



Oak Haven Happenings

December 2014

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Merry Christmas to all of our friends & family!

Jim & I have entered a new season of our marriage. We officially became “empty nesters” when our youngest daughter, Michelle, married her best friend, Corey, on March 21, 2014. We are thrilled for them and so pleased that all of our kids are happy and doing well. It has been my greatest joy to raise and homeschool our four kids these past twenty-nine years. To be honest, I was dreading the “empty nest” stage. But to my surprise, this new stage has been wonderful too! What I like about the “empty nest” stage: grandkids, great friendships with our adult children, less cooking, cleaning & laundry, spontaneous dates and fun with Jim, having dinner at our kids’ houses, going on field-trips with Kristin and her kids, game nights & movie nights, Sunday brunch with family, and lots of travel.

Kristin is doing a phenomenal job raising and homeschooling her four kids, Laken (3), Matthew (6), Landon (7) and Gabriella (almost 9). She also had two foster children placed with her last December 31 (on Gabby’s birthday). John was three months old and





his half-sister, Hailey, was five. John had difficulty eating due to a cleft lip and palate and was diagnosed with “failure to thrive”. Kristin spent four to five hours each day feeding him for the first few months. He had surgery in July to correct his lip and palate and it has made a huge difference. Hailey also took a huge leap forward with Kristin “homeschooling” her in the evenings after she spent the day in public school. She went from not knowing her letters to reading in just four months. Hailey reunified with her dad after the school year ended. Then in late September Kristin received a call about John’s younger sister who had just been born two months premature at 2 lbs 14 oz. Kristin visited her every day in the hospital for two weeks until she got up to 4 3/4 pounds and could come home. She had to go through withdrawal from drug addiction, but she is now a very contented baby. Kristin has named her Hosanna, which means “Praise God”. They have a big and happy household, which also includes Kristin’s cousin Hope.

Jennifer and her husband Bryan are doing great. Last March they had the opportunity to go to Alaska and see the Iditarod race. In October, Jennifer found out that she was one of 8 winners out of 700 nominees for “Women Making a Difference” in the Pandora Hearts of

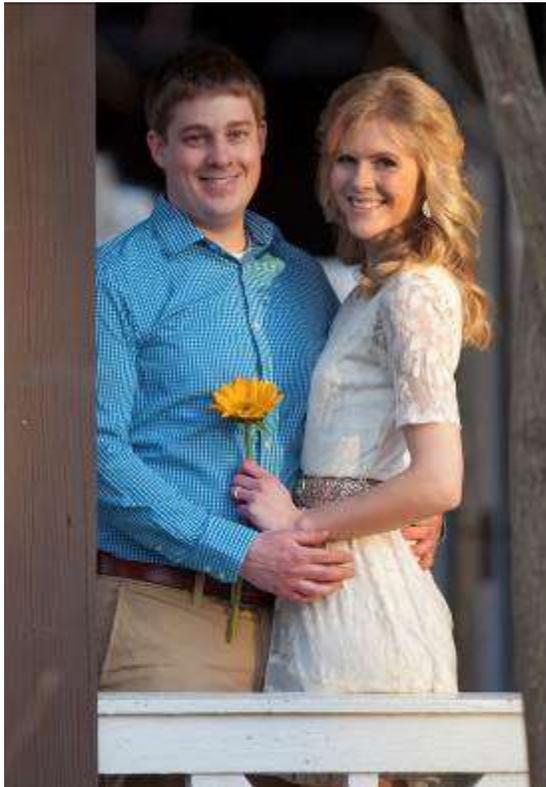


Today contest. Pandora awarded the organization that Jennifer works for, Four Paws for Ability, \$25,000. Jennifer and Bryan got to go out to Los Angeles for the awards ceremony, a photo shoot, etc. Then they went on to Kauai for a trip to Hawaii that had been already planned. Very exciting! Bryan has been busy fixing up their house and is doing an awesome job. He finished their sunroom and moved on to their bathroom, adding all of the details that Jennifer wanted. She is thrilled.



Brian and Liz are taking a big step soon. Liz has signed up with several travel nursing agencies and will decide soon where she wants to be placed for a series of three-month nursing positions in various places around the country. They are seeing this as an opportunity to spend an ex-

tended time in beautiful parts of our country. Their newest hobby is rock-climbing and they try to get down to Red River Gorge as much as they can. They have lots of fun together.



Michelle and Corey were married outdoors at the Cincinnati Nature Center on a beautiful Spring day. They had a wedding trip to Madison, IN and then went on their honeymoon to Charleston, SC a couple of months later after Corey graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in Engineering. They have been busy fixing up their house, a cute little ranch in Loveland, OH, with a big fenced in backyard for their two dogs. They are on a quiet street near a park. Just perfect for them.

Jim & I have kept busy this past year with our rental properties and a flip that we (& Brian) finally finished this fall in the Eastgate area. (If anyone knows of someone interested in a nice 4 bedroom home on a quiet street near the elementary school and park let us know.) Between the various house projects and our photography jobs we did manage to get our work done and still go on 11 weeks of vacation this year. Both the upside and the downside of being self-employed: unlimited vacation, but no paid days off.

Travel:

January: Winter trip with the whole family to Brown County State Park (the lodge has a great indoor water park that the grandkids loved).

February-March: A week on Hutchinson Island where we enjoyed time on an incredible pristine beach that is only accessible by boat (kayak, in our case). Then Brian & Liz and nephews Micah & Ethan joined us for a week on Captiva Island.

April: A week in a Gatlinburg cabin with all of our kids & grandkids. I really enjoyed seeing the Spring wildflowers in the Smokies.

May: Watching history come alive in Williamsburg, VA with Kristin & the kids. The most memorable part for them was helping make bricks by stomping in mud! Then on to the Outerbanks at Duck, NC where we stayed in a condo with my parents and thoroughly enjoyed the beach.

June: Camping at Hueston Woods so Brian & Jim could be at the race site for an early morning Triathlon.





July: A trip for the two of us to Holland, MI for a quick get-away. We enjoyed the quaint town, bike riding, the B & B, Lake Michigan shore, and picking blueberries.

August: Camping at Red River Gorge with family from both sides (rock climbing, playing in the waterfall, and jumping off the cliff were highlights).

October: Jim & I spent several nights in Charleston, SC before joining my parents and Melanie & Steve down in Florida. We went out with a realtor to look at potential investment properties. (We are starting to think of how we can spend the winters somewhere warm.)

November: Three weeks in Hawaii, one week each on the Big Island, Kauai, & Maui (absolutely wonderful sharing it with Jim).

Outreaches:

This year saw the end of my parents' (and our) involvement in the food pantry that they have been running near their home in Indiana for over sixteen years. In an effort to separate church and state, the newly elected county commissioners chose to sell the building that had been built two years ago for the food pantry. My parents touched many lives, both the clients who have received much needed help and the workers who were given an opportunity to reach out to

those in need. I am very proud of my parents for their leadership, hard work, integrity and service to others. What a legacy!

Life is good! We have so much to be thankful for. The most important thing though, is that God sent His Son into this world as a baby to become our Lord & Savior. Believe.

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

May He give you peace & joy this holiday season and throughout the New Year!

With love,

Jim & Julie

