



## The Days are Long, but the Years are Short

My weekly grocery store trip with one, sometimes two kids in tow (or them towing me with that darn tiny shopping cart) – is a 45 minute test of concentration amid major chaos. Often a well-meaning stranger will comment to me: “It goes by so fast. Enjoy it!” or “I miss that age; my teenager won’t even talk to me now.” And usually, in that whirling grocery store moment, I feel a mild sense of irritation by these comments. Here I am, attempting to procure healthy foods for my family amid passionate demands for sweets, 15 trips to the bathroom, restacking of the endcap display all while dodging that tiny shopping cart that zooms towards my ankles – I am using all my faculties to remain calm and get through my shopping list and someone is telling me to enjoy the moment?!?!

Then, later, I realize that they are right. Life is short. Childhood is fleeting. Now is the time to enjoy it. It can feel hard, impossible even, to enjoy the literal and emotional messes that are parenthood in the early years. But this is why my family is part of Open Gate. Because I want to be here to enjoy it all – even the chaos. Open Gate is where I can watch them discover the feeling of paint between their fingers, witness the beautiful first twinkling of friendship, and even watch a spider devour another spider on Spider Island (that was crazy, by the way). I get to be there for those moments. And then, when I just can’t take the grocery store chaos anymore – I come to Parent Ed and fellow parents commiserate and give me new tools to navigate the cereal aisle with just a tad less drama. I always leave those night classes feeling renewed and supported by the incredible community that is this school.

Parenthood is precious, beautiful, chaotic, relentless, exhausting, rewarding, demanding, and the most

incredible time of my life. I am so fortunate to be an Open Gator while on the wild ride of parenthood. To be in a place where I can “enjoy it” and build strong connections and foundations with my girls so that they will still talk to me as teenagers.

I will always revel in a solo trip to the grocery store – even if it’s at 10pm. But Open Gate is this magical place where I can be present for both the treasures and the messes of childhood and where I can learn to be in the moment and soak it all up. Then, someday, I will be at the grocery store admiring someone else’s toddlers and know that I enjoyed it when it was my turn – and now it is someone else’s turn to navigate past those fruit snacks.

Lisa



*Happy and strong Sierra at Webb Ranch Harvest Festival.*