

# Home Rules

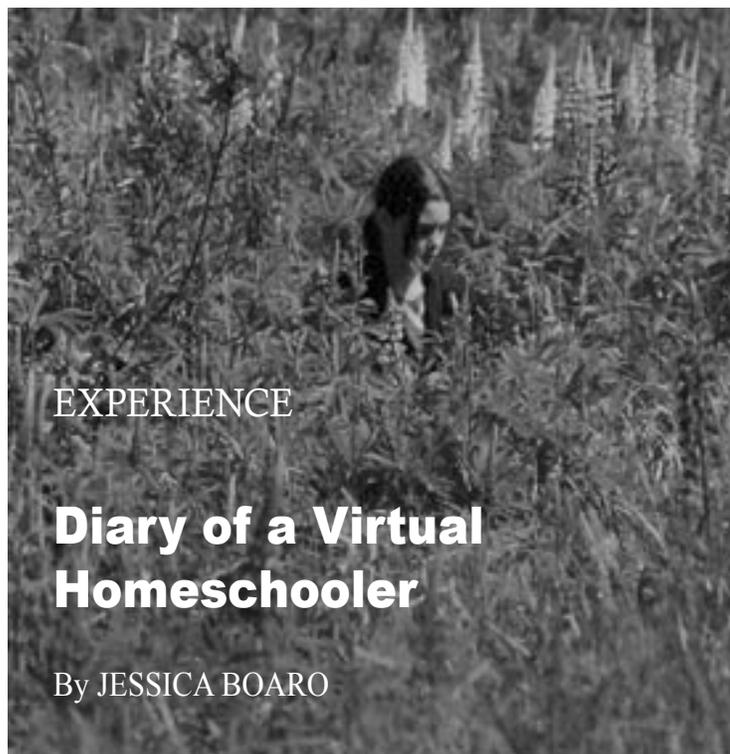
Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents Bimonthly Newsletter



OFTP

Volume 14, Issue 3, June 2009

**“You can educate your child at home”**



EXPERIENCE

## Diary of a Virtual Homeschooler

By JESSICA BOARO

*For many parents the decision to school-at-home throughout high school is dependent upon the need for a standard high school diploma or sometimes it is the child who wishes to follow a curriculum or has the desire to follow the mainstream way of schooling. For whatever reason online learning can meet the needs of those who wish to continue to homeschool their children throughout high school*

*To follow is an article entitled “Diary of a Virtual Homeschooler”. During 2004/2005 at the age of 15, Jessica Boaro, shared her online learning experience with homeschoolers living in and around North Bay, Ontario. This article, written in three separate newsletters - com-*

*bined for this issue of Home Rules - includes Jessica’s musings, a question from a homeschooling mom, interviews with other virtual homeschoolers, as well as, a parental point of view.*

*Note: When this journal was written a student could register at any online school with the only restriction being the amount of courses/credits taken per semester. As of August 2007, students, in some instances, may have to enroll at their locally publicly funded school in Ontario to take any online courses.*

*According to Ministry of Education policy the school that the pupil has the right to attend is understood to be the publicly funded secondary school closest to your residence, in the School Board in which you reside.*

### Diary of a Virtual Homeschooler

**Sept. 13**

My mom called The Virtual School (TVS) to sign me up for Grade 9 Math and Grade 10 Canadian History.

**Sept. 14**

After I receive the verification that they will allow me to participate, my dad sends a money order for \$100.00 (\$50.00 per course) to the school located in Lively, Ontario. The \$100.00 is a cost that will be reimbursed if I complete the courses successfully.

**Sept. 15**

I run upstairs to answer the door and there is the deliveryman with my books. Instead of the grade 10 “Canadian History” they have substituted it with the grade 11 “Sixteenth Century World History”. I email the school secretary to tell him that I have received the wrong book only to find out there not enough students for the Grade 10 course, so they switched me to the Grade 11. Mom is not happy with this switch.

**Sept. 20**

The first day of Virtual School! When I log onto my site at TVS I find the teachers are introducing themselves. I have Miss Walli for Math and Miss Hamill for English. I decided to take grade 9 English instead of grade 11 History. I am taking two grade 9 courses as prerequisites for grade 10 Math and English.

I introduce myself to the other students in my classes. This is an assignment. Apparently, if I don’t talk to the other students this could jeopardize my completing the course.

**Sept. 21—24**

It is difficult to figure out how to send work to the teachers. I spend my time divided between asking questions by email and calling my teachers. I have to send in a contract stating I will not plagiarize or copy other students work.

My five assignments consist of sending in the

#### IN THIS ISSUE...

Diary of a Virtual Homeschooler .....	1
Trust: Rethinking Our Child Rearing .....	3
Camp and the Home Schooler .....	7
eyeGO to the arts: An Opportunity for Youth .....	8
Kids Rule! .....	11
Getting Together .....	12

...continued on page 4

# 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 homebased 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. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without prior written permission from the editor or author.

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## EDITORIAL(S)

### Ideas and time

By KIM BOARO

As a homeschooler of four children over the years many times all I have wished for are ideas and time. Ideas to organize and inspire whoever was taking a plunge to investigate something or explore some nook or cranny. Making time, finding time - time in a bottle - where does time go?

My husband John and I have four children who over the years have schooled us. Melanie is now 27, Amy, 25, Jessica, 20 and Kristopher, 15 - where does time fly...

We live and homeschool or sometimes unschool in a small rural community called Powassan - 30 minutes south of North Bay, Ontario. Over the years we have schooled-at-home in one large city and many small towns. We still look to publications like *Home Rules* to encourage us to cast aside any fear that we are doing right by our children by giving them a relaxed atmosphere to learn at their own pace and in their own time.

Please take time to share with us - in future issues - ideas on how you homeschool.

By DAVE HOWARD

Theresa and I have homeschooled our 7 year old daughter, Leah, all her life, but I know we're still new to it: to all the challenges we'll have to face ahead, and the love and good times that await us. I'm so grateful to have this opportunity, to have a fantastic and supportive extended family, and great friends to help and inspire us.

I'd like to thank the previous editor Marina for inspiring me! And I hope many more people can connect with realistic, positive messages about homeschooling through *Home Rules*.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The role of OFTP newsletter editor has been filled! Kim Boaro will take on the role, as editor and Dave Howard will coordinate the layout and design of the OFTP newsletter.

OFTP is still in need of a discussion coordinator on the execlist. Without a coordinator questions sometimes get lost in the shuffle and discussions are left hanging without a question.

Also, a hotline coordinator is needed as soon as possible.

To apply for any of these positions, please review the relevant job description on our website, and speak up on one of the e-lists or contact us through General Inquiries/Administration at [enquiries@ontariohomeschool.org](mailto:enquiries@ontariohomeschool.org); 416-410-5218 or 1-800-704-0448



## OFTP E-MAIL LISTS

### For Members Only

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

### OFTP General List

<http://groups.yahoo.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.

### OFTP Exec List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OFTPEXEC>  
This list is open to all members and its purpose is to discuss OFTP operations and initiatives.

### OFTP Chat List

<http://groups.yahoo.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. For OFTP's specialized lists, please visit <http://ontariohomeschool.org/oftpgroups.html>

## Trust: Rethinking our child rearing

By CARLO RICCI

In 1892 the Criminal Code allowed corrective force against wives, employees, prisoners and children. Fortunately, corrective force against wives, employees and prisoners is no longer acceptable; unfortunately, in 2004 by a margin of 6-3 the court upheld what is known as the “spanking law” against children. The shame goes deeper: children are the last acceptably oppressed group in the world in which we live. You can act against children in ways that if the same actions were committed against any other group, it would be unacceptable.

Primarily, I see myself as a child advocate. Through the writing on my website, my YouTube channel, speaking engagements and any other means I can think of, I try to spread the message that our child rearing practices are hurting our children and that there are alternatives. Far too many children are oppressed either in their own homes, in schools or in both and other places.

I have taught everything from kindergarten, to high school, at three universities including my current position in a graduate program at the Faculty of Education at Nipissing University. I believe that if we want children to be kind, respectful, caring and democratic as adults, the environments in which they are raised need to reflect this way of life. We cannot expect children who are oppressed and disempowered to be any different as adults. Some may argue that what we get is actually what we want: oppressed and disempowered adults who accept their lot in life.

I, hopefully, would like to believe otherwise.

I have two children ages 3 and 5 and they are being allowed to live their lives in a learner centered democratic way. Learner centered refers to being allowed to learn about whatever they feel the calling and internal motivation to learn about and the democratic part refers to having a substantive

voice in the environment in which they live. We are all better off for it because our house is a more peaceful and enjoyable place to be as a result.

Children are very capable of understanding fundamental philosophical discourse and so I



often share with my children how lucky they are to be able to live in a place where they have a significant amount of control and freedom over their lives, and that too many children do not. For example, they can choose what and when to eat (and it always works out that we do sit as a family for meals on a daily basis); their education (for example,

school or homeschool); what to wear; what events, clubs or sports groups they choose to participate in or not and so on.

I have had many people say to me that the children they know could not be trusted. They need to be told what to eat, when to eat, when to sleep, when to wake up and so on. I often wonder if they consider why their children are the way they are, and that if they had been living in a more learner centered democratic environment whether their children would be more trustworthy—how could they not be.

My way of thinking has been shaped by both my personal and academic research. I have personally witnessed the success of this method of child rearing that for me it is no longer an issue. At first, I had many many questions that I asked myself as I started thinking about alternative child rearing practices, just like I am sure many readers may have—all of them have been and continue to be allayed. I recently returned from a trip to The Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, MA where I witnessed a learner centered democratic approach to learning on a larger scale. For example, the children help run the school, they decide what and when to learn, there are no compulsory classes, no grades yet there was more and deeper learning than I have ever witnessed in all my years visiting schools.

Despite what many believe, making a difference in the world is easy. We can all make a difference by changing how we interact with those around us—by transforming our lives and how we act around young people we transform the world. If we want a better future, the best way to get there is by rethinking our child rearing practices. We can all play a role and if enough of us do, the change will be noticeable.

*Carlo Ricci teaches in the graduate program at the Faculty of Education at Nipissing University.*

## Diary of a Virtual Homeschooler

...continued from page 1

contract, email my daily attendance, going to the discussion board and write two students, explore my new virtual surroundings and prepare for the next weeks assignments.

### Sept. 27

Math—I have to send in a e-diary explaining how to add and subtract fractions with different denominators—due Sept. 28.

English—I have to write five similes and/or metaphors and send in a poem. Also, I have to critique my fellow students. I only had nice things to say.

### Sept. 28

I spend a good part of the day writing out five lessons on the computer and emailing them to the school before finding out I didn't have to send them in. I really only have to send in tests and journal entries. Aaaargggghhhh!

### November 15—VLC start day— until November 30:

Let's just say at first it was hard to find my way around the Virtual Learning Centre (VLC), mainly because it is lot different from TVS. During the evening, on Wednesday November

21, I finally found out where my assignments were,. Only to find out the assignments were due on Friday, so I had to ask for an extension - which I got. Hey!! And guess who else is taking Civics and Careers! MACKENZIE! Small world. (Mackenzie is a homeschooling friend.)

After I sent my first assignment in. I found out for my second assignment in Careers Mackenzie was assigned to be my partner. We worked great together, and got everything done. \*Evil Grin\* now I have someone to bug...

For the Careers course there seems to be lots of group work. In other words, I've had more than just Mackenzie as a partner. At first we got to choose our partners and now the teacher is assigning people for us to work with. Our teacher Miss Anderson goes at her own pace.

In the Civics course we have covered the Confederation and the Charter of Canada. Currently, we are covering the Westminster Model of Government—including the federal and provincial branches of the government.

There hasn't been any teamwork in this course.

So far both of these courses are pretty interesting.

Math, there is not really much to tell about the Math. It is fine. I find the math interesting, but I don't always understand what Ms. Walli needs to be sent in. We have covered integers, graphing, and now are starting to apply all these basics to the stuff we are learning. I don't like math. I like the teacher because I can email her and ask her when I don't understand something. She tries to get back to me right away.



## December 2004

December was rough! With all four courses a lot of work was given before the two week holidays. I now have more of an idea of what Civics and Careers are all about.

Civics deals with parts of the government and how they function. Also, I have a chance to voice my opinion in discussion boards concerning certain present day issues. By the end of December I was completing Module Six. Module Six was how parties are categorized. I now see how confusing and complicated our government is.

Careers is about finding out more about what kind of job would suit you in the future. We ended 2004 learning about what style of a learner I am—visual, auditory or kinesthetic. I'm a kinesthetic and visual learner! I learn best through physical interaction and by looking, reading and watching.. Apparently, I'm not a good listener.

In math I finished on Module Five—solving and graphing algebraic equations. Yuck!

In English we finally finished Romeo and Juliet . Yippee! Ya whoo! Whistle! Whistle! This is a cause for celebration, as I didn't really enjoy reading Shakespeare. The story was good, but I couldn't get into the way he writes.



I almost fell asleep at some parts. For the first couple scenes the teacher put up audios and e-text available to download. The audios helped me understand the story a bit better. The e-text was each scene in the book—which is weird—because she didn't put up this until we had almost completed the module. Also, they sent us the book so we didn't actually need the e-text.

Having two weeks off isn't the best because you don't end up studying during those two weeks of vacation. I was overloaded with

work, as were most of the other students.

## January 2005

The first week back I had two tests with VLC in Civics and Careers and with TVS I had a math test. The Civics test I couldn't get into because of technical problems. I wrote a letter to their technical support and when they didn't get back to me in ten minutes I called the number Ms. Anderson had given us to get a hold of her at VLC. Turns out Ms. Anderson doesn't work in the office and all the technical support guys were out to lunch. The lady I talked to told me they would get back to me by 1:00 p.m. My test ended at 1:30 p. m. Finally an answer from technical support stating I had 'cookie' problems. By this time I had shut down the computer and was heading into North Bay Library. So I reserved a computer at the library, so I could take the test there. Lo! It didn't work. Just my luck when we arrived home the test was no longer available. She sent me a letter back that night saying we'd have to "discuss the matter". It's been four days and the teacher still hasn't checked her email. I really need to complete this test. I'm upset

because I don't know if I'll be allowed to take this test and I feel like this was very unfair.

I did manage to get into the Careers test after some minor difficulties when the teacher forgot to put up the test button. I wasn't the only one who was frustrated with this. We got a distress call from Mackenzie Rodger's mom.—he couldn't access the test either.

In English we are reading Harry Potter and I am writing an independent book report on "Ada Blackjack: A True Story of Survival in the Arctic".

#### **January 10 – 14, 2005**

Hey! I got really good marks for my book report! I am very happy about that. Also, I got great marks for my Harry Potter assignments. Another bonus!

I finished my last math test this week. I think I did a lot better on this one than on some of the others. I don't know what I got for that one yet though because Ms. Walli hasn't marked it yet.

Mom suggested that I ask Ms. Walli if I should take grade 10 applied math instead of academic math. Ms. Walli told me that I had better options for higher education if I stayed with academic math.

Civics and Careers are going just as well. So, far I've got 81% in Civics and 83% in Careers! That not including the tests I've taken, and some of the modules. Ms. Anderson's still grading some of it which means it could go up considerably. Yes!

#### **January 17 – 28, 2005**

EXAMS! Oh, yes everyone dislikes that word. It's the one test where you can't use the textbooks, or con your parents into helping you solve a problem. When you have to cram all those modules into your tiny little brain, and remember EVERYTHING. I think my stress level reached its ultimate high, but I think I did okay.

I took my English exam first. It was just like a long test! I logged onto my site and then clicked on the exam. The difference with between the exam and a regular test was if I had accidentally exited then I was in big trouble, because it wouldn't let me back in. Don't worry folks! I didn't do that - thank goodness. It was actually really easy and I think or more like hope I did really well. I have this feeling I did really extremely well. I've been getting truly good marks back for my assignments in English.

Well, I did the Math exam, and I know for a fact that I didn't do great. I've been getting stumped with Math. I know that I got some questions right, but not as many as I should have. That's all I'm going to say.

On top of all of the exams I still have a Homeschooling Scrapbook to hand in to Civics. Also, a Portfolio assignment to hand in for Careers. These are BIG assignments! Busy, busy, busy, busy! As usual.

The Civics and Careers exam are on the January 31, so now I just have to study for them. Then I'm done, done, DONE! Until next semester anyway.

Well, I'll say good-bye to all my adoring, and devoted fans. Have a good day, and tune in for the next edition in April when I will be interviewing two virtual high school schoolers!

## *Virtual Schooling: The Last Word*

Dear Virtual Homeschooler,

I enjoy reading your homeschooling journal each month.

I was just wondering if you knew approximately how many hours per day you spend in front of the computer?

Also, do you find taking classes this way to be tedious or lonely at times? What do you see as the biggest advantages of taking courses this way?

Thanks, from a homeschooling mom.

*Dear homeschooling mom,*

*I spend a lot of time in front of the computer at times. It just depends on what assignments you get and how big they are. The schools say to put aside 10 hours a week, so about two hours a day for each course. So, depending on what you have to get done, you'd spend 8 hours a day in front of the computer. That's making a really big assumption though.*

*I like it! Yes, it can be lonely sitting at the computer most of the day, but if you have a little brother around bugging you all the time then it's not that bad. Plus, there are homeschooling events to look forward to, skating, skiing, gymnastics, drama, Science North and more, so its not like I'm not going to see people later on in the week.*

*There are many advantages to studying at a virtual school. Staying in my PJ's and house coat!!! Yes, I'm in my pj's until at least 7:30 or 8:00 a.m. sometimes longer. Another difference is you don't have to wake up really early (that doesn't work in our house, because mom gets us up early in the morning). Also, you don't have to wait outside on cold mornings to get on the school bus, and then get squished because you have at least three to a seat.*

*But seriously, I get to learn at home and go to high school. I can compare notes with other high school kids my age, because I do go to high school—just not their high school. I have the opportunity to get a high school diploma if I want too. If I pass my courses all the money is refunded.*

## *Three Views of the Virtual School World*

Homeschooler Jaclyn (J) and her mom, Kim (K) took some to answer some questions about their experience with The Virtual School.

As well, Allen (A) a fellow student from the Virtual Learning Center, states his views on his learning through virtual schooling. Allen, 15 1/2, was born and lives in Oshawa, Ontario. Allen has been homeschooled since grade one and has been with VLC for five semesters - approximately two and a half years.

And JB is Jessica Boaro, your on-the-spot correspondent.

### **Jaclyn**

**JB: What courses did you take?**

**J:** Civics/Career Studies and Science

**JB: How did they introduce the courses to you?**

**J:** They emailed me to tell me how to find all the course information.

**JB: What was the first day of TVS like?**

**J:** Very busy and very confusing.

**JB: Did you like how TVS was set up?**

**J:** It was okay.

**JB: Did you like your teachers? Why or why not?**

**J:** I liked my science teacher because she was always there to answer my questions, but my civics/Career Studies teacher was not often there and it took her about one full day to get back to me.

**JB: Did you find it hard to learn online?**

**J:** Yes, because if I had questions, I found it very hard to ask by email, I like asking in person.

**JB: After the first couple of weeks how did you like the courses?**

**J:** I still found stuff hard to find and it was still very busy.

**JB: Would you ever take an online course again?**

**J:** NO!!!

## **Kim**

**JB: How did you find out about TVS?**

**K:** Through the newsletter

**JB: Did you like how TVS was set up?**

**K:** No, I did not. I did not like that it was set up exactly the same as a school would be - there was no room for creativity with time or information. Jaclyn had to sign on each day and an assignment was given to her with a deadline the very next day or couple of days. Much of the other homeschooling and extra activities that we do had to be put into second or third place just so she could do her school. The information given to us left a lot to be desired. Most topics were only covered superficially and I had to do a lot of extra teaching on the side because I felt she was missing out on the 'real information'. She should have just attended a 'normal high school' but I see what comes out of the high schools and that is really not an option. I also didn't like that the grades were not always given and at the end she didn't even get her assignments back. So the last few weeks of information sent (science) did not even have a grade posted. A grade was just sent in the mail. I also didn't like that the percentage of a final grade for each assignment was not given, so she had no way of knowing how much or how little effort or information was required. I know that if an assignment or test is worth 25% or 30% of my overall mark I will put in more effort than an assignment that is only worth 3%!

**JB: Why did you sign your daughter up?**

**K:** I was looking for something that might help me out of not doing all the teaching as I am in full time nursing myself and find it difficult at times to teach Jaclyn and complete my own stuff too. Also I wanted to see about where she would be if she ever had to take a test for high school, since in our school we don't test, because I know where she is through communication on a particular subject. She gets her testing skills through the Air Cadets and their tests.

## **Allen**

**JB: What did you do before VLC? How did you learn before you started VLC?**

**A:** Basically, my mom would buy textbooks that would be used for my grade level. I would complete those textbooks. Any problems I had I would ask her and she would try and help. By high school it got to the point where she couldn't help anymore, so we enrolled in the VLC.

**JB: Why didn't you just go to regular high school?**

**A:** Since I had been homeschooled all my life it would quite a huge change to go to high school. It was thought by my parents that it would be easier on me just to go to an online school, as it is similar to the homeschooling setting.

**JB: How do you feel about this choice? Did you agree?**

**A:** I agreed, I did think it was easier and to this day I think it was the right decision.

**JB: Do you think VLC has given you a better education than regular high school or about the same?**

**A:** I think VLC has given me about the same education as a regular high school. The material in both is the same so there is no reason for one to be better than the other.

**JB: How did you find out about VLC?**

**A:** Ironically, through a Homeschooling newsletter.

**JB: When you first started VLC did you find it hard to navigate?**

**A:** Navigating wasn't much of a problem, learning was.

**JB: How was learning difficult?**

**A:** Well for one thing, I had to learn how to use math type programs

for math assignments. Also, I had to learn the proper format in which assignments should be sent. What file type you can use for the assignments. Stuff like that.

**JB: What courses are you taking?**

**A:** Biology (SBI4U) and Geometry plus Discrete Mathematics (MGA4U), both grade 12.

**JB: Do you like how VLC is set up?**

**A:** Currently, yes I like it a lot. They're use of technology and the improvements they've made to the communications system have made it a whole lot better.

**JB: Have you ever had any major technical problems with VLC?**

**A:** Once or twice they put me in the wrong course, but a quick phone call changed that. So, yeah once or twice I had a major technical problem but it was fixed quickly.

**JB: Do you like your teachers? Why or why not?**

**A:** I like my current teachers; as compared to the other teachers I've had they are much better due to the fact that they participate with their students much more. They always have time to answer you're questions in scheduled or personalized chats, and, especially in the case of Mr. Harris (Peter Harris is a Science teacher), he allows for some flexibility.

**JB: Have you ever had any problems with your teachers?**

**A:** Nope, I've preferred some more than others but never had any real problems.

**JB: Do you get lonely sitting at home all the time?**

**A:** I can only speak for myself. I personally don't get lonely.

**JB: What do you plan to do when you are done VLC high school?**

**A:** I plan on taking a Bachelor of Science and Education course at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology—a five year program— at the end of which I should be qualified to teach science related material in Ontario public schools.

**JB: When do you plan to do this?**

**A:** In 6 months from now, when I turn 16.

**JB: What made you want to get a Bachelor of Science and Education?**

**A:** Several factors, such as the shortage of male teachers in the coming years and the fact that there are fewer science teachers than there are English teachers. Also, it is a science and technology university so if you want to be a teacher you have to choose something science or math related.

**JB: Do you think this type of learning (virtual learning) is good for everyone?**

**A:** I think this type of learning is good for everyone, especially if long distance telecommunication technologies such as microphones and web cameras over the Internet are utilized. This will give people trying to learn the opportunity not to waste the time going from school to home and back, and still get at least some semblance that they are with other students.

**JB: Do you think this type of learning (virtual learning) will catch on?**

**A:** I think it will increase in popularity, but it will not become the main way in which education is brought to the public for a long time to come. Simply due to the fact the traditional educational system is to ingrained in the minds of the public and it will take them some time to fully embrace the new opportunities that have opened up with the dawn of the information age.

*Other online opportunities exist throughout Canada. For more information on online or correspondence schooling, go to:*

[www.ontariohomeschool.org/correspondencesch.html](http://www.ontariohomeschool.org/correspondencesch.html)

## Camp and the Home Schooler

By JULIE HARTLEY

Over the years as an international sleep-over arts camp, our camp has welcomed homeschooled campers and we have gotten to know these kids well enough to understand - and reject - the clichés about why a home-schooler can benefit from overnight camp. Also, we've come to see how overnight camp is a great fit for the homeschooled child, particularly when that camp has a specialty, or a unique focus.

Has anyone ever told you your homeschooled child should attend overnight camp to help them develop their social skills? In our experience, homeschooled campers have social skills equal to those of school-educated campers and sometimes better.

If your child has a specific passion - say, robotics, or creative writing - meeting others within your own homeschooling community who share that interest can be a challenge. Choosing a specialized overnight camp can introduce your child to dozens of like-minded people, and enrich their homeschooling experience once they return home.

Surprisingly, most overnight summer camps exhibit few of the problems or negative values that may have turned many away from public school education in the first place. A recent United States of America Department of Education survey indicated 85% of families who choose to homeschool do so in part because they are concerned about safety in their child's school - lack of adequate supervision, bullying, drugs and violence. Overnight camps, on the other hand, achieve a degree of nurturing, positivity and support rarely equaled in under-funded public schools. Well run overnight camps have a staff ratio around 1 to 3. In a good camp, counsellors live in with their campers, take activities with them, and 'hang out' with them during meals and at free time. The constant presence of a positive role-model makes bullying and other negative dynamics all but impossible. Campers have said one of the wonderful things about attending camp is being free from the pres-

ures they face at school. Pressures to conform, to take drugs, to participate in activities they may not agree with. At camp, with supportive adults always on hand they can relax and be themselves.

Many parents choose to homeschool in order to create a curriculum to meet the specific



needs of their child. North America is home to thousands of overnight camps so a little research can turn up a camp that can meet your child's precise needs. An example of this is a child with learning disabilities whose needs were not being met in school. This child may find the situation quite different in a camp where his specific learning disability is the focus. Or in some families, parents homeschool because of specific religious affiliations; most religious communities offer overnight camps, where parents can be confident their values will be respected and upheld.

Overnight camps rarely have a rigid curriculum or a fixed and repetitive daily schedule; in this way, too, they differ from public

schools. In most camps, there are no bells that ring. No one telling a child each moment of the day exactly where they should be, or what they should be doing. Camps offer a more flexible and relaxed approach to learning, because it's summer! Specialist camps offer dozens of choices of activities each day. Campers select based on their interests, and also their mood. If your own memories of camp were of enforced 'polar bear dips', clanging lunch bells, mandatory games of 'capture the flag' and a uniform with the camp's logo in big letters, then you'll be pleased to find camps have come on a long way. Again, the key is to research your options. Your choice of public school may have been limited, but the range of overnight camps available within a few hours' drive could surprise you.

There are some activities and skills that are best taught in a live-in environment... Leadership training programs are a key example. For young people who live together, facing team and leadership challenges together, solving problems and negotiating solutions, learning happens on a whole new level.

In our experience when theater kids rehearse for hours each day for their final show, a camaraderie and shared sense of purpose emerges that would be hard to equal in weekly theater classes or in a Saturday workshop. Other camps offer immersion in a foreign language without the need to travel overseas, and again, the knowledge gained far surpasses what could be learned in weekly evening classes in the child's own community.

Parents who choose to school-at-home become experts in drawing together all the strands that can together make up an appropriate education for their child. Museums, libraries, theaters, the Internet, travel, group workshops and religious associations may be some of what the parents may choose, as they weave together their child's education. Overnight summer camp is definitely another. By researching carefully to find a camp suited to your child's needs you open the door to a community of friends, learning and fun that may be with them for years to come.

*Julie Hartley is the co-director of Centauri Summer Arts Camp, a specialist arts camp for ages 8-18 located in the Niagara Region of Ontario. You can reach her through the camp website at [www.centauri.on.ca](http://www.centauri.on.ca)*

## eyeGO to the Arts: An Opportunity for Youth

eyeGO to the Arts  
National Office  
101 Queen St. N.  
Kitchener ON  
N2H 6P7

An innovative national program that engages youth in the performing arts as audience, eyeGO to the Arts is a local program giving students national access. Through working with performing arts partners and Youth Councils, eyeGO encourages high school students to see the theatre as an entertainment option – and an affordable one.

Participating performing arts organizations commit to selling best-available seats to high school students for \$5.00. These tickets go on sale as soon as single tickets to the general public go on sale. Students must ask for an eyeGO ticket when purchasing and show identification proving they are in full-time attendance at a secondary school. Home schooling families can take advantage of the program by contacting a participating venue near to their home or through the national office. These students will be given a special card giving them access to the program. All students must be prepared to show identification when attending performances.

Founder Jamie Grant, General Manager of Kitchener Ontario's Centre in the Square developed the programme when he realized that his audience was aging and there was no sign of a younger audience coming through his doors. Worried about the negative impact on Canadian culture, he ran a couple of student focus groups and eyeGO to the Arts was the result. A programme that is simple to access, eyeGO has generated interest nation-wide.

“eyeGO has broken the barriers of seeing live shows wide open; saying that the theatre is not just for seniors or the rich but for everyone, and ‘you don’t have to dress up to

go.” says freelance arts journalist Coral Andrews-Leslie.

eyeGO is intended to encourage students to attend performances on their own initiative, it is not expected to replace existing educational outreach initiatives. As described by the eyeGO to the Arts Chair, William Chesney, “eyeGO is about individual youth in individual communities making individual choices.” It provides students an opportunity to attend evening performances and encourages them to try more than one performance before determining that they don’t enjoy the theatre experience.

“I saw three plays this year. The first one sucked, I didn’t like the second one and I hated the third one, but it was only five bucks so I’ll keep going”, stated Braden, original eyeGO to the Arts Youth Council member.

Tickets are \$5.00 or less and are available as soon as single tickets go on sale. Even better, students can get the best available seats. All a student has to do is request an eyeGO ticket and show student identification. They then pay \$5 for the best available seat to any of the participating productions. Students can take advantage of this programme in any participating community; they just have to know to ask for an eyeGO ticket. eyeGO is partnering with hipTIX in Toronto and students visiting Toronto are welcome to access the hipTIX programme. For information about eyeGO and the communities and arts organizations involved, go the web-site [www.eyego.org](http://www.eyego.org)

One of the beauties of the programme is although it is rooted in the community, our students can take advantage of it in any community that is participating. They will have

national access. eyeGO is currently in 58 communities with over 140 organizations participating. Although the majority of the partners are currently in Ontario, several communities in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia also offer the programme.

Supported by Ontario Trillium Foundation in its first 6 years, first at the local level and then province-wide, eyeGO is a very lean organization. Each participating arts organization contributes through the sales of tickets at \$5.00 that would normally sell at a higher price. eyeGO provides a national website and networking opportunities sharing what is being learned about attracting students with the participating organizations. Currently eyeGO is running an individual donor campaign that can be accessed through Canada Helps on the [eyeGO.org](http://eyeGO.org) website.

### **Ontario eyeGo partners**

#### **Barrie**

Gryphon Theatre  
Talk Is Free Theatre

#### **Brampton**

City of Brampton Theatre Office  
The Rose Theatre

#### **Brant County**

*Brantford*  
Brantford Music Club  
Brantford Symphony Orchestra  
Grand River Chorus  
ICHTHYS Theatre Productions

Jazz Solution, Brantford  
Sanderson Centre, Brantford

*Paris*  
Cobblestone Festival  
Paris Performers' Theatre

*Simcoe*  
Simcoe Little Theatre

**Durham**  
Borelians Community Theatre  
Durham Philharmonic Choir  
Oshawa Little Theatre

**Georgian Triangle**  
*Collingwood*  
Theatre Collingwood

**Grey Bruce**  
Owen Sound Little Theatre

**Markham**  
Markham Theatre for the Performing Arts

**Mississauga**  
Mississauga Living Arts Centre

**Niagara**  
Centre for the Arts, Brock University  
Chorus Niagara  
Department of Dramatic Arts, Brock University  
Department of Music, Brock University  
Garden City Productions  
Niagara Symphony

**North Bay**  
The Capitol Centre

**Oakville**  
Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts

**Ottawa**  
Centrepointe Theatre  
Réseau Ontario

**Peterborough**  
Peterborough Symphony Orchestra  
Showplace Performance Centre

**Picton**  
The Regent Theatre

**Southwestern Ontario**  
*Blyth*  
Blyth Festival Theatre

*Chatham*  
Chatham Capitol Theatre  
Kiwanis Theatre  
Orchestra London  
Theatre Kent

*London*  
London Community Players  
Orchestra London  
The ARTS Project

*Sarnia*  
Imperial Oil Centre for the  
Performing Arts

**Sault Ste. Marie**  
Algoma University College

**Temiskaming**  
*Cobalt*  
Classic Theatre

**Toronto**  
Ballet Creole  
Ballet Jorgen Canada  
Burning Passions Theatre  
Canadian Children's Dance Theatre  
Chris McKhool  
DanceWorks  
Etobicoke Music Productions  
OMO Dance Company  
TAPA

**Waterloo Region**  
*Bright*  
Grand River Baroque Festival

*Cambridge*  
Galt Little Theatre  
Mayor's Celebration of the Arts  
Committee

*Elmira*  
Elmira Theatre Company

*Kitchener/Waterloo*  
Carousel Dance Centre  
Celebration of Funk  
Centre in the Square  
City of Waterloo, Cultural Services  
DaCapo Chamber Choir  
Dangerous Visions  
eyeGO to the Arts  
eyeGO Youth Council  
Grand Philharmonic Choir  
JM Drama  
Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber  
Orchestra,  
Kitchener-Waterloo Community  
Orchestra

Kitchener-Waterloo Little Theatre  
Kitchener-Waterloo Musical  
Productions  
Kitchener-Waterloo Opera  
Kitchener-Waterloo  
Symphony  
Lost & Found Theatre  
Menno Singers  
Next Level Theatre  
Nota Bene Period Orchestra  
NUMUS Concerts  
Open Ears Festival of Music &  
Sound  
Poor Tom Productions  
Renaissance Singers  
Rigglevake Productions  
Schneider Male Chorus  
Skye Dragon  
Starlight Theatre Presents  
The Registry Theatre  
The Singer's Theatre  
Theatre & Company  
Twin City Harmonizers  
Voca Mocha  
Waterloo Chamber Players  
Waterloo Community Arts Centre  
Waterloo Dance Projects  
Waterloo Entertainment Centre  
Wellington Winds

*New Hamburg*  
The Community Players of New  
Hamburg

*St. Jacobs*  
Next Level Theatre

**Wellington**  
*Elora*  
Elora Community Theatre

*Fergus*  
Grinder Productions

*Guelph*  
Gryphon Dance  
Guelph Chamber Choir  
Guelph Concert Band  
Guelph Contemporary Dance Festival  
Guelph Jazz Festival  
Guelph Lecture Series  
Guelph Little Theatre  
Guelph Symphony Orchestra  
Guelph Youth Singers  
Putting It Together Productions  
River Run Centre  
Rob Crabtree & Friends  
Royal City Music Productions, Inc.  
Theatre Guelph  
Touchmark Theatre

# 2009 FOREST OF READING® FESTIVAL OF TREES™ WINNERS ANNOUNCED

TORONTO, May 14, 2009 ----- Programme partners the Ontario Library Association (OLA) and Authors at Harbourfront Centre are delighted to announce the winners of the 2009 Forest of Reading® Festival of Trees™. This year's Forest of Reading® Festival of Trees™ was held at Harbourfront Centre on May 13 and 14, featuring two action-packed days of award ceremonies, workshops, activities and other exciting entertainment.

## The winners are:

**Blue Spruce Award™** (Kindergarten–Grade 2)  
Mélanie Watt – Chester

**Silver Birch Express®** (Grade 3–4)  
Alan Cumyn – Dear Sylvia

**Silver Birch Fiction®** (Grade 4–6)  
Mahtab Narsimhan – The Third Eye

**Silver Birch Non-fiction®** (Grade 4–6)  
Kevin Sylvester – Gold Medal for Weird

**Red Maple Fiction Award™** (Grade 7–8)  
Norah McClintock – Out of the Cold

**Red Maple Non-fiction Award™** (Grade 7–8)  
Elizabeth MacLeod – Royal Murder: The Deadly Intrigue of Ten Sovereigns

White Pine Award™ (Grade 9–12)  
Cory Doctorow – Little Brother

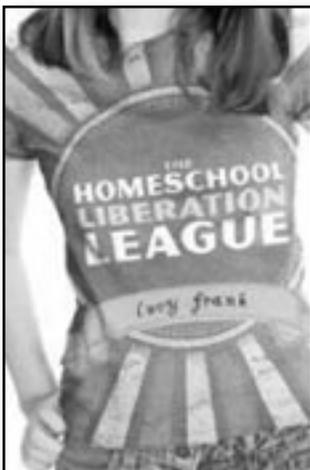
For author bios, book synopses, and additional finalist names please refer to [accessola.com/forest2009](http://accessola.com/forest2009).

The OLA offers nine **Forest of Reading®** programmes that encourage people of all ages in their love of reading. All Ontarians are invited to participate annually via their local public or school library. More than 250,000 readers across Ontario participate each year. The culmination of the programme is an amazing two-day awards event at Harbourfront Centre called the Festival of Trees™, which features seven of the nine awards. The Festival of Trees™ is attended by more than 6,500 guests and many of the nominated authors and illustrators.

The winner of the **Ever Green Award™** (Fiction and Non-fiction titles for adult readers), Lawrence Hill (*The Book of Negroes*) was announced on January 31, 2009. The winner of the Le Prix Tamarack (French language; Grade 4–6) will be announced shortly on the OLA website, [accessola.com](http://accessola.com).

Since its inception in 1974, Authors at Harbourfront Centre has hosted over 5,000 authors from more than 100 countries, including 16 Nobel Laureates. Our season runs from September to June and includes the annual International Festival of Authors (IFOA) (October 21–31, 2009), including YoungIFOA (October 27, 29 & 30, 2009); the annual ALOUD: a Celebration for Young Readers (May 4–6, 2009); and Forest of Reading® Festival of Trees™ (May 13–14, 2009). [www.readings.org](http://www.readings.org)

The Ontario Library Association (OLA) creates programmes, advocacy and promotion for its more than 5,000 members who work in primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and public libraries across Ontario. The mission of the OLA is to foster free public access to information, and to promote Canada's history and culture through the programmes and services of the libraries of Ontario. [www.accessola.com](http://www.accessola.com)



## Homeschool Liberation League by Lucy Frank

Published by Dial Books; ISBN 13: 9780803732308; Genre: Fiction

After a summer at Wilderness Camp, thirteen year-old Katya decides that she absolutely cannot go back to school. At school she can't eradicate invasive alien plants, go on foraged-food-finding missions, or just be herself. Her parents, despite being "school kind of people" are willing to give it a try, but Katya has to stick to their (just-like-school!) assignments. This isn't what she had in mind. So with the help of a mysterious violin-playing boy, Milo, and new friend Francesca, Katya comes up with a plan to save her homeschooling experience. The three become the founding members of the Homeschool Liberation League, but will it be enough to convince Katya's parents that her ideas about learning might be just right for her?

Look for this book in early July

# WHAT'S YOUR SUMMER ADVENTURE?

Tell us how you play to the max!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Send us your picture by August 21, 2009.  
Scan and send your artwork, along with a  
short description of your image to: [newsletter@ontariohomeschool.org](mailto:newsletter@ontariohomeschool.org) or Boaro,  
309 Chiswick Line, R.R. 1, Powassan, ON  
POH 1Z0

# KIDS RULE!

## GETTING TOGETHER

### Young Authors' Writing Contest

#### Divisions:

Primary (Grades 1-3)

Junior (Grades 4-6)

Intermediate (Grades 7-9)

Senior (Grades 10-12)

FICTION – NONFICTION – POETRY

Work can be from students' writing folders or new compositions. Original submissions may be written or typed and may vary in length. Contest winners will receive a gift certificate from Gulliver's Quality Books and Toys.

Winning Submissions will be read at the Books by the Bay Northern Festival to celebrate Canadian Authors on Saturday morning July 19, 2008

**Submit entries to Gulliver's Book Store by June 15th 2008 so that winners can be notified before the summer holidays.** Inquires may be directed to Alison Peden at Callander Public Library (705) 752-2544

Books By the Bay

[www.booksbythebay.ca](http://www.booksbythebay.ca)

**July 18-20, 2008**

Callander, Ontario

Featuring children's authors Frieda Wishinsky and Frank Glew

### Sports Group for Christian Teens

Our sports group serves Christian Oshawa area families who have at least one child of high school age and their siblings. We meet together on **Friday afternoons from 2 – 4 p.m.** with parents taking turns supervising students. We play baseball, soccer, road hockey, basketball, ultimate Frisbee, European handball, volleyball, and many other playground games. From April to December we meet outdoors just north of Oshawa, and from January to March we meet in a gym. In the summers we meet on Friday evenings when the Dads and several homeschool alumni join us. The emphasis is on good sportsmanship, keeping in mind that we want to honour God in all things.

If you are interested in joining an active group of homeschooling families who meet together weekly for gym and sports activities, please contact Sandra Mc Rae at 905 655 9373 or at [mcraftfamily26@hotmail.com](mailto:mcraftfamily26@hotmail.com).

### Toronto Unschooling Association

Toronto Area life learning support group. Social activities and learning opportunities for families with children, with a focus on community based learning and fun in a non-commercial fashion, with an emphasis on cost-free activities for the temporally challenged.

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

### Unschool Adventures

Unschool Adventures designs and leads innovative trips, both domestic and international, for independent teenagers. No two trips are the same, and each is designed with a specific mission in mind. We take advantage of off-season travel benefits by leading trips (typically two each year) in the spring and fall instead of summer and winter.

<http://www.unschooladventures.com/>

**Novel-Writing Retreat**, November 2009

**Australia Trip**, Jan/Feb 2010

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=44987605490>

### Muskoka Homeschoolers Linked

Muskoka Homeschoolers Linked--MHSL E-group's goal is to establish an on-line community for the ever-growing number of Homeschooling families living full or part-time in the **Muskoka, Parry Sound and Almaguin Areas**. Its purpose is to give homeschoolers a place to share field trip ideas, fun outings or educational events, dates and times, curriculum ideas or questions, group meeting dates and time reminders, craft ideas, book recommendations, educational websites, used curriculum, local curriculum sales, as well as additional daily support and a discussion place for homeschooling families. It is open to individuals of all faiths and educational philosophies. The only requirement is respect for the sincere opinions of others. Religious debating and Flaming are prohibited. Merchant/Vendor Advertising is not allowed without moderator approval. Used curriculum for sale may be posted at any time.

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

### Teach New and Used Curriculum Fair

June 12, 2009

6:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Mohawk College Campus

411 Elgin St

Brantford, ON

Contact: Brenda Haviland at 519-443-4558

Used Tables Contact: [7harts@sentex.net](mailto:7harts@sentex.net)

### Shine with Unschooling Conference We Shine in 2009!

June 17-21, 2009

Crowne Plaza Fallsview

Niagara Falls, ON

1-800-263-7135

<http://weshineconference.blogspot.com/>

### HOME RULES SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND DEADLINES

If you would like to submit a piece to 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 no restrictions, although the newsletter is only twelve pages! When making a submission, please include a brief bio, 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** - 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.