

Happy 25th Birthday, VaHomeschoolers!

Erin Scherger, Herndon

In December 1993, homeschooling dads Jay Phaup and Will Shaw were active members in the Virginia homeschooling community. Jay was serving as a support group leader in Fluvanna County and Will was serving as a Vice President of HEAV (Home Educators Association of Virginia) and had been a homeschool lobbyist for five years. At the time, Will and Jay were uncomfortable with “the extent of the exclusiveness within the ranks of the Christian conservative homeschool organizations” and had the idea to create a homeschooling organization which “would welcome all homeschool sorts, not just Christian sorts.” They wished to form an organization which focused solely on homeschooling, without regard to political and social agendas. If an issue did not directly pertain to homeschooling, the new organization would take no position on it.¹

And thus, VHEA (Virginia Home Education Association) was formed; an organization which, over the last 25 years, has evolved into The Organization of Virginia Homeschoolers (VaHomeschoolers).

Nationally speaking, homeschooling has changed significantly—we no longer need to fight for our right to homeschool legally anywhere in the United States. What hasn’t changed is that VaHomeschoolers remains committed to providing homeschooling support to our members, as well as accurate information about homeschooling to Virginia’s families, school divisions, legislators and policymakers, the media, and the community at large. We are steadfast in our commitment to being an inclusive organization, neutral in all matters of politics and religion.

In short, we’re here for all homeschoolers in Virginia and our staunch dedication to our principles remains unchanged. But look how far we’ve come!

- Our Helpline began with a single volunteer who set up a toll-free phone line in her home and fielded every single call. Today, teams of homeschooling volunteers take turns answering questions on the Helpline and via email from our Helpdesk.
- This magazine, *VaHomeschoolers Voice*, began as a single-color handout. Dedicated past managing editors have brought this magazine into its current full-color, professional-quality form.
- On the legislative front, VaHomeschoolers initiated several vital changes to the laws in Virginia which we take for granted: e.g., 5-year-olds are excused from evidence of progress or can delay the start of kindergarten until they are 6, and families may begin homeschooling midyear. Options for providing evidence of progress were expanded and improved, and the amount of detail needed for the “description of curriculum” in a Notice of Intent was simplified to “a list of subjects to be studied.” Our legislative monitoring team continues to work throughout the General Assembly to ensure there are not unfortunate consequences for homeschoolers within otherwise well-intentioned laws.
- Our annual conference began in the basement of a church. For the past several years, we have enjoyed the hospitality of The Cultural Arts Center in Glen Allen. Next year, we will be moving to an even roomier venue at the Fort Magruder Hotel and Conference Center in Williamsburg!
- Even our board of directors changes. This year, just as we do every year, we are looking for homeschoolers who love to help other homeschoolers and who want to help preserve our mission and guide the growth of the organization.

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¹ For more information on the history of VaHomeschoolers, please visit our website at VaHomeschoolers.org/about/history.



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The Organization of Virginia Homeschoolers (VaHomeschoolers) is an independent, nonprofit, member-driven, statewide organization. We are committed to providing homeschooling support to our members, as well as accurate information about homeschooling to Virginia’s families, school divisions, legislators and policymakers, the media, and the community at large. VaHomeschoolers appreciates that homeschooling families are diverse in their beliefs and backgrounds, but united in loving their children, valuing their children’s education, and treasuring their freedom to homeschool. For this reason, VaHomeschoolers is an inclusive organization and is neutral in matters of politics and religion.

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ON THE COVER

Friends burn off some energy during a late winter hike on the Billy Goat Trail at Great Falls Park.
Photo by Molly Newman



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For up-to-date information about legislative issues, the logistics of homeschooling, and opportunities for networking with homeschoolers in your area, visit the website of The Organization of Virginia Homeschoolers.

VaHomeschoolers.org



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