program

Bringing sweet dreams to kids in need

By Sarah Lucas

Pajamas. Whether they are footy or fuzzy, striped or plain, just the word conjures up feelings of warmth, security and happiness. Pajamas are a comfortable end to a long day, or what we don't want to slip out of on a cozy morning. Throw in a fairy tale or a tale of adventure, and sweet dreams will surely follow.

But what if you never knew this comfort, this feeling of being tucked into bed in clean, comfortable clothing? Of drifting off to sleep to the sounds of pirates' swords clashing or fairies fluttering about? What if you went to bed at night in the clothes you had spent your entire day wearing? What if there were no bedtime story—no tales of adventure or escape or of learning or hope? The night would be filled with restlessness and discomfort.

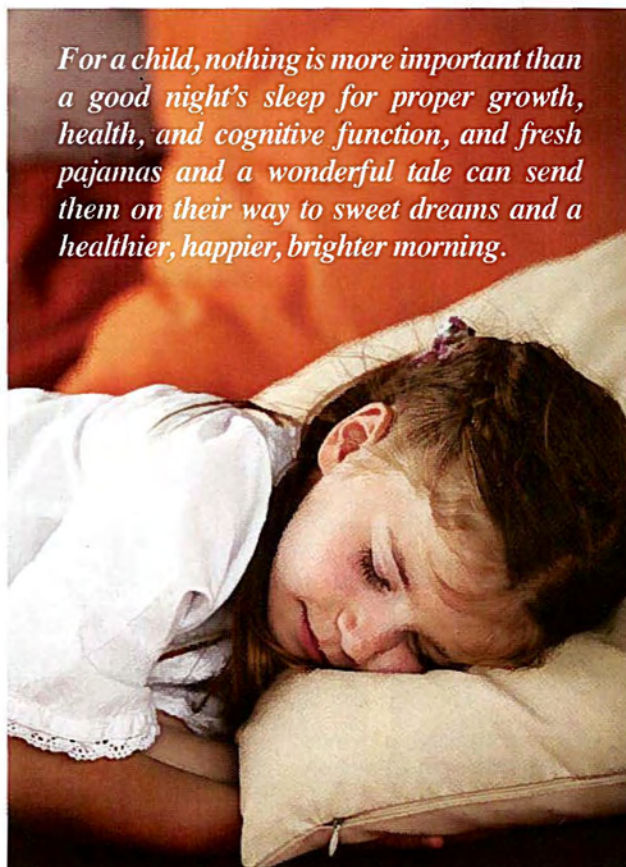
A simple solution

Seeing that a basic need could be easily filled, the Pajama Program was founded in New York in 2001 by Genevieve Piturro and Alice Quirk to offer warmth and nourishment for underprivileged children by providing them with pajamas and books. With 77 chapters in 44 states throughout the United States and six in California alone, the Pajama Program has provided more than 410,000 pairs of PJ's and 140,000 books to children nationwide in the past 8 years.

In December of 2006, local moms and best friends April Fuchs-Smith and Pallie Zambrano took over the Northern California chapter. "As moms, we both enjoy the special time when the kids are in their PJ's and cuddled up sharing a good bedtime story," shared Zambrano. "It's heart breaking to know that there are thousands of kids in Northern California who do not get to have that magical moment every night. The Pajama Program gives us a way to touch hundreds of children in our own community each year."

The Northern California chapter works with over 35 local organizations, including Edgewood Center for Children, First Steps for Families, and Shelter Network. While donations are down from previous years, "...we have had a lot of support from schools,

For a child, nothing is more important than a good night's sleep for proper growth, health, and cognitive function, and fresh pajamas and a wonderful tale can send them on their way to sweet dreams and a healthier, happier, brighter morning.



Girl Scouts, and church youth groups—all who have given the children in their organizations an opportunity to raise donations for other children," said Zambrano. "It's such a great opportunity to teach children how important it is to help each other when you can."

Why It's Important

Dr. Charlotte Yen Aderman, PsyD of Children's Health Council, wrote that "For most children, bedtime represents separation, whether from an alert state to one of slumber or from caregivers to one's own bed. This is why bedtime often involves comforting rituals and transitional objects, such as a favorite story, blankie, or stuffed animal. Separation anxiety for children who have been abandoned in one form or another is even more pronounced. I believe that gifts of pajamas and bedtime stories would help begin to

create a sense of security for children whom this has been severely lacking, and to make bedtime a more anticipated and pleasant moment."

How you and your children can help

On February 5th, M Magazine, in conjunction with Books Inc. and local mother-daughter philanthropy group ChAngels, will host a Pajama Party to collect books and pajamas for local children in need at Books Inc. in Town and Country, Palo Alto between 4pm and 7pm. Children can enjoy making an art project, local authors' readings and yummy snacks. Guests are encouraged to bring new pajamas to donate and/or purchase a new book at Books Inc. to add to the donation baskets. Books Inc. will donate 20% of the sales during the event to our local chapter of the Pajama Program. Guests are welcome to wear their coziest PJ's and slippers! Please join us for this event and help us to share the warmth and comfort of a good night's sleep!

Sarah Lucas is a wife and mother of four, local philanthropist, event designer and proud member of ChAngels. To see what else the ChAngels are up to, visit their blog at www.thechangels.blogspot.com