

2018
Meeker Family
Christmas Newsletter



2018 - Meeker Family Christmas Newsletter - 2018

Dear Friends and Family,

2018 has been an exciting year, full of victories and challenges, goals being met, and upcoming concerns. We hope you enjoy this letter as we share our year with you.



Last December, we finished our year with friends and family as we attended a beautiful choir concert at Riverland Hills - "An Appalachian Christmas," and parties with our church friends and with Creekside's barn family. We had so much fun with our friends and family as we shared this wonderful time of year together. Amber finished her Western IEA season strongly, making her points to move on to Regional finals, and Christmas was celebrated with my and Lee's family, as it should be. As you can see, Snowball was eagerly awaiting visitors!



Our Christmas gift as a family was a trip to Disney World to see the New Year's Eve fireworks. We'd never been at New Years and I had always wanted to go. It was a fun experience, as during the days we got to experience the new



Pandora land (highly recommended), try some new restaurants, and then be completely



wowed by the 360 degrees of fireworks. The crowds were huge, but everyone was nice and it was totally worth it. New Years Eve, the Magic Kingdom had filled to capacity by about 11am. We got there really early, as we didn't want to miss a thing! We enjoyed our day with fastpasses, reservations for dinner (made awhile back) and doing things without long lines like Tom Sawyer Island. Then we moved toward the castle about 6. We had the perfect location - right in front of the castle. In fact, we were also right in front of



the Disney Parks Blog's camera, so we knew we were in perfect position. We also loved that they "counted down to midnight" just after dark (6:30ish) for the "little ones" and had an amazing firework display then - but for those of us who stayed through midnight, it was breathtaking!





January brought the church's winter retreats for middle and high school and the girls loved spending the weekend with their friends. We rode again for Creekside and enjoyed spending time together as a family. We even snuck in a visit with our friend Jennifer!

At this point, Lee's 17 year position with Intel had ended, so he was beginning to look for work in the state. It was such a shame that the company made the decision to close the SC site - there was a lot of talent there. While we could have moved to Austin, TX, we just didn't feel that God was leading us that way. God certainly works in mysterious ways, as throughout January and part of February, Lee was able to help my parents with a very difficult situation in their home after a pipe leaked and the 3 days of repair work turned into a 2.5 month long nightmare for them. Also while he interviewed, we began to take college tours, to help Piper narrow down her search for the next step in her life. We visited USC, Clemson, PC, Anderson University, and the Equestrian Center at St. Andrews University (having visited Furman earlier last fall). It was such a blessing for Lee to get to share these visits with her. While each school had something special to offer, Piper narrowed down her top three: Anderson, St. Andrews, and Clemson. It was a blessing for Lee to be able to be home and help my parents and participate in this unique stage in Piper's life. Just as we were ending these adventures, a position opened up for him at Raytheon. The timing couldn't have been better. God's blessings abound!



During this time, we had a wonderful pair of houseguests - right after Thanksgiving last year (Black Friday), Mama and Daddy had a horrible water leak in their home. They were told the work to repair it would take 3 days, but they couldn't do it until the New Year. So they moved in with us in early January; however, the 3 days turned into 2.5 months as mistake after mistake kept being made by the contractors. While a difficult season for them, we were so happy to have them. I had set up Mama's computer in our kitchen and Tango, Oreo, and Snowball were thrilled to have someone with them all day! They'd sit beside her (or actually ON her foot). When they moved back to their house in February, we were all sad, but no one was more sad than Oreo - he loves his Nana and Granddaddy as much as the girls!





February brought some fun for Piper and Lee, as she took her Daddy on a date night to Ruth's Chris, having won a gift certificate there. They had a great time and wonderful food. This also helped them celebrate his new position with Raytheon. Lee has really enjoyed the work, finding it challenging and fulfilling. The only down side is that the company is in Greenville, so he has about a 90 minute commute to get to and from work each day.

February also saw a great loss to mankind - the Reverend Billy Graham passed away after a lifetime of serving God and bringing so many thousands of people to the Lord. Rest in Peace, sir - you were a good and faithful servant. I have so many memories of his crusades on the television, while we shelled peas and beans at my grandparents. He was such a powerful force for God. I hope God is bringing along a new evangelist - this world certainly needs Him!



Lots happened in February - it also brought the awards banquet for the Georgia Ranch Horse Association, and Amber had earned one! She loves her GRHA hat box. She's really enjoyed the ranch show circuit and has really partnered well with Fancy. The two of them have become quite a team! That was the start of quite a year for these two!



March brought Amber's 8th grade trip to Washington DC. This trip is a bit of a rite of passage for the middle schoolers at Hammond and they had a great time, seeing all the normal landmarks and touring the White House, Smithsonian, etc. March also brought the first Ranch Horse and Quarter Horse shows of the new year, and Fancy and Duke were more than up for the task, with fun and ribbons had by all. However, we did have some disappointing news - the surgery we had hoped to escape (and did last December) was once again looming over us. With Amber's x-rays getting worse, we are back on the surgical schedule, looking to have scoliosis corrective surgery in December, over the Christmas holidays. Amber took the news like a trooper, but vowed that she was going to achieve her goals in riding this year - which included earning a belt buckle, a top 8th position (at least) at IEA Nationals (thus implying getting to Nationals) and to ride in (or be invited to) a World show. She started working even harder toward these ends. She started the ARHA and AQHA seasons off with a bang, getting not only a rainbow of ribbons but a circuit championship at the March show.



We celebrated Easter at the house with family and loved every minute of it. Clint was able to join us and so we also had some great pictures taken - he's such a wonderful photographer! We missed getting a photo at the church's annual cross of flowers that morning, so we went back that afternoon to take one. I love that so much.

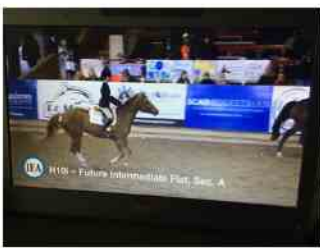




Other spring adventures included Piper, Amber, and friends heading out to Winter Jam - an annual Christian concert, and getting to witness her good friend Olivia's baptism! It's such a joy when we enter God's family! Piper also got a lesson on tractor driving as she and the team prepared Hammond farm for SCISA - the last time it will be held there, as Hammond has sold the property to a charity.



Amber's other goal was to become an intern at Riverbanks Zoo, as Piper had done. She was one of the youngest applicants, having applied at the earliest time she could. She first had to be chosen from the pool of applicants, which was pretty large this year. Then, she participated in a group interview. Once past this, the ones not "cut" were asked to participate in a one-on-one interview where they presented a conservation project. Amber made the cut and went to the 2nd interview. Then, on her birthday, she received her official acceptance! What a wonderful gift! She was overjoyed and so very excited to join the ZooTeens this summer, working with the education department and learning about the animals there (large and small) to be able to educate others. Grace Fields has taken over the program and the kids have really enjoyed getting to know her. They enjoyed a couple of fun nights, watching the Lion King in the Botanical Gardens together. Piper also continued the program - so this summer, both girls spent 5 weeks of their summer working the camps from 8-4:15 Monday - Friday. They are now continuing with volunteer hours through the school year and meetings once each month. It's a wonderful program and they learn so much responsibility.



April also brought the IEA Huntseat National Finals. Our friend and fellow Creekside teammate, Susannah Johnson, had made it as an individual and we eagerly watched online and cheered for her as she rode her class. She took it all the way - Susannah is the National Champion Future Intermediate Huntseat Flat rider this year! We are so proud of her and it couldn't have happened to a sweeter child and family. Of course, our barn family had to get together to celebrate - gathering at San Jose with a cake for congratulations. Way to go!



April brought the next AQHA and ARHA shows as well, but since the ranch show conflicted with prom, Piper elected not to attend that one. We had so much fun picking out her dress and found a great place with lots of choices. I was surprised that she wanted a longer gown, as Piper normally likes the shorter dresses, but it was perfect for her. My sweet girl looked just like Cinderella and the best part of all?!? It had pockets! Deep, usable pockets! She didn't need a clutch as she and Alex headed out the door - she put everything she needed in those dress pockets. Since Piper was also on the prom committee, she helped with the theme and decorations. Since this was the prom that followed the huge solar eclipse last fall, the theme was "Dancing Under the Moonlight" and one of the parents made a beautiful moon for a backdrop for pictures. However, they didn't measure the elevator size and it didn't fit. Piper and Justice carried this huge wooden moon up 25 flights of stairs - those equestrians are certainly strong and have stamina to burn! It was a wonderful night.



The Hammond School classes of 2018 and 2019 with their escorts. Junior/Senior Prom. Be still my heart - time has gone by way too fast.



Unfortunately, April also brought a sad parting of the ways. Over the last three years, many decisions made by their western coach were difficult to understand and not in the girls' best interest. We tried to stay, out of loyalty to her and to the school, as she is the Hammond coach; however, after one final and very upsetting conversation, we told her that we would complete the season, but would not be returning to ride with her and her barn. It was a difficult, but we felt necessary, decision for our family to move on. As Amber prepared for IEA Regionals, things were a tense. Piper had decided to stay home from Regionals (so she said...) so I left her with her grandparents as Lee and I took Amber to Alabama to compete for her individual place as well as the place with the Hammond Middle School Team. In this sport, one can compete both as an individual and together with a team. Amber has worked her way to the intermediate position, meaning she should ride twice for her team - in horsemanship and reining. However, her coach had told us that she would not be allowed to ride for reining, which was Amber's favorite.



Once we arrived in Alabama, we were told that Amber was allowed to ride for the team in both positions. Unknown to us, Adrian (Amber's Hunt Seat coach) had worked with Piper and secretly brought the hunt seat team as a surprise! This meant a 6 hour drive for them, a hotel, and lots of planning to give her support. They arrived on Friday night in secret and showed up at the arena early Saturday morning with posters and banners to watch Amber ride! I can't tell you how much it meant to our family to see Adrian, Kelly (team mom) and all the middle school and some of the high school come to show their support! It was an amazing show of love and one we will never forget. Amber's individual ride was amazing, earning her individual spot at Semifinals. The team rides went well also - in fact, if Amber had not ridden in both positions, the team would not have advanced; however, with a fourth in horsemanship and a second in reining for Amber, a fourth for Millie's horsemanship, and a second for Marci's horsemanship rides, these three little girls showed all the bigger teams what they were made of and earned their slot at Semifinals as a team. Each of them also earned their slots as individual riders. I was so proud of all of them. They were heading to Tennessee in May to compete for a very difficult slot to move on to Nationals in Oklahoma.



As May entered, Lee's Run for God race came and he did so well. I'm so proud of him - he's now running with the 10K group. We also enjoyed Mother's Day with family and friends as well as a celebration of several May birthdays. Piper was awarded the Columbia College Scholar award and Amber placed in the 84th percentile nationally on her Spanish exam. We are so blessed to have two intelligent girls! Amber received her official badge as a ZooTeen and was looking forward to beginning in July. She was also told that she was to be many honors classes as she entered high school. Piper chose an ambitious schedule herself, with almost all AP's her senior year. No slacking off for these two!





Amber was also busily preparing for semifinals with the Pope's at Flamekissed Farm - practicing and riding all she could. We so appreciate them for putting the fun back into riding for both my girls. You never know what you might see there, from "Barny" the chicken (that lets you pet her) to baby horses, 3 days old, who's mom lets you pick them up. How many people can say they picked up a horse! Such special memories.



The end of the 8th grade year at Hammond marks another rite of passage - the "Step Up" ceremony. Since Hammond is a K4-12th grade school, they try to make the move from elementary to middle school and middle to high school something special for the students. There is a six word sentence used to describe each student and Amber's was "I am a



horse back rider." This was certainly fitting for our cowgirl, who rides so many different disciplines. She also enjoyed the dance that night - celebrating the end of middle school and the next new adventure! The end of exams marked the end of another successful year at Hammond. As the girls walked out after their last exams, we had a rising freshman and rising senior - where has the time gone?



Amber finished her exams and we hopped in the car to head to IEA Semifinals in Tennessee. Piper really did elect to stay home this time and showed Duke with Adrian at the AQHA show while keeping up with us all through the weekend. Once again, Amber was successful in earning her individual slot against some of the toughest competition we've ever faced. Her team also came together, with Amber, Millie, and Marcie earning a slot at

Nationals as a team (and they also earned one as individuals). These three girls worked so hard all year and they now had their entry secured and plans to head to Oklahoma were made. Barn friends Jenna Woody, Jada Mark, Macie Leath, and Bailey Kirkland also made it as individuals, so they were very happy to head to Oklahoma with us. It was a smaller group than we had hoped, but a good group.



June brought the end of Piper's second year interning with the Zoo and another Presidential award for her hard work. She invited me to the banquet with her and we enjoyed a wonderful evening of food, pictures, and memories. It ended with a twilight walk through the zoo and it was so nice to enjoy the animals there without the crowds.

Amber was also working hard to prepare for IEA Nationals, as well as the ARHA World Show in July. She attended the NSBA Boot Camp with many of her friends and the





instruction was amazing. Carla Wennberg, TR Potts, Tommy Sheets, Mark Dunham, and Deanna Searles gave so much of themselves to these kids. It was three days packed with riding, instruction, and learning. Exhausting but exciting and just what we needed to prepare for the summer to come. You could not ask for better instruction and we sincerely

thank Stephanie Lynn of the NSBA for putting it all together.



During this week, we had a wonderful visit with our friends Carrie, David, and Kate Schelling who came back from Austin for a visit. I wish we'd had more time to spend with them, but they were catching up with many of their SC friends, so it all worked out. They stayed most of the week with us, so we got to see them in the evenings after the Boot Camp. We miss them! We were thrilled to have them for Father's Day, too. We missed Todd, but had fun catching up!



IEA Nationals was upon us, so we headed to Oklahoma and enjoyed a wonderful meal at Cattleman's and all the usual IEA parties to welcome the national finalists. This year, the party was at the NRHA (National Reining Horse Association) headquarters, along with a great talk for the riders. Amber and Piper were thrilled to see their horses grandsires featured as million dollar sires. Hollywood Dun It, Fancy's grandpa, even had a statue there - she looks just like him! Smart Chic O'Lena, Duke's grandsire had a beautiful painting. We were joined by Mama, Daddy, Aunt Nell, and Kim as they came to watch and cheer Amber on.



Competition began and Amber placed 5th in the nation as an individual! Since her IEA career began, she has been to nationals each summer as an individual, even after building back from a broken leg. We are so proud of her - all her hard work has really paid off. The next day was the team competition and, out of the 12 teams that made it (all of which looked to be larger than ours), these three riders pulled together and, between them, gained the most points to be crowned first in the nation! Amber, Millie, and Marcie are the middle school national champions of 2018! They earned belt buckles, IEA National Champion jackets, and many happy congratulations from family and friends.



They worked very hard and this tiny but mighty team from Hammond worked their way to the top. It was bittersweet for us, as it was the last time riding for the Hammond team; but it was nice to leave on a win.





Leaving Oklahoma City, we had one last stop to make - at Peter Piper's Pizza! Piper had seen it on the way in and asked if we could eat there. It's a pizza place with games where you earn points to get prizes. We wanted to win a small ball before we left - took us about 2 hours (and probably \$30 in coins) but we got it! Amber and Piper won so many tickets. Lee and I also had to contribute to the

ticket winning - haven't done that since the girls were little. It was a lot of fun and we made many fun memories. (Yes, I know the ball was probably worth about \$0.50, but it now is displayed in Piper's room proudly!) We even made it to Little Rock, AR, before the Old Mill park closed and got to enjoy a beautiful sunset over this quaint little park that has become one of our favorite rest stops along the drive to OK.



When we returned from OK, Amber and Piper each spent a week at the zoo, working with the kids. Amber had a great time and Piper always loves working there. We also snuck in a movie - the Incredible's 2! Had to do it! Then, they headed out for Beach Blast with friends from Riverland Hills. Thus began the part of the summer that was fun, exhausting, and a little sad for Lee and I, as it's the first summer where we spent more time apart than together. While the girls were at the beach, Lee was traveling for work. I picked up Amber from the beach and



she and I briefly saw Lee before we left for her next big horse show - in Indiana! The American Ranch Horse Association's World Show. (Piper was still at the beach.) The ARHA World Show was held in Cloverdale, and Amber and I went with the Taylors and the Pope's. We also learned, just as we were leaving, that Amber and Fancy had earned a place to represent South Carolina at the American Quarter Horse Association World Show. Unfortunately, we couldn't do everything, but it was such an honor to make it her first year.



Amber really loved her ARHA World experience - she had great rides and ended up placing ninth in the Ranchmanship class. She had two great reining runs and enjoyed watching and cheering on her friends. The folks from the Georgia Ranch Horse Association were amazing - doing fundraising for the kids going to represent the state (Amber rides out of Georgia, as there is no South Carolina version), and the kids had a great time together. Many thanks to Cindy Winn and all her hard work and Dennis and Amanda Pope for travel and guidance! It was so much fun and everyone was so generous. During some of the down time, we headed out with the team for fun and food, as well as some silly string! It was an exhausting but fun week!





As Amber and I were on our way home from ARHA World, Lee and Piper passed us in the air as they flew out of Columbia's airport on their way to a mission trip in the Dominican Republic. Piper was so excited over this amazing opportunity. Her first mission trip, her first plane ride, her first time out of the country - so many firsts for our eldest daughter. I was so thankful that Lee was chosen as a chaperone; he sent me a few photos each day to keep me up to date on their adventures.



This was an amazing experience for the two of them - both said they felt more blessed than those they went to minister to. The group of high school students from Riverland Hills worked with two different churches in the DR; vacation bible school with both of them and Piper's group was helping to build additions on to the church's school rooms; the other group was painting and working on the roof at their church. They would all get together in the evenings to compare notes. Piper loved working with the kids there - she has a heart for ministry and for children! She held her own, shoveling dirt and lifting cinderblocks - equestrians are deceptively strong!



Piper and her roommates thought they had three geckos in their room, because they each saw one of a different color (on different color backgrounds) - but it was just one little guy that changes color...;) The pineapple was amazing and even grew wild there, and their hotel overlooked a busy marketplace. The last day of the trip, they got to explore a little and went hiking through waterfalls before heading to the airport to come home.

Between all their trips, the girls got their other four intern zoo weeks in - they love working with the kids, the public, and learning more and more about the animals at the zoo.



Piper hadn't returned home for long before she headed out for the annual ZooTeen trip - this year to explore turtles, dolphins, and alligators in FL and GA. This trip is only for those who have been with the program longer than a year, so Amber and her first year friends held down the fort at Riverbanks while the older teens traveled. Piper loved seeing the turtles, tortoises, alligators, and dolphins! It was a wonderful trip, described as "3 days and 2 nights, 3 states, 4 institutions, 1 beach, 1 super target, 1 birthday celebration, endless dolphins, crocodilians, sea turtles, and crabs, 5 cruel 4:00am milk frogs, 1 4:00am fire alarm with a dead battery, 1 subway without bread, 2 education coordinators and 16 ZooTeens = 3 incredible days!"



When Piper returned, we were finally able to sneak in a very short trip to the beach with family. It was the first time the four of us were back together in about four weeks - that's actually the only thing I'd have changed - I wish we could have all done everything together! We enjoyed visiting Blaine United Methodist at Murrell's Inlet where Mama and Daddy had purchased a brick, walks/runs along the beach, and much needed family time.



As August entered we rejoined the Creekside IEA Hunt Seat team with Adrian and joined the Flamekissed Equestrian Team with Amanda Pope as our new Western coach. We're looking forward to a great season! We started with a great practice, team pictures, and the team promises to be fun and a challenge to the other teams in the area.



Since she is no longer on Hammond's equestrian team, we had to look for another outlet for Amber's high school PE credit. She was delighted to learn that karate counts - so we have rejoined Mr. Jerry and Amber's now working toward her second-degree black belt. She's so excited to be back in karate! I love that both my children are happy and enjoying their sports.



August also brought the beginning of the new school year and this time, we have the bookends of high school - a freshman and a senior. Time has passed so quickly! Amber attended the "get to know high school" seminar where she received a laptop and important information; Piper and friends decorated the school, their vehicles, and the class of 2019 started off the year with a bang! These "Sen19rs" are such a special group - how did they group up so fast?!?





Hammond gets the freshman started quickly as they have their annual trip the first weekend of school - to kayak down the Nantahala River together. Many students transfer in freshman year and this gives them a chance to bond in a fun way. They went down the river several times, did a photo/Instagram game, and spent the weekend having a great time, hearing stories from Mr. Manke, and working in teams.



Applying for colleges came to the forefront with Piper, as she had narrowed her choices to three; Anderson, St. Andrews, and Clemson.

She ended up applying to only her top two, as she was quickly accepted with nice financial offers from



both Anderson and St. Andrews. Both are wonderful choices to have and she feels so blessed. Trojans or Knights - we'll see!



Flamekissed's first two shows, in September, the girls had to miss due to a zoo commitment, but the team placed 1st and 3rd overall for both middle and high school. What a great start! Amanda had to go it alone as the coach at her first show for a great reason - her sister had a baby! We welcome little Bertie to the world. I understand she's already been on a horse. Creekside's first show also went well, and the team secured a reserve championship win for high school and champion middle school team placement. We are so blessed to be a part of two teams that treat each other like family! Love our barns!



We also want to congratulate our friends the Schellings on biting the bullet and purchasing a horse of their very own! Kate and Jazz will make a wonderful barrel racing team, I'm sure! He sure is beautiful and she sure looks happy!

Piper quickly received her acceptance from Anderson and St. Andrews - she had a decision to make!



Lee and I celebrated our 21st wedding anniversary this past September. So much has happened over the years. A hurricane kept us from the GRHA horse show, but allowed us to have some time with Lee's mom, who came to stay with us a few days in case it was bad. We really enjoyed spending time with her and hated for her to head home again.





Piper's 18th birthday was celebrated at Urban Cookhouse with friends and everyone had a great meal and lots of fun. They are such a wonderful group of kids! So blessed that she has such wonderful Christian friends! We teased her that we're going to start charging rent, since she's now an adult. She's a little nervous... ;)

We blinked and our baby grew up - she's such a wonderful, sweet, thoughtful, loving, mature young lady. So blessed! Her love for the Lord, children, and animals will be where she concentrates her efforts in college - I can't wait to see where it takes her!

While Piper loves Coach Carla Wennberg and St. Andrews Equestrian Team, from the time she stepped onto the campus of Anderson University, they had her heart. She confirmed that and so she made her final decision rather early that Anderson is where she wanted to go. Other than these two schools, she didn't apply anywhere else. She's so blessed that she had some great choices and she could not have made a wrong decision between them. Go Trojans! We'll start having a lot of black and gold around our house as we progress toward graduation, I'm sure.



October brought the next ranch show and the final SCQHA/AQHA show of 2018. Both girls went and did well, and they had a wonderful time with their friends and their horses. It also brought the SC State Fair, which Piper enjoyed with some friends. The Angle's came to visit and see Locklan's last play at USC. Piper and Elaina have been friends since age 3 - such a special relationship! Can't believe they are now 18! Halloween brought trick-or-treating with Creekside Farm as they went through the neighborhood, even visiting Mama and Daddy's. Piper went to Bible Study that evening after dropping by her grandparents' home too (it was a Wednesday this year) - she said she was getting too old for that much candy.



Piper and Amber started out their Western IEA season with a bang - we didn't get to ride with the team in their first two shows, but the next two our team was one of the hosting teams. It turned out to be a wonderful show - very large and competitive. Both Piper and Amber did well and the high school team was 3rd and 2nd in the AM and PM shows; middle school team was first in both! At the end of an IEA show, there is an award given to the high point Open rider - and this time, Piper won for the afternoon show! I was so happy for her. Her friend Jada won for the morning, so these two girls had a great day. Amber and Piper, between



them, placed in all four classes they were in and the competition in these classes was pretty tough. So proud of my girls and this team. After the show, while setting up for the awards, the DJ played the Cha Cha Slide, Electric Slide, the Macarena, and other line dances and kids from every team went into the arena and danced. They were happy and supportive and all had a wonderful time.



I was just happy to see Piper back to enjoying showing. We had had three consecutive weekends of showing at this date - GRHA, SCQHA, and IEA - and she had a great time and was more relaxed at each one. My gift to her and from her this year was to enjoy her sport during her senior year of high school. I'm so thankful to Amanda Pope and Adrian Mack for making competition what it's supposed to be - a fun, learning and growing experience with caring, considerate team-mates. Piper has come back to herself and I'm so very happy about that.





Between IEA shows came the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November - that's voting day. I had the honor and privilege to accompany Piper to her first time voting in a national election. Pray, then vote. God is in control, so be happy with whoever goes in. If you don't like it - vote again next time!



The second IEA horse show weekend (making four in a row!) brought a great indoor arena in NC, which was nice, as it was cooler in there than in GA. The weekend went as well as the last, and we left with both girls qualified for Regionals, as well as many of their teammates. Our team has four open riders and three of them rode in the same class - they swept it! First, second, and third places! Sarah Evelyn joined us, as she'd decided to cross over from Creekside and try Western. In her first three Western shows EVER, she has 13 IEA points. (You need 15 in 5 shows to qualify.) She's a beautiful rider! Flamekissed coach, Amanda, made everything so much fun. We are so



blessed to have this team. Between Flamekissed and Creekside, the girls have been reminded of what it means to be on a team - to care about each other, cheer for each other, work together, and have fun while remaining competitive; many of this was missing until Adrian and Amanda - so blessed to have them!



I didn't get to see them ride in the second show, as I left the show to drive to Butner, NC to pick up a new family member - a 10 week old Sheltie puppy! This little Sheltie captured our hearts online and Jan Smith was a wonderful and helpful breeder. We decided on the name "Huckleberry Fynn" and call him Fynn. He's playful, curious, smart, and resourceful. We are in so much trouble! His introduction to our other pups went well and he sleeps through the night already! I'm sure there's going to be some "bumps" but we are so excited to have the little fellow in our family! Fynn is a wonderful early Christmas gift for our family.



Another exciting event happened at PC. In the Fall of 2012, the college decided to discontinue the computer science major and just offer a minor to our students. I have worked since that time to reinstate it and now, with the help of Dr. Greg Goeckel, PC will once again offer the computer science major to our students, beginning in fall, 2019. We will also offer two minor programs - a minor in computer science as well as a minor in programming, app, and web development. We are very excited to be able to offer these opportunities to our students.



November also brought the official senior and freshman yearbook pictures of the girls - they have grown into two such beautiful young ladies - inside and out.

The Wednesday before Thanksgiving, we went for Amber's pre-surgical x-rays. While we had prayed for a miracle and another reprieve, it was not to be this time - the curve was still at the "surgery required" degree. We look toward 12/17 with a bit of anxiety, but we know that God has a plan for Amber and has blessed us with a wonderful surgeon that we have known for 18 years - he assisted on Piper's surgery



when she was 15 months old; he put Amber's leg back together two years ago, and he's had 30 years' experience with corrective scoliosis surgery. God has placed us in excellent hands.



Throughout the year, the Riverbanks Zoo interns continue to work one Sunday each month and additional volunteer hours. Amber really enjoyed helping with "Boo at the Zoo" handing out candy to the kids as they came by. She and Piper have been trained on many small animals, including the tenrecs, skinks, snakes, and more! They clean by the river and work to recycle waste. They love their zoo adventures! This is a wonderful opportunity - lots of work, but lots of learning and lots of fun! Mrs. Grace runs an awesome program!



Thanksgiving came with fun food, time with family and friends, and an extra furry baby in the house. We found that Oreo was an excellent and patient puppy sitter, as he let Fynn pull his fur, play bite him, and run around with him all morning. Fynn quickly picked up on the order of treats, as Tango gets turkey first, then Snowball, then Oreo, THEN little puppies! He's not sure he agrees with this, but he sits so pretty when it's his turn! They all gathered around Lee's feet for their taste of the bird - and then everyone else got to eat. We were joined again by Clint, a friend from church, who was kind enough to document the event with some amazing photos. After dinner, we went across to the barn to check on Duke and Fancy and get a few more family photos.



Lee also continued to work with the media services group at Riverland Hills Baptist. It's wonderful that our sermons and celebrations can continue online for those who want to repeat them or can't make it. Check it out at:

<https://riverlandhills.org/media/>

Piper and her friend Eliana left Thanksgiving evening with Eliana's family for some fun "Black Friday" shopping - Eliana and Piper plan to room together at Anderson next year and



are very excited as they plan their room decorations and think about the future. It's so bittersweet that, when a parent's job is complete and successful, their baby moves away. We feel very blessed that Piper has such good choices, such good and true friends, and the support of her family as she moves into the next phase of life - going out on her own. The next few months will bring many changes for our family.



We wish you all a very Merry Christmas. I hope to hear soon from you and all your annual adventures. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers as we move into December with Amber's surgery. We look forward to all the coming adventures as we continue moving forward and into the New Year. Merry Christmas, everyone!

Love,

*Lee, Paige, Piper, Amber,
Tango, Snowball, Oreo, Fynn,
Duke, and Fancy*

