



AHEM News

Volume 12 • No 1 • Fall 2014

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc.

**What
you
need
to
know
when
you
need
to
know
it**

Getting Started Homeschooling

Wednesday, August 13, 2014

7:30 – 9:00 PM

Whether you are actively considering home education or are just curious about how it is done, you are invited to attend Getting Started Homeschooling. The program will be held in the Jefferson Cutter House, Arlington, MA center on Wednesday, August 13, 7:30 – 9:00 PM. Topics to be covered include getting started, filing an education plan, methods, resources, and homeschooling support. Informational handouts will be available and an opportunity for questions will follow the presentation.

The program will be presented by Milva McDonald, a founder of Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable educational organization that gathers and disseminates information about homeschooling in Massachusetts through education, advocacy, and events.

Cost is \$15/person to reserve your spot; the full price will be refunded to you at the meeting, making your participation FREE. If you don't show up, your money will be donated to support the non-profit mission of AHEM.

See www.ahem.info/Events.html to register online or mail a check made out to Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474.

Please include:

- names of participants
- your address, and
- email or phone number

Space is limited; checks must be postmarked by August 8th. No refunds after August 8th except those made to meeting attendees.

Those with email will receive directions about a week before the meeting.

Salon Series participants will be added to the Friends of AHEM list unless they specifically opt out.

IMPORTANT: If you sign up for this event, please do your best to attend. Remember:

- When you sign up, you are reserving a spot that then cannot be given to someone else.
- If you sign up and do not show up, AHEM reserves the right to no longer treat your reservation request on a first come, first served basis for future AHEM events, only assigning you a spot should there be room after the deadline has been met.

Current State Scene . . .

Legislative Update

AHEM continues to monitor bills pending in the 188th Legislative Session for any action taken on education bills that may have an impact on Massachusetts home-schoolers. The current session began in January 2013 and runs for two years.

On Tuesday, March 4, 2014, the Joint Committee on Education held an Executive Session. S 208, AN ACT RELATIVE TO DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY, was reported favorably out of committee, was given its first reading, and is now being reviewed by the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. You can see the full text of the bill, bill history, and petitioners here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/Senate/S208>. S208 was accompanied by H338, H341, H350, H368, H376, H523, H524, H525, H3290 and S283.

S 208 would amend both Chapters 69 and 76 of the General Laws with the "age 18" attendance requirement and further establish tracking and coaching programs to identify and help

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The information in this newsletter does **not constitute legal advice**; it is provided for informational purposes only. AHEM is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

students at risk of dropping out of high school.

AHEM is opposed to this bill and sent a letter to be included in the official testimony for the hearing, which was held on October 8, 2013. We wrote, in summary:

- Raising the compulsory attendance age would be ineffective in reducing the dropout rate. In fact, statistics demonstrate that states requiring attendance until age sixteen have a lower dropout rate than those states compelling attendance until ages seventeen or eighteen.
- Raising the compulsory attendance age would result in increased spending for school departments. Furthermore, raising the age would take away resources from potentially effective remedies to reduce the dropout age in favor of increased costs for teachers' salaries, classrooms, and transportation.
- Additionally, we are concerned that raising the age to 18 could remove alternatives, such as early graduation, from motivated students for whom traditional public school is not working.

If you share our concern, you can write to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. Because the Ways and Means Committee is charged with considering all matters relating to the finances of the Commonwealth, we recommend the following talking point: Since raising the compulsory attendance age would not result in a higher rate of high school completion, the financial burden to taxpayers and already fiscally strapped school departments cannot be justified. This is a universal concern, and will carry the most weight. Please let AHEM know if you reach out, and what response if any you receive.

We are not aware of any movement in the rest of the bills we have been following that could affect Massachusetts homeschoolers. You can read our previous update about them at our website: <http://www.ahem.info/LegislativeIssues.html>.

See The Logic Behind Our Legislative Alerts: www.ahem.info/Logic.html

Not-Back-to-School

AHEM Considering Homeschooling Brochures

Remember when you were considering homeschooling but you weren't sure where to find information about it?

AHEM's *Considering Homeschooling* brochure cuts to the chase with information on deciding to homeschool and getting started homeschooling in Massachusetts.

We'd love your help in getting more of them into the hands of people who need them: young families wondering about the homeschool option; parents of kids who are suffering in school and aren't sure where to turn; librarians who often get questions about homeschooling.

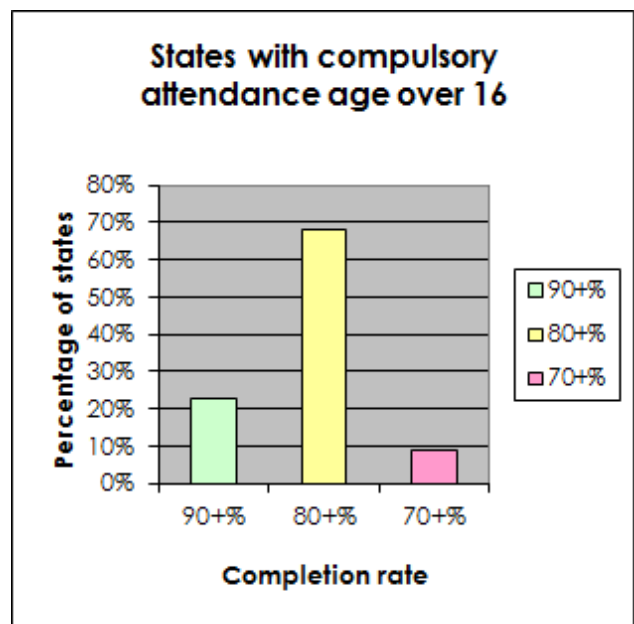
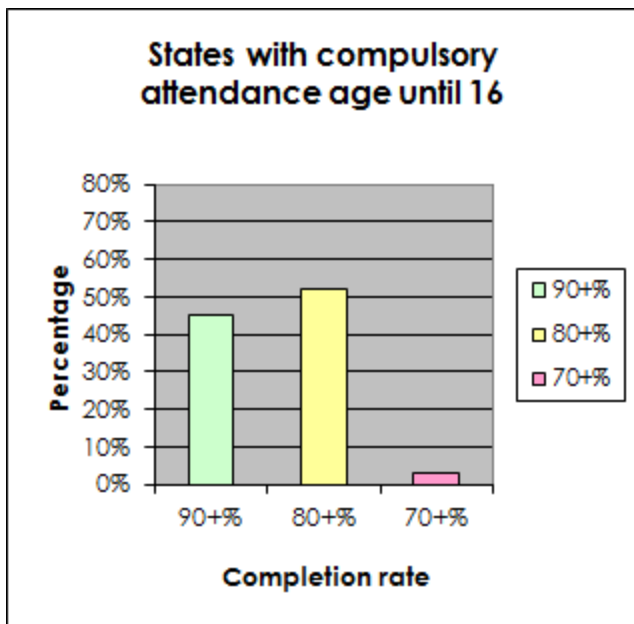
There are lots of helpful and effective ways to distribute the brochure:

- Leave a few at your public library with the Reference or Children's Librarian.
- Hand some out at informal gatherings like park days and support meetings.
- Have some available at homeschool information nights.
- Keep a few to mail to individuals who contact you looking for more information.
- Stash some in a glove compartment or backpack so that they're on hand when you need them.
- Leave a couple or post one anywhere that it's OK to leave free literature or post informational notices.

AHEM would be happy to provide you with copies of the brochure. Just email info@ahem.info with name, address, and number of pamphlets desired, or leave a message at 781-641-0566 with name, address, phone number and number of pamphlets desired, and we'll get them right out to you. Thanks for your help!

Not-Back-to-School Event listing

A treat that we homeschoolers experience during the "Back-to-School" season is the feeling of heading off to a beach or park on a glorious September day when the rest of the world has settled back into closing themselves indoors at school again.



If your homeschool support group hosts a “Not-Back-to-School” event at which you’d welcome newcomers, we invite you to send details about it to list on our events calendar.

It is fun and inspirational to see the myriad of events that take place across Massachusetts at this time of year, from Cape Cod homeschoolers heading to the beach to Western Mass. homeschoolers atop of mountains, (or go ahead – break the stereotype!) and everything in between. We hope you will send us your listing.

Clearing Our Throats

Give and Let Give: Homeschooling From the Ground Up

By Sophia Sayigh

Ten years ago, my then 14-year-old son was in a book group, and explored math and foreign languages at home. He volunteered at the library, American Friends Service Committee, and Food Not Bombs. He took piano and guitar lessons, studied music theory, and took a jazz class at the local community college. He played in a couple of bands and was starting to learn about modern digital multi-track recording.

My 11-year-old daughter read a lot, took violin lessons, sang in a chorus, and took a dance class. She created a line of creams and balms to sell at the homeschool craft fair. She started volunteering to take care of foster kittens and took a workshop at Middlesex Community College to get certified in American Red Cross Pet First Aid.

A lot has changed in the last ten years. And a lot has stayed the same.

Today my son freelances as a Recording Engineer in New York City. My daughter is a newly licensed Registered Nurse.

Ten years ago AHEM was started on the floor of an indoor gym that parents chipped in to rent so families from our local support group had a space to regularly hang out in when it wasn’t playground weather.

It was empowering for us, starting an organization from the ground up, creating a vision and working to make it reality. It was empowering for our kids, especially our daughters, to see their mothers make it happen. I remember mine, returning from the AHEM PO Box with a thick pile of envelopes, grinning, “Mom, you created a monster!” But then, we did a lot of starting stuff and making things happen ten or so years ago.

The founders of AHEM were lucky enough to start homeschooling (for me, almost 20 years ago) in a world where we desperately needed each other. If our kids wanted or needed something, we made it happen.

Milva, another AHEM founder, and I met in the mid-1990s when her daughter, then 11, and my son, then 7, both went to weekly small group meetings to learn Italian with a native

speaker. Families opened their homes for weekly science clubs, knitting circles, reading groups, you name it. The Puddlejump Players, a homegrown group, put on an annual play for years, involving dozens of homeschoolers. My kids were never in the shows, but we went to the performances to support their friends’ efforts. Just like we went to the homeschoolers’ fall fair year after year. I remember the first one we went to when my kids were seven and four, and how inspired and excited they were by all the child entrepreneurs there.

My kids enjoyed history and geography fairs, science fairs, craft clubs, book groups, math classes, bands, and more, all activities and events that I or other mothers and fathers organized, or that the children organized themselves. As with AHEM, we made stuff happen.

Today, homeschoolers represent a market to museums and businesses. Judicious use of these offerings can be a wonderful way to enrich your child’s life. But buyer beware – when I started homeschooling, we had to ask if a museum or wildlife sanctuary would be willing to accommodate a group of homeschoolers at off hours. As our numbers expanded, everyone got the idea, and now there are offerings for homeschoolers everywhere you look. Some places have regular classes during school hours. Some organizations sponsor ongoing “homeschooler” days, with reduced admission and special activities. Even retailers are opening their stores to offer classes for homeschoolers during the school day.

What might be lost by spending some bucks, and spending the day in the car driving from one activity to the next?

Overcommit to prepackaged opportunities, and you might not have the time to spend a day in pajamas reading and cuddling, or the space in a day to make a serendipitous discovery born of nothing-to-do, or to experience a lush afternoon extending to sunset hanging out at Walden Pond in the spring or fall, when everyone else is cooped up in school. Or lingering at the park after a Frisbee game, or playground hopping week to week, or hosting a potluck or meeting at your house. Organizing events or get-togethers yourself is one of homeschooling’s best kept secrets.

If you didn’t sign up for those pre-packaged classes, you might do what we had to do – put time and energy into a home grown experience for your kids and other local homeschoolers. Then what happens? Your child meets other kids who share his or her interest, and you make connections with other adults who are homeschooling their kids. Those parts of homeschooling were, for my family, very important parts, because we built a community of people who cared about each other and were there for each other, and that’s what it’s all about really, right?

Ten years later, that’s what abides.

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Our lives are happening now, not something we’re getting ready for later. So are children’s lives. That remains one of the things I am most grateful for – my children living their lives at every age, blossoming in their own time, having the time to figure out who they are and build relationships and

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connections over years.

Those relationships weren't just with other kids. Some of the people they count as friends today are the other adults in their lives who took an interest in them, mentored them, looked out for them, taught them, encouraged them, advised them, and cheered them on. In his book *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, Malidoma Patrice Somé talks about mentoring: "Recognizing the presence of genius... in a young person... begins with paying careful attention to the young person. One becomes a mentor when one is found by a pupil. We need to know each other in order for such opportunities to present themselves." I would add that children need the time and freedom to find and choose their mentors.

In his critique of compulsory state schooling, *Dumbing Us Down*, John Taylor Gatto draws a distinction between communities and networks. Needless to say, he considers schools to be networks. But not just schools. He says, "Networks do great harm by appearing enough like real communities to create expectations that they can manage human social and psychological needs. The reality is they cannot. Even associations as inherently harmless as bridge clubs, chess clubs, amateur acting groups, or groups of social activists will, if they maintain a pretense of whole friendship, ultimately produce that odd sensation familiar to all city dwellers of being lonely in the middle of a crowd."

Communities, on the other hand, "are collections of families and friends who find major meaning in extending the family association to a band of honorary brothers and sisters. They are complex relationships of commonality and obligation which extend beyond the perimeter of the homestead."

What does this distinction between networks and communities have to do with homeschooling? In a world rife with networks, homeschooling provides us, and especially children, with the landscape to be whole people in the real world, not fragments, and from that to reap the benefits of community.

Homeschooling is more than just freedom to learn. It's more than just awesome classes or innovative learning centers. It's time with family. It's building close relationships with your kids. It's going through real life ups and downs with the support of your friends, your community. It's kids finding their own mentors by virtue of living an authentic life.

Somé says that people must work at becoming better connected to each other by giving: "Someone who believes that community exists in order to provide for his or her needs without having to give anything in response will probably never find the right community..." Homeschooling creates the opportunity to give to others. In so doing, we become better connected to them, and thereby gain witnesses to our whole selves as individuals, which is the ultimate fulfillment.

So while AHEM was created to protect our right to homeschool independently, the act of homeschooling is anything but independent. Homeschooling encompasses challenges like the individuality of homeschoolers (often all we have in common is the fact that our kids aren't in school) and geography (we don't all live on the same street or even in the

same town). But homeschooling also gives us the gift of time, if you've resisted overscheduling, and the opportunity to give. These things offer chances to forge real community.

Make it a priority to schedule time to spend with others, to get to know each other. Don't focus solely on getting children to and from classes and activities. Build relationships with other families, and remember that building meaningful ones takes time. Use existing networks like e-lists, but don't think you'll find a ready-made community. Ready-made communities don't exist, they are an illusion. The only way you're going to get community is to build it one person at a time from the ground up.

Although I had no idea what would be most important to me in choosing a homeschooling lifestyle, in retrospect, I can see clearly that a hugely valuable part of homeschooling isn't about the education. Some of my fondest memories are of the get-togethers or groups we created ourselves.

The weekly park day, which we pretty much never missed, and which, for me, evolved from playground hopping with a five-year-old and a toddler, to watching my 6'2" son leap for a Frisbee at practice with the homeschool high school Ultimate team.

The circle of moms on the beach at Walden shooting the breeze on all topics, and when I say all, I mean all, my son sitting off to the side, comfortably fingering his guitar, unfazed. Probably no better education for a young man.

The relationships built in book groups with both of my kids and their cohorts, the shared experience of reading the same book at the same time, my delight in rereading a classic, and experiencing it through their eyes, too. Finding out that it meant a lot to them to be there, enough that they had dragged themselves out of bed and slogged through Melville's whales, whales, whales to be a part of discussing *Moby-Dick* with our group, or wrapping their brains around Morrison's *Beloved*.

Marking the passage of time through community rituals like May Day, the craft fair, presentation nights, or potlucks.

And of course the precious time spent with my children: Tapping the maple tree in the back yard and spending the day boiling the gallon of sap down to a tablespoon of syrup. Getting up at four a.m. to make hot chocolate and head out past city lights to better view a meteor shower with my son during his outer space obsession. Seeing my daughter enthralled after making water explode in our home chemistry lab, or hanging out on the couch with her, just being with her, as she fussed with her math, that she was determined to get the better of in order to further her goal of going to college.

#

When our family decided to homeschool, it wasn't about running from school, although there was an element of anxiety about school. When our son was two, out of curiosity I picked up *Teach Your Own* by John Holt. Holt described a lot of what had been my school experience as a "good"

student for more than half my life at that time. But he also described something I was seeing with my own eyes: the little explorer and scientist, the small boy who very much wanted to fit into the tribe, very much, as John Holt put, it a “loving, kind, serious and purposeful” little boy.

So the choice to homeschool, was, for us, a choice for something. A choice to preserve and build on our child’s curiosity and love of exploring and learning. A choice to continue to put time as a family high on our list of priorities.

In my work with AHEM, I hear from a lot of sad and panicked parents who have children suffering in school and are looking for an alternative. Their child’s needs are not being met, and/or their child is being abused and bullied by peers and/or teachers and administrators. The number has grown over the years. An August 2013 survey from the National Center for Education Statistics found that, “Ninety-one percent of home-schooled students had parents who said that a concern about the environment of other schools, meaning safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure, was an important reason for homeschooling their child.”

What this means is that for more parents, homeschooling is not their first choice. They don’t choose it because the homeschooling lifestyle appeals to them. They choose it because they are trying to save their child any way they can.

These families come to homeschooling looking for a lifeline, and many do not have a clue what it entails or what they are getting into. They might actually have no idea that the homeschool lifestyle can look like what I have described. They want somewhere besides school to put their kids, and in our free market economy, options are springing up for them, just as the museums and nature sanctuaries sprang to offer classes to homeschoolers in the last decade.

In the interest of protecting the right to independently homeschool, hopefully we can consider whether an offering is necessary or desirable when looked at in the context of our long term goals for our children and families.

Learning centers, homeschool resource centers, self-directed learning centers are springing up all over. They go by many names and take on many forms, from places with an à la carte menu of groups and classes, to stand alone buildings with paid staff where you can drop off your child all day. Some are open a few days a week; others are open Monday through Friday.

A learning center can provide a crutch or stepping stone for families entering a new world that they know nothing about. But keep it in perspective: A learning center, no matter how wonderful, is only one experience out of many at the disposal of homeschoolers. Employ it as a tool if you find it useful, but don’t mistake it for more than it is — a network for sure, and in many cases, a school in different garb.

The use of museums, businesses, and learning centers that market to homeschoolers can drain homeschoolers’ time and motivation for putting into the kind of community building I have described. It’s so easy for newbies to get scooped up by exciting programming and glossy packaging that they never find out about everything else that’s possible, and in the long

run, unwittingly change the face of homeschooling from its vast diversity and possibilities to a face that looks a lot more like school. Maybe alternative school, but still, school.

There are some things — family time, community, freedom — that are so true and basic, they are worth protecting and holding onto. It used to be we didn’t have a choice but to nurture those things, and now I know how lucky we were.

Sophia Sayigh is a co-founder of Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts. This piece was adapted from a keynote she delivered at AHEM’s 10th Anniversary Conference in October 2013.

Meet Massachusetts Homeschoolers . . .

Why We’re Not Going Back to School in the Fall

by Tracy Barsamian Ventola

Last fall, we quit formal schooling. We stopped dragging our seven-year-old daughter — kicking and screaming — out of bed each morning. We no longer held our breath each afternoon as we drove up the school’s driveway, where the teacher would hand us a physically, emotionally, and spiritually depleted child. A child who held it together all day at school and unraveled as soon as she entered the sanctity of our minivan. That unraveling would take the form of tantrums — screaming, hitting, kicking, and punching at home. Somehow we’d survive the afternoon and early evening, only for our daughter to struggle to fall asleep for hours, tossing and turning in bed. And the torture would begin again the next morning when we’d wake her from a dead sleep and fight the battle required to get her to school by 8:20.

Friends and family, with varying degrees of eloquence, warned my husband and me that we were shirking our parental responsibilities. Children must be socialized! Children must go to school! It was our responsibility as parents to endure this hellish lifestyle and get our kid to school, damn it! But the more that we thought about the situation, from our daughter’s perspective and that of our family as a whole, the more we questioned whether going to school (an institution created by the state) was in our child’s best interest? We wondered, what if we stopped imposing society’s rules on our child, who was so clearly suffering? What would happen if we listened to our daughter? She could not have sent us any clearer message: school was not working for her! And the transformation that would occur, as a result of withdrawing our daughter from school, would be more remarkable than we’d ever dared to imagine...

It was a slow process. It started over the summer, once school ended... but, by the end of the fall, our girl was back in her body. The hitting, kicking, and screaming all became things of the past! The tantrums stopped completely. Our home went from a war zone to a place of peace and quiet. The three-year-old little sister got back her big sister. The explosive big sister

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AHEM Not-Back-to-School Picnic

September 8, 2014, 11:00 am – 3:00 pm

Come join AHEM for a Not-Back-to-School Picnic! Mix and mingle with other Massachusetts homeschoolers and celebrate the beginning of the fall season in beautiful surroundings. It will be a great opportunity to share wisdom, gather inspiration, and connect with friends old and new.

We will meet at Hopkinton State Park, located at 164 Cedar St., Hopkinton, MA. AHEM has reserved the Split Rock Picnic Site. There is a covered pavilion, picnic tables, a large recreation field, running water, and restrooms. A sandy beach on the Hopkinton Reservoir is a five minute walk along a forest trail.

Bring a picnic lunch as well as Frisbees, balls, bikes, games, cards, musical instruments – whatever your family needs for a good time at the park and beach.

We will also have a baked goodies sale with all proceeds benefiting AHEM.

If you RSVP by Sept. 5 to info@ahem.info, we will have nametags ready for you, as well as a free raffle ticket making you eligible to win a special prize. Please include your name and address, and kids' names. You will be added to the Friends of AHEM list unless you specifically opt out.

Weather Notice will be posted at www.ahem.info/Events.html on September 8 by 8:30 AM if the event is cancelled due to inclement weather.

Cost The park charges \$5 per vehicle to enter.

Directions to Hopkinton State Park The park is a short distance from the Southborough stop on the Framingham/Worcester MBTA Commuter Rail line.

For directions by car, see www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-north/hopkinton-state-park.html

AHEM Salons Return

Come partake in lively, stimulating discussion with fellow homeschooling parents in a relaxed, friendly environment.

On Wednesday, September 24, 7:00 – 9:00 PM the topic will be “College Bound.” The program will be held in the Jefferson Cutter House, Arlington, MA center.

If going to college is the next step of choice for your homeschooler, join us on September 24th. Can homeschoolers really get into college? Absolutely. The salon's leader is a parent who has successfully navigated the college application process with her lifelong homeschooler in the last two years. Topics will include choosing schools to apply to, tailoring a generic application form to reflect your homeschooling experience, and parental responsibilities as your child's “guidance counselor.” Sample application components will be shared.

See www.ahem.info/Events.html to register online for

was replaced with a gentle girl who played kitties and puppies with her little sister. And the sleep! Our daughter who'd struggled with sleep for years began to easily drift to sleep at night. Replacing the stress of school with a slower pace and unstructured time was healing our seven-year-old.

Before deciding to homeschool, I conducted hundreds of hours of research, during which I met two homeschooling moms whose stories took my breath away. Both moms had sons who, when in school, had experienced behavioral issues very similar to those of my daughter. Both mothers vowed that homeschooling was the tantrum solution! And so, I'd hoped – dreamed! – about the behavioral changes that would occur once we started homeschooling, but what I had not anticipated was how my daughter's inner light – her natural curiosity and her joy of life and learning – would be rekindled by the slower pace, by the days tailored to her needs and interests.

At the beginning of the year, our girl was not interested in much. She wanted only to stay home. To play in the playroom. To lounge on the couch. To lie in bed, looking at books. I religiously planted seeds all fall. I littered books that might interest her around the house. I told her about new, exciting homeschool classes that were forming. I suggested homeschool park days and games days. Nothing sparked her interest. Nothing. This flat stance would continue through the fall, but in December the most amazing thing happened: the lights came back on! She was interested in everything: learning to read, to skate, to dance, to design and sew clothing, to bake her own recipes. You name it, it interested her! Enough time had passed. She had, in a sense, rebooted her feelings about learning... and about life in general.

Art is another way that we witnessed this huge shift in our daughter. Our girl has always been a talented artist, but once she started going to school every day, she all but stopped drawing. Now, as a homeschooler, most of her quiet time at home is spent with a pen and a sketch book in hand, perfecting some aspect of her drawing. She's currently working on getting the fingers on figures to look just right.

A year ago, I experienced many sleepless nights, worrying about our decision to quit school. I was a Spanish teacher before becoming a mom. My mother was a classroom teacher before she became a mom. My father taught special education for over thirty years. I'd never considered homeschooling until faced with my older girl's emotional and behavioral struggles. Now, a year later, I am so grateful for those tantrums! Our daughter's outrageous behavior gave us the courage to homeschool. And homeschooling truly has changed everything. And so, this summer, I sleep soundly knowing that we're on the right path, knowing that we're not going back to school in the fall.

Tracy Barsamian Ventola writes about her family's adventures in unschooling on her website Off Kilter – Holistic Parenting for the Rest of Us (www.offkiltr.com). Her blog focuses on alternative education, holistic health, and conscious parenting.

“College Bound” or mail a check made out to Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. Please include:

- names of participants
- your address, and
- email or phone number to receive confirmation and directions.

Space is limited; checks must be postmarked by September 19th. No refunds after September 19th except those made to meeting attendees.

On Thursday, October 16, 7:00–9:00 PM the topic will be “Rethinking Socialization.” One of the first questions homeschooling families are asked is, “But what about socialization?” In this discussion we will examine our beliefs about what it means for children to be “socialized.” We will also brainstorm ideas for supporting homeschoolers as they forge meaningful connections with others and participate in groups and communities in a variety of social contexts.

Rethinking Socialization will take place at 7:00 PM at Panera Bread, 433 Paradise Rd., Swampscott, MA. If you want, you can purchase soups, salads, sandwiches, baked goods, and hot and cold drinks at Panera. Please do not bring outside food in. If you plan to purchase food, please try to arrive a few minutes early to order so we can begin the discussion promptly at 7:00 PM.

See www.ahem.info/Events.html to register online for Rethinking Socialization at www.ahem.info/Events.html, or mail a check made out to Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. Please include:

- names of participants
- your address, and
- email or phone number to receive confirmation and directions.

Space is limited; checks must be postmarked by October 10th. No refunds after October 10th except those made to meeting attendees.

Salon Series participants will be added to the Friends of AHEM list unless they specifically opt out.

Both discussions will be geared toward adults, so we ask that you leave at home children who will be as happy or happier there with a loving caregiver. Interested teens are welcome to attend.

Cost is \$15/person (teen and adult) to reserve your spot; the full price will be refunded to you, making your participation FREE. If you don’t show up, your money will be donated to support the non-profit mission of AHEM.

Those with email will receive directions about a week before the meeting.

Faces at AHEM:

Meet Morgan Kennedy Henderson

Morgan lives with her family in Stow, MA. She and her husband have been homeschooling their two children from birth. Her son, 19, is about to start his sophomore year at Macalester College in MN. Her daughter, 16, takes classes at community college and Harvard Extension.

Morgan first encountered other homeschoolers in childbirth and breastfeeding classes/support groups, and started considering it before her son was a year old. John Holt, John Taylor Gatto and others provided additional inspiration. AHEM founders and philosophy have been part of her support resources from her earliest days of homeschooling. She and her husband sorted through learning options and multiple activities by regularly evaluating what worked, and being flexible about changing the things that didn’t. She and her family have been unschoolers, been part of a formal cooperative situation, participated in all sorts of activities/groups, and most recently found many needs met through community college options.

Morgan works part time at the Mothers’ Milk Bank Northeast, screening potential milk donors, and as bookkeeper for the Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition. In addition to serving on the AHEM board, she also volunteers with the Nursing Mothers’ Council. Her husband’s law practice is based out of his home office, an option which has allowed one or the other of them to support their kids’ activities during the days. Morgan also enjoys knitting, reading and gardening.

Highlighting AHEM County Contacts

While we at Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts love people to make use of the wealth of information about homeschooling in Massachusetts from our website, we also realize that sometimes there is no substitute for a live person to provide information and one-on-one support, to help with questions about the *Charles* guidelines, or to act as a sounding board for concerns in dealing with school officials. This is what AHEM County Contacts are ready to do. AHEM’s resources allow County Contacts to have a broad overview and solid understanding of how homeschooling works in Massachusetts as well as an awareness of hot spots and trends.

County Contacts

Cape Cod & The Islands: Barnstable, Dukes & Nantucket Counties

Sophia 781-641-0566

Bristol & Essex Counties

Stephanie 781-646-4541

Middlesex County

Cindy 774-249-0806

Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk & Worcester Counties

Milva 781-648-5579

Western Mass: Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden & Hampshire Counties

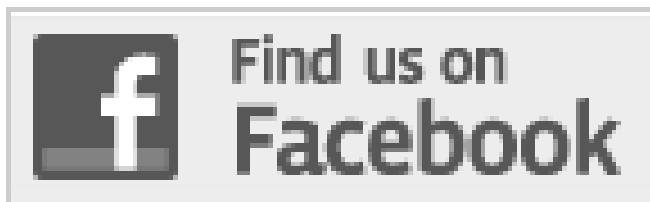
Erin 413-238-4442

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Friends of AHEM keep abreast of legislative and other issues that affect Massachusetts homeschoolers via an announcement-only email list or this newsletter. Friends of AHEM with email get special notice of AHEM events, field trips, and get-togethers. Be proactive: become a Friend of AHEM. Even if your involvement is simply to stay informed, that strengthens all of us.

To become a Friend of AHEM and receive email updates, visit www.ahem.info/BecomeaFriendofAHEM.html.



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AHEM
PO Box 1307
Arlington, MA 02474

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