

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Margaret

Margaret has enjoyed a productive year. She is currently teaching a Grade 4/5 split at Rama Central P.S., with 27 students. Margaret is continuing to teach curriculum through community service, wherever possible. So far, this school year, her class has organized the school's food drive for orphaned wildlife; donated \$250. to *Habitat for Humanity* through a writing project; raised \$156., via an in-class book and toy sale, to sponsor a tree on the *Highway of Heroes*; decorated Christmas stockings for the staff and former lab. and zoo chimps at Montreal's *Fauna Foundation*; and organized the school's winter clothing drive for the less fortunate. After Christmas, Margaret's class will be collecting goods for the local SPCA shelter, organizing the school's spring food drive for the *Sharing Place Food Bank*, and organizing a school-wide fund raiser in support of *Sick Kids Hospital*.

Outside school, Margaret is in her fifth year serving on the board at *Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary*, and continues to drive transfers between wildlife rehab. facilities. She also spent the summer creating wildlife habitat in our yard, obtained "Wildlife Friendly Habitat Certification" from the *Canadian Wildlife Federation*, and was honoured to have our yard featured in CWF's fall e-newsletter! This is Margaret's photo-essay about our wildlife habitat project: <http://blackdeer.ca/gardening/>

Two Hundred Children!

This year, the *Gordon Black Camp Fund* achieved a major milestone! We sent our 200th underprivileged child to summer camp at *Wye Marsh*, on full sponsorship! We want to thank everyone who has donated to the fund, which was established in 2003 as a tribute to Margaret's late-husband Gord and Emily's dad. We also want to thank *Wye Marsh* staff for their assistance with fund raising, handling all of the paperwork, and hosting the children at camp. Each year, *CAS* and *Big Brothers/Big Sisters* select local children from their caseloads to receive our camp sponsorships.



Emily, with her Honour Roll & Award Certificate

Emily

Emily's 2017 will be remembered for both great accomplishments and extreme angst. In May, she got her first part time job, as a "Customer Experience Associate" at our local Walmart store. Her Grade 11 marks earned her a place on the school's Honour Roll, and two academic awards. In July, she finished Grade 12 English early, via an online summer course and, during the summer and fall, she completed driving lessons with *Young Drivers of Canada*. Unfortunately, this year Emily also lost two friends to suicide. Brayden died in May, and Arianna, who Emily had known since kindergarten, died in October. Emily is coping better now, but the shock and grief of losing them, so close together, was almost unbearable.

Emily is currently in Grade 12, taking a High Skills Specialist Major in Cosmetology. She hopes to pass her driving road test over the winter, and has applied to the Law Clerk and Paralegal programs at three Ontario colleges. She is hoping to attend *Fleming College*, in Peterborough, starting next fall. The first round of college acceptances will be sent out in February.



Bailey and Company

Our two cats, Robyn and Dexter (age 9 and 10), and our little dog Sloan (age 7) have enjoyed good health this year. Bailey (age 8) did not fare quite as well. In May, she experienced a sudden onset of dizziness and nausea. The diagnosis was an inner ear disorder, called "vestibular disease" (similar to vertigo, in humans). It took almost two months for Bailey to fully recover, but by mid-July she was back to her lively, goofy self.

In October, Bailey's vestibular disease returned. This time, our vet referred Bailey to a specialist, to undergo scans and tests to rule out a brain tumour or other serious disorder. Thankfully, Bailey's health insurance covered most of the cost! The good news is that all of the scary tests came back negative, and this time it only took four weeks for Bailey to fully regain her equilibrium. The not-as-good news is that the second round of vestibular disease affected Bailey's facial nerves, as well as her balance. The facial nerve issue has not resolved yet. It causes a weakness in Bailey's eyelid muscles, which prevents her from closing her eyes completely.

Margaret consulted with the vet about appropriate precautions for Bailey's eyes during extreme cold or sunny weather. The vet felt that doggie UV protection goggles would be helpful in preventing Bailey's eyes from freezing or becoming sun-blind from the glare off of the snow. We are still in the process of getting Bailey used to her goggles, but she's doing very well with her training.



Barbara and us, on a boat cruise in Tobermory

Vacations

This year, we squeezed several short trips around Emily's work schedule and online summer school course. We spent the May long weekend camping at *Six Mile Lake Provincial Park*. In early-July, we took a road trip to Montreal, to visit *The Fauna Foundation*, Canada's only chimpanzee sanctuary. In late-July, we took Margaret's Mom on a trip to Tobermory, where we rented a three-bedroom cottage for several days. In mid-August, we camped at *Restoule Provincial Park* for a couple of nights, and visited our friend Louise's cottage overnight. At the end of August, Margaret and the dogs spent a few nights camping at *Arrowhead Provincial Park*. (Em stayed home and worked.)



