

# Happy Holidays!

## 2015 Wood Family Newsletter



*Jenny in Tangier, Morocco*

*Welcome to the tenth annual Wood Family Holiday Newsletter! 2015 has been a year of change for **Jenny**. She started out as a full-time admin at Seagate but has ended as an entrepreneur, grant-writer, and homebody. She decided early in the year that she would expand her grant-writing into a business that she could run from home, and then she started getting business cards, a website, and other preparations going. During the four months Andy was in Belarus, Jenny used her extra time to work on her new project, planning to go part-time later in the year while she built her business. Then May 7th came along. Early that morning, just a few minutes after arriving to work, she was told that her job was being eliminated and she would be going home – for good.*

While it was a great shock and hard to leave the awesome team of people she'd grown to love, she realized that this was the greatest blessing she could ask for. She suddenly had time and funds to develop her business. Since then she has met some of the most amazing leaders of non-profit organizations in the Santa Cruz area and has partnered with three of them to do grant work. She's currently working on two projects, with the prospect of more coming. As is always the case, starting a business is slow, but the progress is steady. Jenny is thrilled to finally be working from home,

doing a fulfilling job that benefits people.

When she's not working on this project, she's caring for her kitties (including one foster), for her home (using a weekly schedule she's been dreaming of for years), and for people around her doing service wherever she can. She calls this the "red phase" of her life - with new red hair, red Prius and a red lease on life! She is excited for 2016 and is confident that her grant-writing business will take off, even if she has to get a part-time job temporarily to sustain it. She is basking in this time of great blessings, enjoying more time with Andy and Vienna than she's had in years, and even taking more trips with Andy. She truly feels God is with her on this great adventure and is so grateful for the opportunity she's been given.

**Vienna** also enjoyed a fun and fulfilling year. November marked one year since she began her amazing job as a Behavioral Interventionist working with children on the autism spectrum, and her work has continued to inspire and teach her valuable skills, as well as lessons about the beauty and potential in each individual. She is grateful every day to have the

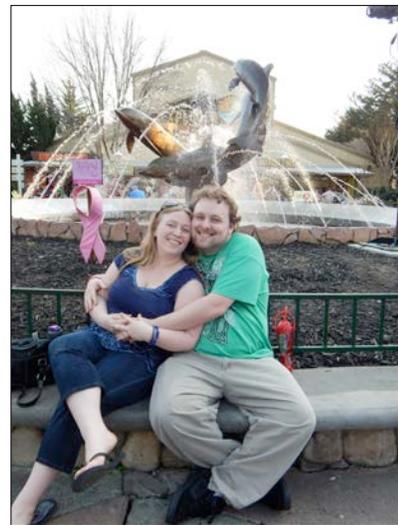


*Four generations at Grandma's 90th birthday: Marilyn Mattson, Jenny, Vienna Beck, and Jean Boyer (deceased) • Jenny and Andy at Las Vegas Heart Attack Grill*

opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children who are struggling, while at the same time having a blast playing with Play-Doh, Legos and stuffed animals. Vienna considers this to be the best job she's ever had, and while she is as yet undecided as to whether she wants to pursue a career working with this population, she knows the experience is invaluable. In the next few months she will be applying for master's degree programs in the California Bay Area in counseling and clinical psychology.

Vienna also found time for family and fun outside of work. In April she joined her husband Michael's family on an awesome trip to Hawaii, in anticipation of which she learned how to play the ukulele, which has since become one of her favorite hobbies. The trip itself was terrific, providing a chance to spend some relaxing quality time with loved ones against a gorgeous backdrop of mountains, oceans, and sunshine. Then in May, she had the opportunity to bring Michael out to Florida to celebrate her great-grandmother Marilyn's 90th birthday party, so that Michael finally could meet Vienna's extended family. While there, they toured around Andy and Jenny's hometown, heard stories and saw tons of photos, creating a beautiful snapshot of Vienna's family history.

Vienna also found lots of ways to get creative in 2015. She produced some art with both digital and traditional media, she learned dozens of songs on the ukulele (and even tried writing a few). Most excitingly, she completed a draft of her first novel, which is still awaiting revision with the help of a handful of awesomely thoughtful people in her life. Overall, this year has provided Vienna many rewarding and exciting experiences, and she continues to love building a life with her wonderful husband as they look toward the future.



*Vienna and Michael dressed as the characters Sadness and Bing Bong, from Inside Out • Vienna and niece Scarlette in Hawaii • Vienna and Michael at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom for nephew Tristan's 13th birthday*

**Andy** spent the first half of 2015 teaching in Belarus on a Fulbright grant. While stationed in the capital city of Minsk (living on the corner of Lenin and Independence Avenue) he took every opportunity he could to travel the country, accepting invitations to speak on American culture and teaching practices, and making new friends along the way. Some of his favorite moments included journeys to neighboring cities where he was treated as a visiting dignitary, road trips with local pals delighted to share their country's small towns and villages, and lectures where he taught Belarusians to sing "Get your Kicks (on Route 66)". Andy also made time to visit Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine, a trip that include a tour of Chernobyl. A less happy moment occurred when he nearly ripped off a finger while hopping off a Belarusian rocket launcher and his wedding ring got caught on a hunk of metal. It was a scary time, especially when the emergency room doctor responded to Andy's state-of-shock rambling with a stern command of "Don't speak!" Fortunately it turns out that Belarusian health care was up to the task, ensuring that Andy can count his blessings with ten fingers.

After a quick return to the States, Andy headed *back* to Europe, this time to teach his international business-speaking course in Finland for a second year. As ever, our resident “road scholar” searched for opportunities to travel the country, searching for street art in an abandoned factory in Tampere and motoring south to enjoy a Route 66-themed motel in Kotka. He’s made good friends in Jyväskylä and has already accepted an invitation to return in 2016. Joined by Jenny toward the end of his Finland gig, the Woods flew south to Morocco where they tramped around Tangier, Marrakech, and Casablanca, which shamelessly included a dress-up dinner at a mock-up of Rick’s Café.

With the coming of Fall, Andy assumed his duties as his department’s associate chair, which calls for him to coordinate the advising of 650 undergraduates majoring in Communication Studies. Initially he dreaded this new job (and some parts remain onerous), but he has grown to appreciate the pleasure of helping folks navigate the university’s labyrinth of rules and procedures. When a student arrives with a predicament that appears unsolvable, Andy relishes the chance to review policies and search for seemingly hidden pathways to graduation.

One additional change: Andy bought a DJI Phantom 3 quadcopter with the proceeds of an award he won for his scholarly work, and now he’s joined the growing community of aerial photographers. He practices in the old airstrip near our Scotts Valley neighborhood and loves finding scenic (and safe!) places to fly. When he’s not flying, Andy enjoys the guilty pleasure of watching YouTube videos of drone crashes. So far he hasn’t wrecked his new toy – but who knows what the New Year will bring?



*Andy wears his Belarusian leather hat (with snappy ear flaps!) • Andy completes his third radiological exam before departing the Chernobyl containment zone • [Bottom] Andy delivers a lecture to students at Gomel Regional Lyceum*



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



**Andrew Wood** Breakthrough! Eating dinner at my favorite pizza joint, I was able to use my growing understanding of Cyrillic to finally figure out the \*name\* of the place: "планета" Pizza - or "Planet" Pizza! Better yet, I figured out this amazing stuff I've been drinking. It's spelled "пиво." That's "п" for "P" - "и" for "ee" - "в" for "v" - and "о" for the second (unstressed) vowel: "ah." Put it together and you've got "Piva." Add a little vocabulary application and the result is... "beer!"

Sunday, February 8 · Like · Comment



**Vienna Beck** SO excited, because next weekend Michael and I will be attending the Berkeley wrap party for Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality, where the author, whom I idolize, will be present to read the final chapter!!

Sunday, March 8 · Like · Comment



**Jenny Boyer Wood** Just did my piano final. I'll miss this class but have lots to practice.

Tuesday, May 12 · Like · Comment



**Vienna Beck** A year ago, I never ever would have predicted I would find myself leading music time with a ukulele in a special needs class. But here we are.

Friday, June 5 · Like · Comment



**Andrew Wood** Marrakesh Day Two: Getting pleasurably lost in the souk's seemingly endless labyrinth. Listening to the siren song of the snake charmer. Buying glass after glass of fresh squeezed orange juice. Saving extra table scraps to feed the stray kitties. Practicing the art of "walking away" as part of the haggling ritual. Smiling every time some dude calls me Ali Baba. And now, taking a much needed afternoon nap while awaiting the late afternoon breeze.

Wednesday, June 24 · Like · Comment



**Jenny Boyer Wood** Really enjoying Marrakech! Lots of walking around the marketplace, great food, kitties to pet, and great smells! I never smell anything but nice things - food, incenses and scents I don't recognize.

Wednesday, June 24 · Like · Comment



**Vienna Beck** After the death of our first car we bought together, Doc Holiday, Michael and I decided to make an investment and purchase an almost-new 2013 Prius.

Sunday, July 26 · Like · Comment



**Andrew Wood** Thanks to Jenny Boyer Wood for being such a good sport during our neon adventure in Portland!

Sunday, August 16 · Like · Comment



**Jenny Boyer Wood** WooHoo!! TreasureHunt Grants just helped Four Paws to Love get \$2,000 from the Harris Foundation!! That's on top of the \$5,000 they received in June!

Sunday, September 15 · Like · Comment



**Vienna Beck** I had so much fun this year dressing up with my family as all the characters from Inside Out! Suffice it to say, everyone who saw our costumes had "all the feels". :P

Sunday, November 1 · Like · Comment