



The Henderson County Homeschooler



Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost (Romans 15:13).

Upcoming Events:

OCTOBER

4, 11, 18, 25 –
Enrichment
Classes

NOVEMBER

1 – Enrichment
Class

8 – Enrichment
Class (LAST
TEACHING DAY!)

15 – Last
Enrichment Class
(Party Day)

16 – Thanks-
giving Feast

22 – Enrich-
ment Class
**PRESENTATION
DAY!**

Please come!

Top “must-have” items in our homeschool arsenal

By Katie Dugdale

I often see the question pop up in homeschool communities and forums: “What are the essential items I need to homeschool?” The Bible and prayer are the most essential. With that being understood as most important, we have several additional items in our home that play an important role in our school. If I had to narrow it down, I’d say these are my top ten. They are in no particular order:

1. **A library card.** We head to the library once or twice a month. I love the children’s library at the main branch in Hendersonville. They have a great selection and are willing to order book series when we make suggestions. They also have great story times and activities every week. We always walk out with a bulging bag full of books.
2. **A laminator.** I have a slight addiction to office supplies. I love them...a lot. We got a laminator last year, and it has proved to be a very worthwhile investment. Mine is the Purple Cow. I found it on Amazon.com and use the laminator sheets from Sam’s (\$20 for 200 sheets).

See **HOMESCHOOL ARSENAL**, Page 2.



Applying “first aid”

By Susan Huranna

As a good, conscientious parent, you probably have a medicine cabinet full of bandages, ointments, and pain relievers. When your child gets a cut, or a poison ivy rash appears, you spring into action, rushing to apply the appropriate medical treatment. If you’re like me, you can’t even bear to hear stories of children being hurt. The innate desire to shield little ones from harm is too great, too instinctive to ignore. As my son begins to train for a future in the field of emergency medicine, I am reminded that it is not just the physical form of first aid that is an important skill to learn. Even the best first aid kit in the world can’t protect our children from all the bumps and bruises they will face on a daily basis.

See **FIRST AID**, Page 2.



Homeschooling in Okinawa

By Cammion Franzen

Our first year of homeschooling was a truly wonderful experience. My husband and I have a young daughter who was at the kindergarten curriculum level during our third and final year of being stationed in Okina-

wa, Japan. She enjoyed everything she was learning, but the most enriching activity we did was doing something that you can do anywhere as a family. What follows is a narrative of our experience.

I began buying produce from an Okinawan woman who ran a co-op and spoke perfect English. We told her of our interest in learning how to

See **OKINAWA**, Page 2.

HOMESCHOOL ARSENAL (Cont.)

3. **An electric pencil sharpener.** Ours is old school (from my childhood), but gets the job done.
4. **A printer, paper, and ink.** I'm always finding printable resources online. We use many free online lap books, which require quite a bit of printing.
5. **A computer with Internet.** You can homeschool for almost nothing if you look. Between YouTube, Netflix, Pinterest, and countless homeschool blogs out there, you can find almost anything (and more, so watch out!) Don't have Internet at home? Consider heading to the library to do school a couple of days each week.
6. **Markers, pencils, scissors, glue.**
7. **Community.** Homeschooling is more fun with other homeschoolers. Enrichment classes were by far our favorite event last year. We also enjoyed the Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas Craft Day, Co-op, impromptu play dates at the park, and just knowing so many wonderful families.
8. **The Kindle App.** Whether you have a Kindle, a Tablet, A Smart-phone, or a Computer, you can download the FREE Kindle App from Amazon and take advantage of the TONS of FREE books they offer daily. The selection always changes and includes picture books, cookbooks, fiction (for adults and children), how-to's, crafts, and much more!
9. **Post-It Notes.** We use the workbox system, so I use Post-Its to relay information and assignments.
10. **Nature!** We love to take off and go see the goats at Carl Sandburg, hike in Dupont, visit the talking trees at Holmes Educational State Forest, drive up to Jump Off Rock, or any other number of outdoor activities. Sometimes we take our school outside with us.



FIRST AID (Cont.)

Is the one item missing from your home remedy supplies the Bible? I remember what a wonderful discovery it was when I realized the Bible is much more than just a history book full of stories. The truths I found there are relevant to every day and every area of my life. Applying their balm to my child's hurts, failures, and yes, even successes, is the best way to protect and prepare him for the problems adulthood is sure to bring. Here are some verses for specific situations:

- When the child has told a lie:
Proverbs 12:22
- When the child says something he should not have:
Ephesians 4:29
- When he has been selfish:
Philippians 2:3-4
- When he has been disobedient:
Romans 13:5
- When he is trying to overcome temptation:
1 Corinthians 10:13
- When you try to teach your child what behavior you expect:
Ephesians 5:1-2
- When the child achieved success and doesn't want to acknowledge the Source:
Ephesians 5:20

It is a comfort to know our Heavenly Father has provided us with such a guide. Memorizing Bible verses is important at any age, but even if you don't have an appropriate verse ready for a given situation, you can say, "Let's see what the Bible has to say about that" and use a concordance to find what you need.

As parents, it is important to study Scripture and grow in our own Spiritual knowledge, not just for our own benefit, but also so we can guide our children. God's Truth and Grace (with some Law thrown in from time to time!) is the ointment that soothes and protects us from life's troubles. As I applied antibacterial cream to my son's scrapes and cuts (when he was a little boy), I explained what I was doing, knowing that one day he would be doing this task for himself. In the same way, I realized it was and still is vitally important that I teach him to apply God's ointment, His Word, to every situation he will be faced with throughout his life.

OKINAWA (Cont.)

grow vegetables and asked if she was able to introduce us to some farmers who would be willing to teach a small family. She was not from our town, so she said she would ask around for us since we spoke very little Japanese. After speaking to our landlord, she set up a time for us to meet a family who farmed just down the street from our house. My daughter and I went to the house with our landlord while my husband was at work and briefly explained to them why we wanted to learn about farming. It is funny, looking back at how we all struggled to communicate with one another that day. We agreed we would come back that Saturday for our "trial" day.

Our first day was exactly how you would imagine learning from a Japanese sensei. In the middle of the summer heat, at the hottest part of the day, he had us pulling up weeds with nothing but our hands. Later he brought gloves, followed by a stool to sit on, then a small hand tool, and finally a hoe with a long handle. It was funny, but we all preferred just using our hands in the end (he did this not be cruel, but to see how serious we really were about learning). His wife made us a big meal, and then we all agreed we would come back the next day after our church service. We worked at their farm every weekend and holiday for a year. It was a wonderful experience. We learned more Japanese (mainly farm related) than we had the previous two years, and they learned more English and had three extra people helping them to care for their vegetables. They loved our daughter and thought of her as a granddaughter.

Our daughter learned much about plants and how they grow, types of insects and which ones are good or bad for a garden, different types of soil, the importance of weather cycles, precipitation, and how damaging or beneficial it can be (we weathered a couple of strong typhoons while there), and about another culture very different from our own.

We started a garden when we moved to Hendersonville in Spring 2013, and it did pretty well considering it was our first time going it alone and with all the rain (!). There are many small farms in our area and I would bet they would love a little extra help. Even just as a one-time experience it is more than worth it to call around and find out if a local farm is looking for some free help. Gardening is a great way to get your whole family involved, outside, and working together. You get to see the cycles of nature and how God created everything to work so perfectly together. It was really a blessing for us, and I know it would be for your family as well.

Suffering from triskaidekaphobia

As a trained medical professional, I can spot all kinds of diseases and disorders using my vast storehouse of useless knowledge obtained in medical school and my internship for which I am now essentially no longer qualified to treat. The reason I bring that up is that I believe I have spotted one disorder in particular that has reached near-epidemic proportions among HCHA members. The disorder, you ask? Triskaidekaphobia. I can just hear the screams now: "Do I have it? I think it runs in my family. In fact, I think Grandma Hypochondriac had that. Doesn't it skip a generation, too? I'm doomed. What are the symptoms, again?" Please, try to relax, breathe into a brown paper bag for several minutes, and pop a Valium if you need to. Hyperventilation won't get you anywhere (well, maybe face-down and passed out, but that's not what you need right now). Here's what to look out for: rapid pulse, palpitations, shallow breathing, dilated pupils, night sweats, insomnia, uncontrolled shaking and jitters, and sudden waves of nausea as you walk by your home-school area. Oh, I forgot to tell you: triskaidekaphobia is the fear of the number 13. Now, you might be asking, "Why does he

suspect there is a near-epidemic of triskaidekaphobia among HCHA members?" It took some insightful medical sleuthing, but here's how I figured it out.

As late summer started to roll around, I began to notice more of those symptoms among homeschooling teachers, in addition to pressured speech, obsessive hand washing, facial tics, and copious under-your-breath mumbling, sometimes over-hearing things like "Who was the numbskull that invented the English language?" "How can you multiply two negative numbers and get a positive number?" "Is it blasphemous to skip the sordid tales of lust, pillaging, and killing in the Old Testament, and if not, how do I explain them to my first grader?" Not to mention frequently hearing the name "Wise Bauer" (often taken in vain, I might add), and other choice 4-letter words, like "math." At first, I figured all of this coincided with the start of a new school year. But nagging questions remained: "This is HCHA. These teachers are the best of the best. They have so many resources, teachers, and potential mentors who have been doing this for so long in our group...even the newbies will be so confident that nothing could faze them," I kept telling myself. I knew that after the first parent meeting—with the great workshops, information, and reminders about

our fantastic website—all fear would be completely alleviated. That's when it hit me...it's the start of the 20 **13** school year!!! Since there's no reason to fear the start of another school year as an HCHA member, it must be triskaidekaphobia!!!

About 87 percent of Americans suffer from this horrible, often disfiguring condition; 13 percent do not. (Side note: When the commercials for Pepto-Bismol say 4 out of 5 people will "suffer" from diarrhea this year, does that mean that 1 out of 5 people will "enjoy" it? Things that make you go "Hmm...") Needless to say, if you currently suffer from triskaidekaphobia, don't suffer alone. Triskaidekaphobia experts say there are several easy, sure-to-work cures: talking to other HCHA triskaidekaphobia sufferers, attending group therapy (like Heart 2 Heart), and participating in the planning and execution of an HCHA-sanctioned event (also known as the HCHA "participation policy") with fellow HCHAers, among others. So if you're feeling scared, alone, and embarrassed, seek help without delay.

– Dan Yoder, HCHA President

P. S. – If any of the above symptoms persist after the first Heart 2 Heart meeting, or last more than four hours, please seek immediate medical attention.

Mission possible

By Sharon Gibson

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to make this school year your best yet.

Companies typically write a mission statement to define who they are and what they stand for, as well as their goals...a verbal snapshot, if you will. While important to companies, a mission statement can prove equally important to the success of your school year.

Though now "retired" home school veterans, my husband and I found a yearly home school mission statement invaluable to each year's success. The foundation of that statement remained relatively unchanged from one year to the next. But the arrival of each new school year brought exciting new phases, ever-changing challenges, and growth opportunities, along with the inevitable need to tweak our annual mission statement's particulars.

Our home school mission statement helped us define who we were as a family, the legacy we wanted to pass on to our children, what we wanted our home school lifestyle to look like, the atmosphere we wanted to create, and individual and corporate goals. Our mission statement was vital in helping us analyze what was important to *our family* and its unique God-given blessings. Each aspect was also helpful in determining where to invest our time, energies, and money, and ultimately

helped us to stay on target.

If you haven't already written a home school mission statement, this is a perfect time to do so. It is also a great time to go on a date with your sweetie!

Set aside a date night, without distractions, for the purpose of shaping your home school mission statement. Pray individually beforehand about what you want *your* home school to look and feel like and your intended goals for the year.

This is the night you decide to make *this school year* your best one yet, and when you will design a plan to make that happen. It is when both you and your husband agree to no longer compare your family to another, and craft your home school into something uniquely your own, taking into account your children's individual talents and interests.

Discuss their strengths and weaknesses and your plans for helping them grow in each of those areas.

Discuss short *and* long term goals for each of your children, your family as a whole, and yourselves. The nature of those goals will be academic, of course, but can also be spiritual, physical, family and church focused, extra-curricular, and service oriented.

This is also a wonderful opportunity for you and your husband to commit to spending more time together as a couple, so bring your calendars and pencil-in regular date nights.

As you determine the particulars of who your family is, what you want *your* home school to resemble, your family values, the legacy you want to pass on, as well as this year's intended goals, you will simultaneously be drafting your own personal home school mission statement. Write it down and post it in your home where you will see it regularly.

Your mission statement will serve as your constant companion, helping you maintain focus all year. This *verbal snapshot* will help you say "no" to superfluous activities with which it does not align. And, like a faithful friend, it will be there when chaos ensues to remind you to get you back on track.

Most importantly, your home school mission statement will prove your *mission possible*, by helping you make *this* school year your best one yet!

Sharon Gibson is the founder of Home-school Legacy and author of Once-a-Week Unit Studies.



Our adventure in homeschooling

By Julie Buckman

Our adventure in homeschooling began 20 years ago when our first born, Joshua, was just four years old. We always knew we wanted to educate him at home, and we were excited to start. We began with *Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons*, the classic book used by many parents. By lesson 20, Joshua began reading on his own. We thought we had this whole homeschooling thing down like pros. Easy Peasy, right? What we didn't know at the time, was that Joshua was very bright, and had the typical "self starter" gifts that often accompany a first born's character. He would wake up early and have most of his work done by mid-morning. I thought I was the homeschool queen.

Our second child, Abigail, was a whole new experience. Abigail looked like a female carbon copy of her older brother. However, that is where their similarities ended. We were about to learn how wonderfully creative God can be when He blesses us with variety in our offspring. Abigail was artistic and playful, never serious about learning like Joshua. She could be found coloring on walls in her room, or other deeds of mischief which usually required the purchase extra cleaning supplies. When I discovered Magic Erasers I thought, "Oh, you beautiful Sharpie-marker-removing sponge, where have you been all my life?" She once emptied a very large container of baby powder all over her room because she wanted it to "snow." Abigail had no interest in reading. She didn't even enjoy being read stories. I would try to let her sit on my lap and read stories, trying to get an early start. She hated it. She just wanted to play on the floor and create things. We tried in earnest to interest her in academics with no success. By her eighth birthday, she still had no interest in reading and could not read more than 20 words. I cringed at public outings when it was obvious how far behind her peers she was. All the wonderful books Joshua had enjoyed at her age became canvas for her artistic creations, despite our many warnings that books were not for art!

About that that Abigail developed an interest in going to public school. Her logic was that they created art and had recess. By this time, I felt like I had pretty much failed her academically. I had watched as the girls at her eighth birthday party had to read her cards to her. They all read so eloquently. It did not bother her in the least that they could read and she could not. SO, when the desire for a public school experience came up, we decided to use it to our advantage. We told her she could enter second grade only if she would do the work required to catch up with them. She had only six weeks before school started. I knew with everything in me, there was no way she

could do it. She took me up on the challenge. On the first day of school, her teacher told me she hoped to get the other students reading as well as Abigail by the end of the school year. They put her in advanced reading. This is when I learned that when children want to learn, they learn. I had not been involved at all with her learning to read those six weeks. It was summer, and this homeschool mom was "off duty."

By Christmas, Abigail absolutely hated public school and pleaded to come home. Mark and I prayed and felt this would be a good time to instill the value of sticking to your commitment. We made her finish the entire year. The rest of her education was at home, and she excelled. We learned to let her follow her passions, but also insisted she do the things she did not enjoy as much, like math. By high school, this late bloomer was enjoying reading for hours daily and began to write novels. Every November, she participates in the National Novel Writing Month. Her vocabulary, and her way with words, is a wonderful expression of her creativity. By the way, she still creates amazing art, but thankfully, uses real canvas instead of my walls (most of the time). She graduated in 2012 from HCHA. In her graduation speech she acknowledged that her desire was to be a lifelong learner. She loves to research and learn new things. She is currently a student at Emmaus School of Biblical Studies. Her current academic passion is anatomy and physiology despite no desire to pursue a medical career aside from possible nutritional studies. She just wants to know how our bodies work. We plan a trip to the Bodies Exhibit of Atlanta in late September.

We went on to have two more children. Avery is now 16 and is enjoying classes with Home School Partners. He has been a much different learner than his older siblings as well. Avery needs human interaction to learn. He was not one that I was ever able to send off to another room for study. He would go in to start but come right back out to "just tell me one more thing." It certainly required more from me as a parent, and by this time, I was feeling a little burnt out with home education. This challenge was even more difficult because Avery has mild cerebral palsy, which to this day, makes writing painful and frustrating. Lack of writing practice led to being behind in most academic areas. We learned to make allowances for his challenges, and like many parents of kids with physical challenges, we were too easy on him. We grew weary of pushing past the tears, and he got behind. However, his character blossomed and His love of God and God's people grew stronger. From an early age, all Avery ever cared about was people. When he was five, he would often strike up long conversations at the checkout counter with adults. He was a charmer and I would often have to pull him away before he finished his lengthy conversations. He used

to have this saying when he met someone new: "Well, that's one less person I have to meet before I know everyone in the world." We are now enjoying his academic blossoming, thankful he is now learning with other students and a teacher that inspires him. His first year of high school was definitely a trial by fire, but he seems to have taken "ownership" of his learning and no longer requires constant oversight. He is doing well! We always joked that with his charisma he would either be in politics or in ministry. Now, at age 16, he feels a call to ministry.

Hannah is our youngest at age 10. She is yet a different learner than her older siblings, and at the same time, a mixture of them all. She loves reading, math, computers and pretty much everything. I can say for sure that with her, I am much more relaxed and enjoying the process. With 20 years of homeschooling behind me, and eight more before I finish, I have learned not to be so hard on myself. I have some successes in my adult children, and that brings new perspective. We focus on character and relationships with God and others first. Out of that priority, comes the love for learning new things, the ambition to excel, and the passion to be their best. It has become the peace that we need as parents who choose to educate at home. We desire to instill a love for learning, and the skills needed to be a self-educated person. Now, I don't worry that my ten-year-old doesn't know the names of every President of the United States. I can't recite them myself, actually. However, if Hannah ever needs to know something, she knows how to find the information, and her love of learning might just inspire her to learn not just their names, but more about their lives, and to enjoy the process. That, to me, is homeschooling success.

Mark and Julie live in Laurel Park with their three youngest children. Joshua, a Hendersonville Police Officer, and his wife, Allison, made them grandparents last November with the birth of their son Jackson.





First-year adventures in homeschooling

By Dana Swekosky

Month One

There are five children, three dogs, one bird, a fish, and only the typical two parents in my household. Since we don't want our children in public high school (although, I would enthusiastically send them one of my dogs), this is the year that homeschooling was to begin. Soon after my notice of intent was sent into the state, all the paper, notebooks, textbooks, and handy materials were acquired. I was gung-ho and ready for my new adventure: homeschooling my ninth grader (for now, the younger children are still in public schools). I even printed out the handy-dandy attendance record from the state. Our first day of official "school" was July 15. There was no school the next day; there were too many errands to run. The following day didn't work out either; we had company come in from out of town. I just couldn't fit school in for the remainder of the week; life was busy. We had a total of three "school" days that month. Oh well, busy life trumps gung-ho.

Month Two

I went to a homeschooling association parent meeting and learned that you don't have to open a textbook every day to have "schooled" on any particular day. This month we have had a "school" day because my daughters braided their hair together (and learned how to walk as Siamese twins), baked cookies (learned measurements), and watched the Percy Jackson movie (learned about mythology). I thought about including a two-week stay at camp as 13 days of instruction (she did learn archery, sewing, etc.), but since I wasn't there as her teacher, I thought that might be against some rule.

In addition to the above, we have completed many vocabulary, spelling, history, music, reading, and writing lessons. The only thing I have avoided is math. I'm one of those "if it can't be done on a basic calculator, then we don't need it" types of people. I did open the math book, but before I could finish the first paragraph, I felt a headache coming on. I decided that I should do a load of laundry and scrub the bathroom before attempting to open the book again. However, another headache took over on my second attempt. I think I passed my "math-induced headache" ailment down to my daughter, because when she opens a math book, she suffers a headache also. Poor baby! So I decided that my husband should take over the math portion of homeschooling. Not only does he not get a headache when dealing with math, he seems to enjoy it. But this is man who thinks going to the dentist is "relaxing," so enjoying math is just one of his idiosyncrasies.

I wanted my daughter's opinion of her first two months of homeschooling, so as I woke her early one morning (which is 9 AM to us night owls), I asked. She pulled the pillow over her head and muttered, "Could you ask me sometime after lunch, when I'm awake?" Hmmm, could that have been my answer?



High school to home school

By Christy Bryson

For the last four years, our family has been hanging on for the ride. Our ride consisted of long days of work for Dad, long days teaching high school math for Mom, long days of school and homework for Trista, and relaxing days of spending time with Mimi and (this past year) Brevard First Baptist W.E.E. School for Carter. Our schedule was crazy, especially if any kind of extracurricular activities other than our normal church activities were involved. Meals were rarely taken together, and if we were fortunate enough to eat together, it was fast food in the car on our way somewhere else.

Our circumstances changed when Jeremy and I purchased businesses in Brevard. That's when God put homeschooling in my heart. Trista has always been my free spirited little girl. Traditional school was not molding her into a better version of herself. It was trying to change her into someone she was not and will not be. I researched, spoke with friends, and prepared myself for this new journey into homeschooling. It took nearly all summer for us to be at peace with the decision, but I think we made the best decision of our daughter's life when we decided to homeschool her this year.

Let me paint a picture for you of our "before" and "after" days. While I was teaching and Trista was in school, we would almost always fuss each morning while I tried to push her to get ready for school on time. I had to be there at 7:30, which meant she had to be there at 7:30. Now my children sleep until 7:30, and we have breakfast together prior to getting ready for the day (we haven't fussed about getting ready to go somewhere yet either).

Before, I spent my day preparing lessons and worrying over other people's children. There's nothing wrong with that calling, and I believe teachers do their best. But my thoughts were rarely on my own children. Oh, I might remember them between classes or occasionally pray for them to have a good day if there was time. Now, though, I can pray for and with Trista any time during the day, and I don't have to wonder about what she learned while I was teaching my students. I'm directly involved, and I am learning more about my daughter than she is learning from me right now. Don't worry; she's still learning, but I really believe I'm getting more of an education. I'm thankful for this new relationship growth, too. We are growing closer to each other and to our Savior each day.

Carter is involved in our homeschooling also. He still attends Brevard First Baptist W.E.E. School three days a week, but he is developing a love of learning at home. He is the flash card king, and even though he's only three, he loves learning his alphabet and the sound(s) associated with each letter. I'm getting to know my little boy more and more each day, and I wouldn't trade this time for anything.

And Dad? He still has long days, but we are able to help with the businesses some in the afternoons, and supper is usually waiting on him when he gets home. We all sit down and eat together, and the children have the time to spend with him while he's home. It's so nice to have some quality time together at the end of each day rather than hoping to see one another for five minutes before baths and bed.

Will we continue this path forever? I don't know. God calls us in different directions as we're ready for them, and I just pray that we'll listen when He tells us what to do next. I'm ready to continue this for as long as He is calling us. So far, I enjoy it much more than our wild ride from before.

Making the world your classroom, Part 1

By Elyce Bender

After seeing a request from Scott for articles for the HCHA newsletter, I was wondering what I might have to offer. After all, we have been home schooling for 18 years now and are graduating our last child this coming May; I must have learned something along the way to share with other homeschooling families, particularly those new to homeschooling.

Then I saw the post from Marji about "What would you change if you could do a home school re-do?" That post, and attached article, got me thinking about what my husband and I would change if we could re-do our home schooling years. I had some similar items on my list as I read in the article. I wouldn't worry about whether my daughter would learn her times tables; she got them eventually. I wouldn't worry about my youngest learning to read, she learned eventually. I wouldn't worry about my son's inability to sit still; he would learn in his own way. These are just a few of the things we worried about.

So I thought perhaps I could write an article about this, but then I realized it wouldn't look much different than the article Marji posted on the forum. So, I quickly dropped that idea. Then I thought, why write about what we worried about when I could write about the things we are glad we did with our children, the things that meant the most to us. That's where this story begins.

Our home schooling style is very eclectic. Throughout our elementary years, and into part of middle school, we were "unschoolers," a method of home schooling that has been misunderstood in many home schooling arenas. Along with some of Charlotte Mason's methods, and lots of units studies, both purchased and homemade, we used the world as our classroom.

Except for math, but not all the time, we did not use curriculum until halfway through middle school. We always had math books, but if we could incorporate math into our daily living, then they learned by baking, cooking, patterns, art, playing, sharing, giving, saving, and any other method we could develop.

So how did our children learn? That's a question we have answered many times throughout the years. Well, let's just say that going to the library became such a frequent event that we knew the librarians on a first-name basis and I had to finally decide that we needed to save the gas money, and past due fees, and start a home library. By the time the children reached middle school, we had over 15 bookcases and over 2,000 books in our home. We

spent half our time reading books, with me reading to the children, and the children reading to mom or each other. We would go through 50 or more books a week. My kids have always had a very high reading level, and we attribute it to all that reading we did. And they love reading. They couldn't get enough of it. We would pick a subject and read as many books as we could get our hands on that had to do with the subject that THEY picked. They always picked fabulous things to study. So reading was a major part of what we did, but only as long as I had their attention. If they had enough we would stop for the day. If they wanted more, then we would read all day.

Doing lots of reading led into doing unit studies. It was natural to slip into unit studies because of the reading. When the children were younger we couldn't afford unit studies. So we made our own. We used the school subjects (history, science, art, music, etc.) to develop them. We would pick a topic, find lots of books on the topic, and then find ways to merge the school subjects into that topic. If we struggled with merging a subject with our topic, then we would pick something within that subject to study, but in most cases we were able to merge the subjects with our topics. As the children got older and our budget got a little bigger, we were able to purchase some unit studies that we really enjoyed. Also, many of the library books included experiments and other hands-on learning within the reading.

The most fun we had was when our unit studies included hands-on learning. My children wanted to make everything. They wanted to touch everything, to get 100 percent involved with everything. So we did. I tried to never hold them back. If it was mud pie making day, then we made mud pies. If it was solar system week, then we painted Styrofoam balls and hung them from the ceiling fan (so they would go around when the light was on, of course.) And if it was goo making day, then we made goo. There was always newspaper everywhere in our home when the kids were little. Our art supply cabinet was as large as our book selection. We couldn't keep enough art supplies in our home. I tried to keep every type of art supply I could find.

How did we afford this? Our local libraries were always having book sales and getting rid of learning books. They sold them really cheap, sometimes 25¢ to \$1 a book. Some times as many books as you could fit into a brown paper bag for \$5. We were very blessed. I could come home from a library sale with about 50 to 100 books and only spend \$10 or \$20. I would also buy lots of art supplies at the local dollar store. Place requests during birthdays and holidays, and grandparents were always willing to come home with items from the dollar store, also.

We also traded with other families to share supplies and get rid of items we didn't use in a while.

So reading, unit studies, and hands-on learning were at the top of our lists. After these "at home" learning methods, we used the rest of the world for everything else. We visited local museums, historical farms and homes, and learning centers. We went to zoos, fairs, and festivals. We picked places that were not expensive, and we made sure a large part of our home school budget was applied to field trips. Wednesdays were our field trip days, and we went every week; rain or shine. We attended reenactments, orchestras, bands, the ocean, aquariums, and other local events. And for every field trip we went on, we would also do further studies at home to learn more on the topic. We also made sure we took lots of pictures for the kids' home school portfolios we made each year for them to remember everything they did. We even went to a life-size dinosaur exhibit at a local mall one year.

If you look at what is around you, you will find lots of places to visit and to learn from. Our family went whale watching, seal and puffin watching; touched sea creatures at a hands-on aquarium; watched bagpipes being played at a medieval reenactment; and sailed on the Bowdoin, the 1921 two-mast schooner that sailed to Antarctica for research. We called them and asked them if they would take our home school group for a sail at an inexpensive rate because we couldn't afford much. They were so thrilled that we called and asked them that they only charged a minimum amount for each adult and child that attended, because they wanted to use the sail as an educational opportunity. A total of fifty parents and homeschooled children set sail, tightened the ropes, and navigated the ship. It was a fabulous opportunity and one that would not have happened if we hadn't asked. Like most of our mothers have always said, "You will never know if you don't ask." We've been to local bakeries for tours, grocery stores, manufacturing plants, and Crayola's Crayon factory. If you live near something interesting, ask them if you can take a tour. I think our home school groups over the years have only been turned down once or twice. Most people are very happy to give tours of what they do. You can also extend that learning by learning at home with movies, documentaries, CDs, and TV shows. Everything is a learning opportunity. Just don't tell your children. Tell them you are going to do something fun and exciting. They learn along the way. They don't have to be told they are going to learn something. Learning just happens in most cases.

Next Issue: Making the world your classroom, Part 2

Really...they will be fine!

By Jill Hart

As a former elementary school teacher, I wasn't at all nervous about starting to homeschool my children when they were five and seven years old. In fact, I delighted in scouring catalogs for just the right curriculum to expand their little minds. I found fun and out-of-the-box activities and planned field trips. Homeschooling would be everything I loved about teaching, without the hassle of administrators telling me what I had to teach and parents complaining that the school wasn't doing enough. We were going to have such a great time learning as a family!

The first day of "school" we went apple picking and made applesauce with my mom and my grandmother. What an opportunity—four generations working together in the kitchen. I'd like to see you try that at a traditional school! That week we also spent a half day at the library, read books on the couch, drew on the driveway, went to the park, and kept working in the kitchen. I heard other seasoned homeschool moms tell me what a great job I was doing, to keep it up, and that my kids "will be fine."

It wasn't long before doubt crept in. What about math? They haven't done any worksheets. How do I know they can really add? Are they reading enough? Maybe I ought to make them sit and have silent reading time for 20 minutes a day. Their handwriting is terrible. What style should they learn? Science. Is looking at bugs really enough? They don't know what a noun is or who the first U. S. President was...I'm a failure.

My "teacher training" kicked into high gear. I still planned "fun" things, but more and more "school" things took priority. I got workbooks and worksheets and computer software. Ahh...familiarity. This is how school should be. Sit down, do your work, turn it in, and I'll grade it.



When it's all finished, then we'll have some fun. We did Bible for 30 minutes every morning, math every day, history three times a week (Because who says you have to do every subject every day? Call me a rebel.), science twice a week—making sure they wrote an official lab report, otherwise what's the point of science? We did read-alones, read-alouds, and...look at all these grammar worksheets! Here's our lapbook project on the Indians...and...and...and... Any self-respecting school administrator would say we were doing a fine job, but as a homeschool family, we were not fine. So, little by little, this textbook and that workbook went by the wayside.

Eventually, we got a balance. Yes, I did keep a math workbook and a few other things, but mostly we did a lot of reading and talking and projects and trips. I'm sure I never used any curriculum "by the book." I'm sure we never FINISHED anything we started as far as curriculum—in fact, if we "finished" half, I thought that was plenty. From the outside looking in, most people would wonder how my kids ever learned anything. But they did. To be honest, I'm not exactly sure how they know some of the things they know. I know I didn't teach them. By giving them an opportunity to

to follow their interests, they learned despite me and my teacher agenda.

By middle school, "they were okay" even by traditional school standards. They had learned everything their public school peers had learned, plus more in many areas. I'll admit, they didn't learn to spell accurately enough for spellcheck to even help them until late elementary ...but does that really matter? They were into all kinds of books and projects. They didn't have time for a spelling lesson.

I think God allowed a good bit of our curriculum to fall by the wayside to make time for HIS plan. Time for my girls to strengthen their faith, learn character lessons, and develop skills that will serve them well as adults. As the parent, I had to listen to Him. He said, "I know you think ___ is important, but ___ is what they need right now." All through our homeschooling journey we had seasons where it just didn't go well. I wanted curriculum or schedules my way, because it was easier for me or it was what I thought they needed academically to prove I was doing my job as a super homeschool mom. I was stubborn and my kids weren't thriving. Finally, when I was just about to give up, I would listen to the quiet voice as a last resort, make a change, and wouldn't you know...things got better.

In each season, I knew deep down what needed to happen, but fought it. I wanted to do it the comfortable way. The way I had always known. The way that wouldn't leave me embarrassed when people quizzed my kids on their addition facts in the line at the grocery store when they asked if we homeschooled. I wish I had listened sooner. I'm not saying you should abandon all structure and let your kids do always as they please and never complete a worksheet. I'm saying, if your children are young, don't be afraid to let go of some of the structure you have in place for your own comfort and let God fill in what's most important. If you do, really...they will be fine. Strike that...they will be great if they learn the lessons that God has for them.

all the things
i want to do someday
seems to be so far away
but what I want
or what I need
seems silly
so for you to do your work
in me
that's what I really
want
for others to see
how powerful you are
to see you, The Almighty
Bright and Morning Star
so when things aren't going
as planned...
help me to see with your eyes
and Your task at hand

~Lisa Konklin~

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