

KEYS....CONTINUED



weekly park day for preschoolers, a teen chess club, a field trip to the local newspaper - whatever you're looking for, chances are there are others within the group who will appreciate and participate in what you set up. If attendance isn't what you'd hoped it to be, don't be discouraged! Many times, people's schedules are already set and they can't squeeze in the new activity. In time, word will spread about how much everyone enjoyed the activity and participation will improve.

Be Appreciative!

Express your appreciation to those who were helpful to you in the beginning. Not only will this strengthen your relationship with them, it will encourage them to continue helping others new to the group. Invite them and their kids for a special coffee and play day at your house. Include a note of thanks in the group's newsletter, if appropriate. Even a hug at park day can go a long way to letting someone know you're glad they were there when you needed a friendly face.

Don't forget those who are giving of their time to keep the group going. Tell the newsletter editor how much you look forward to receiving the newsletter each month. Thank the person who coordinated the field trip or arranged for the group to get the great discount tickets. Pretty soon, you'll find yourself on the receiving end of the thanks!

Be Patient

As with all areas of life, making friends among homeschoolers takes time. Avoid becoming frustrated if the hand of friendship you extend isn't immediately grasped. By engaging in the group's activities, solid relationships will form.

First Class has a wonderful reputation for being a very accepting and warm group. If you don't know where to start, give someone in the Leadership Team a call. Phone numbers are listed in various mailings and on our website. All of these parents have an interest in making your involvement at First Class Skagit County a wonderful experience.

Finding out how the group operates can also take time. Learn the procedures for submitting information to the newsletter. Ask how enrichment groups are formed and whether new members can participate in mid-year. Attend meetings and parents' nights out to discover the group's current leaders and what help is needed. Better yet, if you have a need and you don't see it being addressed, initiate a new idea by presenting it to someone on the Leadership Team. We are always looking for willing people to run new programs.

To paraphrase a familiar expression, "You'll only get out of your co-op as much as you put into it." Trying to find your place in First Class while also struggling as a new homeschooler can be a lot to take on at once. So relax, know that everything isn't going to fall in place at once, and do what you can when you can.



Parent Handbook

Make me truly happy by
agreeing wholeheartedly with each other,
loving one another,
and working together
with one heart and purpose.
Philippians 2:2 (NLT)

First Class Skagit County
1500 E. College Way, Ste. A #303
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
360-404-3001
www.firstclassskagitcounty.org

What's A Co-op, Anyway?

If you're new to homeschooling, the term "co-op" or "support group" may conjure up visions of people sitting in a circle with discussion being led by some type of mental health professional: "Hi, my name is Gertrude, and I'm a homeschooler."



TIME FOR A VERNACULAR ADJUSTMENT!

ver-nac-u-lar (vür-nakúy-lir) *n.*

The standard native language of a country or locality

Homeschool co-ops, like clouds, take many shapes and forms, each group changing to meet the needs of its members. They come in more flavors than Baskin Robbins' ice cream. One size doesn't fit all, either. While some groups seem to work more harmoniously than other groups, there is no single group that makes 100% of its members happy 100% of the time. Nor do 100% of the members take 100% advantage of all the wonderful opportunities available to them through their group.

First Class is unique in that we come at homeschooling and all of its wonderful and challenging facets from a decidedly Christian perspective. Our commitment to assist parents in their homeschooling journey is boosted by the support of the local church.

Our primary goals rest on one desire:

To see children and families come to a saving trust in Jesus Christ.

We are not a "support group" in the traditional sense of the word, either. Our co-op functions because each person in it assumes the responsibility of *partnering* with us in many different ways. In this booklet, you will see many ways that you can become involved. We hope that you will! It is our prayer that as a member of First Class, you will find not only friends, but *family*.

Are you ready? Let's get to know each other!

I Sought, I Found, I Joined! NOW WHAT?

By Carol Moxley

You did it! You made the decision to homeschool, and you found other homeschoolers to help enrich your homeschooling experience. Great! But, for some reason, you still feel like you're always on the periphery of the group. Here are some tips for getting connected at First Class.

Be Friendly

If you're a shy person, it may be asking an awful lot, but once you set aside your fears and actually step into the circle of your support group, you'll soon forget why you ever hesitated in the first place. Begin by introducing yourself to one or two people and mentioning that you're a new member of the group. There are always helpful souls in the group willing to draw you in.

Don't be discouraged if you don't make fast friends with someone immediately. It's quite possible that the others are just as shy as you are initially. By showing an interest in others, you will spark their interest in you.

Be Willing

All the jobs at First Class Co-op are done by committed parents of FC kids. All the little (and big!) jobs these people do make our group successful. If you're new to the group, then Someone Else has been doing all these little jobs. Someone Else may be tired. Someone Else may need a break. Someone Else may really appreciate you offering to help.

By offering to help the group, you not only do your part for the group, but you also get to know people you might not have otherwise had the opportunity to meet. Increasing your network within the group serves to strengthen your family's homeschool support system. **It's worth it!**

Be Positive

No support group is perfect; there's always room for improvement. If there are things you would like to see changed, rather than complain about those things, offer to help initiate change. Bring new ideas with you and offer to help implement those ideas. If there's something the group could have done to help you feel more included, offer to help set that up so new members coming in after you will benefit. Constructive input and an offer of help will go much farther than criticizing the efforts of others.

Be Proactive

If the group doesn't offer an activity you need, offer to organize it yourself. A bi-

IDEAS FOR FRIDAY SCHOOL CLASSES



- **American Girls—Josephina:** Travel through the life of Josephina by reading, crafts, and cooking.
- **Looking for a Job in the Real World:** Discuss different career paths and what might be required for each, practice filling out job applications and interviewing with prospective employers.
- **American Revolutionary War:** Learn about the people and events before and during the American Revolutionary War using plays, videos, crafts, projects, songs, and poetry.
- **Basic Sewing:** Learn straight stitch, zig-zag, and sewing by hand. Use a seam ripper. Make a pillow or a purse. Students should have knowledge of basic scissors safety.
- **Foreign Language:** Learn a second language: games, everyday vocabulary (days, months, numbers, family, furniture, greetings, expressions). Practice with flashcards.
- **Cake Decorating:** Learn cake decorating. Each child could make a cake to bring to the class. Learn to make basic flower designs, etc.
- **Cartoon Drawing**
- **Celebrations Around the World:** Experience the art, culture, and food of other countries.
- **Community Helpers:** Learn about different community helpers (firemen, policemen, etc.) Take a field trip to the Fire Station.
- **Cooking:** How to read measurements, follow directions, learn how to read recipes, learn how to write recipes, make a recipe box (each child could purchase index card file box to bring to class to decorate).
- **Creative Designing:** Embossing, rubber stamps, stenciling, gel pens, paint. Create greeting cards, bookmarks, jewelry, T-shirts, etc.
- **Math Homework:** A study hour where students can bring their own books and get help with math that confounds their parents.
- **Exploring the Seasons:** Explore the seasons through writing, science and art activities. Create seasonal art, take nature walks, make leaf collages, draw season-specific plants.
- **Fall Gardening:** Learn about plants that will thrive in the fall and winter. Plant a fall/winter garden.
- **What do you love to do?** Teach a class based on your interests!

THE VISION AND HISTORY OF FIRST CLASS



Just whose idea was First Class?

First Class was God's idea!

First Class was founded in 2000 as an answer to the prayers of two homeschooling moms in Mount Vernon, Washington, who desired to reach out with Christ's love to the homeschooling community.

The desire was to have a group of families who could get together for support and encouragement ~ and just maybe we could offer classes to students as a way to form friendships and enrich our homeschooling curriculum.

God's hand has blessed First Class, and we have seen it grow in leaps and bounds in a relatively short period of time. Over the years, we have been blessed by the talents of many committed parents who have stepped forward to offer themselves as servants in a effort to see this ministry succeed.

In 2006, First Class Homeschool Ministries was founded by Jay and Heidi St. John, charter members of First Class, with the vision of planting First Class Co-ops in more communities where homeschoolers have a desire to group together and support one another. First Class Skagit County is excited to be able to partner with and support them as we see this ministry grow! Please see www.fchm.org for more information!



Location

Most First Class events are held at Emmanuel Baptist Church, located at 1515 East College Way, Mount Vernon, Washington. Other locations will be announced with the individual event.



How do I join?

First Class Skagit County is a local charter of First Class Homeschool Ministries (FCHM), a national organization created to build communities of home-school co-ops around the world.

Becoming a member is a two step process:

1. Become a member of FCHM.
2. Register with your local co-op.

STEP 1 - Become a member of FCHM

Membership with FCHM is one year from the date of application. There are three options for payment:

\$22/year using credit card with auto renewal
(online only at www.firstclasshomeschool.org)

\$24/year using credit card for one year renewal
(online only at www.firstclasshomeschool.org)

\$27/year using a check (include with application)
Make payable to FCHM and include with application.

STEP 2 - Register to join First Class Skagit County

First Class Skagit County, WA Christian Homeschool Co-op registration dues are **\$15.00/year per family**.

Co-op registration runs from 8/1 through 7/31. Registrations after 5/31 are valid through 7/31 of the following year.

Please fill out our membership form, along with our background check form*, at www.firstclassskagitcounty.org/forms.htm. Make checks payable to First Class Skagit County.

*For insurance purposes, a background check will be run on each person who will be working with the students in any way. It's standard procedure, and is for the good of all concerned!

Please fill out these forms, and send them, along with your registration fee to:

First Class Skagit County
1500 East College Way Suite A #303
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

If you have questions please call 360.404.3001

FRIDAY SCHOOL

Friday School is a great opportunity for you to bless your children and other children. How?

By TEACHING!

Whether your gift is working with 1st graders or 12th graders, there is a place for you at Friday School. Our Friday School Coordinator will be happy to answer any questions about teaching you may have.

In addition to 1st – 12th grades, we always need teachers for early childhood education. These areas are: Nursery, Toddlers, Preschool and Kindergarten. If these age groups appeal to you, please sign up to be involved in these areas at Friday School.

Our ability to provide this range of classes, from “diapers to diplomas”, ensures the whole family the opportunity to participate.

Sound overwhelming? Find a friend and teach as a team! Or perhaps you would like to observe first, with the thought of teaching later! Check the catalog — is there a particular class you’d like to assist in? Feel free to give the teacher a call and chat with her. She’ll be happy to have an enthusiastic helper on board! At registration day, you can specify where you would like to help!

Friday School is not just for students! It’s also a great place for parents to interact and find encouragement and support in their homeschooling efforts. Our First Class Friends email group allows our members to share their hearts and make friendships. At Friday School you can meet those new friends face to face! Each parent is involved in helping in some area during two of our class periods. Their third period can be spent fellowshiping over a latte in our Coffee Corner, and perusing our lending library. After classes are over and cleanup is completed, many families meet in the gym to eat their lunches and get to know one another!



FRIDAY SCHOOL

Friday School is the wonderful, one-day homeschool cooperative that is at the heart of our program. It meets for two sessions each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. Sessions run 8 to 10 weeks, depending on the calendar year and holidays. We offer three blocks of classes, and students grades 1-12 may choose up to three classes to take each Friday. We begin at 8:30 am with chapel, and finish by 12:00 noon.

Location

Classes are held at Emmanuel Baptist Church, located at 1515 East College Way, Mount Vernon, Washington.



Chapel

We begin each Friday School day with Chapel! Chapel is a time for worship, and then announcements for parents before students are dismissed to go to various classes. Traditionally, our chapels have been rich times of fun and encouragement for everyone who attends.

Nursery/Preschool/Kindergarten

Part of what makes Friday School able to reach so many is that we offer an Early Childhood Education program. Parents can know that their little ones are in a safe, nurturing environment, while they participate in Friday School as either a teacher or helper. Of course we need parents to staff these rooms as well and opportunities to sign up to work in this important area are given each semester.

Cost

Fees for classes will vary, per teacher discretion, to offset the cost of materials or services included. Generally, these fees are minimal. Occasional classes are held off-campus, and fees for those classes are set by the class providers.

A \$10 credit is given for each parent who teaches a class!

Scholarships are available upon request. Please contact one of our leadership team if you are interested in applying.



FCSC: A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

What is the Benefit?

Your First Class membership fee allows your family to participate in all First Class activities. Membership is open to all homeschooling families.

Communication

Email is our primary form of communication — announcements are sent out on a regular basis to advise of upcoming events and changes to previous plans. We also publish a monthly newsletter, and sponsor the First Class Friends email group where friendships are built and member-initiated gatherings and field trips are announced.

Fellowship

We love to see our members come up with reasons or “excuses” to gather together! Such gatherings can be announced via the First Class Friends mailing list, or via the newsletter. Here are a few ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

- Have a "Newcomers Tea" or "Homeschooling 101" meeting to address newcomers questions: How to start? Removing children from school? Curriculum? Question and answer time?
- How to determine your child's learning style—and yours!
- Dealing with less than enthusiastic friends and relatives, answering their question “what about socialization?”
- Helping Dad understand his role in homeschooling.
- How do I get my kids to help out?
- Making a portfolio and transcripts.
- Preparing for next year - making decisions on curriculum according to learning style.
- Homeschooling a preschooler...teenager...mixed ages...with a toddler/infant at home.
- Mentoring moms of preschoolers: Helping them learn how to plan their homeschool journey and allay their fears of “ruining their children”. How to begin teaching their young ones now.
- Record keeping.
- How to obtain — and keep — the keys to your children’s hearts.





FIRST CLASS SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tom Murillo - Board Member

Traci Murillo - First Class Coordinator 360-424-5174

Tom and Traci have been involved in the co-op from the beginning, and Traci stepped up to the position of Friday School Coordinator in 2004.

They are homeschooling their three children in addition to the work they are doing for First Class.

Pat Fraser - Secretary/Treasurer 360-848-9882

Pat is a teacher at heart, and has loved the homeschooling concept for years. She was excited when asked to teach in our Friday School. She loves our kids, and our kids love her and her classes on animals of all kinds! She's in the leadership of the Toastmasters organization locally, and an excellent speaker.

Chrissie Hasenöhr - Friday School Reg., Teen Coordinator 360-629-6025

Steve and Chrissie have homeschooled their three boys from their earliest days. They came to us from a huge co-op in Colorado! They have lots of ideas and input for us!

Tami Hodge - Chaplain 360-428-5878

James and Tami are also among our founding families. James has taught classes from time to time, while Tami has been our faithful intercessor, praying over the needs of First Class and our members.

Rod Nelson - Teen Group Leader

Zindra Nelson - Newsletter Editor 360-336-8923

Rod takes Friday mornings from his job to teach classes at Friday School.

Zindra helps with his classes, and does a wonderful job as she publishes our monthly newsletter! They both work with our teens, challenging them to growth through gatherings that are both fun and constructive!

Randy Turner - Board Member

Polli Turner - Website and Email Communications 360-422-6823

Randy and Polli homeschooled their daughters from Day 1, starting back in southern Oregon. They have been involved in First Class from the start, and are now also liasons to First Class Homeschool Ministries (with Jay & Heidi St. John) in Vancouver. They have finished homeschooling, but have a passion to minister to those who are still walking that path!



STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe:

- The Bible is the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God.
- God has existed from all eternity in three persons; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus was God came in human flesh being fully God and fully man, except without sin.
- All men are in violation of God's righteous requirements and His holy character both by nature and act.
- The central purpose of the coming of Jesus Christ was to pay the penalty for man's sin through His substitutionary death on the cross, the successful accomplishment of which was attested to by His subsequent bodily resurrection.
- Salvation is offered as a gift, free to the sinner. This gift must be responded to in individual faith, not trusting in any personal works whatsoever, but in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ alone.

A note from the Leadership Team

First Class Homeschool Co-op is continuing to change and grow. We look forward to a year filled with exciting new activities and opportunities. 1 Corinthians 12:4-31 tells us we all have unique talents and gifts. We are instructed to use these for the glory of the Lord and to serve the body. No gift (or job) is more important than another. No person in the body is more important than another. Let all of us work together, extending grace where needed, helping each other, loving each other with the love that God gave us.

Because we are changing and growing, at times it will be necessary to re-evaluate certain areas of the co-op. In light of this, and to serve you better, we reserve the right to change policies and procedures without notice. We are looking forward to a great year and we hope you are too!

In His service,

FCSC Leadership