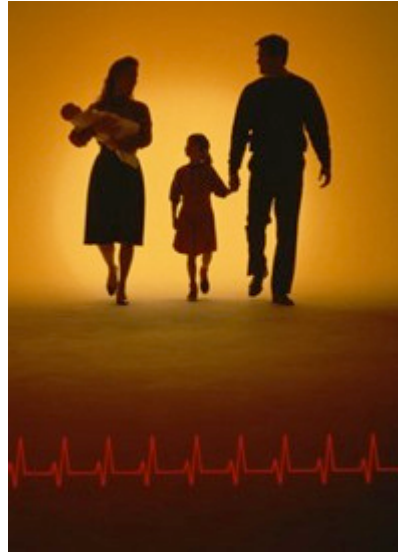




Written by [Dennis Behreandt](#) on August 17, 2008

Champion Family: An Interview With the Scherers

Fortunately, California home-schoolers face no immediate threat. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell stated: "The California Department of Education policy will not change in any way as a result of this ruling. Parents still have the right to home-school in this state." And following a massive outcry, the court has granted a petition to re-hear the case. However, if the decision stands, it could set an odious precedent — a steppingstone for those who want home schooling outlawed nationwide, as recently occurred in Germany.



Courtesy of the Scherer family

Stephen and Sarah take aim during 2006 Bay State finals.

The argument that parents are "not qualified" to teach is commonly used by home schooling's critics. But this is easily refuted. On standardized tests, home-schoolers significantly outperform public-educated students in *all* subjects. They dominate spelling and geography bees.

George Washington, Robert E. Lee, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Booker T. Washington, Florence Nightingale, and C. S. Lewis — to name just a few — were home-schooled. But we needn't look to the past to find home-school heroes.

Despite very limited financial resources, Susan Scherer, a single mom from Billerica, Massachusetts, has home-schooled her two children, Stephen and Sarah, all their lives (never a day in public school).

In February of this year, both Scherer children competed in the U.S. Olympic trials. Stephen, 19, who has just completed his first year as a West Point cadet (dean's list with honors, both semesters), placed first among all American men in air rifle. He faced rugged competition, including a former Olympic gold medalist. "I'm shocked at what happened today," said Army rifle coach Ron Wigger. "I thought Stephen might make the finals, but I had no idea this would happen. What amazed me was how well he handled the pressure with the composure he showed competing against the best shooters in the world."



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Stephen will be the first West Point cadet to represent America at the Olympics in 48 years. His achievement earned the Army Athletic Association's "Athlete of the Week" award, and he has been named the Great America Rifle Rookie of the Year.

Sarah, 17, also had a terrific Olympic trial, finishing second among all American women in air rifle. Unfortunately, only one U.S. woman is permitted to go to Beijing in this event, so Sarah will not be joining her brother on the Olympic team. Nonetheless, like Stephen, she has achieved numerous honors, including winning the 2008 National Junior Olympic women's air rifle competition.

THE NEW AMERICAN: *Susan, when did you first decide to home-school?*

Susan Scherer: When Stephen was four years old, the thought of sending him and Sarah off to school seven hours a day was very saddening because the three of us really enjoyed our time together. So when I found out about home schooling through my sister, I was very excited and decided immediately that I would do it. I wanted to be able to play the role of teacher in my kids' lives and share all the joy of watching them learn and grow and discover the world, together in a family setting.

TNA: *How did you manage this as a single parent?*

Susan Scherer: Being a single mom was very difficult because God made a family to have two parents and there is work enough for even more than two parents, let alone one. I had to cover it all, but of course it was only God who gave me strength. Without Him, nothing good would have come from our situation. God was the father in our home.

TNA: *On a very practical level, how did you manage without financial assets?*

Susan Scherer: In addition to working as a church administrator and an English tutor, I ran a licensed day care out of our home for about 10 years. As Stephen and Sarah grew older, they began to help out with that. More recently, we've also done house painting, house cleaning, and landscaping. To make ends meet, we have worked at every job together, sometimes painting until late at night. Stephen and Sarah therefore now know exactly how to be frugal with money, pay bills, and get things accomplished. They have never complained; I am amazed at this and deeply grateful.

TNA: *Critics of home schooling say kids don't get "socialized."*

Susan Scherer: Public-school kids mostly communicate with students the same age. But Stephen and Sarah have learned to interact with every age sector, from babies in our child care, to foreign college-exchange students whom we've hosted in our home, to the elderly in nursing homes, where we've been running a "Jeopardy" game for many years. But they've also had lots of interaction with kids their own age in church youth groups, the Civil Air Patrol, basketball, baseball, soccer, and, of course, shooting.

TNA: *How did you get interested in shooting?*

Stephen Scherer: We had a friend who took us shooting in Maine, who gave me my first gun, a BB gun. Then, when I was 11, I saw a sign for the Massachusetts Rifle Association. We called up, and we joined the junior shooting program for \$1 each. Sarah and I both shot our first shots on the same day and loved it immediately.

TNA: *What is it that appealed to you about shooting?*

Sarah Scherer: The discipline, the concentration, and the uniqueness from other sports.

Stephen Scherer: Also, it was cool to shoot stuff!



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TNA: *Mom, to what do you attribute the kids' success in shooting?*

Susan Scherer: Dedication and a competitive spirit to win.

TNA: *Did home schooling enhance your development into national champions?*

Sarah Scherer: Home schooling gave me the drive to learn, which enhanced my competitiveness and desire to get better.

Susan Scherer: Also, as in every sport, shooting has its share of “poor sports” with negative, destructive attitudes, and our home environment has helped both of my kids develop character to be able to deal with this type of person. Another factor is the flexible time home schooling gave us. To be competitive at the national level takes almost daily practice — five or six days per week, two hours a day of actual shooting which means four hours total including travel and set-up time.

TNA: *You are members of both the NRA and USA Shooting. What are your views on gun ownership and the Second Amendment?*

Susan Scherer: Gun ownership is essential to living in a free country. There is too much to say about the state our country is in, but without gun ownership, I would feel even more in danger as a person. We have to keep our Second Amendment right secure, no matter what. I would feel very comfortable in a country like Switzerland, where gun ownership is required to a large degree.

TNA: *Stephen, tell us how you wound up at West Point.*

Stephen Scherer: I got recruited by the shooting coach, and it was a very easy process for me to get accepted because of my shooting resume. Also, I'm thankful that I had respectable SAT scores.

TNA: *How do you feel about the Point so far?*

Stephen Scherer: West Point highly values tradition and the moral code; that is what has made it a great place, compared to other colleges. The best thing about USMA is the group of guys there who are your classmates; some of them are the best people in America. And it teaches you leadership skills by making you take charge of things. Of course, in your first year, you don't get much sleep!

TNA: *How do you feel about representing America and the Point at the Olympics?*

Stephen Scherer: It is a great honor to represent my country as an Olympian and as a soldier and to serve as an ambassador.

TNA: *Sarah, you're going to be a home-school senior this fall. What are your plans for the future?*

Sarah Scherer: I hope to find a college with a shooting program where I will receive a full or semi-full scholarship. I'm considering becoming an architect or a physician's assistant. Most importantly, I want to be a wife and mother.

TNA: *You guys are a true home-schooling success story. Do you have any thoughts about home schooling you'd like to share?*

Susan Scherer: Educating your children is a God-given responsibility and blessing of the parent, not a school. Today, there are many options a family has to educate their children, and many situations work well for different families. Home schooling allows a parent to create and control a very specific environment in which his or her children can excel. There are many rewards and benefits.

TNA: *Is there anything that worked especially well for you, that you'd like to share with those who are trying home schooling?*



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Susan Scherer: The focus in our family was on learning at all times of the day, every day, naturally, about life around us and incorporating studies into our lives in a real way. As a parent, the most important thing to do for my kids, including their education, was to pray for them that God would be in charge of their learning. The best part of each day was reading the Bible together and discussing it.

TNA: *Finally, do you have any tips for aspiring shooters?*

Stephen Scherer: Have fun and try to shoot in the middle!

James Perloff is the author of [The Shadows of Power: The Council on Foreign Relations and the American Decline](#) and [Tornado in a Junkyard: The Relentless Myth of Darwinism](#).



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