

Season's Greetings!

This year's letter is going to be largely in electronic form. We'll pretend that it's because I am being environmentally conscientious and not because it's December 22nd and I'm just now starting to write it. And our Christmas tree isn't up yet, because we're going with the Finnish tradition of not putting it up until a day or two before Christmas. Yeah, that's it.

This whole year has been a busy one. We started the year out with a few inches of snow. We had actually gotten snow on Christmas Day in 2010, which was a wonderful treat. Markus loved sledding and making snowballs. Since there was so much snow, all of Atlanta was essentially paralyzed while waiting for it to melt, so we got a few extra days off work to enjoy it.

In March we began a garden project. There is a portion of the back yard that is already fenced off. There were some azaleas in there and a butterfly bush, and even a small pond, but we had not been very good at maintaining all of that. We wanted to try growing some vegetables, and since the space was already fenced in it would keep the dogs out. We cleared out the space, gave the azaleas to the neighbors, built some raised boxes, and started planting. We had tomatoes, peppers (jalapeno and habanero), watermelon, zucchini, corn and strawberries. We had pretty great results considering we both work full-time, limiting the amount of time we could put into the garden. It's amazing what growing your own vegetables does to you: I've never been a fan of tomatoes, but the ones from our garden have turned me.

In May David went for a visit to California with Markus. They spent time with Grammy and Grandpa K, as well as Zechariah, and Brian. Markus enjoyed the beach, baking cookies with Grammy, and playing with his big brother. They also visited Knott's Berry Farm. Samuel and I also visited California in June. We took a weekend to hang out with my brother, enjoy the beach and also visit with Zechariah, and Grammy and Grandpa K.

In May, we also celebrated Markus's third birthday. We had our third Memorial Day Barbecue, invited everyone we know, ordered a bounce house, grilled up some goodies, and had a fantastic day. Markus even got to go to the Disney Store and "open" the store with the Key to Imagination! Markus has learned so many things in the last year. He has known his letters and numbers for a while, and now he's starting to learn how to write them. He is a big helper, anything he can do he will, from feeding the dogs to loading and unloading the dishwasher. He has even mastered his Cookie Monster Wii game.

In July, we all flew off on a fabulous family vacation to Finland. My godmother offered to pay for our airfare so that we could come visit everyone, instead of just her coming to visit us. We started out our trip with a visit to Moominland which Markus enjoyed immensely. We spent time visiting family and friends. Pappa took us fishing, and Markus learned to enjoy red and black currants straight off the bush. It was so nice to be able to see all the different people we get to visit with so rarely.

In August we celebrated Samuel's first birthday. He started walking in June, and he hasn't stopped since. Our little baby isn't a baby anymore, instead he has morphed into a full blown toddler. It's so much fun

watching him learn and discover new things. He is always happy, and has a smile that will light up the world.

For Halloween we had a monkey and a “blue dinosaur with two thorns”. We carved a pumpkin which was then named “Happy Care Bear Pumpkin”. Grammy and Grandpa K came to visit for that weekend, and Grammy was thrilled to be able to go trick-or-treating with the boys. In October we also participated in the American Cancer Society’s Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk. It was quite cold that morning, but we had a good time, and it is for a good cause.

We enjoyed Thanksgiving with some of our friends. Jason is a fantastic chef, and treated us to a delicious meal. A few days later we celebrated David’s birthday. We have become really good friends with several of our neighbors, and they’re great company. David also switched jobs this year, and now works for Solaray Corporation. He’s enjoying the new gig, getting to see different parts of the country.

Now we’re just finishing up our Christmas preparations. I’ve been baking goodies all week long, and we just have a few more things to pick up for dinner on Saturday. We’re all looking forward to some great adventures that I am sure await us in 2012.

If you wish to keep up with us between letters, you can connect with us on Facebook, or view our photos on Picasa. We also have a blog that occasionally gets updated:

<http://www.picasaweb.google.com/nooraanddavid>

<http://www.facebook.com/noora.kragenbrink>

<http://www.facebook.com/david.kragenbrink>

<http://wheretheheartsaysahh.blogspot.com>