



homeschool iowa

A PUBLICATION OF THE NETWORK OF IOWA CHRISTIAN HOME EDUCATORS | WINTER 2017

Features:

**Finding Your NICHE:
Southeast Iowa**

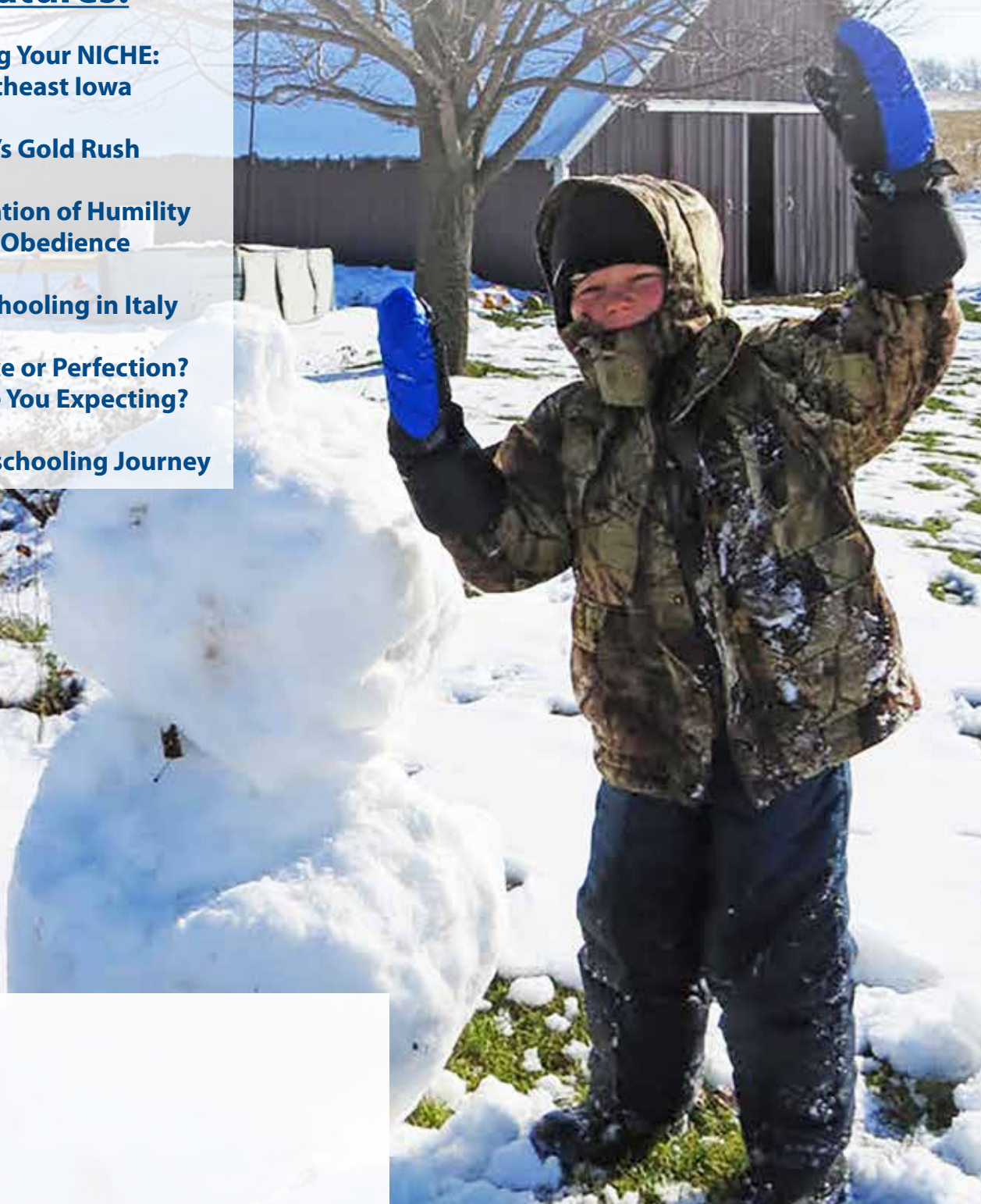
Iowa's Gold Rush

**A Foundation of Humility
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Homeschooling in Italy

**Excellence or Perfection?
What Are You Expecting?**

Our Homeschooling Journey



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Your support helps provide an informative website, toll-free number for homeschool questions, homeschool publications, statewide graduation, annual conference with nationally-known speakers and Iowa's largest homeschool curriculum hall, legal liaisons, Homeschool Day at the Capitol, support for homeschool groups and leaders, homeschool national honor society, and support for national homeschool research.

Reminder:

All 2017 NICHE Memberships will expire on December 31, 2017. We provide this magazine as a free resource to our members and to those who have recently contacted us or attended our events. If you are not a member of NICHE, we hope you will join us. Register online at homeschooliowa.org.

More about the HSLDA Discount

NICHE members are eligible for a \$20 discount on Home School Legal Defense Association membership (new or renewal). When you join NICHE, simply write the NICHE Group Discount Number (available by emailing niche@homeschooliowa.org) on your HSLDA application or renewal form. Pay only \$95 (normally \$115) per year. Or sign up online: www.hslda.org.

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what’s the point?

The NICHE Board believes that even more important than quality academics is eternal salvation from the penalty and power of sin. While we come from different church backgrounds, we, with all true Christians, agree on the fundamentals of salvation:

1. All people are in rebellion against the God who created them and deserve eternal punishment for that rebellion (sin).
2. God, in love, sent His sinless Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross as payment for the sins of sinful humanity, rising again from the dead.
3. Jesus’ death and resurrection provide forgiveness of all sin and reconciliation with God to any who repent and believe in Him.
4. Salvation cannot be earned by any act on our part; it must be received as a free gift by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

If you’d like to talk more with someone about your relationship with Jesus Christ, we invite you to write niche@homeschooliowa.org for a confidential and biblical response.

**Winter Edition
 Cover Photo Contest**

Congratulations to our winner, Jessica Beaver, whose photo of the first snowman of the season at Grandma’s farm is featured on our Homeschool Iowa Winter 2017 Magazine Cover.

Runner Up: Liz Hendress

This gorgeous picture is of a tree located at the edge of the cornfield behind her house. It was taken during a snowstorm, and the tree branches are heavy with fresh snow.



magazine

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our mission

To provide Christ-centered events, communication, and resources to better equip, inform, and encourage Iowa home educators to the glory of God!



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On the Shoulders of Giants

BY ELIZABETH BAILEY

I wandered through the groups of homeschooling families to an open spot on my picnic blanket. It was the local homeschool support group picnic, and I was feeling a bit overwhelmed with the unfamiliar faces surrounding me and the repeated request from my children for assistance with their plates of food.

Then she sat down with a sigh of relief: one of the pioneers of the homeschooling movement. Quickly I finished cutting my toddler's meatball and scooted towards her chair, eager for a chance to talk. Several nearby moms and I talked with the Pioneer about homeschooling life, principles, and methods.

The more questions we asked, the more wisdom and insight poured from the Pioneer to the eager moms beside her. Some of the moms didn't know who she was and were surprised to learn that the Pioneer had not only written fundamental books about homeschooling, but had been homeschooling before it was legal. She is one of the reasons we have the ability to homeschool – someone who fought hard for freedom and won.

When the Pioneer learned I served on the Homeschool Iowa board, she inquired, after, how we were doing. I updated her on the organization's current work and challenges. And there was a long pause.

"People need to support their state homeschool organizations," she said, with a firm conviction in her voice. "For-profit conventions and companies aren't the ones protecting our freedom to homeschool. The state homeschool organizations are the ones on the front lines. State organizations are the watchdogs of

homeschooling freedom!"

It's true. For 25 years now, Homeschool Iowa has been tirelessly working to promote and protect homeschooling freedoms in the Iowa legislature. Homeschool Iowa is the trusted source in Iowa for accurate information on homeschooling laws and options and are constantly working to assist families whose freedoms are threatened. The Pioneer knew and understood the difficult work and encouraged me to press on, even with the toddlers clutching at my knees. I was encouraged.

The evening passed and, finally, the Pioneer turned to her loving daughter, who has just started homeschooling her own son, and said: "I'm ready to go."

The Pioneer put her hand through her daughter's arm, and she, in turn, took her son's hand. They walked away, three generations of homeschooling, arm in arm, hand in hand.

"She is a Giant," I whispered to the mothers next to me. The Pioneer's stature was small and her step slowed by recent illness, but everyone knew I was not speaking of height, but of heart and of a life well lived."



Elizabeth Bailey is a second generation homeschooler who serves on the NICHE board with her tall, dark, and handsome husband, Joe. She works as a stay at home mother to her four children and in the past has worked as a short-order cook, academic coach, and librarian. Elizabeth has a B.A. in Social Sciences from Thomas Edison State College.

REMEMBER

**those who LED you,
who SPOKE the WORD OF GOD to you;
and CONSIDERING
the result of their conduct,
IMITATE their FAITH.**

Hebrews 13:7

(NASB)

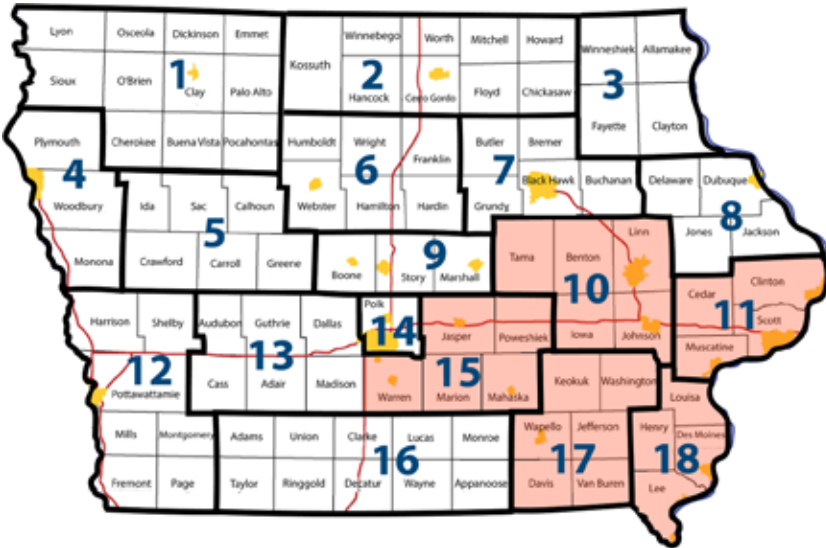


Finding Your NICHE

BY JENN WARREN

Regional Focus: Southeast Iowa

NICHE Regional Representatives:



Terri Nowotny
Region 10



Brenda Kelly
Region 10



Jennifer Miller
Region 17



Dawn Cowman
Region 15



Natalie Schneckloth
Region 11



Kathryn Wilson
Region 11

We contacted our Region 10, 11, 15, 17 and 18 Representatives, asked a variety of Facebook groups, and did a little Google searching to compile this list of things to do, see, and know about Southeast Iowa! We also had a couple of students visit The Pearl Button Museum in Muscatine and write about what they learned. (article on page 9) Do you have anything to add to the conversation? Join us on our Homeschool Iowa Discussion Group on Facebook and chime in!

Region 18, Lisa Chase (region18@homeschooliowa.org), recommended that families visit the Heritage Museum (dmchs.org) and Snake Alley (Google it!), both in Burlington. She also said that there is an active co-op in the area that meets twice a

month and does field trips together as well.

Region 17, Jennifer Miller (region17@homeschooliowa.org), said that homeschooling families should visit The American Gothic House, a historic site and landmark in Eldon. This home provided the now famous backdrop for artist Grant Wood's painting, American Gothic (www.americangothichouse.net).

Region 15, Dawn Cowman (region15@homeschooliowa.org), noted that a fun place to visit in her area is Pella. There is a historical village where you can learn all about Pella's Dutch heritage, bakeries, meat markets, the original house where the founder of Pella, Dominic Scholte lived, and so much more. There is also a learning center at Lake Red Rock just a few miles outside of Pella,



Experiencing The American Gothic House



Exploring Old Fort Madison



Wildcat Den State Park, Muscatine County

walking and biking trails, and places to see bald eagles along the river. There are also several homeschool support groups in the area. including one who sponsors a choir that hosts annual concerts and plans several other activities each year.

Region 11, Natalie Schneckloth and Kathryn Wilson (region11@homeschooliowa.org), sent along a great list of potential field trip places, including the Sawmill Museum in Clinton (www.thesawmillmuseum.org), the Pine Creek Grist Mill in Muscatine (www.pinecreekgristmill.com), and the Herbert Hoover National Historic site in West Branch (www.hoover.archives.gov). The Quad Cities area is blessed with a large and very active co-op. Additionally there are some informal, smaller support groups in the region. The Quad Cities co-op has both an elementary and a teen group. They sponsor regular field trips, service projects, festivals, and teacher training. Membership in the co-op is not required to take advantage of the teacher training. This co-op also runs a curriculum lending library.

Region 10, Terri Nowotny and Brenda Kelly (region10@homeschooliowa.org), Region 10 includes Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, both large cities where a wide variety of museums and historic sites can be found. Terri especially recommended visiting the Amana Colonies (www.amanacolony.com) and attending the annual Indian Pow Wow (www.meskwakipowwow.com). There are several active homeschool support groups and co-ops in the region. Terri and Brenda can put you in touch with the group that most meets your needs.

When we polled the various homeschool Facebook groups in Southeast Iowa we received several suggestions of places to check out for their historic, educational and family fun value. Here's a list of some of those top places, in no particular order!:

- Geode Hunting in Keokuk
- The Villages of Van Buren
- Nelson Pioneer Farm in Oskaloosa
- Dumont Museum, Sigourney
- Lancaster Schoolhouse in Lancaster
- The Children's Museum in Coralville
- Museum of Natural History in Iowa City
- Ice skating in Coralridge Mall and roller skating in Wellman



Traipsing through the Amana Colonies



I-80 Trucking Museum



Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

*Have Questions?
Need Resources?
Need to find a Support Group?
Reach out to your Regional Rep!*

Each regional representative is a seasoned homeschooling veteran with extensive practical skills and wisdom that come from years of experience.

**Find out more on our website:
www.homeschooliowa.org**

- Carnegie Museum in Fairfield
- Harvestville Farms in Donnellson
- Starrs Cave Nature Center in Burlington
- Old Fort & Historic Iowa State Penitentiary in Fort Madison
- Lake Iowa & the free classes they host from the Iowa DNR

The best part of putting together this regional focus is that I was able to make a personal connection with another homeschooler who lives just down the road from me, and we are planning a get-together soon. There is nothing as good as sitting down across the table from another person in real life and having a personal connection with good conversation. If you are not part of a homeschool co-op, support group, or informal group of homeschooling parents, I encourage you to reach out to your NICHE Regional Representative and ask for some help connecting with another family or two in your area.



Do you want your region to be our next Regional Focus? Email me at editor@homeschooliowa.org! Jenn is a happily married, crazy busy work at home, homeschooling mom of two, who thrives on coffee and God's amazing grace.



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Iowa's Gold Rush

BY ABBY AND EMMA VALIENTE, STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS

Our family recently visited the Muscatine History and Industry Center for a homeschool field trip. Nestled inside there is all kinds of history about The Pearl Button Capital of the World, and more. We were given a tour by the museum's assistant director, Terry Eagle, and were told about the interesting history of pearl button factories all around the country.

It started with John Frederick Boepple, who first made pearl buttons in Germany from ocean mussels. Ocean mussels are not easy to find, and business was not doing well. John had a friend in America that sent a mussel over to him with a note telling him how the rivers were choked with them. John decided to go to America. He chose the Muscatine area because of the bend in the river, which would be filled with the most mussels. When he got there, he found out that the rivers were indeed choked with thousands of mussels! That is where it all began.

Pearl buttons were a sign of wealth, so there was a lot of demand for them, and the button business started booming. John hired people to harvest shells, crack them open, and then give the shells to him. People would do that all over the Quad City and Mississippi River area and have the shells imported to Muscatine. The pearl button industry was Iowa's gold rush!

John Frederick Boepple cut the blanks for the buttons by hand. The blanks then had holes put in them so that you could sew them onto clothing. Since business was booming, button makers invented better machines to make the pearl buttons. The factories started popping up all over Iowa. Boepple, being stubborn in his ways, did not want to use new technology not made by him; therefore, he refused to make them any way but the original way he had come up with. Boepple said "I will never use machines to cut my shells. I will only do it my way".

The mussels were collected with a crowfoot bar or people waded in the river and picked them up by hand. Boepple was clamming the river when he stepped on a sharp mussel. Boepple did not think his injury was serious so he continued to work in



the river and contracted an infection. By the time he went to the hospital it was too late and they could not save him. Boepple died in January of 1912 because of what he discovered, and because he couldn't stop doing what he was passionate about.

With the invention of the washing machine, pearl buttons became less and less popular. The washing machines were ruining the pearl buttons with all the chemicals in the soap. Since the pearl buttons were not washable, the plastic button became popular. Additionally, mussels were getting scarce because of over-harvesting, making pearl buttons more expensive. Of course, the pearl buttons are better looking. Like Terry Eagle said during our tour, "Pearl buttons are jewels and plastic buttons are tools."

The button factory in Muscatine lasted from 1890-1967. The button factory business lasted for about a hundred years. Soon people had perfected the button making machines. And mostly women worked on the machines because it was a tedious job. And back then men only did the heavy lifting. At the peak of the pearl button boom about half of the local population worked in button factories.

We highly recommend visiting the Pearl Button Museum because of the rich history inside this small building. Don't let its size fool you! The museum is always finding things to add. Terry Eagle told us all about how the pearl button history includes science, math, and history as well. Come and learn about Muscatine's wonderful history and learn about the beautiful pearl buttons!

Thank you, Terry Eagle, for giving us a tour and showing us your magnificent pearl buttons!

Abby and Emma Valiente reside in Columbus Junction, Iowa with their family and volunteered with the Children's Program at the 2017 Homeschool Iowa Conference. Their mom, Davina, runs a local homeschool support group for Columbus Junction area moms to connect and plan field trips together.



A Foundation of Humility and Obedience

BY KIM STILWELL

The daily task of parenting can be exhausting. We love our children. They are precious to us. But raising children is hard work. It would be a lot easier, at least in the short term, if we let our children have their way in everything. But then we would be doing our children a great disservice. We would also be going against the God-given chain of command. God's Word is very clear. Children are a gift from God and, as parents, we are supposed to raise our children to honor and glorify God. Children are to obey their parents. Our home should be God-centered, not child-centered. In other words, the parents are in charge, weighing their decisions in light of God's Word.

Sometimes this is a hard concept to put into practice. It can be difficult to see our children disappointed or unhappy. As our kids get older and more mature, they can often be an integral part of decision making. We should welcome their respectfully-given suggestions and truly consider what they say. But, ultimately, Dad and Mom make the final decisions.

If we, as parents, are confident we have made the best decision for our family, we should not allow our children to sway us. Children can try to control us with their tears, pouting, and silent treatment. Some children should seriously consider becoming lawyers, because you walk away from their arguments wondering if they are right and you are wrong. Other children seem to have been born with a victim status. These are sinful traits, not God-ordained ones. We need to call their sin for what it is and help them to overcome these manipulative behaviors. There are times, especially as our children get older, when we may not feel very smart or wise in our decisions. But, trust me, if you are striving to live your life in a way that is pleasing to God, you are wiser than your six-year-old and even your sixteen-year-old. While it

may give them temporary satisfaction to get their way, we are harming them greatly if we allow them to run the show.

Many of our rules are family rules. Some examples of these family rules would be that each child is expected to take their plate to the sink after a meal and that bedtime is at 8:00. These rules may change as the years go by, and there may be times when exceptions are made to the rules. That is fine. They are family rules and not direct commands from Scripture. But our children still need to obey these rules because we are their God-given authority.

Then there are God's rules. There are never exceptions to these rules, and these rules never change. It will never be okay for our child to lie. Our children need to respect others and to show kindness, because this is what God expects of them. When our children break rules, either house rules or God-given rules, there should be consequences. At our house, the consequences were more severe if direct commands from God were broken.

However, the fact that parents are children's God-given authority is not to imply in any way that we should have a dictator complex. We should not constantly be saying "no" just to show we are "in charge" or because it is more convenient for us. If Jeff and I can say "yes" to our kids, we do. Our motive for expecting obedience is because it honors God and because we love our children. We know that learning to submit to God-given authority is what is best for them, both practically and spiritually.

The vast majority of our time with our children should be spent in building a relationship with them. Read to them. Laugh with them. Have them work alongside of you. Go on adventures with them. Pray with them. Read God's Word together. Faithfully and regularly attend church with them. Smile at them of-

ten, even if they are just walking through the room. Make it very clear to your children that you love spending time with them and that they are important to you. If your children knows this, your relationship can weather those times when you must give needed correction and consequences. In fact, your relationship will probably grow and thrive during those times as well.

After my last article, several people asked me what I meant by “avoid lecturing like the plague.” I am very thankful that they asked so that I could clarify. My “avoid lecturing” comment did not mean that we should not verbally correct and admonish our children or teens. Quite the contrary, it is our job as parents to do so. But sometimes we tend to think that if we talk about something for ten minutes and re-explain it in ten different ways, it will sink in more. In reality, our children remember simple Biblical truths so

much better. For example, “When you speak to me that way, it does not honor God nor does it honor me as your God-given authority” makes a much bigger impact than a long discourse on respecting parents. (If the child has a habit of being disrespectful, the words should be followed by a consequence.)

While we work on teaching our children obedience and respect for others, we must not forget to teach them humility as well. Developing obedient children, just for the sake of having well-behaved kids, is not our goal. Our goal is to raise children who strive to glorify God in all they do. Most of us have seen families who have obedient children, yet the children are self-righteous. I have also seen families where the parents work hard on teaching their children obedience, yet the whole family is the epitome of humility, grace, and kindness.

Our mental image of a self-righteous person may be someone who has very strict beliefs and convictions. This may be the case at times, but there are many very humble families who have strict standards and beliefs. There are also very self-righteous families who believe they are more holy than the strict families because of their belief in their freedom in Christ. Any time we feel superior to a brother or sister in Christ, we are being self-righteous.

Obviously, we want our children to understand why we have certain standards. But instead of quietly living out our convictions, we can be tempted to criticize and gossip to our children about families and individuals who don't live up to our set of standards and beliefs. We definitely should explain to our children why we believe our standards and beliefs are pleasing and honoring to God, but it should not be with the attitude that we are more spiritual than others. Before God, we are all sinners, even if we sin differently than others.

Sometimes we do need to discuss other people with our children. Perhaps we even need to point out why we have chosen to do things differently than another family. However, discussing others in a negative light should be the exception instead of the norm. If we must discuss an individual or another family, we need to do it with humility, love, and concern. We should never convey a “we are more spiritual than they are” attitude. When we explain to our children why we have certain convictions and

why we believe the way we do, it needs to be done with an attitude of humility and grace.

Even when fellow believers are violating clear Biblical commands, we still need to show compassion, remembering that any of us have the potential to commit any sin. When we talk to our children about the person's sin (and if the sin is public, we should talk to our children about it), our tone should be one of concern for the person, such as, “It is heartbreaking to live in broken fellowship with our Savior. The consequences of sin are great. We need to pray for them. We need to encourage and help them to overcome this sin in any way we can.” We need to avoid a condescending, scornful, smug attitude at all cost.

I admit that line between being discerning and being critical can be very thin. We need to teach our children to be discerning without teaching them

to have a critical, prideful spirit. The latter will harm their relationships their whole life. However, a discerning spirit will enhance their relationships with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

A self-righteous person does not edify their brothers and sisters in Christ. We do not enjoy being around a critical person. If we sense that someone believes they are more “spiritual” than we are, we do not seek their counsel or desire to form a close relationship with them. On the other hand, we do enjoy being around a discerning, compassionate person. We confide in them and seek their advice. If we want our children to have a positive spiritual impact on others, we must teach them to be discerning without being critical or self-righteous.

Learning humility and obedience to authority is not something that stops when we grow up. For most of us, this is a life-long lesson. Having children gives us one more reason to work on this since we are their example. May God bless each of you as you raise your children in obedience and humility.



Kim has been married to Jeff, her high school sweetheart, since 1987. They have been blessed with five children: Joshua, married to Alissa; Joseph; Josiah; Jessica; and Jennifer. The older four are young adults, and Jennifer is in high school. Jeff and Kim have homeschooled their children since their oldest son started school. They make their home in Des Moines, Iowa.

“..sometimes we tend to think that if we talk about something for ten minutes and re-explain it in ten different ways, it will sink in more. In reality, our children remember simple Biblical truths so much better.”

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Incorporating Music in Home Education

BY MELODY WEDERGREN

"Melody, I took lessons as a child, but I quit. Now I regret it!" Then she took a deep breath and took a step back. I saw that familiar look of regret in her eyes. This is a phrase I hear constantly. In fact, I've heard it so often I started trying to keep track of everyone I had heard this from, but I lost count.

Music seems to be buried deep in our DNA as humans. One song can bring back memories, and immediately we are flooded with emotions. There are other songs that make us feel happy, complete, and carefree. Music is relaxing and intense, sorrowful and joyful. Watch the face of a baby when its mother begins to sing. This is the power of music.

It's no wonder the yearning to learn music is buried deep within our souls. Its benefits are subtle yet powerful. The ways music can help children advance is astounding.

Students who take music lessons have higher grades and graduation rates. Music wires a child's brain to understand math. Scales help them develop the ability to recognize patterns. Learning rhythms can boost their ability to understand division. There are some studies that suggest that starting music lessons before age 7 causes the brain to develop faster, enhancing a child's memory retention.

Fill the room with the sounds of a fiddle and banjo playing a bluegrass tune. Watch fingers begin to snap. Turn up the jukebox with a '50s jitterbug song. Watch feet begin to tap. Drive down the road and look for people singing and bobbing their heads to the radio. Music makes us move. The rhythm of music develops our coordination. Playing the piano will enhance a child's fine motor skills. Learning to play the same patterns with both hands and then learning to play the hands and fingers separately is a skill specific to playing an instrument. Not only are they learning to use the hands separately but also to play the fingers on separate notes and rhythms.

The routine of daily practice is the perfect way for children to learn the art of discipline. Before they ever play a note, they will learn how to sit, hold their hands, and where to place their feet. Consistent practice through the days and months will

show them how working toward a goal pays off. Playing piano requires lots of attention and thus will develop their ability to focus on an important task.

The free-spirited child who finger paints and a firstborn who doesn't like mud are two totally different humans. Parents know this: all children are different. And that means that children have different learning styles. Some are visual learners, while others learn by doing. The benefit of home education is that you can more easily accommodate both learning styles. Maintaining a good level of self-esteem and promoting healthy habits are all keys to a child's ability to succeed.

Every Tuesday afternoon, after school, Mom would pick us up with a snack ready to devour. We'd get in the car and make the one-way 60 mile-drive to our weekly piano lessons. The adventure was fun. And by the time we got back home it was time for bed. The drive was worth it, and it brought great rewards "I don't regret driving you to lessons every week," my mom will still say. Unfortunately, finding a good piano teacher isn't always easy. Distance, location, and schedule can all be barriers that hinder children from being able to participate in a music class.

Online education has opened a brand new spectrum of learning to students with online music lessons and curriculum giving parents the tools they need to successfully incorporate music education into their homeschool. Online lessons give students the ability to learn and practice at their own pace. For many parents, enrolling their children in music lessons can be overwhelming! However, most quality music programs focus on learning in bite-size chunks, making it is easier for students and less stressful for parents. Consider adding music lessons to your child's homeschool program!



Melody Wedergren is the Minister of Music at her local church and released her CD "Devotion" in 2015. In 2008, she founded Tune Bucket Music offering online music lessons in playing the piano and bass by ear after years of people expressing their interest in taking music lessons from her "if only you lived closer." Based on the understanding that people lead busy lives and have full schedules, Tune Bucket allows students to access music lessons at their convenience.



Aardvarks and Zucchini: A Des Moines mom's creative approach to teaching her child to read

BY LAURA CARLSON

Merriam Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines phonics as "the science of sound or a method of teaching beginners to read and pronounce words by learning the phonetic value of letters." As public and private schools experiment with various methods of teaching reading, public debate has increased. This is one mom's solution to help her struggling son, using aardvarks and zucchinis.

"Our second-grader couldn't read. He struggled every day at school. His teacher sent home worksheets every night, which we faithfully worked on. He just couldn't sound out the words," Joan Hentschel explains. "You know that comfortable feeling of reading together snuggled under a blanket on the couch? We weren't having that experience."

Hentschel was frustrated with the school for using what she called "invented spelling" which is when the child decides how to spell a word on his or her own. Nothing was marked as incorrect by the teacher. Of course, many of those invented spellings didn't match properly spelled words in a book, so her son couldn't enjoy reading. He was constantly asking how to pronounce words. He was frustrated and, more importantly, she was fearful he would struggle with learning his entire life.

When her second son was entering kindergarten, Hentschel debated quitting work to homeschool, but, at the time, her income was necessary for their family, so she began thinking about how she could help her son skip some of the frustrations her older son experienced.

"I remember my first-grade teacher had an array of words mounted on the walls around the classroom. I was enthralled. I sat at my desk and sounded out every word. I remember feeling so happy that I could read the word lake. The 'A' had a line over it for the long 'A' sound," Hentschel explained. "I knew I

could tutor the boys in phonics using the similar methods."

Understanding her children's attention spans, Hentschel developed a 15-minute lesson goal for each evening to last for 20 days. "A friend who home-educated his children loaned me a book to browse for some ideas. I wanted to boost his knowledge, to give him confidence to continue learning. I found a white board, purchased some colorful markers and began. I wrote 12 words on the whiteboard to study the first evening."

Why 12 words?

Hentschel chuckled, "12 words were all that would fit on the whiteboard."

"I had creative freedom to teach just enough phonics to do what I call 'jump start' reading. I wrote 'ouch' on the board and linked it with sun ray symbol. So, when the boys would see the sun ray symbol over a letter set they would remember it meant the 'ouch' sound each time they saw it."

Hentschel choose the short a sound to begin this process. F – B – P – T – H were the letters in the first lesson. She gradually increased the sounds presented for 20 days. Mixing those letters, she would list 12 words on the whiteboard: "hat, tap, cap, cat, sat, sap, bat, and tab for example. We would repeat a bit from the day before, and build upon the sounds. Then I wrote a short sentence for the boys to read like 'The tan cat can tap'. By the 20th evening, they could sound out words and read to each other. It became a family approach to learning."

Reading skills weren't the only tutoring Hentschel provided her children. "When the boys were young, our family would visit museums and parks in northern Chicago and wait in the long lines. While in line we wanted to focus our children on something helpful," continued Hentschel. "Because I am a mathematician, I would do algebraic problems with my son. I made up

stories like 'Joan has 12 apples in her bag' for him to solve. He kept asking for more challenges at school, asking to do more. We named states and capitols. I knew I could supplement and add critical thinking questions to our family time as the boys grew up."

That struggling second-grade student has grown up and now owns a private library in his home. "Both the boys are readers. One concentrates on technical works and the other fictional books," Hentschel says. "I am so proud of where they are today, and want to share these lessons with others working with a struggling learner. Reading together should be a warm, comfortable experience for children and parents."

In 2013, Hentschel and Suzanne Peyer, her sister and a graphic artist, partnered to put the homemade phonics system into a format parents could use with children as young as three to jump start reading skills. During this time, the sisters suffered the loss of their mother, which challenged the writing and editing process. "We were able to stay close, stay focused on the project through the obstacles and challenges of full-time jobs and living in separate states. It was difficult, but we persevered and published Aardvark to Zucchini Phonetic Alphabet Book in 2016. We also formed a company, Aardvark to Zucchini Press," shares Hentschel.

"Writing this book with my sister was so much fun. The italics, color, and bold print used in the book reinforce the lessons and then are repeated throughout the book just like I wrote on my whiteboard years ago," Hentschel says. "Suzanne illustrated the book beautifully. We would send ideas back and forth to finalize how to artistically represent a word. It has been rewarding to read thank-you letters from parents whose children have learned and gained confidence in reading lessons."

For the tech-savvy family, Aardvark to Zucchini Press launched an app in October 2017. "The app has all the lessons the book does, and it allows projection of the lessons on the wall for larger families or classrooms," said Hentschel. "Age 2 or 3 would be good age for introduction to the book. The sentences are colorful, the subjects simple and fun." Hentschel enjoys seeing others benefit from the work she did to help her children learn to read when they were young. "We purposely selected high-quality cotton paper so the book will wear well," Hentschel said. "One parent reported their child slept with the book because he loved it so much. We were showing the book at a museum, and a child was dancing with it. It is rewarding to see others benefit from the lessons just like my children."

For more information about this full color, 192-page textbook-quality book, visit www.aardvardtozucchini.com where you can preview a chapter. The website uses the same fonts that are in the book. Aardvark to Zucchini Press, Inc. is offering a 20% discount to Homeschool Iowa readers using this code: IAHomeSch20 on their website store.



Laura Carlson is an Iowa born, raised, and educated writer living in central Iowa. Her hobbies include gardening, reading, bicycling, and of course, writing. She is a graduate of Iowa State University and has worked as a diner dishwasher, website developer, cleaning lady, and addictions therapist. Her motto is "Life: Live It."

Has Your Child Been Diagnosed With Dyslexia?

BY SONIA CULVER, M.A., CCC-SLP

Wondering what to do next? Seeking an individualized tutoring program for your child might be necessary. There are franchise and independently-owned practices that focus on improving a student's ability to read. It can be daunting trying to find a resource that fits your child's needs. There are many questions that should be asked to help you determine the right fit for you and your child. Below are some important questions to ask when seeking out a tutor.

1. What are your qualifications? It is important to choose a tutor who is trained in identifying underlying missing links that may be contributing factors to your child's reading delay. Tutors who do not have an education background may not be able to identify these important missing components with your child's abilities.

2. What specific assessments do you use to monitor progress? Does the tutor have specific tools to measure the progress? If not, a family can invest a significant amount of time and money into the efforts that they are not certain are working. It would be very frustrating to get a year down the road and realize that the approach is not working and needed to be adapted a long time ago.

3. How do you communicate my child's progress and status to me? How often and what does that communication look like? You should receive emails, phone calls, and progress notes. Ask what information will be conveyed in those updates. You should expect at least some data to be collected on a weekly basis.

4. What specific strategies do you use for children with reading decoding issues? Are they research based? Is it a "cookie-cutter approach"? Does the tutor believe that one program fits all students' needs?

5. Do you work with reading comprehension (understanding) and, if so, what strategies do you use? If the tutor's strategy to work on reading comprehension is something like this, "We have the student read a paragraph and ask him/her questions about the paragraph," that is really just assessing. That is not giving him/her effective tools to help him/her retain information. If this is the only strategy used, I would seek out another tutor that has training in helping your child to create images in his/her head of what is being said and what he/she is reading. This will help him/her to retain information.

6. How often do we need to come for sessions and how long are the sessions? Expect 1-3 times per week for approximately 30 minutes to an hour. This will vary depending on your child's needs and your family's availability. Creating a healthy balance between helping your child achieve academic success and letting him/her be a kid is important.

7. How are you different from other tutoring services?

Can your tutor tell you specific ways that they are different?



Sonia Culver, M.A., CCC-SLP is the founder of Enrichment Therapy and Learning Center, P.C., with locations in North Liberty and Urbandale, Iowa. Her passion is to change kids' lives by helping them to achieve effective communication skills and academic success.

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2018

EVENT CALENDAR

hi capitol day 2018

March 13, 2018 • Iowa State Capitol • Des Moines, Iowa

This day is so much more than a day to “lobby” our legislators and provide them with the “face” of homeschooling in Iowa. It’s a day of educational opportunities, a day in which your family can make a huge difference! Save the date and plan to join us!

March 13, 2018

register online: homeschooliowa.org



hi graduation 2018

May 19, 2018 • Des Moines First Church • Des Moines, Iowa

Graduating homeschooled students and their families are invited to participate in one of our 2018 Homeschool Iowa Graduation services. While NICHE does not certify the diplomas awarded (homeschooling parents do that), we do provide a beautiful and memorable graduation ceremony.

May 19, 2018

details and participation guidelines on our website: homeschooliowa.org

hi conference 2018

May 31-June 2, 2018 • Corallville Marriott Hotel & Convention Center

Your opportunity to gather with other homeschooling families from around the state and refresh, renew, and refuel your spirit. We’ve lined up some exciting speakers including: Heidi St. John, Sonya Shafer, and Eric Ludy. Our Exhibitor spaces will soon be filling up and we are working on plans for our annual curriculum sale, children’s program, teen tracks and MORE!

May 31 - June 2, 2018

registration opens soon! homeschooliowa.org





Extend your visit on Homeschool Iowa Capitol Day

BY JENNIFER CIHA

Plan a fun family visit to Des Moines this year around Homeschool Iowa Capitol Day, March 13, 2018. After enjoying fellowship with other like-minded families, meeting and greeting your Iowa representatives, explore one of the many educational opportunities in the metro.



Invite a few other homeschool families and get group discount admission rates to the Science Center of Iowa, Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, and Blank Park Zoo. These museums participate in reciprocal programs, so check your current museum memberships.



Consider the State Historical Museum (located one block west of the Capitol), Iowa Gold Star Military Museum, I-Cubs Stadium Principal Park tour, Animal Rescue League of Iowa, Iowa Public Television Station for inexpensive museums and tour options. Please plan ahead. Some tours may need to be scheduled in advance and may require a minimum number of participants.



Older students will appreciate Salisbury House & Gardens, Terrace Hill (the Governor's mansion), Iowa Hall of Pride, Jordan House, Wallace House, Hoyt Sherman Place, Des Moines Art Center, World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, and Celebrate! Innovation™ Learning Exhibition (located at Des Moines Area Community College).



Have active kids? Jump on trampolines at Skyzone and Get Air. Inflatable fun is found at The Playground for Kids, Monkey Joes, and Pump It Up. Climb Iowa has over 10,000 square feet of indoor rock climbing. Putt-putt a round or two at Glow Golf or try their Lazer Maze Challenge. Zoom and race at MB2 Raceway indoor go-karting facility. Backyard Adventures' indoor showroom playground lets kids enjoy backyard fun for a small fee. Swing a ball and bowl at Val Lanes, Plaza Lanes, Air Lanes, Warrior Lanes, Merle Hay Lanes and Bass Pro Shop. Test out your balance at Skate West, Skate North, Skate South. If the ice hasn't melted, go ice skating at Brenton Skating Plaza. Take in God's beautiful nature and hike one of several trails, including Art On The Trail at Jordan Creek Trail.



Make your visit extra special and splish-splash at Ramada Tropics Resort & Conference Center Hotel or Adventureland Inn. Both feature a small indoor water park.



Download the Iowa Culture App, an interactive map that highlights the arts, history, science, and nature all across the state. Planning is a snap with the Favorites tool.



Don't forget to capture a few photos. Your children may not always remember every exhibit, tour, or experience, but they won't forget the memories of connecting as a family!



Jennifer Ciha is a NICHE homeschool graduate and helps coordinate the social media for HomeSchoolIowa.org. She and her husband, Tom, currently homeschool their two children in Ankeny, Iowa. Jennifer blogs about her family's field trips and adventures at www.fielddtriplowa.com where you can find practical information and inspirational photographs.



Homeschooling in Italy

BY LAURA GEERTZ, STUDENT CONTRIBUTOR

Two years ago, my family and I left our home in the States to move halfway around the world to Italy for my dad's job. As you can imagine, that was a big move for your average American family. At this news, my mom thought it would be a good time to start homeschooling. So many changes in so little time. I thought I would hate it - no friends to see every day at school and living in a country that doesn't speak my language. I was wrong, though. I have learned so much, and I love living here.

Homeschooling in Italy became legal a few years ago, so it's not very common yet. When Italians ask me why I'm not in school and I explain that I do school at home, they think it is weird or illegal. I have a few Italian friends who homeschool. We do a co-op with them and some of our American friends. We learn academics and culture from each other. I have not learned the Italian language fluently, but I know enough to get by.

Being a teenager and living in Italy is amazing, although I don't get some of the experiences that other kids my age have. I cannot have a "real" job, but I get work experience by babysitting and walking dogs. I cannot drive here, so I rely on my parents to take me to my activities. Another challenge is isolation. We only know a few Americans who live here to talk with or spend time with. Sometimes I just miss our culture - hearing my own language, having other families around to celebrate holidays our way, going to my favorite stores, eating some of my favorite foods, or being in the same time zone as my friends or grandparents. The internet is slow and unreliable, so I don't use my electronics as much as other teens.

Living in Europe has given me new insight on history. I have the opportunity to see history firsthand and visit places I have only read about in books. I have seen World War I trenches where soldiers hid and fought, and World War II concentration camps. I have seen the rubble of Pompeii and been to France to see the places of the French Revolution. The things that I have seen and learned here will stay with me for the rest of my life.

I love being homeschooled here because I get to experience more of a different culture and enjoy this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I take horseback riding lessons at a local ranch and help out with their horse camp in the summer, teaching both Americans and Italians how to ride. A friend of our family, Francesca, loves to cook. She likes to come over and show us the true Italian way of making fresh pasta, or tiramisu. We like it too. Another one of our friends, Nerina, is like my Italian grandmother, my nonna. She taught me the Italian language and has never-ending knowledge about history, culture, and customs. Her husband, Diego, doesn't speak much English but is super funny and is a really good saxophonist. Living here has given me a different viewpoint on a lot of things. I used to think that being fast and efficient was everything, but living in Italy's slower pace has given me a new appreciation for quality time, like enjoying good food, my friends, and my family.

Not only do I have a new appreciation for time, I also have a different perspective on how the world views us. The people here watched the 2016 elections and were interested to know what we thought. Not only were they interested in our viewpoint, they understood that our new president will affect their lives as well. When we saw news coverage on the post-election riots on Italian television, our US culture looked so hateful and violent





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compared to the people we live around. This kind of thing helped me understand how other countries look at us, how we represent ourselves. This is very meaningful to me and helps me be more conscious on how I present myself. Americans are known to be noisy and self-centered, and I try to be the opposite.

I am very thankful to my mom and dad for taking me to see tons of Roman ruins and for coaxing me out of my home, sometimes to go on trips. I am so very lucky and thankful, that they took me to Pisa for my 14th birthday and Paris for my 16th. I wish that someday I can come back and revisit my favorite places and friends after we move. Over the time I have lived here, I have fallen in love with the area and people, but I will be glad to go back to Iowa next summer.

Picture Captions:

1) Learning about Leonardo's life at his home in Vinci.

2) In Paris, we toured the city by bike and learned about the history of French kings and the Revolution.

3) This is a trench that was used by both Austrian and Italian soldiers during WWI - as the front moved back and forth across the border at that time.

4) Here we are participating in the grape harvest at a local vineyard. Wine is an important part of culture and tradition here.

5) Contemplating first century entertainment in this Roman arena in Verona.

6) Getting instruction and firsthand experience at cheese making the old-fashioned way.

Laura is in 10th grade. She has studied clarinet for 6 years and would love to learn how to play lots of instruments.



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Excellence or Perfection? What Are You Expecting?

BY NATALIE SCHNECKLOTH

As a child I was known as “highly talented.” I was one of those kids that was pretty good at most anything and picked up on new skills rather quickly. I often was asked and expected to perform at every turn. It created in me confidence in some ways but in others, it created more of a perfectionistic performer mentality. As I got older, and some things became more difficult to learn and do, it became more difficult to “perform” to the standard that was expected.

I believed that what was needed of me to be accepted and loved was to attain perfection. And of course, perfection was only attainable by Jesus Christ. I began to be defeated under the weight of failing to perform to such standards of perfection, and rejection became my new identity. In order to avoid the negative feelings that come with rejection and failure, I became content with becoming a wallflower and seeking mediocrity - in being “just good enough.” If I wasn’t outstanding in much, then I wasn’t noticeable and, therefore, rejectable.

In the last several years, God has started a good work in me - teaching me to be humble rather than downcast. To enjoy doing things well, but learning not to hang my identity and acceptance on what people think or say about what I’ve done. To strive for excellence rather than unattainable perfection or contentment with mediocrity.

One of the ways He has shown this to me is through my son. My middle child, David, is very similar to me. He has always gotten things much easier than others his same age - reading at age 3, doing first-grade work at age 4. Today he’s age 8 and doing mostly fifth-grade work right along with his 10-year-old sister. I’ve grown to expect a lot out of him. Yet, like me when I was young, he’s started to hit a point in his life and learning process where things aren’t coming quite so easy anymore. Spelling words are a bit more difficult, math and english too. History is more reading and a bit less creative play. And in general, chores and responsibilities are increasing in number and in difficulty.

One day, as I was struggling to get through to him and his poor attitude about his lack of effort in doing better, a question was posed to my mind. “Are you asking for excellence or perfection?” I paused in mid-discipline and thought for a moment. As my son stared at me, I could see his tender

heart behind his frustrated glare. I could see myself - 8 years old, feeling defeated, unloved and unaccepted. I looked into his eyes and told him how much I loved him. Asked him if he thought I was asking him to be perfect. And as he replied with a tearful “Yes,” the little girl in me began to cry a little too. I asked him to forgive me for not giving him a clear picture of the Gospel. Reminding him and me that our acceptance isn’t ultimately in what we do, but in what Christ has already done. And because of what He has done, we are called and freed to strive for excellence instead of perfection. We are called to do all that we can do to the best of our ability and for the glory of God. If we try and skate by with little effort in life and do the bare minimum to get by, is that bringing glory to God? No matter how well my son or I

do in life, we are never more accepted and loved than we are right now; but will our lives point to God along the way so that other’s can see His goodness and glory in the gifts and talents He has give us to use?

This moment changed the dialogue between our hearts. And moments like this is why we homeschool. It’s not just to teach the “Three Rs,” but to

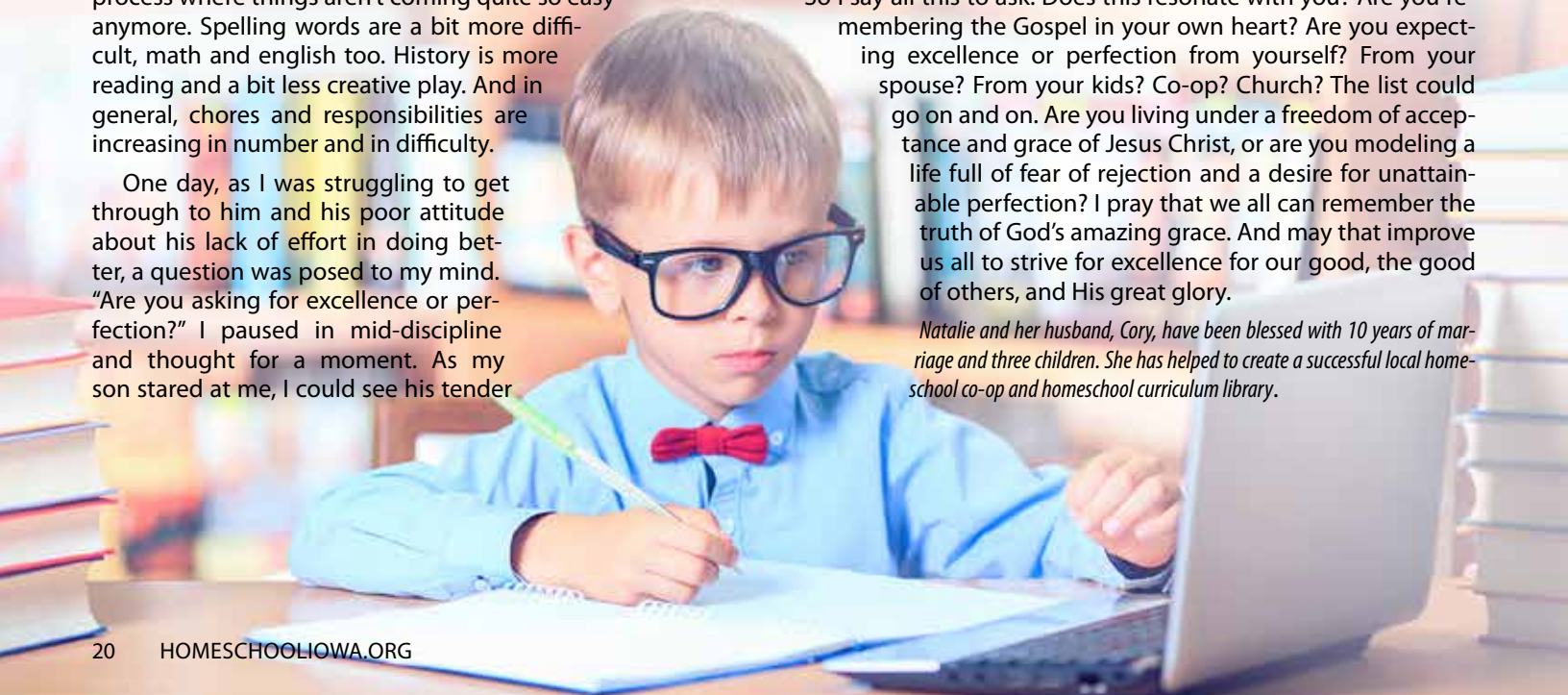
disciple our children’s hearts and minds and daily remind them (and ourselves) of the Gospel and not just American morality.

My son still struggles with attitude and striving for excellence rather than trying to rush and be done so he can move on to something else. (He’s 8, I expect that.) But the dialogue has changed. He doesn’t feel crushed under the weight of my criticism, because it’s sandwiched in by the truth of the Gospel - that I love him and accept him, and so does God because of Jesus. Yet we are still called to strive for excellence so that others can see God’s goodness, and experience that same love and acceptance and freedom to be excellent and not perfect.

So I say all this to ask: Does this resonate with you? Are you remembering the Gospel in your own heart? Are you expecting excellence or perfection from yourself? From your spouse? From your kids? Co-op? Church? The list could go on and on. Are you living under a freedom of acceptance and grace of Jesus Christ, or are you modeling a life full of fear of rejection and a desire for unattainable perfection? I pray that we all can remember the truth of God’s amazing grace. And may that improve us all to strive for excellence for our good, the good of others, and His great glory.

Natalie and her husband, Cory, have been blessed with 10 years of marriage and three children. She has helped to create a successful local homeschool co-op and homeschool curriculum library.

“..moments like this are why we homeschool. It’s not just to teach the ‘Three Rs’ but to disciple our children’s hearts and minds..”





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REQUIREMENTS:

>> No initial reporting required
If public school written request is received, use NICHE Independent Private Instruction Response Form

ACCESS AVAILABILITY:

>> No access to Dual Enrollment for public school services, activities, or Senior Year Plus options (*other than concurrent enrollment*)
>> No access defined in Iowa Code for Parent-Taught Driver Education

COMPETENT PRIVATE INSTRUCTION (CPI) Option 2 w/ Opt-Out Reporting

REQUIREMENTS:

>> No initial reporting required
ACCESS AVAILABILITY:
>> No access to Dual Enrollment for public school services, activities, or Senior Year Plus options
>> Access available for Parent-Taught Driver Education
Use NICHE Optional Report Form for CPI Option 2 with Opt-Out when applying for status as a teaching parent for PTDE.

OPTIONS WITH REPORTING AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC SCHOOL SERVICES

COMPETENT PRIVATE INSTRUCTION (CPI) Option 2 w/ Opt-In Reporting

REQUIREMENTS:

>> CPI Form A must be filed by Sept 1 or within 2 weeks after removing child from school
>> Annual assessment results report must be filed by June 30

ACCESS AVAILABILITY:

>> Access available for Dual Enrollment for public school services, activities, and Senior Year Plus options
>> Access available for Parent-Taught Driver Education

COMPETENT PRIVATE INSTRUCTION (CPI) Option 1 w/ Your Chosen Teacher

REQUIREMENTS:

>> CPI Form A must be filed by Sept 1 or within 2 weeks after removing child from school
>> Meet with your chosen teacher 8 times (2 per quarter)

ACCESS AVAILABILITY:

>> Access available for Dual Enrollment for public school services, activities, and Senior Year Plus options
>> Access available for Parent-Taught Driver Education

COMPETENT PRIVATE INSTRUCTION (CPI) Option 1 w/ HSAP* Teacher

REQUIREMENTS:

>> CPI Form A must be filed by Sept 1 or within 2 weeks after removing child from school
>> Meet with HSAP* teacher 16 times (4 per quarter)

ACCESS AVAILABILITY:

>> Access available for Dual Enrollment for public school services, activities, and Senior Year Plus options
>> Access available for Parent-Taught Driver Education

*Public School Homeschool Assistance Program



Our Homeschooling Journey

BY ZELDA ANDERSON

Our homeschooling journey began when we were newlyweds about 29 years ago. God gave us the opportunity to serve in the middle of the bush country of what was then known as Zaire, Africa, now Democratic Republic of Congo. My husband went as a high school technology and Bible teacher, I as a labor and delivery nurse. We lived on a mission station with many other missionaries and their children. Since there were not any English-speaking schools nearby the missions joined together to provide boarding schools to educate the children of missionaries. These schools are usually hundreds of miles from where the parents work. This boarding school had the philosophy that your children should be homeschooled until second grade because it was such an emotional burden to pull young children away from their parents at such a young age. Most parents were glad to do this to keep their young children home a little longer.

What we found interesting is that all these young children seemed very well rounded, obedient and joyful. We had never heard of homeschooling before this, but started to see a pattern in their lives that directly correlated to their education. They were being educated to see the whole world and that it did not revolve around their particular age group. We have seen the majority of these young kids grown up to be productive husbands and wives that love children and work in a variety of areas all over the world. We had dreams like that for our children.

Halfway in our term in Africa, Zaire had a major war that forced us to evacuate back to the Midwest where we grew up. God miraculously got us jobs in Ottumwa, southeast Iowa, in both our fields of expertise. Within a year of our return, God miraculously brought our two children, Michael and JinHee, in our family, one by birth and the other by adoption. Because of those seeds of homeschooling, we knew we had to get serious about how they would receive their education. We had both grown up being educated by public schools. But with my husband working in the public schools, we saw the good and bad of going that route again with our own children.

When our kids were about 2-3 years old, we started attending the NICHE Homeschool Iowa Conference to learn what this

journey would entail. With much prayer, it did not take long for God to show us that we would be homeschooling parents. We also found parents in our church, whom we call the pioneers of homeschooling and visited their homes to “see how it was done.” The journey became very real as we joined the Davis County Homeschool Assistance Program, with supervising teachers and their own children. We labored side by side through the intricacies of educating our own children. We cannot thank God enough for the testimony of those supervising teachers and their godly and practical encouragement to our own journey.

This was the most amazing journey that we have ever taken. It was also the hardest. But God used it to teach us right alongside our children. Each year I made it a point to attend the Homeschool



*The Anderson Family
Michael, Zelda, Mark and JinHee*

Conference. Like all normal moms, by the time April and May roll around, we are ready to be “done” with our school year and take a “break.” Many times, I told God, “this job is beyond my head, and you can release me at any time.” However, He profoundly used the moms and dads and speakers at each conference to give me my immunization boost to carry on the next year. I have hardly missed a year since their birth. Both kids graduated early from high school, and then went on to college. Our daughter has finished college and now is a teacher to 3rd grade children. She is definitely

using many skills she learned from her homeschool days. Our son is in graduate school, hoping to go on to medical school. He too is doing major teaching in his public health program and research job with the Iowa Center for Disease research. Over the years, we have all served as volunteers at the conferences. And I have mentored other homeschooling moms. The journey just keeps going.

As I look back on those 13 years of homeschooling, I am so grateful to God that He allowed our family to travel that road together. I miss those days, and many times I wish there was someone in the car with me to stop and learn something special when we pass a monument or museum. Both children have talked that when they marry and have children, someday, that they too will probably homeschool. Thank you to all the past and present NICHE members who helped us with God’s call on our lives. You were all a very instrumental part in that journey!



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