

The calendar indicates I need to reflect on our family's activities for 2024 and send Christmas greetings to those who have enriched our lives both near and far. This past year has been full of adventures and milestones. Our grandchildren are growing up and we are so lucky that six of them are here in Tucson. We enjoy attending their concerts, plays, and other activities.

January started with many more family activities because Chris and his family were here for the holidays. Ice skating, even me, mine tours, watching Wyoming beat Toledo Ohio in the last few seconds here in Tucson, video games, and bringing in 2024 as a complete family was so much fun. Once

again, Italian food was a mainstay for family dinners. My sister Karen came down with her son, Brian, and granddaughter, Brianna, for the day. Brianna finally met cousins her age, in fact, Dominic, Brianna, and Michel are the same age and have birthdays within three months of each other.



This year we were able to get away to Sedona for a long weekend in May for our anniversary. We



took a Pink Jeep tour and thoroughly enjoyed bouncing over large boulders to see the sights of the area from above. In June we took Fakhria, our adopted daughter, to see the Grand Canyon. Then in July along with Masi, Kelli and her service dog Lucy, we drove to Glacier National Park. From there we meandered our way south through



Wyoming, Utha and Colorado. We toured Yellowstone, stopped in Lander where I was born, and visited Vernal. Kelli visited with an old friend while Hannes, Masi and I saw Dinosaur National Monument. From there we went through western Colorado and then home. In October, Hannes and I accompanied Kelli to Boston so she could go on to see her father and stepmother in Canada. We boarded a train and went to New York City. There is so much to see and do in New York City, and we thoroughly enjoyed every minute there.



Hannes continues to work even though he enjoys a slower pace in the mornings. However, he still enjoys the challenges of his job, and the company needs his expertise. This does lead to less involvement in other activities, but his engineering mind always finds something that needs to be done around the house or just for fun. He has become quite an auto mechanic fixing our cars and those of our extended Afghan family.

We were also delighted on July 3<sup>rd</sup> when Fakhria's husband finally had the papers necessary to immigrate to the United States. The immigration system needs a major overhaul! I am also in the initial stages of starting a program to educate illiterate refugees from Afghanistan and some African countries through a nonprofit organization. With all the driving and sometimes waiting, I enjoy reading and have joined a book club. In



addition, I am using Duolingo to refresh my Spanish language skills and then meet with a couple of young ladies each week to speak Spanish. I also work out to keep my back from hurting.

I continue overseeing Kelli's needs and being the taxi driver. Kelli is here with us and of course Lucy, her service dog. She attends a work-out three times a week, belongs to a needle point group, and does a program to increase balance and left-right coordination.



Ryan continues his management position at Raytheon, has moved up in management, and often must travel. Charlene's administrative position has required her to complete her master's degree in



educational administration which she will complete by May.

Alex is attending the U of A on scholarship for his hard work in high school and his International Baccalaureate



Diploma. Fortunately, the University of Arizona has a strong program in Pharmacology as he wants to go into pharmaceutical research for drug therapy. Lizzie is dancing and singing her way through life while taking IB and AP courses as a junior. Dominic started high school and is very involved in the band. As a freshman, he is in the Wind Ensemble for upper classmen. He asked to join a brass quintet that won the regional competition and went to state competition. His new trombone funded by his Great Uncle Keith's inheritance makes playing more enjoyable.



Annika and Luis continue their work at a local hospital. Katie is a senior also taking AP courses. She has a part-time job, enjoys her choir and theater, where she has had some starring roles, and is very independent. Bella is in fourth grade and quite a bookworm. She likes anything to do with science and technology. Melanie runs on endless energy. She is doing gymnastics and was also asked to join the school's cross-



country team although she was only in second grade, and she



can run! Both the girls are involved in Girl Scouts. We never miss Grandparent's Day with the girls in February during Love of Reading Week.

Masi continues to teach preschool through kindergarten at a local international school. Her curriculum is mainly taught in German. Most of her friends work out with her at a local gym for teaching martial arts in Krav Maga and other disciplines. Two weeks ago, she received her black belt in Street Combat and on December 15h, she received her black belt in Krav Maga from her gym "Rising Phoenix". She is beautiful both inside and out, and we know she can take care of herself! We enjoy having Masi join us on trips to help with Kelli and she always sees the bright spot of any adventure.



Chris and family are at home in Germany. Filiz completed her Realschule with high marks and is now working on her Fachabi (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) towards further education in business. She has had an internship with the local court system and a part-time job at a bakery. Michel is in Realschule, still enjoys his friends, video games, and sports. We miss seeing them!

So, that's a rap for 2024! We don't know what adventures will come our way, but with our strong family bonds, we will have new milestones to experience and enjoy our family and friends. We wish all of you a blessed Christmas and a happy 2025.