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NEWS

From Science to Theater - Learning in Their Own Style

Almost two million children in the United States are being homeschooled

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By [Alice C. Stelzer](#) | [Email the author](#) | February 8, 2011

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Elizabeth Namen, founder and inspiration behind Epoch Arts, homeschools her daughter as do many of her friends. So it was a natural progression that brought a homeschool co-op to Epoch Arts on Skinner Street in East Hampton. Here was a 42,000 square foot building that was empty during the day just waiting for this activity because the Epoch Arts programs do not start until after school

Artistic Director Namen, who also teaches "Original Theater" at the co-op, said, "We started with two classes last year and the parents wanted more. This year there is an extensive catalog of 24 classes available. There are on any given day 50 to 100 children of the more than 35 families involved taking classes such as German, knitting, exploring art or theater."

Co-ordinator of the Epoch Arts Homeschool Co-op with Namen, Sioux Wimlar teaches "3 Minute Fiction." The class is based on NPR's short story writing contest.

"Homeschool theatre class was the first class we did and then knitting circles, and it snowballed from there," said Wimlar.

Wimlar homeschools two children, ages 6 and 10.

"It's a good fit for us," she said. "Finding a community like this has made all the difference. One advantage of homeschooling is my son has a lot of life skills. At 10 years old, he can cook an entire meal. We can focus a lot of individual attention on a child. That's one of the reasons homeschooling is growing."

Justus Joy is an articulate representative of the Epoch Arts Homeschool Co-op. At 14, he knows exactly what he wants to do with his life.

"I have always been homeschooled. I like it," Joy said. "It is freer than school. I see school more or less as a prison. Right now I am taking animation and glass arts. Art is just natural for me. I love animation art but it is just a hobby. I am hoping to get a law degree to become a prosecutor. We need to get the criminals off the streets. I want a career that means something, that makes a difference."

Joy understands that to reach his goal, he will have to have more structured education at some point.

Capoeira, a martial arts form developed by African slaves in Brazil, is a very popular class. Taught by Fabiano Lucas, it is performed with authentic music and has a strong acrobatic component.

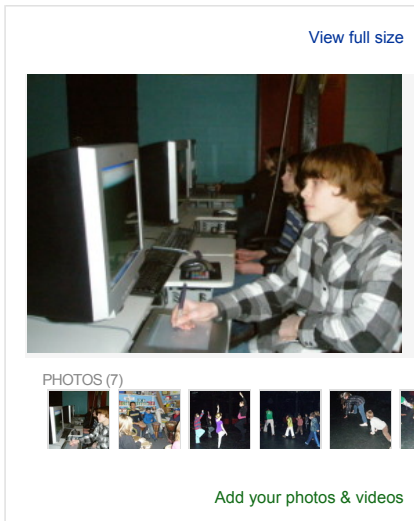
Marcella Trowbridge is homeschooling four children ages 7 to 18.

"I think it is awesome here. Epoch's mission is dynamic. They have invested blood, sweat and tears into this space. The space is very inviting and the variety of programming is excellent," she said.

Trowbridge points out that one of the values of this program is that it allows a child to have exposure to many different things and people in any one day.

"The co-op allows us to access more than we could as a single family," Trowbridge said.

Marlene, a homeschooling mom of four children ages 4 to 13, said: "I really want to be in control. It takes individual attention to individual learning styles. I am very thankful for this program. It has given us the opportunity to meet a lot of nice people and connect with other homeschoolers. We are all in the same mind-set here."



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