

It's hard to believe we just celebrated our 10th Anniversary this month, also seems to be a common number for our friends and neighbors. Life is much different than 2003... Thank you to everyone that came to our wedding and have been a part of lives before and since.

This has been a year of firsts, change and recovery. Dan had surgery on his ankle this past winter and wasn't able to join Nicholas out in the snow, so Janet stepped in with the igloo making and snow forts as best as she could (Dan is the one who loves the snow).

After 5 years establishing a good routine at the same day care, Nicholas graduated this past May from pre-K and before his classmates disbanded, the kids that Nicholas has spent all his time with over the years gathered for a fun picnic. Seeing them playing together that afternoon was fun and we, the collective parents, reminisced about their early years at the school.

This summer we drove to Washington DC (or Vienna, VA as Nicholas fondly remembers) to visit the best man in our wedding and his family. We enjoyed getting away, seeing the capital, hanging out and having "movie night". Although, it did take 2 nights for Nicholas to make it through "Transformers" since he kept falling asleep. The Smith boys loved the helicopters taking off from the Smithsonian, though Nicholas kept wanting to see the "real dinosaurs" instead of fossils.

Nicholas started Kindergarten in August and spent the first couple of days being very excited and waiting outside for the neighbors to walk together. Several neighborhood kids and a boy from his pre-K/daycare days are also at the school, which is nice. They have been in class together 5 years already and they just started elementary school! Dan and Nicholas still walk in the mornings, rain or snow, though he keeps asking to go back to his "old school" since it was easier then. Janet told him that his cousins in high school are thinking back to their Kindergarten days and wishing they were there too, enjoying "the good old days" when life was easier.

Dan's father passed away this fall and we all gathered for a wake in Springfield. There were a lot of memories for Dan and his siblings at his uncle's house where he had often gone as a child. We all enjoyed looking for Dan and his siblings' names on the upstairs ceiling. The evening was filled with many stories and pictures as everyone looked back. Since we told Nicholas that a wake was where we said goodbye to Grandpa Smith, he kept looking for him to show up.

This November we took a last minute vacation to Orlando, Florida to join some friends who were enjoying Disneyworld. Since Nicholas gets very excited about things, we didn't tell him about his first plane ride until the night before we left. He was pretty excited, especially when we mentioned that he could ride two planes since we had a connection. On the first full day, we all travelled to the beach where the Smith boys couldn't get enough of the sand and water! Day 2, Nicholas, and parents, went to Legoland, formally Cyprus Gardens, where he enjoyed the experience and is one of his current happy places. Janet got to ride all the ones that went around and Dan got all the wet rides. Day 3 took us to Disney Downtown where we took in more Legos and a lunch at the T-Rex restaurant and Nicholas imitating the mechanical t-rex entertaining all around us. Many firsts for Nicholas, including a kid-version rollercoaster, driving a mini-car, carousel and not the least, the plane ride. It was good to get away, even though we came back to snow.

Nicholas still loves music, especially the organ. His favorite musician, Judy told us about an organ exploration day for kids and he really enjoyed it. Also, his enthusiasm for cleaning hasn't changed and it is good that he can now "help" more, though sometimes its more work than to have him not "help." We are taking pictures so he can be reminded later about his early love of cleaning.

We look forward to a magical Christmas with Nicholas this year as he counts down to the big day. Best wishes for a healthy and happy New Year and we hope to cross paths sometime soon.

Dan, Janet and Nicholas

