

MERRY CHRISTMAS

2011

As our family reaches the end of another year, we promise that we will not mention anything "Disney" in this year's Christmas letter. We won't say that it has been two agonizingly-long years since we last left Disney World. We won't say how we can't wait to go back as soon as the budget allows it. And we won't mention at all that the kids still talk about their favorite rides, and that we watch online videos of other people riding them. No, nothing this year about Disney, promise.

Andrew has had a very busy year. As soon as the snow melted in February, Drew was determined to learn to ride his bike, which he did (with the help of Daddy), in fewer than 90 minutes. He continues to lose teeth and has the perfect toothless smile. He started first grade in the fall, on top of soccer and cub scouts. He loves that Daddy coached his team and is den leader for his Tiger Cub den. He is doing very well in school, learning things that Mommy and Daddy learned several grades after first. He is in that transition from little boy to big boy. He still loves puppies, but also pirates. He still likes to be tickled, but is losing his patience for our humor. He is one of the last kids to still have Mom or Dad stand with him as we wait for the school bell to ring in the morning, which is just fine with Mom and Dad. He enjoys special dates with Mommy and adventures (camping, pizza, chess) with Daddy. The ever-present WaWa has all but been replaced by Jack (the puppy), although WaWa is still in his prayers every night. We won't stop our boy from growing up (tried, didn't work), but we will hold on to these times as long as we can, because there will be a time when he no longer wants to wear matching shirts, but he will always go on those dates with Mommy (whether he likes it or not). For now, we walk a line between cuddling and giving him his first knife. We love our boy.

Alexia has grown into a very fine and opinionated young girl. She loves to sing and dance as long as nobody is watching her, and has no qualms about politely asking you to go away so she can continue. She still has that perfect, twinkly voice, which is perfect for making all those cute little kitty sounds. Lexi finished her soccer career in the fall, and is looking forward to trying new things next year, like painting or dance. She loved gymnastics this past summer, so we are excited to see if there are other activities she enjoys as well. She absolutely loves going to preschool twice a week, proudly wearing her backpack which is two sizes too big. Lexi is trying to grow out of her shyness, even agreeing to sit on Santa's lap on the way to the mall, only to refuse when the time came. There were thoughts of using force in order to capture yet another Screaming-with-Santa picture, but we don't want to cause any more permanent damage than necessary. What an amazing little girl.

Brielle and Lexi are twins, but the only common trait they share is their birthday. Brie is our little, spunky, fun-loving, rule-breaking, damage-inflicting girl. There is rarely anything that Brie will not try at least once, generally with reckless abandon. Brie excelled at gymnastics over the summer (lack of fear helps here), and she also finished her soccer career this year and is looking forward to trying new things. Brie loves Girl Scouts, preschool, and whatever her sister is doing currently. All the kids were introduced to Smurfs this year, but it is Brie who got hooked. She plays with all the little Smurf figures every single day, and leaves them spread out on the floor, every single day. But, at the end of the day, after all of the toys have been broken and all the rules have been broken, our Brie is the most cuddly, soft little girl there ever was, with a gigantic smile to match. Brie brings excitement and energy to our family that we simply could not do without. What a perfect little girl.

Tracy is still living so full of a life that it could fill its own annual Christmas letter. She never toots her own horn, but fortunately for all our readers, Jamie is very good at tooting. (Really?!? Yes.) Tracy continues to hold down a full time "job" co-leading her MOPS group, while at the same time crafting fantastic, unique, one-of-a-kind cakes, volunteering at Drew's school, keeping the kids in an alive state, providing clean clothes and towels for the entire family, and making sure that lunch boxes not only make it to the classroom, but are also filled with actual food to consume. If this were not enough, there's Cake Club, Twins Club, and Twilight Club (de facto). Obviously, Tracy can't say "no" to joining a club, so Jamie is starting the Watch Football Club. Tracy never seems to stop doing something, and it's because she works very hard for her family. Her family surely doesn't know how good they have it.



Jamie is still enjoying his work-from-home job with IBM and [Insert Charlie Brown "teacher" voice here.]. You know, we have all had that conversation with an "older" person who says that "it seems like it was yesterday" that such-and-such happened. Too-eerily-similar statements have been known to be uttered by Jamie this year. Jamie has narrowed down the reason for this to two possibilities: 1) He has now joined the ranks of the "older" or 2) You hit a point where nothing ever changes, so it really was just "yesterday." While he refuses to even consider Option #1, he is more than happy to welcome Option #2. Weird, right? Here's the thing: If monotony means stumbling across the hallway to work every morning, riding your bike to and from school every day with your boy, listening to your girls play (and squabble) downstairs while drafting technical documents, and generally "being there" for so many things that could so easily be missed, then monotony is just about everything that he has ever prayed for. In short, it's been another wonderfully-monotonous year for Jamie. Check back next December for another copy/paste of Jamie's paragraph.

Toby is still plugging along, but is surely becoming an "old dog." He is far from decrepit, though. He still likes to play, he still likes to bark at both real and imaginary intruders at the front door, and whichever side of the back door he is currently on is the wrong side. He spends warm and cold days alike in the sun on our deck in the back yard. He blames his aging on a distinct lack of meaty bones in the past year.

As a family, we stay very busy, but we try very hard to play as much as we can. Sometimes this means taking a family camping trip, which is a lot of work, but something that nobody will forget. They surely won't remember *that* camping trip, but will look back and remember the times we went camping. Other times it is dressing up in full gear to go walking and splashing in the rain. Take note: Winter snow boots do not double well as rain boots. We also spend several of our evenings at Casa Bonita, which seems a bit cheesy to Mom and Dad (pun very much intended) but is the most exciting restaurant for them. We packed more into a one-night mini vacation to Colorado Springs than others do in a week, and we make a weekend trip to Nebraska to see family into an adventure that is genuinely fun for everyone. We try our best to remember that this is our kids' childhood and to focus on the little things that may just become the big things later on.

Our Christmas letters are always full of cheer and happiness and glad tidings (whatever that means), because we choose to remember the good things instead of the bumps and bruises, stitches, blood work, diarrhea, and cryogenically-frozen (well, just frozen) pet frog in the freezer. We leave out those times we yelled at the kids just a bit too much, or when we celebrated the time change because it allows us to claim it's bedtime a bit earlier than it should be, and all those times we threatened to throw away the toys left on the floor (again), with no intention of actually throwing them away (and the times we DID throw them away). Jamie always says there's a reason Jesus never had kids on this earth, because it's impossible to parent perfectly. Every day we are thankful that we have those toys to step on and yell about and that we have our wonderful kids that leave them strewn about to yell at. Just imagine all the stuff that never makes it into our Christmas letters, lest we lose all our friends, become excommunicated from family, and save loads of postage every December. Hmmm.

We hope the past year has been as memorable for you as it has been for us, and we are thankful you were there to share it. We love you all and wish you the very best for this Christmas and the coming new year!

Love,

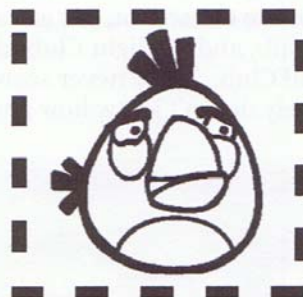
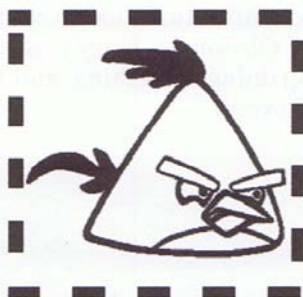
The Deba Family

Jamie, Tracy, Andrew, Alexia, Brielle and Toby too!

P.S.: Disney.

www.TheDebas.com
(2011 Christmas Video and Family Blog)

Fun Family Christmas Game: Color angry birds, cut out, tape to a small rock, throw at opponent. Enjoy!





MERRY CHRISTMAS
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

Love~
Jamie, Tracy, Drew,
Lexi & Brie Deba