

Feather Christmas Letter 2018

Dear Friends,

I hope this letter finds you well and your lives filled with joy. I must admit that I write this letter at the end of each year and include my favorite pictures to remind myself of the good times and to refocus my energies on what has been good in my life the past year!

This has been perhaps our biggest travel year – demonstrated by Dave earning the southwest companion pass since they simply can't give the man any more drink vouchers. Ginger did fieldwork in Marrakech and Agadir, Morocco and a conference in Beirut, Lebanon (Jan-Feb), a couple's trip to Aruba (March), G's friends Paula and Susan visiting from DC (April), and a visit from our former Moroccan exchange student Yasmine (May), then multiple family trips to Vegas with G (April), GKAv (May), G (June), GAAv (July), and G (December) with a big end-of-year/New Year's family trip planned to Vegas (Dec 27-Jan 3). In addition, we enjoyed a week at Lake of the Ozarks boating, shopping, playing cards, and (almost) escaping another escape room (Aug). We celebrated Dave's dad's 95th birthday in Kentucky (October), followed by a couple's trip to Denton, Texas to see Kyle's first opera (October), a couple's trip to San Antonio for the MESA Conference (Nov), and another trip to Kentucky for Thanksgiving (Nov)!

Dave is still working in Nevada and flying home almost every weekend. While doing all the remote working, traveling for work, commuting, and fixing everything we break while during the week, Dave somehow managed to "sneak in" rebuilding our staircase. Alec and Hayden helped and it turned out perfect (as is usual for his DIY projects). Dave officially committed to working in Las Vegas until December 2019 so we will soon be considering options of whether he will extend, find a job in KC, or who knows what else. We continue to stretch and demonstrate our courage, ability to sacrifice, and determination prompted by the degree to which we push our capacity to commit to new challenges, often driving unconventional familial arrangements, but we're making it work.

Ginger continues to toggle between job applications (64), article and book projects, and driving kids to and from...She enjoys jazzercise, tutoring in Arabic, audited a class on Fieldwork in Developing Countries in the fall, and recently started a Ladies Book Group (Anyone??). She's applied for a 2019-2020 Teaching-Research Fulbright in Morocco with an affiliation at al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane and recently learned she's made it through the peer-review portion of the selection process!

Alec (20) is a junior/senior at University of Kansas and plans to graduate with his BA in May with a major in Political Science and minors in English and Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies. He continues to work at the Dole Institute of Politics, participates in KU's mock trial (for which he won two expert witness trophies), and was active campaigning for 3rd District Representative Sharice Davids. He continues to help as a judge for his high school's We the People program. Alec plans to start law school in the fall and recently learned KU has awarded him the Jayhawk Scholarship (which means a full-ride if he attends KU Law school). He is still deciding between international law and elder law, which will determine if attends KU or another "reach" school.

Kyle (18) wrapped up his high school years with a flurry of activity, enjoying shows with the Improv Team and final band concerts, singing in All-State (Feb), completing his Eagle in Scouts (March), competing in the nationals of We the People in Washington, DC (May), and graduating on Mother's Day! His barbershop quartet placed 8th in the Nationals in Orlando, Florida (July) and he finished off his high school musical stint as Cloppin in *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Feb) and Jean Valjean in *Les Miserables* (July). Along the way, he's drastically altered his diet to deal with his Acid Reflux. Now a freshman at the University of North Texas with a double major in Music Education and Vocal Performance, he sings with the University Singers and enjoyed performing as Mole and Dragonfly in his first Opera, *Cunning Little Vixen* (Nov) for which he had to learn to rollerblade! He is happiest when he's spending time with Allison Polisky or singing tags with...virtually anyone!!

Hayden (17) is a junior at BVNW, a froster and baker at Nothing Bundt Cakes, a soon-to-be licensed driver, and an artist. He has continued to do modeling for New Rules Compression Garments and to amaze us with his frenetic masterpieces and attention to detail. He is considering art school but may take a gap year to figure out what he wants to be when he grows up. He is happiest hanging with boyfriend Brett! Like Alec, Avery, and me, Hayden found out he has Hashimoto's Disease and this year his thyroid stabilized enough so we're able to start meds to help with that!

Avery (15) is a sophomore at BVNW, a restricted and frequently-grounded driver, and a froster at Nothing Bundt Cakes! When not hanging with the Footloose Clique or being an angsty teen, she has enjoyed roles in many plays and musicals: a statue in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Feb), a specialty dancer in *Urinetown* (Mar), Paulette in *Legally Blond* (June), "the sick prostitute" in *Les Miserables* (July), a narrator in *Book of Days* (Oct), Gillian in *To Gillian on her 37th Birthday* (Nov), Jessica in *Soapy Murder Case* (Dec), and now rehearsing Betty in *No, no, Nanette* (Feb). She's toying with the idea of pursuing a career in theater and has started voice lessons, tap, and jazz.

As if we weren't busy enough, Ginger thought we needed an exchange student for the year...

Nour (17) is our exchange student from El Kef, Tunisia! She is amazingly resilient and seems un-phased by the crazy pace and mood changes of the Feather clan. She enjoyed cross country in the fall and plans to swim in the spring on the BVNW school team. She brings a calm, positive energy to the home during the week and appears to be one of the few exchange students still with her original host family (Did I mention resilience?) Nour seems happiest when slathering large amounts of Harissa (Tunisian hot sauce) on literally anything!



This is where we started....



This Facebook post really says so much about the crazy business and stability of our family!



Happy Holidays and a Joyous New Year to All of our Friends and Family!!
GDAKHAv & N

And then there were more.....



Yasmine, our former Moroccan exchange student, surprises Kyle for his grad party! She's turned entrepreneur and is now founder and CEO of voyaj, a new type of travel company!

Kids driving and working has been a big rallying cry for the Mom this year as I'm really ready to get back to work...



Hayden's new driving glasses, suited up for the job interview...and then there was Brett!!



Kids Being Goobers and All Slicked UP!!



Nour El-Aifia from El Kef, Tunisia....I kid Dave that we talked about 6 kids, 4 of our own, a Moroccan, and a Tunisian!



The kids continue to be dramatic on (and occasionally off) stage.....i.e. All the world's a stage....



G's Fieldwork in Southwestern Morocco January and February and Conference in Beirut....so much good stuff is happening in Morocco!! I hope I'm there next year!! ☺



At the end of the day, this says it all....

