



Working with OFTP

by Carlo Ricci

In my mind I sometimes like to make a distinction between a job and work. A job is something that you do in order to make money and it is usually something that you would not otherwise choose to do in your spare time. In contrast, work is something that you do that is fulfilling and that you do because it is meaningful to you and, you believe, to the world at large. In my case, I see what I do for the Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents (OFTP) as work that I feel is a calling. I engage in it voluntarily because I believe that it helps others and therefore contributes to making the world a better place. In this article I would like to extend my personal thanks to all of the people who work with the OFTP and to share with the community at large some of what I do and by extension some of what the OFTP does.



I think it is important to give the larger community a sense that many people volunteer many hours so that many people can benefit from our work. Most importantly, I want to encourage those who are working with OFTP to continue to do what they do because I am told often that our combined efforts are making a tremendous difference.

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In large part, what I do with the OFTP is lonely—what I mean by this is that even others within the OFTP executive often are not aware of what I or others are doing. For example, when someone calls me at home and asks for the help of the OFTP, I do what I need to do and most of the time no one else is cognizant of the situation. Some weeks I field between 5 to 10 calls and no one knows about them other than me. In some cases I need to seek the advice of others and so I post the dilemma and wait for the wisdom to filter through my inbox, but mostly the issues are clear enough that I can deal with it without appealing to the larger community of the OFTP for help.

What are some of the things that I am asked to deal with? In some cases it is a question from someone new to homeschooling and they just want to know what it is and how they move forward with their decision to homeschool. I have had callers confuse the OFTP with a type of schooling alternative in the sense that they want me to personally go to their home and homeschool their child or for me to send someone who will do this for them. I have had calls where what parents really want is to find a virtual school. In other words, they still want their children to be a part of public schooling but they want to do it from their home rather than have their children attend a physical institution. I have had people call who either have just started to homeschool or who have been homeschooling for awhile and just want support and a friendly ear to assure them that they are not alone.

As I mentioned earlier, some of the calls are fairly straight forward and require little intervention. However, there have been situations where I have had to intervene in a more formal way.

I have been to meetings with superintendents, principals, board officials and so on. In some cases people have been denied permission to homeschool and I needed to gently advise a superintendent of Policy/Program Memorandum No.131, for example. As an associate professor teaching in a fac-



ulty of education, graduate studies program (which means I interact with teachers, principals and so on who take the graduate courses), I can tell you that most of them know very little about homeschooling and that what they think they know is mostly unflattering; nevertheless, once we spend some

"Thanks for your help and sound advice especially in this difficult time for me."

time talking about homeschooling, their appreciation and respect for it increases dramatically. In fact, I have had former students contemplate and some actually start to homeschool their own children after realizing that it is an option and a wonderful option at that. Perhaps this would be a good time

to share some of the emails I have received after my interventions. Of course, to cite them all would be impossible so I will just offer a small sampling:

"Thanks for your help and sound advice especially in this difficult time for me."

"super, I will start the search! Thanks!"

"The principal has agreed to our proposal"

"Thanks a lot again for all of your on-going help"

"Carlo, thank you so much for your help. I have sent a copy to the board and let us hope that is the end of it all."

I have included these quotes not to be a braggart but to give you a sense of the type of work we do and the type of success we have. I have not gone through the whole list but just picked the first few that I could locate. From this small sampling you can see that in some cases I help those who want to homeschool, but also those who either want to school part-time or who are simply having a problem communicating with their schools.

I have also been asked to conduct workshops and more formal talks from a number of different organizations. I have been flown to Ottawa to talk at an alternative public school and to a homeschooling community; I have been asked to speak at the Early Years Center in Toronto and the crowd there were so inspired that they insisted that the coordinator ask me back; I have been asked to speak to local homeschool groups; unschooling and homeschooling conferences; academic conferences and so on. I feel fortunate that my formal job and my work blur and so sometimes it is hard to distinguish between the work I do for OFTP and the work I do for Nipissing University. Of course, I also write for OFTP.

In short, the work I do for

OFTP is very rewarding. It is great to theorize, but acting and changing the world (no matter how small a part we play) is very satisfying and fulfilling. The truth is that in this paper I have unfairly simplified the type of work that I do with OFTP because the truth is that what I do is as different as the number of people who have contacted me over the years. In part, this makes it even more motivating.

It often gets suggested to me that an individual is too insignificant to make a difference in the world. I could not disagree more. I truly believe that each of us can truly change the world and that this would require very little time on our part. For example, primarily I see myself as a child advocate. Unfortunately, children are the last acceptably oppressed group. In fact (as reported in the National Post), by a 6-3 margin, in 2004 the court upheld the 112-year-old Criminal Code defence -- known widely as the "spanking law" -- that allows parents and teachers to use "reasonable" force "by way of correction." First included in the Criminal Code in 1892, the section originally allowed the use of corrective force against wives, employees and prisoners, as well as children. Thankfully, wives, employees and prisoners are now spared; unfortunately, children are still not. In contrast, what I advocate for is unschooling and free schooling which are learner centered democratic approaches to childrearing. They are learner centered in that children decide what they learn, and it is democratic in the sense that children have a substantive voice in whatever community of which they are a part.

How we can make a difference can be summed up simply by Paul Goodman, a friend of, and source

of inspiration for, Ivan Illich. Goodman once said:

"Suppose you had the revolution you are talking and dreaming about. Suppose your side won, and you had the kind of society you wanted. How would you live, you personally, in that society? Start living that way now! What-



ever you would do then, do it now. When you run up against obstacles, people, or things that won't let you live that way, then begin to think about how to get over or around or under that obstacle, or how to push it out of the way, and your politics will be concrete and practical."

Similarly, Gandhi says "you must be the change you want to see in the world." So, if you live as if your side won, then by simple extension you have changed the world. Simply, by living that way you would be making a difference in the world because you live in the world and are a part of it—by transforming yourself, you are transforming the world. I find that it is a cop-out to say that I cannot make a difference, because the truth is that you can—we all can by just living differently. Consequently, if you treat young people in a learner centered democratic way consistent with the tenets of unschooling, then you are chang-

ing the world. So, to change the world all you need to do is treat the young people in your life as trustworthy human beings who are capable of making their own substantive choices that, in some cases, you may disagree with but that you need to consent to. Of course, this does not mean a free-for-all. With freedom comes responsibility. For example, you have a right not to be hit by me but you also have a responsibility not to hit me. When disagreements come up they need to be dealt with in a democratic way where all of the parties' voices are heard and respected.

In future issues of Home Rules, I would be interested in reading what other OFTP volunteers are doing to help the cause and I would like to invite your contributions and look forward to reading your thoughts and about your experiences.

Carlo Ricci currently teaches in the faculty of education's graduate program at Nipissing University and he founded and edits the online Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning (JUAL). He tries to incorporate the spirit of unschooling, democratic and learner centered principles in all of his classes. Everything of value that he has learned, he has learned outside of formal schooling. He has never taken a course in school connected to what he now teaches and writes about. He has taught in elementary and high school. He has also taught in undergraduate, teacher education programs and graduate programs. His personal schooling experience as a student and later as a teacher has inspired him to revolt against institutional schooling. He continues to heal from the wounds inflicted on him by formal schooling. He has two daughters ages 3 and 5 that he hopes will decide to unschool.

"The Universe: Yours to Discover" 2009 — International Year of Astronomy

Experience a Galileo Moment!

Four hundred years ago, Galileo Galilei made the first telescope observations of the planets and stars. In celebration of this leap in the science of astronomy, the United Nations has declared 2009 the International Year of Astronomy (IYA).

This makes it a very good year to participate in experiential and educational activities relating to both the science and wonder of the cosmos. Search the official Canadian IYA site for local events, such as planetarium presentations, kid-friendly astronomy talks, telescope nights organized by astronomy societies, and more. www.astronomy2009.ca

You might even want to organize and register your own event! Events that are designated as "Galileo Moments" qualify to distribute free AstroCards, which are not only collectible but also have a registration number that can be entered online to have your name sent into space by the Canadian Space Agency in 2010.

To help more people take an interest in astronomy and experience star-gazing, another project of the IYA is the Galileoscope, a high-quality, low-cost telescope kit being made available for US \$15 plus shipping. The Galileoscope site also includes some free downloadable teaching resources. www.galileoscope.org/gs/

If this is the year you get to look through a telescope for the very first time, you can download and fill out a First Telescopic Observation certificate, signed by the (U.S.) Astronomical League welcoming you to "our fascinating Universe!" www.astroleague.org/files/events/Telescope5B.pdf



Public domain image

NASA celebrates 50 years of space exploration and related technology

NASA turned 50 on October 1st, 2008. Here are some of its key moments of 1959:

February: Launch of the scientific satellite Vanguard 2 from Cape Canaveral, Florida, as part of the International Geophysical Year.

March: Pioneer 4 was sent to the Moon in a successful lunar flyby.

April: NASA unveiled the Mercury astronaut corps.

May: Two monkeys, Able and Baker, were launched aboard a missile that carried them to an altitude of 300 miles. They were recovered unharmed after the flight.

June: Scott Crossfield made the first unpowered glide flight in the X-15 aircraft, the first American plane to reach hypersonic flight.



"The X-15 missions provided important data on hypersonic air flow, aerodynamic heating, control and stability at hypersonic speeds, and piloting techniques needed for reentry. The successful program contributed to all future NASA space projects up to the Space Shuttle."

The entire timeline from the 1950's to the present can be found at www.nasa.gov/50th/home/

Canadian Space Agency Resources for Educators

The Canadian Space Agency is not very well prepared for 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy: its Kids, Youth and Student sections are blank, with "under construction" notices.

However, they do have many worthwhile resources in the *Educators* section. www.asc-csa.gc.ca

NASA Science for Kids

NASA's web site includes a section on Science for Kids. Explore its pages on The Universe to find interesting information on space, planets, stars and more; plus downloadable resources and activities such as making a star finder (constellation finder). <http://nasascience.nasa.gov/kids/the-universe>



Tomatoes in Space!



It's not too late to participate in the 2009 Tomatosphere Project! You can help the Canadian Space Agency find out what they need to know to support long-term human space missions such as establishing a base on the Moon and later going to Mars.

What would astronauts need if they were going to stay in space for a long, long time? Basically, life support: food, water, oxygen, and a way to get rid of the carbon dioxide they breathe out. One way to provide all of the above is with living plants.

But what are the effects of the space environment on the growth of plants? You can help the Canadian Space Agency find out!

Here's how the Tomatosphere research project works: you sign up to receive tomato seeds to germinate. You observe and record the germination process. You report your findings about the plants' growth and development. Scientists will use your data to compile it with the findings from other seeds grown by other children. They expect over 12,000 participants this year!

Some of the seeds are regular seeds that haven't been subjected to any unusual influences. These are the "control group" seeds, important to provide a baseline for comparison. Other seeds have been subjected to an environment that simulates what scientists expect to find on Mars. The simulation of the Mars atmosphere was conducted at the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. The scientists want to know whether the seeds will still grow well enough to provide life support for a long-term space mission. It wouldn't do to get out in space and then find out that the seeds won't germinate, or that the plants they produce are too weak to contribute properly to the mission, or that they get sick and spread their illness to other plants. The needs of long-term space stays are for a controlled environment, where as much as possible works according to plan. So it's important to conduct these experiments to find out how seeds react to different possible influences they might encounter.



The research is conducted as a "blind" experiment. That means you won't know which of the two groups of seeds you're growing is the control group until after the germination component of the experiment. That's part of the scientific method, to prevent any unintentional bias from creeping into the results. Both types of seeds are equally important to the project. A proper experiment can't be conducted without the baseline measurements of the control group of seeds.

Germinating seeds is a hands-on way to learn more about plants, their growth, and photosynthesis. The Tomatosphere Project also includes some additional science-related teaching modules linked to areas in the curriculum that include nutrition, energy, weather and environmental studies.



To find out more and sign up for the Tomatosphere project, visit www.tomatosphere.org.

Late reader unschooler found work at NASA

An American "crunchy con mommy and navy wife" wrote on her blog about what she's thinking as she looks into homeschooling:

"I have a friend who is really really smart. She worked for NASA, got a degree in some sort of engineering, and she was unschooled until she was ten (I think that is the age) She didn't know how to read until that point because she wasn't interested in it! Yet despite a very unconventional education, she is one of the smartest people I know. She is one of the many many success stories I've seen with homeschooling, and I'm confident that we'll be able to do this in our home too."

March 22 entry on <http://afreshlymilledlife.blogspot.com/>

Editor's note: I presume "crunchy con" means a conservative who is back-to-nature health conscious, not a convict with arthritis.

Green Planet

Meanwhile, back on our own planet, Earth Day is on April 22nd.

In 2010, Earth Day will celebrate its 40th anniversary. In preparation for this milestone, Earth Day Network is launching a Green Generation campaign:

www.earthday.net

Earth Day Canada has info on local events: www.earthday.ca



EcoKids has environmental resources for kids and teachers: www.ecokids.ca

Homeschooling remains illegal in Germany

For the last decade, dozens of German families have been involved in court cases for educating their children at home. Occasionally, families have been able to continue to homeschool after paying fines, or simply because the local authorities choose to ignore them, but that is the exception rather than the rule. In most cases, they have to pay fines that can be thousands of dollars, and have even had to flee the country to avoid losing custody of their children. In some families, the mother and children leave the country to continue homeschooling while the father remains in Germany to keep the job that provides for their families. Thus the choice is sometimes to be separated and exiled or stop homeschooling. According to the Home School Legal Defense Association, some homeschooling mothers and fathers who have remained in Germany have "been imprisoned, had their bank accounts confiscated, their wages garnished, or their businesses ruined by the actions of their local government."



A recent case (Konrad v. Germany) is an example of the difficulty encountered. The family appealed to the European Court of Human Rights under the European Convention on Human Rights, but the Court refused to hear the case. The Court explained its rejection by saying that although it agreed that homeschooling was an exercise of protected parental liberties, these liberties were overridden by concerns raised by the lower courts that homeschooling could create a "parallel society."

German homeschool leaders agree that their right to homeschool will not be won through the courts but only through a change in legislation. To that end, they need influential German experts to provide credible research and favourable opinions. They also need the international community to apply political pressure.

British concerns about home education as a potential cover for abuse

An estimated 55,000 children in Great Britain are either home-schooled or school drop-outs. There is currently no required registration of homeschoolers and the responsibility for a child's home education rests solely with the parents. School boards are not required to monitor home-schooling nor do they have any authority to inspect the quality of the learning. Parents are not required to answer any questions about what they are teaching.

All this may soon change, however. In response to the concern expressed by local authorities and children's charities that these children might be mistreated without detection, the Children's Minister, Baroness Delyth Morgan, has ordered a review of the situation.

Led by a former director of children's services named Mr. Badman (sic), the Elective Home Education Review will investigate how home education is supported and monitored and how concerns about the welfare and education of a child are dealt with. In particular, it will "consider what evidence there is to support claims that home education could be used as a 'cover' for child abuse such as neglect, forced marriage, sexual exploitation or domestic servitude."

Said the Minister: "Parents are able, quite rightly, to choose whether they want to educate children at home, and a very small number do. I'm sure, the vast majority do a good job. However, there are concerns that some children are not receiving the education they need. And in some extreme cases, home education could be used as a cover for abuse. We cannot allow this to happen and are committed to doing all we can to help ensure children are safe, wherever they are educated."

These comments have aroused a great deal of indignation among the British homeschooling community, and have sparked reactions on the Canadian online discussion forums as well.

The options being considered under the review include tighter monitoring.

Said Mr. Badman: "Legislation affords every parent the right to choose to educate their child at home but with those rights go responsibilities, not least being to secure a suitable education. By the same token, local authorities are charged with ensuring that all children are safe, well and receiving an education that is both enjoyable and allows for the expression of all aptitudes and abilities."

Zurich restricts homeschooling to state-licensed teachers

The Canton of Zurich, in Switzerland, is about to put restrictions on the right to homeschool. Whereas homeschoolers in the area used to enjoy relative freedom, with only an occasional visit from the authorities, by summer 2009 only parents who have a teacher's certificate will be allowed to educate their children at home.

An estimated fifty families are affected. So far, eight of these families have announced that they will resist the legislation. They face fines of up to 5000 swiss francs (around \$5290 Canadian) and possible citations for disobedience of official orders. An appeal of the legislation has been filed.

The Code Civile Suisse of 1907 states that parents are responsible for seeing to a child's education and to his/her physical, intellectual and moral well-being. But each canton interprets the law for its own area. Homeschooling is already outlawed outright in two cantons, and now Zurich is imposing the new restriction.

Interpreting the word "education" in Kenya's laws

Kenya's Constitution and Children's Act of 2001 give parents the right to provide education for their children. However, the definition of "education" in the Education Act refers to education in a school setting. Ministry of Education officials therefore say that homeschooling is illegal.

A government task force is currently reviewing the Education Act, and Kenyan homeschoolers have formally requested that they be included in the process as stakeholders. They have not yet received a response and it is unclear whether homeschooling will be explicitly accommodated in the new wording.

Kenya's Constitution is also being revised. The draft so far allows parents to set up independent schools, but because these schools would be regulated, the option would restrict parental choice.

Spring Home Education Conferences in Ontario

The 17th Annual KW Christian Home Educators' Conference

April 4, 2009 (Saturday)
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Rockway Mennonite Collegiate,
110 Doon Rd., Kitchener, Ontario
www.kwchea.ca/html/conference.html

19th Annual RVHEA Homeschooling Conference

Rideau Valley Home Educators' Association (RVHEA)
April 18, 2008 (Saturday)
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Kanata Baptist Church
465 Hazeldean Road, Kanata, Ontario
Contact: Mary-Ellen Datema - 613-256-8073
Email: conference@rvhea.org
www.rvhea.org

TEACH New and Used Curriculum Fair

June 12, 2009
6:00pm to 9:30pm
Mohawk College Campus
411 Elgin St, Brantford, Ontario
Contact: Brenda Haviland - 519-443-4558
Used Tables: 7harts@sentex.net

Ontario Christian Home Educators Connection (OCHEC) Convention 2009

April 24th and 25th, 2009 (Fri.-Sat.)
Hamilton Convention Centre
1 Summers Lane, Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y2
(905) 546-3000
www.ochec.org/Conv2009.php

15th Annual Parents Guide Conference

May 30, 2009 (Saturday)
Barrie Free Methodist Church
284 Cundles Rd. E., Barrie, ON
(entrance off of Livingstone Street E)
parentsguideconf@hotmail.com
Mailing Address:
Parents Guide
P.O. Box 21072
Barrie, ON L4M 6J1
www.parentsguideconf.org

Shine with Unschooling conference

We Shine in 2009!
June 17 - 21, 2009
Crowne Plaza Fallsview, Niagara Falls, Ontario
1-800-263-7135
<http://weshineconference.blogspot.com/>

Books on Homeschooling through High School

The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education

by *Grace Llewellyn*

Publisher: Lowry House Pub; Rev Exp edition
(September 1998)

ISBN-10: 0962959170

ISBN-13: 978-0962959172

Real Lives: Eleven Teenagers Who Don't Go to School Tell Their Own Stories

by *Grace Llewellyn*

Publisher: Lowry House Pub;

2 edition (Jul 31 2005)

ISBN-10: 096295912X

ISBN-13: 978-0962959127

Homeschoolers' College Admissions Handbook: Preparing Your 12- to 18-Year-Old for a Smooth Transition

by *Cafi Cohen*

Publisher: Three Rivers Press;

illustrated edition (December 7, 2000)

ISBN-10: 0761527540

ISBN-13: 978-0761527541

And What About College?: How Homeschooling Leads to Admissions to the Best Colleges & Universities

by *Cafi Cohen*

Publisher: Holt Associates

(May 1, 2000)

ISBN-10: 0913677116

ISBN-13: 978-0913677117

Homeschooling: The Teen Years: Your Complete Guide to Successfully Homeschooling the 13- to 18- Year-Old

by *Cafi Cohen*

and *Janie Levine Hellyer*

Publisher: Prima Publishing

(May 11, 2000)

ISBN-10: 0761520937

ISBN-13: 978-0761520931

The High School Handbook: Junior and Senior High School at Home

by *Mary Schofield*

Publisher: Christian Home Educators Pr;
6th edition (September 1997)

ISBN-10: 0966093704

ISBN-13: 978-0966093704

Senior High: A Home-Designed Form+U+La

by *Barbara Edtl Shelton*

Publisher: Homeschool Seminars & Publications;
3rd edition (1999)

ISBN-10: 1887639098

ISBN-13: 978-1887639095

From Homeschool to College and Work: Turning Your Homeschooled Experiences into College and Job Portfolios

by *Alison McKee*

Publisher: Bittersweet House;

3rd edition (January 1, 2008)

ISBN-10: 0965780635

ISBN-13: 978-0965780636

Homeschooling High School: Planning Ahead for College Admission

by *Jeanne Gowen Dennis*

Publisher: Emerald Books;

2 Rev Updated edition (April 1, 2004)

ISBN-10: 1932096116

ISBN-13: 978-1932096118

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Homeschool Campout

Each year (since 1987!), homeschoolers (local: Kingston, Gananoque, Lansdowne and North Grenville, and not so local: Welland, Brantford and Mississauga) have met on a weekend in late summer at Charleston Lake Provincial Park, just north of the village of Lansdowne. This year the Campout will be Aug. 14-16. (alternate dates if sites are not available is Aug.21-23; we will know for sure by the first week of May)

Families set up their campers or tents on one of three connected group campsites and everyone brings all the equipment, food, etc. they'll need to camp for 2 or 3 days. Some families, who aren't so partial to the camping life, just come for the day on Saturday. The weekend is busy with soccer and parachute games, touch football, trail walks and swims at the beach. We have songs, even anthems, around the campfire, expert sand castle building, trivia games, facepainting, henna tattoos and scavenger hunts. We have had crafts like tie dying, friendship bracelets, wind-socks, playdough and monster soap bubbles. And always, there are lots of opportunities to connect with fellow homeschooling families.

There is a group site contribution fee of \$10.00 per family per night which is required with your registration form, as well as the additional park fees, which are to be paid at the front gate of the park

when you arrive. If you are interested in joining us just for the day or for an overnight camping trip, email Kathy Baker at: gkbaker@1000island.net and the Campout info and registration form will be mailed/emailed out to you.

It may seem early to be planning a summer camping trip, but **we must book with the Park in the first week of May**. Please be aware that we

register our campers on a first come first served basis and we book up fast! So email as soon as possible. Once booked, we do have a waiting list, in case a spot opens because of a cancellation.

Please note, we have a "no dogs" policy at this campout.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call or email us:



Kathy Baker
2092 Blue Mountain Road
RR4
Lansdowne, Ontario
K0E 1L0
(613) 659-3050
gkbaker@1000island.net

Michelle Stein
1011 Pelton Road
RR3
Kemptonville, Ontario
K0G 1J0
(613) 258-3085
mm.stein@sympatico.ca

Blog it, Tweet it, Talk it Up!

- a quick word from Marian Buchanan

I hope Carlo's article has inspired you to want to do whatever you can for OFTP too. Obviously, Carlo's work is among the most important, and we always need more volunteers with good communication skills to serve as liaisons. We also need to pass the torch every so often in terms of administrative positions like the newsletter editor, which is an urgent need right now.

But even contributions that might seem small can help and are most welcome. For example, do you



Let everyone know how great the OFTP is, how it has helped you personally or how it helps families whose homeschooling is being thwarted by school boards, principals or Children's Aid workers. For

have a blog, Facebook profile or Twitter account? Then you can help OFTP by talking us up on it!

that alone, OFTP is worth supporting. So let your friends and followers know!

Tweet and blog also about the educator's discounts OFTP members get, the topics of discussion on our e-lists, and of course the interesting news and articles in this newsletter.

It's the 21st century version of word-of-mouth — the best kind of "advertising" there is! So if you're tweeting, blogging, or listing your interests on social media profiles, slip in a good word for the OFTP!

Forest of Reading®

The Ontario Library Association offers its *Forest of Reading®* program to encourage people of all ages in their love of reading. All Ontarians are invited to participate via their local public or school library. More than 250,000 readers across Ontario participate each year. There is still time to participate in 2009: just sign up at your local library, read some of the books in the program, and cast your vote by **April 23rd**.



Awards Reading Programs are designed for various age ranges as follows:

- Blue Spruce™ -primary-grade 2 (picture books)
- Silver Birch® -grades 3-6 (fiction, non-fiction)
- Silver Birch Express™ -grades 3-4 (fiction, non-fiction)
- Red Maple™ -grades 7-8 (fiction, non-fiction)
- White Pine™ -high school (fiction)
- Le Prix Tamarack™ -grades 3-6 (french fiction, non-fiction)
- Golden Oak™ -adults learning to read; ESL (fiction)
- Evergreen™ -adults of any age (fiction)

Find out more about this year's nominated books at www.accessola.com/forest2009/



The culmination of the *Forest of Reading®* program is the *Festival of Trees*, an amazing two-day event of activities for kids and awards for authors.

Held at Toronto's Harbourfront and attended by more than 6,500 young readers ranging in age from 6 to 15, the two-day festival is currently Canada's largest literary event for young readers.

May 13th: Blue Spruce, Red Maple and White Pine

May 14th: Silver Birch Fiction, Non-Fiction and Express

This year is shaping up to be a treat with dozens of great authors already confirmed and more to come.

Aside from the Awards Ceremonies and workshops with the authors, there will also be illustrators, live music, and many other fun and exciting activities:



- Hockey Hall Of Fame installation including top shot hockey game and a mini hockey rink, NHL trophies and fun historic display cases
- Toronto Fire, Toronto Fire Trucks
- Henna Painting
- Face Painting
- Book Making installation
- *Mysterion The Mind Reader*
www.mysterionthemindreader.com
- Bouncy Castles and Obstacle Courses
- Bug Collection from John Powers - *The Incredible Bug Collector*
- Halton Bird Conservatory bringing some of its beautiful birds
- Button Making Exhibit
- Cawthra Rocks Band
- Toronto Zoo bringing bug collection, Winston The Skunk and some of their Animal Touch Tables
- Fortune Tellers to predict the Weird & Wonderful
- Boat Tours
- Blue Spruce art installation
- Conscious Soles
- Breakdancing Crew



If you haven't been to the festival before, check out these photos and videos from previous years: http://accessola.com/ola/bins/content_page.asp?cid=92-2718

The Festival Tickets are now on sale through Harbourfront. All tickets must be purchased on-line. Phone, mail or faxed-in orders will not be accepted. www.harbourfrontcentre.com/whatson/today.cfm?id=1049

Awards Ceremony hosts include Jackie, Ryan and Mark of TVO Kids, as well as Rob Dyer of Skate4Cancer.com. A contest is being held for hosting the White Pine Awards Ceremony:

<http://bibliocommons.com/forest/contests/emcee-white-pine-awards>



Tickets are \$13 per person per ceremony (taxes included and lunch not included). The ticket price includes the ceremony, the programming, and the entertainment. The maximum number of tickets allowed for purchase is 200. The Festival comes to a close at 2pm each day, so bus pick-ups can be scheduled for between 2pm and 2:30pm.

Some of the ceremonies are already sold out, so you might want to buy now before it's too late!



Help!!! We're still looking for someone to take on the role of OFTP's **newsletter editor**! I'm filling in temporarily but I really don't have the spare time, and I need a replacement ASAP!! I'd love to do it if I *did* have time, because it's actually **lots of fun**! If you have an interest and the only thing stopping you is you don't think you'll know how, don't worry: I will help you get started and show you the ropes.

You don't even need professional desktop publishing software like Adobe InDesign (although of course, if you do have it, that makes it easier), you can also do this with OpenOffice, an open source program that is totally free, which you can download from openoffice.org.

To volunteer or ask questions, contact me at newsletter@ontariohomeschool.org.

We could also use a **discussion coordinator** on the exec list. Without one, questions sometimes get lost in the shuffle and discussions are sometimes left hanging without a decision.

I think that's why we don't have any clear conference plans, in spite of Marina offering to serve again in 2009 as **conference coordinator**. The issue was brought up that maybe it shouldn't always be in the Toronto area, but no one stepped forward for any other region. Without a discussion coordinator to keep the decision-making process moving, there was no decision made either way, so we missed our opportunity to have it anywhere this year.

Do you think it would have been better to have

it in Toronto again than not at all? Too late for a 2009 conference, obviously, but if we want to host one in 2010 we need to start making decisions about it now! (Some things need to be done quite in advance.) I invite you to share your own perspective on what OFTP should do about conferences. Email or call or post on the e-lists to let the rest of us know which of these options you think is best:

- Gratefully accept as coordinator whoever volunteers, and hold the conference wherever they are, even if it means it's always in the same region.
- Rotate the opportunity between regions and if no one volunteers for a region when it's their turn, just not hold it that year.
- Stop hosting our own conferences and focus on co-sponsoring those of local support groups in accordance with our regional conference funding policy. ontariohomeschool.org/regionalconferences.html
- [other — something I haven't thought of]

Something to keep in mind about the benefits OFTP offers you as a member, is that it's only through its volunteers that OFTP can be what it is and do what it does. So if you want OFTP to continue giving you conferences and newsletters and help when you need it, please think about what you might be able to give back (whether it's taking an administrative torch when it needs to be passed, or just spreading the word about how great the OFTP is so that others can join and volunteer). Thanks!

- Marian Buchanan

Submission Guidelines and deadlines

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 home-schooling; 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). Call the hotline to be given the current editor's address.

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

*Send us your drawings, photographs, stories, reviews and poetry.
Would you like to write an article? Go for it!
We are always looking for submissions.*

OFTP e-Mail Lists (For Members Only)

OFTP Exec List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OFTPEXEC/>

This list is for discussing and making decisions about OFTP operations, initiatives, official responses and policies. Decisions are made by consensus. Any OFTP member can (and is welcome to) become part of OFTP's decision-making body by joining the exec list.

OFTP General List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oftp/>

This list is for discussing and sharing ideas and information about homeschooling. Discussions may include daily homeschooling issues, passing along articles or conference information, product reviews and questions about legalities.

OFTP Chat List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oftpchat/>

This list is for talking about anything that would be considered "off topic" on the other OFTP lists, and for socializing with fellow OFTP members.

Other OFTP lists

<http://ontariohomeschool.org/oftpgroups.html>

FOPE (francophone list), OFTPKids, OFTPTeens, oftpwebsite, etc.

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' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 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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Contact Info

GENERAL INQUIRIES/ADMINISTRATION

enquiries@ontariohomeschool.org
416-410-5218 or 1-800-704-0448

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Any editorial contributions, letters and advertising inquiries should be directed to the Editor at:

newsletter@ontariohomeschool.org

MEMBERSHIP INQUIRIES

membership@ontariohomeschool.org

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 Glenda Willemsma,
1038 Road 3 West, R.R.#2,
Kingsville, ON, N9Y 2E5

If your e-mail address and/or mailing address has changed, please notify the Membership Secretary immediately.