

Pennsylvania Homeschoolers

PA Homeschoolers Masthead hand
lettered by Molly Richman, age 6.

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A STATEWIDE NETWORK SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT HOME EDUCATION

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Harrisburg Lobbying Day Set for May 22, 1990

from Susan Richman

On Tuesday, May 22, 1990, Pennsylvania Homeschoolers is sponsoring a lobbying day in Harrisburg, and we invite a coalition of as many homeschooling support groups, organizations, and individuals as possible to take part. Everyone will be visiting their legislators and personally letting them know how home education is working for their family. One highlight of the day will be giving each Senator and Representative a copy of our new anthology, *WRITING FROM HOME: A Portfolio of Homeschooled Student Writing*. We feel this will be a wonderful opportunity to thank our government officials for their past support of home education (remember, they all voted for our bill) and to let them know how the new law is working out so far. Many of the legislators had grave doubts about the bill, seeing it as being too open to possible abuses, and we want to let them know that it was a good

decision to make home education a viable option in PA.

If your child has something published in the anthology we especially hope that you will be able to come and personally give a copy of the book to your legislators, perhaps with a personal signed note from your child. Support groups might want to also bring posters sharing some of their activities from the year. You might also want to bring along a few samples of your child's work or be ready to share about specific accomplishments or interests of your child.

We will have a display table set up in the rotunda all day, beginning at 9:30, and families can meet there to receive nametags, books, and directions on which Senators and Representatives need to be visited. Although we are not lobbying for a law change now, it is important for homeschoolers to maintain a positive presence in the Capitol and

keep lines of communication open. If you have concerns about any other bills that could potentially affect home education, this would be a good time to discuss those also (see page 3). We don't want representatives to have any doubts if the issue of tightening controls on home education ever comes up. (The state of Florida, whose home education law was one of the models legislators used in writing ours, is now facing a bill calling for *twice* a year evaluations or testing.)

We are asking all families to make a small (or large!) donation to help defray the expenses of the day (cost of books, phone calls, any extra mailings, nametags, displays, etc). There is a space on the order form on the back page of this issue for this purpose, or just send any donation, no matter how humble, along with a note. All checks should be made out to "PA Homeschoolers." Thank you so very much in advance, and see you in Harrisburg! ●

We are very pleased to announce that *WRITING FROM HOME: A Portfolio of Homeschooled Student Writing* is now ready for sale. We thank everyone who participated in this book—especially all the many children who worked hard at their writing and sent on so many wonderful submissions. The 372 page book is full of a variety of types of writing—observations of the world, family life stories, poetry, book responses, field trip followups, family newspapers, fiction and more. There are also many ideas for parents in the intro sections to each chapter, covering topics such as motivating children to write, establishing an encouraging environment, finding real audiences, starting writing clubs, setting up family newspapers, and much more—and you won't have to do the mental translating necessary when reading books on writing directed at teachers in schools. It is truly a book for the whole family, the first of its kind, and should be in the "tool kit" of every homeschooling family!

HSLDA Files Suit in Pittsburgh

From Howard Richman

To our knowledge, only one school district requested documentation mid-year using the certified letters required by the law. That was the Pittsburgh Public School District and they are now being sued by the Homeschool Legal Defense Association. See the last issue of *PA Homeschoolers* for more information.

The case is known as Stobaugh et. al. v. Wallace. The HSLDA points out:

We are *not* challenging the authority or power of the Superintendent of Schools as defined in State Law.

We are asking for relief of Dr. Wallace's *abuse* of his authority.

The suit resulted after Dr. Wallace requested documentation midyear from all those parents who had refused to have their children participate in the basic skills "MAP" tests given at Pittsburgh schools. The parents held that the "MAP" tests were not required under the

new homeschooling law. Dr. Wallace held that without the "MAP" test scores to reassure him, he had a reasonable belief that education was not taking place. In the certified letter he sent to at least one of the families, He wrote:

Since you did not take your son to the school in order that he could have taken the MAP tests, I am unable to determine whether he is achieving and learning as he should be and I have a belief that appropriate education may not be occurring in the home education program.

The law states that superintendents can request documentation from parents during the year if they have a "reasonable belief" that a child is not receiving an appropriate education. This court case will probably set guidelines for school superintendents about when they can request such documentation. We will follow progress of this suit in future newsletters. ●