

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

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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 liaison 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.

NEWS ON THE LEGAL FRONT from Howard Richman

New Homeschoolers Organization Established in Pennsylvania

I am writing this right after my return from a very successful meeting with homeschooling leaders in Eastern Pennsylvania. On April 13th I drove to Quakertown to attend a meeting called by Ann Cameron-Shick of Pocono Area homeschoolers in order to unite Pennsylvania homeschoolers behind a legislative plan.

Not only did we unite, but we also set up a framework that will enable us to work together toward our common goal. We all agreed about the urgency of action in view of PSEA's (Pennsylvania State Education Association) current attempt to limit homeschooling to parents with teaching certificates and in view of the many school superintendents in Pennsylvania who are denying parents the right to teach their own children.

Six people were physically present, three others sent letters or notes that were read at the meeting, and all homeschoolers in Pennsylvania were present in spirit. After discussing our goals, we set up an organization called Parent Educators of Pennsylvania which will soon be incorporated as a non-profit organization. It has two and only two functions: First to get legislation passed, and second to provide legal support to homeschoolers. The first priority of this organization is getting legislation passed and the first money raised will be used to offset the costs of mailings and other activities to support this legislation.

Several responsibilities were delegated:

While everyone is responsible for contacting legislators in their own districts. I (Howard Richman RD 2, Kittanning 16201) am responsible for keeping track of such legislative contacts. Please drop me a postcard to tell me how your legislator responds when you visit him.

In Louisiana, praying and letter writing campaigns organized by pastors provided the major impetus behind their successful legislative campaign. Tom Eldredge (1071 Pocopson Creek Rd., West Chester PA 19382, 215-793-1898) is responsible for organizing Churches and Pastors behind the legislation. He is also setting up a meeting between Dr. Raymond Moore and Harrisburg legislators. Please write to Tom if your Church or pastor can support our legislative campaign.

Once the legislative process begins, it can move quickly. Kate Barr-McPherson (R.D. 1 Box 461, Landisburg, PA 17040, 717-789-4537) is responsible for keeping track of what happens in Harrisburg and coordinating our response to congressional hearings should such hearings take place. Please write her if you and/or your children would like to testify in Harrisburg about why home-schooling is good or about why the present law is bad.

A great number of home-schoolers in Pennsylvania use correspondence schools, especially Christian Liberty Academy. Don Owens (RD 2 Box 112 H, Strasburg PA 17579, 717-687-9036) is responsible for contacts with correspondence schools.

Most people in America today do not know what home-schooling is. Peter Bergson (314 Bryn Mawr Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010, 215-527-4982) will coordinate our efforts to get home-schoolers onto TV and radio talk-shows and interviewed in newspapers. If you are willing to be interviewed about home-schooling please contact your local television station, radio station, newspaper, and/or Peter.

There may be times when we need to contact every home-schooler in the state to get everybody into immediate action. For example, when our legislation gets introduced in the basic education committee of the House of Representatives it will get a bill number. Then, everyone can right-away contact or recontact their state representatives in support of our bill. In addition, it may be the time to flood the people on the basic education committee with (gramatically correct!) letters in support of our bill. Susan Laurito (3334 Disston St. Philadelphia 19149, 215-335-0674) and my wife, Susan Richman (412-783-6512) are responsible for setting up phone trees in Eastern and Western Pa. respectively so that a few phone calls lead to every home-schooler in the state being contacted.

I feel very optimistic that we can get our legislation passed because we have so many strong energetic people coordinating their efforts. We all have to work hard to get this legislation passed, if we don't, we may wake up one morning to find that we cannot teach our own children unless we have teaching certificates.

Send Money Now

downtown

On May 29th at 8 am at the Holiday Inn in Harrisburg, Parent Educators of Pennsylvania is sponsoring a breakfast meeting between Dr. Raymond Moore and Pennsylvania State Legislators. Please send a check for \$10 made out to Tom Eldredge (1071 Pocopson Creek Rd., West Chester, PA 19382) to cover the expenses of this important meeting. Also, you might urge your legislators to attend this meeting.