

Home * Base

Maryland Home Education Association

Maryland's First Homeschooling Organization. Established in 1980

82



From Manfred...
Editor & Publisher

March 27, 1999 Conference Update:

Within a few weeks you will receive your conference registration packet. As always, I strive to improve the conference every year. This time around we are featuring one of the most sought after keynote speakers, David Colfax. David's extensive homeschooling experience and knowledge of parental and child issues makes him a must to hear.

You can buy lunch on campus this year. Costs range from about a buck (hot dogs) to \$3.50 (sandwiches). There are a variety of drinks (including bottled water), chips, pizza, salads, and more. Having direct access to lunch allows you to spend most of your time where it counts, in the workshops, at the resource fair, or networking with other homeschoolers.

I have arranged the schedule so that everyone is present for the keynote speech and *four* workshops (one more than last conference). There is sufficient time built in to look for resources and books, network with others, or just to take some time out and enjoy a more leisurely flow to the day.

Stemming the Creeping Crud

I have been in communication with several school districts over the past months to help them create more accurate homeschooling information packets. As many of you may have discovered, information about homeschooling coming from your local school district is often riddled with inaccuracies and inappropriate language that contradicts

Maryland Update

Language Patrol

I am reviewing the homeschool packets of several school districts, highlighting areas that go beyond what is legally required of a homeschooling family to be in compliance with the law. Below is a portion of what MHEA will be mailing to all school districts in Maryland in the near future as part of our effort to stem creeping regulation. Use the recommendations I am making to these school districts to inspect your own district's homeschooling information packet for improper language:

- Avoid the use of the word "shall" or "required" unless this is specifically stated in the bylaw. Words like "recommend," "encourage" or "this may include" are appropriate to use where "shall" and "required" do not apply. Using words like "encourage" invite homeschoolers to focus on your requests instead of causing a reaction or fear.
- Avoid stating specific hours, days, etc., unless enumerated in the bylaw. Since homeschooling is a year round affair, stating that the homeschool program be 180 days, or that math must be an hour long per day, interferes with the right of parents to plan their educational program to best suit their children's needs, interests and learning styles.
- Please do not require that homeschoolers offer specific subjects, such as Maryland history, AIDS awareness education, and so forth. 7-301 of the Maryland Code requires that parents provide "regu

7-301 of the Code and the homeschooling bylaw.

Health = Better Homeschooling

Starting with this issue, I am including a section about health information that has made a positive difference in people's lives, including my own.

If your name on the address label ends with "98" it is time to renew your subscription for 1999! Please fill out the form on page 7 today!

[illegible]

lar and thorough instruction” in the subjects normally taught in the schools. These subjects are English, math, science, social studies, art, music and physical and health education. You certainly can “recommend,” “suggest,” etc., that homeschoolers teach specific sub-topics within each required subject area, but avoid words like “shall,” “must” or “required.”

- there is “regular and thorough instruction in the subjects normally taught in the schools.” The use of “equivalence” may mislead your reviewers to assume that their job is to assess the academic progress of a homeschooler – a source of serious conflict. Therefore, please...

- # Ann Arundel – Making a Positive Difference

- Their guidelines stated that “an interview with a representative from the Home Instruction Office must be scheduled prior to the start of the Home Instruction Program.” This is an additional requirement to COMAR 13A.10.01., which is not

permitted by the bylaw: “A local system may not impose additional requirements for home instruction programs other than those in these regulations.”

- By formatting COMAR 13A.10.01 and their guidelines in exactly the same manner, and by including “COMAR 13A.10.01” in the heading of the guideline page, the guidelines appear to be a continuation of the bylaw and is a misrepresentation of information; it appears to give the guidelines the force of law.

- The addition to the “assurance of consent” form regarding student participation in interscholastic athletics or any other extra-curricular activities is not addressed by COMAR 13A.10.01. The assurance of consent form is strictly a means of securing a parent’s or guardian’s agreement to adhere to COMAR 13A.10.01. The placement of this note on the assurance of consent form is inappropriate and could be construed as consent to this policy when none was intended. This issue should be included with the Anne Arundel County Guidelines.

The Result:

Mr. Sholl, the homeschool coordinator for the county schools, wrote a timely response to Sandy Bishop in which he addressed her concerns. That county’s homeschool guidelines will now reflect the proper wording and context of the bylaw. I want to congratulate Sandy on her efforts on behalf of Anne Arundel homeschoolers for a job well done! Keeping the crud of creeping regulations at bay requires that every homeschooler take the responsibility like Sandy did to check the power of the local authorities.

This responsibility extends beyond awareness of what school personnel might be up to. It is not wise to place your security in the hands of others, whether Manfred Smith of MHEA, or the folks at the Home School Legal Defense Association. Homeschoolers may have common interests, but they may not all be in **your** best self-interest. We need to remain aware of both our adversaries ... and our friends.

Military Accepts Homeschoolers

Manfred Smith

On October 17, President Clinton signed the Defense Authorization Bill, which included a provision that ended discrimination against homeschoolers by the military. For the next five years, military recruiters must give homeschoolers the same preferential treatment (called Tier 1) that they currently give to high school graduates and those with a semester (15 hours) of college. After keeping track of the attrition rate of homeschool recruits for five years, the military will re-evaluate this provision. If they tend to stay in the military as long as school graduates, homeschool graduates will get permanent Tier 1 status.

Homeschoolers must present a diploma and a transcript that indicates that they have met the graduation requirements set forth by the state or school district with jurisdiction over these schools. Graduates of satellite schools and approved correspondence programs would qualify. It is not clear whether students with parent-issued transcripts will also qualify, but HSLDA believes that they will. I believe that any registered homeschooler in Maryland who has fulfilled the requirement of the law – whether enrolled in a registered correspondence program or being reviewed by the local school district – should be able to qualify for military admissions since each of these options is regulated by the state.

Discrimination against homeschoolers is ridiculous, especially in the light of the difficulty recruiters have had trying to sign up eligible recruits. A recent Baltimore Sun article about the difficulty of finding qualified recruits noted that many of the high school graduates could not pass the basic entrance exam and some had even graduated with honors. Drug use was another common problem. Coming on the heels of this article was a Washington Post piece that revealed that the military had been dumbing-down the process and recruiting men and women with inferior qualifications.

[Part of this information is from PA Homeschoolers and the Unschooler's Network]

Our king-sized sandbox was filled with castles and dirt roads and Tonka construction sites. The quiet street was littered with wagons, bikes, toy cars, and the occasional home-made scooter, which were periodically ridden with a frenzy and then dumped unceremoniously at the nearest curb. Collecting kid-vehicles was a standard chore just before dark each night.

I often wish I had a video camera posted by the toy trunk we kept near the front door. It would have been fun to speed up the film and watch the dozen times a day that Eric dashed in to trade baseball equipment for basketball, tennis balls for bubble pipes, and kites for hockey sticks. They covered it all, every day.

If your child didn't show up hungry at lunch time, it was probably because he and several others were fed at whatever house they were playing in when lunch time rolled around. Nobody worried much about safety, since they were always near a responsible adult. On a warm day, they might gang up at somebody's pool or sprinkler. And at a certain time on every hot evening, we all waited together on the curb for ice cream man to come.

The train that passed through our little town was a major event for in the summer. It's low whistle in the late afternoon was, for a period of time, greeted with cries of "TRAIN! TRAIN!!!, (or, "ning ning boop boop", as our littlest neighbor called it), and a frantic search for a mom who would hustle the train enthusiasts off to wave to the engineers. It was usually me. We would pile in the Volkswagen and speed off to the crossing about five blocks away. One young engineer electrified the crowd one evening by tossing wrapped CANDY to them! Needless to say, he was the one everybody hoped to see from that day on.

Neighborhood birthday parties started out at the birthday girl/boy's house, of course, but after a while the formal party would dissolve into a neighborhood tag session, and the exhausted moms were left to recover together over a cup of tea. One memorable year nearly every celebrant at one party had

End of an Era

Nancy Plent, Unschooler's Network

When my son Eric was small, all of the houses on our block had stay-at-home moms. Our kids knocked on each other's doors as early each morning as we would allow them to. Their play took them from house to house during the day as they thought of new things they wanted to do. When they played hockey or tag in the middle of our backwater street, the moms sat on the curb and kept an eye open for cars. On rainy days, the neighborhood gang liked to fill our guest room wall to wall with all the cushions they could find from all over the house, grab some popcorn, and sprawl on the cushy floor to watch TV cartoons.

either active chicken pox or healing scabs from it. We decided they were all going to come down with it anyway, and it would be silly to cancel the party.

I could go on and on about the “mob scene” that our kids grew up with, and the enormous energy they spent dreaming up new things to do. I try to picture what it would have been like if, instead of stay-at-home, we had been living a 90’s kind of life instead. I think about - what if? each day had started by rousting my sleepy three year old out of bed, nagging him to eat a “healthy breakfast”, dressing myself in a “success suit”, getting the day’s gear stuffed into the car, dropping him off at daycare by 8:30, and then tearing into a parking lot at my job with smoking tires. I try to imagine what day care could offer that would have been better than the laid-back, helter skelter, rough and tumble, ebb and flow, this and that, interest-driver, daily smorgasbord that our admittedly imperfect neighborhood provided. I can’t.

When I look at the same neighborhood now, a mirror of most neighborhoods today, I think, I’m sad to think how much harder it must be for today’s stay-at-home moms, and how easy it would be to feel isolated. We didn’t know at the time that we were living out the end of an era, when it was normal for mom and kids to be around the neighborhood all day. I like to think that families in these rushed times may start looking at home schoolers enjoying their children, and the children enjoying their childhood, and begin to realize that it might be nice to have things back that way again.

I know that today’s home schoolers must work hard to provide similar experiences for their children. When I look at our same neighborhood today, with everybody off to work by 9 and hardly a child in sight, and I’m sad to think of how much harder it must be. We didn’t know we were living out the end of an era, when it was normal and expected for mom and the kids to stay at home.

Trusting Ourselves

Earl Gary Stevens

As fall approaches some of the newer members of our Portland home education support group begin getting the jitters. The vision of home-based education that seemed so simple in the spring, so obviously correct, can begin to look a little scary in the fall. For some the planned curriculum may have already lost some of its shine. For others the decision to practice “unschooling” may begin to feel uncomfortable, especially after an unsuccessful attempt to explain the concept to relatives at the family’s annual summer picnic. New members, especially those who are refugees from the public schools, look to the veterans in our support group: “What should we do? What shouldn’t we do? What do you do?” These newer families can see that home-based education is working for many of us. They want to understand our daily lives, and they would like to share in those feelings of quiet confidence and delight that they perceive in so many of the mothers and fathers in our group. Yet we can’t tell people what they should do. Families must discover for themselves what they must do. No one else knows.

At our autumn gathering for new members, Andrea Kelly-Rosenberg and I and others came to offer support, as old-timers in our group have been doing for the past few years. Much of our vision and our confidence regarding homebased education comes from our observations, our personal experience and a great deal of thinking. We harvest this over years of living, and there aren’t many shortcuts. It is enough for newcomers to take some first steps, and it is necessary only for the steps to make sense and to seem possible.

We try to address concerns about regulations without wasting too much time on them. Maine’s Chapter 130, taken together with custom and precedent, allows for every imaginable approach to home education, but Chapter 130 is filled with so much schoolish language that it tends to throw people into a panic. Over and over we tell new mem-

MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA

bers that they are to interpret Chapter 130 to fit the real lives of their children and that they must never feel forced to manipulate their children to fit Chapter 130. There are always questions about curriculum. We try to stress that Maine families are not required to use a formal academic curriculum, and that the word “curriculum” can also be used to describe plans for unschooling. We emphasize that “grade level” is something that exists primarily in the minds of school administrators and that it has little relevance to the lives of children. There are many things to learn and do; it rarely matters whether we address them in any particular order or at any particular time.

At this year’s meeting for newcomers, Andrea talked about trust, trust in one’s children, trust in oneself. While listening to her speak I realized that in our society this concept of trust can be very difficult for people to grasp. To some it may sound a little airy, a sort of alternative lifestyle sentiment. In the public schools it is practically an unknown concept. For many of our families it is the compass that guides us in our relationships with our children.

Trust doesn’t mean that a kid will not necessarily want to do what we would like to see him or her do in every instance. Trust means that we are confident that kids are learning all the time and that in a healthy environment they tend to make healthy choices. Trust is when we realize that our kids have everything they need in order to learn and that they don’t need to be fixed. Kids can grow and learn and succeed without adults constantly measuring them, judging them, and fussing over them.

For my part, I talked about learning as an outgrowth of the real interests of family living. What do I do? What are my plans for the fall? I’m doing a unit study on the habits of striped bass and shorebirds. My lab instruments are fishing rods and binoculars. Field trips are held next to a certain bridge on the outskirts of Portland. Do I have any suggestions? Yes. Go for a walk in the country, visit the library, make cookies. Fall is a good time for reflection; it needn’t be spent in a state of apprehension.

What are my plans for my son, Jamie, who recently turned 14? I have none. What are his plans for himself? Well, he’ll probably continue with many of his current interests. He’ll ride his bike, play the piano, read, fool around with the computer, act in a play, paint some pictures, and build things. No doubt he’ll also find other things to do, and he’ll bring many new ideas and interests into our lives. None of us knows what they will be.

Compulsory schooling rests upon the premise that education is a science and that educators know what they are doing. But, as John Gatto suggests, providing what is useful and good for children and for families isn’t a science, it is an art. Artists work better when they are free to make artistic discoveries outside of institutional methodologies and boundaries. One cannot learn to fully trust children and families while relying on institutional wisdom about them. And confidence, like art, never comes from having all the answers; it comes from the habit of being open to all the questions.

MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA MHEA



Love Notes



From Barbara: "I've been reading your newsletter since I started homeschooling years ago ... the information you provide is so helpful."

From Dana: "Thank you for your hard work over the years for all of us in Maryland. I especially look forward to the yearly conference and haven't missed one since the first one I attended back in 1990 ... keep up the good work."

From Richard: "You probably don't remember us, but you talked to my wife and I three years ago and you made us feel so confident about being able to teach our children that we decided to homeschool when they turned school age. We just finished our first year, and we have had a great year ... We are looking forward to meeting you in the near future."

FUN Books (410-360-6265)
1688 Belhaven Woods Ct., Pasadena MD 21122-3727
FUN@IQCweb.com
<http://www.iqcweb.com/fun>

- FUN Books is owned by a homeschooling family in Anne Arundel County, Maryland.
- Request our catalog of learning materials for yourself and your friends
- MHEA members receive a 20% discount off retail prices (the marked out prices in our catalog)
- Sign up with our birthday club! Give us the names and birth dates of your children (ages 4-16); and when their birthday approaches, we'll send a card worth \$3 in FUN Bucks!
- Special orders welcome and often available within a week! (usually discounted 20%)

We now also carry books published by: Critical Thinking Press, ISHA Enterprises (Easy Grammar), Oxford University Press as well as math textbooks by Harold Jacobs. This is in addition to our stock of Dover books, Bellerophon, Miquon, Key to series, Curiosity Kits, Jim Weiss, Odds Bodkin, Jay O'Callahan and many more. We also have Linda Dobson's latest, The Homeschooling Book of Answers.

Send us your postal address and email so we can send you our catalog (new one being mailed out in January!) and notify you of our special open houses. Our open houses are a great place to meet other homeschoolers and stock up on books discounted from 20%-50%. We also have fun activities for children.

***** NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION *****
THIRD NOTICE For 1999 Renewals

Please renew your subscription at this time. The next mailing will be the CONFERENCE REGISTRATION with discounts offered for 1999 subscribers only, so please renew TODAY!

Please cut out this section and mail it back with a check to MHEA.. **Thank you for your prompt reply.**

_____		_____	
Last Name		First	

Street		City	State
_____		_____	_____
County	Phone (+ area)	Email	
_____	_____	_____	

Would you like us to send homeschooling information to anyone?

_____		_____	
Name		Address	

___\$15 1999 Subscription		___\$25 MHEA Supporter	
___\$		Extra Donation	

Thank you for choosing to be a MHEA Supporter. Your support helps to defray increasing postage, publication, and phone fees.



Wellness Page

The purpose of Wellness is to inform our readers about research and practices that effect their health and well-being.

Healthy Teeth, Healthy Gums - A year ago I commented to my friend Barbara that her teeth seemed unusually clean and bright. She proceeded to tell me about her new electronic toothbrush, Sonicare. I was so impressed that I went out a few days later and bought my own. And what a difference it makes!

Sonicare's brush vibrates at thousands of brushes per minute and is clinically proven to remove plaque, stains, and improve gum health. One key feature of the unit is that it sends ultrasound through its bristles into your gums, killing bacteria below the gum line. There are other electronic toothbrushes on the market, but I do not have any information about their effectiveness.

Sonicare can be found in most stores. Best deals include Sam's, Walmart, Service. Look for sales. Costs range from a low of \$79 to \$99. Extra brushes are about \$25 for a set of two.

Preventing Colds - One of the most effective ways to prevent colds and the flu is the centuries-old technique of rinsing your nose with salt water. We simply make up a saline solution for each member of the family and using an eye dropper, rinse our nasal passages several times a day. Research shows that those performing daily irrigation had a significant reduction in the number of colds they caught.. If you rather use a prepared saline solution, a product such as *Ocean*, which avoids the use of additives, is available at most drugstores.

Take Charge of Your Health Today - For two years now, my family has benefited enormously from Dr. Julian Whitaker's *Health and Healing: Tomorrow's Medicine Today* newsletter. For more than 27 years, Dr. Whitaker has been an advocate of living a healthy life. He is the author of six books and his newsletter is full of the latest available medical and nutritional research. This is an excellent source of objective information about a wide variety of alternative medicine, including vitamin and mineral supplementation, herbal remedies, homeopathy, and much more. Of the many "alternative" newsletters and magazines out there, Dr. Whitaker's newsletter is the best. To subscribe, call 800-539-8219. Cost is about \$40 per year.

Maryland Home Education Association™ © 1998

9085 Flamepool Way

Columbia, MD 21045

410-730-0073 Fax 410-964-5720

E-mail: homebase@erols.com

Manfred Smith, Editor & Publisher

Please Renew Your Subscription for 1999 Today!