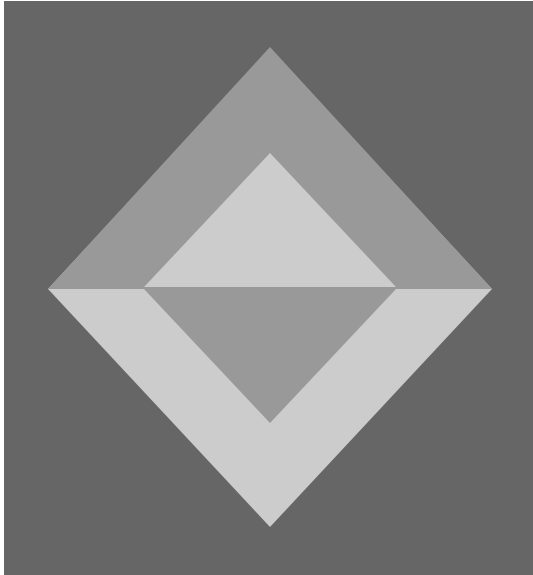


January 2006 issue

## **North Carolina Unschoolers Living Is Learning**

**[www.ncunschoolers.com](http://www.ncunschoolers.com)**



My name is Anna Blalock, I will be 16 one month from today. I live in Conover, NC. In order for you to get to know me better, I will share with you about my family, my hobbies and interest and our unique approach to homeschooling.

I am the only daughter in my family. I have 3 brothers. My older brother, Landon is 18, he goes to CVCC and works on my Grandpa's tree farm. My younger brother, Ethan, just turned 14. He likes to drive 4-wheelers and ride bikes, he has the need for speed. Jon Phillip is 10 years old, he is the youngest in our family. He is the typical "Baby" of a large family. He loves to read and play video games. He enjoys building things – and destroying things. My mom and dad celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary this year. My Dad is a quality engineer. He works for Tyco Electronics in Greensboro. He commutes 2.5 hours every day, round trip, and he does not enjoy that aspect of his job. My mom is very active in several homeschool groups. She plans and organizes many field trips and activities locally as well as throughout the state. We have a yellow lab named Joy. She is 4 years old and has been in our family since she was 6 weeks old. She is a wonderful dog and we love her a lot. We have a Chinese crested named Tequila, she is very odd looking. My friends have referred to her as a burnt hotdog. Here is a picture of her so you can see how funny she looks. We also have a cat, a guinea pig, and a bunny. My family loves to camping, go the movies, play board games and get together with our extended family. My grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins all live within 20 minutes of each other, and we are very close. Being part of a large family does have its challenges, but overall I am glad to have a big family and lots of extended family for support and love.

I have been out of public school for almost 3 years. But, I do not consider myself a homeschooler, I am an unschooler. Many people are not familiar with , and do not understand, the term unschooling. There are many different ways to define unschooling, but to me it means learning through everyday living. I like the quote by Ned Vare, a veteran unschooling dad, whom has an adult son that was totally unschooled. Ned says,

“Unschooling is living your life as if there were no such thing as school”. Our journey into unschooling began when my mother decided to take us out of public school. The conventional public school setting did not serve my family well. I enjoyed school, and I was a typical good student. But, my brothers did not fit that mold as well, and my mother decided it would be best if they were not in that environment. My mom talked to me about taking them out of school, and I thought it would be fun to be homeschooled. We could go more places, have more free time, and sleep later. So, at Christmas break of 2002, we made the transition from public school to home. Prior to taking us out of school, my mom did a lot of research about homeschooling methods and approaches. She read books, looked online, and also joined homeschool groups to get information and feedback. She knew that a very structured “school at home” approach would not be practical for my brothers, as that had not worked in a school setting. We decided to start our “new” school year by taking a break and deschooling for a while. The more my mother found out about unschooling, the more we realized that we did not need structured school work, text books, assignments and tests to insure that we were learning.

Through unschooling we are allowed to pursue our passions and interests and take them as far as we want to. And, we are also able to try new things and NOT pursue them farther if they do not suit our strengths and interests. Although we do not have a set curriculum, and we are not required to do schoolwork, we are involved in a lot of activities and we are learning all the time- because we want to!. We have been on numerous field trips to places all over the state and even out of NC. We have taken classes at our local science center, we are involved in various clubs and organizations. This is last year’s yearbook which we were involved in putting together. It shows a lot of the activities in which we participated, but it represents only a fraction of what we have done. Many people think that if children are not “forced” or required to do school work, they will not learn. But, we are living proof that children DO learn without coercion .

Being allowed to unschool has given me many opportunities to pursue my passions and interests. I enjoy reading a variety of books. My mother and I have picked up several crafts and hobbies that we enjoy together. We do round loom knitting, beading, sewing and scrapbooking. Baking and cooking is also a favorite. As I said earlier, my family loves to camp and we take several trips a year. We are especially fond of campfire cooking and using our Dutch ovens in creative ways. Swimming, tubing, canoeing and hiking are my favorite camp activities – as long as the bugs and weather will cooperate.

I love children and I am very interested in early childhood development. I became Red Cross certified at 12 . I baby-sit for a few families regularly, and I feel like I am part of their family. I provide child care for homeschooling events sponsored by our local homeschool group. I have volunteered at preschools and nurseries, and watched children for meetings and conferences. This is one of my strongest passions and I want to pursue it farther. I plan to study early childhood development and education, and hopefully open my own innovative preschool as an alternative to conventional preschools or daycares. In order for me to pursue this goal, I know I must go to college... Therefore, I am planning on dual enrolling in our local community college next year. I have a SAT prep CD that I am using to help pre-

pare for community college. I have been doing more intentional reading of books that are recommended for college bound students, and I have joined a book discussion group. I want to study foreign language and I am currently using Rosetta Stone for Spanish. I am going to start the French in Action series with a friend in the next month or so. I am also involved in a Biology club in which we study anatomy and dissect all sorts of gross things like animal organs and eyeballs. So, although I do not HAVE to do any of this, I want to, and I know I need to in order to reach my goals.

I became interested in Gavel club through my involvement in a 4-H Teen Retreat. There was a Toastmasters workshop with impromptu speaking, like table topics, and I was called on to speak. I had to describe what pickled pigs feet taste like, and my response was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. The Toastmaster at the workshop was very impressive and he inspired me to find out more about Toastmasters and public speaking. My mom began to network with friends to find out about any opportunities that would meet this interest, and she found out about the Gavel Club, and , here I am. This is just another example of how unschooling works for me. I have enjoyed the meetings thus far and I am looking forward to getting to know each member better.

So, there is a little peek into my life as an unschooler. My family is loving and supportive and I am glad to be part of a large extended family. My passions and hobbies are easily followed through our unschooling lifestyle. And I have goals and dreams that I know I need to work hard to achieve. Having the freedom to do what I enjoy, enhance my personal strengths, and make my own personal choices has been a wonderful opportunity and I am glad I am unschooled.

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### ***Tiffany's Place Homeschool Day***

*North Wilkesboro, 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month from 1-5pm for all homeschoolers, all ages. Come and enjoy the fun. For more information about Tiffany's Place go to: [www.tiffanysplace.net](http://www.tiffanysplace.net)*

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### **Biltmore Estate Winter Pricing through Feb 28**

Unwind from the holidays and welcome the New Year at America's largest home. From sensational savings to relaxing getaways at our inn, **Biltmore Estate** is the place for winter fun.

#### **Save \$20 on Your Winter Visit**

Visit during *Biltmore Estate Rewards*, January 2–February 28, to enjoy incredible savings on estate admission. During *Biltmore Estate Rewards*, adults can purchase estate admission for just \$25.00—a savings of \$20.00! Plus, ages 16 and under are admitted free with a paying parent or guardian.

Your estate admission ticket includes daytime admission to Biltmore House, Gardens, Winery and Farm Village, and access to great shopping and dining. Parking is included in your admission.

<http://www.biltmore.com/index.html>

## Being 12

(Another great post from the NCU list reprinted with permission)

Being twelve can be a challenge in and of itself. One foot's often still planted in childhood (and rightly so, imho) while the other foot may represent changes in physical appearance, increased hormones, soaring intellect, etc. It's a confusing time! I remember having the same thoughts when our eldest (now 15) was 12. He'd moved from a very structured (structured in an inappropriate way per his personality - he prefers self determined structure instead of external, forced structure - the latter leads to conflict and chaos in his being) environment to a relaxed environment at home. At the time, I would have probably labeled his confusion as the need for further social development - when in our situation, it was really more of a need for self affirmation, realization/awareness and growth. I put untold amounts of pressure on myself, thinking "he's moved from 20 peers a day to not wanting any contact with those his own age - I NEED to get him involved." That was clearly my need - his need was to sit back and figure himself out. I'm so very glad we followed his lead!

Rachel

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Drawn by Dallen age 11

## This Week's Experiment - #453 - Touch Drawing

For sense of touch try this, you will need:

either a paper bag or an opaque plastic bag  
a large rubber band  
one or more small objects  
paper  
pen or pencil

Have a friend place a small object into the bag, without letting you see what it is. You want an object that has a fairly easy shape to draw (irregular chunks of rock are difficult), but also an object that you don't already have a mental picture of. If you use a common object like a coin, the person could draw it from memory, without relying on touch. I have used sea shells, coral, nuts, strange keys, plastic toy animals, etc. Don't use anything sharp. No, a cactus is not a good choice, even for your little brother.

Once you have the object in the bag, place your non-dominant hand in the bag. That means if you write with your right hand, put your left hand in the bag. Use the rubberband around your wrist, to hold the bag in place. Now comes the fun part. You are going to draw the object by touching it to find out what it looks like. Make your drawing as detailed as possible. Once you feel that you have a good drawing of the object, remove the bag, and compare your drawing with the actual object.

Try this with several different things. Some are easy. Others are harder. The hardest part is to control your imagination, and draw just what you feel, not what you think.

What does all of this have to do with science? First, in working with science, you need to use your senses. It is very easy to "see" the results you expected from your experiment, even if it really did not turn out that way. It is also easy to overlook the unexpected, simply because you are not using all of your senses.

Also, we are exploring the connection between touch and visualization. You are learning to "see" with your fingers. If you could not see, you would do this all the time. It is interesting to find out how well your brain can visualize what your fingers feel.

You can take this experiment to the next level by using larger objects. Place a large object into a large plastic trash bag. You could also make a cardboard "shield" with an arm hole in the center. That would let you touch very large objects and draw them without being able to see them. Try drawing patterns, such as tree bark, a very rough seashell, or a fossil.

Don't worry if you are not a wonderful artist. I have trouble drawing anything more complex than stick people, but I still find this experiment very useful. If my stick elephant has its legs in the right place, and the right size and shape for its trunk, I am happy that my brain and my fingers are communicating well.

For very delicate touch, try feeling the pattern on the handle of a spoon. Use one with lots of scroll work or intricate patterns. Of course, you will need to support the spoon as you do this, to keep your other hand free to draw. I suggest sticking it into something that will hold it firmly, such as... ice cream? Sounds like a good idea to me.

Have a wonder filled week.

**Letter Sounds and Reading**  
**An e mail from Kathy Bertrand reprinted with permission**

As a life learner I believe that my children will learn what they need to know when they are ready for it. As such I do not have to make things interesting for them. Having said that, I would like to share some observations of my dd who is 6 1/2. At age 4 she exclaimed at the dinner table....."There is my name" on the back of a container on the table. After looking at it I realized that she was referring to the word "Nutrition", her name is Nicole. She recognized the "N" & was beside herself with excitement. That was it for about a year. Sometime between 5 & 6 she learned how to write her name, love & her brother's name (Isn't that soooo sweet!!!). I never sat down & said OK, this is how you spell your name.....she would ask, I would answer. Again, that was it for a long time. Occasionally we would be out & I would be looking for a street sign & she would want to help me, so I would have to stop the car, write the 1st letter of the name so she could help me look for it.

I will admit 2 times I tried to interest her in learning her alphabet. Once after a fellow age mate met us for a park date after pre-school, the little girl's mom went on & on about how at pre-school that week they were studying the letter "W" and that day they ate watermelon & did some other "W" crafts, etc. I thought, oh, that sounds like a fun thing to do & tried it at home. My dd was completely not interested in having a lesson about a letter that she did not care about at that moment & I was frustrated because she didn't think the projects were fun. Another time came after my dh pressed me about teaching her how to read at about age 6. He wanted me to have a plan, because he couldn't see how she would learn without me doing something to teach her. Well, I bought a couple of workbooks and a picture dictionary. She loved the workbooks for about 2 days and then had no interest for a long while. She picks them up sporadically & devours them. She will work in the books for several days and then not again for months.

After all this, recently she has gotten VERY interested in letters and words. She copies words from everywhere. We stand in front of restaurants so she can copy the signs, we go inside & she copies the menus, she copies books, signs, everything. She is burning up every piece of paper she can get her hands on. She walks around spelling words all the time. Some she knows, some she doesn't.

Now let me tell you, if I sat down and said, "OK, today I am going to teach you xyz....." she would automatically turn her mind off. It would totally kill her interest. She asks, I answer. Just as she learned to walk, talk & ride a bike without any active teaching on my part, I know she will learn to read as well. It is so unbelievably exciting to watch this process unfold, but it is a process. Another word of caution that I would say is that young children are absorbing so much information that it makes sense that some children take longer than others to put it all together. One child may take in so much through physical activity or merely through watching, that they are not quite ready to put it all together. If we push our children to learn something before they are ready, we actually prevent them from learning in the best way for that particular child. Does that make sense?

At 5, I know my dd still had too much pre-reading life to live to be bothered by the written word. As 6 1/2 she is starting to put it together & sometime in the future she will be reading & one day it will be hard to remember a time when she wasn't reading. They do grow up so fast.

\*\*\*This e-mail was not intended to be judgmental in any way, just sharing my personal observations & opinions\*\*\*.

Cheers  
Kathy

### **Carolina Homeschooler,**

Based about 45 miles south of Charlotte NC, is coordinating a trip to Washington DC and New York City this coming May (the 25th through the 31st). We invite your members to travel with us - the more we have going, the less expensive it will be for all of us. :)

This trip is for homeschooling families (including grandparents, if they'd like to come along). We'll travel by train and have two full days to explore each city. To read more about our plans, visit the Educational Travel forum at <http://www.carolinahomeschooler.com/forums/forumdisplay.php?f=45>

To keep updated and receive the latest travel plans via email, please subscribe to our educational travel mailing list at <http://www.carolinahomeschooler.com/lists.htm>

Let me know if you have any questions. :)

Warmly,  
Dianna

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(Taken from an unschooling list reprinted with permission)

### **What makes an unschooler "radical?" ??**

Generally, the term 'unschooling' refers to an educational philosophy that is 'not school', doesn't look like school, sound like school, feel like school. It is based on trusting that people, including kids since they're people too, will learn what they need when and how they need it in ways that work for them. "Radical" unschooling is taking that philosophy of trust and applying it to the rest of life - trusting that our kids will eat what and when and how works for them, that they'll sleep when their body says sleep and wake when they're finished with sleep, and so on. Treating kids with the same trust and respect for their individual selves and choices that you would for a spouse, friend, other adult person.

So, someone can be unschooling in the academic sense yet have strictly structured bedtimes, chores, mealtimes, etc. "radical" was added to differentiate in discussion between folks who extend unschooling into the whole life of the family.

--Deb

## Live and Learn Unschooling Conference 2006

Hotel info:

We'll be at the Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town---great location---in easy walking distance to many local attractions. It's a beautiful hotel with lots of local flavor!

It's not a chain, but a locally-owned hotel. So the 800 number takes you directly to the hotel, not to a switch-board in Nebraska or somewhere! <g> Their number is: 1-800-237-2133 or 505-843-6300

You can access their website at [www.hotelABQ.com](http://www.hotelABQ.com) and take a virtual tour.

Please, when you call, ask for the special Live and Learn Unschooling Conference rate of \$89.00 and \$109.00 for the few junior suites available. Note the suites are a King with a sofa (no sofa-bed!).

The conference is September 5-11, 2006. We will be starting Wednesday evening with an ice cream social as a time to get to know each other a bit before we start. Presentations, break-outs, and fun-shops will start on Thursday morning with the Talent Shows on Thursday and Friday nights. Saturday evening, we will have an optional (extra charge) sit-down New Mexican supper with a dinner-show, followed by a dance for everyone. We will wrap up midday on Sunday to give you time to sight-see with your families before the post-conference party at a nearby park.

I will be out in Albuquerque in February for a site survey. Let me know whether you have any questions---I'll check while I'm out there.

The website will be updated soon. I'll post when it's ready.

~Kelly Kelly Lovejoy Conference Coordinator Live and Learn Unschooling Conference  
<http://liveandlearnconference.org>

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All area homeschoolers and their families are welcome to come to the **FHE sponsored Skate Day, at Skate-Haven USA in Winston Salem.**

\*\*\* FHE Skate Day is the 2nd Tuesday of each month, September- May, 1:30-3:30 PM.

Enjoy skating & socializing to the sounds of specially selected music that include a mix of old favorites, Disney tunes, and Christian music. It is an event that is Fun for the whole FAMILY.

Skating Fee is \$4.00 per skater which includes skate rental. It is an additional \$3.00 to rent rollerblades or can you bring your own skates or rollerblades.

There is a Snack Bar, vending machine and an arcade that includes driving games, claw, pinball, video, and air hockey.

I'll have a few curriculum catalogs and Scholastic Book Club flyers as well as FHE's Lending Library. The FHE has a number of purchased or donated audio and video tapes from past NCHE Homeschool Conferences and all of these are available to members for a set time period. YOU are welcome to bring anything homeschool related that you'd like to pass along, i.e. books/ workbooks, videos, etc

Location / Directions: SkateHaven USA is located at 120 Hood Drive in Winston Salem across from Calvary Baptist Church in the Clubhaven Shopping Center at the crossroads of Country Club rd. and Peace Haven rd. It is easily accessible from 421. Use the Peacehaven Rd Exit and make a left turn at Country Club and it is on the right. Phone # 910/765-1041.

I'm happy to answer any questions and hope to see your family the second Tuesday of each month.

QUESTIONS ? email me: [michellebrooks@triad.rr.com](mailto:michellebrooks@triad.rr.com) OR Leave a message 631-8543.



## Usborne Book Parties

-Feb 18, 2006 at Kathy Bertrand's house in Raleigh at 1:00pm, dinner after for those who wish to go out. If interested e mail Kathy for directions at bertrandacademy@bellsouth.net

-Feb 25, 2006 at Lori Barklage's house in Catawba, hosted by Lori and Pam Genant at 3:00 pm, children welcome as usual. If interested e mail Lori for directions at redheads@charter.net

Come out and have fun and see the great books Usborne has to offer, and at the same time support unschoolers!

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## Homeschool Yearbook

OK everyone that time is fast approaching. Anyone who wants to participate can. It is a general homeschooling yearbook, no one will be turned away. You can submit pictures or pages, you can buy a yearbook, you can sell ads or you can do all of the above, but to make it happen WE NEED YOU.

OK April 15 will be the deadline, can we all remember that date, LOL.

If you would like to be IN the yearbook either send in pages or send or e mail photos and we will do your pages for you. This is a scrapbook type yearbook, pages, color copied and bound at a local copy place, are 8 1/2 inches X 11 inches. One side only. You can do a family page and include pictures or your family. Include whatever info you want, names, ages, homeschool name....whatever. You can get these pages back after we copy them.

Activity pages. Are you involved in a homeschool group, or just going out to play with other homeschoolers, TAKE YOUR CAMERA. Take pictures, make a page. Include whatever info you like, date, activity, place, group, names of the people, description etc. Include play groups, museum tours, science center days, skating days etc.

Selling ads, the books are not free, LOL. The yearbooks will remain at \$15 per yearbook. Add \$5 shipping and handling if you will need the yearbook mailed to you. Ads will be sold for \$35 for a business card size ad. Remind businesses that these yearbooks will be going statewide. Have any check or MO made out to NC Unschoolers. You can either give me or Teresa the money and business card or you can mail them. IF YOU SELL AN AD IT REDUCES THE PRICE OF YOUR YEARBOOK. Each ad you sell reduces your yearbook by \$5 per ad. So 3 ads and you get one free yearbook. 4 ads and we will mail that free yearbook to you at no charge. Without the ads we cannot cover the cost of the yearbooks. Anyone can sell ads with no obligation to buy a yearbook.

When we get closer to the deadline we will post dates and times when we will be getting together to work on the yearbooks, it was great fun last year getting together and working on them with other friends.

OK if you need to e mail photos to me please make sure they are good quality and e mail them to genant2@aol.com. If you do this we will work on your pages. If you want to e mail completed pages e mail to the same address. If you want to mail me anything, completed pages, photos, checks (YAY) business cards etc, please mail to Pamela Genant, 1519 Falls Road, Valdese, NC, 28690. Make sure all checks and MO are made out to NC Unschoolers.

## **The Homeschool Alliance of North Carolina**

Established in 2003, HA-NC is a grassroots network of homeschooling families. We believe that all homeschoolers' interests are served when we are seen by the government, the news media and the general public as a diverse people united by our choice to homeschool our children. HA-NC has a strong online presence, offering a main member e-mail list for networking, a bi-monthly e-mail newsletter and an informative website.

### ***Vision***

***We envision a state in which families who choose to homeschool will legally be able to continue to make the choices that respect the rights, needs and aspirations of their children.***

### ***Mission***

We are committed to promoting our homeschooling community in all its diversity and protecting our homeschooling freedoms.

### ***We are...***

"Homeschoolers Supporting Homeschoolers"

JOIN OTHER HOMESCHOOLERS, AND SUPPORT THE HOMESCHOOL ALLIANCE OF NORTH CAROLINA. HERE IS SOME OF WHAT YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO AS A MEMBER!

- ***An alliance that takes no position on religion, partisan politics and non-homeschooling issues***
- ***A network of homeschoolers all working together to promote an accurate portrayal of homeschoolers' diversity***
- ***An email discussion list for networking among members***
- ***A bi-monthly email newsletter***
- ***A legislative committee that will help you to stay informed of legislative issues concerning NC homeschoolers***
- ***HA-NC events and activities***
- ***Regional directors to help you find other homeschoolers in your area***
- ***New homeschooler support***

***The Homeschool Alliance of North Carolina is open to all homeschooling families who reside in North Carolina. Please join us and support our mission.***

***To join, send your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address to our membership coordinator, [membership@ha-nc.org](mailto:membership@ha-nc.org).***

***Once your information has been received, you will be added to our database and subscribed to the main member e-mail forum for all HA-NC members***

This Unschooling Newsletter is put out by NCUnschoolers, a yahoo list for all Unschoolers in North Carolina and surrounding states. A place for unschoolers to find support, share ideas and field trips and general chit chat. It is not a place for anyone looking for curriculum advice. If you would like to join this list go to:  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NCUnschoolers/>

If you have anything you or your child would like to contribute to the North Carolina Unschoolers' Newsletter, please send submissions to [genant2@aol.com](mailto:genant2@aol.com). Send submissions for the next issue by April 15, 2006. Contributions can include but are not limited to; short stories, poems, articles, essays, favorites, field trips, conferences, or get togethers.