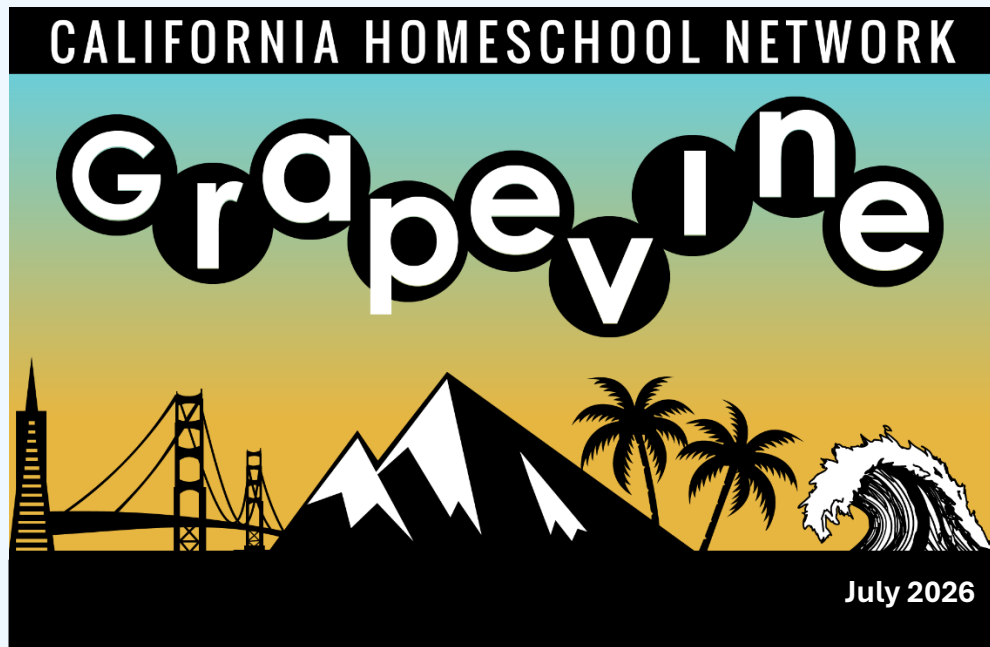




Unearthing Wonder

Digging Into the Past to Build the Future

July is full of reasons to celebrate and explore! This month our park days are taking us back to the age of dinosaurs with fossil digs, T-Rex Tag, Tricera-Toss, dinosaur art, sensory play, and plenty of prehistoric adventures.

*But while we're looking back millions of years, we're also taking time to remember another important piece of history. This July marks **250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence**, a reminder that understanding our nation's past helps us appreciate the freedoms we enjoy today including the freedom many of us cherish to educate our children at home.*

As homeschoolers, we know that some of life's greatest treasures are discovered when we slow down, ask questions, and dig a little deeper. Whether we're uncovering fossils, learning about our country's history, studying God's amazing creation, or simply remembering the reasons we first chose homeschooling, every discovery helps shape the future we're building with our families.

So, grab your explorer's hat, dust off your curiosity, and join us this month as we go on a journey through history—one fossil, one story, and one wonderful homeschool memory at a time.



Happy exploring!



What's Inside

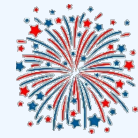
From the President	3
Helpful Homeschool Information:	4
The Homeschooler Challenge	5
CHN Local Ambassadors	6
July's Park Day.....	6
Digging Up Your "Why"	8
Carolyn's Corner	9
Craft Time with Trina.....	12
Would You Rather?	13
Twig & Wonder: Nature Adventures for Curious Homeschoolers.....	15
Upcoming Events	16
Printable for the Children	17





From the President

HAPPY 250TH BIRTHDAY



Can you imagine that 250 years ago a group of like-minded, committed and brave men created a new nation defying all odds of success? Can you imagine the fear and doubts that permeated the mind of these visionaries? Can you imagine the effect it had on their families and loved ones? Can you imagine defying and challenging one of the most powerful nations in the world at the time?

Well, this is the genesis of our great country today. Was it worth it? Absolutely, and we are the benefactors of the blood, sweat and tears of so many heroes of the time. To gain a notion as to the importance of this creation I encourage you to read just the first ten amendments (the Bill of Rights) of the Constitution. Without the success of the Founding Fathers, you would not be reading this commentary and be able to homeschool.

Let's move forward to 1994 where less than a dozen individuals met to address the importance of creating a homeschool advocacy organization dedicated to the freedom to homeschool in the State of California. At the time there were two other homeschool organizations, CHEA and HSC, as well as the California State Department of Education. The founders of CHN were not happy with any of the three aforementioned organizations and we worked very hard defying doubters to establish what is considered to be the best organization in the state addressing the needs and rights of all homeschooling families.

In the last several decades we have seen a softening in the importance of freedom and liberty in our daily lives. Homeschoolers in many cases are duplicating the softening of our freedom to teach our children unobstructed. The voluntary dependency of the general population on government benefits and policies has diminished our freedoms to great degree. Our voluntary dependency on the public education system via public charter schools and publishers has also posed a challenge to our freedom to homeschool the way we really want to. Each family should do a serious cost-benefit analysis of homeschool choices.



There is an interesting dichotomy affecting many families. We often hear from parents homeschooling because they do not like what is happening in the public school classrooms and at the same time enrolling their children in the

charter schools. As time goes on there is becoming a smaller difference between the classrooms and the charters. The policies imposed on charter members are becoming more restrictive and controlling. Yes, there is an important service the charter option provides families in the form of financial benefits and maintaining a close adherence to the classroom requirements for those who are short term and will go back to the classroom in a year or so. But for the long-term homeschoolers, they need to really assess benefits to cost.

Another hindrance to real homeschool freedom where you are able to teach your children to their individual pace and readiness is the textbook publisher. Here is where you can spend a huge amount of time and money in a system that might not be beneficial to the student. If the parent spends upwards of \$1000.00 per child on curriculum it can be very difficult to just drop that particular publisher. Textbooks are generally based on age = grade and if your child is either ahead or behind the schedule the whole entire homeschool experience is in jeopardy.

These are just two examples of how we as a homeschooling community can lose our freedom to homeschool as we please. The founding members of both the United States and CHN dedicated time and money to set forth the foundation of freedom. They would be greatly disappointed if either group loses their freedom to homeschool in a manner that represents the ideals and goals of the individual. If we, the individual, lose our freedom then the greater community also loses their freedoms.

Onward to homeschooling your children in the manner that best serves their needs. CHN is always there to provide the encouragement and techniques that will create the future thinkers, professionals, inventors and parents.



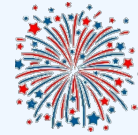
Helpful Homeschool Information:



EiE Excellence In Education <i>Representing over 35 years homeschool experience!</i>	NEW TO HOMESCHOOL? A Complete Homeschool 101 Presented by a homeschool pioneer with over 35 years experience! Everything you need to start your homeschool journey.
When seeking advice, go with a pioneer who has experience!	

The Homeschooler Challenge

Real-world skills. Playful learning. Family connection.



Welcome to *The Homeschooler Challenge*—a monthly invitation for families to learn, grow, and make memories together! Each challenge blends hands-on fun with life lessons that build confidence, creativity, and character. From teamwork and problem-solving to kindness and personal growth, every month brings a fresh opportunity to explore real-world skills in joyful, meaningful ways.

July 2026 Homeschool Challenge – *The Great Dinosaur Debate*

This month's homeschool challenge is all about:

Are dinosaurs more closely related to birds...or reptiles?

Become a research team!

Split into two groups.

One team gathers evidence that dinosaurs are most like birds.

The other researches why they are believed to be reptiles.

Build your case using books, documentaries, museum websites, and other reliable resources.

Then hold a friendly family debate!

Extra Challenge:

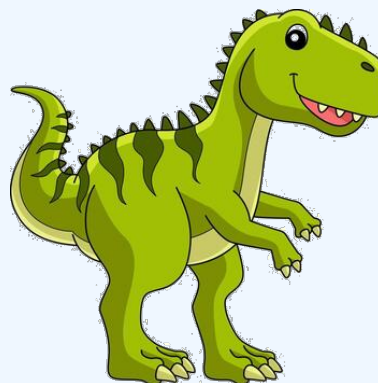
Have everyone vote before the debate...

Then vote again afterward.

Did anyone change their mind?

Skills Growing This Month

- ✓ Research
- ✓ Public Speaking
- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Respectful Discussion



CHN Local Ambassadors

Become a CHN Ambassador—Because Community Starts with YOU! Love homeschooling? Love sunshine, field trips, and making new friends? Then you're halfway to becoming a **California Homeschool Network Ambassador!**

We're building vibrant local homeschool communities across California—and we need *fun-loving, big-hearted parents* like you to help host park days, plan adventures, and bring families together.

No experience? No problem. We'll train you. All you need is a willing heart and a positive attitude (bonus points if you love snacks and playgrounds).

Let's make homeschooling feel a little less lonely and a lot more awesome—one park day at a time!

Email chn_secretary@californiahomeschool.net for more information.



July's Park Day

Expedition: Dinosaur Discovery Day!

Grab your explorer's hat and join us as we travel back in time for one of our most exciting Park Days yet!

*This month, our young paleontologists will dig for hidden fossils, race through an action-packed game of **T-Rex Tag**, test their aim with **Tricera-Toss**, create beautiful **Dino Shadow Art**, and explore hands-on dinosaur sensory stations designed especially for curious minds.*

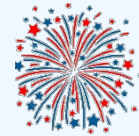
Whether your child loves science, art, running, digging, or simply making new friends, there's something for everyone on this prehistoric adventure.



As always, our Park Days are about so much more than activities. They're a chance for homeschool families to build friendships, encourage one another, and make lasting memories together. Every game played, fossil discovered and laugh shared becomes another treasured part of our homeschool journey.

So, dust off your explorer gear, bring your curiosity, and prepare for a roaring good time—we can't wait to see you there!

Explorer's Tip: Don't forget sunscreen, water bottles, comfortable shoes, and a camera. You never know when you'll discover your family's next favorite memory!



Find a Park Day Near You: Park days are hosted by CHN volunteers across California. To see if there's one happening in your area, visit our website or contact CHN directly. If your county doesn't have a park day yet, we'd love to support you in hosting one—we're here to help with ideas, resources, and encouragement!

All ages welcome—come play, connect, and celebrate the season with your homeschool community!

Check the website's [Events Calendar](#) for more dates and locations along with other events happening this month.



Digging Up Your "Why"

By Trina Rueber



Every paleontologist knows the greatest treasures aren't found lying on the surface.

They're discovered by digging.

Homeschooling is much the same.

In the middle of long days, math lessons, overflowing laundry baskets, forgotten spelling words, and sibling squabbles, it's easy to lose sight of why we began this journey.

This month, take a few minutes to dust off that treasure.

Ask yourself:

- Why did we choose homeschooling?
- What dreams did we have for our family?
- What kind of adults are we hoping to raise?
- What moments have reminded us this journey is worth it?



Write your answers down.

Place them somewhere you'll see them often.

Because your "why" becomes the compass that keeps your family moving forward, even on difficult days.

Just as fossils tell the story of creatures long ago, the little moments happening in your homeschool today are becoming the stories your children will one day tell.

So, celebrate the progress.

Celebrate the curiosity.

Celebrate the freedom to learn together.

You're building something beautiful.

One ordinary day at a time.



Carolyn's Corner



If you have a question you would like to submit for Carolyn to answer, please send it here at info@californiahomeschool.net



Homeschooling A La Carte

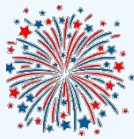
One of the most common first questions beginning homeschoolers ask is, "What curriculum should I use?" This is an understandable query given that most people have had no previous exposure to the world of homeschooling. However, it reveals a basic misunderstanding of the term *homeschool*. Homeschooling is the traditional form of educating the young and has existed since time began. Schools, as we know them with rigid age-graded groupings are relatively new, only having been instituted a little more than 100 years ago. Before that, students worked through whatever curriculum existed at their own pace. Instead of asking a child what grade he was in, the question would be, "What book are you in?" Moreover, in colonial times, students were not even admitted to school until they could read. Obviously, everyone started with homeschooling.

Today, the first thing most new homeschool parents inquire about is a graded curriculum and worries about "falling behind" are common. If you have an open mind, try to entertain another way to educate your children, one that has proven exceedingly successful for decades but that has been almost forgotten with the proliferation of school-at-home curricula. I'll call it "A la Carte" homeschooling.

A la Carte homeschooling recognizes that every child is unique and develops at his or her own pace. Dr. Raymond Moore and John Holt, two early homeschool advocates, recognized this and advocated letting children learn at a natural pace with their unique talents and interests in mind. Think about this. We know that children will learn to walk and talk at different ages and don't worry that our toddler is "behind" in speaking if he isn't producing full sentences at age two, but we worry that our 9-year-old is "behind" if he resists writing a paragraph. Consider that both Dr. Moore and John Holt recommended delaying formal instruction until after age 8! Some children begin reading at age 3 and others don't start reading until age 11, like President Woodrow Wilson. This is normal and should be recognized as such, but we have been steeped in an age = grade philosophy for over 100 years and don't recognize normal human variances.

Another area where children (and adults) vary greatly is in learning style. Some like to read a book and others can't stop moving. Some learn best by talking and singing and others remember things they write or draw. Most learning styles are not accommodated by a school type curriculum and for those, slogging through the texts and workbooks yields more frustration than enlightenment and satisfaction. Perhaps because of the work of Dr. Moore and John Holt, many early homeschoolers understood this and did not try to emulate school at home. Many of those who did try to use a standard school curriculum burned out and quit, prompting Dr. and Mrs. Moore to write *Homeschool Burnout* explaining the dangers of forcing a rigid age graded curriculum.

An A la Carte curriculum can accommodate any learning style and developmental schedule. It simply means you use what works for an individual child to learn or develop a skill. John Holt published a newsletter, *Growing Without Schooling*, in which he published letters from pioneer homeschool parents around the nation in the 1970s and 1980s. Parents related what worked for them. Most used what Charlotte Mason called "living books" and real-life experiences. They related different and often "hands-on" ways to learn about math and science. Some used a standard textbook when it fit their child's needs.



Many enterprising homeschoolers and homeschool advocates have published curriculum materials that are widely used today. Most of these are extremely creative and flexible but one must still use discernment in their application. Parents often think that if the program or unit study includes it, it must be done. The suggested activities may be very worthwhile, but they may not all be useful for *your* child (or one of your children). The program is your slave, not the other way around. Alter it as needed. No one, no matter how talented and discerning, can create a text, unit study, activity guide or learning kit that is a fit for all children. Always use what is helpful and skip the rest.

Other important A la Carte additions are games, crafts, music, projects, sports and skills such as cooking, sewing, woodworking, gardening etc. These are just as important for a child's developing body and intellect as the books! They develop physical and thinking skills and often involve and enhance understanding of math, science, history and the arts.

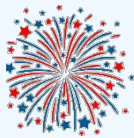
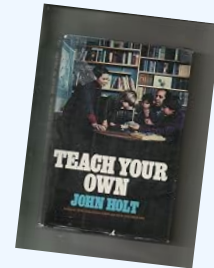
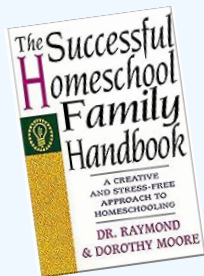
Finally, stop worrying about missing something. No one can learn everything - even in a lifetime! Do you remember everything you learned about history in the 6th grade? Most isolated facts are forgotten soon after the test. People remember meaningful stories and events. Textbooks are unlikely to contain riveting stories that will be sealed in memory. That is why using interesting living books for history, literature, science and even math can yield far more lasting and productive results. Don't forget to include games! They enhance learning far more than drill and flash cards and teach important skills that a worksheet can't provide.



The enormous amount of time children spend in school and doing homework is far more than actually needed to acquire the knowledge and skills presented. Depending on age, one to four hours of study a day can yield the same or better results than a full day at school plus homework time. This leaves many hours in a day to pursue other worthwhile activities. Homeschooling A la Carte is a wonderful and productive approach

to learning. For more background read *The Successful Homeschool Family Handbook* by Dr. Raymond & Dorothy Moore and *Teach Your Own* by John Holt.

by Carolyn Forte



Craft Time with Trina

Dino Egg Bath Bombs

Turn bath time into an archaeological dig!



You'll Need

- 1 cup Baking soda
- ½ cup Citric acid
- ½ cup Epsom salt
- 3 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Water
- 2 teaspoons of kid safe essential oils (we love lavender)
- Natural food coloring (optional)
- Tiny plastic dinosaurs
- Silicone egg molds (or mold of choice)



Mix your dry ingredients. Then mix your wet ingredients and slowly pour into your dry mix until the mixture holds together (if you pour too fast you will activate the citric acid causing it to fizz). Hide a tiny dinosaur inside each mold, pack tightly, and allow time to dry overnight.



When bath time arrives...

Drop in the egg...

Fizz...

Bubble...

Then watch your little paleontologist rescue their dinosaur from its prehistoric egg!

Why We Love This Craft

Children practice measuring, following directions, chemistry, patience, sensory exploration, and imaginative play—all wrapped into one exciting activity.

Happy Crafting!

Trina





Welcome to This Month's "Would You Rather?" – The Family Fun Edition!

Get ready to stretch those imaginations and spark some laughter—our monthly "Would You Rather?" challenge is back! Each question is designed to bring your family together for silly debates, creative reasoning, and maybe even a few unexpected insights along the way.

Whether you're chatting around the dinner table, driving to your next adventure, or hanging out at park day, this month's scenario is sure to get everyone thinking (and daydreaming!).

So, round up the crew, cast your votes, and see who's the most daring, practical, or potentially heroic in your bunch. Let's dive in and discover what everyone *would rather* do!

The Prehistoric Pet Problem



A mysterious time machine gives you ONE choice.

You may bring back **one extinct animal**...

BUT...

You have to feed it.

You have to clean up after it.

You have to train it.

And it lives in your backyard forever!

Would you rather have...

A friendly **Triceratops** from the Late Cretaceous period

OR



A giant **Saber-Toothed Tiger** from the Ice Age?

Dig a Little Deeper

Ask one another:

- Which would be easier to feed?
- Which would make the best companion?
- Which would be harder to keep safe?
- Would either make a good family pet?

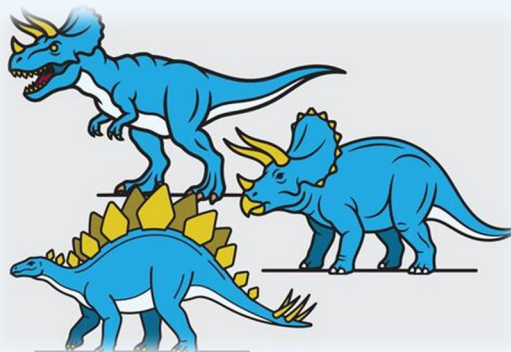


Skills Being Built

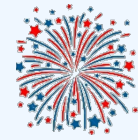
- ✓ Creative Thinking
- ✓ Problem Solving
- ✓ Decision Making
- ✓ Perspective Taking
- ✓ Conversation Skills



💡 **Got a great "Would You Rather?" question?** We'd love to hear it! If your family has a fun, quirky, or thought-provoking idea, send it our way. Email us at info@californiahomeschool.net. Your question might be featured in an upcoming edition — and spark some lively debates across our homeschool community!



Twig & Wonder: Nature Adventures for Curious Homeschoolers



Become a **Backyard Paleontologist!**

Grab a magnifying glass, a soft paint brush to remove dirt and debris, and take a nature walk around your back yard or nearby park. Search for fossils or clues of previous visitors.

Collect items while you're out such as:

- feathers
- leaves with interesting veins
- shells
- seed pods
- animal tracks
- rocks with unusual patterns



Press them into clay or homemade salt dough to create your own "fossils."



Then ask:

- What clues does this leave behind?
- What might someone discover 1,000 years from now?
- If your family disappeared tomorrow, what evidence would show you once lived here?

Finish by making a page in your nature journal titled:



"The Clues We Leave Behind."

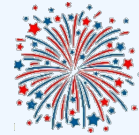
Write about your fun fossil hunting adventure or about the legacy you're leaving—not only in physical evidence, but also in character traits and stories that will be passed down for generations.





Upcoming Events

July's Events:



Check the Upcoming Events Calendar to stay up-to-date on any of June's events as CHN zoom meetings are taking a break for the summer. The calendar will have listings of park days and field trips.

July 7 at 7pm

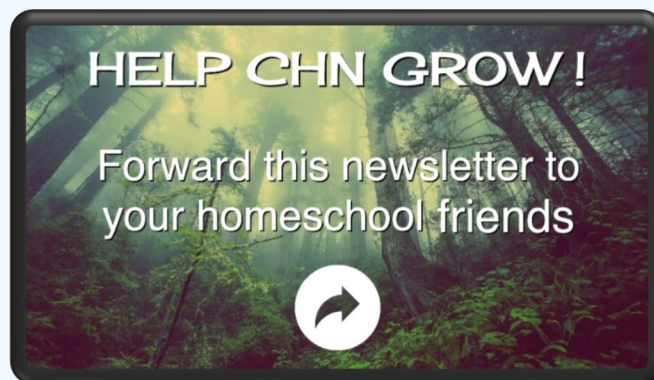
Homeschooling Q & As

July 16 at 7pm

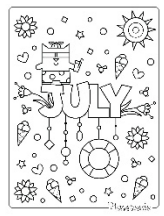
CHN Ambassador Information Meeting

July 17 at 7pm

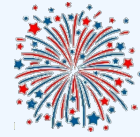
Calling All Ambassadors



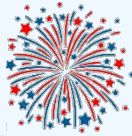
Printable for the Children



July's Coloring and Activity Pages



Clicking on the graphic to the left takes you to the downloadable pages.



Copyright (C) 2025 California Homeschool Network. All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

2640 S Myrtle Ave A-7, Monrovia, CA 91016

