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# COMMUNITY Page

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## One teacher, two students equals one home school

By **STEVE LeBLANC**  
 Special to *The Champion*

Jill Hicks' classroom is nowhere and everywhere.

Her curriculum includes nothing in specific and everything under the sun. And while she has no official assistance from the outside world, her pool of resources is as vast as her imagination.

Welcome to Ms Hicks' world of home schooling. Population: one teacher, two students.

The individual attention this instructor-pupil ratio affords is one of the things that attracted the Laurier Avenue mother to this unique lifestyle.

"We really wanted our children to have a joy for learning and thought we could encourage that," said Ms Hicks, speaking for herself and husband David. "We saw a real quest for information from our children early on and didn't want that to be lost."

Ms Hicks has been home schooling for the past 10 years. Her two eldest children, 19-year-old Faith and 15-year-old Noah, now attend university and E.C. Drury High School.

For the past year and two months, seven-year-old Nathan and five-year-old Eli have had mom all to themselves.

Said Ms Hicks, "I was home schooled as a child myself, which made the start with Faith that much smoother. I also have a masters degree in early childhood education, which helps as well."

### No typical day

She explained that there's no typical day around Hicks H.S. (Home School) and that "learning happens all the time."

Nathan and Eli are being taught to read and write just like their in-school counterparts, but not necessarily between the confines of 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

They listen to cassette tapes on various subjects, take weekly art classes and soak up information during regular field trips to the library, museums and conservation sites.

"The boys just recently learned about cowboys from their father, after his latest trip to Washington," recounted Ms Hicks.

"Home schooling is more of a free-flow kind of experience. Lessons and activities are varied and different.

"We also encourage them to seek out some answers on their own. It's important for them to gain at least a little independence now because there won't always be someone there telling them what to do."

While admitting there are some wonderful teachers in the school system, Ms Hicks believes regular classes can often become a social playground, where some students lose their drive and individuality.

She added "we're all social beings" and that home schooling hasn't caused any problems for

her children with regard to interaction with other students.

In fact, she said, Noah has had a seemingly problem-free transition into high school. During his freshman year at Drury, he excelled in all his classes as well as on the stage — as the lead in a drama club play.

Recalled Noah, "There was just one guy who used it (his home schooling) as a personal vendetta, but basically everyone was very accepting of my situation."

"The transition was smoother than I thought it would be."

Jerry Ann Clifford, assistant superintendent at the Halton Board of Education, said Noah is a typical case study of home schooling's many success stories.

### Well prepared kids

"Almost all of the children I've known to be home schooled in Halton have been very well prepared for high school or college and were well adjusted," said the Halton Board's liaison for home schooling.

"In my experience, home schooling has only been a drawback for children with emotional problems or special needs."

She estimates that roughly 120 families in Halton currently practice home schooling, although one Milton woman feels this figure is well off the actual mark.

"There are lots of home schooling families that don't register with the board, so I think her numbers are very conservative," suggests Judy Clifford, who teaches her nine-year-old son Ben and five-year-old daughter Victoria.

She took Ben out of elementary school three years ago, after he began imitating some of the "bad boys" who were acting out in class.

Ms Clifford said, "This is a much better spot for him. He's more relaxed now and is really into projects and sports."

"After eight to 10 years of school, it's easy for some students to be worn out once they reach high school. For Ben and Victoria it'll be fresh and they'll tell us when they're ready to go."

"They may not study everything that other children do, but let's face it, 90 per cent of learning is desire."

Despite tremendous success with her own children, Ms Hicks stressed that home schooling is not for everyone — and is not a solution to every problem.

"You really have to enjoy being with your kids and find ways or giving each other space because you're with them every day and night," explained Ms Hicks.

"Home schooling families aren't usual rich either, because one parent essentially has to give up work."

"For us however, it's been a wonderful experience."

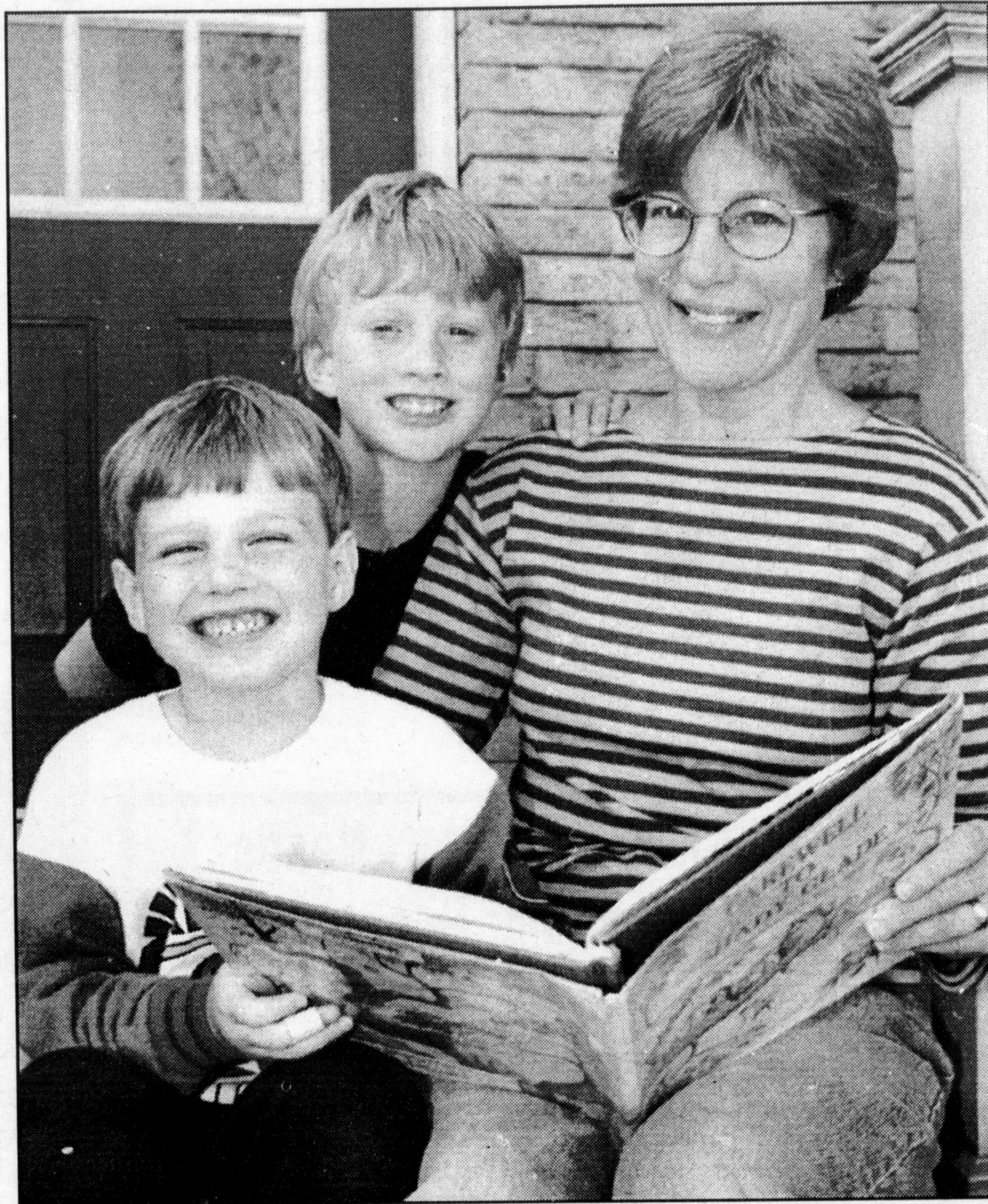


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Mom Jill Hicks is keeping Eli, 5, (left) and Nathan, 7 at home and teaching them herself after having successfully done the same with her two other children.

## All systems go for meetings

The Milton Jaycees spent much of yesterday morning trying to confirm where voters would meet the candidates this Wednesday.

In light of this week's teachers' strike, the service club was initially told it couldn't use Bishop Reding Secondary School for its Meet the Candidates Night. But the Halton Roman Catholic Separate School Board later said all after-hour activities would proceed as scheduled.

The 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. event at BR will include both opening and closing statements and

questions for mayoral, regional council, town council and public school trustee candidates.

At the same time at Campbellville's Lions Hall, the Halton Federation of Agriculture will host another all-candidates meeting featuring candidates for Wards 1 and 3.

Next Tuesday, Nov. 4, The Champion will host an informal evening with candidates at BR from 7 to 10 p.m. The following night, E.C. Drury's Parent Council will hold a meet-the-trustee-candidates from 7 to 9 p.m. in E.C. Drury's auditorium.

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