



merry christmas

and happy *new year*



Love, The Cicero Family
John, Jennifer, Kaitlyn, & Aubrey

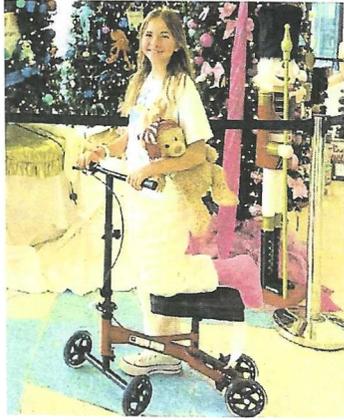
2025

Look out! Go! No, stop! Not so fast! Too slow! That crunching sound was the garage door!

Oh, wait...I thought I was still the passenger while Kaitlyn was driving. Turns out that I'm just writing a letter. Actually, Kaitlyn (now 16), who just got her license a couple of months ago, is an excellent driver. The only casualty so far has been one of our landscape lights (which, indeed, makes a crunching sound when it is flattened by three tons of metal). So, we have a lot to be thankful for. And again, we'll say that gratitude is one of the secrets to happiness. No matter the situation, we can always find something to be grateful for.



Most parents don't want to see their kids on the news (at least not their mugshots), but we had the pleasure of watching Aubrey (12) deliver the weather forecast as part of FOX 21's Kidscasters series. And although she doesn't have to deal with scraping ice off of windshields just yet, she has had plenty of challenges this year. Seventh grade... 'nuff said. Then add elbow surgery to remove a painful bone fragment. Then add a series of stretching casts for her clubfoot (but in true Aubrey never-give-up fashion, she earned her purple belt in karate while in a cast!). THEN add major surgery in Iowa. In total, we traveled out of state eight times for medical appointments. But again, we are grateful—we were able to take her to one of the best clubfoot doctors in the world. She's on a knee scooter but, by the time we ring in the new year, she should be able to walk normally for the first time in three months.



We journeyed to Peru this summer. The first part of the trip took us deep into the Amazon rain forest, hours by boat from the nearest town. What we saw *in the wild*: a jaguar, a sloth, birds, capybaras, a 15-foot green anaconda (the heaviest snake in the world...we estimate this one was almost 200 pounds!), various monkeys, birds, caimans, giant river otters, tarantulas, birds, piranhas, bats, weasels, and tons of birds. The second part was spent in the Andes, hiking the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu and seeing the ancient towns of Cusco, Ollantaytambo, and more. The Peruvians are amazing, friendly people, and we recommend going if you're even remotely interested in South America. Bonus: it's relatively inexpensive!

Our family had a lot of drama in 2025. No, no, no...not **that** kind of drama. Through their theater company (ACT & ACT II), Kaitlyn and Aubrey were in some major shows. In the production of *Mary Poppins*, Kaitlyn played the part of Jane Banks while Aubrey made her mainstage debut in the ensemble. With 12 performances at the Ent Center for the Arts, the show reached 9000 audience members! In *Newsies*, Aubrey charmed the crowd in her lead role as Les, while Kaitlyn was one of the featured dancers. Finally, Kaitlyn played Lucy in a powerful performance of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. We were blessed to have relatives (from both coasts and in between!) visit to see these plays.

As the social coordinators for ACT II, we hosted an epic game of Capture the Flag in a 16-acre wooded area with 24 players, creating memories that will last a lifetime. It wasn't **quite** at the level of Camp Half-Blood from Percy Jackson, but of course, we only had mortals in our version.

John is now reading a suspense novel in Braille. Something bad is going to happen; he can feel it. In all seriousness, though, his eyes have gotten a lot worse this year. He's hoping that he can blame his current bowling performance on his vision. Not much else can explain all those errant shots! He's going for eye surgery in 2026. If you don't get a letter next year, the surgery didn't go so well.

Jen continues to shine in her many roles, from fantastic mother to expert travel agent to math homework tutor to concert French horn player to dishwasher repairperson. We have her to thank for so much of the joy in our family, even if she wants John to cut back on the desserts. And I'm not kidding about the travel agent part—leave that to Jen. John booked a hotel once and the "free breakfast" was water and a clementine.

For you, our beloved family and friends, our wish is that you have an excellent 2026 filled with warmth and joy. We also hope that you are able to find gratitude in whatever ups and downs you may face. Doing so may be the key to joy in the first place. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

John, Jen, Kaitlyn, and Aubrey