

DEVELOPING A HOMESCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM

by Terry Yaceyko

First of all, let me introduce myself. I'm Terry Yaceyko. I'm happily married to Richard and we have 4 daughters (23, 19, 13 and 11). We have homeschooled for 19 years and I am very passionate about homeschooling and homeschool support groups.

Through the years, I have received home school support in different ways.

At the top of the list would be support from God. Whenever I have struggled with a homeschooling or parenting issue, I have prayed for wisdom (James 1:5 – 6). Sometimes it takes a while, but I have always been amazed at how God has answered my prayers in creative ways.

My husband continues to be a huge support for homeschooling in my life and our home. I was talking to a friend today and she reminded me about how hard our husbands work so that we can stay home to home school our children. That alone is a big support for our home schooling. (I also pray for the home-school moms and dads that are parenting and homeschooling solo – it is tough, BUT do not forget that God is there for you as well, and will fill in where your spouse will or can not. And dear homeschool community, let's be there for the homeschoolers around us. Do something to lighten their load.)

My older sister started home schooling the year before we did and has always been a huge support for homeschooling in my life. We even lived in the same town for a few years and our children enjoyed Country Days (and more) with each other!

However, the one *best* support for my home schooling comes from our local support group. I live in rural Alberta, so it isn't a very big group – only about 20 of us in an hour radius, with 8 to 15 moms meeting regularly once a month. I know sometimes it is hard to fit homeschool support group meetings in our busy lives. It is also hard (sometimes) getting your house clean for the meeting, too! Making time for each has been worthwhile in my life, though.

We have to watch how busy we are and what we cut out of our schedule. I would recommend making sure you get the support you need to continue home educating your children. Homeschool dads, make it easy for your wife to get to a homeschool support group meeting. She really needs to be with like-minded women at times – it's a great place to get inspiration, vent and share!

Homeschooling our children is going against the norm. Homeschooling traditionally (or parent-directed) is tiring at times. Some of us have children with learning issues. Some have young adults

(aka teens) with attitude problems.

Some of us are homeschooling many, while others are only home educating one. Some have been doing this for years, and some have only begun their home school journey.

Wherever you fit in the above list, there is a place for you in a homeschool support group. (I especially invite veteran home educators OR interested new homeschoolers to pray about attending or hosting a support group. Yes, it takes time and energy, but it is one of the best ways to encourage home educators in Alberta! Email me at supportgroups@aheaonline.com for information and ideas for support groups AND please let me know if you start a new support group in your area!)

No matter who you are, please know you should leave a home school support group meeting feeling encouraged. That is my top goal for our support group meetings. Why not make it a priority to encourage other home educators at support group meetings and whenever else you can?

Yes, it is easy to compare ourselves with others. Remember that leads to pride or discouragement. Avoid comparison. Share what is working and enjoy what is working for your family – no matter what others share. If something isn't working for you and yours, try something new!

I had the opportunity this spring to call all of the support group leaders in Alberta. I updated information (see the AHEA website for the current list of homeschool support groups in Alberta!) and asked support group leaders what the *one* best thing their support group does.

It was great to hear what was working throughout the province. Some are very active with lots of members, while many have fewer members and concentrate on only a couple of things during the year. A few leaders said it is easier to get to know each other in smaller group settings.

Here are some ideas that are working around the province:

- Monthly meetings for parents (some with guest speakers)
- A History Fair Day (with a theme, presentations and optional costumes)
- Home School Track Meet (in the spring or fall)
- Weekly Sports Program - weekday evening with different ages at different times with a yearly fee (hopefully a member will write an article about this. It sounded amazing and they didn't have a huge group – only about 20 to 40 families in

their area)

- Home School Swimming Lessons
- Education Fair (includes science, art and more; they have a Science-in-a-Crate as an extra and a speaker for the afternoon)
- Moms meet for an early meal and meeting at a restaurant
- Lots of extra activities for the children – moms visit at those times
- Email newsletters or Yahoogroups elists
- Year End Celebration (or Back-to-Homeschool Celebration)
- Kid Activities one afternoon a month (3 – 45 min. classes – archery, pottery, art and more)
- Weekly afternoon coffee at one member's house – moms visit while children play
- Homeschool youth group
- Monday afternoons at the park
- Homeschool family monthly meeting (potluck supper – then some parents supervise the children while the other parents have a meeting.)

Why do I share so many different ideas? Because our home-school communities and needs are different. The ladies in our area love our monthly support group meeting. It is working for us. BUT there are many ways for a Homeschool support group to meet – the above list shows the creativity of home-schooling families in Alberta.

Are you wishing you had more home school support? Why not see if there are other homeschoolers in your area that are interested and just start getting together regularly for support? Get the word out there. Be willing to open your home if you live in a rural area. Being hospitable is a lovely way to live. Try some of the above ideas or come up with some of your own and see what will work with the homeschoolers in your area.

Start developing a homeschool support system today!