



homeschool iowa

A PUBLICATION OF THE NETWORK OF IOWA CHRISTIAN HOME EDUCATORS | SPRING 2018

Features:

**Finding Your NICHE:
Northeast Iowa**

Homeschooling Held Hostage

A Just Woman

The Man Talk

Beyond the Homeschool Years

**Helping Our Kids
Tell Truth from Fiction**

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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.
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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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Join Us for HI Conference 2018!

Laura Johnson and Crystal Wieland are Homeschool Iowa's new conference coordinators. They sat down with Homeschool Iowa Magazine to discuss the upcoming 2018 conference. Both of these ladies bring something different, yet similar, to the table as they spearhead conference plans: Lauren is the daughter of former Homeschool Iowa board members, Scott and Stephanie Bailey, she grew up as a conference volunteer, and plans to begin her children's homeschool journey this fall. As an avid homeschool mom, Crystal has been attending the NICHE Conference for the past seven years and, in her life before homeschooling, was an event coordinator.

Who should attend the NICHE Conference?

Lauren: Anyone who has children still in the home -- regardless of whether or not they plan to homeschool. Teaching the next generation encompasses all aspects of life and is not limited to the textbook arena. Be filled by the support of like-minded parents, be challenged by speakers who point upward and onward, and be prayed over by our staff and leaders who are ever-ready to lend a listening ear.

Crystal: Everyone! I have attended with my husband, my mom, and another homeschool mom. Each person has benefited from attending. Last year, my husband couldn't come, and I missed being with him. Conference always helps re-calibrate us and puts us on the same page for our family and our homeschool journey. I'm also surprised by how much my mom has enjoyed the conference. She loves her grandchildren and wants to be part of their childhood. Getting a glimpse into our world, as homeschoolers, has really enhanced her support of us.

What makes the NICHE Conference special from other conferences?

Lauren: While it can be beneficial to visit other conferences from time to time, we believe the benefits of attending your own state homeschool conference are invaluable. A crucial building block to a strong support system is networking with and meeting new people in your own community. Are you wondering where you can find a local homeschool group? Come meet your Regional Representative! Are you concerned about homeschooling laws and how they might change? Come meet your legislative liaison! Are you wondering how you can get further involved with the state organization? Come meet your Homeschool Iowa board members! You don't need to walk this journey alone. Let us walk it with you.

Crystal: I love homegrown local stuff, and the NICHE Conference is truly all that put together. I've attended this conference for the last seven years. The workshops are so plentiful, it's been hard to decide which one to go to at times. The vendor hall has been a great way to see new ideas. I've told my husband that conference is the new Christmas, and we try to budget accordingly. To find something so rich in our own backyard is great.

When and where is this year's conference located?

Crystal: May 31-June 2 in Coralville. As a Des Moines resident, I was surprised by how much I enjoyed going to Coralville and getting away from my obligations at home. The hotel and conference center are attached and make getting to workshops easy: no meters, no parking, and no walking. Also, everything you need is in walking dis-



tance of the hotel -- even a grocery store and a variety of restaurants.

Who are some of the featured speakers?

Lauren: Hop on our website, homeschooliowa.org, to find the complete list. You'll be surprised by the wide range of topics from which you are able to choose! However, I am most looking forward to hearing Eric Ludy. His passion is inspiring others to live boldly, walk powerfully, and give relentlessly for the gospel of Christ.

Crystal: There is quite the array of speakers! I'm personally looking forward to Sonya Shafer, with Simply Charlotte Mason. I try to follow the style of teaching that "Education is an Atmosphere, a Discipline, a Life." Mrs. Shafer is a great leader on this.

What is there for my kids?

Lauren: If you have small children, like myself, Mother's Room and Toddler Town are the places for you! Located on the second floor of the Marriott, you'll find a little reprieve with toys for the littles and refreshments for yourself. When you stop in, look for me, as I will be there with my newest -- coming May 12!

Crystal: Personally, we have done it all, from the children's program, to keeping the kids with us because I had an infant and needed the older one's help, to the kids staying at Grandma's so my husband and I could focus.

What blows me away, and makes a lot less work for parents, is the children's program directed by Scott and Hannah Kratzer. They have been leading this awesome program for eight years. That shows a lot of love and faithfulness to our kids and to NICHE. The children's program is an engaging "Vacation Bible School experience" which moves the kids through skits, small group learning, and Bible time -- all centered on a strong theme. This year's theme is The Great Adventure: a mission to pursue, a love to share! The two days are focused on a shipwreck adventure in the travels of David Livingstone.

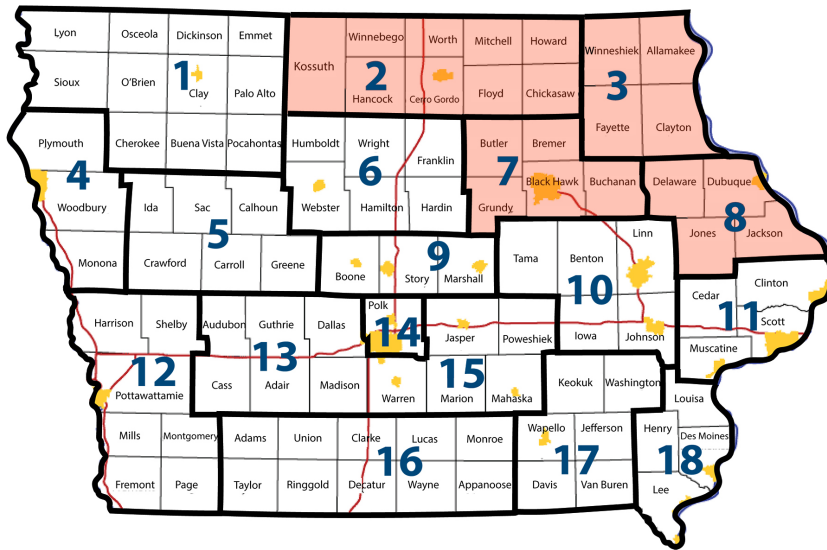
Is there anything new at the conference this year?

Lauren: Yes! Kicking off the last day of conference, we will be holding a Moms & Muffins and Dads & Donuts session. Heidi St. John will present a brief devotional, along with a time of fellowship, during Moms & Muffins, while Eric Ludy presents the same during Dads & Donuts. Come fuel your bodies with a scrumptious breakfast while our speakers fuel your spirit with encouragement.

Finding Your NICHE

BY JENN WARREN

Regional Focus: Northeast Iowa



We contacted our Region 2, 3, 7, and 8 Representatives, asked a few Facebook friends, and did a little Google searching to compile this list of things to do, see, and know about Northeast Iowa!

Region 2, Alicia Navarette (region2@homeschooliowa.org). Region 2 has some really interesting places to visit, including Hawkeye Buffalo Ranch in Fredericksburg, where the same family has farmed the land for over 150 years. Another neat place to visit is Fossil Park in Floyd County. Clear Lake has a fire museum, fishing, cabins, an art center, and so much more! You could spend a whole week just there at the lake. (clearlakeiowa.com) For those interested in learning all about recreational vehicles, take a tour at the Winnebago Factory. And in Mason City you can visit the boyhood home of Meredith Wilson, author of the musical, *The Music Man*.

Region 3, Kristen Borseth (region3@homeschooliowa.org), said that homeschooling families should visit the Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah (vesterheim.org). The Vesterheim museum has 12 historic buildings in addition to the museum and has been named one of the top 15 small museums in America. Another place Kristen recommends visiting is the Driftless Area Education Center in Lansing (http://allamakeecountyconservation.org/driftless-center.html). The director at the Driftless Area Education Center told us that there are

NICHE Regional Representatives:

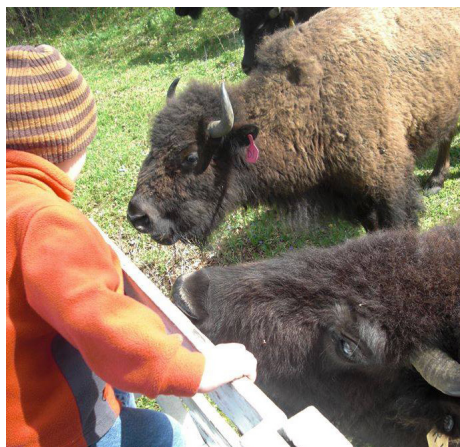


Alicia Navarette
Region 2

Kristen Borseth
Region 3

Jill Oppman
Region 7

Teresa Ott
Region 8



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Scarlett, Miller, Braxton (l-r) racing their Lego cars at Creative Learning Labs, Dubuque; March 2018
Submitted by Nicole H.

field trip options available with a naturalist if you make arrangements ahead of time; otherwise, you can drop in to visit any time. Additionally Region 3 has a variety of caves that you can tour on foot or by boat! There are a few homeschool groups and co-ops in Region 3 as well. To get connected, email Kristen.

Region 7, Jill Oppman (region7@homeschooliowa.org), noted that her region is a busy and interesting place! A few of the educational places she would have you visit are Underground City in Independence, the Science Imaginarium in Waterloo, and the Ice House Museum of Cedar Falls. The WCF Symphony offers educational classes and a lollipop orchestra. The University of Northern Iowa also has several activities for kids. There are also multiple homeschool groups throughout Region 7. Some are large with co-ops, and others are smaller with simple library get-togethers. All of the groups do field trips, park days, and a variety of other activities.

Region 8, with Teresa Ott (region8@homeschooliowa.org), encompasses the Dubuque area, which is filled with museums and historical sites. Some that were recommended are the Creative Adventure Lab (creativeadventurelab.org) and Eagle Point Park, which has 164 acres overlooking the Mississippi River and Lock & Dam #11 with a tri-state view of Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. Additionally, there is the Mississippi River Museum (www.rivermuseum.com). For food, Nicole, a homeschooler in the area, recommends Beecher's Ice Cream, Donut Boy Donuts, and The Mathias Ham House.

In Conclusion:

This feature has simply been a quick overview of what is available in these regions, but there are several other places in Northeast Iowa to check out too! A few from my bucket list are:

- Little Brown Church in the Vale - Nashua
- Bradford Pioneer Village - Nashua
- Big Springs Trout Hatchery - Elkader
- John Deere Tractor Museum - Waterloo
- Grout Museum - Waterloo
- Phelps Youth Pavilion - Waterloo
- Little Red Schoolhouse - Cedar Falls
- Hartman Nature Reserve - Cedar Falls
- Hanson's Dairy Farm - Hudson
- Laura Ingalls Wilder Park & Museum - Burr Oak
- And in every area of Iowa, the County Conservation Programs

are well worth your time to visit and participate in!

We will focus on Northwest Iowa in our next issue, and I would love to have your input! Email me at editor@homeschooliowa.org with your tips on places to visit, pictures of activities, and attractions in the Northwest area of the state.



allamakeecountyconservation.org

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:
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Julien Dubuque Monument
Digitally drawn artwork by Ashlyn, 14 years old | Submitted by Teresa C.

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Beyond The Homeschool Years

BY LAURA CARLSON

It is my hope that after reading this feature, second-generation homeschooling families will be encouraged to stay the course, and families new to homeschooling plan to finish the journey strong. Imagine we are sitting at my table holding cups of steaming tea and listening to three talented homeschool graduates share their educational stories. Where will your student's educational journey lead? I hope it ends with a high school graduation party!

Every student has a unique school experience, but when high school is finished, all students are grouped under one term, "the homeschool graduate." Will the label of "homeschool graduate" profit or hurt your student? Is it as good as a "real" high school diploma? Can a homeschool graduate get into college? Some parents homeschool through eighth grade, and then enroll their children in public schools, thinking, "I can't teach high school. I'm not equipped."

Can you supervise chemistry and calculus classes when you don't know what an algorithm is or how to explain electromotive forces to a teenager? Literally hundreds of parents walk with you on this path. Most of us aren't scientists and physicists able to tiptoe through these lessons and experiments in our kitchens. (Well, I'm certainly not!) Seeking outside assistance when needed through coops, colleges, and friends with those degrees is one way to supervise and remain homeschooling families through high school.

Sculpting Her Future

Artist Emily Verdoorn was homeschooled "from the beginning until I graduated from high school. My parents deeply value a good education, for which I am so grateful. This meant reading a lot of good books and spending time outdoors, but also being consistent in work, like math, science, and other traditional subjects. My parents also encouraged us to pursue what interested us. For me, this was often art related."

As a high school student, Verdoorn took private and group art classes in Des Moines. Almost all her free time was busy creating something, "clay penguins to popsicle-stick cabins to pencil drawings." Participating in a variety of area homeschool co-ops offered many learning experiences for this budding artist. The freedom homeschooling offered gave her parents countless opportunities for varied art lessons and unique experiences as part of her high school programming.

"I knew I wanted to study art, but I did not know how or where. I learned about Belhaven University at a homeschool convention in Cincinnati, Ohio. For two years I took a few classes online through Belhaven and Des Moines Area Community College," added Miss Verdoorn. "I attended Summit Semester in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, that brought 30 students together studying worldview and Christian thought. This shaped my thoughts, and I decided to finish my studies in Jackson, Mississippi, at Belhaven University's campus. I did not know anyone there, and I was moving 13 hours away from my family. But my professors in the Art Department grew to be mentors, and I found close friends. I graduated in May 2017 with my Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Visual Art (BFA). I returned to the Des Moines area and currently teach

art lessons through the Des Moines Home Instruction Program and The Art House Des Moines."

Verdoorn credits her parents guiding her education that shapes her choices as an adult. "I am a Christian, and that is very important to me. My Christian education absolutely played a role in my worldview. In our culture, when we are immersed in social media, even mass education, it is easy to feel like a replicable part in a giant machine. In a family, this is different. Members are not interchangeable."

She continues, "C.S. Lewis, one of my favorite authors, discussed the value of membership and loss of self in his book, *Weight of Glory*. He writes that an individual may lose their name by becoming a prisoner. In this case, he is given a number rather than a name. The second is if a man is in a family. There he is called "father" or "grandfather". In the first instance an individual joins a collective. In the second instance he joins a membership. To quote Lewis, 'The father and the grandfather are almost as different as the cat and the dog. If you subtract any one member, you have not simply reduced the family in number, you have inflicted injury on its structure.' It was in membership that I was primarily educated. It was in membership that I became a Christian. This is no small thing. I cannot remember a time when I was not a Christian in a Christian home, surrounded by a supportive homeschooling community of all ages."

CONTINUED PG 13



Emily Verdoorn
ARTIST



One More Thing

BY SONYA SHAFER, 2018 HOMESCHOOL IOWA CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

It's probably happened to you too. You're running low on eggs, apples, and napkins; so you make a mental shopping list and announce, "I'm heading to the store. Does anybody need anything?"

"Could you get some avocados so we can make guacamole? Oh, and some cotton balls?" your daughter asks as you walk by.

Eggs, apples, napkins, avocados, cotton balls. Got it.

"Can you get me some tea bags, please," another daughter adds.

Eggs, apples, napkins, avocados, cotton balls, tea bags. No problem.

"We need more popcorn," calls your husband from the other room. "And I'm out of decaffeinated coffee."

You feel your list quickly approaching the line that delineates Too Much.

Your son wanders into the room: "How can I brush my teeth if there isn't any toothpaste?"

That's it. You reach for the nearest pencil.

What was a relatively simple and manageable task has become overwhelming.

Crossing the Line

Looking back, you can easily see how it happened. The process of adding one more thing, then one more thing, then another one resulted in crossing the line into Too Much.

It's pretty easy to recognize that shift with a shopping list. But somehow it's not as obvious with homeschooling.

You start out with a mental list of priorities: read and discuss good books, practice spelling and writing, accurately calculate numbers, cultivate good habits of character, appreciate good art and music, love God and His Word. That doesn't seem so overwhelming.

But then others start to offer one more thing.

"Does your child participate on any teams? I think he would really like this one."

"Take a look at this class. It meets once a week."

"Have you seen this new curriculum supplement? It takes just 15 minutes a day."

"This teacher is offering a discount on lessons this year. It's a great opportunity!"

"I think you would really enjoy that co-op, and there's a discussion group too."

"You really need to make your child study ____."

So you add one more thing, then one more thing, then another one. And what used to be a relatively simple and manageable task becomes increasingly overwhelming. Soon you wonder why homeschooling seems so stressful and why you're not enjoying it any more.

You have crossed the line into Too Much.

Keeping It Manageable

How do you stay away from Too Much? How can you keep things simple and manageable? The same way you do with a shopping list. Ask yourself the same three questions that you do when you're going to the store.

1. Do we really need it?

When your daughter tells you that you need to put cotton balls on the shopping list, you first check to see if you already have some on hand. It might be that she just didn't look in the right place.

Do the same with activities and curriculum. Ask yourself, What is the purpose of this item? Is that purpose already being accomplished in my home school? Look past the trappings and the outer show and think about what you hope to accomplish by adding the item. Do you already have something in place that can accomplish the same thing? It might accomplish it in a little different way, but if it is accomplishing the purpose and it is already in place, you don't need another one.

2. Is this the best one?

Once you have determined that you do, indeed, need avocados, you take some time in the produce section to find the good ones—the ones that best meet your criteria. If you can't find any good ones, you don't buy them.

Do the same for homeschooling. Make sure the proposed activity or curriculum resource meets your standards. You are under no obligation to download or use every resource or opportunity that comes along. Look for good quality that will fit well with your goals during this season of life. Be a picky shopper. If you can't find what you're looking for, don't add it to your cart.

3. Can we afford it?

As you find the store items on your list and place them in your shopping cart, you are probably careful to keep track of how much money you are spending. If you go over your budget, you're not afraid to remove

items from the cart and put them back on the shelf.

Most homeschoolers are careful about spending money, but few are as careful about spending time. That's where homeschoolers tend to cross the line into Too Much: they spend almost all of their time, rather than budgeting it and keeping some in reserve.

Reserve time, unscheduled time, is crucial. Your children—and you—desperately need unhurried time in which to process ideas, to explore interests, to create, to internalize, to form relations, to know deeply.

Such a gift of time is sadly lacking in today's world. In fact, busyness is seen as a sign of worth; yet such a perception couldn't be further from the truth. Busyness is what can prevent you from reaching your child's heart. Busyness is what can prevent your child from thinking deeply, forming just opinions, growing in wisdom, and really knowing.

And isn't that why you're homeschooling in the first place: to shape your child's heart, character, and beliefs? To encourage him to think deeply and to know in his heart what is most important? How sad if, under the heavy pile of Too Much, the most precious resource slipped through the cracks—the resource of time to contemplate important things.

It's easy to complain, if I just had more time, when the solution is, rather, strictly budgeting the time you spend on activities and assignments and keeping the rest in reserve for thinking, exploring, and processing.

So prayerfully set a time budget and guard it with zeal. If a proposed activity or curriculum addition is going to put you over your time budget, take that item out of your cart and put it back on the shelf.

Have you crossed the line into Too Much with your schedule or curriculum demands? It's not too late to take a good look at what is in your cart. In fact, you may want to pull everything out and line it all up for review. Pray over what you see; look for unnecessary duplicates; determine if each item is the best fit to help you reach your goals in this season; make sure you have a generous supply of unscheduled time. Then when you're ready, start to reload your cart. And as you do, be sure to put in what is most important before you add one more thing.



Sonya Shafer is a popular homeschool speaker and writer, specializing in the Charlotte Mason Method. She has been on an adventure for more than 20 years studying, researching, practicing, and teaching Charlotte's gentle and effective methods of education. Her passion for homeschooling her own four daughters grew into helping others and then into Simply Charlotte Mason, which publishes her many books and provides a place of practical encouragement to homeschoolers at simplycharlottemason.com.

“Busyness is what can prevent you from reaching your child’s heart. Busyness is what can prevent your child from thinking deeply, forming just opinions, growing in wisdom, and really knowing.”

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Beyond The Homeschool Years

CONTINUED FROM PG 9

High Flyer

Anderson Sebastian Ott shares a sense of humor and honesty when asked about his life. "My father's two grandmothers' maiden names were Anderson and Sebastian, but you can call me Andy," clarifies Ott. "I can juggle. I am a pilot. I play piano and viola. I'm a passionate believer in cryptocurrencies and their potential to change the way finance works in the world. If you, dear Homeschool Magazine Reader, haven't heard of Bitcoin, please go and look it up."

Ott claims he makes a perfect cup of hot chocolate and will win all nap championships. He and Mackenzie, his wife, are raising their young children in Wisconsin. "I work a 24.5-hour shift every third day as an Airport Operations Coordinator at the La Crosse Regional Airport. I perform FAA and TSA-required inspections on my shift. I am also the firefighter on the field."

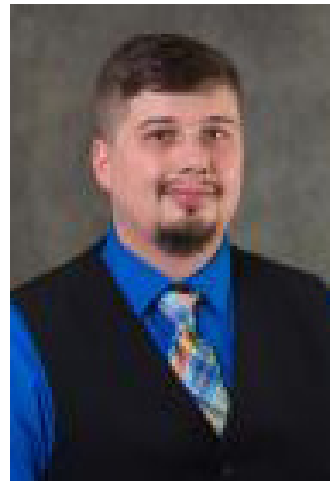
Following his homeschool graduation in Iowa, Ott enrolled at Calvin College in Michigan to major in physics. "I realized that I didn't want to continue with that major, because most of the physics-related careers were either teaching, researching, or becoming an engineer. None of those interested me. I dropped out during what would have been my sophomore year and worked full time at Village Creek Bible Camp. My junior and senior years of college were at the University of Dubuque. I graduated from UD in May of 2015 with a Bachelor of Science in Aviation Management. I chose UD because I had always been interested in aviation and because it was in my hometown, which meant I could live with my parents and not pay rent. (My parents did offer up a few complaints about me returning home, but on the whole, I don't think they minded having me around)."

Faith filled Ott's home and as well as his educational years. "My parents were my primary spiritual teachers. I fully reject the public opinion that homeschooling creates socially inept people. Most of my friends in high school were homeschooled, simply because they were the people I had the most interaction with on the cross-country team, the theater groups, dances, and spring senior banquet. I was also in the Dubuque Youth Symphony and volunteered in community theater over the years. A favorite memory from high school was my two-year study for English using the Lord of the Rings book series."

"I took a year off college to do some soul-searching, but the coursework I completed at the community college while in high school was credited. My parents did a really great job getting me the proper social contact with all sorts of people as they supervised my education."



Andy Ott
AIRPORT OPERATIONS
COORDINATOR



David King
ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

Future Decision Maker

Meet David King, homeschooled from third grade through his high school graduation, is a self-described hiker and traveler. "I work as an Admissions Advisor at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. My job requires me to be on the road visiting high schools and community colleges in eastern Iowa and western Illinois meeting with students who may be interested in attending UW-Platteville. I enjoy my job and the territory I cover."

King's educational background is as diverse as his job. The traditions and experiences his parents

provided formed the framework that has guided him to other countries and back to Iowa.

"My mom used unit studies for our schooling and added things she thought would enhance our education. We compared volcanic activity in Yellowstone and Iceland. The homeschooling group made and ate Icelandic food, studied its history and culture, and studied the geology. Another year we made a working shark target and sent it to a research facility in Florida. I remember using a stylus that we carved to do math in the Mesopotamian tradition."

These early international studies ignited David's desire to travel. "I was born in a suburb of Chicago. And each time our family moved, it was to own more land. Our family finally ended up with a 30-acre hobby farm in northern Illinois. We had horses, cattle, llamas, goats, and chickens. I learned the value of challenging work and the responsibility that comes from caring for livestock. I showed cattle at the World Beef Expo and won several Grand Championships. I met with national and state leaders to discuss importing and exporting beef. Those years of traveling and geography lessons sparked my interest to visit the world. After high school, I choose North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, because of their highly-rated international studies program. Studying in China and Japan provided opportunities to meet friends that I still have today. We had 12 international friends over for Thanksgiving Dinner last fall."

Students don't live in a vacuum. "My home education included biblical character development. We did a lot of group activities for 4-H and other social groups. My friends come from all walks of life. My family helped shape my faith as a child. My Christian worldview is based on living a Christ-like life, knowing it is impossible to do, but I must try. I will never have all the answers, but my journey is one of growth."

Mr. King earned a Master's degree in Adult Education from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and offers these words to homeschoolers, "I encourage any student to reach outside their comfort zone and explore areas of interests they may not be familiar with. Gain confidence in acquiring new skills. Reach out and meet new people. Everyone has a purpose. Find yours."

CONTINUED PG 25

Homeschooling Held Hostage

BY HEIDI ST. JOHN, 2018 HOMESCHOOL IOWA CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

remember the day we decided to pull our daughter out of school. The day we “made it public”—this decision to homeschool.

I. Was. Terrified. Really. My knees were knocking as I walked into our oldest daughter’s grade school. I liked her teacher. I had no complaints, really, except that we knew in our hearts there was something missing. school

We longed for more. More shared experiences. More tailored education. A greater focus on the Creator of the beauty that surrounded us. A desire to dig deeper into family life. More story time. More field trips. Less rushing to go our separate ways every morning. More LIFE.

That was fifteen years ago. Our beautiful second grader is now a beautiful wife and is expecting her own child this year. Time goes by fast.

In the past fifteen years, we’ve seen a lot of changes in the homeschool community. There is much more pressure being put on homeschoolers to excel academically. We’ve gone from a few brave moms who, without access to mainstream “curriculum”, managed to give their children an excellent education—but we’ve forgotten what made it excellent.

It was excellent because these moms had a vision for homeschooling—they weren’t trying to re-create school at home. They were simply being obedient to the One who had called them to be different. They knew that if He had called them, He would equip them. And they were right.

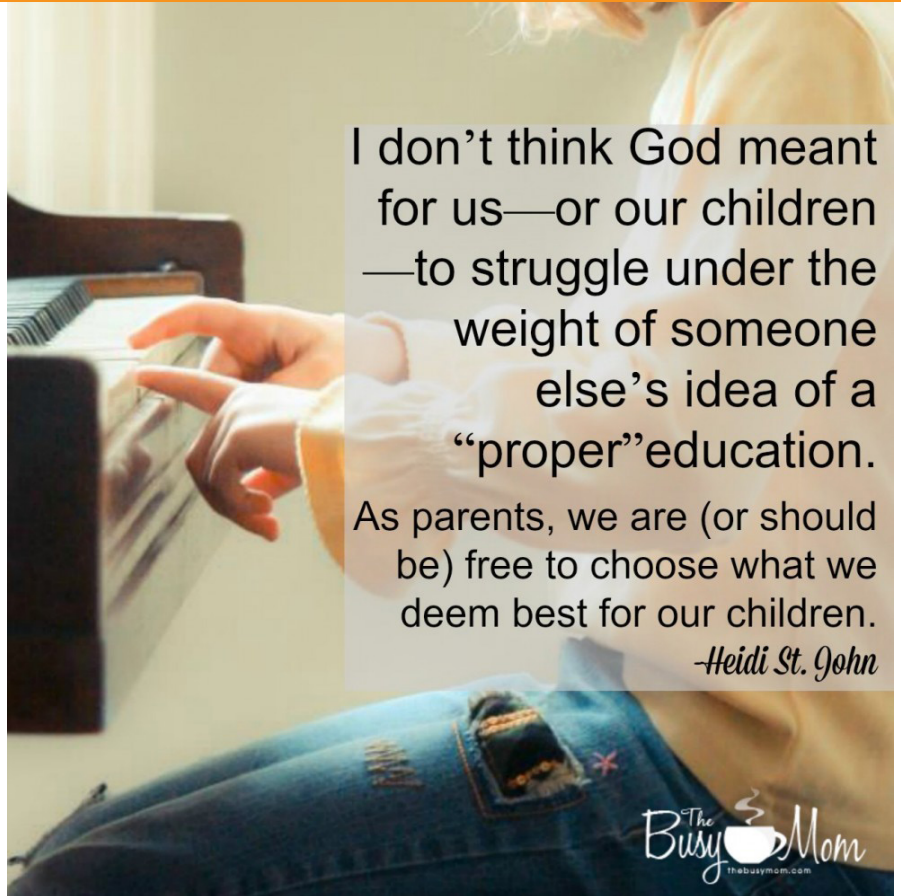
When I was brand-new to homeschooling, I did the only thing I knew how to do: I set up a classroom in our home—complete with desks like the ones I had in school.

We soon began to understand that those desks, however, were not going to work over the long haul. What we really needed was a comfy couch, where we could curl up and read about the life of a hermit crab named Pagoo or discover the mysteries of the Island of Capri. Yes, a couch was what we needed.

For years, I notebooked with our children. We took nature walks and studied the seasons together. We did copy work and read stories of brave men and women who followed God with an abandon that most only dream about. And we spent a lot of time on the couch.

My husband (the patience of this man knows no limits) hauled the desks back up the stairs and out of the house. We sold them at a garage sale in the spring of 1999.

And today, as I look closely at our homeschool, I have to ask,



I don’t think God meant for us—or our children—to struggle under the weight of someone else’s idea of a “proper” education. As parents, we are (or should be) free to choose what we deem best for our children.

-Heidi St. John

“What makes me different?”

It’s easy to be held hostage by the expectations of the world.

I see it all around me—and I feel it myself. The pressure is enormous. Why don’t my kids know Latin?

Am I doing enough?

Most of us took our children out of public school in search of something more, only to be hijacked by the world’s system—right there on the couches in our living rooms. We’re putting our kids into hyper-academic “homeschooling” programs and we’re allowing the pressure of the “what ifs” to determine what we teach our children. Yes. We’re falling for it. Does this sound familiar?

- We can’t read today, kids. We have too much math to do.
- Mommy would love to play with you; but you need to finish your schoolwork first. And don’t forget about yesterday’s work.
- We’ll do that later, after we do school.
- Where is your list of assignments from the co-op?

Our Bibles gather dust—or worse—become just another thing to check off of our curriculum checklist.

So many homeschool moms today are suffering from burn-out—and I get it. The pressure to do more is enormous. But I

wonder ... is all this "more" really what God had in mind when He called us to be different? Somehow, I don't think He meant for us to bring our children home only to have our home life hijacked by a worldly philosophy of education. I don't think God meant for us - or our children - to struggle under the weight of someone else's idea of a "proper" education.

I think—just maybe—He meant for us to be free.

- Free to read aloud. All day if we want to. Even with our high schoolers.
- Free to draw and create.
- Free to discover the beauty of Creation - unhurried - and without the expectation of a report that is due about our "discovery" at the end of the next day.
- Free to forget about preschool.
- Free to take a hot chocolate walk for no reason.
- Free ... to know Him more.

It's hard to do that when we're always on someone else's schedule.

If you are being held hostage by a burdensome curriculum or a program that promises to get your kid into college—and if you're wondering if this was really the life that God had designed for you, I challenge you to look at those first homeschool moms. They set the bar—and they did it without expensive "all inclusive" programs. They did it by faith. They did it because they knew God would provide for their every need if

they would only trust Him to guide and direct them.

These precious moms found out that God is faithful. He can be trusted. His mercies are new every day.

His yoke is easy. His burden is light.

Ask Him what He has for you and your children. If you are not experiencing the "life" you were looking for when you began your homeschooling journey, it may be that you're not giving the Lord permission to lead you there.

I know—because for all my trying— and even after I have experienced the freedom that comes from a more relational approach to homeschooling, I often find myself a hostage of homeschooling rather than a mom who is enjoying the gift that she has been given through homeschooling. It's easy, even for a mom who has graduated a few children, to wonder if she's doing enough.

If you're being held hostage today—ask the Lord to show you His heart for your homeschool. Because in following Him, you'll find the LIFE you're looking for.



Heidi St. John has been married to her husband Jay since 1989. Together they have seven children from toddler to adult and have homeschooled all the way through high school. A favorite conference and radio speaker, Heidi approaches marriage and parenting with humor and grace. Her passion to encourage moms and set them free to be who God has created them to be will bless and encourage you.

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A Just Woman

BY KIM STILWELL

My kids' friend, Tressa, was coming over. The house was a mess, but we had a packed day, and there was no time to clean it before she came. I mentioned my concern to one of my daughters, and she said, "Oh, Mom, don't worry. It's just Tressa!" This reminder that Tressa would continue to love our family, in spite of the condition of our house, put my mind at ease. This same reason is why we love having Tressa in our home and think of her as one of our family.

My friend, Amy, was coming over and was going to use the desktop computer in our basement. Our basement has 22 years of stored junk down there. (I am slowly working on it.) At first I stressed about having her see our basement, but then I realized that it was "just Amy," and I stopped worrying about it. I knew she would continue to love me no matter what the condition of my basement. I would not be less in her eyes because of this.

Recently I went as a chaperone to an advanced survival event with three of my kids. Two of my mom friends — Karen and Donna — went too. Before the trip I realized that Karen and Donna would see me at my worst—sleep deprived, not having showered, unwashed hair, and probably struggling greatly with the "roughing it" part of the whole experience. In spite of my missionary kid upbringing, I have lost much of my ability to handle the lack of showers and soft bed. Karen and Donna were more experienced and comfortable with roughing it. I feared that seeing me in my most vulnerable state would cause them to think less of me. But the Lord reminded me that these friends have been nothing but supportive and accepting from the time I met them. I realized, "It's okay. It's just Karen and Donna. They love me in spite of my shortcomings." I knew that they would accept and love me no matter how successful (or unsuccessful) the experience turned out to be. It was one of the best weeks of my life in large part because of these two gracious women. They encouraged me when I was struggling, gave me tips on keeping warm at night, and not once were they scornful of my inexperience. We came through the week unshowered, cold, and sleep deprived, and yet both of these dear ladies are closer friends than ever.

A friend stopped by to drop something off right after she had been working out at the gym. She was in her workout clothes and had obviously just exercised very hard. She said, "I thought about going home and showering before I came by, but then I realized, 'It's just Kim, and she won't care.'" I can't tell you how it warmed my heart that she saw me as "just Kim."

I want to be a "just" woman. I do not mean this in the sense of being a woman of justice, though I do hope to



be that as well. I mean it in the sense that people will be so comfortable with me that they see me as “just Kim.” In this article, when I use the term “just woman,” I am referring to “just” in that sense of the word.

When I think about the friends in my life who are “just women,” they make me feel comfortable, accepted, and relaxed. I often misspeak. I tend to ramble. I am overweight. I sometimes laugh at the wrong times. I make mistakes. I sometimes interrupt. Yet I am thankful for those in my life who love me anyway. They will continue to be my friend in spite of my many failures and mistakes. They do not put the burden of perfection on me. I want to be this kind of friend to others. My heart’s desire is that my friends and family see me as “just Kim.”

A “just woman” does not have a critical spirit. She is not nitpicky. If something isn’t just right, she can accept it and move on with life. She does not seek to find fault with others.

If God is not critical of something, we should not be critical of it either. And even if it is something that God would be critical of (sin), we should still not have a critical spirit but a spirit of “What can I do to help you overcome this sin?”

A “just woman” assumes the best about people or she assumes nothing at all. But she does not assume the worst.

A “just woman” is not easily offended. You don’t have to walk on tip toes around her. You don’t have to weigh every word you say. She understands that people misspeak sometimes. If you do say or do something that is truly hurtful, she either lets love cover it or she lovingly talks to you about it.

A “just woman” does not make everything all about her. She does not feel like she has it worse off than anyone else. She does not feel that she is better than everyone. In reality, she really doesn’t think much about herself at all.

A “just woman” has a depth of character. She has a deep love for the Lord and others. Her deepest desire is to be like Christ. She is patient and kind. She is understanding of the imperfections in others.

A “just woman” has a sense of humor. She does not take life, or herself, too seriously. If someone stops by and catches her in her pajamas and robe at 10:00 a.m., she sees the humor in the situation and is not unduly horrified.

A “just woman” is gracious. She is courteous. She has a friendly, kind spirit. She is not prickly or moody.

A “just woman” sees her own faults and imperfections. She realizes that there are sins in her own life that she has not overcome. She is not self-righteous enough to feel that she is more spiritual or godly than others.

I want my children to be “just” people, too. The best way to instill this quality in them is to model it. Our children should see in us a kind, patient, uncritical attitude toward others. However,

we should also actively and purposefully teach these traits to our children. Some children tend to be critical of others. From a very young age, we should discourage a critical spirit. If our child says something negative about someone, we should help them think through how to give that person the benefit of the doubt. If it is blatant sin, we need to help our child to see the other person’s sin with sorrow, not with self-righteousness.

When others think of our family, I want them to think, “Oh, it’s just the Stilwells.” It would break my heart if someone thought we would think less of them or be critical of them because of their imperfections or because they might do some things differently than our family.

I should add a couple of disclaimers. While we should strive to be “just women,” that doesn’t mean that we embrace or accept sin. I don’t want anyone to say, “Oh, it is just Kim, so I can bash my husband and tell her every single thing I don’t like about him.” I also don’t want anyone to say, “It is just Kim, so I can shoplift in front of her and she won’t care.” I want my character to be such that my friends and family would not even consider doing these things around me.

Another exception to always being a “just woman” is our children. I want my kids to see me as a “just woman,” and I want them to have that attitude toward others as well. I want them to know that I will love them in spite of their sins and imperfections, but I don’t want them to think I condone their sins. My children are all young adults and older teens now, but when they were younger, I would not have wanted them to think, “It is just Mom, so it doesn’t matter if I do my chores,” or, “It is just Mom, so I can skip my schoolwork today. She won’t care.” We should extend grace to our children. They are children. They will act like children. We should not expect the same maturity from them that we do from adults. However, we do want to teach them responsibility, and we need to give consequences when sin is involved.

Being a “just woman” can be summed up in two passages of Scripture: “Be ye kind one to another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32) and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). My children and I repeated the first verse every night before bed for years. It wasn’t a magic formula to stop childish squabbles, but it was a good daily reminder to them, and to me, to treat each other with respect and love.

I am so thankful for all the “just women” in my life. They have had such an impact and have led me to desire to be more Christ-like. May God bless each of you as you desire to be “just.”



Kim Stilwell moved to Iowa when she married her high school sweetheart and best friend in 1987. Jeff and Kim have five children and a daughter-in-love. The days were indeed long, yet the years far too short, and their children are now all older teens and young adults.

“A ‘just woman’ has a depth of character. She has a deep love for the Lord and others. Her deepest desire is to be like Christ. She is patient and kind. She is understanding of the imperfections in others.”

The Man Talk

BY ERIC LUDY, 2018 HOMESCHOOL IOWA CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

As is tradition, at the start of every new semester of training at Ellerslie (the ministry I lead in Windsor, Colorado) I gather all the men from the upcoming semester onto the chapel stage.

It's time for the "Man Talk" with Eric.

All the men, young and old, are dressed up in suit coats and ties. Our shoes are polished, our hearts stirred with anticipation, and the occasional bead of sweat can be spied slowly dripping down the forehead of one of the men. The atmosphere in the chapel is sparkling, even regal – bursting with expectancy. The tables are set for our opening night banquet while the flicker of candlelight shimmers enthusiastically about the decorated room.

When all the men arrive up onto the stage, I look each one in the eye, then clear my throat and begin.

"Men," I say in a serious, grave tone. "You have entered an environment that demands you behave as men. This is not a place for boys. This is not a place for perverts, egotists, fools, and rebels. This is a place that celebrates the dignity and nobility of manhood."

I can visibly see the discomfort in many of the men's eyes. I'm only starting my fourth sentence of the semester and yet I can perceive that some of these men are already wondering if they are supposed to be here.

"If you are planning on spending twelve weeks here on this campus," I say, "then you will spend those twelve weeks behaving as men. Men of honor. Men of purity. Men of Truth. Men of holiness. Men of humility. Men of courage. Men of God!"

Every *Man Talk* is a bit different. But all carry the same soul searching thunderous commission to rise up and behave as men.

Paul had a *Man Talk*, of sorts, with the church in the ancient city of Corinth. I must admit, that his particular *Man Talk* was a bit shorter than mine. In fact, he packaged his *Man Talk* into one very pithy word. He simply growled the word, "Andrizomai!"

If someone said *andrizomai* to you, you might simply shrug your shoulders and say, "Gesundheit!" After all, the word doesn't hold meaning to you and sounds more like a terrible sneeze than anything else.

But the church in Corinth knew the strong and historic commission that Paul was issuing to it with that one singular word. Paul was pressing the ancient words of Moses into their soul. These were the same words, now translated into the Koine Greek, that were originally passed on to Joshua, then passed on to David, then passed on to Solomon, and passed along through Jewish history 1,000 years until they reached Jesus Himself, who passed them on to Peter, James, John and the rest of His disciples. And now here is Paul walking in this ancient tradition passing these words of forked-lightning on to the namby-pamby Corinthian

church. And what amazes me is that, after two thousand years, somehow here, in the present day, that same powerful word of ancient Israel is being passed along to you and to me.

Andrizomai! (pronounced - an-drid'-zom-ah-ee)

Moses, when he gave his manly commission to Joshua, to be strong and of good courage shouted two words, "Chazak" and "Amats." But when translated into Koine Greek, those two ancient Hebrew words of manly gusto got packaged into one singular word of thunder and lightning... *Andrizomai!*

Simply put – Moses said to Joshua: "Be a man! Do your job manfully! Behave with the courage of a real honest-to-goodness man of God! Go! Do valiantly!"

Joshua then said to the men of Israel as they prepared to set out to conquer the nations of the giants, "Be men! March forward manfully! Behave with the guts and determination resident to true honest-to-goodness men that believe in God Almighty! Go! Be fearless in the face of the giants!"

"God's men... are purposely strong, purposely courageous, and purposely brave. They don't accidentally do what they do... they do it because it's the 'manful' thing to do..."

This ancient *Man Talk* got passed down through the ages. Typically, this ancient combination of two Hebrew words (Chazak + Amats), were repeated amongst the Jews simply through the emotion-infused phrase of "Rak Chazak!" And those two words spoken, even whispered, were enough to cause a Jewish soldier's knuckles to turn white with manly purpose, his throat to let out a guttural war cry of determination, and his soul to

grip its iron will and pull it from the scabbard.

But as Paul took up his pen, pondered the present weakness of the Corinthian church, and yearned to see the manfulness of the people of God return full force, he took the burning Hebrew phrase of Rak Chazak and packaged all its grandeur, glory, power and purpose into one singular Greek word. He shouted to Corinth, "*Andrizomai!*"

Rumor has it that I'm coming to Iowa in June to give a *Man Talk*, of sorts. Nowadays, these *Man Talks* are simply called Home-school Conferences (don't worry, ladies, you can join in, too). Unfortunately, my *Man Talk* won't be delivered to you in Hebrew or Koine Greek, the way Paul dished it out. But, though it be in a different language, it is the very same *Man Talk*. It possesses the same vigor that led Joshua to face thirty-one hostile enemy nations with dauntless courage and the same audacity that led Caleb, at the age of 85, to climb the mountain of giants and purge those dreadful characters from their long held ancient stronghold.

God's men have the thunder clap of "*Andrizomai!*" always booming within their souls. "*Rak Chazak*" infuses their thoughts, their actions, their attitudes, and their every plan and design. They are purposely strong, purposely courageous, and purpose-

ly brave. They don't accidentally do what they do. They do what they do because it's the "manful" thing to do. Or, as the Christian would understand, they do it because it is the "Jesus" thing to do. It's the way that *The Man* would do it.

The Man, Jesus, showed us manful living. He lived life with the gusto of love and faced death with the grandeur of courage. He boldly took the lowest seat and humbly served those around Him. He suffered every indignity that others may receive deliverance. He sacrificed His very life to ensure life for others. He was the epitome of that which makes a man manful.

So, as you and I gather together in early June, that very same *Man Talk* is waiting to be delivered to you.

Imagine yourself at Ellerslie and in the flickering candlelight of the decorated chapel. It's banquet night and anticipation is hanging in the air like a dense cloud of glory.

Imagine that you are on the Ellerslie chapel stage with fifty other men. But instead of measly old Eric Ludy walking up onto the stage to address you, imagine that it is Jesus Christ Himself that strolls up onto the stage and stands before the onlooking, awestruck men.

Imagine that His voice is serious and grave. And out of all the fifty men standing there beside you, He singles you out. He says, "You!" With a bit of panicky shock in your voice, you respond, "Me?" "Yes," He responds gently as He affectionately enunciates your name. "Come forward!" As you walk forward, your legs feel like Jell-O and your heart is beating every sane thought out of your head. As you position yourself in front of the Risen King of Kings, He tenderly looks you in the eye and says, "Dear one, it's time for you to become a man!"

Now imagine you were to say, "Yes, Lord, I agree wholeheartedly!"

You were called to live manfully, just as The Man, Jesus, did while He was here on this earth. You were called to live with the thunder of Andriozomai in your heart just as Moses, Joshua, David, Peter, James, John, and Paul did in their day. You were called to have the war cry of Rak Chazak in your chest, Holy Spirit thunder in your soul's fists, and nuclear propulsion in your spiritual heels. You were called to live manfully – to do the work of The Man.

Imagine that this isn't your imagination, but it is very real. And God is saying this to you right now. He's beckoning you to take a step forward in being made into a real honest-to-goodness man of God.

If you are game, I know for certain He is.

Let's do this thing!



Eric Ludy serves as the President of Ellerslie Mission Society. He is also a teaching pastor at the Church at Ellerslie and the lead instructor in the Ellerslie Discipleship Training. Eric is the bestselling author of eighteen books and a highly respected voice in the Church today, especially on the topics of Biblical sexuality, manhood, prayer, and the deeper Christian life. BraveheartedChristian.com





capitol day 2018

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

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Capitol Day Through the Eyes of our Kids

We asked the children of a couple of our Homeschool Iowa volunteers to observe and report on Capitol Day 2018.



An Early Start for Volunteers at Capitol Day

BY: ISAIAH WIELAND, age 11

Homeschool Day at the Iowa Capitol was filled with early morning starts, taking over the Iowa State Capitol and serving our legislators.

My day started at 5:30 AM. I got up, got dressed and helped prepare breakfast for the legislators. We left the house at 6:30 and picked up coffee from Friedrichs and chicken sandwiches from Chick-Fil-A, then headed to the Capitol. When we got there we served breakfast to the legislators and soon almost 700 homeschoolers were there to literally take over the Capitol.

The number of people there was amazing. We set up chairs on the beautiful Capitol floor and listened to the Governor speak, after that I joined my friends and met their representative. The crowds were so thick I could not get through in some places and had to find another way around. After we packed up we moved towards the elevator. When we got in, of all people to be there, was our own representative John Forbes. On the short ride down it was fun to talk to him.

Then we went to Walnut Creek Church for a Machine Shed lunch of everything imaginable to eat. We listened to some more speakers and had cookies and coffee. After everybody left, volunteers cleaned the church. We loaded everything into our car and headed home.

Throughout the day I never heard one complaint or negative comment about anything there. It was hard and I was tired at the end of the day, but it was worth it. I had a great time and can't wait until next year.

A Crowd of People Represent Homeschool Iowa

BY: CHANTAE WARREN, age 10

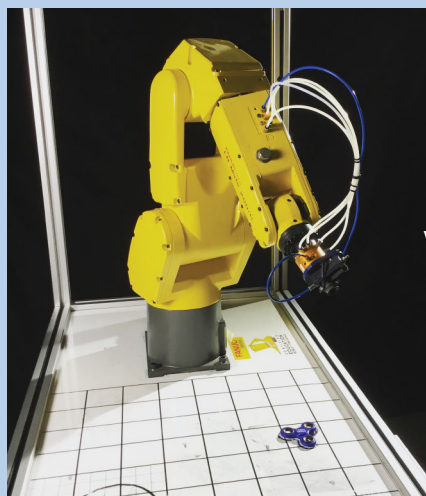
I am new to Iowa and had never seen the inside of the Iowa State Capitol until Homeschool Iowa Capitol Day on March 13, 2018. I live in Henry County, Homeschool Iowa Region 18 and have been homeschooled since kindergarten.

The Capitol was crowded and loud! It was inspiring to see so many other people who homeschool at the Capitol. We met and talked to several people as we walked around and looked at all of the displays. My brother and I really liked the model of the USS Iowa ship.

There were several speakers during Capitol Day. The first speaker was Governor Kim Reynolds who gave an encouraging speech about how she feels about homeschooling. Governor Reynolds said, "I want to see more homeschoolers involved with STEM." (STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Math). At the 11am rally in the Capitol rotunda House Majority Leader, Chris Hagenow spoke about the importance of everyone showing up for events like Homeschool Iowa Capitol Day, letting our legislators know that we care about homeschool laws in Iowa.

After Mr. Hagenow spoke we went to a church a couple of blocks away for lunch and the rest of the speakers. Lunch was from Machine Shed and it was very filling! Teen Pact then did a neat skit about the process of a bill becoming a law. After that Mr. Nathan Oppman spoke about how important it is to be a Christian when we talk to our leaders. Next we listened to a Page who is working at the Capitol talk about her job. There were a few more things that afternoon but we had to leave because we had a 2 ½ hour drive home and we needed to take care of our dogs, black labs named Blaze and Storm.

I had a very fun and very educational experience and am excited to come back to Capitol Day next year!



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Helping Our Kids Tell Truth From Fiction

BY LEAH NIEMAN

We are in the information age, but not everything we read is truthful. Are we able to tell truth from fiction? Are our kids able to determine what news and information is real and what is fake?

A recent study from Stanford researchers considers this question. The study evaluated students' abilities to determine if information sources are real or fake.

Stanford researchers described the results as "dismaying," "bleak," and "[a] threat to democracy."

How did this happen?

We're getting a lot of our information online. Twitter, Facebook, and other sources online have become places we go for current news. We're following links to stories we see flow through our social media accounts to get news in realtime, but we're finding with the convenience of this "instant access" comes a whole new ballgame.

How can we determine if those sources are truthful or not?

1. Pay attention to the URL

When you go to any website, look at the URL. Most legitimate news sources are going to be a .com. If you see something like a .com.co, or anything that looks odd, that's a clue it may be a fake news site. You can certainly have .gov or .org. Those are going to be legitimate URLs. But if you start seeing additional .XX after the .com, .org, .gov, or anything that is not a normal URL ending, begin questioning the source.

Remember: Established news organizations usually use their own domain, and they're going to have a standard domain URL along with that.

Tip: If you find yourself on what you think is a legitimate news source but notice the URL has an odd ending, go check out just the regular .com. It's likely you'll find out you've landed on a fake news source.

2. There should be an "about us" section.

Most, if not all, credible sources of news information are going to have an About Us section. They want you to know who they are, who the people are writing the stories, and their credentials. All that information, for most websites and news sources, is totally transparent. If you go to a site and there's no About Us section or the About Us section is incredibly vague with no way to contact those running the site, then chances are it's not the most legitimate source of information you're going to find.

Remember: Legitimate sites have a clear About Us section. They are proud of their site, their writers, and their credentials.

3. Look for quotes within the story

When writing a story, quotes and sources should be cited and linked to the original source. If you don't see quotes in the story that are linking to those sources, that should be a little red flag that it's not a credible news source. The links should be to reputable sources. Links should not reference another site or person who's quoting that same quote. You're looking for the first source of information.

4. Check the comments

Many fake and misleading stories are shared on social media platforms using dramatic headlines. These sorts of headlines are used intentionally to inflame or mislead. People read the headline, are initially aggravated, and comment. This tactic draws many comments, and the comments cause greater visibility and circulation. Many people initially don't read the article, but once there are several comments, people begin to believe the story must be true.

Remember: Check that comment section and make sure that's not the case. A lot of the comments are going to come from Facebook, and Twitter, and social media, and other places because, again, they've used a headline that's meant just for social media and causes a lot of responses without people really going and understanding the story at all.

5. Use the reverse search image

Just like misleading story headlines, images can be used to generate traffic. Often the image circulating won't even represent the article. We often refer to these as "clickbait" because the image is used solely to get users to click so they land on a web page.

Remember: It's easy to "Google search" an image. If you see an image that looks unrealistic or just want to verify an image before clicking through, you can do a quick Google image search to find and verify the image. To do this, right click on the image. Select Google search for the image.

Being able to tell truth from fiction is a skill all kids need. It's a skill adults need as well. I'd encourage you to talk about real and fake news with your kids.

Begin a family project and keep track of how many times you can spot real news and fake news. Note the sources that are reliable, and begin to take note of where fake news pops up the most.



Leah lives in Central Illinois. She is a wife and mom of 2 homeschool graduates. She's a popular speaker who encourages parents to walk with their kids through the world of social media and technology to raise a generation of digitally responsible young adults. Article used with permission from leahnieman.com

Beyond The Homeschool Years

CONTINUED FROM PG 13

Same Yet Different

Three repeated themes of faithful and interested parents accepting the challenge to be the educational supervisors for their children. Introducing them to the world, each family used other resources to fill in any gaps in the parent's abilities to teach.

Each student was awarded a homeschool graduation diploma at graduation. Their parents used available resources to challenge and find interests for their teenagers, making the educational years interesting and valuable. These former students do not claim that Icelandic unit studies, A.C.S. Lewis trilogy or a private art class was the "perfect" action that propelled each into a college and a career. The time parents invested laying foundations during the homeschooling years, the work that continued through their high school years, that combination is what launched responsible adults. Community College coursework was available during the high school years. Action was taken and permitted by the supervising parents when the student exhibited interest in a course or study that wasn't available at home. These decisions can happen in any grade, the important answer is that these choices were made by parents with their teenagers to stay on the homeschool path through high school.

Can you homeschool a teenager? Well, the short answer is yes. My usual response is answer this question: Did you teach your child to use modern bathroom facilities? If you can convince an

often-non-verbal, self-centered little person to use a bathroom successfully, I'm confident you can supervise that individual through high school. Combinations of home, public and private classes, and ease of online college coursework have changed the high school landscape. The beauty of homeschooling is the personalization, the individual tailoring for each student that parents control - isn't that one reason we chose homeschooling?

A homeschool diploma printed by parents is legitimate proof of a high school education and is used by graduates for admission to community colleges, private and public universities. Employers accept parent issued diplomas. Educate yourselves on the state code for graduation goals and your rights to classes. We haven't paid a penny for college classes our son takes as a high school student.

It is my hope that as you read these stories you were inspired to plan, research, discuss, question and commit to supervising your children all the way to a high school graduation. Our son graduates in May and often wears his Carlson Academy t-shirts around the house while studying his online classes. He plans to participate in the NICHE May graduation ceremony and our family will celebrate his achievement. Another unique story to be shared with others. And, we haven't been on this path alone.



I'll see you further on down the homeschool path, Readers!

Laura Carlson is an Iowa born, raised, and educated writer living in central Iowa. She is a graduate of Iowa State University and has worked as a dishwasher, website developer, and addictions therapist. Her motto is "Life: Live It".

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Learning Throughout the Day

BY HEIDI FRANZ

Child development experts confirm that the first five years of a child's life shape the child's future. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 commands us to teach our children as we sit, walk, lie down, and get up. But how do we teach our preschool aged children at home?

As the owner of a toddler and preschool curriculum website, I hear often of the challenges that arise when parents are deciding how to go about teaching their children. As a parent and teacher, I understand the desire to spend time teaching our children, but not robbing them of their childhood to do it. There is a balanced approach and here are three ways to provide your child with a firm foundation in academics, development, and biblical learning while still allowing for a generous childhood.

Learning Through Play

Never underestimate the learning that occurs when children experiment, build, and have imaginative play time. While this used to be a key part of childhood, sadly electronics and busy life styles have limited the opportunity for a child to have unstructured, yet supervised play time.

A child with time for activities like playing outside and riding bikes will build gross motor skills. Throwing a ball develops hand-eye coordination. Rebuilding a toppling block tower for the 10th time teaches self-control, cause and effect, and trial and error. Dressing up as a super hero or playing with dolls fosters a child's imagination.

An added blessing to play is that it often doesn't require expensive toys. With a little training on independent play, basic blocks, empty boxes, and a ball can entertain a child for hours.

So, put away the electronics, turn off the television, and allow ample time for your child to play. If you are unsure where to begin, a solid curriculum can provide age-appropriate play ideas.

Learning Through Structured Time

While unstructured play is very important for young children, teaching a child to sit quietly and focused for an age-appropriate amount of time is crucial to build a solid foundation of learn-

ing. It is in learning to sit that a child learns self-control, listening, and respect for the adult. This training at home prepares a child to be able to sit unassisted at church or the library. Structured time could consist of reading, listening to instructions, or doing a short writing assignment or craft. Helping around the home with cleaning, cooking, and laundry builds a work ethic beyond the fine and gross motor training.

Learning Through Teachable Moments

As my children have grown, using teachable moments has become my favorite way to teach. I define a teachable moment as "an unplanned, God-given opportunity that arises with your child or student, that if grasped, provides an ideal chance for learning to occur." These are also the times in our day that God has provided to make a deep impression of Him on our children.

Here are two examples.

1. While giving your child a bath, he remarks that the toy is sitting on the water. This is a teachable moment to demonstrate the words "sink" and "float."
2. While driving in the car, your child points out a beautiful rainbow. This is a teachable moment to tell the child about God's promise to Noah.

There are only two requirements for taking advantage of a teachable moment: time and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. The more you take advantage of these opportunities, the more they will occur.

Often I am asked how long each day child should sit for learning. While short bursts of structured time is vital, learning is all around if we will take the time to provide it.



Heidi Franz is a stay-at-home, Jesus-seekin' momma of four who loves to connect with other women! Through various methods, Heidi shares practical tools to transform a home or classroom. When she's not blogging at Our Out-of-Sync Life or developing ideas for the ABC Jesus Loves Me curriculum website, she can be found doing the same things you do: loving, laughing, calming, training, and impressing upon her children to live for Christ in this "out-of-sync" world.





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>> 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



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Explore Eastern Iowa

BY JENNIFER CIHA

Plan a family-focused visit to Eastern Iowa this year when you attend the 2018 Homeschool Iowa Conference.

Close to Conference

Dive into history at University of Iowa (UI) Hospitals and Clinics Medical Museum, UI Museum of Natural History, Old Capitol Museum and State Historical Library. Just a short distance to the east is The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum.

The Iowa Children's Museum offers hours of play. Inside Coral Ridge Mall, you'll also find ice skating, a movie theatre and over 100 stores. Looking for a bargain? Iowa City is notorious for great thrift stores.

Challenge yourself on the University of Iowa Recreation Center's 50-foot rock climbing wall. Stroll along the Iowa Avenue Literary Walk and be inspired.

Cruise to Cedar Rapids

Cedar Rapids, located 30 minutes north of Iowa City, offers opportunities for art and culture including Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, Grant Wood Studio and Visitor Center, National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library. Experience Brucemore, a historic 26-acre nineteenth-century estate mansion.

Explore Outdoors

In Iowa City, you'll find hiking at Hickory Hill Park, paddleboard

rental at Terry Trueblood Recreation Area or the Iowa River Land-ing Wetland Park for nature journaling.

Indian Creek Nature Center in Cedar Rapids offers unique out-door learning opportunities.

Between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids is Coralville Lake, Devonian Fossil Gorge, Sugar Bottom Recreation Area, and Macbride Nature Recreation Area. Camp, fish, hike, and more at these wonderful natural resources.

Check out the Iowa City Mom's Blog: Mom's Guide to Iowa City for family restaurant deals and where kids eat free.

Download the Iowa Culture App. An interactive map high-lights the arts, history, science and nature all across the state. Planning is a snap with the favorites tool.

As you join NICHE for the 2018 Homeschool Iowa Conference, plan a couple extra days to connect as a family and make some memories.



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.fieldtripliowa.com where you can find practical information and inspirational photographs.





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