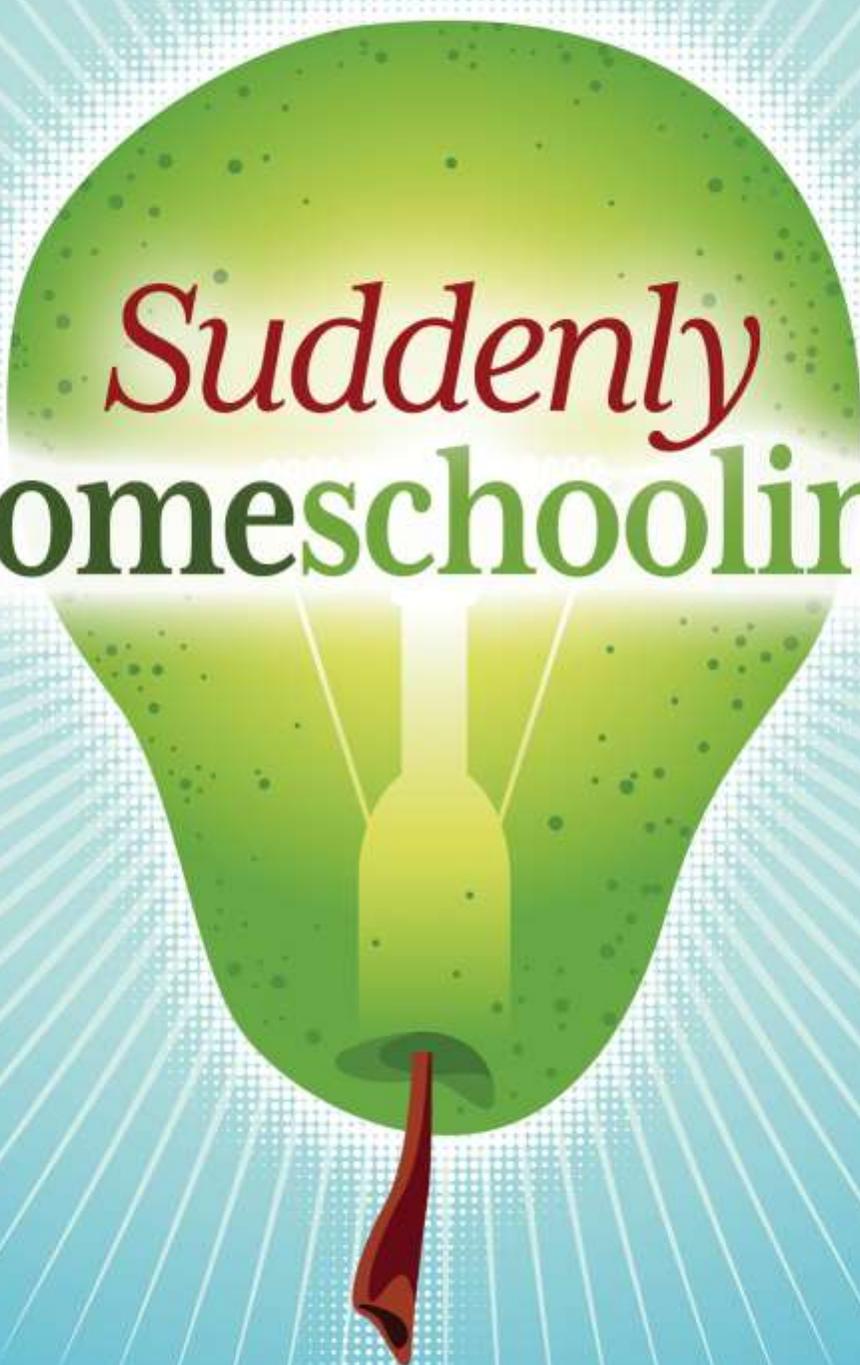


**“a very practical, interesting, engaging approach”**

Helen Hegener, Publisher *Home Education Magazine*



*Suddenly*  
**Homeschooling**

**A Quick-Start Guide to  
Legally Homeschool in 2 Weeks**

**Marie-Claire Moreau, Ed.D.**

# Suddenly Homeschooling

## Chapter 2 (Preview only)

Marie-Claire Moreau, Ed D

# What's Your Story?

## Chuck and Daria

To outsiders, Chuck and Daria seemed like the perfect couple. With a luxury canal-front home, matching SUVs, recent job promotion for Chuck and successful part-time modeling career for Daria, it looked like things just couldn't get any better. Summers were typically spent sailing up and down the coast, vacationing with family and friends and living the opulent lifestyle, and became even sweeter the summer that little Rachel arrived. After the first few blissful weeks, Chuck returned to long hours at work while Daria busied herself with the duties of a stay-at-home mom and grew accustomed to the great responsibility of raising a child. To Chuck, though, Daria seemed overly preoccupied with the baby and less focused on their marriage and social life than he had hoped. As the weeks and months went on, tensions began to tug at the marriage, neither of them able to understand the other's emotional viewpoint. The resulting separation three years later called for many decisions to be made, not the least of which was what to do with little Rachel. Intending all along to school her daughter at home, Daria needed to find part-time work in order to support herself and maintain the quality of life she desired. Putting the idea of homeschooling aside, Daria was forced to place Rachel in daycare in preparation for her daughter's eventual enrollment in a kindergarten class at the local elementary school. And so the couple performed the balancing act of working, visitation, split activities with Rachel, and juggling their belongings and responsibilities while living apart. After 6 months on an exhausting joint-custody treadmill, however, Daria decided to approach Chuck again about homeschooling. She explained her reasons for wanting Rachel at home and her lack of time to enjoy the lifestyle she

was working so hard to preserve anyway. Although Chuck didn't know much about homeschooling, he was able to relate to Daria's dilemma because he didn't feel he had adequate time to spend with Rachel either. With trepidation, but willing to give it a try, he reluctantly agreed to let Daria try homeschooling. For Rachel's sake, he also increased his financial contribution so that Daria could reduce her work hours and begin schooling Rachel at home. This, he hoped, would result in longer visits for him and Rachel in the long run. In a sudden turn of events, with little to no preparation, Daria was now going to be homeschooling.

## Anya and Desiree

Anya and Desiree had always been the best of friends. The girls had practically grown up together, lived only a few houses apart, and even their birthdates were close together. The 12-year olds had been inseparable for the last few years and looked forward to entering middle school together in the fall. Things changed, though, when Desiree's parents decided to send their daughter to a private middle school, something that Anya's parents could not afford to do. Anya was devastated, but pledged to remain best friends with Desiree, no matter where each of them went to school. Unfortunately, however, the first year of middle school changed Anya, and by her 7th grade year, neither Anya's parents, nor Desiree could recognize her. Anya had changed her hair to a much messier style, began wearing her clothes more provocatively, and used language that her parents didn't approve. Anya's friends weren't the kind of kids her parents liked much either, but they were reluctant to say anything to their daughter, fearing she might become even more like the other kids. But when Anya started sneaking out at night and was found drinking alcohol with another student when the parents weren't at home, Anya's parents knew that something had to change. Although they couldn't afford the private school that Desiree attended, they could afford to homeschool since they both worked from home. In the middle of her 7th grade

year, Anya's parents took her away from the negative influence of her friends and suddenly found themselves homeschooling their daughter that year.

## Marnie and Hal

Marnie and Hal are parents to three young children, and the oldest was fast approaching school age. With school a natural assumption, the family prepared for their oldest child, known as "little Hal," to begin kindergarten in the fall. Once the enrollment packet had been completed and all the medical forms had been completed, little Hal and the whole family waited excitedly for orientation day at Harwell Elementary. Although orientation started out well, with the administrators and teachers giving tours of the school and distributing t-shirts for the children to wear on their first day of school, little Hal had a little bit of trouble listening and standing still for very long. As the morning wore on, little Hal chatted constantly during the presentations, tipped on his chair, crawled on the floor, and talked loudly instead of using an "indoor voice" like most of the other children. A teacher asked little Hal to wait his turn but he couldn't resist grabbing papers and toys to play with while she was talking. This was nothing new to Marnie and Hal but they quickly saw that little Hal's behavior was not going to fit in with the requirements of his new school and new teacher. Although his parents tried to quiet him, they knew that little Hal was just being himself. Besides, there wasn't anything they could do to change his behavior here that they hadn't already tried at home. Quietly, Marnie took little Hal's hand and the family slipped out of the classroom toward the school exit. Before they reached the door however, the school principal walked up to them, offering the name of a psychologist who could medicate and calm little Hal to help him behave in the classroom. Shocked and surprised by the principal's presumption, the family declined the offer and headed for home. They suddenly began homeschooling that fall.

## Ava

After several failed attempts, Ava finally mustered the courage to phone a local homeschooler using the information on a list she got from the district school office. When veteran homeschooler Jeannette answered, Ava nervously asked her for information about homeschooling a high schooler in the middle of a school year. Specifically, Ava wanted to know where to get the curriculum for her 11th grader to finish the year at home. Trying to hone in on Ava's needs, Jeannette asked her a couple of questions. During their brief conversation, Ava revealed that she knew nothing about homeschooling and had fallen into it entirely by accident because her son had been expelled. Ava explained that she and her husband were angry, but had no other option but homeschooling at this point. Ava didn't know how long she might be homeschooling her son, adding that having him complete 11th grade was her most immediate worry. Jeannette did her best to point Ava to some books and web sites that might help her, at least temporarily. She saw that Ava needed help quickly because she was suddenly going to be homeschooling.

## Gabriel

Because of his birth date, Gabriel started at Lakewood Elementary at age four and was in 2nd grade at the age of six. Gabriel wasn't a problem in school; as a matter of fact, just the opposite was true. Teachers enjoyed having Gabriel in class because he was bright and quick, courteous and helpful, and required no help at all while out-performing all the other students in class. Gabriel got along well with the other children in class and students always liked working with Gabriel because he always had all the answers, too. Most of the time, because he already knew the material, Gabriel was given classroom jobs to keep him busy, such as turning on computer equipment and cleaning the hallway in between the classrooms. Sometimes, he was also permitted to go into other rooms to help younger children, and would read to them or help with craft

activities and centers. By the time Gabriel reached the 3rd grade, however, it was becoming apparent that he needed more. His work was completed at an astonishing pace and he had little or nothing to do while the other children worked at their desks. Gabriel would often wander around the classroom, touching and playing with objects on the walls and tables, or he would take books off the shelves and read on the floor in the back of the classroom, searching for anything to keep himself occupied. There were few classroom jobs to keep him busy this year and no opportunities for him to help in the other rooms, either. Worse, because he attended a small charter school, there were no programs available for higher-achieving students, thus Gabriel was forced to remain in the 3rd grade classroom and learn virtually nothing at all. When his parents met with the teacher at the end of the first marking period, they began talking about better meeting Gabriel's academic needs. The teacher loved having Gabriel in class, but told his parents that she was worried about his increasingly antsy behavior because he was becoming so bored with 3rd grade. The teacher told his parents that another elementary school in town offered a gifted program, but Gabriel's parents were reluctant to send him there because of the recently publicized gang activity in that particular neighborhood. Plus, it was too late in the school year to get Gabriel into that school anyway, since there had been a deadline to apply for school choice earlier in the year. After a series of meetings with the Principal and the Head of Instruction, plus some testing allowed by the family's medical insurance provider, Gabriel's parents decided to withdraw him from 3rd grade and begin homeschooling using 5th and 6th grade materials at home instead. Although his parents weren't sure where the homeschooling would lead them, they found themselves suddenly homeschooling their son in the middle of the academic year.

Laura

The moms in the homeschooling group first saw Laura and her daughter, Olivia, at a park day. The pair was quiet, observing the activities from the margins of the playground and speaking to no one. Olivia clung to her mother's arm as Laura's eyes darted nervously from one end of the park to the other all afternoon. At the next scheduled park day, as Olivia stood in silence watching the other children, Laura awkwardly introduced herself to another mom who was standing by the swings. The other mom was friendly and patient, reaching out, but sensing that Laura wasn't really ready to chat. As time and several more park days passed, the other moms gradually began to introduce themselves to Laura and the other children came to play near Olivia, sometimes even sharing their toys. Eventually gaining a feeling of trust, Laura finally revealed that she had been homeschooling Olivia since pulling her out of school earlier that year. Without sharing details, Laura confided that Olivia had been victimized in school and that was why Laura didn't want Olivia in a school setting any more. Any advice about how to suddenly homeschool a child dealing with a frightful situation was welcome, Laura added.

## Brett

Brett was on the fast-track to making it on the professional tennis circuit. Just a kid, he had already won championships around the state and his parents and coach believed his talent could take him even further. Brett had a tough time juggling school work with tennis practice and would stay up late in the evenings just to get his homework done. Fearing he wasn't getting enough sleep, Brett's parents would often pull him from school early in the afternoons so that his practice could begin earlier and homework wouldn't end quite so late. This wasn't popular with Brett's teachers or the school principal but Brett managed to maintain his grades and looked forward to summer when he could focus more on tennis and less on academics. When Brett's coach phoned his parents to tell them about a great opportunity, one that would require frequent travel but could

also earn him additional experience and titles, Brett's parents were torn over what to do. They knew that other children who were intensely involved in sports sometimes hired private tutors to travel with them. But Brett's parents had always been involved in his education and wanted to handle the responsibility on their own, since at least one or the other would be traveling with Brett anyway. Brett's parents spoke openly with the school counselor, and the counselor agreed that something had to give. The counselor explained that Brett's school work would only be getting harder and that the amount of homework was expected to increase in the upper grades, too. All parties agreed that Brett simply wouldn't be able to do it all much longer. With the help and support of the counselor, Brett's parents made the decision to withdraw him from school and teach him at home as well as on the road. Homeschooling would afford Brett a more flexible, efficient schedule so that he could focus more on tennis and travel if he needed to.

## Michael

Tests had always been hard for Michael. It wasn't because Michael wasn't smart. It was because Michael became so nervous that he got all choked-up and forgot everything the moment he saw the test. His test anxiety not only kept him from getting good grades on tests, but also created an abnormal level of anticipation and lack of confidence over other assignments, too. Michael had few friends and seemed to be sinking into depression as he approached and then began middle school. Michael's parents communicated with his teachers, talked to the principal and met with the school counselor, but no amount of strategizing seemed to be able to get Michael the tools and practice he needed to relax on test days. It came as no surprise to anyone when Michael was sick on the first day of the state's high-stakes testing and his parents were informed that Michael would have to take the make-up test the next week. But, when Michael began vomiting the night before the make-up test the following week, his parents knew it was

time to take a more serious look at their situation. They thought that Michael needed to see a doctor and possibly begin a program of counseling, and decided there wasn't any other alternative but to pull Michael out of school for a while. His parents wondered how they would be able to suddenly begin homeschooling but, for Michael's sake, were willing to give it a try.

## Craig and Mary

Craig and Mary's divorce was an all-out war. They couldn't agree on a thing, least of all anything having to do with visitation and custody of their young son, C.J., who was turning five in just a few months. Overnight visits, medical providers, an allergy-free diet and C.J.'s many extracurricular activities preoccupied them for months, and they hadn't even begun to think about schooling options for C.J. that fall. Mediation was helpful for a while, but began to shut-down when Mary refused to back down on her desire to teach C.J. at home due to his medical condition and frequent doctor visits. Craig felt that enrolling C.J. in school would be alright and was able to locate a public school with a full-time nurse on staff that offered resources for parents of children with special needs. Their back-and-forth continued for months until finally a trial date was set and they had no choice but to sink back and wait for a judge to determine their son's fate. It wasn't until Mary contacted a homeschooling advocate in her area that things began to change. Mary learned that homeschooling wasn't at all uncommon and that many families in her city were doing it successfully. She found out about some groups she could join where she and C.J. could find friends, support, and share in classes and field trips where C.J. could be with other children his age. Mary also learned that homeschooling as a single parent was not only possible, but becoming more common. In fact, she learned that there were several divorced, working mothers and fathers in the local area who were willing to help her get started. Because she didn't know a lot about homeschooling, Mary enlisted the help of a state-wide organization and one of

the local homeschooling parents. Together, they helped her type up a list of questions and answers that she was able to give to Craig to help explain more about homeschooling. Mary herself prepared a list of homeschooling groups that she could join, as well as a list of classes and opportunities for C.J. that would offer the same general “feel” as elementary school but still satisfy her health and safety concerns for C.J. Re-opening the discussion about homeschooling was easy once Mary had some supportive documents to show Craig. In fact, Craig even agreed to attend a homeschooling meeting to see what it was all about. After several days of talking, something they hadn’t been able to do for weeks, Mary and Craig were able to discuss C.J.’s special needs in relation to their desire to have him participate in normal daily activities like other kids his age. Surprising even himself, Craig agreed to let Mary give homeschooling a try, asking only that she have C.J. monitored more frequently to be sure that he was making progress at a similar rate as other children his age. Overjoyed and excited, Mary’s victory hit her hard when she realized that she had fantasized so long about homeschooling without actually knowing much about how to do it. Suddenly homeschooling, Mary looked for any answers she could find in a short amount of time.

## Geoffrey’s Grandmother

Geoffrey never had any problems in school until his mother got sick at the beginning of his 3rd grade year. After that, Geoffrey began having a harder time concentrating in class, his grades started dropping, and he finally stopped turning in much work at all. He worried continuously about his mom and, though his weekly counseling sessions with a psychologist were helping, they didn’t stop him from thinking a lot about his mom during the day. When it looked like his mom wasn’t going to be getting any better, Geoffrey’s grandmother moved in with his family to help out. Geoffrey’s grandmother had been a school teacher and liked to help him with his school work in the evenings. She tried as much as

she could to keep Geoffrey on track, even helping him with occasional homework and studying for tests, but Geoffrey rarely remembered to bring his papers home or tell his grandmother what he was supposed to do. His grandmother took over his mom's role at the school, stepping in whenever there was a parent conference or a PTA meeting to attend, and she tried to stay in contact with his teachers, too, although she didn't know how to use email which made it hard for her to stay in touch. Instead of putting him on the school bus, she began driving Geoffrey to school, using their time alone in the car to talk and help Geoffrey work through his feelings. Geoffrey enjoyed their conversations and riding in her car and this made him feel better. Sadly, however, it didn't do much for the quality of his school work. When Geoffrey didn't pass 3rd grade, he was placed in a summer program to hone his skills; he barely made it to the next grade that fall. A couple of months into 4th grade, Geoffrey's grades and morale really hit bottom when his progress report showed he failed all of his subjects in the first marking period. Now running out of ideas, his grandmother approached the Principal to talk about homeschooling for the rest of the school year. The Principal was supportive and agreed with the concept, suggesting that Geoffrey could return in 4th grade when he felt better. Although Geoffrey's grandmother had been a classroom teacher, she knew nothing about homeschooling, but was willing to give it a try, if it meant helping her grandson. The truth was that she was worried about the impact of taking Geoffrey out of school and how he might feel next year when he returned to a lot of questions and curiosity from the other children; but she didn't see any other way to keep Geoffrey from failing. Plus, she thought that Geoffrey might feel more relaxed at home seeing the day-to-day care that his mom received, which would maybe even help him accept the changes going on in his life. Borrowing some books from the school, she talked one last time to Geoffrey's teachers and made sure that she would be teaching the same material as the other children would be learning that year. Although she would be following the school's curriculum with the intention of eventually

returning Geoffrey to school, his grandmother was suddenly, albeit temporarily, homeschooling.

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The stories you just read are true. Except for their names, these are real stories about some of the actual homeschooling families that I have encountered over the years in my work as a homeschooling advisor. As you can see, every case is a little bit different and each of these families arrived at homeschooling in a slightly different way. But they all have something in common, too. Each of these families started homeschooling suddenly, quickly, and quite by surprise.

Some of these people had thought about homeschooling before but others never had any intention of ever doing it at all. In fact, many of these families had never really heard much about homeschooling, and went into it with no knowledge and no background whatsoever. Of those who knew about homeschooling, including those who were hoping to give it a try, a change in circumstances prevented them from moving forward, so they pushed the idea aside. Whatever the reasons, all of these families experienced sudden changes in circumstances requiring them to move quickly toward a solution, and homeschooling became that solution. Every one of the families in these stories was virtually thrust into the world of homeschooling, an uncomfortable and unfamiliar place for some, a happy and surprising place for others, but an unexpected place for all. Some were overjoyed. Some were overwhelmed. Many were anxiety-filled. Most wondered if they could do it on such short notice. Several initially resented having to do it at all.

These days, there are many circumstances that bring families to homeschooling. Perhaps one of these stories mirrors your exact situation, but probably your story is a little bit different. Ask a thousand homeschoolers how they got started and each will have a slightly different spin on the series of events and steps taken to begin the home education process. And every family continues to practice

homeschooling their own unique way, too, making each homeschooling family a little bit different than all others.

In the early days of homeschooling, it was common to assume that homeschoolers did so for religious reasons or because of some non-conformist philosophy involving government interference over child-rearing. Several decades later, however, today's homeschooling has matured and can be practiced much differently than it was in the past. Homeschooling has become as unique as the people doing it, and there is no sense in measuring it against some arbitrary standard that exists only in legends from the past. Time and time again, we see that no one homeschooling situation is any more typical than any other.

Perhaps your personal story begins as a public school parent who has watched the amount of homework your child is receiving reach unreasonable levels over the last several years and cut harmfully into whatever little family time you had left in the evenings. Possibly you have come to resent the fact that your child spends six or eight hours each day in school and still comes home with two-three hours of work every evening, and you wonder if anything is being accomplished in the classroom at all. Maybe you worry that your child isn't getting enough play time, or enough sleep, or has no time for sports or music lessons any more, due to the hectic and never-ending school-homework-cycle. You ask yourself why parents are needed to help so much and why families must purchase so many supplies, and you wonder whether it would just be easier and cheaper to do at home all by yourself.

Maybe your story begins by objecting to some of the teachings of a certain school, program or curriculum. Whether for faith-based reasons or simply your own desire to control the content of certain subjects, you prefer to remove your student from classes teaching about scientific evolution, reproduction, or about some philosophical premise you do not agree with. You may be opposed to

animal dissection or object to the use of harsh chemicals in and out of the classroom and prefer that your child not come into contact with practices you do not condone or products you do not approve. It could be that you don't want your students present for holiday parties and religious observances or at lectures about politics, preferring that they don't hear from anyone but you about topics like date rape, hate crimes, suicide, and anorexia and bullying. Believing that parents are a child's first teacher and know best when the time is right to introduce controversial topics like these, you have determined that the school district's timing on these subjects just isn't right for your family.

Every parent knows that children often imitate one another but your reason for homeschooling might be that you begin to spot changes in your child that concern you. You wonder about the effects of your son or daughter spending six-eight hours each day surrounded by children whose habits, behaviors, and values do not match your own. You have noticed the effects of your child's immersion in this environment and it is becoming more evident and worrisome as the years go on. The thought of your middle- or high-schooler entrenched in teen culture, pressured to conform in ways he or she may not be comfortable, worries you, too. It may be that clothing styles, body piercings and tattoos, sexually-explicit language, and the constant boy/girl drama don't sit well with you and you'd like to reduce the contact your child has with this kind of influence.

Your child's learning, or lack of progress, may have spawned your interest in homeschooling. You recognize that children are not all the same and it bothers you that your child's learning style cannot be accommodated with standard classroom instruction. Although your child learns well while studying at home, he has difficulty applying what he has learned to the kinds of problems they ask in school. Or maybe the teachers have not recognized your child's special gifts but instead require him to work in an environment where he is not challenged or supported. Aware that a mismatch between a child's style and the methods and

atmosphere provided in traditional classrooms is a prevailing problem in schools, you recognize the need to let your child learn how he learns best.

Or maybe your story begins and ends with the fact that you just worry about all the violence at schools and can't bear the thought of sending your child to a place where guns, knives, and other weapons have been found in student backpacks and lockers across the country. Having a police officer on campus may curtail, but doesn't prevent, campus violence and you refuse to have your child witness or somehow become accidentally harmed in hallways and lunch rooms where fights erupt without warning. Your recollection of school as a safe haven for children to blossom has been replaced with images of fortress-style buildings equipped with metal detectors and you want to give your child the joy and love of learning that you experienced as a child. Although you know you cannot protect your child forever, you want to keep him safe for as long as you can.

No matter how you got to homeschooling, you can do so knowing there are families who understand and applaud your rationale, and who couldn't agree more with your decision. With the backing and support of decades of experience from millions of families across the country, rest easy that you aren't as different from any of these families as you might think. Just like it was for them, homeschooling is the right decision for you, too.

Eventually, with the help and support of close family and friends combined with the homeschooling resources available in their communities, all the families in these stories settled nicely into homeschooling. All except one were still homeschooling when I last caught up with them some years later. In fact, I still hear from a few of these families today and I am rewarded to hear of their triumphs and see how nicely their children have grown. Time and time again, stories like these give hope to families who are apprehensive about starting their own homeschooling adventures. No matter how quickly or blindly one begins the

process of homeschooling, as you can see from these tales, it certainly can be done.

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