

WESTERN PA. HOME Schoolers

A Network for Sharing Local
Information about Homeschooling

Early Fall, 1985

Newsletter

Editor: Susan Richman

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WHEW! We've almost reached 300 subscribers now! A warm welcome to all families new to our network and newsletter, and I send a special thank you to GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING, John Holt's bi-monthly homeschooling magazine (729 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116. \$15/year) for putting in such kind words about our newsletter in GWS #45. John Holt has always been personally encouraging of my writing and newsletter work, always an inspiration and a friend. John is right now dealing with a serious recurrence of his cancer, and I know he will appreciate all of your good wishes, prayers, courage and hope.

For PA homeschoolers this is a time for a crash course in effectively influencing our legislators. You all owe it to your children to put out your best effort to secure passage of our Home Education Bill, HB 1478. Your children will see you as willing to work hard to change the world for the better for them, and for all families across PA. They will begin to understand how our state government can respond to people's needs. "Civics" is one of the subject areas we will agree to teach to our children under HB 1478. What better way to begin a study of government and a citizen's role than through actually helping to make a positive law change.

We also welcome with this issue a special section for our children's writings, THE BACKPACK, edited by Madalene Murphy. Just as our newsletter has given so many of you parents a real forum for your personal writing about your children, we hope that many of our children will now feel more welcome to contribute here too. —Susan Richman, ed.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS COOPERATING WITH HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES IN WESTERN PA.

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

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Western PA Homeschooler's
Masthead by Jesse Richman (9)

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The school district news is more of the same. Some are cooperative and somewhat flexible, others are hauling responsible, serious parents into court, even threatening to remove children from the home. Some districts have seemed to be cooperating, but then have pulled the rug on the parents at the last minute, due to mysterious school board rulings made at meetings the parents were never told about. Due process rights are being denied wholesale. It is becoming clearer and clearer how much we need a law change in PA. Here's what you can do:

--MEET with your Representative and Senator. Write follow-up thank you letters showing you appreciated their time and openness to the issue. We aim to have EVERY legislator visited by 5 different families, and receive at least 10 other letters from constituents. Don't feel that just because someone else you know has already visited or written that you don't need to-- numbers count here, numbers of very personal, individual contacts.

--WRITE to Representative JAMES GALLAGHER (democrat) at 1439 Haines Road, Levittown, PA 19057. He is the Chairman of the House Education Committee, where our bill is now. Ask him to hold Public Hearings on Home Education Bill HB 1478, so that we can have a chance to tell our story and demonstrate support for Home Education.

--WRITE to Representative RUTH HARPER (democrat) at 1427 West Erie St., Philadelphia, PA 19140. She is chair of the Basic Education Sub-Committee. She can toss out the bill if she thinks it's unimportant. Again, ask for public hearings on Home Education.

--Another way you can help the legislative effort along is by seeing that PA homeschooling families get good media coverage. Think about calling your local paper, radio or TV station, and offering to help with a feature on homeschooling. Perhaps a local homeschooling support group is having a special gathering-- kids' science fair, writing workshop, nature hike, group field trip, parents meetings. This might be the time to get some positive coverage about it. Might be especially good to show group activities, as folks-at-large always seem to worry that homeschooled children are kept in locked closets all day. Do send on any articles about local homeschoolers, as we are compiling all we can get and sending them on to Jim Gustafson, our Parent Educators of PA Contact in Harrisburg. Merry Dorean sent on a super article from the May 22, 1985 Greene County "Democrat Messenger" that takes a close look at the Walkos and Doreans. The PGH Post Gazette did a feature homeschooling story, interviewing the McMillans, Fredlands, and Richmans. The Kennedys near Erie made the press too. All these good press contacts may be invaluable if these same newspapers cover the story of HB 1478.