

Happy Holidays!

2017 Wood Family Newsletter



2017 was an exhilarating, challenging, and unforgettable year for **Vienna** and her husband **Michael**. With help from their families, they launched this year by purchasing a house! Together they moved into their dream home in Tracy, California, complete with a yard for the kitties, fruit trees, and lots of space for friends and family. In their new community they began putting down roots as Vienna kept her job but met new colleagues and families in the area with whom she could continue her work as an ABA therapist. She earned a promotion to the level of Senior Behavior Technician and continued her meaningful and exciting work with kids on the autism spectrum.

Meanwhile, Michael took the next big leap of the year and began taking steps for pursuing his long-term goal of opening a game shop with his best friend Tom. Together, the two of them put in countless hours into making this dream a reality, until finally, in late October, Dragon's Den Games opened its doors and the two young shop-owners quickly began making their mark in the community, drawing in crowds and gaining the patronage of many loyal customers.



Vienna and Michael had some other adventures as well this year; together with Michael's family they visited Mexico, where they could swim in the clear blue waters, spot amazing local creatures, and practice their high school Spanish skills. Vienna also was privileged enough to see her new favorite musical, *Hamilton*, in San Francisco with Jenny, which was an unforgettable experience. Vienna and Michael also adopted their second cat, Pluto, who had been living with Jenny and Andy as a foster for several weeks before the kids met him and immediately fell in love. Pluto and their other kitty, Jupiter, quickly became best buddies.

In their new home, Vienna and Michael have already made many great memories, such as throwing an Independence Day bash complete with legal

fireworks and a viewing of *1776*, huge sleepovers with all their friends who made the drive up from Santa Cruz to attend the Dragon's Den Grand Opening Party, and hosting both halves of the family for a lovely Thanksgiving celebration. Many new adventures surely await!



For someone who never traveled much as a kid, **Andy** seems determined to visit as many places as he can. 2017 was therefore marked by the plunk of passport stamps and a pile of airline miles. Not once but twice he visited Querétaro, Mexico, first in February to deliver lectures at Tec de Monterrey, and then in December to co-present a workshop with Deanna Fassett for professors seeking to help their students learn written and spoken English more effectively. During that latter trip, Andy responded to an impromptu speaking prompt by delivering a pro-Trump oration in front of 25 Mexican participants, savoring the looks of horror that gradually transformed to laughter as the intentional badness of the speech became apparent to his new friends.

Andy also spent two months in Europe, teaching his International Business Speaking course in Jyväskylä, Finland, and supervising an SJSU study abroad program in Ljubljana, Slovenia. During his fourth trip to Finland, Andy dedicated his weekends to long road trips, renting lakeside cabins, exploring ruins, and driving past the Arctic Circle in search of reindeer. In Slovenia, Andy fell in love with the green rivers, seaside towns, and alpine air – and has been invited to return in 2018 as a faculty member for a summer program. In between Finland and Slovenia, Andy joined Jenny for a fascinating visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. [Jenny will share more of that story in her section of the letter.]



Holidays offered chances for creativity and renewal. For Halloween, Jenny and Andy went all out – yet again. This year they dragged out the clown costumes for a revision of “Scary Circus.” Jenny played “Jingles the Happy Clown,” while Andy preferred a darker theme, hoisting a flask and chomping on a cigar as “Creepy the Bad Example Clown.” For Thanksgiving, Andy and Jenny joined Vienna, Michael, and the extended Beck family for a *Día de los Muertos*-themed family get-together. Andy admits that he initially thought the idea was a bit batty. But after seeing the movie *Coco* with the group and participating in the cacophonous creation of a deliciously

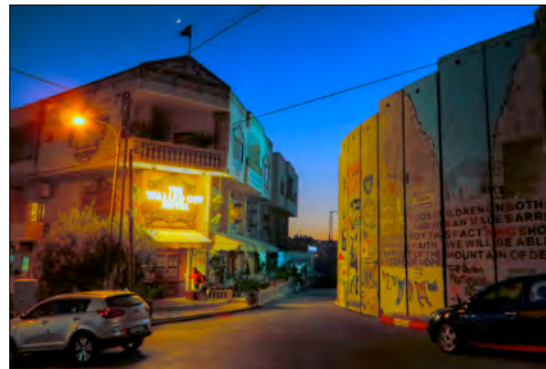
excessive meal, he appreciated the chance to gather around an altar of deceased family members to share memories. Once more Andy departs the year feeling wistful, grateful, and amazed.



2017 was full of progress for **Jenny**. She expanded her grant-writing business to ten clients and has even won several grants! It's really becoming a full-fledged job and she still loves it. The best part is working with inspiring people doing amazing work for people and animals. Next year she hopes to keep up the momentum, become more efficient, and of course, win more grants.

She traveled with Andy quite a bit this year, including to Mexico, Detroit, Slovenia, Istanbul, and Israel and the West Bank. Inspired by Banksy's Walled Off Hotel in Bethlehem, she was insistent that this site be our summer

destination. So together we learned all about Jerusalem and the very different world of Palestinian territory, just a short drive away. In the Old City, we walked where Jesus walked, climbed the Mount of Olives, visited the Jewish Temple Wall, the traditional garden of Gethsemane, Golgotha, and the garden tomb. Jenny learned so much and was inspired by these sites and the events that took place there. In Bethlehem, behind the wall that separates the West Bank, we saw the traditional site where Christ was born but were most impressed with what we learned about the history of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, especially with a visit to Camp Aida, a refugee camp of Palestinians, and their descendants, expelled from their homes in 1948.



Jenny also started reading – more than she has since college! She read several books this year and has learned a ton from them. Mostly, she was inspired by our trip to Israel to dig into the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and read three books and many articles about it. It is fascinating to her and nurtures her love of learning.

Jenny has continued her passion for fostering cats and has helped quite a few overcome anxiety and get adopted. They return the favor with companionship and antics. At church, Jenny continues to be quite busy. She is winding up her calling as Primary teacher but has recently received the call to be the Ward Music Chairperson. Her first job was to coordinate the Christmas program for Christmas Eve. Even with the country and world in disarray, Jenny considers 2017 a great year.



PS: Here's the Wood Family's Year in Facebook Status Update-form!



Jenny Boyer Wood I am on a reading tear since Christmas! Because of the book in the middle of I've read the entire hillbilly elegy and half of I am Malala. I'm trying to expand my horizons and learn about new cultures this year.

January 4 · Like · Comment



Andrew Wood Delivering my Beowulf lecture today, starting off with The Mamas and the Papas 1965 hit "California Dreamin'" In my mind, this makes total sense.

February 21 · Like · Comment



Vienna Beck Karaoke was phenomenal tonight, especially because I finally got to sing Hamilton with my awesome back-up bros!!

February 25 · Like · Comment



Jenny Boyer Wood Biggest grant yet!! \$50K for the SV Theater Guild to build our theater!!

April 7 · Like · Comment



Vienna Beck I love my job because instead of coming home with boring stories about what happened at the office, I get to say things like "Today I battled a space cat".

April 17 · Like · Comment



Jenny Boyer Wood Due to the amazing generosity of my sweet husband, Andrew (and sudden discovery of his hatred for Alexander Hamilton), I get to go to see Hamilton tomorrow with Vienna!!!!

May 9 · Like · Comment



Andrew Wood I started my morning with a sauna and cold shower and feel like I breathed properly for the first time in months - the sort of mindful breathing that I teach in my public speaking course but don't really practice.

June 9 · Like · Comment



Jenny Boyer Wood Banksy's Walled Off Hotel is THE reason Andy and I even went to Israel and the West Bank. As soon as I saw it online, I knew I had to go. And not just for the art but also for the political challenging of the system that is inherent in that region. And the hotel did not disappoint. In fact, it is a perfect contrasting irony to the surrounding environment.

June 29 · Like · Comment



Vienna Beck I just successfully haggled for some leather sandals-- all in Spanish! My high school Spanish teacher would be so proud.

July 17 · Like · Comment



Andrew Wood Quitting my day job. Going pro, knitting (and sort-of crocheting) fashion wrist-scarves. So far, Jenny is my only client. But that will change. Oh, yes. That will change.

September 27 · Like · Comment



Andrew Wood Make more paperclips! Just don't be angry at me if you lose a day of your life to this game. You've been warned: there is only one mission. MAKE MORE PAPERCLIPS!

October 26 · Like · Comment



Vienna Beck After a hugely successful soft opening this past weekend, now Dragon's Den Games is amping up for a grand opening in two weekends!

November 2 · Like · Comment



Jenny Boyer Wood What an awesome night at the Messiah sing along! Tonight I sang my first solo!

December 10 · Like · Comment