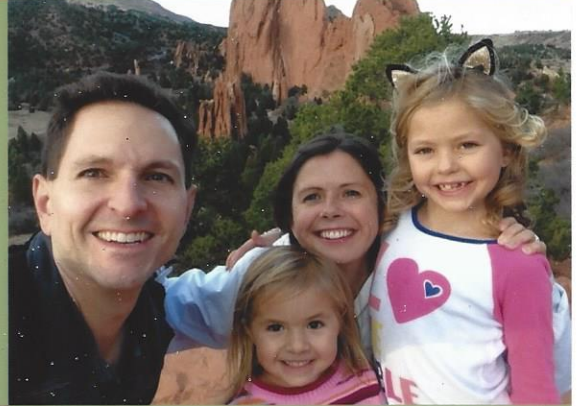


HAPPY
HOLIDAYS!



2017



Merry Christmas
from the Cicero Family
John, Jennifer, Kaitlyn, and Aubrey



Happy holidays! It's the Christmas season again and that means it's time for sharing some happenings from 2017. We hope that your year has given you plenty to be thankful for and that you look forward to Christmas with a joyous heart. In our household, all members born in the 21st century were begging for snow as early as July, but when it finally came months later, Aubrey noted, "Brrr! Snow is colder than I remember." Well, of course, kiddo—perhaps the flip-flops weren't such a great idea. We must admit that once school starts, we think, "Here comes the cold weather again," but October and November usually have plenty of nice days to ease us gradually into the finger-numbing months.

Aubrey (4) is enjoying preschool. It's a pleasure watching her learn to read, sounding out the letters and connecting them for short words. She has really taken off with her swim lessons, too. Earlier this year, she was still tentative about getting her face wet, but now the little shark just wiggles through the water! Kids learn so quickly!

Kaitlyn (8) is now in second grade and loving school. She is a natural performer, loving church choir, school choir, and her children's theater "Beauty and the Beast" production. We enjoy singing karaoke at home and are always amazed at how she can listen to a song once and then sing it better than we can. She also gave bowling league a shot but, perhaps to our relief, does not share her father's passion for the sport.

While 2016 was the year of Star Wars (and of rejoicing that it *wasn't* the year of Frozen), 2017 was the year of Harry Potter. It took us a couple of months but we watched all of the movies and they were wonderful! For a solid month or two, Kaitlyn wouldn't leave the house without drawing a scar above her eye. It was fun hearing "wingardium leviosa" over and over until everyone figured out that it doesn't make sisters levitate, nor does it make trash go into the wastebasket all by itself.

2017 was also the year of career uncertainty. Everything was going along just merrily at John's company (DMT) until March, when the Swiss parent company announced they would lay off two-thirds of the employees and attempt to either sell or shut down DMT. John was informed that even if the company sold, the smaller business would almost certainly not require his position. So we bit our nails for the next nine months during all of the sale negotiations, wondering where he would work next and saddened at the thought of leaving a great company. As luck would have it, though, the new parent company has plans to expand the business and John miraculously gets to keep his job! Hooray! For this, we are very grateful. The new company is Innov Wire Technology (IWT). There will always be a special place in our hearts for the folks that didn't get to keep their jobs, though, including seven of the nine engineers that were in John's team...not a weak link among them.

In the bowling world, John had a banner year. He placed very high in a PBA regional, eventually losing to PBA Hall of Famer Brian Voss in match play. He then won the Colorado Springs Masters and the Peak Bowl Masters. Of course, it wasn't all roses; he missed the cut by *one* place in not one, but three tournaments. Oh, well. *Someone* has to be the first place loser.

At John's 40th birthday party, we had to pull out the fire extinguisher. Reports vary; John insists that it was the grill that caught fire while others say there were just too many candles on the cake.

Jen kept very busy this year. She loves being a great mommy and finds that it is extremely rewarding. As the girls get older, the number of friends (and thus the number of birthday parties and play dates) grows seemingly exponentially and we have cultivated many wonderful friendships with their parents.

Jen also showcased her travel agent skills, taking the whole family on a very relaxing vacation to Cozumel. We rented a 1972 VW Bug in which we came to appreciate the improvements in cars over the last 45 years:

<u>Modern term</u>	<u>1972 VW Bug equivalent</u>
"Power windows"	"It takes a lot of arm power to roll down these windows"
"Leather interior"	"Smells like a cow died in here"
"Heated seats"	"No air conditioning"
"Keyless entry"	"Lucky if the key doesn't break off in the lock"

The last day of the Cozumel trip was one to remember. John broke his toe that morning, got chased by a barracuda in the ocean, was stung by a bee, and (sadly) witnessed a lady die of a heart attack on the beach while the lifeguards tried their best to revive her. The latter event made us realize just how minor all of the other things were!

Jen also convinced us to make the crazy trek up to Nowhere, Wyoming to see the total eclipse. Wow, what an adventure! Nine hours to make a four-hour drive. It was unforgettable and worth every minute of it. Or should we say, *the* minute was worth every *hour* of it.

Memorable quotes:

"Look, there's a pirate crossing the street!"

-Aubrey, upon seeing a huge, scary-looking guy with a bandanna after "pirate day" at school

"Mommy, I don't want cents. I want bills."

-Kaitlyn

Steven: "Does John always drive like that?"

Jen: "Drive like what?"

Steven: "Well, I guess that answers *that* question."

"I don't need help. I'm a professional."

-Aubrey, climbing boulders at a friend's birthday party

It can't be said often enough: life is wonderful because of the joy and laughter brought by you, our friends and family. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

John, Jennifer, Kaitlyn, and Aubrey