

Season's Greetings from Dave & Dee & Cassandra

Another year has gone by blazingly fast, and we hope that 2016 was a good year to you!

On being a family...

It's quite a feat to be working parents - we have learned a lot about work-life balance this year. Where we used to fill our time with sports, events, gym...and no small amount of television, evenings are now filled with family dinner time, reading books, playing trains and painting!

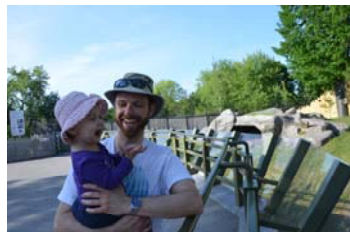
We are so thankful to the many people in our "village" here raising Cassandra. Most notably, we must specially thank Nana and Papa Smith (and Misty as Cassandra would remind us as it's Nana, Papa and Misty's house!) who care for Cassandra several days a week to enable Dave and Dee to work and not yet have to put Cassandra in a daycare system of sorts. It has been a great comfort in the transition back to work for Dee, to leave Cassandra with trusted family - plus, not being with more kids in a daycare, we are absolutely certain we avoid more colds/viruses than most at this stage which is also a plus!



Our annual hike in the "Forks of the Credit" provincial park



Cassandra picked the brown horse and was quite thrilled to have a ride



Daddy and Cassandra share some giggles at the Zoo



Mommy and Cassandra riding Gordon in the Green's customized Thomas & Friends train



At the "Wiggles" concert with Cousin Isaac



We visit Niagara Falls

The past year, Cassandra has grown quite a lot and is truly a thriving little girl now - from her first steps last Christmas eve, she's now walking running and jumping and climbing. We recently took her to a Christmas market and she was treated to a horse drawn carriage ride and a carousel ride - and, she loved the experience quite a lot! She also attended her first concert, "The Wiggles", this year with Cousin Isaac and was mesmerized. We do try to keep exposing her to new things in life.

She continues to be a very good communicator and now speaks in full sentences and already attempts negotiation with her parents (we are in trouble, we know it!). We are hoping very much to avoid some terrible 2 temper tantrums since she can generally communicate well...fingers crossed!

Currently, she's finding her singing voice (Jingle Bells and We Wish you a Merry Christmas are among her favourites), and can often be heard randomly reciting parts of her favourite books (From the Cat in the Hat, she has been exclaiming lately - "Our fish said, No, No, make that cat go away! Tell that Cat in the Hat you do not want to play. He should not be here. He should not be about. He should not be here when your mother is out!").

Cassandra will be graduating from her "parent and tot" swim class soon, and will be on her own in the pool in the new year in her toddler "duck" class. She enjoys regular music / fitness/ fun classes, as well as community events and going to school at the local drop in preschool program near Nana's house.

Mom and Dad haven't been so active only fitting in a handful of golf rounds and volleyball games, though Dave has recently taken up some social curling again which is fun.



Fun in the fall leaves



Relatives visit from England!



Smith family at a pool party

Careers & Dwellings...

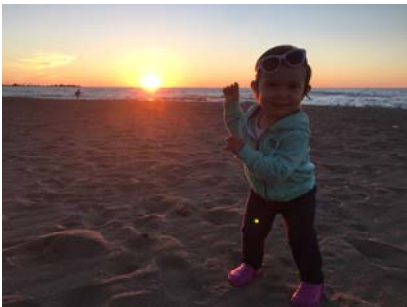
Dee continues to have a rewarding career in consulting; though the past year has been more challenging than most - when she was on maternity leave last year, Hay Group was acquired by Korn Ferry. So, coming back to a company in transition and then learning the new corporate tools and getting used to the changing culture and management has been interesting. Ultimately, work is engaging for Dee though, and, the company allows for work from home flexibility which helps greatly with the work-life balance. Dave continues to work on contract for RONA as an Estimator/Layout designer, but has more often spent time focusing on being daddy and continually trying to work on our little house.

Our little house did get some great upgrades this year with some new doors, a new pathway and porch steps, and new asphalt driveway. We are very pleased with the change in appearance and functionality we achieved. The basement renovations which have been on the backburner for a few years and periodically worked on, will hopefully be done this coming year.

Travels!

We used to always have a tale to tell of a far away location explored in this section of our newsletter - being parents has changed this! But, we have had fun travelling a bit this year with shorter/more local trips to:

- * Nana & Papa's Trailer in Southampton, where Cassandra had an added bonus of experiencing a "Halloween in August" - and had a great practice run learning to trick or treat, and use her Piglet costume an extra time. A child with a true Scottish heritage, she heard the "sunset piper" at the beach and was very excited about the music and truly enjoys bag pipes.
- * Cottage Country - we were honoured and fortunate to be invited to spend time at some friends' family cottages/ getaway condos. We enjoyed the down time with our friends and their kids - Cassandra had oodles of fun enjoying the fresh air, making mud pies and splashing at the beach, and her first fire by moonlight, though mom and dad didn't let her have a roasted marshmallow....
- * Ottawa - to visit our friends Joyce & John, their daughter, Rhea, who is just a few months older than Cassandra, as well as their kitty, princess. Rhea and Cassandra had lots of fun together!
- * St. Catherines/Niagara falls - Dee had a work event in St. Catherines, so we extended this trip to be a family trip to visit the "biiiiig waterfall" as Cassandra would say, as well as have a lovely lunch with our Great Uncle Norm
- * JW Marriott (Rosseau Muskoka Resort) - Dee had a work event here too, so we extended this trip to be a family visit as well!



Cassandra dances at sunset on the Southampton beach



Daddy's shoulders make great transportation



Fun at the beach!



Cassandra decides to pay the piper



Smith Cousins having fun at the orchard picking ... and eating... apples!



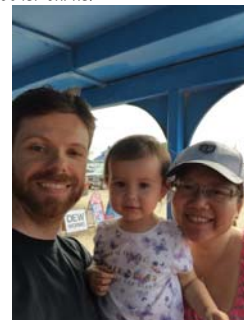
Cassandra & Rhea - Girls just wanna have fun...and not just see each other online!



Cassandra's Halloween look for 2016



Dave enjoys a jet ski



Riding the steam train in Port Elgin

Events!

Springtime was a very busy time this year - we celebrated Cassandra's Baptism, as well as Cousin Ben's First Communion and Cousin Isabelle's Confirmation. We would like to specially thank Nana, who assisted greatly in the preparation for the event, and those who agreed to be Cassandra's God parents and help us as we go along this path: Ryan & Jen Green and Aunt Brenda Inglesi. And of course, Fr. Jan Kolodynski who has been continually supportive of our faith journey with Cassandra, and baptized her at St. Jerome's Parish.

In more happy news, our group of friends welcomed new babies into the world this year: Havana De La Cruz (Connie and Marco), James Green (Ryan & Jen), Gideon David (Jacinda & Stephen), and Elyse O'Connell (Ben & Sacha). We are very happy to see the families in our lives grow, and to have more play date opportunities!

We also want to congratulate newly wedded couples this past year and wish them the absolute best - Olga & Shaun, and Andrea and Naz.



Cassandra's Baptism - God Parents & Fr. Jan



Smith Cousins in Nana and Papa Smith's garden

So: it has been a different sort of busy year, but we are very happy (and mostly healthy) and hope you all are too! Hope you have enjoyed our new newsletter format with bigger pictures that is more environmentally friendly!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!
Mr. & Mrs. D. Smith, and, Cassandra