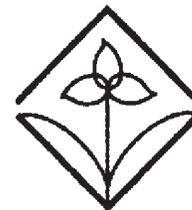


Home Rules

YOU CAN EDUCATE YOUR CHILD AT HOME!



OFTP

AN ATTEMPT TO PROVOKE: SHOULD ALL FORMS OF HOMESCHOOLING BE EQUALLY VALUED?

By Carlo Ricci

Margaret Wells, who teaches a course to teacher candidates at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, contacted OFTP and asked if there was someone available to speak about homeschooling on April 11, 2007. Several of us volunteered and in the end it was agreed that I would do it. I am pleased to report that all went very well. The talk was initially scheduled to run for an hour and in the end lasted for nearly two. After the talk, the students came up to me for more sharing and I have received several follow up emails from those in attendance. Much of the time was spent talking with them and not at them and I thoroughly enjoyed engaging with their questions. It is clearly a wonderful group.

Since the talk and dialogue went for so long, I cannot share with you all of the details, but what I will do is share with you a very brief and limited overview and then I hope to present you with a point of discussion that the community I spoke to received well and were pleased about, but that some of you may find a point of contention. In short, I am interested in being provocative and to generate some discussion around the issue I will describe in more detail below.

First, this is my attempt at sharing with you the overview: I started by sharing with them some theory, practice and my personal experience. I talked about people's motivation for homeschooling and I suggested that some theorists suggest that there are two main categories; namely, those who have decided to homeschool for religious reasons and those who have decided to homeschool for pedagogical reasons. I shared with them that in my case, it will be for pedagogical reasons. I shared with them that, as with all communities, homeschoolers are not a homogeneous group. We do share some complex commonalities but there are also some real differences. We talked about many of what I would consider myths. Specifically, the lack of socialization, endlessly watching television, playing video games and so on. I problematized the latter two for them and shared how the belief that these activities are inherently dangerous is not as conclusive as some believe...and so on.

Now, let me share the point that I think some of you may find provocative. I shared with them that my personal motivation for embracing the community is that I believe that children are among the last group whose oppression is accepted (for more on this you can read Holt or Gatto). So, my battle is to help end this oppression. My battle is to ensure that children have a more learner centered, democratic space. By learner centered I mean that children have the right to choose their own curriculum and learning, and by democratic I mean that children have the right to control

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

ONGOING AND NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFTP NEEDS YOUR HELP!

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 July 20, 2007.**

CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS

We would like to hold a *Diversity In Education* conference in 2007. But we can't do it without your help!

We need a conference coordinator and a committee of volunteers to step up and help make a conference happen.

No experience is necessary. Just a willingness to help.

To volunteer, contact conference@ontariohomeschool.org

No volunteers means no conference!

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 July, August and September. Please help out - It's easy!**

2007 CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

PARENTS GUIDE HOME SCHOOL CONFERENCE

Saturday June 2, 2007

Barrie Free Methodist Church, 284 Cundles Rd. E., Barrie, ON

<http://www.parentsguideconf.org>

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>

TEACH NEW AND USED CURRICULUM FAIR

Friday June 8, 2007, 6:00pm to 9:30pm

Mohawk College Campus, Brantford, ON

Contact: Brenda Haviland - 519-443-4558 or email 6harts@sentex.net

CORRECTIONS

The website link for the Special Needs article in the last Home Rules should have read:

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

The website link for the UCanDoIt! article should have read:

<http://www.u-can-do-it.ca/projects.html>

The editor of *Home Rules* regrets the errors.

To repeat what others have said, requires education, to challenge it, requires brains.

~Mary Pettibone Poole

(cont. from page 1)

their own space. I believe that children are capable of this and I have spent too much time around children who have had the opportunity to embrace a learner centered democratic approach to be convinced otherwise.

At this point I will share one of many examples of how I continue to learn from my mistakes and how I still need to be continually reminded of how true this is.

When my now four-year-old was much younger, although her environment has always been and continues to be learner centered and democratic in the way that I described, there were (and still are) areas where I believe we still have to improve. The example I am going to share is around food.

We over-parented in that area to the point where I now look back and think about how unnecessary we behaved, given how well things have worked out when we stopped over-parenting. In our home we tried to make available to my daughter only "healthy" foods and allow her to have only "healthy" foods. What we noticed was that when my daughter spent time at my parents' home she did not have this restriction. In my parents' home food is food and a chocolate and a piece of broccoli are equally available.

What we found, not surprising now, was in our home and in our presence our daughter craved and wanted less healthy food over healthy food much more often; whereas in my parents' home this would not be an issue. I thought about it and I concluded that what we were inadvertently doing was that we were working against ourselves. We created a hierarchy of foods: there was what was allowed and the forbidden, and of course the forbidden was too tempting to pass up. So ultimately, we abandoned our hierarchy and have never looked back since.

Sometimes my children will choose less healthy foods but more often they

will choose healthier options. To my surprise still, believe it or not they often turn down chocolate and ask for broccoli.

On these issues and many others I continue to learn from my grade 4 schooled mother and my grade 8 schooled father: real life examples for how schooling and education are not the same thing. Although, I consider myself to be a very capable parent, admittedly, there are many instances where my children are right and I am wrong. I think this ability to recognize that is what makes me a better parent.

So, now I want to share my point of provocation: again, I shared with the OISE community that my battle is to end oppression and that I have great respect and admiration for free schools, even though I prefer unschooling. I told them bluntly in my talk and then the issue arose again in the form of a question about whether I believed that we should do away with schools altogether and have everyone homeschool? Although, I do not support mainstream schooling, I believe that free schools do have a place. Furthermore, I would find it hard to disagree with those who argue that not all homes are safe or best for children.

In short, my statement that I believe some may find provocative is the following: I am battling against child oppression and I would defend children against this oppression whether it is occurring in a school or in a home. The students really seemed to respect this position and I believe it allowed them to embrace the concept of homeschooling in a more open way. I am curious to hear your thoughts on this and I looking forward to continuing the dialogue.

Ultimately, I ended the session by reminding the community that schooling and education are not the same things.

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

CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD

Where: Oshawa Civic Stadium
99 Thornton Rd. Oshawa, ON

When: Monday June 25, 2007, rain or shine

Fee: \$10.00 per participant (family maximum \$35.00)

Payment must accompany registration, no refunds will be given and **no post dated cheques will be accepted.**

This event fills quickly please register early (max. 300 participants). Only homeschooled children may participate and they must be at least 4 years old as of September 1, 2006. All participating families **MUST** have one adult volunteering to work an event or to sheperd a group of younger participants.

Due to this event growing each year we will only accept registration for those within a 100km radius from the stadium unless you have participated in previous years.

To request a registration form contact Sheila at 905 438 0771 or 905 259 1697 or email slessard81@hotmail.com

**When you make the
finding yourself -
even if you are the
last person on Earth
to see the light -
you will never
forget it.**

~Carl Sagan

DEALING WITH LEARNING DISORDERS

by Donna Fawcett, author of *Thriving in the Home School*

My husband and I came to our home schooling decision in an unusual way. We were first introduced to the idea by a good friend. After consulting our family physician, we were sold on the idea. Why? Because we are the parents of children with physical and learning disabilities.

At one time the common belief was that home teaching was fine for the “normal” child but children with physical, mental or learning problems needed to be dealt with in the system. After all, where would parents get the resources to properly teach these children? I was grateful for my doctor’s endorsement and encouragement. He offered to compose a letter to the Board of Education if I faced any challenges. Our youngest daughter’s hearing specialist echoed the recommendation stating that home teaching children with Central Auditory Processing Disorder seems to be the best way to educate them properly.

So we started onto our home educating path with little more than basic text books, two doctors’ blessings and our own deep love for our children. Our oldest daughter suffered with severe asthma and we simply rearranged her day around this debilitating disorder. As time went on, we discovered that her asthma attacks were provoked by dairy intake—something we wouldn’t have observed had she remained in the system. She is now asthma free with an excellent education as a bonus.

Our middle daughter suffered from epilepsy. Her seizures had robbed her of the ability to retain information. We couldn’t adequately monitor her in the education system and in all fairness to the teachers they had thirty other children to deal with so they couldn’t do an proper job of monitoring her either. Within two years we discovered a misaligned vertebra in her neck. Through constant interaction

we became aware of her lopsided gait and the strange way she tipped her head. A series of chiropractic appointments brought the seizures to a halt but we still had to work at helping her regain what she had lost. We allowed her to choose the order of her classes and discovered that she needed regular breaks in order to remember what she learned—a practice that couldn’t have worked in a classroom setting. We gave her ear phones to keep out sound distractions that broke her concentration. She likely wouldn’t have retained enough information to



qualify for the Board of Governor scholarship she received in university had she stayed in the system because we probably wouldn’t have discovered the misaligned vertebra. Nor would we have been able to help her catch up to her peers.

Our youngest daughter was born with a shocked immune system. This disorder had us running to the hospital emergency room often. It became the underlying cause for Central Auditory Processing Disorder—a hearing impairment that doesn’t allow the child to hear all that is said. CAPD children typically fail to understand phonics and reading because they can’t absorb the complete sound that letters or letter combinations make. Attention span is severely limited and they can’t process lists of instructions. For us, that meant focusing on sound in small bites.

She too wore ear phones to allow her to concentrate. We began communication by touching her first and forcing her to focus on our words. We kept instructions brief and enunciated clearly. She also received an academic scholarship in university and reads and writes clearly. According to our physician, she has gone well beyond the boundaries of most children with CAPD—something that we can only attribute to home teaching. All three daughters received math and English exemptions for their first year of university along with their scholarships.

Whatever the struggles you face with your child know this: no one will ever care or understand your child quite like you do. While the education system is doing its best to offer alternative learning styles to children with disabilities you can be assured that they can not tailor-make an education to each child like the home school parent can. They will not care about your child like you do. They cannot see your child through the eyes of a parent like you do. If you are feeling discouraged or overwhelmed please remember the words of a veteran home teacher of children with medical and learning struggles: you *will* accomplish the task of educating and while it may not be all that you wish for your child, it will be more than our overloaded education system can offer. Because you offer one extra ingredient that can’t be found elsewhere—the incredible love of an involved parent.

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/author/donna or email her at hometaughtfawcetts@hotmail.com.

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**.

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.

INTERESTING LINKS



<http://www.AccentonSkills.com>

Wanna be a REAL inventor? If you are a student in grades 6 - 12 you might want to visit the website to join their Summer Inventing Workshops.

<http://www.msawhiteshell.com>

Manitoba Science Academy is offering a six-week (in-house) program for scientifically gifted high school students (Grade 10-12). The program provides placement for students on research projects with professional scientists. For more information visit the website.

<http://www.eol.org/home.html>

The Encyclopedia of Life is a really cool website that should be partially online by mid-2008. In the meantime you can view demonstration pages, a preview video and some other information about the project. You can also read an article about the project at <http://tinyurl.com/yuxvco>

<http://tinyurl.com/3y7aeh>

This website shows a LEGO Periodic Table of Elements. Cool!

<http://www.hhmi.org/catalog/main?action=home>

Biology lectures from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Lots of free lectures and some labs on CD's.

<http://www.curriki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/WebHome>

Our mission is to improve education

around the world by empowering teachers, students and parents with user-created, open source curricula, and it's all free! We believe that access to knowledge and learning tools is a basic right of every child. Our goal is to make curricula and learning resources available to everyone.

<http://i-evolved.blogspot.com/>

The Evolved Homeschooler blog has links to science and evolution resources.

<http://www.OnlyOneMoreBook.com>

Through this podcast and its website, there is a lively, interactive community linking children's book authors, illustrators, readers (parents and children) and publishers. Busy parents and educators can now discover great read-aloud children's books while they are busy doing the many tasks that would otherwise rob them of the opportunity to research great children's books in more traditional ways.

<http://www.usc-canada.org>

The Seed Map is a teaching and advocacy tool designed to show the state of global agro-biodiversity today. The map identifies key threats to the world's seed and biodiversity systems, and highlights regions where peoples' movements are fighting to protect biodiversity – and winning! When you order a Seed Map you get an easy to understand, full-size (26"x39") world map as well as access to an interactive website*, and a CD* of that website for ease of reference. The Seed Map and associated materials are free,

however for orders within North America and Europe payment for postage is required. (\$10)

<http://www.albertatomorrow.ca>

Students will explore the future effects of land use to Alberta's wildlife, ecosystem services, and natural resource production. There are teacher guides and student activity sheets for Alberta curriculum: grade 7 science unit "Interactions and Ecosystems", junior high environmental and outdoor education, grade 9 social studies unit "Economic Systems in Canada and the United States", and grade 11 biology unit "The Biosphere". Teacher guides are available at <http://www.albertatomorrow.ca/teachers/teacher1.htm>

<http://blog.green-street.ca>

This is an environmental blog for educators. Co-authored by teachers across Canada, the blog will give tangible, ready-to-use ideas for teachers to develop student environmental sustainability awareness.

<http://www.castlequaybooks.com>

The Cardboard Shack Beneath The Bridge: Helping Children Understand Homelessness, is written and illustrated by Tim Huff and lays the groundwork for parents and teachers to start talking with children about homelessness.

<http://tinyurl.com/2rv93q>

Quizam Capturing Increasing Home Schooling Trend in North Bay Ontario

FIRE SAFETY FOR ALL

by Yvon Dionne

PLANNING FOR PUBLIC FIRE SAFETY PROGRAMS

Municipalities in Ontario have a legislated mandate under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act (FPPA) to provide fire safety and certain components of fire prevention through public education. The purpose of fire and life safety codes and regulations is to establish **minimum** requirements that will provide a reasonable degree of safety from fire and other life safety hazards encountered in buildings and structures. Throughout history, there have been many fire disasters that have influenced these requirements. The following are just a few:

1825 - Great Miramichi Fire breaks out in a hot, dry summer - Miramichi, New Brunswick - 200-500 killed

February 3, 1916 - Parliament buildings are destroyed by fire.

July 29, 1916 - Forest fire ignited by lightning destroys towns of Cochrane, Ontario and Matheson, Ontario - 233 killed

January 9, 1927 - Laurier Palace Theatre Fire Montréal, Québec - 77 killed

The Great Fire of London, 1666

Fire started on September 2, 1666 and within 5 days destroyed all of old (medieval) London.

An area of 1½ miles by ½ mile burned to the ground. 13,200 houses were destroyed and 87 churches, including St. Paul's Cathedral.

In all this destruction, it is amazing that only six people are definitely known to have been killed. However, it seems likely that the actual death toll was much higher.¹

Fire fatalities in Ontario per million population between 1997 and 2003 are:

1997-13.4

1998-11.6

1999-10

2000-8.5

2001-10

2002-7

2003-8.9



The fire death rate in Ontario has experienced a 33% decline from 1997 to 2003.³

Locally here in Tecumseh the last fire death occurred in 1986 when an elderly woman died of smoke inhalation in a structure fire.

The Tecumseh Fire/Rescue Services is currently involved in fire prevention inspections, code enforcement and public education programs. Current public initiatives include:

- ❖ The "Learn Not to Burn Program", which is currently available in our local elementary schools and supported by fire department personnel.
- ❖ Firefighters target specific grades each year and visit all classrooms of the targeted grade 2's during Fire Prevention Week with information on smoke alarms, escape planning and fire safety. Firefighters will also bring to the grade 2's that year's fire prevention theme.
- ❖ The Children's Safety Village of Windsor and Essex County sponsored by the Rotary Club of Windsor and Essex County has proven to be a valuable asset for

our community with all 10 elementary schools utilizing the Village Program. During these sessions, students are instructed in various aspects of fire safety in the home. Fire Programs are aimed at students in grades 1, 3 and 5. The Children's Safety Village also encourages other activities for community groups such as Kids Day International, Annual Safety Awareness Walk and holiday events.

- ❖ Smoke alarm program. The department is currently involved in a smoke alarm program, which includes checking the residences smoke alarms during an incident. The responding units will not leave the scene without first installing a working smoke detector for those people who are unable to purchase one. Some of our local service groups and clubs have supported the Smoke Alarm program through donations and by informing the Fire Prevention Division of citizens in need. In the case of the elderly Suppression will send a crew out to install a smoke detector for Prevention.
- ❖ We also host fire station tours by many different groups young and old. Tours will include fire and life safety presentations, familiarization with equipment, apparatus and handing out Fire Prevention materials.
- ❖ Public safety announcements. The two local print media have cooperated in assisting Fire Prevention with public education articles and messages on current issues. Recent articles have been published pertaining to open-air burning, emergency preparedness, address signage and the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning.

(cont. on page 7)

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- ❖ Tecumseh Fire and Rescue along with other county departments in the county, is promoting The Arson Prevention Program for Children (TAPP-C). This program will identify children who are at risk setting fires and will make appropriate education and counseling available to them and their families.
- ❖ Risk Watch is being used in all of our elementary schools both English and French. Risk Watch is a school-based injury prevention program for children. This program was developed by the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA). This program teaches children the skills needed to make positive choices concerning their safety with respect to the following: motor vehicle safety, fire and burn prevention, choking, suffocation, and strangulation prevention, bike and pedestrian safety, falls prevention, firearms injury prevention, poisoning prevention, and water safety.

The fire department is very active in promoting fire safety in schools by working with the schools to provide regular visits during the year. This year the department aided the local grade schools in the evacuation fire drills conducted as part of a province wide fire drill initiative.

As mentioned earlier, Municipalities have a legislated responsibility under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act (FPPA) to provide public education with respect to fire safety and certain components of fire prevention. Conducting a simplified risk assessment is the first step towards compliance with these requirements and is intended to identify information required by a municipality to make informed decisions about the programs in addition, activities necessary to effectively manage the community fire risk based upon local needs and circumstances.⁴

The fire service in Canada overall has done an excellent job in delivering fire

and life safety programs to our children in traditional schools. Where we have failed in my opinion, is in our ability to reach those students that are being home schooled and to a lesser degree students attending private or church run schools. The Province of Ontario has according to the Ontario Federation of Independent Schools 800 private schools in the province and that 110,000 students are attending private schools across Canada.⁵

Here in Tecumseh we have four private schools, Lakeview Montessori, Acedemie Ste. Cecile International, An-Noor Islamic and Cavalry United church. These schools have a combined student population of approximately 400 students.

Our Fire Prevention Office has been very successful in targeting these schools during our Fire Prevention Week Program. We have been able to teach these students the same programs we give to the other nine grade schools and two high schools in our municipality.

In the 1995-96 school year, there were approximately 17,500 registered home schoolers in Canada.⁶ Other evidence suggest that there has been a rapid growth in home schooling in Canada and U.S. in the past 20 years with an estimated 80,000 children in Canada being educated in privates homes today.⁷ This figure excludes Quebec home schooled children, as the Quebec Ministry of Education does not collect data on home schooling. Locally, the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board has indicated to me that they have approximately 40 children registered to be home schooled.⁸ In addition, the Greater Essex County District School Board has indicated they have 110 children registered to be home schooled.⁹

The Ontario Ministry of Education policy for home schooling states that parents should inform the local board of their intention to home school. The policy in its entirety can be found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/131.html>.

In view of the fact that these children are not receiving fire and life safety programming at home from the fire service. Then the fire service collectively should provide at least the resources to get this information to the parents.

Since these numbers represent a prospective audience dispersed throughout the country one fire department or agency alone could not accomplish this task. Possibly a collaborated effort between provincial and territorial Fire Marshal Offices coordinated through the Government of Canada's, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) and Safe Canada could provide the leadership necessary to get the message to home schooled children. The HRSDC's mission statement states:

"HRSDC's mission is to build a stronger and more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in making choices that help them live productive and rewarding lives, and to improve Canadians' quality of life.

To do this, we:

- *develop policies that make Canada a society in which all can use their talents, skills and resources to participate in learning, work and their community;*
- *create programs and support initiatives that help Canadians move through life's transitions—from families with children to seniors, from school to work, from one job to another, from unemployment to employment, from the workforce to retirement;*
- *create better outcomes for Canadians through service excellence with Service Canada and other partners; and*
- *engage our employees, establish a healthy work environment, nurture a culture of teamwork, and build our leadership capacity."¹⁰*

The Government of Canada website <http://www.safecanada.ca> can also

(cont. on page 8)

(cont. from page 7)

be used as an additional resource to achieve the goal of getting fire and life safety message to the home schoolers.

"The Federal Government Departments are working together to provide Canadians with a peaceful and safe society. Safety touches all aspects of our lives...at home, at work, and in our communities. Through this website, your Government provides you with useful safety information about policing, school safety, food recalls, transportation safety, surfing on the internet, health advisories, weather advisories and more. This website is about safety for young and old, Canadians and visitors to Canada. Learn more about what the federal government is doing to keep Canada safe..."¹

We can deduce from these mission statements that the aforementioned agencies would be a good fit in this endeavor.

The next hurdle is how we get the message to our target audience. In this case, our target audiences are the parents or caregivers instructing the children at home. The way to do this is through the network of established support and advocacy groups already in place for home schoolers. Some being:

Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents

Home School Legal Defence Association of Canada

Alberta Home Education Association
Yukon Home Educators' Society

BC Home Learners' Association

Saskatchewan Home-Based Educators
Manitoba Association of Christian Home Schools

Ontario Christian Home Educators' Connection

Association Chretienne de parents-Educators du Quebec

Home Educators of New Brunswick

PEI Christian Home Educators

NS Home Education Association

Christian Home Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador

These groups once identified need to be contacted and given the information on where to get the educational materials required to teach fire and life safety. By all accounts, my research has shown that these parents are very dedicated to teaching their children. Organizing a field trip with other parents to a local fire station or possibly a local "Safety Village", could for example be coordinated through one of the support groups mentioned earlier.

Sylvie Beveridge a teaching parent and a member of "Mothers support Mothers" approached the "Safety Village" asking when she could bring her home schooled child to the village. The volunteer staff at the village informed her that the programs are designed for groups of schoolchildren attending traditional schools. Staff at the village suggested that if she could organize a group of home schooled children to attend the village, they could also receive fire prevention education. These children have been attending the "Safety Village" now for four years. This group is an exception to what other groups are doing for their children.

CONCLUSION

All stakeholders would share the financial burden and the internal labour resources required to achieve this objective. Considering that the fire and life safety educational materials have already been developed the only cost borne could be in kind. The internet will be the medium used to deliver the resources to the home teachers. The cost obviously for instance to download and possibly print materials would fall on the shoulders of the recipients. Locally we can supply educational brochures through our Fire Prevention Office

The baseline data in this case is mostly empirical in nature. Tecumseh Fire and Rescue Services do not currently have a program in place that addresses the issue of fire and life

safety education for home schoolers. Further information was also collected informally by speaking with some Fire Prevention Officers from other fire departments. I also visited the web sites of the various groups and found no reference to fire and life safety education. The Executive Director of the Ontario Federation of Independent Schools stated, "Our organization is primarily a lobby group looking for funding for our parents. We offer the schools administrative support but do not get involved in curriculum issues. They are far too varied."² Since the majority of our data is observed it would be difficult to measure quantifiably. The yardstick to measure success in this case would be in how accepting my plan would be to all the stakeholders. In my estimation the reduction in funding would be compensated by the devoted and loving parents involved in the education of their children.

¹ Taken from: www.angliacampus.com

² Taken from: www.unstas.un.org

³ Ontario Office of the Fire Marshall, Annual Report 2003-2004, www.ofm.gov.on.ca

⁴ Ontario Office of the Fire Marshall, <http://www.ofm.gov.on.ca/english/FireService>

⁵ Taken from: <http://www.ofis.ca/main/tiki-index.php?page=Home>

⁶ Education Quarterly Review, Winter 1997, Vol. 4, No. 4, Statistics Canada.

⁷ Taken from: www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/sessional/HomeSchooling.doc

⁸ Phone interview with Zina Vivier, Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, Feb. 16, 2007.

⁹ Phone interview with Sharon Pyke, Greater Essex County District School Board, Feb. 16, 2007.

¹⁰ Taken from: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/comm/about_us.shtml

¹¹ Taken from: http://www.safecanada.ca/role_e.asp

¹² E-mail from Elaine Hopkins, Executive Director of Ont. Federation of Independent Schools, Feb. 9, 2007.

Editor's Note: If readers have input about how best to teach and learn about personal and fire safety in the home, I would be interested in receiving feedback. Does your family have creative ways to learn about safety? Please share your ideas! Health Canada has some age-appropriate resource material on household safety (including fire) here: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/index_e.html

UNSCHOOLING AIDAN

by Pamela Andrews

Even while pregnant, I planned to homeschool. Unschool. I would have a lively, intelligent child. We would go on fun outings to the Science Centre and the zoo. We would paint and model clay. We'd participate in the homeschooling community. It was all very lovely in my mind's eye. I didn't anticipate Aidan.

Aidan was born blue. He was revived after three minutes. Over the next week his brain swelled. He had multiple severe seizures. He was revived over and over again. Finally the MRI showed severe damage to all areas of the brain, including the brain stem. The doctors gently suggested we take him off the ventilator that supported his breathing and "let nature take its course". They didn't think he would breathe on his own for more than a few hours, maybe a couple of days.

It's hard to believe Aidan is two now. Two years old and going strong. He has Cerebral Palsy - damage to the parts of the brain that control motor movements. He has global developmental delays. He is non-verbal and non-ambulatory. He can't roll, sit, crawl, stand or walk on his own. He still coos like a three month old. He can't drink or eat enough to support his body weight. He gets all of his fluids and supplemental nutrition through a G-tube. And he's a cute and charming toddler. He loves to laugh. He doesn't move like a typical two year old but he can take a few steps with help, and I believe he will walk one day. He's our only child and the light of our lives.

When he was six weeks old, Aidan started therapy with a wonderful occupational therapist. Later we added physiotherapy and speech therapy. We've taken him to an osteopath, a traditional Chinese doctor, a cranial-sacral therapist, a

naturopath and a shiatsu therapist. Therapy has become a way of life for us.

The mainstream therapists come to the home until age two. After he turns two, I was told, he would go to an "infant stimulation program", a preschool for special needs kids. He would be bussed to and from the school, five days a week. Parental participation is not permitted.

"Studies show," the infant development worker said, "that this is the best way for him to develop his full potential. It's also the only way to continue to get therapy."

I sat in shock and said nothing. What about our plans to homeschool?

I read every book on Cerebral Palsy I could find. Maybe with books, I could manage my own home therapy program? I doubted myself. I felt so alone. I was afraid to be without professional help. I shared my angst with our wonderful occupational therapist.

"Nobody really knows for sure if therapy actually works," She confided.

I made phone calls. I got on wait lists. I discovered Aidan could still get therapy even without the preschool program. Other parents have not been so fortunate. There is a class action lawsuit going on right now by parents who allege they had to give up custody to get care for their special needs children (*Larcade et.al. versus the Province of Ontario, 2005*)

Aidan's birth thrust us into the medical mainstream. We had endless rounds of appointments with doctors, therapists and specialists. All these appointments while adjusting to our roles as new parents, getting breastfeeding established, and taking

care of a newborn. We got a lot of unsolicited parenting advice wrapped up with the medical expertise.

"Don't pick him up at night if he cries," the pediatrician cautioned, "Just go in and pat him."

'Go in where?' I thought, 'He's right beside me.'

The physiotherapist warned of the dangers of becoming "too attached". It's okay if Aidan cries when he does his exercises or later at the mere sight of the physiotherapist. All children cry. Don't worry about it. Give him to me. Leave the room if it bothers you. He'll be fine.

I fired that therapist. And the next one. The only two pediatric physiotherapists in our city. For several months, there was no physiotherapy. Without therapy, Aidan continued to progress. I began to wonder. Did therapy actually work?

I read *My Left Foot*, the autobiography of Christy Brown, a young man with Cerebral Palsy who grew up in the 1930's and 40's. Then through my yoga studio, I met a mother who homeschooled her six year old son with Cerebral Palsy. I found an online support group for parents homeschooling special needs children. It was possible. Possible and maybe more beneficial than most special education classes.

My Left Foot. What an inspiration! Christy Brown's mother emerges as the hero of the story. She gave birth to twenty-two babies. Only thirteen survived. She buried more children than I will ever have. I imagined her cooking for all those children. Washing stacks of dishes and mountains of laundry without any modern appliances. She baked her own bread, mopped floors and

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cleaned out the fireplace flue. She was constantly pregnant and breast-feeding. Yet through it all, she somehow found the resources to homeschool her special needs son Christy.

Christy Brown couldn't walk or speak. The doctor told his mother to institutionalize Christy, that he was an imbecile. Instead, she taught him how to communicate through writing. She supplied him with books, paints and canvases, mentors, a typewriter, a trip to Lourdes, and finally a little house of his own. What an extraordinary woman. Or perhaps she was just an ordinary woman, like me, just doing her best.

I struggle to engineer successes for Aidan. He can "hi-5". He can pull down the light switch with his right hand. He can knock down a stack of blocks. I did everything I could think of to keep his motivation to move alive. I built a ramp and lay him at the top of it. Any little movement on his part would cause him to slide down the ramp. We put him on the ramp several times each day. He seemed to enjoy it. Over time we were able to lower the ramp, as he wriggled his way down on his tummy.

I thought about the philosophy of unschooling. Let your child lead. How did it apply to my situation? Aidan loves the water. I took him swimming.

Now Aidan shrieks in delight when we enter the pool. In the water, Aidan can move. If he never walks, he will at least be able to swim. In the water, other kids interact with him. They ignore him on land because he's not moving around. Water equalizes. Holding my hands, he can stand on the edge of the pool and "jump" off into the water. He laughs with the joy of it.

We start swimming more and going to therapy less. We enroll in a parent and tot swim class. We take days off therapy, then weeks. Still Aidan continues to progress.

Fall comes. We cancel our spot in the infant stimulation preschool. We go swimming instead. I find a new physiotherapist and a new pediatrician. I feel lighter, freer, more connected to Aidan. Still I second guess myself. Am I doing the right thing, ignoring the "experts"? I reread *My Left Foot*. What an amazing story. More swimming. Our unschooling adventure has begun.

Pamela lives with her partner Graham and her son Aidan in South-Central Ontario. They enjoy swimming, getting out into nature and spending time with friends and family. They have no pets but enjoy watching the many varieties of birds that come to their bird feeder.

I'M ALWAYS LOOKING FOR ARTWORK CREATED BY ALL OUR WONDERFUL HOMESCHOOLING KIDS. PARENTS CAN EVEN SEND IN PHOTOGRAPHS OF SCULPTURES AND OTHER 3 DIMENSIONAL ART. SEE SUBMISSION INFO ON PAGE 12.

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Send your ad to *newsletter@ontariohomeschool.org* or mail to 12 Bannock Crescent, Kanata, ON K2K 2P8.

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The Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Culture are pleased to offer Ontario's home schooled children the opportunity to visit some of the province's best attractions this summer.

The 2007 "Yours to discover" Fun Pass provides general admission for children 14 years and under, accompanied by one paying adult or senior, to experience Ontario's agencies and attractions (limit of 1 coupon per paying adult or senior). The pass is worth approximately \$120 in ticket prices to the following participating provincial attractions:

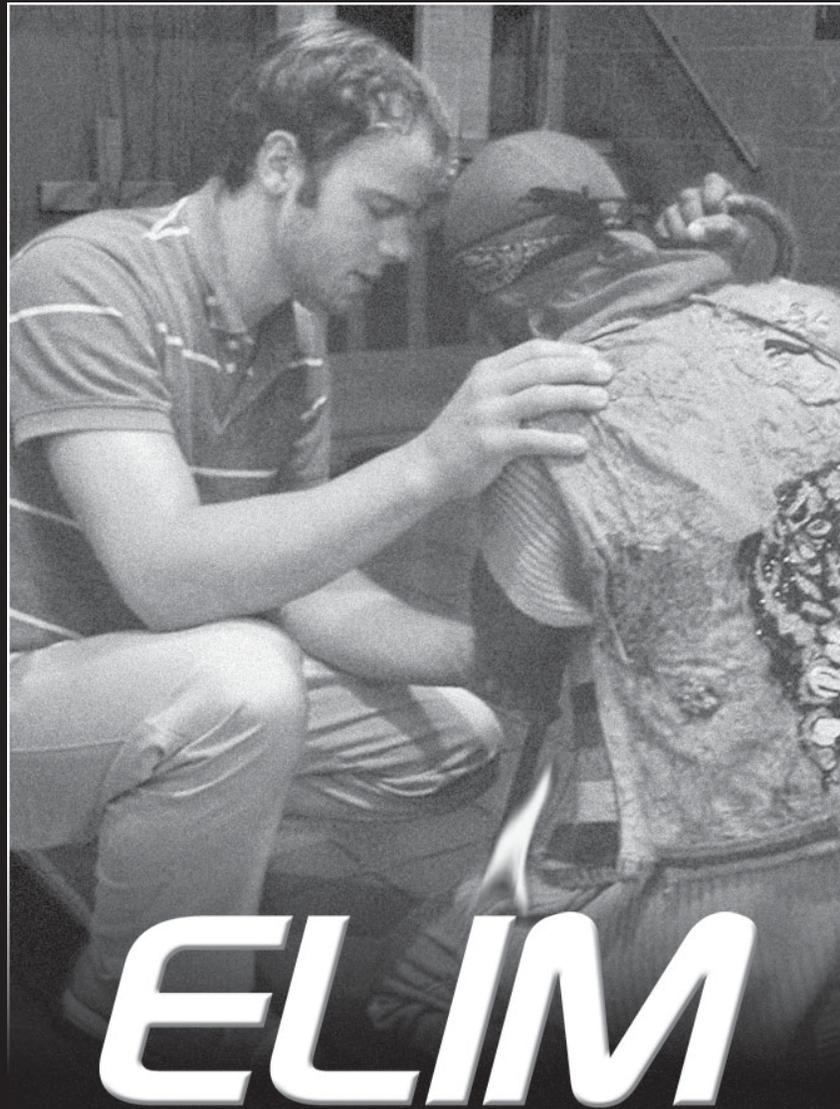
Niagara Parks Commission (Butterfly Conservatory, Old Fort Erie), Huronia Historical Parks (Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, Discovery Harbour), Science North, Upper Canada Village, Art Gallery of Ontario, Fort Henry, Fort William Historical Park, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Ontario Place (excluding the Rogers™ Chinese Lantern Festival, and CNE rides and attractions at *Exhibition Place*), Royal Ontario Museum, Royal Botanical Gardens, Ontario Science Centre (excluding Shoppers Drug Mart® OMNIMAX® Theatre or *Titanic* Exhibition), Ontario Heritage Trust properties (Barnum House, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Fulford Place, Elgin and Winter Garden Theatres, Homewood), and Ontario Parks (Daily Vehicle Permit discount)

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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.

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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

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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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