

January



February



March



April



May



June



2009 Meeker Family 2009 Christmas Newsletter

July



August



September



October



November



December



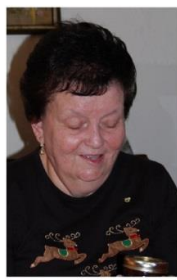
Meeker Family Annual Christmas Newsletter, 2009

Happy Holidays to you all!

This has been a year of ups and downs – highs and lows, with some days full of energy and others where you just wanted to pull the covers back over your head and stay in bed. I know each year, the letter seems to start this way; I suppose everyone's does. Let us share our year with you.



In December, Amber got to participate in the very special Christmas tree decoration ceremony at Hammond – a senior and a K4 student are paired together to decorate a Christmas tree while the entire school looks on. There were 14 seniors who were participating for the second time – they had been there all these years! After this ceremony, the K4's got to sing to their parents in a cute little Gingerbread program where they re-enacted the tale of the Gingerbread Man (run, run, as fast as you can!) The month continued with Christmas parties, viewing Christmas lights, and fun with family and friends. Santa was good to all of us this year and we had a beautiful Christmas.



Opening Christmas presents is so much fun! We also saw beautiful lights and enjoyed time with family and friends!



School Parties - Piper's 2nd grade teachers dressed as Hannah Montana and Amber's class made and decorated gingerbread houses.





Our year started off as usual – we were back in school and enjoyed a fun zoo trip with our friends the Schellings – David and Kate are always fun to see the animals with! Then, we got a nice surprise for SC – SNOW! (Well, it was only about a quarter of an inch and it didn't stay for a whole day but we were EXCITED!) Tango didn't know what to make of this white stuff and Lee came through for the girls by helping them scoop enough snow from the deck and slide to make a couple of snowballs each. They made a couple of snow angels too. By the end of the day,



the snow was gone, but it was fun while it lasted!

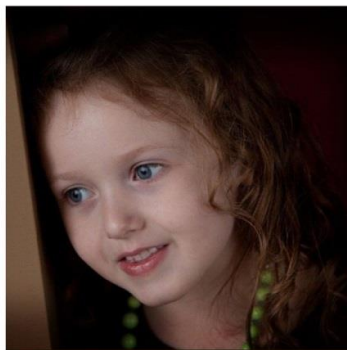
One evening in January, the girls dressed in their nightgowns and then dressed their dolls up also – the two of them were so cute! They curled up in Piper's bed and posed for photos – some smiling and some pretending to be asleep!



Valentine's Day brought a wonderful surprise – Lee and the girls went to the Picture People and had "Daddy/Daughter" photos made – I couldn't ask for anything more. It was such a wonderful treat for me and they all looked so cute! February also brought some fun Hammond events – the K4 groups were studying the letter "K" and took a field trip to Krispie Kreme Doughnuts to see how they are made. What a COOL field trip! Of course, they had to taste them to make sure they were cooked correctly! February also brought about the annual "Country of Study" day – last school year, the entire school studied "Ecuador" and the lower school was transformed, one building into a jungle with beautiful artwork from the K4-first graders and the other building into the sea and Gallopagos islands with artwork from the second-fourth graders. The Kiva (where they eat lunch) was turned into a market place and the kids were emmersed in Ecuador's culture for a day filled with stories, pictures, and other fun activities. Toward the end of February, the second graders put on a USA show – Piper was a "German-American" and performed a wonderful dance for the parents!



Also in February, I received the wonderful news that I was granted tenure and promotion at Presbyterian College – so I am now Dr. Paige Meeker, Associate Professor of Computer Science in the Physics and Computer Science Department at Presbyterian College. How exciting!



Toward the end of February, first of March, Mitchell's Photography sent an email requesting the girls to come in as models for Mitchell to try out some new poses in his new location – we were excited and the girls loved being models. Piper did everything asked of her; Amber was an adorable challenge and the pictures from that shoot show all ranges of emotion from these two girls. We love them and he did a great job, as always!



March 15th, things took a turn with a 6am phone call. Those are never good. We received the sad news that Lee's grandmother, Dora Harter, had passed away in her sleep sometime in the night. Dora was a sweet, loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother who made beautiful crafts and loved her family deeply. Though we know she's at peace in Heaven above, we will miss her so very much.



March also brought the annual SIGCSE conference. This year, the conference was held in Chattanooga, Tennessee and it was my first trip. I hosted one of the "birds of a feather" sessions and had a wonderful time. I got to meet some people face to face that I'd only communicated with via email and learned a lot – these conferences really make you want to come back and add so much to your classes! As a highlight, the conference hosted a dinner at the Tennessee Aquarium – the dinner was so unique, in that it was served THROUGHOUT the aquarium – to get a sample of everything, you had to see all the exhibits. It was a wonderful place to visit and I hope to return with Lee and the girls – they would love it! One unique treat was the river otters – they were so active and fun to watch! They also had a butterfly room, where you could walk through and enjoy the butterflies coming all around you. It was a fun trip!



St Patrick's day brought a day of green at Hammond – everyone dressed up and Amber and I had matching t-shirts. Piper pulled out her green top and they headed off to school. They also later posed for me in their beautiful brown dresses. I just love to take their photos – I bet you can't tell that!



Mitchell's, in addition to doing a great job on the modeling photos, took some great Easter shots of the girls – they look forward every year to visiting with Mr. Mitchell and his bunny!



The end of March/first of April brought a bit of worry to us – Mama had been feeling ill for awhile and went for some tests; the doctor felt she should be in the hospital, and for over a week, there she stayed. After many tests and medication changes, Mama is now on the road to recovery, but the doctor told her it may be a long time before she feels like herself again. We also learned that my Uncle George had been diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. So far, it's been a tough year. Happily, after several months of treatments, he was told in August that he is cancer free.

April also brought grandparents day at Hammond. Mama and Daddy couldn't attend (she was in the hospital) but Mom joined the girls for a tour of the school. The girls were thrilled to have their Grandma there and showed her every aspect of their day, giving her a tour of the lower school and showing her all their recent work. This was the first year she had been able to go and enjoyed seeing all the achievements of her two granddaughters.



Three weeks after Lee lost his grandmother, we received news that his grandfather had also gone to be with the Lord. Glenn C. Harvey was a kind man who loved his family. Like Lee, he enjoyed puzzles and he always made applesauce when he knew we were coming, because he knew I liked it. He was very independent and loved the outdoors. We will miss him greatly.



Once again, we hosted our annual Easter Egg Hunt and we had such a fun time with all the kids. The shelter at Saluda Shoals park worked well last year, so we rented it again and actually had two hunts – one for Amber and her friends and one for Piper and her friends. It always amazes me what good little hunters these kids are. After the hunts, the kids played on the playground at the park and enjoyed juice, cookies, and fruit. Everyone left with a bunny to play with and we once again had a great time.



Our little Hammond ladybugs were slated to go to a farm to hunt Easter eggs, but a bad thunder storm drove our little hunters inside instead. The kids didn't mind and the girls hunted in Hammond's extended day room while the boys in the ladybug classroom. Each of them found a dozen eggs stuffed with goodies and then had a party in the classroom. Mrs. Barrett and Mrs. Harvin helped me get them into the hall for a group photo and these little ones were so happy and full of life. It's a joy to watch them and see the happiness in their little eyes.



Amber's actual birthday fell on a school day this year, so we took in fun cupcakes for the class and Mrs. Barrett made the day really special by giving Amber a birthday hat that looked like a cake with five candles on it. She wore it all day and was SO EXCITED about her birthday!



This year, Amber was set to have a "Scooby Doo" birthday party. So, she was joined by her friends from school and her family for a fun afternoon. Piper asked two friends to join us (Gray and Elizabeth) and the three older girls divided the 18 four and five year olds into three groups. You see, we had a mystery to solve – someone had stolen the birthday cake! The kids followed clues and played games to discover that of the 6 adult suspects, it was the girls godmother, Kim, who had tried to make off with the cake! To discover this, they had to pin the tag on Scooby Doo, have a relay race with bouncy balls, and wrap their team leaders (Piper, Gray, and Elizabeth) in toilet paper to make them mummies. Each of her friends took home a little Scooby beanie baby. Amber had the best time with her friends – it was the first really large "friend" party she's had and she's very excited to have many more!

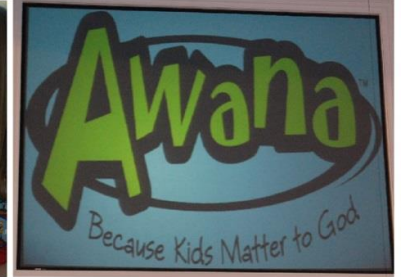




Exactly three weeks after Lee’s granddad passed away, we received tragic news again. My cousin Lynn’s son, Brandon, was killed. Brandon was a deputy sheriff in NC and while in pursuit of a suspect, lost control of his vehicle and hit a tree. He was a fine young man, 26 years old, and a fine deputy. We don’t understand why things like this happen, especially to those so young, but he’s in a better place and looking down on us all now. Rest in peace, Brandon. You will be missed.

Exactly three weeks after this, Lee and I held our breath – but for the first time in 9 weeks, we had no tragedy that day. Bad things seem to come in threes, I suppose.

At the end of April, we celebrated another year of AWANA’s at Riverland Hills Baptist Church. The girls really love this church program and have learned so much. They study between one and four Bible verses a week and recite them to their leaders on Sunday nights. This year, both girls graduated – Piper will move from Sparks to TnT next year and Amber will move from Cubbies to Sparks. They are already looking forward to September - next year’s AWANA’s!



Hammond’s annual fun day was exciting and fun as usual. While Amber has been before, this was the first year she got to participate! The K4’s are grouped in two teams that compete with themselves. The K5-4th graders are mixed into teams together. So, Lee joined me and he stayed with Piper’s group and I walked with Amber’s. They had fun on this field day – running relays, hopping in a potato sack, carrying eggs in spoons, etc. Siblings are on the same team, so next year, Amber and Piper will be together. They ended the day with the annual shirt signing and picnic. The kids have such a ball, and so do the parents. I love to go and have never missed a year. (Knock on wood!)



Amber really enjoyed “Action, Cheer, Tumble” this year and ended the year with a gymnastics display for the parents. She puts her heart into everything she does and really loved Ms. Pam, her teacher. She was especially excited to receive a medal for her achievements - I’ve never seen a child so happy! As a fun surprise, Mr. Todd (Schelling) her friend also joined us – he was looking at Hammond for David for the next year. He watched Amber’s performance and later we found out that David will join Amber in the K5 classes at Hammond. She’s so excited her friend will be there!



The ladybugs had a fun end of the year party – they went to a local park and played all day! They divided into 5 groups and then went to different stations – the playground, arts and crafts, running in the field with games like “red light”, bicycles, and stories/reading. After every group had been to every station, the kids had a picnic lunch and then were dismissed for the day.





My big 2nd grader was kind enough to indulge her "old Mama" and let me come to her class end of the year party, camera in hand. The kids had ice cream with TONS of toppings and they had a ball. They hung spoons on their noses and posed for the camera and were just all around cute!



The last day of school was bittersweet for everyone. Piper was sad that three of her good friends won't be returning next year, so she cried as we left the school. Amber, however, was eager to start the summer. Mrs. Long and Mrs. Barrett were both kind enough to bring their classes under the reading tree for an end of the year group photo. The girls are growing up so very fast.



All year, Amber's teacher, Mrs. Barrett, has told the kids that she loved them too much to let them grow up and leave her. So, the last day of school, she attempted to keep them little by locking the door and putting a brick on their heads! The kids were full of giggles as they held up their cardboard bricks for Mrs. Barrett's photo. Afterward, Amber left the classroom and told me that Mrs. Barrett had *really* put a brick on her head to keep her little but confided to me that it "won't work!" Sadly, I think she's right.



June started a new adventure – for quite awhile, Piper has been asking me about horseback riding lessons. She went to her friend Elizabeth's horseback riding birthday party and was hooked. The lady who owned the stable, Joy McMillion, and I spoke and I discovered that Amber could also take lessons. So, in June, we began riding. The girls love it! At first, Amber was a bit nervous on the back of her horse, but by the second lesson was eager to take the reins – she wanted to make her horse "go" but Mrs. Joy explained that stopping was more important! The girls have ridden three different horses – Penny, Kussa, and Alex and they love them all. Each lesson begins with first capturing the horse and bringing him/her in from the field. Then, the girls brush them out, bridle and saddle them, and lead them to the paddock. Then, after the ride, they must brush them out again and muck a stall. They are having a ball!



June brought a new change - I cut my hair short for the first time since high school. We're all still getting used to it!



June also brought with it the end of the year dance recital for both Amber and Piper. This year's theme was "The Wizard of Oz" and Amber was a member of the yellow brick road. Piper had two rolls (one for each class) – she was an emerald city lady and a jazzy girl. They did very well and we are so proud of them. Their family came to watch along with Piper's friend Elizabeth and her mom. Grandma, Nana, Granddaddy, Aunt Nell, and Kim made up the rest of the party. At the close of the performance, we presented each of them with roses –our ballerinas love flowers!



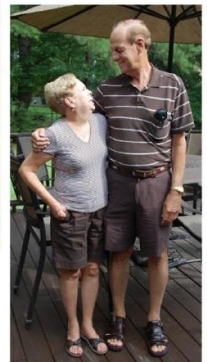
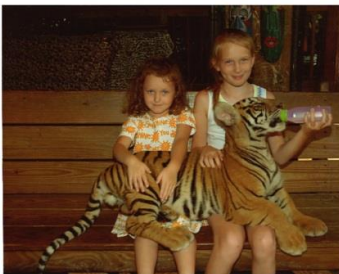
The day after the recital, we left for Disney World with Lee's mom for a week. We had a wonderful time! It was hotter than I expected. Having gone last year in July, I thought June would bring cooler weather, but I was mistaken. Disney was celebrating this year and since we went right after Lee and Madi's birthday, we celebrated that. Every restaurant we entered gave them extra desserts. The girls were jealous of all the cupcakes and chocolate their Daddy and Grandma were receiving! If it was a character meal, they also received a card signed by the characters! A highlight for the girls was also to meet the Tinkerbell fairies – they were in the Magic Kingdom for the first time and they played with the girls and were so sweet. In case you have missed it, Tinkerbell has a couple of new movies out on DVD and they feature other fairy friends who we also got to meet. We went to all four parks and enjoyed many rides and shows. After a wonderful trip, we returned to SC, but Disney had us hooked. Lee and I converted our tickets to Disney annual passes so that we could return throughout the year with the girls. Looks like this will be the year of the mouse – Mickey Mouse, that is!



We had another scare in June. My grandfather wasn't feeling well and as he prepared to go to the hospital to be checked, his heart stopped. After CPR and the shock paddles, he was revived and went to the hospital, but we weren't given much hope. Early the morning of the third day, as the nurse entered the room she asked "How are you this morning?" and he responded "Fine." He has continued to improve and the doctors are amazed.

Piper excitedly left us for a week this summer to join her friend Elaina in NC. They enjoyed the woods and streams near her home and had the best time!

Mama, Daddy, Aunt Nell, and Kim invited us to join them in their annual beach trip and the girls and I happily did. Lee joined us on the weekends (poor thing – he had to work during the week) and we had a wonderful time. We got to visit the Belin Methodist church for Sunday services; the minister there, Mark Alexander, is Daddy's cousin. Other treats included many fun filled days on the beach and a couple of meals out to Sarah J's and The Sea Captains. I watched the girls closely near the water, as there were dangerous riptides at the time we visited. They know not to go too deep in the ocean and never without an adult, but sometimes the lure of the waves can be very tempting. We collected sea shells and played and played together. We also had a treat - the girls got to hold a REAL tiger cub and a REAL monkey - our little animal lovers were THRILLED!! One day, I hope Lee and I can live at the beach – it is so peaceful to me.



August brought with it my parent's 40th wedding anniversary. As part of the celebration, they agreed to join us for the Christmas lights at Disney World this December – they missed joining us in June due to health issues. We're excited!

Mama and Daddy's church in Camden, First Baptist, was asked to sing at a national church conference – to present a Christmas cantata. They needed children to join them and really wanted children who were related to members of the choir. So, Piper joined her Granddaddy and practiced all summer for the August performance. They traveled to Spartanburg, SC one day and sang before about 1500 choir directors from all over the country. What a fun experience! Piper will join the group once more at Christmas to present the cantata to the church in Camden.



Before school started, we visited the zoo with Carrie, David, and Kate Schelling. The zoo is always a fun day – we enjoyed the animals and then did a nature walk by the river and through the woods on the path that leads up to the botanical gardens. We rode the tram back down and then had lunch at a pizza location in the zoo before coming back to the house to play for the afternoon in the cool. Amber is very excited that David will join her at Hammond this year. She can't wait to get back to school and see all her friends. I can't believe she's in kindergarten and Piper's starting 3rd grade. My babies are no longer babies.

As Piper is getting older and more serious about her dancing, we were facing longer hours at the studio. To help make this easier, Lee and I thought we'd look closer to home for a place and "Southern Strutt" was highly recommended. It's the #1 dance studio in SC and #2 in the US for these kids. Piper won't be competing this year, but preparing to as she gets to perform at several high school basketball and college half times and at DISNEY! She's so excited to get started and lessons were to begin in September. After receiving the schedule, she will dance at several places around Columbia, and at one of the PC basketball games! The Disney trip will be April 8-11, 2010, and she will dance on the large stage at Downtown Disney. Y'all come on down and we'll have a party! Amber elected to take Science and "Fun Bus" at Hammond this year instead of dancing, but both of them wanted to continue horseback riding – so, our weekly calendar was quickly filling up. We continued riding until the end of September, but just couldn't keep up the schedule. We hope to add it back in as soon as possible. Amber especially loved it and was getting quite good.

The end of August brought the first day of school – Kindergarten and Third grade. I can't believe they are getting to be so big! Amber was thrilled that Ms. Tuller (Piper's Kindergarten teacher) was to now be HER teacher and she is a "bear cub" – she came out the first day saying that her class was AWESOME! Amber was also SO EXCITED that David Schelling was not only at Hammond, but also in her class! Piper left Mrs. Todd's room saying that third grade was going to be the BEST YEAR EVER! All in all, we had a great first day of school.



The beginning of September brought another loss to our family. My aunt, Easter Mathis, passed away as the month began. Aunt Easter was a very sweet, kind lady who always had a happy sparkle in her eyes and a smile on her face. She had been ill for awhile and we know she is in a better place now, joining her husband and her Lord and Savior. We will miss her very much.



We decided to take a crazy adventure – Piper, Amber, and two of Piper's friends – Elizabeth and Amy joined Lee and I, Kim and Tori on a wild and wonderful birthday weekend trip to Walt Disney World! We drove down the Friday of Labor Day weekend and stayed at the Pop Century Resort. Friday evening, we jumped into the pool before trying to get everyone to sleep before our adventure began! Saturday was spent in the Magic Kingdom – we ate in the castle at Cinderella's Royal Table and then rode ride after ride. The girls arrived in the MK at 8:30 and half of our party headed back to the Pop Century resort at 9:30 that evening – Piper, Kim, and I stayed to watch the fireworks and got back a little after 11:00. We were exhausted! Then, we got up the next day and went to Animal Kingdom, where we had

breakfast with Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Goofy, and Daisy and then explored Animal Kingdom for the day. Before leaving Animal Kingdom, we took a special after-hours tour of the safari and then had a great meal at the Tuskar House, where the girls danced with Rafiki, Timon, and met two animals and their keepers. That evening closed with a visit to Downtown Disney for a quick shopping run. Between the two days, we got dizzy with the Mad Hatter's Tea Cup ride, soaked on Splash Mountain and the Kali River Rapids Ride, laughed at the Monster's Inc Laugh Floor, battled "Zurg" with Buzz Lightyear, screamed on Thunder Mountain RR and Expedition Everest, and met lots of characters to add to our autograph book, including Ariel, the Disney Fairies, Princesses, and many other classic characters. We drove back home on Labor Day, after a memorable weekend.



Unfortunately, after we returned, I was rear-ended by a truck on my way home to get the girls for dance one afternoon. Even more unfortunately, the person who hit me had Allstate insurance. Dealing with this company has been a nightmare and is STILL going on – if you have this company DROP THEM IMMEDIATELY. If you would like to hear the details of this, drop me an email or give me a call.



Though we celebrated Piper's birthday over the labor day weekend, family and friends came over to see her before her birthday. We had a fun afternoon playing the Wii and eating cookie cake. It was a fun way to spend the day.



This year, both our girls were once again a part of Irmo's annual Okra Strut Parade. However, they gave us one small problem – they were on different floats this time! Amber joined the AWANA group from church, happily handing out pencils to those who were watching the parade while Piper danced down the street with Southern Strutt, her new dance studio. They both had a great time, even though the slight drizzle that was a part of most of the parade turned into a heavier sprinkle before we reached our car to return home. It was a fun morning for all!



The day after the parade, Lee and I celebrated our 12th anniversary with our girls at the house. Then, we took Amber to celebrate her friend Alyssa's birthday, where there was a magical fairy lady who did face painting – Amber LOVES to have her face painted.



This year, we once again visited the Sease Farm's Corn Maze. We joined some other Intel folks – the Schellings, the Robbin's and the Bojans. The Bojan's are here on an Intel tour of duty for over a year from Israel and they have 3 children, one of whom was Amber's age. When told that Maya didn't speak English, Amber said "Oh – Hola – that means hello." She's right, of course, but Maya didn't speak Spanish either. However, we know that Hammond is teaching Amber the right way to go about things! We got lost in a space themed maze and finally made it out to the tire maze,

corn snake tunnel, and marshmallow maze. Everyone had a great time – they'd added a giant slide this year, but it was much cooler than last year.

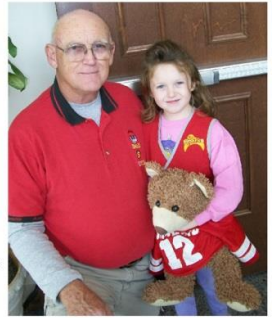


I was just in "need" of more photos of the girls, so a coupon from the Picture People came just in time (ha, ha!). We took them in for portraits and they were just TOO CUTE! They did really well and the photos were so hard to choose from. The girls had purchased the tutu's this summer and they looked "too-too" cute on them!





Being a bear cub, Amber gets to bring home the “class mascot” (a stuffed bear named “Curly”) twice this year. Curly loves going home on weekends with the students and they write in his scrapbook and add pictures of his adventures. Curly got to sleep with Amber and her “zoo” of stuffed animals she sleeps with, as well as join her at AWANA’s Sunday evening at church. Curly is well traveled – according to his scrapbook, he’s been to several football games, birthday parties, and quite a few sleepovers. It’s a really cute way to get Kindergartners to write..



Since Piper is getting older, her choir sings in the main worship at Riverland Hills from time to time. On her Nana’s birthday, Piper sang at church and her Nana, Granddaddy, and Grandma all came to watch. She sang in all 3 services and then we had a birthday dinner together.

Friday, 10/30 brought with it the annual Halloween parade at Hammond – this time with a secret guest! Piper’s friend Elaina came for the weekend and dressed up as a



Hammond Student – Piper was a black cat and Amber was “Violet” of the Incredibles. We

were planning to leave a little early from school that day to get to Disney World for “Mickey’s Not So Scary Halloween Party” and Elaina was coming with us. The girls day was filled with parades and parties (and Piper had two tests) and then we left about noon for Orlando. We arrived at the Port Orleans Riverside resort that evening and got ready for a fun filled next day!



We woke up early that morning – this was Elaina’s first Disney trip, so we were all excited! While Lee and I got ready, the girls carved pumpkins – Piper chose to carve a cat pattern, Amber wanted Minnie Mouse (don’t you LOVE those pumpkin patterns you can buy) and Elaina carved Mickey. We left for the Magic Kingdom about 9am and little did we know we would not return until about 1am! We rode ride after ride.

Thunder Mtn RR was the favorite by far – we even got to ride it twice without leaving the ride! Amber got braver than any other trip riding between Piper and Elaina on Splash Mountain, and the girls got chosen to talk to a monster at the Monster’s Inc. Laugh Floor. We met a new Disney fairy (Terrance) and enjoyed trick-or-treating in the MK with Piper and Elaina dressed as black cats and Amber, Lee, and I dressed as the Incredibles. Capt. Hook was menacing toward Lee and Amber told him “Don’t mess with my Daddy – he’s Mr. Incredible!” She was also cute with Cruella de Ville, almost bringing the cast member out of character when Amber told her that she LOVED her coat – it was so soft! Trying to remain in character, Cruella said “Yes, like rabbit.” Amber replied – “It IS! I’ve petted a real rabbit before.” Piper and Elaina, however, did get that comment and looked warily at her. The parade was led by the headless horseman and the fireworks were amazing. What fun we had; however, we were EXHAUSTED the next day. Monday, it was back to work for all.





November brought crazy hair night for the girls at AWANA's. Piper chose to make her hair red and add swirly gold pieces to it. Amber liked the swirly gold pieces, but wanted pink hair with green polka dots. Amber actually won first place for the craziest hair! That night, we began to wash the color from their hair, and Amber's came out in about 10 minutes. Piper, however, has thicker hair and needed more spray to cover it. After an hour of scrubbing, we were finally blond again. Whew!

As Thanksgiving approached, we prepared to have family and friends over to the house; however, the Saturday before Thanksgiving, Amber spiked a fever and unfortunately was diagnosed as having the flu. She's frustrated to be confined to her room and we've had to cancel family and friends coming this year, but we'll be thankful for a quiet holiday and for healing as Amber gets better.

Santa was out early this year, taking requests and before the flu hit us at Thanksgiving, the girls headed out to go over their list with Santa from Mr. Mitchell's (Mitchell's Photography) and then we went to the Picture People for some family shots with Tango. We've had a busy year - hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Merry Christmas!

Love,

Lee, Paige, Piper, Amber,
and Tango



