



The Homeschool Convention Season Is On

Spring is here, and all across America homeschool conventions are sprouting like mushrooms in virtually every state in the Union. And with each passing year, these mushrooms have grown larger and larger to the point where they require the biggest convention centers in their respective states. There are hundreds of vendors and exhibitors at these conventions offering a plethora of educational programs for parents seeking the best for their children, plus instructive workshops, and knowledgeable, charismatic speakers. It is wonderful to see how truly interested parents can be in the education of their children, browsing the vendor booths, asking questions, buying books and programs on a tight family budget without the help of the taxpayer.



I've been exhibiting at these conventions since they began in the 1980s. In Massachusetts, our state organization, MassHope, held its first convention in a church basement in 1988 with an attendance of about 300 parents. Today, it is being held in the state's second-largest convention center, in Worcester, and will draw over 3,000 parents. And so, homeschooling is no longer being practiced in secret by parents hiding from the local government school superintendent, but is being practiced in the open all across America, and there is little chance that the socialists in Washington will ever be able to shut it down.

If you are a parent thinking of homeschooling, you'd be wise to attend one of these conventions. You'll be able to meet other homeschooling families and get the feel of what it's like to be a homeschooler. It's easy to find a local convention on the Internet. Just type in your search engine, for example, Ohio Home School Convention, and the link will come up. In fact, I just did that while writing this article and can inform you that the 28th Convention of Christian Home Educators of Ohio will take place on June 21-23, 2012, at the John S. Knight Center in Akron, Ohio. You don't have to be a member of CHEO to attend. "Children of all ages are welcome to attend with their parents when a family pass is purchased. By registering you are stating your complete understanding and acceptance of CHEO's child attendance agreement."

CHEO also publishes a very colorful illustrated magazine, the *Ohio Homeschool Companion*, available on the Internet. Its latest issue has such articles as: "Getting the Most Out of the CHEO Convention," "ABC's of Homeschooling," "Learning is Better Together," "Learning to Love Math," and much more. Homeschoolers are using the Internet in the most productive and creative ways possible.

One of the nice things about homeschool conventions is the good behavior of homeschooled kids. They are polite, very comfortable in the presence of adults, and quite friendly. In contrast, "public" (government) schoolers generally hang out in groups that avoid adults and often engage in anti-social



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behavior. Which is why Christian students in the public schools generally hang together because of the immoral conduct of their nonreligious fellow students.

But we are now entering a new era in homeschool conventions: the free-enterprise convention. This is the big new kid on the homeschool convention block, featuring such nationally known personalities as Gov. Mike Huckabee and Chuck Colson. These “Great Homeschool Conventions” are being held in Greenville, S.C. (March 22-24); Memphis, Tenn. (April 12-14); Cincinnati, Ohio (April 19-21); Long Beach, Calif. (May 24-26), and Hartford, Conn. (June 14-16). They have attracted over 450 exhibitors and a large number of veteran speakers, including Dr. Jay Wile, Amanda Bennett, Cathy Duffy, Scott Somerville, Steve Demme, and many others.

This convention organization is distinctly Christian in character with an explicit Statement of Faith, which reads:

We believe there is one God who is infinitely perfect, existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe Jesus Christ to be truly God and in His incarnation to have been truly man....

We believe the Old and New Testaments to be the infallible word of God, inerrant as originally given, verbally inspired by God and the complete and sufficient revelation of His will for man’s salvation and conduct.

Great Homeschool Conventions, Inc. was created by Brennan and Mary Jo Dean, who live and homeschool their three children in the Mason-Kings Mills, Ohio, area. The five conventions are operated as free enterprises, thus combining the principles of both educational freedom and economic freedom. Their convention philosophy is summed up as follows:

Great Homeschool Conventions, Inc. is a conservative organization and avowedly “young-earth.” Notwithstanding, Great Homeschool Conventions, Inc is an education forum.

We disavow “groupthink.” as we believe that it is incumbent upon parents to teach children to think critically, to be able to access a broad spectrum of knowledge, and to formulate reasoned conclusions as individuals. Such a foundation should enable them to defend their Faith and their worldview as they move through successive levels of education and into the workplace.

To this end, we believe that educators (parents) cannot be closed minded to opinions that differ. I may understand my own position very well, but I cannot defend it properly unless I am informed regarding other points of view. Such an approach makes for a well-rounded education and, if properly inculcated, a well-grounded student.

We welcome diversity of opinion, as legitimate questions and alternate viewpoints may be found within a variety of subjects. This must not be construed to imply that we are indiscriminate or undiscerning with respect to our speakers or exhibitors. Biblical values are foundational to a cohesive and just society; they cannot be ignored nor posited within a vacuum.

Our speakers are invited guests and are free to present their subject matter as clearly and cogently as they are able. In so doing, they may offer opinion, philosophy or conviction that differs greatly from that of another.

Speakers are not, however, permitted to call out, name or attack another speaker-colleague, in a way that disparages that person’s character or the validity of their position. A speaker’s presentation should be able to stand on its own merits. For this reason, we believe Christian



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scholars should be heard, in the same forum, without fear of ostracism or ad hominem attacks.

The Convention Philosophy, therefore, seeks to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, while providing homeschool families with the broadest range of excellent materials and resources.

This is quite an affirmation of the centrality of the Bible and Christian faith and educational independence among homeschoolers in the midst of a regime in Washington that stands for an opposite philosophy of life.

While the state-wide Christian homeschool organizations started as membership organizations, Great Homeschool Conventions is more like a national movement combining religious freedom, educational freedom, and economic freedom, fueled by the Internet. It represents an important trend in American culture, with conservative political overtones, even though the conventions are nonpolitical.

At the same time, the homeschooling philosophy is spreading among non-Christians, secular libertarians, and big city folks. It's a phenomenon that socialists and statists will not be able to control. The genie of educational freedom is now out of the bottle, and there is nothing the teachers' unions can do to stop it. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other sites all provide forums for those who are on the side of freedom. It means that the future belongs to educational freedom, and educational freedom is politically conservative.

In other words, this is a second American Revolution, not being fought on the battlefield but in homes, on the Internet, and in conventions. It is the most important cultural and spiritual phenomenon in America today. It defends the principles of freedom enunciated by the Founding Fathers and is educating Americans on the practice of freedom by celebrating family life and the right of parents to pass on to their children — the future generation — the knowledge, wisdom, and values that made America the greatest, richest, and freest nation on earth.

If you want to learn more about the philosophy of educational freedom, courses in which are not given in any of our liberal colleges of education, you should read four books: [Is Public Education Necessary?](#) and [NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education](#) by Sam Blumenfeld; [Underground History of American Education](#) by John Taylor Gatto; and [The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America](#) by Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt. After reading these books you will know more about American education than 99.9 percent of the so-called experts.



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