

Welcome to the newsletter for homeschool group leaders

Homeschool Leader written by Carol Topp, CPA

Summer 2008. In this issue:

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Choosing a Leadership Team

As the homeschooling movement grows, so do support groups and homeschool co-op groups. All this growth means more organization is needed to handle larger memberships. Many homeschool groups find themselves needing to formalize their groups with by-laws and boards of directors. They also find themselves handling more money and larger budgets.

Forming a Board

First follow the Biblical example of Moses, who could not handle the burden of leadership alone. God directed Moses to:

"Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people.... They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone". (Numbers 11:16)

You should do the same and establish a board of helpers, sometimes called by its more formal name, Board of Directors. This doesn't have to be formal. Simply, choose people of integrity with gifts of organization and discernment. Look for people who show an interest and commitment to you group. If they have experience in serving on a charitable or church board it would be extremely helpful.

Just Ask

Approach potential board members personally, emphasize their strengths and contributions to your organization, and ask if they would be willing to help in a leadership role.

Keep It Small and Form Committees

Keep your Board small, so decisions can be made easily. Every board should have at least three members, a president, a secretary and a treasurer. Some boards prefer to add a Vice President who will succeed the current President.

As responsibilities increase, the size of the board should increase. Many boards like to add Program, Planning or Membership duties to board members. Most boards assign committees to handle many tasks. Committees meet outside of Board meetings. A co-op of 20-100 families might have a board of about 4 or 5 members and 2 to 5 committees.

Define the Task

Keep tasks well defined and limited. Some people are reluctant to volunteer for leadership because they fear there is no getting out later! If you define their role specifically and limit the term to one year, they may commit freely. Our co-op found it difficult for the director to make morning announcements because she had so many responsibilities at the start of co-op. Our board looked around and noticed that one particular woman was always there on time (or early), had a strong voice and was already organizing field trips. We asked her to take over the job of doing morning announcements for the next semester. We complimented her organizational skills and promptness! She agreed and our director had a huge weight lifted!

To read more about leading a homeschool groups visit my website www.HomeschoolCPA.com and go to the Articles page

Visit my blog,
www.Homeschoolblogger.com/HomeschoolCPA

I have been hearing a lot from homeschool leaders across the country, probably because my new book, *Homeschool Co-ops*, just came out. I get a lot of questions, so I have refocused my blog to be a question and answer blog from homeschool leaders. Each entry is a question from a homeschool leader like you and covers topics such as nonprofit organizations, leadership and finances. Some recent entries include:

[Paying an honorarium to a co-op teacher](#)

[How much money can a homeschool group earn?](#)

[Questions from Homeschool Leaders](#)

NEW! NEW! NEW!

My new book *Homeschool Co-ops:How to Start Them, Run Them and Not Burn Out* is now available at

- [Amazon.com](#)
- [BarnesandNoble.com](#)
- [Booksamillion.com](#)

Here are some recent reviews:

Carol,

I am halfway through our book and had to stop and tell you how much I love it! You have done such a great job of giving information without being judgmental. I am going to tell everyone I know that homeschools to read it. We have several families at our church with young children just starting to homeschool and I know they will benefit greatly from your description of different types of co-ops. Thanks for sharing your knowledge and experience with everyone.-Pam McBride, eCoops.com Online Data Management for Teaching Co-ops

As a homeschool group leader for many years, I would have benefited from this book when our group went through a major reorganization. Growing pains are never fun, but our growing pains would have been easier with this resource. This book contains 11 chapters, and one chapter that ALL homeschool co-ops should read is the one about 501(c)(3) Tax-exempt Organizations. There is a handy checklist and list of resources. I highly recommend this book for any homeschool leader or member.-Tami Fox, Discount Homeschool Store www.dhss.com

I cannot express in a brief review what a benefit this one book would be. I picked it up with several specific questions in mind - issues that we had to deal with in our co-op - and she addressed every single one. Topp not only presents her own information, but also leads you to more, providing several website and book suggestions that could prove invaluable. She offers a variety of suggestions (There is no one right way to run a co-op) and even goes so far as to cover ground you may not be ready to think about right now (Like whether or not you would ever want to be a 501(c)(3) and what it would entail). Finally, she addresses a topic that every leader needs to study in advance - avoiding burn out.-Tammy Cardwell, Eclectic Homeschool Online <http://eclectichomeschool.org/>

Read a sample chapter, book excerpts and a table of contents at www.HomeschoolCo-ops.com

NEW! NEW! NEW!

My ebooks have been revised to offer you more options

Money Management for Homeschool Organizations
and
Tax Exempt 501c3 Status for Homeschool Organizations
are now available the three different formats!

FREE Abridged version available for immediate viewing at www.HomeschoolCPA.com/books.html

I shortened each ebook to only 20 pages to make opening the file quicker and easier, at 40-50 pages each they were packed with lots of information, but too much for easy download. These are “try before you buy” versions of the longer books.

Ebook format. These are the original ebooks at 39 and 51 pages now available as electronic books for the very low price of \$3.75 each. They include additional information from the shorter abridged versions for those that need more in depth information

Print format. Some people don't like ebooks or cannot handle large print jobs, so my ebooks are now available in print for approximately \$7.50 each (plus shipping)

Visit www.HomeschoolCPA.com/books.html to read the abridged version or order the full length books.

Profile on Mason Homeschool Co-op in Cincinnati Ohio

In this issue of Homeschool Leader I am profiling my own homeschool co-op, the Mason Homeschool Co-op in Mason Ohio (a suburb of Cincinnati). We are a co-op of approximately 40 families that meet weekly for three hours of classes. Volunteer mothers (and a few fathers) teach our classes although a few classes have paid teachers (art, guitar, Spanish). Parents pay those instructors directly in addition to the \$75/family semester fee.

My co-op has faced many problems in the past few years, most of them from growth. Here are some issues that we have faced:

- Finding a new meeting place (4 locations in the 6 year history)
- Recruiting new board members.
- Dealing with dress codes
- Printer ink staining the carpet
- Parents bringing sick children to co-op
- Unannounced visitors for the day
- Members unable to pay co-op fees
- Death of a member's husband
- Chronic illness in families
- Job loss for the family breadwinner
- Adoption and foster care problems
- Running in the hallways
- Chaos at lunchtime

As you can see some of the problems a co-op faces can be expensive, heart wrenching and frustrating. We handled them all successfully because we have a strong board with six members. We are a mix of ages, life and family situations and personalities. The board holds its meetings during co-op time about once a month. Occasionally we need a longer meeting and spend an evening together. The people I have had the pleasure serving with are an inspiration to me of level-headed, kind, compassionate biblical leadership. I dedicated my book *Homeschool Co-ops* to them.

If your co-op or homeschool organization is suffering from some of the problems I listed above, please be encouraged that no problem is too large to handle if others are helping you to share the load. Gather like-minded members to help you run your group. Do not try to do it alone, or you will burn out.

This is a quarterly newsletter written by Carol Topp, CPA for homeschool group leaders. Thanks for reading! Please feel free to pass this along to other homeschool leaders.