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A Mother's Love Launches a Musical Journey



In a shady outdoor nook of her West Hollywood art consulting studio, Paragone Gallery, Francie Kelley talks about her passion for nature, for color and art, for the music of Judy Collins and Pete Seeger, and the path that led her to writing award-winning songs for children. That path included musical theater, acting, and her most profound inspiration – motherhood.

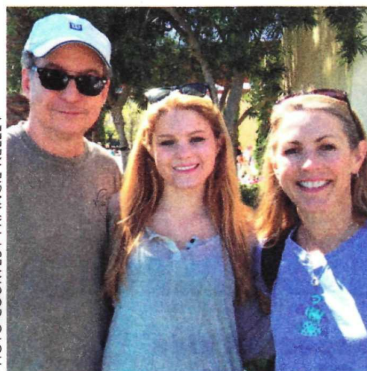


PHOTO COURTESY FRANCIE KELLEY

Francie Kelley, at right, with husband Pat and daughter Katie.

Through the bold colors of a painting or the toe-tapping rhythm of a song, children connect more deeply with their own feelings, she says. For Kelley, the richness of life is not about rushing from one activity to another. It's about community. It's about going for a long hike with her husband and daughter. It's about getting "ice cream with sprinkles," after school, as she sings in one of her songs.

Kelley's CD *Wake Up & Go To Sleep!*, produced in collaboration with her husband, Pat, a top Los Angeles jazz guitarist, studio

musician, and composer, is a joyful celebration of childhood with whimsical lyrics about "counting clouds," "finding daffodils" and "running backward in the summer grass."

Kelley was managing her own successful art consulting business when her daughter, Katie, was born. One afternoon as Kelley glided in the rocking chair trying to sooth her crying baby, she became acutely aware of the running-to-do list in her head.

"As moms, we always have so many things we need to do," says Kelley. "But on that afternoon I realized I needed to be right here, in this moment."

That epiphany led Kelley into the recording studio, where she wrote her first song, "Babies Won't Keep." Each of the other 11 songs on her CD is also a reflection of a mother's love, capturing the tender moments of kids dancing in their jammies and "kissing the moon and stars goodnight."

Kelley recently released her second CD, *Where Do You Want to Go Today?*, a musical safari celebrating a variety of cultures. Again, many of the lyrics come from her personal family experiences, including her daughter's discovery of a tarantula in the backyard that became an Argentinian Tango, and a ukulele found at a garage sale that led to a Hawaiian melody.

Her advice to other mom entrepreneurs:

- Don't give in to perfectionism.
- Identify what's really important. "The most meaningful moments are the most simple," says Kelley. "Go for a walk with your family. Let your kids create percussion instruments with kitchen utensils."
- Learn to forgive yourself.

— Elena Epstein