



Wisconsin Parents Association Newsletter

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WPA's Member Event, June 22, 2019

What is a WPA Member Event like?

- *Over 100 adults and children, meeting, talking, hanging out, celebrating graduates, getting to know the WPA Board of Directors, learning about Wisconsin's laws, sharing stories, reinforcing our freedoms, connecting for future work...*
- *Games, crafts, information in break-out sessions, inspiration from the Keynote Speaker, fun slideshow, scavenger hunt, group art project, Member Meeting, great volunteers, lots of food, good coffee and tea, ideas, issues, support!*

Members and their families shared a lovely, sunshiny day at the Jensen Community Center in Amherst, Wisconsin, on June 22, 2019. The theme of the day was **Working Together**. Our Keynote Speaker, **Chandler Forbes**, gave a heart-warming and encouraging message about how homeschooling allowed him to find his own path and how important it is to work together to keep our homeschool freedoms.

Four graduates, with their families, shared parts of their stories with the audience. They included **Joshua Buntin, Elijah Dean, Aaron Mitchell Folsom, and Donner Steed Timothy Wolters**. Congratulations, again, to these young adults!

Those who attended received flower seeds in their welcome bags, labeled with the hashtag **#GrowingWithWPA**. *Don't forget to share photos of the growth of your seeds, as well as other photos of your family's homeschooling growth, with this hashtag on social media.* Let people know that you are a part of WPA!

Thank you to everyone who made the day possible, including the WPA Board of Directors, break-out session speakers, Chandler Forbes, Member Event Planning Committee, volunteers of all ages who helped things run smoothly, and each family who attended.

Conference 2020!!!

Be sure to save the date for the **2020 WPA Conference, May 8-9** at the **Holiday Inn Stevens Point – Convention Center!** The planning committee is gathering steam, and is always looking for more volunteers. If you want to help with planning, or pitch in for an hour or two at the Conference, please email us at **volunteers@homeschooling-wpa.org** to let us know. Many hands make light work!



Above: Flower Power! Member Event attendees came together to create individual petals in a lovely homeschool bloom.

Left: Some of the families who attended WPA's 2019 Member Event gathered for a group photo at the end of the day.

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WPA's Ten Principles

Since 1984, WPA's work has been based on ten principles.

- Know what Wisconsin's homeschooling law does and does not require and how it is interpreted and enforced.
- Do only the minimum required by statute or regulation. Doing more will reduce freedoms you and other homeschoolers enjoy.
- Maintain the distinction between homeschools and public school programs, including virtual charter schools.
- Do not ignore violations of your rights, even when they seem too small to matter or it takes time and effort to protest.
- Learn to work with your legislators, regardless of their political party.
- Do not seek or accept benefits from the government. Such benefits are likely to be followed by increased regulation, especially since the government is accountable for how tax dollars are spent.
- Do not push for new homeschooling legislation. Small minorities generally have difficulty getting legislation passed. Also, legislation can be changed so much through amendments that it may end up working against the minority that introduced it.
- Stay out of court if at all possible.
- Understand and apply the distinction between compulsory school attendance and compulsory education.
- Work with other homeschoolers on the grassroots level. Set aside differences in approaches to education, curriculum choices, religious and philosophical beliefs, etc. Work to maintain the right of each family to make its own decisions.



These ten principles are the reasons homeschoolers in Wisconsin have been able to maintain their freedoms. WPA has had to work hard to maintain them in the face of opposition to homeschooling from the educational establishment, some legislators, and some members of the general public. Read more about WPA's history on our website at <http://homeschooling-wpa.org/wpa-history/>.



As the only state-wide, inclusive, grassroots organization dedicated to protecting the right of parents to provide an education to their children according to their own principles and beliefs, Wisconsin Parents Association is passionately committed to providing accurate homeschooling information.

We are excited to announce that in the coming months, we will be launching our new "WPA 101" program, available to homeschooling groups, libraries, and interested parents throughout Wisconsin. This 20- to 30-minute presentation by a WPA-trained facilitator will include an overview of homeschooling in Wisconsin, information about WPA, and an opportunity to ask questions and share ideas or concerns about homeschooling.

For more information, please email wpa@homeschooling-wpa.org.

Be A Fact-Finder!

What is the difference between compulsory attendance and compulsory education?

Hint: You can find the answer to this and many more Wisconsin homeschooling questions on www.homeschooling-wpa.org.



Legislative Watch Update: 2019-2021 Budget

The WPA Legislative Watch committee closely monitored the biennium budget process. The Wisconsin Legislature passed the 2019-2021 biennium budget bill on June 26, and Gov. Tony Evers signed it on July 3. Great news - there were no proposals or amendments which affect our homeschool law!

Legislative Watch is one of WPA's core functions, and we continue to monitor proposed legislation which may affect our very reasonable homeschool law. If you enjoy following the news and have an interest in the legislative process, please contact us at wpa@homeschooling-wpa.org to learn more about our Legislative Watch committee.

Wisconsin Parents Association Board of Directors

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File the PI-1206 Form Annually by October 15

It's that time of year - time to file the PI-1206 form!

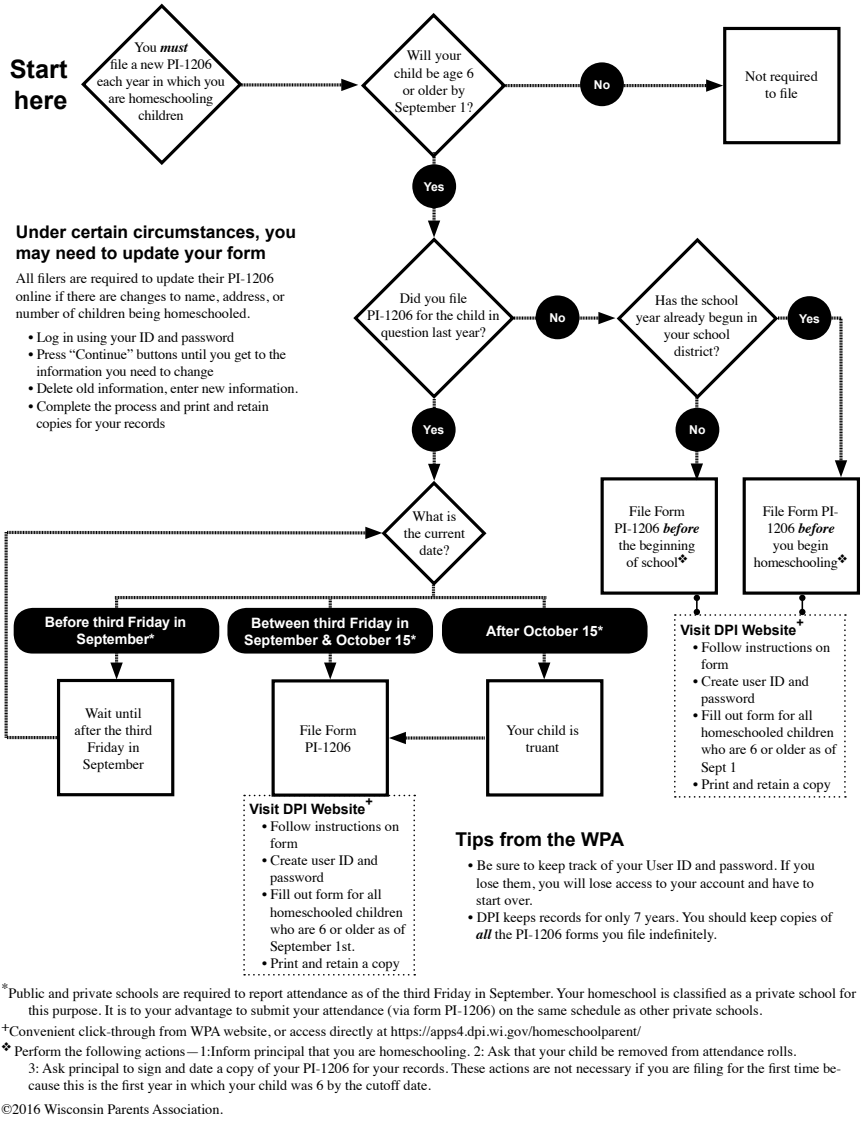
As a Wisconsin homeschooler, you are required to file form PI-1206 online every year you are homeschooling whether you start homeschooling the day public schools open or later in the school year. **You are not legally homeschooling if you have not filed the PI-1206.**

In filing the form, you are simply REPORTING the enrollment in your homeschool. Wisconsin Statutes require all public and private schools, including homeschools, to report to the DPI their enrollment numbers as of the third Friday in September. You are NOT requesting permission to homeschool. You are NOT registering your homeschool or children with the DPI. You are NOT seeking approval from your school district nor the DPI for your curriculum.

Wisconsin Statute 115.30(3) directs parents to file the PI-1206 sometime between the third Friday in September and October 15.

When and How to File the Form PI-1206

For more detailed instructions visit www.homeschooling-wpa.org.



Some important things to note:

- If your child is not age 6 as of September 1, 2019, you cannot file a PI-1206 for 2019-20 for them by law. If your child will turn 6 by September 1, 2020, then you will file a PI-1206 for them for the 2020-21 school year.
- If your child was in a traditional school for the 2018-19 school year, and this is the first time you are homeschooling, you should file the PI-1206 shortly before the school year begins in your district, *for this first year only*. For subsequent years, you can file in the normal filing window of the third Friday in September and October 15.
- If you withdraw your child from a traditional school during the school year, make sure to file the PI-1206 form before withdrawing them.

For complete instructions or a refresher on filing the PI-1206 form, please visit:
<https://homeschooling-wpa.org/2016/07/13/when-and-how-to-file-the-pi-1206/>

Deschooling Our Children, Deschooling Ourselves

"I removed my children from public school at the end of this last school year, and we immediately began homeschooling for the summer so we wouldn't fall behind. I must be doing something wrong, because they hate all the textbooks and workbooks I bought. They complain and fight constantly, or refuse to come out of their rooms when it's time for schoolwork. We are all miserable. I thought homeschooling was supposed to be different! Should I just put them back into school?"

We often receive questions like this from parents who jump right in to heavy academics, often replicating the school environment in their homeschool after their children leave a traditional school, and wonder what they are doing wrong because they are having difficulties.

The most important thing you can do for your children - and yourself - is to allow for a period of **deschooling**, which is a time to move out of the traditional school routines and mindset, and take time to decompress, relax, rediscover each other, and rediscover a love of learning!

What can deschooling look like? Nature walks. Trips to the library. Museum visits. Playing board games. Road trips. Reading for the pleasure of doing so. Exploring. Cooking and baking. Read alouds. Crafts. Stargazing. Trying new things. Just hanging out.

Homeschooling does not need to replicate a traditional school experience. As the administrator of your home-based private education program, you have the freedom

and responsibility to research and determine what your educational philosophy is, what your children's learning styles are, and then develop a learning plan or path for your children to follow. The deschooling period is the perfect time to work on these things!

In short, deschooling is a reset and an adjustment to a new normal, and it can generally take anywhere from a few weeks to a couple of months. You and your children will know when the deschooling period can be concluded.

Once you and your children are deschooled, then the individualized plan or path for learning can begin!

Insights from "The Handbook"

Why Do Families Homeschool?

Families homeschool for many different reasons. Some want their children to have a conventional education while learning in their own way, at their own pace. Some want their children to pursue special interests. Other parents choose to share more of their beliefs and values than attending conventional school would allow. Some seek academic excellence, while others cannot find an acceptable alternative. Some children cannot learn well in a conventional school. Other parents do not want their children trapped by the academic and social pressures of conventional schools. Some prefer to learn from life experience. Opportunities to build a strong family draw others. And some want to take charge of their own lives rather than surrendering them to conventional schools.

Homeschooling encompasses all these reasons and more. Whatever your reasons, you are not alone.

Homeschooling families are amazing. In a society dominated by conventional schools, we are learning in our homes and communities, reveling in discovery, growing in confidence. We are contributing to our communities, doing important work, and having fun.

(con't on pg. 6)

Keep Those PI-1206 Forms!

WPA's Question Answering Committee (QAC) has received several calls over the past year or so about homeschool graduates being asked to provide proof of their enrollment in a home-based private education program.

How long should the PI-1206 forms be retained? Indefinitely.

The Department of Public Instruction only keeps PI-1206 forms for seven years, and once a form reaches year eight, it drops off of their system and cannot be retrieved. WPA does not receive or keep copies of this form. It is the responsibility of the administrator of a home-based private education program to retain these records.

Some institutions of higher education, an increasing number of employers, and employment background check agencies are asking for proof of enrollment in a home-based private education program, especially documentation covering the high school years. Remember that the PI-1206 form is the proof of enrollment in a home-based private education program, and gives validity to the transcript and diploma issued by the administrator of that program. (This would be similar to one of these entities contacting a traditional school to verify enrollment.)

Homeschoolers entering college and the workforce may find they have a few extra hoops to jump through when seeking a degree or employment and demonstrating that they graduated from a home-based private education program. Applying to college or for a job as a homeschool graduate may take some additional advocacy on your part. When you enter college or the workforce, you may find you will need to sell yourself and your experiences as a homeschooler. Your unique educational choices and experiences can be a real asset to a college or a workforce filled with other students or employees who may have followed a more traditional path.

Not being able to provide sufficient documentation may result in a loss of opportunities, or needing to obtain a GED or HSED.

WPA recommends that the administrator of each home-based private education program retain several copies of each child's PI-1206 form - in paper and electronic form - in multiple places such as your home, with your grown children who no longer live in your home, a safe deposit box, on a remote server or cloud, on a flash drive, and even with a trusted friend or relative.

Homeschooling with Grace

By Mary Sue Slifer, WPA Treasurer and 10-year WPA member

A wise woman said: *"There is beauty in keeping the family unit together regardless of how we teach."*

Burn-out, self-doubt, worry, and concerns are common with homeschooling parents, and at times I need to remind myself not to pass them along to my son. Our journeys are filled with challenges and sometimes life can be overwhelming. Moving. Changing jobs. Death. Babies. Divorce. Illness. LIFE is messy. How we handle life is as important as math and language arts.

We all make mistakes. How we handle our mistakes, and the mistakes of others, really defines who we are. Handling life with grace, raising our children with grace, will prepare them for all the wonderful and messy things life throws their way.

In the beginning, I was so determined to TEACH my child, I lost sight of spending time with him. Cherishing the times he sat in my lap, reading him a book. Watching him discover bugs or listening to storms. Those times I treasured most. A family learning together, managing life together is so much more important than mastering square roots.

I love spending time with my child. I love hearing him use words that make adults give him a second look, or have a conversation with someone who is not expecting his pointed questions and genuine interest. I love allowing him to explore his interests on his own level. And now as a teenager, encouraging him to be a critical thinker.

Why are you homeschooling? For us, it was to allow him to pursue his passions throughout life, and to ultimately find them in his career. Motivating him to get up and treasure his days. This has defined our homeschool journey. Have you asked yourselves that question yet?

It's wonderful to homeschool in Wisconsin. We have 875 hours a year to learn! As the administrators of our homeschools - we define the terms of the school year! Giving yourself permission to take a day or week off is okay. Giving yourself permission to say something is not working is OK. When new homeschooling parents ask me advice - without fail it is, "It's okay to throw something away if it's not working rather than force it!" And, "Forgive yourself." There will be days you can't do the laundry AND teach science. Allow yourself to triumphantly say, "Today it was enough to (fill in the blank)!" Our children are watching how we handle 'too much' ... Concentrate on your accomplishments and use your mistakes as lessons.

Frustrated? Go outside, breathe, look at the clouds. Play a game. Read books - any books. Do art. FIELD TRIP! Practice life skills!! "Today is cooking & laundry day." Balance a checkbook! Check out a historical marker! Walk the dog! Take the cat to the vet! Watch a documentary.

Curriculum troubles? Reach out to other homeschoolers -do they have 'that' book? What was their experience with that curriculum? Check out the library systems. Or, a curriculum sale or fair - ask questions!

Worried about missing something? In the beginning I stressed about what I would miss. I made a list of goals for the year. Kept the list in my lesson planner. Looked at the list, got stressed about meeting those goals. Lost the list. 3 months later, my list showed up. Looking at it again, I realized we met our goals and hadn't even stressed about it.

From there on, I made my list for the year based on my curriculum (although we're eclectic homeschoolers) putting it away and only pulling it out at the end of the year. I realized we were meeting those goals every year. I learned to trust myself. I am accountable for my son's education. I'm accountable to myself as the administrator of my son's homeschool. If I fall short, it's my doing, not his. Making adjustments is up to me. I can fix it! And what a great lesson for a child.

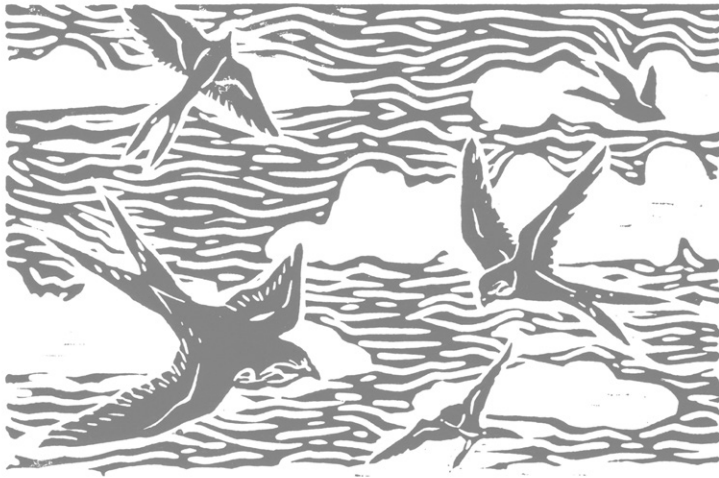
Consider breaking your subjects into 8 week increments, then switch them out. Managing several subjects in one day can be overwhelming for everyone. Retention is better than crossing something off my list.

Meals, budgets, housecleaning, errands, family or church or group commitments - all life lessons! Buying or maintaining a car! Life is beautiful, messy and filled with opportunities. You're getting the chance to show and teach them how to handle the ups and downs.

Self care is essential. Spending time with other homeschool Moms helps me recharge. Assurance that we're not the only one in that spot. How do you and your children recharge? Where do your passions lie? Does your child see you pursuing your passions? Isn't it just as important to show our children how we as adults follow our passions? What makes your child tick? Take them for a walk and ask them what makes them happy!

Life is so precious. Build a tent in the living room and see where it leads. I miss hearing, "Mama! Come find me." They grow so fast and as excited as I am for high school, I would love to go back and do it over again. I might change a few things, but for the most part, I would love to have him crawl into my lap and ask me to read *GO DOG GO* for the 816th time.





2020 Kohl Student Excellence Scholarship

From the Kohl Foundation website: *"It is the goal of the Foundation to encourage Wisconsin youth to pursue post-secondary education in a public or nonpublic university, college, or vocational/technical college. The Foundation awards \$10,000 scholarships to 100 Wisconsin high school graduates each year. Homeschool students receive a proportionate number of the total scholarships awarded each year."*

WPA has worked with the Kohl Foundation over the last 20 years to process the homeschool student applications, and, in the past few years, to improve the online application process.

Further information from the Kohl Foundation: *"Applicants must be graduating high school students who intend to enroll in a postsecondary institution, which may be a public or nonpublic university, college, or vocational/technical college. Students who are residents of the State of Wisconsin, are in good standing, and who demonstrate probable success in postsecondary education are eligible to apply. This is a competitive scholarship."*

Any student who meets the above eligibility criteria may apply. Candidates are not evaluated on financial need. Students will be evaluated on their leadership, citizenship, school and community involvement, and academic achievement. In addition, students will be evaluated on their ability to clearly articulate goals in each of four areas: future educational goals, personal life goals, community/society service goals, and career goals."

Important Dates and Reminders:

- The application process will open in September. The online Homeschool Application must be submitted by the homeschool deadline, which is Tuesday, November 26, 2019.
- Three letters of recommendation are required. New this year: An improved process of requesting letters of recommendation will be rolled out this year. See <http://kohleducation.org/> for details.
- All applicants will be notified in December as to whether or not they are a finalist.
- 100 scholarship recipients will be notified in March.
- Recipients are invited to recognition banquets in April.

If a student in your family is interested in applying, please read about the Student Excellence Scholarship at <http://kohleducation.org/> so you don't miss any important details. Homeschool students may also contact WPA at KohlSupport@homeschooling-wpa.org with questions related to the scholarship.

Insights from "The Handbook" (con't from pg 4)

We are living in the present as surely as we are preparing for the future.

Our lives make much-needed statements:

- Families matter.
- Ordinary parents can raise children without relying on "experts."
- Children who are given love, support, and guidance are eager to learn and good at it.
- Everyone benefits when families learn and grow together, when parents consider raising their children a high enough priority to arrange income and career advancement around it.
- Even a small minority can work through a grassroots organization to maintain its rights and responsibilities in the face of continuing challenges from powerful interest groups.
- People can create and maintain a space where children and families are free to learn and live.

Today's homeschoolers walk in the footsteps of pioneers and provide the trail for those who will follow... What you do will affect the way you and others, maybe even your children and grandchildren, can homeschool. Please act carefully, boldly, courageously, and wisely. Welcome to homeschooling in Wisconsin!

Excerpt from: *Homeschooling in Wisconsin: At Home with Learning*, p.9-10. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Parents Association, 2013.

Conference Slideshow



One of the highlights at WPA's annual event is always the slideshow showcasing our members' homeschooling photos from the year. We'd love for you to share your journey with us! Make sure to grab those snapshots along the way - we'll let you know where to email them in the Spring. Happy memory-making!

Homeschooling is a Choice

By Rebecca Ahl, WPA Legislative Watch and 10-year WPA member

You already know what I'm about to tell you. You know because at some point, in some way, you chose to homeschool your child. Whether you came to home-schooling because you were inspired by a friend, or because John Holt books lit a fire in your heart, or because your child had a terrible school experience, here you are. Whatever brought you to homeschooling, at some point, you had to make the choice to do it.

Making the choice to homeschool naturally opens some doors and closes others. It's important to understand this choice and its consequences.

When you choose to homeschool, you are choosing *not* to attend public or private schools. In most cases, this also means you are choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities offered through public or private schools. You are choosing not to be provided with a prescribed curriculum, or text books or other school supplies. You are choosing to provide these and other kinds of experiences or materials to your children in your own way.

You are also choosing to follow the Wisconsin laws that relate to homeschooling. Under Wisconsin law, you have the right to educate your child at home. If you choose to homeschool, you have the responsibility to do so in any way that meets the minimum, reasonable requirements of the law.

It's important in parenting - and in life, generally - to recognize when you are making a choice, and to consider the possible consequences. Choosing to homeschool means choosing an education for your children that is shaped by your beliefs, your goals, and your educational style. Under our Wisconsin law, you have incredible freedom to make a path of your own. But the nature of choices means that you are also letting go of other opportunities. It's important to understand the meaning of your choice to homeschool.

The Extraordinary Value of a WPA Membership

An annual family membership in WPA costs \$35. But what is it worth? What do you and others get with that membership?

First, because WPA is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization, guided by an all-volunteer, working board, every cent of your membership goes to sustaining WPA, the only statewide 501(c)3 non-profit working to maintain the rights of all Wisconsin homeschoolers.

Of course, keeping your membership current means you get our semi-annual Newsletter, and you are the first to receive update emails, especially related to legislative watch and legal issues. Members also get to attend our annual conference or member meeting, and member graduates get to participate in our graduate recognition ceremony.

Your membership dollars also support the maintenance of our richly detailed website, which is currently free and available to anyone with internet access. This is an incredibly valuable service that WPA provides. For the kind of regularly updated, accurate information the WPA site provides, many other organizations require paid access. Adding a paywall, even to publicly-available information, would be a reasonable way for WPA to maintain these services for homeschoolers, but at this point, the wealth of information available to you on our website remains free to access.

WPA also staffs and maintains our Question Answering Committee (QAC), a dedicated group of experienced Wisconsin homeschoolers available to answer any question about homeschooling in Wisconsin. This free service is, again, made available to members and non-members alike, through the support of your membership dollars and the incredible dedication of our volunteers. If I need to ask a veterinarian a question after office hours, I have to pay for that. If I want to get answers about what's wrong with my laptop, I have to pay for that. But homeschooling families in Wisconsin can reach out to WPA twenty-four hours a day, and quickly get personalized, accurate information and support, at no charge.

Our Legislative Watch committee, also staffed by volunteer members, is dedicated to keeping our laws strong, and works daily to monitor homeschooling news and legislative action that may affect Wisconsin homeschoolers. The current political landscape makes legislative action more unpredictable than ever, and keeping abreast of these ongoing issues is essential to protecting our rights.

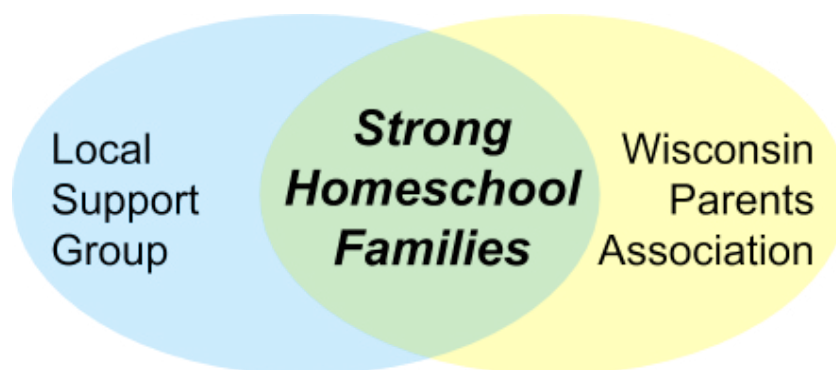
Keeping all of these valuable services accessible to non-members is another way WPA works every day to protect your right to educate your children. Our goal is to keep every Wisconsin family informed of their legal rights and responsibilities under our current, reasonable laws. Avoiding legal mis-steps and misunderstanding by any homeschooling family helps protect all of us, and keeps our current laws strong.

Thirty-five years ago, founding WPA members fought for the creation of a reasonable Wisconsin homeschooling law that protects all families, regardless of their hometown, their wealth, or their personal beliefs. For thirty-five years, WPA has been lighting the way for Wisconsin families who choose this path to educate their children. ***Your paid membership keeps the lights on for you, and for every Wisconsin homeschooling family.***

If your friends or families benefit from our hard work, please consider encouraging them to join us. If you know Wisconsin homeschooling families who are not WPA members, please let them know how hard WPA volunteers work for them, and ask them to join us. ***Finally, thank you for joining us; we couldn't do it without you.***

Our goal is to keep every Wisconsin family informed of their legal rights and responsibilities under our current, reasonable laws.

WPA + Local Groups = Stronger Together



Being a member of
a **local homeschool support group**
gives you opportunities
to establish local relationships,
share ideas and experiences,
and build a day-to-day network of support.

Being a member of
Wisconsin Parents Association (WPA)
means you're part of the state-wide, inclusive,
grassroots organization dedicated to protecting the
right of parents to provide an education to their
children according to their own principles and beliefs.

When you join or renew your membership with WPA and your local homeschool support group at the same time, everyone wins — \$5 of your WPA membership fee stays with your local homeschool support group!

Learn more at https://homeschooling-wpa.org/membership/lhsg_partnership/.