

Our (Thirty) First Year Checkup

My son had his 12 month checkup at the pediatrician the other day, and all is well! It was kind of strange though, when the doctor asked my husband if I snored a lot. My husband admitted I do, and then the doctor proceeded to make me breathe for him. What the heck – is this a normal part of how a one-year-old baby is examined, by exploring the mother's snoring habits? The doctor then started describing some of my behavior as of late – you are tired all the time, and you feel lazy. Right on! He said he could tell just by looking at my puffy eyes that I probably have allergy problems, which is inhibiting my sleep patterns – did I mention that our pediatrician is also the county's medical sleep expert? So he recommended that I start taking Claritin and some nose drops. I tried the nose drops yesterday, and already I could breathe better through my nose better than I've been able to in months – funny how you don't notice things like this, but I've been so busy, I thought I was just tired from all the busy-ness, and I didn't really notice that I wasn't able to breathe much through my nose. I did notice that I've been itchy constantly – my eyes, behind my face, and now, I have this nasty spider bite on my knee I got on the 4th of July that will not go away – I itch constantly! I'm really hoping the Claritin works, and I can be back to the energetic mom I so want to be! Hey, maybe the allergy medicine will work SO well that I can get myself a pet cat ☺

So anyway, like I said, everything is going great with my son. I just thought it was weird when the focus of the doctor's appointment turned to me. He is doing great; he is 30 inches long which is exactly average for his age. He weighs 21 lbs, which makes him a little on the smaller side, weight-wise, so we have to try to fatten him up. The doctor

also said he should be standing more, but then again, I had scheduled his appointment for during his nap, so we had to wake him up to see the doctor. I don't know about you, but I wouldn't exactly be thrilled about standing up for someone in the middle of my nap either!

Jubilant Jubilee Time

Once a year, like many around the nation, our small town has a festival complete with carnival rides, games, and fried foods galore. Upon seeing how quickly our money disappears year after year, we vow to never return to our town's festival, called the Jubilee. But somehow, we find ourselves back there year after year, and the kids always do have a great time, despite the fact that a family could go broke because of this thing.

This year's Jubilee was great. My girls were looking forward to it for an entire week. Once they began to pull up the trailers and set up the rides come Sunday, the kids' excitement was unstoppable. And because we formulated a careful budget plan regarding the Jubilee this year, Mom and Dad were happy to see the little ones so excited. But there was one problem we did not foresee nor did we warn the kids about – the possibility of rain. And you know what I'm talking about – these traveling amusement companies are not going to refund your money just because it rained a little and they had to shut down some rides. It was quite a gamble – dash the hopes of the little ones or take our chances with the rain (and judging by the radar, we could tell it was probably going to rain all night). We decided to take our chances with the rain, especially since we were assured that they would keep the rides open unless there was lightening. Luckily for

us, the gamble paid off, and we were all able to enjoy many (wet) hours riding the rides, sampling the food (including my favorite Jubilee treat, Root Beer Float flavored Dippin' Dots), and mingling with friends we bumped into along the way.

The kids had a great time, and so did my husband and I, even though we rode ourselves sick. A ride called the Hurricane (boats that fly in a circle) was the one that did in my hubby, while the Orbiter made me feel like I suddenly aged a decade or two. Immediately following the Orbiter, with my head spinning, I made the unwise decision to get on a ride called Rock O Plane which is essentially a Ferris Wheel with circular cages instead of benches – and as the large wheel turns, the small cages with the passengers in them spin around independently, going upside down and sometimes trapping the riders facing head-first for what seems like forever... fun, but the combination of all those rides made my head spin for the rest of the night!

We returned to the Jubilee with my parents when they came to visit on Saturday when there were live bands to listen to, and it was just a nice atmosphere. The kids each got to ride a few more rides, and they were satisfied until next year...

AWWW!!!

We were playing in the back yard yesterday when we saw something furry laying on the ground. Thinking the dog had gotten an animal, I put the dog inside and made myself scarce while my husband investigated – I'm sensitive about animals, and if the dog had killed a furry little creature in the back yard, I wanted to pretend like it didn't happen. So I come back outside a few minutes later, and my husband is still

kneeling over the fur, saying he hasn't figured out what it is yet. What? Clearly the fur was not moving; why couldn't he figure out what it was? I fetched him a stick, and when he poked it, he found that it was just fur. And underneath the fur was a hole containing teeny tiny baby bunnies – live ones! They are incredibly cute, and they even hop! After some investigation on the internet, we found that the best thing to do is to leave them alone and that their mother didn't abandon them. Baby bunnies only get nursed for 5 minutes per day, and if the mother were to stay near the nest, she would alert predators to the babies. I couldn't resist pushing aside the fur to take a picture. It's very inconspicuous yet also in the middle of the open yard. I sure hope nothing happens to those babies. The first one is of the nest, then you move the fur, and the second picture is of a little head, note the white blaze on the top of the head. The third picture is a baby bunny face with eyes closed, see if you can find it in the middle of the fur:





I'm too afraid of hurting them to examine them closely enough to count them or take better pictures, but aren't they cute! From what I read, they will venture out of the nest at around 3 weeks old, and they will leave it altogether at 6-8 weeks. Judging by the size of our babies and the fact that we didn't see the nest before yesterday, I'd say ours are probably only days old; perhaps they were even only hours old when we found them yesterday! I am so glad we have a fenced yard now to keep the neighborhood cats out – we have a few, and I've been feeding one of them. I feed her at the front of the house though, so I wonder if continuing to feed the cat will encourage her to come over here or if it will distract her and keep her in the front of the house, away from the baby bunnies?

I'm excited to watch them grow – they already look bigger than they did yesterday! Maybe I'll post their progress on my blog – stay tuned!

Battle Of The Bulge

If you think this is a weight-loss blog post, click again!

Recently, I've noticed a huge bulge appearing in the floor of

our downstairs bathroom:



Ok, so it's difficult to see in the picture – it's a few inches above that rectangular green carpet, but believe me when I say it's getting bigger, seemingly by the day – it's now big enough to trip over! My husband thinks we'll be able to see what's happening by going into our basement and looking at it from below the bathroom floor. The only problem is that our bathroom is over the crawl space, not the basement. In the 2½ years that we've lived in this house, we've never set foot (nor knee) in the crawl space – it's always scary to think what one may find in a crawl space that hasn't been disturbed in years, at least for me. I guess I've seen too many horror movies... or maybe it's the fact that I grew up only miles away from the most macabrely (not a real word, but fits perfectly here if you ask me – maybe I will coin the term) famous crawl space – that of John Wayne Gacy, where 29 bodies were unearthed in the late '70's.

So anyway, someone needs to go into that crawl space to find out what this bulge it expands and takes over the entire house!

And we recently were told that our electric wiring in the house is out of date; here we've been spending money to fix up certain things on the house, and other things just keep breaking. Sometimes I'm not so sure about the joys of home ownership, sigh!

Before and Afters

As you might have read in my blog before the impromptu camping trip, we've been putting a lot of effort into a bunch of home improvement projects lately. Here are a few of the latest pictures:

Backyard, before and after the new fence:



Not from the same angle, but hopefully you get the idea. We now have a fenced-in play area for the kids, and the dogs have their own little area for their gross natural business.

Even the rats have moved on up into posh digs. Here is their new cage, where all 4 of them live together – harmoniously, I might add!

BEFORE:



AFTER:



The Scariest Night Of Our Lives...

... happened just the other night. It's really frightening and a huge reality check to know that you could be sitting somewhere (camping and enjoying the beautiful outdoors in my case), totally relaxed, and the very next minute, there is a life or death emergency – literally.

Before you fret, let me disclaim that everyone is fine but this was almost not the case. As you may have read in my

previous blog post, we decided to take our 4 kids camping and have been in the great wilderness of northeast Indiana during the past week. A few nights ago, my husband and I had gotten the kids to bed, and we were enjoying a horror movie on the porch of our cabin when we heard a strange noise – kind of like a kid laughing or coughing. Then, through the window, we see our oldest daughter Taylor practically jumping down the ladder that leads to the loft area in our cabin where our two oldest kids have been spending the nights. From her body language, it was obvious that someone was very hurt. My husband and I ran inside the cabin, just as Taylor said something about her sister choking on a gumball, and that's when we see our 5-year-old daughter Sammie in the loft, CHOKING. My husband grew wings, flew up to the loft and gave her the Heimlich until the gumball shot out of her throat and across the room. Sammie was catching her breath, but she was still drooling and not talking – the scariest moment of our lives! I was already on the cell phone with 911, and the dispatcher was asking me if I could bring her up to the front of the campground, so they didn't have to waste precious time by trying to find our cabin. Miraculously, Sammie started to talk and act like nothing even happened – that's kids for you! Poor Taylor was scared and shaking, so we told her what an AWESOME job she did *saving her sister's life*. We are going to write to our local newspaper about what a hero she is – without her quick thinking and correct response to the situation (she was actually dozing when it happened), I shudder to think that we could have lost Sammie... I just can't bear to think of it. Thank God everyone is ok! The very cool (thank you Steuben County emergency dispatch!), calm and collected dispatcher asked if I wanted to cancel the ambulance that was already in route, and I agreed and thanked her before I hung up – so that makes FOUR times I've had to dial 911 on my cell for this or that, not fun!

But we have outlawed gumballs in our family – just not worth that kind of agony! Maybe on their wedding days or on the

days they move out of our house and gain their independence, maybe then we will be the family that celebrates with gumballs after outlawing them for decades!

Bloggging In The Great Outdoors

Now that school is out, we decided to take a last minute camping trip with the kids and dogs, and it's been wonderful. More on that later – I am in a cabin, “roughing it” in the great outdoors (so to speak – we do have beds, running water, a bathroom, a/c, even a little fridge and microwave), but it doesn't even seem appropriate to be using a computer – just kind of takes away from the outdoorsy ambiance a little bit. But it rained yesterday, with more storms forecast for today and tomorrow, so I figured I would use some of my free time to let my faithful readers know that I haven't skipped town. Well, I kind of have skipped town, but in a good way, and someday soon, I'll be back to blogging like a maniac whenever I have the chance...

Until then...

Memorial Day Weekend

In honor of fallen US soldiers on

MEMORIAL DAY 2009



The dead soldier's silence sings
our national anthem. **-Rev. Aaron Kilbourn**

Despite the seriousness of Memorial Day and what it signifies, it is a day that is also known for kicking off the summer season in much of the United States – the season of swimming pools, backyard BBQ's, and days of school-less freedom for kids accompanied by the school-less dread cast upon many parents.

We had an action-packed but great Memorial Day weekend, beginning with a fun game night Friday night, and we stayed up too late. Saturday I slept late (though I still only got about 4 hours of sleep!), and while I was sleeping, the kids set up a garage sale and got quite a few customers – I wrote about this in a previous blog post. Saturday night we decided we would take the kids to experience the drive-in movie theater – best before the mosquitoes got too bad for the year (yeah right) and before it gets too hot out. We arrived at the drive-in early (I wrote about [this place](#) in another post as well; it's a drive-in movie theater that was built on a family's farm in the middle of the country), and we gave Ladderball (amazing what a dangerous weapon two balls on a string can be when in the hands of children) and Cornhole a try, but the kids had way more fun rolling on the huge area of open grass. They delighted in petting the roaming farm dogs, and likewise – the dogs loved it too. Before the movie started, we spilled 2 of the 3 cans of pop we had brought for

the kids, and then disaster really struck – the mosquitoes came out in full force. My oldest daughter, who has a propensity for attracting mosquitoes anyway, started getting eaten alive and screaming about it. Now the movie was starting – Oh, and it was Night at the Museum 2, something we really wanted to see. So we had to pack up our little “camp” and quickly pile into the van to escape the carnivorous mosquitoes. Once inside, it was hot and cramped. Luckily my son was asleep, but the rest of us were all in the back of the van with the seats down trying to stake a claim on a piece of steamless window so we could see the movie. More pop was spilled, and some blankies became unusable for the night, which of course caused more tantrums. There was about 20 minutes left in the movie when everyone settled down, and our 2-year-old fell asleep – 2 down, 2 to go! During the intermission between the movies, we found out that many of the mosquitos went away, and my husband and I moved outside while the girls laid in the back of the van. They did not see very much of Wolverine – our oldest didn’t make it past the opening credits. While we weren’t really interested in seeing Wolverine a second time, we did so anyway since we had already paid for it and we were now kid-free. It was such a nice night to sit under the stars and watch a movie, and it became perfect when a silent farm dog came over for some more petting, honestly, what could be better? From what I saw of it, Night at the Museum 2 is really funny. I definitely have to see it again, but from what I was able to hear, Hank Azaria is just hilarious! And I guess I need to back up so I can tell everyone about my husband’s extremely embarrassing moment. We had pulled into our spot at the drive-in facing the screen, and then we noticed everyone else was backing in and lifting their hatches so they could sit in the back of their vehicles. Thinking this would be a good idea, my husband went to turn the car around while I stood in our parking spot. I looked over to see when he was coming, and that’s when I saw our van backing over one of those posts they have at the drive-in – OH NO. Worse yet, I heard the sound of

laughter as people laughed at my husband – I felt so badly for him! The good news is, he was embarrassed, but mostly he was relieved because at first he thought he had hit a person! So no harm done, even the pole was ok. But this explains why turning the car around again was NOT an option when we got chased into the vehicle by mosquitoes!

Sunday we went to church of course, and we continued the Fearless series by hearing the story of Joshua, all of which was fitting for Memorial Day weekend. After church, we decided to do something fun and met friends at the new great restaurant and shared Saganaki, which gained some new fans, I think. Then we ventured up to Michigan, where they have a little fun park place with go-karts and bumper boats. We had a blast! Then the kids fell apart a little bit and presented a perfect example of my husband's patented "trickle-down crab-onomics" theory. Even so, we had lots of fun, despite the invasion of frogs at the fun park – you heard me, FROGS!

I am afraid of frogs, and I don't know why. It's not really something I fear in my head rationally, but rather a "physical" fear. When I see frogs, my body reacts in any one or more of the following ways: shaking, screaming, crying, "heebie-jeebies" where I'll just get this creeped out feeling like something is behind me or going to crawl up my back or something. So anyway, on the way over to the bumper cars, there was a grate over a deep manhole that had a BIG green frog in it. That guy was creepy, but I actually felt bad for him – I hope they can get him out. They said next time it rains, the well should fill up and he'll swim out, but I don't know... I wanted to throw some bugs down there for him. And then while we were bumper boating, there was actually a FROG IN the bumper boat pool! Luckily for me, this one wasn't too big, but it really freaked me out – looked like a shark or an alligator floating like that with its head above the water. Once I got over the initial frog freak-out, I was worried it would get smashed by a bumper boat. But it didn't, and the

workers said they get frogs all the time. On the way home, we decided to stop by a large lake where we looked for more frogs, snakes, turtles, and birds, of which, we saw lots. But, we got home late AGAIN and didn't even stay awake through our rented movie, oh well.

Monday we decided to take it easy and stay home, especially since we had lots of stuff to put away from the busy weekend. And we also had to get all of our garbage out since we get one garbage day per month where we can put out anything we want, no matter how large it is. We had tons of garbage from when we cleaned out and re-did the spare room, but when I woke up, all the garbage was already out there and the house was picked up! What a nice surprise; hubby is the BEST! We decided to go out and get a grill to add to our backyard Eden since we got our fence and our patio set the other day. We went to Walmart and got the grill and some food, and had a cookout, which went pretty well – it was easier and cheaper than taking the kids to a restaurant, and they were better behaved outside than they usually are inside. Overall, another GREAT weekend – I am thankful for the beautiful weather we had all weekend too! Tomorrow it's supposed to rain, but hey, maybe the frog will be freed. A good thing, as long as he doesn't hop down to Ohio!

Here's hoping that your Memorial Day weekend was safe and fun, and hopefully you paused to reflect upon the entire reason we celebrate this time of year – to remember, honor, and be thankful to those American citizens who lost their lives fighting for our country.

WHERE IS THE RAT?!?

My daughters are having a garage sale today. They've been working it all by themselves (along with their older friend), and it's fun to peek out the window and watch them. They've gotten a lot of customers, and people are buying our old junk and popsicles and some have even donated money just because the kids are so cute. It kept them busy all morning, and things were going great until they went upstairs to get their bathing suits on because they were hot. That's when they noticed that one of our four pet rats was not in his cage! Where do you even begin to look for a missing rat in a house?!?

Not only that, but one of our dogs is a terrier mix and has been yearning to taste a pet rat. We needed to find that rat before the dog did! My oldest daughter is a worrier, so of course she started panicking about her rat – near hyperventilation and everything. I started to look for the rat, but then worse-case scenarios started running through my head – what if it got outside and we never found it? What if it was dead somewhere? What if the kids found it dead? What if no one found it dead and it stank up the house for weeks? What if we couldn't find it and it starved? I went to look under my bed (funny that I thought I saw something running across the floor this morning. I chalked it up to a hallucination caused by lack of sleep which happens to me a lot – I sometimes see my cat running across the floor, and she died over a year ago!), but then I realized that I wouldn't really WANT to find the rat under there. I'm not scared of rats in the slightest, but today I was not in the mood to look under my bed and have a rodent come running at me. As I was debating what to do next, my daughter found the missing rat (Bobby Jack) in her sock drawer. Apparently the sock drawer was a "safe place" for Bobby since the girls have been putting him in there (!), and he likes it. Nevermind their poor,

unsuspecting laundry maid who has rats running all over her work, sigh.

But the good news is the rat is safe and sound. Now we have to figure out how that happened in the first place. My two-year-old admitted to letting the rat out, but my husband thinks she is giving a false confession because she is usually scared to pick up the rats. Hopefully someone let him out and forgot about him and he didn't get out on his own. I am just thankful we locateed the MIA rat before the dog did!

Northwest Ohio Is Cracking Up!

So much for my blogging break – I had a pocket of time and blogged like a maniac the other day! I knew that would happen, as soon as I wrote about how blogging is going on the back burner, I would find time for it again. That's actually part of the reason why I wrote the "blogging break" post! ☐ Not that I'm promising my 5 posts a week anymore, but I will do what I can – I do love to ramble on and on and on about everything while sharpening my typing skills!

Back to the point of this post. A few months ago, we noticed that our front porch is crumbling away to nothing! It's a rather large cement porch, and parts of it have started falling off, seemingly overnight! We called various construction places to get estimates, and according to them, it's a common problem around here this spring. Something about a moist winter, then it got really cold while there was a lot of moisture, so water that was in the cracks of the concrete expanded as it froze, causing things to crack and

crumble. I've noticed it every where in the area – other houses, strip malls, parking lots. But it really stinks. I love my front porch, and it's going to cost over \$2,000 to fix it! It's kind of something that needs fixing asap before it gets any worse. Replacing it with a wood deck is cheaper, but I really love it just the way it is – well, before it started crumbling to bits anyway. The concrete where the garage meets the driveway is even worse, and I don't think repairing that was even in the estimate! Ah, the joys of home ownership!