

Mission Statement:

The Springfield Home Education: Learning for a Lifetime or SHELL is a loosely structured, inclusive homeschool support group for active homeschoolers. We warmly welcome families of diverse backgrounds and beliefs. We are mindful and respectful that homeschoolers come from all backgrounds, religions, and cultures. Our homeschooling focus is social and educational in nature. We embrace our diversity and are bound together by the common goal of giving our children the best homeschooling experience possible..

Members of our support group in and around Springfield, Missouri strive to share educational information and support for its members and the public in an atmosphere of respect, inclusiveness, and acceptance through Internet communications, social activities, educational trips, and occasional meetings.

Philosophy Guidelines:

- 1) We recognize that homeschoolers come from vastly diverse backgrounds but all with the common philosophy that we want the best for our children and their education.
- 2) We welcome homeschoolers of all ages, gender, religious, political, educational and personal philosophies. We purposefully do not do anything religious or political at any of our activities unless announced by the planner. We will respect other member's philosophies and be sensitive to the values of others, especially when they may differ from our own. This includes views with which you may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable. In this way, we are free to meet together without pressure to conform to a single set of beliefs.
- 3) We are self-governed and have no elected or appointed leaders. Each member has an equal voice. Changes to the guidelines must be agreed upon by a majority of active SHELL members at an organizational meeting to be announced no less than 30 days prior to the actual meeting. However, guidelines 1 and 2 may not be altered.
- 4) In addition to scholarly pursuits, and providing fun social activities, we strive to teach our children respect and kindness for others, and the principles of a civil society. To establish common expectations in such a diverse group, we have developed behavior guidelines for SHELL events. Your support of these guidelines is deeply appreciated.

Behavior Guidelines for Children:

We request that parents are mindful of their children's conduct during park day and other events. Our goal is to create an atmosphere that is safe and pleasant, and to reinforce positive behavior among the children. For this reason we ask that at SHELL sponsored events, parents do the following:

- 1) Encourage children to welcome any interested child into their games and play.
- 2) If you notice improper behavior (throwing sand, name-calling, etc), kindly inform the parents of the children involved. When the parents are unavailable, gently stop and redirect inappropriate behaviors that cannot be ignored.
- 3) If you have a child with behavior problems or special needs, or you are simply feeling overwhelmed, please feel free to ask for help.
- 4) If you or your child is having a bad day, please consider going home and just trying again next time.
- 5) Parents are responsible for their own children. Do not assume that other parents or older children will watch your child unless you have specifically asked them to do so and have received an affirmative reply.

Reminders For Adults:

Park day is a wonderful time for parents to discuss the many aspects of home schooling, as well as the important events in their lives.

Some friendly reminders.....

- 1) When discussing "adult" topics, be careful of what children may overhear.
- 2) When discussing "controversial" topics, speak respectfully of different points of view.
- 3) Please do not smoke during SHELL get-togethers.
- 4) To minimize the spread of illness, avoid SHELL activities when you or your children are contagious. Please inform the group (via email or phone) if you have inadvertently exposed the group to an illness.
- 5) Many SHELL families have specialized diets for health or ethical reasons (no nuts, sugar, caffeine, wheat, meat, alcohol, dairy, etc.) So, check with the parents before offering food to a child.

6) We encourage positive parenting techniques, as opposed to shaming and spanking. When children misbehave, please do not respond in kind. Keep in mind that misbehavior is simply an opportunity to teach.

7) An inclusive self-governed group can only continue to be successful when members take responsibility for planning events. All parents should take an active role in SHELL by offering either educational or fun activities.

8) If you sign up for a field trip or activity that requires a head count, please make every effort to attend. If you are absolutely unable to attend please notify the event coordinator as soon as possible. Some events require a minimum number of participants or may require advance purchase of materials/supplies so an accurate head count is important. Also, sometimes there is a limit or maximum number of participants, so someone else could attend if you can't give proper notice.

9) Individuals who offer an activity to the group will make all the decisions regarding that activity. Members may work in teams to set up activities. Anyone attending an event will respect the wishes of the event coordinator.

10) No activity is mandatory. Each member may decide to participate or not.

11) Members should plan to have at least one parent present at events unless prior arrangements have been made with the event coordinator.

12) At times there may be an age specific activity planned. In order to accommodate families with children of various ages, parents with children of ages not allowed to the event will not usually be required to stay. But you must confirm this with the event coordinator beforehand.

13) When dropping off a child at an event where you will not be present, you should make contact with the event coordinator to make sure your child is in the right place at the right time. Please return promptly at the designated time.

14) Commercial postings are prohibited. Using the group for solicitation of any sort is prohibited. Making a profit on activities is prohibited. Although some activities do cost and those charges will be posted at the time the activity is announced. In the event you are planning on attending an activity that is to be paid in advance, please do so promptly.

15) Guests may attend SHELL events. If there is limited space for the event, SHELL members should be included first. Our expectations for guest behaviors are the same as all other participants, and members bringing guests will be held responsible for their guest's behavior. When bringing guests, you must clear it with the event coordinator beforehand.

16) We will maintain a zero tolerance for violence and physical or verbal abuse among the children or adults. If there are repeat incidents involving the same person, then it is possible that a group decision would be made to request the offending family to cease attending SHELL functions.

17) Most of our families belong to more than one homeschool organization. It's fine to share other group's open activity information as long as it's labeled clearly which group this activity is being sponsored by.

18) If you are offended by a comment or action of a member of SHELL, you are encouraged to talk to him or her privately rather than discussing it with others in the group.

19) In the event there is an irreconcilable disagreement, and you feel you have pursued the issue to it's fullest, then it is appropriate to schedule an organizational meeting and discuss it with the group. Anyone can call a meeting.

20) For speed, economics, and convenience, most of our information will be relayed through the Yahoo groups page. If you don't have a computer, most libraries have internet access. If that is not an option, post to the group and someone will volunteer to be your email connection. This simply means they will mail you periodic information, or give you a quick call if something comes up of immediate importance.