

# Samuels Family Newsletter



Samuels Family  
Christmas 2010

Dave, Erin,  
Leah, & Brian



## Special events in our family's life

- Leah turned 7 on March 26, 2010 and is in Second Grade at **Walnut Grove Elementary School**.
- Brian turned 5 on December 8, 2010. He is in Pre-Kindergarten at **The Quarry Lane School** where he is starting to learn to read.

## Merry Christmas 2010 from our family to yours!

Christmas? Again? Seriously? *How many different ways can you say "Where did the time go?"* The days sure go by fast even with just the normal work, school, and family activities. The chaos of extra-curricular activities hasn't really even started yet. How do you all do it?? We vote for a minimum of 4 day weekends!

We hope this newsletter finds you well.

Dave and Erin are still working at EMC in Pleasanton. Dave creates highly technical courseware for EMC

software. Erin is a Product Manager for EMC Documentum software. The work keeps us busy and we are both grateful to be working in this economy.

Leah and Brian are enjoying school and do well in their classes. Leah is still a serious reader and Brian dying to learn. That can't be a bad thing at all!



## Leah Jane (a.k.a. Sammy)

Sammy? You would think that it was a nickname that came from Samuels, but it is not. Leah decided that she didn't like her first name and, on her own, renamed herself Samantha. She liked the sound of Samantha Samuels and even started writing Sammy on all of her homework. We were not sure how much we should support her decision given she already had to change her identity from Leah Berry to Leah Samuels. Since we were already family before the adoption, the changing of family roles was really hard for her. For now, we just asked that she put Leah on her school work. She can be Sammy at home, if that is something that will help her adjust to her new life with us.

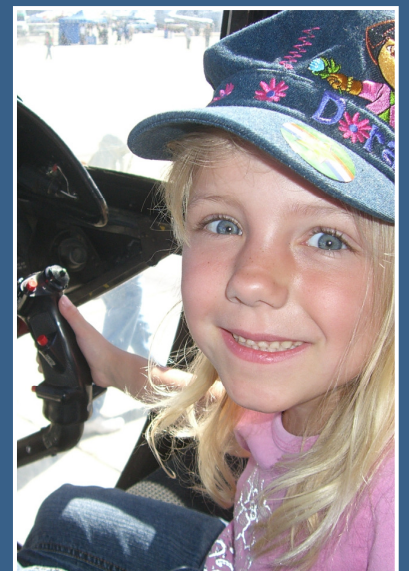
Leah had several successes this year. She participated in her first science fair at school, learned to ride a two-wheeler, and finally figured out how to work the swing in the backyard. Her reading skills are far above her grade level and she spends a lot of time pouring herself into chapter books. The 40 or so *Magic Tree House* books that she got for her 7<sup>th</sup> birthday only kept her occupied for about 2 or 3 weeks – tops! She even decided to teach herself how to write in cursive over the summer.

There are still many challenges ahead, as we have been told to expect at least a 5 year transition period. *Ouch!* We are fortunate to have a wonderful full-time aide at school for her this year, which truly helps keep us sane!

## "I LOVE having a birthday!"

**Brian – Age 5**

- We celebrated our 11<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary this year.
- We have confirmed that weekends should really be at least **4 days** long! ☺



Salinas Air Show  
October 2, 2010





**Papa's Race Car!**

Papa found a toy replica of his '64 Galaxie Race Car and fixed it up for Brian.

## Big Boy Brian: A Baby No More

Our baby is growing up... way, way too fast. He'll still admit to being Mom's baby, but he is Daddy's little guy. *Why didn't Daddy graduate to Dad?? That's SO unfair! Really, really unfair!!* ☺

Brian continues to be a very happy little boy with the same strong personality. New things are still hard and make him anxious. Once he gets over the fear then he is into it, whatever it is, 110%. He is a million miles an hour all day long. He's very loud. Never quiet. Ever. It is no wonder that he sleeps so well at night!

The poor little guy ended up with pneumonia this year and took him out of school for 10 days. We'd never seen anything that knocked him down like that. During that process he was also diagnosed with asthma, which is triggered by allergies. He's very allergic to pollen and is also allergic to grass. We'll start an immunotherapy shot treatment soon. In the meantime, he has to use a nebulizer (Pulmacort) twice a day.

Books have always been a daily part of Brian's life and he very much wants to learn how to read. He is working on phonics and should be able to read many three letter words by the Spring. He has C-A-T "Cat!" down pat.

Transformers, Dinosaurs, Dragons, Cars, and all-things-active are Brian's favorite things. He loves movies, but they don't keep him very occupied during the short rainy season. It is a good thing we live in California!



## Sibling Rivalry – More or Less...

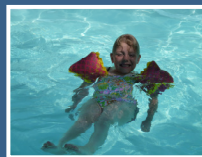
"How do the kids get along?" Well enough. The biggest challenge is that they are polar opposites with little or no common interests. We used to just think it was because they were a boy and a girl, but it isn't really that simple. They really are just very different.

Leah prefers independent, solitary, and otherwise sedentary activities like coloring, drawing, and reading. When she is in a group, she prefers to sit on the outside and observe rather than participate. When she is active, she still tends to pick the more independent activities like riding her bike or swinging on the backyard swing. We know that a large part of it is due to her fragile emotional state, as she only trusts herself and is just not ready to create real relationships with others yet. Hopefully, in time that will change. She "tolerates" Brian and will play with him, yet he's so excitable that he gets under her skin sometimes. She seems to prefer the calmer activities and calm just isn't in Brian's nature. Not even close!

Brian can't play alone. Ever. It just doesn't compute - at all. He loves movies, but you have to watch them *with* him. No, that doesn't mean just sitting in the same room while reading the Kindle or working on the computer. You have to *watch* the movie too. He knows the difference. ☺ He loves playing dueling dragons, enemy Transformers, thumb war, and even Monopoly. Yes, the real Monopoly for 8+ year olds. He doesn't quite understand it all, but will (and has) sit at the table for 5 straight hours playing with the family. For him, it's all about being with the whole family.



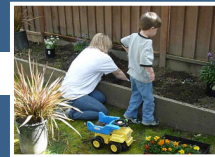
Kindgon Drags Car Show in Lodi, CA – September 2010



Birthday Party



4<sup>th</sup> of July



Gardening



Bumblebee Transformer



Diabetes Presentation to 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Class



## Astronomy

Dave continues to make really good use of his backyard-observatory. On a clear night you will often find the dome open and Dave at his computer working up the imaging plan for the evening. He has been able to successfully automate his system, which has saved him a great deal of time and frustration. There is not a lot of time for hobbies these days, so the less time he spends fighting the quirks of sensitive scientific equipment the more time he can spend on the hobby he loves.



Dave continues to be a director on the board of the Fremont Peak Observatory Association ([www.fpoa.net](http://www.fpoa.net)), which has not taken up as much of his time as it has in the past. He was still involved in

the local college intern program, the public information programs, and the annual member appreciation BBQ. Dave even bought the lucky ticket for the grand prize Orion telescope at the Star-B-Que this year.



The kids had fun at the event this year (aside from Brian spraying bug spray in his eye). The organizers put together a great "Kids Corner" that had a lot of fun things to keep the little ones entertained.

The kids love to go with Dave to the observatory and chase lizards and collect rocks. Brian often asks if he can go to the "ZER-be-tor-EE" too. So, cute!



**M 76 Planetary Nebula**  
3.5 Trillion Miles Away  
December 2010



**NGC 157 Galaxy**  
75 Million Light Years Away  
December 2010

[www.davesamuels.com/images/best](http://www.davesamuels.com/images/best)



**Terracotta Warriors**  
Xi'an China  
April 2010



**Adam Block Astro-Imaging Workshop**  
Tucson, AZ  
December 2010

## Our Family Adventures

Most of our travel that involves getting on an airplane is related to work, but we try to get out to local destinations as a family. We are members of the Oakland Zoo, where the kids enjoy the rides almost more than they enjoy getting to know the animals. The kids have enjoyed their weekend bike rides to the many Pleasanton parks and the different play areas that they offer. Living in an older neighborhood has its perks, including its central location. There is a nearby park in almost every direction.

The Salinas Air Show in October was a lot of fun for the kids, as they got to see some really huge monster trucks and great big jets. Papa came up from Arizona for the "Kingdon Drags" car show and exhibition race in Lodi, CA in September. We all went out to see him race and everyone had a good time. When we got home Brian immediately setup all his Hot Wheels like the drag race. So, guess who got a toy drag race game for his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday from Grandma Toni and Papa? ☺ Bet you'll never guess.

Dave took a couple of astronomy-related trips this year. One of the trips was for an astrophotography course near Tucson, AZ. He is hoping that his pictures will improve a lot based on what he learned. His other trip was to visit an astronomy buddy in a remote area near Bishop, California where he had several nights of clear and unpolluted (no pesky city lights) skies. In September, he was able to visit his cousin Karen in Utah for her daughter Meghan's wedding. Dave and Karen always have a good time together.

Erin went to Boston, Seattle, and China this year. She spent a few days in Beijing again, but went out to a city called Xi'an. Xi'an is where the famous Terracotta warriors were found and she was able to do a little sightseeing to see these amazing and historic statues. Her other adventures include being a working mom and finding a few spare moments to read her Kindle.



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[www.davesamuels.com/brian](http://www.davesamuels.com/brian)



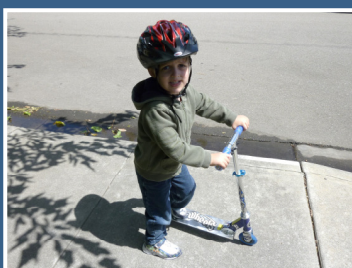
Willet Way – Pleasanton



Another Computer Wiz



Coloring Easter Eggs



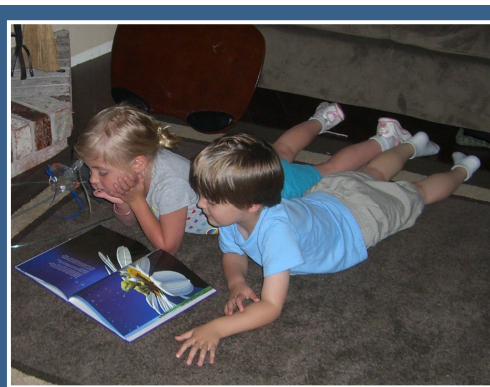
Scooter

## Another Year of Remodeling

Does it ever end? It surely doesn't seem that way. As usual, we were a bit more ambitious with our renovation plans than what was actually realistic. We finally got that garden window put in the kitchen, as well as the granite countertops. We only have been talking about it for about 10 years. ☺ We replaced some closet doors and did some retexturing and painting, but that is about as far as we were able to get.

We had new tenants in both of our rentals this year and the transition between tenants was a lot more work than we expected. The tenants that we thought were excellent (because they paid several months of rent in advance and never bothered us) ended up causing about \$15,000 worth of damage to the property by setting up a marijuana growing operation. They bypassed the meter so PG&E condemned the box and cut power to the house, which forced our new tenants into a hotel for three days while it was all sorted out. Luckily, the new tenants were very understanding.

In the other property, we asked the tenants to leave due to lack of payment. This was hard because they were old friends - and they say that you shouldn't do business with friends... They didn't end up moving out on time, which caused our new out-of-state tenants some challenges when their moving truck arrived. Fortunately, we got through it.



Big Sister Story - July 2010

## Happy New Year 2011!

We are looking forward to the fresh start that a new year brings. There are many challenges ahead and we appreciate all of the support from our family, friends, coworkers, and community. In the interim, we wish you all a happy, healthy, and wonderful Christmas season.

Love,

Brian  
Leah  
Dave



Papa's Race Car



Big Jet



The Big 5



First Science Fair Project