

THE HOME EDUCATORS NETWORK

Term 3, 2013

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TERM DATES:

Monday 28th July
Friday 27th September

THEN Contacts

Coordinator:

- Julia Dirks 824 6021

Treasurer:

- Heather Taylor 859 0303

Membership:

- SallyAnne

Playcentre:

- Christine Cave 839 5513

To loan:

The telescope:

- Marietta Smith 849 9491

The microscope:

- Lori Silsbee 855 0110

Books from the library:

- Sarah Walsh 850 8545

MOE Liaisons contacts

- Sheena Harris

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- Meredith Connolly

Term Newsletter

- Lisa Piggott (Articles)

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- Denise Styles (Activities)

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G'day fellow Home educators

Firstly, I must give my absolute sincerest apologies for the lateness of this newsletter. Unfortunately I had to put my computer in for repairs over the school holidays. It now means I am about two - three weeks behind in many of the jobs I have, and not all of them to do with homeschooling. Sorry!

Thanks again to those people who take the time to contribute to the newsletter. Am thrilled with Kate and Vanessa's great contributions aswell as Julia's great story, Who am I. Also another thank you to Margaret who always kindly checks to see if there is anything required to help with the newsletter. I really enjoyed reading them all!

Julia mentions needing "new blood" on the THEN committee. This is really important!!! Most of the people currently on the committee are coming towards the end of their homeschooling travels and so we need new members to take their places. If you thought you might be interested then please contact us now so we can advise / train you before the next AGM (early next year) not leaving you in a position of floundering along ... we're nice like that. ☺

These are some of the positions that will need filling in 2013 ... Julia will not be standing for coordinator again, Heather will not be standing for treasurer, Denise will not be doing the activities sheets, and I possibly won't be able to be editor next year as if everything falls into place my family and I will be spending a year travelling.

Please contact any of us for further info if you feel it is something that you can do. Denise and my duties are

The Home Educators Network

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Family Day

Family Day has been a big part of my homeschooling journey. There was always someone to talk to if I had problems. Just the fact that I could interact with like minded people is of enormous benefit to stay on track.

The other benefit is that you can stop people nagging about socialisation of the children as socialising with a wide range of ages is much more beneficial compared to socialising just with peers. With so many adults around to diffuse any problems amongst the children, it makes for a happy environment.

I have stopped going as my two homeschooled girls were the only teenagers left and understandably they didn't want to go any more. I miss going though.

The people left going are feeling a little deflated as attendance has been down this year.

Why is that? We thought it might be because of Thursday sports, so it was shifted to Tuesday, but that hasn't made a difference.

Changing to once a fortnight or month makes it hard to remember which week it is on and telling new homeschoolers about it. THEN subsidises Family Day, but we can't keep doing that if people don't use this wonderful opportunity.

Try to keep Family Day in mind this term.

Happy homeschooling, Julia Dirks

PS The families left going won't stay after 1:30 if no one else has showed up, as they are quite happy to socialise at their own home.

HOMESCHOOL CAMP AT TE KAURI LODGE

Our Homeschool Camp at Te Kauri Lodge, near Kawhia was great! It was held from the 27th - 29th of May, with members from about 25 families, who came from Raglan, Cambridge and the Waikato area.



It was a two night camp, which was long enough, but we all wanted to stay longer, (well, all the kids did). Some fun things we did were Walks through the Bush with Roxie talking to us about the environment. Roxie was our friendly Educational Guide. She took us for walks, and taught us about birds, plants, pests and streams in the area.

On the first day we all met and learnt about Kawhia environment, and then we went for a short walk in the forest. The weather wasn't as good as we expected, it was cold and it rained but we actually enjoyed being in the bush.

The first night we played a few games before going to bed, we slept in bunk beds in big rooms, all together. It was very spacious and could sleep many more.

Second day we made a big picture the size of a table! with birds, a stream and the banks of the stream. We hung it up on the wall afterwards.

We also got to feed eels, with meat we brought and we walked down to a clearing and toasted marshmallows and cooked hotcakes over a little fire

We did a few walks, it was lovely to be in the bush.

(Estelle 12)



The Camp was great, there was heaps of people to meet as well as our grandfather and our friends were there.

We played a game like Charades.

We learned about leaves and tree's.

We only stayed two nights. The first day it rained but it was warm and walking in the bush was misty but nice. We saw lots of orange snails.

The next day was cold but sunnier. We went down to feed eels and roasted marshmallows and pancakes on a fire.

Even the small children could walk on the tracks, it wasn't too hard for anyone.

It was the best camp I have ever been to.

(Awhimaia 10)

Te Kauri Lodge Camp - Camp Co-ordinator, Vanessa McCall, Natural Learning Waikato

On the first really cold days of late May, we went into the forest at Te Kauri Lodge for a 2 night Camp. We arrived on the Monday afternoon and were welcomed by the Lodge Custodian, John Makin and Jo Roxburgh the resident Educator, (known to us as Roxy).

It was a bit of a jumble as people filtered in, rather than being ready to begin by 1pm. The Camp had a "start time" planned with the notion that information could be given (just once) and plans made together. At that point I let go of my 'plan' because I thought things would have to 'unfold as they would'. The notion of taming the spirit of Home Educators is oxymoronic.

Roxy led the children in a game to meet each other, which was very effective, as they had to silently establish their age range themselves. Then they did a name association game, each child choosing something they liked to be their own 'name link'. They had fun doing this, and it made it easier for all following activities.

The children that arrived later may not have settled as quickly, as a 'group' feel had begun. Still all the children mixed together happily, aged 13 to toddlers.

We had shared evening meals, which were delicious, thanks to many clever cooks.

Our first night was very cold, it snowed locally, and I wasn't warm enough in my bed. A few others said the same. I didn't expect lots of sleep, but I wished I had been warmer.

There is a rumour of a Fire-Alarm sounding at 2.30am on the second night. Sounds too awful to contemplate, I'm sure it was a collective bad-dream.

When I went into the chiller in the morning, it seemed warm, but that was because the kitchen was so cold. I thoroughly recommend sorting good footwear for a winter camp at the Lodge.

At this Camp you must get people to understand how to store their outdoor footwear, so they are not causing problems for others and to have indoor footwear at the ready. Once sorted your comfort level goes up exponentially.

We had a full schedule of activities offered to us by Roxy, but they were weather dependant , and the first morning was hampered by cold drizzle. Innovatively Roxy brought the 'Stream Study' indoors. We made a large mural of a forest stream, and children drew pictures of plants and creatures, which they placed on the mural and in a large tree branch that was hung over the stream mural.

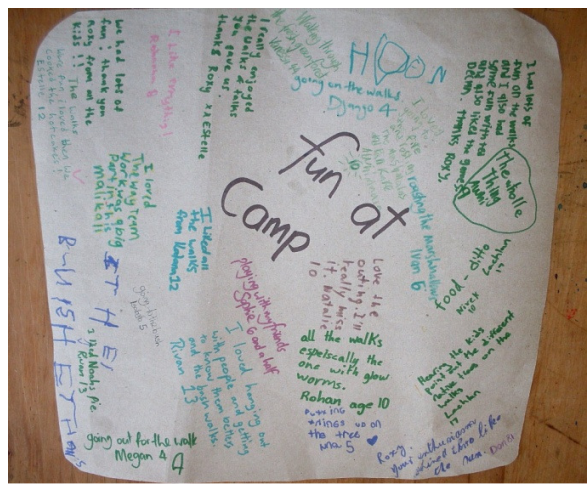
Later that day a bushwalk was possible. Children saw many of the things they had been discussing and seeing in the books.

That evening a group went out, this time to see/feed eels in the stream. The children really enjoyed going out in the dark.

The Wednesday was a bright sunny day, and the group had an expedition to a stream, taking supplies to cook pancakes and marshmallows on a camp-fire. They shared carrying the load of dry wood between everyone. The children all mentioned later, it was a really fun activity.

The children were all a bit sad to have to leave, a sign of a good camp, as they were enjoying each other's company and especially the bushwalks so much.

I asked the children to add to a page of something that was 'Fun at Camp' and collected these comments.





CAR SCHOOLING by Margaret Evans

At our recent information evening I was surprised at the response when “carschooling” was mentioned. So here are some thoughts on car schooling.

Firstly we are called to be home educators but sometimes for no fault of our own the “school” work does not seem to happen as we are often on the road to one activity or another. But rest assured in a car you have a captive audience. They cannot escape to the trampoline or computer – unless you are inclined to let them bring their computer with them in which case you have lost your captive audience!

Here is a sample day when my 10 year old and 13 year old and I went to Papamoa for the day. We needed to visit an elderly friend who was about to travel back to India and this was the only day we could do it.

Before we left home we prayed together. For the first part of the journey we listened to the tape “Tchaikovsky visits America”. This resulted in some discussion about different parts of the story and the music. When I notice my passengers were bored I encouraged skip counting, by 2's, 5's 3's, 4's etc. 7's is always the hardest but we managed it. By now we were close to our destination and I asked the children to give me directions.

While visiting our friends, my children took the family's preschoolers to the park while the adults sat and chatted. Walking to the park and playing there with the girls was great phys-ed time for the children. It was also very good for them to learn to take responsibility for younger children.

At the end of the day we drove home. Our focus topic for the term was Europe. So on the drive home I named various countries in Europe and they had to tell me the capital city of the country. Then we sang some songs.

Car schooling for that day included quite a bit of revision of things we already knew. But revision is a valuable educational tool. During our travels that day we covered music, some American and Russian history, maths, geography and discussion skills. Wow! And it was all fun. There were no text books involved. There was no classroom. There was no formal schooling. But we were learning all the time.

Story tapes, talking books, sing-along tapes are great for taking with you in the car. But it is also a great time to just talk and discuss things or practice poetry, times tables and songs that need to be learnt off by heart. One thing we like to do when going on a long trip is to check it out on a map first and then look for the places we have to pass through on our way. Even my four year old grandson plays this game. He knows all the sizable landmarks between his home in Auckland and our house in Hamilton and looks for them and talks about them as they travel.

But car schooling can also take on the form of activities that we used to do when I was young to keep us occupied on a long journey. Twenty questions; animal vegetable and mineral; alphabet games; singing songs; I spy; first one to see....(black dog, blue house, an evergreen tree etc.); counting cars – someone counts white cars, someone counts blue cars, someone counts vans, who counts the most over a certain distance?

Then there are the number plate games. Let's say the number plate is CDH 317

- What do the numbers on the number plate add up to? 11
- What is the highest number you can make out of those three digits? 731
- What is the lowest number you can make out of those three digits? 137
- Can you multiply them together? 21
- Can you take them away from each other, the lower numbers from the higher numbers? 3
- Using the letters in order what funny phrase can you come up with? Cats dance happily. Could David help? Create daring harmonics. Cucumbers don't hatch.

And then there is the "which way should we go?" activity; this is best on short journeys. For example when travelling across Hamilton and you know you have to cross over the river discuss the route with the children and let them choose within reason which bridge to cross, or which main road to take. "Shall we go to Chartwell over the Fairfield Bridge or over the Wairere Bridge today?" This helps them learn to name landmarks and think about routes across town, long before they learn to drive them.

So car schooling is what you make it. It has as many varied forms as home education itself but certainly provides plenty of scope to prevent boredom when traveling. Have fun!

MAKE A WILL!

I hope you don't mind me sharing this with you but during the last term holidays my eldest brother, suddenly died. Unbeknownst to anyone (including the Dr he had seen the night before) he'd had actually contracted meningococcus disease and passed away the next morning when his heart gave out. So I ended up in Melbourne for 10 days helping arrange a funeral. As well as being very sad, it was a very steep learning process I can tell you.

You see Paul was a solo parent, his second wife having passed away again suddenly, when his two youngest boys were preschoolers. So everything was a bit of mess, understandably with grief over his loss and the worry of what would happen with his two boys, orphans now at 11 and 12, his rental property, car he'd not long purchased on a loan and so on. You see Paul had not left a will, or really discussed where his boys should go in case anything should ever happen to him, so it was all very much in the air as to what his wishes were and frankly who was in a position to take the boys. Then there was the local Family Court, and Social Service groups etc. The 11 year old is special needs so has a lot of groups and people involved with helping him.

Now I am not sharing this story for pity, but simply because I am amazed at the number of people I have since spoken to have told me that they do not have wills. Some have said oh but I have asked friends, family etc and they said they'll take them but they have not officially documented it. As parents our greatest wealth is our children and it is indeed our responsibility that they are taken care of in the event that anything befall us ... so make sure it is legal!

If you do not have a will in place, then whoever tries to take guardianship will have to go through the Family Courts to get custody. A local lawyer I spoke to said she has seen some awful custody cases fighting over guardianship for the rights to children; she's see people do it just to get money for the kids. Sounds

ridiculous but it does happen. There also may be two sets of grandparents, or aunts, uncles, etc who both / all want to take the kids, so best to have who you and even your kid's want (if they are old enough to ask).

Even though the price of a will is around \$200 for one person (many lawyers offer a discount for couples), a lawyer told me that it is essential you have it done professionally when children are involved. You will need to understand the Family Protection Act and make sure that what you want in your will is in fact legal, especially if you have step, permanent foster or adopted children. It was recommended that you don't do it online but speak to someone to make sure it cannot be contested.

In case you are wondering Paul's 25 year old son from his first marriage, and just a new father himself, as their next of kin, stepped up to the plate and is now his brother's guardian.

Who Am I?

I was thinking about this lately. I know what I'm not and that's a writer. I always struggle to write something for the newsletter and put it off till past the last minute. I then of course have to scramble to quickly put something to paper.

It's been a big change for me lately as Sam has left home to become a pilot in the air force. Robyn is in her last year of homeschooling and struggles to decide what to do next year. Lee-Ann has only one year of homeschooling left and knows she wants to be an actress. She only has to decide where and how she's going to achieve that.

Where does that leave me?

I don't have much to do with Robyn's and Lee-Ann's schooling now as they are pretty much self reliant. Lee-Ann still needs me to drive her to where ever she needs to go, but now that she has her learners license and practices about 300 km a week, I think she should have her restricted by the end of the year.

Where does that leave me?

Growing up I always wanted to be a stay at home mum, with maybe working a little part time once the kids were in school. Homeschooling became my full time job and I've never regretted that. But now this job is coming to an end (18 months left).

Where do I go from here?

With over 15 years left till retirement I have to decide on something. Do I want a career or would I just like an easy no care job? Once all the kids have moved on, do Dan and I go oversees for a few years? Dan's work certainly can provide those opportunities, but that would probably mean I would stay at home. Is that what I would prefer?

Decisions, decisions, decisions.

I know one thing that I'm getting stale and are ready for a change. I'm outgrowing homeschooling and so need to move on. This is why at our next AGM I will not be available for re-election. New blood needs to take over.

So who am I?

I'm so many things: daughter, sister, wife, mother, co-ordinator of THEN, manager of Lee-Ann's soccer team, cleaner, cook, gardener, budget adviser, home educator, taxi driver, driver instructor etc. the list goes on and on. Each year it changes depending on what jobs I decide to take on.

Do we ever know who we truly are? Circumstances change and then you find yourself doing things you never thought you would or could.

So when I figure out who I am I'll let you know.

Julia Dirks

STREWING

Recently I came across a new word ... strewing. A friend in Aussie does this with her kids so I had to look into it a bit further as it sounded so interesting.

For those like me who are new to this term, **“Strew”** is defined by Merriam Webster as: “to spread by scattering”. It was brought into homeschooling, and specifically unschooling, terminology by Sandra Dodd years ago on an AOL Homeschooling board when she said: “I just strew their paths with interesting things.” The term stuck.

Quite simply, just as a farmer sows seeds hoping to grow all kinds of good things, a homeschool parent can sow seeds of learning in hopes of growing curiosity. The “strewing” strategy can help inspire interest in a topic that you want to cover in your homeschool but may not be one that your child has shown an interest in – or even knows anything about.

By placing interesting objects or books around the home, related to this new topic, we invite our kids to explore the new item and ask those “why” questions.

This is perfect for those who are unschoolers or natural learners but can quite easily be incorporated into a more formal homeschooling atmosphere.

- Leave simple craft supplies on a table beside a tube of glue.
- Set out a book opened to a full-page photograph of an important landmark or building, or country
- Stuck a detailed diagram of a double helix beside a bin of Lego pieces?
- Leave a word puzzle on the table beside their breakfast bowl
- Put a little display on the table of a dead bug (ew... I know but some kids love them), or maybe some shells
- Leave some pretty material on the table with a pattern beside it for older girls
- Wool and a set of knitting needles
- Have a photo frame and change the picture in it every so often. Don't warn the kids, it's better if they notice it and mention it. You could put a picture of an animal in it which could lead to learning about an animal, or put a famous piece of art in which could lead to a discussion to the painter or even a famous person (composer, politician, inventor, etc)
- Leave out a magnifying glass ... kids love these!
- A set of magnets ... the \$2 shop has cheap packs
- Put a packet of sunflowers seeds (or similar) on the table. It may ignite a passion for them to want to grow them

- Leave a musical instrument around – see if you can borrow or hire one.
- I am sure you can come up with some great ideas!

All of these are methods of strewing, which simply means to place objects in the path of kids without any expectation, coercion, or force of use.

When a new passion is sparked, you can continue to explore it via trips to the library, documentary films, board games, experiments, photography projects, and especially one-on-one discussions.

Strewing is about more than just placing physical objects, though. The intention behind strewing is to inspire curiosity that leads to learning; but we don't need to limit that inspiration to physical items like books or toys. Curiosity could also be inspired by a field trip or other form of exposing our kids to new experiences.

Lisa