

Homeschool Advocacy

Tina Hollenbeck

I recently welcomed four curious business people into my home to answer their questions about homeschooling. We had a delightful conversation, and I'm certain they left with a greater understanding of and appreciation for home education.

About a year and half ago, I similarly opened my home to a newspaper reporter, allowing her to feature my family—photographs and all—in a major back-to-school article about homeschooling.

I realize that some who homeschool have a visceral reaction against such attention. In fact, some in my own homeschool support group cringe upon hearing that I share any information about my family and our learning endeavors.

Such a response is often rooted in a family's desire for privacy. But sometimes it springs from fear that showing ourselves to the larger community will invite scrutiny that may result in calls for more stringent regulations, an outcome few if any homeschoolers would welcome. When I taught English to immigrant kids in large public schools, we faced the same dilemma. Any publicity about our program, no matter how positive, carried with it the risk that critics would come knocking, attempting to force unwarranted change.

And, of course, they did. However, for every negative comment, we received at least three or four positive, and that was just among those who chose to speak up. Undoubtedly, the information also helped to educate a great many more, resulting in their tacit support. As for the criticism, we could (diplomatically) counter it with data that showed how well our program worked.

So it is with homeschooling. My girls are only in the first and second grades, but I've advocated for homeschooling since before they were born. And I've rarely encountered negative reactions. Most often, people marvel that I'd *want* to spend so much time with my children (a sad commentary!). Or I hear admiration from those who've interacted with homeschooled kids and see the fine citizens the approach usually produces.

Of those with questions, most are merely uninformed; when they get answers, they almost always move into the supportive camp. As for those who remain unconvinced, I can let them go in peace, knowing that the data back me up in terms of homeschooling's effectiveness.

You may never be called upon to “advertise” your school in a formal way. However, if such an opportunity arises, I challenge you to take the plunge, trusting that your efforts will almost surely bear good fruit. And at all times, I urge you to speak with quiet confidence (not arrogantly or antagonistically) of your school, whether at the grocery store or with a relative. Hiding will most

surely invite suspicion and further questions; transparent advocacy, on the other hand, will probably yield positive results. And that can only benefit your children as they interact within your community and beyond.

Biographical Information

Copyright, 2009. All rights reserved by author below. Content provided by [The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine, LLC](#).

Tina Hollenbeck and her husband, Jeff, are raising and homeschooling their two daughters in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Tina is staff writer for Celebrate Kids, Inc. (www.celebratekids.com), a regular contributor to The ChatterBee (www.thechatterbee.com/), and also operates a small in-home daycare. When not teaching, she enjoys working out, scrapbooking, and singing on her church's worship team. To read more articles like these, visit her blogs at <http://tinahollenbeck.blogspot.com/> and <http://tinahollenbeck-celebratekidscolumns.blogspot.com/>.