

Business *Mums*

The magazine for mums who mean business

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Going Bonkers With Galina

By Tash Hughes, Word Constructions



Many people may call you bonkers for juggling business and family, but Galina Zenin really is Bonkers about her business!

Four years ago, Galina took over the Bonkers Playcentre in Brighton East, a bayside suburb in Melbourne. Bonkers is now unlike any other play centre as Galina has thoroughly incorporated her love of music into the centre.

Galina's passion

"I have two passions – children and music," said Galina. "I am very lucky to be able to combine those two passions in my life."

"Music helps children grow and develop, and my wish is to reach as many children as possible to help them develop fully. I'm not interested in good musicianship from three to five year olds – it is the life skills and personal development that matters."

It is the use of different skills and functions during singing, dancing and instrument playing that aids development. For example, shaking a maraca in a group involves watching, listening, copying and physical movement.

"No other subject combines the left

and right brain like music – it should be the core subject and basis of all school curriculums," enthused Galina.

And what excites Galina about this profile? It is the opportunity to tell more people about the value of having music as part of children's every day life!

Going Bonkers

Galina moved to Australia from Moscow and spent two years learning English before continuing her previous career of teaching music. Teaching in catholic and private schools, she realised that most schools and pre-schools have a lack of music in their early curriculum.

Introducing music to Bonkers was to give many children music in an affordable way. In fact, Galina ran music classes at Bonkers for two years at no charge! While some children attended regularly, others joined in when they happened to be at Bonkers and class sizes jumped on cold and wet days.

Parents of some regular students actually requested Galina to charge for her music lessons. This increased the perceived value of the classes and encouraged children to attend

consistently which gives them more benefits.

These same parents wanted their children to stay with Galina so they requested her to open a kinder. In November 2006, Bonkers music kinder opened with four children – there are now 85 children in the kinder program and Galina has plans to find bigger premises to allow for a full day kinder program.

As well as a formal music session every day, the kinder children use song and dance throughout their day. And the music they sing and dance to is written specifically for their learning topics by Galina herself.

Bonkers the Monkey and his friends put on performances every Saturday and Sunday at the play centre, and were also featured at this year's Royal Melbourne Show. Not only does Galina write these programs herself, she also performs in them!

Add in the music café and band performances for parents, and it is easy to see why Galina believes she has a unique play centre!

A Bonkers day

Galina schedules her work around





The respect for family and tradition is also carried through to Bonkers where the kinder children are taught to love their family background and culture. In fact, every child can say at least a couple of words in the native language of all their classmates!

“Some children want to know English and won’t speak their traditional language at home,” reported Galina. “But after a while with us, they think it is cool to speak another language and use it for Mum and Dad. It is wonderful for their development as well as for their family and culture.”

her children, even though one has recently graduated from Swinburne Uni. When she isn’t working with the children at Bonkers, Galina works at home or at the centre depending on her family’s needs.

The Bonkers Culture

The one thing Galina truly couldn’t live without is her family and their support, followed by music. Galina is also proud of her Russian heritage and culture – they choose to speak Russian at home.

Up at 6:30am, Galina does some work before taking her 12 year old son to school. She has a floating schedule, personally running at least three music sessions a week, until picking her son up from school and taking him to basketball. In the evenings, Galina writes music, walks the dog and does other business tasks.

Galina’s daughter helps with marketing, editing and serving in the café; her son helps with producing CDs, DVDs, presentations and recording performances; her husband helps with running the Live Shows, music concerts, private functions and adult music nights; Galina is truly supported by and involves her family in her business.

During holidays, Galina works for a balance between family, her marriage and tasks such as writing music and teacher manuals.

This is Galina’s first business, and she still has lots of obstacles to face, but it doesn’t seem likely she’ll ever move on from Bonkers!

Tash Hughes is a professional writer who loves helping other business owners succeed. Through **Word Constructions**, Tash prepares articles, web copy, procedures, media releases and more, leaving businesses to get on with what their best at. Tash also provides general business support and advice, in between caring for her three children.

Galina’s Top Tips For Business Mums

1. Have a very clear plan and organisation – I need reminding of this myself, but it is very important.
2. Set your values. Make a priority list and use it to prioritise your time according to your values.
3. Establish with your family clear support you need to manage – running a business is very different to having a job and everyone needs to understand that.

