

AUG Annie's 30th Birthday in Mexico!

13th

The Gillinghams and Keiths all headed south of the border in an EPIC Annie Celebration planned by boyfriend extraordinaire, Kevin Mulholland, to highlight her love of the Spanish culture and language that was easily shared with all of us in this International celebration. Our destination was Ensenada where we all stayed in the Guadalupe Valley which is known for its up and coming wine country! The hotel included 8 different cabins on the same property with enough beds to sleep 20. It also had a great patio/common area to gather which we used to host the party celebration after dinner. We started off with an 11:00 a.m. check-in time and then we all hopped on a private van that Kevin chartered to take us out for the entire day and evening. We started with a "wine itinerary" which included the following wineries:



:: 12PM - [Bodegas Cielu Winery & Brewery](#)

:: 1:30PM - [Vinos Emevé](#)



:: 3:00PM - [Viña](#)

[Chateau Camou](#)

:: 4:30PM - [Vinícola](#)
[Torres Alegre y Familia](#)



Each winery has a different appeal and included great taste sensations such as cheese platters, fruits, baby and mature pig tacos, etc. Kevin added to the fun by providing adornments for photos to remind us that we were here for business and it was all about Annie! We got tours, bought wine, sipped wine, bought more wine, ate, learned more about the area, drank more wine, cheered Annie, took pictures, enjoyed views, tasted more wine, etc. You get the idea!

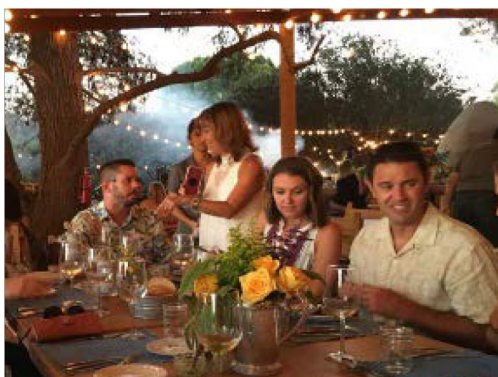


For dinner we went to Deckman's where we were served a five-course meal by a Michelin Chef who created an indoor-outdoor dining room, with views of the wide-open kitchen with no windows or walls set in the middle of a vineyard. Hard to explain but with the warm

summer air and wine freely flowing with each course and we all agreed that this was an exceptional experience. The meal included: tapas, mussels, scallops, quail, pork, and a melon icy dessert. They seated us in the center of the restaurant, with a long table that made us feel like we were at home with a large family gathering.



After dinner, we ventured back to the hotel where we met on the patio and played music so we could dance under the stars. We fired up a Gillingham rendition of "Up Town Girl" aka "Annie Girl" that went like this:



Annie Girl

She's been living in her global world.
I bet she wishes she had a private jet,
To take her wherever she can get!
She is gonna turn into 30 years,
She'll be getting lost of silly cheers.
As long as anyone can keep her still,
She's always looking for her next big thrill.
That's what she likes!



And when she knows what she wants with her time,
And when she wakes up in Mexico after wine.
We'll know she's not so tough,
Just because she loves a Long -Island guy,
She found someone who doesn't ask her why.
He's never tired of her Spanish trips
And all her other traveling quips.

She loves to go!

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa
Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa

Annie girl!

She likes planning parties and fancy pearls,
She's never tired of her crazy life.
She always looking for that next cheap flights
Because she can...



Been three decades, we've all watched her grow
She teachers while turning that big 3-0
We know she's super fine
Just because she loves a Long -Island guy,
She found someone who doesn't ask her why.
He's never tired of her pool-time floats,
And anything else that might rock her boat.

She loves to play!

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa
Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa

That's our Annie Girl

She's our Annie Girl



Happy Birthday Annie Girl

The song turned out to be one of our best which I'm sure had nothing to do with the amount of wine served, sipped, and consumed all night long! The dancing included Seamus trying his hand sliding across the rocks (which did not work as planned) in the form of "the worm" dance move and other crazy antics that kept it lively and fun! We made our way to bed at about midnight which tells you that no one wanted the night to end.

The entire celebration was fun for everyone who made the trek to Mexico! Happy Birthday Annie...Ole!



News From New Zealand

Hi Family!

We are nearing the end of our first year abroad in New Zealand, and it's been quite an exciting 12 months for us. Along with the international move, we welcomed kido #3, Lawson, our Kiwi baby. Although I miss all of you, the past year has been a great experience and I'm looking forward to the what the future holds. Below is a bit of an update about where we are and how we find life to be similar/different in NZ vs The States.

When we first arrived here last September we didn't have a clue about where we would settle. We had enough savings and time left before Lawson arrived to travel around the country and get a feel for where we would setup shop. After our travels, we decided to settle just north of Auckland on a small peninsula, called Whangaparaoa (fhah-ngah-pah RAH-aw-ah). It has a beach vibe, some amazing nature preserves and views, and is only a bus ride away from the Downtown Auckland. We are still renting and love our home. It's a house with a yard that's overlooking one of the

bays on the peninsula, and something we could never afford for the equivalent in California.

Once we finished our travels we started going to regular appointments for Lauren's pregnancy with Lawson. Rather than going to a doctor, your main medical contact during a pregnancy is a midwife. We loved both the doctors we had back in the States for Holden and Grayson's birth, but really enjoyed the experience with our midwife and found it lead to a much smoother and calmer birth experience. I'm sure part of it had to do with this being our third child, but we felt much more comfortable throughout labor since the midwife's purpose is to help you through the entire process rather than just being there to catch the baby. The other big difference in our healthcare experience between NZ and The States was the cost, or lack thereof. We didn't have to pay anything out-of-pocket except for a \$25 ultrasound appointment and \$20 for parking at the hospital. Although the hospital experience wasn't as nice Scripps Encinitas, it was completely free rather than the \$2k or so we had to pay out-of-pocket for Grayson and



work/life balance. You rarely see people work later than 5:30pm, you have 4 weeks vacation and 12 public holidays, and the entire office shuts down between Christmas and early February. Kiwi's value they holidays and people regularly take trips throughout the year.

The kids are all very happy here. We just celebrated Holden's sixth birthday, he recently lost one of his front teeth and is involved in our local Scouts group, New Zealand's coed version of the Boy Scouts. Grayson is now 2.5, is fully talking, and has a big personality. Lawson is almost 7-months-old, loves eating solid foods (and beach sand), and is a few weeks away from crawling. The boys all get along great and love exploring all the nature NZ has to offer. They are at the beach almost every day exploring the tide-pools and playing in the sand, or mom takes them out on a hike in the bush (forest). I recently asked Holden if he missed California and he said only his friends and family. I asked him if he missed Mexican food, but that wasn't as big of issue for him as it is for me.

closer to \$5k we paid for Holden's C-section. That's not including the copays for every doctor's appointment as well as the monthly premiums we were paying for a health insurance in the US. Our monthly premiums alone were approaching \$1k for our family and we would consistently pay all of our deductible throughout the year. All in, I've estimated we are saving around \$15k-\$17k a year on healthcare here and have had great experiences with the system in general.

About 6 weeks after Lawson was born I started a new job at Vodafone as a Finance Manager. Vodafone is one of the biggest telecom companies in the world and is the 2nd biggest mobile phone & internet providers in New Zealand. Work hasn't been all that different than my previous jobs except emails end in "Cheers" and when passing someone in the halls you stick to the left rather than the right (which actually took a while to get used to). The biggest noticeable difference between working in NZ vs The US is the importance of people's





Some other things we love about NZ - the night skies are amazing. Even with the city close by you can still see the Milky Way with your naked eye. There are nature preserves everywhere. It seems like you are never more than 10 minutes away from a bush walk that feels like you are hiking in the Jurassic. There are so many beaches, and so few people, that we regularly have the sand to ourselves. The people here are all extremely friendly and welcoming. Not once have I had a negative experience for being an immigrant in this country (even though Lauren is a citizen). All this is helped by the fact that we are on an island almost the size of California with less than 4.5 million people vs the 40 million Californian residents.

Not everything about the move has been without issue. Being a San Diego native I've really struggled with not having Mexican food. I say this only half-joking. I actually have cravings

for California burritos or rolled tacos with real guacamole. Since most of the produce consumed here is grown here, prices increase when food is out of season, and avocados in particular can be extremely expensive - they were up to \$5 each this winter and are regularly \$2.50 for one (there's actually a black market for avocados and theft from orchards is a real issue). This is also the coldest winter I've ever lived through, which isn't saying much, but I'm ready for Spring and some warm weather. And the hardest part by far is not having my family close by. I miss being able to drive to my parent's house for dinners or having Holden & Gray play with their cousins. It's also tough to miss another set of holidays and Riel gatherings.

I hope you enjoyed the update. I miss you all and I can't wait for someone to come visit us!

Cheers, Dustin, Lauren, Holden, Grayson, and Lawson



Francie's Updates

Hey Everybody,

August 26, 2017

My good friend Robin sent me this picture and when I opened it this morning it put a big smile on my face, as you can see I am well into Christmas Cheer!



OK, I'm back. Sorry I left you for a while, I am sure you all missed me terribly, I am still clawing my way up the side of the gully, but I can definitely see where I am headed.

Got some good news! On Tuesday, if my blood draw goes well as they are anticipating it will, they are going to take out my port. That is a vote of confidence for all is good. my new stem cells are doing what they are supposed to be doing, engrafting and building new ones, my platelet count is even high enough to have surgery, though I really would rather not.

It is a rough climb and no sissies need show up for it. I'm not going to lie It's been a tough 4 weeks. Most of it is a blur of Nurses and Doctors in and out of my room, poking me and prodding me but mostly, waking me up! I am on a bunch of new anti-rejection drugs and my biggest enemy right now is the wind and dirt. There are some nasty spores and fungi all around us and if you get some in your lungs while you are immuno-suppressed, it does not bode well. So, we will not be able to put our back yard in until after the first of the year. No walks at the Zoo, pretty much I need to stay home and away from crowds. Not for all events but I need to consider risk versus benefit, so I am going to try very hard to be happy with a few pots on the back porch.

Now, the question is when will they know if Brett's immune system actually took over mine? Until all my counts are up in the normal range, they probably won't check, they will wait until I am totally engrafted, and hopefully, free of cancer. I am going to include a link you can cut and paste to your browser that explains the next part of my battle with Graft Versus Host Disease, GVHD. It is short and pretty informational.

<https://bethematch.org/for-patients-and-families/life-after-transplant/graft-versus-host-disease-gvhd/>

Besides this battling with loss of my thought process, which as you know, frustrates me a great deal , I am working hard to keep at my regular routines, but this update has been a tough one. I will keep working on getting the word out and thanks so much for your patience. I'm doing the best I can. here is the latest on my boys, Bryce is over at Meat and Three, NYC, with Harold who has been mentoring him. Another great opportunity in his dance with New York City Cuisine. <http://haroldsmeatandthree.com/>

And finally, Brett's in the San Diego Film Festival in the first weekend of October! We have been waiting for him to get into this one and this is the year. So this is a little save the date, here is a link to the website.

Thanks to all of you for your moral support, it has meant a lot to me, and for supporting my kids as well. We really appreciate all the love. The hard days just make me tougher, things that would have freaked me out a year ago, are becoming mundane. Lyle as always, is right there beside me giving me all the help I need. Loved all the cards and pics in the hospital, as I said before, many people could not believe all the love I was receiving.

The house was beautiful when I returned, Lyle kept everything up for me and a big shout out to my neighbor, Jackie Fielding, for keeping my favorite plants alive. Now I just need to start walking a bit each day until I am not so tired, so on that note I'm going to go kick some ass, then take a nap!!!

XOXOXOX - me

September 12, 2017

Just a quick notice to let you know I am still waiting for the results of whether or not Brett's stem cells have left me some of his DNA to replace my immune system. I will probably find out at the end of this week or next. I did get the bone marrow biopsy results that show less than .5 cancer in my bone marrow which is very good news, since at my very worst, it was 200. They usually don't even report anything less than 1.

Last week they tested my spine, but still no results there yet either. As soon as I get the results back I will let you know.

The way I feel vacillates back and forth, made a trip to urgent care on Sunday because I thought I might have a blood clot but all was good. I am hanging in there and Lyle is taking very good care of me. He is getting very good at making dinner and doing house cleaning chores. I am so lucky to have such a great husband.

They are supposed to take out my port tomorrow, so as long as my blood work is good that will happen. All my prayer warriors are now focused on what I need to happen.

Thanks for all the love and support - me





back to school



September is going “back to school” time. We have many teachers and principals who are in the midst of returning or going to new schools, but in this article, we focus only on the students. It is hard to believe that the 4th generation of Riels from Frank and Edith already number 21. And since these children are from 9 of the 22 members of the third generation --there are likely to be a lot more to come!

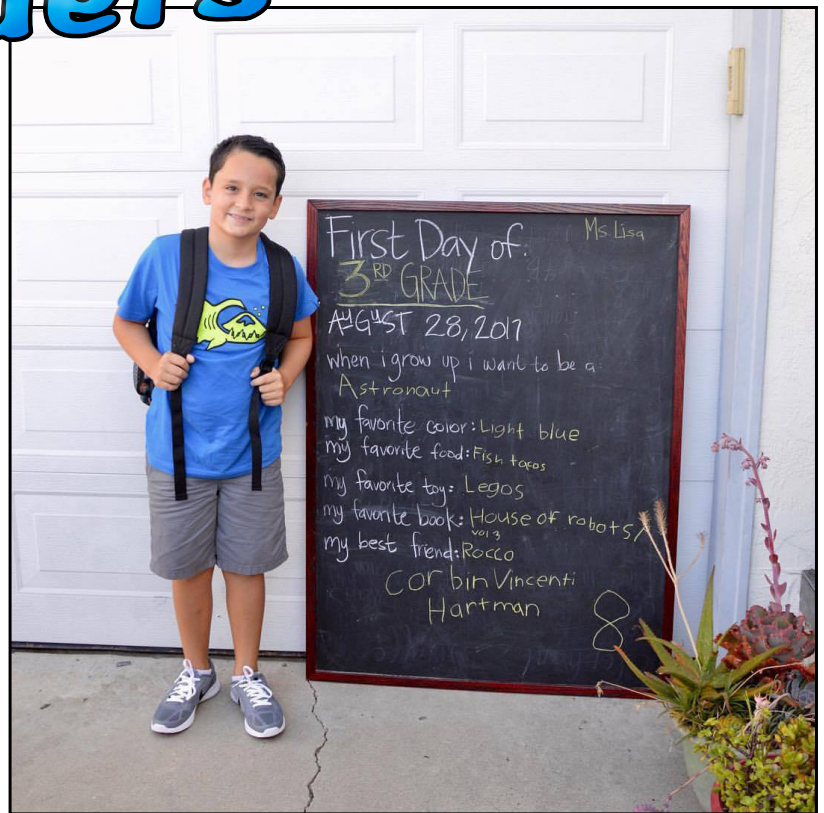
So here is the listing of all of the kids in the fourth generation and the schools that they are attending. You can see, Matthew is leading the group being the first to graduate from high school and move on to university. His brother Corbin is also one of the elders as he heads off for second grade. After that, we have kids in clusters. In the first group of school kids are the three 6-year-olds, Liam, Holden and Benny who are in elementary school. The biggest group is the 4-year-olds, Braeden, Cora, Owen, Noah, Josie and Blake who are the mostly in preschools as are the 3-year-olds, Emily Sofie, Matty and Rhys. The current toddlers are Riley, Grayson and Madeline. Lawson is the oldest of the babies followed by Addelyn and Quinn. We wish them all a very creative, powerful and engaging school experience!



The Elders



Matthew Hartman (18) in his first semester at San Diego State University



Corbin Hartman (8) 2nd Grade - High Tech High Explorer Elementary

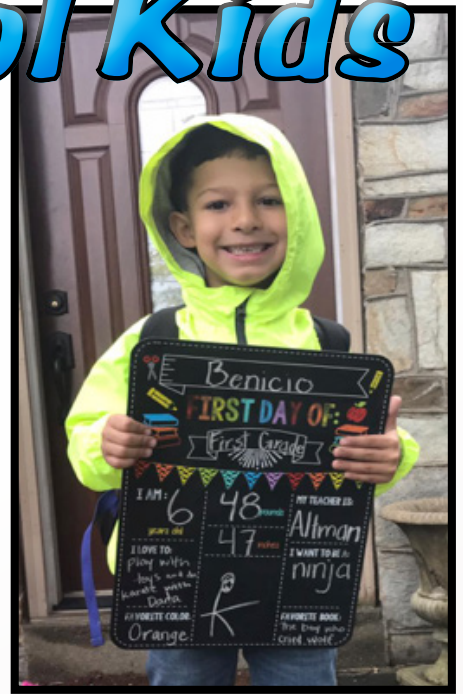
The New School Kids



Liam Keith (6) is going into Kindergarten at Francis Parker



Holden Benesch (6) on a New Zealand adventure with family



Benicio Rios (6) is in first grade at James Monroe Elementary School

The Junior School Kids



Blake Riel (4) goes to the International Montessori school in Claremont, CA



Josie Hartman (4) is in Pre-K at St. Columba Catholic School



Noah Benesch (4) will start preschool in Oct at Patrick Henry High School

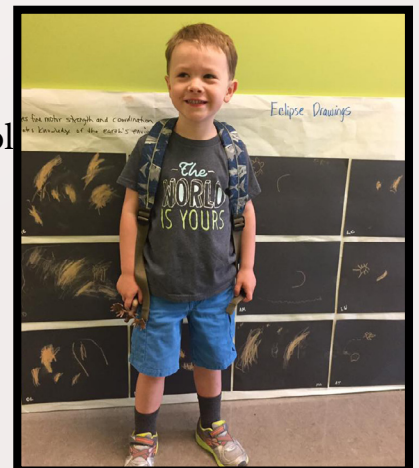


Braeden Keith (4) is in Junior Kindergarten at Francis Parker

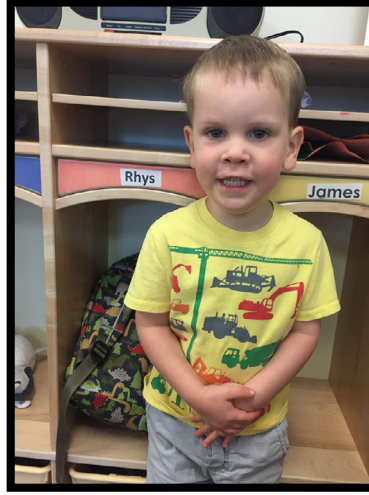
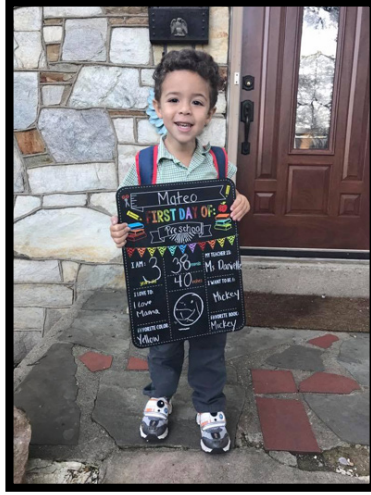


Cora Hartman (4) is in Kindergarten in a Montessori school called Carden Hall, in Newport Beach

Owen Lane (4) attends Preschool in Maryland



The Preschool Club



Emily Mehan (3) begins Bright Horizons Pre-school in North County

Mateo Rios (3) attends John Kenney Child Care Maryland at Heller Park

Rhys Lane (3) Daycare in Maryland

Sofie Rios (3) attends John Kenney Child Care at Heller Park

The Toddlers



Riley Keith (2) just started his first year of preschool at Adventure Days in Tierrasanta.

Madeline Benesch (1) Home Care

Grayson Benesch (2) is on a New Zealand adventure with family



The Babies



Addelyn Mehan (6 months) Day Care and Grandparent school



Lawson Benesch (7 months) is also on a New Zealand adventure with family



Quinn Riel (2 months) Home Care



The Perfect Ending to My Summer

By Birdy Hartman



Being a teacher marks the beginning and ending to the summer like none other. We teachers so enjoy our time off but also, like all of the kids in our lives, anticipate a change in routine. So, on Labor Day weekend the west coast Hartman gang, that didn't have to work (sorry Scott), went up to San Clemente beach for a little sunshine, sand and seaside. San Clemente is a good halfway point between

Long Beach (Curtis' home) and SD. The day was a little warm but that didn't damper the fun of being together as a family. I never tire of seeing Corbin, Josie and Cora play together. Craig and Ana enjoyed swimming with Corbin in the waves as he boogie boarded like a pro. And Curtis and Lauren were happy

watching Cora jump the waves as she squealed with laughter as they tried to knock her down. We ended our visit having pizza and had to say some soggy good-byes for the long trip back to our homes. But it was just the perfect way to end my summer!



FAMILY SHORTS



Total Eclipse of the Sun



Up until last year my only experience with a total eclipse had been the song lyrics from “Your so Vain” by Carly Simon. But it wasn’t until mid-2016 that I learned there would be a total eclipse in the United States, and better yet I could drive to it!

So, about a year ago, I started looking for places to stay. Well, I was about a year late. All the campgrounds on the path or even near it were full and it looked like I might have to do some improvising. Finally, I found one that was only a few hundred miles from the path and I took it.

So, the next few months were spent preparing for the event. Believe it or not, there were a lot of things that we had to get ready just to see the eclipse, let alone photograph it. So, I started getting special filters for my camera (most were already sold out) and even some binoculars to bring the sun in even closer. Finally, I knew that the trip would not be complete unless we had the funky cardboard glasses with pictures of the eclipse on them.



By the beginning of the year we had almost everything except the filter for my camera lens as it was still back-ordered (it finally arrived 2 weeks before we left). I had read just about everything I could on taking pictures of an eclipse so I felt I was ready. The best advice I got was to NOT take pictures the whole time but to just stop and experience the eclipse. The author of the article went on to say that it affects so many things in the sur-

rounding environment you would not notice it, if all you did was shoot pictures.

As spring of 2017 came around I thought I might make things a little more interesting by buying a new motorhome and thus making the eclipse trip, its maiden voyage. Also, Brian and Drew decided to tag along to really put the motorhome through its paces.

The total trip was 7 days of driving (3 out, 3 back and 1 day driving in the jeep just to get there) averaging over 420 miles a day, but it was totally worth it. We arrived in Kansas (200 miles away from the center of the eclipse) on Sunday night. Then early Monday morning we piled into the jeep to make our way to Nebraska for an area just North of a small town called Arthur.

We were a bit worried because of the cloud cover but by the time we got there it had turned into just patchy clouds that were moving by fairly quick. We pulled off the road and found a nice spot next to a field with a windmill style water pump in the middle of it. I picked Nebraska because I felt there would not be much of a crowd there and for the most part I was right. There might have been a few thousand but they were all spread out over 70 miles of road. We drove right to the middle of the path so we would experience the longest eclipse possible (2 min - 40 sec).

Once the eclipse started, and we knew it had because a group of hippies from Oakland (no kidding it looked like they were all wearing stuff from the ‘70s) started dancing in the middle of the road, we started watching the sun disappear behind the moon. It took about an hour and all along I waited for the area to get darker and colder as I had read about. But other than the





crickets starting to chirp when the sun was about half way covered I really didn't notice that much of a change.

Even when the sun was just a sliver it was still fairly bright and warm

but once the sun slipped behind the moon everything changed very fast! First off, everyone was cheering just as much as we were. It is such an awesome sight to see the sky go dark and the corona of the sun become visible. I also took some time (between taking pictures) to note that all the horizons looked like dusk and dawn at the same time. It was strange to see a sky above be that was dark enough



to see stars but on all horizons (north, south east and west) there were red clouds reflecting the sun's light.

I must tell you that it was the quickest few minutes of my life because, before I knew it, the sun was peeking back out the other side and creating the famous diamond ring in the sky. I was able to capture a few pictures of it along with the total eclipse picture you see on these pages. I was even luck enough

to capture some solar flares during the eclipse.

Just as quick as it started it was over. I think everyone was kind of in a state of awe and couldn't believe what they had just witnessed. There really is no way to describe the experience because so many things are going on at the same time. We hung around for a few more minutes but then jumped back into the jeep for a long drive home.

As we waited in traffic (not bad only about a 30-minute wait) we made some sandwiches and enjoyed a nice lunch while discussing the event. There was no texting or talking to friends on the phone just a good old fashion lunch with everyone joining in on the conversation. Did I mention that there was no cell service there? Anyways, just as we finished lunch the Nebraska State police waived us through and it was clear sailing (or driving) all the way back to our campground.

We had a great time and have decided that in 2024 we will be heading to Texas to see it again only this time we will have over 4 minutes to enjoy the event. Places are filling up already so if you plan to go I recommend you start thinking about making reservations in 2020. I know we will. Next month I will fill you in on the road trip portion of the journey and tell you all about our maiden voyage in our new RV. Till then enjoy...

Calling all Runners and Walkers...

Do you ever wake up with an urge to run or walk in the wee hours of the morning? Well let it be known that you are not alone in the Riel Clan. The Running/Walking team of Robert and Listy begin Tuesday-Friday at Mission Trails Park. They meet at 5:00 A.M. and put in an hour before they all go off to their work day. Isn't that awesome? Exercise checked off for the day.

Well, that is too early for this bird and I often miss out of the fun. However, I do occasionally join them for their Sunday excursions that begin at a much more Birdy friendly time of 6:00 A.M. This last Sunday we went to La Jolla Shores and enjoyed the beach views while we huffed and puffed. And here is the added secret treat...Robert is known for treating you to Starbucks if you join the crew on Sundays. It really is a wonderful way to start the day and I appreciate that they

always make me feel welcomed even though I am the slug of the group! So who is in for next week? Let's see if the new school year will bring new runners to the early morning gang!



Carol's Summer Fun

