



COURTESY HEATHER ZURBURG

"With homeschooling, it shows a lot of character that you get up on your own," says Heather ZurBurg.

By Tenia S. King

Walk to most students, and the conversation turns to school, social events, and maybe part-time jobs. But working with teams across the country, full-time teaching, military service, university training, and making the news deadline for the regional paper—these are topics of conversation that these homeschooled students are eager to discuss. Meet these Florida leaders who have used the homeschooling benefits of flexibility, self-motivation, and individual attention to pursue excellence.

### Guarding the Goal

Sometimes, Heather ZurBurg, 18, is just too busy to go to school. Other times, it's just what she needs. See, ZurBurg has a goal, one she tends regularly. By eighth grade, she was the goalie for the Jacksonville Fury, a girls under-15 team. Problem was, she lived in Gainesville, about two hours away, and practicing and playing for two hours in Jacksonville three times a week was taking its toll.

ZurBurg wanted to create the best training and schooling plan possible for herself, so in eighth grade, she and her parents decided to homeschool. "It just felt like there was so much dead time at school I could be using better," she says. She wanted to play in the Olympic Development program, and to do so, she needed to beef up her training regimen.

Training hard showed dividends as she made the state team for the Olympic Development Program, and played there from 1998 to 2000.

ZurBurg was determined to find the best she needed to fulfill her goals. "It was worth it to go to the Jacksonville team because of the quality of coaching," she says. "I had more opportunity there to really lead the team from the back." She took the same

view in her education and headed back to **Buchholz High School** her sophomore year for Italian, drama, and Advanced Placement English. "The high school could provide some things that I needed better than I could, but I still preferred to do a lot on my own." She says students need to be willing to take charge to get what they want out of life. "By being homeschooled, I had the chance to get the foundation I needed to strengthen my body," she says. "But I also got a much more take-charge mentality. I can do whatever's necessary without waiting for someone to tell me to do it."

Her needs to make her mark on the field have led her to a much different environment this year. She put her name out on the internet looking for a team on which to be a guest player for the Orange Classic Invitational in Miami in 2000, and the coach, Ko Thanadabout, who took her on on the Miami trip, asked for her participation again in 2001 for the President's Cup Tournament in Phoenix. She kept in contact with the

completed her two-year college degree and is a teaching assistant at a local private school—and she's only 17.

At 15, she started in **Indian River Community College's** dual-enrollment program and by this spring will earn an Associate of Arts degree in education. But she admits that at first, she often procrastinated. "But I got over that real soon," she says. While finishing up at IRCC, she's taking two classes at **Atlantic Baptist College** in Ft. Pierce. "Three of my four classes are taken over the internet, so I only have to go to the college once a week for a three-hour class.

Womble also homeschools because it allows her to have more one-on-one attention. She says she has the time to pursue her teaching assistant duties full-time from 8:30 to 2:30 p.m. on weekdays. She teaches 13 students from first-graders to 11th graders. She enjoys teaching so much that she also leads a Sunday school class for three- to nine-year-old children—often dressing up to illustrate a story.

# Leaders at home

Showing leadership while walking a different path

coach and her teammates, and in 2002, she was invited to come spend the summer training with the girls of the Windy City Pride team. The summer went so well that the team, ranked 12th in the nation and known by colleges across the country, offered her a spot for her upcoming senior year if she would come and live in Illinois. After talking it over with her parents and finding a family to host her and serve as her guardian, she went, beginning her senior year at **Lincoln Way Central Community High School** in New Lenox.

"I'm in the best possible environment to prepare for college soccer. Right now, being in a high school makes it easier for the NCAA and colleges to keep track of me," ZurBurg says. "It's hard being away from my folks, but I'm exactly where I need to be." -SRR

### Driven to Teach

Many students practice martial arts, perform in plays, and volunteer in their communities. But Jamie Womble has nearly

In working toward a degree while teaching, she studies between rehearsal breaks for a local community production of the musical "The King and I" three times a week. As if this isn't enough, she plans to start training to become an instructor after getting her black belt in Tae Kwon Do. She's a member of a self-defense crew, which meets every two months, and she teaches the first half of the course.

Obviously, teaching is her passion, and homeschooling is one tool Womble has used to live that out. It also affords her the flexibility to fit all these teaching opportunities into her schedule, and she has enjoyed the "twists and turns" allowed in homeschool education.

She doesn't hesitate when asked what's next. Womble's goal is clear: "I will get my BA in Elementary Christian Education," she says. "I should have that by the time I'm 20."

### Leading the Ranks

At 6:30 on New Year's morning 2002, a young cadet left on a rescue mission to search for a radio device that detects naval emergencies. For Cadet Mitchell Campbell,

Learn more about Zurburg and the others at [www.floridaleader.com](http://www.floridaleader.com)

who usually attends to the duties on the family farm during the morning hours, this was a drastic change of pace.

Not many 15-year-olds prefer to be called “lieutenant,” but Campbell, a cadet with the Naples Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, enjoys his title and everything that comes with it. On Monday nights, he gears up with pilots at the Naples airport and he assists them as co-pilot during orientation flights.

As a homeschool student, Cambell has the freedom needed to be an active cadet. “You get to choose your own hours,” says Campbell, whose work with the Naples Squadron began when he was only 13. Also, he wakes up between 6:30 and 7:30 every morning to feed the family farm animals, and he especially enjoys giving trail rides on horses to members of his community.

The chance to experience excitement motivates Campbell to work hard as a cadet. “It’s a good opportunity to do things that other people don’t do,” he says. Taking photos of damaged ocean vessels, serving on disaster relief missions, tending to aircraft crashes, and flying along the Florida coast to look for boats are all duties involved in his work. “I can get onto a military base, camp out for a week, and live like a soldier,” he says. Campbell aspires to become an Air Force fighter pilot after studying at a military college, and he hopes that his experience in the Naples squadron will mean higher wages and a higher rank.

### Living for Music

The background music on Dan Klintworth’s voice mail captures his love for classical music and composer John Williams. Klintworth, 16, idolizes Williams, the man behind the movie scores of *Indiana Jones*, *Jaws*, and *Star Wars*, and he wants to be a soundtrack composer as well.

Organizing his time around this dream is easier with homeschooling, he says, which lets him work at his own pace while developing his musical talents. “I’ve been focused on my music, and I practice for several hours a day.”

At six, Klintworth started music lessons, and he says soon after “it took fire.” Playing the flute for the Florida Symphony Youth Orchestra and the **Titusville High School** band allows him to interact with other music lovers. He also plays the piano at church and participates in band events and concerts. The 16-year-old, who studies orchestras as well as the lives of composers, composed and arranged “Celebro Libertas,” which was performed in a fall band concert. By accompanying solo and ensemble students during performances, playing the piano at weddings and funerals, and arranging choral soundtracks and orchestrated music, Klintworth shares his musical abilities with anyone who needs his services. “Music is my social life,” he says. “I really enjoy it. I get a feeling of accomplishment.”

Having written music for almost four years now, he travels more than an hour every three weeks to take composition lessons from the associate dean of the music

## Popular Myths About Homeschooling

### Myth #1

**Families choose to homeschool for religious reasons.** Dissatisfaction with the public schools is actually the number-one reason people choose home education. Still, many families incorporate faith-based materials and values in their home education program.

### Myth #2

**Families mostly homeschool their younger children.** Although many families begin homeschooling during the elementary years, more and more families are continuing to homeschool through middle and high school. In Florida, 50 percent of all students being homeschooled are over 13.

### Myth #3

**Homeschooled children are sequestered all day in their own homes and very isolated.** Without the confines of being in a structured school for 6 to 8 hours a day, homeschoolers have the freedom and the time to pursue interests in sports, the arts, community service, and church ministry.

### Myth #4

**Homeschooled students are unable to interact with other students and people.** Homeschooled students interact with people of all ages, not only in the above-mentioned activities but also in part-time jobs, support group activities, and field trips.

### Myth #5

**Homeschoolers have difficulty getting into colleges.** All of the Florida universities and private colleges, plus hundreds across the country admit and some actively recruit homeschooled students. Homeschoolers bring strong academics and test scores, good communication and leadership skills, self-directed study habits, and a variety of extracurricular activities to the college application process and are excellent and sought-after candidates for admissions.

—By Marcy Krumbine, State Chair of Florida Parent Educators Association (FPEA)

department at **Stetson University**. He knows what he wants out of college—a good music program, of course—and right now, he’s considering **Wheaton College** in Illinois because it seems to fit his criteria.

Klintworth’s mother, Lillian, is confident that homeschooling her son was one of the best decisions her family ever made. “I know he wouldn’t be where he is in his music if

not for being homeschooled. He just wouldn’t have time,” she says. “His life is devoted to music.”

### Getting the Story

Writing for a city newspaper is usually done by college interns and full-time reporters, but Matthew Puchferran, 15, is a rare exception. As a staff writer for *South Florida Sun-Sentinel’s Next Generation*—a “news and views” publication for and by Broward County high school students—he improves his writing and interviewing skills. He also is the editor of the *Boca Youth Quarterly*, a local homeschool newsletter. “We have more than 50 subscribers,” Puchferran says. Last spring, after submitting 10 writing samples and copies of his newsletter, he became the first homeschooler ever on the *Next Generation* staff.

As a budding journalist, Puchferran enjoys traveling to destinations he’s studied. While researching the Civil War, the family visited Fort Sumter in South Carolina, and they traveled to Jamestown and Williamsburg after studying early American settlers. Puchferran has also traveled to Juarez, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas, where he volunteered at health clinics for the poor and worked with kids in the Los Ranchos Amigos orphanage. Traveling alone, Puchferran lived with a family in Mexico. Afterward, he wrote an article about his trip to Mexico and other traveling ventures for a *Sun-Sentinel* article.

As if his reporting accomplishments aren’t enough, he also is a coach for the Christian Home School Athletic Association and practices soccer daily. “I enjoy working with younger children,” Puchferran says.

Puchferran participates in the Duke University Talent Identification Program, which identifies gifted children and provides resources to enhance their academic development. It also includes a six-month preparatory course for the SAT.

Next year, he looks forward to continuing his writing and participating in the dual-enrollment program at a local college. ➔

For more information on homeschooling, contact Krumbine at [chairman@fpea](mailto:chairman@fpea), or visit [www.fpea.com](http://www.fpea.com).

On family trips, Matthew Puchferran goes over the edge while pursuing geography live and up-close: “I do a lot of extracurricular activities,” he says. “I’m out every night and weekend.”

COURTESY MATTHEW PUCHFERRAN

