Volume 9, Issue 4

Parenting: The Gold Behind the Guilt

Your Home a Haven

Stress to Strauss: A Symphony in No Time Flat

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FROM THE EDITOR

Mary Kay Smith

I awoke to the sounds of loud, sweet chirping outside my window and I smiled with the thought of many happy birds playing. But when I looked out, it was to see European starlings vehemently fighting over the suet feeders, one knocking the other over onto his back and holding him in what looked sure to be a death grip. My thought—my very first thought, I must admit—was, “Why don’t my kids sound sweet like that when they fight?”

Of course, I have to acknowledge I’m no Jenny Lind either when I’m angry or frustrated. And that brings me to a question: What makes us as parents get upset or frustrated with our kids? Sometimes it is because they misbehave, but many times it is because we are already experiencing stress over some other issue and it just comes out as a “short fuse” with them.

That’s why this issue focuses on help for the homeschooling mom and dad. It takes great commitment and energy to teach our children day after day. Not only do we decide the overall goals and then curriculum and daily lesson plans, but we have to adapt them to several grades and learning styles at once! Who in their right mind would think they could accomplish all that with grace, and then load homemaking, carpooling, and church and community volunteer work on top? It’s no wonder we’re tired and sometimes annoyed—it’s just that often our focus of frustration is in the wrong place.

This issue begins with an article from one of my favorite authors, Gary Thomas. With excerpts from his newest book, Sacred Parenting, Gary discusses how parenting affects the parent, and helps form the character of Christ within us. Don’t let guilt settle here!

Then consider your environment and structure. Sometimes we might think we’re upset at our kids when it’s our own lack of organization that’s at fault. Joy Hayden helps us there, with a discussion on organization and time management. Could your health be causing some trouble? Read Laura Baldwin’s stress-busting advice. And in this issue, Joel has some words of wisdom just for the men. Finally, we’re upset at our kids when it’s our own lack of organization that’s at fault. Joy Hayden helps us there, with a discussion on organization and time management.

We hope you find something helpful here. And to everyone trying to keep your many “balls” in the air at once, take heart. Juggling, after all, is a noble effort. Jugglers perform before kings. ☺

The Virginia Home Educator

The purpose of The Virginia Home Educator is to provide a forum for the discussion of Virginia homeschool issues. The views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of Home Educators Association of Virginia.

The Virginia Home Educator is sent quarterly to Virginia’s homeschooling families without charge. To receive a free subscription, sign up at www.heav.org.

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HEAV THE REAL HEROES

I am a home educator stationed overseas in Japan with the U.S. Navy. I continue to receive your notices, and am constantly both disturbed and gratified—disturbed that there continue to be Americans at all levels who are determined to make all children wards of the State, and gratified that there are people like you willing to stand up to them. I often receive letters of support from family, friends, and strangers telling me what a marvelous job I’m doing in defense of freedom. You’re really the ones that deserve thanks.

Sincerely,
Richard W. Weathers
Commander, USN
Executive Officer
VAW-115

MILITARY AND DRIVER TRAINING

According to the information sheet that comes with the HS-3 form for homeschooled in-car driver education, one of the qualifications for the parent/guardian to teach behind-the-wheel is to hold a valid Virginia driver’s license. We are military and according to the DMV are not required to have a Virginia driver’s license. We don’t wish to get a Virginia driver’s license because Virginia will assume we are residents and they will then get us on personal property taxes! We are residents of Texas since entering the military 20 years ago.

I called the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles and all I got was, “Sorry, it’s the law.” Does Virginia have some driving rules that are much different than any other state? We meet all the other requirements and hold valid driver’s licenses from another state. What can we do? Is there any way to get a waiver for military members on this?

I checked with DMV. According to Karin Grim, “Code Section 46.2-334H requires us to evaluate the parent’s driving record to ensure they have not accumulated six or more demerit points within the preceding 12 months. We do not have the ability to monitor records outside of Virginia, nor are other state point systems comparable to ours.”

Unfortunately, unless the law is changed, this will have to stand for now.
Joe Guarino, Director of Government Affairs

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Do you have comments about the magazine’s themes? Articles? Anything HEAV is doing? We’d like to hear from you! Write to us at editor@heav.org

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The Virginia Home Educator  |  5
Joining nearly 600 4-H’ers from across Virginia at the 82nd State 4-H Congress in June, several homeschoolers from Henrico excelled in competitions in Presentation and Share-the-Fun. Ruth Anderson and David Butcher each placed first in their project area in Presentation contest. Christi Spark received a second place, blue ribbon in Presentation contest. Collins Mehfoud also placed second in Presentation contest. Briana Dawkins earned second-place, blue ribbon in “Instrumental” competition of the Share-the-Fun contests and was part of the Share-the-Fun Show, which showcased the winners in all areas of the talent contests. Briana Dawkins was also elected as a Northeast District Ambassador for the State 4-H Cabinet and was tapped into All-Stars. Christi Spark was one of thirteen students chosen to represent Virginia at the National 4-H Congress in Atlanta, Georgia in November.

4-H is the youth education branch of the Cooperative Extension Service, a program of the United States Department of Agriculture. for details, visit www.4-h.org/info/

Congratulations to these homeschoolers who won prizes for their stories in the 2003 Reading Rainbow contest: kindergarten first place—Jana Gilmore, Roanoke; second grade second place—Samantha Rivers, Bedford; third grade first place—Jada Kestner, Castlewood; third grade second place—Simon Kiser, Lynchburg.

The Beach Breakers varsity softball team represented the Commonwealth of Virginia in the 2003 Homeschool World Series in May. The event was held at the Okaloosa Walton Community College baseball and softball complex, Niceville, Florida. The Lady Breakers, competing against teams from Alabama, Georgia, and Kansas, came into the competition fielding the youngest team in the tournament. The Breakers played a total of six games for an undefeated tournament championship, riding the pitching arms of Kathryn Gard (4 & 0), and Jane Zook (2 & 0), and aided by sparkling team defense and timely hitting!

The Lamons children from Fairfax each placed first in their division of the CPC Essay Contest this year! Lattany Lamons, grade 9, wrote on “The Impact of 30 years of Abortion on My Generation.” Logan Lamons, grade 6, and Layna Lamons, grade 4, wrote on “How I Keep My Heart and Mind Pure.”

If you’re interested in having your children participate in the next Crisis Pregnancy Center Essay Contest, watch www.assistcpc.org/articles/essaycontest.shtml for details.

Do you have a child who has accomplished something? Won awards? Anything that you would like others to know about? We’d like to hear from you! Write to us at editor@heav.org

Congratulations to high school freshman, Lindsey Smith, who launched her own magazine in September! Lorien’s Quill is a quarterly publication for girls ages 6th-12th grade and includes crafts, volunteer ideas, tips to prepare for college, great birthday party suggestions, reader interviews, and more.

If you would like information, you can e-mail her at diamond209@juno.com.
Help! What an attention-getting word. We all need help at different times and in different ways—homeschoolers are no exception. It's that awareness deep inside that we need assistance or relief that can cause feelings of anxiety, confusion, discouragement, and even fear. It can be overwhelming. When this happens, we need someone to come along side to assist us and show us the way. What a relief when help comes!

Helping homeschooling parents is what HEAV loves to do. We're here to answer your questions; to help you choose curriculum; to connect you with local support groups; to direct you to resources that will fit your needs; and to encourage and inspire you—regardless of whether you've homeschooled a few months or many years.

Thanks to your support, I'm excited to share with you some of the new ways HEAV is expanding our programs and services to meet the growing needs of Virginia homeschoolers:

• We’ve just finished a complete revision of HEAV's *The Virginia Homeschool Manual*. It has more than 500 pages of practical information—and includes an expanded 1007-page version on CD. Every leader and homeschool family needs this comprehensive resource that covers kindergarten through college and all the unique situations in-between. (See the back cover.)

• We’re also in the process of updating and expanding our website (www.heav.org). Not only will it have a new look, but also additional information and links. This is a great place to locate homeschool information, find useful forms, and get questions answered.

• We’ve allowed an increased in the number of pages in our quarterly magazine from 24 to 28 when we need it. Our editor hasn’t always been able to get all the information in! She has had to make drastic cuts in many great articles in order to keep the magazine to 24 pages. Now we can make sure you’ll get every tidbit of interesting information.

• We’ve implemented a personal curriculum counseling service for those with questions about which curriculum to choose. Call our office with your questions at 804-288-1608. We hope to grow this into a full range of curriculum services in the near future.

• We’re also getting ready to move to a much-needed larger office space in Richmond!

We’ve been at our present location for seven years and we’re bursting at the seams! We redesigned our office workstations and rearranged our space for maximum efficiency. We bought shelves and increased countertop organization—we even rented temporary space in a downstairs office—yet there still wasn’t enough space for everything.

After some searching, we’ve found a great office space—at a bargain rate—on Dabney Road in Richmond. This is just off I-64 at the Staples Mill exit near the Dabney Road post office. This office will double our square footage and give us the storage we need. It’s also on the ground floor so it will be much easier to transport our resources to book fairs, seminars, and the convention. The additional space will allow us to better serve you through increased efficiency and the offering of new programs and services.

So why not become an active part of HEAV’s expansion! If you receive this free quarterly magazine, but you’ve never become an HEAV member—or your membership has lapsed—please join or renew today! For just $25 per year, you can help support legislative activities that protect and expand your rights to educate your children at home. You’ll also help us get out important news and information to thousands of new and veteran homeschoolers through our publications and weekly e-mail updates. In 2002, our office received approximately 3,400 phone calls; and so far this year, we’ve received more than 2,700 e-mails!

If you’re already a member, please consider a tax-deductible donation to help us expand and meet the growing needs of homeschoolers right here in Virginia! Join with us! Grow with us! We need your help to keep homeschooling strong in Virginia!
My wife and I were out on a walk when we saw a little boy, about 16 months old, running in the middle of the street. The temperature hovered in the mid-forties, yet the young lad wore no shoes or coat. Lisa and I figured there had to be a frantic parent somewhere. We walked up and down the sidewalks, asking at houses.

About fifteen minutes later, we saw a car coming down the road. A young mother saw us, covered her mouth, parked the car, and ran toward us, crying.

She hugged Lisa and me, and said, “I can’t believe I lost him. Stupid me! How could I lose my baby? You probably think I’m totally ditzy that I could lose my child!”

In fact, we thought nothing of the sort. We found out that little Dawson is a renowned escape artist. This mom had no fewer than three locks on her front door to keep him inside, but dad had rushed out to the grocery store and had secured just two of the locks. While Mom talked with Grandma in the living room, Dawson saw his opportunity.

What parent would think of this mom as irresponsible? Yet what followed her immediate reaction of relief and joy was extreme guilt.

Every parent feels guilty. We know we can always spend more time with the kids; provide a better living environment; get a better curriculum; listen more, pray more, respond in a more patient manner...but we’re fallible human beings. We get tired and grouchy. We don’t always think before we act.

I have faced tremendous guilt over my own parenting. As a father and husband, I am close to worthless after 9:00 PM. I love to get up early and work hard throughout the day, but this means that by a relatively early hour I’m dead to the world. I hear about parents who have long, soulful discussions late into the night with their children, and I feel ashamed at how frequently I hibernate in front of the television. On a vacation with my brother, I watched Jerry talk his boys through their day, offering lessons and meaningful prayers. I guiltily compared that to my, “Love you, bud. God bless you. Good night.”

I want my kids to think of me as the best father in the world. But as they get older and see other dads, they’re going to realize that in many areas their dad falls short. There are times when I just don’t know what to do, as well as times when I do know what to do, but I’m too tired to do it!

It’s not possible to be a parent without occasionally feeling guilty—but we need to turn it into a good thing. Guilt is a fierce reality, a judgment of damnation—but God has provided a cure in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What once was deadly can now play a positive role in our lives. We must find our refuge in God’s grace and mercy.

GUILT CAN POINT US TO GOD
Sometimes we parents need to remind ourselves of a few basic facts. First, we’re not God. We’re going to miss some cues. We’re going to get distracted by our own health needs, vocational concerns, or ministry obligations.

The positive side of our limitations is this: Weakness on our part can actually become a strength when we use it to transfer our kids’ allegiance from us to God. God alone loves them with a perfect love. Our children need to know that even if Mom and Dad let them down, there is One who will always “be there” for them.

My desire to be “the very best daddy in the whole, wide world” cloaked a desire to be treated like a god in my own house. What enormous pressure this put on me! How much more freeing to admit to my children, “Do you see, kids, why Daddy needs a savior, just as you do? All of us are helpless apart from God’s grace.” I can’t be God to my kids; but I can model my need for God. After all, what is better for the Kingdom of God—that my son and daughters would say, “I can never serve God like Dad did,” or “If God can use my dad, he can use me?”

When guilt reminds us that we are insufficient and that insufficiency points us to God’s forgiveness, his empowering Spirit, and his provision of grace, then guilt becomes a spiritual bath. That’s healthy.

GUILT CAN MOTIVATE US TO DO BETTER
Parenting is a very long journey. It is hard to focus on a task for eighteen years, and inevitably there will be highs and lows. When we see parenting as a long journey, we don’t drown ourselves in guilt on days that rate less than an A+. We’ll have another go at it the next day. Guilt is overwhelming when you become
consumed by your failings, but it can become positive motivation when you hear our Lord say, “Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).

Recognizing I become dead weight after 9 PM, guilt motivates me to get more involved at 7:30 PM, before my brain turns to mush. It means I spend more time with my kids on lunch dates, when I’m alert. Whatever your scenario, let your guilt lead you to become more involved instead of pulling back in frustration. Because of the breadth of God’s mercy, we get another chance and can look forward with confidence.

GUILT CAN REMIND US OF GOD’S PROVIDENCE

Parental guilt can encourage us to rest in God’s providence. It’s no accident that we have the children we have. When God placed them in our care, He knew our limitations, and yet still entrusted us with these children.

I like Carolyn Mahaney’s thoughts in her book, Feminine Appeal: “We can deduce that if God in his divine wisdom chose to give sinful children to sinful parents, then our children are not so weak that they are unable to endure our sinful behavior…. Our children are not that fragile. If they were, God would have waited until we were further along in the maturing process before he gave them to us. But he didn’t.”

As people of faith, we need to trust God and let some of the responsibility fall back on him. This doesn’t mean we fail to fully engage ourselves as parents to the best of our ability. But it does mean that we have a place of rest—it’s called trusting in God’s providence and in Christ’s sufficiency.

GUILT CAN TEACH US TO LOVE MERCY

One of my favorite phrases for meditation in Scripture comes from Micah 6:8, where we are told to “love mercy.” Micah doesn’t tell us to merely “demonstrate” mercy or to “discipline ourselves” toward mercy; he tells us to fall in love with it!

The Hebrew word for this love, ‘ahava,’ is used of a husband toward his wife. To “love” mercy is to feel enthralled by mercy, to feel so thankful for the mercy God has shown you, that you frequently mention it to others. The mere thought of it warms your heart and brings a smile to your face. You have a childlike awe and wonder: “God has shown me mercy!”

What does this have to do with guilt? Without acknowledging our own guilt, we would never sense the need for mercy, so we wouldn’t appreciate this glorious gift. Guilt is terrible, but mercy is more wonderful than guilt is terrible (“…mercy triumphs over judgment,” James 2:13).

What does this mean, practically? Turn guilt feelings into a call to worship! Confess that you have fallen short, but then expend just as much energy worshiping the God who forgives and who will show mercy to you in your failings.

GUILT HAS A POSITIVE “HIDDEN AGENDA”

Sometimes I wish I could start parenting now, at age 41. I feel more mature, more settled in my career, with a better perspective to begin parenting than when our first child, Allison, was born to me at the age of 26.

But what helped me to become more mature? What gave me a better perspective? What has worked on my character over the past decade-and-half?

Raising my kids!

To be sure, God can mature a soul in other ways, but in my own life, raising Allison, Graham, and Kelsey has provided a major pathway to spiritual formation.

Yes, I’ve failed at parenting—again and again. Yet God revolutionized my understanding when he seemed to drop a simple truth in my lap: He cares just as much about my own growth as he does about my children’s growth. He wants the process of parenting to change all of us, myself included.

This is, in fact, the “gold behind the guilt.” God cares so much about you that He’s willing to risk letting you raise his precious children. He knows ahead of time that you’re going to make mistakes, but He is so zealous for your own growth that He is willing to take that risk.

When we look at parenting this way, instead of producing guilt, it gives us greater understanding. God has created the family through which he can shape, mold, and form all of us, parents included.

Guilt has a place—when we fall short, we should feel guilty. But God has a remedy! Guilt feelings can discourage, weaken, and frustrate us. But guilt forgiven can motivate, encourage, and keep us focused. In this light, guilt can actually be our servant as we embrace the sacred task of parenting.

Homeschooling father and former Virginia resident Gary Thomas (www.garythomas.com) lives in Washington state with his wife and three children. He is a writer, speaker, and adjunct professor at Western Seminary. His six books have been translated into several languages, and his most recent title, Authentic Faith, won the Gold Medallion Award. This article is adapted from Sacred Parenting, which will be released by Zondervan in January 2004. Gary will be presenting his material on Sacred Parenting at Reston Bible Church, Reston, Virginia, in late April. Keep your eye on their website, www.rbcm.org for forthcoming details.”
President George W. Bush signed the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003. The new law will help protect innocent families against overly intrusive social workers. “Over the years, thousands of homeschool families have been victimized by social workers operating on nothing more than a tip from an unknown stranger,” said Mike Farris, Patrick Henry College president and general counsel for the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). Farris attended the signing ceremony along with Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, Senator Judd Gregg, Majority Leader Tom Delay, and Representatives Boehner and Hoekstra.

Representative Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO), joined by Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Boehner (R-OH), formally introduced HSLDA’s “Homeschool Non-Discrimination Act” (HoNDA bill) in Congress. It already has 28 co-sponsors including the chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee.

The Homeschool Non-Discrimination Act of 2003 brings federal law up-to-date with the rapid growth of homeschool students, who now number roughly two million. HoNDA ensures that the rights of homeschool students are protected and gives flexibility to parents in educating their children at home.

The key provisions of the legislation:

- Clarifies the Higher Education Act to ensure that homeschool students and the institutions that enroll them are eligible for federal financial aid;
- Ensures that homeschool students have access to Coverdell Education Savings Accounts;
- Allows all homeschool students to apply for the Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program;
- Strengthens protection of homeschool student records under the Family Educational Records and Privacy Act;
- Amends child-labor laws in recognition that older homeschool children may work during traditional school hours, as their school day does not necessarily follow the public-school schedule;
- Clarifies that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act does not require parents to complete burdensome paperwork or undergo an evaluation when they decline special education services.

The five-year pilot program that allowed homeschooled graduates to enlist in the military at the highest enlistment status ended in October. The good news is that as of August 15th, a directive from the Office of the Under-Secretary of Defense allows homeschool graduates to be eligible for Tier I status in all four branches of the military for another year (through September 30, 2004).
For many years prior to 1998, homeschoolers who wished to enlist in the military were designated in the same category as high school drop-outs and were relegated to Tier II status. Many of the best military career options are closed to those who enlist under this status. HSLDA worked with Congress and the Department of Defense to pass an amendment to create the five-year pilot program that automatically conferred Tier I status on homeschool graduates so they would receive equal treatment with all high-school graduates.

Over the last five years, many homeschoolers have successfully entered the military and have served well, including in the recent conflict in Iraq. HSLDA will continue to work with the Department of Defense and expect homeschoolers to be given Tier I status permanently, either by the military or by Congress.

In early July, HEAV sent a letter to the DMV stating they do not have statutory authority to require home-educating parents to obtain “approval” from the local school superintendent. Parents educating under the homeschool statute are only required to notify* their division superintendent of their intention to homeschool—not seek approval. We also indicated that parents educating under the religious exemption statute do not have to provide such notification and are therefore also not required to receive “approval” from the school superintendent for their home instruction.

We requested in our letter that the DMV change their requirement. We suggested they allow homeschooling parents to certify that they are homeschooling their child under either the homeschool statute or the religious exemption statute.

On August 1, HEAV received a reply from the DMV commissioner denying our requested changes. In his response, he did not cite any statute authorizing “approval” by a local school superintendent. He only mentioned safety concerns.

HEAV agrees with the DMV that the safety of our roads is extremely important. We do not agree, however, that their concerns override the fact that they have no statutory authority to require home-educating parents to obtain “approval” from a local school superintendent.

Between mid- and late August, we appealed to the DMV again through additional avenues. In his response in early September, the DMV commissioner stressed the importance of road safety. This time, however, instead of denying our request, he wrote that he would have his staff review the pertinent policies with the assistance of the Office of the Attorney General. As of September 25, we were still awaiting the results of this review.

** § 22.1-254.1. Declaration of policy; requirements for home instruction of children.
B. Any parent who elects to provide home instruction in lieu of school attendance shall annually notify the division superintendent in August of his intention to so instruct the child....

While we recognize Virginia’s home educators may comply with the DMV’s current requirements that would allow you to teach the behind-the-wheel portion of driver education, we hope you will wait while we continue to work to correct this situation. Complying with the incorrect language authorizing local superintendent “approval” of your homeschool may set a precedent that will be difficult to deal with in the future.

If you would like more timely legislative and other updates, please go to HEAV’s website at www.heav.org and register for the free e-mail updates.

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** DMV Rejects Request to Correct Behind-the-Wheel Forms - Joe Guarino

On July 1, a law initiated by HEAV went into effect giving homeschooling parents the option to teach their own children the behind-the-wheel portion of driver’s education. To exercise this option, a parent would have to be authorized by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Unfortunately, even after many attempts by HEAV to review the DMV form prior to publication, the form was published with inaccurate information. The information sheet and application that the DMV put in their local offices and on their website require that home-educating parents obtain “approval” for their home instruction from the local school division superintendent.

Homework taking longer than it should?

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The start of the school year brings mixed feelings in our home. The familiar routine is welcome after weeks of unstructured summer days. New textbooks are eagerly opened and the excitement of the new curriculum has everyone energized. But with the start of school comes unwelcome pressure. It’s not the schooling part of the day that causes the most stress—it is the “rest of life” that has to be attended to.

ORGANIZE THE YEAR INTO SEGMENTS

Since it is difficult to tend to all the household responsibilities on top of school, consider organizing the year into four-week segments. Conduct school for three weeks; take the fourth week off. Use that week to catch up on housecleaning, appointments, etc. If a child has not completed his allotted school assignments for the first three weeks, he must get caught up during the week off.

CREATE A DAILY SCHEDULE

Perhaps the stress you face is not so much a week-to-week problem but a day-to-day problem. With eight children (grades 2-10), I’ve heard that endless stream of “Mom, I need you,” “Mom, can you come here?,” “Mom, I don’t understand this.” Creating a daily schedule for each child AND myself after reading the book, Managers of Their Home (Steve and Teri Maxwell) brought us much relief in this area. The children knew exactly what they needed to be doing, when they should be doing it, and stopped relying on me to direct every moment. It was particularly helpful to our more distractible children.

DE-CLUTTER YOUR HOUSE

This summer we spent a marvelous week at the beach. While there we met another homeschool family. I mentioned how easy it was to keep the beach house clean but so difficult to keep my own house picked up. The other mom quickly responded that it was because we didn’t have all our “stuff” in the beach house.

I came home determined to rid our house of everything that makes housecleaning so burdensome. I started in the room that was in the best shape so that I had a chance to build my confidence. I had rooms that were so bad that I actually took everything out and re-evaluated each item before returning it! It makes sense that the rooms we find hardest to keep clean are the rooms that need the most de-junking.

Find something to give to Salvation Army or other charity groups every time they call. Always have a de-junking weekend before Christmas!

MAKE A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

Once the junk is gone, make sure that there is a place for everything. Are you adequately using the vertical space in your home? Vertical space can be found in closets, on backs of doors, on walls, and even in cabinets. Closet organizers are a must.

Don’t be afraid to go “outside the box” when using the space in your home. Turn your coat closet into additional pantry space or even a computer nook. Turn your unused dining room into a home office or classroom. Evaluate your needs and available space and then make your home work for you.

EVALUATE YOUR ACTIVITIES

Sometimes our schedule needs to be de-junked. Evaluate your activities. This can be very difficult. We’ve cut back significantly in sports because the practices and games left us with little family time. But planned family activities will build up the family and reduce the amount of conflict between siblings. When a family enjoys being together, days are more pleasant. Hence, less stress!

GET HELP WITHchores

Have your children help with the chores. Every month our children are assigned three chores. That saves me 24 tasks per month, 288 tasks per year.

I highly recommend Sandra Felton’s flipper chart (Messies 2) for scheduling household responsibilities. If you don’t have time to clean the whole house, do the chores that give you the biggest psychological boost. For me that would be making the beds and cleaning the kitchen countertops and floor. Always keep the shiny things shiny.

BREAK DOWN YOUR WORK

Adopt “divide and conquer” as your motto. Tackle big jobs by breaking them down into more manageable tasks. If organizing a whole room is overwhelming, then just organize the bookcase today. If organizing the bookcase is overwhelming, then just organize one shelf. (Read The 15-Minute Organizer by Emily Barnes.)

Have you ever timed your chores? Most don’t take nearly as long as you think. Unloading a dishwasher can be done in a minute or two. Make a list of tasks that can be done in less than 15 minutes so that you make the most of the “little minutes” of your day.

On the other hand, be aware of activities that are time stealers—like handling paper. Try to handle each piece of paper only once. “File it; don’t pile it.” Throw away junk mail before it comes into the house.

In summary, you can reduce your stress by applying two basic principles: Make the most of your home by getting rid of the clutter and evaluating the use of your space. Then, make the most of your time by establishing chores, using those little minutes, and pacing yourself. Don’t let your home rob you of the joy of homeschooling.

Joy Hayden has been homeschooling for 11 years. She lives in Sterling with her husband, Mark, and their eight children.
THE PROFESSOR B MATH PROGRAM

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The New York Times — "Math Method Deducs Rote and Adds to Pupils' Scores" — This article testifies to the incredible increase, in already high math scores, at three elementary schools within an affluent community on Long Island, NY.

The Daily News — "Ghetto Kids Whiz Through the Cosmos" — "First graders...barely tall enough to reach the blackboard, are doing addition and subtraction of six digit numbers. By second grade, they're polishing off long division. In fifth and sixth grade, they're sailing through the algebra regents exam for ninth-grade students."

Newsday — "Education: Spreading the Roosevelt Math Magic" — "...youngsters' progress earned them a spot on (TV)...During the segment, first-graders effortlessly demonstrated subtraction with borrowing and second-graders breezed through long division...The key to the program is early and continued exposure...before the 'fear' of mathematics...sets in, Barrett said."

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THE VIRGINIA HOME EDUCATOR  |  13
D
o you feel that lack of harmony? Are things out of proportion? Remember, as Pastor Malcolm Smith says, “You are not likely to trip over a mountain, but a molehill.” It’s true: the major cause of stress is the minor things in life. It is estimated that 70 to 90% of all doctor-visit complaints stem from being over stressed with the demands of daily living.

Stress is not always obvious. Are you forgetful? (I forgot I needed to go to a parent-teacher conference at my co-op. I didn’t forget the event—I forgot I was a teacher!) Do you have constant asthma flare-ups? Frequent urinary-tract problems? Can’t sleep? Have backaches? High blood pressure? Grind your teeth? All these are symptoms of stress.

The way our body reacts to stressors (It’s what time?!) is called our fight-or-flight reflex. Our heart races, blood flow increases, muscles tense, food is undigested, and hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol pump through our system. We are ready to run great distances, fight hard, heal fast. But a regular state of emergency wears out our body’s immune system, our emotional reserves, and our family.

What do we do about it?

REST

Even if you’re not convinced you deserve to take a break, consider that God commands rest. The Hebrew word for Sabbath is “shabbat,” or intermission. God says, “Come. . . and I will give you rest,” using the word Greek word for intermission. He even chose to rest: “And on the seventh day He rested.” This uses the Hebrew word “shabat” for cease, celebrate, make to rest, or desist from exertion.

EXERCISE

There are two ways to relieve stress physically: exercise or remove yourself from the situation.

Studies show that exercise is a way to handle stress. It dissipates the “go-get-em” hormones in our body, taking the pressure off our systems. Exercise gets the brain chemicals communicating to the cardiovascular guys who discuss the stressors with the renal system. The muscular system gets the message, checks in with the “general managers,”
the central and sympathetic nervous systems, who then monitor the overall situation and decide on a reaction.

This communication between systems takes practice! Some studies suggest that it is duration and frequency of exercise, not the intensity of it that makes the difference in stress levels.

But it should be enjoyable. A study was done on rats who either were given drugs for stress relief, were made to exercise on a treadmill, or allowed to choose to “play” on an exercise wheel. The “play” rat group demonstrated the most reduction in stress. “Hippy and happy” wins over “fit and frazzled” when it comes to relieving stress.

**REMOVE YOURSELF**

The other way to reduce stress is to GET AWAY. Turning off the triggers to the hypothalamus will signal the body to rest. Think “HEAVEN.”

**Hobbies** – Feeling fragmented is one of the reasons for stress. Hobbies help people relax by focusing them on one activity they enjoy, such as quilting or bird-watching.

**Environment: Enhance or Escape** – Enhance your environment with candles, soft music, reorganization, or cleaning. Even changing facial expressions from frowns to grins makes the brain react with cheery energy charges.

Escaping is easy for me and I have to guard against it. (A good book. A so-so book. Any book.) A sweet friend who takes little time for herself enjoys quick trips to the grocery store. Escape is good when God arranges it.

**Ask** – Homeschool mom Elena Schlener says, “Pray.” This is her very strongest resource, as well as ours. Cast all your cares upon Him; ask, and it will be given to you.

**Vision** – Just knowing why we do what we do clears the mind and emotions. Take time to go over your goals in light of the word of God. Prioritize.

**Eliminate** – Pastor David Moore recommends we cut out 10% of our activities each year. Organize your life into the **essentials:** the Lord, your spouse and children; your most important responsibility; the **necessary:** meals, housecleaning, providing for the family; and lastly, the **good.** Then cut the good. (Wow…you go first!)

**Nutrition and sleep** – Eat well, cut sugar and caffeine, increase chocolate (just kidding). And get sleep. Sleep deprivation causes car accidents, confusion, and lack of energy for your vision.

One writer described stress as the tension on a violin string. Too loose, no music. Too tight, broken. God designed stress and rest in just the right proportions to bring us into harmony with Him and be a melody to the world. Are your strings in tune?

Laura Baldwin is a homeschool mom who has many more life experiences to illustrate the article than she could fit in! Her favorite ways to beat stress: read, read to her children, talk about what she read, and exercise. 😊
ORGANIZATION
Color-Coding
I have four kids, three of whom are boys. Things can get pretty mixed up around here, so I color-code every possible thing. I buy towels, toothbrushes, sip cups, regular plastic cups, bins for organizing, notebooks, pencils and pencil boxes, clothes (when appropriate), index cards, labels, file folders, book covers, etc. in their own color. Each child knows his and his siblings’ colors, so we all know right away who has left school books out or a wet towel on the floor! This has prevented a lot of arguments, helped Dad and the babysitters, and encouraged the children in their work.

Anita Dickens

Hanging closet organizers, like the type with sections for shoes or sweaters, are great for baby or toddler clothes.

Michelle Mayer

Check out www.flylady.net, the Web site of Marla Cilley and friends. These are ladies who have learned to get their own homes and lives in order and love helping others.

Kay Vanatta

DECLUTTER
My favorite tip is the five-minute rule, otherwise called “clean as you go.” It only takes a few minutes to quickly wipe off the bathroom counters, make sure towels are hung up, and get the hair off the floor before you leave the room, but the bathroom will always look neat. Or wash dishes as you cook so you don’t end up with a huge pile at the end of a meal. If you teach everyone to take just five minutes before they leave any room to make sure it’s as clean (or cleaner) than when they entered it, your house will still need deep cleaning to pass a white-glove inspection, but it will be uncluttered when company drops by or when you’re ready to start that new science or art project.

Mary Kay Smith

The last five minutes before going to bed, the kids “pick up” in their rooms. Not a complete job—but enough to keep clutter under control. I do this myself in the kitchen/family room before I turn out the lights.

Sandy Muller

KIDS AND CHORES
As kids grow they can handle more responsibility. Consider increasing the depth of requirements for chores already assigned. For instance, instead of just having the kids load the dishwasher after meals, assign them specific duties to clean up the whole kitchen.

Sue Cameron

I made “chore cards” for each child for their morning chores. The cards also contained pictures (e.g. a bed to tell them to make their bed) for my preschoolers. They can look at their card and see what needs to be done.

Cynthia Tung

Buy a small laundry basket for each child. If you don’t have time to put away a mountain of laundry, you can at least sort it by child and put Mom’s and Dad’s clothes away. Then each child can put his own clothes away.

Michelle Mayer

To get my children to help me clean the floor we have “BABY-WIPE RACES.” Each child is given a section of the kitchen floor and clean baby wipes, the timer is set, and Mom says, “On my mark, get set, wipe!” The child who has the most dirty wipes wins an “Applause Parade” around the kitchen table. It doesn’t sound like much of an award, but they always desire it greatly.

Kristina White

IN THE KITCHEN
One of my family’s favorite meals is pancakes and waffles. So when I have forgotten to take something out of the freezer for dinner there is no panic—we have waffles or pancakes and everyone is VERY happy.

Sandy Muller

Get a crock pot and use it! You can start a meal in the morning, and have it ready and waiting when you return from an afternoon of errands, classes, or field trips.

Michelle Mayer

Being a homeschool dad with two sons and a working wife, it only seems fitting that our boys learn to cook and prepare meals. So, at ages 10 and 11, each of them has a “dinner” night. On “their” night, they select the meal and prepare it with minimal help from Dad and brother. As they progress, we’ll move beyond hot dogs and soup, I’m sure.

Mel Canon

Enlisting help in the kitchen for dinner helps everyone. There are no sibling quarrels brought on by an empty stomach, because part of my crew is engaged in chopping, slicing, making a side dish, learning to cook an entrée, or some other hand-and-mind-engaging activity. In addition to the life skills they are acquiring, we also get some one-on-one time to talk and share. Asking for the children’s input on the menu also helps to make more happy faces at the dinner table.

Beth Sullivan

TIME MANAGEMENT
One of the most important ways I can think of to reduce stress is to be on a schedule. Scheduling the most important things of the day “in cement” is really helpful—such as time with the Lord, meal-times, and “swing time” (a.k.a. talk time) with your spouse so you can chat about the day’s activities, plans, dreams, goals, etc.

Robin Brastovski
When the children get to be in the 6th or 7th grade, I tell them the number of school days for the year, and then they count how many pages they have in their books and figure out how many pages a day they need to do to finish the book in time. They also fill out weekly schedules and check off their assignments when they do them. (I add or subtract items as needed.) Having them involved in assignments teaches them responsibility and time management (and gives me more time).

Karie Dawkins

If a younger child needs help, he asks an older sibling before interrupting Mom.

Michelle Mayer

With older children in the house, there is a lot of coming and going. We have a central calendar to post commitments and we have family meetings to keep each other posted about life in general.

Kay Vanatta

Get rid of the cable TV service or satellite dish, and keep the TV off. You save a lot of money; the whole family gains time for more fun and productive pursuits; and stress caused by all the noise, ridiculous programming, and biased “news” reporting is reduced immeasurably. Read instead. We have a television in our home, but only to use for instructional videos and the weekend family movie. Our home centers around our family, not the television.

Clarence & Vivian King

HELP FROM OUTSIDE
I thought my husband and I had to “be all things” to our children—especially in my earlier years of homeschooling, but I’ve learned never to say “no” to offers of help and service! Rejoice in God’s gifts wherever and however He lightens your load, and don’t be afraid to allow other adults to be a part of your children’s lives! We now see the rich benefit of allowing them to glean from the wisdom, gifts, and abilities of many wonderfully talented individuals who have mentored our children in countless ways.

Mary Ann Lash

HEART ATTITUDES
Focus on the positive and on lifting up more than pointing out the negative. Speak to the heart to instill desire to rise up. Teach and demonstrate that no servant is greater than his master, admit flaws, be willing to work alongside, and believe that nothing is impossible with God. Bless and do not curse.

Pam Perkins

Make a point of having fun together. My husband and I both work at home, as well as school at home. We tend to work all the time. We have to plan breaks and time for FUN for the family.

Kay Vanatta

(continued on page 21)
husbands, to minimize stress, you must incorporate your wife. This is not a business suggestion, but a spiritual one: You must consider your wife to be part of your “corpus,” your body. It’s the only way to be a fully functioning man of God.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them,” says Genesis 1:27. As a native Hebrew speaker, I can tell you that this is an accurate rendering. There is an implied equivalence between “him” and “them.”

The Lord has given N’omi and me numerous metaphors to help us understand the husband/wife relationship. In this brief column, I’ll share a few of them as tips—although each merits a book. If you want the scriptural back-up, email me, or research it yourself.

• One person, two parts. When you marry, you become “one flesh.” God means this to be taken seriously. But just as salvation is both a one-time act and a lifelong unfolding, so is this mystery. It’s a process, and you must work at it; it doesn’t happen automatically. “Incorporate” your wife by considering that she is part of your “corpus,” your body; when your hand, foot, stomach, or eye gives you input, you don’t argue with it; you simply take the report into account in deciding what to do next. Give that respect to your wife.

• Help. You are the head of your family; that means everything is your responsibility. Your wife is more spiritually sensitive, but she is not the head. She is called (Genesis 2:18 and 2:20) “ezer k’negdo”—“an help meet for him,” meaning, “a help appropriate for him.” Interestingly, the Hebrew, “k’negdo,” could also mean, “as opposed to him.” Your job is to make the “opposition” to be the reflective, informative kind that a mirror gives, not the opposition of an enemy.

• Mirror. Your headship manifests in all realms; it is not only spiritual. Your wife is the mirror of your soul. When you look in the mirror and see something you don’t like, you know that it is silly to take issue with the mirror; you examine yourself, using the mirror to help you see what you otherwise cannot. So if you are unhappy with your wife—or your kids, for that matter—examine yourself. Ask the Lord to show you what you are doing to produce this reflection.

• Embrace responsibility. Our four daughters-in-law love us because we told them when we first met them: “In your marriage, everything is his fault.” The fact is that the vehicle of the marriage goes where the driver is guiding it, whether by intention or by abdication. The wife’s entire life exists within an envelope created by the husband. The good news: If you take responsibility for everything, you are liberated to do something about it!

• Priorities. “I love you so much, Mary; you’re third!” With these words, our dear friend and pastor Vinnie expressed to his wife his understanding of God’s order: God first; me second; wife third. This is followed by children; job or business; then relatives; friends; neighbors; community; country. Of course, God is first. I must be second, because my wife—and everything else—depends on me. She must be next because much of my responsibility is delegated to her as my primary agent.

• Integrity. The only thing we take with us from this world is our character. “To have integrity” means to be homogeneous in our moral nature, to be “all of a piece.” It doesn’t happen automatically; we have to work at it, for the Enemy is always tempting us with relativism. Our greatest asset in this ongoing endeavor is our wife, who is our mirror and our coach. She is not God, anymore than any mirror; but she is our most faithful source of input. And it’s not a matter of her choice; she is these things to us regardless of her preferences or her conscious intentions!
Every man a hero, every wife a coach. The coach is not the rival of the athlete; the coach is his greatest fan and supporter. The athlete chooses the coach, and their destinies are intertwined. If the athlete treats the coach as rival or critic, he destroys the relationship and loses its benefits. But if he takes the coach’s input to the Lord for confirmation, instead of arguing with it, he can discern between her spiritual insight and the occasional expression of her human frailty. Together they can be a hero, and that is God’s will.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it,” says Ephesians 5:25. Your wife is gradually perfected by your love, as the church is gradually perfected by Christ’s love. If you notice imperfections in her, pray to see and correct the imperfections in your love for her. Don’t try to “fix” her.

Summing up: To reduce homeschooling stress, incorporate your wife. “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (Ephesians 5:28-29).

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:
JUNIOR YEAR:
- Received 5’s on A.P. Government and A.P. English

SENIOR YEAR:
- Scored 800 in verbal and 760 in math on his SAT’s
- Received an ACT score of 32, placing him in the 99th percentile
- Last summer he scored highest grades (A’s) in 300-level psychology classes at Mary Washington College
- Member of the National Honor Society
- 2003 Valedictorian with GPA of 4.215

EXTRACURRICULAR ACHIEVEMENTS:
- Member of FUMA’s cadet-run Honor Council
- Member of this year’s VISFA Division III State Championship Prep Football Team
- Editor of the Academy newspaper, The Sabre
- Chosen as a member of the VA All-State Choir

COLLEGE ATTENDING IN FALL 2003:
- Entering University of VA as a sophomore
- Field of Study: Child Psychology
**Coming to Virginia**

**TEENPACT: VIRGINIA STATE CLASSES**

TeenPact offers two sessions in Richmond next year: January 26-30, and February 2-6, 2004.

TeenPact trains young people to be leaders who will impact the nation and the world for Christ. At TeenPact State Capitol Classes, students learn about the political process and the basics of state government, and analyze public policy from a biblical worldview. They read actual bills that are being worked through the Legislature, research how political candidates spend their campaign money, write their own bill and try to get it passed in the TeenPact Legislature, and interview elected officials and lobbyists in the Capitol.

There are options for both 8-12 year-olds, and 13-18 year-olds.

To download the applications, go to [www.teenpact.com/stateclass/VA.htm](http://www.teenpact.com/stateclass/VA.htm)

Questions? The Virginia state contact is Mrs. Kathy Tran: (434) 392-5378; t2tran@juno.com

**OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY 6TH ANNUAL WATER HAULING DERBY**

*When:* Saturday, February 21, 2003  
*Where:* Kaufman Hall, Old Dominion University  
*Sponsored by:* the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

**WHAT IS THE WATER HAULING DERBY?**  - The water-hauling derby serves to expand students, knowledge of Electrical and Computer Engineering. The students will build a vehicle that transports water from one side of a table to another using aspects of all types of engineering. (Students will be provided a circuit diagram to use, and engineering students will be available to come and aid in the circuit-building aspect of the contest.)

**HOW CAN STUDENTS ENTER?**  - To enter the contest, you must register by submitting an entry form and purchasing a kit of parts from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at ODU by January 15, 2003. The cost of the kit is $25.00 (checks made payable to ODU-ECE) for each team entered. Kits will be delivered or mailed to the school. Rules and additional information will also be made available.

**PRIZES**  - There will be separate prizes for the middle school and high school divisions, and prizes will be awarded based on creativity (use of household items), artistic appearance, electrical circuitry, and amount of water successfully dumped.

- First place: $200.00  
- Second place: $100.00  
- Third place: $50.00

**CONTACT**

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Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering  
Old Dominion University  
Norfolk, VA, 23529  
Phone: (757) 683-3741  
Email: ODU_waterderby@yahoo.com

**SECOND ANNUAL SALUTE TO HOMESCHOOLERS DAY AT KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, FLORIDA**

Homeschool families are invited to be the honored guests for full-day access to Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex shows and exhibits! Learn about the latest NASA accomplishments, take a bus tour of KSC restricted areas, meet an astronaut hero at a private briefing, and perform new, fun hands-on activities! Homeschool teachers can pick up a packet of NASA education material to bring a little “SPACE” back to your classroom.

**Dates:** Thursday, March 11, and Saturday, March 20, 2004  
**Time:** 9:30 a.m. start  
**Price:** $24.50 (same price for adults and students) and includes admission, materials, commemorative patch and lunch (Call to make special dietary arrangements). Children under 3 are free. Last year’s event sold out! Call to book early!  
**For more information, call 321-449-4400 or e-mail dgarbiso@dncinc.com**

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The author conducts tours of Culpeper.
Stress-Reduced Homes:
Tips from Our Readers

(continued from page 17)

Believe in character first, academic excellence second. I believe my children can be anything they want (GOD wants) them to be. My kids know I bend over backwards to see that they get every opportunity possible. In return as they see me sacrificing and working so hard for them, they yield to any practical requests I make that they are capable of—not for pay, but because they want to!

   Susan Shumaker

The following Web site was referenced in a book on parenting. As I read the list of 100 ways to praise a child, I thought of how helpful this list will be during the school year when my children are truly trying, but things are not going well. There are many things to praise a child for, even when the day is going less than perfectly. http://www.sayno.com/child.html (produced by Mark Dillon, a D.A.R.E. officer)

   Stephanie Buckwalter

DAD IS INVOLVED
Dad invests at least one hour a week discipling each child. The fruit of having children who know that you respect them as co-heirs in Christ and that everything you do is for their best, yields children who want to help make life as easy as possible for someone who treasures development of their heart and soul.

   Susan Shumaker

When our fourth child was born, the weekly trip to the grocery store overwhelmed me. Our oldest was in second grade, our second was in kindergarten and our third was two years old. My husband started having “science class” on Thursday night after supper dishes were cleared. He used Backyard Science as his guide. This was my opportunity to do the weekly grocery shopping with just the baby and myself. It helped me maintain my sanity and Dad enjoyed the time in the teaching position. He had no lesson plans or heavy assignments, but my older three still remember the experiment which Life Saver dissolved the fastest and that Dad made school fun to see.

   Lynell & Danny

MONEY-SAVING TIPS
Shop Saturday-morning yard sales for clothing, equipped with a list of sizes and needs of kids. You can also find schoolbooks, music instruments, and office supplies for wonderful prices. Look around! Go a few times with an experienced “yard-saler” who can pass on some tips. Don’t take young kids with you, and any older child who does go must bring his own money to spend. This is not a time to nag Mom for toys—establish rules before the trip. Get a Friday paper and map out a route. Most yard sales end by noon—you can be home for lunch or a family afternoon event.

   Sandy Muller

Good Ingredients | Yes.
Good Idea | Maybe Not.

Good educational ingredients aren’t necessarily a recipe for success. For best results, choose all your materials from one source.
Learn right. For life.

BJU PRESS
www.bjup.com/onesource
The next magazine will focus on preparing for college. No matter how old your children are now, there will come a time when they need this information, and that time comes much sooner than you expect! The issues involved don’t really change that much, so if you can’t use the information yet, just tuck the magazine away. If you have already gone through this process, please share your stories with us. We’ll keep it anonymous so you can be frank. What was the best thing you did to prepare your child for college? What one thing do you wish you had done differently? What was your child’s biggest adjustment? Send your (short) statements to editor@heav.org by November 21, and we’ll include as many as we can.

Regional Newsletters
Northern Virginia: SHARENET: Melissa Riemer, SHARENET@att.net or Susan Smith, susieg@alum.mit.edu
Fredericksburg area: homeschoolresources@yahoo.com
South of Richmond: Tri-Cities Home Educators, Vicki Bentley, Gmabentley@cs.com
Harrisonburg and Rockingham County area: Valley Home Educators (VHE), newsletter@vheweb.org
Roanoke area: Greater Roanoke Valley Home Educators Association, Ken Johnson, khsakwce@cs.com
Tidewater area: Tidewater Homeschool Info Support (THIS, PFS, HIS), Darlene Levy, homeschooling4ULord@juno.com
Tidewater area: TEACH, info@teachhomeschool.com
Williamsburg area: WAHE News, Penny Richardson, richapen@juno.com
Williamsburg area: HEART HOTLINE, Donna McEvoy, BIZIMOM807@aol.com
HEAV Update: Sign up at www.heav.org
E-Group
Homeschool_Hotline: homeschool_hotlinesubscribe@yahoo.com
Helpful Websites
Children with learning disabilities: visit www.ldcouncil.org

If you know of a regional e-mail listing that is sent to at least 100 families, we’d be happy to list it in this column. Send your information to editor@heav.org.
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