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Inside Track

Homeschool Family Sends Seven Kids to College — All by Age 12!



A family from Alabama is inspiring the nation with its amazing homeschool success story. In fact, Kip and Mona Lisa Harding, from Montgomery, have been so successful in educating their 10 children at home that seven have gone on to college — by the age of 12!

It all began when the Harding's oldest child, Hannah, was in third grade, enrolled in public school. A friend suggested that the couple try homeschooling their daughter, something they conceded wasn't even on their radar. But they ended up giving it a try and soon decided that they could do a better job educating their children than the local school district could. Recalling Hannah's early public-school experience, Kip noted that "there was a lot of homework in the evenings, and we just decided to pull her out. It was a scary time at first, but we started and it was working out great and we just never looked back."

Mona Lisa Harding told NBC's *Today* show that at first she and Kip didn't have a firm plan. "It just kind of happened. We started homeschooling, and it was very efficient. Kids have to be educated, and as they accelerated, we had to find another option because they outdid me very young."

Out of the gate Mona Lisa had ordered a slew of workbooks by subject and grade level, "but that got a little tedious and a little boring," she told [KSL.com](#). "We started to get away from boxed curriculum and went into just reading for pleasure and reading what the kids wanted to read."

Before long the Hardings found their children blossoming under the less regimented environment, accelerating in reading, writing, math, and science in a way they never could have in a government school structure. Mona Lisa explained that she and Kip would discover subjects in which each child excelled, and concentrate more time in those areas, allowing their children to hone their skills and knowledge.

"Hannah was whizzing through the math and saying, 'Mom, do I really have to do the rest of this chapter? It's so repetitive,'" Mona Lisa recalled to [KSL.com](#). "And I'd say, 'No, just do the odd [problems] or the even ones or just skip the rest of that chapter.... And next thing you know, she's ready for some advanced math.'"

By the time Hannah was 12 years old the Hardings were searching for more challenging options for her education, and ended up enrolling her in a local junior college. She began with just one class, but three semesters in Hannah was carrying a full load right along with students who were up to 10 years older than she was. At 26, Hannah is now an engineer with a master's degree, and is working toward her doctorate.



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The other Harding children have had similar success. Twenty-four-year-old Rosannah earned a bachelor's degree in architecture before she turned 18, and has helped to put her husband through college.

Twenty-three-year-old Serennah graduated from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Georgia and is now a U.S. Navy physician completing her residency at Maryland's Walter Reed Hospital Army Medical Center. She is the one of the youngest doctors in U.S. history.

Eighteen-year-old Heath earned a bachelor's degree in English at age 15 and a masters in computer science at 17. He calls himself the family "slacker" because he took some time off between degrees.

Keith Harding, 15, recently graduated from Alabama's Faulkner University with a degree in music, and is planning to become a composer.

Seth Harding, 13, is now a sophomore at Alabama's Huntingdon College studying history. He would like to become an archaeologist.

Eleven-year-old Katrinnah is a freshman at Faulkner University, majoring in legal studies and minoring in theater. She wants to be an attorney.

Additionally, the Hardings have three more children, "all of whom are homeschooled but too young for college, even by the family's standards," reported [BusinessInsider.com](#). "Mariannah (8) and Lorennah (6) both say they want to be pediatricians, while Thunder (4) already has his sites set on lifeguarding."

The Hardings point out that, like most other kids, their children aren't geniuses. They simply found a method of teaching them that brought out the best and encouraged learning. Kip told KSL.com that their homeschool philosophy is simple: "One [public school] teacher has 30 students on average. We can do better than that. Kids get left behind in a classroom.... This is where homeschooling really takes off because these kids are getting extra attention."

While the Hardings insist that they are not trying to denigrate public schools, they point out that there are some fundamental problems with the government model. "Teaching is a hard job and teachers still have a place," Kip said. "But government money comes with strings attached.... We're just relying on God and He keeps coming through and it's working out well. Truly, we're just average."

Encouraging parents who are considering educating their children at home, Kip emphasized that successful homeschooling goes beyond merely creating a positive learning atmosphere. "Love those kids," he encouraged parents. "Be around them as much as you can. Be that influence for your kids.... People just really need to take charge of their kids and love them to death."

Photo: Courtesy of the Harding family





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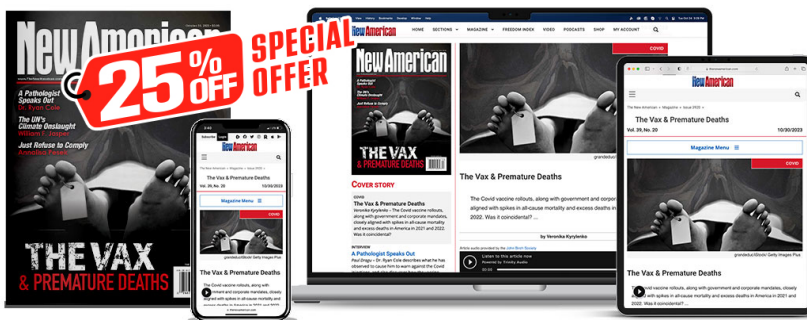
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