

# Homeschoolers Serve at General Assembly

by Georganna Mehfoud, age 16

Several other homeschoolers and I have had the privilege of working with this year's General Assembly as interns in Delegate Jay Katzen's office. I think I can safely say that all of us have learned a tremendous amount about our government. Michelle Legg, Delegate Katzen's Legislative Aide, believes that by working in a delegate or senator's office you learn more than by being a page. I agree. Like pages, we ran errands, made copies, filed bills, and hand delivered documents. However, as interns we were more deeply involved in what the delegates were actually working on.



(l-r) Arlene Walters, Patrick Mehfoud, Clifton Pleasant, Delegate Jay Katzen, and Georganna Mehfoud

Prompted by Michelle Legg's highly complimentary feedback, it was suggested I survey staff on my floor regarding homeschoolers. I worked up a questionnaire and distributed it to the secretaries and aides on the seventh floor. I got back four of the eight that I handed out (all from the women). The questions were very basic, *'What were your views of homeschoolers before working with them during this General Assembly?'* *'How have your views changed?'* *'What impressed you the most about homeschoolers?'* *'How could homeschoolers better serve you next year?'* Although by now I'm used to the usual question, *'So um... how do you ....ah...get like...well....socialized?'* I was surprised by how many people I worked with wondered this.

"I wondered if homeschooling would affect a child's interactions with others," said Janie Hodges, a General Assembly secretary, "or if they would miss out on both the good and the bad which you find in a classroom environment. The good being sharing ideas and learning from each other & learning to get along: the bad being discipline problems, lack of individual help and undesirable influences found in the group environment." While she was impressed with what she saw during this General Assembly, her views on homeschoolers did not change. She still felt that "homeschooling works well for some parents and students."

Legislative Aide, Dorothy Stellmach, said she was glad to have had the opportunity have her own bias realigned. "I was concerned that homeschoolers were not obtaining a well-rounded education in varied

subjects... or that they would have a narrow view of the world. But I had the opportunity to get to know a very fine young man who seems very knowledgeable for his age and is eager to learn. Their level of maturity is higher than I would have expected it to be for their particular age level."

The secretary to both Delegate Guest and Delegate Weatherholtz, Vicki Lowery, was also pleased with the level of maturity shown. Regarding homeschool interns, she said, "Their positive attitude, willingness to work and ability to understand detail impressed me the most. It was a treat to be able to call on the services of so willing a group. Next year we would love to have the same privileges, they were great!"

Annie Sawtelle, a Legislative Aide to Delegate McClure, said that she has known several homeschooled children and "Since I already had a favorable impression, my views did not change. Can I get one for next session?!" All of the women that we worked with said they would love to have homeschoolers come and work with them again, "I would welcome them back. They were a big help....They could definitely help with the same sort of tasks next year."

But we did not get all the credit for the work we did, "My hat's off to the parents also!" said Janie Hodges. They all wished us the best in the upcoming year. I certainly hope to have this opportunity again next year.

