

## Homeschool Super Heroes

### Speakers:

Gentry  
Gena

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**Gentry:** Hi, I'm Gentry Beck of Homeschool Super Heroes and I'm thrilled to have Gena Suarez as our Super Hero guest today. If you'd like to listen to our other Super Heroes make sure to visit [www.homeschoolsuperheroes.com](http://www.homeschoolsuperheroes.com).

Now, Gena Suarez resides in the Tri-Cities of Tennessee with her husband, Paul. This is also where they homeschooled their six children, Paulie, Luke, Levi, Julia Rachel, Susanna Hope, and Chloe Abigail. They enjoy long country rides in the van while listening to books on CD, hanging out with good friends, and staying up late.

By the grace of God the Suarez family has published *The Old Schoolhouse Magazine* for 10 years.

Thank you so much for joining us today, Gena. How are you doing?

**Gena:** I'm doing good. Thanks for having me. It's great to be here.

**Gentry:** Yes. Well, would you go ahead and start off by telling us a little bit about your family and about your approach to homeschooling your six kids?

**Gena:** Sure. Yeah. Our family is probably a little bit different compared to just the mainstream Christian family in America. I think we relate to a lot of homeschool families that have maybe had their first cropping of children and then wait several years and then more come along and we definitely would fit into that model. We had four children and then we waited 11 years and had two more. And so we have Chloe and Susanna who are just babies, but then we also have our older children, our oldest one being an adult who is 21 and who's already out on his own. And so it's a very different lifestyle definitely.

I find myself having real strong deep conversations with my older ones, and then I have to turn quickly and try to go into a different mode where I'm talking about Dora the Explorer with my babies, and then turn back again to the older ones and we're taking about college and other deep issues. It's kind of interesting just having to go back and forth, but it's fun and I just wouldn't trade it for the world.

**Gentry:** Good. Okay. Also, I know you have the four older ones and then the two younger ones, so you probably don't have a typical day, but what's a homeschool day look like in your family?

**Gena:** You know, again our family is a little strange. Because we do publish the magazine and we travel so much as a family, you're right, the days are definitely different and there probably is no one day that's just like the other. So we have some schedules, but we try and keep especially if we are home for a period of time then we are able to spend the time necessary with each child doing the various schooling.

You know, two of our kids right now are being homeschooled technically, so we have two that are out of school, we have two that are babies, and then we just have our two middle ones that are doing school. And both of them are in high school, so right now at this time in our life things are, well, they're hectic in some ways, just with child training and just having so many kids. With homeschooling things are pretty easy going for our family right now because both of our kids are in high school and one of them is graduating this December as a matter of fact.

So, you know, they kind of school themselves. They do a lot of different kind of learning. We have trained them from infancy to love books, to love learning, so we've kind of surrounded them with a lot of resources.

We've been blessed because in having the magazine a lot of companies will end us a lot of samples and trials and free products and things they want us to review and so my kids have always been kind of surrounded by a mountain of stuff. You know, it involves some stuff, and so they've kind of learned on their own to get in there and dig around and follow their own interests, so that really is the model that we follow afterwards.

With homeschooling we're not overly structured. If anything we would probably be under structured. We give them a lot of time to really pursue their own interests and then we support them. We come alongside them and support them in those interests. For example, our oldest child is really into computers and technology. Our second oldest one is really into literature and books and so we just kind of gave them those venues, those abilities to go out and decide who they are.

Really they can't have that without the time afforded to them to do so, so had we been sitting, this is just our philosophy, had we been the kind of family that kind of sat all day and did 10 hours' worth of real strict curriculum, a real strong routine, they wouldn't have had quite as much time to sit down on their own and run around and figure out kind of who they are and pursue those interests because we would be having fed them to them so heavily.

So we kind of chose not to do that. We chose to give them a little bit more time. And it's been neat just to see those personalities emerge and those expert, you know, they're all kind of experts in their own ways with these various things that they offer students, so that's kind of us. We're real loose, we work kind of the light, directed, (inaudible 00:05:08) kind of easy going homeschoolers is the Suarez family.

**Gentry:** You did say, I know ya'll travel a lot. What's the difference between a day at home where you're saying you're under, you know, you're supporting their interests and you're not as structured, is that how you still do it on the road, or how do you homeschool your kids while being on the road?

**Gena:** You know, they probably do more when they're on the road. We, because we're in the car, I really like for them to use that time to keep their minds occupied. I don't want them playing a bunch of video games or just sitting there staring off aimlessly into space.

Although it's nice to look out the window and of course we don't micromanage all of their time, but they bring their books with them. You know, they take their stuff with them and we have an iPad and we have the iPhones and we've got the laptops and of course all their books and things like that, and so they're able to get in there and just kind of jump into whatever they're doing at the moment.

Each one of the kids that I'm schooling right now that are in school they've got various books. They're in the middle of several things and so they may take a book bag each of them with them on a trip. And we're going to be with the American Family Association in a couple of weeks.

As a good example, we'll be off visiting them for a couple of days and so the older kids are coming with us and they already know they're going to bring their stuff with them and they'll be in the hotel for a little bit by themselves and they'll have to do their homework and keep themselves occupied with the things that we bring for them. But it's nice because they're completing their work and their credits are piling up and they're obviously working toward a goal, especially my older one because he is graduating in December so he's on a bit of a track, a faster track himself. Yeah, it's nice.

**Gentry:** Good. Well, I know that you have, I mean you have six kids, you have a larger family, so what is some advice that you would give moms who do have larger families and homeschooling them like more kids than one?

**Gena:** You know my first word of advice really would be to relax and not to worry about all the structure. And you know I don't want to step on toes because I know that there are a lot of families out there who are highly structured and heavily into routines and you know, I know I could learn some from them.

And, you know, I'm real honest and transparent with people. If you drop by my house at any given moment including at this moment you'll see that it's kind of messy. I mean we don't have the perfect home that's cleaned up all the time and generally there is a lot of dishes on my counters and maybe some yucky food in the fridge that needs to be thrown out.

Just, you know, we're not -- I think a lot of people feel that they have to have it all together and that if they do, especially if they have a lot of children, that they need to be doing better or they need to be doing more. And I don't know, I've been doing this for a while, and I really feel that as long as you're doing the important things, you're getting the crucial learning in place and working with the kids, their hearts, and maintaining the relationship, everything else is going to kind of fall into place.

And really the last thing on the list is the house and the maybe the perfect routines and structures. I think that as long as we're getting our kids hearts, we're spending time with them, they're doing their basic work, you know, they may not get to every subject every day, it doesn't matter. What public school does either? I remember being in public school and at the end of the year I remember noticing fitness, you know there's five chapters left in this textbook and two chapters left in this textbook. You know, and we never finished anything either.

And I'll tell you what, the kids coming out of the homeschool system are just scoring far better on the ACTs and SATs anyway. So they're, you know, I just would say, this is a long answer I guess, I'll shorten it up here, is that just don't try to model yourself after the public school system or all of the routines that come with that because, you know, it doesn't take as long. You've got much more time with your children.

The most important thing is to spend that quality time with them now and the house will always be here and the cleaning and the perfect meals, that sort of thing can all come later.

**Gentry:** Well, that's some great advice. One thing, I know that you have the magazine and so you have to juggle homeschool and working with the magazine. How do you juggle all that and keep it all in balance?

**Gena:** You know, without my husband I could not and there would be no point and I probably would have either quit a long time ago once I realized how major publishing is and what a large commitment it is. But fortunately within about the first two years of TOS Magazine coming out Paul was able to come home and so it was a wonderful thing for our children for the past I don't know, seven or eight years he's been home with the magazine, with our children helping to homeschool them and being a team with me.

He does a lot of work for the magazine. He manages the layout and that sort of thing. We've got layout artists, but he has to approve everything and he works with the art and he goes out on the road and deals with conventions and so really it's kind of a family team effort, but again if he wasn't here full-time there is simply no way.

In fact, Susanna who's three is my earliest reader out of all six of my children. She started reading and it's because Paul, you know, we both work with her, but he is the one who taught her to read her first sentence, a nice big long sentence as a matter of fact. About a month ago she started reading, so that's my husband. It's because he's here that we're able to make this thing work. And it's been really fun. I'm excited. I feel like we've got -- we don't have a very good routine and we don't have the best structures in the world, but the kids are doing fine and they're with mom and dad. We're here and the magazine is still going.

**Gentry:** One thing I know a lot of moms, kind of new moms always want to know, if you could start over again, start from the beginning, what would you do differently in how you homeschool your kids or even how you've run the magazine business?

**Gena:** Oh, goodness. They say that hindsight is 20/20. You know, there's so many things I'm sure we would change. Maybe, goodness I could probably think of a million different things. I guess it would depend on the category that we're talking about, whether it's parenting or whether it's scholastics, or whether it's business.

I mean there's so many things to cover with that, so I think just the short answer would be I think that we would spend more time in the morning preparing and reading God's word and praying and just gathering together as a family first so that we're all on the same page from the very beginning of the day. And I think that that's something that we can do anytime. We can start that now. We can start that -- it's really this is the kind of thing that we do in the evenings. My husband will do a Bible study with the kids and he's very good with that. He's better than I am with that sort of thing, but I think that if we were to start over I think we would do it in the morning. Do it to start the day off, we put the Lord first is the better way to go for us anyway.

As far as the magazine and running the business itself. I don't know. You know, it kind of exploded over night. It got real big. It's 10 years old. I don't know. I wouldn't change the staff. We've got a wonderful team that got us back together. I don't know. Maybe we would have got a bookkeeper sooner or budgeted better, that sort of thing. But we have a wonderful bookkeeper now, so we're doing good.

**Gentry:** On a day-to-day basis how much time do you kind of split between devoting it to the magazine and being able to be with your family because I know a lot of people that own their home businesses it is hard. It takes more hours and

sometimes the parents have to stay up later at night to be able to spend time with the kids during the day. How do you kind of -- I know we talked about balancing it, but what kind of time do you have to devote to each one?

**Gena:** You know, every day is different and because each child is different we kind of customize not only their education, but the time we spend with them and you might have, out of six kids you might have one kid who's so needy, who's needing your attention more than the others maybe.

You know, my 21 year old is off in California right now visiting family and friends and he's on his motorcycle touring the country and doing the big boy thing. He doesn't really need us right now too much. You know, we talk and we text, but my babies are the ones that we affectionately refer to them as the clingers, the little ones. And they are.

I mean they want to sit right by me and the neat thing is is that while I'm doing my work they're right on top of me. They sit on either side of me and they're watching -- we have Netflix so that we can pull in Dora the Explorer and some educational documentaries and things like that for them and they sit there and watch their shows or they fix my hair or they do my give me a tag here, you know, three year old stuff, that sort of thing and we play while I work.

So it's neat because I'm not off in an office somewhere. I haven't left them alone day after day after day or that sort of thing. We're together as a family and so I think because we do incorporate some into the business, for example, my 17 year old, he's going to graduate in December, we pay him to do photography for the magazine. We also pay him to stand behind the booth when we're off at conventions. And he goes and he talks with writers and even advertisers and so it's nice because we're incorporating them into the business and paying them and spending that time with them.

But yeah, I guess it's just different. You know, it's different every day. There's not, I wouldn't be able to give you a percentage of well, 44 percent of the time, but especially since it would change from day-to-day and if we're traveling then I'm with them a hundred percent of the time and we're looking for the nearest exit so Paul and I can go off and be alone or something, but because we are together a lot. We are together, the whole entire family a great deal.

And I'm thankful. I would say it's a lot more time that we would spend with them than probably an average family in America would with everybody kind of going off in their own direction, which is typical.

**Gentry:** If our listeners did want to contact you how could they do that and be able to see more about the resources that you offer?

**Gena:** Well, they can come to our website. We're simply Theoldhomeschoolmagazine.com and we have a free sample up right now of our current issue. They can just click on this little flipping graphic. It's right there on the front page. Just flip through and that would give them a sample of the entire magazine right there.

And of course, we've got lots of resources. We have a lot of free resources. If you know people who are really considering homeschooling or they're struggling or maybe financially they're not really able, we are very happy to just give you whatever you want for free. I mean if we have it we'll give it to you. If somebody wants a subscription to the magazine and they can't afford it just give us an email or a call. We won't bother you or ask you how much you make or anything like that. We're very happy.

We have a lot of e-books that address, you know, why we should bring our kids home and bring them home instead of put them in the public school system and there's some serious issues there. There's some real problems in the public school system for the Christian child. And so we have a lot of e-books and other resources that we will make available completely free just for the asking. So we have a heart to see the homeschool community grow and to see Christian parents bring their kids home where they belong.

**Gentry:** You mentioned helping parents bring their kids home. Can you talk just a little bit about that and just give our listeners because not everyone does homeschool, that are some of our listeners do still have their kids in public school, so can you just talk a little bit about what you would say in your book also?

**Gena:** Yeah. Well, we have several e-books and the e-books probably can say it a lot better than I can say it, but there's a specific, there's definitely, you know, there's most children who are Christians and are (inaudible 00:16:53) did a study about this and we can certainly back this up and give you the exact stats when you go a hold of us, but most children who come out of a Christian home if they go to public school and they stay in the system all the way through they don't have a real good chance of keeping up with their faith. In fact, (00:17:09) says is that most of them abandon their faith. They go on to other things.

And so we as parents were called to train our children up and away they should go, or we are supposed to. We are mandated by God to get to their hearts and to share the Lord with them and to actually model Him and teach them His ways and teach them God's word. If we have them off in the public school all day long, day after day, with their being exposed to all the agendas.

And you may have heard just recently in California there's a new law which states that it's mandatory. The gay agenda in the education, it's going to be in the textbooks and in the actual classrooms and you cannot opt out of that. So if you're in California be a good parent because your kids are going to be getting an

earful of some things that perhaps you as a Christian parent don't want them to hear. And they say that as California goes so does the rest of the nation and so I would just say that we're very cautious.

We would rather see parents homeschool their children or even put them into a Christian school than to have them in the public school system where good chances are the system will get to their heart faster and well, more quickly than you can because as a parent obviously if you're with them all day you can influence them, you can spend time with them and you can share with them.

But if they're gone all day who is training that child? Who is getting to their heart and speaking into their lives if not you? You just want to make sure that that person or that system is a Godly one and certainly not one that is antagonistic to the gospel and to the faith that we share.

So it's just important to at least think about that and which is why we do make these resources available absolutely free. We're very much happy to just give those out because we feel so strongly about it.

**Gentry:** Well, Gena, thank you so much for spending part of your day with us. I know I've been encouraged and I'm sure our listeners have walked away with some awesome ideas for their own family and for their own homeschooling. And remember for our listeners that you can get a lot of free resources at Gena's website, [Thehomeschoolmagazine.com](http://Thehomeschoolmagazine.com). So make sure to go check this out. Thank you again, Gena, for spending some of your time with us.

**Gena:** Oh, and my pleasure. I appreciate you having me.

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