

Home School Co-Op seeking membership in Riverbend area

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
September 27 2017 11:04 AM



BRIGHTON - Many families in the Riverbend have to commute to the nearest home school cooperatives located in Edwardsville and Collinsville.

A home school cooperative is a group of families working together toward the goal of home education. Local home school parent Wendy Howard is putting together such a co-op closer to the Riverbend. She is hosting a meeting on Oct. 2 at Brighton's Schneider Park to discuss possible locations for such a cooperative. She said 34 families from Alton, Godfrey, Brighton and Jerseyville have confirmed they are coming, but it is open for all families - even ones only interested in home schooling their children.

Howard has formerly hosted a "Homeschooling 101" informative seminar for people interested in that method of education, and is bringing her literature to the meeting for parents who have yet to begin homeschooling, but at least are considering it.

The Howard family is currently on their fourth year of homeschooling. Currently, Howard says she is working with four children, ages three, eight, 10 and 12.

"We had issues of bullying on school bus, and school that were not being addressed by the school district," she said via Facebook Messenger. "I have one on the spectrum, and the school was not meeting his needs."

Before making the decision to home school, Howard said she spent six months researching homeschooling laws, methods and curriculum. After pulling her children from the public school system, Howard said the lives of her children have improved.

"We no longer have the morning and after school meltdowns and behaviors with my 10-year-old," she said. "They are able to work ahead in subjects, dive into and spend more time on interests. We're able to stay on a lesson until it is mastered rather than being moved along. The social interactions within the home school community are more positive."

Apparently, Howard is not alone in her decision. She said there is a growing home school community in the area. She said local Facebook groups dedicating to homeschooling exist with 50-300 members each. Howard is an administrator for the Riverbend Area Homeschoolers group, which has approximately 130 members, and is a part of the Southwestern Homeschoolers, which has 54 members.

"There is a growing home school community in this area," she said. "So many are happy with the school districts, class sizes, bullying, negative social interaction between students and curriculum - such as common core."

Currently, Howard said many people drive from Jerseyville to Collinsville to attend homeschooling co-ops. She said she and other families have been working toward establishing one closer to home for some time, and she has previously hosted classes at her home - featuring a Magic School Bus Science Class and a Harry Potter Book Club. She said six families attended the science class, and 11 attended the book club.

Many families seek homeschooling for religious reasons - and still do - but Howard said there is a growing number of secular homeschooling options - hers included.

Possible future locations for the co-op will be discussed at the meeting at Schneider Park, Howard said. Many families attending have spoken with their pastors and community organizations about hosting it.

More information can be found at Howard's [event page](#) on Facebook.