



MARLER

Christmas Newsletter



Volume 17

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Another year has passed us by. How the time flies! We dealt with military separations and health issues with Keegan but overall we had continued blessings for our family! We look forward to ringing in the New Year and what surprises it has in store for us. We are praying for no separations, improved health and continued developmental gains for the children.

We concluded 2006 with the four of us together safe and sound. Christmas was simple. We had just moved into our



new home so we were still in the process of unpacking. New Years Eve was uneventful and we all were in bed and asleep before midnight. We missed the fireworks on the Las Vegas strip.

The rest of January remained typical. We continued with the kids' demanding schedules. Jeff left for Montgomery, Alabama for Squadron Officer School (SOS). While he was there he visited many old friends near Fort Rucker and also at the Children's Hospital in Birmingham where Keegan was treated for cancer.

In late February, Jeff graduated from SOS. He graduated the top third of his class and Top Contributor for his flight.

Upon returning from SOS, Jeff was told he would be sent to Iraq for a couple of months. Before he left we had our landscaping completed. It was finished just in time to celebrate Keegan's 8th birthday. This year we threw her a Princess



party with several of her girlfriends from school. It filled our hearts to see Keegan socialize with typical peers and enjoy all the attention. The little princesses really had a royal time!

In March, Jeff returned to Iraq for his third tour. Mid month, Braden took part in a Special Olympics bowling tournament with his secondary autism class. Braden really enjoys bowling and did quite well. Later, Keegan suffered another set of seizures while at home. The seizure showed no signs of stopping. Kristy prepared Keegan for her Diastat injection. The amount had increased due to the multiple seizures she had last April. The increased dosage caused Keegan to have very shallow breathing so Kristy called an ambulance and

Keegan was rushed to the emergency room. The seizures continued throughout the transfer and into the Pediatric ICU. Kristy was able to get a message to Jeff's unit, which notified him in Iraq. While in the emergency room, Jeff called from Iraq to check on Keegan. She was given so much sedation to stop the seizures that she was out for nearly a day. For the next four days, Braden remained at home with some of our therapists while Kristy camped out at the hospital. Keegan's cat scan showed no problems, but a MRI is best way to check for her type of tumor. Apparently the hospital was too busy to schedule Keegan for a MRI, so after four days Kristy demanded to be released from the hospital since there was no explanation for the seizures. Keegan's Doctor increased her anti-seizure medication and we hoped it would be enough. Kristy made an appointment and returned for a MRI the following week, but the hospital was unable to keep the appointment.

In April, after two attempts, Keegan's MRI still hadn't taken place. Easter was simple with hidden baskets and a dinner out for Kristy and the kids. Kristy once again celebrated another birthday without Jeff. This year she turned 41 and asked that we not mention her age in our newsletter anymore. Jeff returned from Iraq at the end of April. We were so grateful to have him back home safe and sound! He returned to his 66th Rescue Squadron (Combat Search and Rescue - CSAR) unit where he was still the Chief of Mobility. This kept him very busy with all the deployments to the Middle East.

In May, Braden and Keegan took part in the Nevada Special Olympics track and field competition here in Las Vegas.



This comprised of a running event, ball toss, long jump and javelin throw (with NERF rockets). The children were able to bring along a typical peer buddy from school to compete with them. Both kids received a ribbon for their participation. Mother's day was bitter sweet this year as we euthanized Cheyenne. We adopted Cheyenne in 1991 when we lived in Norman, while Jeff was studying at the University of Oklahoma. We wanted a playmate for our one year old Dakota (sweet pup we found in 1990). Dakota passed two years ago and Cheyenne was lonely. We adopted Bailey in December to keep her company. Bailey

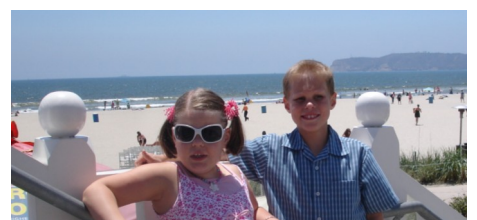


was just too young and energetic for her. Cheyenne had bad arthritis, was mostly deaf and began losing her sight. She woke up on Mother's day suffering and we loved her too much to allow that to go on. Cheyenne was a beautiful, gentle, loyal and sweet natured dog. She traveled to Europe and to quite a few states in her long 17 years. We miss her but take peace in knowing she is running around Heaven with Dakota. At the end of the month, we went through big changes in our home therapy team. That has been a constant struggle since we started therapy five years ago.

In June, Jeff flew to Albuquerque, New Mexico for simulator training. While he was away the children finished out their school year. We were all excited because it meant we were heading out on our annual Disneyland trip. Once Jeff returned we packed his truck and headed to Anaheim, California for five days. We stayed at our favorite hotel and did everything and anything we wanted. It was pure Disney bliss! When the trip



ended we jumped back into the truck and headed to Coronado, California. Jeff had to fly some training flights over the open ocean. Kristy and the kids enjoyed the cute town of Coronado and the beach while Jeff was flying. When he wasn't flying, we went to SeaWorld, Old Town, Downtown San Diego and the Del Coronado Hotel. It was the perfect ending to our vacation. It was so relaxing and



rejuvenating! We celebrated Father's Day at the beach. When we returned home, Jeff transferred to a new unit called Red Flag. He is the Officer in Charge of the Search & Rescue shop. This job allows him to fly with his old unit when Red Flag is not underway. For the most part this is a non-

deployable assignment. That made Kristy very happy!

On July 2nd, Keegan had more seizures. They started while at our community swimming pool. Kristy and the therapists rushed her home to give Keegan the Diastat to stop the seizures. Keegan continued to seize so once again she was taken by ambulance to the hospital. We still had not had her MRI done after two more attempts (totalling five attempts). Because the Fourth of July was approaching and the hospital was slow, Keegan finally had her MRI while hospitalized. We were out of the hospital in three days. The MRI showed no return of her brain tumor (Praise be to God!) and once again the Doctor increased her Diastat dosage. We were exhausted from the hospital stay, so the Fourth of July was uneventful. We had a BBQ dinner and watched fireworks from our bedroom window.

In mid July, Braden celebrated his 10th birthday with a pizza & pool party with three of his best friends from



school. The kids had a fabulous time and it was the perfect way to fight off the Vegas heat. Jeff's mom, Lucille, and hubby Doug stopped by for a short visit



as they were out here for a bowling tournament. We even managed a little antique shopping and had a nice time! We ended the month celebrating our 19th wedding anniversary. We went to the Las Vegas strip for dinner, watched the "Spamalot" play and went dancing. Because we aren't as young as we use to be, we were home before midnight!

In late August, a week before school was to start, Keegan had more seizures. This time she responded correctly to her Diastat, stopped seizing, went into a deep sleep and awoke refreshed. Kristy started volunteering at the kid's elementary school. She helped get the school ready for new school year. This year Braden is in 4th grade; splits his time in a typical class (which includes "SPECIALS": PE, music, science, computer lab, library and art), in Resource for academics, and in a secondary Au-



tism room with the assistance of his aide, Mrs. Sandy. Keegan started 2nd grade with a similar schedule with her aide, Mrs. Michelle. The kids love their aides and teachers. The staff provides stability, compassion and security while on campus! The kids have many friends at school this year and the social gains are invaluable. The kids love school for different reasons; Keegan's strength is academics, Braden's is socializing.

In September, Jeff went to Temecula, California with his RED FLAG CSAR shop for parachute jump qualification training. While his survival experts jumped, Jeff got to fly in the airplane. On the last day, they took part in the filming of the VH-1 reality TV show "Flavor of Love" starring rap recording artist Flavor Flav. Since Jeff was flying with his guys that day, he was in the copilot seat of the plane during some of the shots. Who knows if you will be able to see him. On the home front, we had another therapy team change, which is very strenuous on all of us especially the children. Keegan finished out the month with the completion of her first year of piano lessons and has done very well. We were pleasantly surprised by her demeanor during lessons, her in-



creased knowledge and her ability to play. She started to show a lack of interest and began protesting, so we are giving her a break. We will reintroduce it to her again later to see if she shows any interest.

Before we knew it, it was October. Keegan had another seizure at school. Luckily, Kristy was volunteering that day so she had Keegan carried to the car, grabbed Braden and went home. Kristy prepared Keegan for the seizure and got the Diastat ready. Keegan went into a seizure and fortunately she responded correctly to the anti-seizure medicine. After her heavy nap she was back to her old self. On the 21st, we celebrated Jeffery's 41st birthday. Jeff will continue to let you know how old he is.



loween this year Keegan dressed up as Snow White and Braden was Indiana Jones. He especially loved having

He's not scared. This year we attended our community's Trunk-or-Treat celebration. All the neighbor children had a really great time. For Hal-



a hat and bullwhip from Disneyland.

In early November, Kristy's sister Kerri came for a long weekend to attend her high school's 20th reunion. We took her out to dinner, Cirque du Soleil's "KA" show and dancing at the infamous Studio 54. We had a great time and wonderful visit. Jeff worked the Nellis



Air show again this year. Kristy and the kids opted not to attend because the noise from the Thunderbirds really scared Keegan last year. For Thanksgiving we marked our one year anniversary in our new home. We had a big meal with friends; Laura, Braden's autism teacher, Rich, the kids' P.E. coach, and Alex, Jeff's Flight Doctor. The day after Kristy decorated the house for Christmas. To close out the month we had a nice visit from Jeff's youngest brother, Randy, and his wife Andrea. They are such a nice couple and fun to visit with. We also trained a new ABA team.

In December, we will take part in the Autism Walk-a-thon. Donations collected from family and friends will make a nice sized donation to the cause. Kristy's high school girlfriend, Suzee, and hubby Bernard will stop by for a short visit. Kristy always looks forward to seeing Suzee. We will attend a few holiday parties and look forward to hosting our own holiday gathering. It is our way of thanking the children's therapists (new and old), teachers and selected school staff for their dedication and commitment to our children's fight with Autism. We want to say a special Thank You to: Home team~ Cassandra, Whitney, Elaina, Cameron, Beth, Robby, Richard, Jamie, Jessi, our consultant Joe Donohue and school team~ Mrs. Sandy, Mrs. Michelle, Ms. Anderson, Mrs. Karas, Ms. Erica, Ms. Kay, Mrs. Tamara, Mrs. Burkhardt, Ms. Steik, Mrs. Manning, Mr. North and our principles Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Cooper. All these special people have really big hearts and we adore them. We feel so blessed to have so many angels among us.

We continue to have monthly Lovaas workshops, endless therapy hours (ABA, Speech, OT) and school. The kid's schedules remains full and they continue to gain. We are proud of them and for putting up with it all.

Remember, if you are ever in Las Vegas, be sure to look us up for a visit. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Love,

Jeff, Kristy, Braden & Keegan Marler

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