

# TEXAS

HOMESCHOOL MAGAZINE

*THE RISE OF  
Homeschooling  
Entrepreneurs*

*Sowing seeds  
for a family*

*Harvest*

*Work and  
Homeschooling*

FALL 2025



**TRAIN UP A CHILD  
IN THE WAY HE  
SHOULD GO: AND  
WHEN HE IS OLD,  
HE WILL NOT  
DEPART FROM IT.**

*Proverbs 22:6*

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# CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK

NOVEMBER 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> 1920



**MORE BOOKS IN THE HOME!**



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## Hey Yall!

For those of you who don't know me yet, my name is Melissa Ebner, wife, homeschool mom, editor, chicken wrangler, etc.

My husband and I have been married for over 20 years. We have four children—ages 26, 19, 15, and 12 and are moving into our 13th year of homeschooling. Life at our house could easily be described as "a bit of a funny farm." We share it with three Beagles, too many chickens, and ten cats (the cat story is a whole testimony for another day). I'm an eclectic maximalist—my favorite color is somewhere between 1950s vintage, rainbows, and linen leopard print. Clear as mud, right? Haha, you may see a little nod towards my style in the magazine from time to time.

Some of my favorite things? Jesus, my family, gardening, thrift shopping, old bookstores, and anything to do with history.

In 2024, we celebrated our first homeschool graduate! As a homeschool mom, it feels like earning a major award. If I could, I'd set her in the front window like the leg lamp in *A Christmas Story* so everyone passing by could see her. And when they ask, "What's that?" I'd proudly say, "That's a homeschool graduate. Yes, it can be done, and yes, we did it."

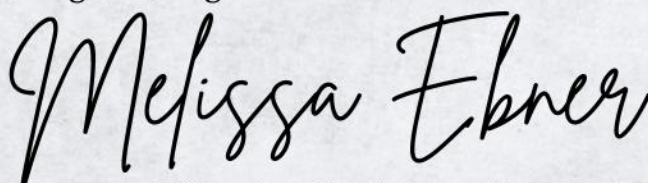
Alongside the magazine, I'm entering my third year of teaching at Master's Academy of Fine Arts, a local arts and science co-op, and we're about to start the second year of Ebner House Academy—a small, faith-led teen co-op we host in our living room once a week.

For the past five years, I've worked in media and marketing from home, and volunteered in ministry, which has fit beautifully around our family schedule. And now, God has opened a brand-new door: launching the Texas Homeschool Magazine. This has been a dream in the making for years, and I can't wait to share it with you. We have an amazing list of contributors and stories that I know will inspire, encourage, and equip you.

The Texas Homeschool Magazine is more than just pages of articles—it's a place where Texas homeschoolers can come together, share stories, and encourage one another. It's a website for weekly resources and community. Whether you're brand new to homeschooling or a seasoned veteran, I hope you find a little inspiration, a little practical help, and a whole lot of joy in these pages.

Here's to the beginning of something amazing.

With love, Coffee, and Prayer,



Editor-in-Chief, Texas Homeschool Magazine







# TEXAS

## HOMESCHOOL MAGAZINE

## ABOUT US

**Welcome to the Texas Homeschool Magazine and blog. A place where homeschooling families in Texas come together to explore the endless possibilities of learning, growing, and thriving.**

**We believe in the God-given freedom and responsibility to educate our children according to biblical values, nurturing both their academic potential and spiritual growth.**

Our mission is to empower and encourage homeschooling families. We believe that education is not just about learning facts. It's about shaping hearts and minds to know, love, and serve God, and to walk in the unique calling He has for each of us.

Homeschooling is a gift. It's a way to educate our children in an environment that aligns with our values, beliefs, and priorities. It is a responsibility, and we don't take that lightly. With the freedom homeschooling offers, we can not only provide academic education but also teach life lessons, instill character, and guide our children to develop a strong relationship with Christ.

- **Build Strong Family Bonds:** Homeschooling enables parents to be more present in their children's daily lives, forming deep, lasting relationships rooted in love and faith.
- **Pursue God's Calling:** We believe that God has a unique plan for each of our children, and homeschooling allows us the time and space to guide them in discovering and walking in that purpose.





We understand that homeschooling isn't always easy. There are moments of doubt, exhaustion, and frustration. But there are also moments of triumph, joy, and growth.

We are more than just a website and Magazine. It's a community of families to share the journey together. Whether you're just starting out or have been homeschooling for years, we want to encourage you in the beautiful work you are doing in your home and in the lives of your children.

Our Values: Faith, Family, And Freedom

- **Faith:** We are grounded in the belief that homeschooling is a ministry—a way to fulfill God's calling for our families. Everything we do is rooted in Scripture, prayer, and a desire to honor God in all aspects of our lives.
- **Family:** We value the importance of family relationships and believe that homeschooling strengthens the bond between parents and children. Homeschooling allows for shared experiences, memories, and moments of growth that deepen the family unit.
- **Freedom:** Homeschooling gives families the freedom to learn at their own pace, to explore subjects that matter, and to build a schedule that works for your unique needs. We encourage families to take full advantage of this freedom to cultivate a home education.

We invite you to explore all that we have to offer and join our community of Texas homeschoolers.

Whether you need support, resources, or simply a place to connect with like-minded families, we're here to walk with you every step of the way. "It Can Be Done"



# Cover Model

Hi, my name is Dawn Darnell, I'm a mom to four beautiful children, wife to my best friend, newbie homesteader, and follower of Christ. I built a business as an influencer promoting different fashion and lifestyle brands. But after having several life changing events from experiencing secondary unexplained infertility, multiple miscarriages, near death birth experience, and then being blessed with three back to back pregnancies and birth, I decided it was time for me to take a step back from my business. I had found a greater calling in serving Christ and that was being a homemaker, and serving my family. Being a mother is my ministry, and though it is far from glamorous and sometimes very challenging, it is by far the the most rewarding role I've been blessed with.

This is my second year homeschooling my son after four years of him being in public school and it's the best choice we have made. We have more time as a family together. My son can have a curriculum better suited for his needs, and we also have an amazing support system with our homeschool community. Homeschool gives us more freedom to be with our children, to teach them and nurture them, and it allows us to slow down and be more present. If you are thinking about homeschooling go for it. Trust your mom gut. You know what is best for your children.





Dawn Darnell





# The Flower Farmer Setbacks into a





# Who turned

# WINING

# Business





# From \$78 to a Thriving Farm: How Saying No Led to My Biggest Yes

Kathryn DeLadurnatey



SUNNY HILL  
FLOWER FARM

**G**raduation day passes us by, and the all-too-common ache in our heads is a blank white DOC file with a question mark and a blinking text cursor.....

That is it. Or at least that is how it started for me. The months leading up to graduation and the months after were just a question mark with nothing to follow. In the beginning, I felt like there were so many opportunities and ideas laid at my door that I didn't even know where to start. As hard as this is, I do think that this is where good ideas flow from. I can even remember that day, 5 years ago, when I chose to travel down the road of flower farming.

## **The Rainy Road Trip That Changed Everything**

I was on a road trip with my parents on our way to Houston, Texas, and it was pouring rain. At the time, I had been seriously contemplating taking the two-week intensive course in floral design at A&M. It was a course that, afterwards, would place me in competitions and very high-end floral work. But I had also run across flower farming, which piqued my interest.

But on this road trip, everything changed. My Dad turned to me and said, "I think that you shouldn't go to A&M and you should instead grow flowers and try to sell them."

Tears ran down my face. I knew this was the right thing, but it felt like ripping a dream from my arms.

To this day, I am so unbelievably grateful for my Dad having that hard conversation with me. To all the parents out there....Remember, you know your children better than anyone else. And you also have their best interest in mind for them to succeed. What you say does matter!

With this charge from my Dad, it gave me a kind of liberty. I am also beyond thankful for the fact that God gave me a desire to then take what I was given and run with it!

## **Starting with a Shovel and Seeds**

As soon as I got home from that road trip, I went into full action.

I ordered seeds, got a neighbor with a tractor to disc up the front yard. And started planning every detail. Things were going to plan until, with any new plan, opposition comes.

That guy I hired for the soil prep never came back. So by hand, I made rows, pulled out nasty weeds, and planted all my seeds! Ever since that day, opposition after taking action has felt more like an old companion that rises its head all too often.



Something that, as young people, we have that is a blessing is this. We must act now because time will run out. And to have the energy to press against all odds. I do believe that if you have both of these, you will find them to be very good traits for building a business.

I want to stop here right in the middle to say this. The next stories I am about to share. Well, they make me pinch myself! And what I hope you take away from this is. Where we start is not always where we end up. We must live each day knowing that we are to use the time God has given us wisely. Each of us has been placed on the earth with several "Talents," and our job is to create like the master Creator and to glorify Him.

To remember that our biggest mistakes are the ones that we learn from the most, and we should, in turn, move forward with integrity. And whatever happens today should not define our attitude or our perception of the future.

So here I was, year one, a host of flowers growing, and no one to sell them to. To be honest, that whole year I only sold \$78 worth, and that was it. Dear friend, you can't get much smaller than this LOL.

### **From \$78 in Sales to a Solid Customer Base**

But like I said, the opposition needs to proceed with overcoming head-on. Year two, I knew just what I had to do: get my product in front of people. So off I went, one door knock at a time. I believe I have covered every business in my closest towns and learned to have the best elevator pitch. But my parents were right there in the trenches with me; that is the key!

My Mom would see me discouraged after getting "NO" as a response from a door-knock. And she would say, "The next door could be a yes. Now Go" And one by one, I started having weekly customers to deliver to and also started supplying banks with holiday arrangements.

I realized I had to find a way to serve more people and to create more profit without making these weekly deliveries, which were taking me away from the farm.

So in year 3, I opened the farm for u-picks. Took on floral design for large events, and then inspiration hit me. When this happens to you, don't let it go; be inspired and capitalize on it.

**“When you know where you’re headed, you’ll know what to say no to.”**





I was in an airplane on my way to Virginia when I had an idea to host an agriculture weekend at the farm, highlighting the flower u-pick we had started.

I had two months to plan it, mind you, the date for the event was at the end of July. In reality, no one should have even come to it....

And again, my parents didn't call me crazy. I presented the idea and they supported it. In the end, I had 15 vendors showcasing local products, live music, and food.

And like something out of a Hallmark movie, I saw over a hundred people come out. They brought camp chairs and hung out with their families.

Something had changed for me and our family. We turned our front yard into an event center and a parking lot.

I was riding high. And just remember, those high moments are what get you through some of your biggest failures.

That next spring, I hit a wall when I lost 6,000 tulip bulbs in a refrigeration accident, and in tears, I had to refund all the customers who invested in this venture.

**“Do the thing that scares you most; that is the hardest. It might be your biggest breakthrough.”**



But the best was yet to come, in the year that started so badly.

I planned to host that AG weekend yet again. I got on podcasts, radio, and even Live Television. All to promote my spring event.

In the back of my head, I was so worried that what if I opened my farm to hundreds of people and my flowers didn't bloom or even grow. I had doubled the size of the farm that year, and I was risking a lot on something I couldn't be sure about, considering I had just had a huge crop failure.

But with my parents' encouragement, I left this to the Lord and planned in faith.

In the meantime, I opened the farm for photographers to rent for photo shoots. We opened each Friday for people to build flower bouquets in the field. And partnered with local businesses to host a floral class at their brick-and-mortar.



As a business owner, I have three things that I want to share here if you started your own business and are trying to figure out how to get it off the ground:

1. Do the thing that scares you most; that is the hardest. And that also seems the least possible to work, but if it did, it would be the best thing ever.
2. When you feel stuck with what to do next (especially when it comes to daily tasks), always ask this question: "What can I do today that would bring me at least one new customer?"
3. Partnerships: People ask me Why do I have vendors at my events? Or why I teach floral classes at brick-and-mortar stores? The easy answer is. I want to expand how many people know about my businesses," and so anytime I can get my ideas/products in front of other people's clients, I will.

**“Parents—  
what you  
say  
matters  
more than  
you  
know.”**

But now we are here at year 5...

And the best year yet. This spring, we hit the ground running. And I launched my first flower stand on a main road....Between Lockhart, Luling, Bastrop & Gonzales, TX. (5672 FM 86 Luling, TX)

It has been so, so incredible. We now have a lending library there, a cooler of flowers that I stock twice a week. And I partner with two other businesses in the area to supply our community with sourdough and eggs.

It's been a journey.

But dear friend, five years ago I would not have imagined all these amazing opportunities. But year 5 has taught me two things.

When you know where you are headed and you know the goals for your business....You will know what things you need to say "No" to. I have said no to more opportunities this year than ever.

And there will always be people who see your success and try to copy what you do. Shut them out and don't worry because they can never be you. Our farm serves so many people, but the largest part is encouraging the next generation on how to start businesses and learn skills.

Which is why we continue to host our "Market at the Farm Ag weekend" in May. If you are interested in something that is coming out in the spring of 2026. Sign up on the waitlist for our "Young Entrepreneurship Intensive workshop"





# MASTERBOOKS.COM

— *Where Faith Grows!* —



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Science



Language Arts



Electives

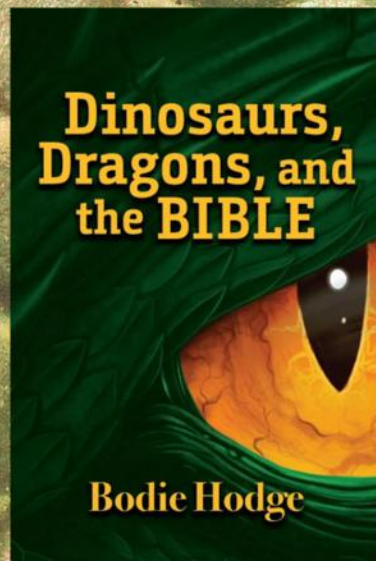
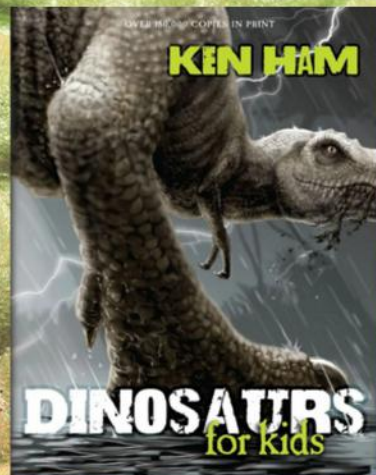
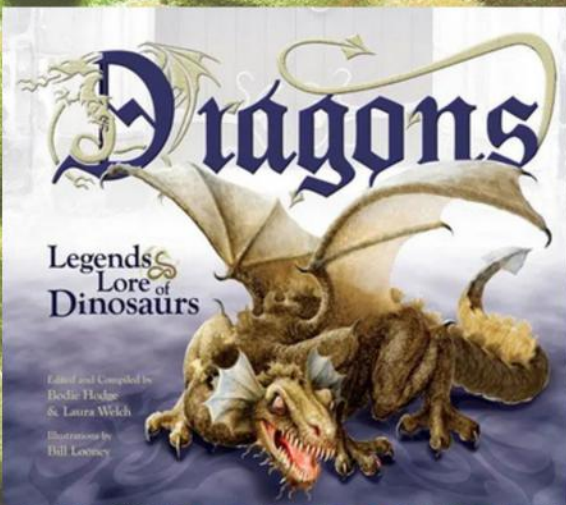
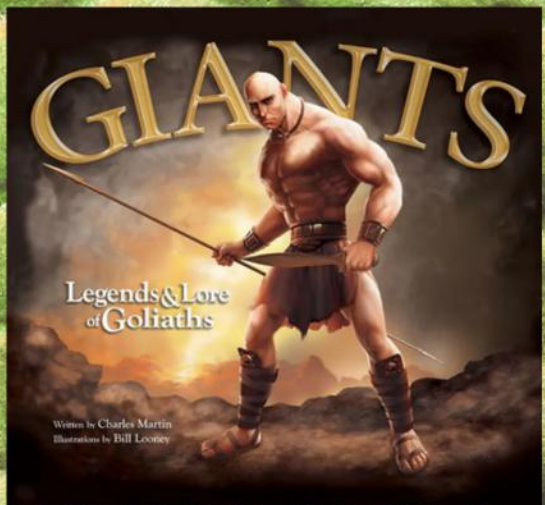


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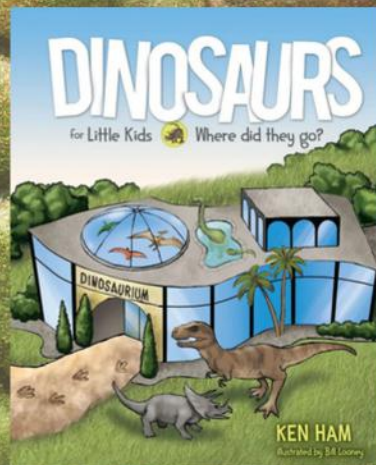
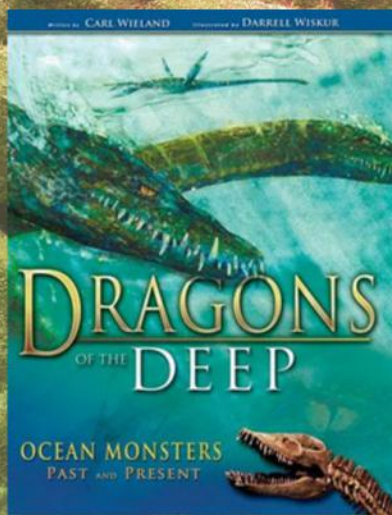
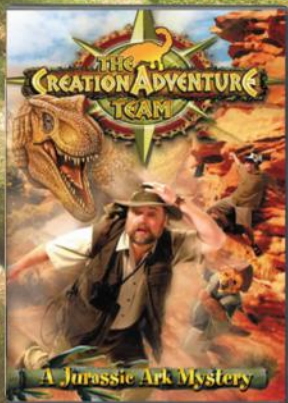


# GIANTS



# DRAGONS

# DINOSAURS



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# W&M

**IN FOCUS**





# Wild Roots Photography

**ADVENTURES. LOVING.  
UNSCRIPTED.**





# Life in Focus: A Homeschool Duo's Photography Journey

MELISSA EBNER

**It started with a homeschool dance and a borrowed camera.**

That's the spark that ignited Wild Roots Photography—a thriving business built by two moms who juggle lesson plans, camera bags, and the unpredictable beauty of raising a family. Jenay and Ashley never planned to become business partners, but somewhere between co-op classes, pre-dance photo shoots, and endless cups of coffee, they discovered that their talents were a perfect match. Today, their work captures more than just portraits—it tells stories. Stories of families, milestones, and everyday magic. But their own story is just as captivating.

## **Two Families, and a Shared Vision**

Jenay's path to Wild Roots began long before she ever clicked the shutter in a professional setting. She and her husband, Caleb, have been homeschooling for 12 years—a journey that has taken them from Texas to Colorado to Montana, and now, back home to Texas.

“We love traveling together whenever we can,” Jenay shares. “Whether it's a quick weekend getaway or a cross-country adventure, it's about building memories.”

Caleb and Jenay were friends in high school before life wove their paths together into marriage and parenthood.

Ashley's story has its own flavor of adventure. Married to George, her best friend and partner in life, she's navigated military moves, parenting, and now homeschooling three kids for the past six years.

“Our house is full of curiosity, creativity, and probably someone always singing,” “Family is our center.”

Though their backstories differ, the two women share a common heartbeat: raising children with intention and living life with creativity at the forefront.

## **From Happy Accident to Hustle**

Wild Roots didn't start with a business plan—it started with friendship and a knack for showing up at just the right moment.

“Jenay was the one with the camera,” Ashley recalls. “She'd take photos of the kids before dances or big events. I was the one fussing with hair, making sure outfits were just right.”

Without realizing it, they were already functioning as a photography team. After a few sessions together, Ashley kept telling her she needed to turn her talent into a real business. One day, I finally said, “You have to do this,” and she replied, “Only if you do it with me!” And the rest is history.

That single sentence was the seed.





# “We want our kids to see their moms dreaming and doing.”

“The “happy accident” soon blossomed into an official brand with a name, a following, and a growing list of clients.

Their friendship wasn't built in a coffee shop or through mutual acquaintances—it began at a homeschool teen jam event. Their kids clicked immediately, and soon so did the parents.

“It was one of those rare, instant connections,” Ashley says. “The kind where the husbands get along, the kids get along, and you just know you've found your people.” Homeschooling continues to shape their business. The flexibility it offers allows them to weave work around their families, and vice versa.

“We can shift learning days, work in bursts, and even bring our kids along when it makes sense,” Jenay explains. “It's a lifestyle that's taught us how to be creative with our time.”

We each have our strengths, and we really try to lean into them. Jenay is incredibly organized and detail-oriented, and she handles all of our editing—she's truly amazing at it. I (Ashley) love connecting with clients, brainstorming creative ideas, and being in the moment during shoots. I also help with shooting and have started creating videos for our brand, but when it comes to editing—that's all Jenay!

We've naturally found our rhythm as a team. There's a lot of collaboration, but also a deep trust in each other's roles. It makes running Wild Roots feel seamless, even in the middle of busy homeschool-mom life.



## Structure Meets Spontaneity

Jenay's detail-oriented approach balances Ashley's flair for improvisation. It's a partnership that clients feel during sessions.

"Jenay will notice if a necklace is crooked or the light is shifting," Ashley explains. "Meanwhile, I'll crack a joke to loosen everyone up or pivot when a toddler melts down."

The result? Sessions that run smoothly without feeling stiff, where authentic moments happen in front of the lens.

For Jenay and Ashley, work and life don't just coexist—they often inspire each other.

From a 4-H event to scouting a location for a homeschool graduation ceremony, the women keep their eyes open for beautiful backdrops and lighting conditions.

"There have been so many times when homeschooling and photography just overlap naturally," Ashley says. "We'll spot an open field or a perfect wall and immediately say, 'We have to come back here for a shoot!'"

Homeschooling keeps us out in the community and in nature, which constantly sparks ideas and gives us fresh inspiration. It's one of the coolest parts of how both worlds blend together so well.

## Raising the Next Generation of Dreamers

If there's one thing they want their kids to learn from watching Wild Roots grow, it's that dreams require work.

"We want them to see us chasing goals, problem-solving, and not giving up," Ashley says. It's not always easy, but it's worth it."

**One day,  
I finally  
said,  
"You  
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"Only if  
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And the  
rest is  
history.**





## Lessons for Entrepreneurial Parents

Their advice to others dreaming of launching a creative business while raising and educating children?

“Start small, dream big, and communicate often, Don’t wait for perfect timing—it doesn’t exist. If you feel called, take the first step. Surround yourself with people who support you. That makes all the difference.”

## Can you share a “beautiful chaos” moment?

*“Okay, this might sound a little crazy, but honestly, a lot of our moments feel like beautiful chaos—and we wouldn’t have it any other way!”*

*Just recently, we had a shoot scheduled on a rainy day, and the rain was coming down hard. But with a deadline looming, there was no backing out. Jenay’s husband stood there holding an umbrella over her while she kept shooting, and I was running around with my gimbal, capturing the kids playing in the rain. It was definitely chaotic, wet, and a little wild—but honestly, those after-the-rain sunset photos are some of my absolute favorites to date. Plus, the video we created is one of my best yet. Sometimes chaos brings out the best!”*

Wild Roots Photography is still in its early chapters, but the women behind the lens are already dreaming about new ways to grow—expanding services, exploring new styles, and continuing to capture the stories that matter.





**10¢** DR

**and**

**TURTLE**

**Drawings**

**The WILD, WOVEN Life of a  
Homeschooling  
Mompreneur**



# DREAMS



E





# How One Homeschooling Mompreneur Turned Chaos into Creativity—and Made a Life She Loves

KATRINA ASHBURN

I always knew I wanted the ‘Game of Life’ car—the one packed with tiny pink and blue pegs that barely fit. I joke about it, but I truly meant it.”

Even as a little girl, I dreamed of a home filled with the noise, joy, and delightful chaos of children. And honestly, I think the seeds of my entrepreneurial spirit were planted back then, too, right alongside my childhood dreams of motherhood.

## The Turtle That Started It All

I’ve been an entrepreneur since I was small. I remember sitting in the front yard with paper drawings of a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle face I’d sketched over and over again, trying to sell them for ten cents each. A true art gallery of turtle expressions. I didn’t sell a single one—not even to a pitying neighbor—but that didn’t stop me. That early determination to create and share something of my own never left.



When I became pregnant with my oldest, my creativity found a new outlet: jewelry-making. I sold handmade pieces wherever I could—craft markets, festivals, and yes, to a few kind people who probably just wanted me to stop talking about jump rings. My husband, my forever supporter, built my wooden display booth by hand and sat with me for hours at shows, chatting with customers while I nervously rearranged earrings for the tenth time.

## Creative Roots and Coast Guard Moves

After high school, my husband joined the United States Coast Guard, and we spent a few years in Michigan before moving back to Texas in 2007—me, newly pregnant again, and armed with a fresh degree in Graphic Design with a Fine Arts emphasis. Every bit of that education has shaped my work over the years, from branding to product design.

“Any wild hair I get for a business idea—he’s usually holding the measuring tape or keeping the kids entertained.”

I grew up with a mom who could sew anything, but I didn’t truly appreciate that skill until our second baby arrived. Suddenly, I wanted to make tiny dresses like the ones I wore growing up. That led to a handmade clothing line—and because I needed photos, I rekindled another old flame: photography.





**“I always knew I wanted the ‘Game of Life’ car—the one packed with tiny pink and blue pegs that barely fit. I joke about it, but I truly meant it.”**



Hence, I opened Junkyard Studio Photography. Soon, I was shooting family sessions and client work in between nap times and snack negotiations. Even today, I’ve been blessed to work with so many beautiful families, first newborn moments, and more.

### **Business by Hand and Heart**

Fast forward to 2022: I felt pulled back to my hands-on crafting roots and launched The Rustic Wolf Trading Co ([www.therusticwolftradingco.com](http://www.therusticwolftradingco.com)). There, I create hand-sewn clothing and housewares, heirloom crochet pieces, and hand-poured soy candles. It’s the kind of work that lets me honor the beauty of childhood and tradition. My heart has always been about capturing childhood and holding it close, but also giving parents the joy of gifting their children something meaningful. Something to be remembered. Something they might one day pass on to their own children. There’s a deep, quiet honor in creating—one that reflects the heart of our Creator.





**“We’re not just building businesses. We’re building a life—messy, faith-filled, and full of turtle drawings and ten-cent dreams.”**

God, in His infinite imagination, designed a world full of beauty, texture, and life. When I sew a dress, pour a candle, or shape something with my hands, I feel a small glimpse of that divine spark. It’s not just about making things; it’s about joining in the sacred rhythm of creation. Whether I’m stitching heirloom pieces or crafting something simple at the kitchen table, I’m reminded that to create is to worship—to echo the One who made us in His image, full of potential, wonder, and the ability to bring beauty into the everyday. “I’m not just making clothes or candles—I’m stitching together memories and caffeine-fueled dreams.” Somehow, in the midst of all this, I found myself teaching at our local high school. That brief season stirred something unexpected: the desire to homeschool.

### **The Scariest Yes**

I didn’t grow up in a homeschool family. I was a public school kid—the talkative one, always doodling, never great with grades, but endlessly curious. I remember wishing I could study what I actually loved. Those memories stayed with me. I knew that if I ever homeschooled, I’d want to nurture that spark—the kind that can’t always be graded but matters just as much. I’ve always been the type who, if I don’t know how to do something, I’ll figure it out. If I can’t do it the first time, I’ll try again (possibly with tears and snacks, but I’ll try again). That grit is something I believe God placed deep inside me. Still, the idea of homeschooling my own kids terrified me. Like, big-time scared me. What if I failed them? What if my kids ended up learning long division in their twenties because I taught it wrong? What if I couldn’t figure out fractions (again)? But the nudge wouldn’t go away. Last fall, I finally said yes. My two younger kids officially started homeschooling, and in October, my oldest—now a senior—chose to come home too. I will never forget our first day at the kitchen table. Books spread out. The house filled with questions and answers, laughter and silence. I was terrified... and also amazed. No one cried. Not even me.



## Rhythms, Reroutes, and Real Life

Let me be honest, though—I've bought curricula I never finished, researched learning styles like I was writing a thesis, and had Pinterest-fueled ambitions that quietly disappeared under piles of laundry. This first year has been a journey, and my kids have gracefully ridden the waves with me.

One of the most beautiful surprises has been discovering how differently each of them learns. Our days have become a rhythm that feels like ours—we bake, we craft, we take field trips, and we rest when we need to. It's different from anything I ever imagined, and yet more fulfilling than I could've hoped. I see the fruit not just in their education, but in our relationships. We've discovered how differently each of them learns and built a rhythm that works for us, not some perfect Instagram version of homeschooling.

"I can't tell you how many heartfelt ambitions have gently been swept under the rug... usually along with LEGO bricks and mystery crumbs."

### A Life Woven Together

Looking back, I see God's hand in every step. Every failed business idea, every risk I hesitated to take, every moment of fear or doubt—He's used it all. Our life now feels woven together. Not perfect, but purposeful. My kids have seen it all. I can't count how many times they've sat in the car with snacks and a tablet while I ran into a photography session, or helped pack candle orders, but most importantly, watched me pivot more than once with adaptability and determination. They're learning that creativity isn't always tidy. That success takes grit. That failure is just another version of learning. Being a mompreneur isn't always glamorous—it's late nights, glitter explosions, printer errors, and starting over (again). But they've seen it all. They've seen that entrepreneurship is not just about success—it's about resilience, adaptability, and faith. "We're not just building businesses. We're building a life—messy, faith-filled, and full of turtle drawings and ten-cent dreams."

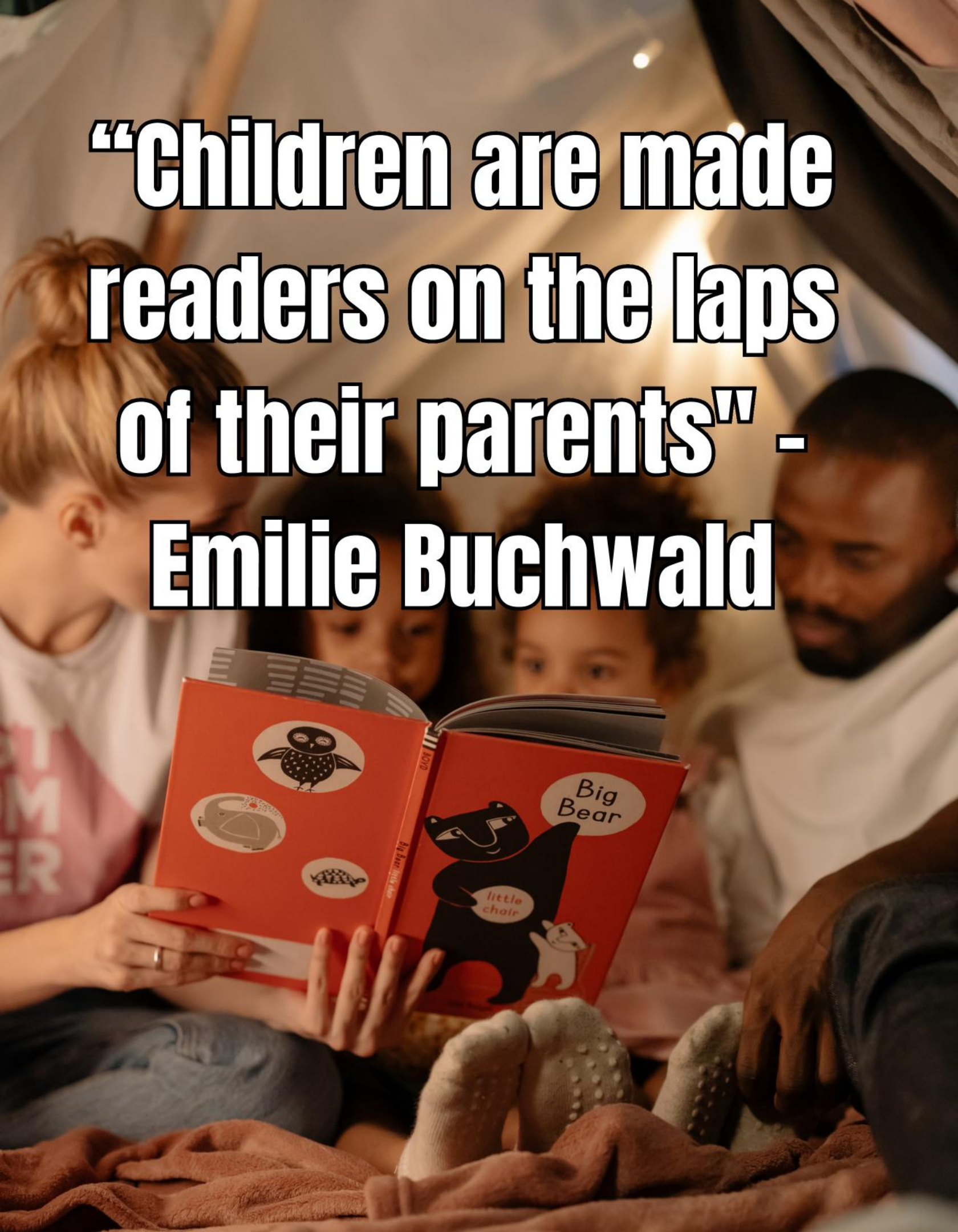


**“There’s a deep, quiet honor in creating—one that reflects the heart of our Creator.”**





**“Children are made  
readers on the laps  
of their parents” -  
Emilie Buchwald**





OUT OF



THIS

WORLD

✧ devotions ✧

Nancy I. Sanders

**NEW** 21-DAY  
DEVOTIONAL  
FOR KIDS!





# CROWDDE COUCHI

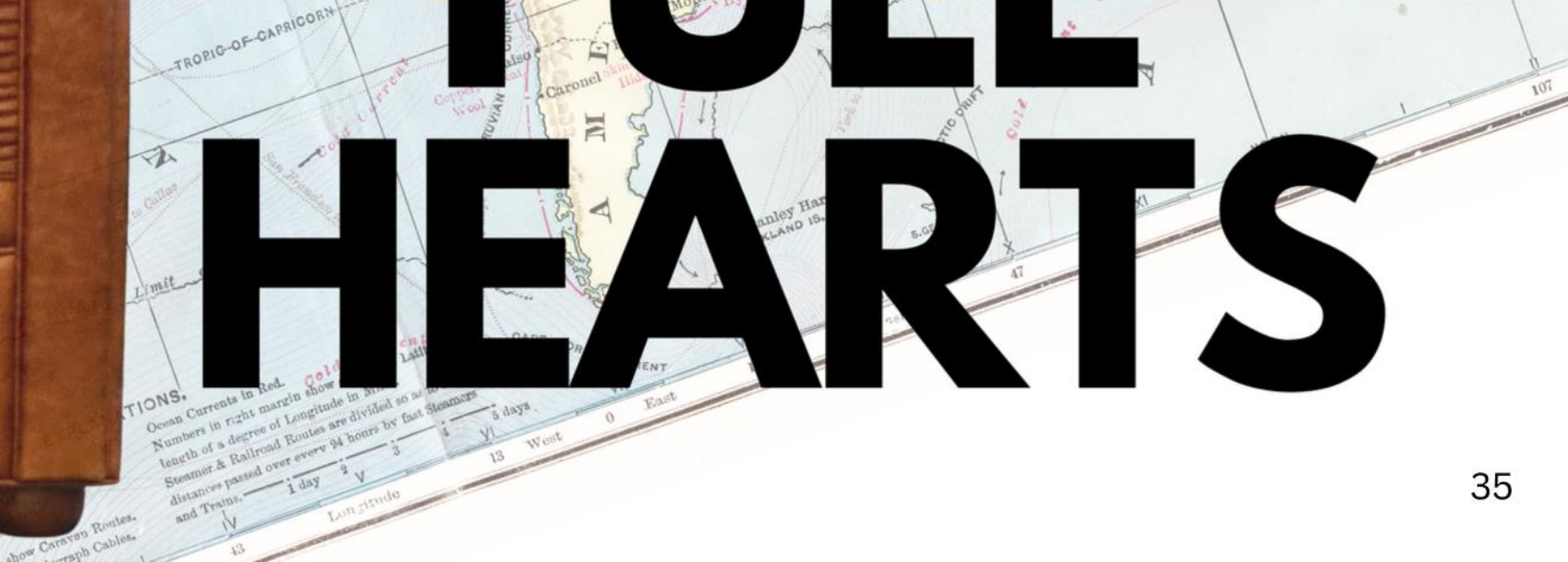




D



# FULL HEARTS





## Crowded Couch, Full Hearts:

# The Joys and Challenges of Homeschooling Many Kids

ANELLE RICHARDSON

I can still clearly remember my adamant insistence in high school that I didn't want any children. Even after my husband and I got married, I first said only one child, then two. And here we are: Eight children later, and so grateful that God's plan for us was different. My first introduction to a large homeschool family in real life was a sweet missionary family where the mom had 11 children and her daughter and son-in-law had 5. I, astonished, rudely shared my opinion that that was CRAZY. Both of them were so gracious and told me that they are so grateful for their family and were blessed. More than a decade later, I tracked them down through a friend of a friend to apologize for my harsh words, and we laughed over God's sense of humor, since at that point, we had 6 children with a 7th on the way.

My husband and I met in college, fell in love, got married after we finished studying, and set out on a great adventure to backpack Europe for 4.5 months. Quite adventurous, but nothing could have prepared us for the large family homeschooling homesteading lifelong adventure that we embarked on after that and are still navigating with God at the helm.



It has been a rollercoaster of ups and downs (definitely more ups than downs), and I have found buckets full of truth in the statement, shared wistfully by moms of grown children, that the days are long, but the years are short. We have 8 children: Seven boys, now ages 27-16, and one girl, age 13 (or as she says: "almost 14"). And no, we didn't stop because we "finally got a daughter". We homeschooled in South Africa, Canada, and have been here in Texas for the past almost 6 years and we're about to enter our 25th year of homeschooling. We love it here and, God willing, would love to stay here forever. Our children, still at home, certainly consider themselves Texan!



## THE JOURNEY BEGINS

We started our homeschooling journey shortly after our second child was born. At that point, we still thought that we would only have two children, and I threw myself into researching the best curriculum, the best way to teach children, etc., etc., etc. Our poor guinea-pig eldest was, at the age of 2, thrown into the deep-end of his mother's enthusiasm and quest for greatness. As our family grew, our vision for homeschooling changed. When we started out as unbelievers and planned only two children, our goal was to raise exceptional academic, hot-housed children who could regulate their emotions and be a benefit to society, but exceptional first and foremost. This changed as we started walking with the Lord and our family grew. Although, we definitely still wanted the last two goals, hot housing went out the window (thank goodness!), and there was a shift from "exceptional academic children" to a strong foundation in academics, focusing on their strengths and helping them conquer their weaknesses, so that they could do anything God called them to do in the future.

After much prayer and discussion between Trevor and I, our homeschool mission was crafted: We endeavor to lead our children to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and mind and to love their neighbor, including their family, as themselves. We commit to working with them to love learning and to have a strong academic foundation, so they're equipped to do whatever God calls them to. We want to raise children who are resilient, who stand for what is right, and who grow to be contributing members of society. When I started homeschooling in South Africa in 2000, homeschooling was in its infancy, with it only being legal for 2 years at that point. Those were the days of not taking your children out during school hours, few support groups and co-ops, and not a lot of curricula available, especially in South Africa. I am so grateful that we met an amazing group of homeschoolers who love the Lord and shared with us faithfully. The one thing all these mamas told me was that with many little ones, it would be wise to combine some of our learning to learn together as a family.

**“We want to raise children who are resilient, who stand for what is right, and who grow to be contributing members of society.”**





**“I want to make it clear that there is NO perfection here.”**

They were correct, and we were so blessed to come across Five in a Row, a curriculum that immediately spoke to my love for reading good books. As our family grew, it turned out that unit studies that we could do together as a family were definitely the right way to go! We have continued some form of that over the years. I was a little (okay, a lot) sad when we put away the Beyond Five in a Row when our youngest outgrew it, but unit studies still play a huge role in our homeschooling. This year, with only 3 of our children still being homeschooled, we are planning to continue studying Logic together and adding World Geography. I can't wait! Some of my favorite memories of homeschooling lie in reading with our children. In the early years, we would have the children do a quiet activity while I read aloud to them. The older ones would soon forget whatever they were doing and become engrossed in adventures of times gone by or in lands far, far away, the middles would listen and play, and the little ones would become increasingly louder until I had to remind them to be quieter. I love that our children, grown and almost grown, still remember the stories we read and the lessons we learned. I was pretty careful in choosing our reading material because I wanted our children to have examples of siblings treating each other well, people following God's calling, those who overcame adversity, and walked in integrity.

**“Some of my favorite memories of homeschooling lie in reading with our children.”**





In a large family, it is imperative for our children to be teammates and not rivals. I cannot begin to count how many times we read Bible verses pertaining to brotherly love, and 1 Corinthians 13 was read over and over and over again. I love how that carried over to chore time (most of the time) and building a servant heart, not only towards their many siblings but also leading to opportunities to volunteer and reach out to those in our community. It looks different today with our children sharing in different ways and us only occasionally volunteering all together as a family, but I am grateful that these lessons stuck. I want to make it clear that there is no perfection here. There isn't always song and dance (thank goodness, as some members of our family are fairly musical, but the others not so much... I'm included in the latter group), everyone isn't always kind, the reality is that chore time can still sometimes be a struggle. Wherever many people dwell together, sometimes they just get on each other's nerves. And sometimes I'm just tired and don't want to deal with heart issues, only to be reminded to not grow weary of doing what God has called us to do. Living with so many personalities sure builds character. I remember a specific time when two of our children shared a room. One was (and still is) a person who needs a little more time to "become human" in the mornings, the other woke up with joy in his heart and a song on his lips.



It made sense for them to share a room in our home, especially since no-one was getting their own room at that point, but it took many teaching and learning opportunities for them to figure out a way to co-exist happily for that first hour of the morning.

Finding a daily rhythm that worked for us required, and continues requiring, adjustment as we go. Whenever in doubt, I go back to the homeschool mission statement to remind myself what is most important and how to adjust things to stay the course. Sometimes it is trial and error, and especially as the children are getting older, some are graduating, and some are moving out, our homeschool and life planning look different.

In the early years, for example, we read children's Bibles during evening family devotions, and then we suddenly had children who needed more than a children's Bible.





So after reading the basic kid version, we would read from the Word and dig deeper with the older ones while the younger ones colored or drew. As the age range grew, we still had family devotions with something for the younger ones and “middles”, and then, once the little ones were in bed, getting more in-depth with the others. Now, with all teens and young adults still at home, we have family devotions in the morning before my hubby goes to work, since evening activities mean that not everyone is home most evenings.

As a young mom, I was completely unprepared for parenting, but even more so in raising a large, Christian, homeschool family. I felt like everyone else had it all together. It was during this time that an online friend (if you're old enough, you may remember the yahoo groups where you would get an email digest of discussion once a day :D Yes, I'm that old...) sent me a DVD of a recording of a show they watched in the US: The Duggars' "14 Kids and Pregnant Again". Oh, the children were so well behaved, the mom spoke in this sweet, kind voice and never seemed to lose her temper, they all sat around their table happily learning, and her husband seemed so involved in everything they did. I felt like this was what we had to strive for.

Trevor wasn't so enamored by this family as I was. He reminded me that we saw only a small snippet that was heavily edited. Between God, Trevor, and real-life families, I realized that I only needed to emulate Christ. I reflected recently that it is no different today for anyone doing anything outside the norm: The medium has just changed to social media, where we get sucked into the “what looks perfect” when it really isn't.



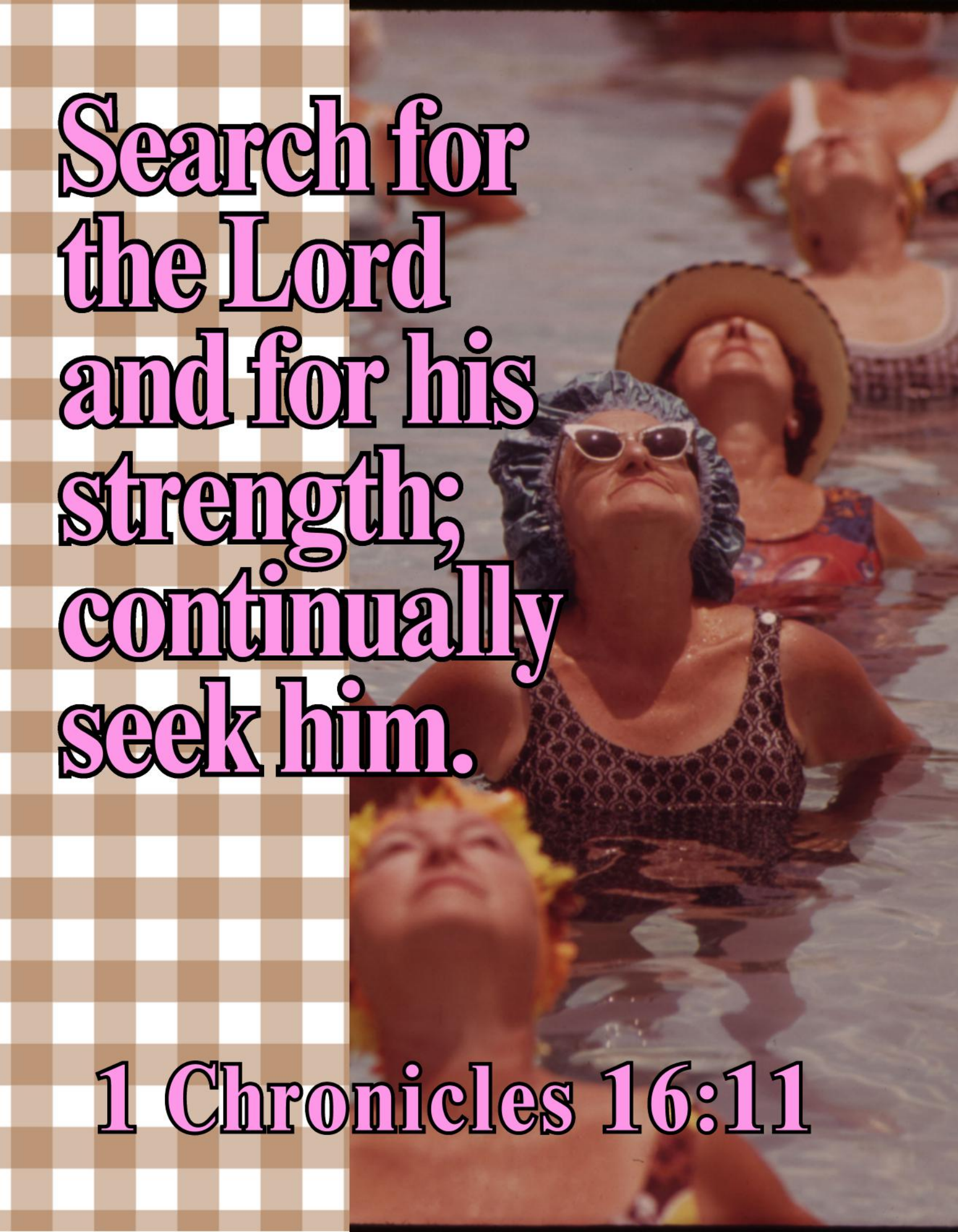
When we had 6 children, we moved from our homestead in South Africa to Canada. I was totally unprepared for the cold, and moving into the city into a smaller house and a tiny yard was hard. The upside was that there were lots of homeschoolers, and getting involved with the homeschool community helped tremendously with making friends. One of my dearest friends from Canada is another large homeschool mama, who really encouraged me tremendously, as we entered the teen years. Within a year, we realized that we needed more space. We moved out of the city, and although we didn't homestead (couldn't imagine doing it with the extreme winters), we had some land and a little more breathing room.

After a little over a year in Texas, we were forced to move as our landlord was selling our rental home. It is a story for another day, but God provided the perfect homestead for us, and it is here where we live life and homeschool as a family today. We added rabbits, chickens, sheep, pigs, cattle, and goats to the mix. We started a small business making all-natural goat milk soap and other products, and love that our children are a part of it in various ways. I always tell them that we're like those old agricultural families that had dozens of children to do all the farm work... they don't find my joke as funny as I do!

Looking back, I'm so grateful that God had other plans for us. I can't imagine what life would have been like with only 2 children and living in the city, the way I had planned it. I'm grateful that we can teach our children about God throughout the day, can be on this educational journey with them, can raise our own food, and live life with the people dearest to my heart. We miss my older kids desperately, but I'm so thankful for the years we had together as a homeschool family. If I could do it all over again, I would choose the same, but I would have read more books, sweated the small stuff less, and sang off-key with them more. Because, truly, the days are long, but the years are short

**“If I could do it all over again, I would choose the same, but I would have read more books, sweated the small stuff less, and sang off-key with them more. Because, truly, the days are long, but the years are short.”**





**Search for  
the Lord  
and for his  
strength;  
continually  
seek him.**

**1 Chronicles 16:11**



# Understanding Texas Homeschool Laws

## Your freedom, your responsibility

Homeschooling in Texas comes with some of the most parent-friendly laws in the country. But with that freedom comes the responsibility to know and follow the state's requirements. Whether you're brand new to homeschooling or just need a refresher, here's what you need to know to stay compliant and confident.

### Is Homeschooling Legal in Texas?

Yes! In 1994, the landmark *Leeper v. Arlington ISD* case confirmed that homeschooling is a legal form of private education in Texas. This decision gave parents the right to teach their children at home without government oversight.

**Requirements for Texas Homeschoolers:** Unlike some states that require testing, registration, or home visits, Texas keeps it simple.

The law considers a homeschool to be a type of private school, and it must meet three main requirements:

**Curriculum** – Instruction must be in a bona fide (genuine) manner. This means you are sincerely teaching, not just going through the motions.

**Subjects** – Your curriculum must cover at least:

Reading

Spelling

Grammar

Mathematics

**Good Citizenship** (this can include history, civics, community service, or lessons in responsibility)

**Written Format** – Curriculum must be in a written form. This can be traditional textbooks, printed workbooks, or even digital/online programs.



## Do I Have to Notify the State?

If your child has never been enrolled in public school, you don't have to notify anyone—you can simply begin homeschooling.

If your child is currently enrolled in public school, you must send a withdrawal letter to the school. This ensures your child is not marked absent or considered truant. **Testing and Records**

No standardized testing is required by the state. However, it's wise to keep records of transcripts (for high schoolers). These can be helpful for college admissions, the military, or transferring back into public/private school.

## Good Citizenship—What Does That Mean?

Texas law doesn't give a rigid definition, which gives parents flexibility. Many families cover "good citizenship" by including:

Texas and U.S. history

Government and civics lessons


Community service projects

Character and values education

Your Freedom, Your Choice

The beauty of homeschooling in Texas is the trust placed in parents to educate their children. You can customize your approach—whether you use a boxed curriculum, an online program, or a mix of hands-on projects and field trips.



A person with long brown hair, wearing a blue denim jacket, is seen from the back, looking out at a forest. The background is a soft-focus view of trees and foliage. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent grey rectangle on the left side, which contains the main text. A horizontal white line is positioned below the main text.

**The Day I told  
GOD To Leave  
Me Alone.....**

**He Changed**





# My Life



# Dear UNDECIDED -ON- HOMESCHOOLING MOM...

BLANCA MONTELONGO

If I knew then what our homeschool life was going to bring us—the rich relationships we've formed, the adventures it's gifted, and the freedom it has provided us—I would not have yelled at God, at the top of my lungs, to leave me alone as he pursued me to follow this sacred calling. Like you (maybe), I wanted something more grand than teaching ABCs and sitting through yet another library storytime. I wanted a thriving career where shiny quarterly awards were distributed and a business professional dress code was required. At least that's what I was taught to desire.

## **When Career Goals Collide with God's Plans**

In January of 2019, I was being recruited for my dream job as a project manager. It was finally happening!

I was strongly encouraged to apply with a near guarantee that I'd be picked up for the next team that was being built. Except when I sat down to apply for this long-awaited position, an unsettling hesitation completely took over my ability to see this application through.

I closed my laptop and took this matter to prayer. In hindsight, that specific step should have been done prior, but at that point in my life, I thought the next step to success was above the need of prayer.

What happened next was a series of unfortunate goodness. I couldn't apply for the job in peace, and the PM recruiting team had to move on. My then-current position was being cut because of budget, and every job I had my eye on had been filled. My entire friend group and community would all go with it. Suddenly, what was my entire existence and life's pursuit was being plucked from the tight grip of my hand, one by one.

## **Yelling at the Sky**

I realized all the doors in front of me had been closed, and I knew enough to know it was the work of a force I had been ignoring that was calling me to veer off this highway. The very hand of God had blocked my ten-year career plan. Enough ignoring turned that seemingly easy road I was on into a complete wreck, and debris began to fly.





### The Idea I Couldn't Shake

"Leave me alone! Stay out of my life, you're ruining my life's work!" I bawled towards the sky with every ounce of frustration I had, as I knew I couldn't ignore this other than gentle leading. Three months into that same year, I found myself pulling our son out of four-year-old kindergarten. Financially, it didn't make sense for me to go back to work when my salary would only cover daycare.

As I lingered around the house, the small still idea of homeschool started popping up. I looked online for some questions and answers, but few options and forums were available. I couldn't get a clear picture of what homeschool was supposed to look like or if I could even properly do it.

I sheepishly brought up the option to homeschool with my husband, and his eyes lit up! The conversation became something serious with a clear vision over days, and I dove into finding answers from any resources I could find. Could I actually do this?

**"Leave  
me alone!  
Stay out  
of my life,  
you're  
ruining  
my life's  
work!"**



## **Realizing I Was Already a Teacher**

In the questioning of my own abilities, I made a list of all the things I had already taught our son. I had taught him how to walk, how to read, count, and even use sign language before I taught him to speak his first words!

Maybe I was already his life-teacher? Maybe I was already naturally equipped to add school to our home life? I became convinced that I was the perfect person for this job!

We said yes as a family, and I took the summer to prepare. I bought the fanciest curriculum I could find (classic rookie move) and made our spare room a decked-out kindergarten, complete with bulletin board borders, chef's kiss!

We threw ourselves into a life of unknowns, but certainly one of obedience to a calling I had no idea was ever an option. We had slow mornings, too many arts and crafts, and I read as many books as I could with my son on my lap. That first year was dreamy, quiet, and unforgettable.

***“I have had childhood craters in my heart back filled with the redemptive time I have spent with my own children”***

Exactly one year later, in March of 2020, the world went indoors, and the homeschool community erupted! Up until that point, we didn't know a single family that was homeschooling. There wasn't a co-op within miles or even a playgroup operating within the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We had been very alone in our journey, though we always made the most of it.

But once COVID hit the masses, my messages swarmed with questions like, "How do I start homeschooling?", "What's legal?", "Do you want to build a snowman?" (Literally, a Facebook group had started with this post title by a mother who was starting to homeschool her children and asked for a group to form in her area, in the middle of a Wisconsin winter.) My natural and spiritual eyes had opened to the realization that I had been "plucked" from my perfectly planned life and placed in the position of a suburban pioneer. I had been gracefully given a little over 365 days to make all the first-year homeschool mom mistakes to pave a road for those who would come after me. That was almost seven years ago, and the messages have not slowed down, not once, from families in desperation who want to know more about how they, too, can start homeschooling.

I have been immensely fulfilled over the years to know I have acted like a bridge as families go through the decision-making process of bringing their children home. I have seen relationships heal, peace return to homes, and in my own personal experience, I have had childhood craters in my heart back filled with the redemptive time I have spent with my own children.



## The Birth of WholeHeart Homeschool Co-Op

Homeschooling was a desire given to my heart that I didn't know I wanted or needed. today, that desire is about to open its doors to a brand new homeschool families ministry in Lavon, TX—WholeHeart Homeschool Co-Op! I am so grateful to be able to serve as the Director of this co-op that is discipleship-driven and carries a vision to be a supportive community, providing resources for homeschooling families to grow through arts and enrichment classes, project-based learning, and clubs. I couldn't imagine telling day-one homeschooling-mom me that we'd be so deep into this homeschooling lifestyle, we're now running a full-on co-op. And not only because I didn't know what a homeschool co-op was, but also because day-one homeschooling-mom me was ridden with self-doubt and hesitation. Like you (maybe), I wasn't looking to be home, endlessly serving "second breakfast." Or maybe like you, I had no idea what I was really saying yes to. Maybe, like you, I simply didn't think I could. But it's not about subjects done at home.



**For information about WholeHeart Homeschool Co-Op in Lavon, TX, please visit [www.lavonfirstassembly.org/wholeheart](http://www.lavonfirstassembly.org/wholeheart) and follow us on social media:  
Facebook: Whole Heart Homeschool Co-Op  
Instagram: @wholehearthomeschool.co.op**

## For the Mama Still Deciding

The picture is greater than we can comprehend, and if you're feeling that tug to take your next steps in homeschooling, believe that there are droves of people depending on you to see beyond the now.

I challenge you, dear Undecided-on-Homeschooling mama, to ask yourself this question,

"Who am I pioneering for?" Who needs you to throw out the ten-year plan and take a leap of faith in unfamiliar waters? Whose future is hanging on your next step to bring your children home?

Whose healing is waiting on the other side of your yes? I've since never so shamelessly yelled at God.

He saw people from places I could never reach and opened my eyes to an eternal partnership with Him through homeschooling. I could never have thought up this life for myself, thus giving a very real meaning to the verse found in

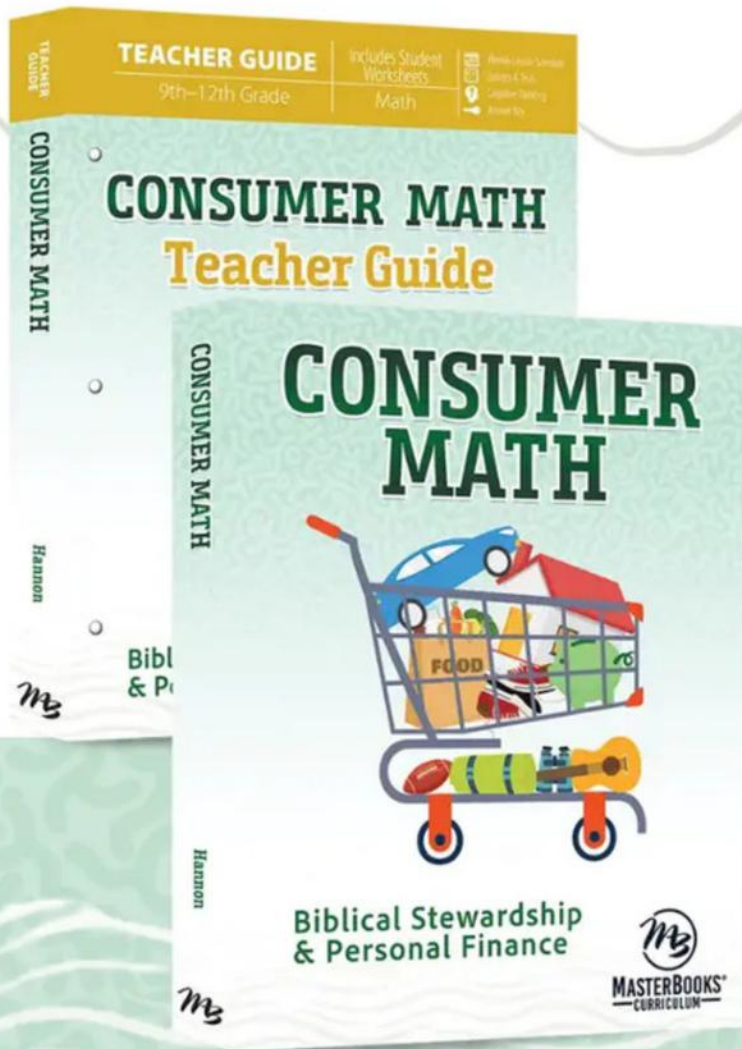
***Isaiah 55:8-9:***

***"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.***

***"As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.***



# New Release!



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# Classical Conversations®

## Education Independence



## A Principled Path Forward for Christian Education

### BEYOND SCHOOL CHOICE

While school choice is a popular topic, **Education Independence** offers something greater—a principled approach that strengthens families and builds communities through authentic freedom.

This paradigm shifts from “*How do we get taxpayer funding?*” to “*How do we restore education to its rightful place in God’s design?*”

### OUR WORK IS FOUNDED ON FOUR PILLARS

#### Independent Parents

God trusts parents with their children and so should we; therefore, we affirm that parental rights come from God and should be protected from the state.

#### Independent Funding

Education is the responsibility of the family, with support from fellow believers; therefore, we recognize that the financial obligation remains on parents, with support from private, voluntary benefactors.

#### Independent Pursuit

The purpose of education is to know God and to make Him known; therefore, we uphold that the sacred pursuit of education exists outside the jurisdiction of the state.

#### Independent Ideas

Wrestling with Truth promotes blessing and virtue for the whole community; therefore, we conclude that a flourishing society emerges from a free market of ideas.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

**For Policymakers:** Reduces government burden while strengthening families and communities.

**For Advocates:** Transcends partisan politics by focusing on timeless principles.

**For Organizations:** Creates mission-driven partnerships honoring religious liberty and educational excellence.

**For Families:** Restores authentic choice and autonomy while building sustainable, values-aligned communities.

### JOIN THE NETWORK

The Education Independence Network is a growing community of advocates, policymakers, and organizations building on this shared vision.

We are committed to educating the grassroots community, partnering with like-minded organizations, and engaging in public policy conversation.

Together, we can build an education paradigm that honors God, strengthens families, and serves the common good.



## Promote and protect Education Independence!





**FLAMES**

**and**

**FAITH**

**A Junior Cadets -  
God Given Mission**







# Answering the Call: God lit the Fire

JOSHUA RICHARDSON

**I**n my sophomore year, my mom heard about the Angleton Junior Fire Cadet program. I was immediately interested. I always felt called to help others, and this was an excellent way to see if my interest in firefighting aligned with the reality of it. I had to write an essay as part of the application, which made me a little nervous since writing is not my favorite subject. My parents and I also had to attend an interview at the station. The interview was for me, and my parents had their questions answered. I became even more excited as I learned more about it. My parents loved that the station clearly believed in parental authority and that, in their station, it was God first, then family, and work third. I learned a lot about firefighting, but also about teamwork, ethics, and integrity from the wonderful men and women I had the opportunity to train under!

Some departments offer the Junior Fire Cadet program throughout Texas. My experience has only been with the Angleton Junior Fire Cadet program, and I'd love to share a little about it. The program is dedicated to both serving the community and raising the next generation of firefighters.

It consists of meetings, training, both concepts and hands-on, leadership opportunities, teamwork skills, and far more. Cadets attend department meetings, participate in Public Relations (PR) events, respond to fires and other emergency calls at the Fire Officers' discretion, and assist on the scene under the supervision of officers. The Junior Fire Cadet program offers teens the opportunity to serve and lead in their communities and instill good, long-standing habits for the future.

The Cadet Program is structured just like a normal Fire Department. It's governed by the program's Constitution and Bylaws, as well as SOGs, and a board made up of members of the Department. The Cadets are led by mentors who lead everything the Cadets do. Under them are the Cadet officers, one Captain, three Lieutenants, and one Secretary. Under them are the rest of the Cadets. No cadet is better than another, but Cadets who hold Officer positions have more responsibility as they lead. Every year, elections are held to vote in new Officers so that everyone can sharpen their leadership skills. This is one of the many ways the program better teens and prep them for the future.

I was privileged to be voted in as Captain for 2.5 years before I aged out of the program. I'm humbled that my fellow cadets trusted me enough in that position. It was an excellent opportunity for me to learn leadership within a safe environment.





**“Throughout the Cadet**

**program, our mentors and Cadet Officers help instill in themselves and in the other Cadets good morals, good habits, and skills that will benefit everyone in the future.”**



Training is a crucial part of the program. Cadets learn the basics of first aid training in the fire service: practicing identifying injuries, signs of illness, and how to treat and call for medical assistance. These skills give cadets a taste of the medical side of the job. Cadets also go through CPR training and certification, AED training and certification, and stop the bleed training and certification. One of the events we did while I was a member, in tandem with our medical training, was to attend an EMS base. We got a tour of the base and observed the medical equipment on the RA units. We talked to the EMS crew on duty and gained valuable insights about what EMTs and Paramedics do. We also visited the LifeFlight base in the area. We spoke with the pilots and medical crew about their jobs and how to get into LifeFlight Academy.





Running calls with firefighters is fun, but some dangers come with that. That's why there are safety measures in place to protect the cadets on calls. When the tone drops, we get to work! Cadets start truck checks and check around the trucks before leaving the station. We throw on our gear and roll out. I had the opportunity to get on the radio and notify dispatch that we were en route to the emergency. As we headed to the emergency, we helped the driver navigate the roads by pulling up the location of the emergency, watching traffic, and calling out cars that may not see the emergency vehicles approaching. I specifically remember one of the calls I went on: There was my company's Captain and I in the engine. We got to the scene, and he asked me to deploy the fire hose on the front of the truck. This was not a usual cadet task, so I felt honored because it meant I had enough training and practice that he was confident in my ability to deploy and operate the hose.

Physical training, also known as PT, was a big part of our program, as you can imagine. Staying physically fit and strong is important because the job requires us to move or handle heavy equipment and run, jump, climb, lift, carry, pull, drag, and push objects and or people. Training differs depending on the night and who is available to lead the exercises. Some of that training was basic or intense workouts, or fire operational training, pushing our bodies and minds to the edge to ultimately make us better firefighters. This kind of training takes basic tasks we may do on call and turns them into obstacle air consumption drills, helping us sharpen our minds and making us more efficient on fire calls.

The most important thing we are taught as Cadets is that our safety is our top priority, because if we aren't safe, we can't help anyone else. I've taken that piece of advice with me throughout my time in the fire service. These little pieces of knowledge have helped me so much as I advanced through the fire service, making me a better, safer trainee firefighter. Throughout the Cadet program, our mentors and Cadet Officers help instill in themselves and in the other Cadets good morals, good habits, and skills that will benefit everyone in the future.



**“The most important thing we are taught as Cadets is that our safety is our top priority, because if we aren't safe, we can't help anyone else.”**



**Teamwork:** the ability to work as a team with others of all backgrounds.

**Honesty:** being honest and truthful about what you did and didn't do.

**Humility:** not being a know-it-all. Being able to be teachable and not puffing ourselves up.

**Leadership:** demonstrating the characteristics of a servant leader, being willing to get your hands dirty and work alongside your firefighters under you.

**Accountability:** holding each other accountable for our actions and keeping track of everyone's location for the safety of all. Each of these skills and attributes is a characteristic of good firefighters.

The Junior Fire Cadet program is an excellent program that enables young people to be ready and equipped for the future to serve their communities. From the classroom to emergencies, the program is interactive, skill-building, team-building, relationship-strengthening, and safety-enforcing, a way to raise the next generation of firefighters. At the Angleton Fire Department, our Cadet program adopted these words from Colton Joseph Myers, which now stand as the Angleton Junior Fire Cadets' Mission Statement: "To provide the youth of our community an opportunity to learn about the fire service. Through teamwork and dedication, we strive to improve our lives. To achieve academic excellence and to conduct ourselves with honor, integrity, and dignity. We will enrich our lives and our community while learning and bettering ourselves."

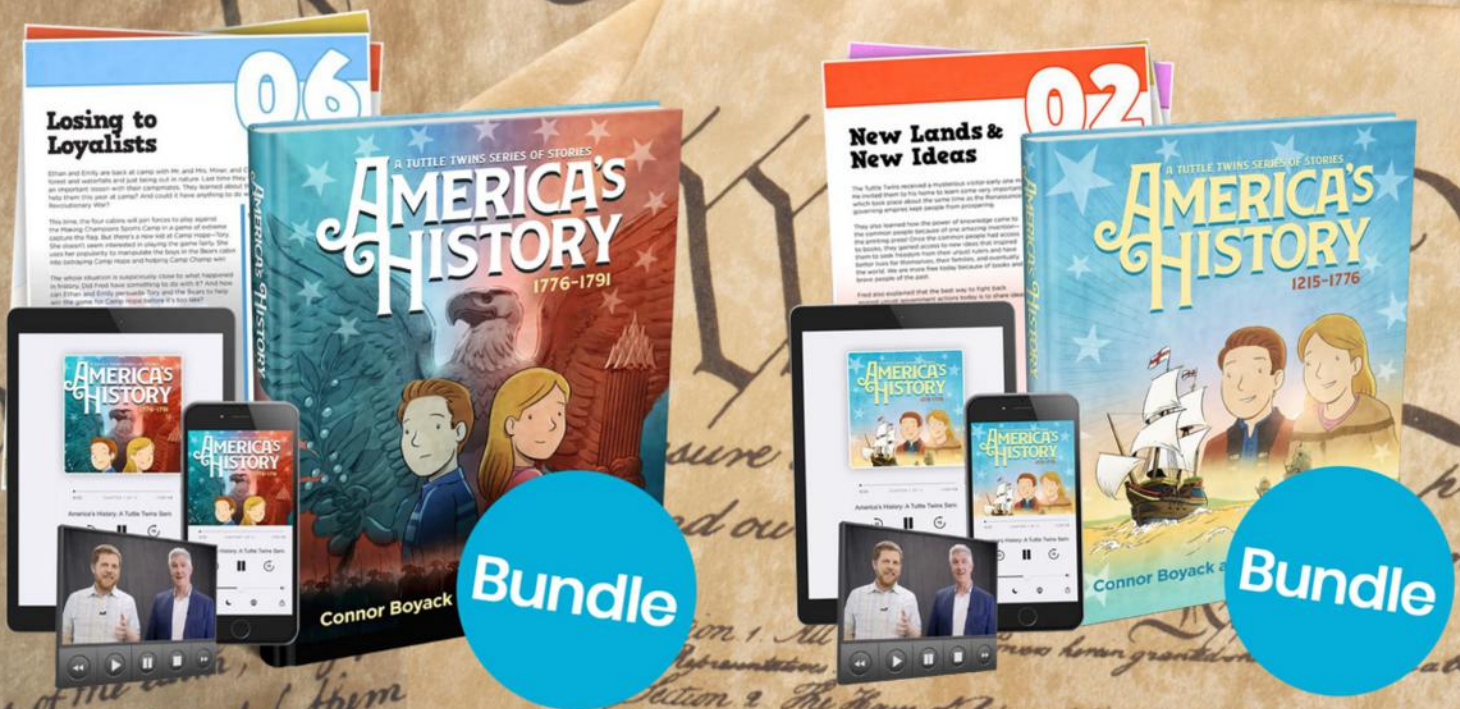
I graduated from the Fire Cadet Rookie School through the Angleton Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter a week after I graduated from high school. I'm now volunteering at our local fire department in Jones Creek. I've enrolled in the EMT course at our local community college, and I'm also studying hard for my next fire testing for a career as a firefighter. I'm excited to see where God takes me next!



# THE TUTTLE TWINS



## History Curriculum



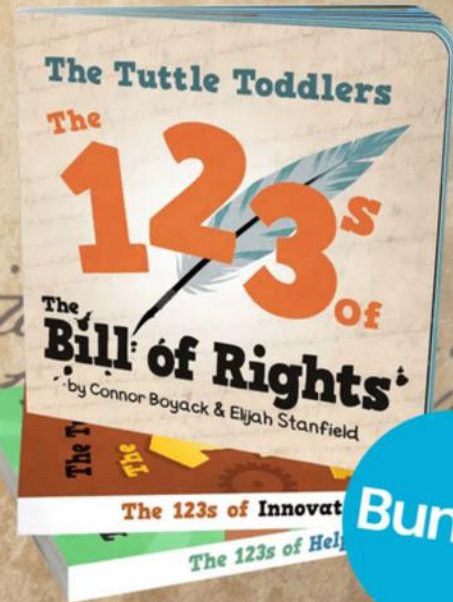
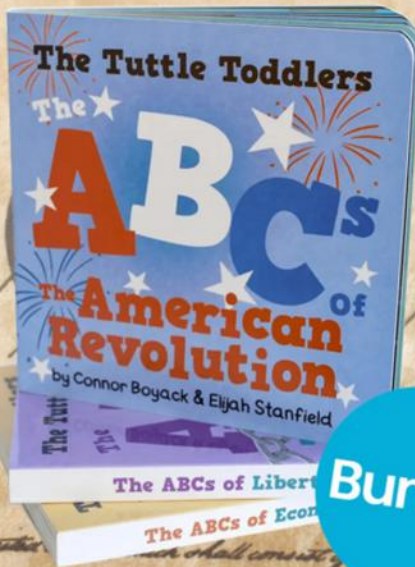
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# A Timeline of Homeschooling in Texas

**1915**

## *First Compulsory Attendance Law Enacted*

*Texas passes its first compulsory attendance statute, requiring children of certain ages to attend public school unless enrolled in a private institution. At the time, homeschooling was considered a form of private schooling under this law.*

**1981**

## *TEA Reverses Interpretation*

*The Texas Education Agency (TEA) shifts its stance, ruling that homeschools are not private schools and therefore subject to compulsory attendance—leading to legal challenges and uncertainty.*

**1987**

## *District Court Rules in Favor of Homeschoolers*

*A Tarrant County court rules that homeschools can indeed be considered private schools and are exempt from compulsory attendance.*

**1994**

## *Landmark Texas Supreme Court Decision*

*The Texas Supreme Court issues a unanimous 9–0 opinion in *Leeper v. Arlington ISD*, confirming that bona fide homeschools—teaching reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and good citizenship using visual materials—are exempt from compulsory attendance.*

*This marks the official legalization of homeschooling in Texas.*



# School Freedom in Texas

**1923**

*Private School Exemption Expanded*

*A revision to the law clarifies that children attending private or parochial schools—which at the time included bona fide homeschools—are exempt from compulsory attendance.*

**1985**

*Leeper Case Filed*

*Attorney Shelby Sharpe and TX Home School Coalition file a class-action lawsuit (Leeper v. Arlington ISD), representing homeschool families who argued that the 1915 law intended for homeschools to count as private schools.*

**1991**

*Appeals Court Upholds Ruling*

*The Second District Court of Appeals affirms the lower court's decision, reinforcing the legal standing of homeschools.*



# A Timeline of Homeschooling in Texas

**Post  
1994**

## *Leeper Day & Strengthening Protections*

*June 9 becomes known among homeschoolers as Leeper Day, a celebration and reminder of the victory for homeschooling freedom. The Texas Home School Coalition works with TEA to ensure that simple "letters of assurance" suffice if school districts question a home education's validity.*

**1995–  
2003**

## *Expanding Homeschool Legitimacy*

*The THSC advocates for practical accommodations: access to driver education (1995), college dual-credit classes (1998), and recognition in college admissions (e.g., HB 944 in 2003).*

**2007–  
2021**

## *Legislation for Homeschool Access*

*Bills are passed to allow homeschoolers to take the PSAT (2007) and to participate in UIL extracurriculars (Tebow Bill, 2021)*



# School Freedom in Texas

**2025** *New Voucher Program Introduced - Texas introduces a \$1B school voucher program offering homeschool families up to \$2,000 yearly for educational expenses, Voucher program introduces new funding model with ongoing guardrails.*



**Voices**

**Of**

*Free*

**Brazoria County  
Alliance For  
Homeschool Freedom**



“full of energy, inspiration, and community”

# Freedom





# Protecting Freedom, Empowering Families:

## The Story of the Alliance for Homeschool Freedom of Brazoria County

In the heart of Brazoria County, a small but passionate team of women is working tirelessly to protect one of Texas's most cherished educational freedoms — the right to homeschool without unnecessary government interference. The Alliance for Homeschool Freedom of Brazoria County has grown into a trusted source of support, education, and advocacy for families across the region, with an impact reaching well beyond county lines.

At the forefront of their organization is President Jennifer Halfeld, joined by Vice President Jasmine Salinas, Treasurer Rachel Siegel, Secretary Ashlynn Faulkner, and board members Morgan Crocker, Jaime Rocha, and Paula Broadway. Together, they represent a powerful combination of personal experience, political engagement, and an unshakable belief in the ability of parents to educate their own children.



**Dr. Ron Paul speaking about Homeschool freedoms**



## CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

I started the Alliance when the Tebow Bill passed. Our representative, Cody, had authored this bill and was met with a large outcry from the homeschool community. He genuinely believed he was doing what his constituents wanted, but he simply didn't know otherwise. That experience made me realize the need for an organization that could communicate directly with our representatives, advocate for our needs, and serve as a unified voice to help preserve homeschool freedoms.

So I called some of my close homeschool mom friends, including Paula Broadway, who fights for our freedoms every session at the state legislature. We sat down in someone's living room and came up with our mission and what we were trying to create. It has evolved a little over the years, but at its core, it is still the same thing we set out to build in that living room.

-Jennifer Halfeld

## **A Deeply Personal Mission: For Treasurer Rachel Siegel, the mission is rooted in her own childhood.**

My mom pulled my sister and I out of public school when it was still illegal to homeschool. We lived in constant fear. We practiced what to say if someone from CPS came to our door. We rehearsed how to answer questions from strangers in the grocery store. Every outing, every knock at the door carried the weight of uncertainty, potential loss, and fear of being taken away. We were just kids—but we knew the risks. Even after the *Leeper v. Arlington* decision in 1994 officially recognized homeschooling as legal in Texas, the fear didn't disappear overnight. It took years to unlearn it. Today, I homeschool my own son—and he has no idea what that fear feels like. His friends don't either. And I want to keep it that way. I know what it costs to get here and how easily freedom can be lost if we don't stay vigilant.

President Ronald Reagan said it best:

“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same...”

We are the ones who must protect this freedom—not just for our families, but for generations to come. That means staying informed, engaged, and active in our communities and legislatures. I homeschool today not just for my son, but also in honor of my mother, who sacrificed so much to give us something better. Her courage built the foundation I now stand on. And I will spend my days offering that same courage, hope, and support to others.

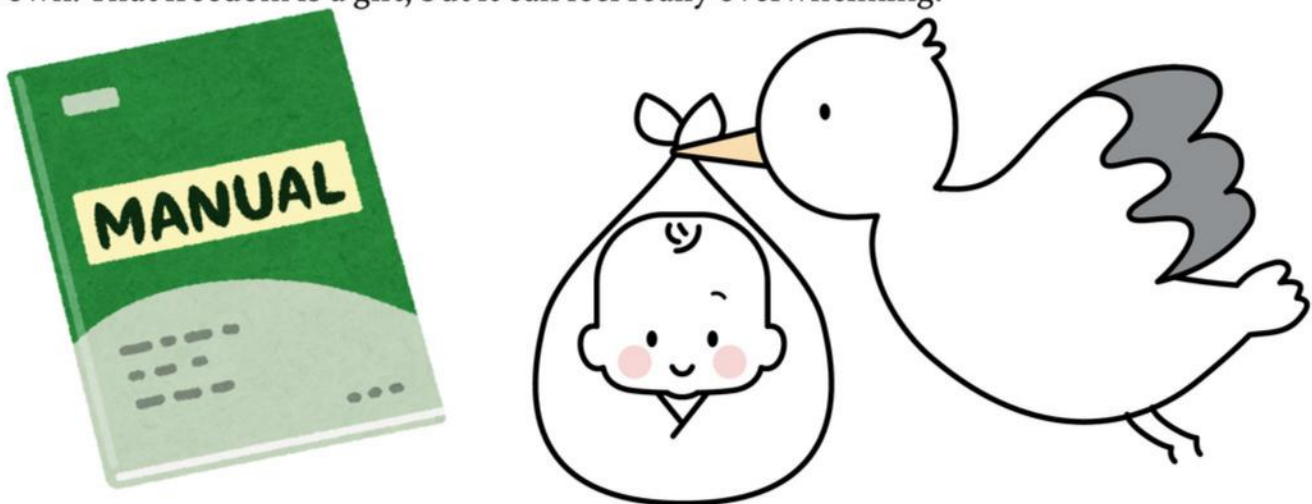
We've come a long way. Let's keep walking forward — together.

-Rachel Siegel



Our mission is “to educate about and advocate for homeschool freedoms and support homeschool families.” This mission goes back to why we first started: to preserve homeschool freedoms. To achieve this, we focus on two main areas- supporting homeschool families and advocating for our rights. Many parents feel lost when they first begin homeschooling. We have all grown up in a system where we are taught to send our children away because someone else “knows better” and can be trusted to educate them. But in Texas homeschooling, there is no “help” from the system; we are completely free. We have no oversight and no restrictions on how we teach our children, which is both empowering and intimidating.

Speaking with the Hifalutin Homeschooler, Jennifer Cabrera, at our last convention, she equated it to like when you leave the hospital with a newborn. No one sends you home with a manual. You’re just handed this tiny human who communicates through screams, and you figure it out. Homeschooling is much the same. You make the decision to homeschool , and suddenly, you are on your own. That freedom is a gift, but it can feel really overwhelming.



This is why support is one of the primary ways we help maintain our homeschool freedoms. Whether you are brand new to homeschooling or have been doing it for years, everyone needs encouragement and guidance sometimes. We need someone who has walked in our shoes and someone to tell us that it will be ok or to try something new. Our monthly Homeschool 101 Meetups (usually held at local coffee shops) are designed to offer that support. We help parents get started, answer their questions, and give them the confidence to know they do not need the system to educate their children.

The second way we protect our freedoms is through advocacy. We educate new homeschoolers about why it’s important to resist government oversight (don’t take the bait!!) and we also engage directly with our local representatives. This means making phone calls, visiting their offices, and mobilizing our community when legislation comes up that could impact homeschooling.

By combining support for families with advocacy for freedom, we believe we can preserve the rights that make homeschooling in Texas so unique and empowering.

-Jennifer Halfeld



## DUAL MISSION

The Alliance's mission — to educate about and advocate for homeschool freedoms and support homeschool families — is not just a statement, but a strategy in action. They believe protecting homeschool freedoms requires a combination of political vigilance and community building.

On the support side, the Alliance ensures that families know they are not alone. They answer questions, offer guidance on curriculum and teaching styles, and encourage parents to trust their instincts.

On the advocacy side, they act as a bridge between homeschoolers and lawmakers. Vice President Jasmine Salinas notes that they aim to be the “first point of contact” for any elected official in Brazoria County who needs information on homeschooling. Whether through calls, in-person meetings, or community mobilization, they make sure the homeschool perspective is clearly represented whenever policy discussions arise.

## GROWING REACH AND INFLUENCE

From humble beginnings, the Alliance has expanded its reach dramatically. Today, their social media platforms connect them to over 18,000 followers, and their in-person events draw hundreds. The annual Free 2 Homeschool Convention and Expo has become a major highlight for homeschool families in the region, with more than 300 attendees at the most recent event.

The convention is not only a place to connect with fellow homeschoolers, but also an opportunity to hear from nationally recognized speakers. For two consecutive years, attendees had the rare opportunity to hear from Dr. Ron Paul, a steadfast advocate for parental control in education. His message — that parents, not government, are responsible for their children's education — resonates deeply with the Alliance's mission. This past year's keynote speaker, Jennifer Cabrera, known as The Hifalutin Homeschooler, brought humor, encouragement, and candid insights to the stage, instantly winning over the audience.

# The 5th Annual Free 2 Homeschool Convention and Expo July 18, 2026





## A Year-Round Calendar of Connection

A Year-Round Calendar of Connection Beyond advocacy and the convention, the Alliance keeps families engaged throughout the year. On the first Friday of each month, they host their Homeschool 101 and Support Meeting, offering consistent connection and encouragement. They also organize creative, family-friendly events like the Back-to-School Book Swap, playful shaving cream battles complete with fire truck hose-downs, and educational field trips to the State Capitol.

These events are designed to be more than just social gatherings — they are opportunities to strengthen relationships, share resources, and remind families that they are part of something bigger.





**“Our job is to make sure families understand the stakes and feel empowered to defend their rights.”**

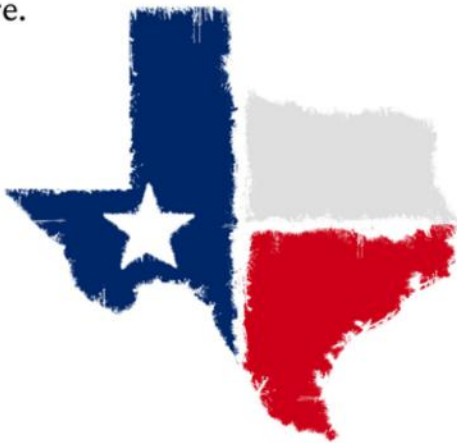




## HOMESCHOOL FRIENDLY

At its core, the Alliance for Homeschool Freedom of Brazoria County exists to ensure that Texas remains one of the most homeschool-friendly states in the nation — and that families feel both empowered and equipped to make the most of that freedom. Their blend of advocacy, education, and community-building offers a model for how grassroots organizations can make a lasting impact.

As Ashlynn says, Texas is not just a place to homeschool — it's a place where the spirit of freedom, hospitality, and community thrives. And as long as the Alliance is standing guard, homeschool families in Brazoria County can be confident that someone is watching out for their rights, their children, and their future.



**We all come from a culture that tells us “the system knows best,” but that simply isn’t true. Nobody knows your child better than you. Nobody loves or cares for your child more than you. Nobody wants your child to succeed more than you. If you have a passion for homeschooling and want to build that close relationship with your kids, have the flexibility to see your family when you want, take trips, and choose what your children are learning, then it is vital that we protect these freedoms.**

JENNIFER HALFELD





I was truly honored to be asked to be a part of the Alliance for Homeschool Freedom. After prayerfully considering it, it was a no-brainer! It takes a village to raise and educate our children, and I believe deeply in the power of community. Being surrounded by passionate, like-minded individuals who are committed to protecting homeschool freedom and supporting families through faith, unity, and purpose is both humbling and inspiring. I especially love witnessing the light bulb go off in families as they begin to empower themselves, find their way, and grow closer together. My contribution to the Alliance includes offering a listening ear, connecting with the public, and helping plan and support meaningful initiatives. It's a beautiful reminder of what's possible when faith and freedom come together in community.

-Morgan Crocker

I joined Alliance to encourage and empower other families on their homeschooling journey. I want people to know that they are more than capable of doing this, and they are not alone in their efforts. As a homeschool mom about to start our seventh school year, I am by no means an expert, but I have learned so much and want to share that with others. One of the goals of Alliance is to bring our community together and to share resources, ideas, and experiences. Together, we can inspire and uplift one another, making the homeschooling experience even more fulfilling for our families. It's a wonderful journey, and with the right support, it's one that anyone can take on confidently.

-Jaime Rocha





**A wonderful book! It's a great resource to help children, and adults, to see what worship looks like. Totally recommend this book to be added to your library.**

*Whitley Ebner*



whitsrowstudio



**FREE  
COLORSHEETS**

You can now download FREE coloring sheets inspired by Hallelujah Homestead right on my website!



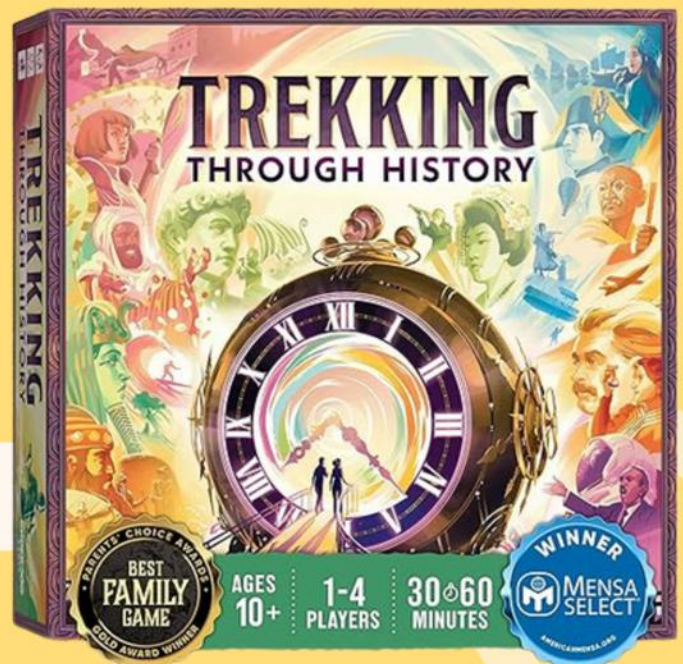
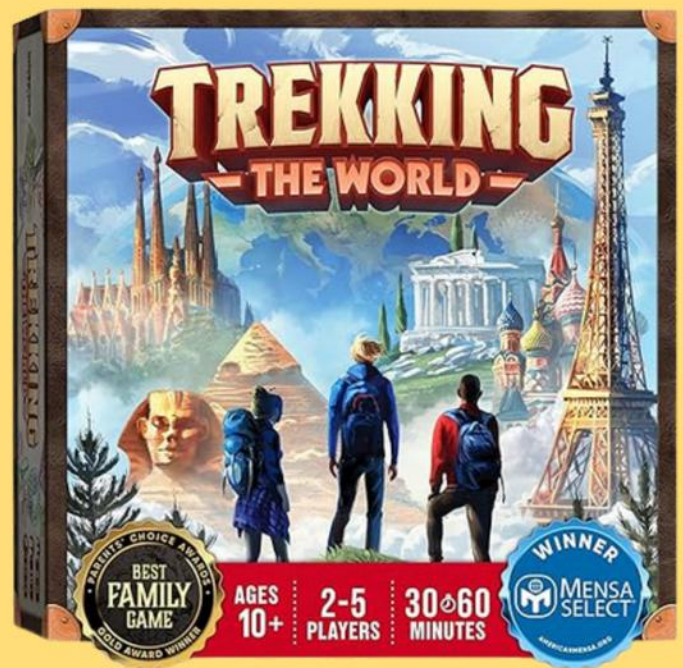
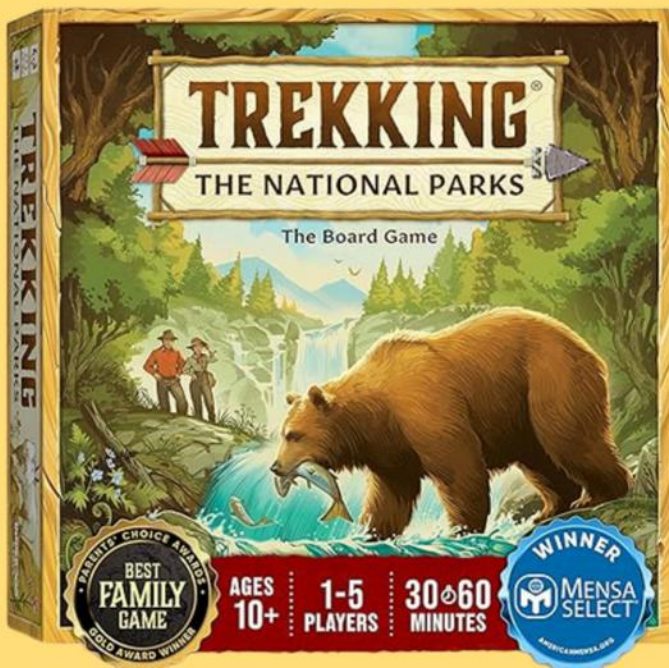
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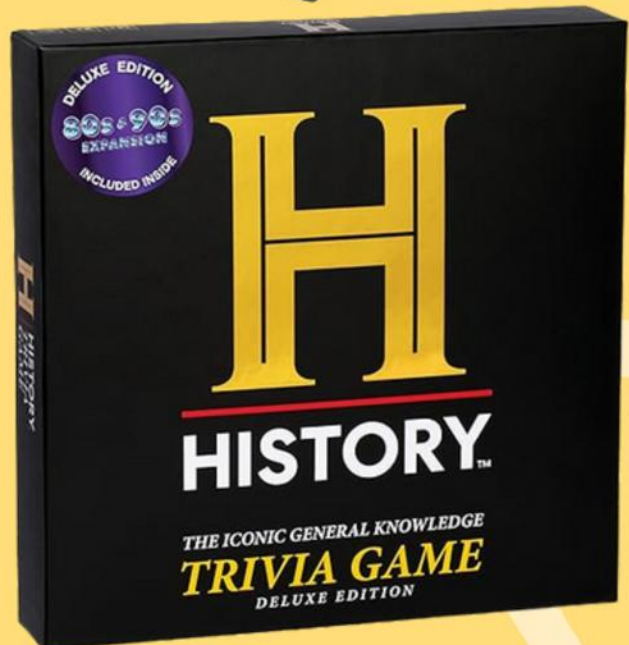
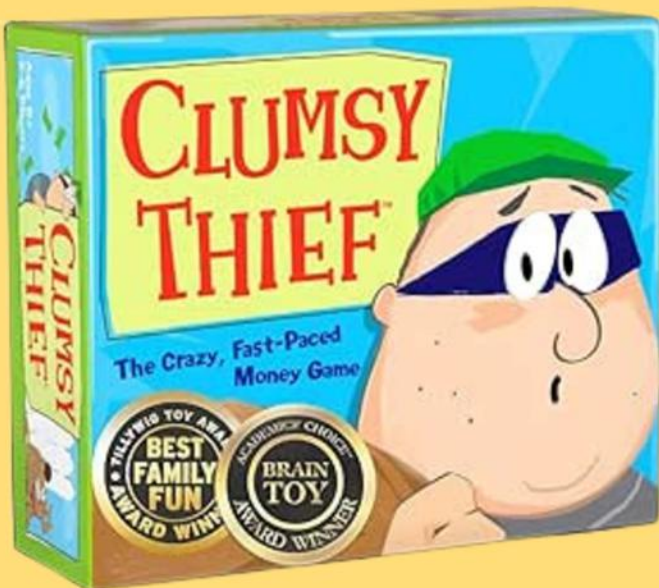
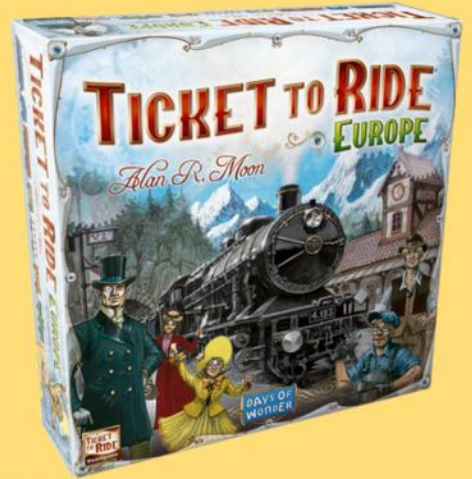
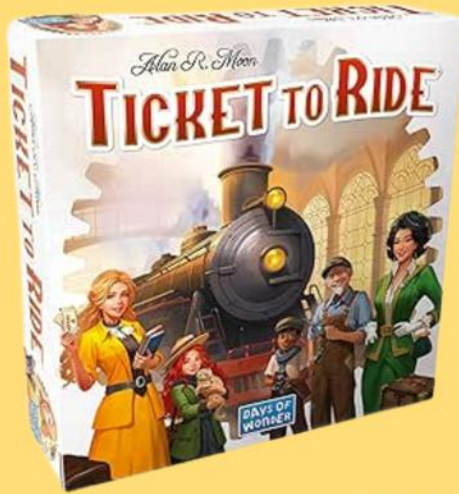
Step onto the front porch of Hallelujah Homestead, where life is measured in sunsets, homegrown harvests, and God’s unfailing grace. This heartfelt book invites you to slow down, savor the seasons, and discover that everyone can worship the Lord in their own way.



# GAME SCHOOLING FAVORITES









**"Life starts  
all over  
again when  
it gets crisp  
in the fall."**





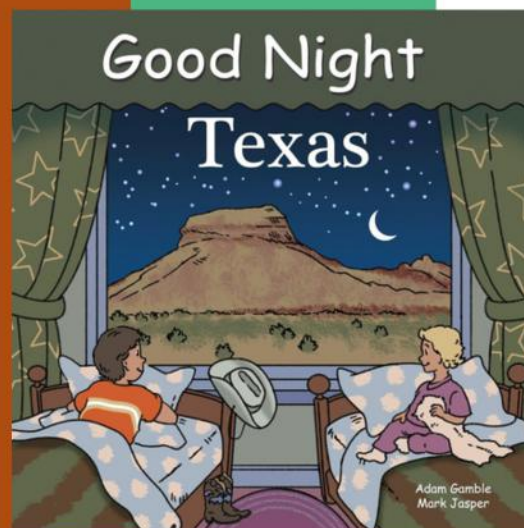
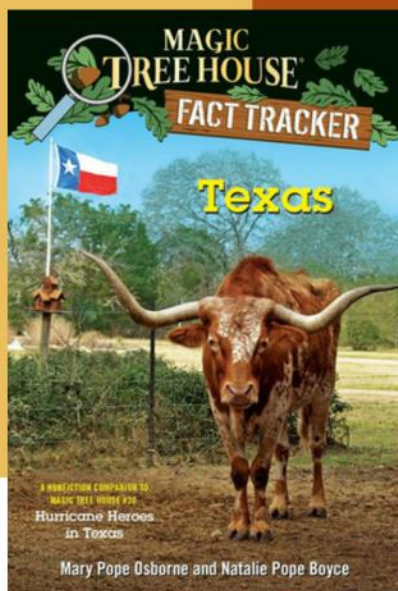
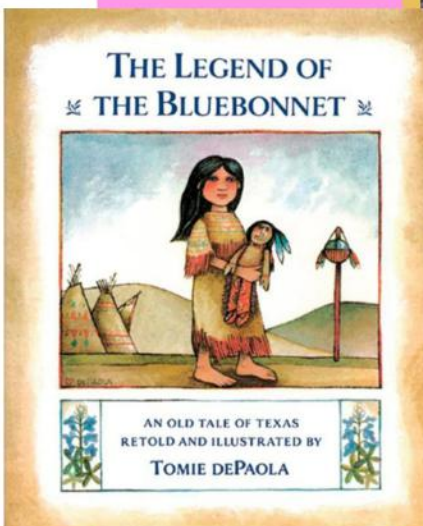
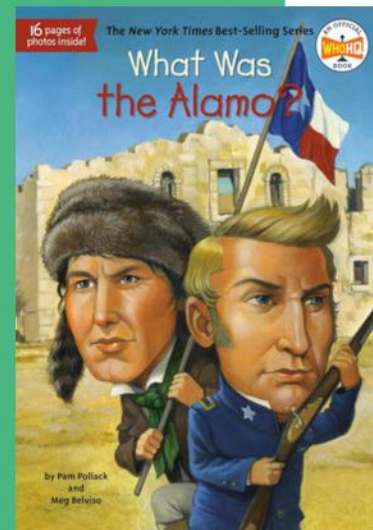
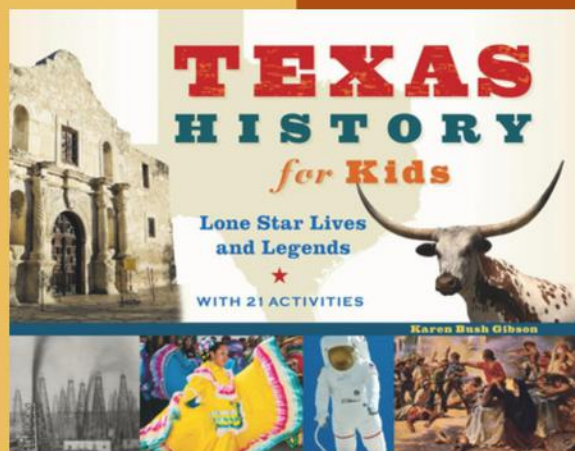
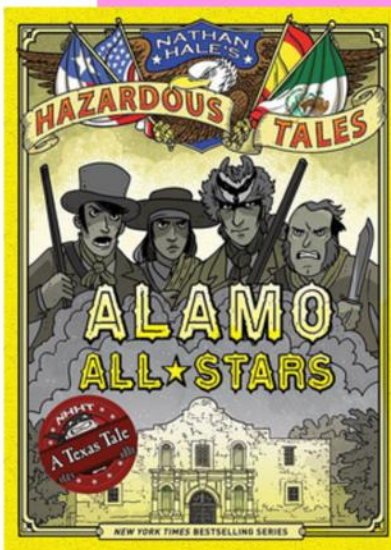
# Texas History



## Puzzles and Resources

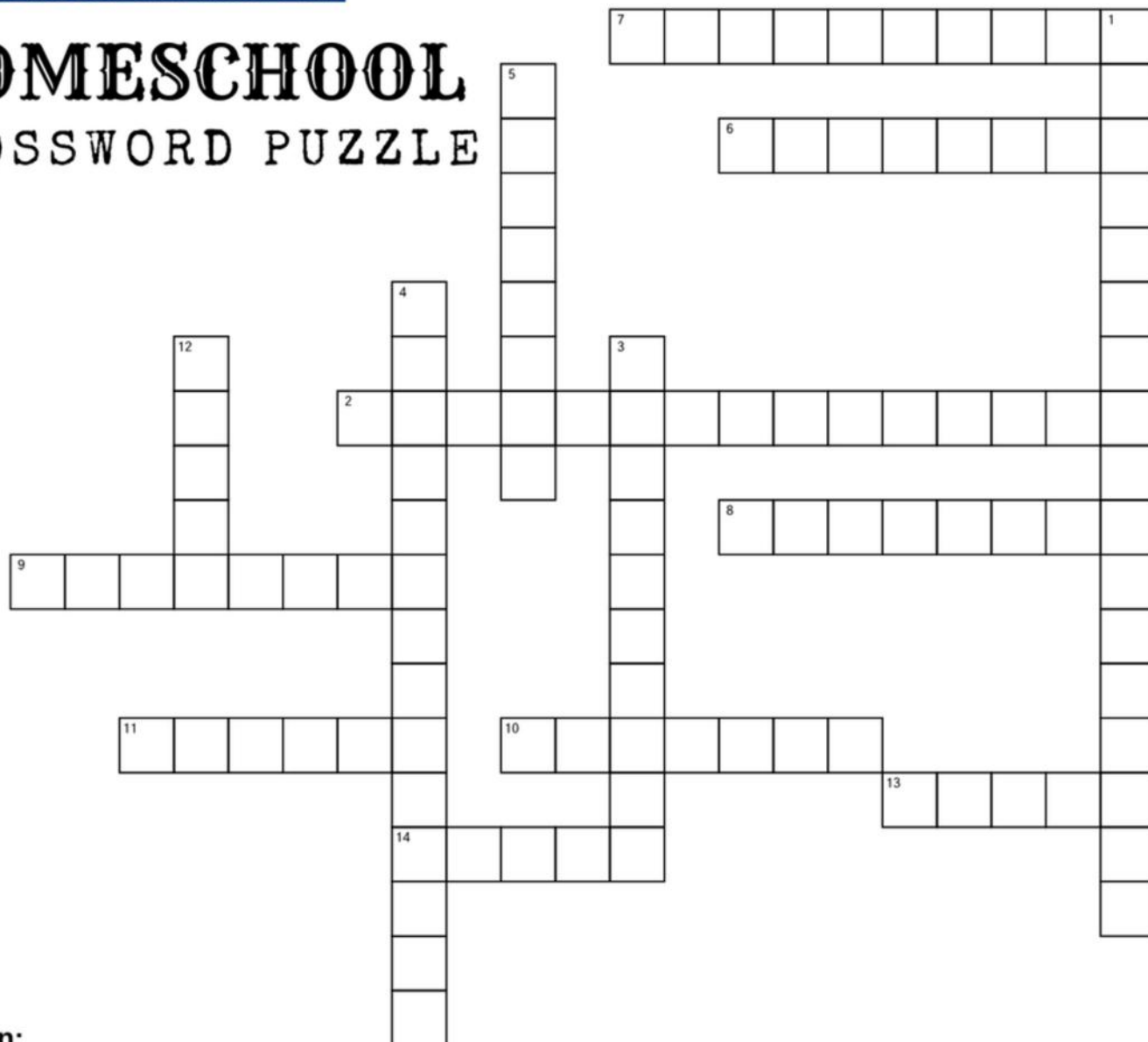


# TEXAS HISTORY BOOKS FOR KIDS





## HOMESCHOOL CROSSWORD PUZZLE



**Down:**

1. Math curriculum popular for its computer-based lessons
3. Annual homeschool gathering with speakers and exhibitors
4. Must-have school supply for maps
5. State nickname of Texas
12. Christian-based homeschool publisher

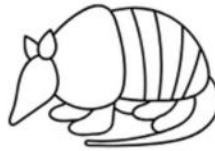
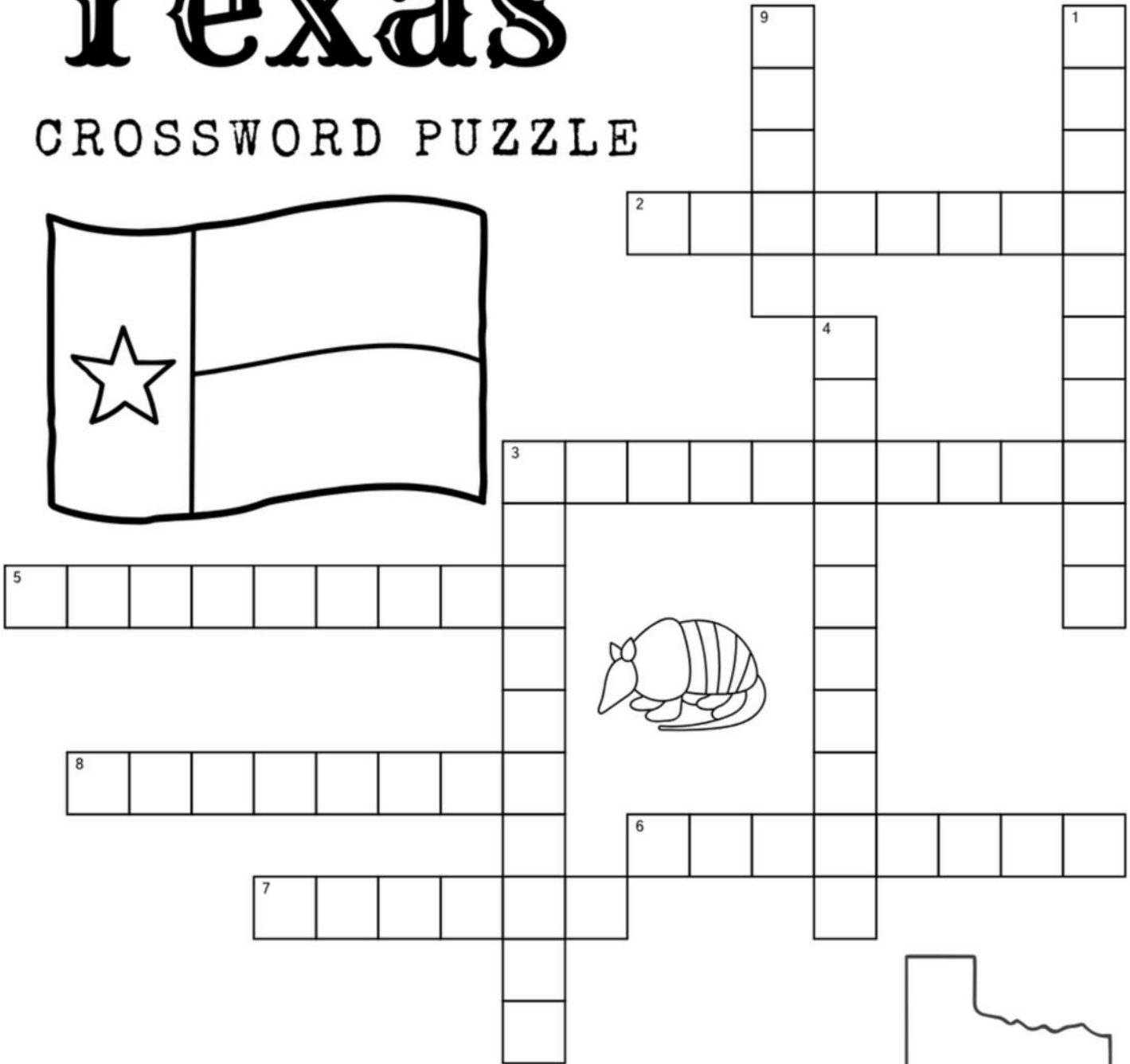
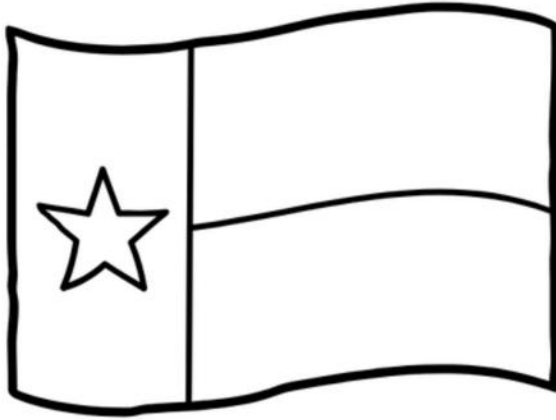
**Across:**

2. Reading curriculum famous for its phonics approach
6. Bible-centered curriculum publisher
7. Texas state flower
8. Popular math curriculum using manipulatives
9. Classic board game of wordplay and vocabulary building
10. Hands-on subject that might involve experiments
11. Morning lifeline for many moms
13. Famous 1836 Texas mission battle cry — "Remember the \_\_\_!"
14. Educational board game about trading and building settlements



# Texas

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



**Down:**

1. Holiday celebrating the end of slavery in Texas.
3. 1836 battle where Texas won independence from Mexico.
4. The Texas state flower.
9. Famous Texas mission where a big battle happened in 1836.

**Across:**

2. Native American tribe known for expert horse riding.
3. First president of the Republic of Texas.
5. Island city hit by a big hurricane in 1900.
6. Nickname for Texas, seen on its flag.
7. The word Texas means...
8. What Texas was before it joined the United States.





# Texas

## WORD SEARCH

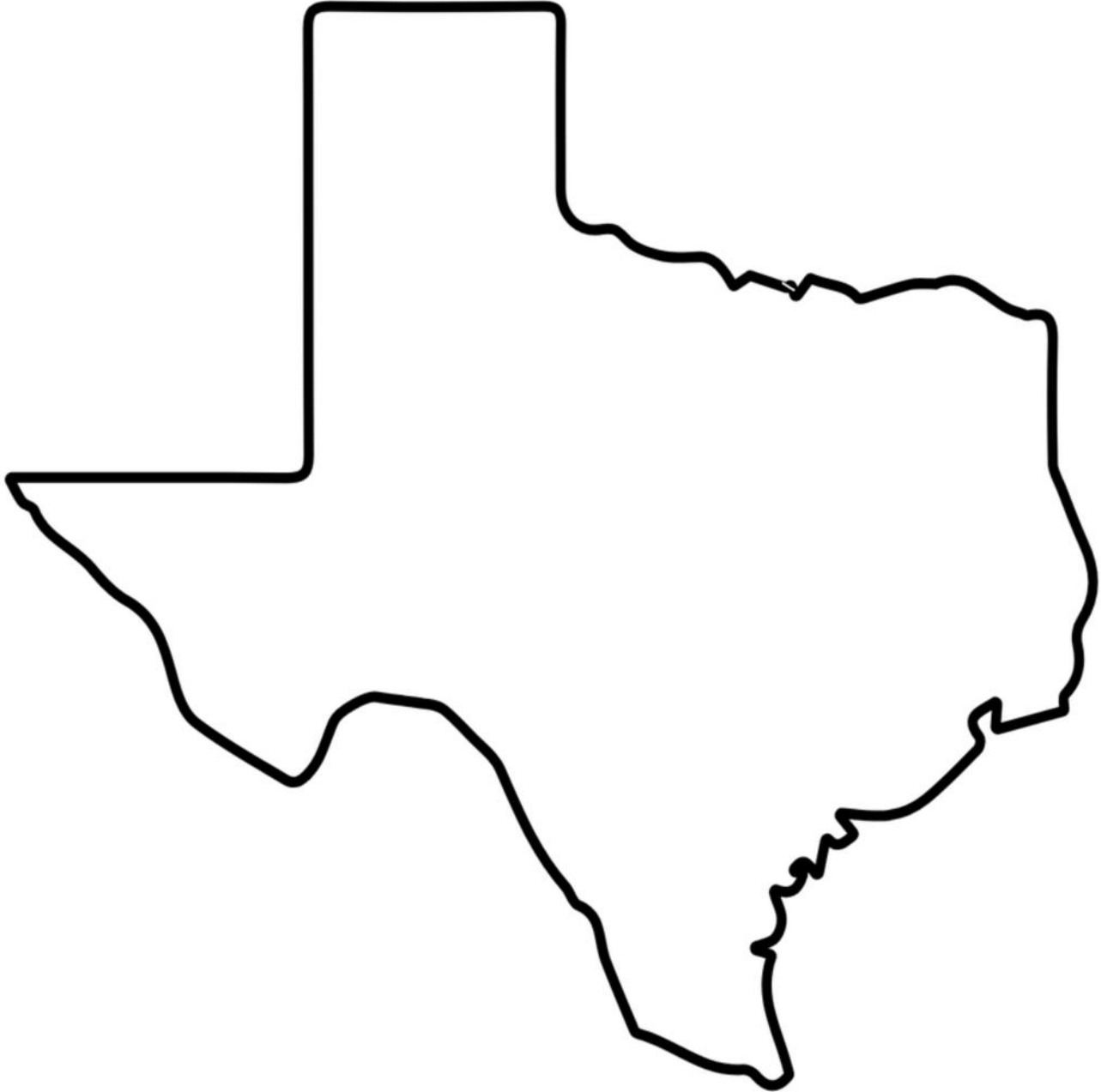
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SAMHOUSTON  
BLUEBONNET  
SANJACINTO  
JUNETEENTH  
GALVESTON

LONESTAR  
REPUBLIC  
COMANCHE  
TEXAS  
ALAMO



# Texas



The Republic of Texas was annexed into the United States and admitted to the Union as the 28th state on December 29, 1845.

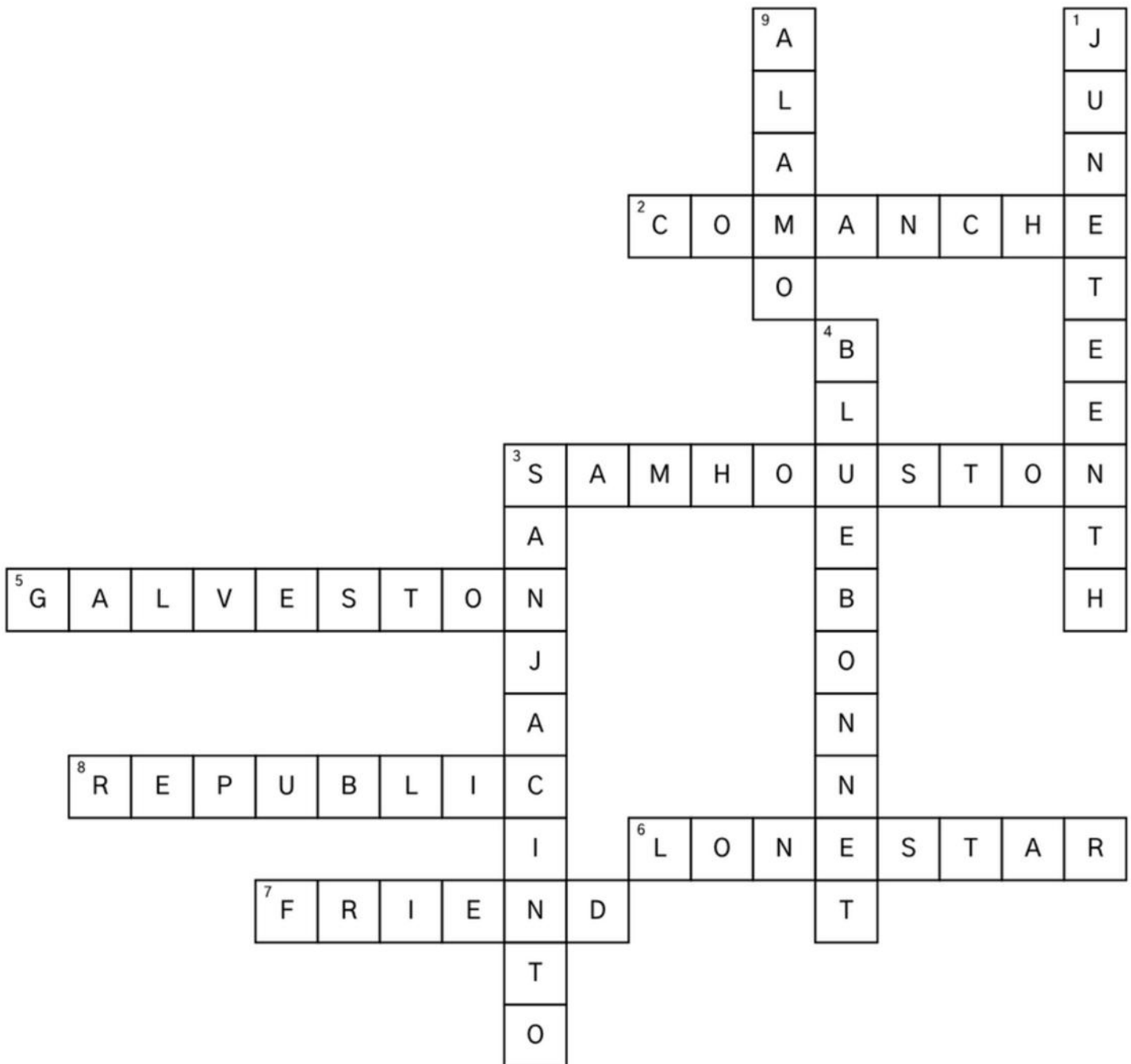




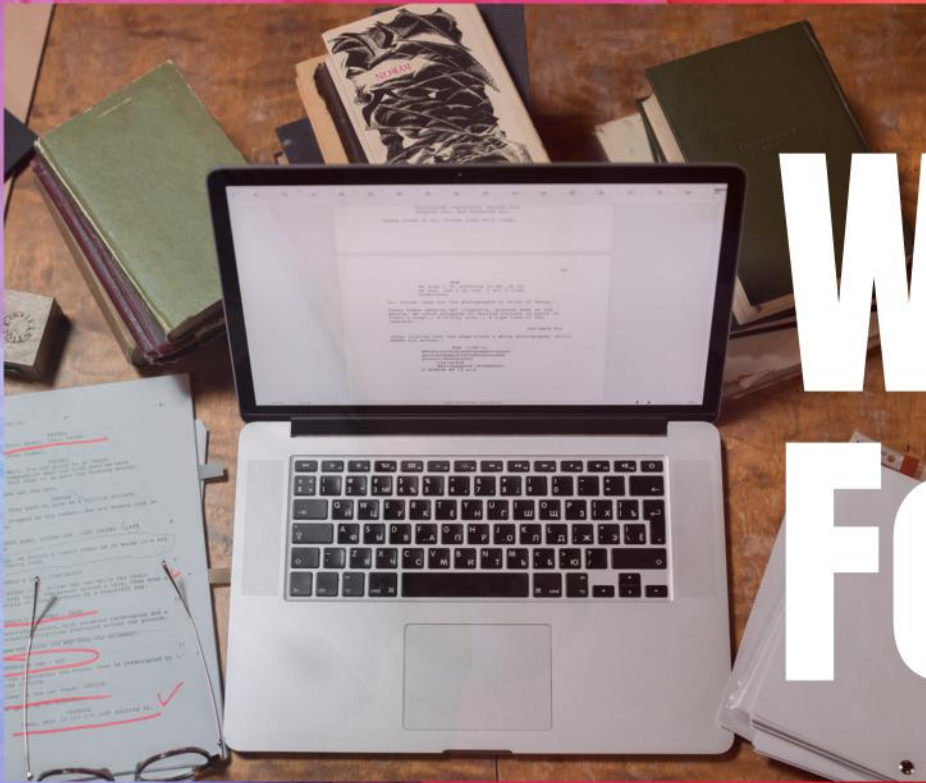


# Texas

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE - ANSWERS







# Write For Us

We're always searching for compelling stories to encourage our readers and inspiring homeschool testimonies! If you're a writer with a passion for the Homeschool community, have a knack for History, or have a great idea, we'd love to see what you've got. Whether you're an experienced author or just starting your writing journey, Texas Homeschool Magazine and Blog offers a platform for those stories to be heard.

**WANT TO WRITE FOR  
TEXAS HOMESCHOOL  
MAGAZINE OR BLOG?**

**Submit Your Work To  
The Texas Homeschool  
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*Melissa*

**Editor-in-Chief**

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