

Gulf Coast Manatees Homeschool Group INC.

Membership Core Values & Policies

Education is not just about filling a pail but igniting a fire that fuels a lifelong journey of discovery and growth. Let's continue to inspire and be inspired!

Jacqueline Van Dyke, President and Founder

Thank you for your interest in our homeschool co-op. If you are a potential new member, you are invited to join us at a public class or activity. These are announced on our public Facebook page and website. Often these are our park play (and PE) activities. We have a few classes each month that are also open to the public. This allows you to meet with our members and get a feel for our GCMHG atmosphere.

At GCMHG we are a group of educational leaders and parents. We are proud to announce that we are one of Citrus County's first non-profit 501(c)(3) homeschool co-ops. At our Homeschool Co-op, everything is carefully thought out to ensure we keep kids safe while simultaneously providing them with the best possible education and socialization experience.

GCMHG is proud to be a member of the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce. As such, we have received rewards and recognition. Our membership and involvement will help us achieve our goals.

Our Mission as a Christian conservative homeschool co-op, is to supplement our children's education and physical fitness. Our goal is to enrich their overall experience to allow both children and adults the opportunity for positive socialization.

GCMHG is very strong in our Conservative Beliefs and Core Values. Patriotism is at the center of all we do. We say the United States Pledge of Allegiance and believe in our Bill of Rights and have prayer.

Each year, in our pre-kickoff parent meeting, all members are given access to the latest version of this Membership Core Values & Policies document. We all read and sign this and pay the new year's dues by Kickoff in August.

Whether you are a renewing member, or a potential new member, please read the entire Membership Guidelines & Policies document before signing. This will ensure that your expectations of us, and ours of your family, align. We do realize that the document is lengthy, but we feel it is important to communicate expectations for our relationship to function smoothly. Our Vision is that we all build meaningful and lasting relationships while enjoying our educational journeys.

Being a "Manatee" is both a privilege and a responsibility. Each one of us has special gifts and talents. Being a member allows us to share those gifts and talents with other families. While we do realize and respect that each family may differ in personal beliefs, anyone who will teach must do so from a Christian conservative view.

GCMHG is open to families that are actively engaged in homeschooling, with at least one child in grades K-12, and that are in compliance with our state's homeschooling laws. Homeschooling is defined as any schooling that occurs in the "home." By requesting membership, you recognize that GCMHG was started, and, with your contributions and involvement, will continue operating, from a Christian conservative viewpoint.

GCMHG is a registered non-profit group. Florida Solicitation Registration #: CH71257

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the division of consumer services by calling toll-free: 800-435-7352 within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

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We are excited and proud to welcome you and your family to our group as a Manatee. GCMHG functions as an extended family providing a safe, secure, dynamic environment for our children to experience social enriched learning. Membership demonstrates a willingness to serve the group. All members are required to participate in our co-op in a responsible and respectful manner. The success of our group depends on the cooperation and participation of our members.

Below are our policies and responsibilities. We ask you to agree and conduct yourself accordingly. Please share these with your student(s) and indicate that you have done so by signing this document. This will help ensure our students are happy and safe as they participate in our classes and events. Our goal is to provide an immersive and exciting experience in a safe space for our families.

Extra fees above and beyond registration may include the facility fee, field trips, special events, class fees etc. Class fees will be due at the time of class registration, unless otherwise noted. Field trips, special event, etc. fees will be due by specified due date.

1. Core Values and Christian Conservative Beliefs

a. Adaptability

- i. Members must be responsive and flexible to change, embracing new experiences and changes with a positive attitude.

b. Truth

- i. Truth is the foundation for values, such as trust, fairness, and cooperation. It inspires loyalty and trust which are absolute necessities for a group to function in a manner of safety and respectability.

c. Integrity

- i. Theft is grounds for immediate dismissal.

d. Respect

- i. Members must treat each other, elders, teachers, friends and everyone they encounter, with dignity and understanding regardless of age, gender, or beliefs.

e. Accountability & Forgiveness

- i. We all make mistakes from time to time. Members are expected to own their mistakes and actively learn from them. Without accountability and ownership of behavior, there is no emotional or personal growth.

f. Collaboration

- i. GCMHG works together to achieve shared goals. We value input from others and operate in a supportive and cooperative environment.

g. Communication (gcmanatees@gmail.com)

- i. Our communication must be open, truthful, and effective. Members are expected to strive to express themselves clearly and respectfully. Please email us with any questions, suggestions, or grievances.

h. Empathy & Compassion

- i. GCMHG engages in acts of kindness and generosity. We openly express gratitude and operate in a spirit of compassion looking for opportunities to build each other up. We rejoice in the achievement and successes of others.

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2. Financial Responsibilities

a. Membership

- i. Our GCMHG membership year runs August 1st through May 31st with yearly, non-refundable dues of \$100 and \$25 per sibling at the time of membership application.
- ii. Members joining mid-year, or any time between August 1st and February 27th, will pay full dues upon becoming a member.
- iii. For those joining between March 1st and July 31, there will be a discount for the remaining activities.
- iv. Additional costs may arise for some classes and events. These will be announced when scheduled.
- v. You understand that by requesting membership, you are doing so with the intent of participating from August until May. Membership for each year must be renewed each August. If you leave the co-op at any time, during any session, you will no longer be considered a "member", and your privileges will be revoked. Certain conditions for leaving for an extended period and then returning will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

b. Payment Methods (for dues, fees, events, materials, logo wear etc.)

- i. We accept cash, checks, and Zelle.
- ii. Zelle payments are to be made to gcmantees@gmail.com.
- iii. PayPal is accepted for an additional fee.

c. Food and Supplies

- i. On occasion, families will be asked to bring food or supplies.
- ii. If a family chooses not to contribute food or supplies, they will need to pay \$10 when signing up for the event so that we may make purchase arrangements.

3. Fundraisers

- i. Each family is expected to participate in no less than 3 fundraisers per year.
- ii. A family can choose to opt-out by paying an additional non-refundable \$250 fee when paying membership dues.
- iii. Fundraising opportunities will be on band in the calendar, with all information.
- iv. Members that gain sponsorships equaling \$500 or more will be exempt from the 2 remaining fundraising obligations.
- v. WinterFest is mandatory.

e. T-shirts, Tank Tops, and Sweatshirts Oh My!

- i. We ask that every student wears a GCMHG t-shirt to attend events & trips.
- ii. Adults are encouraged to wear them as well.
- iii. Current options and pricing available on Band.

4. Community Outreach & Responsibility

- a. GCMHG earnestly seeks opportunities to participate in community service/outreach.
- b. Through meaningful engagement, we inspire pride and empower our children, families,

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and community. As Manatees, we focus on creating a supportive environment that fosters positive growth and a sense of belonging to the community. Community outreach teaches responsibility, builds character and self-esteem, and shapes a better world for all.

- c. We ask each family to participate in at least one of these events per year.
- d. Teens can use these opportunities to earn community service hours.
- e. These events will be listed on the Band app.
- f. A family can choose to opt-out by paying an additional non-refundable \$50 fee when paying membership dues.

5. Volunteering

- a. We ask that a parent/guardian volunteer to help with an event at least 3 times per year.
- b. Volunteering is encouraged, please share your skills with us so we can identify areas of teaching where you are comfortable or talented, or helping out in classes.
- c. We ask that parents/guardians also be willing to help with other jobs/tasks as needed.
- d. A family can choose to opt-out by paying an additional non-refundable \$150 fee when paying membership dues.

6. Classroom Participation for Parents

- a. We encourage parents to participate, but in the classroom setting, we ask that only the teacher & volunteer parent be in the class, to avoid disruption. Parents can be in the hall or main area during class time.
- b. Parents will be expected to leave their cell phones outside of the classroom, or have the phones muted. Cell phone use will not be allowed for parents or children.
- c. We expect all of our parents and children to help ensure classes, events and field trips run safely and smoothly.
- d. If a child needs to take a break during class, the volunteer teacher assistant will step out with the child to avoid disrupting the class and bring them to their parent(s).
- e. If there is an issue with a child, the teacher, volunteer parent and at least 1 board member will discuss it with the parent away from the class/group activity.
- f. We have a separate Class Conduct Contract. **Please read it and share it with your student(s).**

7. Field Trips

- a. We each represent GCMHG. Please behave appropriately and respectfully towards our hosts and towards each other.
- b. Please wear a current GCMHG shirt during each trip. These may be purchased throughout the year. Please check for the latest ordering information on our Band Community page.
- c. Please be on time! We go in as a group, if you are late you may not be able to attend.

8. Facilities

- a. GCMHG uses a portion of our dues to go towards payment of rent and supplies.
- b. We pride ourselves on leaving facilities in better condition when we leave than it was when we arrived. We have many places that allow us to meet there simply based on our reputation of caring for facilities as though they were our own.

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c. We rely fully on our Manatees to help clean up after classes and events.

9. Conflict

- a. ALL grievances are to be made through email at (gcmantees@gmail.com). If an in-person meeting is needed it will be done after email communication has been done and with at least 2 board members present.
- b. Grievances with another parent should first be addressed between the parents. If no solution is reached, then email the board and we will address the situation.
- c. If a parent feels there is an issue with a company, field trip host or in-house guest visitor, they must first communicate with a GCMHG board member as to not tarnish the reputation of our co-op, allowing us to be aware of and take responsibility for remedying the situation.

10. Unacceptable Behavior (Hitting, name calling, etc.)

- a. Our group has children of all ages, backgrounds, and struggles.
- b. Children act out from time to time, but incidents must be handled immediately with apologies being made and issues being addressed.
- c. No child should place their hands on another.
- d. Foul language will not be tolerated.
- e. These types of behaviors will not be ignored, as we will not jeopardize the safety of our children.
- f. The family will receive a warning for each incident.
 - i. 1st - verbal with parent, child and 2 board members present to explain as positively as possible.
 - ii. 2nd- warning via written email.
 - iii. After 3 months of no warnings, the record will be “reset” to award the personal growth.
 - iv. 3rd- warning via written email, then dismissal via email.

11. Bullying

- a. Bully incidents of a member targeting the same child, adult, or group of children/adults is grounds for immediate dismissal.

12. Illegal activity

- a. Severe behavior or illegal activity is grounds for immediate dismissal.
- b. Illegal activity includes, but is not limited to: theft, harm, illegal drug use, crimes against children, or if a member is found to be a sex offender.

1. 13. Social Media, Promotion, and Communication

- a. **Band Community** (Band is a private social media tool similar to Facebook)
 - i. Upon payment of membership fees, each family will be given access to Gulf Coast Manatees' Band community.
 - ii. Band's features for discussion, event calendar, photo albums, and private chat provide a secure and safe platform for our families to organize and share activities and experiences.
 - iii. Families can find all of the most up to date information using our Band community.
 - iv. No personal/self-promotions or spam is allowed on Band with the exception on Mondays members can post information about sales, trades, freebies, parties, etc.

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b. GCMHG Facebook

- i. Our group has a FB presence that is completely open and public facing. This is one of the ways we let the community, and our sponsors, know what we are planning and achieving. It allows everyone to see how active and successful we are.
- ii. If your family has a social media presence, please share our public posts and activities on your own social media accounts to help promote GCMHG, continuing to build our reputation as one of the premier, active homeschool co-ops in Florida.
- iii. If you see an event or promotion on our FB page, please consider sharing it on yours.

c. GulfCoastManateesHomeschool.com (our website)

- i. This is our website which serves as another way to get our presence out there and show the community, potential sponsors, as well as future Manatees what we do.

d. Media & Photos

- i. We regularly take photos of students participating in classes, events, field trips and other activities.
- ii. These photos are intended to be used for items such as yearbooks, videos, graduation memorabilia, social media, our website, to promote the co-op and to share with our sponsors so they can be proud and confident of their support for our Manatees.
- iii. We strive to take at least one full group photo per event.
- iv. We are not responsible for photos taken by individuals at our events.

14. Injury and Accident Liability

- a. During any Gulf Coast Manatee event or class, no one shall hold the host(s) accountable or liable for any injury.
- b. We understand that accidents happen, and we expect everyone to be mindful, alert, and conduct themselves with extra caution.
- c. Parents are to use discretion while remaining engaged, involved, and vigilant.

15. Intellectual Property

- a. All ideas and events that are created by the Gulf Coast Manatees must stay in our group.
- b. Families may not take the ideas and classes elsewhere without writing approval from the board.

16. Drop Off Policy

- a. Information available upon request.

17. Board Members 2025 – 2026

Jacqueline Van Dyke - President

Rebecca Fink - Secretary

Angie Hester - Treasurer

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Class Conduct Contract

Our volunteer teachers work hard to prepare fun, interactive, and exciting lessons in order to enhance classroom learning opportunities. Please do not allow your children to bring anything to class that would be disruptive for them or the other students. This includes games, cards, handheld devices, music players, and others distracting items unless approved by the teacher for class participation.

The purpose of class time is to focus on learning a given topic in a shared environment with peers. It is expected that the student's full attention and respect be given during class time. Talking, standing up, leaving, or otherwise distracting other students will not be permitted. If a student needs to leave the class for any reason, they should raise their hand to get the attention of the teacher or teacher assistant. Walking out of class or encouraging other students to do so will not be tolerated.

Cell phone/electronic devices (including, but not limited to: phones, iPads, computers, smart watches) use will not be permitted during class time, by either parents or students, whether indoors or out unless requested by the teacher. Students' cell phones must be turned off and left out of sight during classes. Teachers may reserve the right to collect cell phones at the door of their classroom. If an attending parent needs to take a call, they must immediately leave the room to avoid distracting or disrupting the class.

Teachers may need to use a mobile device for attendance, or presentation of classroom activities; all other uses should be reserved for before or after co-op activities.

DRESS CODE POLICY: During **CLASS DAYS** students must dress respectfully. **GIRLS:** NO MID-DRIFFS ABOVE THE BELLY BUTTON, NO BUTTS HANGING OUT. **BOYS:** NO SHORTS OR PANTS BELOW THEIR WAIST/HIPS, NO PROFANITY OR INAPPROPRIATE WORDS ON CLOTHING. We simply expect all parents and students to dress appropriately for the activity. For example, if a physical education activity is scheduled, please wear proper shoes and comfortable clothing for the activity. We do encourage all Manatees to wear a GCMHG shirt to events, activities and field trips.

Not all students, or families desire a social media presence. Students may not take pictures/videos of classmates or anyone else attending a class or event without the person's knowledge and consent. They may not share or post pictures/videos of others on social media sites without the parents/guardian's consent. We have families who do not allow their children's images to be posted online. You **must have adult permission** of all persons in a photo/video to publish them online. Each family has indicated their preference when signing the membership application. You must be fully aware of the preference of each person in the photo before publishing or sharing photos of those individuals.