

Western PA. Home Schoolers

A Network for Sharing Local Information
About Homeschooling

Late Spring, 1985 Newsletter
Editor- Susan Richman #12

This is our season for getting our farm ready-- not for planting, but for the upcoming 4th Annual Homeschooling Weekend! We're busy mowing campsite areas, fixing up privies, clearing out the garage so it can become our Registration Area, clearing out our old cottage for extra meeting space in case of rain, making signs so folks can find their way around easily. We're brainstorming about possible kids' activities and parents' discussion topics, and looking forward to sharing exciting news about the PA legislation initiative.

Lots of folks have already given their ideas and input to help make this a really special weekend. Hope to hear from you, too, with suggestions on how we can best help everyone feel welcome and have a worthwhile time. Don't be shy about offering yourself as a discussion leader-- this weekend is not a gathering to hear "experts", but a format for families to share with and support each other. The best way to make sure we can offer a discussion session you really want is for YOU to offer to lead it.

One other note... you should be hearing soon from a local contact person about our Western PA Homeschooler's PHONE TREE. There will be times, perhaps soon, when it will be necessary to get in touch with everyone quickly to help move along homeschooling legislation. In all other states that successfully waged legislative campaigns, effective phone trees were indispensable. Look forward to everyone's ready cooperation with this. If you'd like to be a first contact person in your area, do let me know soon.

- Susan Richman, Editor

SCHOOL DISTRICTS COOPERATING WITH HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES IN WESTERN PA:

ALTOONA
ARMSTRONG
BEAVER
CONNEAUT LAKE
CRAWFORD CENTRAL
CRESSON
FAIRVIEW
FOX CHAPEL
HIGHLANDS
HOPEWELL
KANE
KISKI
MILL CREEK
MT. LEBANON
MT. UNION
NORTH ALLEGHENY
NORTH HILLS
PENN CREST
PITTSBURGH
QUAKER VALLEY
REDBANK VALLEY
SHALER
SOUTH BUTLER
SOUTH WEST BUTLER
SLIPPERY ROCK
TITUSVILLE
TRINITY
WEST JEFFERSON HILLS
WOODLAND HILLS
YOUGH

Not many changes to report in our school district listings this issue, as most new families will be negotiating with superintendents over the summer. Do let us know if your district should be listed, here, as I'm sure we don't yet have a complete list.

Douglas Boelhouwer of the PA Dept. of Education, sent a memo late last fall to all private and non-public schools in PA. The gist of his message was that these schools cannot "shelter" homeschooling families UNLESS the family has official permission from their superintendent. In other words, a family can have a liason relationship with a private school, but they STILL must first get the OK from the local public school district. Boelhouwer is also busy cracking down on families who've seriously organized non-public schools but do not have an official school building other than their homes. A bare church basement is fine, a well-equipped home is not, it seems. This issue may soon be resolved in the courts, with the appeal of the Mosmer's case described later in the newsletter.

Here's a classic, if awful, story from the Waterford, PA School District. The School Board was holding its regular public meeting, trying to wrangle out what policy and approach the district should take with several newly discovered homeschooling families. One board member, who opposed the whole idea, asked if the district couldn't simply say that homeschooling wouldn't be allowed AT ALL in their district. Listen now to the superintendent's response: "NO! We can't deny their application. What we would do would be this: TAKE ALL REQUESTS FOR HOMESCHOOLING, AND THEN DENY ALL REQUESTS FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER". Some of us might suspect some superintendents privately thought along these shady lines, but it amazes me that one would even come out in a public meeting with such a statement. Talk about respecting due process rights of parents! This might be a good story to pass on to your legislators to show the very unfair treatment some families are receiving in some districts.

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