

# PENNSYLVANIA HOMESCHOOLERS

A STATEWIDE NETWORK FOR SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT HOME EDUCATION

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## What are Our Graduates Doing?

from Howard Richman

We recently sent out a survey to the parents of the 6 PA Homeschoolers graduates who graduated in 1991, the 19 who graduated in 1992, and the 39 who graduated in 1993. Here are the preliminary results. At the time this newsletter went to press we had received the surveys back from 36 of the parents of the graduates.

### Going to College

17 (47%) of the graduates were currently attending college not at home. Here are the colleges that they are attending:

Allegheny College in Meadville PA  
Appalachian Bible College in Berkley WV  
Baptist Bible College in Clark's Summit PA  
Bob Jones University in Greenville SC  
Cedarville College in Cedarville OH  
Corning Community College in Corning NY  
Houghton College in Houghton NY  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania in Indiana PA  
Lancaster Bible College in Lancaster PA  
Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore MD  
Messiah College in Grantham PA  
Penn State in McKeesport PA  
St. Johns College in Annapolis MD  
University of the Arts in Philadelphia PA  
Word of Life Bible Institute in Pottersville NY

Many of those attending college were also working or doing volunteer work.

### College at Home

3 (8%) of the graduates were pursuing higher education without attending a college campus.

One was taking a computer programming correspondence course and working at the same time in his family's

business.

Another was enrolled at Goddard (VT) in a self-learning homeschooling program. She was also an apprentice, a part-time waitress, and self-employed.

A third was teaching himself college courses studying literature, theology, logic, thinking skills, and speaking. He works from April to October and studies from October to April.

### Working for Someone Else

11 (31%) of the graduates were working for someone else. Two were carpenters, one of whom was also a supervisor teaching boys the carpentry trade in his family's construction business. Two were laborers. One was a salesperson. Two were short-order cooks. One was married and working on a farm. One was working as a thermal technician insulating houses. And one was working as a coal mine cop and venturing into buying vehicles and fixing them up for resale.

Many of those working were planning to enter college in the fall. Also, one was set to enter a linguistic training program in preparation for participating as a missionary on a teen mission to South Africa.

### Self-Employed

4 (11%) were self employed. One was the sole proprietor of a sewing and upholstery business. Another was a seamstress. One was working as an actor and co-director of a play that was originated, written, acted, and directed by youths ages 16-26 years. One of those who was self-employed was also volunteering 90 hours a month to instruct people about the Bible.

### Unemployed

Only 1 (3%) of our graduates was unemployed, and that one was also working with family members and was not on welfare. None of our graduates were on welfare. ●

# Homeschooling Parents Told to Put Children in School

by *Howard Richman*

Two incidents on opposite ends of Pennsylvania show that prosecutions of homeschoolers haven't ended under Pennsylvania's homeschooling law. But there is a big difference in the type of conflicts. It used to be that homeschoolers weren't even allowed to start homeschooling. Now the conflicts center upon whether they complied with the law when they did homeschool.

In both of the incidents that I will describe in this article the parents did not comply with the law in the view of school officials and an outside judge or hearing officer.

## Western PA Incident

In one incident, a family in western PA decided to homeschool in order to avoid truancy fines. Their fourth grade daughter had school phobia, and had been absent more often than she was in school. At times during first, second, and third grades, the school district had provided a home-bound-tutor. But in fourth grade, the school district was refusing to provide a home-bound tutor any longer. So, based on the advice of a school official, the family decided to homeschool instead.

Unfortunately, the parents were too disorganized to do the paper work. They managed to file an affidavit at the beginning of fourth grade, but that's about all they managed to do. They didn't keep a log. They didn't keep samples of work. They had nothing at all on paper to show for a year's worth of home education.

At the beginning of fifth grade they sent their daughter to school for one day and then started homeschooling again. This time they didn't even file an affidavit. When the school district realized that the parents had not filed a new home education program affidavit, and had not enrolled the daughter in school, they took the family to court in a child-dependency action at which the family could lose custody of the child.

My wife Susan testified on behalf of the family, but based on their lack of compliance with the law, the judge ordered the parents to put their daughter in school immediately, or lose custody. Since then, the parents have been trying to get their daughter to school on time, but not always successfully. One morning, for example, the daughter collected all of the family's keys and locked herself inside the cab of the family's pick-up truck. Her parents had to call the state police to unlock the truck so that they could get her to school.

Families like these pose a difficult problem for those of us who take the

educational aspect of homeschooling seriously. We sympathize with the parents. We sympathize with the children. But maybe parents who aren't organized enough to do any paper work, aren't organized enough to homeschool.

## Northeastern PA Incident

In northeastern Pennsylvania a much better organized family ran into problems and were told to put their children in school. The problem in this case was the parents' and evaluator's decision not to disclose the evaluator's teaching certificate number!

Under Pennsylvania law an evaluator has to be qualified. He or she can be a PA certificated teacher, a non-public school teacher, a licensed psychologist, or someone that the school superintendent pre-approves. The evaluator chosen by this family was indeed a certificated teacher.

In the past, these parents had used an evaluator who did long descriptive evaluations and attached a copy of his teaching certificate to each evaluation. But in 1992 they switched to an out-of-state evaluator who only stated the few words directly required by the homeschooling law in her evaluations and did not even include a copy or the number of her teaching certificate because of the law not specifically requiring such information.

The superintendent had received complaints about the children's education from one set of the children's grandparents. He wondered if the daughter, who had had learning problems in the past, was getting an appropriate education. He did not know this out-of-state evaluator, and the minimal evaluation that he had received from this evaluator did not address his concerns. He felt that in view of the complaints that he had received from the grandparents, he had better make sure that the family was following the law.

The superintendent requested a copy of the evaluator's teaching certificate, but the family and evaluator refused to provide it. They felt that this superintendent had often made requests that went beyond the requirements of the law, and they decided to draw the line. Push came to shove and the superintendent arranged a due process hearing to determine if the children were getting an appropriate education. The impartial hearing officer was chosen by the parents from a list provided by the district which included local lawyers and a neighboring school superintendent. The hearing was held for both children. The whole issue at the hearing was whether the evaluator chosen by the family was qualified.

The evaluator came to attend the

hearing with the parents. At the hearing, the evaluator was asked to disclose her teaching certificate number (which is the same as her social security number), but, after consulting with the family, she again refused. The superintendent tried to call Harrisburg to verify that the evaluator was certificated, but Harrisburg had several teaching certificates with the same name and needed a number.

Based on the refusal to disclose the teaching certificate number of the evaluator, the hearing officer held that the family was out of compliance with the homeschooling law. A few months following the due process hearing, a child-dependency hearing was held. Both sets of the children's grandparents came to the hearing to testify against the parents, and the court ordered the parents to put their children in school or lose custody. The family, however, moved out of state instead.

Susan and I often urge that people stand up to school districts which make demands that go beyond the home education law, but we would never suggest that people risk their freedom on anything so trivial as whether or not to disclose the teaching certificate number of their certificated evaluator!

## Concerns about Minimal Evaluations

The Bucks County Intermediate Unit has scheduled a "Home Schooling Mini-Conference" for public school officials on March 21st. One of the main questions that the conference is designed to address is, "How can we make sure that portfolio evaluators are reviewing responsibly to assure that 'appropriate education is occurring?'" The one sentence evaluations written by some evaluators have led some superintendents to doubt whether the evaluators are doing their job. Such evaluations do not inspire confidence!

Evaluators who are planning to write such minimal evaluations should be aware of their history. The idea of minimal evaluations was brought to Pennsylvania by a homeschooling leader who discovered a Florida evaluator who did minimal evaluations under their similar law. What was lost in the translation was that the Florida evaluator had met with, and was well known by her superintendent. She was also the leader of the local support group and was only doing evaluations for families in her group. When evaluators who are strangers to the superintendents use such methods in Pennsylvania they may be doing homeschoolers a disservice.

I have been invited to the Bucks County mini-conference and will report about it in the next issue of this newsletter. ●