

Homeschool Dad Gets Key Position at PA Dept. of Ed.

by Howard Richman

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In September, 1997, homeschooling father, Biagio Musto was selected by the Ridge administration to head the office at the PA Department of Education which deals with homeschooling! Formerly the head of "Pupil Services," Biagio now heads a new entity, called the "Division of Student and School Services" which handles homeschooling affairs as well as many other areas.

Biagio and his wife Carol began homeschooling in the 1970's when their eldest of six children Anya (now 27) and Antonia (now 25) were in second and first grade respectively. One reason was the severe allergies that ran in the family. Both Anya and Antonia were not only allergic to the food at the Catholic school that they attended, but they would even break out in rashes in response to the uniforms!

Biagio and Carol homeschooled their six children for the next decade. When they started there were only a handful of homeschoolers throughout the state. They were truly among the pioneers of homeschooling in PA.

Biagio told me that his family used a structured approach to homeschooling. When the kids were in elementary school, they used the Calvert School curriculum. For high school, they put together their own plan. In general, they would begin every day with reading aloud from both the Bible as well as the local newspaper. One of their favorite parts of the newspaper was a section called "This Day in History." They would often look up places mentioned in the newspaper on maps that decorated their walls.

They stopped homeschooling when their eldest was going into 12th grade and their youngest was going into 4th grade. They were partly worried that the lack of diplomas then available to homeschoolers might interfere with their children's opportunities for college and careers. Also, Carol felt that she needed to go back to work (she is now teaching philosophy at Luzerne County Community College) to help pay for the children's upcoming college educations.

Since then, Anya (27) attended Pittston Area High School for her senior year then went on to the Honors College at Misericordia (in Dallas PA) where she received a 100% Presidential Scholarship. She is now a lawyer in Phoenix, AZ. Sophia (23) is now completing a masters degree at Ithaca College and interning as a speech therapist in Bucks County, Biagio II (22) has completed a prelaw degree at Marywood College (in Scranton) and is currently seeking admission to law school, Leonard (19) has begun work as a law enforcement officer where the family lives (in Pittston Township, Luzerne County) and is persuing an Associates degree in criminal justice. Miriam (16) is a senior at Seton Catholic High School in Pittston.

When we homeschoolers have had problems with school districts who misinterpret the home education law, we have called or written to the Department of Education where we have gotten help from Marion Gray, Sarah Pearce, or Al Myers. Now in the few cases where these people are not helpful, we can go over their heads to the homeschool dad who is their boss!