

# Grand Prairie Parent Pushing Kid-Friendly Coffeehouse Plan

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By Eva-Marie Ayala, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Texas

May 7--ARLINGTON -- Eryn Hall dreams of a java junction with children's play dates, a nursing area and changing tables aplenty.

"Regular coffee shops are set up for adults," she said. "They usually don't want kids running around screaming and crying and getting their sticky fingers on display cases."

So the Grand Prairie resident aims to create a child-friendly coffeehouse. Her nonprofit group, Gorbella's, is raising money for a community center coffeehouse that also would serve organic food. A recent fundraiser paired moms and their toddlers at the Arlington Yoga Center on Abram Street.

Hall, 28, came up with the idea about a year ago after having trouble finding healthy, infant-friendly places she could take her daughter Haile, who is now 2. Those that welcomed youngsters often had a wide variety of fried food and little else to offer, she said.

Since then, she has been sharing ideas with and getting advice from Cafe au Play, a Portland, Ore., group with similar goals.

Coffeehouses geared toward families have been opening in other cities in recent years.

Java Mama in La Mesa, Calif., has tea parties and baby dances. St. Paul, Minn., is home to Ginkgo Coffeehouse, which expanded its kid-friendly offerings with story and art hours and added a play area after it stopped allowing smoking in 2002.

My Coffee House in Seattle has a play area with a train set, a Lego table, a play kitchen and a magnetic letter wall.

"No one comes in here who doesn't have a child with them," shift manager Robbi Hilton said.

"The original owner got tired of taking her child to other places and being asked to keep her child calm all the time. ... Here, it's a really relaxed atmosphere where parents or nannies can drink their coffee and do their thing with their children."

Hall has raised about \$5,000 so far, mostly by taking donations at organized play dates and from rummage sales. She hopes to raise up to \$20,000 to open Gorbella's -- her daughter's variation on the word gorilla -- in the Arlington area within a year.

Kiri Howard, 23, of Arlington, can't wait to go with her son, Wyatt, 2. It's been nearly two years since she's been to a coffeehouse, she said.

"He gets a little rambunctious," she said.

Five tips for parents who bring children to coffee houses

Bring your child a snack. Chocolate-covered espresso beans may not be a good idea.

Drink options are limited. Make sure they'll go for juice or milk.

Big comfy chairs are for sitting and are not a makeshift bounce house.

Outside chairs are not a jungle gym.

Finger paintings are often appreciated, but glaze-covered ones are not.

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