

VOL. 73, #4 | ONLINE | SUMMER ISSUE 2024

# A NOTE FROM JESSICA



Summer Greetings, Church!

My first summer in San Mateo has thrown me for a bit of a loop! It's sunny and beautiful, my calendar says it's June, people are traveling, kids are out of school, yet when I walk outside there's no scorching heat or an immediate need for air conditioning. Last June, when I

visited CCSM for the first time as part of the interview process, I could not believe how cool and refreshing it was in the evenings. Dave Olson, one of the co-chairs for the search committee, said, "Just think, you could have hundreds of more nights like this if you move here."

After my interview with the Board and Search Committee wrapped up, I left San Mateo and took an Uber to my sister's house in Livermore to visit family for a couple of days. I remember sitting in the back seat of the car, looking out over the bay as we drove across the San Mateo bridge. As we were driving through Hayward I thought, "Wow, this could actually happen, I might really move here." It wasn't just the amazing summer weather, or being close to my family, but the possibility that I would be called to serve as your pastor that brought a smile to my face and hopeful anticipation to my soul.

I know many of you are traveling this summer, and I'll be out of town a couple of weeks myself, but



if you are around and interested, I'd love to meet up for a cup of coffee/tea, breakfast or lunch, or a walk around Central Park. Whether you're a longtime member or someone new to the church, I'm always eager to get to know you better. Perhaps we can chat after service at Coffee Happy Hour, or you might be interested in joining one of our small group gatherings (like our men's and women's coffee groups) or a ministry team (like Connect & Celebrate) who recently hosted our annual church picnic. There are many ways to connect and build relationships here at CCSM.

Throughout this edition of the Pine Tree, you will find stories and photos of what we've been up to as a community of faith, along with ways for you to engage this summer and beyond, including youth summer camp, music opportunities, and a new partnership with Peninsula Precious Plastics.

I know we are still getting to know each other, and I look forward to the many summer days (and fall, winter, and spring) ahead, filled with opportunities to serve and grow together as a church

With gratitude, hope, and love, Tessica

# CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

# Unplug, Recharge, and Connect

Calling all CCSM High School (and rising 9th graders) Youth! Get ready for a relaxing weekend getaway to Mike & Lee Mullery's cabin on the South Yuba River in Penn Valley, near the historic Bridgeport Covered Bridge,





about 3 hours' drive from San Mateo. We'll have opportunities for swimming in the river, hiking, stargazing, playing cornhole, and relaxing in the cabin. Breathe in the fresh mountain air and soak up breathtaking views as we connect with God and each other.

Dates: FRIDAY, JULY 26 - SUNDAY, JULY 28

**Cost:** FREE (financial gifts for this trip are graciously accepted and can be designated for our Youth General Fund)

### CYF Church Camp 2024 at Camp Tamarack!



Camp Tamarack, better known as "Camp Tam," is our denomination's summer camp in the high Sierras, east of Fresno. When the snow melts at over 7,000 feet, Camp Tam is revealed. Tent cabins, a lodge, fire bowl, worship area, grassy meadow, lakes close by, and propane lighting make for an amazing, rustic experience! Our camp cook, Kymberly, is al-

ways guaranteed to cook up delicious meals for all to enjoy!

The weeks at camp vary, but they typically include:

- **Small-group discussions** on a scripture-based theme for the week
- ♣ A Talent/No Talent Show for campers to show off their skills, skits, jokes, or none-of-the-above
- **Daily worship services** with fun camp songs
- # Hiking, swimming, games, and sports
- Arts and Crafts, dance parties, and more!

Each week is an opportunity to explore our Still Speaking God, nature & creation, with friends both familiar and new.

### **DATES:**

Senior High Camp (grades 10-12): JULY 14-20

Junior High Camp (grades 7-9): JULY 21-27

Junior Camp (grades 4-6): JULY 28-AUGUST 3

### COST:

**\$290/per camper** (scholarships available)

### **REGISTRATION:**

Contact jessica@ccsm-ucc.org for registration link and paperwork



Youth preparing sandwiches for Open Cathedral ↑
60 Minutes Youth Discussion Group →



# CCSM SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED!

The Children, Youth and Family ministry is pleased to announce scholarship awards to an outstanding group of youth from our congregation.

These scholars were acknowledged and received scholarship checks at the services on Sunday, May 26 and Wednesday, May 22. The scholars graduating from high school and about to enter college in the fall of 2024 are *Camille Grant* (University of Montana, Missoula College working toward a certificate leading to environmental sustainability), *Kimberly Lopez* (College of San Mateo with the goal of running her own business), *Lily Mathews* (Colorado State University to get a degree in social work and criminal justice) and *Aleksa Bamaca Diaz* (one of the California State Universities studying to become a teacher). The scholars currently in college are *Ashley Lopez* (studying to become a criminal justice psychologist), *Emelin Perez* (studying to become a Neonatal Intensive Care Nurse) and *Ana Bamaca* (studying biology at UC Merced to become an environmental scientist).

You may note that all the scholars this year are young women. They are all active in their communities, volunteered in various capacities and had strong references. The scholarship program was funded thanks to the generosity of Sue Bullis and other members of our congregation. We wish these scholars well and are so happy to support their educations to serve as the hands, feet and faces of God in the world.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!



### A PSR GRADUATION: CONGRATS TO REINA GONZALEZ!

Congratulations are due to our own Reina Gonzalez, who received her Certificate in Theological Education for Leadership from the Pacific School of Religion on May 19!





# THE PRECIOUS PLASTICS PROJECT (P3)

Did you know that only 5-6% of the 36 million tons of plastics that are discarded in the U.S. each year are actually recycled? The rest of it is burned or dumped into landfills and some of the plastic winds up in the environment polluting rivers and oceans around the world.

In an effort to address this problem, a new technique has been created to turn hard-to-recycle plastics into brand new usable products. The organization behind this innovation is called the Precious Plastics Project (P3). It was formed in 2013 in the Netherlands by Dutch graduate student Dave Hakkens. The technique uses a series of specially designed machines to grind, melt down and re-use number 2, 4, & 5 recycled plastics in order to create new products.

This process has been replicated around the world in order to promote local recycling. One such outfit is based in neighboring San Carlos. They have been reaching out to churches and other nonprofits to participate in the program with their members. P3 San Carlos has agreed to partner with CCSM and its members to collect the plastics and to create new products.

Leading the effort for CCSM is the Environmental Justice Ministry and the CCSM Youth Group, spearheaded by Zach Floresca. Zach and members of the Youth Group will manage the program at CCSM by handling promotion, plastics collection and delivery as well as product creation in the lab at P3 SC. So, please read the info below for details. And, start to collect your #2, #4, and #5 plastics at home and bring them to CCSM and place them in the P3 collection box in Kloss Hall.

Gary H. White Lead, CCSM Environmental Justice Ministry Climate Reality Leader, Bay Area

### PLASTICS RECYCLING AT CCSM



**CCSM**, in collaboration with *Precious Plastics Peninsula (P3)*, has launched a plastics recycling program at our church. The goal of the program is to help church members find a home for their hard-to-recycle plastics and for the plastic to be reused in novel ways.



All you need to do is bring your #2, #4 & #5 marked plastics to the church and place them into the plastics collection bin. Members of our Youth Group and/or EJ Ministry will then deliver the collected plastic to the P3 workshop in San Carlos. The plastic is melted down and then used to create new products such as chairs, clipboards, phone cases, and many others.



SAVE YOUR PLASTIC IF IT HAS ONE OF THESE SYMBOLS.



-MILK JUGS -SHAMPOO BOTTLES -CLEANING PRODUCT & DETERGENT BOTTLES



-PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS
-BREAD BAGS
-SNACK BAGS
-SQUEEZABLE BOTTLES, TUBES



-YOGURT CUPS AND TUBS
-MARGARINE TUBS
-SYRUP BOTTLES
-PLASTIC BOTTLE CAPS
-FOOD CONTAINERS AND STRAWS
-PLASTIC FURNITURE



REMOVE THE LABELS, WASH AND DRY THE ITEM.





BRING THE CLEAN PLASTIC ITEM TO CCSM FOR RECYCLING.



# **CCSM SOLAR UPDATE**

The CCSM solar canopy has now been operational for over one year. Dedicated on May 23, 2023 with a commemorative plaque hanging in the loggia (walkway) outside Kloss Hall, our solar system generates ample amounts of renewable solar electricity for church operations.

With the addition of the solar canopy in the parking lot, our church is saving money on its energy costs. The solar array has enabled CCSM to dramatically reduce its PG&E electric bill even considering the increased rates for purchasing electricity. An example shows a 48% savings of \$1620 for the month of April 2024 when compared to our 2023 bill of \$3360. Our monthly bills for 2024 show even greater savings thus far.

The successful Going Solar capital campaign that was held in 2023 resulted in donations pledged and/or collected that exceeded the cost of the entire system.

The campaign raised a total of \$368,550. This was more than enough to cover the \$351,660 cost of the system. Thanks go out to the generous church members for their donations. We appreciate your commitment to helping CCSM take action on climate change.

To extend the CCSM philosophy of going solar, our Environmental Justice Ministry (EJ) is now rolling out the new Solar Ambassador Program. The program is set-up to inform CCSM members about going solar at home and provide them with an EJ member for assistance as requested. Stay tuned for details.

For additional information or answers to any questions you might have, please contact Gary H. White, Lead of the Environmental Justice Ministry. He can be reached at 650-346-1519 or (gwhite2711@gmail.com).



# **ENDOWMENT UPDATE**

Given that we celebrated Earth Day a short while ago, we wanted to update you on how our endowment fund is allocated relative to climate change and how it's doing overall.

In May of 2022, our endowment fund assets were moved to funds managed by United Church Funds, an entity of the national UCC. In accordance with our endowment fund policy, we have 30% of our funds allocated to equities. These equities are invested in the United Church Funds' Beyond Fossil Fuels Fund, which does not invest in stocks of fossil fuel companies. The remaining 70% of our endowment is invested in a fixed income fund.

As of March, the endowment fund had a total

market value of \$1.85M, up from \$1.75M two years ago. Excluding the unrealized gain in the account, approximately \$756,000 is unrestricted, \$500,000 is restricted in some way, and \$400,000 is designated for housing assistance for our senior pastor should it be needed. Income from the endowment fund is one of the income sources in the church's annual budget. This year we anticipate receiving \$48,500 in endowment fund earnings.

As you know, donations to our endowment fund are highly valued. If you are considering including CCSM in your planned giving approach (e.g., will/trust), please feel free to contact Rev. Jessica or Chris Yeh - we'd be happy to chat with you.

# MUSIC & ART THIS SUMMER: 6/21 AND 7/19



Music and Art will meet informally during June and July. There will be no hostesses or programs, just getting together for fellowship. Be watching for

notices of the summer social gatherings. Upon notification please RSVP to Pat Pepper at: pjpepper31@gmail.com or by phone: 6750-343-4286. Our custodian will need to know how many tables and chairs to set up.

# MINISTRY OF SERVICE AND JUSTICE

by Genel Morgan, Lead

Thanks to Sharon Tobin, Valerie Leung, Sue Bullis, Eric Chaney, Brenda Kelley, Robin Person and Genel Morgan, MSJ continues as an active ministry at CCSM. With the generous help of the congregation through plate offerings and Sunday donations of non-perishable food, our Blessing Box continues to support our neighbors who are food insecure. June Brown diligently picks up food donations from Samaritan House that help supplement our reserves. We have also observed people from the neighborhood adding food to the box. It takes a village.

We average \$1000 plus with our plate offering each Sunday which we donate to a variety of charities who are always so grateful for our support. It is a good way to inform the congregation of charities in our local community as well as let the charities know of our support. Through those charities the congregation has volunteer opportunities. A few links are included below:



SAVE THE BAY (Bay clean up): Charlie Onorati, 510-463-6813

SAN MATEO PRIDE CENTER: sanmateopride.org SAMARITAN HOUSE: samaritanhousesanmateo.org With the endorsement of MSJ, CCSM is now in discussion to host the Samaritan House Dining Room. This would provide us an opportunity to truly be the hands, feet and face of God.

MSJ meets the second Tuesday of the month on Google meet and would welcome anyone who wants to join us. Contact Genel Morgan (glmrn12@gmail.com), or Sharon Tobin (sharonrn30@hotmail.com), for the link.



# **CONNECT AND CELEBRATE**



# San Jose Giants Baseball Game, BBQ and Fireworks Saturday, August 17 at 5:30

Join us for our 3rd annual San Jose Giants game outing. Details to follow, but block this date on your calendar now.



# Sheryl and Kelly's Baby Shower

The Connect and Celebrate Ministry (aka the party committee) hosted a baby shower for Rev. Dr. Sheryl Johnson and her wife, Rev. Dr. Kelly Colwell, on April 21 in Kloss Hall. At least 80 of Sheryl's and Kelly's CCSM friends were pleased to celebrate the mothers with good wishes, cake and

other treats. Everyone joined in games, including baby food tasting, which was a big hit. Rev. Jessica said a blessing for parents and baby, and Sheryl and Kelly were grateful for all the love and support of their CCSM family.



### **Pick-A-Parties Continue!**



Pick-A-Parties are still happening, with CCSMers enjoying meeting up for a wide range of activities. Here's the latest:

**Book Lovers' Lunch:** Braving torrential rains, a group of avid readers gathered at Carole Melis' house for a lively discussion of their current favorite books. As in the past, tastes ranged from biography to mystery and from easy reads to quite challenging. Sandy McNabb and Carole treated the readers to a light lunch, and were pleased to see the rain stop before everyone headed out.

**High Tea:** Pearly Masters hosted a lovely high tea for a group of cultured CCSM members. As you can see from the picture, Pearly didn't hold back on the treats, and everyone enjoyed the food and the lively conversation around her table.

**Kids Cooking with Chef Mike in Kay's Kitchen:** Mike Harris bravely led two young chefs through a cooking lesson which required plan-

ning, following a recipe, and knife skills (!) in Kay's Kitchen. The kids then served their completed meal to their families, who raved about the results.

**Rock Hounds:** This event had to be postponed, but a new date will be announced soon. Please look for it and sign up for a fun summer event!

### **CCSM's Annual Picnic Launches the Summer Season**

CCSM's annual summer picnic tradition continued, with more than 100 members, family, and friends gathered in Central Park on June 9. Tony Gallo donned his chef's hat to lead a team of grillers—Doug Henton, Dave Olson, and Gary White. Although the hot dogs disappeared early, there were burgers and other great food in abundance, including Rev. Alvaro's mango and jicama salad, lots of fresh fruit and side dishes, and too many decadent desserts. The weather cooperated, so people were able to enjoy the sunshine (or shade if they wished) as they chatted with new friends and old. Thanks to all who helped set out food, move food, monitor games, clean up trash, and otherwise make this event a success! See the next page for photos (thanks, Chuck, for the great pix!).

[CONNECT AND CELEBRATE continued on page 8]

# CHURCH PICNIC AT CENTRAL PARK!

# CONNECT AND CELEBRATE CONT.

# Successful Third Annual Pie Social

This year's Pie Social brought out some new bakers — Moderator Don Ruthroff, we mean you — as well as "professionals" like Susan Bell. As always, everyone enjoyed the raffle, and funds raised will be applied to support other Connect & Celebrate events.







A Pick-A-Party hike at Huddart Park in April brought this group together under the trees

### SPECIAL MUSIC OPPORTUNITIES THIS SUMMER

FAMILY FIESTA & SUMMER BBQ HOSTED BY THE LATINO MINISTRY SPECIAL GUEST: ROSA LOS SANTOS SUNDAY, JULY 7, 4 - 6:30 PM

FIESTA DE MUSICA – A CONCERT ON THE GREEN WITH ROSA LOS SANTOS SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 4 - 6 PM

### THE BELLS NEED YOU...

If you love the bell choir when we ring in church and would like to help out, we have a few opportunities for you without having to ring a note...

First: It takes a lot of hands to set-up and take down the bells including tables, pads, skirts, music & stands and of course the numerous cases of bells themselves. If you are willing to flex your muscles before, or especially after church when the bells ring – we would love your help! Our goal is to set up a small group called Friends of the Bells who are willing to help us **set-up or take down our equipment each time we ring in the sanctuary.** If this is something you are interested in doing, please contact Joy Mason, joymason@astound.net Bell Choir Rep/Music Committee or Lynnelle Bilsey, Director of Music 650.339.5795 or <a href="https://linearchy.com/linearchy.

### YOU CAN BE A DING-A-LING TOO

Do you like to laugh?

Would you like to make music, but feel you can't carry a tune?

Do you like to 'work out' with the sounds of music?

And...Do you like to try new things?

Then CCSM has the opportunity for you! Join us on **Thursday nights in the bell room from 6:30 – 7:15 pm** for these special events:

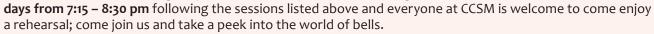
July 18 & 25: What's Ringing All About - The Basics

August 15 & 22: Having Fun with Bells - Cool Ringing

and on Sunday, August 11, 11:45AM - 12:45PM: Ring that Bell at Coffee Hour

These events are geared to take the mystery out of ringing bells. You don't have to know how to read music to participate; its helpful but not required.

In addition, the Carillon Ringers (CCSM's bell choir) will be rehearsing Thurs-



If you have any questions, please reach out to Lynnelle at 650.339.5795 or <a href="mailto:ltbmusings@gmail.com">ltbmusings@gmail.com</a>



Let's Get Together – Yeah, Yeah, Yeah... (do you remember this song – extra points if you remember which movie it's from & which artist(s) sings it)

### Sunday, July 21 from 3:00 - 4:30pm, in Kloss Hall

Do you like to sing in the shower, hum along with the radio in the car or do you have a favorite tune that gets stuck in your head? Let's get together with friends and family and have a great time making music and with an old-fashion sing-a-long! We are putting a list together of some great sing-a-long tunes for all ages, if you have a title or two you'd like to hear please share. Musicians include Susan Bell, Siew Kang, Chona Tendero, Alan Roby, Lynnelle Bilsey and more. Contact Siew Kang or Lynnelle Bilsey to sign-up to join us – open to all ages. Let's Get Together, right away, we'll be having twice the fun... Let's Get Together, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah!

[cont.  $\rightarrow$ ]



# SPECIAL MUSIC OPPORTUNITIES THIS SUMMER CONT.

# EXPLORING THE ROLE MUSIC PLAYS IN OUR LIVES WITH LYNNELLE BILSEY

Wednesday, July 31 at 7:00 pm in the Fireplace Room (please watch the bulletin for more information)

This conversation will be exploring:

- ♦ How music speaks in your life
- ♦ How music impacts your emotional well-being
- ♦ How you can deepen your relationship with music
- ♦ How you may extend your understanding of the many way's music touches us every day?



### DROP IN CHOIR SUNDAYS: JULY 14, AUGUST 4, AUGUST 25

Everyone is welcome to come join us for "Drop in Choir Sundays" this July and August.

We will be rehearsing from 9 - 10 am and then singing in church the same day for service.

The music selections will be fun and easy to sing and it's a wonderful opportunity to participate in service as a song-leader for the congregation without a long commitment. If you like to sing high, low or aren't really sure – this is a good chance to come give your vocal chords some exercise. All voices and ages are welcome. Please reach out to Lynnelle Bilsey (Itbmusings@gmail.com) if you have any questions.









The Posy Posse strikes again! Posy Posse deliverers shared CCSM love with friends in the form of beautiful backyard flower bouquets. From top left, clockwise: Susan Stoehr, Anne and Steve Galli, Kay Harris and Carol Glasmann, Anne Fuller.



# SUMMER WORSHIP SERIES



# **No Longer Strangers:**

The Keys to Living as a Community of Faith, shown by the letters to the Ephesians

# July 28 - September 1

This walk through the letter to the Ephesians teaches their church how to be a community that follows Jesus' teachings and lives the "Good News" in their life together. In the midst of familiar interpersonal conflicts, the writer of Ephesians reminds them that they are "now in Christ Jesus," no longer strangers to God and importantly no longer alienated from each other. Because of this new life in Christ, they are experiencing a radical transforma-

tion of their identity—as individuals and as a community.

These six weeks will explore what it looks like to live rooted in reconciliation with God and with neighbor, and how we practice it in radical ways.

# HOSPITALITY: Tools of the Trade

July 7, 14, & 21

If you've ever been traveling, there's nothing like finding a place that feels a little like home, is there? A little kindness, someone making the extra effort for you—it all ends up feeling like a pretty special gift.

There's a reason spiritual folks are sometimes called "sojourners": our faith lives are like a long trip. Our community can be that place on someone's journey where, when they arrive, they encounter that kindness and extra effort that makes them feel a little more at home. In our own homes, we make an extra effort to make sure people feel welcome when they visit: we may make special food, tidy up the living room, put out a bouquet of flowers. These extra touches make people feel welcomed and valued.

For three weeks this July, we'll focus on hospitality through a biblical lens and look at our own practices of welcome: What touches and intentions can widen and deepen our hospitality? What are we doing well? What can we improve? How can we become that place that feels a little like home to travelers along life's way?

We'll dive a little deeper into this series beyond worship at a Thursday evening Zoom Gathering from 5:30-6:30pm on July 11, 18, & 25, when we will reflect on questions as part of a "Hospitality Audit." Email <a href="mailto:jessica@ccsm-ucc.org">jessica@ccsm-ucc.org</a> to receive the Zoom link and be sure to watch Connections for more information.

# **Joys and Concerns**

### **CCSM Pastoral Care Team**

Please share your prayers with the pastoral care team, **Rev. Jessica Vacketta**, **Rev. Álvaro Durán**, and **Chase Montara (Rev. Dr. Sheryl Johnson** is on parental leave). Share your prayers, your hopes, and your lives. You may connect in the following ways: by **filling out an online prayer request** or by **contacting us via email**. You may also contact the church office at <u>cmontara@ccsm-ucc.org</u> or call 650-343-3694, and Chase will make sure one of the pastors contacts you as soon as possible.

### PRAYERS OF JOY AND GRATITUDE

With joy and thanksgiving we celebrate with Sheryl Johnson and her wife Kelly Colwell following the birth of their daughter, Andrea Claire Johnson Colwell on May 3. Welcome, Andrea!

We celebrate with **Kim and Javi Rey, and Maya,** following the birth of their daughter, and sister, **Ellie Rocchi Rey** on April 21st. Grandparents are **Peter and Gail Held.** 

### PRAYERS OF LOVE AND STRENGTH

We surround in prayer the Floresca family as they mourn the death of their father and grandfather, Jesus Floresca, on May 27. Please hold Renato and Lauri and children Sofia and Zach in your prayers.

We surround in prayer the family and friends of **Michele Moffitt** who passed away peacefully in Pennsylvania surrounded by her two cats and sisters on Friday, May 3.

**Kayoko** and her family held a memorial organ concert and reception in remembrance of her husband **Mark Grech** on June 2.

We surround in prayer and send loving support to **Gene Chelberg** on the death of his spouse **David Meissner**, who passed away on April 21. A memorial service was held May 3 at CCSM.

We offer our heartfelt condolences to **Susan Stoehr** on the passing of her partner of 40 years, **Bob Goulart,** who died on April 19.

We lift up in prayer the family and friends of

Mary-Helen McMahon, friend of Mike and Kay Harris, who passed away April 17 after a very long illness.

### PRAYERS HEALING AND SUPPORT

Longtime member **Jo Buckham**, age 100, is now on hospice care at Sunrise in San Mateo. Prayers for Jo and her family at this time.

### **ONGOING PRAYERS**

We join faith communities around the world in praying for a ceasefire in Gaza. May the fighting and killing stop. May all hostages be released by Hamas. May food and medical aid reach all who need it. May the Peace that surpasses all understanding prevail.

CCSM's prayer ritual for Ukraine, originally held March 6, 2022, continues to be available at tinyurl. com/CCSM-Ukraine-Prayer.

Continuing prayers of strength, encouragement, and healing for our beloved siblings: Trini Romero; Genel Morgan's family member, Jason; Allison Rock and Chris Wuthmann's friend, Karen; Mel Thrash; Judy and Minsook, friends of Angela and Robert; Bev Knowlton; Alice Morison's close friend, Cheryl R; Lee White, friend of Michele Merfeld Hale; Cari Parker; Martha Clements; Bill Melis; Mike and Lee Mullery; George Vail; Martha Pierce; Jo Buckham; Ruth Black; Dorothy Gorman; Dr. Jim Groundwater; Dottie Scott; Don and Jonathan's brother, Chuck Ruthroff; Caroline Reinke.





### A newsletter for the families and friends of the Congregational Church of San Mateo, UCC

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Sheryl Johnson and Baby Andie

