

## Keeping It Real

Erin Scherger, Herndon

With the increasing popularity of homeschooling, I sometimes wonder about the impressions and stereotypes of the homeschooling experience.

Not that I'm worried about the comments from the naysayers. Though homeschooling can be done, and well, by anybody, I do know that it is not for everybody. I have seen for myself the benefits of homeschooling; their concerns are not a concern of mine.

And part of what I love about *VaHomeschoolers Voice* is the sharing of articles about what is going well for homeschoolers, written by homeschoolers themselves—the successes, the inspiration, the creativity. I love to read about kids who have discovered their passion, like Artemis Haptonstahl, who has dreams to create a tiny home, or Heidi Zmick, who is pursuing her love of French.

But I sometimes wonder if, as a community, we don't buy a little too heavily into our own press—that homeschoolers are highly motivated and bright; that homeschoolers are successful because we parents are able to customize their educational experience so specifically to their interests; that our children will discover their passions and take their first steps towards a fulfilling life; that everything is rainbows and unicorns and our children will be grateful for this amazing gift of homeschooling that we have bestowed upon them.

But, what if that's not our current reality? What if, a few months into the school year, our reality is that we are no longer so inspired? What if homeschooling begins to feel (to either parent or child, or both) difficult? What if we begin to feel as if we've made the wrong choice?

First, in the immortal words of Douglas Adams, "Don't panic."

Sometimes, when we're not inspired, we just have to push through. There's a sign on the wall to the yoga studio where I practice that reads, "Discipline is remembering what you want." Remembering the *why* of why we homeschool can be the motivation we need to work through a bit of a lull. Perseverance can be a good quality to model for our children.

But sometimes, we need to acknowledge that change is necessary. Sometimes, the curricula that we acquired for our children simply aren't a good fit. Jeanne Faulconer—homeschooler, writer, conference favorite, and former VaHomeschoolers board member—has even declared a holiday, around this time of year, that she calls "Curriculum's Not Working Day."<sup>1</sup>

Every so often, we simply need to break out of a rut. Karen Shumway and Laura Sowdon share ideas on how they inject a bit of variety into their homeschool routines. Personally, I always found that a good field trip broke up the routine for our family. Heather Cole, our new Roads Scholars editor, writes about field tripping to the homes of presidents from Virginia—a great unit study idea.

And, now and again, it helps to remember that homeschooling is not always easy, no matter how it appears in homeschool blogs and on social media. As some wise person said, "Don't compare your inside to someone else's outside." I am pleased to introduce a new project feature by Keely Noffsinger Massie: an inside look into the homes and experiences of members of Virginia's homeschooling community. Not just the good, but the messy, as well.

If the initial glow of homeschooling has lost a bit of its lustre, don't worry, this is often a normal part of the process. But do take this opportunity to see if you have unrealistic expectations of what homeschooling should look like and, instead, embrace the imperfections and complexities that make your experience truly your own.

*After 16 years of homeschooling, Erin Scherger has moved on from her jobs of teacher, principal, cafeteria monitor, taxi driver, and guidance counselor. Her two previously unsocialized homeschooled kids are now spreading their wings at four-year universities.*

<sup>1</sup>To read Jeanne's article, visit [thehomeschoolmom.com/october-1-curriculums-not-working-day](http://thehomeschoolmom.com/october-1-curriculums-not-working-day)

# Voice

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# Contents

## FEATURES

4 **Foreign Language Learning in a Monolingual Household** by Sarah Zmick

8 **Varied Education** by Laura Sowdon, OTR

9 **Double Potions Magic Classes!** by Karen Shumway

16 **BUILDING DREAMS The Totally True Tale of a Tiny Home in the Making** by Dawn Haptonstahl

19 **Moving On Up!** by DeeDee Sauter

23 **Call for Volunteers**

## DEPARTMENTS

10 **ROADS SCHOLARS Roadschooling the Homes of Virginian Presidents** by Heather Cole

14 **A Homeschool Day in the Life** by Keely Noffsinger Massie

18 **Volunteer Notes**

20 **FAMILY LEARNING IDEAS Learning for the Holidays** compiled by Angela Tuell

## ON THE COVER

Sisters Evalee and Lily Mae Cole, complete with Anna and Elsa costumes, help their dad make pancakes for dinner.

Photo by Keely Noffsinger Massie



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