

The B.A.S.H.E.R.T. Bulletin

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Baltimore Area Support for Home Education with Regard to Torah

Do you enjoy writing? Please help us make our newsletter interesting and useful by submitting articles for the newsletter. The newsletter is published on the 1st of each month. All submissions for the newsletter should be submitted by e-mail or mail by the 20th of the month before. Classified ads of interest to our group as well as announcements of accomplishments, birthdays, or simchas are also welcome. E-mail submissions to:

penina@

STANDING STRONG

By Aviva Werner

I love homeschooling! I love the time I get to spend with my kids, the activities we enjoy together on a regular basis, the quality of life that we all share. I often hear other parents complaining about the pressures they feel dealing with the situations that arise from sending their kids to school - carpools, tuition

"To make a difference, we have to be willing to be proud and stand strong. And though it isn't easy, it is immensely more rewarding than being the

costs, peer pressure, homework, bullying, juggling too much in too little time. I listen and sympathize, while inwardly, I revel in the freedom I have to live my life in a way that reflects my priorities. I sometimes share this with others, when I sense an openness and interest in how homeschooling affects my life. At other times, I feel

it would be perceived as a personal attack and refrain from discussing how different it is for me, and how different it could be for them.

I have encountered two basic responses when meeting others for the first time, who hear that I homeschool my children. The first is positive: "How wonderful - your children are so fortunate!" The

second is not: "Why would you DO that? How will your kids get all they need without attending school? What about socialization?" Although the intensity of the response may vary, it is rarely neutral.

Since many of the people I meet have a negative view of homeschooling and perceive homeschoolers as flaky, socially inept, and dysfunctional to some degree, I encounter the second reaction too frequently. Generally, I see myself as being in a position to bring new perspective to those who haven't usually had an opportunity to explore what homeschooling is. I am

confident and positive about the life choices we have made, and don't feel apologetic for choosing a path that so few in our community have chosen. I enjoy discussing their perceptions and concerns without defensiveness.

And yet, sometimes I get tired of explaining to the people I meet about what homeschooling is. I periodically feel frustrated that judgements are made about what I do and who I am, by those who really have no idea what it means. The constant questioning and skepticism as to my ability to provide the many benefits that they are convinced traditional schooling offers can be draining.

One day, after a disappointing encounter, I pondered how nice it must be to be part of the status quo, to not have one's personal choices constantly questioned and evaluated by strangers. I thought of how intense the pressure to conform can be, and how difficult it is to choose to be different. I wondered how many people would be making the choices we made if they

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weren't afraid of what people would say.

Later that same day, I got a letter that reminded me how important it is to continue to unapologetically represent the lifestyle we live. A friend had written of her admiration for the life we are leading, and how she and others she knows have been inspired by choices I have made, particularly homeschooling. She told me of specific changes that she made in the way she raised her children that she directly attributed to the ideas I had shared with her. Although there have been individuals in the past who commented on how motivated or inspired they felt by our life, I discounted them as nice comments but not very substantive. I always felt it was kind of these people to be encouraging, but I never thought of it as more than that.

After all, I am just a normal mom doing normal everyday things - I don't have exciting accomplishments to boast of. I am happy, my kids are happy, but our life seems so average to me that I couldn't see what could possibly inspire anyone. It was when I received the letter that I finally

realized that people weren't just being nice - they really meant it.

This realization, that our life was meaningful not only to my immediate family, but to others as well, forced me to think about what it was that made an impact on them. Most parents love their children deeply, and strive to provide the best for them. By homeschooling, I believe we have gone further in providing for our children's needs than what is considered the norm. As homeschoolers, we spend more time with our kids, deal with more messes, supervise more activities, have more conversations, than do the average parents. That is the nature of our lives.

If what we did was standard, then it wouldn't merit another glance from outsiders. It is precisely because what we do is unusual that people take note. When I considered the people who have changed the way they lived their lives because of us, I realized that it was because what we do isn't the norm that it made an impression. It is by doing things that others are afraid to do, that one makes an impact on those around him. Yes, it takes courage to stand up for one's beliefs, especially

when they aren't shared by the general public. By braving the challenge and being willing to stand alone, we strengthen our own character. Not only do we build our own sense of self, but we can be instrumental in aiding others to improve their lives.

True, many whom I meet might never alter their thinking, let alone their actions. But there have been and will be those who are open to implementing some of the ideas that we can share with them in their lives. Ideas about homeschooling, child raising, education - ideas that may be familiar to many homeschoolers, yet often so foreign to others.

To make a difference, we have to be willing to be proud and stand strong. And though it isn't easy, it is immensely more rewarding than being the same.

Upcoming Events

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra offers programs during the week for children from preschool through 8th grade. All programs are performed at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall and cost \$5.50 per person. There are group discounts and a free chaperone ticket for each 15 student tickets that are purchased. The programs available this year are:

Tiny Tots (Pre-K - Kindergarten)

Tuesday, February 25, 2003 at 10:00 and 11:30am AND Wednesday, February 26 at 10:00 and 11:30am "Peter and His Instrument Friends"

Wednesday, April 2, 2003 at 10:00 and 11:30am "All about Opposites"

Prime Time (Grades 1-3)

Tuesday, March 4, 2003 at 10:00 and 11:30am AND Wednesday, March 5, 2003 at 10:00 and 11:30am "Peter and His Instrument Friends"

Thursday April 3 at 10:00 and 11:30am AND Friday April 11 at 10:00 and 11:30am "All About Opposites"

Music For Youth (Grades 4-8)

Tuesday, January 7, 2003 at 10:00 and 11:30am "A Musical Portrait of Picasso"

Wednesday, March 26, 2003 at 10:00 and 11:30am "Brilliant Brass"

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of B.A.S.H.E.R.T. will be held on **Monday, January 6th, 2003 at 7:30pm** at the home of Penina Taylor. The subject of this meeting will be a panel discussion entitled "Going beyond the textbooks." Please be on time, the meeting will begin promptly at 7:30.

More Upcoming Events

Tuesday, December 10, 10:30am

Field trip to the American Red Cross Headquarters. Learn about the American Red Cross and what they do....a great follow-up field trip to the Clara Barton House. This field trip is also free. Call Sara Ani to sign up 410-764-0074.

Thursday, Dec. 26 11:00pm

Kennedy Center production of "Tom Sawyer". Mark Twain's classic American tale comes to the Kennedy Center in a fun-filled musical adaptation that chronicles the zany escapades of Tom, Huck, Becky and all of their friends. Kennedy center literature says ages 9 and up. Call Penina Taylor to sign up. Payment must be made to Penina Taylor by 12:00pm on Tuesday, December 10th. If payment is not made at that time, you can call the Kennedy center to see if there are any seats still available, but it will cost an extra \$1.20 to purchase tickets individually. Also, we must have at least 20 tickets purchased to get the group rate. To make

arrangements, call Penina at: 410-358-9704.

Motzei Shabbos, Dec. 28, 8:00pm

Adult game night at the home of Penina Taylor. Come, play, socialize and just have fun with other homeschooling parents. Bring a snack, a drink and a game to share. Call Penina for more information 410-358-9704.

Wednesday, Jan. 8 10:00-12:30

Field trip to Winterthur for a special homeschool tour of the exhibition The Grandeur of Viceroyal Mexico: Treasures from the Meseo Franz Mayer.

Discover the rich artistic heritage of Mexico from 1521 to 1821, when it was a colony of Spain. This exhibition features exquisite and often flamboyant decorative arts that reflect a unique blend of cultures.

After the tour we will be able to make a Mexican craft. Recommended for ages 7 and up. Cost for fieldtrip:
\$5.00 per child

1 free adult for each paid child (cost is usually \$8 per adult). Please sign up at the November meeting or call Sara Ani to make arrangements 410-764-0074. Payment must be made at time of sign up.

Mother/Daughter Rosh Chodesh Group

Rumor has it that the ladies that attended the Teves Rosh Chodesh get together had a great time. Thank you, Sara Ani for all your hard work. Plans are now being put together for a Rosh Chodesh Shevat. If you would like to help organize this get together, please call Sara Ani to see how you can help. Lets make this monthly get together a success! The idea is to celebrate Rosh Chodesh and spend time together working on crafts such as quilting, knitting, etc. Please call Sara Ani 410-764-

Oversight Program

If you would prefer to be under the oversight of a Jewish Organization, to be reviewed by a homeschoolin mom just like yourself, perhaps you should consider joining the Lubovitch Home School Program. Run by Celia Greenberg, under the supervision of Rabbi Baron of Columbia, LHSP provides accountability required by Maryland Law without having to report directly to County officials. For more information, contact Celia Greenberg at 410-997-3950.

Guitar class

Chaya Drabkin is offering a guitar course for children ages 6 and up. Two lessons a week, for 2 weeks There will be four lessons and a recital after that. Chaya has at least 5 guitars to lend for FREE for the children to use and practice on at home.

The cost is \$20 for all four lessons plus the recital. Guaranteed that the child can play one full song by the end of his/her first lesson!

Also, Chaya has some spaces left to teach home-schooling kids either violin, piano, or guitar. She

uses the Suzuki method, which teaches music by listening, rather than by reading. (The way we learn our languages!) She is extremely successful and loves teaching. These spaces are available only during school hours. Please contact Chaya for more information or to register. (410) 358-4929

Learn over the internet!

Rabbi Y. Pollack of Toronto, Canada has created an online Yeshivah. Contact Rabbi Pollack for more information.

ypollack@sympatico.ca

Of Interest.....

4-H

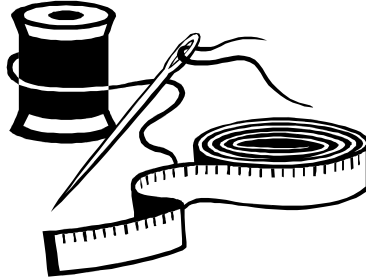
Sara Ani leads a 4-H group which meets on the second Tuesday of each month at Pikesville Middle School at 7:00pm. Ages and interests vary. If you would like more information, please call Sara at 410-764-0074

Creative Movement and Yoga

Dance Therapist with experience in public and Jewish education seeks to offer Creative Movement and/or Yoga playgroup(s) for children of varying ages or for parents and children together. Personalized attention, also able to work with special needs. Days, times, and fees negotiable. Please call Joyce Wolpert, D.T.R., L.C.P.C. (Registered Dance Therapist, Licensed Counselor) 410-358-0977.

Sew Perfect

Sew Perfect, a home economics course run by Yakira Cluster is now offering classes in sewing (including clothing, gifts,



mending, etc) as well as decorative needlework. Additionally, she is offering a full home economic curriculum including household and time management skills. Flexible scedule, reasonable rates. Hurry, space is limited and classes are filling quickly. Call Yakira for more details 410-764-8425.

We Need You!

Please contribute to the B.A.S.H.E.R.T. bulletin....help make the bulletin more interesting and more informative.

Important Notice

If you want to “stay in the loop” and be kept up to date on what is going on in the group, if you would like to receive this newsletter even when you can’t or don’t make it to meetings, you must become a member of B.A.S.H.E.R.T. If you do not pay your \$25 membership and fill out a form, this will be the last newsletter you recieve in the mail. Please don’t get left behind AND your support helps the entire homeschooling community!

B.A.S.H.E.R.T.

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