

December 2011

Happy Holidays!

I always struggle with how to start this letter and this years' letter seems harder to start than others have been in the past. I hope this letter finds you and your families spending time together and enjoying the simple pleasures in life.

It has been a busy year for all three of us at work and unfortunately the refrain has been we are tired, stressed, and somewhat cranky. I'm extremely busy as the office manager of both locations of the Endoscopy Center which has been a stressful situation. I enjoy the people I work with so that helps but there is definitely more work than I can do in any one day! We took a week off at Thanksgiving and while I enjoyed my vacation I doubted it was worth it when I came back that first week. I'm still catching up three weeks later...

Christine is still teaching at Atascadero High School and is somewhat amazed that this is her 10<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. Over the last few years there have been so many cuts in funding and programs that everyday seems more difficult than the last. She seems somewhat better this school year because last year she was wishing that she had studied anything else in college! Last June she was chosen to be a reader for the College Board reading and grading the essays from the Advanced Placement US history test. It is a very prestigious honor but a considerable amount of work. She was in Louisville, Kentucky for 7 full days of work, ½ day of training for each of the 2 essays she read, 6 days of reading from 8 to 5 for a total of 1290 essays. She is still really busy at work and is on a number of committees for her district, the school, and the district's teachers union. She has also been going out with her fellow teachers every Friday after school. I'm getting used to her running late on Friday's if we have plans!

Elizabeth is really busy at Cal Poly with work and doesn't really want to talk about it much. There have been lots of cuts to programs and staff there too but the workload has also increased beyond the ability to get it all done. After our vacation over Thanksgiving Elizabeth doubted it was worth it too as she faced her piles of work and her staff. Everyone is in survival mode with work which spills over into personal lives. In April, the day after Elizabeth's birthday one of her best friends got married and Elizabeth was one of the maids of honor. It was a very busy weekend for all of us. She has taken time off to visit her other best friend in San Diego which has been good for her. The girls are planning a trip in the spring to Florida where their dad moved in August for a new job.

The girls and I spent Thanksgiving week on a cruise to the Mexico Riviera. It was the same ship we were on last year with a slightly different itinerary due to security concerns in Mexico. We got off in Ensenada and went to the port shops and then got back onto the ship for a relaxing day in the Sanctuary. Then it was a nice day at sea and two days in Cabo San Lucas where the ship was anchored in the bay. We got off the first day for a short time but didn't buy anything- they were a bit too much in everyone's personal space and if you stopped for even a second to look at something a bit too pushy. The weather was wonderful in Cabo and we enjoyed having a relaxing vacation.

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year!

GearyEllen