

## **Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Clark Family!**

As is our tradition, we are in Fayette, Maine at the old farm for the week between Christmas and New Year, celebrating the completion of 2006 and the beginning of 2007. We've asked each of our daughters to write a few words about their families:

### **.Hilary and Scott**

Happy Holidays! It has been another wonderful year. Katie turned 1 in August and is walking around like a champ. She has also mastered climbing up and down the stairs (and tries to master all slides and jungle gyms and chairs as well). Kate is starting to use the word 'no' a lot...which will be really cute for about three more weeks...hahaha. She is already a big teaser and likes to try to trick us and make us laugh. She also likes to do anything her big sister Sarah is doing (Sarah will be 4 in February), which includes lots of singing and dancing and reading. Sarah has been working hard on her letters this past year and is close to perfecting the letters in her own name. She still loves to draw and color and paint and I struggle to find space for all of her wonderful artwork. Sarah and I participated in many fun Audobon Society nature classes this year. Some were in-classroom events about ocean life. Sarah liked making the crafts and eating the snacks that were provided. Other events involved stories and nature hikes. We were very lucky that we always had great weather for our hikes and it was fun to learn more about nature and have some special time together while we were at it. Kate, Sarah and I all enjoy weekly visits to the library for Preschool storytime and sometimes parties and concerts (we've hit most of the libraries in the area at one time or another in the past 12 months).

It seems very long ago that Megan and I walked for two days and 39 miles for the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, but it was by far one of the highlights for me of this past year. Thank you everyone for your wonderful and very important support. It was an incredible weekend and I'm so happy that we were able to participate and finish the amazing event. I also gave sculling a try this summer to indulge a years-long interest in boating. The class was wonderful and I really enjoyed my time on the water learning a new skill with a great group of people. Unfortunately I don't think my schedule as a stay-at-home Mom is ideal for learning the complexities of the art of sculling. I have decided to pursue kayaking next summer (no white water, please) in hopes of finding a compromise.

Scott has been promoted to Assistant Vice President and continues to enjoy his job at Mellon. He also loves spending time with the girls and me (especially bike rides, t-ball, and rough housing with Sarah). Sarah has also scored some coveted rides around the yard on Scott's new John Deere tractor, which he enjoyed tremendously as well. A lot of Scott's free time from work has been spent on refinishing the basement. He has done a lot of work with the small amount of time that he has and the space is finished enough to be used by the girls to play this winter (we can even use the trykes since there's no furniture yet). Scott has done a great job and although he's enjoyed the project, he's very excited to see an end in sight. We are both looking forward to spending Christmas Eve with the extended Flynn family (my Mom's sisters' families) and to visiting with Barbara (Scott's Mom) down in Florida in January. We wish you all a wonderful holiday season and the best of life in the New Year!

### **Megan and Dan**

It was the best of times, it was the hardest of times...

This past year has been the most amazing, life-changing, life-affirming experience I've ever had. The time has passed so quickly! I remember bringing Emma and Abigail home from the hospital (finally!)- they were so little. Here we are a year later, and although they are not large in stature, they are large in personality! Emma is my social butterfly. She loves to engage others. She is thrilled by the sight of family- especially her cousins. She has been practicing her walking diligently. I believe that she will be walking any day now. She says "Mama," "Dada," and her version of light and cat. She also says "Baby". We're not sure if she is referring to herself or to Abby. I call Emma my sunshine dolly because she is like a burst of

sunshine after a rainy day (course her earlier mood could have caused the rain). She is a sweet, loving baby who adores her sister, even if she is a little rough in demonstrating that love. My Abigail is such a joyful spirit. She finds (or makes) fun wherever she wanders...and she is a wanderer. She's quick and bright and courageous. She doesn't exhibit fear, and she has an "I'm up-to-no-good" smile, which can be a pretty disconcerting combination. While Emma practices standing independently on the ground, Abigail prefers to exhibit her prowess from a higher vantage point- like standing in the Lego bin (while the Legos are still in the bin)- ugh! Abigail has recently begun to exhibit an interest in learning to walk, as well. Initially, she preferred to sit on the sidelines clapping for Emma, however I think she has begun to see the appeal of walking (in addition to the praise which accompanies such efforts).

I'm currently enjoying my winter break from classes. I think it is safe to say that this past fall was the most challenging semester of my college career. I would never have made it through the semester without the help of Dan, my Mum and Dad (watching over the girls every Tuesday night) and Dan's mother, Betty (who has become a true friend and confidant over the past semester). Their devotion to me, Dan and our girls has provided Dan and I with sanity-saving respite, and our girls with invaluable bonding time with the most important people in our lives. I will begin my final class in January 2007. Once I have completed this class and my capstone project I will have completed my graduate degree!!!! My next adventure: what do I want to be when I grow up?

Dan has had another wonderful year at Fox Sports Net New England. He continues to love his job. He works the second shift, which allows him extra one to two time with the girls. Dan cares for the girls until he takes them to daycare at 11:00am. Dan is a wonderful father! He adores his girls, and they absolutely adore him. Dan hasn't been able to indulge in any of his hobbies while I have been in school, however summer is looking much more promising.

We wish you all a happy, safe holiday season. May you enjoy all of the wonderful changes that life brings your way in the coming year. We love you!!!

### **Kathy**

Once again, I asked the kids to help me with our portion of the annual Christmas letter by asking them what their favorite memory of the past year was.

Heather: "My favorite thing was seeing my family at the reunion."

Heather will be eleven in March and is now in the fifth grade. She was a little nervous about moving up to the middle school, but absolutely loves having a locker and access to the school store. Although she tends towards procrastination about homework and projects, she is a very good student and made the honor roll her first term. She continues to be a voracious reader and is re-reading the Harry Potter series. She participates in two afterschool clubs. On most Tuesday afternoons, she goes to Paws and Claws, where the members talk about animals and sometimes bring in a pet to share. In November, I was able to carpool and chaperone a club field trip to the MSPCA in Methuen. Heather particularly enjoyed playing with the cats. On some Thursdays, she attends the Chess Club. According to my dad, she's pretty good. She has also continued with Girl Scouts as a second year Junior, and has already been on her first camping trip of the school year. This fall, she began taking gymnastics and she loves it! All three of the kids started swimming lessons and are really enjoying them. Heather also participated again this year in our church's Christmas pageant, "A Not So Silent Night," and was very pleased to garner one of the major roles. She has also taken to "writing" her own songs and plays and is always prepared to perform for a willing audience.

Mikayla: "My favorite thing was rolling down the hill at Plimoth Plantation!"

Mikayla is eight and is in the second grade where she has been doing very well. Kayla and I have continued with Brownies and have enjoyed many fun activities. At the end of this school year, we will be flying up to Juniors. She and Nathan played soccer on the same team, the Green Goblins, this fall. She decided not to play next spring, opting instead to take gymnastics like Heather. She started a session after Heather, but seems to be catching up quickly. This year, Mikayla also participated in the church Christmas pageant,

playing one of the donkeys that sang "Away in the Manger." She has recently discovered Sudoku puzzles and she and I enjoy working on them together.

Nathan: "My favorite thing is STILL everything."

Nathan is six and loving first grade; his teacher, Mrs. Carter, is awesome! Like his older sister, Heather, he is quite a good speller and it seems to be helping him with his reading skills. He really made huge improvements with his soccer skills this fall, as well, and will be playing again in the spring. He and I have really been enjoying the time we've spent together as Cub Scouts...geez, are boys different than girls!

As for me, I celebrated my ten year anniversary at The New England Center for Children in September. Although, like any other job, it has its frustrations, I am still extremely satisfied with my position in the agency and looking forward to many more years there. In January, I will also be celebrating five years as a consultant with Creative Memories. Although this may be the first year I will not be in the red at tax time, I continue to run the business primarily as a means to support my own scrapbooking habit! Working on my albums pretty much fills up any free time I have. In fact, Dad had to drag me away from them in order for me to write this, so, if you'll excuse me, I'll sign off now and get back to them. Merry Christmas and may you enjoy a wonderful year of many memorable moments!

### **Ruthie**

The Heather Fund continues to contribute books to the young school children of Lowell. This year the Heather Fund donation went to the Bartlett Community Partnership School, Lowell. This year Hilary, Megan and I will be readers at Abraham Lincoln School Community Readers' Day. We continue to enjoy remaining a part of the Lincoln School extended family.

We also continue to enjoy our Family Nights on Fridays, with occasional special guests from out of town, or local family and friends who can make it.

This past fall, I volunteered to watch over Emma and Abby on Megan's school nights. This gives me special time with them, and it's been a pleasure watching them learn new things. Right now, Emma is taking steps, but they are still mostly cruising around. Abby seems to prefer her commando-style maneuvers to climb into precarious positions, then smile at the onlooker! No sooner had I volunteered to watch over the girls, than I was asked to join the Missions Committee at Church, which meets on the same night, in the first week of each month. Bill immediately volunteered to cover the meeting nights, and he even went with me on a getting-to-learn-the ropes run the week before he was to solo. It all went swimmingly! This coming semester Megan's class is on a different night, and one of Megan's friends will alternate coverage with me.

We had wonderful visits with family and friends at the summer of 2006 Evans Family Reunion. As usual there were great conversations, meals, and we enjoyed some sightseeing together in Plymouth, MA, including Plimoth Plantation, where actors play the roles of the original settlers. Several characters are portraying ancestors of the Evans clan!

This year my family week at the Cape was even fuller with more grandchildren. It was Katie, Emma, and Abby's first Cape summer, and they all seemed to handle the full days and full house very well! The young mothers developed a strategy for what they call the witching hour, that time of day after the children have had a long day at the beach, have been showered, have eaten, but before bedtime. Each of the young mothers, and Tara Jean, planned an activity to do with the children. This is a tall order because of the age range, but all the activities were successful, fun events to engage the children for the witching hour and then ease them to a quiet transition to bed. Some of the events included: hand-printing (and in the case of the babies, foot-printing), cousin tee shirts; games at the park; a walk to the duck pond to feed the ducks; etc.

This year I got to watch Kayla and Nathan play soccer, Kayla and Heather take roles in the Sunday School Pageant, Kayla at her badge ceremony for Brownies, and Nathan and Kathy in their Cub Scout uniforms heading off to a den or pack meeting. Now its Nathan's turn to be learning the many new spelling words, and he's doing a great job.

Over the summer, I still headed off to shop at BJ's with Kathy and the children, and often we had lunch afterwards at McDonald's. Nathan's favorite activities include playing with super/action heroes such as Power Rangers, Buzz Lightyear, Spiderman, etc. He prefers us to read to him about these superheroes as well. Sarah continues to learn so many new things, including from her field trips with Hilary to the Audobon nature activities and events. Now Katie also loves looking at books, carefully turns the pages, and Sarah will sometimes "read" to Katie or to us.

My work at Middlesex continues to keep me busy and interested. Bill and I are thankful for the wonderful people in our lives, for the good health we enjoy, and for so much in life that holds interest and pleasure for us.

### **Bill**

This has been a great year! Ruthie and I have been so incredibly blessed with our family and friends, and with another year of good health. Ruthie and I had a great 2 week vacation in Phoenix with my brother Dick and the western Clarks, and we're heading back for our 2007 Winter Vacation next week (I'm writing this Feb 2, 2007). These vacations typically include some extended family, and this year Carol, Bahama John, Carl Crockford, and Bill McLucas will all be spending some time with us.

The big trip for me was "The Great Alaska Motorcycle Trip". There is a full explanation with photos on my website: <http://velocette.us/Alaska.htm> but the short version is that Carl rode his Harley from LA to Dick's in Phoenix, then flew to Boston. After some fun here, we loaded my 1966 BMW R50 motorcycle in my van and we drove to Phoenix. Then the 3 of us, with Dick on his 1969 R60, headed out for an 8 day, about 1500 mile trip through Northern Arizona and Southern Utah (Alaska seemed a little far for this trip). We had a blast, and hope to have another trip next Fall in New England.

I just accepted a one year, full time contract with Nortel, so it looks like my long vacation is over!

We all send our love, and hope you have a great 2007!