

Happy 2014 from our Blue Boat Home!

In 2013 we completed our fifth year in our little house in Emporia, and we're finally starting to feel settled here, with a good circle of friends and community involvement galore. We opened our doors to couchsurfers from around the world as well as friends and family, and we made trips to Ben's 15-year college reunion in Iowa, a family reunion in Ohio, and a cousin's wedding in Tennessee as well as numerous visits to our families in Nebraska and Oklahoma. We continued to sell our produce and crafts year-round at the Emporia Farmers Market and other local venues. In the fall, we worked up the gumption to renovate our back porch into a proper, four-season laundry room. How much longer we'll be in town is still unclear, but it's definitely home now!

Ben:

Last year I felt I had traded my white collar permanently for a green one, but although our curbside recycling business is doing well, there's not much call for a home energy auditor in Emporia, let alone a permaculture designer! I put a lot of work into our tiny urban farm in the spring, and we were featured on two garden tours in June, and I taught some classes here and there, but then I seriously lost my momentum in the summer. The garden would have fallen apart if not for a workshare arrangement with our friend Charlene and some eager help from my Little, Justen.

Being a Big Brother has been satisfying in many ways! Justen and I have had a lot of adventures together that I wouldn't have had on my own or with Jessie. I also tutored another young friend in JavaScript programming, which helped to keep my own skills sharp so that I was able to accept another Web programming job toward the end of the year. It looks like there's more of that in store for the years to come.

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Jessie:

The year started off with a busy semester for me at ESU. In March, we hosted another successful Discovery Day Conference, the 39th annual here at ESU. Soon after that, we were informed that our program was in jeopardy of being cut due to budget shortfalls. Fortunately, we were given a reprieve and our enrollment has increased by more than double this fall!

In June, I attended the American Art Therapy Association conference in Seattle, where I presented with several students on our work with children with Autism. I also spent much of the year planning another Kansas Art Therapy Association state conference. The conference occurred in November and it went very well! Now I'm vice president of KATA until 2016.

I had the privilege of visiting St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis twice this year as part of my role as advisor for Up 'til Dawn. It is an amazing and beautiful place! You can help our ESU fundraiser by donating to www.utd.stjude.org/jaws.

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We always welcome guests at 1301 State St., Emporia KS 66801. Best wishes for a happy 2014!