



# Oak Haven Happenings

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## Greetings to our friends & family!

We wish you much peace & joy in this holiday season and the upcoming year.

Our family has grown from six to ten people. We count Liz, Brian's lovely fiancé, and three children that Kristin & Jennifer are fostering : Gabby (4), Landon (3), and Matthew (2). They come down and visit us "at the cabin" (as they call it) every weekend. It is wonderful! (Sorry for the "censoring" of

some of these images. It's required by the foster care agency.)

This year has been one of our most productive and incredibly rewarding, though often overwhelming, years for us. We set out our goals at the New Year and posted them (following Michelle's example) and referred to them daily. While we didn't meet all of our goals (i.e. read through the whole Bible and exercise 20 min. every day), we were more mindful of our intentions.

## Oak Haven Investments, LLC

Our biggest goal was to start a real estate rental business and purchase 5 houses. We close on our 5<sup>th</sup> house this week! Our four kids are partners in our family business: Oak Haven Investments, LLC. We are all learning a lot about: buying houses & fixing up houses, marketing, dealing with people including tenants and even a few homeless people. It has taken a huge amount of work and time, but we are so glad that



Before



After

we are doing it. All of our houses are up in Xenia (70 min. away) where Kristin & Jennifer live. The houses are inexpensive, the rental market is strong, and as a bonus, we get to see Kristin & Jennifer on our weekly visits to work on the houses.

## The Kids (?)

**Kristin (25) & Jennifer (24)** have had the biggest adjustments this year. In the spring they fostered an 8 month old baby, DaQuon, and his 2 ½ year old sister, DeNasia for a couple of months. Then in September they had Gabby,



Landon & Matthew placed with them. The kids are a lot of work, but so enthusiastic and loving. Kristin leaves the house with them at 7:15 each

her job. (She would do it for free.) She is also fostering an 8 week old golden retriever named Slugger. She is pleased that her Dad put up a



morning, dropping off the boys at a daycare in Xenia. Then she drives to Dayton where she teaches Science at Imagine Schools (K-4<sup>th</sup>) and Gabby goes to preschool. Kristin loves having the children and she loves teaching science. Many of her students tell her that science is their favorite subject. In her “spare time” she had an incredible garden again this past summer and doubled its size.

privacy fence in her yard to stop the neighbor dogs and her dog, Connor, from racing up and down the back yard.

Jennifer continues to train dogs (& people) for 4 Paws for Ability in Xenia and loves





**Brian (21)** is a photographer and partner in our Oak Haven Photography business. He is helping us grow the business and learning all the aspects of running the business. Brian has also been busy with his fiancé, Liz, planning a wedding and getting their house ready. Their upcoming wedding is April 30<sup>th</sup>!

Brian & Michelle both became realtors this past year and are pleased to be working with Sibcy Cline. They are enjoying this field and have



become very knowledgeable. (Michelle has helped us buy two houses.) Feel free to contact them if you have a need for a Realtor ☺.

**Michelle (20)** adopted a big German Shepherd this year named Dash. She had fostered him as a puppy for 4 Paws, but due to shyness he was dropped from the program. He is a sweetie and wishes he could be a lap dog. Michelle continues to do a lot of art and enjoys the freedom that her first car (a VW Passat)



gives her.

**Jim & I** turned 50 this past year and one of our goals was to do something “amazing” to celebrate. We flew to Texas in November and drove a big loop: Corpus Christi, Brownsville, San Antonio, & Austin. The beaches on Padre Island were wonderful. We were immersed in bird watching everywhere we went. The kids laugh that we even visited a landfill to birdwatch. Our favorite place was Refuge Atascosa



where we saw a long list of life-birds including our first Roadrunner, and also a Bobcat up close.

## Outreach

We continue to help with the Food Pantry my parents run in Indiana and visit the Owensville Commons (senior citizens’ apartments) at least once a month. Jim’s passion for preserving history has made him very active in the Owensville Historical Society where he has accepted the position as President. He is hoping to record many interviews of our local history. This Fall we helped start a Young Adult Group that provides Bible Study & fellowship. The group enjoys outdoor activities and is interested in reaching out to the community. In November they helped with the Food Pantry and spent the day at



my parents "farm". It was a beautiful 60 degree day and about seven of them (including Jim) decided that swimming in the 42 degree lake would be fun. It was memorable!

## Travel

As always, we manage to make time for trips. We started off the New Year (literally) on New Year's weekend at Red River Gorge, KY with the whole Gordon clan. We had fresh snow and the hiking was spectacular along the gorges, although a bit treacherous with slippery slopes and frigid cold. It was wonderful coming back to the warmth of the cabin and playing games and learning the waltz & polka.

In February, we went south to sunny Florida. Jim & I went on down to the Keys and snorkeled at the reef at John Pennekamp S.P. It was neat to see all of the colorful fish, but being surrounded by dozens of three-foot long barracudas was very intimidating. Michelle & Brian joined us at Captiva and we had a great week with Grandparents and Aunt Melanie & Uncle Steve.

Since Kristin & Jennifer couldn't get away from work, and go to Florida, they planned a trip to Washington D.C. when the cherry trees would be in bloom. We joined them for a whirlwind weekend in early April. We got a tour of the White House & the Capitol, as well as see-



ing Arlington Cemetery, the Holocaust Museum, and the zoo. (All things that we didn't get to see the last time we were there.)

Summer was spent working on rental properties and our house. We did a quick camping trip to Pike Lake S.P. and a "girls trip" to Madison, IN. Then over Labor Day we went up to Chicago for our niece's wedding on a farm, a beautiful setting.

In the Fall we were back to Red River Gorge, this time camping with 3 other families and our new foster kids. We had a great time hiking, eating and sitting by the campfire. Our two little guys did not like sleeping in the camper, though, and woke up repeatedly through the night crying. It was memorable!

## In Conclusion ...

Ah, life is wonderful and we are so very thankful for all of God's blessings!

We wish you a Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!

The Varicks

P.S. No, our addition is still not finished. We have painted the walls and Brian & I just laid the slate floor in the sunroom (which looks wonderful). We still need to put in wood floors and finish the mudroom and the half bath. Hopefully it will be done by summer. ☺

