

# Happy 2017 from our Blue Boat Home!

There's no way around it: a lot of discouraging things happened in 2016. Fortunately we had some very good times as well. In April we went to Aguascalientes, México to visit Ben's old friend Javier and his family, and in October we visited the Netherlands and France — both trips to remember for a lifetime! Within the US, we visited Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Houston, as well as our families in NE and OK.

Friends and family visited us, too: Malinda and her daughters, Adam, Brett & Kristin, as well as Grinnell College extern Anjali, and of course our nephew Nicholas, Jessie's brother Josh, and both sets of parents! We're also enjoying being part of the "village" helping our friend Diane raise her foster daughter, Athena.

We said goodbye this summer to Simon, our 17-year-old cat. He was stubborn and independent right up to his very last day, which he spent outdoors, sleeping in the flowers.

## Ben

A good part of my year was spent training to bicycle across Iowa with RAGBRAI. I'm very familiar now with the county roads surrounding Emporia, and I did enough camping to last me for a few years! I also passed through my old stomping grounds in Fairfield to visit some friends, notably Emily and Brian & Meghan's family.

I continued my permaculture practice by teaching another successful intro course, pruning the apple orchard of a local nonprofit, and setting up an aquaponics system for a local school. I poured a lot of effort into trying to revive the Emporia Gardeners of America, but alas, it disbanded at the end of the year. I'm getting more active in the Kansas Permaculture Institute, which will figure prominently in my 2017.

I've been seeking a buyer for the Green Door recycling service that I've been operating for the past four years. Getting it ready for sale has been good incentive to get everything ship-shape! I have enough on my hands with the Web work I do for the UUA and a variety of other clients.

I enjoyed brushing up on my Spanish and Russian and studying Dutch and French for our trips this year, so I've decided learning languages is my hobby! I'm currently working on Cherokee, my biggest challenge yet!

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## Jessie

It was a busy year as usual for me. I helped plan a conference cohosted by the Nursing College and Art Therapy program at ESU. Patch Adams was our guest speaker and he is even more off-the-wall than you would expect. As a planning committee member I was obligated to clown with him at the local hospital, and to my dismay the picture made the paper!

I volunteered with Children Inspire Glass II where children created stories and clay sculptures which were then made into blown glass pieces by college students and instructors. I also collaborated with our friend Gaile, other faculty, interns and elementary students on a "secondhand" drum set made of recycled materials which will be displayed and played during the Dirty Kanza yearly.

As of July, I am a part-time doctoral student at Mount Mary University in WI, working toward a Doctorate of Art Therapy (DAT). There I met my fantastic cohort members Tzafi, Kai, Huma and Melanie. I look forward to many adventures with them in the coming years.

I topped the year off with a fall semester sabbatical to work on Autism and Art Therapy Research and am excited about what will result from that!

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