

# the Famlet monthly

October 28, 2012

Volume 15, Number 10

## Dear Family,

I don't know about where you live, but around here we're getting ready for a very important election—one whose outcome will dramatically impact the lives of our children. I'm writing, of course, of the Forest Knolls Elementary School student government election where Sophie is on the ballot as a candidate for vice president. Lucy and Grace have helped her make a dozen or so posters; she's written her essays and I think the campaign is about over. I'm not exactly sure when the election is. I'm not sure Sophie knows either. The consensus is sometime this week—assuming it doesn't get postponed by the school cancellations that will inevitably accompany the impending hurricane.

Oh, yeah, so if this month's letter reads like I wrote it in a bit of a rush, it's only because I'm hustling to get it out the door before the storm hits tomorrow and we lose power for a week (hopefully no more than a week). If you have any extra time at the end of your prayers, you might toss in a request that no trees fall on our house.

I guess there's also a presidential election happening soon. I forget who's in it, though some of my professional associates assume that I must be personally acquainted with the candidate who shares my faith. (I usually just tell them that I'm not at liberty to discuss the nature of our relationship.) This is our fifth presidential election living in Maryland, a state that's never in play. Maryland went 62.0 percent Obama in 2008—a slightly larger share than he garnered in his home state of Illinois (61.8 percent) and so-called “liberal” California (60.9 percent). The President will win comfortably again here next week, but I've never seen as many yard signs and bumper stickers supporting a GOP presidential candidate here in rich-liberal Montgomery County (72 percent Obama in 2008) as I have this year. I'm attaching a picture of my favorite one.

In addition to Sophie's student government essay, she and Lucy are deep in the throes of the application process for middle and high school next year. Lucy is applying to the Communication Arts Program (CAP) at Montgomery Blair High School (the program Hannah's currently in) and Sophie is applying to the Humanities Magnet program at Eastern Middle School (the program Lucy's currently in). Both programs are merit-based and require extensive essay-writing, test-taking and teacher-recommendation-getting. This process is almost exclusively Crystal's department since, as the household's lone National Merit Scholar, she is the partner best equipped to help students negotiate rigorous academic application processes, while at the same time preparing them for the possibility that, given the tremendous application volume to these programs, there is a distinct possibility they

won't get in, and they still have other very good options, life will go on, yada yada yada. We'll all be a little less stressed when this is all over.

The girls' Halloween costumes are all set. Hannah attended a multi-stake Halloween dance on Friday with black tally marks drawn all over her hands, arms and face. People in the know (I'm not among them) recognize this as some sort of Doctor Who get-up. She says a lot of people at the dance recognized and appreciated the reference, which tells me that she danced with a lot of nerds, which is fine. Sophie is all set as the goddess Artemis, with a pretty white dress stitched together by her mother and an awesome wooden bow carved for her by our incomparable neighbor, Rick Kemper. Regular readers may recognize Rick as the man whose family I ostensibly home teach but who invariably does projects for us. Rebuilding our front porch last year is an obvious example, but he's also become Crystal's go-to guy for honey-do list items that she has come to learn after 18 and a half years of marriage that her husband's just never going to do. Grace will be Ginny Weasley, her mother having located just the right kind of washable red hair dye.

I only mention all this because it's looking more and more like Halloween isn't going to happen on account of the approaching “Frankenstorm” off the coast. If this turns out to be my final mortal communication, well, it's been nice knowing you. Every prayer at stake conference today and yesterday asked for protection from the storm and the visiting authority (Elder Cook of the Twelve) spoke in part about preparing for and weathering life's tempests. I was thinking yesterday while replenishing our generator's fuel supply (again) about how at least I never have to worry about adding stabilizer to my stored gasoline because we go through it so quickly. I wonder if real estate agents ever use that as a selling point for people considering a move into the area. “And the best news of all is that the gas for your generator will never gum up or go stale.” Yeah, I can see it.

Lucy turned 13 earlier this month during a week-long field trip to New York City with her aforementioned magnet program classmates. I asked her to sum up her experience in a paragraph, but that request appears to have been prioritized behind CAP application essays and other school work. The highlights appear to have been attending performances of *Stomp* and *Bring It On* (on Broadway), interviewing two guys at Sirius/XM Radio and shopping at M&Ms World.

Presumably they did other things, too, but that's all I could get out of Lucy. She is a teenager, after all.

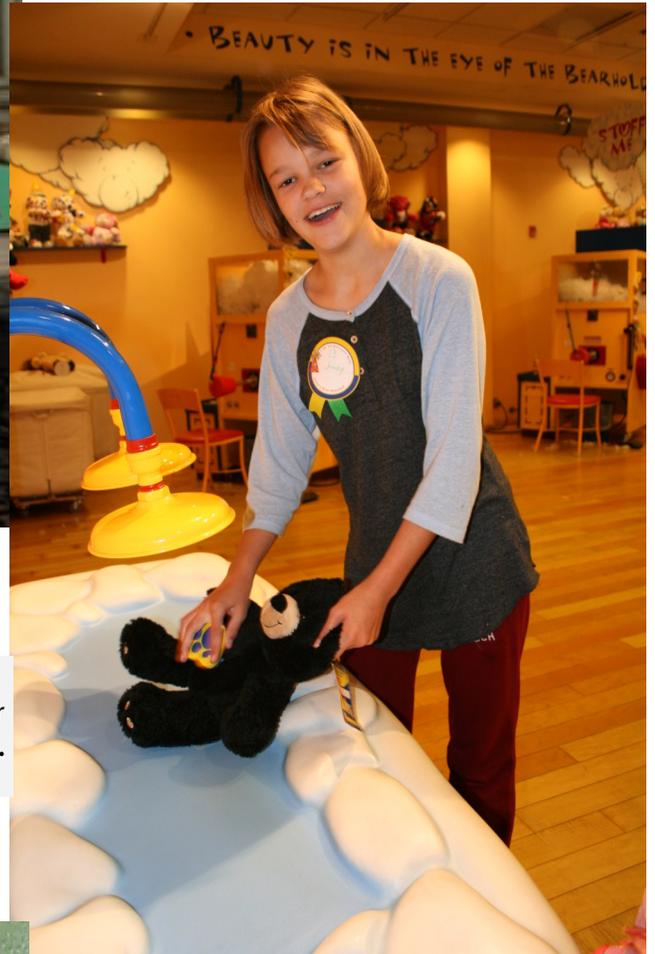
Mom and Dad, here's to hoping your mac-daddy whole-house generator holds up this time. I'm sure we'll be over soon.

Love, Tim, et al





Sophie, Grace and one of the posters now hanging at their school.



Lucy at Build-a-Bear on the day after her 13th birthday.



My favorite political yard sign. It's on Kemp Mill Road, which Hannah and I drive the length of twice each day to get to and from seminary.

(Roughly half of the Kemp Mill neighborhood's residents are Orthodox Jews—hence the Yiddish.)