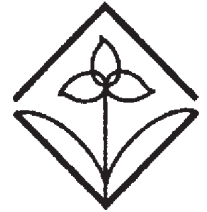


Home Rules

YOU CAN EDUCATE YOUR CHILD AT HOME!



OFTP

DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION CONFERENCE PLANNING

My name is Marina DeLuca-Howard and I am the Co-coordinator of the next *Diversity in Education Conference*. I live in Toronto. I am looking into a TDSB school as a possible venue. One close to a large park, and a mall, as well as restaurants.

It would be interesting to provide people with a forum to ask questions and have opportunities for small group discussions. I always liked the idea that knowledge is generated through discussion, and that there are no "experts" necessarily. It may be in keeping with the whole idea of homeschooling, and "diversity in education" to invite the gamut of people interested in education (teachers, schoolers, school at homers, unschoolers, students, parents, and PH.D types), but allow the attendees room to question and share experiences to create a mosaic.

Keeping in mind that people remember more what they do and say, rather than what they are told, could make this a unique experience. I am eager to find a group of like-minded individuals and start shaping a conference!

Here are some of the possible positions.

The Speaker Coordinator position requires contacting speakers, constructing a schedule, tracking speaker requirements (microphones, room size, equipment), communicate basics such as directions and scheduling to the speakers, confirm travel arrangements/accommodation requirements if necessary and purchase small thank-you gifts or arrange honorarium. I have already lined up 2 tentative speakers: on empowering children to self-direct, and a parent who started a democratic school.

The Vendor Coordinator must contact vendors, what kind of equipment, special set-up, prepare vendor info kit including when/where to unload, set up, take down, displays, and work with venue coordinator to plan the vendor/exhibitor area.

The Publicist to create flyers and announcements, email newsgroups, assemble a list of places/ways to advertise and contact local support groups to make sure they're aware of conference.

The Volunteer Coordinator maintains a list of people who have offered to volunteer on the day-of, plan the day's events, fill positions (e.g. registration, announcements/group address, direct traffic, assist vendors/participants, first aid), anticipate needs such as poster paper, markers, name tags, pens, pencils, receipt book, string, masking tape

The Programme Coordinator creates the program containing all the days events, schedules, directions, important info, maps supplied by Speaker Coordinator, Vendor Coordinator and Venue Coordinator, arranges printing/photocopying, if available early enough, give to registration secretary to

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Deadline for submissions to the next issue of *Home Rules* is the third Friday in September 2007 at 6 p.m.

ONGOING AND NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFTP NEEDS YOUR HELP! NEW VACANCY

OFTP is run completely by volunteer labour. If you have a free few hours a week and would like to help in the following administrative position, please contact enquiries@ontariohomeschool.org **before September 21, 2007.**

PRINTING AND MAILING COORDINATOR

Newsletter (Home Rules) mailing every two months:

- receive master copy of newsletter from Newsletter Editor and have it printed based on quantities given by Membership Secretary, plus sufficient extra for any conferences/expos/info nights that may be scheduled before the next newsletter issue, as well as extra copies for new member packages
- prepare envelopes (return address, postage, labels based on current database)
- stuff envelopes with newsletter, any inserts and membership renewal notices where necessary
- place newsletters in the mail
- mail renewal notices to expiring members who receive the HR via email

Other mailings:

- send new member packages and renewal packages whenever Membership Secretary provides this information (roughly weekly)
- send general information packages at request of area reps, hotline volunteers, enquiries recipient, or by any other source
- send hotline instruction package to hotline volunteer whenever Hotline Coordinator provides volunteer contact information
- maintain adequate supply of OFTP handouts and brochures for use in new member packages, general information requests, as well as for conferences, expos and information nights
- send supplies of brochures to any member requesting them for distribution in libraries, local support groups, etc.
- maintain hardcopy newsletter archives

OPERATION SUPPORT GROUPS!

Is your support group included on our list? Please submit the your group's information and help homeschool families across the province by providing them with valuable information and a means through which they can connect with others. Visit <http://www.ontariohomeschool.org/supportgroups.html> to add or update your support group's profile. Or contact the Area Reps and Support Group Coordinator, directly at: reps.groups@ontariohomeschool.org

OFTP HOTLINE

1-416-410-5218 OR 1-800-704-0448

Please contact Katherine Marschel-Chan at hotline@ontariohomeschool.org **if you are interested in volunteering** to help answer the OFTP Hotline. It's a great way for you to help OFTP help others and it doesn't involve a huge time commitment! A package will be sent to each volunteer to provide them with information on retrieving the messages (calls are left on a central message center and do not forward to your home) as well as advice on responding to the callers' requests. We also have an OFTP Hotline email list that you can sub onto to get further assistance from other OFTP members if you need it. **Volunteers are needed for the months of September, October and November. Please help out - It's easy!**

2007 CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

BACK TO SCHOOL ANNUAL CURRICULUM FAIR - MISSISSAUGA

Friday August 17, 2007, 6:00pm - 9:30pm
St. Martin's Secondary School, Mississauga, ON
<http://www.btsfair.ca>

What we learn to do, we learn by doing.

~ Thomas Jefferson (1743 - 1826)

(cont. from page 1)

mail to attendees. If not, deliver to conference for distribution at the door.

I am looking forward to a dynamic endeavour, and to learning many interesting things. Please consider lending your expertise to make this an exciting adventure. I can be contacted at delucahoward@gmail.com or 416 531 7839.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The position of "programme co-ordinator" has been filled. All other positions need volunteers!

INTERESTING LINKS



The Ministry of the Environment has launched two websites — www.obviously.ca for secondary students and www.ontario.ca/ezone for elementary students. The websites were created to explain the challenges facing our planet and inspire them to take actions that protect the environment — all within an interactive media experience that includes music clips and videos.

www.vanaqua.org/cleanup

This September, kick off the school year by taking your children outside to engage them in a hands-on, conservation activity! Sign up for the TD Canada Trust Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, and join the tens of thousands of Canadians who participate in this annual, nation-wide event to protect and restore the health of Canada's shoreline ecosystems.

Join "Write for Rights" — Amnesty International's exciting global write-a-thon on Human Rights Day, December 10. Hundreds of schools and writing classes participate. It's free, it's easy, it excites students and it's a great way to demonstrate the power of writing. Hold your write-a-thon on or around December 10th. Register or find out more at www.amnesty.ca/writeathon or call toll-free 1-800-AMNESTY.

See more links on page 5!

HOMESCHOOLER CAMPOUT 2007

Join us for our 20th Anniversary at **Charleston Lake Provincial Park**, just north of the village of Lansdowne. This year the Campout will be **Aug. 10-12, 2007**.

There is a groupsite contribution fee of \$10.00 per family per night which is required with your registration form as well as additional fees which are paid at the front gate of the park when you arrive. If you are interested in joining us just for the day, a day site contribution fee of \$10.00 is required.

To receive a registration form or any more info please send an email to Kathy at: gkbaker@1000island.net

Please be aware that we register our campers on a first come first served basis and we book up fast!

Visit <http://www.ontariohomeschool.org/campout.shtml> for full information.

YOUTH EXPLORING ART PROJECT

BY LUCY ERSKINE

"Opening Night" at the Oakville Town Hall had the Mayor speaking to a hundred people from the Homeschool community. Parents, friends, grandparents and neighbours showed up to celebrate the amazing efforts of this group of homeschool kids aged 8 to 17. The kids were just beaming with pride and the feeling of success. They were artists! The 18" X 24" stretched canvases, painted in acrylics, hung on the walls of the Town Hall for three weeks in May for all the public to see.

How did this come about? Only Homeschoolers know the logistics of finding a place to actually do a project, and having space to store canvases can be daunting. The arts for youth grant, donated by the Halton Regional Chairman's Charity Golf Classic to the Oakville Arts Council, had been used in previous years by elementary schools. I have volunteered with "ArtWorks", a group who hangs art in public places, for fourteen years and said "Yes, we want that for the Homeschoolers!" before I thought out how complicated it would be.

While having lunch with a former THN mom whose son now goes to a non-profit private school for Autistic & Asperger's kids, Woodview Learning Centre, the problem came up and it was decided that we would join forces

and have their nine kids do the art project too, and we could use their storage and their wonderful gym... how perfect!

Almost perfect - I had to do a lot of research and figuring what should be in focus and decided on the last 150 years of contemporary art. Yeah, but I'm not that kind of artist - I work in Gold and Silver! However, I do know a lot about art and art history. I just had to summon my own confidence in my abilities and what I know, and as it turns out I am an inspiring teacher in that field for a group of kids! I was going to get someone else in to do it, but knew that I could get the energy across that I wanted - the exploring, experimenting, opening up to the possibilities of the colours, texturing, composition and emotion of creating art on canvas. Oh Boy- did they ever respond!

After organizing the canvases and paints and getting them (with help from the notes of the woman who did it with her school the previous year) I had to plan on the ages, what I would show and talk about, how many workshops they'd need. Most of all, I had to have a lot of promo to get kids to sign up, to recognize what a great opportunity it was. I made up a slide

(cont. on page 7)

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE

by Tyler Bragg

Homeschooling your children has the potential to be both a rewarding and challenging experience. Every parent who currently teaches teenagers at home is aware that this process may become even more difficult if you decide to teach your children during their high school education. Although these challenges vary between families, one area of difficulty that most homeschooling families face is learning about the process of applying to college or university. As your children get older and as the majority of occupations require post-secondary level education, it is important to understand the application process. This includes educating yourself and your child of the various methods of applying, and the specific requirements of each college or university your child wishes to attend. It is my hope that this article may equip you with some guidance and information that may be useful during this process.

First, however, allow me to elaborate on my own experience of being educated at home. As the eldest child in a family of four children, my experience of homeschooling consisted of being removed from the public education system after Grade Two and being taught at home by my mother for every grade thereafter including high school. My parents decided they wanted to teach us at home to ensure that we were being taught according to our Christian faith. Throughout our homeschooling experience, our education was highly structured and followed a routine, but the content and curriculum used was that of a mixed variety of subjects. This meant that some of our curriculum was based on Christian values and beliefs, but we were also permitted to choose other topics that we wanted to learn more about according to our own interests.



My education was also unstructured in some form, as we did not complete any 'official' testing or send our tests to a governing body for review. Yet, homeschooling provided me with many benefits that public school would not have been able to give. The increased one-on-one instruction, ability to focus and concentrate in a smaller class setting, the development of an ability to work independently, a faith-based education, and the relationships I have with each member of my family are just a few examples of these benefits. Furthermore, I was also highly involved in my church youth group, on several music teams, and played hockey and soccer, therefore I was able to be socially active and maintain friendships that I highly value to this day. Overall, I may confidently state that my parents did an exceptional job at not only preparing me for future education opportunities- but also preparing me for life.

As I approached the end of my highschool education, I began to think about my future and my long-term education and employment goals. This was complicated by the fact that I had not completed an 'official' high school diploma as a result of homeschooling until Grade 12. At this time, I talked to many people about how to get into college or university, and I was shocked to find out it appeared that no one I talked to knew how to do so as a homeschooler. I met with my local high school guidance counselor, who while she ate her lunch, handed me a brochure and told me to read it, was not able to answer my questions, and then sent me on my way. I spoke to other homeschooling families, and one mother who also taught her children at home told me, "Oh, you'll never get into college, it's impossible!"

Thankfully, I did not believe her. Finally, I called my local community college (Georgian College in Owen Sound) and was happily informed by the Student Services department that they would help me apply to the programs I was interested in. They invited me to come in and talk about my educational goals and informed me that I had two choices:

- (1) write the GED and obtain an official diploma, which would be a long-term decision; or
- (2) apply as a 'Mature Student' to the colleges I was interested in and write the 'Canadian Adult Achievement Test' (CAAT), which most colleges accept as the equivalent to a high school diploma and can be written in a 6-8 hour session. As I was getting older and wished to begin post-secondary education as soon as possible, I chose the short-term option and wrote the CAAT.

The most important thing to know about applying as a "Mature Student" and writing the CAAT is that you usually must be 19 years of age and/or have been out of formal education for at least a number of years, and this will vary between colleges and the process is different for applying to university. Furthermore, the CAAT has various levels (A to D) that are written according to the specific colleges and programs one wishes to apply to. The exam covers all areas of a high school education, including science and mathematics, and the results provide one with their average grade level obtained among all categories. Some colleges even have their own forms of testing for mature students. The results are then used as the basis for an admission decision, but you must also submit an online application to the colleges via the Ontario College Application Services website. For example, I applied to Georgian College for

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Police Foundations and wrote their specific test that they had developed for mature students. Also, I wrote the CAAT (Level D) for my application to St. Lawrence College and Level C for Sir Sanford Fleming college for the Social Service Worker and Police Foundations programs. Note that I was able to write all three forms of testing at my local community college, and then my results were sent to the specific colleges with my application.

My CAAT results granted me 'mature student' admission to four out of five of my chosen programs. What most people do not realize is that most colleges are *required* to accept a specific amount of mature students to each program per academic year, which greatly increases one's chance of being accepted as a homeschooler. After carefully considering my career goals, I accepted an offer of admission to St. Lawrence College in Cornwall, Ontario in the Social Service Worker program. One may ask, "Were you able to keep up with the other students?" The answer: yes. In fact, two years later I graduated at the top of my class with a 3.98 GPA, obtained two other academic awards, and was chosen as the Valedictorian at my college graduation!

What about university? After completing my diploma, I applied to university through an 'Articulation Agreement' (which allows one to transfer directly to university) between St. Lawrence College and three universities, and obtained admission to two out of three of my chosen programs. I accepted an offer of admission to Carleton University in Ottawa with advanced standing in the second year of the Bachelor of Social Work program, and was offered an Entrance Scholarship based on my academic performance during college. Although this is not the only method of applying to university, it appears to be the simplest method as a homeschooler—by learning about the various transfer opportunities that a particular college offers according to each program and utilizing those agreements to gain en-

trance to university. Although this may limit your post-secondary education opportunities, most universities will focus on your academic performance in college, rather than evaluating your grades during high school. This process may also include the submission of "Entrance Essays" as well as references, but this will also vary between universities.

Obtaining post-secondary education as a homeschooler is not impossible, but it does require a lot of hard work and dedication. Understanding the basics of applying to college or university is essential to guiding your children through this sometimes overwhelming process. If you do homeschool your children, ensure they receive quality education at home and allow them to make their *own* choices and decisions. Always remember to help your child remain optimistic and to nurture a sense of hope for their dreams and for their future.

Here are a few tips:

- Help your teenager narrow down their career and education goals. Get them to talk to someone who works in that specific field or arrange volunteer work.
- Contact your local college or university and ask if they have a specific policy regarding the admission of homeschoolers and/or mature students.
- Learn about the entrance requirements for the specific college/university according to the program your child wishes to enroll in.
- Contact Student Services at the college or university to inquire about various testing that may be required for admission as a 'Mature Student', including the GED, the CAAT, or if they have their own version of testing.
- Before going to complete the testing—be prepared! Most entrance exams test all components of a high school education including science and advanced mathematics.
- I highly recommend attending

college before university. Not only does your child have a greater chance of getting into college, but it will also allow your teenager to determine their academic skill level.

- If your child wishes to eventually attend university, ask the college if they have any "Articulation Agreements" (transfer opportunities) with universities within a specific program. These agreements will usually shorten the amount of time it takes to complete a degree and are usually based on grades obtained during college instead of high school.

Tyler Bragg lives in Ottawa, Ontario with his wife Danielle. He enjoys learning and writing, music, sports, and working full-time in his field for the summer. He looks forward to completing his degree in Social Work at Carleton University and obtaining employment working with children and youth. If you have general questions for Tyler you can email him at tbragg@connect.carleton.ca

INTERESTING LINKS - PART 2

www.UCanRead.com features a new learning to read and remedial reading program as well as other educational products.

www.greatschools.net/content/summerReading.page is a wonderful resource for parents to both help their kids learn to read and to enjoy reading. There are book suggestions for grades K-6.

www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_childrens.html This is a booklist with a twist: Children themselves evaluate the books, and provide reviews of their favorites. Since 1974, Children's Choices have been a trusted source of book recommendations used by teachers, librarians, parents—and children themselves.

www.guysread.com Children's author Jon Scieszka helps boys find "stuff they like to read".

www.trelease-on-reading.com/rah_treasury.html An online version of Jim Trelease's Read-Aloud Handbook.

KINDERGARTEN LEMONADE

by Carlo Ricci

I am feeling very uncomfortable because we have signed our daughter up for kindergarten—I truly believe that this is the wrong thing to do and that the oppressive environment of schooling will diminish her learning. If the decision was solely mine I would not expose her to this limiting experience; regrettably, I believe it needs to be a family decision and as a family we (my daughter, my wife and begrudgingly myself) agreed that she would sign up and then decide when she is there whether she wants to continue or not. I am hoping that she will decide that school is not what she thought it would be, sooner rather than later. And I have no doubt and all the hope that she will eventually reach this decision. I want to share our experiences with those of you who have not given your children this opportunity and have not experienced this yourselves, so that you can feel confident that your decision to unschool is indeed the right one. The experience I want to share is the lemonade party that was held at the school my daughter is registered to attend next September. After the event we walked home. Then, I went for a long roller blade. I processed the information and came home to write this down:

We went to Princess Margaret because we were invited to meet Annabel's teacher and see the classroom that she will be attending in September. We and quite a few others were late because the invitation asked that we meet between 4 and 5. The event actually started at 3:30. When we got there parents were scattered around the classroom sitting uncomfortably in chairs made for small children. The children were seated on the floor in a circle and the teacher had just finished reading them a story. Annabel was the only child that cried for a few seconds and she did not want to join the others in the circle. After about ten min-

utes she did—minutes before the session came to an end.

The teacher was seated in a comfortable chair in front of the class. To her side was an easel with chart paper with a clearly written agenda (no spontaneity here). Since we were late we missed the story and her speech to the parents. She did not reread the story but she did review her speech for us. The speech was like daggers to my ears.

She said that as parents we should spend less time with our children so that they can become accustomed to being without us. She asked us not to cry or be emotional when we drop off our children because that will make it worse for them and for her. She asked that the children be toilet trained because she will not accompany them to the bathroom. She went over the daily schedule and assured the parents that the stations were not for children to play but they were about science, math and so on. In the end she made the students applaud themselves for sitting so still for so long; especially, those that were there from 3:30 because they had sat attentively for almost 45 minutes (is this what we should applaud children for? Is this what we want our children to do?)

On the other side there was the school code of conduct displayed at the, for the most part non-reading, kindergarten children's eye level. I did not bother to get close enough to read it, but from where I was standing it looked like an official document, not unlike the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the UN Declaration of Independence. I will

read it one day out of curiosity.

The teacher directed us to a series of information pamphlets that were on a round table at the back of the room. I collected my share. There was a pamphlet titled, A Healthy Start to School. It was put out by Toronto Public Health. The pamphlet included information about head lice and children's stress. Another pamphlet put out by the Toronto District School Board titled Welcome to Kindergarten in the Toronto District School Board. I just want to highlight one thing because it is representative of the thinking that permeates the whole system. The front cover has the word "welcome" written in huge red letters and three words that surround a smiling child, among other things. The three words are

explore, learn, play. I want to share with you what the book says about play. In a section titled learning through play I quote the following:

Play is a very important part of the kindergarten program. Young children develop their skills and abilities best through learner-based play. Teachers plan learning experiences where children actively participate in doing and thinking. (p. 3)

What I find interesting is their understanding of play. Play is planned by teachers. My understanding of play and the beauty of watching my children play is that it gives them, the children, the opportunity to plan their own play by using their imagination and creativity. Evidently and unfortunately, the board who takes its orders from the Ministry of Education does not agree. It gets worse from here but I will stop. For example, they suggest that the purpose of play is for children "to show what they know and can do." In other words, play is a way that teachers can assess, evaluate and

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(cont. from page 6)

measure what children can do, and, of course, there is a right way to play.

After speaking to other parents, they told me that the other kindergarten teacher told the parents that their children would be reading and writing by the end of the year and that they should expect their children to have homework every night. One parent said, "Oh boy, every night!" I think he is anticipating a battle.

When we went outside for cookies and lemonade, the principal was patrolling the sidewalk. He was reprimanding every child that attempted to step foot on the sidewalk. He shushed them all back onto the grass. One parent said, "That it's okay she is my daughter." I think the principal heard and he seemed unimpressed and chose to ignore the comment.

Clearly, but not surprisingly, the lemonade part left a sour taste in my mouth.

Carlo teaches in the faculty of education's graduate program at Nipissing University. He has two young children he hopes will choose to be unschooled. Visit his webpage at <http://www.nipissingu.ca/education/carlor> or email him with your responses at carlor@nipissingu.ca

GREEN STREET ALERT!



The Program endeavours to provide opportunities to actively engage students and teachers in environmental learning and sustainability education. The Program links schools in Canada to reputable Environmental Education organizations across the country. New programs will be available for viewing around August 20, 2007 and registration takes place on September 4, 2007. Be sure to check out their website at www.green-street.ca

(cont. from page 3)

show and had examples of impressionist, post impressionists, surrealists, NYC abstract expressionists. I showed photos of the artists working. Most great artists had a network of artists friends behind them, supporting their taking a plunge. I asked that if the parents did come, not to mention their views on 'modern art'! Let the kids decide themselves.

Paint Day



went beautifully! I love those homeschool minds that take all the info then turn it into their very own thing. The work was amazing. They were all successful at tackling a big canvas and coming out of it very pleased with the results. That was my main ambition.

At the end of April, my son and I hung the works in the Town Hall, 53 pieces and they looked fabulous. I printed up proper brochures with mini pictures of each of the works so they could have a souvenir. The Opening Night couldn't have been more wonderful. Kids dressed up - some dressed up as artists - you know, homeschool style! It was beautiful. They gave me a lovely handblown glass bowl for my efforts which couldn't have been more appropriate - support the artists: they breathe life into us. These kids now have their works hung in their homes. They learned a lot about contemporary art history and they experienced the creating of it themselves. They also have had their artwork hung in the Town Hall - not many people can boast that!

Lucy is a homeschooling mom (UN) who is an artist. With son Will, she has been very active in THN - The Homeschool Network (www.thnonline.ca) which has about 50 families in the area and they do things with other homeschool groups too. Lucy writes very verbose email promotions for events by THN, but will try to keep this brief! This describes an art project that was hugely successful, the homeschoolers rose to the occasion magnificently. Maybe others can do something like this in their area.

Photo credits: Will Erskine and Billi-Jean



Paint Day

Whenever I do any reading or showing (teaching) with the kids I always have parcel wrap paper taped to the tables and lots of coloured pencils and sharpeners out - they listen and absorb much better while doodling. The learning workshop was over two hours of my talking, showing and demonstrating with paints. I wasn't sure how homeschoolers would fair in that situation, but they lapped it up. That was sure shown on the actual paint day, Feb. 28.

The kids from Woodview came and we went over the demonstrations of some techniques again and then everyone had a canvas with their names on the back and plastic covered tables and floors. It



Opening Night!

FINDING BALANCE IN THE BUSYNESS

by Donna Fawcett, Author of *Thriving in the Homeschool*
and Donna Dawson novels *Redeemed* and *The Adam and Eve Project*

Society has become a collection of activities. The goal is to keep busy—to fill in the spaces. The kids have soccer, baseball and swim lessons in the summer. Skating, hockey, and a dozen other events fill the colder months. And parents are no better. Church meetings, planned school trips and jobs—be they paying or non-paying—compete with the silent moments. But those silent moments are important. I understand as a former home teaching parent just how difficult it is to find those precious bites of time but that doesn't make it any less necessary to do so. So how do we steal that silence back?

Probably the best way to begin finding time would be to take a gander at your calendar. Typically the calendar is the hub of activity in many families. Often I have entered homes and found that keeper of the days tacked in a strategic spot in the kitchen. Inks of varying hues cover each small block with scratchings of places to be, things to do, people to meet and too often almost every block is filled to capacity. If that is the case, then you have discovered the needed proof that indicates your life is too busy making you a prime candidate for burn out.

Peruse your busy schedule and find the next vacant date. Once you have found that empty square of time, automatically fill it in with the large letters spelling M-Y-T-I-M-E. Circle it a few times. Star it in red pen. Sign

your name. Why? It's quite simple. It is a subliminal message to the rest of the family that you need some rest. By planning ahead and marking it down, you are committed to it.

Then you must find a way to empty the house of all other inhabitants and if you can't do that then you need to find a way to keep the children occupied unconditionally. Ask a neighbour to keep an eye on them. Get a family member to help out. Trade off with another home schooling mother making arrangements to look after her brood at a later date. And once that's accomplished, kick back with a good book, a movie, go for a walk or simply sit there and stare at the wallpaper if that makes you wind down.



Finances and commitment make it difficult for us to forge ahead and claim that needed space but we must do so. It does our children absolutely no good whatsoever if we are stretched so thin that we can't be the loving, nurturing parent we should be. Guilt tends to be a factor too. Too often, we have convinced ourselves that because we aren't being paid in cash for our hard work we shouldn't take the time off. We have this idea that unless there is a pay cheque involved, it isn't a legitimate job. But the contrary is true. Home teaching

is a demanding career choice and its rewards come in many different forms but like any taxing work, it can sap you leaving you as an ineffective worker. Call it your mandatory holiday time.

And don't be afraid to say "no". North Americans have a terrible time using that two letter word. We feel that to do so would be rude. Again, not so. Keeping your health in top form—mentally and physically—is as good an excuse as any to learn the art of gracefully saying "no". If the person asking is offended that isn't your problem. Your concern is to bring your children to their adult years with the best tools available to them as they enter into society. Burning yourself out won't help you do that.

So the next time someone asks you—as a stay-at-home Mom—to do something for them, don't be afraid to weigh all the factors. Do you *really* have the time? Are you already running in too many directions at once? Will this benefit your education program? Will this tax your family relationships? And then smile, thank them for thinking of you and politely refuse.

Donna Fawcett is a retired home schooling mother turned freelance writer and conference speaker. In her book 'Thriving in the Home School—A Parent's Guide', she shares some of the lessons learned in her own home school. To contact her, visit www.homeschoolblogger.com/authordonna or email her at hometaughtfawcetts@hotmail.com.

NEW SUPPORT GROUPS

Special Needs in Home Education of Canada <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/snheoc/>

Niagara Area Homeschool Group <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NiagaraAreaHomeschoolGroup/>

We learn by example and by direct experience because there are real limits to the adequacy of verbal instruction.

Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, 2005

HARASEN HOMESCHOOL RISES TO CHALLENGE

by Cindy Harasen

We are new OFTP members and hail from rural Thunder Bay. My husband Steven and I homeschool our three children (Max - 8, Kyra - 6 and Kaleigh - 3). We have never sent them to school and while we go one year at a time we have no plans to send them to school. I suppose we fall somewhere into the unschooling - eclectic homeschooling category although my control streak sometimes gets in the way.

Imagine how proud we were when our tiny little Harasen Homeschool, student body of 3, placed in the Top Ten of Earth Day Canada's 6th Annual Great EcoKids Challenge 2007 for our outstanding contribution to the environment and local community. We were also featured in the EcoKids News Bulletin in their EcoKids in Action section. What a nice plug for homeschooling!

Although we love to recognize Earth Day we try to incorporate the principles of Earth Day into our lives each and every day of the year. In fact one of the things we like about homeschooling is that we have the opportunity to make environmental studies a priority and build them into every subject we study.

Here are some strategies and ideas on the go in our homeschooling household.....these are all efforts that involve and include all family members regardless of age, allowing them to participate and learn to what ever degree they are able.

- Growing our own vegetables and herbs
- Raising chickens and turkeys for eggs and meat
- Heating our house with wood

- Conserving water
- Washing clothes in cold water
- Hanging clothes to dry
- Using environmentally friendly cleaning products
- Sweeping instead of vacuuming
- Cooking with whole foods
- Recycling and composting



Max and Kyra and members of Kyra's Nature Club get ready to enjoy a rice krispie earth cake!

This Earth Day we decided to make 'Kyra's Nature Club' a reality. In fact it was our submission of Kyra's Nature Club to EcoKids that won us our top ten spot. Kyra has been talking about her club for years and it made sense to have the official opening on Earth Day. Together we developed a Nature Club kit for members which included an introductory letter, Club Constitution, Ideas for Change, a Membership card and button or fridge magnet. The kids worked with me to pick out a logo and prepare all the items in the package. Packages were sent out or delivered to family and friends to educate them and inspire them to make changes in their own lives. We had a gathering at our home on Earth Day to open Kyra's Nature Club, celebrate

Earth Day, and Max's Birthday too, which was two days later. Lots of reasons to celebrate with some bubbly ginger ale. We made two earth cakes, including a rice krispie sphere which was a big hit. Kyra sees her club as a global one with the primary purpose of increasing awareness and educating people of all ages on what they can do to make a difference. Both she and Max also shared their ideas with friends at Sparks and Beavers. As for our next big project...we are in the process of planning and designing a new home which we will be building next year. It will be an underground 'off the grid' home and hopefully an awesome learning experience and adventure for all of us. We'll keep you posted.

We are also going to take a tour of our own home and lives and make a list of the products we use that we can make from all natural ingredients rather than buy. We

have done this in the past and made our own dog biscuits, toothpaste and bath salts. We hope to add to the list this year.

And so, as you can see, Mother Earth is a priority in our personal and rather eclectic curriculum. After all if we don't have a planet to live on where would any of us go to school.

Cindy Harasen thrives in rural Thunder Bay with her husband and three children. They raise vegetables, herbs, chickens, turkeys, cats, a dog, a budgie, a rat, a bunny and hundreds of Japanese koi. They no longer use their dishwasher, clothes dryer or air conditioner and flush only when necessary. Until someone gives them a good reason to send their kids to school, they will continue to learn at home.

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Life Learning magazine was launched in 2002 by Editor Wendy Priesnitz, a Canadian homeschooling pioneer who founded the Canadian Alliance of Homeschoolers in 1979. She is also the author of *School Free - The Homeschooling Handbook* and *Challenging Assumptions in Education*. Life Learning magazine is published by Life Media, created 31 years ago so that Wendy and her husband Rolf could work at home with their two unschooled daughters.

www.LifeLearningMagazine.com

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND DEADLINES FOR 2007

If you are interested in making a submission for the newsletter, here are some guidelines to follow:

Topic Suggestions - your 'style' of homeschooling; curriculum critiques or reviews; teen stories; research studies on homeschooling; educational articles; book reviews; tell us about your support group etc.

Length Restrictions - There are currently no restrictions but attempts should be made to keep articles concise. When making a submission, please include a brief bio about yourself, approximately 2 to 3 sentences in length.

Book Reviews - Please include the author, ISBN number, publisher, copyright date and name of reviewer. If a homeschooled child has reviewed the book please include the child's age.

Curriculum Reviews - Include curriculum name, supplier name and contact information, price, appropriate age/grade level and name of reviewer.

Format - See "Newsletter Inquiries/Submissions" to your right for contact information. The Editor can accept most file formats. Articles can be attached to a regular e-mail or included within the body of the e-mail message. Articles may also be sent through traditional mail (be sure to allow sufficient time prior to the deadline).

Issue Deadlines - Submission deadlines are the third Friday of each odd-numbered month (ie: January, March etc.) by 6 p.m.

Send me your drawings, photographs, stories, reviews and poetry. Would you like to write an article? Go for it! I'm always looking for submissions.

OFTP E-MAIL LISTS (FOR MEMBERS ONLY)

To subscribe to the **OFTP Exec List** please go to <http://www.yahogroups.com/group/OFTPEXEC>. This list is open to all members and its purpose is to discuss OFTP operations and initiatives.

To subscribe to the **OFTP List** please go to <http://www.yahogroups.com/group/oftp>. The purpose of this list is to discuss and share ideas and information about homeschooling. Discussions may include daily homeschooling issues, passing along articles or conference information, product reviews and questions about legalities.

To subscribe to the **OFTP Chat List** please go to <http://www.yahogroups.com/group/oftpchat>. The purpose of this list is to provide a forum for members to share thoughts, feelings, questions and information on "off topic" (non-homeschool) issues.

To find OFTP's specialized lists, please visit <http://ontariohomeschool.org/oftpgroups.html>

Home Rules is published bi-monthly by the Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents (OFTP). OFTP is a non-profit, volunteer-managed group committed to providing information about and support for home-based education to our members and the public at large. OFTP supports parental choice in education as stated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (26.3). We act as a link between home educators and institutions such as the provincial government and local school boards. OFTP believes that parents have the right to determine the satisfactory nature of instruction for their children.

The views expressed in articles in this newsletter are those of the writers and are not necessarily the views of OFTP. OFTP believes that parents need to find the method that works for their particular family. OFTP does not espouse any one method of home education over another.

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Any editorial contributions, letters and advertising inquiries should be directed to the Editor at: OFTP c/o Wendy Wagner, 12 Bannock Crescent, Kanata, Ontario, K2K 2P8, or via e-mail at newsletter@ontariohomeschool.org

MEMBERSHIP INQUIRIES

To join OFTP or to renew your membership, send a cheque or money order for \$30.00 for one year or \$75.00 for 3 years payable to OFTP to: OFTP c/o Lisa Kondrat, 352 Dundas St. E, P.O. Box 1423, Waterdown, ON, L0R2H0 or via e-mail at membership@ontariohomeschool.org

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