

WESTERN PA. HOMESCHOOLERS

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A Network for Sharing Local Information About Homeschooling

Notes from Susan Richman, editor...

Thanks to all of you for being patient waiting for this issue of our newsletter. This has been a fall where we've barely had a moment to catch our breaths. As many of you have heard, we've been working all fall on renovating the big farmhouse on our property. By the time you're reading this, we'll hopefully be all moved in, maybe even with a functional kitchen! Necessarily, our homeschooling this fall has centered around the themes of HOMES. Jesse and Jacob's vocabularies now include all sorts of new words-- polyurethane, floor sander, primer, latex, patching plaster, penetrating sealer, wall board, soffit and fascia, slate and fiberglass shingles. Their "visual discrimination" has had a real boost-- they can now spot instantly which houses we pass on the highway have aluminum or real wood siding, which have slate roofs (and hexagonal patterns of slate!). They've been busy measuring rooms and toys and refrigerators and doorways (to see if the refrigerators will fit through!). Their sense of history is alive-- They've wondered how old our house really is (perhaps 100), and daily theorize about how additions and changes have been made. They've seen how even doorknobs and door hinges used to be finely crafted. Jacob has begun asking all sorts of questions like, "How was the first house invented? How tall are houses allowed to be? How wide are houses allowed to be? How do they hold up the roof of a house before they've built the other parts?", and many more. We look with new eyes at older homes everywhere, seeing architectural details we were blind to before. "Field trips" have included numerous visits to paint stores, lumber yards, sawmills and auctions (somehow along with Ft. Ligonier, Pgh Symphony Tiny Tots Concert, Children's Museum, and Allegheny Observatory...) The kids have all been helping with sorting out and packing up our possessions, often rediscovering a toy that had been long forgotten on shelves for months (ah! the mystique of hidden treasure). We will now have lots more room, not only for our own projects, books, and collections, but more room for VISITORS. Look forward to sharing our new home with you!

- Susan

W. PA SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT HAVE COOPERATED WITH HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES....

ALQUIPPA
ALTOONA
ARMSTRONG
BEAVER
CRESSON
FOX CHAPEL
HIGHLANDS
KANE
JEFFERSON MORGAN
MILL CREEK
MT. LEBANON
MT. UNION
PENN CREST
PITTSBURGH
QUAKER VALLEY
FEDBANK VALLEY
SHALEP
SOUTH WEST BUTLER
SOUTH BUTLER
SLIPPEFY FOCK
TITUSVILLE
TFINITY
WEST JEFFERSON HILLS
WOODLAND HILLS
YOUGH
CRAWFORD CENTRAL

You can probably see right off that this list is indeed much longer than last time! Many new districts have been approached, and most are getting the word that it is legal for them to approve families' plans. By cooperating, though, I certainly don't mean to imply that these school districts are doing handsprings over the chance to help out a homeschooling family. Often initial approval is given quite grudgingly, with liberal doses of "Humph, we certainly don't think this is a good idea" types of comments. Remember that superintendents are being put in a bit of an awkward position when dealing with homeschoolers. They are in the school "business" and you not only don't want to buy their product, but want their approval to try something they may view as (unfair?) competition. This is a time for those of us dealing with school districts to be as gracious as possible, not take their criticisms personally, agree perhaps that their system is one of the best in the state, smile, and again firmly state our plans for teaching our own children. Many families have found, too, that it can be very valuable to keep in contact with school district people, letting them know concretely what you are doing with your children. You may find, as I did when meeting with our assistant superintendent last spring, that they are very impressed with what we are offering our children. I was told that if we ever wanted to send Jesse (?) to school, that he'd really have to recommend we try a private school with a similar non-graded program, as the public schools just couldn't, frankly, ever match what we were already giving our son!

(W. PA. Masthead
lettered by Jesse Richman)