

# 2019 in Review and Looking Ahead

JOE BAILEY, PRESIDENT

**“W**hat Has Happened in Congress?” This was the cover article of a NICHE (Network of Iowa Christian Home Educators) newsletter 25 years ago. It went on to describe a series of federal legislative attacks on homeschooling that had been successfully defeated that year (1994). The most notorious one was H.R. 6, an education funding bill that could have forced teacher certification requirements on all homeschoolers. Thankfully, concerned parents flooded Congress with so many calls that it shut down the switchboard system on Capitol Hill. Overwhelmed by the response, lawmakers scrambled to amend the bill to protect home educators from federal regulations, a 180-degree switch!

Just 25 years ago homeschooling was barely legal, there weren't very many curriculum options, it was socially frowned upon, and it was difficult. But a number of brave families plowed the hard ground. Some of them stumbled into it, feeling there was no better option. Many of them caught the vision, that God calls all parents to disciple their children, and that doing so through home education is the best way to accomplish this.

Today we see the fruits of these homeschoolers' efforts. Homeschooling is no longer considered odd. National studies have demonstrated that homeschooled students perform well academically. Over 2.3 million students are homeschooled in the U.S., and we continue to see it grow nationally and internationally. Most importantly, homeschooled graduates carry forward their parent's beliefs at a much higher rate than their peers. A whole generation is now engaging the culture as welders, doctors, lawmakers, and homemakers. They are now raising their families with the same vision. As a homeschool graduate, I am thankful to be part of this multi-generational movement.

Here at Homeschool Iowa, we are excited to support the growth and advancement of home education. As the movement continues to expand, so do we. This year our board of directors assembled a 5-year strategic plan focused on strengthening our advocacy efforts, building better personal connections with and between homeschool families, and inviting businesses and individuals to join in funding the movement.

I am excited to report that we have already made progress in these areas. This year we have grown our advocacy team. This team is charged with building rapport with legislators, providing legislative updates to our members, and engaging the media to present the positive message on homeschooling. We recently purchased Voter Voice software and look forward to using it this next legislative session to provide better information to our members and connect homeschoolers with their legislators.

We have also increased our number of regional events. This year our regional representatives hosted

nine Homeschooling 101 events across the state. And, for the first time ever, we have hosted a autumn teen event in partnership with Generation Joshua and Americans for Prosperity.

As some of you may have noticed, we have been inviting individuals and businesses to partner with us financially to help fund the mission. The response from you all has been such a blessing. The additional funds donated this year have enabled us to add to our advocacy efforts and better thank some of our volunteers without increasing costs to hard-working homeschool families.

In short, I am extremely encouraged seeing what God is doing in the homeschool movement and how He is prospering Homeschool Iowa's work to help. If this vision excites you, I would like to invite you to get involved! There is so much yet to be done and so many ways to help. From encouraging a neighboring homeschool family, to volunteering to help with an event, to financially contributing to help fund the cause, there is a place for you to help build God's kingdom through home discipleship. Please join us!

*Joe and Elizabeth Bailey have been married since 2012 and have five children. Joe was homeschooled K-12 and was involved with his local homeschool choir, volunteering for Homeschool Iowa, 4-H, First Lego League, and running his own lawn care business. Joe went on to receive his B.S. degree in Mechanical and Welding Engineering from LeTourneau University. Joe now works as a weld engineer at Vermeer Corp. is currently serving as Homeschool Iowa President. Joe & Elizabeth are both passionate about securing homeschooling freedoms for their own children and for future generations.*

