



Merry Shebazzle 2010

Holiday News

GREETINGS, HOLIDAY CHICKENS!



Welcome to the fourth annual electronic-style Bernstein family newsletter thingy. *(We're still down with the "green" thing and will be utilizing our paper, ink and postage savings to purchase carbon offsets for our vehicles and make a donation to a local soup kitchen.)* Sit back, relax and attempt to enjoy the following paragraphs. If Alli's reaction to reading this one over my shoulder is any indication, you probably won't. *(Update: she's decided to write her own to prove that she is a better writer than I am... keep reading!)*

Julie and Andrew (that's me!) started the year having just turned 40, and the mid-life crises were visible in full force over the early part of the year. Julie went all crazy and decided to get her knee all tricked out. She claims the surgery was for some meniscus tears and floppy cartilage action, but we all know the truth. **Mid-life bionic knee implants.**

Andrew took the plunge and followed through with his 40th birthday present from his spouse and mother-in-law, signing up for an improv class at Second City where he can pretend like he's still 20 once a week. The first class went well and Andrew found a new hobby, and has taken 3 more 8-week sessions. **Alli gave his first onstage performance a 6 out of 10.** In the coming year, Andrew hopes that Julie can

find more time for herself, and to continue pursuing her passion in photography.

On the performance front, Alli participated in her first full-length play this fall. Alli rocked the stage in two fantastic performances of **Charlotte's Web** as Fern (the little girl who saves the pig), and has officially caught an acting bug, now itching for her next stage performance.



Julie and Alli continued to home school this year. Alli's 3rd grade year of home schooling was such a success that we jumped on board for more. Julie has done an amazing job balancing Alli's diverse interests and incorporating them into a challenging and engaging educational journey, and our family is really benefitting from this flexible lifestyle. They take advantage of a strong local homeschool community, and use the entire metropolitan area as a classroom.



The number of activities Alli participates in (dance, music, sports, theater, etc) cannot be listed here **for fear that we might fill up the internet.** Andrew is still president of the PTA.

On the job front, Andrew completed his 5th year as a Data Management Architect (he doesn't really know what that is either) at Trans Union. In recognition of this milestone, he was awarded a rice steamer by the company. **The rice steamer leaks.**

Julie continued her masterful balancing act of educating Alli (and herself) while holding down a part-time job that occasionally flares up into a full-time gig, but conveniently offsets the cost of, well, **Alli.**



Community garden plot year 2 wasn't as swell as last year due to bionic knees, busy schedules, improv injuries and mother nature, but we did still manage to grow stuff, including **KALE**, and we've experienced very few side effects from consuming our harvests.

2010 also saw the celebration of Andrew and Julie's 20th wedding anniversary! Add Andrew to the list of people who don't know how Julie made it this far. In the spring Julie and Andrew will have been married more than half their lives. Andrew can't imagine a better person to spend his life with.

In the spring we added a new furry member to our family. Granger the cat came aboard and has snuggled (he hugs!) his way into our hearts. He has grown to be the **size of a small mountain lion** and Andrew fears he may eat Roo one day if we can't keep the food bowls full enough. Roo is

doing well after a cancer scare. One biopsy and a **small vacation budget** later, he's all well and as abnormal as ever (he tries to eat metal). Sadly, our beloved Maxwell finally gave into old age and is no longer with us. It took a while to recognize Alli without him at her side, but we are thankful he didn't suffer too much and that we were able to give him a wonderful home for the past 11 years. He is missed.



Due to life getting in the way, a fall road trip was postponed, although we did manage some local travel – including a blissful and educational overnight **camping** excursion to an organic farm. In the spring we also went to a wonderful statewide home school conference where we learned, played and had quality family time.

I'll close the "adult" portion of our proceedings by reiterating what Julie wrote last year, cuz she's swell and stuff. I will change 2010 to 2011. *Don't tell anyone I'm plagiarizing again.*

Our hopes for 2011 and beyond are to continue our path to living more simply and healthfully; to love, learn and laugh together as often as we can; and to always seek more ways to give more back to the world than we take. Many thanks to you, our friends and family, for the love and support you give to us. We wish you a season filled with warmth, joy and peace.

Andrew, Julie & Alli

Alli's Newsletter

Greetings, all! I hope this year has been as fun and exciting as it was for me. It's so shocking how another year has passed by so rapidly. Yikes!

This was my second year of home schooling, and even though at first it didn't seem possible (because last year was pretty awesome), it was the best year of learning that I've ever had, thanks to my mom! Throughout the year, I have gotten to do many cool projects (including Podcasting!), take awesome classes with friends, go to some great shows, care for some cool animals, and take many fun field trips (the Shedd Aquarium and Museum of Science and Industry are my favorites), and much more! I also got to be in my first play, which was A.W.E.S.O.M.E.! Even my dad has contributed to my learning process. He's been teaching me some computer programming stuff, using an application called Scratch.

Earlier this year, in mid March, we got Granger, who (if you don't know) is our newest cat. My mom and dad really should thank me, since I was the one who begged for him. You see, it all started in late February, when my dad and I were delivering some donations for the cats and dogs at C.A.R.E, an animal shelter in Evanston. I asked a person who worked there if I could play with a cat or two, and that was when I first met Granger. We both instantly fell in love with the cute little thing. A few days later, my mom said that we would go back to the shelter with us so that she could see for herself how cute and sweet Granger really was. She too loved the little cutie, and the next day, we ended up getting Granger. Thank you, thank you, very much!

And now for the saddest part of all. A few weeks ago, Max, otherwise known as my favorite cat, and best friend was taken to the vet and was euthanized. In other words, sadly, he is no longer with us. I really miss him, but I know that he didn't die in pain, so that part makes me feel a little better.

Have a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

And that now concludes the whole letter for 2010. Thanks for reading!

