

January, 2016

Dear family and friends,

Thank you to those of you have sent us letters. Here's what's been happening with our family lately.

Mark and Sarah are both away to college now, so Dave and Ruth are enjoying the empty nester life, at least for most of the year. Both of the kids chose to attend the same college (Dordt) so that simplifies many things.

Sarah is freshman and has made a plan to do majors in both Digital Media and Graphic Design, plus a minor in Psychology. She very much loves it there, and has made many friends. Her roommate quickly became her best friend and they do lots of things together. Since Dordt is in a small town surrounded by farms, she does miss being near the many stores she grew up with, but she and her roommate have made several shopping trips to the nearest big cities Sioux Falls and Sioux City. She has a work-study job preparing and projecting songs for chapel and worship events, which is going well.

Mark is a senior. He decided to change his major from Mechanical Engineering to Computer Science (with hardware emphasis), which fits well with the 4 summers he did programming at Fermilab. The change of major came late but he was still able to squeeze everything in to hopefully graduate in 4 years, because many of the courses he had already taken were applicable to the new major. This semester his load is relatively light so his parents hope he has time to work hard at getting a job. Over Christmas break he went on a mission trip to Nicaragua with a group from the college. They taught school teachers how to use modern but very inexpensive "Raspberry Pi" computers to replace the 15-year old PCs they had.

Ruth's small business "When Not Gardening" has been growing slowly but steadily, and doing well. She sells her felted artwork mostly at craft sales. She's also now the treasurer of the local knitting guild and meets every week with a group for social knitting. The weather was good for gardening this year, which she really enjoys. She continues to co-lead a women's Bible study and another small group at church.

Dave is now an elder in our church, in charge of the many education programs there. He's very busy at Fermilab, working on several different projects in parallel. There's a lot happening there with many physics experiments in progress or preparing to start up, most of them looking at the properties of neutrinos and muons. The new thing that he's gotten involved with this year is working on ways to make secure grid computing easier. He's still the chair of the Fermilab public lecture committee, and still leads or co-leads 3 Bible studies/small groups.

Dave & Ruth took advantage of the empty nest to take a trip together last fall to stay for the first time in the Caribbean Islands, by spending a week in the beautiful U.S. Virgin Islands St. Thomas and St. John. We especially enjoyed snorkeling and did that most of the days.

There have also been times of significant sadness since our last letter. A year and a half ago Ruth's mother died, and a year ago Dave's mother died. They are both greatly missed. Fortunately Dave's father and Ruth's father both seem to have adjusted pretty well to living alone.

Have a great 2016.

Love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "The Dykstras". The script is cursive and elegant.

Dave, Ruth, Mark and Sarah Dykstra

(pictures on back)



At the Arkansas Alligator Farm



Temple Grandin spoke at Fermilab



Mark ziplining in Nicaragua



Graduate with grandfathers



One of Ruth's art products



St. John



Bananaquits in St. John