

Baby Diary

The first year of life for children is full of constant development and changes – babies do new things every single day. Realizing this, I decided to make a diary for each of my kids about their first year. I would write in it from time to time to summarize all of their many changes, hoping some day they'll enjoy reading them. I was writing in my son's Baby Diary the other day when it occurred to me that I should share it on my blog; especially since he's been very crabby lately and it's been really difficult for me to write blog posts with him in my arms. He was born on July 11, 2008.

Christopher's Diary:

7/16/08 – went to dr. checkup for your slight jaundice. dr. said everything looked good and you weigh 7 lbs. 11 oz.

7/17/08 – Actually, since it was the 12:01 showing, it's actually the 18th... but your first movie in the theater was the Dark Knight. You barely stirred and did drink a bottle during the movie. You didn't make a peep.

7/19/08 – You attended your first stage play, the Music Man. You were very good, except you pooped early in the show and were crabby and had to be taken out, but only for a few mins. so you could get your diaper changed

7/20/08 – umbilical cord stump falls off – you are 9 days old.

8/11/08 – You had your one month check-up today! Everything looks good; you weigh 9 lbs. 14 oz. and are 22 in. long. Your head circumference is 38.3 cm. You didn't cry at all while getting weighed and measured.

8/13/08 – You smiled at Mommy!

9/3/08 – In the past week, you've started "talking" back to me! You smile really big when I smile at you and give you a big HI, and you smile at me every time you see me when you wake up. When you were born, you could hardly see any lashes, but now your eyelashes are getting long and beautiful! Your eyes are still a bright beautiful blue!

9/5/08 – You laughed for the first time – long and loud. And it was during Daddy's funny play, The Nerd. You laughed at the part where they're playing the 'I'm going on a trip' game. I don't know if you heard the other people laughing or it was just a coincidence, but it was SO cute!

9/12/08 – Today you had your 2 month dr appt. You are 12 lbs 9 oz and 23.25 inches long. Your head circumference is 44.5 cm. You fussed a little as they were examining you, but you didn't cry. The dr said you have dry skin and we have to watch your ears to make sure formula isn't going in there.

9/22/08 – For about a week now, you seem to recognize your bottle. You'll get extra excited when you see it and open your mouth. Your big sister Disney calls you "Beeber". Your big sister Sammie loves to hold you and is always asking questions about newborn babies. She calls them "born" babies.

10/16/08 – You are 3 months old, and you are starting to play with toys. The other day I saw you "discovering" your hands, and ever since you've been grabbing things. You know how to put your fist in your mouth. You're still spitting up a lot. Not as much at a time as Disney did when she was a baby, but many times throughout the day.

11/5/08 – You've been playing with toys for awhile now; you can grab things and you try to draw them into your mouth. You love making g sounds – ga, goo, ggg. You are still a very happy little guy and smile at everyone, making their days!

12/4/08 – Time flies and you are almost 5 months old! Disney used to call you Beeber, and the name stuck, so we call you that sometimes. Disney now calls you Kipper. You've had some crabby days, but most of the time, you're still very smiley. You've been experimenting with vocalizations and you LOVE to stand! You do not bend at the waist! We tried the tot wheels (walker) for the first time the other day, and you like it for short periods of time since you just hang in there – your feet don't touch the floor yet. Most of the time, you're pretty good about sleeping at night, usually waking up only once. But you also have bad nights where you won't let Daddy sleep! You like baths, and you're really starting to like toys. You

play with the busybox on your crib, and try to eat EVERYTHING! You might be teething because you try to knaw on everything. You've been trying cereal and if your gums seem really sore, Mommy and Daddy have been giving you a treat – a dab of peanut butter on your pacifier. You LOVE it! You found your feet a few weeks ago, and you were trying to get your toes in your mouth. We are excited to take you to see Santa pretty soon!

Rectal Gas Policy

We're all adults here, right? Then you'd think the following sign spotted in the band room at a local high school would be less amusing:

Rectal Gas Policy

- Any student who releases audible rectal gas will receive one after school detention.
- Any student who “reacts” to audible or inaudible rectal gas will also receive one after school detention.

If you feel the need to relieve yourself of rectal gas you must stand in the hallway to pass it.

Where do I start? First, it must be said that I was visiting the school while attending a wonderful show choir performance starring (as far as I'm concerned) a good friend and my favorite teenager. She did an awesome job!

After the concert, another friend gave us a brief tour of the new school where she works. It's a really nice school, but we were surprised to find that they apparently have an entire policy about a specific bodily function. I wonder if students actually go into the hallway to abide by the policy. And it really makes one wonder about the incident(s) that caused the

policy to be drafted in the first place. Asking my friend to make copies of the policy so I can post it on my blog is juvenile, I'll admit... but funny is funny, and I find it amusing. I wonder if the teacher realizes that strangers come through her band room sometimes and read her rectal gas policy? Did she have to submit it to the principal for approval before posting it? Hey, Derek, do any of the schools you sub at have a body function policy?

Our Friend, The Doctor

With 4 kids, many of them small in years, we are at the doctor's office lots. We are so lucky to be really happy with our pediatrician, especially since we see him often. Today was another such visit – time for our 2 year and 4 month check-ups for the little ones.

Disney (2 yrs. old) liked the fishies in the waiting room and the Dora sticker she got at the end but that's about it. She didn't want the doctor near her, she didn't want to be weighed, measured, nor have her heart listened to, and she didn't want to walk in front of the doctor like he asked. Best we could tell during all the kicking and screaming, she is 2 feet, 10 inches tall and weighs 25.5 lbs.

On the other hand, Disney's baby brother Christopher seemed to love the doctor's office. Then again, he smiles all the time, so it's hard to tell. He smiled when they measured his head – both times, since the nurse forgot the measurement from the first time (43 cm). He smiled when he was weighed (15 lbs. 6 oz.), and he smiled some more when his length was measured to be 25.5 inches. He's a really good baby – the doctor says he acts more like a 5 month old than a 4 month old because of the

strength in his limbs and how he uses them.

Disney's a great kid also, but she is two years old. And "terrible two's" is not just one of those sayings; it's based on truth. Disney was the sweetest baby and toddler you could imagine... then she turned two. And she's still sweet, she just has a miniscule amount of patience and tolerance for things that don't go her way. She could be chatting happily about doggies one minute, and the next thing I know, she's melted onto the floor into a puddle of two.

But there must be something going on with the body chemistry of two-year-olds. Everyone knows they're like that, and it's not just an unearned bad reputation. If it weren't for the "terrible two's", I think I would want an even larger family – but it's the dreadfulness of the terrible two's that give me pause – only one more bout of terrible twos to battle, if we can survive Disney's, of course!

About This Blog...

For some reason, I was inclined to go to my "About this blog" page today. I knew it would be outdated, but I was still surprised about how wrong it really was, check it out:

This is a blog about my life as a mom of 3, (soon to be 4!), girls. I am the matriarch of a family that includes 2 dogs, a parrot, and kids ages 8, 3 1/2, and 1 1/2, and coming soon, a newborn... Wish me luck!

That was the old original version I slapped up in a hurry way back when I started this blog. In case you're not a regular reader, I should tell you that girl #4 was actually a boy (surprisingly, my doctor has a reputation in town for reading

the ultrasound wrong when it comes to gender – I always thought the circumstances were exaggerated until it happened to us), and so I now have three girls, ages almost 9 years, 4 years, and 2 years old. We also have a little boy who is almost 4 months old. I was right about the needing luck part – 4 kids at one time, especially ones this little (and spoiled!), can be very needy all together and quite a handful. We still have the parrot and the dogs, and they just add to the chaos. It's stressful, but that's my problem, I have to learn to lighten up about some things. Most of the time, I have great fun watching them all interact as the daily chaos unfolds. The little guy loves his sisters!

Halloween

Our trick-or-treating was actually on Thursday, and we had lots of fun. It's a darn shame though that we lost our camera along the way, and even after numerous calls to the police station, it hasn't turned up. But after trick-or-treating, we went to our friends' church party, and they took a Halloween picture of our whole family. I wonder if they'll sneak it into the newspaper next year to advertise their party. They did that this year – imagine my surprise when I'm flipping through the paper the other day and there's a picture of us from Halloween last year, dressed as a fish with my husband the monk beside me holding Pebbles Flintstone.

I just hope there wasn't anything else too important on that camera. Also, it was an expensive camera which my husband had won, not to mention the fact that we're now without a camera. We had to finish the rest of our Halloween celebrations without taking any pictures. On tap today was the community Halloween party at the ice rink – there's no ice in there

yet. Instead, they set up carnival games, bouncy castles, a cardboard box maze, and face painting for the kids. They have hay (straw) rides through the "haunted" fields, and each kid that attends gets a bag of popcorn and a trick-or-treat bag to put their candy in when they win it from the games. It's very cool, and the best part is that it's all free – including hot dogs and punch for the whole family. For some reason, this year's turnout was a bit lacking – less than 1/3 of the people from last year I would estimate. I guess it's because they had it after Halloween this year? I don't really get why that would scare (haha) people away – a free fun thing for the kids including dinner? It'd be hard to keep us away! Since I only have one Halloween picture of the kids and they're cute, I'm reluctantly sharing the whole family's Halloween picture, myself included – I love dressing up for Halloween and wanted to get more mileage out of my less-than-\$5 80's costume. One of the funnest things about dressing up is being creative and finding things that make a costume for a bargain. Next year I want to be Dorothy from Wizard of Oz, so I'll have to be on the lookout all year for a dress and shoes I can use. Here is a list of people and costumes from this year:

Taylor – almost 9 years old – a costume she put together herself involving a dress, a cape, and devil horns

Sammie – 4 yrs – a princess

Disney – 2 yrs – a unicorn

Christopher – almost 3 mos. – a lion cub

Dad – an escaped inmate

Mom – a time traveller from the 80's



Hope everyone had a great Halloween!

Kids' Birthday Parties

Had my daughter's 2nd birthday party over the weekend, and it was a blast. Family and friends came from far and wide, and my daughter recognized the "Happy Birthday" song I've been singing to her the past couple of weeks when everyone sang it to her. On a side note, I have a hint for parents everywhere, including myself the next time I throw a kids' birthday party: have something ready to give the kids to occupy them before the party, otherwise excitement and anticipation will get the best of them, ruining moods of kids *and* parents. My 3 kids were so anxious before the birthday party last weekend that they were running around, fighting, and even tantruming. I would advise giving the birthday child his or her present early (if they can all play with it without fighting!) or setting aside some kind of toy for all of your kids. Better yet, line up someone who can take the kids out of the house all together and let them arrive a mere 15 minutes before the rest of the guests – now that would have been bliss. It's

just impossible to get last minute party preps finished with 3 (or any number, for that matter) wild children running amok. And forget about keeping the house clean while waiting for the guests to arrive. Here we are on Saturday, trying to keep the kids sane and serve lunch all while getting things ready for the party. Then we had to clean up the mess the kids made during lunch really quick before the guests began arriving, after making sure that they actually ate something in their excitement. The formula added up to one hectic pre-party morning and early afternoon, with the tantrum-thrower losing her voice before the party began.

But overall, it was lots of fun; especially getting to see family who aren't often able to make the journey to Ohio from Illinois. I know the birthday girl appreciated it and had lots of fun too, and I want to thank everyone who was a part of her special day. Thanks for the gifts and thanks most of all for being there to wish Disney a happy 2nd birthday. Special thanks goes to justj and his family for the very special gifts they bestowed upon our family; as well as Carol and Megan who also were thoughtful about giving each of the girls a present. This helped alleviate much fighting later in the day while we were suffering birthday party comedown. Another special thanks to the family who travelled hundreds of miles to be there for Disney on her special day. Family and friends are the BEST!

BELOW: Disney eating her birthday cupcake



Brain Fart = Abandoned Child

I'll start right off with the excuses. I have a lot going on right now. My October is booked solid. I've adopted the philosophy to just take one thing at a time because if I try to think about it all at once, I will end up breathing into a paper bag. Last week, my focus was on my daughter's 2nd birthday party – inviting guests, buying supplies, getting the house ready, etc. I decided to put this week on the back burner last week and not try to do things to plan for our trip to Florida we're taking at the end of this week.

So this morning, I got up and when I went to check my oldest daughter's backpack for school, she said Dad had already signed her papers that needed to be signed – which is why I missed the memo. All was well, I thought, until the school called our cell phone. It was RIF week at my other daughter's school (Reading is Fundamental), which means parents can come in and read books to the class. Normally we would just drop off our daughter and be on our way, but of course today we stayed at the school for awhile to read books, which is why my other daughter's school called our cell phone – thank goodness we had picked up the lost cell phone at the corn maze place Friday night – see one of my [previous posts](#) if you're curious about the adventures of the cell phone.

So anyway, they were calling to tell us that today was Columbus Day, there was no school, and could we please come pick up our daughter. Talk about embarrassing. I realize it happens; everyone forgets something now and then, but why did it have to involve one of the kids? And I'm out of good excuses – I'm not pregnant anymore or recovering from surgery or anything like that... just an average, run-of-the-mill brain fart. It's not a big deal; we retrieved my daughter, and both

she and the people at the school were laughing about it (and probably will be for years to come). But this really stinks because this is really bad for the way my mind works. I'm obsessed with detail and constantly worried about forgetting things; I'm always trying to relax about these things but when something like this happens, there's a little voice in my head that says, "See? Look what happens when you weren't so obsessive about details!". Oh, well... the good news is today my oldest is perfectly happy spending time with her little sister, and likewise. So without our trouble-making middle daughter around (she had school today – or did she?!? I was at the school with her, but now I better double check!), they should get along quite well giving me some much needed catch-up time for housework and vacation packing. So why am I sitting here blogging?!?

Here's a footnote – it's now later in the day, I was able to sort thru some of the accrued clutter in our house, and I found a newsletter from my daughter's school. Guess what? October 13 is not listed under important dates in the newsletter for having a day off! So there! Not completely my fault! I can transfer 2% of fault to the school!

A Twisted Episode of Survivor

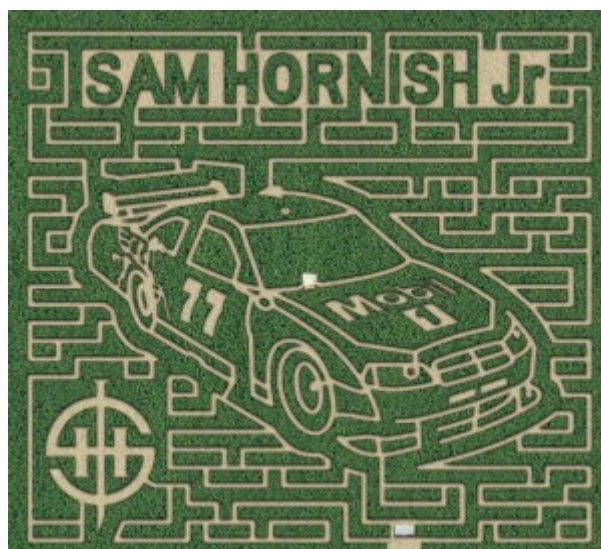
I had a wonderful weekend. It all started with another visit to a haunted house on Friday night. Although I enjoyed my previous haunted house experience at Ghostly Manor earlier this year, I just wasn't feeling the Halloween vibe enough to subject myself to scariness – I didn't sleep well the night before and little sleep makes me feel claustrophobic – weird. But anyway, the haunted house was actually a haunted corn maze and they had other things to do at the farm, so I enjoyed

myself immensely hanging out with my kids and the coolest teenager I know. There is just something about farms that make me feel an inner peace; something that was illustrated again during the weekend – more on that in my next post.

Literally a cornfield in the middle of nowhere, [Leader's Family Farms](#) has things to do to keep all ages entertained. There were even a few things we didn't even get a chance to try after spending so much time being lost in the corn maze. Next time I will have to check out the hayride and the coop shoot – I have a special affinity for hayrides because they remind me of the week-long vacations to a dude ranch I took with my family as a kid. But one thing about Leader's that really impressed me was their ability to make appealing and fun attractions without the large budget or the mechanical reliance that a major theme park would have. The "Barnyard" or family area had several things for the kids to play with: bouncy castles, a zip line, haystacks to climb on, a hay maze, slides – all physical activities which would guarantee kids' exhaustion giving the parents some "mommy-daddy time" at the end of the evening – the problem is everything was physical for Mommy and Daddy too, and like the DJ noted, "I don't know who is getting tired out more – the parents or the kids!" But that illustrates my point about the ability to entertain every age group without spending big bucks – and that is true for both the patron *and* the establishment. Actually, let me back up for a minute and go off on a tangent – the purpose of the site, right? □ Why do they call it a hayride when you're actually sitting on straw? I learned from a display at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo that hay is green and made from grass. Straw is yellow and made from wheat. So the kids were climbing on *straw* stacks, they played in a *straw* maze, and people were enjoying *straw* rides... doesn't have quite the same ring to it as hayrides, I guess...

But back to Leader's – they had a DJ, who hosted Karaoke and played wedding-style audience-interactive songs like Hokey-

Pokey, The Chicken Dance, YMCA, and Shout. I was trying to teach Disney (my almost 2 year old) the YMCA, but she only liked the part where we clapped. Maybe next time we will get down on the dance floor – this time my other girls were too shy and tired was I. My insanely brave (or psychotic, depending upon who you ask) 4-year-old Sammie was intent on going into the haunted house, and my husband was actually going to take her in, but before she could even enter, she was frightened away from the experience by the scary music alone. We got a cell phone call just as we were entering the corn maze, and so we retrieved Sammie and let her enjoy the experience of the corn maze, which ended up being what I would describe as a twisted game of Survivor. Take 4 kids, all under the age of 9, into a corn maze and wander around in the dark for over an hour. No bathrooms, no snacks, and you only have enough stroller for two of them, so the other two have to walk. It was fun, but also quite an experience. I would love to go back and explore the maze – without kids though. And when I got home, I looked at an aerial photo of the thing, and now it all makes more sense. Here is where I spent my Friday night:



You enter at the small white building at the bottom of the picture and go left. Where we really started losing it was around the back tire and the spoiler of the race car. You can see how many forks and circles there are in the paths in that

area. And again, while in the thing, I had no idea what it looked like because I didn't think to check a map before going in. I would also bring a flashlight next time; well, maybe not if I didn't have kids to worry about. We were using our cell phones for light, but then the other half of our group who went into the haunted house called to see where we were and when I said I didn't know, the cell phone lost service – adding to the stranded feeling we were experiencing. I must have stashed my cell phone on top of the stroller really quick because my daughter had turned backwards in her seat and was falling out, so after I fixed her, I frantically searched for the cell phone with no luck – apparently it had fallen off the stroller in the corn maze. So when we finally got out, I had to tell the staff that I lost my cell phone in there. As they laughed at me, they asked if it was on vibrate or silence mode – “Of course it is!” I said, because it would have been too easy to find it otherwise, and let's face it – a lost cell phone in a corn maze wouldn't be funny if you could call it and hear it ring. So a small black silent cell phone lost in a corn maze in the dark? Forget it. They did call me the next day though, saying that they did eventually find it, probably with the light of day. Well, anyway, the corn maze with 4 little children in the dark was quite an experience. Not horrible, but not recommended... quite an experience – I can only describe it as having felt like I came through an ordeal after we got out... it was kind of like being stranded in the wilderness, not knowing when rescue would arrive. Sure, there are “corn cops” and all you have to do is yell, but I don't know how they'd hear you and I honestly didn't want to be the group that yelled for help. We did it on our own, and for that, we got the satisfaction of accomplishment.

Well, I've rambled about that long enough... I had fun. I loved the serenity of the farm at night, and it was a beautiful night weather-wise. It was cool but not cold, and being in rural Ohio meant that we were navigating the maze under a canopy of thousands of stars... I would love to go back

and explore the maze without worrying about the kids being hungry, thirsty, having sore feet or having to go to the bathroom. And someone remind me that if I have any more kids, a corn maze is NOT a good activity for a pregnant woman – too much walking and not enough bathrooms. This post is so lengthy I'll have to save our alpaca farm adventure for the next post... stay tuned!

My Kids

Everywhere we go, I get the comment, "You must have your hands full." Since I usually only have my younger two with me while the older two are in school, people have no idea how right they are! Here are some recent pictures of my angels – they grow so fast and this is for relatives and people who haven't seen them in awhile:

Christopher is a Cubs fan, of course!



Good thing I checked on Christopher during his "tummy time" – this is what I found and he wasn't even making a peep!



*Disney loves her Homer doll even though she calls him
"SpongeBob"*



*Here are all 4 of them together: Disney is almost 2, Sammie is
4, Taylor is 8, and Christopher is 2½ months*



*Christopher doesn't have the hang of holding his own bottle
yet*



Everyone says Sammie and Disney look like twins, years apart. Sammie really wanted us to take this picture of them holding her Samantha sign – no one had the heart to tell her it was backwards



The Question Phase – Already?

My daughter Disney is not yet 2 and has already entered the question phase – a time of life when a child asks questions about anything and everything. It seems a little early for this; I don't seem to remember her two older sisters entering the question phase until about 3½ or 4 years old. Heck, at Disney's age Samantha was busy painting with poop!

But as we know, all kids are different (thank goodness for that because we already have a Sammie), and so we welcome Disney's transition into the question phase. Since it's just beginning, she doesn't yet ask questions about how things work, but rather about where her favorite people are. It's really cute since she gets this little inquisitive look on her face and because she's not even 2 yet, her questions aren't very well formed. We know what she means though, and try to answer the best we can. Some of her favorite questions are: "What Daddy doin'?" "Where Taywer (translation: big sister Taylor) go?" "What Sammie doin'?"

I guess most of her questions do revolve around the whereabouts of her loved ones... an example of her super-sweet nature. Disney truly cares about other people and she is such a sweet little girl – always saying please and thank you even when it's not expected of her. So this isn't a full example of the questions phase – that title will be reserved for the sometimes difficult-to-answer questions that revolve around "why"? Like... Why is the sky blue? Why does Sammie get more candy than I do? Why can't we have a kitty? Why do I have to go to school? Why is Mommy's hair turning gray?

Disney's inquisitive face:

