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The Wise Mom™



A Quarterly Electronic Newsletter for HMN Members

September 2008

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wise (adj):
informed, aware

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HMN ANNOUNCEMENTS

Happy Fifth Anniversary HMN!

This October the Holistic Moms Network celebrates our fifth anniversary as a national non-profit community for parents interested in holistic health and green living. Special celebrations and items will be part of our **2008 Natural Living Conference** to mark our anniversary. **Help us celebrate by supporting our growing community:** [donate to HMN](#), [purchase HMN merchandise](#) or give a [gift membership](#) to another mom or through our [Helping Moms in Need Program](#). Thank you for making HMN possible and for your passion for holistic living!



[Organic Valley Web Site](#)

2008 Natural Living Conference: Don't Miss Out!

The 2008 Natural Living Conference is just around the corner and space is going fast!! We are honored to be featuring Keynote Speakers **[Barbara Loe Fisher](#)**, co-founder of the National Vaccine Information Center, and **[Annie B. Bond](#)**, author and environmentalist. In addition, we welcome workshop speakers **Helen Coronato** on *Eco-Action Plans for Kids: Real Ideas with Real Results for Real Moms!*; **Dr. Loren Marks, DC** on *Stress and Your Health: Using Integrative Assessment Technique to Create Balance*; **Stephanie Bachmann Mattei** on *Parenting From Your Heart, Based on the Teachings of Nonviolent Communication*; and **Nancy Plent** on *Homeschooling 101*. **[Register online today](#)** and catch the excitement!

Welcome New HMN Sponsors!

HMN welcomes our new Sponsors to our community:

- **[A Better Birth \(CA\)](#)**
- **[Essential Life Builder \(NY\)](#)**
- **[Life is Good Chiropractic \(PA\)](#)**
- **[Marney Cakes \(NY\)](#)**
- **[Marshalls Creek Chiropractic \(PA\)](#)**
- **[Zayna's Cuts for Kids \(NJ\)](#)**

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FROM THE EDITOR BY AIMEE K. WOOD

Learning is a lifelong process that cannot be compartmentalized into just schooling or childhood. Also, learning isn't just about academics or the three R's of reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. Learning spans the generations and can encompass aspects such as emotionality, spirituality, and inner growth.

This issue of ***The Wise Mom*** focuses on learning not just because it is back-to-school time, but because we are all on a learning journey called, "life". We have some wonderful poetry submissions from a member and one of our holistic kids. A holistic dad, Patrick O'Kane, reviewed the book *Hold Onto Your Kids*. Patrick gives us his opinion on this classic attachment parenting book. Scott Noelle of www.enjoyparenting.com gives us some sage advice on providing an honest wholesome example for our children in "Invisible Teaching". Many schools have discovered the practice of meditating with children and our guest author Sarah Wood Vallely teaches us some simple techniques. Dr. Susan Rubin changes the direction of nutritional education for children by starting simply: in the school garden. The Green Team interviewed the Ridge and Valley Charter School in New Jersey. That school is truly a refreshing change in the world of standardized testing. Kasey Errico, HMN board member and teacher at the Ridge and Valley Charter School is highlighted in our member profile. "Greening Your School" is a proactive article to help you look at your school and make changes. Finally, Amy Reissner, HMN member, embarks on the journey of growth that was facilitated by the death of her mother in the article, "Lessons about Loving and Valuing Oneself".



[HappyBaby](#)



[Ideal Bite](#)

Take this opportunity to learn something new and embark on something that you are passionate about. How enriching it is when we can learn a new skill or technique and pass it on to our most precious resource: our children!

Enjoy this issue of *The Wise Mom* and I welcome your submissions and comments at: wisemom@holisticmoms.org.

Warmly,
Aimee K. Wood
Editor

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SPECIAL THANK YOU TO CONFERENCE MEDIA SPONSORS



The Holistic Moms Network would like to thank the following magazines for sponsoring our community by giving us free advertising space in their pages to coincide with our [5th Annual Natural Living Conference in October!](#) Emily Fano, our National Media Coordinator, secured the ads. Guido Caroti, Emily's husband and an Art Director at Random House, designed the beautiful ads. And, HMN member and photographer, Sumayyah Simone provided some of the amazing photography. Please look for these magazines, and our ads, on newsstands and support the magazines who supported HMN, or pick up a free copy of each at the Conference where they will be displayed!

- [Inspired Parenting Magazine](#) (Summer 2008)
- [E, The Environmental Magazine](#) (September 2008)
- [Natural Solutions Magazine](#) (October 2008)
- [Kiwi Magazine](#) (September/October 2008)
- [Positively Green Magazine](#) (August 2008)
- [Living Crafts Magazine](#) (Fall 2008)
- [Natural Awakenings: Morris County](#) (July, August, September, and

- October 2008)
- [*Holistic Health Magazine*](#) (Sneak Preview Issue/July 2008 and August 2008)
 - [*The Link, Homeschooling Magazine*](#) (August 2008), and
 - [*Natural Life*](#) (September/October 2008).

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MEMBER POETRY BY SHAWNA SEALING

Learning



Today more than ever, I have learned how to learn.
How to watch, how to inhale, how to absorb
The thoughts, emotions and lives of my sons.

I created, birthed, rocked, sung to, fed, and
breathed in
Their love, scent, imagination and wonder.

I soak in the sunshine of their beings.

Knowing that I smile upon them in days of dreams or
Frustration and anger, knowing that joy will
Bound up and throw out the stress. I can feel it sneak up and wrap
Around me as I learn the ways of old, the traditions, teaching and healing and
Cooking and praying.
Life and light over my sons.

Will they know how to sun dry tomatoes or
Dig up the Echinacea root and extract the medicine?

Will I be able to teach them the grinding of ginger
Wrapping of white sheets added to the ginger for a fever?
Will they remember me still as I dehydrate and create a rainbow
Of live foods and drinks so that they will feel alive?

Will they know their bodies cry for help, their symptoms scream as a rash or a
headache?

Will they learn as I did the secret of Jewelweed?
Will they be able to determine a product that helps, enriches and teaches
Rather than a fad, a gimmick, a profit?

Can I learn the ways of the world, evil and glorious so that
I may teach green to my children
Red and yellow, black and white?

Will they know the poison from the healing?
Peak oil, economy crashing, living without electricity
Outhouses, chickens and fertilizer?

I have learned today what organic means from my five year old child
Organic, of course mama, means that no big man or little man

Can make anything better than God has made it...

Today I have learned so much
Sometimes being the teacher really means being the student.

About Shawna: I am a mother, in love with the hippie that I married, an activist for the earth & all its inhabitants, birth warrior, postpartum doula, herbalist, home birth and breastfeeding advocate, aspiring midwife, self proclaimed birth junkie, friend and a tree hugging supporter of missionaries. I strive daily to meet and greet the Lord for His Grace, wisdom and protection. I also strive/struggle to live gently and to please Him. I am a Co-Director of a doula Co-Op called Babymoon Doulas and you can visit us at: www.babymoondoulas.org.

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HOLISTIC KID'S CORNER



Nature Calling

"The wind whispers through the willows,
The water rapidly charges on,
The wolves howl at the moon,
Leaves rustle at your doorstep,
Snow dashes through the fields,
Nature's calling for you to see-
All the wonders of the world."

Spirit

Let your spirit soar,
Up to the clouds
And back again,
Flying high
Light as air
In the sky,
Way up high,
Let your spirit soar.

"Nature Calling" and "Spirit" were written by Autumn Rose Lukomski-La Police, age 10, Richboro PA. She is a holistic kid born at home 10 years ago. She was

extended nursed for five years, never vaccinated, still family beds, is vegetarian and homeschooled. She loves to write, especially nature-themed poetry.

**Editor's Note: Image courtesy of www.freefoto.com.*

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BOOK REVIEW: HOLD ON TO YOUR KIDS

Hold On To Your Kids by Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Maté.
Reviewed by Patrick O'Kane

'Kids need to be with kids'

'You want him to have friends, don't you?'

'C'mon, cut the cord already'.

I can hear these and other critiques echoing in my mind as I re-read the title of this inspiring book by Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Maté. They still echo because they were some of my first reactions. Luckily, I didn't judge this book by the cover.

Hold On To Your Kids is a comprehensive summary of the findings of Gordon Neufeld's lifetime devotion to analyzing relationships between children, teens and their parents. With the help of Gabor Maté (a physician and former client of Dr. Neufeld), Neufeld has created what turns out to be a very satisfactory answer to the question, "Why is my child ignoring me?"

The basic premise of this book is that children will inevitably form a primary attachment in their lives. We all do. At infancy, our primary attachment is to our mothers. Parents remain in this role as the infant becomes a toddler. During childhood and into adulthood, our primary attachment sometimes migrates to someone else—usually one of our peers. In the authors' view, it is this trend toward 'peer orientation' (rather than maintaining our 'adult orientation') that is wreaking havoc among the social and emotional development of our children.

This thesis of 'primary attachments' is very appealing. Much like a cheating spouse (a tragic, yet dead on comparison), children who have formed primary attachments with peers will quickly lose interest with everyone else around them. They never want to be around the house. Nothing their parents say has any influence over them. Teachers lose any connection they may have had. Conversely, everything their best friend (of the week) says is gospel. Much like an infant will cry when separated from her mother, peer oriented youth want (or even need) to be in constant contact with their primary attachment (which explains why they are always on the phone and/or internet chat). In short, teens that have become 'peer oriented' are, in a way, engaged in an extra-familial affair. Against such a situation, parents and teachers are typically at a total loss as to how to proceed.

As the book progresses, Neufeld and Maté further develop this theory. They vividly describe the effects of peer orientation upon families. They tell of

parents parenting in ways they never intended to. Punishments are doled out with no effect; arguments are frequent; tempers flare and houses are no longer 'homes'. The authors also indict 'peer culture' as both superficial and paralyzing for our children's emotional development. Are we really confident relinquishing our parenting role to the coolest kid in our child's 7th grade class?

Lucky for the reader, Neufeld and Maté offer extensive advice on how to counter this trend in our society. The practical advice offered is the result of over 30 years of counseling parents (and children) on dealing with attachment issues. They provide advice on how to 'collect' our children, discipline them without breaking bonds, and most importantly, how to preserve our position as the primary attachment in our child's lives.

In response to a 'turgid and lumbering manuscript' the authors employed a very effective editor (Susana Porter) to tighten up the writing and clarify the important messages of this book. As a result, the book flows nicely and keeps readers engaged throughout. While ***Hold On To Your Kids*** is a tougher read than the typical bestseller, the read is compelling and eye opening. Every new section contains an 'a-ha' moment. But don't treat this like a beach novel—the ideas require concentration (and even some note-taking). If you are wondering what is wrong with your relationship with your pre-teen, and are tired of the cynical answer, 'That's just how kids are', ***Hold On To Your Kids*** contains a much more satisfactory reply.

Patrick O'Kane has a Master degree in Education. Having taught in urban, suburban, international, middle and high schools, Patrick has developed a keen interest in raising excellent children. Currently living in Europe, he enjoys spending time with his wife and son while teaching Spanish and coaching several sports teams.

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INVISIBLE TEACHING BY SCOTT NOELLE

Excerpted from The Daily Groove: A Creative Parents' Guide to the Art of Attraction Parenting, by Scott Noelle

The problem with teaching children explicitly is that we are rarely aware of what we are teaching them implicitly.

For example, if you tell your children to say "thank you," the implicit lesson is that expressing gratitude is something they should do whether they feel like it or not -- not something that comes naturally.

Better to say "thank you" yourself -- to model the appropriate behavior joyfully. Joy is attractive and, eventually, they'll want in on the fun!

Your child doesn't internalize what you say as much as the energy with which you say it. Pay close attention to how you feel and you'll notice that teaching often carries a subtle vibe that feels "yucky."

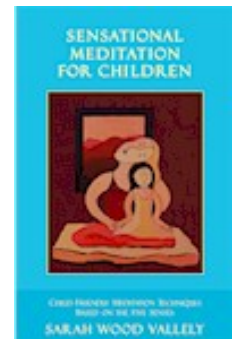
So when you must teach explicitly, clean up your energy first. Otherwise you might be teaching the wrong lesson!

When you teach by example, you are following the advice of Gandhi who said, "you must BE the change you wish to see..."

*Scott Noelle is a parenting coach, author, and father of two. His book is a compilation of brief, thought-provoking, inspirational messages originally written for his free e-newsletter, **The Daily Groove**, which is available at www.enjoyparenting.com.*

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MEDITATING CHILDREN FIND EXCITEMENT WITHIN THE STILLNESS BY SARAH WOOD VALLELY



A meditation movement for children is quietly emerging across the United States and throughout the world. Children are learning meditation techniques at home, in school, in after-school clubs, and in churches, yoga studios and YMCAs. Parents, teachers, and therapists are finding that meditation helps children in as many ways as there are children learning its techniques.

Teachers report that their classroom environments are more peaceful with meditation. They attribute this to their students' ability to express care and compassion for one another. Teachers also say their students' academic skills and confidence have risen.

Therapists who work with children say meditation reduces test anxiety, builds positive peer relationships, and enhances anger management skills. Scientists find meditation decreases blood pressure and helps other physical functions, which may be adding to these positive shifts in children.

If meditation brings about these fantastic benefits in children, how does a child learn how to meditate most constructively? I've been teaching meditation to children for almost ten years and have found introducing a child to his or her senses, is the best way to not only teach a child how to meditate but to inspire him or her to meditate. Because let's face it, when we become still and experience the world around us (and within us) with all of our senses, we are reminded of how exciting our world truly is. Who needs a TV show when a symphony of birds chirping and trucks rumbling, a celebration of cool breeze on our toes and an explosion of images of our favorite things are warming up around us, just waiting to be heard, felt and seen?

The senses are our vehicle for learning new things. If we take a tour of a castle, we not only see the stone abutments and the moat, and thereby understand what castle defenses were like, but we also learn what castles

smell like through our nostrils. If we hear someone drop her purse, we learn what dropping something in a castle sounds like. We might run a hand down the stone wall and learn about its texture.

The senses children use most frequently to absorb information about their world, and to thereby understand it, are called by some researchers their learning styles. Some children are visual learners and learn best by taking in what they see; other children are auditory learners and absorb information most easily by hearing words and other sounds; yet others are kinesthetic learners and are most comfortable learning about the world by touching objects and feeling emotions.

Here are a few ways you can guide a child to learn meditation, with respect to visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning. You might not be aware of your child's learning style, but using all three approaches will benefit your child.

Visual Learning- Sense of Sight

When working with your child to establish personal goals, help him create a collage of pictures representing a particular goal or dream. Then lead him through a meditation in which he visualizes his goals being met. To help your child improve his relationships, have him close his eyes and visualize resolving the conflict he is having with another person. For example, ten-year-old, Noah watches himself ask his sister to please stop taking his toys out of his room during his meditation.

Auditory Learning – Sense of Hearing

Guide your child to hear things during meditation. Afterward, ask him what sounds he heard. For example, if you lead your children through the Grounding Cord meditation, ask him if he heard things moving down his grounding cord. During this meditation, children let go of energy and objects down a cord, into the center of the planet. They might see, hear and feel blue dust move out of their body and down the cord. Or they might see pictures of homework and people go down. These objects are not bad, just things they do not need to think about in that moment. Click here to learn more about that meditation: <http://www.sarahwood.com/SampleMeditations.htm>

Kinesthetic Learning – Sense of Touch or Emotional Intelligence

Art activities cater to the kinesthetic child. After meditating, do projects inspired by your child's meditation that involve touching the medium, such as finger painting and handling clay.

Your child will love exploring exciting worlds and peaceful states of mind with their new power – meditation. Your child might become aware of the clock ticking and the wind rustling through the trees while they sit quietly in the mornings with you. Or they might feel warmth in their heart and a tingling in their toes while meditating before bedtime. Whatever the sensation or the time of day, your child will become more centered and familiar with their inner most feelings and the subtleties of their world, with meditation.

*Sarah Wood Vallely is author of **Sensational Meditation for Children - A Complete Guide to Child-friendly Meditation Based on the Five Senses**. Sarah began working professionally with children in 1991. A former art teacher, Sarah now teaches meditation to children. Sarah has a bachelors in*

Fine Art and her cross cultural meditation training includes American Board of Hypnotherapy Certification, Vipassana (Buddhist), a four-year internship with regression therapy master (Western Shamanism), Huna practitioner training (Hawaiian), Reiki, Level II (Japanese) and ongoing Yoga instruction (Hindu). Sarah is also a member of the ChildSpirit Institute and North Carolina Writers' Network.

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NUTRITION EDUCATION BEGINS IN THE GARDEN BY DR. SUSAN RUBIN

Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand. ~Chinese proverb

The latest research shows that nutrition education is not working! It is ineffective in creating behavior change in getting our kids to eat more veggies. So much time, money and energy has been spent in our schools to teach kids nutrition and we've gotten nowhere.

The pyramid is part of the problem. Why are we wasting time teaching our kids the government sanctioned official word on nutrition that just doesn't stick?

The USDA food pyramid is uninspiring and full of conflicts of interest with the food industry, meat and dairy lobbies. If we want our kids to really learn something beyond being able to regurgitate facts and figures for a test, we need them involved on a deeper level.

Our school cafeterias are now loaded with 100 calorie packs, baked chips, granola bars and other so called "healthier" fare all in the hopes of "better nutrition". These products do nothing to promote a higher Food IQ for our kids nor does it make them significantly healthier than the previous junk sold in our schools.

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results"~ Albert Einstein

Clearly when it comes to nutrition education and to our children's health, we need a new approach. I suggest that we shift the emphasis away from nutrition and instead towards the four letter word that begins with F: Food! To build our Food IQ the right way, we must get our hands dirty and experience all that food has to offer.

I'm not kidding when I say get our hands dirty. In order to truly learn about food, we must plant gardens everywhere; in schools, childcare centers, summer camps, senior centers and throughout our communities. Gardens involve and teach us about food and the world on many levels.

- When kids grow food, kids eat food! Gardens are a great solution to the epidemic of picky eating behaviors.
- You can't grow junk food! There are no artificial ingredients or significant allergens (gluten, dairy, soy) in a garden.

- Growing food cultivates an environmental awareness helping our children to become stewards of the land.
- Gardens are the cure for nature deficit disorder. Keeping our kids away from screens and high tech for a while is useful. The garden helps us slow down; you can't force a green bean to grow fast, you have to wait!
- With gas prices soaring above \$4 a gallon and food costs following skyward, growing food makes more sense than ever for our wallets as well as our waistlines.

As a school food advocate, I can tell you that if you want to improve the food in your school, the cafeteria is not the easiest place to start. By cultivating garden projects which build Food IQ and ecoliteracy, the entire culture of food in a school can transform. This roundabout way of impacting the cafeteria will help create a demand for fresh, local, real food, instead of low calorie, fat free questionable food products.

Here are some resources for getting a garden project started in your school or community. So if you want to build your Food IQ, get your hands dirty and get growing. Mother Earth will thank you!

www.kidsgardening.com
www.betterschoolfood.org
www.ecoliteracy.org

Susan Rubin DMD, HHC is a food educator and mother of 3. She is the founder of Better School Food and is writing a book on food and parenting. To learn more, visit www.betterschoolfood.org and www.drsusanrubin.com.

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GREEN TEAM NEWS: TEACHING GOES GREEN BY STEPHANIE BOURGEOIS

This month, Holistic Moms Network's Green Team Reporter, Stephanie Bourgeois, took a peak into the alternative charter school, [The Ridge and Valley School](#), in New Jersey and interviewed board member Donna Best. It is a hopeful look into the future of education and our planet.

The Ridge and Valley School is in Blairstown, NJ, located on 18 acres of land adjacent to the Paulinskill River. It is a FREE public charter school for children from K – 8. The school was opened five years ago, with the overarching theme of 'awareness, community and respect.' They boiled down their mission to "education for a hopeful and sustainable future" – a powerful statement the school seems well equipped to honor through experiential learning.

Nature is widely used as an extension of the classroom every season of the school year. Recently, one class project involved finding out how many species lived in a 5'x5' plot of land; the students found an astounding 125 species. 'Outdoor education spaces' include a yurt, an octagon, wetlands, a lower meadow, and logwood fields. Donna Best, school board member, pointed out, "the whole world becomes their learning environment." She added that their students are taught to be acutely aware of their bio-region in order to grow up to be deeply aware of their environment and thus become stewards of the

planet.

Another unusual aspect of the school is that all 110 students interact and know each other well across grade levels (e.g., kindergarteners might teach 8th graders how to snow shoe). This is in contrast to traditional public schools where ageism is very prevalent, Donna points out. Likewise, classes are multiaged but grouped by grade level. Subject matter is integrated, not separated by topic. Children follow their interests while their unique learning styles are honored. Moreover, there are no letter grades, only a detailed write up about each child's work. Doesn't it sound refreshing?

Teachers here are called guides, setting the tone for a very different kind of leadership. Donna described the school's commitment not to a hierarchical model, but to "circle governance," which has its own principles and practices. The school employs "shared leadership" and everyone is considered responsible. It is all about teamwork. The principles of circle governance are "listen with attention, speak with intention and contribute to the well being of the group." Donna added that this leads to far less fighting, criticism and conflict among children than in regular public schools. In fact, when conflicts do occur, they are dealt with right away in a team format, where "everyone takes part," she says.

The idea of experiential learning here translates into little homework, none in fact up to 3rd grade; children are simply not bogged down with work. Instead, 'guides' introduce them to the world around them in ways that increase their wonder and their critical thinking skills. Donna noted that this is a far cry from the old system of 'state and repeat' that seems to squander children's natural abilities to love learning and to think critically.

The Ridge and Valley School tailors the broad mandated curriculum for kids to learn basics skills in the context of their environment. Classes offered include the usual NJ core curriculum, PLUS hiking, carpentry, cooking, gardening, photography among others. Subjects are naturally integrated as the following example shows: students might have a year long project of creating a cold frame for a garden (a glass closure). This project will require that they use math to figure out the frame, building and investigation skills to construct it, and artistic skills to decorate it; research skills as they learn which plants they can grow and harvest, and lastly, presentation and public speaking skills as they present their project to other students. This struck me as such a fun and practical project too: over a 7 month period the food is grown, harvested, cooked, shared and eaten.

Best describes that the larger benefits of this new kind of education is that kids, her children included, are very proud of their work. Also, they are not living in fear of being bullied or criticized by other students. Additionally, she finds this program fosters children's natural joy, curiosity, wonder and awe. Donna stated that efforts are going into adding a high school in the future. For now, graduates go on to very competitive vocational and technical high schools, some go to private schools, some get home schooling, and others enter regular high schools. She was delighted to point out their transitions are generally "amazing" – these children are prepared to thrive anywhere they go.

Donna believes that we are at pivotal moment in our nation's educational history. She upholds the adage "show me, maybe I will learn; but let me

participate and I will keep this knowledge forever.” It occurs to me that she is right, this is what real education should be about: a combination of experiential learning, team building and working together towards a common goal: creating citizens of the earth with an enhanced passion for learning, a true connection to nature, an ability to lead and care for this earth as they see how we are all interconnected in this universe. Such grass root movements can change the world and create a sustainable future for all our children.

*Stephanie Bourgeois is the HMN Green Mama reporter for **The Wise Mom**. Stephanie grew up in Switzerland, but has lived in the US for almost 20 years now. She is married, and is a mother to her 2 year old daughter, Chloe. She also works part time in a private group practice as a psychotherapist, and is trained in Body Psychotherapy and Reiki. Stephanie is also passionate about holistic health, green parenting, and sharing what she is learning with other mothers.*

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MEMBER PROFILE: KASEY ERRICO



Name: Kasey Errico

City, State and HMN Chapter: I live in Flanders, NJ. I’m a member of 2 chapters because our original chapter split into two: Warren County and Western Morris County, NJ chapters.

Tell us about yourself: I have a stepson, 17, a son, 8 and a daughter, 7. My husband and I both grew up in NJ and live in Flanders, NJ. I have a degree in Psychology and have worked extensively in the human services field before having children. I have taught natural childbirth classes after being inspired by my own homebirth with my second child. After my children started school at an environmentally focused free public charter school, I decided to pursue my teaching certification. I am fortunate to be able to teach at the [Ridge and Valley Charter School](#) (see above article) that my children attend.

What got you interested in holistic living?

It was a slow awakening through my journey into parenthood starting with LLL and Bradley method of childbirth. It just all made sense. It was empowering. My mother nursed both my sister and me and was always making healthy foods, baking bread and sprouting beans when I was growing up.

What are your top three holistic passions?

I don't know that I can pick 3! I am currently working on mindful parenting and am very involved in alternative education. I am also concerned with consumerism and the environment. However, I am very passionate about homebirth even though my own birthing days are over. I want my own children to have choices in the future.

What holistic practice or lifestyle could you not live without and why?

I really love homeopathy – it has helped out my son especially with some skin issues. Also, the continual seeking of knowledge through reading as well as connecting with others through HMN and local community organizations that support informed citizens.

What unholistic practice or lifestyle do you still participate in (or refuse to give up)?

Well, I do enjoy chocolate! We also make a gingerbread house every Christmas with all sorts of candies decorating the exterior and the surrounding scene. It is tons of fun and a family tradition, so it will stay for now.

How has HMN affected your life?

It has very simply changed my life and altered my path. It has led me down roads I don't think I ever would have encountered otherwise. The ripple effect from the organization is far reaching and I am forever thankful for its existence.

**Editor's Note: Kasey is on the HMN Board of Directors and is a Chapter Mentor.*

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GREENING YOUR SCHOOL BY MICHELLE LEWIS

Here are 10 easy ways to start greening your child's school.

HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS

- Get your school to offer organic options and/or to start using local growers.
- Get rid of the junk vending machines. No candy, no soda! Or ask to replace junk with healthy options like fruit.

GREEN CAFETERIA

- Work with the administration and food services departments to eliminate Styrofoam cups, plastic utensils, and other wasteful products.
- Help make space for a compost to utilize food remains, then organize a kids' detail to help with composting.

USE OF GREEN CLEANERS

- One out of every three cleaning chemicals used to clean school buildings in the United States is known to cause human health or other environmental problems. As a result, the way schools clean and maintain their buildings can

have a significant impact on the health of the students and the quality of the education they receive. Go to Grassrootsinfo.org and follow the links to a list of approved institutional cleaning products.

EDUCATING IN THE COMPUTER AGE

-Look for products that meet credible environmental standards, such as EPEAT or Energy Star. Computers, printers, fax machines, and copiers should have an energy-saving "sleep" mode that kicks in automatically after a period of inactivity.

-Connect electronics to power strips and switch them off at the end of the day. Investing in Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) computer monitors is another great way to improve energy efficiency.

SWITCH (OFF) LIGHTING

-Switch all lights to compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), which are three to four times more efficient than standard incandescent bulbs.

-Motion sensors and timers ensure that lights are not wasting energy in an empty room.

RECYCLE

-Create paper, plastic, and aluminum recycling centers near waste bins.

-Encourage recycling through newspaper drives and by enrolling your school in a program that collects computer printer cartridges and used cell phones.

-Schools produce a tremendous amount of paper waste. Discouraging single-sided printing and encouraging recycling can go a long way to alleviate waste. Request that the school copy center and administrative offices use 100 percent recycled paper.

GREEN TRANSPORTATION

-Alternatives include carpooling or biking.

-Enact a policy that prevents buses from idling on school grounds.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS

-Ask the grounds crew to use natural herbicides and pesticides. Children are highly susceptible to toxic pesticides sprayed on playgrounds and athletic fields because of their high metabolisms and low body weights.

-Make sure playground equipment is safe. Widespread threats are posed by lead in paint, asbestos, mold and arsenic in pressure-treated wood used in playground equipment.

OUTDOOR GREEN SPACES

-Flower and vegetable gardens, trails and woodland areas offer students unique learning opportunities, ranging from wildlife observation to planting and harvesting their own organic produce in "edible schoolyard" programs.

ENVIRONMENTAL CURRICULUM

-Connecting students' intellectual and emotional lives with their environs is one of the most significant outcomes a green education can have.

Here are links to various websites with more information:

Green Schools Initiative — www.greenschools.net

Facing the Future — www.facingthefuture.org

Center for Ecoliteracy — www.ecoliteracy.org

Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education — www.sustainabilityed.org

Rethinking School Lunch — www.rethinkingschoollunch.org

California School Garden Network — www.csgn.org
Healthy Schools Network — www.healthyschools.org
Healthy Schools Campaign — www.healthyschoolscampaign.org

Sources:

Natural Home Magazine - www.naturalhomemagazine.com - 09/2003

New American Dream, www.newdream.org.

The Green Guide, www.thegreenguide.com, Top Ten Green Schools in the US, 2006.

July/August 2006.

National Association of Independent Schools, www.nais.org, It's Easy To Be Green, Spring 2008.

Melissa Lewis, Green Team Reporter, is a member of the Middlesex County Chapter. Her family, which includes her husband - Rob and 3 year old daughter - Ella, will be adding a new member in January. She enjoys her part-time job as a GIS Analyst (making maps), reading and coordinating the events and playgroups for her chapter.

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LESSONS ABOUT LOVING AND VALUING ONESELF BY AMY REISSNER

As parents, we can never be totally sure if our children are taking in all that we consciously try to teach them. Sometimes, it is only when we reach adulthood that we finally recognize the lesson that our parents tried to teach us.

I am a married professional woman and mother of two children, ages 13 and 8. The biggest lesson that I have finally learned is that the value of who I am as a person has next to nothing to do with what I do as a professional. It might sound rather silly that I am admitting to learning this lesson rather late in life, as I am 50 years old. Strangely enough, it is a lesson that I have tried to teach to my children, but now realize that it was more a cognitive idea and less a true belief up until recently. It was only after the recent passing of my mother that I fully grasped the meaning of this major lesson on a deep kinesthetic, emotional, and spiritual level.

The ensuing week after her passing, was a week filled with sadness, memories, personal reflection, reconciliation and transformation for me. I have finally recognized what an amazing woman my mother was. I have come to realize that on the surface, my mother, while beautiful, did not have some of the accomplishments that many women have today. She did not have advanced degrees or an important career. She was not well-traveled, nor did she recognize haute cuisine. However, she had something that not many people have, an authentically true identity and focus. Her priority was being a mother, wife, daughter, and wonderful grandmother. This was all she wanted and all that she needed to be. Her potential was actualized and everything else that I felt she could have done or should have done was unnecessary in the face of her self-understanding and self-awareness. It was not fear or lack of courage or weakness that kept her from advancement. It was simply the fact that no

matter what anyone else thought, she marched to the beat of her own drummer, never veering off course for an hour, minute or a second. She never wished to be anything other than what she was; a caring, compassionate and loving mother.

The one regret she did express was not living long enough to see her grandchildren grow up. She had completed her mission on earth. Whether my mother realized it or not, part of her mission was to bring me back to an appreciation of who I am. Attaining higher degrees and certifications is important to me, but not as a way of filling up that which is empty or not good enough or a way of finding myself. I am already here and it is just perfect being me. I have realized that I have spent many years defining my self by what my mother was not. Now I recognize that the definition of who I am is more than the sum of that which is not my mother and that which is my mother. I am the sum total of that which I am...defined by no one but me! All the roles that I fill are not me at all. The indescribable "me-ness" is the uniqueness of who I am as I carry forth these roles. The essence of who I am never changes. Who I am as defined by me and others is: sweet, caring, loving, kind, compassionate, nurturing, spiritual, and grounded. A few weeks ago, I would have said driven. This last quality is one that comes from lack. Now I recognize that I am not, nor have I ever been lacking in anything. My mom and I are a lot more alike than I ever thought; only it took me awhile to see things as clearly as she did. This is a major gift and important lesson that my mother has given to me. I have truly come home to myself.

Amy Reissner is a Professional Energy Medicine Practitioner, speaker/writer, former Childbirth Educator, Perinatal Counselor & Registered Nurse. She has over 15 years experience in the field of holistic health. Amy is trained as a homeopath and will shortly complete her certification in Donna Eden Energy Medicine. The focus of her Rye, NY practice is the use of kinesiology/intuition in assessing and balancing women's energy for correction/prevention of illness, optimization & transformation of health. Her mission is to empower people to dance with their energy and to create lives that are filled with health, joy, and a sense of purpose.. For more information, Amy can be contacted at areissner@optonline.net or at <http://healthywayholistic.zoomshare.com>.

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