

2018 Member Survey Results

Broadening Our Horizons, Focusing on You

Lisa Jones, Membership Coordinator

In years past, we have sent two surveys to our members each year: a general survey and one pertaining specifically to government affairs. These surveys guide The Organization of Virginia Homeschoolers and the board of directors to concentrate on the areas that are most important to you, the members of VaHomeschoolers.

Membership has its privileges. That's true for so many things, not just the American Express card. Membership with VaHomeschoolers affords you a subscription to *VaHomeschoolers Voice* magazine and the Happy Scientist website, as well as discounts to our annual conference and entry to members-only events. The membership also gives you access to retail discounts around the state. What is often overlooked when you join VaHomeschoolers is the benefit to others. VaHomeschoolers provides support to the family that just pulled their child out of public school due to bullying or illness, to the single parent who wants to homeschool but isn't sure how to make it all work, and to those who are interested in homeschooling but just don't know where to start. Your membership fee provides a place for those people

Historically, these surveys have only been sent to our members. Because we pay our lobbyist in Richmond with organization money, making sure that he is getting his "marching orders," so to speak, from our members makes perfect sense and is how it should be. This year, however, we took another approach for the general survey.

As one of the only inclusive homeschooling organizations in Virginia, we have a critical need for more volunteers and an increased membership if we wish to continue to support *all* homeschoolers in Virginia. So, this year, we not only sent our general survey to our members; we also posted it to our social media pages, in order to hear from those homeschoolers who are not yet members. That way we hoped to learn how we could meet their needs as well. This approach worked well: it doubled the number of respondents and gave us quite a lot to think about.

to ask their questions, get guidance, and to find their community. That \$29 allows us to advocate for homeschooling rights in Richmond and to keep our focus on homeschooling as our only agenda.

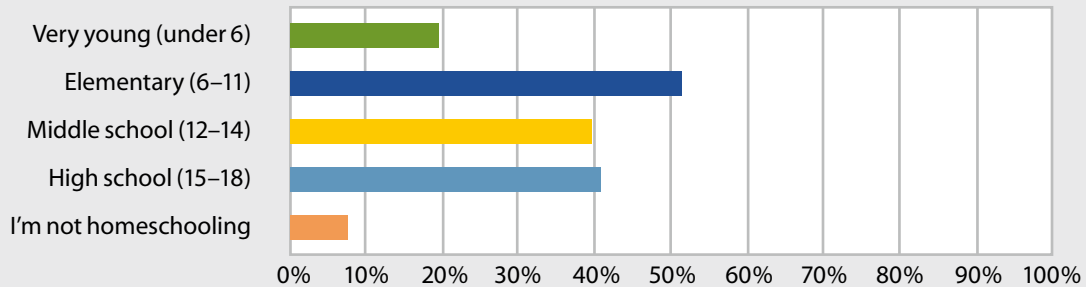
Some of the requests that we received regarding additional benefits you'd like to see were things such as a homeschool prom and more social activities for our members. As membership coordinator, I'm actively looking for regional coordinators to help bring these ideas to fruition. What we'd like to see are VaHomeschoolers-hosted events such as parents' nights out, paint and sips, proms and dances, and science fairs. But in order to have these things happen, again, we need volunteers.

VaHomeschoolers is inclusive because homeschoolers differ. The
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And the Winner Is...

*As a thank you for taking part in our survey, we chose a random participant to receive a one-year membership and all its concomitant benefits. We are pleased to announce that **Jennifer Lillihei** is the winner! Congratulations to her, and thank you to all who participated in our member survey this year.*

Age of respondents' homeschool students



survey showed that our respondents vary widely in why and how they homeschool. The ages of our students are fairly consistent with the greatest numbers being in the elementary ages.

A full 70% of our respondents file under option (i) of the Home Instruction Statute, with a high school diploma or higher. Of those respondents, 50% choose a nationally normed standardized test to show evidence of progress.

As an inclusive organization, one of the challenges is maintaining the balance of providing information without opinion. Unfortunately, many times that means that there will be opinions that you don't agree with posted on our Facebook groups or written about in our magazine. That's the beauty of our members; we are a passionate bunch. We are also able to respect the differences that make us diverse. Inclusion is not about everyone being the same, it's about celebrating our differences. Our inclusive nature was what the majority of our respondents deemed most important to them, with effective lobbying in Richmond coming in next at 45%.

Our Voice is Your Voice

Our magazine, *VaHomeschoolers Voice*, is the shining star of our member benefits. The articles are written by homeschoolers, the pictures are submitted by

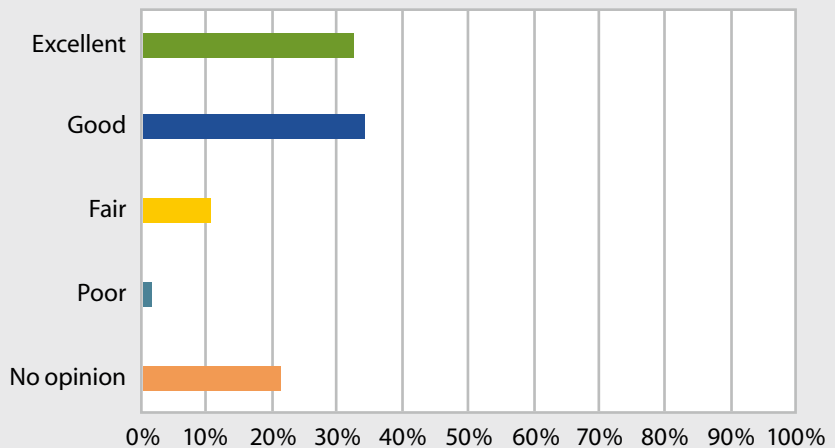
homeschoolers, and it's put together by a dedicated team of volunteers! The passion and commitment to this standard of excellence has not gone unnoticed by our respondents. The member respondents unanimously gave *VaHomeschoolers Voice* good to excellent marks. There's a reason 80% of the readers take the time to read *Voice* from cover to cover! I hope the team is as proud of this "grade" as the board of directors is of the team!

You all prefer to hold the magazine in your hands and for it to be delivered via mail. We've been considering offering the magazine online and through your email, as well. Of the respondents, only 10% were interested in these options. That definitely gives us something to think about and will inform some of our decisions in the near future.

Website Renewal

This past year has seen a huge change in our website, and it's not gone unnoticed.

Respondents' feedback on the new design of the VaHomeschoolers website



What respondents value most about the annual VaHomeschoolers Conference and Resource Fair

Answer choices	Responses
Speakers tackling topics that matter to me	81.37%
The chance to browse resources and curricula	69.61%
A place to ask my questions	55.88%
A feeling that I am part of a larger group	52.94%
Friendship with other homeschoolers	44.12%
Activities for my children and teens	44.12%
Other	8.82%

We are careful not to inundate our membership with emails, but when we send updates and announcements, it's nice to know that they are appreciated! Across the board, the email information sent out has been appreciated by the respondents. On every topic, from Government Affairs updates to NOI reminders, all respondents rated the value of the emails as high.

Social Media—Growing Our Community

The majority of our respondents are on social media and find our Facebook pages “moderately important.” As one of the moderators, I try to make our Facebook group a place that reflects the values of our organization. It’s a place for support, assistance, and giggles, too. If you have ideas or interest in our social media, please reach out to Volunteer@VaHomeschoolers.org.

We will be re-launching our blog; it was so nice to see the interest and ideas for topics.

Conference Is Coming!

Our annual conference is coming up in March. We’re trying a new location this year and are excited about the possibilities that brings. But the best part of the conference is *you*, our members. The conference team tries very hard to put on the best event possible. Do we meet

everyone’s every need? No. But we hope to provide a place for you to meet your community and celebrate what we have in common.

Lisa Jones is the Membership Coordinator and a member of the VaHomeschoolers board of directors. She lives on a small farm in Carson with her husband, two daughters, seven chickens, two goats, three cats, and two dogs.

Government Affairs

The Government Affairs portion of the 2018 membership survey asked questions about homeschooling-related legislative and school system issues. This feedback helps inform our legislative priorities in the upcoming General Assembly session and identifies problem areas when interacting with school divisions.

We found this year’s results to be consistent with years past, and are once again pleased to see that our members experience very few difficulties with their local school divisions. This indicates a mostly steady state of affairs for homeschooling in Virginia, with the notable exception in Loudoun County regarding the religious exemption, which came to light after the survey ended. We compiled six years’ worth of survey results this past summer, which provide a more detailed picture of member feedback on legislative matters. This “Survey of the Surveys” can be found in the June–August 2018 issue of *Voice* and on our website at VaHomeschoolers.org/about/annual-survey.