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GREENHOUSE

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*Johann Wolfgang
von Goethe*

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TEACHERS HAVE GREAT INFLUENCE, RECOGNIZED OR NOT!

by Mike Marshall



Mike and his wife, Ronda, are homeschooling parents of six children (ages nine to twenty-six) and have homeschooled for seventeen years. They have served on the board of NCHE for eight years. In his day job, he works as an engineering consultant to the electric power industry.

I was recently asked to speak to a group of education majors at one of the state universities. The format was to be a panel discussion with one person each to represent public schools, charter schools, parochial schools and homeschools. We were to have a few minutes to introduce ourselves and the type of school we represented. The rest of the time was for students to ask questions. I'll have to admit I didn't spend a whole lot of time preparing as I didn't really expect a group of education majors to have many questions for a homeschool dad.

As it turned out, I was the only one on the panel to show up. The department head in charge of the event told me I had the whole one and a half hours. In an effort to get a feel for the crowd (and to buy some time) I asked them what they thought homeschooling was. Some had no knowledge of it and others were quite familiar with homeschooling. Things went well after that introduction, and we had no trouble using the allotted time.

Near the end of the discussion, I spoke about the amount of influence they will have on those they teach. I wrote down the names of several teachers from my past that had some influence on me. I also told them that I never once told any of them thank you for the personal interest they showed in me or how they helped me in some particular way. The point I wanted them to realize was that although they may never hear it from the students, they really will have a lot of influence on their lives.

Just a few days ago I was signing a stack of NCHE diplomas for NCHE member families graduating homeschool students. I thought back to my discussion with the college students on the topic of influence, and I was reminded of you, homeschool parents. You probably don't get a lot of praise from your students—your children, in this case. Even so, you need to realize the unbelievable amount of influence you have in their lives. Yes, it can sometimes feel like a thankless job, but you are shaping their future in ways you cannot imagine, and that influence reaches far beyond them. Their own families and generations to come will be different because of people who influenced their lives—primarily you!

Sure, a little ongoing praise from your children for your efforts would certainly be nice but try to look past the here and now and think about how much you are shaping their future. Those teachers, and others, from my past have no idea the amount of influence they had on me, but that doesn't make it any less real. The truth is you may never hear it either, but it doesn't make your influence any less. Think about that the next time you get frustrated to the point of considering quitting or the next time you feel like you're getting nowhere with your students. You are making a difference; so don't give up. I have a lot of admiration for you! Keep up the good work!

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."
Galatians 6:9 

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TEN BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO HAPPILY-EVER-AFTER



by Debbie Mason

Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.

We all want that happily-ever-after story for our children. One of the biggest decisions our children will make during their lifetime is whom they will marry. This decision is probably next to the decision to follow Christ in importance. As parents, we desire to equip our children to go about the process of choosing this partner in a wise and godly way—to not only choose well and right but to honor God in the process.

Early in the homeschool movement, homeschoolers started questioning many culturally accepted ways of doing things, and dating was one of those things. We saw and had experienced a dating culture that was full of promiscuity, broken hearts and bad marriages. We figured that there had to be a better way, a way that would protect our children from promiscuity and hurt. For years, book after book was published with new ideas for how to date or, more accurately, how not to date. An old name for the process was resurrected—courtship.

Courtship became the new and improved way of finding a mate. Along with the name *courtship* came all kinds of rules for how this should be done, as each new book presented its own guidelines. While many of these ideas had value, several went too far. We were guilty of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. As with many things, the pendulum swung too far in the other direction. We went from parents being completely out of the equation to parents arranging the

marriages. We went from the promiscuity—the free love of the 60s and 70s—to couples never being left alone or allowed to touch until after marriage. How do we sort out what is true and honoring to God, from what is not?

I was committed to figuring out the best way. I read just about every book on the subject, trying to come up with the perfect approach. Being an analytical person, I endeavored to make all the new ideas fit together in a nice little package. However, that was not so easy to do.

Throughout the years, as I experienced my four children, and their friends, growing up and having various experiences with guy-girl relationships, my ideas have grown and changed. As much as I wanted to come up with a set of rules that would make this process easy and foolproof, I have realized that the answer is not in the rules but in the relationship. A growing relationship with Christ is the foundation of a right and good courtship. It is critical that the young person wants to honor and obey God. No amount of rules will ever be enough if the heart is not in the right place.

In searching for biblical principles that work, I did find some that I think are helpful and applicable to courtship. The Bible does not speak directly to courtship; we have to take biblical principles and see how they apply to the courtship process. So, instead of ten easy steps for finding a mate, I give you ten hard principles.

Principle 1—Keep God first and the rest of our priorities in order.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

God and his principles should be the number one priority in the young person's life. This is the foundational principle for doing courtship right. In pursuing God's will, the young person has many priorities such as family, friends, school, work, etc. A common problem with dating relationships is that the couple gets their priorities out of whack. They get so wrapped up in each other that they are not responsible in the other areas of their life. While getting to know each other is a priority,

it is not the only priority, and it is not the first priority. The young person needs to balance priorities.

Principle 2—Trust God.

Psalm 37:3-5 Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Believing that God is sovereign and loves you will allow you to rest in His will. If it is God's best for one to marry, He will bring a mate in His timing and in His way. Instead of being stressed and anxious that we have to find our mate—that we have to make it happen—we can rest and pursue His calling for our life. Do we believe

that God wants good for us and that His plan is best? Do we want His will more than our own? When we stop trusting, we start fretting and manipulating. This trust is just as important for the parent as for the young person. We, as parents, have to trust God with our children. We realize early in their lives that we really can't control what happens to them, and this becomes more of a reality as they grow into the teen and young adult

years. We need to rest in His sovereign plan.

Principle 3—Honor your parents.

Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

We may have some disagreement as to what it means to honor one's parents, but we cannot argue that we are supposed to. The way we honor our parents can vary depending on the circumstances. When young people strive to honor their parents, they will make the parents a part of their courtship. They will make them aware of what is going on with the relationship. They will ask for advice and seriously consider that counsel. They will make opportunities for their parents to get to know the

“A growing relationship with Christ is the foundation of a right and good courtship.”

person they are seeing. If a young person disagrees with his parents, he should plead his case; he should work to help his parents understand, using facts and biblical principles to back up his case.

Principle 4—Parents should be reasonable.

Colossians 3:21 *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*

Proverbs 23:26 *My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways.*

As parents, we want so badly to protect our children from harm. We believe that we are wiser than they are and know better. In our attempt to do what we deem is best for them, we can tend to become too controlling. When we parents establish restrictive rules for our young adult children to follow, we are in danger of provoking our children and making it difficult for them to honor us. Parents need to start when their children are young to build a trust relationship so that when they grow into the teen and young adult years, they will want the parents' advice and input; they will want to share their lives, and they will want to make the parents part of the process of finding a mate. Parents need to listen to their children and strive to understand them. They need to respect that child's personal relationship with God and the calling on his or her life.

Principle 5—We should strive for sexual purity.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;*

It is clear that God wants us to be sexually pure, to abstain from sexual immorality. Where we may have room for disagreement is what it means to be sexually immoral. I cannot list what is admissible and what is not for a courting or engaged couple. However, I think the question the young person needs to ask himself is whether his heart strives to be sexually pure. It is not about how much one can get by with but what behavior is consistent with God's desire for His children to be sexually pure. In practice, having a list of dos and don'ts can aid in the goal of staying pure, but no amount of rules will keep the young couple pure if their hearts aren't there first. However, I think it is good to have lines that you won't cross and to develop these lines when you are thinking rationally.

Principle 6—Love others as yourself.

Matthew 22:36-39 *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

Philippians 2:3 *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

This is one of the most important biblical principles for any relationship, but especially pertinent to the dating relationship. If couples treated each other in such a way that always considered what was best for the other person, it would drastically change dating relationships. Instead of acting selfishly, they would aim to be a blessing to each other, encouraging each other in the Lord to pursue God's way.

Principle 7—Be honest.

Ephesians 4:25 *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*

Not only should we be honest with our words, we should be honest with our actions. It is all too common for deception to be a part of the way that young people relate to each other. Many times flirtation can be deceptive. Anytime we cause someone to believe something that is not true, we are being deceptive. If a guy treats a girl as if she were special to him when she is not, he is not being honest. If a girl flirts with a guy just for fun, she may be communicating that she is interested in him, and if that is not true, she is not being honest. Guys and gals need to be very careful what they say to each other both in words and deeds, to make sure that they are being honest with what they are communicating.

Principle 8—Christians should not marry non-Christians.

2 Corinthians 6:14 *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*

The Bible is clear that Christians should not marry non-Christians. It doesn't actually say that a Christian cannot date a non-Christian. However, if the purpose of

dating (or courting, whichever you want to call it) is to find a marriage partner, then it would be very unwise and dangerous to date someone you cannot marry.

Principle 9—The husband is the head of his wife.

Ephesians 5:22-23 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

You may be wondering how this principle is related to courting since it is about marriage, not courting. I will explain what I think the connection is. While the Bible is clear that the husband is the leader of his wife, it does not say that every man is the leader of every woman. There are really no Bible verses that say that a guy should lead and the girl should respond to that leadership, but I think it is a good way to begin a relationship if the purpose of that relationship is to pursue the possibility of marriage. Because the young man will be the head of a home if he marries, it can follow that he should be the leader in his dating relationships.

If a young lady wants a husband who will be a godly leader in the home, she would be wise to let him lead in the dating relationship. She should look for behavior that shows that he is a man who will not only lead but will also lay down his life for her. The young man should look for traits that show that she understands what it means to be respectful and submissive. This guideline of the guy leading and the girl responding in dating is not a black and white, all-the-time rule. This guideline does not mean that the girl can never initiate. However, in my experience, I have observed that most girls would be ever so happy to take the leadership, so it is a good discipline to let our men lead. All the same, I think we need to be careful to not be too extreme with this idea. Have you read Ruth?

Principle 10—Life on this earth involves hurt.

Romans 5:3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

Romans 8:20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it,

John 16:33 In the world you will have tribulation. But

take heart; I have overcome the world.

When we early homeschoolers started investigating courtship, one of the most common goals was to protect our children from being hurt and making mistakes. We thought that if we could come up with the right way for our children to find their mates, they would not be hurt by getting into wrong relationships and consequently being hurt by the break up. We have learned that this is almost impossible. We live in a fallen world, and as a result, people will get hurt. No matter what we do or how we do it, we cannot protect our children from being hurt. Self-protection is not the right priority to have. Righteousness is. Relationships are risky. The goal of dating/courting relationships is to find out if the couple is right for marriage, but many times the answer is no, and that hurts. We have to be willing to take that chance. God heals the broken heart and uses it for His glory.

As you attempt to put these biblical principles into practice, you will probably find it helpful to develop guidelines for your family that are more concrete. The Mason family had ours. The caution is to never forget that these guidelines are not Scripture. They are tools to help us follow Scripture, but they are not equivalent to it.

A healthy courtship involves a young man and young woman who are both pursuing God's will. They want with all their hearts to do things His way. It involves parents who are also seeking God's path and who want what is best for their children and are willing to take the time and effort to understand and love their children, putting aside their own personal interests. God is very creative in how He brings his children together. Each couple has their own unique love story. Some marry young; some marry older. Some date for years, some for weeks. But whatever path God uses, He is the matchmaker. 🍷



Debbie Mason, with her husband Spencer, homeschooled four children from 1981 to 2007. They have been on the NCHE board since 1988. Debbie serves as the GREENHOUSE editor and speaker coordinator for the NCHE conference.



THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE

HOMESCHOOL LOVE STORIES



Matt and Alissa Faw — Our Love Story

by Alissa

It was dislike at first sight. First impressions can often be misleading, especially when they are as harsh and judgmental as ours both were. But first, let me give you some history.

Matt Faw and I, previously Alissa MacDonald, were both homeschooled, but moved in different circles. Our paths may have crossed on occasion, but in no significant way. In 2006, my oldest sister married a good friend of the Faw family. Not long after the wedding my family became members at the church Matt's parents founded and still pastor. Yet, for one reason or another, it would still be years before our encounters were anything more than an awkward "How's it going?" over Christmas breaks and such. Matt was a student at Appalachian State at the time, and I was all over the place with YWAM (Youth with a Mission). Little did we know that mutual friends were already whispering



about what a great couple we would make.

I had been home for a year when he finally moved back, and we both agree that it was dislike at first. After talking for a while, he decided I was a "Miss Goody two-shoes," and I thought he was disinterested in everything important in life. The people around us knew better. His mother wanted him to make friends at the church, so every Sunday she would put her arm around my shoulder, ask if I had said "hi" to him yet and drag me over for an awkward conversation! It didn't help that all of our friends saw more than we did and gently pushed and dropped hints now and then. It wasn't long before we both realized that our first impressions were wrong, but I still wasn't interested. I had recently been hurt, so I was not looking for a relationship. Thankfully Matt was gracious and didn't give up at first. I definitely cared for him, but was very scared to give my heart away. The day we started dating, I cried! Poor guy had no idea until much later. That didn't last long though. We started dating in early September, but by Thanksgiving, I knew that I loved him. That February he proposed in the mountains behind

a waterfall, Robin Hood style. We were married June 19, 2012 at the Castle McCulloch near Greensboro and have been married for over a year now! You may say it was all too fast, but we both knew who we were in the Lord and in ourselves. We were confident in our identity of self. We have been so blessed in our marriage and plan on living happily married 'til death do us part.

Alissa MacDonald Faw, daughter of Scott and Christy MacDonald, has lived in the Charlotte area for thirteen years. She was homeschooled from third grade until high school graduation and then spent several years traveling and studying dance with YWAM. Alissa is currently working with Samaritan's Purse.

Matthew Faw, son of McLean and Denise Faw, was raised and homeschooled in Charlotte. He graduated from Appalachian State University in 2009. Matthew is currently working as a content and marketing specialist for AC Controls in Charlotte. He is also the founder of an eSports company.



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Peter and Mereda Farynyk — A Fairy Story

by Peter and Mereda

Once upon a time there were two young children.

Mereda: From what I understand, our story began when I was about thirteen; I was at the NCHE annual conference, and I had a conversation with Peter about the chains coming out of my gums that were attached on one end to brackets glued to impacted teeth and on the other end to my braces. At least that was one of the earliest memories Peter had of me. I don't remember it at all, but I'm sure I made a great impression.

Peter: I can't believe that Mereda doesn't remember our first in-depth conversation! I remember it so clearly. Maybe I remember it so well because, at the time, I had an impacted tooth which my orthodontist was contemplating chaining up and pulling down, and I was terrified. Fortunately, my braces helped my impacted tooth to wiggle into place on its own. I never forgot the girl who had undergone the terror of having her teeth chained to her braces. She was the girl of the brave heart.

Mereda: The first time I remember really noticing Peter was when I was about fifteen, and I went to a football game that he played in. He was very good at football, and very attractive.

Peter: After seeing Mereda at a few of my football games our paths did not cross again for five years. I attended a small Bible college in Texas, and Mereda went to UNC Chapel Hill. Upon graduating from Chapel Hill, Mereda was planning to take off to Los Angeles to pursue a career in film acting. That is when our story took an interesting turn.

Mereda: It was June 3, 2010. I had just come back to Chick-fil-A in Charlotte after my graduation from Chapel Hill. Although I'd been working with Peter during the few weeks that I'd been back, I had taken little notice of him and had almost no interaction with him—this lack



of interest was mostly, if not entirely, due to the fact that I believed him to be about eighteen-years-old. I typically have an excellent memory for people, and I even thought, "He looks a lot like that Peter I knew in high school!" so my not realizing that he was one in the same—and consequently, older than I was—was incredibly uncharacteristic.

So, you're probably wondering what happened on June 3. Well, it was

common to have one of the guys at Chick-fil-A working out in the dining room with me. I would clean tables, refill beverages, chat with guests, clear away trays, etc., while they would clean tables, take out the trash, sweep, mop, etc. Well, on that particular day, Peter was put in the dining room with me. I'd never worked closely with him before, and I was completely blown away by how naturally we worked together. I'd worked with a lot of great, helpful people, but there was something about working with Peter that was alarmingly—well, better.

During the day, I was chatting with a coworker, and I mentioned that Peter was "*Really great to work with!*"

Her ready response was, "Yeah, he'd make a great husband, too!"

I literally laughed in her face and said, "He's a little young, don'tcha think?"

She had to have been confused by that remark, but she didn't miss a beat, she just said, "But he's so smiley. You need a smiley person, to keep you light!"

It was that same day that I found out that Peter was, in fact, twenty-three and not eighteen.

Peter: I remember well the day that Mereda and I worked together in the dining room. She was great. She was here then there, like a butterfly flitting from one table to the next, blessing each person whom she served. She was efficient and hospitable, kind and happy. She was truly a delight to work with and, oh, so much fun! I thought that it was great that it was the two of us out in

the dining room—a guy and a girl serving together, each with our unique gifts and abilities.

Mereda: After I discovered that Peter was not, in fact, in high school, we talked more at work. Still not much, but we started talking about theology and fairytales—two subjects that are near and dear to our hearts. It didn't take long for me to be impressed by his knowledge of the Scriptures, but I still thought he was rather, well, stiff and boring. That's when we started talking about fairytales—George MacDonald fairytales no less! It takes a rare person to like George MacDonald fairytales, and when I realized that Peter was one such person, I knew he was neither stiff nor boring.

Peter: One of my favorite words in the whole world is "faerie," the British form of the word "fairy." To me, a true "faerie story" gets at the heart of all that is right and good. When Mereda told me that as a little girl she claimed to be a fairy, I knew that I had found a unique girl. As Mereda and I talked about God and truth and all things beautiful, my admiration for her heart and her mind grew and grew, and is still growing.

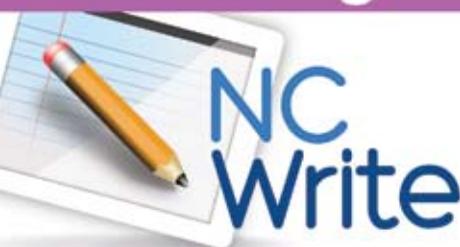
Mereda: One day, Peter surprised me by showing up at Chick-fil-A just as I got off work to invite me to Barnes and Noble with him; it was the first time we'd talked outside of work, and I didn't quite know what to expect. We talked for three hours after which we parted ways and Peter told me he'd pray about what to do next. A week later, he told me he wanted for us to get to know each other better. I stayed in Charlotte, a lot of other things happened, and after sixteen months, we had our fairy tale wedding.

Mereda Farynyk, daughter of Spencer and Debbie Mason, grew up being homeschooled in Charlotte. She graduated from UNC Chapel Hill and is now administrator for The Ormand Group Landscape Services.

Peter Farynyk, son of Rich and Betty Farynyk, grew up in Charlotte and homeschooled grades 6-12. He attended a Bible college and graduated from Thomas Edison College. He is now attending Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. He is the assistant director for the sports ministry at Calvary Church in Charlotte.

Peter and Mereda were married on December 29, 2011.

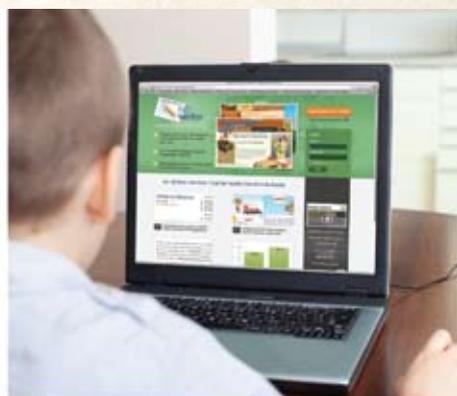
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Caleb and Celia Fox — Our Engagement Story

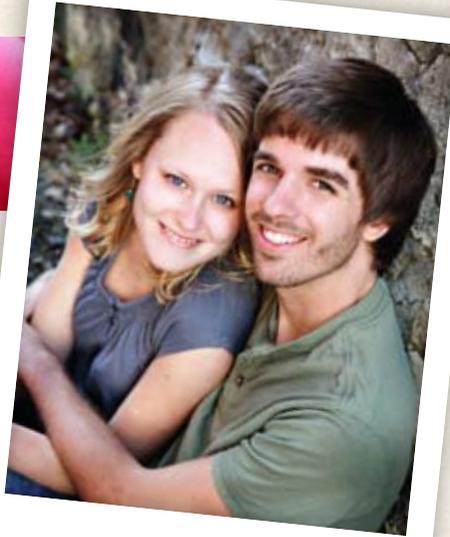
by Caleb

This story begins five years ago in January of 2007. I was on vacation with my family at a place called Chetola Resort just outside of the small town of Blowing Rock, NC. I remember it was bitter cold that weekend, and I believe we were graced with some snow as well. There is a lot to do and see in that area. You can ski on many of the slopes, take a hike up the mountain, or just enjoy the scenery from a downtown coffee shop. But this particular weekend, there was only one place I wanted to be. About a half-mile walk from Chetola resort is a lake called Bass Lake. It is a beautiful spot. There is a trail that goes around the entire lake, wooden benches all along the way, and it is secluded enough that you might even spot some wildlife. It was and is one of my favorite places in the world.

On January 28 I took a walk from the condo to Bass Lake. I had my cellphone in my pocket, one pencil, and a leather bound journal. I was heading to the lake to think, and I usually think a little clearer if I write down my thoughts. I found a wooden bench by the lake and began to write about one subject, one person—Celia. She had been on my mind a lot. At that time I was very attracted to her and was even flirting with the idea that maybe we had a future together. Of course, at that time it was just a dream, but I still wanted to think through it, try to bring some clarity to my confused and immature mind.

So, on that cold morning I began to write. I wrote about Celia, how she made me feel, what I loved and liked about her, and who I wanted her to be. I wrote for what seemed like hours, although I'm pretty sure it was only a few minutes. When I was done I had my dream on paper—the one dream in my life that I prayed would come true—the dream that was Celia.

I never could have guessed how that dream would one day become my reality. Fast forward five years. It's January,



2012, and Celia and I are five months into a courtship. I for one couldn't have been happier. I was starting to see the beginnings of my dream come true. The last week of January I asked Celia if she would want to take a day trip to Blowing Rock on the upcoming Saturday. She agreed. So on that Saturday, January 28, 2012 we climbed into the car and drove the three hours to Blowing Rock. It was a cold day and the wind was an unkind guest to our little trip. We made it to the quaint little town just after lunch. I

pulled the car off the road into a gravel parking lot, and then we walked down a wooded trail that opened up to a lake—Bass Lake. By this point my heart was pounding. I was trying so hard to act as normal as possible. We walked around to the opposite side of the lake and stopped at a wooden bench. We sat down and spent a few minutes in silence, admiring the view in front of us, and grateful for a moment peace. Finally, I broke the silence.

"Celia, I have something that I would like to show you. It's a letter from a long time ago, one that I've never told you about. Would you mind if I read it to you?" With her permission I pulled out three separate pieces of paper, three pages from an old journal, and I began to read. I read her the words I had written about her exactly five years earlier, five years to the day, sitting on that exact bench. I read to her the words of a confused boy who only wanted one thing in life, to be with her forever. I read her the words that I had kept with me for five years, the words that, one day, I hoped I would be able to share. With the words of a younger me, and with tears in my eyes I told her I loved her. And with these words I finished the letter: "Someone once said, 'It's better to have an impossible dream than no dream at all.' I believe they were right. And if I could see one dream in my life come true I know exactly what dream it would be—that one day I would walk hand in hand with Celia to this very spot. And once we'd reached the spot I would tell her how much I love her, and that I wanted to spend the rest of my life learning how to love her more. And then I would ask her to be mine forever. It may be an impossible dream. It may even be a foolish

dream, but I believe it is a dream worth fighting for. I believe she is a dream worth fighting for.”

With those words I folded up the letter, reached into my pocket, pulled out a ring, and got down on one knee. I told her I loved her, and that I wanted to spend the rest of my life learning how to love her better. “Celia Ann, will you marry me?” And wouldn’t you know it—she said yes!

Caleb Fox, son of Mark and Cindy Fox, grew up homeschooled in Burlington. He studied communications

at Thomas Edison State College and now works for Piedmont Metals Inc. in Burlington as a welder and fabricator. Caleb is also a worship leader at Antioch Community Church where his dad pastors.

Celia Fox, daughter of Wayne and Lori Henry, also grew up homeschooled in Burlington. She studied at Alamance Community College and now works as a nurse at Duke Hospital.

Caleb and Cindy were married on June 9, 2012 and live in their hometown of Burlington.

David and Anna Guthmann

by Anna

David and I grew up together in Charlotte. We were involved in lots of the same co-ops, classes and activities. These activities intersected mostly through music. We were almost always in the same choirs and shows together. We also shared a love for volleyball and spent many summer nights at David’s house playing volleyball with friends. Ministry was another passion we shared growing up. David and I were both small group leaders for middle school students while we were in high school and also participated in incredible mission trips to Romania.

As romantic as it would be to say that we were childhood sweethearts, that was not the case. David and I were good friends but were not interested in each other beyond that. We went to separate colleges, David to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD and I to Grove City College in Pittsburgh, PA. We always enjoyed catching up at home over our college breaks and hearing about all the excitements and challenges of our college experiences.

After we both graduated from college in 2009 and were in town for Christmas break, our relationship took a different twist. David was home from his submarine training in Charleston, and I was on my first break from teaching kindergarten in Charlotte. I came



over to the Guthmann’s house to share in the excitement of the engagement of David’s younger sister, Elizabeth. While I was there, David continued to pop in and out of the conversation, and I remember thinking to myself, “Hmm, he’s really cute!” Apparently, he thought the same of me, because I got a call from him shortly after I left asking if we could catch up sometime

soon. While David and I continued to communicate over the phone, it wasn’t until a few weeks later when David returned to Charlotte for a mutual friend’s wedding that our relationship really began to go in a new direction.

David and I were placed next to each other during the wedding reception and had a blast chatting and dancing together. We stayed up really late talking together and realized how much we had grown and changed during college and had fun reminiscing about childhood memories and all that we had in common. Two weeks later, we started dating.

Our dating relationship wasn’t the most ideal as we were separated by his Naval submarine career and my teaching job. However, through our long distance relationship, we learned a lot about making the most of our time together and really preparing ourselves individually for a long-term relationship. Eight months into our dating relationship and shortly before leaving for a seven-month deployment,

David proposed. He asked me to marry him the day after Thanksgiving at my family's lake house where we had made so many memories together over the years.

We got married two weeks after he arrived home from his deployment and moved to our first duty station in Norfolk, VA. It's amazing how the Lord prepared both of us during our dating relationship and engagement for life and marriage in the military. Our relationship has been incredible. We have learned so much about relying on the Lord while we are apart and taking advantage of every moment that we do have together. We have been extremely excited to see how the Lord steered our lives

together and cannot wait to see what He has in store for us in the future!

Anna Guthmann, daughter of Roger and Susan Preble, grew up being homeschooled in Charlotte. She attended Grove City College and taught kindergarten for two years before getting married and moving to Norfolk, VA.

David Guthmann, son of Howard and Alice Guthmann, grew up being homeschooled in Waxhaw. He attended the Naval Academy and is now serving on a submarine in the US Navy.

David and Anna were married on October 1, 2011.

Philip and Angela Hines

by Angela

Our story really begins in 1995 when I, as a fifteen year old, went on my first mission trip. While serving in the Czech Republic with Teen Missions International, I got to know the girl who would become one my closest friends in life and who would, three and a half

years later, introduce me to my husband. In January 1999, I flew to Seattle, where Laura was in college at the time.

My friend Laura was newly engaged and she, her fiancé and I decided to go swing dancing during my visit. They wanted to bring along a partner for me, and Philip, my future husband and mutual friend of both, was the third one asked and the first to say yes. We definitely hit it off immediately that night and Philip kept showing up everywhere I was that weekend. The morning I left, he invited Laura and me to breakfast. Given that he was a college guy, we were expecting cold cereal and maybe some orange juice. We had the surprise of our lives when we arrived and found the table covered with a linen cloth, crystal glasses, homemade Swedish pancakes, freshly baked cinnamon rolls and the best part—violin music playing in the background. His roommate stoutly defended Philip saying "Oh yeah, he does this all the time."



After my return to college, we stayed in touch via email and phone calls, seeing each other only one other time in the next year and a half. At that point, summer of 2000, we decided it was time to either move forward to something beyond friendship or give each other the freedom to pursue or be pursued by someone else. Philip came to North Carolina for a long weekend to visit me and to meet my parents. By the end of the weekend, we both agreed that we

should pray about whether or not to move forward and a few weeks later concluded that God was telling both of us "yes."

I met his family over New Years of 2001 and shortly afterwards lined up a summer internship in Seattle so that we could have some time in the same place. That summer was overall a delightful time of getting to know each other very well and falling in love. It was tough for me to return to the real world in August for my final semester at Appalachian State.

Because my parents had asked that if I spent the summer in Seattle that Philip come spend an equal amount of time living with them in North Carolina, he arrived in mid-October to do just that. Even though he was already working a full-time in job in the Seattle area, his boss was kind enough to give him a leave of absence, which is what allowed the long stay in North Carolina. We had thought we

would be engaged by the time I graduated in December, but that was not to be, as my parents were not yet ready to give their approval. So, in January, Philip accepted a job in the Washington, DC area, and I moved to Spain to intern with a local ministry organization. Yes, apart again! It was a dramatic four months with many ups and downs, but in the end, God taught us both a lot, and by the time I was back on US soil towards the end of May, I knew for sure this man was my future husband.

We asked my parents for their blessing to get married about a month later, and they happily granted it. Six days later we were engaged and 100 days after that we were married.

Last month we celebrated our tenth anniversary and while our marriage has offered a constant challenge for

us to grow and change and mature, we are very thankful that God brought us together and gave us a life together. We have three beautiful sons, ages four to nine, whom I also homeschool, and a life full of opportunities to serve the Lord and love those around us.

Angela Hines, daughter of Timothy and Kathryn Kroboth, grew up in Charlotte and always homeschooled. She attended Appalachian State University and earned a double business degree.

Philip Hines, son of Don and Myrna Hines, grew up in Tacoma, WA. He went to Stadium High School and Seattle Pacific University, earning a degree in electrical engineering. The Hineses live near Washington, DC.



Ethan and Bekah Martin

by Bekah

Six years ago this week, my life was forever altered by someone I didn't know. Someone I thought didn't exist. Someone I swore had died at birth.

Until I met him.

"Mom," I announced two seconds after I laid eyes on the boy, "I've found the man I am going to marry." If this seems fast to you, imagine how my mother felt. In one brief second I went from spouting math equations like, "Singleness equals happiness and marriage equals bondage," to asking, "Where's the church and the white dress?"

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I had no idea this story actually began nine years earlier. He told me about it that day, on our first date. The air was chilly and crisp, the smell of fall hung thick in the sky. "I met you once before," he said as we walked. "Nine years ago." Then he said something that made me reel: "I had a crush on you." Wait a second. Nine years ago. Was he kidding? That would make me fourteen years old. Do you know what I looked like when I was fourteen? Skinny. Scrawny. Sick. Relentless seizures. Mind-numbing medications. Barely able to put a sentence together. He had a crush on that? It sealed the deal in my mind.

"Will you marry me?" I asked. Not really. Not out loud, anyway. But my heart was in awe. This boy looked beyond my skinny, my scrawny, my sick. And he loved me. Just the way I was.

It's been six years, and I love him more every day. Sometimes I have to pinch myself. Is it true? Is this the man I didn't know? The man who didn't exist? The man I

once claimed had died at birth? I guess you can see how happy I am to be a fan of the new math. It goes something like this: Singleness equals sadness and "marriedness" equals happiness. But only when you've found the person who loves you from the inside out. Happy meeting-day anniversary, Babe. I love you.

*Bekah Hamrick Martin, daughter of Randy and Merry Hamrick, was homeschooled in Fayetteville. Ethan supported her dreams as her "Patron of the Arts" while she majored in the obsolete field of journalism. Her first book, *The Bare Naked Truth: Dating, Waiting, and God's Purity Plan* is now available for pre-order from Zondervan/HarperCollins.*

Ethan Martin, son of Bill and Sue, grew up homeschooled in Weddington. He attended UNCC and is now the director of engineering at Powerboss, Inc., in Aberdeen.

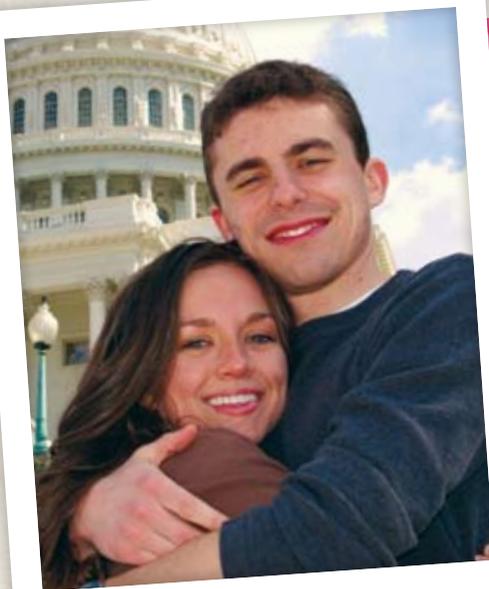
Ethan and Bekah were married on August 4, 2007.

Ladd and April Lesh

by Ladd

In November of 2007, I was single and getting old—really old. I was twenty-three and had never even dated. Sure, I had been on a few dates—OK, two, but I had never been in a committed relationship (i.e. courtship). College had come and gone and all I had to show for it was a degree. It wasn't that I was anti-social. I was homeschooled K-12 after all! Nor was I desperate or lacking female friends. The reason was simple. I hadn't found my girl. But I had a growing concern that perhaps she wasn't out there. Not to mention, my younger brother went on his first date before I did. Who did he think he was?

So in the early fall of the twenty-third year of my life, I found myself working on Capitol Hill, enjoying my job, but missing one crucial element: my wife. One day a light bulb went off in my head. My sister, Charity was



studying at Focus on the Family's Institute in Colorado Springs. Ratio: 70/30 female to male students. What better time to find my bride? I booked my flight, and Charity arranged the gatherings. First there was the coffee shop: ten girls and me. Looking back, a bit ridiculous. Next was a hiking excursion: more girls and me. I was having

a good time but things weren't going well on the wife front. My bride to be just wasn't there.

It was Sunday morning, the last day of my trip. On a spur of the moment decision, I decided to haul my sister to an Anglican Church service to meet Alan Crippen, president of the John Jay Institute (a graduate program I highly recommend). It was at that service that I was introduced to a girl named April Thompson, a fellow at the John Jay Institute. She wore cowboy boots, hailed from my beloved state of North Carolina, believed in states' rights

and packed a .38 special in her purse. Most important, she loved Jesus and His Word. She had more personality in her 5'2" frame than I had found in the entire 107th Congress. After a lengthy five-minute conversation, it was settled. I would have to marry her. Before the day was out, we were Facebook friends (that meant something back then), and I was plotting matrimony. For Christmas, I sent her the usual flowers, chocolate and ammunition—every girl's dream. I convinced April to come to Washington D.C. for an internship (for a pro-life Democrat I might add. Hey, you gotta do what you gotta do). Two months later, I asked for her hand in marriage from the top of the Capitol dome. We were married only six months after we met.

November 11, 2012 marked five years since we met in Colorado, and I am so grateful that God gave me April for my wife. She is my closest confidant, best friend and mother of our three wonderful children. But lest you think otherwise, marriage isn't always bliss. In only five years, we have had our share of sorrow, job loss, totaled vehicles, financial struggle and earthly idols coming to the surface. Marriage has exposed my tremendous shortcomings, and

I praise God for it. Our relationship has been used by God through the power of the Spirit to spur sanctification in ways I could never have imagined. I'm thankful for God's faithfulness. I'm thankful for April Thompson. 

Ladd Lesh was homeschooled K-12 by pioneering parents and lived most of his childhood in Charlotte. He is a graduate of Grove City College and worked on Capitol Hill for Rep. Joe Pitts (R-PA) before joining Apologia, a homeschool curriculum company.

April Thompson Lesh, from Jacksonville, attended a small Baptist school where both of her parents were teachers and her uncle the principal. She is a graduate of Southeastern Free Will Baptist College and a fellow of the John Jay Institute. She is now a stay-at-home mother of three young children. Ladd and April look forward to homeschooling. They are members of Church of the Redeemer (PCA) and reside in Union County.

Ladd and April were married on June 21, 2008.



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FOUR STRATEGIES TO MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE WORK IN THE MIDST OF HOMESCHOOLING

by Kevin and Cetelia Bullard

My wife, Cetelia, and I have been married for twelve years, have homeschooled the past five years, and have three children, Max, nine; Caitlin, six; and Kuria Joy, four. As you well know, homeschooling your children and having them by your side 24/7/365 is both a blessing and a challenge. Life becomes more challenging when you factor in extra-curricular activities, birthday parties, play dates, library trips, social outings and possibly—puberty. Oh yeah, did I mention that somehow and somewhere in the throes of incessant child rearing demands, school responsibilities and ever present obligations at church and the community, you've still got to actively build your marriage? Whew!

How does a homeschooling couple keep their marriage healthy and functional while fulfilling their calling to homeschool their children in an excellent way? Below we offer four strategies that we strive to practice daily in the midst of our crazy-busy homeschooling lives. While simple to understand, they're not always as simple to implement. As you read through them, take an inventory to see how well you're doing.

Renew Spiritually Everyday

This first practice is personally spending time with God each day to be renewed. We know what it's like to go to bed late, wake up early (or hit snooze a few times to cram in a few more minutes of sleep!). Either way, once your eyes are open and your mind focuses on the day, it's easy to start thinking about the multitude of things you must do for a successful day.

For the spouse who works outside the house, the focus also includes clothes, work and managing projects and people all day. For the homeschooling parent, that list can include getting themselves dressed, getting the kids up and dressed, fixing breakfast, teaching and training, fixing a snack, chasing down the dog who's gotten outside the house, fixing lunch, doing more teaching and training, attending a play date, going to the library, going to a dance rehearsal, attending piano lessons, and hustling to a basketball practice. For both, the first job each morning consists in shoving it all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other, larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in." Listening to that other voice can be through prayer; reading the Bible, a book or devotional; listening to praise music, a Christian podcast or an audio Bible; or even watching a message on television or the Internet.

While the ways to spend time with God are virtually endless, the practice of spending time with Him cannot be overemphasized. When you let the other voice speak to you, you

find strength and direction for your day, which includes time with your spouse after the children have gone to bed. Spouses who are caught up in the busyness of life and neglect their time with God will slowly, but surely, find themselves running on fumes. This will lead to a marriage that runs on fumes and is ultimately displeasing to both spouses. Life is busy and tough. To have the strength to make it through each day and give yourself to your spouse, you must renew spiritually on a daily basis. Seek to put God first daily so you can become more like Christ in your marriage and in every other area of your life.

Put Your Marriage before Your Children

We strongly believe that couples must put their marriage before their children. Said another way, the children should be raised from the strength of the marriage, not in spite of it. (Note: this is a highly controversial topic, and we understand that you may disagree with us.)

Why do we believe that should you put your marriage before your children? For starters, you have to remember who you made a covenant with at the altar. While you may have brought your children into the world and nurtured them, you never made a covenant with them before God and many witnesses. That covenant was made with your spouse. Therefore, after Jesus Christ, your first allegiance should be to your mate.

Many couples start out with their priorities in order

but see them quickly disordered when the children arrive, and to a certain extent, it's understandable. Newborns, toddlers and small children obviously cannot take care of themselves, so that role is naturally and rightfully filled by the mother. As the mother digs into her role, it's common for the husband to dig into his work. If the husband and wife are not careful, they can grow apart and wind up putting the needs and demands of the children (or the job) before the needs of their marriage. Perhaps

this is why the divorce rate spikes between years three and seven of marriage (when the children are born), and after twenty-one years of marriage (when the children leave home).

We can relate to the difficulty of keeping the marriage on the front burner and know how easy it is to let the children's needs take center stage. While we are not advocating

that you be derelict in your duties as a parent, we are encouraging you to ensure that your marriage remains your closest and highest human relationship. Teach your children to respect your time with your mate and cultivate your friendship with one another. Be sure that neither you nor your mate take sides with the children against one another over sensitive issues.

Cultivate Your Friendship

When was the last time you and your mate had a date? When was the last time the two of you packed the kids up

“Many couples start out with their priorities in order but see them quickly disordered when the children arrive.”

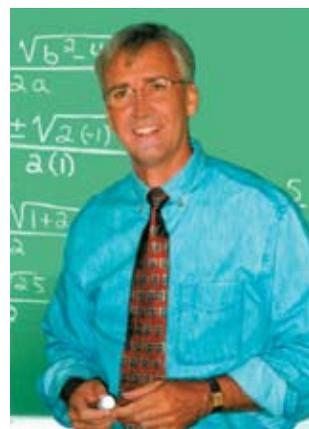
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and sent them off for the weekend so the two of you could hang out and be buds? How often do you and your spouse participate in shared interests? How long has it been since you and your mate shared a hearty laugh? If it has been a while for any of these, you're missing out on great ways to cultivate your friendship!

Before you and your spouse became homeschooling parents, the two of you were friends who had common interests and looked forward to spending time with one another. Although days now may be clouded over with diapers, book bags and rides to soccer practice, we're willing to bet that friendship seeds are there—they just need to be cultivated. Ways to cultivate your friendship with your mate may include a regular date night (in or outside the house), spending time with other marriage-minded couples, attending concerts, sports events or engaging in other activities that allow the two of you to be friends and lovers for a few hours instead of tired, homeschooling parents.

Without a doubt, taking this time with each other has been the biggest area of struggle for us. Both of us tend to suffer from "someday sickness" where we try to front load all the work and responsibility so we can enjoy life someday. Being responsible is good, but it can be taken to the extreme, and we have done that. Kevin's mom has helped us to see that we need to enjoy life now and not wait until our kids reach a certain point in their growth. This has been helpful to both of us, especially Kevin, since he has serious workaholic tendencies. We have found a wonderful woman at our church who will drive nearly an hour once a month to care for our children for free so we can go on a long date. We can cultivate our friendship and see in one another what we saw fifteen years ago when we first met. Although we have matured and changed, the little things that first attracted us to one another are still there and simply need to be cultivated so we don't lose our friendship and love in the midst of being parents.

Affirm Your Homeschooling Mate

While the previous suggestions were directed towards both spouses, this final strategy is for the spouse who is not the primary homeschooling parent. In our case, this is Kevin. While he is as supportive as he can be, the bulk of the homeschooling responsibilities fall on Cetelia while Kevin is at work. Cetelia suggests that one of the things the secondary homeschooling parent can do to strengthen

the marriage is to continually affirm his or her mate. Some things in life provide immediate feedback or an instant result, e.g., giving a presentation at work and getting good reviews as soon as it's over. However, immediate results are not always present in homeschooling. Maturity takes a long time, and the outcome of the hard work, effort and prayers invested in the children may not be seen for many years. This delay can cause the primary homeschooling spouse to become weary in well doing and lose heart. To avoid this natural tendency, ensure that your mate knows you appreciate his or her efforts, and continually (and authentically) offer praise for his/her efforts and the growth recognized in the children. This affirmation will not only encourage your spouse to continue giving his or her all to homeschooling, but will also bring the two of you closer because words of kindness act as a magnet between hearts.

As you go forth with your busy schedule at home, work, church and elsewhere, recall these four strategies and put them into practice at every opportunity. Having a healthy, functional marriage is challenging, and it becomes more complex when you add in homeschooling. To make your marriage work, renew spiritually everyday, put your marriage before your children, cultivate your friendship with your spouse and affirm your homeschooling mate. As you do, you will see the positive impact on your marriage. 



Kevin and Cetelia Bullard are the duo behind Marriage Works!, a ministry that creates resources and experiences that help couples build and sustain a healthy, functional marriage. They have homeschooled for four years and are parents to three great children, Max, Caitlin and Kuria Joy. Kevin and Cetelia both come from divorced homes, so they understand the pain and confusion caused by broken marriages. As a result, they are committed to making their marriage work and helping other couples learn how to make theirs work as well. Through Marriage Works! they provide coaching, weekend getaways and resources that lead to a healthy, functional marriage. You can access Marriage Works! at MyMarriageWorks.org, [facebook.com/MarriageWorks](https://www.facebook.com/MarriageWorks) and twitter.com/mrgwrks.



HOMESCHOOLED YOUTH FILL SLATE OF STATE 4-H OFFICERS



CIA 4-H Acoustic Band



Claudia Whitaker is a longtime member of her local county 4-H Advisory Board and the Forsyth County Extension Advisory Council. For fourteen years she and her husband Frank homeschooled their children Ellen and Vance. Both of them now have their own families and are homeschooling their children in Raleigh and Tampa.

by Claudia Whitaker

The 4-H Program in North Carolina marked a first this year when 4-H youth from across the state met in Raleigh at 4-H Congress and elected four homeschooled 4-H members as their state officers. This is the first time that all four officeholders are homeschooled. Nathan Barrick, president, Forsyth County, Hannah Davis, vice-president, Carteret County, Dallas Perry, secretary-treasurer, Alexander County and Luke Hill, reporter, Bladen County, will lead more than 235,000 young people between the ages of five and nineteen who participate statewide each year with the help of 21,500 adult and youth volunteers. The 4-H program is the youth education program of North Carolina Cooperative Extension, based at North Carolina State and North Carolina A&T State universities. This year more than 560 4-H'ers, volunteer leaders and NC Cooperative Extension agents attended 4-H Congress.

Hundreds of homeschooled 4-H youth in our state have gained rewards from 4-H participation. In this article, we will spotlight 4-H award winners whose families are members of NCHE.

 **Alamance County.** Sarah Kenney and Nathan Troxler competed in the Application, Interview, Resume and Essay contest and were awarded trips to National 4-H Congress in November in Atlanta, GA. Sarah was a state bronze Cumulative Record winner in Personal Development, ages 13-15. Elizabeth Kenney received a state silver for her Cumulative Record in Personal Development, 13-15. She also received District Gold Project Record awards in Citizenship and Civic Education, 11-12, and in Healthy Lifestyles, 11-12. Nathan Troxler won a District Silver Project Record award in Environment and Natural Resources, 13-15.

 **Alexander County.** Elected state secretary-treasurer 2012-13, Dallas Perry was also a first place state Cumulative Record winner in Expressive Arts and a Gold District Project Record winner in Communication Arts. Caleb Gilreath placed second statewide out of

eighty youth in 4-H Shooting Sports Tournament, Junior Rifle Sporter Division. His team won first place in the state.



Brunswick County. Members of the Hickman's Crossroads 4-H Club Darby Dawkins, Carlyn Clark and Camden Clark were awarded first place in the state 4-H Horticulture Contest. The team placed sixth overall in the national competition in October in Wisconsin. Darby Dawkins placed fifth in individual scores and won national awards, Grand National for her photo, "Monarch on Lantana" and Outstanding Award for "Beautiful Pollinators."



Caswell County. Rachel Rudd was elected reporter for North Central District and was awarded a \$300 Ned Richardson Scholarship at the Pittsylvania-Caswell Livestock Show and Sale. Lydia Rudd is a gold project record winner and received a state gold award for her 4-H Presentation in Bugs and Bees, ages 11-13.



Forsyth County. The Trailblazer Teens 4-H Club won a state gold group award and a Bronze Overall in the state 4-H Project implementation with the theme "Hungry to Help." Hosanna Gourley won a silver award in the Individual state 4-H Project implementation and silver in the Overall competition. Club secretary, Allison Wise, chairs the club's volunteer work at the Winston-Salem Rescue Mission. At State Congress, Laura Hutchins was inducted into the state 4-H Honor Club, one of the highest honors a 4-H'er can achieve. She also competed in the AIRE contest and won a trip to National 4-H Congress in November, where she has been asked to lead the

delegation in singing the National Anthem. Laura is a bronze ambassador and received a 4-H Achievement Award.

In addition to his election to the State Council, Nathan Barrick competed in the Application, Interview, Resume and Essay process and won a trip to the National 4-H Conference in Chevy Chase, Maryland in April, 2013. He also received the 4-H Citizenship and Community Development Trophy and was the recipient of the \$1000 Jane K. Stuart 4-H Scholarship. He was a Youth Voice Summit delegate and a Citizenship Focus delegate. Nathan is a silver level Ambassador and performed at 4-H Congress with his club, the Carolina Inspirational Artists, in their Acoustic Band which performed at four 4-H events.

Seven youth from Forsyth County won gold medals. Among them were Allison Wise in Bugs and Bees, 14-18, Alex Arrowood in Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, 11-13, Hope Arrowood in Forestry and Wildlife, 11-13, and Austin Wise in Careers and Entrepreneurship, 11-13. Samuel Barrick was awarded a state silver medal in Horticulture Production and Marketing, 13-15. Thirty-three Forsyth County youth attended District Activity Day in June to compete for medals and awards. Gold medalists included Nathan Barrick in Expressive Arts and Communications and Andrew Pledger in Horticulture Production and Marketing, 11-13. Silver medalists were Grant Wise in Science and Technology, 11-13, and Isaac Hanna in Careers and Entrepreneurship, 11-13. Luke Arrowood was a Cloverbud participant in the 5-8 year old division. In the Clothing Competition, Allison Wise was awarded second place in ages 14-18, and Laura Hutchins won third place in the 14-18 age division. Seth

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Barrick provided the sound for the awards ceremony and for the clothing competition and modeling event. Blue ribbon winners in 4-H Entertains were Brandon Joyce, who performed a piano solo and the Carolina Inspirational Artists Acoustic Band that provided entertainment with "A Tribute to Chicken Bob." Members of this group included Nathan and Seth Barrick, Jady, Lindsey and Sidney Hooker, Carlee and Neil Tesh, Alex and Hope Arrowood and Andrew and David Allen Pledger.

Forsyth County had a total of twelve Cumulative Record winners this year. State gold winners were Justyn Joyce in Personal Development, 16-18, Hope Arrowood in Expressive Arts, 13-15, and Nathan Barrick in Citizenship and Community Service, 16-18. State silver awards went to Samuel Barrick in Plant and Horticultural Science, 13-15, David Allen Pledger in Health and Safety, 13-15, and Lindsey Hooker in Expressive Arts, 16-18. State bronze winners were Samuel Barrick in Citizenship and Community Service, 13-15, Brandon Joyce in Expressive Arts, 16-18, and Hope Arrowood in Plant and Horticultural Science, 13-15. Sydney Hooker won a District silver award in Expressive Arts, ages 13-15, and Brandon Joyce was awarded a District Bronze in Citizenship and Community Service. Twenty-four youth won medals in District Project Records this year. In the Citizenship and Civic Education division, Austin Wise and Grant Wise both won silver awards, and Brandon Joyce won a bronze medal. In Communication Arts, Nathan Barrick, Lindsey Hooker, Hope Arrowood and Jady Hooker won gold medals, and Sidney Hooker received a silver award. In Consumer and Family Science, Grant Wise and Allison Wise received gold medals, and Hope Arrowood was awarded a silver medal. In the Environment and Natural Resources category, Alex Arrowood and Samuel Barrick won gold awards, and Austin Wise received a silver. David Allen Pledger was awarded a gold medal in Healthy Lifestyles, and Andrew Pledger won a bronze award. The two gold award winners in Personal



4-H State Officers: president, Nathan Barrick, Forsyth; vice-president, Hannah Davis, Carteret; secretary/treasurer, Dallas Perry, Alexander; reporter, Luke Hill, Bladen

Development and Leadership were Allison Wise and Austyn Joyce. Nathan Barrick was awarded a silver medal, and Brandon Joyce received a bronze. Andrew Pledger won a silver award in Plant Science.

The County Talent Show held in May was popular with Forsyth County youth and had twenty-five performing acts, five fashion entries and sixty-one non-performing talent and art entries. The overall winners were the Creative Inspirational Artists Acoustic Band. Second place went to Josiah Gourley, and third place was won by Brandon Joyce. Blue ribbon winners in the County Nutrition Fair included Luke Arrowood, Brody Grimm, Lexi Grimm, Isaac Hanna, Andrew Pledger, David Allen Pledger, Stephen Pledger, Hannah Upchurch and Grant Wise. Blue ribbon winners and

Best Presentation awards went to Hannah Troutman, Alex Arrowood and Hope Arrowood. Blue ribbon winner and Best Taste award went to Allison Wise. Andrew Pledger received a third place in the state Poultry Poster Contest winner in the 9-10 age division. County youth who won Judge's Choice awards at the Dixie Classic Fair were Samuel Barrick with handmade flowers, Grant Wise with an Energy and Power Technology Project and Luke Arrowood with his sculpture. In the 4-H Fair Booth competition, the Trailblazers 4-H Club won second place, and the Trailblazer Teens received fourth place. The Trailblazer Teens also won second place in the Christmas Tree competition. In the County Photography Contest a number of youth were recognized. Alex Arrowood received an award in the "4-H in Action" category. In the "Nature's Beauty" division, Jady Hooker, Paiten Iselin, Alex Arrowood, Sidney Hooker, Lindsey Hooker and Brandon Joyce received awards. Those who were recognized in the "Lines" category were Paiten Iselin, Alex Arrowood, Samuel Barrick and Lindsey Hooker. Nathan Barrick was awarded first place in the Operation Military Kids contest in the "Honoring Our Heroes" artwork. Samuel Barrick received a second place in the OMK "Military



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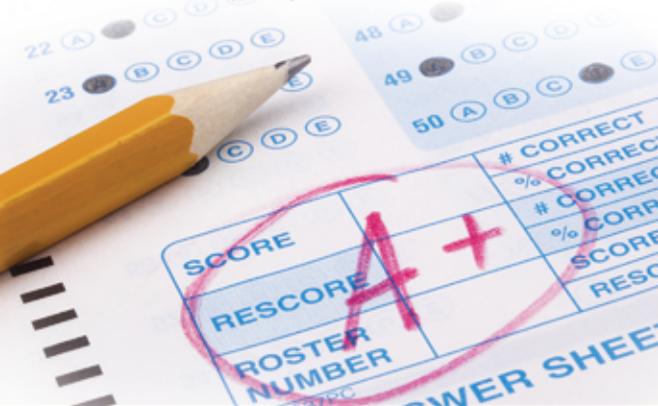
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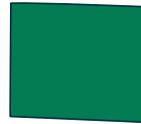
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Life" artwork and third place in the OMK "Honoring Our Heroes" photography.



Guilford County. Israel Farnham was awarded the 2012 Huddleston 4-H Electric Academic college scholarship.

Israel was a state gold Cumulative Record winner in Leadership, ages 16-18. His District Project Records were awarded gold medals in Citizenship and Community Service, 16-18, and Science and Technology, 16-18. Mia Farnham was awarded a state gold medal in Public Speaking, ages 9-10, and won First Place statewide in the Water Conservation Poster Contest.



Lincoln County. Emma Isom was inducted in the state 4-H Honor Club at 4-H Congress this year, which is

one of the highest honors a 4-H member can achieve. She won second place in the state Poultry Judging Contest and attended the National Egg and Poultry Contest for the NC Avian Bowl Team in Kentucky in November this year. She also attended state Electric Congress and placed second in the Territorial Electric division, ages 13-15. Emma won a District gold medal for her Project Record in Animal Science, 13-15, and a District silver award in Leadership and Personal Development, 13-15. She serves as Lincoln County Historian. Michael Stines, a member of the 4-H Animal Science Club, had the experience last year of raising a dairy steer and showing at the Cleveland County Fair for the first time. He was awarded first place in Showmanship and second place for Junior Steer.



Transylvania County. Ana McArtney has been awarded the Dr. David and Carol Burnette Scholarship, a college scholarship given to a 4-H member in the West District.

Georgia McArtney received a District silver medal for her 4-H Project Record in Consumer and Family Science, ages 13-15. 

For more information about 4-H and the opportunities that it offers youth, contact your local county Cooperative Extension Service. Visit <http://www.nc4h.org> for a list of county offices.



2012 CROSS COUNTRY MEET PRODUCES FASTER TIMES

Leslie Woodley, the state champion for the Forsyth Hawks, crossing the finish line first

by Ernie Hodges

On October 20, the 2012 NCHE Athletic Commission Cross Country Meet was held in Winston-Salem. We had nearly fifty percent more participants this year than in 2011 with a total of sixty-seven runners. The winning time in the boys division posted by Andrew Robinson at 17:46 was nearly 1.5 minutes faster than in 2011 even though the distance was about 600 feet longer. (The course was a little short in 2011.) There were eight times posted in the boys division this year that were faster than last year's winning time! These numbers reflect the training many of you have been doing all year long. The girls division winner from last year graduated and so we had a new girls champion, as well, with Leslie Woodley of Forsyth at 20:37.

In the 2012 NCHEAC Boys Varsity Cross Country the team results were, in order: Asheville, 24 points, Forsyth, 41, Surry, 76, and High Point 100. Individual boys varsity times were: Asheville, Andrew Robinson, 17:46; Asheville, Philip Gibson, 18:52; Asheville, Lance Morsell, 18:54; Surry, Hunter Sawyers, 19:06; Forsyth, David Hamilton, 19:07; Forsyth, Daniel Shirley, 19:09; Forsyth, Andre Falardeau, 19:10; Asheville, Stuart Voigt, 19:14; Forsyth, Quinn Jenkins, 19:14; Asheville, Grant Dockery, 19:19.

In the 2012 NCHEAC Girls Varsity Cross Country the team results were, Forsyth, 15 points and Surry, 50. Individual girls varsity times were: Forsyth, Leslie Woodley, 20:37; Forsyth, Nan Gordon, 21:07; Forsyth, Cate Gordon, 21:21; Forsyth, Ana Hamilton, 21:34; Forsyth, Meredith Cortts, 22:45; Forsyth, Sarah Doub, 22:46; Forsyth, Kenzie Collins, 23:47; Forsyth, Analise Meyer, 23:54; Surry, Krissa Hill, 24:20; Surry, Sydney Bedsaul, 25:01.

Did you know:

- The foot race is 5 kilometers (5 K) or approximately 3.1 miles.
- The course is a combination of surfaces: pavement, grass, dirt paths, wooded trails, etc.
- The team with the lowest score wins.
- The order a runner finishes determines the points. The first place finisher received 1 point; the fifth place finisher received 5 points.
- A team's first five finishers provide the team's total score.



State championship boys team: left to right, Tanner Besosa, Tucker Besosa, Grant Dockery, Andrew Robinson (boys individual state champion), Stuart Voigt, Philip Gibson, Lance Morsell



The state championship girls team: left to right: Meredith Cortts, Maggie Walker, Sarah Doub, Kenzie Collins, Amber Dumont, Nan Gordon, Annalise Meyer, Anna Hamilton, Casey Mahoney, Leslie Woodley (not pictured: Cate Gordon)



Ernie Hodges and his wife, Iris, homeschooled their three children to high school graduation. Ernie serves as advisor on the NCHE board and is the current NCHEAC state director.



Asheville Repeats as **STATE CHAMPION** in Volleyball

by Dale Brown

For the second consecutive year, the Asheville Trailblazers have swept all three divisions in girls volleyball at the NCHSAA State Championships. The 2012 NCHSAA Girls Volleyball State Championships were held in Winston-Salem on October 20. East and West regional tournaments were held October 19, also in Winston-Salem. The East had teams participating from Alamance County, Cary, Durham County, Fayetteville, Harnett County, Johnston County, North Wake County, West Wake County and Wake Forest, also out of Wake County. The West teams participating were from Asheville, Cabarrus County, Forsyth County and Greensboro. Cary and North Wake were new teams to compete this season.

Advancing from regional play into state round from the East were



2012 Varsity Girls Volleyball State Champions: (Left-Right) Head Coach—Sidney Youngs, Meredith Payne, Mary Kania, Alyssa Adcock, Kyndal Jackson, Hannah Smith, MVP—Alex Arnette, Emily Strange, Rachel Taylor, Lauren Ball, Kami Watt, Assistant Coach—Brenda Watt

Asheville's Varsity Girls player Hannah Smith prepares to serve.

North Wake and West Wake in the middle school division, Fayetteville and West Wake in the JV division and West Wake and Wake Forest in the varsity division. Teams advancing from West regional play into state round were Asheville and Forsyth in the middle school division, Asheville and Greensboro in the JV division and Asheville and Cabarrus in the varsity division.

In the varsity division state semi-finals, Cabarrus defeated West Wake and Asheville defeated Wake Forest. Asheville then defeated Cabarrus in the title game 3-0 (25-11; 25-10; 25-5), repeating as state champion and claiming their fourth state championship in the past six years. All-tournament team members in the varsity division were: Paige Storey (North Wake); Katherine Woodley (Forsyth); Christine Patterson (Fayetteville); Courtney Eckmann (Alamance); Keturah Wells (Wake Forest); Kimberly Hovey (West Wake); Anna Messisco (Cabarrus); Kendyl Parker (Cabarrus); Alex Arnette (Asheville, *MVP); Mary Kania (Asheville); Hannah Smith (Asheville).

In the JV semi-finals, Greensboro defeated Fayetteville, while Asheville defeated West Wake. Asheville then defeated Greensboro in the state final 2-0, (25-22; 25-12) to repeat as the JV state champion. This was



Middle school state semi-final action between Asheville and West Wake

Asheville's third consecutive state championship in the JV division. All-tournament team members in the JV division were: Ansley Paige Niebaum (Johnston); Kailey Macy (Durham); Aubrey Hendren (Cabarrus); Maggie Rymer (Cary); Hope Arrowood (Forsyth); Sophie Stoddard (North Wake); Jillian Taylor (Harnett); Samarra Merritt (Wake Forest); Allyson Brown (Fayetteville); Kara Adams (West Wake); Ashton Kirven (Greensboro); Caroline Webster (Greensboro); Rebekah Downer (Asheville); Katie Kania (Asheville); Gabie Marshall (Asheville, *MVP).

In the middle school division semi-finals, newcomer North Wake defeated Forsyth, while Asheville topped West Wake. In the championship game, North Wake was able to take Asheville to three sets before falling to the Trailblazers. Asheville won the championship 2-1 (25-16; 17-25; 25-18), to claim their fifth consecutive state title. They are the only team to have won a state championship in the middle school division. All-tournament team members in the middle school division were: Twilla Matthews (Harnett); Maddie Mullins (Greensboro); Macy Emery (Cary); Leah Ferrell (Johnston); Emily Thomas (Fayetteville); Miciah Drane (West Wake); Kristen Roache (Forsyth); Lucy Conley (North Wake); Shirita Wells (North Wake); Ashley Downer (Asheville); Kelly McCall (Asheville, *MVP); Elizabeth Vining (Asheville).

The games were played at the Gateway YWCA and Wake Forest University. There were a total of twenty-nine teams represented among the three divisions. 



Asheville's Varsity Girls player Emily Strange defends the net as Alyssa Adcock looks on.

Asheville Repeats as **STATE CHAMPION** for Boys Soccer



*2012 State Champion Varsity Boys Soccer, Asheville Trailblazers:
Top Row: (left to right) James Dorris, Sheldon McBride, Corban
Crosley, Seth Martin, Matthew Batchelder, Grayson Toney, Caleb
Adcock, Zachary Hartzog, Will Davis, Cole Maita, Jamie Marshall,
Coach Steve Woody; Bottom Row: (left to right) Joe Coffee, Grady
Martin, Logan Woody, Stuart Voigt, Phillip Gibson, Kyle Phillips*

by Dale Brown

The 2012 NCHEAC Boys Soccer State Championship was held in Winston-Salem, October 19-20. It was held on the campus of Wake Forest University. There were six teams competing in the tournament and seeding of those teams was based on regular season results. The regular season consisted of two conferences, East and West, with both conferences containing three teams each. In the West Conference, the teams were Asheville, Cabarrus County and Forsyth County. Fayetteville and two teams from Wake County, East Wake and Northeast Wake made up the East Conference. From the regular season results, Asheville and Northeast Wake each earned byes into the state semi-final round of the tournament. They both had to await the winners of the games that started on Friday morning, which involved the number two and number three seeds in each conference. Number three, Cabarrus surprised number two, Forsyth, 1-0, in the West match up, and in the East contest, number two East Wake defeated number three Fayetteville in overtime on



*Asheville's Caleb Adcock defends Northeast Wake's Collin Hanchey as
Northeast Wake players Mckenzie Smith and Conor Chapman look on.*

penalty kicks, 4-2. In the state semi-finals, Northeast Wake in only their second year of competing in the league, came from behind and defeated Cabarrus in overtime and on penalty kicks, 4-2. Asheville then defeated East Wake 6-2 earning them another shot at a consecutive title by advancing to the championship game. Asheville did prevail in the title contest by shutting out Northeast Wake, 3-0, and thus repeated as the tournament champion. All-tournament team members were: Brandon Smith (Forsyth); Nathaniel Stewart (Fayetteville); Joe Ashby (East Wake); Thomas Goodwin (Cabarrus); Micah Levinson (Cabarrus); Taylor Dougherty (Northeast Wake); Alex Hendrix (Northeast Wake); Luke Miller (Northeast Wake); Corban Crosley (Asheville); James Marshall (Asheville); Seth Martin (Asheville); Logan Woody (Asheville, *MVP). 🇺🇸



Asheville's Corban Crosley battles East Wake's Ian Logan for the ball in the state semi-final.



Dale Brown has served with the NCHC Athletic Commission for the past six years and has been the director of the volleyball and boys soccer tournament since 2007. He and his wife, Angela, have nine children and live in northern Orange County. They are in their twentieth year of homeschooling.

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2009 NCHEAC Volleyball Co-MVPs Face Off in College



by Dave Farrington

During their high school careers, Molly Farrington, now junior at Fayetteville State University and Brianna Smith, freshman at Chowan University faced each other many times in NCHEAC volleyball competition including the 2008 NCHEAC Championship Game won by the Brianna and her Lighthouse Eagle teammates. During the 2009 volleyball season NCHEAC began all conference selections for volleyball with Molly, Brianna and Samantha Patterson earning Co-MVP honors. Brianna and Molly now became teammates on the Eastern Conference All Star team soundly defeating the Western Conference All Stars 3-0. While this was a great achievement for these ladies, it was bitter sweet for the Farrington family. Molly had just played in her last high school game and was graduating from high school that weekend, but she had also just signed her National Letter of Intent to play volleyball at Fayetteville State University. As the 2010 season began, Molly was now a freshman in college and Brianna chose to take a year off from high school volleyball. However, in 2011 Brianna returned as a senior to the Eagles and was named to the All-Star team once again.

After graduation, Brianna chose to play at Chowan University, which, along with Fayetteville State, is a member of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA). This meant that once again these young ladies would face each other on the volleyball court. As the 2012 season began Chowan had a four-year six-game hold on the Lady Broncos including the 2009 CIAA championship, regular season games and the conference Semi

Finals in 2010 and 2011. However, 2012 would prove to be different as these two conference powerhouses would meet in Fayetteville on September 29 with FSU winning 3-2.

As the conference season wore on, Fayetteville maintained an unbeaten record during conference play earning the CIAA Southern Division Champions. Chowan would be the Northern Division Champions with their only conference loss coming at the hands of Fayetteville. As their respective number one seeds, these teams would not face each other on day one of the CIAA tournament, and their proven skills meant they continued as number one seeds heading into the Semi Finals on Saturday. Both



Brianna and Molly

teams won on Saturday evening setting up a showdown for Sunday afternoon.

The match proved to be everything a conference could want with teams trading points back and forth during the first three sets. Heading into the fourth set Fayetteville State was up 2-1. The fourth set started out much the same way with the ladies trading points until Fayetteville started pulling ahead

before going on an 11-1 run to end the fourth set earning Fayetteville State the 2012 CIAA championship.

Prior to the beginning of the conference tournament, the All CIAA teams were announced with Molly earning second Team All CIAA honors. After the match was over and the trophies were handed out, Brianna showed a spirit that all parents hope for in their children. After a tough and emotional loss she sought out Molly for a congratulatory hug. These young ladies will face each again next year in the CIAA. Brianna is hoping for a different outcome, and Molly is hoping for more of the same.



Dave Farrington and his wife, Sally, have been married for twenty-one years and are in their eighteenth year of homeschooling. They are the proud parents of three girls: Emily (twenty-five), Molly (twenty), and Hana (ten), as well as grandparents of Ben (three) and Wes (three months). Emily, who plans to homeschool, was a first grade dropout and Molly and Hana have always homeschooled. Dave retired from the US Army in 2004 and at the same time started as the athletic director for the Fayetteville Crusaders. He has served on the NCEAC board since the spring of 2005, and is the spring tournaments director.



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HOMESCHOOLING AND OUTSIDE CLASSES

by Spencer Mason

“Exactly what classes can homeschool students take outside the home and still meet the North Carolina legal definition of homeschool student?” This is a question that has been frequently asked for many years of NCHE board members and staff, DNPE personnel and homeschool leaders. The North Carolina statute says, “Home school’ means a nonpublic school in which one or more children of not more than two families or households receive academic instruction from parents or legal guardians, or a member of either household.” Getting a consistent answer to this question can be frustrating because there are several opinions on how the law is to be interpreted.

Since 1988, DNPE has taken the position that all core subjects (which they define as language arts, math, science and social studies) should be taught by the parents, guardians or members of the household with a high school diploma. They say that homeschool students can go outside the home for instruction in non-core subjects such as visual and performance arts, computer courses and foreign languages. It is only in recent years that they have allowed that homeschoolers can participate in co-ops and employ tutors and still meet the requirements of the law.

Several years ago, before DNPE changed their opinion about co-ops and tutors, we asked a homeschool friendly state senator to get an off-the-record opinion from the state attorney general regarding classes outside the home, co-ops, tutors and concurrent classes at community colleges. We asked for an off-the-record opinion because we didn’t know what position the attorney general would take, and an on-the-record opinion carries the weight of law. The

opinion rendered was that all classes, core and non-core, should be taught by the parents, guardian or member of the household. They allowed for concurrent enrollment in community colleges because that statute was passed after the homeschool law.

NCHE has consulted with several lawyers and legislators, and we think that homeschoolers have more flexibility when it comes to the instruction of their children. We have always believed that students can participate in a weekly one day co-op where their parent/teacher contributes in the instruction or take part in a science or writing class with other students and still be in compliance with the law.

There are three ways of getting more clarification about co-ops and outside classes for homeschool students: 1) test the law in a court case, 2) get an on-the-record attorney general's opinion and 3) request that clarifying language be added to our current law. I don't know of any homeschool family who is willing sue the state and go to court; and an attorney general's opinion may severely limit a homeschool parent's flexibility; so the best solution, in this case, is to change the law.

However, NCHE has not sought to change the wording

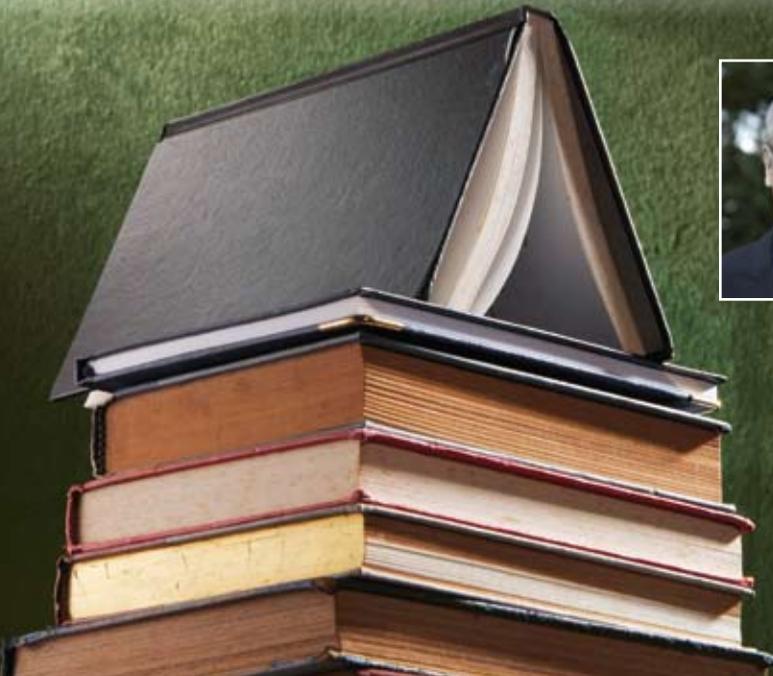
to our law because we have been concerned that homeschool opponents would take the opportunity to add more regulations for homeschoolers. (We have dealt with several attempts to add more regulations to the homeschool laws over the years.) Another reason is that even though there is a lot of angst over these interpretations of the law, homeschoolers have been pretty much free to homeschool as they see fit. Many of

us have taken advantage of outside classes by being quiet about them when communicating with DNPE and have not experienced any negative ramifications.

The results of the November elections have opened up an opportunity to revisit the law. We now have a house of representatives, a senate and a governor who seem

to be homeschool friendly. We are now evaluating our chances of getting clarifying language added to our homeschool law while avoiding more regulation. If we deem that it will be possible to get our law amended without endangering our freedom, we will proceed with plans to accomplish that. One part of the process will be giving you instructions on what to discuss with your legislators on NCHE Capitol Fest day in Raleigh on March 12. Start now to plan your trip to Raleigh!

“The results of the November elections have opened up an opportunity to revisit the law.”



Spencer Mason and his wife, Debbie, homeschooled four children for twenty-six years. They have served on the NCHE board since 1988. Spencer served twice as president from 1998-2000 and 2008-2012. He now serves as the legislative vice president.

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North Carolina Homeschool History

Although home education is the oldest form of education, it was not officially recognized in North Carolina until a Supreme Court decision in 1985 ruled that a homeschool could operate under the existing private school law. Through the efforts of concerned members of North Carolinians for Home Education, a bill was passed in 1988 that specifically named home education as an alternative for complying with compulsory school attendance requirements.

About NCHE

Our purpose is to protect the freedom to educate at home, to provide encouragement and support to families choosing home education for their children and to promote home education as an excellent educational alternative. Since its beginning in 1984, NCHE has grown from a few pioneering families to a statewide association of home educators that promotes home education and supports home educators. NCHE is governed by a working board of directors who volunteer their time and efforts to represent homeschoolers in every part of the state. A non-profit organization, NCHE operates on the basis of biblical principles and living faith. NCHE welcomes members of all races and religions.

NCHE Membership

Membership in NCHE is available to all residents of North Carolina who pledge to uphold the ideals of NCHE and comply with the North Carolina homeschool law. Membership is obtained by donating any amount to NCHE (suggested donation is \$25). The service of NCHE is made possible by the generous and consistent contributions of its supporters. The NCHE ideals are: educational excellence, parental authority and responsibility for education, protection and promotion of the family, diligence in moral and ethical instruction, responsible citizenship, freedom of choice among educational alternatives, and defense of constitutional rights.

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Visit Us Online at ncche.com

BULLETIN BOARD

NCHE Twenty-Ninth Annual Conference and Book Fair will be held May 23-25, 2013, at the M.C. Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem, NC.

Attention All 2013 Graduates. The spring graduation information will be on the NCHE website <nche.com> by January 1, 2013. The completed graduation application must be in the office or postmarked by March 1, 2013.

Email Addresses Wanted. Since NCHE uses email for much of its communication, your email addresses are needed in order for us to stay in touch. Please send an email to <memberservices@nche.com> with your name and mailing address. We'll verify our records and send you a response confirming that we now have your email address. You may also call the office at (919) 790-1100 during normal business hours.

New Website: GREENHOUSE Online. Because NCHE wants to more widely publicize the benefits of home education, GREENHOUSE articles are made freely available online. Users may access a digital version (PDF) of the magazine in its entirety at <nche.com>. Users may also enjoy a mid-week update every Wednesday as NCHE plans to make one article from the current volume available for the first time in an online readable format. Through this schedule and format NCHE desires to provide a balance of convenient access and to encourage users to reflect and interact with the material and each other by way of the online sharing and commenting. Begin now at <greenhouse.nche.com>.

NCHE Capital Fest 2013. Mark your calendar. Capital Fest will be March 12, 2013.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

To ensure you continue to receive GREENHOUSE, subscribe today. To subscribe, go to <nche.com> or call the NCHE office (919) 790-1100.



NCHE TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

May 23-25, 2013 • M.C. Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem, NC.

Just wanted to say thanks for the conference. Top notch speakers, well-laid out, learned a ton, left feeling more prepared and excited about the coming school year. Thank you!

– Jody –

I was only able to attend on Friday (due to family plans) and definitely wished I could have been there all three days. :)

– Nicole –

This was our first time attending the conference & it was great! Thank you for all the hard work that went into it & we look forward to next year

– Sheyna –

We are Excited to Introduce These Great Speakers Presenting at the Conference



Scott Klusendorf
President of
Life Training Institute



Jeannie Fulbright
Popular homeschool
writer and speaker



**Derek and
Cheryl Carter**
Founders of Family
Success Ministries



Tracy Klicka
Homeschooling mom
of seven and widow of
Christopher J. Klicka



Ken Sande
Founder of Peacemaker
Ministries and its
new sister ministry,
Relational Wisdom 360



Mike Smith
President of
HSLDA

Follow us as the conference comes together at <http://conference.nche.com/>
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*Mark your calendars and
make your plans to come to...*

Capital Fest

MARCH 12, 2013

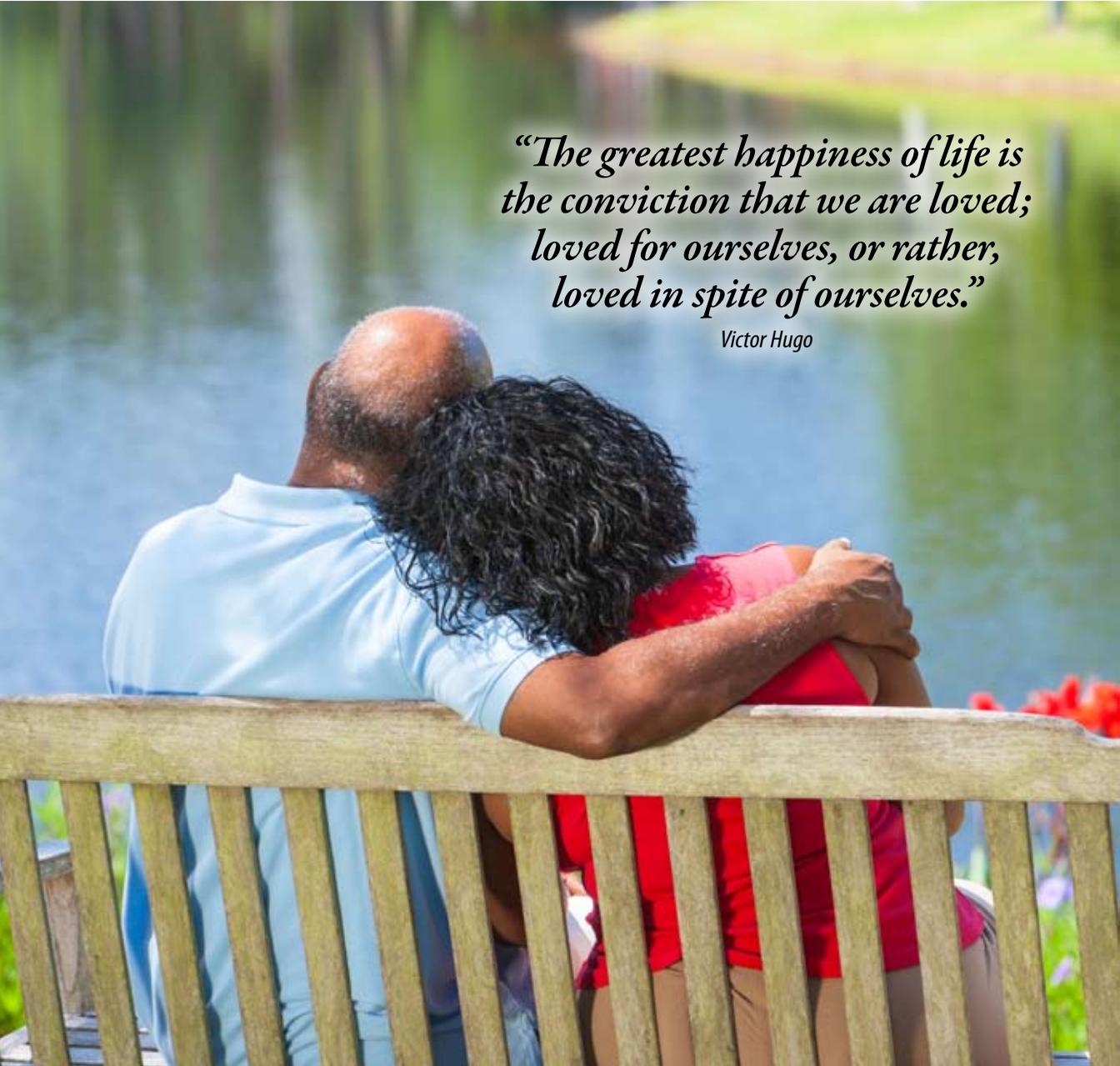
For the first time ever, we are able to announce the date of Capital Fest months in advance. More than just a day at the legislature, it's a look at all three branches of government, a lesson in North Carolina history and a great springtime outing in Raleigh!

Meet other homeschoolers from around the state as we join together to express our appreciation for our elected officials and remind them of the great success of home education in North Carolina.

North Carolinians for Home Education
4336-A Bland Road
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A photograph of a man and a woman embracing on a wooden deck. The man is wearing a light blue polo shirt and has his arms around the woman. The woman has long, dark, curly hair and is wearing a red top. They are sitting on a wooden bench with vertical slats. In the background, there is a large body of water, likely a lake or river, with a blurred shoreline and trees. The scene is bright and sunny.

*“The greatest happiness of life is
the conviction that we are loved;
loved for ourselves, or rather,
loved in spite of ourselves.”*

Victor Hugo