Stepping Stones for Home Educators
a path through our homeschool village

Winter Warmth Comes from Within, p. 10
Parents: Passengers or Participants, p. 8
Our Winter Wicked Vegie Patch, p. 14
Winter Chocolate Delights! p. 34
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!
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From the Editor...

Winter is often a time of great reflection for me. A couple of weeks ago friend and I were talking about how we each create opportunities for achieving goals. Our conservation ranged over two lifetimes of homeschooling experience and we both agreed that one of the most important things we had in common was our belief that at the core of success was attention. No matter how much we wanted something it was only when we kept our attention firmly on our goals did they materialize.

It is easy to become distracted and focus on all the little things that crop up each day and lose sight of what we really want. Sometimes what we get isn’t what we want at all, but what we need. Often, on reflecting on the outcome, I realise I’m better off when this happens. Aligning my wants with my needs brings a great deal of satisfaction and success in my life.

So, if you are feeling a little blue or overwhelmed this winter, focus your attention on what you want to create in your life. You should find that you will automatically begin to attune your actions to your goals. If you like what you are getting in a particular area of your life, keep your attention where it is. If you do not like what you are getting, look to where you are focusing your attention – chances are you are focusing on the opposite of what you really want.

Right now I’m focusing attention on creating a truly enjoyable and useful national magazine for home educating families. I love ‘walking’ through our ‘village’ and meeting the people who have sent in articles and items. We do live incredibly interesting lives! You are most welcome to share what is happening in your corner of Australia, how you homeschool, ask a question, activities to do, etc. Our themes for the Spring Issue are:

- **Photography:** how does your family use photography as part of your home educating? To record, as an art form, for your blogs, or as a hobby?
- **Frugal Homeschooling:** how do you keep costs down? Not just homeschooling costs but general living costs. What is the most frugal thing you've ever done?
- **Home Educating and Working:** are you a working and a homeschooling parent? How do you balance your responsibilities and schedules?
- **Budget Gifts:** We’re looking for ideas for gifts to make and create. Share some of your past or present projects.
- **Horses:** anything at all about horses and learning at home!

Submissions by September 10th please.
Feedback on the bullying issue from Autumn Issue

Dear Editor,

Sadly, I don't have a solution to bullying, though I do have a suggestion. Perhaps educating our children, for example, conflict resolution for kids and/or building self esteem classes may be step forward. This would provide our children with ways to manage conflicts and build their self esteem to lessen the risk of being targeted by bullies (not withstanding Asperger Syndrome, etc).

In addition, education for adults would also help identify bullying behaviour, in ourselves and others, and promote ownership of one's own behaviour. It would be helpful if adults learnt how to resolve conflicts in an appropriate way. Strategies!

Regards, Marg

Dear Beverley,

Firstly, love the magazine! As I was printing it out though I thought how nice it would be if you had a printer friendly version, or black & white option as I read the articles outside whilst soaking in the crisp air & mild sun. Would it be too hard to have a choice for printing?

Thank you,

Kata

Thanks Kata. We always appreciate feedback about the magazine. Our pdf version of the magazine is already printer friendly, but we have some great news. The HEA will begin printing issues of the magazine, in full colour, from the beginning of 2011. Members will be able to opt to receive the pdf version or the printed one.

Beverley, HEA Editor

Don’t forget to send in your reports of the homeschooling camps you’ve attended, as well as those coming up. AND stories about life at home, living with pets and plants and why and how you homeschool! See the list of themes for our Spring Issue, or for a list of themes for Spring and Summer, visit http://hea.asn.au/resources/disp_res.asp?type=4&id=234.
Parents: Passengers or Participants

by Sarah Ham

Most of our children love homeschooling group get-togethers. They play and explore and learn and interact while their parents accompany them, initially as passengers. Whether or not the parents progress to participants depends on how welcoming the homeschooling groups are.

Few people would be deliberately unwelcoming, however there are many families who haven’t been able to find their niche in the homeschooling community. Their experiences contain several similarities.

To begin with, though, let’s consider the term “homeschooling community”. It’s a very diverse group of people whose common interest is that they take personal responsibility for their children’s education. There are many ways that this can be achieved. Some families replicate the style used by schools, i.e. formal bookwork at a desk. Others may allow their children to follow their interests and learn through life experiences. The former is often referred to as school-at-home, and the latter as either unschooling or natural learning. When Charlotte Mason’s style of instruction, the Waldorf and Steiner methods, Classical Education and the myriad of curricula available are added, the possible styles of homeschooling are enormous.

I am fairly familiar with the most common homeschooling styles and curricula and it doesn’t bother me greatly to ask for more information if presented with a style/curriculum I’ve never heard of before. But new homeschoolers, who may not have had an opportunity to read and research, are often intimidated when questioned about their homeschooling style/curriculum. They’re new to homeschooling, new to a homeschooling group, and feel out of their depth with no idea about what they were just asked. Perhaps “style” and “curriculum” are homeschooling jargon words that would be better used sparingly – the subject is not at all inappropriate, perhaps just the language used.

As people navigate the necessary small talk to find common ground, another discussion that often arises is why people have chosen to educate their children at
home. Within the homeschooling community, I have observed three main reasons why families choose to homeschool – ideological, faith, and/or dissatisfaction with their children’s school. Ideologists don’t tend to offend others unless they’re extremely emphatic but faith discussions can be tricky – both ways.

I have attended groups where the majority of members hold strong views either for or against faith and people whose beliefs differ even slightly, sometimes find that they don’t quite fit. As I said at the beginning, I doubt this is deliberate – I think it’s more likely that the group members are so delighted to have found a commonality that they relax into “belonging” rather than participating in the harder work of welcoming others in. As a point of propriety though, many people don’t enjoy direct questions about their faith. Good listening skills will usually uncover that information readily enough.

Parents who have recently withdrawn their children from school often struggle to know how to adequately fulfil their state’s registration requirements, yet due to potential divisiveness registration is a subject that most groups prefer not to discuss. Just as each family represented in a homeschooling group has, for their own reasons, decided to provide for their children’s education at home, some of these same families, again for their own reasons, have chosen not to register with their state government’s education department.

While many of us would recognise that each family’s decisions are just that – their decisions – there are no guarantees that every person we encounter shares that outlook. Therefore, many families prefer not to discuss registration in order to protect their privacy. A genuine plea for help with the registration process from a new homeschooler is very different from general nosiness but a blunt question about one’s registration status can be very confronting.

It’s wonderful that there are numerous homeschooling groups around, facilitating a multitude of opportunities for our children. That’s probably the main reason why so many of us persist in trying to find our niche in the homeschooling community, even when it’s hard. Because, unless you’re an extrovert who loves working the crowd, it is hard to establish yourself in a group. The points I’ve raised above are little more than simple etiquette. My close friends know my religious beliefs and political affiliations, my acquaintances don’t.

Drop the jargon, and skip the religious (or alternative, or anti) and political (registration) discussions till friendships form. Respect other families’ privacy and allow them to choose how much information they would like to share with you.

And I hope your participation produces firm friendships for your family.
Winter is a beautiful season for connecting with our loved ones and taking time to acknowledge the wonder of Earth’s cycles. While there may not be blooms of colour, scuttling wildlife or lazy afternoon picnics to enjoy, there are many meaningful activities to acknowledge the turning of the wheel with your little ones.

If you have a seasonal table or shelf, you’ll be packing away your Autumn items to make way for some winter seedpod fairies, perhaps on a white or palest blue cloth with some favourite candles for lighting in the evenings... Sprigs of evergreens, refreshed often, will bring some life and colour to your home and brighten up the seasonal display as well. As time passes, this seasonal tableau can become an important means of bonding the family with nature, and with each other. Like all celebrations, festivals and rituals, it serves as a conscious recognition of time passing.

Nature walks can still be enjoyed in cooler months, step out in your winter woollies just to enjoy the wonders of the world around you. Children love to be outdoors at any time and winter’s crisp air is reason to run free. Some trees have beautiful winter blossoms. Late in winter new leaves can be seen, waiting for the sunshine to bring warmth and new life. The natural world at night without artificial lights and noise is something few children get to experience. Fire-gazing cuddles are memorable moments, and the wonder of fire is most appreciated on winter nights.

Stories for winter include any version of The Three Bears or a simple telling of The Pot That Would Not Stop from the Brothers Grimm. For the older child, or an interested little one, it is a great time to introduce reading from a chapter book. While you are snuggled together after an early bath, with the aroma of simmering soup to warm you, you can travel with lovable characters through time or around the globe, learning and dreaming and remembering together... Stories are the essence of connecting to our world.

Animals are much less active in winter. A bird feeder is most appreciated by our feathered friends at this time when food is less abundant. Noticing how quiet the animal world is will make spring seem all the more magical with its gift of baby creatures to welcome and observe.
When I think of winter crafts I imagine knitting, felt, more puppets and sewing. Fabric is an appropriate medium for this season, and winter provides us with the time to sit quietly and enjoy exploring our creative ideas. Other craft options include candleholders, dried flower creations, little clay animals, wreaths and bird feeders. And if you’re like us and can only dream about snow, cutting snowflakes from paper always impresses children. Hung in the window these create a wintry atmosphere and add a touch to the home decor that says ‘a loved child lives here’... The sun is also a relevant theme for winter craft, for the solstice is symbolic of the sun’s birthday - it is after this date that the days begin to lengthen again.

Being indoors lends us more time to be in the kitchen. You could cook porridge, muffins, jacket potatoes, soup, bread, pancakes, latkes; yum – the list goes on! Living in the tropics, we don’t mind a break from mountains of salads and fruit! Cooking with children can be more fun than we first imagine. It took me awhile to relax enough to do it, but seeing the joy it brings them has helped me ignore the floury handprints, sticky taps and excessive washing up.

In the Northern Hemisphere there are observances during winter such as Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year. Even though our winter occurs mid-year, we can still find reason to celebrate the season and fill the short days and cold nights with festive joy. The Winter Solstice, which was known as Yule in old Europe, occurs on 21 June this year. Leading up to this mid-winter event we can decorate our homes and plan a shared meal with family or friends to reaffirm our ties with each other. Recognising the solstice or the equinox with our family each season can bring back the magic of festivities now lost to commercialism.

We live in a society that often views routine as old fashioned, so meaningful rituals are becoming a lost art. In an attempt to reject the family culture of past generations, we may be losing delightful traditions that deserve to be re-enacted. I hope this series is assisting your family in bringing a sense of rhythm to the year and developing some of your own seasonal customs... because family is forever.

Brown and green, green and brown. Look carefully as you walk the wintry path. See here a spark of pink, and there a show of purple. Winter flowers smile fondly; and then, around a twist, a turn, glorious sun gold yellow! Winter has its warmth too.
Biodiversity in Your Backyard

How many animals do you depend on every day to stay alive? How many plants? And what about other living things?

Make a chart with the headings – PLANTS, ANIMALS, OTHER – and go for a walk around your house and garden with mum and dad and see how many you can list. Don’t forget to list all the tiny creatures that you can find! Carefully look under leaves, rocks and logs. Look up at the sky and in tall trees. Check behind furniture and in damp places inside. What else is living and growing where you live?

A few years ago Macquarie University researcher, Andrew Beattie, set out to count how many species lived in an average Sydney backyard – animals, birds, plants, insects, worms, spiders, micro-organisms, etc. He counted at least 4,620 different species! And he’s certain there were many thousands more species he missed.

The planet Earth is full of amazingly diverse creatures and plants, all dependent on this diversity for survival. Did you know biodiversity includes all the plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genetic information they contain and the ecosystems they form.

We are lucky to live on one of the most diverse countries on the planet, home to more than one million species of plants and animals. Many of them are endemic, found nowhere else in the world. These account for 85% of Australia’s flowering plants, 84% of mammals, over 45% of birds, and 89% of inshore temperate zone fish. A highly diverse and complex ecosystem is a sign of health and has a positive impact on the quality of air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat, as well as providing us with materials for use in our daily lives and nature to enjoy. Would you like to attract more native birds, butterflies or cute furry creatures into your backyard?

You can easily enhance the biodiversity of your backyard by planting indigenous species. They help to create shelter, shade, and nesting places, while preventing
erosion and providing food in the form of leaves, nectar, berries, seeds and associated bugs. Even small areas along the side of your house will help provide habitat for native fauna creating ‘wildlife corridors’ for animals and insects to move from one feeding or nesting area to another. Leave leaf litter, twigs, and rocks as they provide miniature habitats for plants and creatures too. A few sheltered moist areas in your garden bring in bugs which feed birds, lizards and frogs. Try to photograph or draw the different creatures you find and the plants they love to live near.

Ask your neighbours to do the same so that collectively you can begin to not only provide ‘wildlife corridors’ but also enjoy watching nature close to home.

Check out these CSIRO Backyard Biodiversity pages for more ideas:

Find out about the fascinating world of insects then use the guide to help identify insects in your neighbourhood.

Australia has many animals, birds, plants and other species that are threatened or endangered. Find out more about this issue and try an activity to help protect biodiversity in your backyard.

Backyard Biodiversity goes on in gardens, nature reserves, creeks, wildlife parks and zoos. Try these ideas to get involved in biodiversity activities in your area.

**Invasive Species:** [http://www.csiro.au/resources/InvasiveSpeciesActivity.html](http://www.csiro.au/resources/InvasiveSpeciesActivity.html)
Cane toads, fire ants and blackberry bushes - read about the environmental and economic problems caused by invasive species and try an activity to learn more.

**Salinity:** [http://www.csiro.au/resources/ps20l.html](http://www.csiro.au/resources/ps20l.html)
Salinity is a major environmental threat in many parts of Australia. Read more about it then try a salinity experiment.

Illustrations by April Paine, 11 & Roger Paine, 5
A couple years ago I saw an article in the “Grass Roots” magazine for a “wicked bed”. That’s wicked as in candle wick, drawing action, not wicked as in evil or really, really cool (I suspect wicked is not used for really, really cool anymore; it went to “sick” at some stage but I have a feeling even that has been superseded). I can’t keep up.

Anyway, as a family we made two of these wicked beds. Fairly big ones, about 2 metres by 5 metres. And they are great. It’s just that we don’t manage to keep them full of vegies. So, we’ve decided to fill them up with perennials and grow our annuals in Wicking boxes.

When I showed our local permaculture group our original wicked beds they were really keen, but all that digging out put them off. One of the ladies went straight home and designed the wicking boxes. So we are following her design.

Our plan is to have enough boxes going to supply us with a big salad each at least 3 times a week. We are sowing mostly lettuces and leafy greens. Basically, you water this system through a pipe, which directs the water to a “reservoir” at the bottom of the box. The water then wicks up to the root zone. It is normal for the soil to be dry in the top couple of centimetres.
Materials:
These instructions written by Gerry Boal, reprinted with permission, published in the Port Lincoln Times.
• Polystyrene box (our fruit and veg place gives them away)
• Length of slotted ag pipe to fit base of box
• PVC pipe 40 -50 cm diameter with cap, to fit depth of box with some sticking out the top
• Cleaning cloth (eg Chux)
• Dripper elbow fitting
• Chopped pea straw or shredded paper

Method:
1. Make a hole 10 cm from bottom of box to allow for drainage. Insert elbow fitting into this.
2. Cut length of ag pipe to fit bottom of box. If this is a snug fit it won’t require capping, otherwise it can be capped with the base of a juice bottle.
3. Cut hole towards end of slotted ag pipe to fit diameter of PVC pipe.
4. Insert PVC pipe into ag pipe.
5. Wrap agricultural pipe in chux-type cloth to prevent pipe from becoming blocked with soil.
6. Place chopped pea straw and shredded paper in base of box.
7. Fill box with growing medium such as mix of potting medium, coconut fibre soaked in water containing Seasol, potash, fish emulsion, Epson salts and poultry manure.
8. Plant and mulch.

Worms can also be added. You would require another piece of PVC pipe 70mm diameter, drill some holes at various spots around the bottom to allow entry of worms. Place pipe in one corner of box and place worms in followed by chopped food scraps. Cap this end also. Feed regularly. Worms will distribute their castings in the box, adding to plant nutrition.

When to water:
Look down pipe. If there isn’t any water visible it is time to top up. The water will “wick up” to the root area of the plants. In times of rain or if you add too much water it will drain out through the drainage elbow. Our local permaculture group have grown all sorts of things using this system. You can set up a system in a big pot and plant a fruit tree. Just remember to fill any drainage holes and make just one about 10 cm up from the bottom.
You hear people speak about miracles a lot; perhaps on TV, in books, or in the movies. Sometimes though, you hear about a miracle that happens in real life.

Porntip is the name of a female Asian Elephant at Taronga Zoo in Sydney. Her name comes from Thailand and means “Gift from Heaven”. She is the leader, or matriarch, of Sydney’s elephant herd and, as a part of Australia’s efforts to breed Asian Elephants, she became pregnant just over two years ago.

When the time came for her to have her calf, zoo staff and experts from around the world began to check on Porntip to make sure all was well for the birth. During this time, Porntip went into labour and this lasted almost seven days – the longest period ever recorded in a zoo elephant. The vets became very worried and ran some tests which showed that the little calf was in the wrong position to be born.

The vets could not detect its heart beat, it had not moved for some time and it had separated from the placenta which attached it to the mother. They assumed that the calf was dead. There was no other possibility. The Zoo Manager went on TV to say that Porntip’s little calf had died and could not be born alive. The news was terribly sad for all involved.

Then, amazingly, two days later and almost nine days after her labour began, Porntip gave birth to a male calf which the keepers discovered was actually alive! The experts were stunned. One of them said it was so incredible that he could only describe it as a miracle. Though the little calf was
very weak and partially paralysed, he soon found his feet and was able to feed from Pomtip. Before long he was shuffling around his stall like an old man, and so the keepers gave him the nickname “Mr Shuffles.”

The zoo then held a competition to allow the public to choose a proper name for the new little calf. According to tradition, all the Taronga zoo elephants have names in Thai as they came from Thailand before living at the zoo. So what name did the public choose?

With a mother called “Gift from Heaven”, and after such an amazing birth, they chose the Thai name “Pathi Ham” (pronounced par-tea-ham), which means miracle! It was the perfect name. And the little miracle elephant continues to grow and thrive.

There have now been three elephant calves born in Australia in the last year. The first was Luk Chai at Taronga (and you can read about him in the October 2009 edition of Stepping Stones).

The second was a little female calf called Mali at Melbourne zoo and now we have Pathi Ham. There are still two more births planned, one in August and November this year.

The Wonderland of Nature: Book Review

by Michelle Morrow

The Wonderland of Nature was first printed in 1964, before I was even born. Since then it has been reprinted many times because it is an Australian nature classic.

In the pages of this book, you explore the great outdoors with Chris, Tess and their Nuri Mass, the children's mother. This book takes you on a journey as this family experiences the wonders of nature from their own backyard or as they travel to different parts of Australia.

Nuri Mass explains about many different species of common bugs and insects that you can easily find and she uses scientific explanations in a story like way so that they are easy for children to understand.

There are over 200 interesting black and white illustrations that add to the charm of this book. This book can be read for sheer delight or used as the basis for primary school science.

Hardback Picture Book, 280 pages, to suit ages 5-12.
$39.95, available from www.homeschoolingdownunder.com

Natural World and Wildlife Colouring Books

These titles in the beautifully illustrated Dover series are ideal for nature studies as the fact-filled captions give scientific name, size, habitat, colouring, distinguishing characteristics and other data. The colour reproductions on the covers provide further guidance.
Amazing Animals: Features 44 animals considered especially unusual because of their shape, coloration, defences or adaptation for survival. Animals include: peacock, electric eel, blue-ringed octopus, Bactrian camel, aye-aye, flying squirrel and many more.

Arctic and Antarctic Life: Colour 44 life-like illustrations of a variety of polar inhabitants all shown in their native habitats. Animals featured include: several types of seals and penguins, walrus, beluga whale and many others.

African Plains: Features 41 animals, native to Africa, in their natural habitat. Animals in this book include: zebra, giraffe, cheetah, elephant, lion, rhinoceros and many more.

Coral Reef: 44 realistic drawings of an underwater paradise, featuring from the angelfish to the Creole wrasse, with the snapper, leafy sea dragon and other old friends thrown in. This is a lovely book.

Australian Wildlife: 30 native Australian animals to colour. Animals featured include all the standards such as the platypus, kangaroo and kookaburra, but also includes lesser known animals like the sugar glider and the blue parrot.

Reptiles and Amphibians: 44 accurate line drawings of more than 70 alligators, snakes, lizards, frogs, toads and more. This is a good introduction to these fascinating creatures.

These books sell for $10.95 each and can be found on our website at www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au along with many other titles from this publisher.
By Bailey Groves
home educated student

On the 25th June at the QVMAG people from all over Tassie came and taught us about the wonderful Tamar. These included AMC teachers, lecturers and even a government representative.

David Maynard, a lecturer at the AMC, talked about observing life under the Tamar. The main focus was how to get information. There are many ways to observe reefs and other things. You can use cameras which are affordable but they only give you pictures. Divers are a good source of info, and they are much easier to control! However they are expensive.

ROVs are like an underwater version of the Mars Rover. The info from these can be unlimited as they can go where divers can’t. Unfortunately there are very very expensive, and if one gets lost (or eaten) there aren’t a cheap loaf of bread.

In most cases the observation techniques and the collection of physical material have to be balanced against their cost. I learnt a lot of new things.

(David Maynard lectures at the Maritime College now and is passionate about the beautiful Tamar Valley. His ‘Beneath the Tamar’ website is at: www.sp.maynardi.com)
The Original Rockford Red Heel Sock Elephant
Detailed instructions for making an elephant from a pair of socks can be found at http://lennytaylor.freeyellow.com/elephant.htm.

Elephant Trunk Craft

**Materials:** paper towel roll, grey paint, wool or string, paint brush, glue, scissors, construction paper, crayons, stapler or tape.

**Instructions:** Paint the paper towel roll grey and when dry, poke two holes opposite each other near one end carefully with the scissors. Cut two pieces of wool or string about 60cm long and tie one end of each through the holes. Determine if you want to be an African elephant or an Indian elephant. What’s the difference? They have different size ears! Cut a strip of construction paper about 5cm thick and long enough to wrap around your forehead with an few centimetres to spare to overlap and staple or tape the ends together to fit snuggly around your forehead. Fold another piece of paper in half and cut out a set of large, floppy ears. Place the bottom edge of each ear up against the strip of paper and staple or tape them in place. Wear the ears and tie the trunk around your head on and pretend to be an elephant!
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Little Critters

This Australian home grown business makes unique, handcrafted giftware and keepsakes featuring your little critter’s own handprint! Have fun with your child creating handprints which can then be transformed into a ‘Little Critter’ such as an elephant. It is then a simple matter of selecting one of the many fun, colourful designs from the Litter Critter gallery and the product or products of your choice. [http://www.littlecritters.com.au](http://www.littlecritters.com.au) (Rainforest Panorama image used with permission)
**Elephants Can Paint Too!**

Katya Arnold teaches children and elephants how to paint. In her book she explains how elephants are a lot like the children she teaches -- they love to wrestle, climb on each other, and act silly.

They even cry when they are sad. Elephants, like children, are unique individuals with different ways of painting: some take a long time to paint, others finish quickly. Some like to wrap their trunks around the brush while others hold it in their trunk. Some dab and others drag the paint across the canvas.

The paintings are sold through the Asian Elephant Art and Conservation Project - visit [www.elephantart.com](http://www.elephantart.com) to watch videos of elephants painting and to see a collection of their masterpieces.

To paint like an elephant, tape a large paint brush to the top of your children's hands to give them a different feel for the brush. Encourage them to pretend they are elephants and use long flowing strokes and dabs of paint to make their pictures.

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**How to Make an Origami Elephant**

Follow the hands in the video below: rated complex and challenging!

Or for something less challenging, Squidoo lists dozens of links to instructions for making origami elephants - from very easy ones for little hands to complex designs like the one above.

[**Squidoo Origami Elephants**](http://www.squidoo.com/origamielephant)

[**Origami Elephant Video**](http://www.videojug.com/webvideo/how-to-make-an-origami-elephant)
Thinking back to my childhood, I remember very little. My mother’s theory is that it was such a trauma-free childhood that there is no reason to remember it. What I do remember though, are the days spent making or baking things. My mother would be painting or busy at the sewing machine and I would be on the floor, cutting out bits of cardboard or drawing pictures. Later I would hand-sew clothes for my dolls. Such wonderful memories! Nowadays the craft cupboard is brimful with pieces of material, beads and beautiful papers and brushes. In reality there is little time for such creative pursuits, but I’ll always be grateful for having that outlet and for never ever being bored! How can one be, with so many treasures waiting to be discovered?

It takes very little to introduce children to such hobbies. In fact, if you leave a child alone for long enough he/she will start creating things without any prompting. Yet, if you want some inspiration of your own, these books can be of great help.

With an activity for every day of the year (and a bonus thrown in for leap years!) 365 Things to Make and Do (Usborne) will keep the fussiest of young artists content for a very long time. The activities are varied so the reader will learn how to use various media and be stretched to depict different subjects. Each activity is clearly explained in step-by-step instructions and clear illustrations. Colourful and beautifully presented, this large hardback book will make any reader itch to get started on the projects. Ideally suited to budding artists of primary school age.

If you’re looking for something specific to fit in with your current history studies, cardboard cut-out models will provide some interesting hours for even the most reluctant student. It is not a bad idea to invest in a small glue gun to keep the models together for longer as there are few things as frustrating as spending hours on something only to see the work coming undone a week later. At the moment we have Make this Roman Fort, Make this Viking Settlement and Make this Egyptian Mummy available. We can get hold of other models for you to make, such as a ballet theatre and Shakespeare’s The Globe theatre, to name but a few. So just ask if you want us to find something to fit in with particular studies or interests.

JOSEPH BANKS - BOTANIST

Joseph Banks was a passionate botanist who took part in Captain James Cook’s first voyage to Australia in 1768. The picture below is part of Janette’s Pictures of Australian History. To read more about Joseph Banks, and find out about this wonderful resource, go to http://www.australianhistorypictures.com/. You can also obtain a 10% discount by mentioning this picture.

Excerpts from the text accompanying the picture of Joseph Banks in Janette’s Pictures of Australian History:

“Sir Joseph Banks, was the chief naturalist on Captain Cook’s voyage. Like William Dampier before him, he was a part of the new field of naturalist explorer...

... Even from the ship, he could see dozens of new species to collect in a vast coastal bushland...

In fact, Joseph Banks found so many new species that Captain Cook changed the name of the place they visited to the one that we know today - Botany Bay...”
We all have sets of coloured pencils lying around just begging to be used. If you think pencils are just for kids to colour with, have a look at the amazing pictures on these websites:

http://www.coloredpencilcentral.com/

Try this simple idea with your kids and give them a chance to explore some of the many different ways you can use pencils.

**Materials**

- coloured pencils
- brown paper or coloured pastel paper
- pictures of wild mammals (or anything else you like)

Begin by letting the kids practice some of the techniques suggested below. Let them choose an animal to draw on the brown paper. Select a few colours from the pencil set. You can put the others aside. By limiting the palette the drawing will have a good unified look. White and cream pencils are effective on coloured paper. It is easier if the kids draw the animal only and ignore the background.
Coloured Pencil Tips

- Try not to drop your pencils - the leads inside will break into short pieces.
- Keep your pencils sharp - they work much better that way!
- Test out pencils to see how dark and light you can draw with them.
- Varying pressure makes interesting pictures.
- Start by drawing lightly.
- Once you get further into your drawing, don’t be afraid to press really hard.
- Have fun mixing colours. If you want to draw a brown dog, try using.
- All the browns you have to create an interesting picture.
- Vary colour intensity - some areas can be really bright and others dull.
- You don’t have to use every colour from your pencil box in every picture.
- Think about what you are drawing and choose a few colours which suit the image.
- Experiment with layering colours over each other.
- Don’t forget white! You can leave white areas of paper or use a white pencil to draw highlights, blend and burnish.
- Try drawing on coloured papers.
- Have fun.
- Break all the rules at least once! (except the one about dropping your pencils!)
By Korina
http://korinaivatt.wordpress.com/

Now because I should be studying, I have found a new hobby to distract me! It is craft with the kids - I'm really enjoying some of the things we have been making together recently. This morning some of the kids friends came over and the arguing was starting, so I nipped it in the bud with “who wants to make a picture of themselves sliding down a rainbow?” Well really, who would say no?!

First of all you take some photos much like these...

You will need some coloured paper and some cardboard. Get the kids to draw a rainbow on the cardboard and then to cut out pieces of the coloured paper to make the rainbow... Glue is also essential - much to the delight of my children! Very soon things started to look like this...
Zachary was very pleased to finish his rainbow before the others – absolutely everything is a competition (right down to eating dinner some nights!) But I digress...

Lastly we added our photos which I had cut out for the children.

Hey presto! You have a child sliding down a rainbow!

And if you are Zachary, apparently you slide down rainbows on your head!
If Peter Pan is to be believed, mothers are for telling stories. Wendy Darling, once in the Neverland, acts out with gusto her part as 'mother' - sewing and darning, enforcing bedtimes, dosing the Lost Boys with imaginary medicines - but the only essential part of her role is the telling of stories, which is a medicine in itself.

Much of what Peter, and the Lost Boys, do not know is due to lack of a mother's tales – the old tales like 'Cinderella' and the informal, personal ones, such as the story Wendy tells of her own home and mother – stories that widen a child's understanding of the world beyond their immediate experience and that develop imagination and through it, empathy.

Children may begin "gay and innocent and heartless" but through story they will have their hearts opened and the limits of their innocence extended. Story is a way of growing up. Peter Pan's inability to remember story, even that of his own personal narrative, is indicative of his decision not to grow up.

"Who is Captain Hook?" he asked with interest when she spoke of the arch enemy.

"Don't you remember," she asked, amazed, 'How you killed him and saved all our lives?"
"I forget them after kill them," he replied carelessly.

When she expressed doubtful hope that Tinker Bell would be glad to see her he said "Who is Tinker Bell?"

"Oh Peter," she said, shocked; but even when she explained he could not remember.

Last week I came across an article by Germaine Greer in The Guardian about 'old wives' tales' in which she says "Women teach babies and children to speak, which is the same as teaching them to think. An integral part of this activity is waking up their imagination, to see the numinousness of the real world, giving them, to adapt Wordsworth's phrase, glimpses that would make them less forlorn."

So that is what mothers are for – to teach a mother tongue, to shape that tongue into story, to read and tell aloud, giving her child the tools for growth and maturation.

**Stories to Read Aloud**

I learned to read before I went to school, though no one realised it. I had a lovely little Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes book that fit snugly in my small hands. Years later my daughter taught herself to read on Each Peach Pear Plum by Janet and Allan Ahlberg. The lovely rhyming sentences led you from one page to the next in a very memorable way. These stories are best enjoyed when read aloud, as our all good books!

Access the largest online exhibit of Aesop and other Fables, on the net. There are over 650 fables, indexed with Morals, Fairy Tales, Mythology, Stories, Real Audio, Images, Search engine, Message Forum, Lesson Plans and more being added all the time!

[www.aesopfables.com](http://www.aesopfables.com)
My life’s passion is summed up in Linda Dobson’s opening to her anniversary edition of *The Art of Education*: “I’m forever a homeschool advocate, because I know life and learning beyond the confines of school make for happier, healthier, saner adults with a strong sense of purpose and the ability to thrive and attain success to the best of their abilities, and I want to see as many families and children benefit from the practice as possible.”

It is said that we’re lucky if, during our education, we have access to one or two teachers who have a special ability to ‘switch on’ learning in his or her students: Dobson is such a teacher, and continues to be one of my treasured home education mentors. For learning doesn’t stop once we become adults and we need mentors of this caliber throughout our lives.

Why is Linda Dobson special? What does she have that other teachers lack? Trust. Dobson trusts that a learner can and will learn. And her respect and concern for children is genuine and heart-felt. Those characteristics, together with her ability to see and act beyond her own immediate interests and needs to that of a nation, give me hope.

And we need hope: while business reaps the benefits of information and communication technology, public education views it with suspicion or worse, misuses and abuses it to spy on children or reduce learning to meaningless and competitive league tables. Good intentioned but ill-informed educational reform adds confusion and cost. Public education in the USA is no longer sustainable. Her plea, for families to make sure their children ‘get an education instead of schooling’, is an agenda that will be increasingly heard as schools continue to fail...

A proponent of self-education, Dobson is convincing – path which will build confidence as autonomous learners… her message - “we, the people, must teach ourselves” – states the obvious, but it is a reality that society has been lulled into letting go while governments imposed a massive and failed experiment – that of compulsory public education – upon us.

*The Art of Education* begins with a consideration of the ‘real business’ of schooling: the “subsumption of the individual... the [modification of] natural, individual expression into a socially acceptable sameness.” When home educated parents are asked ‘aren’t you worried about socialisation?’ it is this that people are talking about, not the acquisition of social skills. It amazes me how often this is the first and most loudly voiced protest against the concept of home education – academic education, civic responsibility and personal fulfilment are sadly of lesser concern.

Few of us start home educating by defining ‘education’ or critically analysing the concept or purpose of schooling. Many families are refugees from the school system, reluctantly starting on this path because school has failed their children. *The Art of Education* questions the assumptions we make about schooling, the way it is structured and its methods and purpose. People who feel damaged by their personal school experiences will rejoice and feel liberated by the messages in this book.

Those who enjoyed school or who found it to be a refuge from a less-than-happy home-life may feel challenged by its strident anti-school language. But if we put aside our personal biases and read the text objectively there is much to offer any parent, for the subject is not purely ‘education’:
There is much in this book to guide our parenting practice towards a more holistic, healthy and happy relationship with our children well beyond their childhood.

“When education is art, the journey is the education.” By drawing on the metaphor of education as art instead of business, Dobson makes a compelling case which, through demonstrating the huge differences between schooling and education, asks us to change our perspective about notions of ‘success’.

An examination of the Self reveals those factors which create our lives: social conditioning, experiences, nurture, genetics, etc. Dobson places an emphasis on social factors, examining the imperatives these implant in our minds and which drive our desires – wealth, duty, compulsion, reliance and dependency on ‘experts’ and overly excessive administration and bureaucratization – to show us “how society’s institutions cleverly encourage conformity and complacency”.

Education to prepare one for adult life Dobson argues needs to be more than “feeble attempts at intellectual stimulation and preparation for jobs”. How does home education offer more? Dobson answers by examining the gift of time, real connection with others, a focus on self-knowledge and self-understanding rather than selfishness, understanding the difference ‘learning’ and ‘training’, and the role of context and meaningful purpose, achievable within a home educating framework.

She offers a chilling summary of the damage to society inflicted by schooling: “Schools condition adults (parents) to raise capital instead of kids. Parents disconnect from kids. Schools take over even more parenting responsibilities. Parents disconnect further from kids. Schools call in social services to repair the trauma. Parents disconnect even further from kids. Schools do even more of what they already do. And then those children have children.” She blames schools obsessive attention on competitiveness, reward and punishment and argues that we need to shift our focus to “family-centred, parent (adult)-powered lifestyle patterning”. We can do this by noticing, examining and changing our priorities – what matters and what does not matter – and by taking conscious control of the actions which direct our lives. *The Art of Education* not only provides a tool for doing this, but takes you further by helping you develop, step-by-step, your own personal educational philosophy for your family.

From there Dobson expands the horizons of homeschooling, dispelling some of the most persistent and inaccurate myths. Far from the concept of children learning in isolation at home with mom as teacher, home education is centred in community learning with interaction with people of all ages and from all walks of life.

Although aimed primarily at an American audience, this book has much to offer families around the world worried about the fate of their children or when considering their educational choices. Dobson peppers this text with insights and advice aimed at making the transition from schooling to unschooling easier for parents, not with the authoritative teaching voice we are familiar with but as a friend, a mother, someone deeply concerned with our well-being. Her helpful attitude and personal, ‘I’m on your side’ tone is both encouraging and reassuring. The practical tips, advice and insights give the reader appropriate, achievable and immediate actions to take. Common sense starting points reveal just how easy and simple homeschooling can be.

The Art of Education is a powerful and passionate plea for parents to take stock of what’s happening in their homes and communities. It’s also a blueprint for taking control, reclaiming the lost territory of family and community responsibility.

**Linda Dobson is the author of many books on home education. Stay in touch with Linda on** [Parent at the Helm](http://www.parenthelms.com). **The Art of Education will be available from the 4th July from** [http://www.booklocker.com/books/4734.html](http://www.booklocker.com/books/4734.html)
Hot Mocha Pudding

Part 1
1/3 cup raw sugar
2 tbspn butter
1 egg
1 cup SR flour (I use plain + half a tsp baking powder)
1 tbspn instant coffee (dissolved)
1 1/2 tbspn cocoa
1/2 cup milk
1 tsp vanilla extract

Part 2
1/3 cup raw sugar (or less)
1 tsp coffee
1 tblspn cocoa

Part 3
1 1/4 cups boiling water
Cream butter & sugar, add egg. Add all remaining ingredients for Part 1 and mix well. Pour into a large greased casserole dish. Mix Part 2 ingredients and sprinkle over pudding evenly. Pour the boiling water onto this gently. Bake at 180 degrees C for 35 minutes. Serve hot, with or without cream or ice-cream. Nice chilled too!

Microwave Fudge
Not healthy, but delish!

1/2 cup organic cocoa powder
450g icing sugar
1/2 cup butter
1/4 cup milk
1 tsp vanilla essence
1 cup dessicated coconut

Mix cocoa and icing sugar in a microwave safe dish. Slice butter on top. Pour milk over but do no mix.

Cover and cook on high for 2 minutes. Add vanilla and coconut, stir well to combine. Pour into a greased 18cm square pan. Chill for one hour and cut into squares. Keep refrigerated.
One of the things we need to keep in mind when planning activities is to anticipate the outcomes, taking into effect all of the factors at play, particularly social and environmental.

For example, on very windy days children display increased levels of nervous energy and may be more boisterous. Some may be anxious: this anxiety might show up as increased timidity or sensitivity, or it could translate into aggressive behaviour. I've chatted to teachers about this effect of the weather on students and the need to change the tone and nature of activities. We've all witnessed the creeping boredom that sets in when the weather has been dull and rainy for days on end, or the total lack of motivation when it comes to a sustained heat wave.

It is easy to acknowledge how heat, cold or wind can change how children react to social stimuli or learning: less obvious are things like noise. A drumming workshop is definitely going to get energy levels high and boisterous. Noise-sensitive children, on the other hand, could end up feeling wiped without knowing why.

Scents and smells can also affect the way children behave and react: for example, a stale, stuffy environment will eventually make most people irritable and less tolerant. Smells that are unpleasant or overbearing can have the same effect, such as exhaust fumes if playing in a playground near a busy road. Most of us don't notice these subtle effects but for some children/people they can be triggers.

Aggressive behaviour can result from not being able to get away from triggers that are causing discomfort. I only became aware of this trend in myself as an adult. As a child my agitated behaviour was misread by my parents and I was scolded or punished.
It is up to the parents and adults to create and maintain environments in which children feel safe and secure. It's not easy, nowhere near as easy as we're led to believe. We can't just put a bunch of children together and expect them to play nicely in any old circumstances. Supervision involves not only watching the children and intervening when something starts to happen, but pro-actively intervening before the activity, by anticipating need.

One of my most enduring lessons as a young mother was working out that if I took my toddler to a party and she stayed up late, in an environment with lots of different noises, smells and faces to experience (and learn), she'd be exhausted for a day or two, which for a toddler means crankiness and tantrums... Funny thing was, I felt much the same way but used to blame my child's behaviour, not the over-stimulation of my senses the night before.

Children also need time to assimilate their social experiences. After an exciting physical and loud experience, help to calm the children with half an hour of a quiet, structured and supervised activity such as a group game. Include the parents. This brings everyone together and helps build a sense of belonging within the group, and no one is left feeling excluded. Balance busy social days or sleepovers with plenty of quiet days at home with just mum and dad and siblings.

Rough and tumble play with mixed age groups without close supervision by parents can be a recipe for injury. Older children (and even playful adults) often miss the cues that signal when the play has escalated pass the safe point for younger, smaller or less experienced children. Children who are used to each other play differently together – they know how far they can go before upsetting each other. Humans tend to be overconfident about their ability and perceptions. It is up to us older, wiser and more experienced humans to help our children learn these lessons!

Introducing new children, or new elements such as a novel setting, can also inadvertently trigger conflict. Children are more likely to run into trouble or encounter problems because they are unaware of the need to be more careful. I'm all for close supervision – even if that means 'hovering' – when there are mixed age groups or new elements.

We tend to overestimate our children's abilities to handle new situations, which includes what happens when someone gets hurt or upset. We assume they will know what to do, or that they will handle it the way they do at home. But there are different social dynamics at play and everyone behaves differently when there are other people (not just family) around. Our children are learning social skills and they need protection, mentoring and guidance. Hence the need for ongoing and close supervision.

I have to admit I found it hard to be properly attentive to my children while enjoying conversations with friends: homeschool activities and group gatherings were probably more important for my social life than they were for my
children! I think we're lucky as homeschooling parents because we get to spend so much more time with our children and that helps us to tune into their needs. We seem to instinctively know when our children need our attention. I think it is okay for parents to intervene in respectful and non-intrusive ways to keep play safe or to head off potential problems.

Our first duty is to ensure our own children’s needs are met, but we are also responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all the children present. Watching out and making sure that children’s play isn’t escalating in such a way that it is hurting or upsetting anyone is an important part of belonging to a homeschool group.

Often it is sufficient to gently remind the children that you are being attentive to their behaviour and expect them to respect each others’ needs when playing. Don’t leave it to the group leader to intervene and talk to the other parents. Make it a habit to remind everyone that it is important for the parents to keep an eye on all the children and stop any inappropriate behaviour before it escalates. I firmly believe the world would be a much nicer place if there were more attentive adults 'hovering' around children in school playgrounds!

However, it is also important not to smother children. Allow them explore different games and ways of playing. ‘Hovering’ attentively is different from smothering or restricting children, or not allowing them to experience games you would not normally encourage them to play.

Talk to your children about why you don’t like those sorts of games. Children respond well to sensible and logical reasons – though you’ll need to catch them before they get tired and grumpy. This often means making sure that play sessions last no longer than the children’s energy does, no matter how tempting it is to stay and chat or play for another hour or two!

If you are new to the group, make sure you introduce yourself and stay fairly close to your children for the first few sessions. If you hover near the games being played, watching attentively and taking an interest, your children will feel more secure about joining in the fun.

Introduce your children and ask the other children to help them feel welcome and look out for them as they don’t know all the rules yet. Home-educated children have shown themselves to be able to handle this responsibility very well if it’s expected of them.
Hello, my name is Emma, I’m 10 and I am a homeschooler. I like working on the computer. I like going on Super Clubs Plus (SCP). I would like other homeschoolers to go on SCP.

SCP is a safe social network site. You can make your own webpage and write emails. SCP is only for 6-12 year olds.

You can also write in forums, browse other people’s homepages, earn stars and other awards and do lots of other cool things.

I really like editing my homepage. All homeschoolers get put in the Domus School. There aren’t many people in the Domus school yet. SCP is lots of fun. I hope to see more homeschoolers there.

For more information go to www.superclubsplus.com.au

Emma demonstrating Super Clubs Plus at the Home Education CampFest
Education.au recently published a presentation by CEO Greg Black on ‘Embedding Technology in Teaching and Learning’. This is an area most governments continue to invest heavily in, with mixed results. Lack of appropriate professional development and provision of time are two of the greatest challenges facing the school sector. Digital information and communication technological skills fall into two categories: according to Black, “the easiest to teach and test are also the easiest to digitise, automate and outsource”.

There is high demand for people able to work collaboratively, synthesise and personalise information, problem solve, explain and use it, working across different disciplines and boundaries. Evidence shows that the best performers in the digital education revolution integrate opportunities, devolve responsibility, focus on personal learning and avoid streaming. Buzz words to describe digitally switched-on students include “creative and ingenious, surprising, collegiate, engaged, inspired”. They include students who want to learn in groups through practice with friends, not from “copying stuff from books and teachers”.

The report recommends that educators consider that furniture, lighting, security, comfort and location are just as important as the space learning occurs within: “learners need space for instruction and presentations; spaces for talk and private study; spaces to access resources; room to move; technology that is ‘just in time’ and flexible; tools for communication and flexibility in space location and resources.” Wireless and mobile devices need to be part of the mix, to accommodate learning in any environment.

“Spaces shape and change practice. Engaging, adaptable spaces energise students, teachers and the community. Well-designed learning spaces inspire creative, productive and efficient learning.” MCEETYA Learning Spaces Framework

“In today’s interconnected, technology driven world, learning typically takes place in physical, virtual and remote places. It is an integrated, highly technical environment in which learners learn. The new learning spaces incorporate technologies, engage the learner, creating new learning possibilities, enhancing achievements and extending interactions with local and global communities.” 21st century learning spaces, education.au 2009

Home educators are well placed to help their children embrace and use digital information and communication technology in all areas of the curriculum, without the hindrances and assessment regimes imposed on the school sector.
By Bethany, age 12

For over two years now I have been blogging with homeschoolblogger.com a free site that lets you publish your ideas in a safe environment with a homeschool twist.

What is Blogging

Blogging is like an online journal that people can read and make an online comment.

What I like to Blog about

Mostly I write about what's going on in my life, in a not too personal way. I also like posting little recipes and pictures. Sometimes a simple picture can be enough.

Some safety tips on Blogging

Although Homeschoolblogger is a very safe site, my mum has taught me to still follow these rules;
- Don’t use your real name, especially your last name
- Don’t put your suburb or town
- Don’t put your email address on for public viewing
- Never put where you’re going; e.g. “Tomorrow we are going to Brisbane and staying at the Starlight motel”.
- Don’t post pictures of your house or street.

On Homeschoolblogger you can change blogging settings. For instance you can make it so only your friends or registered users can view your blog/profile.

General tips on blogging

- Post often, if you don’t post for a while people will stop reading your blog.
- Spell check!
- Post pictures as often as you can.
• Post comments on other people’s blogs to encourage visitors.
• Pick a nice template then personalize it. Don't put too many gadgets, that just looks messy.
• Having your age on there helps people get to know you better.
• Don't say anything like, “I hate my friend Pat” as they could read it.
• Don't write anything you wouldn’t say out loud.

Getting Started

The hardest thing about blogging for me was getting started. Creating a blog was easy but getting people to look at my blog was the hardest thing. I would post a million entries and I wouldn't get a single comment, so I started posting comments on other people’s blogs and after a while they would comment on mine. I think what really helps is having a ‘bloggy’ button, a picture link that other bloggers can post on their sidebars.

Homeschoolblogger is mostly Americans so they are always interested in an Aussie blogger.

For more information visit:
http://www.homeschoolblogger.com/home.php
Australia Talks Home Education

The ABC Radio National afternoon show Australia Talks featured a program dedicated to home education on 1st June. The show acknowledged that home education is catching on and asked the questions, “Why are more parents turning their back on the traditional education system and is homeschooling a valid alternative to schools?” Feedback was positive, with dozens of comments by home educating families and students on the show’s webpage rebutting claims about inadequate teaching skills and opportunities for social development. Read all the comments generated by the feature [http://www.abc.net.au/rn/australiatalks/stories/2010/2908830.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/australiatalks/stories/2010/2908830.htm) or download the audio [http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2010/06/ats_20100601.mp3](http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2010/06/ats_20100601.mp3).

On the HEA Website

Bookmark these HEA pages and visit often!

Education in the News is a monthly summary updated frequently with items of interest in the news relating to education that may be of interest to home educating families: [http://hea.asn.au/resources/results.asp?type=4&catid=14](http://hea.asn.au/resources/results.asp?type=4&catid=14).


The HEA News Archive also features articles and items that may interest members and includes important notices from the HEA Committee: [http://hea.asn.au/news.asp](http://hea.asn.au/news.asp).


Email items for inclusion on these pages to Beverley, HEA Editor, [editor@hea.asn.au](mailto:editor@hea.asn.au).
In February this year, a dozen home schooling families in the Hunter Valley, NSW, attended the first meeting of the FBI (is it legal to borrow that acronym?).

At the Fun Brain Institute, we get together to share opportunities for learning about diverse subjects through stimulating activities. It’s a blend of brain gym, play group and home school cooperative. Our fortnightly three hour gatherings are usually attended by 15 to 25 children, mostly under age 10, and their families.

Our initial format included structured sessions such as:

**Think Quick!** - challenges to promote cooperation, creative problem solving and thinking outside the square. For example, team constructions with limited materials and a purpose.

**Mission Possible** - open ended math and science activities. For example, building 2D and 3D shapes using straws and pipe-cleaners and participating in interactive science shows.

**Game Zone** - table or board games, brainteasers, phonics or math games, cards, puzzles, chess, construction toys, etc.

**Art Starts** – start with a basic idea and make it your own. For example, make and test boats using recycled materials, foil and plasticine, or make and decorate a basket (for the chocolates we made, yum!)

FBI is very much a team effort. Many parents, and some children, have risen to the challenge to share their expertise and contribute in whichever way they are comfortable. As a result children have enjoyed dramatising a story, trying circus tricks, making a balloon hovercraft, digging for dinosaur bones and singing together. For our transport theme, Darcy (age 10) prepared a very impressive model to explain the use of hydraulics in lifting heavy loads.

We have explored themes such as: boats, puppets, transport, dinosaurs, fossils and rocks, and have exciting plans for future dates. Group challenges, topical brainstorms, quick puzzles and interactive math and science segments are all fun ways to stretch the mind. A casual morning tea or lunch break is a great opportunity to make friends, talk about life and home schooling, or simply eat and play!

**What makes FBI work?**

- Cooperative planning and leadership enable us to provide diverse experiences for our children. Regular participants share ideas, hopes and skills as we plan for future dates.
- Our common goal is to have fun with friends whilst giving brains a healthy workout!
- Adjusting activities as they unfold, being prepared but spontaneous and flexible. Also adapting to the dynamics of the group present as numbers and ages vary.
- Having group values and attitudes to aspire to, such as: Inspire and Empower, Respect, Be Kind, and Have a Go. These are displayed with positive examples of their meaning.
- Providing a balance of structured, stimulating segments and casual, open-ended ones.

The Fun Brain Institute seems to have filled a need in the rapidly growing Newcastle home education community: a welcome opportunity to meet regularly, in addition to social days, sports and excursions. We see FBI as an inclusive and creative group that will grow and evolve to meet the wishes of those who attend.

**If you'd like to know more, email Vanessa:** preston007@bigpond.com
Unschooling allows your child to learn what they want when they want. It doesn't mean (as recent press items in the USA indicated) letting your kids run feral! Unschooling exposes your child to different environments and provides many areas in which to learn, including doing courses of study or explorations on topics of interest.

We don't tend to make our child learn things that are not relevant to an area in which they are not interested. If I feel I would like my child to learn something and can see a good reason for it, I usually introduce it in an interesting way, or explain to the children why it would be a good idea to consider it. If they are not interested at that time then we might introduce it later, when they can see a need or want for it.

Here is an example of one of our unschooling days. My daughter re-read an article we were featured in several years ago where we talked about making polymers. She wanted to try this again, but do something different than last time. My daughter is fourteen and my son is nine. We did some research about polymers on the internet; the children chose to make bouncy balls (Over the next couple of weeks, we followed up the activity by observing the application of polymers in the home and all around us on a daily basis, such as materials used in the building of houses, toys, mechanics and in industries).

After looking at what the ingredients were, we went shopping and bought borax and food colouring. This involved calculating the cost of these items. We then looked at the main ingredient in borax, boron, and asked how and where it occurs? As it is mined, we talked about the cost to the environment and where it might be found in Australia, or if it came from overseas which would cause even more environmental impact. We talked about null hypothesis. We then tried the recipe – a few times – so, as you guessed, the balls didn't bounce well the first time. Bouncing the balls gave us plenty of maths practice, working out things such as mass, diameter, length of bounce, using a bat for more distance, buoyancy and so on.
We have been looking at the advantages of moving to acreage and looked at many real estate sites. Some adverts for land use ‘acres’ while others ‘hectares’. We needed to find out the comparisons: more maths. We booked a few appointments and looked at land and got a good idea of size and prices. All with huge variations.

This led to us finding out why: some had natural spring water, others only tank water. Some were near chicken farms that smelt really bad, etc. Real estate salesmen get a real shock when the kids ask about seeing comparable properties or if they can justify the price of a property. They didn’t seem sure whether to answer the kids and usually looked pleadingly at us parents to save them!

My daughter has been reading two types of books at once. She is reading books by the author who wrote the Miley Cyrus’ movie and also a drama/comedy series. My son still isn't into reading as much, so he played Age of Empires on the computer and learnt quite a bit of history in the process. He then hopped onto Google Earth to see the places on which he was declaring war. He spent a lot of time in present day Germany having a browse at the architecture as well as the size of the country.

After all this we watched the previous night’s episode of ‘Flash Forward’. A year or two ago we studied CERN and the kids are really interested in physics and science and love the whole quantum physics concept in the series. There are so many discussions on humanity, integrity, what if it really happened, etc.

Later we went to visit a friend and heard all about her natural naming day of her baby, a really different way to name a child then is generally accepted in our culture. The kids loved to hear about it. At home again, the kids had a good hour on MSN and Facebook, making plans with their schooled friends for the weekend.

As I write, they are watching footy on TV with their Dad after helping me clear up after dinner (which they chose and helped cook). Basically in one typical unschooling day we had covered history, geography, English, maths, health, HSIE, sport, science, culture, and socialisation!
There is not one thing I dislike about home schooling. I could go into a long rant about why it suits us, listing political, religious, parenting and all the other reasons you have probably heard before. We are registered and even that I don't dislike, but I must say I've had my moments. We signed up for registration in NSW long before I found out there is an option for not registering. If only I'd known! So far we have had three visits from our approved person (AP) and they were all so interesting and a real learning curve.

After the first meeting we were registered for a year. The approved person was satisfied that we knew what we were doing and was happy to give us some leeway to find our feet; it was quite nice really. In that year I learned so much about which learning styles suited us and it seemed, mostly due to the strong will of my daughter Lily, that natural learning was the way to go!

So when the next registration rolled around I showed the AP a very basic plan based on a summary of the NSW Board of Studies K-6 syllabus. The approved person did not approve! It seemed to me that our AP really didn't think our approach ticked enough boxes and she gave us a six month registration. This was very difficult for me and I went through a crisis of faith in my ability to home educate my child. Before she left the AP suggested I go through all the syllabus materials and formulate a detailed plan of what we wanted to do: I had no idea what we were having for lunch, how was I to plan the next possible two years of our lives!

What she wanted was totally contrary to how we were successfully learning, what we believed, how we lived... How dare she! And that came up a lot in the next six months: thoughts of, "horrible AP, working for the man, trying to keep us down". I wanted to rant and change the system but now I think about it, I may have taken her well-meaning suggestions as a personal attack.

Over the next five months before we had our next visit I formulated a ridiculous plan, completely over-ambitious. Some people would probably love it, it was structured and detailed, listed all our resources, gave timelines and was - for us as natural learners - just not going to happen! I also forced Lily into a structured routine of workbooks and timetables that I think will take us both some time to recover from. I just wanted the registration and I would do anything to get it.

Finally at our last visit our (now completely lovely) AP awarded us a two year registration. She cooed over the brilliant plan and was delighted that I had put so much work into it.

It has now been 12 weeks since her visit and we have not adhered to the plan one bit! But at least I have two more years before I have to worry about it. Registration can either be completely painful or totally easy and everything in-between. I am envious of other natural learners who have submitted simple plans and received long registrations. I couldn't give any tips about how to do it as it depends on so many factors. If I could choose whether to register or not, I am not entirely sure what I would do and will probably opt to cross that bridge when it comes.
FAQ: TAFE ADMISSIONS
Michelle sought advice about TAFE admission policy for home educators.
Many home educating children wish to start pursuing studies in their chosen first career in their early to mid teens. TAFE has long been an appropriate vehicle for these students. Recent changes to the school leaving age have caused considerable confusion, with reports from some families that their under 17 year old children have been denied access to courses.

Paul Reader, HEA Secretary for 2009-2010 replied:
“Restricted entry to TAFE is contrary to advice HEA received from the Deputy Director's office earlier in the year. The only principal being applied is that TAFE needs to be convinced that the student is capable of completing the course in which enrolment is being sought. In some cases completion of Y10 or Y12 is being used as an entry measure. This year, Y10 evidence has been waved for home education students. Next year there may be an arrangement for Board of Studies to provide some form of certification based on home education registration.

Our family successfully enrolled a 16 year old (now 17) student in a CERT IV without HSC or Y10 through OTEN, this year. We enrolled initially on line, paid the fee, and subsequently received requests for additional documentation for which there were a number of alternatives. Some of these alternatives can work for home educators, such as providing testimony that the student is capable of undertaking the work.”

Esther Lacoba, HEA President 2009-2010 and current committee member, advises NSW members should contact the head of the Home Education department at the Board of Studies - Kerry Sheehan, kerry.sheehan@bos.nsw.edu.au - for advice on how to rectify this matter. Esther’s daughter is undertaking 2 hours a week of study through a local TAFE.
A Homeschool Centred Holiday at Narooma, NSW from August 20th 2010
Cas from Narooma Holiday Park is keen on putting together camps for home educating families – she needs 20 families to show an interest in a camp starting August 20th. For more information visit: http://naroomahomeschooljubilee.wordpress.com.

Willochra Homeschool Camp
11th - 15th October
Linda Maher is organising this popular camp during October. For more information email lindamaher08@gmail.com

Australian Unschooling Conference Retreat
Sept. 3-7, 2010
Tallebudgerra Tourist Park, Gold Coast, Queensland
~ for attachment parenting families wishing to extend this philosophy into the older years
~ for families looking into home education as an alternative to school
~ for homeschooling families interested in exploring natural learning and unschooling
~ for unschoolers wanting to extend this philosophy to other areas of their lives
~ and any other families looking to extend their social network with like-minded others!
www.unschoolingretreat.com
Homeschooling Fathers’ Camp
August 6th – 8th 2010
Lake Perseverance Recreational Centre, Crows Nest, Queensland

“I will strengthen them in the Lord, and in His Name they will walk, declares the Lord” (Zech.10:12).

Homeschooling fathers are unique men! This Camp is an opportunity to be encouraged, equipped and refreshed in our calling as homeschooling fathers as we have a weekend together. Through both inspirational and very practical sessions plus plenty of time for relaxing, talking, and generally taking time out, we can return home with renewed purpose and energy for the task God has given us to do!

Lake Perseverance Recreation Centre is nestled on the northern shores of Lake Perseverance, between Toowoomba, Crows Nest and Esk, and is about 2 hrs. drive from Brisbane (via Esk). See map overleaf. Accommodation: is in chalet-style cabins, each with en-suite. Wheelchair access is available to some cabins. Meals are fully catered for by professional caterers.

Cost: Full attendance: accommodation (incl. all meals from Fri dinner – Sun lunch) $100. Saturday only: 9am-5pm, Morning-Tea, Lunch and Afternoon Tea, $30.

Registration and Refund Policy: Numbers are limited so get your registration forms in early. Registrations will not be accepted after Monday the 26th July. Please note that deposits cannot be refunded after this date.

Program Highlights:
Speakers - Jason Kauffman, Andrew McColl, Bob Osmak
Question & Answer opportunity
Outdoor Activities
Time for Fellowship

Enquiries: Andrew & Sue McColl
Email: runimed6@yahoo.com.au
Ph: (07) 3264 3248
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2011

Tuesday 22nd to Sunday 27th March
Wyrral Valley Holiday Park, Buwria (near Albury) NSW

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Conference and Festival

Our aim is to create a National, Annual Event in Australia that will meet the needs of ALL Home Schooling Families. Our Festival is an opportunity to showcase the talent, skills, interests and passions of our Home Schooling Community.

Our intent is to promote and foster the skills, interests and knowledge of our National Home Educating community, and allow the passion of this information to reach as many Home Schoolers as possible. At its heart, we believe that Home Schooling is a lifestyle, chosen by families for the enrichment of the entire family.

Book online at www.rainbowdivas.com

Homeschoolers enjoying learning at the Fun Brain Institute, p.43
Winter is always the perfect time to curl up with a good book and, here again, is the perfect excuse to do just that this winter.

In 2010 we’re once again inviting home educated people of all ages to participate in the Home Ed. Winter Read-a-Thon. Not only will it give you the perfect excuse to read lots of great books this winter, but you will also be helping to raise funds for the aid agency TEAR Australia (for information about TEAR - rhymes with “near” - visit www.tear.org.au or phone 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 us 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 us by email at vampir12@bigpond.net.au, or by phone on 9557 8262, and we'll send you one. Once we’ve received your completed registration form, we’ll send you everything you need to get started.

About the read-a-thon…

It will run from June 1 to August 31 - you can read for all or part of this time. All the money you raise will go directly to TEAR Australia.

You can include books of any length or genre. Picture books, chapter books, non-fiction, comics and audio books are all eligible to be included. You can also include books which have been read to you. You can participate with as little as one sponsor – every dollar raised counts.

TEAR Australia will issue receipts to all sponsors who request them. Every participant will receive a certificate from TEAR Australia. The participant who raises the most money will receive a $40.00 gift card from book sellers, Angus & Robertson.

We hope you will be a part of the Home Ed. Winter Read-a-Thon 2010.

The Ephraums Family - Grace, Judy & Brian – a Melbourne home educating family
We can use this time to promote home education in our local communities by organizing suitable activities open to the general public and by advertising them in local community halls, preschools, churches, playgroups, libraries – anywhere families might visit!

The HEA can supply you with promotional material to display in preparation for your events for 2010 National Home Education Week – posters and brochures introducing home education. HEA flyers are also available for distribution: contact secretary@hea.asn.au. Here are some ideas for promoting Home Education during National Home Education Week:

- Ask to be interviewed by your local radio station. Call talk-back radio during Home Ed week
- Library display. Libraries are an ideal place to promote home schooling. Ask your local librarian now if you can set up a display for National Home Education Week. Along with some of HEA promotional material you could show photo albums, old homeschooling magazines, children's posters, list of recommended books, list of good local resources.
- Organise a picnic in the park, or open up your planned events to your community. Place it in the local paper's diary section FOR FREE to invite all community members along. (see below for a sample Press Release you might adapt for your local event.)
- Book an appointment with your local Member of Parliament and talk to him/her about home education.
- Put on a sausage sizzle fundraiser/awareness campaign at the local Bunnings or similar business (Scout groups do this all the time)
- Advertise an introductory evening for parents to ask questions. Have material to display and distribute. Invite homeschooling parents to talk about how they teach their children at home, what materials and curriculum they use, etc.
- Hold a stall at a local market selling things the children have made and hand out your group's newsletter and HEA flyers.
- Ask local community centres, libraries and shops if you can place a poster on their board (available from HEA). Hold an event in conjunction with this so it can be mentioned on the poster.
- Place a poster and/or promotional literature for parents at child-care centres, preschools and even schools.
The Science and Engineering Challenge is a full day event conducted at various venues around the country. Participation is free. Photos and videos from last year’s event, plus details of what the activities involve, can be found here: [http://www.deakin.edu.au/scitech/future/schools/challenge/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/scitech/future/schools/challenge/)

The Home Education Network team now advances to the Victorian final later in the year. If you’d like to join the team, contact Sue Wight at robwight@optusnet.com.au. It is not necessary to be a member of HEN to join the team.

The organisers are interested in getting home educated students from other states involved. All that is required is between 16 and 32 kids aged 16 or under who would like to take part and one home educator willing to act as coordinator for the group. The team is broken up into groups of 2-5 kids and each group completes one full day activity or two half-day activities. Being the coordinator is not an onerous task, you simply distribute information to the team and organise them into groups according to their preferences. Then you turn up on the day, tick people off, introduce them to each other and hand out name tags. If you are interested in joining or coordinating a team for another state, contact the editor.
Translating Every Day Life into Educational Jargon, just one of dozens of books, e-books and resources available from Beverley Paine’s Always Learning Books.

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STATE HOMESCHOOL ORGANISATIONS