

Parents try home schooling

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6 September 2006

Cindy Knoblauch of Havana has been a sixth-grade home-school teacher in English and arts for more than 12 years. She advocates making sure that children who are home-schooled get a variety of experiences.

The Knoblauch family is part of a home-school group of Gadsden County parents and children who meet once a month and share opportunities for learning.

"We take (students) on field trips as part of their schooling, and they then have to write about that experience," said Cindy, 48. "... At the end of each week they keep a portfolio of what they have learned, and it is part of their documentation provided to the state-certified examiner so they can be recognized for their learning skills."

Latrenda Gainous-Goldwire, home-school coordinator in Gadsden County, noted that the numbers are growing.

"Last year there were 325 (Gadsden) students in a home-school program, and so far this year there are 360 students already signed up," she said.

As a Florida Virtual School teacher, Cindy Knoblauch is available to her home-schooled students 24/7 via the free virtual-school Internet program.

She and her husband, Mark, decided in 1991 that they wanted all their children to be educated without the difficulties that accompany large schools.

Cindy's educational background gave her an opportunity to be both a mother and a teacher. She has degrees in special education, exceptional education and elementary education and a master's in instructional design and development for distance learning, all from Florida State University. She learned she could become certified as a sixth-grade teacher in the authorized Florida Virtual School Internet program.

She home-schooled her two girls, both in college now: Sarah, 21, is studying civil engineering at FSU, and Emily, 18, is studying at Tallahassee Community College to become a teacher. Both were dual-enrolled at TCC while they were in high school. Her son, Jacob, 13, is also home-schooled. He's not sure what he wants to be when he grows up, but math likely will be part of it. He's also researching what it takes to go into business on his own.

Bo and Debbie Pittman of Quincy have 11 children - all home-schooled.

The Pittmans originally had five children and then decided to adopt six children.

"It is not easy to do this with so many children," she said. "Each one has different needs and levels of learning. We are happy we can have them all around us and know exactly how they are doing."

"We have spent 21 years home-schooling our children, and it is still going on. We love doing it, as we know how important it is to have your children really learn and be able to seek a college education."

The state requires that all classes be documented and that evaluations be done regularly by a certified evaluator. After finishing their senior classes, students receive a document indicating they completed the program.

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