

Meeker Family Christmas Newsletter, 2005

Seasons Greetings, One and All!



Another year has come and gone and been filled with exciting decisions, amazing adventures, and exhilarating and exhausting fun! Please read along and share our year with us.

December held many fun and intriguing activities. Piper is beginning to come out more and more with her singing in church. The preschool choirs really entertained us all with beautiful music and fun things to do. The preschool also went all out - not only with the singing, but by allowing the four year old class to present the nativity play. This was a surprise for us, but all the other parents knew about it - Piper didn't share the secret! She was just very excited about the day. Our little angel played the part of a little angel, spreading the good news of Jesus' birth. We joined her in her classroom afterwards for fun and activities!



Throughout December, I'd been experiencing a lot of abdominal pain. Lee finally talked me into seeing Dr. Givens who promptly told me that, I would need some tests to be sure, but my gall bladder was the most probable culprit. As it turned out, I needed surgery to remove it. My first thought was how I desperately did not want to miss Amber's first Christmas. However, through a concoction of so many pills I lost track (and thought seriously of a pill box to carry around with me) and a carefully chosen diet, I made it through the holidays.

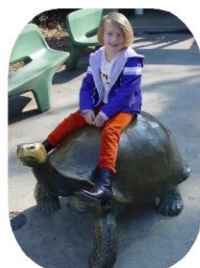
Christmas was happy as always. The girls enjoyed a wonderful meal at their grandparents' home (my parents on Christmas day and Lee's parents the weekend after) and enjoyed opening presents. Amber was just starting to get into this, and she really didn't care much for whose present she was opening - she just liked the general idea of it all. Children are what really make Christmas.



The Thursday after Christmas, Dr. Moses, my surgeon, operated and removed my gall bladder. Not my most favorite way to spend the holidays; however, now that the healing has taken place, I feel so much better. It was a difficult process, though. Whoever said that laparoscopic surgery was the "easy" way to go and that you "bounce right back" is not telling the whole story.

USC

About 1 week into my recovery, I received a call from USC, asking if I could teach one of their classes - Artificial Intelligence. This is an area in which I am interested and have read, but never taught before. Dr. Matthews told me that the class would begin in a week. So, with 1 week's notice and 2 weeks after surgery, I started teaching a Monday/Wednesday/Friday class. Amber joined St. Andrew's Baptist preschool program for those days and enjoyed it so much that we began letting her attend 5 days a week for 3 hours a day. Mrs. Flo was her main teacher and Amber does love Mrs. Flo. My USC class was challenging and fun to teach, with a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students.



During this period of time, we also needed to find time to have a little fun. Carrie Shelling and I took the children off to Riverbanks Zoo during their annual "Free Fridays" in the January/February time span. Her son, David, was born about 2.5 months after Amber. Piper always enjoys the zoo; Amber especially enjoyed the aquarium and the penguins.



For Christmas, the girls had received matching pajamas - I just had to have their photos taken in them, and Valentines seemed a perfect time. We went to the Picture People. Piper was so very patient, allowing her little sister to sit on her back and trying not to complain too much when Amber grabbed her bow and tugged!



Carrie and I had so much fun with the children at the zoo that we decided to bring Lee and Todd along for the next trip. We had a great time. The children especially enjoyed entering the lorikeet exhibit, though the colorful little birds were careful not to let the babies get too close!



We had photos taken up in Greenville with Mitchell's Photography. The bunnies were so cute! Amber reached out and grabbed one by the ears - poor bunny. However, we freed the bunny and all turned out well.



Little did I know that Candy (Candy Ward Photography) was also going to have bunnies this year! She borrowed a Mama and 2 baby bunnies from a friend and Piper was in heaven. She just loved the bunnies! Amber was also thrilled, but didn't seem to understand why the bunnies kept trying to escape.



Piper and Amber both enjoyed hunting Easter eggs and they got to do it three times; once, with our Sunday school class and again at each grandparent's home. They both loved hunting the eggs. Piper also got to hunt at preschool, though Amber's class was considered a little too young at the time.

Remember last year, when the swing set we ordered was supposed to come three weeks before Amber and Amber came three weeks early? Well, we sure have enjoyed it this year! Sadly, one of my favorite features, the parent swing, was ripped apart by a cat, but the girls really love to swing and play. We have a toddler swing for Amber and she gets so excited in it! Piper is climbing, swinging, and sliding all over the place, too. It's nice to be able to get away in your own backyard!



Piper has always loved music; she started the Kindermusik program at preschool when she was three and she has come such a long way. Ms. Allie helps them sing, increase the range of their voices, and shows them new musical instruments. Amber and I dropped in on a lesson and Amber, too, seemed to love the music. Piper so enjoyed this class!

We had to say a sad good-bye this year. Since Buttercup's death, Samuel had been very reserved and sad. Though we'd talk to him, he just didn't want anything to do with us and found solace only when the outside birds perched nearby and chirped. We thought it best to find a home for Samuel where he could be with other birds and with a little help, found just such a place. An older lady who loves birds took in Samuel to join her two other cockatiels. Samuel is very happy there.



I had been noticing that Morgan was obeying me less and less. This was so unusual that I began to worry about him. He was not coming when called and seemed to startle rather easily if one of the girls came up on him when he was sleeping. The vet confirmed what I was afraid of - that Morgan was going deaf. There was nothing he could do to prevent it. So, Lee and I are working with the girls to teach them to stamp their feet if Morgan's sleeping so he can feel the vibrations and Morgan has gone back to his hand signals for tricks. He's just as happy as ever, so he doesn't seem to miss it. It broke my heart, though. It's just a reminder that time is moving on. Morgan is twelve (will be thirteen in April) and I still think of him as the little 10 week old ball of fluff that came home with me that first summer out of Furman.

I can't believe it's been a whole year since Amber blessed our lives. She is such a little treasure - and into EVERYTHING! It's amazing to me how different her personality and Piper's are. One thing was the same, though - the hesitancy over that first bite of birthday cake. Both Piper (at age 1) and Amber were not sure



they were supposed to eat it - or even how to go about it. With a little encouragement from her big sister (after all, Piper had done this before), Amber reached into the cake and got a finger-full and then a hand-full and then a face-full! It was such a fun day! We decorated with fish, as her room is a beach theme, and had a few family members and friends come to share the day.



Piper had enjoyed a year of ballet at Seven Oak's Park. She ended the year with a recital, where she and her friends did an elegant dance for us. She had a wonderful time and does so love ballet.

After a year of work, I met my weight watcher goal and became a lifetime member. I was so excited to reach this - it means better health and better eating habits. I won't say that I don't "slip" from time to time, but overall, I feel so much better. I highly recommend this program to anyone committed to losing weight, but I will add that I don't think the program will work if you don't go to the weekly meetings. The support is really important.



The preschool had a special program in May before the end of the year. It was nice to see all the children with their teachers. Piper really loved Mrs. Kimberly and Mrs. Denise and Amber became very attached to Mrs. Flo.



Once again, Piper enjoyed Miss Kim's Gym during her school year. Her good friends Elaina and Andrew were also a part and the end of the year show for the parents, which was very well done. Piper was the first child to perform and she did so with confidence and grace. The children ended their gymnastics by receiving a medal for a year well done.



Well, Lee and I apparently waited almost too long in the search for a good kindergarten. We began looking in January and toured a couple of programs as well as spoke with the headmaster at Nursery Road Elementary. After a thorough review, we decided that, if we could manage it, we'd love to send her to Hammond. Their program sounded amazing. A lot of individualized attention, computer skills, Spanish, art, music, and nature skills - it was just incredible. However, Hammond is all

the way across town - it's about a 40 minute drive. Lee and I decided the benefits outweighed the travel and we decided to send her to Hammond. We got one of the last two slots and we were lucky and thankful to get it. More on Piper's Hammond experience later in the letter!



In May, we also lost a wonderful member of our family. Aunt Bleka was my Grandmother Welsh's sister and she was so very special. She always had bright and happy things to say and she had been calling us on the phone fairly regularly. She loved hearing Piper talk to her and we would send letters and phone calls back and forth. It's hard to believe she is no longer with us, but with God and her family above. We miss you, Aunt Bleka. You were such a special lady.



I had also begun to wonder what I would be doing in the Fall. There was a possibility for additional adjunct work at USC, but then I received a call from my friend Wayne - who teaches computer science at Presbyterian College. Apparently, a CS professor had left suddenly and they needed someone who would be willing to teach some or all of her classes. PC is a wonderful environment and I was up for the challenge. I went up to Clinton and spoke to a few people and was offered the position. I decided to take them up on it and moved into my new office over the summer.



Having missed going to Pennsylvania last year to visit Lee's family, we decided to try to take a trip at the end of May, after USC classes were completed. We were saddened to hear that our favorite B&B in VA had changed to a "couples only" place, meaning our children were no longer welcome. So, we found a B&B in Gettysburg, PA called the Battlefield Inn, B&B and spent a couple of nights there so that we could visit with our friends Clif, Kim, and their boys, and Dudley, Stella, and their brand new baby girl! The children all fell asleep after a long day of play, which let us "adults" talk and play games like we did in graduate school. It was such a fun time and we wish we could have more nights like that! We enjoyed the horses at our B&B and we were just a stones throw from the giant Boyd's Bears factory, which Colin (Clif and Kim's oldest) really wanted to take Piper to. We had such a fun time and then left there to head on toward Benton and Shickshinny, PA.



We arrived in Shickshinny to meet with Lee's aunts and grandmother at their cottages in Patterson Grove. We stayed in Jeanette's cottage and the girls were very happy to have their Aunt Jeanette, Aunt Rachel, and Grandma to play with. Amber was determined to climb every step she could find (and we were determined she wasn't going to --- all in all, it was a bit of a draw in who won that little battle) and Piper got to visit with her Great Grandpa and lots of other family. Piper enjoyed taking some photos, too! Uncle Ronald and Aunt Debbie, who also have a home there, took us to visit a friend of theirs that has some of the retired Budweiser Clydesdales! I must say, that you will never appreciate the size of these beautiful animals until you are standing right beside one. It was really fun. We also had a picnic and hiked along a stream to see some pretty waterfalls, visited with other family, and introduced Piper and Amber to their new cousin Kamryn, Becky and John's newest child. Piper and Morgan got reacquainted and after a fun and tiring time, we headed home. Amber is not the rider that Piper is, so the last hour or so was a bit trying. But, we made it in one piece and have many happy memories of our trip.





This year, I was asked to help out with St. Andrew's Vacation Bible School. I was to create and teach the crafts for the first and second grades. It was so much fun! These kids were so creative, too. Each day, we created a scrapbook page of our location (we were on a "Ramblin' Roadtrip" as our theme this year) and a take-home craft as well. We created a photo rock to commemorate Yellowstone Park, visors with pens and stickers, and lots of other things. The kids had a lot of fun. Piper and Amber also joined VBS (Amber was a little young, but she had fun!) and made their own crafts. They learned so much.



Our MOPS group (Mothers of Preschoolers) created some summer get-aways for moms in the mornings. One of these was a visit to Irmo's fire department. I think we overwhelmed the poor firemen there - there were between 25 and 35 children there! But they showed us their gear, put it on, and let the children see that they aren't scary in it - they are a friend to run to if they see a fireman in gear during a fire. They also showed the children the station and trucks. Amber fell asleep by the end, and we were joined by Carrie and David, who really liked the truck!



We had a wonderful trip to the beach this year. Again, as usual, we went on the week of the fourth and we enjoyed the beautiful fireworks over Cherry Grove Pier. We were joined by Mama and Daddy for the week and Aunt Nell and Kim for part of the week. Piper loves the beach. She likes to jump the waves (in the shallows, of course) and make sand castles. Amber wasn't so sure she wanted her toes to get sandy, and preferred to sit on a towel or in a chair the first part of the week, curling her feet up so that the sand wouldn't touch them. However, she LOVED the water (which meant we had to double our watch on her) and enjoyed splashing in the tide pools when allowed. She was also fascinated with the sea shells she found and entranced by watching the little creatures that are prevalent along the shore - the birds, crabs, and unique insects. Piper and Lee caught a little crab in a bucket and everyone watched him for awhile before he went home to the beach. We purchased a tent this year to sit under and filled a small float with water under it for Piper to have a source of water for her construction projects and Amber to sit in and play.



The only sad part of our trip this year was the photographer. For the last 4 years, we have used Angela Felenz photography; our experience this year was awful and I can no longer recommend them in good conscious. I asked around for the name of another photographer and found a wonderful one. More on that a little later...



Amber decided to drive us back from the beach - however, Lee and I thought it would be better if he drove instead. So home we came after a fun week!





Since my friend Jennifer Vaughan had become an Aunt, she was unable to make her annual New Years day visit. So, we convinced her to come up in July. Jen got to meet Amber and Piper was thrilled to have Miss Jennifer back to play with. These visits between friends are so much more special when they come so far apart. Jen is a true friend - she came the same weekend that "Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince" came out. I'm a big fan of the books (Jen hasn't read them). Being a great person, Jen went to the bookstore with me at midnight that Friday while Lee stayed with the girls (though, admittedly, it doesn't take much to get her to a bookstore!). While I was teased and not allowed to fully read the book until after her trip, it was fun to get out and about. (The book was excellent, by the way - now if only book 7 were ready...) Jen was treated to tea parties at home and games at Chucky Cheese. The girls loved having Jen to give them attention!



We discovered that Piper's best friend, Elaina, was moving away. So, we wanted to spend as much time as we could with the girls together. Piper, Elaina, Amber, Lochlain, and us "moms" went to Riverbanks for the day and everyone had a great time. Piper and Elaina have been best friends for about 2 years. Since they are only 5, that's a really long time.



As usual, we returned to the beach to visit with Aunt Nell and Kim down in Garden City. Piper and Amber both love the beach so... I wish we could spend more time there!



We had decided to try to retake the family beach photos and wanted to see if Lee's parents could join us at the coast this time. They were able to come with us, so we rented Martin Manor one more time and headed down. It was fun introducing them to some of our favorite haunts of the beach - the Sea Captain's House (GREAT seafood), Friendly's (Great food), the Mermaid Shop, Me and Mommy, Madeline's Playhouse, Barefoot Landing, etc. We would enjoy the beach in the morning and then eat and shop in the afternoon/evening. We all had a very nice time.



Having been so disappointed by the other photographer, and really wanting beach photos of Amber at this age, I asked around to find someone else to take the girls to. "Incredible Smiles Photography" with Tracey Floyd was recommended. I was a little paranoid after my bad experience, so I emailed this poor lady a list of photos I wanted that must have been a mile long. She took EVERY ONE of them. We were on the beach for close to three hours and she was so good with the girls - they did amazing for their age and that time span on the beach of all places! We had close to 200 proofs to preview and except for a small handful (5 or so) they were all amazing. It was so difficult to choose. I thank Tracey for doing such a wonderful job and look forward to doing business with her in the future. I highly recommend her!



This year, Piper's new school required her to have a uniform. This should have curbed my clothes purchasing a little, but according to Lee, it has not. We went to the uniform store and picked out several skirts and jumpers (Piper does not want to wear pants - she doesn't want to look like a "boy.") She looks so cute in her uniform and she was so excited about preparing for her new school.

In late July, Daddy went for a routine physical; little did we know what was to come. Dr. Givens ran some tests that found a bad spot on the colon. More tests showed that the polyp had to be removed, as it was malignant. Dr. Moses did the surgery (he saw both of us in one year!) and he did a wonderful job. All of the polyp was removed and Daddy has recovered nicely from his surgery. We thank the Lord for the good news that things were caught early.



Piper learned a hard life lesson this year. We expected that our decision to send her to Hammond would probably limit the number of her preschool friends that she would go to school with (if any). Piper's such a social butterfly, that I didn't worry too much. However, Piper's best friend since age 3, Elaina, discovered that her daddy had a new position and they were moving to Ohio. This is (as Piper understands it) very far away and makes weekend visits impossible. The girls met at Chick-Fil-A the night before the move and played. Since then, they have written and called each other on the phone. Piper often tells me how much she misses her friend. Even though she has made new friends at Hammond, her bond with Elaina will always be special.

Piper has reached another milestone - that first day of kindergarten. The day before the "official" start of school, the children went and played with their teachers and the parents went to learn all the policies and procedures. Piper already was so happy she didn't want to leave with us. That next day, she proudly entered her classroom and she loves it there. She is learning Spanish with Mrs. Archilla, computer with Mrs. Swygert, music with Mrs. Herring, art with Mr. Lalumondier, PE with Mrs. McAllister, and loves the library with Mrs. Conrath and Mrs. Drafts. Mrs. Jones and Mrs. McLaughlin help her with reading, cooking, letters, numbers, her days of the week, months of the year, etc. She's also getting more adept at using scissors, crayons, and glue and (as always) her social skills are A+. She knows her phone number and address. She has explored nature on the grounds with Mr. Mancke and her first "report card" was excellent. We are so proud of her and so happy in our decision to send her to Hammond. It's a wonderful environment and she is learning and having fun, which always ensures more learning. Mrs. Duffy, Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Belk, and Mrs. Cruea take over in the afternoon (everything else was the 9-12 schedule!). She breaks up her afternoons three times a week with Gymnastics, Science class, and Cheerleading. (I was told after the first couple of weeks that everyone took cheerleading but her and she really wanted to go. Heard that one before, anyone?)



At the end of last year, MOPS had meant so much to me that I volunteered to be on the steering team and head up the crafts. So, over the summer, I looked into many different ideas and we have 6 to 8 crafts planned for the upcoming year. I hope everyone enjoys them! Our first few meetings have gone well and everyone seems to really enjoy coming, listening to the speakers, and just talking and getting to know each other.



Last Spring, the preschool gained a new director (who, sadly, had to leave for health reasons shortly thereafter). While she was there, she introduced many wonderful ideas to the great teachers there. New crafts and work began to appear and many unique designs. Piper got to meet her at the beginning of her time there (and the end of Piper's) and she loved all the art projects she was introduced to. This Fall, Amber joined the one year old class.

She just loves her teachers, Mrs. Agnes and Mrs. Evelyn. She's back together with her little friends and happily waves bye-bye and throws us a kiss as we leave. (I don't know whether to be happy or sad about that... happy, I suppose!)



I found it a little amusing that Piper came home from Hammond very quickly able to spell "H-A-M-M-O-N-D" - she really enjoyed watching the cheerleaders and going to the pep rally's! We went to the first football game, not realizing it was against Calhoun Academy - Kim's school! So, godmother Kim got to play with Piper and Amber (who willingly left us and went happily into Kim's arms) before the game and Piper cheered for her school on her side while Amber and Kim walked over to "enemy territory." At half time, we joined them and enjoyed the rest of the game while we caught up with each other. Hammond won, so Piper was happy. We enjoyed a couple of other games as well - Piper loves to go and cheer for her Skyhawks!



As we did last year, we ordered Piper's birthday "supplies" from birthdayexpress.com. However, when they didn't arrive, we worked with the kind employees there for a frantic few hours to find out why - apparently, they were mistakenly sent to another state! (Wonderful mistakes these customer databases are capable of aren't they.) This meant that Piper's party with her friends her age was postponed for a week in order to obtain all the necessary supplies and send out the invitations in plenty of time. However, the weekend of her birthday, Piper got to celebrate a lot. That Friday, we went to Hammond and supplied fun cupcakes for snack time. Then, that Sunday, we were joined by family and friends to celebrate. Piper was thrilled to get to have two parties, as her other one was the next weekend.



For Piper's friends, we had a "unicorn" birthday party. Each child came in and painted a sun-catcher. Then, we went outside for a fun scavenger hunt. I was amazed at the skill of these little hunters, as we hid a couple of hundred (or so it seemed) items outside and very few remained! Then, everyone had some cake and ice-cream and we opened gifts. We had about 20 children come and everyone seemed to have a nice time. We finished the day by pinning the horn on the unicorn and then pulling strings on a unicorn piñata in order for lots of fun surprises to escape! Amber wanted to be involved in everything also, so we helped her be a part of the games as well. I can't believe our little girl is already 5 years old. It's so hard to take in how quickly time goes by. She looks so grown-up and she changes each day.





Candy (Candy Ward Photography) took some really cute pictures of our grown-up little five year old. Piper is fascinated with cats - probably because I'm allergic and she can't have one. So, her favorite playmates are "kittys" (most of which are named "Ashlee"). Here she is with her favorites - Precious and Ashlee, as well as a few others (including one of Ambers - hmm... wonder how that happened?). She also had a few Halloween toys to play with.



This year, we were afraid we'd miss the state fair... the first weekend, the weather was so dreary and the second weekend was pretty booked. However, Piper had been talking about getting an elephant ear since last January, so we wanted to try to go. So, the last Friday afternoon/evening, we braved the fair! Sadly, I didn't know that our camera batteries were BOTH nearly gone, so we missed some cute photo moments.



There was a petting zoo and of course we toured the small animal exhibits. We also had that wonderful (?) elephant ear, and the mandatory corn dog, french fries, and cotton candy (for about \$20 per person it seemed). We closed our evening with some fair rides. I was a little surprised that they would not allow me to ride with Amber. They would, however, allow Piper to ride with her. So, Amber rode her first fair ride "alone" with her big sister while Mama and Daddy watched fearfully from the side-lines. Piper also got a little more daring this year, riding some different rides with her Mama and Daddy alongside. We left the fair with one prize from a game and a lot of fun memories.



Last year, we went to the Picture People in the mall to have the girl's pictures taken in their Halloween costumes. They were so cute! So, we had to repeat the process this year. Amber loved playing with the bubbles they produced just for her and Piper really enjoyed all the special attention she got from her photographer - who was willing to clown and play with her as she prepared for her poses.



Because I have started working again, I was unable to allow Piper to join her little ballet class at Seven Oaks Park that she was a part of last year. She kept asking me when ballet was going to start. So, I asked around and Tori (who's daughter Elizabeth goes to school with Piper) told me about a program at USC which gives classes on weekends. Though it makes for a busy Saturday, Piper loves her ballet and tap classes. This group will work hard so that in the Spring, they will be a part of the Columbia City Ballet's production. Piper is very excited and she is having so much fun! Amber often tags along for these lessons and is trying so hard to join the other girls. Both of my little ones have music in their veins, it seems.



Since Amber did not begin at St. Andrews "Growing Place" until January of last year, she missed the 2004 school pictures. However, this year she was right there, waiting in line. Isn't she adorable? The company they used this year did a wonderful job. I haven't heard a single complaint!



Here's Piper's first Hammond School photo - isn't she just adorable!?





This year, we once again visited Harmon Tree Farm before Halloween. Amber was much more able to enjoy the hay ride and corn maze this year. She took off through it and made us run to keep up with her! Piper and Amber worked together to answer all



the questions to direct our way through the maze. We were joined by Todd, Carrie, and David, and really enjoyed the day. David and Amber were so cute, playing with the little pumpkins! We ended the day by finding a nice sea food restaurant in Lexington and just having fun.



Having taken a little time to rake up the yard and arrange some decorative gourds in the yard, we wanted to take some outdoor photos of the girls. Since then, whenever Amber sees a big pile of pine straw, she tries very hard to get in!



Hammond has a yearly Halloween parade, where the children get to dress in costume and parade through the halls for the parents. Even the teachers dress up! After they went through the halls, the larger kids paraded for the kindergartners and then they changed back to the usual Hammond attire. The children had such a fun time!



With the loss of their director, it was questionable that St. Andrew's preschool would have a parade this year. However, after 4 years of watching Piper, I really wanted to share the experience with Amber. So, I asked permission to head the parade and (last minute as it was - I'm afraid I asked a little late) was able to pull off a parade at St. Andrew's Growing Place as well. The children came in (or with) their costumes and they were all so cute! The parents who were able to come gave out candy to the kids and everyone seemed to have such a nice time.





As usual, we attended St. Andrew's annual Fall Festival. Piper and Amber went in costume and enjoyed all the fun booths! Piper had her face painted and Amber kept trying to confiscate any balls used in any games. They both did the cake walk and came away with a cupcake each. A fun family evening for all!



Halloween morning, Amber found the candy. "Choc-lat" she said. When I said "not now..." she left me, went to Lee, and said "Daddy, choc-lat." What a rascal!

She and Piper left the house to go trick-or-treating and Amber didn't want to come back. They had a lot of fun!



We traveled to Greenville once again for some amazing Santa photos with Mitchell's photography. It was really great to have that "Santa in the background" shot, as Amber was really not happy to sit on his lap this year. She tolerated it once or twice, as she saw "big sister" do it, but she was not happy to continue the encounter and let us know quite quickly that she was ready to go. Morgan was also a little unsure of Santa, but we did get some really cute photos of them all together.



Still having some things to do in Columbia, Elaina's parents made a trip down from Ohio in November and Piper was SO VERY EXCITED! She talked about nothing else, once she found out Elaina was coming. "She's my very best friend in the whole world." The girls met on Friday evening at Columbiana Mall and enjoyed many carousel rides. They saw another preschool friend, Sammy, while there and we also ran into Todd, Carrie, and David. We all decided to have dinner at Ruby Tuesdays, where the girls ate mac and cheese and then got a huge tall cake dessert to split with their parents. We got together again on Sunday at Piccadilly's to have lunch and play before Elaina and her family headed back home. Piper was sad to see Elaina go, but the girls really had a lot of fun together.



Well, Piper and Amber were very excited about the Australian group - the "Wiggles" coming to town. We got tickets when they went on sale and had amazing seats right on the floor only 5 rows from the stage! Amber was a bit intimidated by some things, but loved the confetti that came over us and hit the floor. Piper was thrilled to get to actually hand Dorothy the Dinosaur a long stemmed rose. (Sadly, I as I held her up to the stage, I realized that I had the camera - so Lee was unable to snap a shot of this momentous occasion!) The girls had a wonderful time and Piper saw many of her friends there before and after the show.

With November comes Thanksgiving. Hammond had a traditional Thanksgiving feast, where our little ones transformed into Indians, with unique names (Piper's was "Purring Kitten"). The children had made their outfits and their placemats and "bearskin" rugs to sit on! The feast consisted of venison balls, Chick-fil-a nuggets, corn, an apple decorated as a turkey, and of course, lots of treats! It was so adorable.



Thanksgiving day, we gathered here at our home. Piper and Amber were so excited to have all of their grandparents here. Amber felt especially big, as she demanded her seat at the table (not the high chair) and was accomodated. We had a nice meal and some fun play time.



Little Amber is a mess - she gets into everything! We can't take our eyes off of her, or she's climbing, calling people on our cell phones, taking Piper's toys, or trying on my jewelry. Such an adventurous age she's at now! She's smart, too. As soon as she hears the phrase "Amber, what do you think you're doing?" she giggles, grins, cuts those baby blue eyes at us, and RUNS!



To wrap up our year, we headed out once again to Candy's (Candy Ward Photography) for some family Christmas photos. We hope that each of you had a wonderful year and have many more wonderful years to come.



Merry Christmas All!

Love,

Lee, Paige, Piper, Amber, and Morgan

