

WESTERN PA. HOMESCHOOLERS

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A Network for Sharing Local Information about Homeschooling.

What a fine Homeschooling Weekend we had here in mid-June! Warm thanks to all the 37 families who were able to come and share their thoughts, experiences and questions. We were all grateful for the fine weather on Saturday for the discussion sessions. All were well attended and fruitful. Many parents said to me afterwards that they were especially pleased at how well the kids all got along, showing few apparent social difficulties even with the "peer group deprivation" of homeschooling! We were all glowing around here for days afterwards-- such good feelings of friendship and support. Made me realize again how lucky we are to have such a valuable and freely given resource-- each other! Our own

Our own lives have been so enriched by family visits with other homeschoolers. Each family always has some unique interest-- from the amazing plasticene clay houses the Sherosky kids have made (and are constantly re-making!), to the animal and reptile cages on display everywhere in the Bigelow home, to watching Emily (11) and Clare (5) Murphy improvise a wonderful ballet to Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nacht Musik", and hearing Christian (8) improvise in 5/4 time on the piano (he loves Dave Brubeck's jazz), to seeing the modular castle Luke Wilson and his Dad, John, have designed and made from recycled homeosote., to the intricate ships-in-bottles made by Ray Wilson, to the fence Nathan Wilcox (7½) made all by himself around his tree swing. We often come away from visits with borrowed treasures-- an Erie Canal song book right when we're in the midst of a canal binge, another Little Bear book for Jesse to read, a four-record set of "Lives of the great Composers". We've also shared book orders with other families-- Beth Spatz has access to a great school library remainder catalog, which brought us a fine children's book on how dams are built (ready to answer our questions after visiting Kinzua Dam during a visit with Warren, PA homeschoolers...). Almost always get ideas for new books to read too--- Diana Baseman and Olivia (6) insisted we read Peter Pan and then Heidi, two major delights of our spring and summer.

So.... all this is just to urge you to look up families near you (or not near you but perhaps near some PA site you've been meaning to visit) and go spend a day with another homeschooling family. I guarantee you'll have a great time!

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

ARMSTRONG
ALTOONA
BEAVER
FOX CHAPEL
KANE
JEFFERSON-MORGAN
MILL CREEK
MT. LEBANON
MT. UNION
PITTSBURGH
SHALER
SOUTH-WEST BUTLER
SLIPPERY ROCK
SOUTH BUTLER
TITUSVILLE
TRINITY
WEST-JEFFERSON HILLS
WOODLAND HILLS
YOUGH

Many families have been contacting other school districts this summer-- this list will hopefully soon be much longer! More and more districts are realizing that this is a legal PA alternative. Again, Mr. Douglas Boelhouwer in the Dept. of Ed. in Harrisburg, (717-783-5146) is a good ally for homeschoolers-- it is probably a good idea to suggest your school district contact him for clarification on the state's view on home-teaching. This both lets your school district have a source of needed information, and shows that you already know about these sources.

On July 5th I had the chance to give a 2 hour talk on Homeschooling to an Indiana Univ. of PA grad. course, "Alternative Educational Programs in the USA". I had recieved notice of the course offering, and on a whim called up the professor to see if he was interested in a speaker on Homeschooling. He was! The class of 50 responded with good interest, and lots of questions (none of them unkind or defensive). Feels good to be letting education professionals know more about this option, perhaps helping them be prepared to help, not hinder, a homeschooling family in their districts.

1 year (4 issues) of Western PA Homeschoolers is yours for a \$5.00 donation. Sample issue available for \$1.25. Special thanks to those families willing and able to give more.

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