



AHEM News

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc.

**What
you
need
to
know
when
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Visit the State House with AHEM!

The new year brings a new group of legislators to the State House, so to encourage Massachusetts homeschoolers to meet their representatives, AHEM is sponsoring an event on Thursday, April 14, 2011 for homeschoolers to go and hand out packets with information about homeschooling to legislators. We plan to include a fun scavenger hunt as part of the day. State House tours will be available, as well as all that downtown Boston has to offer. So mark your calendar now to spend a day in the city this spring with other Massachusetts homeschoolers.

Tips for Connecting with Your Legislator

1. Your legislators want to hear what you have to say. Legislators want to meet and speak with their constituents. Most people go into politics because they want to make a difference. Contact your legislator with the belief that he or she sincerely wants to hear what you have to say. Your voice and your vote count.

2. Meet with your legislator. It is very easy to set up a time to meet with your legislator. You can call his or her office and tell the legislative aide what day and time you will be visiting the State House. You can call both your state representative and state senator. Your legislator will either meet you him or herself, or have a staff member meet with you. The more notice you are able to give about your visit, the better your chances of meeting with your legislator, instead of one of the staff.

Generally, legislators are in their State House offices Monday through Thursday. You can also set up an appointment to meet with your legislator at his or her district office which will be somewhere in the geographic area he or she represents. Legislators are usually in the district offices on Fridays. You can find your legislator's name and contact info here: www.malegislature.gov/People/FindMyLegislator. You can print out a copy of *Meet Massachusetts Homeschoolers* (www.ahem.info/MeetMAHomeschoolers04b.pdf) to share, or

just drop by to introduce yourselves as homeschooling constituents.

3. Keep it simple. You do not have to go armed with facts and figures. Most legislators just want to meet you and your family. Legislators may have questions about homeschooling, but it has been our experience during group State House visits that their questions usually have more to do with the day-to-day life of homeschoolers, than any deep philosophical discussion about homeschooling.

4. You are your own best advocate. You and your family may be the first homeschooling constituents your legislator has met. He or she may have a preconceived idea as to what homeschoolers are like. Legislators need to see that homeschooling families are just like other families. We only differ in that we have decided on an alternative form of education. Connecting with your legislator can help him or her see homeschoolers as constituents with whom he or she feels comfortable.

5. See your visit as an educational experience. Visiting your legislator is an empowering experience for both you and your children. It is a learning experience for children to see that they have a voice in representative government. It has been our experience that legislators sincerely enjoy meeting and talking to children. You and your children can prepare for the visit by visiting the Massachusetts General Court web site, especially the page on the lawmaking process: www.malegislature.gov/Engage/HowIdeaBecomesLaw. Younger children might enjoy the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Kids' Zone: www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/ciskid/kididx.htm. Relax, and enjoy the time you spend with your legislators.

6. Follow up your visit with a thank you letter. It is always a good idea to personally thank your legislator for taking the time to meet with you and your family. Sending a thank you letter will go a long way in cementing good feelings about the visit.

Current State Issues . . .

Legislative Update

Since the beginning of the two-year legislative session that began in January 2009, AHEM has been tracking certain education bills that could have an impact on Massachusetts homeschoolers. Of particular concern were several bills that would have changed the compulsory attendance age to begin at age five and extend until age eighteen. These bills (S 245, S 270, H 355, and H369) were consolidated during review in

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Photo courtesy of freefoto.com

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the Joint Committee on Education and redrafted as H 4753, which then went to the Ways and Means committee for a cost analysis. AHEM contacted several legislators to voice opposition and, thankfully, the bill died.

AHEM also followed H 4646 (previously H 473), "An Act allowing non-public school students to take the MCAS exam." Though AHEM did not oppose the bill, it did contact the reviewing legislative committees to ensure that they did not utilize the term "home schooled students" in the bill (as the draft proposed) because the education statute does not currently define that term (homeschoolers are referred to as "otherwise instructed" under MGL Ch. 76, Sec.1). Regardless, that bill also appears to have died during review in the Ways and Means committee.

The two-year legislative session wrapped up its "formal session" on July 31, 2010 without passage of any of the particular bills we were watching. The legislature is now in its "informal session" through the end of the year, during which previously pending bills are unlikely to be passed (unless the House Speaker or Senate President presses the issue AND the bill receives no opposition).

The new two-year legislative cycle will begin in January 2011. Any bills that died in the 2009-10 session would have to be re-filed then. AHEM will continue to keep an eye on these new bills and keep you posted as to any that have the potential to impact homeschooling in this state.

Summary of Data from Homeschool Policy and Practice Database, December 2010

Here are responses to Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts's questionnaire about homeschool policy and practice in Massachusetts <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HSGC3N2>.

For over seven years, AHEM has been collecting information from homeschoolers about official town policy (including the policies themselves), and about how homeschooling actually works in towns in Massachusetts, according to homeschoolers. The results draw an interesting picture of the way homeschooling works in general (pretty smoothly) and homeschoolers' personal experiences of dealing with school officials (overall, no major problems).

When do school officials ask that you submit homeschooling plans?

Most schools don't specify. In towns where there is a requested date of submission, there were no reports of problems if a plan was filed later than requested.

Regarding face-to-face meetings:

64.1% of respondents report that school officials do not ask for face-to-face meetings. 8.9% report that school officials ask for an initial meeting with homeschoolers when they filed their first plan. 6.4% are asked to meet annually with school officials. Of those asked to meet, 57.3% choose to comply, and 42.7% do not. Usually declining a meeting is as simple as saying "No, thank you," or even ignoring the request. Homeschoolers who chose not to meet with school officials were ultimately approved.

Hours and schedules:

37.9% of respondents are asked to state that they meet or exceed the 900/990 hours required yearly in the public schools. 24.6% aren't asked for anything. 9.8% are asked for number of hours spent on each subject. 2.7% were asked for a daily grid-type schedule.

When asked to supply a schedule, it often suffices to state instead that you will meet or exceed, or provide the equivalent of, the 900/990 hours of instruction in the public schools, or to ignore the request. In any case, there were no negative consequences for those who chose to decline giving a grid type schedule.

Access to materials:

66.7% of respondents provide a list or partial list of materials and/or resources. 12.0% say a list will be available upon request. 6.7% provide nothing. 1.3% percent physically show materials to a school official.

Educational background:

36.1% of respondents summarize their educational background. 30.8% say they are "of competent ability and good morals." 12.6% provide nothing.

Form of assessment:

- 45.0% of respondents write a progress report. Some

people who write progress reports indicate that the schools expect them to also submit work samples (a report combined with work samples is commonly referred to as a portfolio). Please note that *Charles* requires homeschoolers to submit only one form of evaluation. A report alone should suffice, or work samples without any written narrative, should suffice. While a portfolio, paper or digital, is nice to have as a record for your own use, there is no need to give that much information to school officials. (See <http://www.ahem.info/Portfolios.htm>)

- 11.5% of respondents submit no evaluation at all.
- 11.3% of respondents submit work samples.
- 9.8% of respondents choose to test. Tests used include the California Achievement Test (CAT), the Personalized Achievement Summary System Test (PASS), the Wide Range Assessment test (WRAT), the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and the Stanford Test.
- Some respondents indicated their evaluation method varies; parents choose from year to year. A few indicated use of a form of evaluation other than testing, progress reports, or work samples.

Frequency of assessment:

69.4% of respondents who indicated frequency submit evaluation once a year, 13.7% don't submit an evaluation, 8.6% submit twice a year, 1.1% submit three or four times a year.

Approval letters:

60.4% of respondents always receive an approval letter, 10.1% usually receive one, 9.5% sometimes receive one. 4.3% receive one only if they request one. 2.7% never receive one even if they ask for one. 5.9% do not receive a letter of approval and have never asked for one.

Do school officials allow homeschoolers to participate in school activities?

8.8% of respondents report that their school does not allow them to participate in school functions at all. Varying percentages of respondents report that their school allows them to participate in either classes (13.8%), sports (20.8%), extracurricular activities (19.6%), chorus or band (17.6%), borrowing books (9.3%), or some combination of these. Many respondents have never tried to get school services, and are not aware of their town's policy, if there is one.

Which best describes your district?

62.3% of respondents reported their town to be "run of the mill," 30.6% reported their town to be "nice and easy," 6.7% reported their town to be "a little rocky," and 0.5% of respondents considered their town to be "a pain in the you-know-what." Some towns that homeschoolers rate as friendly include Dracut, Medway, Millis, and Pembroke.

In summary, things continue to go pretty smoothly for homeschoolers here in Massachusetts. Most homeschoolers report no difficulties in dealing with school officials. In cases where school officials ask for more than *Charles* allows, we see over and over again that homeschoolers who are aware of their rights simply submit what *Charles* allows, and there are no negative repercussions for standing up for oneself in this way. Furthermore, standing up for your rights in this way

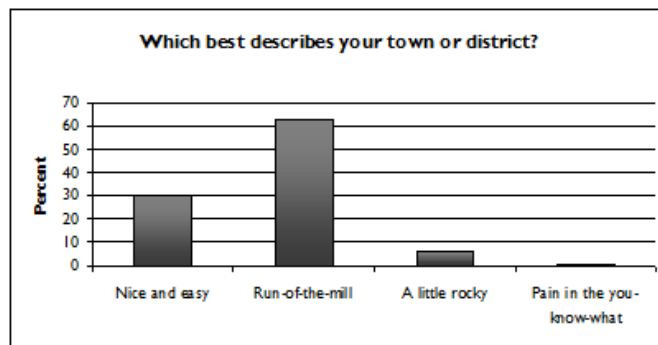
strengthens the ability of other homeschoolers to do the same, and lessens the likelihood that school officials' demands will escalate. We can't say it enough: School policies that exceed *Charles* and *Brunelle* do not have to be adhered to by homeschoolers. (See <http://www.ahem.info/HSPoliciesinMA.htm>.)

See *Tips for Writing your Education Plan* <http://www.ahem.info/TipsforWritingYourEdPlan.htm> for ways to satisfy the requirements of *Charles* without going into needless detail.

Questions? Call AHEM. <http://www.ahem.info/CountyContacts.htm>

This is an ongoing project: We hope you will help us build the database further as the more responses we get, the clearer the picture of homeschooling in Massachusetts becomes. The more questionnaire responses we receive, the easier it is for us to pinpoint hotspots or identify trends. Please take a few minutes to fill out the questionnaire, which you can find at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HSGC3N2>.

To see the results of the survey summarized in this email so far, visit http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=4dtKhrnH9AhgZaH_2bpBuWQ1Km2r_2bOP_2bFg53FJkkPRmA_3d



Meet Massachusetts Homeschoolers . . .

Popcorn and Page Turners: Running a Teen Book Group

By Sophia Sayigh

When Fred was 13, he was part of a book group run by another homeschooling mom. While he really liked being in the group, and the idea of reading and discussing literature with peers, the books they were reading were too easy for him. I decided that we could start our own book group, and we would read adult literature. I had never led a book group before – just had read a lot as a fiction lover – but was excited to give it a try.

I had a certain framework that I was comfortable with and I was careful to put this out to prospective members of the group. They were to join only if they were sincerely interested, not because mom or dad thought it would be a good idea. I would choose the books, with the readers in mind, of course.



They were committing to doing all the reading, and they weren't to come to book group (which met on Wednesday afternoons for two hours) unless they had completed the reading. This applied to my own kid as well. Maybe a risk, as I might choose a book they didn't really want to read, but it was part of the package.

I would read aloud during group, and allow time for questions and discussions. Kids supplied their own books – sometimes I specified certain editions depending on a translation or version. I would assign reading for in-between meetings, usually between 50 and 150 pages. It was important to me that the kids invested some of their own time into doing the reading, if for no other reason than that they would have to employ some time management skills in getting the reading done on time. I always did the assigned reading as well.

Members of book group rotated bringing a snack to share. This grew to be a fun part of group, where members would try to one-up each other in the snack deliciousness factor. I am comfortable with food being eaten in my living room, so the food was out the whole time, and kids were also welcome to keep busy while I read aloud, as long as it didn't distract any other listeners. People knit, drew, Fred even practiced fingering on his guitar. Sometimes certain sets of kids got a little silly and I'd have to regain their attention. This was before the days when EVERYONE has a cell phone, so electronic devices weren't an issue. In a later group I did, kids were texting and receiving calls, so I had to ask kids to turn off their phones during group. I asked parents to call only if it was an emergency, and to call the house phone, and we would hear it and answer if it was for a book group member (yes, sometimes it was parents who were calling!).

My goal was to foster a group of kids who, over time, would grow comfortable asking questions and voicing opinions. To this end, I tried to be a good listener, and not be didactic in my running of the group. In general I did not have a goal or moral I wanted the kids to get out of a certain book. In fact, one of the things I loved most about book group was hearing the kids' perspectives on different books, and also getting to know these young individuals better through hearing their opinions and impressions. At the request of one member, I sometimes "quizzed" them on the books. I would find a quiz on Sparknotes or some similar website or book, and ask them

the questions, going around the room. Most of them found this to be fun (they could skip their turn if they didn't). I found it to be useful in figuring out where maybe something had missed their understanding, and I could take time to explain. I always checked in to see that they'd understood the reading done on their own before piling more on top of it. I would normally try to exhaust what the kids thought first, with me explaining plot or background if necessary. I think as time passed, the kids knew that I wasn't trying to shove anything down their throats or judge them, and then I could be part of the discussion too, but I tried to wait my turn. I think when adults speak, a lot of times kids hold their tongues. Sometimes I would get excited about some piece of literary criticism or some such and share that with them.

I researched the books before choosing them, figuring out how many weeks it would likely take to get through each, and how many pages I might assign. I was usually able to read aloud about 50 pages in two hours. I also found questions that I thought would provoke discussion or made up my own. How did I choose the books? I googled "college bound reading list" and found several to draw ideas from. Some books I chose because I remembered them being favorites of mine as a young teen (*Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *Wuthering Heights*) or older (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Beloved*). Some I chose because they were classics I had never read myself (*Madame Bovary*, *Things Fall Apart*, *Mrs. Dalloway*). I tried to choose a variety of genres and time periods. I have more books left on my list of "Want to Reads" than I do on the list of books we read. So many books, so little time.

We always ended a trimester with a play reading. We read at least two Shakespeare plays a year. First the kids were assigned to read a Lamb's Tale or other retelling of a Shakespeare play. Then we would watch a movie version. The kids would make secret ballots saying what parts they wanted to read. I would then try to assign parts in a balanced way, pleasing as many people as possible, and being mindful of not always giving the lead roles to the same kids. For Shakespeare, people had to read multiple roles, and I read as well.

We met from September to June in three sessions. The first went from September – December with a break over the holidays, the second from January to March with a couple weeks off, and then from April – June. I did this for five years with Fred, and for one with Nadia (she was in another similar group for two years before I took it over).

I inherited Nadia's book group, so I didn't build it from the beginning. With Fred's, I thought of kids he knew who were of similar ages whom I thought might be interested and asked them if they'd like to join. There was no charge to be in the group. I made it clear that we would be reading adult level literature. I only had so much space in my living room, so the number of participants was limited to eight or nine. Being at a somewhat similar intellectual age was important. In general people heard about it by word of mouth, so if a spot opened, there was usually someone waiting in the wings to fill it. A couple of times, when a space became available, a younger kid wanted to try out book group, but unless they could keep up

with the content and pace, they dropped out.

I did not try to please all the people all the time. Some people didn't like that they didn't get to pick the books, so my book group wasn't for them. The way I figured it was I needed to be enjoying myself, and frankly, I had set the whole thing up to meet my child's needs. I wasn't going to dumb down reading or choose content based on personal preferences. Sure, some of the boys were yawning through *Persuasion*, and I had to agree that *Wuthering Heights* had lost some of its luster since I had worshipped it at 12. *Beloved* was a struggle for some, and *Moby Dick* is truly a whale of a book! But we got through them all, and I don't know that we would have if we hadn't known Wednesday afternoon was waiting for us, and we wanted to be a part of it, and being a part of it meant you read or listened to what had been assigned that week.

In retrospect, my kids read and enjoyed and absorbed an amazing array of literature, in itself a wonderful thing. No doubt all that reading helped them as writers. Fred especially was inspired to go on "jags" with certain authors he was introduced to – Dickens, Nabokov. Both kids consider live Shakespeare a treat, and have favorite plays and characters. Both their college application portfolios boasted an impressive reading list – and not the annotated or cartoon versions either! I was pleased to hear report that Fred and others in his group were easily the best-read students in their college freshman English classes. For my part, it was a pleasure to be able to share my love of reading with these young people and be part of their growing up, getting to know them in a different way from just being Fred or Nadia's mom. But maybe best of all, if I had to pick just one thing, is that I had this shared experience with my teenagers. Whatever else was going on, we had a common ground to connect on, to banter over, to commiserate about (Oh Raskolnikov!). Such a nice thread to have woven through those sometimes turbulent teen years, and we'll have it forever.

Sophia Sayigh serves on the board and is a co-founder of Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts. Her two children, now grown, never went to school. Home was and is filled with many pets, and lots of music, books, computers, and conversation. For a list of the books read in book group, see <http://www.ahem.info/>

Around AHM . . .

AHEM Named to List of Top-Rated Nonprofit Organizations

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts has been named to a new list of top-rated nonprofits by GreatNonprofits, the leading provider of user reviews for nonprofit organizations.

The top-rated Education nonprofits list is composed of organizations that have received at least ten positive reviews from stakeholders, such as volunteers, donors, or clients.

AHEM has received seventeen reviews to date.

The reviews were posted as part of the Top-Rated Education

Nonprofits campaign conducted by GreatNonprofits, in partnership with Guidestar and a coalition of nonprofit organizations. "We are gratified to be able to honor Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts for its work on homeschool issues," said Perla Ni, CEO of GreatNonprofits. "They deserve to be recognized for the support they have from their community of stakeholders."

You can read all of the reviews on both the GreatNonprofits and the GuideStar websites. And, if you haven't had time to write a review yourself yet, but would like to do so, please proceed to the review form now <http://greatnonprofits.org/reviews/write/advocates-for-home-education-in-massachusetts-inc>.

The entire list of top-rated Education nonprofits is available at <http://greatnonprofits.org/education>. This list can be used to find great nonprofits to support with your giving, volunteering, and patronage.

About the Campaign

The campaign was hosted by GreatNonprofits, Guidestar, and a coalition of other nonprofit organizations.

The success of the campaign and the diversity of organizations reviewed reflect the core of GreatNonprofits' mission to bring visibility, transparency, and accountability to the sector and allow nonprofits to engage with their community in a different way.

All reviews appear on GreatNonprofits.org as well as GuideStar.org, the premiere source for donor research on nonprofits. Nonprofits with 10 or more positive reviews during the campaign are included on the GreatNonprofits Top-Rated Education Nonprofits list.



Giving Thanks

In this season of giving thanks, we want to take the time to thank all of you who have helped AHM over the past year by being a part of what we do, whether it be by:

- reading our emails,
- filling out our questionnaire,
- donating money to the organization,
- accessing Amazon.com via our website
- writing a Great Nonprofits review
- distributing our brochures,
- "liking" us on Facebook
- inviting us to speak to your group,
- coming on a field trip,
- connecting with your legislator, or
- attending our Bookfair and Celebration of Homeschooling in Massachusetts

We also want to publicly recognize the wonderful people who have volunteered their time and talents to AHEM over the past year. We rely on volunteers, both on site and online, to support homeschooling in Massachusetts. If you have helped out in the past year, and aren't represented on the list below, please let us know!

We are very grateful that the following people have considered AHEM a worthy cause to which to contribute some of their valuable time. Their very offer to help strengthens the foundation of the organization:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| • Ann C. | • Nadia S. |
| • Ari D. | • Norah D. |
| • Bekka S. | • Pat F. |
| • Cheryl P. | • Phillip Y. |
| • Cindy T. | • Rick S. |
| • Fred S. | • Roberta A. |
| • Glenn D. | • Sharon C. |
| • Joanne C. | • Shim Y. |
| • Katharine M. | • Suzanne M. |
| • Leanne S. | • Tonya T. |
| • Lisa R. | |

We can't thank you enough,
AHEM Board of Directors

Faces at AHEM: Meet Ann Cole

Ann Cole lives in Groton, MA with her husband, David, their four-year-old daughter, and almost nine-year-old son. They began homeschooling just over a year ago, after reading John Taylor Gatto, John Holt, and others, and being inspired by local homeschooling families (*Thanks Milva and Sophia!*). Ann and family are thrilled to leave the rat race of full-time work and school schedules and are embracing the freedom and harmony that comes with homeschooling. The kids are busy sampling what the libraries and local communities have to offer – 4H, theater, music, gymnastics, museums, etc. – and are so excited to finally have a chance to explore their own interests. Ann was previously a professional ballerina (and got a little taste of “homeschooling” – referred to as ‘independent study’ then - herself while dancing and finishing high school) and then went on to become an attorney after being sidelined by an injury. She and the kids still love to dance around the house with the extra time homeschooling now affords them. Ann is also passionate about maintaining the rights and freedoms of homeschooling families under the law and looks forward to doing more volunteer legal work with AHEM!

AHEM Field Trips & Events

Info regarding all AHEM trips & events:

If you sign up for a field trip or event, please do your best to attend. Remember:

- When you sign up, you are reserving a spot that then cannot be given to someone else.
- It is disrespectful of our host and reflects poorly on all homeschoolers when we reserve space, and a large part of our group doesn't attend the event.
- If you sign up and do not show up, AHEM reserves the

right to no longer treat your reservation request on a first come, first served basis for future AHEM events, only assigning you a spot should there be room after the deadline has been met.

Field trip participants will be added to the Friends of AHEM list unless they specifically opt out.

Homeschooling High School to College

Saturday, January 22, 2011, 1:00 - 3:00 PM

This workshop is intended for DIY homeschoolers who operate without an outside curriculum, who keep their own records, and who are looking toward college. The program will be held in Arlington, MA on Saturday, January 22, 1:00 – 3:00 PM.

Topics to be covered include a timeline for homeschooling high school with college in mind, figuring out where to apply, keeping records, grades, testing, and preparing a portfolio, resumé, and transcript. Handouts will be available and an opportunity for questions will follow the presentation.

The program will be presented by Sophia Sayigh, a founder of Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable educational organization that gathers and disseminates information about homeschooling in Massachusetts through education, advocacy, and events. Sophia's children never attended school and were accepted at their first choice colleges with merit scholarships.

Cost is \$15/person (teen and adult) to reserve your spot; the full price will be refunded to you at the workshop, making your participation FREE. If you don't show up, your money will be donated to support the non-profit mission of AHEM.

If you want to go: Download the registration form found here: <http://www.ahem.info/HomeschoolHighSchoolRegistrationForm2011.pdf> and return it to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474.

Space is limited and spots are allotted in the order registration forms are received; **forms and checks must be postmarked by January 7th**. No refunds after January 7th except those made to attendees at the workshop on January 22nd. Those with email will receive confirmation about a week before the workshop, with detailed directions and parking.

After January 7, call 781-641-0566 or email info@AHEM.info to check availability. Walk-ins will be accommodated on January 22, if space allows.

What: Homeschooling High School to College

Where: Jefferson Cutter House, Arlington center (directions will be sent when you register)

When: Saturday, January 22, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Fee: Free, but send registration form and check for \$15 to reserve your spot. Your registration fee will be returned to you at the workshop on January 22. If you don't attend, the fee will be donated to support the non-profit mission of AHEM.

Contact: 781-641-0566

Museum of Science High School Science Series Lectures

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts has reserved space for ages 14 - 18 at two Museum of Science High School Science Lectures. You are welcome to come to one or both of them. The lectures each last 45 minutes and you can enjoy the museum exhibit halls until closing.

Thursday, March 24, 2011

(checks must be postmarked by March 4)

Green Chemistry Day

Introduce students to the concepts of green chemistry with real-world industrial examples of sustainable practices, materials and products. Learn about local issues and what chemists and researchers from the Warner Babcock Institute are doing to improve the quality of consumer products for the sake of our health and the environment. Engage in small group forums on topics that relate to solar energy, bio-based materials, and cosmetics; learn about the environmental and health implications of traditional consumer products; and make recommendations for future green chemistry research projects. Scientists and volunteers from Beyond Benign will be on site to assist in hands-on activities related to green chemistry research. Activities and scientists' presentations: 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.; lecture: 11:15 am (**MEET AT 9:15 AM in Lobby**; we will enter the Museum as a group.)

Thursday, April 7, 2011

Race: Are We So Different?

(checks must be postmarked by March 18)

Enhance your visit to the traveling exhibit Race: Are We So Different? with this panel featuring members of Boston's Genetic Screening Study. Hear Dr. Duana Fullwiley of Harvard's Department of Anthropology and Afro-American Studies provide students with the history of the ideas of race. Dr. Michael Carson, a geneticist at Bridgewater State College, will cover race's contemporary genetics. Finally, Dr. Peter Taylor of University of Massachusetts Boston will talk about race, genetics, and IQ. Explore these topics and more by visiting the exhibit following these presentations. (**MEET AT 9:15 AM in Lobby**; we will enter the lecture as a group.)

For more details on either of these lectures, see http://www.mos.org/educators/field_trip_resources/field_trip_activities/high_school_science_series.

Cost is \$10/person (teen and adult) to reserve your spot; the full price will be refunded to you at the museum, making your visit FREE. If you don't show up, your money will be donated to support the non-profit mission of AHEM.

If you want to go: Mail a check made out to Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. Please include:

- the number of teens and adults,
- name of responsible adult***
- ages of teens,
- your address, and
- email or phone number.

*** Teens need an adult to be responsible for them — either a parent, or another adult with whom the parent has made prior arrangements — accompanying them to the lecture and while in the rest of the museum at all times. Those with email will receive confirmation about a week before the visit.

Space is limited; **checks must be postmarked by:**

March 4th for Green Chemistry Day. No refunds after March 4th except those made to attendees *at the museum on March 24th.*

March 18th for Race: Are We So Different? No refunds after March 18th except those made to attendees *at the museum on April 7th.*

You can purchase lunch at the cafés, or bring your own to be eaten outside.

Email FieldTrips@AHem.info for more information or call 781-641-0566.

Directions:

See http://www.mos.org/visitor_info/maps_and_directions.

Parking

Parking is \$3 per car payable to the museum at the box office in the main lobby before you exit.

Educators' Discounts

AHEM has a web page that lists museums and retail stores that offer discounts to homeschoolers: www.ahem.info/EducatorsDiscounts.htm. Please send us more listings of Massachusetts stores and museums that offer discounts to homeschoolers. Include as much info as possible, including the name of a contact person if you have one.

AHEM Membership Cards

Any Massachusetts homeschooler can use a letter from their local school department as legal proof of homeschooling status. AHEM has available "membership" cards. While they are not legal proof of homeschooling status, homeschoolers have found that many retailers do accept such cards as evidence of homeschooling, allowing homeschoolers to be eligible for educator discounts at various retail stores, most notably book stores, arts and crafts stores, and educational supply stores. Anywhere that offers discounts to teachers is probably receptive to offering the same to homeschoolers. It can't hurt to ask! And don't forget to let us know if you have an addition to our Educators' Discounts page.

If you would like an AHEM membership card, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. Indicate "membership card" on the envelope, and allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. People requesting cards will be added to the Friends of AHEM list, so include your email address as well if you have one, as that is our preferred form of communication.



facebook.com/AHEM.ma

Help AHEM Help You

Imagine: Your child is having trouble in school and you need somewhere to turn for guidance about pulling him out. Or you're a seasoned homeschooler but need ideas for seeing your teen daughter through her high school years. Maybe you seek help with logistical matters like filing your education plan or you want to find ways to connect with other home educators. At AHEM, we hear from parents like you every week.

— **“AHEM helped me to have the confidence and resources I needed to start homeschooling my sons.”**

AHEM delivers. When you said you wanted a sample education plan, we provided one. When you asked for examples of progress reports, we made them available. When you were looking for stimulating conversation with other homeschoolers on relevant topics, we were there with the AHEM Salons. When you wanted up-to-date, useful information on getting started homeschooling or homeschooling high school, we offered free programs to help.

— **“Homeschooling in MA is so much easier because of AHEM!”**

AHEM's State House events promote awareness of homeschooling, forge positive connections with our legislators, and strengthen the grassroots presence of homeschoolers in Massachusetts. Our next State House Day is April 14, offering you an opportunity to gather with homeschoolers from across the state to learn about Massachusetts' government and explore our beautiful capitol.

— **“AHEM understands that homeschooling is not about isolation, but rather about community and engagement.”**

What other ways has AHEM been there for you? Field trips, one-on-one phone or e-mail support, legislative watches, policy and practice database, workshops and conferences, our Unit Study on Massachusetts History and Government — these represent some of the offerings we work to bring you.

— **“This organization is a life-line to homeschoolers...”**

This year, AHEM was identified by our volunteers, donors, clients served, and other supporters as a top-rated nonprofit in the education field. **AHEM depends on donations from homeschoolers like you to keep bringing you our website, survey results, free counseling, legislative watch, and programming.** As the year draws to a close, please consider a tax-deductible donation of any amount so we can continue to work for you!

Donate securely online via Paypal at

<http://www.ahem.info/SupportAHEM>.

If you prefer to write a check, please make it out to “Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc.” and send it to:

AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474

Many thanks, and wishes for health and prosperity in the new year.

Become a Friend of AHEM

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc. (AHEM) is a nonprofit, independent, grassroots, volunteer-run, educational organization that gathers and disseminates information about homeschooling in Massachusetts through education, advocacy, and events. We believe that informed and active homeschoolers are their own best advocates in maintaining the right to independently homeschool. We welcome and value the participation of anyone interested in homeschooling in Massachusetts. AHEM, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

Friends of AHEM keep abreast of legislative and other issues that affect Massachusetts homeschoolers via an announcement-only email list or this newsletter. Friends of AHEM with email get special notice of AHEM events, field trips, and get-togethers. Be proactive: become a Friend of AHEM. Even if your involvement is simply to stay informed, that strengthens all of us.

To become a Friend of AHEM and receive email updates, send your name, address, and email address to info@ahem.info. To become a Friend of AHEM and receive *AHEM News* by US mail instead of email updates, send your name and address to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. Donations to offset cost are appreciated.

To become a Friend of AHEM, send your name and address to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474 or email info@ahem.info. It's free! ...

Why Are You Getting This Newsletter?

You are receiving this paper copy of the newsletter through the mail instead of our timely announcement-only emails because we have you listed as a Friend of AHEM, but either the email address we have for you has been bouncing, or we don't have an email address for you. We'd appreciate hearing from you with an updated email address in order to conserve paper and postage, and to keep our costs down.

If you would like to keep receiving this paper version of the newsletter, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to AHEM to support efforts like sending this newsletter to Massachusetts homeschoolers who don't have computer access. And please pass your newsletter on to a friend or leave it in your local library when you're done with it. Thanks!

If you don't wish to receive this newsletter, please take a moment to let us know and we will stop sending it. Either email info@ahem.info, call 781-641-0566, or drop us a line at AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474. We really appreciate your help in keeping our lists current.