The HEA is a volunteer organisation that supports HEA members and home educating families throughout Australia. We currently have several vacant roles that need filling to enable the HEA to continue to provide services, support, information and discounts for you and other home educators: email volunteer@hea.edu.au if you can help.

**Committee**

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New South Wales: Alicia - 02 4257 5116, parkerlam5@aal.net.au
South Australia: [state contact support person needed](http://hea.asn.au/resources/results_sg.asp?state=SA)
Victoria: Jeanie - clarkspar@aussiebroadband.com.au; 03 5394 1178
Tasmania: [state contact support person needed](http://hea.asn.au/resources/results_sg.asp?state=TAS)
Western Australia: Sandra - sandrawilson@iinet.net.au; 08 9452 1830
Northern Territory: [state contact support person needed](http://www.hea.asn.au/resources/results_sg.asp?state=NT)
Australian Capital Territory: Karen - krl89@aal.net.au; 03 9 449 4370
Welcome to the village

It has been said “it takes a village to raise a child”. Stepping Stones for Home Educators is the ‘village’ to which all the members of the Home Education Association of Australia belong.

Welcome to our village! At the heart of our village are our homes. Rich in resources and skills these homes create a vibrant community in which our children are born, grow and thrive. Together our homes form a wonderful village, full of opportunities and support for everyone!

Stepping Stones for Home Educators is produced and distributed by the Home Education Association Inc.

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from the Editor...

By now you will have noticed that this issue is a printed one! We’re excited and we hope you are too. Not everyone wants a printed issue though and it is possible to opt to download a pdf version from the HEA website for future issues: simply email publications@hea.edu.au.

In our winter issue we continue to bring you articles on home education styles. Though we share the home education experience, we don’t agree on how it should be done. For me the main lesson has been that what works for one child does not necessarily work for another, and that what works today might not work tomorrow. An open mind is one of the best tools in the home educator’s toolbox!

We had a fantastic response to our request to share your history teaching experiences! Read three passionate articles on the subject, guaranteed to inspire you anew.

As home educators we are in the fortunate position of being able to organise our own time. Many of us have chosen to volunteer for various good causes. Read the stories of three such volunteer experiences. If you have volunteering stories or ideas to share, please let us know so that we can include those in our magazine.

There is plenty here to ponder. Put your feet up and enjoy!

Elsa Raubenheimer and Beverley Paine
Magazine Editor and Publications Coordinator
magazines@hea.edu.au and publications@hea.edu.au

At Home with HEA

The 2011 HEA Annual General Meeting was held on 21st March. We have some new members on the committee and a few of our longstanding committee members have retired.

I would like to publicly thank Esther Lacoba, Beverley Paine and Sue Podger for their fantastic efforts and devotion to the HEA during recent years. Esther, Beverley and Sue have retired from their roles on the committee after contributing many hours of their time to ensure the successful running of the HEA during recent years. Without the selfless input of these three amazing ladies, the HEA would not be the strong, successful organisation that it currently is.

After being on last year’s committee Maaike Johnston, Sharyn Grebert, Alicia Parker, Kathryn White and myself have all been re-elected as committee members. Thank you Maaike, Sharyn, Alicia and Kathy for continuing to support and contribute to the HEA.

Rebecca Stanford, Gauri Holloway, Rosemary Wilson and Amelia Priest have joined as new committee members. Thank you Rebecca, Amelia, Rosemary and Gauri for supporting the HEA and for helping out. So these are our current committee members:

President - Guy Tebbutt
Vice President - Maaike Johnston
Secretary - Sharyn Grebert
Treasurer - Rebecca Stanford
Alicia Parker
Kathryn White
Gauri Holloway
Amelia Priest
Rosemary Wilson

Best home educating wishes,

Guy Tebbutt
HEA President, president@hea.edu.au

Don’t want the printed copy? Stepping Stones is also published as a downloadable pdf. Send an email to publications@hea.edu.au to opt-out receiving the printed version.

Contributions to Stepping Stones for Home Educators: HEA members are welcome to submit articles and items for publication in Stepping Stones for Home Educators. Please email Elsa Raubenheimer, magazines@hea.edu.au for a copy of the Submission Guidelines and Style Guide.

Market Place Classifieds: Email your For Sale, Swap, Wanted to Buy, and Home Business Advertisements to: publications@hea.edu.au. Classified ads are free for HEA Members.
Thank you for your letters!

Use the Stepping Stones Post Office to connect with fellow home educators. Perhaps you’d like to find a penpal, meet local homeschooling families, or establish a connection with homeschoolers in areas you might visit soon on holiday. Email Elsa magazines@hea.edu.au with your letter. We’d love to hear from you!

Our readers write...

I’m not sure if this is the right place to send it but I have been meaning to write to say a very big thank you to everyone who puts Stepping Stones together. It is truly an interesting, thought-provoking and beautiful magazine. We (my two boys and I) enjoy reading it so much. There is just one comment, and this comes from my 7 year old - why is there always a picture of a girl on the front cover? I had to laugh but I had no answer for him. We are hoping the winter issue just might have a picture of a boy on it.

Kind regards,
Leanne S

Ed – Thanks for your kind words and your son’s comment about the front cover: from now on we’ll mix it up a little! Good resolution photos from our readers are always welcome.

BG asks:

How do you go about having a child assessed for gifted and/or learning disabilities? Our eldest daughter seems to be bright. When she was at school she was assessed using the wrong assessment, so the results didn’t tell us anything except she’s above average (something we already knew). Our youngest daughter is finding life a lot harder. No-one has ever put their finger on it, although several different child care teachers mentioned there’s something not quite right. Some days she seems to follow everything and then others she seems not to understand plain English and just stares at me blankly. On those days she can’t even do revision of work she previously understood. I get very frustrated with her and don’t know where to go for help or assessment so that I can work out a better way to teach her.

Our readers reply...

Belinda G replies to Catherine’s question regarding mathematics programs in the last issue.

I have two girls who are in Year 1 and Year 2. We don’t use Mathletics (although I’ve been told it’s good) because I’d paid for my children to have Spellodrome (which is run by Mathletics) and found that it wasn’t really suited to their grade. My youngest daughter could rarely find words simple enough for her, and my eldest daughter deliberately chose words that were too easy.

We use Study Ladder. It is graded by class level. It covers the whole mathematics curriculum and it could be used on its own if you wanted to. You also only pay one fee per family, not for each child, and you can work at grade level, or above or below as needed. So if the children are stronger in one area of math than another you can swap grade levels. We also got the literacy activities in the package, as it was all covered in one price. The activities include video instructions, worksheets to print, interactive games and speed tests to develop mental arithmetic.

I supplement it with Targeting Math Lab (computer games, buy the student version for around $20) and the text book for the year level. We are working through one topic at a time, for example addition. Do the addition section in their class levels on Study Ladder (the eldest does her own grade plus the grade above to extend her), then the text book activities for Terms 1 and 2. In Term 3 we’ll revisit addition and do the exercises in Terms 3 and 4 of the text. Hope this was helpful.
Continuing our series on different approaches to home education.

More than one way...

Choosing Homeschool Curriculum:  Part 3  by Beverley Paine

In this article Beverley continues to elaborate on the choices available to home educators as they launch their exploration of some of the many methods and approaches available to them.

In the summer and autumn issues we featured some of the major questions you may ask as you start your home educating journey. What approach you choose will depend on:

• how long you intend to homeschool;
• what you are legally required to teach;
• your children’s learning styles;
• your preferred style of learning, teaching and parenting;
• your children’s personal interests, temperaments and dispositions, talents and abilities;
• any learning difficulties, differences or special need requirements;
• your family values and lifestyle choices;
• the quality and nature of the available materials;
• how much support is available to you;
• what you can afford.

Popular homeschooling methods

Home educators enjoy a variety of different approaches to helping their children learn at home and in the community. These range from ‘do-it-yourself’ personalised curriculum development to a ‘school-at-home’ approach.

Unschooling

The unschooling child's education is built around his or her interest with the child determining how, when and what to learn. Often called ‘delight-driven education’, unschooling is a rejection of school-based methods of instruction, preferring to use whatever is useful to facilitate learning. The parent is not regarded as a ‘teacher’ but as a ‘facilitator’ – someone who helps the child find appropriate resources to support learning. The slogan “the world is our classroom” exemplifies the attitude that educational resources can be found anywhere. “Life-long learning” is a term often used by unschoolers, demonstrating that education is a process that continues throughout one’s life and isn’t seen as something that mainly happens to a person during childhood. There is an emphasis on retaining, or rediscovering, the child’s natural inclination and enthusiasm for learning.

Unschooling is perceived as an unstructured approach as it is very spontaneous and responsive to immediate needs. Many parents blend an unschooling approach with judicious use of textbooks, unit studies, online tutorials and parent-organised activities in some subject areas. Some parents lose confidence in the unschooling approach as the children approach high school age. Others find recording and documenting the educational progress of their children difficult. This method particularly suits motivated children who wish to specialise early, are entrepreneurial, or have difficulty with traditional schooling.

There are dozens of excellent sites and blogs online to help you explore this approach, including:

• http://lifelearningmagazine.com/blog/
• http://sandradodd.com/unschooling
• www.naturalchild.org
• http://theparentingpit.com, a dad’s perspective.
• www.unschoolaustralia.com

Natural Learning – Informal Learning

Natural learning is very similar to unschooling, where learning is personally meaningful and of high interest to the child, but is less ‘child-directed’ and more ‘family-centred’. Naturally learning children learn the skills and knowledge necessary for healthy and holistic development and growth within the everyday context of home and community. There is an emphasis on learning life skills, as well as practical activities and skills, development of work ethic, self-reliance and service to others. Living and learning are not seen as separate activities.

Translating everyday life into educational jargon is usually required to build confidence in this method and to learn how to document educational progress.

For information and support join:

• http://joyouslearning.info
• http://groups.yahoo.com/group/learningnaturally.
Charlotte Mason Approach

Charlotte Mason, a 19th century educational reformer and devout Christian, believed in promoting the value of good habits, nature study and insisted that children learn from quality literature, what she termed “living books”. Narrative – the retelling of what has been read or learned – is used to demonstrate learning and comprehension. Copy work reinforces thoughts and ideas while simultaneously teaching handwriting. A sense of the ‘big picture’ of human history is taught through the use of a “century book”. This approach combines practical life skills with a sound literature-based education.

This approach is very adaptable and works well with both unschooling and traditional school-at-home approaches. Ambleside Online www.amblesideonline.org provides a free online curriculum for the parent who wishes to follow a structured approach. For more information about using this approach visit the following websites:

- www.charlottemasoneducation.com
- www.charlottemason.com
- www.pennygardner.com
- www.amblesideonline.org
- www.secularcrm.com
- www.homeschoolfavourites.com.au
- http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CMandFriends-ANZ

Classical Education

Classical education is a three-part method intended to literally “train a child’s mind”. This approach teaches children to think, rather than teaching ‘subjects’. At its core is the Trivium, an educational process that recognises that children learn differently at different ages. It begins by teaching children basic facts across all subjects, then encourages the development of independent or abstract thought, before finally producing adolescents who can reason and use language to communicate eloquently.

It is a rigorous, literature-based, structured approach most suited to a traditional school-at-home style of learning. Families using this approach recommend The Well-Trained Mind: A Parents’ Guide to Classical Education by Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer. Some useful websites:

- http://www.memoriapress.com/forum/
- http://www.welltrainedmind.com/forums/
- http://groups.yahoo.com/group/chooz/
- http://classicalhomeschooling.com/

Waldorf (Steiner) Education

Holistic in nature, Steiner education educates the whole child with its motto of “head, heart and hands”. Younger children focus on arts and crafts, music and movement, and nature in a strict progression and structured way. Reading is taught from age seven. Older children learn self-awareness and reasoning skills. Children do not use textbooks in the early years; instead they create their own books and understanding. Television and computers are deemed deleterious to creativity. There is an emphasis on imagination, natural materials and spiritual development.

Support and resources for home educating using this approach can be difficult to source, though materials and books can be purchased from Steiner shops. Golden Beetle Books www.goldenbeetlebooks.com offer a complete curriculum. There is a great deal of information available on Steiner education and the curriculum available on the internet:

- http://www.steiner-australia.org/other/Wald_faq.html
- http://millennialchild.com
- http://www.waldorfinthefamily.org
- http://www.waldorfhomeschoolers.com

Montessori Education

In a controlled learning environment made up of ‘learning centres’ stocked with Montessori learning materials, children learn at their own pace by freely selecting highly structured activities developed to teach innately those things the child is developmentally ready to learn. Montessori materials are generally made from natural materials and there is an emphasis on learning life and practical skills. Many families find they are able to buy or make their own Montessori materials following instructions found on the internet.

- www.monhtome.com
- http://www.montessorifortheearth.com/
- http://www.montessorihomeschool.com/

Summary

Throughout our home educating years we did a little of everything: wrote our own learning programs, used textbooks and computer programs, enrolled the children in specialist classes as well as distance education courses. Before selecting resources I always asked myself:

- What ‘need’ will this resource meet?
- What will it achieve?
- Does it need me to do/learn anything to be able to use it with my children?
- Does it require any preparation to use?
- Are the children likely to work with it willingly? Does it suit their learning styles?
- Can I achieve the same goal using something I already have on hand?
- Is it re-useable? Can I use it for younger children, sell it or give it away when we’re finished with it?
- Can I afford it?

Wherever you are in your homeschooling journey, you won’t go amiss if you focus on building a strong foundation based on your own beliefs about the purpose of education and what your homeschool should be like. Together with a little bit of research and chatting with others, it is relatively easy to select and add the specific resources you will need.

Beverley is the author of many articles and books:

- Stepping Stones for Home Educators
- Winter 2011
- www.homeschoolaustralia.com
- Mum to three adult home educated children
What is Eclectic Homeschooling? by Melissa Curran

Eclectic - in ancient use, epithet of a class of philosophers who ‘selected such doctrines as pleased them in every school’.

Some might call us indecisive. From the orderly structure of school-at-free play and TV — we’ve tried most learning methods.

Not so unusual. Most of us spend some time at the beginning of our homeschool adventure exploring and experimenting with styles and curricula, eventually settling on something that works well for us as a family and fits in with our parenting and educational goals.

Unless you don’t. Like us. We’re eclectic and proud of it, picking out – magpie-like – the shiny bits from everything and taking them home to decorate the nest.

And rather than being a confusing mish-mash, I find it turns out more like a collage – different materials, textures and colours working together to make a unique and coherent picture.

So much for explanations. How does it work for us day-to-day? I’ll tell you, with a short disclaimer:

Unschooling is more than a method of teaching and it’s difficult to pick and choose from the natural learning philosophy. You can’t really be ‘a little bit unschooling’. Even for those of us who chose not to implement it as a philosophy, it raises many interesting questions that can only help us challenge and clarify our own ideas about education, and for that reason alone, it’s worth reading about. It’s a philosophy I respect, although we don’t practice it now, and you won’t find it represented in our typical day.

Steiner education isn’t represented here either, being part of a spiritual philosophy and perhaps of not so much general interest as unschooling, although we use many Steiner play materials, crafts and craft books.

So here’s how it works in our house.

After breakfast and morning jobs were done, one random day last year, Emily and Lizzie sat down with their maths books and I taught them their lessons. Just like school, only in the kitchen. That’s us in school-at-home mode. I value this direct, efficient approach to the learning of basic skills.

By the time they were done it was close to 10 and so we all sat in the lounge room, ate biscuits and watched ‘Behind The News’ on the ABC. I guess I’d call that relaxed school-at-home!

After a bit of a chat – and really, if there was an educational style called conversational homeschooling, that would probably describe us best! - the girls went to their room to work on one of their self-chosen projects – writing a newspaper set in the times of the Greek gods, called The Daily Godograph. Learning has extra meaning and satisfaction for us when time is made for the children to experience self-direction and work with their own ideas and imagination.

Sometimes we’ll do some informal unit studies around this time. Nothing fancy! No lapbooks here - just books and activities most often linked to a time or person in history. In the past I’ve also used purchased unit studies from Five In A Row.

Noah responded by building a Lego game of his own based on the chapter, complete with passage and cave and standards to be won, and if that isn’t a spontaneous narration at work, I don’t know what is! What I love about CM ideas is the way her emphasis on good literature nurtures the children’s minds as well as my own and gives us good ‘food’ to digest. I also find her emphasis on nature study for younger children an easy way to make science a regular part of the week.

Free time then for everyone, because the next day was busy with dance and

played Lego game with him as a reward for his hard work, brushed the guinea pigs, ate lunch, drank tea. Definitely the delight-driven part of our program!

Back to Charlotte for some living, twaddle free books - The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe for Noah, a chapter of Eagle of the Ninth for the girls. It’s a tale of Roman Britain and Noah listened in. In the chapter I read today the hero, Marcus, entered an old, Holy Place of Life - a barrow - to recover the Ninth’s lost Eagle, captured by the tribe of the Epidaii.

Noah responded by building a Lego game of his own based on the chapter, complete with passage and cave and standards to be won, and if that isn’t a spontaneous narration at work, I don’t know what is! What I love about CM ideas is the way her emphasis on good literature nurtures the children’s minds as well as my own and gives us good mental ‘food’ to digest. I also find her emphasis on nature study for younger children an easy way to make science a regular part of the week.

Free time then for everyone, because the next day was busy with dance and
choir and more dance rehearsals, taught not by me but by tutors. I love being able to outsource some of the children’s instruction. Not only are there subjects I don’t have sufficient mastery of to pass on (and yes, classical ballet does come to mind) it gives me the chance to stop being a teacher myself, to have some respite from facilitating and planning, and ‘just’ enjoy being their mother. Most days see a hint of classical education in there as well, with chapters from Story of the World being read and narrated and Latin lessons being done together. In the lounge room (I don’t know why we bothered fussing about the children having desks. They are never used for study - too schooly - but I digress...) Yes, I ‘choose what pleases me from every school’. Nothing seems to me a perfect doctrine; so many things seem to offer something of worth.

And isn’t this the beauty of home education - the flexibility to choose, adapt and change materials and styles to suit each child in the family and to suit our own teaching style? Bespoke homeschooling, I’ll call it, the next time someone doubts my magpie ways. Individually tailored.

Melissa lives in Sydney and homeschools Noah, 7, Lizzie, 11 and Emily, 13. Her blog, Through the Wardrobe, can be read at http://throughthewardrobe-musings-melissa.blogspot.com/

Eclectic Homeschooling

by Michelle Morrow

The essence of eclectic homeschooling is to borrow freely from a range of different styles of homeschool philosophies and combine them to find your own personal taste and convictions and, hopefully, your children’s learning style.

So what is your homeschool philosophy?

Of course, ‘how to homeschool’ becomes more of a challenge, because our philosophy seems a bit ‘wishy-washy’ as we each determine what works well and what we want to achieve.

We all like to know where we are going and eclectic homeschooling seems to have no real anchor. For some finding an anchor is easy, as they have thought long and hard about what their educational goals are, whilst for others, it is a journey of trial and error.

In truth, I think most eclectic homeschoolers lean towards a particular homeschooling style, such as:

- Classical Education
- Charlotte Mason
- Unit Study
- Montessori
- Steiner
- Natural Learning

Eclectic homeschoolers glean from other philosophies to strengthen and individualise their own foundations and firm them up as they go.

This does require some thought, and reading different authors who have pondered this can help home educators find their way. Our style also changes to incorporate different circumstances and flow with the fluctuations of life.

Laying a foundation for your homeschool philosophy

Over the years I have read many books on homeschooling philosophy. I love some of the suggestions and often their core ideas and values overlap in places.
Some authors that I would recommend who have searched out this matter and helped me to shape up my style are:

- Ruth Beechick. *The Three R’s, You Can Teach Your Child Successfully* and *Biblical Home Education*.
- Sally Clarkson. *Seasons of a Mother’s Heart* and *The Ministry of Motherhood*.
- Catherine Levinson. *A Charlotte Mason Education* and *More Charlotte Mason Education*.
- Ray and Dorothy Moore. *Homeschool Burnout*.
- Mary Pride. *The complete guide to getting started in homeschooling*.
- Chris and Ellyn Davis. *I saw an Angel in the Marble*.
- Diana Waring. *50 Veteran homeschoolers share...Things we wish we’d known*.

Imagine a seven-month-old baby who’s just learned to control his body well enough to be able to sit on his bottom without falling over and is crawling with confidence. He’s just got to the stage of pulling himself up on parts of the furniture so he can now balance in a half standing position, still wobbling but very proud of himself.

Now, if we, the parents, had a ‘Big Book of Baby Standards’ and carefully monitored our child by its instructions, we might start questioning our baby’s natural learning progression seeing that, by the book, he should already be standing alone if we wanted him to walk before he turned one.

So, we then decide to take his future into our own hands as he obviously has no idea that he needs to walk by the age of one. After all, he’s only a baby, how would he know what’s good for him, right? We make up a plan of how many hours a day he needs to practise his ‘standing skills’, and we set a routine for him. We stand him up several times every day and let him go, but he falls every time.

What happens next? Remember, he’s only seven months old, his muscles are not strong enough to hold him and his reflexes are not advanced enough to avoid the fall, let alone protect him from getting injured when he hits the floor, thus causing him spinal injuries. But we don’t notice that, all we can see is that he cries and he doesn’t want to do it and he’s not getting ahead. ‘He’s probably just lazy and needs some more prodding’, we say. But the more we push him, the more he refuses to co-operate and now he doesn’t...
even want to crawl any more. He has completely lost his natural interest in even trying to get from place to place. He has suffered way too much to care anymore.

We take him to the doctor and he tells us that the child’s spine is disfigured and his muscles are not strong enough to hold it in its natural shape any more, and adds that he'll need walking aid when he's ready to walk. (Oh, and he gets some painkillers, so now we don't even notice that there is anything wrong with him as he doesn't show any signs of it). At least now we can say to ourselves and others that he's got a 'problem with his spine', that's why he can't walk yet and will need extra help when he learns to walk.

But would anyone in their right mind do such cruel thing to a child? Of course not! At least, not when it comes to learning to walk. Then why do people do it to children when it comes to educating them?

When we push children to achieve something they are not ready for or not interested in (lots of times these two mean the same thing), we can do a lot of harm. Being forced to read when he's not ready, he develops dyslexia, therefore he 'needs' more pushing. Having to listen when he's not interested, he wiggles and plays around, suddenly he has ADD and 'needs' medication (although he can sit still for hours during his favourite activities).

It's not the child, however, who's got the disorder, it's whoever is not considering the child's needs. Not special needs, just natural needs.

The term ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) should simply apply to anyone who ignores the child and doesn't pay attention to signs that clearly show his learning AND psychological development. Why do they label children who are just being children and would otherwise develop easily at their own pace?

The school system and even parents focus so much on where children are meant to be heading with their education in the future, that they completely forget about the child today. They make sure they cover everything step by step, nobody missing anything (as if that were possible!), but they ignore what's going on within each child at present.

What happens to the baby who does the unforgivable and skips the stage of crawling?! Same as to the child who skips learning his times-tables: he'll learn what he needs to when he needs to. I've never heard of a healthy adult who couldn't crawl just because he didn't learn to when he was a baby. I do know, however, that not all adults know their times-tables in spite of the fact that they were tested and passed in school.

At the end of a day I never ask the question 'did we cover everything?'. The only question I ask myself is: 'Did I answer all her questions?'.

I allow my daughter to be in charge of her own education and to follow her own curiosity. And most importantly, I make sure I don't teach her. Which is something I need to remind myself of every day.

It's not easy to accept the fact that our children don't need us to teach them everything they will ever know. How many times do we feel that we could give the information to them readily, saving them the time and trouble to get to the answers the hard way? But by restraining our urges 'to be of help', we provide them with an even better lesson. Having acquired information as the result of their own investigation will make that bit of knowledge truly theirs.

They'll know how they got to the answer and the information won't just be a memorised fact which they have accepted from someone without questioning its validity. That's what natural learning and, in my opinion, real education is. It works for us and would work for many if they allowed themselves to trust their children.

Dora Sumegi is a single mum from Far North Queensland, who has been homeschooling her daughter for five years with the support of some wonderful friends.
Homeschoolers love their libraries…
Help us fill our library with your stories!

What do you like to read?

How did your child learn to read?

What is your child’s favourite book right now?

Top Secret
by John Reynolds Gardiner
Reviewed by Elsa

Allen Brewster would have made a perfect homeschooler! He does not take kindly to being told what he ought to be interested in and when given an uninspiring science project, fights to choose his own topic, photosynthesis. During his experiments he has to learn all about standard photosynthesis and so will the reader. But there is a twist as he decides to experiment just a little further! The cover poses the question: “Is Allen Brewster really a threat to national security?” – well, you’ll have to read the book to find out. Funny and informative, this will be a hit with you and your children. A great read-aloud for the whole family, but just right for 9 to 11-year olds to read independently.
Available from Leatherwood Books
www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au

The Story Tree
by Sophie Fatus
Reviewed by Elsa

This colourful collection retells seven tales from around the world (from Indonesia to Norway). As with all Barefoot Books, this is a joy to behold. A story-time CD brings the stories to life and even young children can follow the tales in this beautifully illustrated book. Retold folktales include: The Magic Porridge Pot, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, Monkey-See Monkey-Do, The Sweetest Song and others. The Story Tree is has a sturdy, glossy soft-board cover with fold-in flaps and comes with Audio CD. Suitable for ages 4+.
Available from Leatherwood Books
www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au

Homer Price
by Robert McCloskey
Reviewed by Elizabeth, aged 10

If you like mystery, science and laughs in a book then go to a library and look up Homer Price. Because Homer is an intelligent boy who likes science, the local Barber, and the coffee shop owner. So I guarantee that if you like the local coffee shop owner, or barber, or sheriff, then you’ll like this book. So I say 10/10.

Don’t Judge a Book

Books come in all shapes, sizes and thickness. Some have pictures, some don’t. Some are made from paper; some are made from cloth and some from card. Don’t discriminate and judge some books to be better than others. Let the reader take what he or she needs from each book, magazine, article, comic or other publication. It doesn’t matter what we read, we always learn something we didn’t know before. It may be about what’s in the book - a piece of information - or it may be a revelation about human nature or about the self. Or it could be about how words are put together to make meaning, the role of punctuation or grammar… Know that whenever you see your children reading they are learning something and having fun. It doesn’t matter what they are reading. Enjoy the fact that they are happily reading something that has caught their attention for more than a moment and that the habit of reading is growing in their minds.

Welcome to the village Library
The cold season is always a lovely time to curl up with a good book and here, again, is the perfect excuse to do just that this coming winter.

In 2011 we are once again inviting home educated people of all ages around Australia to participate in the Home Ed. Winter Read-a-Thon. This is the perfect excuse to read this winter while raising funds for aid agency TEAR Australia (for more info about TEAR, visit www.tear.org.au or call 1800 244 986).

If you’re home educated and would like to be part of the read-a-thon, all you have to do is complete a registration form and send it to me at the address on the form.

Registration forms can be downloaded from HEN’s web page at www.home-ed.vic.edu.au. Alternatively, contact me by email at vampir12@bigpond.net.au, or by phone on (03) 9557 8262, and I’ll send you one. Once I’ve received your completed registration form, I’ll send you everything you need to get started.

The Read-a-Thon will run from June 1 to August 31 and you can read for all or part of this time.

You can include books of any length or genre. Picture books, chapter books, non-fiction, comics, audio books, magazines and graphic novels are all eligible items. You can also include books which have been read to you.

The participant who raises the most money, and the participant who reads the most items, will each receive a $25.00 gift card from booksellers Dymocks (www.dymocks.com.au).

Every participant will receive a certificate from TEAR Australia.

All the money raised will go directly to TEAR Australia. TEAR Australia will issue receipts to all sponsors who request them.

I hope you will be a part of the Home Ed. Winter Read-a-Thon 2011.

Grace Ephraums
Melbourne home educated student
The Art Gallery

Folk Art from Around the World

An Exhibition of Artworks by Hunter Home Educators

I was given the opportunity to mount a homeschool art exhibition at the recent Tocal Field Days, which is a large annual event in the Hunter Valley. We thought long and hard about the theme and after considering several local ideas eventually decided on a theme which was broader - that of “Folk Art from Around the World”. It was to be a large exhibition so we started with two classes during term 4, 2010, followed by 8 more sessions in term 1 this year.

Classes were planned to allow flexibility for families. Some chose to take part in every class while others came to a few or even only one session. The workshops were self-contained but also flowed together as a series, so those kids who came to several experienced a progression.

I began my planning almost 12 months ahead of the exhibition and started collecting resources 3 months prior to beginning classes with the kids.

We travelled on an artistic adventure around the globe, visiting each continent. We looked at authentic images of artworks from each country, often reading a picture book or inspirational text, or watching a slide show or short video. The students were encouraged to create individual images influenced by, but not copying, the examples.

The children always used artist quality or student grade artist materials, paints, brushes and papers. It really makes a difference! I love the kids to explore their own ideas so, in order to keep a level of continuity in the exhibition, I limited the palette or colour scheme for each project. I spent time teaching techniques such as brushstrokes, coloured pencil techniques, how to apply gold leaf etc. Children varied in age from 4 to 16, so I tried to cater to all the different ages and abilities.

A couple of kids who showed interest, helped to present the artworks, label pictures and hang the exhibition. We chose not to frame the work due to budget constraints, so we presented the pictures mounted onto foam core which was then attached with velcro dots to ‘wonderwall’ wall carpet. Even though we were able to use two areas of wall space, we still only had room to hang about half of the pictures. It wasn't a competition, and I didn't necessarily choose the 'best' works, I tried to include as many images as possible from each child involved. The event was a terrific culmination of months of hard work.

One comment from someone at the exhibition brought me a sense of satisfaction: “It doesn't look like a school exhibition; the work is too individual and creative”.

The Art Gallery by Bernie Meyers

Folk Art from Around the World

Stepping Stones for Home Educators Winter 2011
Bernie Meyers is an artist who runs classes for home educated students at Shiloh Art Studio, Martins Creek NSW. www.berniemeyers.com

The table below shows a brief outline of the exhibition classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Artistic Style/Inspiration</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Palette</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Aboriginal Dot Painting</td>
<td>foam relief printing/calligraphy parchment</td>
<td>burnt sienna ink on white or raw sienna coloured paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Tribal design/ Matisse</td>
<td>Collage/Canson pastel paper</td>
<td>bright colours, black and white (Matisse style)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Traditional motifs</td>
<td>Plastic Drypoint etching/intaglio printmaking paper</td>
<td>turquoise on off-white paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Celtic Knotwork</td>
<td>Coloured Pencil/gold leaf/watercolour paper</td>
<td>red, blue, yellow, green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Matryoshka Dolls</td>
<td>Acrylic/watercolour paper</td>
<td>purple, pink, blue, green, black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native America</td>
<td>Pueblo Pottery Design</td>
<td>Acrylic/watercolour paper</td>
<td>earth browns on pottery shaped paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Chinese Brush Painting</td>
<td>Ink/ancient Chinese seals/Chinese cotton paper</td>
<td>black and red on panorama-scroll or fan shaped paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Faux Papyrus Painting</td>
<td>Acrylic/faux papyrus paper</td>
<td>red, blue, yellow, green, black, brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>Geometric design</td>
<td>Coloured Pencil/Canson pastel paper</td>
<td>turquoise, blue, black, white on dark paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Plate design</td>
<td>Acrylic/watercolour paper</td>
<td>red, blue, yellow, green, orange, black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to run an art exhibition for your local homeschool group

If you would like to run an exhibition for kids in your local homeschool group, you don’t have to take on such a major event. It is easy if you choose one topic, for example, Egyptian painting. Here are some tips to get you going:

- find a location to exhibit - try a local library, café etc
- measure the space so you know how much work is needed to fill it
- choose a theme
- decide on how many times you will meet with your group to work on the art and plan the number of lessons accordingly
- collect books with authentic images as inspiration
- find picture/story books if possible
- work out a budget for art materials
- decide on the medium for the kids to work in
- choose a colour scheme
- allow time to gather art materials and resources
- set the class times and have as many parent helpers as possible
- enjoy the journey!

Bernie Meyers is an artist who runs classes for home educated students at Shiloh Art Studio, Martins Creek NSW. www.berniemeyers.com
'Grandma, tell me again about the times when you had to hide in the cellar from the bombings', I nagged my good old granny thirty years ago. I would listen to her stories with great interest about people in her youth. Her daughter, who never lived to be my aunt, and the grandfather I never knew are still vivid memories to me. I was the most enthusiastic little historian back then. I developed a life-long passion for history.

Then I went to school. The drudgery of memorising dates of events irrelevant to my life was nerve-wracking. I still have nightmares about history classes. Moreover, when someone asked me about my emotional experience of Cyclone Yasi, I could only compare it to the anxiety I used to have before a history exam. The only thought that gave me courage, while hiding in our shelter (a brick toilet block, where we had to run for cover after logs came through the roof) was my grandmother's story about her experiences during World War II and how she survived the raids.

The fact is that we are all part of history and as we live our lives, we create more history. Children love to hear stories about their own mischief and what they used to do when they were little. This is a good place to start. Photo albums of your child's early years, collecting their artworks, or telling the story of their birth and other milestones will build up the history of their own life. Keeping track of measuring their heights on the wall for example is a great way to introduce timeline as you write the date to each measurement.

Stories about siblings and parents will strengthen family ties and develop a feeling of belonging. Going further from here are the stories of older family members from times before your child was born. The history of loved ones teaches them where they come from, and this helps them in finding their own identity.

Books won’t teach young children about the most important people in their lives. Not even the best history teacher could have told me about the soldier, who was considered an ‘enemy’ in the text books, but described by my grandmother as a ‘nice and polite young man’ who carried her groceries for her.

As history is mostly about people, it’s not the facts that will capture your child’s imagination but people’s involvement in it and how it affected their lives. Facts can come later. When the child is already absorbed in the story, dates and names will stick with him without effort.

Whatever you do, the golden rule is to engage your child emotionally. Make history a personal experience. The rest follows.

**About the author:**

Dora Sumegi is a single mum from Far North Queensland, who has been homeschooling her daughter for five years with the support of some wonderful friends. Dora works part time and is fortunate to have a job she can take her daughter to and which allows her to do some work at home. Their approach is informal learning.
Written by Time History in our Homeschool

by Melissa Curran

“History is a cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of man.”

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I don’t remember where I first heard about Susan Wise Bauer’s Story of the World. I do remember reading the first chapter to a 7yr old Emily, out in the garden, baby crawling and pulling up grass and little sister scambling on the climbing frame.

It seemed to me the perfect book for my history-loving daughter and my sleep-deprived self. With its chronological and narrative approach to history it appealed to both our imagination and our intellectual selves; it introduced Emily to history from the nomads to present times and from East to West (and filled in many gaps in my own knowledge). She narrated most of what we – or later, she herself – read. In the early days she narrated with pictures she drew or by telling me what she remembered of a chapter. As she grew older her narrations became more complex and she began to think, explore and question ‘history’ more deeply. She read widely, especially fiction set in the time periods she was most interested in.

That little sister grew older. Lizzie didn’t love history in the same way my big girl did. Story of the World time meant sighs and squirms. Wars and conflicts upset her. But she loved to listen to Little House on the Prairie and when I suggested a ‘Laura and Mary’ day with some homeschooled friends, she was happy to plan games and doll-making and homemade lemonade. She liked to sit on a grandparent’s lap and listen to stories of “when I was little like you”.

Australian history needed a fresh approach. Living in Sydney we had easy access to sites important in colonial history and I thought that a history journal might be the way to go. Using Our Sunburnt Country by Allan Baillie and Janette’s Pictures of Australian History the girls kept a record of all they had learnt and the places they had seen over that year of Australian studies.

As my history loving child has gotten older, she’s moved on from her Story of the World books. Passionately interested in 20th century history I’ve sourced several resources for her including textbooks, living books and films and online learning, like that at BBC Schools. She continues to study and narrate, although her narrations now are written and beginning to take an essay form. She has plans to study history at university, to volunteer at a historic house, to teach history in schools.

As I write, she and her sister are at the Museum of Sydney. Their Grandad has taken them to see some exhibitions: the photographic An Edwardian Summer, and another exhibit about the history of the indigenous civil rights movement. For Lizzie this hands-on approach to history continues to be the one that can pique her interest in a subject that is not one of her passions. Something else she’s loved doing with her sister is researching and writing a newspaper set in the past. Renaissance classifieds anyone? And in this house, it’s hard to grow up without a healthy dose of historical novels and biographies being read to you, even if your natural preference is for Lord of the Rings and Elven lore.

As a family we’ve also enjoyed a lot of history-based TV shows like The Time Team, Worst Jobs in History and High Street. Lizzie’s heading off to school next year and I’m confident she’s had the exposure to history and to historical thought she needs to manage the subject at school.

And the baby? He’s 7. We’ve done a little hands-on history using Usborne’s Ancient History Pockets while I decide on the way into history that will work best for him. I’m thinking of how he likes to draw designs and maps and wondering if a time line chart – something I read about but ended up not doing with the girls – might be the perfect way to ‘show’ him history. Combined with Story of the World, the odd episode of Horrible Histories, a good children’s history encyclopedia from DK or Usborne and an outing and project or two, we should be ready for a little – or a lot! – time travel.

Whatever resources I decide on, history will be as much part of our homeschool as on the day I called Emily over from to the rug and said “I’ve got a new book for you – I think you’ll like it. Shall I begin?”

Resources mentioned:

• Story of the World books are available at www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au
• Visit Homeschooling Down Under for Our Sunburnt Country at www.homeschoolingdownunder.com
• Australian History Pictures can be found at www.australianhistorypictures.com
• And for Usborne History Pockets visit Homeschool Favourites at www.homeschoolfavourites.com.au

Melissa lives in Sydney and homeschools Emily 13, Lizzie 11, and Noah 7. She blogs at http://throughthewardrobe-musings-melissa.blogspot.com
AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

NOT BORING!

by Janette Cassey Ingham

I have heard it said recently in the media that Australian history is difficult to teach because Australian children find it boring; that our history needs something like a civil war to fight or a dictator to vanquish to make it interesting. This makes me sad, because to me all history is so much more than a bunch of names, dates and cold facts on a page, and if the most important thing is to learn from history and not just to learn of it, then there is so much more to discover and consider!

Right from the early days of Australia’s recorded past we can close our eyes and imagine ourselves thousands of miles away from home in an unknown place far across the seas, camped in a hot, fly-blown, sandy new land. Waking up in the dirt wearing the same sweaty unwashed clothes, with only a few scraps of dried-out biscuit and beef for breakfast, lunch and maybe dinner. Looking around, we see that we are surrounded by a troop of unhappy soldiers, and hundreds and hundreds of miserable-looking convicts. Talk about uncomfortable!

Or you might imagine yourself to be one of those who were brave enough to go exploring across our big country when (to you) it was unknown. Out there, surrounded by the strange new sights and sounds of a strange new land, not knowing what you would encounter. Hundreds, thousands of miles from anyone and completely alone! With no help to look for, no way of contacting anyone and the knowledge of whether you lived or died known only by God in heaven.

For history is made up of the experience of peoples’ lives, and the achievements and dates come out of those not the other way around. Such situations, most of us or perhaps our children find hard to imagine now. This surely makes reflecting upon the comparison between living in historic Australia and our convenient modern world important. Such dramatic differences! It would be a shame not to take the opportunities history affords to learn some appreciation at the same time for all we have today. We are so used to electricity, refrigeration, food from a nearby shop, telephones, medicines, , and clean hot and cold running water. History can remind us of how incredibly blessed we are in Australia in this age. As happened to the victims of the recent tragic floods and tsunami, it could suddenly all be swept away!

History can help us to imagine ourselves with less and remember ourselves as having so much more.

Australian history can also inspire you and leave you in wonder. While reading the stories of adventures in a wide new land you can find yourself discovering the trepidation and determination of our explorers and our settlers, as well as the cleverness of the Aboriginal people. Often with only a few supplies they would pack up and head off into unknown distances, north, south, east, west.

Five Teaching Strategies

by Beverley Paine

1. Learning by Doing

The doing of a task by children prepares them for life beyond childhood. By letting them ‘have a go’ and practice a wide range of skills children gain confidence in their abilities and learn responsibility. Children happily engage in hands-on history activities that were daily tasks for our ancestors or are performed by people living in other cultures today. Cultivate the motto ‘learning by doing, not reviewing!’

2. Incidental Learning

Being around when certain activities happen, or in the vicinity when information is being offered to others, can impart incidental learning. Without effort children seem to pick up knowledge and understanding, often not knowing where or how they came by it. Capitalise on this by personally taking an interest in history knowing that your children are quietly observing and learning.

3. Learning by Reflection

Help your children gain different perspectives by modelling a questioning approach to learning. Help them develop ways to think and talk about situations. Spend time each day musing with your children about the past, present and future!

4. Be a Storyteller

Good teachers are good storytellers. Embedding knowledge and information in stories aids memory and understanding. Read quality ‘living books’ together and talk about the characters and action to bring history to life. Create and tell your own stories.

5. Learning by Exploring

As children get involved in hands-on activities they naturally generate questions. Make time to answer your children’s questions when they ask them and continue the conversation, exploring the topic for as long as they want or need. Explore possible answers as well as helping them research correct answers - this helps to develop their imaginations.
and all directions in-between; the vastness of Australia before them, mapless. They might find themselves stranded in the never-ending dryness of desert, or being tossed about on our enormous sometimes barren coastline in a tiny boat, fording raging, flooded rivers or lost in thick bushy mountain passes. No wonder people suffered and sometimes died of hunger and thirst. Through history you can find yourself in their shoes.

And what about the fascination of being the first to collect and record Australia’s new and unique portion of creation? Fossicking like the naturalists: along the coast for treasures, or peering deep into the bushes to find precious new insect, seed, plant and bird-life; or spotting one of Australia’s unusual animals like ‘the Paradox’, ‘Water-mole’, ‘Duck Bill’ (known now as the Platypus). You can find yourself in the shoes of people like Joseph Banks and Georgiana Molloy, discovering, observing and recording the treasures of the special nature of Australia.

Of course we have our own tales of dangers and shipwrecks, our own crimes, fights and struggles. Whether you were a member of one of the hundreds of Aboriginal groups whose world was being turned upside down, or a shepherd way out guarding his master’s sheep alone. Whether you were taking a journey, long and hard, with the threat of escaped and angry prisoners on the road (the famous bushrangers); or a victim of gun fights and rough justice. As well, there are the stories of newly born Australians standing up for their freedom and what they believed was right; a changing, growing and talented nation. Yes, Australia has plenty of exciting stories all of her own.

Many of these people took the time to write their experiences down, presumably so that we might be able to imagine what their lives had actually been like. They left us an insight into our Australian story through their eyes and pens. It would be sad then, would it not, for the imagination of Australian children to miss out on all of that!

So Australian history is not boring. We are living on an enormous island in the middle of a wide ocean at the bottom of the world not long added to the map; of course there are plenty of fascinating stories to tell and to imagine!

A home educating mum, Janette loves expressing herself, whether in drawing, dancing, gardening or sewing and loves poetry and imaginative stories. She is the author and illustrator of Pictures of Australian History and Our Australian Stories - Part 1, Aborigines and the Colonies. Her aim is to bring Australian history and learning to life for Australian families and their children. www.AUSTRALIANHISTORYPICTURES.com
Exploring Colour – Wet and Creepy Dippy Designs

For the Wet and Creepy Dippy Designs we used tissue paper, paper serviettes and blotting paper with food colouring diluted in water. We folded the paper and dipped it in the mixture. We experimented and made purple. The tissues and serviettes were hard to separate when wet, and easy when dry.

Exploding Colours

For the Exploding Colours experiment we used textas, methylated spirits, water and blotting paper. We drew a line with different coloured textas and then soaked the paper in either the methylated spirits or water. We had to predict the result. We had to record our result on a chart. The ink from the line was pushed up much higher than where it was marked.

Some questions we asked:
Why do some colours rise faster than others?

The water separates the colours. The paper fibres are thick and like a sponge. Some colours are heavier than others and can’t move up the sponge holes (gaps in the fibre of the paper). It is because a big molecule rises slower than a small molecule.

Which colours have the biggest (slowest) molecules?

To determine this we had a colour race. We used red, green, blue, yellow, organise, purple, brown and pink. Pink, brown, purple, red and orange were slowest.

We discovered that blue travels faster than yellow. Roger’s red was fast too. We discovered that different makes of texta pens use different inks. Some reds were faster than other reds.

Other observations:

We used ordinary paper and it wouldn’t soak up the water. Thomas liked the way the colours spread from the centre when he was ‘painting’ using pilot pens and methylated spirits.

The records of these experiments are drawn from Beverley’s children’s 1995 science scrapbooks.
Winter’s Forests
by Dave Blissett

Winter in the forest – does it make you think of naked trees, standing like dark skeletons on a ground covered by a thick blanket of snow? It’s a popular image but (for the majority of forested areas in Australia) it’s not true.

Much of Australia’s forests grow in mild, temperate climates, where winters are not harsh enough to force major changes, like they do in the Northern Hemisphere. So most of the forests you visit will have much the same look all year round. However, there are some places in Australia where the forests and the animals which call them home, have to adapt to the coldest of winter conditions.

In the high country of south-eastern Australia and Tasmania, winter conditions place great demands on the forests. Sub-zero temperatures are common across the winter months. In these high mountains, snow may fall as far north as the Queensland/NSW border. On the highest peaks, above 1600 metres, the snow may be many metres thick and last from autumn into spring. It can even snow in summer.

The trees of these high country forests have special strategies that help them survive the winter. One of the most common high country trees is the Snow Gum (Eucalyptus pauciflora). These tough eucalypts have short thick trunks, small leathery leaves and are able to withstand strong winds and freezing cold. They grow thick woody bulbs, called lignotubers, under the ground where they store nutrients insulated from the worst of the cold.

In more sheltered gullies, where rainfall and humidity is high, grow rainforest species like the Antarctic Beech (Nothofagus moorei). These ancient trees grow slowly, thick, twisted and gnarled, and may be hundreds of years old. A forest of Beech trees, covered in moss and lichen, can look like something from a fairy story.

And out on the most exposed ridges and the highest peaks, such as the main range of the Australian Alps and around Cradle Mountain in Tasmania, few trees can survive. In these harsh places, above the snow line, only the hardiest of shrubs and heath plants can colonise the rocky ground, where winds regularly top 100 kilometres per hour and temperatures drop below minus ten degrees.

Despite the harsh winter conditions of these high country forests, a wide range of animal species survive. Mammals, birds, reptiles, even amphibians and insects can be found across the alpine regions. Some, like snakes and alpine frogs, hibernate through the worst of the winter snows, coming out to feed and breed when the warmer months return. Others, like the Common Wombat and Bush Rat are forced to dig into the snow to find buried roots, grasses and seeds. While predators, like the Alpine Dingo and the Tasmanian Devil are able to survive through the bleak winter by feeding on the remains of dead animals that fall victim to the icy conditions.

Humans too live in these wintry places. The first Aboriginal inhabitants of south-eastern Australia would regularly move down from the high country when the winter snows arrived. Then, during the warmer months, they would climb back into the mountains to gather valuable food sources, such as Bogong moths.

Even today, you can experience the feeling of a “true” winter by visiting one of the many alpine national parks in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. These are places where people go to enjoy alpine sports such as skiing and boarding, or to walk in the cold silence of the winter forest.

You can find out more about the winter forest, by clicking the following links:
Growing a Forest in our Backyard!

by Beverley Paine

In 1987, I watched a series on television about the threat of nuclear war and the polluting effects of nuclear energy and shortly afterwards read a book that detailed the horrors of chemical and biological warfare. The graphic images and disturbing statistics haunted me for weeks. This fear ran counter to my optimistic nature and I fought its depressive grip with a stronger weapon - the instinctive need to survive. What could I, an ordinary person with problems of my own, do to change situations decided by greedy and short-sighted governments?

I knew I had to do something, but that it had to be an affirmative action that supported life. I also knew that I needed to make a difference where I lived and set examples my family and friends could emulate.

An interstate holiday which included hundreds of kilometres of travelling through forested areas devastated by die-back from causes which were at that time unknown, convinced me that without trees life on our planet was fragile, if not doomed. Luckily, that year I was introduced to two wonderful organisations, Permaculture and Trees For Life. Both promoted life-affirming activities and operated at the grass roots level. Dedicated volunteers espoused sustainable visions and worked toward changing the way people think about the world. I became hooked, with enough positive action to keep my imaginative brain busy for years.

Permaculture is wonderful as a concept but hard to achieve in practice. It demands a total change in perspective and challenges old values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour. I will never cease to learn about how to live sustainably! Trees For Life, on the other hand, gave me instant success and a feeling that I could, with minimal effort, make a real contribution.

Thus began our odyssey into tree growing as volunteer growers for Trees For Life. Over the summer months our backyard would turn into a miniature forest as thousands of trees germinated and grew, often as tall as two feet, in boxes of plastic tubes. Every day we would carefully water, prick out weeds and remove hungry bugs. One year, a box of wattles disliked the mains-water, as it came directly from the Murray River, and showed signs of dying. We watered them separately with our precious rainwater and watched them thrive.

Growing trees isn't a lot of work, but committing up to seven months of each year can be hard. If we left “our babies” with someone else for a week, we would worry. It doesn't take long for a forest to die at this stage of life. We've grown trees for farms in the south-east region, the Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula, and Kangaroo Island and many hundreds for our own property.

In 1988, we purchased and began to revegetate a four and a half-acre property. We continue to plant trees and under-storey species about the property each year. As our forest grows taller and bushier, it begins to look healthier. Natural regeneration of ground-covers and small shrubs has begun. Our aim is to grow our own small piece of bush-land, which we can enjoy with friends, other forest enthusiasts and local wildlife. Although not yet mature, it is populated with many different species of birds, lizards and insects, as well as echidnas, possums and kangaroos.

When the fear rises strongly within me, and I begin to feel there is nothing that we, as a species, can do to repair or stop the global damage we are causing, I go for a short walk, breathe in the fragrant eucalypt air and listen to the wind in the forest in our backyard.

Join Trees for Life!

www.treesforlife.org.au
Being a Volunteer Surf Lifesaver

by Heather Haines

When I saw that this magazine wanted articles on being a volunteer I thought I really should put pen to paper, or rather fingers to keyboard. Both my son and I are volunteer Surf Lifesavers at our local Surf Club. Never in a million years did I think I would ever do this (and certainly not after having emigrated from a country town in the UK where I had never seen the surf, let alone needed to be shown how to use a shark alarm!). However my son decided on arrival to the Sunshine Coast that he really wanted to join up.

I remember accompanying him to the beach and jumping around in panic as I saw him being swept out to sea at a rather swift pace in a rip and wondering what I should do. He was smiling, having fun and no one in the club seemed remotely concerned – only me, his mother! I later learned exactly what a ‘rip’ was and that they were very useful for getting out to the back of the waves quickly. In my son’s case this trick is of paramount importance not only if he needs to do a rescue, but also because he now competes at both State and National level.

Recently he returned from the Aussies having been awarded a Bronze Medal working as part of a team. I am immensely proud as my son has been diagnosed with ADHD and Aspergers. He has never particularly excelled at working in a team. However our local Surf Club at Dicky Beach in Caloundra has offered him many opportunities to learn about working as part of a team and getting along in a group, which is an essential skill within this field and indeed life in general.

Most beach rescues are a team effort and it is wonderful to see young children and teens honing these skills which will always be useful in later life. Surf Lifesaving has given us opportunities to mix with others and meet people from all walks of life. In my view, the teenagers he associates with are inspiring, as are the younger Nippers. They have caring attitudes and learn amazing life skills.

My son at the age of 15 has gained not only his SRC, Surf Bronze, but also his ARC/Defib qualifications, his Senior First Aid, and IRB Crew certificate. He is a very active member of the club and attends as many patrols as he can, and has for the past two years been awarded for the outstanding number of hours he has put in at the beach helping to keep people safe. His newfound passion for the surf inspired me to get my Surf Bronze Medallion - no mean feat as at the age of 42 I had never set foot in the surf, let alone paddled a rescue board! I managed to pass my Bronze Medallion and it has given me so much respect for both our paid and volunteer Surf Lifesavers who put their lives at risk to save others every year.

I attend a voluntary patrol once a month and have really enjoyed getting to know a lot more about the fabulous volunteer Surf Lifesavers who patrol our beaches across the whole of Australia. These clubs are run entirely by volunteers and without these selfless people they would not exist. They attend patrols on all the major public holidays including Christmas Day and all in our club do so with pride and a smile on their face. We may have opted out of the school system for a variety of reasons, but we have not opted out of community life altogether!

Volunteering teaches children many important life skills. Not only does it add that critical element of socialisation with people of different ages that many non-homeschoolers seem to worry about, it also
Wrap With Love

by Melissa Curran

See, you don’t even have to leave the house to volunteer! Emily and I have been knitting blanket squares for ‘Wrap With Love’, a charity that collects and distributes hand-knitted blankets (or squares) to be given to those people suffering due to disasters world-wide. Emily can knit while she’s waiting for her dance class to start or on a rainy weekday afternoon or in between English and Maths. It’s a pick up, put down kind of volunteering with a feel-good factor and with the added bonus of honing a skill. This winter we’re hoping to join in ABC 702’s annual blanket and square drive and knit-in as well.

For blanket and square instructions, visit http://www.artsandcraftsnsw.com.au/WrapPattern.htm

For anyone in Sydney who would like to join us for a homeschoolers’ knit in, feel free to email me at mgcurran@hotmail.com

Volunteering at the RDA

by Kirsten P

My name is Kirsten and I am thirteen years old. I volunteer at the ‘Riding for the Disabled Association’ (RDA). For a long time I have been mad about horses and have never really had a chance to be around them. When I heard about the RDA, I couldn’t wait to visit. I was sure it would be perfect. I would get to be around horses, learn more about them, and I’d be helping out at the same time. I just wasn’t sure how I would go being around people with special needs, since I hadn’t experienced it before.

It turned out far better than I could have imagined! I love it there and always look forward to Tuesdays. Being hands on with the horses has built up my confidence amazingly and I have learnt so much. I have also enjoyed getting to know the riders. It’s great to see them progress and share in their excitement. They’re a lot of fun. I never leave that place without a big grin on my face.

Going to the RDA doesn’t feel like a job and I enjoy every bit of hard work (except maybe picking up the presents the horses leave behind for us). I love getting to know the horses and the other volunteers too.

My opinion is that in the volunteering environment, everyone has a great attitude. They all have something in common and enjoy what they are doing, otherwise they wouldn’t be there. In this case, we all love horses and have a heart to help others in need, enough to volunteer our time and energy. I love what the RDA is doing and hope to be part of it for many years to come. We don’t get paid, but our rewards are far more valuable than money.

An impressive portfolio of volunteer experiences will benefit your child and help him or her stand out from the crowd in another positive way.

Volunteering is a fantastic way to take advantage of the freedom that comes with homeschooling, while giving back to the community and helping your child learn important life skills. It provides an amazing sense of charitable giving and selflessness that I feel can only be viewed as a good thing. Happy volunteering everyone!

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101 Games and Activities for Children with Autism Spectrum and Sensory Processing Disorders

Pediatric occupational therapist Tara Delaney helps parents and teachers engage young children in play by providing details of and instructions for stimulating interactive games. The author shows adults how to help children move their bodies through play. The games focus on teaching skills such as eye contact, interaction, association and attention span, as well as social, numerical and language skills. Although the games are easy to learn, they should provide plenty of learning and fun, inside and outside.

Available from www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au

Kids With Zip

A practical resource for promoting active children ages 3–12
reviewed by Beverley Paine.

Kids With Zip, by Joanne Landy and Keith Burridge, is an accessible and practical resource with over 600 ideas for stimulating inside, outside, individual and group activities to promote physical health and well-being. Although aimed at teachers and people who work with groups of children, there is a lot in this book to stimulate activity within the home.

It can be hard to come up with ideas to combat the lure of the internet, computer games and television shows, and bring balance to our children’s lives. Physical activity is essential for healthy development, but it can also sharpen academic ability and improve motivation. The authors recommend moderate activity, about half an hour to an hour of developmentally appropriate activity daily. It’s important to think of the needs of the whole body and encourage a range of different activities – not just those our children find naturally easy or fun. The aim is to use and tone the whole body. A variety of different movements means our insides get a good workout too.

Exercise doesn’t have to be a chore or an imposition. The authors present many ways to integrate physical activity into daily life so that it becomes habitual and a permanent feature of family life. The book also offers suggestions and information for children with an impairment or disability. Individual and group exercises, games for groups and games for special occasions and seasons are included.

What I found especially useful was the wealth of information about child development in Part 1. The why and how of exercise and activity are simply but thoroughly explained. Part 2 goes beyond the typical teacher’s manual. The quirky illustrations and general presentation of the games and information help to make it easier to read. Although expensive, I highly recommend this book if your group is planning a sports activity day!

What is your favourite home education resource and why? Email your answer to magazines@hea.edu.au!

Books for Healthy Development!

Doctor’s Surgery

By Samuel W, age 10

When I was young I went to see,
The Doctor in his surgery,
But halfway through examining me
He left to go to the lavatory.
There I was He left me free;
It was the best few minutes in the world for me!
I fiddled with the anaesthetics,
The tweezers and the antiseptics,
And the funny old x-ray machine,
And the good old mosquito bite cream.
I mixed the pills upon the shelf
But didn’t keep any for myself.
And then - I saw it - in my way,
The bucket from the old sick bay.
I had an idea - a naughty one though,
It stayed in my head; it just wouldn’t go!
I bent over to pick up the bucket of tin,
And started to pour lots of medicine in.
Oh, glorious stuff soon began to go in,
All those medicines in their bottles and tins.
The pills and the bits, the antidotes and creams
And the medicines I thought were only in dreams.
I had emptied in about every medicine in the room,
When suddenly the whole bucket went KABOOM!
And there I was standing in the gloom,
As the doctor stepped into the remains of the room.
What’s On Around the Country

Please forward your news and information to Elsa:
news@hea.edu.au.

Dr Jay Wile, author of Apologia Science, will be visiting Canberra, Adelaide and Melbourne in June. For bookings details see http://drwile2au.com/

HBLN’s Science Fair/Tabled Activity Day on Monday June 27 from 10 am – 3pm at Brown Park Recreation Centre, Salisbury Rd, Swanview, Perth.

Home Ed Readathon 2011 - help raise funds for the aid agency TEAR Australia. See page 13 for more details.

MS Readathon 2011 registrations are now open.
Reading period is any 30 days throughout June or July (July only in TAS). See page 13 for more details.

Oct 28 – Nov1 Unschooling Conference 2011
Airlie Beach, Qld: www.unschoolingretreat.com

November 21-27: National Home Education Week
It is time to start planning your celebration activities! HEA can supply promotional materials and literature. For large events please put let us know a couple of months in advance: publications@hea.edu.au.

Newbies Night, 7 June
Beverley Paine will be answering questions about homeschooling and how to get started.
Starts at 7pm EST. For more information see:
http://www.rainbowdivas.com/NHN.html

NHN is a dedicated, password protected online conferencing room. Connect in real time with other Homeschoolers, with webcam, audio and text chat.
A sensational opportunity for geographically isolated families to connect and stay in touch nationwide.
Annual cost $10 per family for 2011.
A place to get support and information
Join NHN Yahoo Group to access room and password details:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NationalHomeschoolNetwork/
Hello, I’m Mari a homeschooled student in NSW, Australia. I’m 13yrs old and like watching and playing tennis, and I love swimming.

On the 3rd of March 2011, at Ruth Everuss Aquatic Centre at Lidcombe NSW, Kickstart ran a traditional yearly Swimming Carnival for all the home educating community. This year around 50 children participated.

Children aged 4 to 17 years can participate in the homeschooling Swimming Carnival. It is one of my most awaited activities for the year because I love the races against other teens around my age. The event includes Freestyle, Breaststroke, Backstroke, Butterfly and fun races.

When the day had finally arrived, I couldn’t wait!

When we got there and walked in the Centre a Kickstart staff member wrote on our hand our age using a blue or red texta. The blue texta indicated that you were in the Dolphins team and the red texta indicated that you were in the Red Salmon team. I was in the Dolphin team.

When we were preparing and getting ready on the long concrete steps we couldn’t wait till we were called to have our first race. There were 7 of us competing in the 13+ age group. We were the first age group to compete. James, the main organiser from Kickstart, called it 13 opens.

Our first race was freestyle. When we got in the water it was actually a bit cold but I couldn’t wait to do my first race. The whistle went off, and we all started Racing! I couldn’t believe it for my first race against 6 competitors I came second! We were so happy at the end of the race to receive our ribbons from the Kickstart staff.

We also had presentations and ribbons for the children that came 1st, 2nd or 3rd and for the age champions. Kickstart also handed out to everyone that didn’t receive a place ribbon a Well Done or an Achievement ribbon, because everyone tried their hardest and it was fun for all.

At the end of the Carnival James announced the team that won. The Blue Dolphins won! I had that colour so I was happy. That was just for fun! Everyone did so well!!

I hope this will inspire other children and especially teenagers to come and join us. Even if you’re not a good swimmer it doesn’t matter, it’s a fun event. So come to make this event possible and join in the fun. Hope to see you there next year!

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Support Groups Update

**SA Free HBL eNewsletter:** [www.hblsa.com/](http://www.hblsa.com/) or email Jessica hblnnewsletter@gmail.com

**VIC Melbourne:** The Excursion Factor offers many activities for Melbourne-based home educated students. See [http://theexcursionfactor.webs.com/](http://theexcursionfactor.webs.com/)

**WA Perth:** Perth Learning Hub for students aged 13-17. More details: [www.hshighschool.com](http://www.hshighschool.com) or contact Elsa at elsa@leatherwoodbooks.com.au

**WA Wheatbelt Area:** Vicki organises activities for home educating families. Contact Vicki 0401621041 or email vickiheijn@yahoo.com.au for more information or just for a chat about home education.

**NSW Newcastle area:** All-Inclusive, Once-a-Term Social Day, first Friday of each term. Come along to catch up with friends or make some new ones. For more info or to find out about other events, visit [http://hunterhomeed.proboards.com/index.cgi](http://hunterhomeed.proboards.com/index.cgi)

**SA Chapter of HEA** is no longer in operation as it is unable to form a committee.

To list in the magazine or HEA Updates, email details to news@hea.edu.au
Home Education CampFest
March 2011
HOME EDUCATION
IN THE NEWS

A selection of recent items from the HEA webpage: http://hea.asn.au/resources/disp_res.asp?type=4&id=221. Please forward homeschooling news and information to the HEA Editor editor@hea.asn.au or to the HEA News Editor news@hea.edu.au.

NSW Board of Studies 2010 annual report shows increase in registration of home educated students: From page 79 of the report: The number of children registered for home schooling has shown a steady increase over recent years. Anecdotal information from parents identifies that reasons for home schooling vary. Common reasons include a family decision based on preferred learning style, an individualised approach to address learning issues, illness and/or geographical isolation. From the commencement of the 2010 calendar year, applicants for home schooling have been invited to provide a reason for choosing to home school. Over time, this information is expected to provide useful data. www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/administration/pdf_doc/annual-report-2010.pdf

US National Home Education Research Institute report states 2.04m students homeschooled in 2010: In a report published in January 2011, the author predicts a surge in homeschool numbers in the next 5-10 years, partly due to current home educated individuals choosing to educate their children at home. www.nheri.org/HomeschoolPopulationReport2010.pdf

German family denied permission to homeschool: In Germany a judge acknowledged the quality education given by a family homeschooling their children, before denying their right to continue. www.hslda.org/hs/international/Germany/201104190.asp

Homeschooling rates rise as students avoid the crowds in Californian classrooms: Parents are turning increasingly to homeschooling in an effort to provide their children with one-on-one education, and escape large class sizes. www.mydesert.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=201104280350

Mississippi judge demands addresses of home educators in his district: Although told that it was a "confidential" matter, home educators are concerned about the unusual order requesting their names and addresses. The HSLDA took up the case and obtained a stay. http://thesop.org/story/20110408/mississippi-judge-demands-homeschool-student-ids.html

New Editor for SA eNewsletter

South Australian home educating families welcome Jessica Ween as the new HBL Newsletter Editor.

She has taken over from Tamra Lees who has put in a sterling effort over the last 18 months lifting the newsletter from a handful of subscribers to 220 in that time! The newsletter has been going almost continuously since 1989 and has undergone many transformations. From its inception, homeschooling families have been invited to participate in this community venture by offering to become editors for a year or more.

The newsletter is now produced as a free e-newsletter but printed copies can be arranged for the cost of printing and postage. Tamra asks South Australian home educators to support Jessica as the new editor and to continue to send in items and articles for publication. She said that “submissions inspire and assist other homeschoolers to create great learning environments in their homes, and in the groups they run and attend”.

The newsletter is the best way to stay in touch with what is happening in South Australia with homeschooling. It contains a list of activities for the coming term and is a valuable networking tool. Please support and use the newsletter by sending news, announcements and information about useful resources to the editor for publication.

For more information about the SA HBL Newsletter, visit http://www.hblsa.com/ or email hblnewsletter@gmail.com.

EDUCATION IN THE NEWS

A online monthly summary of educational news items that may be of interest to HEA members. The news page is updated fortnightly. We welcome feedback and items for inclusion in the newsletter that would benefit our members, including information about homeschooling camps, seminars, local groups and other activities that support and promote home education in Australia.

Well done to homeschooled student Bella Stiene who won a Highly Commended Award in the Max Fatchen Young Writers' Award at the Kernewek Lowender Writers' Event 2011 for her story called Tsunami.

Stepping Stones for Home Educators  Winter 2011

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HEA Member Discount Subscriptions

The HEA’s been working hard to add some benefits for our members. Here’s a list of the subscriptions on which you can get discounts and special deals by being a HEA member in 2011.

ABC READING EGGS
You can register your children for the ABC Reading Eggs online program for $19.98 per child, discounted from the normal $79.95. To find out more about the Reading Eggs program, visit www.readingeggs.com.au/. To access the ABC Reading Eggs discount, go to http://readingeggs.com.au/contact_us, click on the parent link, complete the contact form and be sure to include your HEA membership number.

MATH MAMMOTH
You can purchase Math Mammoth downloadable curriculum and receive a 20% discount off the normal price. To find out more about Math Mammoth visit www.mathmammoth.com.

To access this discount, email Tere Latimer at admin@hea.edu.au.

HAPPY SCIENTIST
You can subscribe to The Happy Scientist and receive a 65% discount. To find out more about The Happy Scientist visit http://thehappyscientist.com/. To access your discount, email Tere Latimer at admin@hea.edu.au.

HOTMATHS
You can register your children for the Hotmaths online interactive maths for $28 per child, discounted from the normal $79.95. To find out more about Hotmaths visit www.hotmaths.com.au/. To access this discount email Esther Lacoba at hotmaths@hea.edu.au.

MATHLETICS AND SPELLODROME
You can register your children for 12 months with Mathletics online program for $30 per child, which is a huge saving from the normal $99. You can then also register for Spellodrome through your Mathletics account for $15 instead of the normal $45. For more information about Mathletics, visit the website www.mathletics.com.au/. To access the Mathletics discount, email Anne-Marie Rodd at mathletics@hea.edu.au.

GRID CLUB
You can register your children for the Grid Club online learning system and receive a 50% discount off the normal price. To find out more about Grid Club visit www.gridclub.com. To access this discount, email Tere Latimer at admin@hea.edu.au.

STUDY LADDER
You can register your family for the Study Ladder online learning program for 18 months for the price of a 12 month subscription. Study Ladder normally costs $88 per family for 12 months. This deals equates to a discounted price of $58.67 for 12 months. For more information about Study Ladder visit www.studyladder.com.au/. To access, register online with Study Ladder https://www.studyladder.com.au/sign-up/parent-step-1 for the 12 month subscription. Then contact them with your name and HEA membership number and ask for the free 6 months extension to be added to your subscription.

SKWIRK
You can register your children for the Skwirk interactive online learning program and receive a 15% discount of the normal price. To find out more about the Skwirk program visit www.skwirk.com.au/. To access the Skwirk discount email Tere Latimer at admin@hea.edu.au.

ED ALIVE
HEA provides a discount on Educational Software from EdAlive, to download the discounted brochure go to: www.yousendit.com/download/UfH2aUNMTERCSWRFQIE9PQ

Don’t forget to use your HEA membership card when purchasing educational resources or visiting museums, etc and ask if they offer discount to home educators. If they do, please email their name and address to Amelia advertising@hea.edu.au.

If you have any suggestions for good subscriptions that would benefit our members or would like to help us assist home educators in other ways, contact Maaike Johnston at subscriptions@hea.edu.au.

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