

Happy Holidays!

2014 Wood Family Newsletter

Welcome to the ninth annual Wood Family Holiday Newsletter! **Andy's** big news is that he received a Fulbright scholarship to teach in Minsk, Belarus in Spring 2015. In preparation for that journey, he flew to Washington D.C. to attend seminars and get to know the two other Belarus scholars. Truth be told, Andy sort of dreaded this trip, thinking that the seminars might be dull and generic. Turns out, the program was fascinating, and Andy really appreciated the chance to meet his new colleagues. Now if only he would have dedicated more time this past fall to language training!



Teaching in Finland

His plan is to cram as much Russian into his head as possible over the next few weeks before he departs for Minsk in late January. He'll be away from home for four months, returning in late-May, only to leave a week later to teach in Finland. Yep, Andy is co-leading a departmental program that brings SJSU students to that country for nearly a month of coursework. The program also includes side trips to places like Tallinn, Estonia; Stockholm, Sweden; and St. Petersburg, Russia. Andy loved his experiences there this summer, particularly since he was able to teach two international business speaking courses for JAMK University of Applied Sciences in Jyväskylä. Best of all, Jenny joined him for the latter part of the Finland program. [She'll tell you more about their European adventures later in the newsletter.]

Back home, Andy put on his surgical scrubs for Halloween, helping the family mount its annual porch show. This year's theme: Alien Autopsy. Once again, kids gasped and cheered as "Dr. Fox Moldy" carved into the unlucky corpse from another world, exposing gooey organs while reminding visitors to "keep watching the skies." But it almost didn't happen. For some reason, Andy took a long time to catch the Halloween spirit. In fact he'd barely started laying out the operating table and setting up the crash-landed UFO when Jenny got home early from work. Usually it's Jenny who tolerates Andy's obsession with this holiday, but this time she took the lead and injected some much-needed enthusiasm in the day's preparations. By nightfall, the show was ready and the kids rolled in. Best of all, Vienna joined us, playing an escaped UFO abductee with creepy panache. Andy is already dreaming about the next show – and the next year of travel, teaching, and family fun.



Alien Autopsy



International teaching



Looking for "School of Athens"



Jenny and Andy in St. Petersburg, Russia

2014 was an active year for **Jenny**. She has fostered over 20 cats this year, helping to socialize them while working to provide them loving homes. Most of our guests were kittens and only with us a few weeks, but having those little treasures in our home added so much fun and joy to our lives. We still have three foster friends with us, and they're not kittens any more. No matter what, Jenny cherishes the chance to care for these wonderful animals; she especially loves the great feeling she gets when they find their "forever" home.

In springtime, Jenny took a voice class at the local college. Jenny loved being exposed to classical music she hadn't heard before and learning how to get more out of her talent. She really did improve by the end and hopes to take another class this spring. In early summer, Jenny joined Andy for his last week in Finland before spending a few days in St. Petersburg, Russia. Afterward they set off for Cinque Terre and Rome, Italy. Finland is a lovely country, and the people were so nice. Being summertime and so far north, it was amazing to see the sun stay up until very late and then come up again in the wee hours; it's such an interesting phenomenon. Cinque Terre is a quaint region of Italy, filled with character and charm. The landscape and hiking were awesome. Rome was

grand, and we loved the Vatican and all of the ruins surrounding us. The Coliseum was walking distance from our hotel. What a great vacation!

In late July, Mary and Hallie visited us from Florida. Some highlights of that week included our first trip to Alcatraz, which is especially spooky at night, and an afternoon of whale watching. Jenny saw magnificent creatures that day, including humpbacks, hundreds of dolphins, and little sailfish. It was an experience of a lifetime, right in Monterey Bay. Then before summer ended, Jenny and Andy took a street art class in San Francisco, where they learned to stencil. They hope to practice some of their skills in future road trips (safely and as legally as possible, of course). One final special occasion: Jenny returned to the temple after a couple of years of missing it. She's really glad to have that special spirit back in her life.



Vienna, Jenny, Mary, and Hallie at Point Lobos



Vienna showing off her look as a substitute teacher on her first day!

Vienna continued to build a life with her new husband Michael this year, while gaining experience towards eventually earning a Graduate degree in Psychology. At the beginning of 2014, she was working full time behind a desk, and feeling the draining effects of it, so she decided to switch to part-time to pursue something more active and hands-on. After earning her credential, she began working on a part-time basis as a substitute teacher, traveling to many different schools, subbing in classes of all age groups, and winning the kids' adoration as Mrs. Beck. It was a fast-paced, unpredictable job, and a fun way to learn about interacting with kids in a teaching capacity.

Around this same time, she had the opportunity to become a volunteer at the Suicide Prevention Service for her community, first undergoing a rigorous 40-hour training program before becoming a crisis line responder prepared to take calls from people in need. This experience has been immensely fulfilling and gratifying. She even went on to attend the training for the following "class" of volunteers, this time as an unofficial assistant trainer. She is so grateful for the knowledge and experience she is gaining through this work, and she knows that it will aid her for the rest of her life.

To top it all off, in the latter half of the year she left her office job for good, having accepted another job as an Early Childhood Interventionist with a small local organization that specializes in treating children on the autism spectrum. Her experience substitute teaching was one of the primary inspirations for pursuing this job, and Vienna had discovered that working one-on-one with kids was what she had enjoyed most in the classroom. The training she received from her new employers

was invaluable, and she is enjoying putting it to work with kids. Her husband Michael has been endlessly supportive of her adventures in exploring different career opportunities, and they continue to thrive and enjoy their ever-changing life together.



Vienna conquering the Dinosaur Head Rock at Point Lobos!

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



Andrew Wood Delivered my first HUM lecture of the spring semester yesterday. Topic: Marx, materialism, alienation, and communication. Best of all, Jenny and Vienna traveled to campus to see it! Next stop: Emerson!

Friday, January 24 · Like · Comment



Vienna Beck I dreamed I got to play Fantine in Les Miz then I woke up and saw that I'd gotten my substitute teaching credential approved. Not bad for only being awake two minutes!!

Tuesday, March 25 · Like · Comment



Jenny Boyer Wood In the news for family and friends category: Tomorrow I go under the knife for a hysterectomy. The best part is I get two weeks in bed and no more monthly pain! Thank you to all my wonderful friends and family for all the support you always give to me and my family.

Thursday, April 17 · Like · Comment



Vienna Beck Subbed my first high school class today!! 12th grade modern lit, which is crazy because I am only a few years older than these guys... But we had an awesome time discussing death, ambivalence, and Woody Allen. I love feeling like an actual teacher!

Wednesday, May 7 · Like · Comment



Andrew Wood Heading back to Finland via cruise ship. It's like being in a hotel lobby for eleven hours. Afterward we're taking the bus from Turku back to Jyväskylä. If I'm lucky, we'll get back by midnight. Now here's hoping that Jenny's travels go smoothly. Can't wait to see her again!

Sunday, June 15 · Like · Comment



Jenny Boyer Wood Tonight I ate my first truly Finnish meal - Fried Whitebait - Finland's answer to fish and chips. Yep tiny whole fish you just pop into your mouth. Actually not too bad!

Tuesday, June 17 · Like · Comment



Andrew Wood Driving 80+mph under a dark purple Wyoming sky: the Allman Brothers' "Midnight rider" rattling my speakers, a fat orange moon rising to the east, and a slowly growing sense that maybe I'd driven too long today. Fortunately I made it to Buffalo (not the one in NY) and got a decent room. Of course I'm thinking about Robin Williams and agreeing with Jenny, that it'd be wonderful if that amazing guy could have read some of the lovely things written about him just 24 hours ago. I feel rattled, with everything a bit too close-up. Time to shut the curtains and drift to sleep with the trucks racing by.

Friday, August 1 · Like · Comment



Vienna Beck I'm not sure how this happened, but I have a fancy new car and a fancy new job as an Early Childhood Interventionist. My life is pretty cool.

Monday, November 3 · Like · Comment



Jenny Boyer Wood A big day for our kitties yesterday. We rescued 2 gorgeous long-haired black cats from the Castro Valley foothills! Kono and his mom Josie are settling in to their new indoor space after living outside most of their lives. And finally, little hiccup was adopted!! YAY!! I love it when they find their forever homes.

Sunday, December 7 · Like · Comment