

## The Bentham Family Newsletter for 2008

Well, we're finally back on track with our annual Christmas newsletters. After a long drought, this is now two in a row. As we wrote a few months ago, our biggest news was that after six years of apartment living, we finally moved into a house again. How blessed we are! We're enjoying our new home more than words can express, and our new neighbors as well. It's a challenge to try to fit all the storage and apartment items that once filled a 2400 square foot home into a 1500 one; *simplify* is the buzz word for us these days.

Rachel, our Glamor Gal who will (GULP) be 18 in just a few months, is now in her last year of high school. It truly does not seem possible that we've come to this point, yet we are savoring every moment of this significant milestone in her life. When we started homeschooling, we never dreamed we would see it through to the end, but one year melded into another, and for our family, there has been no better experience than to learn together on a daily basis; we cherish this privilege. Rachel carries quite a heavy course load and is in the middle of several senior projects, one of which includes starting a home-based business. She's called it *Uniquely Yours* and among other things, makes custom styled cards and jewelry. Check it out at <http://uniquelyyoursbyrachel.blogspot.com>. Of course, she loves her job at Alethes and took us quite by surprise when she recently acquired an interest in Sales. So, instead of working in Accounting, she will now be calling on Loan Officers about their borrowers. If you know Rachel at all, the best part of this job is that she gets to talk a lot! Rachel's favorite field trip this year was when we went to South Padre Island and saw Grandma and Grandpa Bentham in Donna, Texas. In yet another milestone, Rachel has begun work on getting her driver's license.

Alyssa, now 16, and totally our *retro girl* has had many changes this year. After having grown her hair out for the last eight years, she got it cut much shorter (she wanted a 50's flip). She also started working at Alethes in February, in the Compliance department. She has blossomed through this experience in more ways than we could have imagined. Her poetry continues to be published on <http://www.skywritng.net> and she has made huge progress in her piano studies this year. We are so grateful that all the girls continue to excel in this area! Alyssa loves history and aspires to be an historical reenactress; she has already started her collection of costumes for what she hopes will be her future business. She also continues to grow her Coca Cola memorabilia collection at antique shops, eBay or wherever she finds something of interest. One of her favorite field trips was when all three girls treated us to Six Flags in San Antonio this summer. It was mighty hot and humid, but they didn't care. They enjoyed many of the rides, but the roller-coasters were the best.

Did we mention the word eBay? In this house, that word has become synonymous with Autumn. She loves to scour the site for good buys. We have to limit her or she would stay on all day. Autumn towers over her sisters and mother, and is growing into a pretty young woman. She turns 15 in March and started high school this year. One of her favorite memories of 2008 was when we went to see Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Guy in Mississippi in May. We had the opportunity to go four-wheeling on two different days and enjoyed their beautiful new home. Autumn has been helping Mom on projects and just started babysitting for our neighbors. She enjoys the experience and the children. Ever the artist, she has taken on the arduous project of painting a 27 piece Christmas village in painstaking detail. Imagine painting the eyes of a carousel horse that stands only 3/4 high! Of course, pets are Autumn's first love and she adores her new guinea pig, Gracie Ann. Rachel has one named Trixie and Alyssa has her Dollie. We lost three hamsters and a gerbil this year, but gained three *more* gerbils. John and the girls are relentless in trying to talk Mommy into mice. To date, she has denied their requests adamantly. Stay tuned, to see who wins!

For Valerie, it has been a challenge to juggle the move and homeschooling, but slowly things are settling into place. The best part of being in her own home is having appliances that work! She has not had much time to put into her scrapbooking, but has enjoyed decorating a house for the first time in a very long time. She has done a lot of staining projects with the girls lately. One of their woodworking assignments was to stain their loft beds; they did an awesome job! However, they would prefer to not see another can of wood stain ever again. She and the girls continue to volunteer on Thursday mornings at Hill Country Community Ministries' Clothes Closet and count it a joy to serve each week. Although Valerie has enjoyed all the field trips we've been on this year, the best ones are those where she finds a good bargain to make a home for her family.

John works at Alethes and heads up their Marketing and Communications efforts. After working in the IT department for the first year and a half, he was able to move back into the type of work he so loves. One of his favorite field trips this year took place just after Thanksgiving where we visited the Dr Pepper museum and Heritage Farms in Waco. John has a long list of special projects to do on our home things that he decided we could do ourselves instead of paying the builder for (extra electric outlets, etc.). He is soooo looking forward to having a garden in the spring! He's been waiting a long time and has already started the compost and planning.

We wanted to visit with you and are sorry that we had to make our conversation abrupt, but due to the move and the holidays following so quickly, we just ran out of time. We'll try to update you in the coming months. Look for new photos, poems, and other happenings on our web site at <http://www.ourlegacymatters.com>.

Three beautiful girls, 3 guinea pigs, six gerbils, one awesome husband and a grateful wife, make for a busy, yet love-filled home. Please come and see us when you have the time. We would love to catch up with each one of you at our cozy little cottage on 2300 Lauren Loop. And while we truly do love our home, we know that ultimately our refuge is in God alone...

*Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.*

~ Psalm 63:7,8

From our home to yours, have a blessed Christmas and a bright New Year,

John, Valerie, Rachel, Alyssa, Autumn, *Smokey, Oreo, Butterboy, Otis, Joey, Calvin, Gracie Ann, Trixie & Dollie*