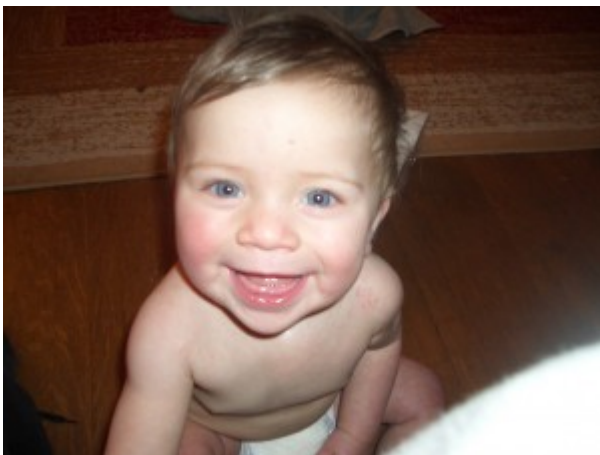


Snagglepuss

Today my son is 8 months old – how time flies! Gone are the days when I could cradle him like a newborn baby and sing him to sleep. There is no better way to relax than that, and I really miss it. Yesterday when I was in Walmart, I literally almost cried when I saw the itty bitty baby outfits. Why do they grow so fast?

So anyway, today is Christopher's 8 month birthday, and he's been growing by leaps and bounds lately. He popped his first tooth a few weeks ago, and I swear, every day that tooth gets a little bit taller. He just has the one tooth so far, like a snaggletooth, so we've been calling him "snagglepuss". I don't think that nickname will stick though, it's not quite as cute as his nickname of "Beeber", which is how our 2-year-old used to say Christopher.

Here is "Snagglepuss" – note the little tooth on the bottom:



And he is finally sitting up! A little late, but it seems as if now he's doing everything at once! He can scoot on his tummy, roll from his back to his tummy and his tummy to his back, and he can also sit up by himself when he's laying down. Now that he's sitting, he can be busier because it's easier for him to play. Here he is sitting up:



And of course, after all of this activity, he gets tired, and sometimes, he doesn't quite make it up to bed:



HAPPY 8 MONTH BIRTHDAY CHRISTOPHER!!!

Potty Humor

I had to share this funny little story because something our almost 5-year-old daughter Sammie said the other day had my husband and I in stitches. She calls out from the bathroom – “Dad! I have to go poop but I can't... Oh, nevermind!”

Hmmm, now that I'm reading it, it's not quite as funny. I guess you had to hear her little 4-year-old voice call it

out. Kids are so adorable with their bluntness. And I'm just glad that Sammie was able to solve her own problem!

Springing Ahead

Tonight is the night we change our clocks for Daylight Savings Time. I guess we're ending Daylight Savings – or maybe we're starting it. I don't know and I don't really care. All I know is that I will be losing an hour of sleep. Ok, it's not THAT bad; I do like when the sun stays out later, although there is no sun in the weather forecast for the next few days... But I loathe the idea of losing a precious hour of sleep. If I remember correctly, the time change throws the kids into a tizzy for a few days every year until their bodies readjust – something else to look forward to.

So anyway, this should serve as your reminder to change those clocks – no excuses about being late to church or theater meetings tomorrow! And yes, you must flip the clocks forward, not backward. Remember, it's SPRING ahead, FALL back. And try not to fret about losing that hour of sleep. As Jay Leno said last night referring to this horrible economy that only seems to be getting worse:

“After losing your job, your 401K, and your house, losing an hour of sleep seems like nothing!”

Multi-Tasking

Because being a Stay-at-home-mom (SAHM to laypeople) is my current profession, I am required to multi-task on a daily basis in a way some people have never experienced. My “pay” (bringing up healthy happy children who turn into independent, admirable adults) is by no means immediate, and it also depends upon my ability to multi-task. Consider the following 2 scenarios most SAHM’s must endure on a daily basis (and these are just 2 of MANY!): Can I fold and put away a load of laundry while planning and preparing a nutritious lunch for 4 kids while simultaneously managing “surprise” but necessary tasks that appear; like changing diapers, washing hands, and refereeing any arguments that break out? Can I accomplish buying everything I need at Walmart while staying within our family’s budget AND concurrently fulfilling the needs of my two youngest children in a timely enough fashion to be able to pick up their older sisters at school at the time I’m expected?

Man, when I put that all on paper it sounds difficult. And sometimes it is, but most of the time, I do it without thinking because I love and treasure my family. But if you know a SAHM and she seems like an airhead or like she’s not-so-bright or even a little bit loopy, just remember everything that must go through her mind on a daily basis, then multiply that by how many kids she has... It just might provide enough explanation for her scatter-brained behavior!

Gee, being a SAHM-of-four sure makes my working-mom-of-one days look easy. Back then my multitasking consisted of paying bills and doing paperwork while I sat in traffic... And although my current lifestyle is much more hard work than I’ve ever had before, it’s that much more rewarding also, and I wouldn’t trade it for the world!

Ahh... A Relaxing Baseball Game And A.... LOSS?!?

I had a really stressful day yesterday. The kids went completely crazy at night – was it a full moon? I didn't check. Even if that was the case, other little things kept going wrong also. Little things – things that really shouldn't matter. Except that when those little things are added up, they equal *one bad day*. So I thought I could beat my stress by looking forward to watching some BASEBALL on TV. Yes, that's right, I said BASEBALL on TV! And it's only early March – we haven't even changed the clocks yet!

I just happened to look on tvguide.com yesterday to see if I could look forward to a new episode of *Lost*, and I noticed that my favorite baseball team, the Chicago Cubs, were set to play their cross-town rivals, the Chicago White Sox and it was going to actually be on tv in our little corner of NW Ohio! Even though it's only spring training, that brightened my mood considerably since it's been MONTHS since I've gotten to watch baseball. With the way my day was going, I was sure something would go wrong – the [tvguide](http://tvguide.com) had made a mistake and we didn't get it, Vegas (where the game was played) would disappear into a sinkhole, something like that. But 10:00 finally rolled around, and the game was on! AND, the teams were putting in their starters rather than their scrub players, which meant real, actual baseball to watch! So I felt better; I relaxed and sat down to watch the game, and of course, that's when my two middle children (the trouble-makers of the brood these days) decided to start fighting. So it wasn't peaceful, but I did get to watch the game. And it was a good game – the Cubs were down, but then they tied it up, but of course the Sox came back to win. A disappointing outcome for such an

otherwise great game. But the good news is, it was only spring training so who cares who won!

After the game I left WGN on the tv, and I was treated to an episode of the old tv show Alf. Remember Alf? It was a sitcom from the 80's about a family who discovers an Alien Life Form (ALF), and takes him in to live with them. Alf is a furry wise-cracking puppet with an affinity for cats (to eat!), and the family must keep him secret so he doesn't get taken away. Alf was a huge fad in the 80's; there were toys, lunchboxes, a cartoon spinoff, you name it. After the Alf episode, on came the Steve Wilkos show (he's the former bodyguard from the Jerry Springer show who now has his own trashy talk show – I wrote about this in a previous post, probably because of my disbelief that they would actually give this guy air time). And that was my cue to hit the sack for my lovely 4½ hours sleep. So far, today has been a little better, although our trouble-making 4-year-old is at school. Tonight I'm looking forward to a brand spankin' new Office episode – YIPPEE! But first I have to get through a few boring meetings. Sure hope I don't doze; I am awfully tired!

Twins – Years Apart

Everyone says it. Our family, friends and acquaintances are in agreement – our two middle children look just like each other. They could pass for twins, except for the fact that Sammie is almost 5 and Disney is 2½ – so twins years apart, you might say. Don't believe me? Nothing like photographic evidence...



For Those Born Between 1930-1979

The following words of wisdom came to me in an email forward. However, I have to disagree with some of it since I was born near the end of the window and I did have some of the things growing up that the email says I would not have had. So, I put my personal comments about this email forward in *italics*.

THOSE BORN 1930-1979

READ TO THE BOTTOM FOR QUOTE OF THE MONTH BY JAY LENO . IF YOU DON'T READ ANYTHING ELSE—VERY WELL STATED

TO ALL THE KIDS WHO SURVIVED the 1930's, 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's!! *(I can barely get credit for surviving the 70's. After all, I only experienced the 70's for a year and a half!)*

First, we survived being born to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they were pregnant. *(Well, ok, maybe everyone reading this survived some of that, but that doesn't make it right, of course!)*

They took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a can,

and didn't get tested for diabetes .

Then after that trauma, we were put to sleep on our tummies in baby cribs covered with bright colored lead-based paints.

We had no child- proof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets. Not to mention the risks we took hitchhiking. *(that is definitely before my time. I've never hitchhiked. And the only people I know who have are either deceased or over the age of 50!)*

As infants & children, we would ride in cars with no car seats, booster seats , seat belts or air bags. *(Ok, I remember this – every kid I knew whose parents had a station wagon would ride in the back of it for long trips, no seatbelts. I think kids should be buckled up, but I think the whole booster / car seat until they're 8 years old is just plain ridiculous! Ah, the effects those lobbyists have on Congress is purely amazing, isn't it?)*

Riding in the back of a pick up on a warm day was always a special treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and NOT from a bottle.

We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle and NO ONE actually died from this.

We ate cupcakes, white bread and real butter and drank Kool-aid made with sugar, but we weren't overweight because WE WERE ALWAYS OUTSIDE PLAYING! *(Well, a few people I went to school with DO have heart problems, but...)*

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on.

No one was able to reach us all day. And we were OK.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and

then ride down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes
After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We did not have Playstations, Nintendo 's, X-boxes, no video games at all (*umm, I beg to differ. My generation had Atari, Intellivision, the Commodore, the Tandy, the original Nintendo, and even some hand-held electronic games*), no 150 channels on cable, no video movies (*again, not true. I remember the day my family got our VCR. I was worried my big sister would be mad because she was at a sleepover when we got it and the whole event was so exciting. We rushed right out to the video store to rent a video. But all the good ones seemed to be in BETA, not VHS...*) or DVD's, no surround-sound or CD's (*but we had records, cassette tapes, and walkmans!*), no cell phones, no personal computers, no Internet or chatrooms.....

WE HAD FRIENDS and we went outside and found them!

We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents.

We ate worms and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever. (*Nor did the gum we swallowed stay in our tummies for seven years – hehe*)

We were given BB guns for our 10th birthdays, made up games with sticks and tennis balls, and although we were told it would happen, we did not poke out very many eyes.

We rode bikes or walked to a friend's house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just walked in and talked to them!

Little League had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment. Imagine that!! (*Nowadays, we'd be lucky to get enough kids to have to turn them away, not that we would, but the point is, many kids are busy playing video games or causing trouble... or*

their parents are just too busy to let them commit to anything extracurricular)

The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law! *(Nowadays kids are charged as adults, so parents aren't often given the option to decide what's best for their own child!)*

These generations have produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers and inventors ever!

The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas.

We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned HOW TO DEAL WITH IT ALL!

If YOU are one of them CONGRATULATIONS!

You might want to share this with others who have had the luck to grow up as kids, before the lawyers and the government regulated so much of our lives for our own good.

While you are at it, forward it to your kids so they will know how brave (and lucky) their parents were.

Kind of makes you want to run through the house with scissors, doesn't it?!

The quote of the month is by Jay Leno:

'With hurricanes, tornadoes, fires out of control, mud slides, flooding, severe thunderstorms tearing up the country from one end to another, and with the threat of bird flu and terrorist attacks, are we sure this is a good time to take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance?'

For those that prefer to think that God is not watching over us...go ahead and delete this.

For the rest of us...pass this ON!

Ok, I'm not a big fan of passing on email forwards... But this one entertained me, so do with it what you will, and remember that my contributions are the ones in italics, so thanks for reading my commentary!

So THAT Explains My Crazy 9-Year-Old!

Our oldest child was always “the good one”. She was responsible, logical, creative, and very helpful with her 3 younger siblings. A few months ago, things changed. Not a day went by when she didn't have a tantrum or when she was the worst behaved kid of the day. What has happened to our sweet little girl, we wondered? Are these teenage hormone changes kicking in, and will we not see any relief until she's grown up? With a high-maintenance spitfire 4-year-old, a toddler deep within the throes of the “terrible twos” and a baby in the house, how would we ever make it, especially without the help of our “model” kid?

I was so frustrated with her behavior that I did a simple google search for ‘moody 9 year old’. What I found was a HUGE relief in the form of a very informative article that helped to define the behavior of a child going through this particular transition period. Most people aren't aware of any traditional behavior problems in the average 9-year-old child, but this article described my daughter to a “T” (and her name is Taylor, haha) But seriously, the article was a huge load off! Not only did it totally describe the alarming behavior changes, but it also gave survival tips for the rest of the family. Coincidentally, ever since I read the article, her behavior has improved and she's pretty much back to normal.

But if we should have a relapse or if someone else does a search for 'moody 9 year old" and they're led to my blog, here is a copy of the helpful article:

From

https://www.informedfamilylife.org/2005/01/parenting_the_nine_year_old.html

This article by Rahima Baldwin Dancy on "Parenting the Nine Year Old" describes the developmental changes of the nine-year-old child and how parents and Waldorf education meet this psychological stage. It first appeared in Mothering, Summer, 1989.

Parents of nine year olds often wonder, "What is happening to my child?" Children at this age can become very critical and argumentative, or very moody and withdrawn. Nightmares, irrational fears, headaches and stomachaches often arise. Some children feel as if no one at school likes them, or others become suddenly self-conscious about being rich, poor, or otherwise "different." Parents may be accused of being unfair or of not understanding, as the child rushes off and slams his or her door.

Searching for an explanation for the changes in behavior, parents sometimes blame a new teacher, a recent move, changes in the family such as separation or the birth of a sibling, or simply "growing pains". An understanding of what is actually taking place can help us avoid needless worry and provide the support and guidance that children need during this time.

What is Happening?

The special needs of the nine year old are the result of an important change in consciousness that marks the end of early childhood and the transition to a new developmental phase. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, states, "In the ninth year the child really experiences a complete transformation of its being, which indicates an important transformation of its soul-life and its bodily-physical

experiences.”

Earlier, before the age of five or so, the child has a dreamlike state of consciousness in which the outer world and inner experience end to flow together. Outer events are not “observed,” but are deeply taken in through unconscious imitation. Whereas babies learn nearly everything through imitation, kindergarten-age children continue to imitate many aspects of their world, such as the movements of the teacher or parent.

While the power of imitation is so strong, the child feels united with the world and experiences no sense of aloneness. But with the loss of this power around the age of nine, the child feels separated from the world. Something that was hidden and slumbering begins to awaken. Nine year olds suddenly have a strong experience of themselves as separate beings, with a new feeling of distance from the world and other people. This sense of self, first experienced around age two-and-a-half, recurs now in a much deeper way, as the inner emotional life of the child begins to develop.

Although children react differently to leaving the sweet, dreamlike world of early childhood, one response is nearly universal: children become more conscious of their surroundings. You will probably find that what was once passed by unnoticed is suddenly focused on and questioned. This awakening to the world may be met with quiet astonishment or sharp criticism, depending on the child’s temperament.

A critical child may notice whether the statements people make are grounded in the real world or are a veneer. He or she may begin to question parents and teachers, wondering, “How do they know everything?” and, indeed, “Do they really know everything?” Something in the child is seeking reassurance that the authority of the adult will stand the test of quality, and that it carries an inner certainty.

In contrast, another child may become more withdrawn and start to look under the bed at night, or may have frequent stomachaches in response to this new sense of being alone. Parents whose children suddenly want to be alone often feel as if they are “losing” their children, as if the children no longer want to share their developing inner worlds. This is a time when intimations of mortality and death can enter a child’s consciousness. Religious questions and concerns about good and evil may also emerge with the child’s increased self-awareness and sense of choice and responsibility.

Usually, within six months after the ninth birthday (and sometimes earlier), the children are profoundly aware of this new sense of separateness between the self and the outer world. As the “I” penetrates into awareness, children begin to experience themselves as self-contained beings. They often feel as though they are in a threshold situation, poised, as it were, on the cusp of their own destiny. A 70-year-old woman wrote of this time in her life: “In this year I had a significant I-experience. I had just come from school in the city and had to change trams. In this moment of waiting, the complete certainty came to me that now all of life lay before me and that I was the one that must travel it.

Essentially, the nine year old is experiencing his or her own identity-to become a separate individuality, able to confront the outer world. Ideally, the child comes through this difficult time with a sense of connection with his or her higher self, a kind of “knowing” that will remain even after the heightened awareness is integrated.

My son spent many difficult months in the throes of “the nine-year change.” One night, as he popped out of bed for the third time, I had to muster great self-control to say, “What now?” “I’m glad I’m me!” he announced, radiating like the sun. He went on to explain, “It’s just like the song “The Age of Not Believing.” The words of the Disney song ran through my mind: “You must face the age of not believing, doubting everything

you ever knew. Until at last you start believing, there's something wonderful in you." We all shared in his joy and thanked God that family life could once again return to normal.

Parenting Tips

What can parents do to help their child through this important turning point at age nine?

- Understanding what is happening will help both your child and yourself as a parent. When both parents, or parents together with the teacher, consider a child and his real needs, it can help give the child balance. Be patient— this, too, shall pass. Ten is a wonderfully harmonious time between the crisis at age nine and adolescence, when the next intensifying of self-consciousness occurs.
- Be willing to let your child have her own inner emotional life. You can't "fix it." Honor her need for privacy or her sudden impatience with a younger sister. Be willing to let go and tolerate distance. Your relationship is changing and will improve again once alterations have been completed. Be nearby with understanding and reassurance that she is still loved.
- Share your thoughts with your child about things that go beyond the every-day affairs of life. But don't limit your child by providing "answers" or definitions that can't grow within the child when asked about things like God or death.
- Have faith in self-healing, in your child's ability to come through this phase. Support individual artistic activity that attracts your child (writing poetry, keeping a diary, drawing or painting, music).
- Support your child's interest in the world by providing opportunities to build things, visit a farm, plant a garden, do work in the real world. Encourage a connection with the plant and animal kingdoms and with simple human creative activities now before the child explores the world of technology, which is more appropriate for adolescence.
- Nourish your child with stories that illustrate the interconnectedness of life and the powers of fate and destiny.

The story of Joseph and his coat of many colors has this element of the dream heralding his destiny and the patience he needed to see it manifest. In the curriculum of the Waldorf schools, the Old Testament stories are told in third grade because they mirror 2- the inner state of the nine-year-old child. The creation story, for example, describes the child's own experience of leaving the paradisiacal realm of early childhood, acquiring new self-awareness, and with it the added dimensions of choice and increasing responsibility for one's actions. In fourth grade the heroic tales of the Norse myths represent the exploits of the new ego in larger-than-life fashion. The Waldorf curriculum also introduces the child to the world through projects in house-building, farming, and the study of the plant and animal kingdoms, not as abstract sciences, but in relation to the human being.

– Recognize that the child needs to establish a new respect for adult authority that goes beyond the blind acceptance of the younger child. Parents can encourage this by honoring a child's new relationship with a teacher or other adults in his life. Steiner states, "What matters is that at this moment in life, the child can find someone—whether this be one person or possibly several persons is of less importance—whose picture it can carry through life." (3) Parents can also help themselves be this kind of authority by presenting a united front to the child and by both sitting down with the child when questions of discipline arise (single parents may want to bring in a teacher or other adult during this time).

The magnitude of the changes that a child of this age is going through can be better understood if you contemplate the differences between the child of seven and the child of twelve. The seven year old is light-hearted and always in movement. The limbs are active for learning (through touching, doing, walking the times tables, and so forth). In contrast, the head is relatively large and still dreamy. The seven year old is just beginning to get adult teeth. His or her emotions are easily influenced by impressions from the world, with

tears changing to smiles relatively easily.

The twelve year old, on the other hand, has a head that is very awake for thinking and longer limbs which seem heavy, tired, and often awkward to control. There is a rich and sometimes over-powering inner emotional life; the older child brings a great deal more to each experience. Physically, the sexual organs are beginning to mature as the child enters puberty.

The nine-year-old is in the middle between the world of early childhood and the world of adolescence. The physical and emotional changes which you may observe in your nine-year-old child are the outer manifestations of the tremendous change in consciousness which is going on within the child's expanding inner world. By understanding the nature of these changes, we can better provide support in parenting the nine year old.

Awakening to the world and a new sense of self brings with it a new need: to understand the real world of everyday life, while at the same time long for intimations of something beyond ordinary life. As parents and teachers, our task is to become loving authorities for the growing child, sharing both a true picture of the world and a sense of our own inner striving.

Another Wonderful Zoo Visit

We went to the Toledo Zoo again last weekend (it was our second weekend to visit the zoo in a row; we visited on Feb 7 and 15). Almost a week has passed since our last visit, but I had other blog posts lined up and ready to go, so that's why I'm first writing about it now.

Having a zoo membership is awesome because you get to visit the zoo whenever you have free time, and you don't have to worry about seeing EVERYTHING on EVERY visit since you know you'll be back soon. The last few times we've gone, we parked in the back parking lot and stay on that side of the zoo, which cuts the amount of walking considerably – a great option for winter months since this parking lot is free in the off-season and very close to the rear zoo entrance. With 4 small children, this is the way that works best for us, even though it means skipping the other side of the zoo which includes the polar bears, seals, wolves, and giraffes. No matter, we still see plenty, and now we have a whole half a zoo to see sometime if we go without the kids or are feeling extra ambitious.

Every zoo visit is different, which is one of the things I love about going. The animals are always doing different things, and my favorite exhibits vary with each visit. Here are the highlights from last Sunday's visit:

Lions – The Toledo Zoo has white lions. White lions are rare and the result of a recessive gene similar to the gene of white tigers. The Toledo Zoo has 3 white lion brothers on loan from Siegfried and Roy, the famous Las Vegas magicians. Normally during our zoo visits, the lions are sleeping and up on a ledge far from the viewing glass, but last Sunday they were walking around, and one of them even walked right up against the viewing glass! I've seen lions up close before, but not for a long time and never the gorgeous white lion until last week.

Hippos – The hippos are in their indoor enclosure for the winter, and even though their room seems somewhat cramped, the animals don't seem unhappy, and it's very cool to see these HUGE animals up close. It's amazing to me that their small pool must get very deep very fast in order to allow the animal to be completely submerged. As we watched, the hippo was bobbing for apples, and he caught his apple and swallowed it whole. This hippo was so large that the apple in his mouth

looked about as big as a grape would look in the mouth of a human being. And this provided an extreme close-up of his humongous teeth!

Gorillas – When we got to the gorilla exhibit, it was empty. But a friendly zookeeper told us to stick around for about 10 minutes for gorilla feeding time. We then got to watch as the keepers threw greens, fruit, and straw all around the enclosure; taking care to place some on the various ledges and hide some within crevices of the exhibit (seriously, am I too old to embark on this as a career?!? I'm afraid so...). Then they let the gorillas back in, and it was a frenzy. Well, an orderly frenzy – there was no pushing nor shoving; just some excited gorillas foraging in their exhibit. They quickly found all the hidden surprises, and we laughed as one of the females hoarded as much lettuce as she could carry and brought it up to a high ledge to enjoy it all by herself.

Elephants – The elephants were indoors, and the now 6-year-old baby Louie was using his trunk to eat jello off the floor. I really enjoy watching elephants use their trunks; it's fascinating to me how dexterous they are – almost like they have 2 fingers on the end. But we've watched Louie grow up ever since we've been coming to this zoo when he was just a year or two old, and now he's getting pretty big! Last time we were at the zoo, he was trying to get down a step so he could get to the water, and he ended up going backwards down the step – it was so cute!

So great day, awesome fun as always! Like I said, every visit is different, and I am never disappointed! I am a zoo-addict!

Happy Birthday To My Blog!

Happy Birthday to my blog! Today is the one-year anniversary of the day I started my blog on tangents.org! And 381 blog posts later, here we are! So even though I haven't been able to blog every day, there were a few days when I got more than one post up, and so in a 366 day year (leap year in 2008), I was able to make 381 blog posts, and that averages more than one a day, surpassing my goal I had when I started this thing! So I'd like to thank everybody who trudges through my rambling garbage – those who have read all 381 My Food Chain Gang blog posts and those who pretend to have read them ☐

Having this blog has been a great way to vent my feelings (from pride about my kids to my frustrations with Walmart), share news stories I find interesting (from funny police happenings to interesting animal tidbits), write movie reviews, and most importantly, keep in touch with my family and friends who live far away – especially when our lives are too busy to allow us to chat on the phone when we want. THANKS AGAIN FOR VISITING my site!