



# Oak Haven Happenings

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## Greetings to our Friends & Family!

Jim & I look forward to sharing with you the highlights of our year, but more importantly how we have been impacted by them.

### Jennifer

The biggest highlight has been Jennifer (22) buying her own house. A very exciting time, but also a little sad when she and Kristin moved away from home and out of our daily lives. Fortunately, we get to see them when we are up in Xenia (65 minutes away) helping them fix up their house, or when they come home for a visit. Jennifer's house is exactly what she was looking for: an older home with character, near a bike trail (right behind her house), extremely affordable (HUD as is), and



*Jennifer & Connor outside Jennifer's new house*



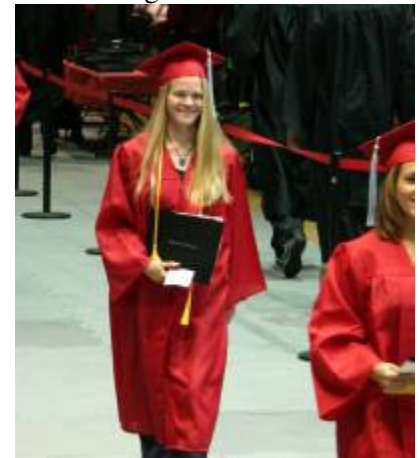
*Brian, Julie, Brutus, Jim, Kristin, Michelle, Denali, Nikita, Connor, & Jennifer (Clockwise from top left)*

fairly private (at the end of a dead-end road with a big field on one side lined with trees). Jennifer is now only 3 minutes from work (yeah!) where she is a trainer for 4 Paws for Ability.

### Kristin

Kristin (23) looked all summer for a teaching job and finally found one in Dayton when she broadened her search the middle of August. She had a whirlwind two weeks going to training up in Columbus, setting up her classroom, and moving from home. She moved into the house in Xenia a week after the closing during the bathroom remodel

when the house didn't have running water or a toilet for several days. (But a 35 min. commute was much better than a 90 min. one.) She is now a 2nd grade teacher for



*Kristin honored as marshal leading the Education Department at UC's graduation*

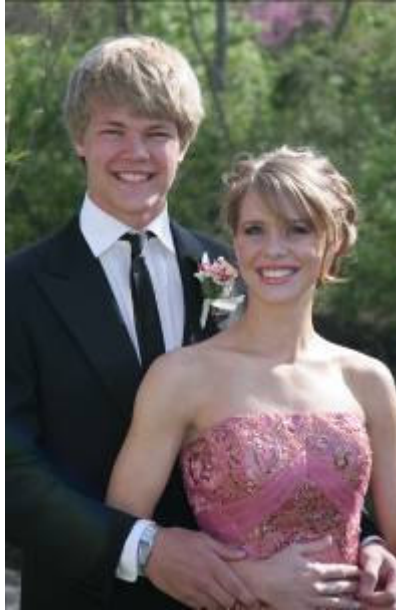
an inner city charter school called Imagine School. It is a new school and she is fortunate to have a wonderful classroom with 3 big picture windows, a computer station for the kids, a computer for her, a clean-up area for art, and their own bathroom. She only has 18 students, but quite a few of them come with a history of problems. She is learning about inner city culture from these 7 year-olds. Every day is challenging, but also rewarding. Kristin is doing a fantastic job with them. She always wanted to work with children in the mission field. We're glad she's serving in Ohio and not in Africa!



*Kristin moving the turkeys during her farm internship with Michelle in Kentucky.*

## Brian

We don't see a lot of Brian (19) because he is so busy with school, work, friends



*Brian & Elizabeth on prom night*

and his very sweet girlfriend, Elizabeth Little. He is in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year in Multimedia Technology and especially enjoys his digital photography class. He helped us with a couple of weddings this past year and a private school, setting up and taking all of the class pictures. We are now considering him our apprentice and starting him on an individualized plan to learn all the aspects of the business (home-schoolers at heart). We are looking forward to transferring the Oak Haven Photography business over to him one day.

## Michelle

Michelle's biggest highlight and challenge this year was a farm internship that she and Kristin went

on this summer for two weeks in July down in Kentucky. They learned a lot, but at times it was almost like a concentration camp: working long hours, out in the hot sun, 100 degree temperatures, and doing hard physical labor. They were told to bring an alarm clock so they could be up at 5 a.m., but not told that it needed to be battery operated since there was no electricity in their cabin. (Not that they would stay up late since they were so exhausted by the time it was dark.) Their "shower" was a 55 gallon drum of water with a dipper! On



*Michelle with her new kitten, Cayenne*

the positive side, it was an incredible learning experience on organic farming, crop rotation, animal husbandry (Joel Salatin method), and living simply on the land. Michelle is turning 18 tomorrow (Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>), hard



to believe that our youngest is that old. She is doing well in her 2<sup>nd</sup> year of college studying Marketing Management Technology and looking at options for a 4-year degree.

## Trips

Another big highlight in our family was my parents, Lew & Mary Gordon, celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. My Mom has always wanted to visit Alaska and somehow it evolved into us going with them as well. Jennifer knew a family in



*Julie's parent in front of Mt. McKinley (Denali)*

Anchorage that had a 4 Paws dog who offered to help us plan our trip. She then offered their cabin on the lake, their suburban, and even her Mom's home. What incredible hospitality! We also stayed in Mountain Morning Hostel outside of Denali National Park and saw



*Mary & Lew Gordon, Michelle, Kristin, Julie, Jim, Jennifer, & Brian in Talkeetna, Alaska*

black & grizzly bears. Mt. McKinley was HUGE and the whole area was breathtakingly beautiful. We also got to see a sled dog demonstration. What a fast ride that is! Another neat place that we stayed was down in Homer on a renovated boat that had been docked up on a high cliff with a panoramic view of water and mountains. It was so exciting when we spotted humpback whales. Our finale day was our last day with a train trip down to Seward (a must do) and a 4 hour boat trip to see glaciers "calving", sea lions basking on a rocky island shore, puffins and

orca whales coming close to inspect us! We live in an amazingly beautiful country. God must have had fun creating our world.

The other related anniversary celebration was spending a 4-day weekend in Gatlinburg with the whole Gordon





*Jim & Julie, Jennifer, Faith, Hope, Micah, Brian, Michelle, Kristin, Ethan, Lew & Mary Gordon, Jeff & Wendy Gordon, Melanie & Steve Simms*

clan over Labor Day. What a memorable time that was with a candlelit dinner, a special cake by Michelle, and a presentation of an album commemorating my parents for the wonderful heritage that they have given to us all. Each member of the family designed a page with photos and writing and then Jennifer pulled it all together with additional memories. It is so nice to take the opportunity to tell those that you love how much they mean to you. We treasured our time together: hiking, eating, relaxing by the pool, and walking around Gatlinburg.



Thank you Mom & Dad for giving us a wonderful legacy!

## Home Improvement

I almost forgot to mention our ongoing addition project. The outside is done and it looks wonderful. Every time I pull into the driveway I say, "Wow!" The inside is still stud walls, but that should be transformed this winter. (Jennifer's house



took priority for awhile to make it livable.)

## In Conclusion

I thought that this stage of our lives might be a little boring, but instead it has been very exciting and fulfilling. We have been incredibly blessed this past year, and we hope that you have been as well. We look forward to hearing from you!

May God bless you richly!  
With love,

The Varicks

*Julie, Jim, Kristin, Jennifer,  
Brian, and Michelle*