I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year—Charles Dickens... Anyone who believes that men are the equal of women has never seen a man trying to wrap a Christmas present—Author Unknown... Look, Daddy, Teacher says every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings—It's A Wonderful Life... Christmas is doing a little something extra for someone—Charles Schulz... What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus? Claustrophobic—Author Unknown... Christmas is the season when you buy this year's gifts with next year's money—Author Unknown... If Ifs and Buts were candies and nuts, we'd all have a merry Christmas—Author Unknown... Oh, for the good old days when people would stop Christmas shopping when they ran out of money—Author Unknown... It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child Himself—Charles Dickens... God bless us, every one—Tiny Tim, A Christmas Carol... 

Matt Murray, M2

http://asb.umc.edu/murmur.html

Photography in Pelahatchie, MS by Kristen Shivers, PT1
When I was growing up living in Northern Utah, each Christmas we would do a "sub-for-Santa" for a family that was struggling. Typically we would drop the gifts on the porch, ring the doorbell and make a run for it. One year we chose a family that lived several miles outside of our city where due to the remote location, drop, knock, and run was not possible. We spent several weeks collecting toys, clothes, and food for our family. A few days before Christmas, my friends and I gathered together and wrapped each of the gifts and set out on our journey. The night was crisp and cold and the snow, which had started earlier in the day, continued to softly fall. As we drove out into the country we saw Christmas trees glowing brightly in windows and smoke curling up from chimneys amid a soft white blanket of snow. We were all a little silent as we pulled up to what appeared to be the smallest free-standing home we had ever seen. We knocked and a very tired mother of three small children answered the door. The front door, which opened straight into the living room, revealed a small 10 foot by 10 foot cluttered room, with three small anxious faces staring at me and my friends. Along the wall stood a small Christmas tree placed on a card table so as to make it appear more impressive. Oddly we placed the gifts under the tree and then by the side of the tree until the tree was completely covered by gifts. As we looked at the pile of gifts we all thought, “I think we are going to need a bigger tree”. Tears filled all of our eyes as we all watched a grateful mother and three excited little kids who minutes earlier wondered if Santa would find them that year. As we walked back to our car, no one spoke as we considered our own good fortune and the joy we were able to provide to someone less fortunate than ourselves.

Not long after this experience I spent a couple of years living in Austria. The holidays were always a very special time for me and my family however I was unable to travel home for Christmas during those two years. I had a lot of friends around, but it was not the same as family. A few days before Christmas a family who I had known in Vienna invited me to spend Christmas day with them. We had traditional carp (yes, carp – the fish) for dinner and enjoyed traditional Austrian pastries and candies. That was the year I was also introduced to Christmas forensics. As we sat and talked, there was a baby playing on the floor in the middle of the room who would let out a little short cry at regular 30 second intervals. It was quite a mystery until we looked closer at the baby’s head and saw an unusual red goop on top of the baby’s head. Hanging above the baby’s head was a “chandelier” made of a Christmas wreath with lit red candles. We discovered that as the candles burned the wax would drip from the wreath onto the baby’s head and for a split second was hot enough to make the baby cry. The wax would then immediately cool down and the baby would continue happily playing for another 30 seconds until the laws of thermodynamics and gravity would once again kick in and briefly make her life exciting.

The kindness of this family made my holidays away from home very warm and memorable. They covered my personal Christmas tree with the gift of opening their home to me and doing what they could to make my Christmas enjoyable. I look back on the experience, not with a feeling of “glad that is behind me”, but rather with gratitude for those who did something for me that I could not do for myself.

As students in health care we have all adopted a profession rooted in service, and more importantly selflessness. As with any career path we can see incidents of arrogance or indifference, but as a whole what we have all ultimately chosen to do is to put others above ourselves. The most gifted, successful, proud surgeon will still wake up in the middle of the night and leave his home to share his lifesaving skills with the homeless or downtrodden, when called upon. I could never understand why there was so much fund raising and multiple requests for donations targeted toward students at UMMC. Each of us will rack up a sizeable amount of debt during our education. Anyone but a student seemed to me to be in a better position to donate. I finally realized that the reason that so many requests are made of us is that by definition of our chosen path we are training to be professional “givers”. The generosity of each of you as the call to help has gone on throughout the year has been admirable. Our recent drive for toys at the Claus Ball was no exception. We easily doubled our toy collection this year as compared to the past years, and for that I am truly grateful (Maribeth had to throw the children from the Howard Jones swing band and the cracking from the warm fire soothed the south of all in attendance).

I would like to recognize Allen and Michael Luttrell. Allen and Miltie are a staple in campus life. Everyone loves their smiling faces and outgoing personalities. They are both examples of hard workers with great attitude, always eager to offer “Hi” and to brighten anyone’s day. Although their cheerfulness is infectious, it is their friendliness that shines. With equal measure, their impeccable work ethic, attention to detail, and care to the job at hand are worthy of recognition. Because of all they do for us, we want to say thank you. Their attudes exemplify the importance of daily character in the workplace and genuine care to the people around us.

“The greatest part of our happiness depends upon our dispositions, not our circumstances.” - Martha Washington
Another of my favorite things about this time of year is the lights. If you’ve got a lazy winter night, grab some hot cocoa and make a loop through the area neighborhoods. It’s ride around for a while admiring the hard work and giving us a chance to see all those mold spores. Some might say that these decorations are a waste of time, money, and energy; but there’s something truly magical about a robotic Rudolph standing amid a sea of snowmen, elves, and two thousand multicolored light-bulbs. There are several impressive homes each year, but for a guaranteed crowd pleaser you just need to take a short ride north. Canton, as you’re probably aware, is also known as the City of Lights. This announcement is made in large sparkling letters on your way into town, and the displays on the square unquestionably justify that title. Many of the town’s residents take this annual light show very seriously, and I’d suggest cruising some of the surrounding side streets after you check out the main attractions on the square. Besides having some of the best lighting displays in the area, Canton also hosts several events during the holidays. A Christmas parade, the annual Singer-Odier contest, and musical entertainment are all part of the fun. Check out http://www.canton-mississippi.com/events/ for the latest news.

That’s it for this month... and this year. As we go our separate ways over the next few weeks, I want to wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season and a happy new year. Cheers.

LIVE
Live each day, meet each new challenge with an energy and strength that radiates from the core of who you are. Live with intensity - Live with passion.

LIFE
Life is a gift - each day requires that we embrace what we are given. Life allows us to adapt and change, respect your life and live with focus.

WELL
Feel good, look good and stay healthy - at any age and through every stage of your life. Take care of yourself inside and out. Be intentionally well.
When asked what motivates him, the 29-inch man with osteogenesis imperfecta simply responded, "I am thankful that my message of perseverance has inspired my vertically challenged friends in this state and also worldwide. I wish him the best of luck."

Official tryouts for his local team begin in February, but Pingping has already started private workouts with his strength and conditioning coach, fellow short-man posterboy and tennis hero Michael Chang. Interested parties can follow Pingping's daily progress on Chang's blog entitled, "Life of Fire: Pingping has set the Chinese press ablaze with his recent announcement that he will tryout for his local football team."

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The Private Banking Group at Trustmark National Bank wishes you a Happy Holiday Season and Best Wishes for the New Year! We appreciate the opportunities we have had to provide you with exceptional customer service and sound advice in 2009. Through a commitment to excellence, Trustmark Private Banking is making a difference in the lives of Trustmark clients. We are continuing this commitment as we prepare for the New Year! Contact our Private Banking Office today at 601-208-5834 or visit us online at www.trustmark.com.

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Delivering Doctor Amelia: The Story of a Gifted Young Obstetrician’s Error and the Psychologist Who Helped Her by Dan Shapiro, who also wrote Mom’s Marijuana. If you’re an M3 or M4 who is interested in joining us, then please email me (mporter2@ummed.edu)
If you’re like me each December, you’ll be waiting until the last minute to pick up those holiday gifts. We all love giving gifts to our friends and family and seeing the smiles (or if you’re at the Oliver household, the look of shock) appear. This year, why not consider extending that gift to another family or person in need? Here are a few ideas:

1. **Eye Glasses** – an estimated 158 million people in the world need glasses but don’t have them. Donate your old pair of glasses to help give the gift of sight back to someone.

   **How to do it?**
   - LensCrafters’ OneSight eyeglass donation program
     - [http://www.lenscrafters.com/eyeglasses/7/about/onesight-charitable-giving](http://www.lenscrafters.com/eyeglasses/7/about/onesight-charitable-giving)
   - CharityGuide.org
     - [http://www.charityguide.org/volunteer/fifteen/eyeglasses-donation.htm](http://www.charityguide.org/volunteer/fifteen/eyeglasses-donation.htm)

2. **Cell Phones** – help people keep in touch or keep individuals in touch with services such as domestic-violence centers and health-care centers.

   **How to do it?**
   - Cell Phones for soldiers - cell phones are recycled and the money earned is used to purchase phone cards for our troops abroad.
     - [http://cellphonesforsoldiers.com/](http://cellphonesforsoldiers.com/)
   - The Wireless Foundation - cell phones collected, recycled, and sold contributes to nonprofits working to end domestic violence.
     - [http://www.donateaphone.com/CallToProtect/index.cfm](http://www.donateaphone.com/CallToProtect/index.cfm)

3. **Lap Tops** – nearly 2 billion children in the developing world have little or no access to education. Laptops like the XO, built by techies at MIT, are lightweight, efficient, and kid-friendly. A rechargeable battery fuels this lightweight lappy. At $199 per laptop, give the gift of education to a child and a community.

   **How to do it?**
   - One Laptop Per Child

4. **A Water Buffalo... or a Llama, or a pig, and much more!** – According to the World Health Organization, poor nutrition contributes to about 50% of deaths associated with infectious diseases among children aged under five in developing countries. 1 out of 4 preschool children suffers from under-nutrition in the same areas.

   **How to do it?**
   - Heifer International - Buy or Share an animal such as a goat or a water buffalo that will not only provide nutrition for a long period of time, but can also be used to farm and earn money for a family in a developing country. You can donate chickens and ducks, too! These gifts cost anywhere from $20-$250.
     - [http://www.heifer.org/site/c.adRQQNFPGZ/8X327I/7?source=Riv494](http://www.heifer.org/site/c.adRQQNFPGZ/8X327I/7?source=Riv494)

5. **An old stethoscope.** Organizations providing medical relief around the globe are always in need of medical supplies such as otoscopes, stethoscopes, scales, and microscopes (the one getting dusty in the attic?). By donating supplies, organizations can spend more of their time and money on treatment or basic needs like food for populations in need.

   **How to do it?**
   - Partners in Health
     - [http://www.ph.org/youcando/medsupplies.html](http://www.ph.org/youcando/medsupplies.html)

Let’s not forget those unused medical texts or medical guide books can also be donated to upcoming UMC students buried in student loans or to other organizations.

   **How to do it?**
   - Operation Giving Back (American College of Surgeons)
     - [http://www.operationgivingback.facs.org/content77.html](http://www.operationgivingback.facs.org/content77.html)

6. **Your Time.** Don’t forget the Jackson Free Clinic is open Saturdays, and is in need of your volunteer time. Other local charities also welcomes your presence and your time.

   **How to do it?**
   - The Jackson Free Clinic - 923 Martin Luther King Jr Dr., Jackson, MS
   - Stew Pot Ministries, a Community Kitchen. 1100 W. Capitol Street Jackson, MS 39203
     - [http://stewpot.org/index.html](http://stewpot.org/index.html)
   - Mississippi HeARTS Against AIDS – Art Auction to raise money for HIV/AIDS services here in MS. The Annual Event is Feb 13, 2010 at Hal & Maf’s.
     - [http://www.mississippihearts.org/](http://www.mississippihearts.org/)

The Gift(s) that keep on Giving

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Spotlight of the Month: Rece Thompson

Sara Martin Robertson, M4

Q: What is your position at UMC?
A: Student Admissions Officer II
Q: Tell us about your family.
A: I have a very compassionate heart for people. It touches my heart dearly to hear about tragedy and trauma concerning anybody I know, and I
Q: What is you position at UMC?
A: Student Admissions Officer II
Q: What is your favorite TV show?
A: CSI Miami
Q: What is your favorite Movie?
A: The Passion of the Christ
Q: What is you favorite Food?
A: Steaks and Fish
Q: What is you position at UMC?
A: Student Admissions Officer II
Q: What is you favorite TV show?
A: CSI Miami
Q: What is your Plans for Christmas?
A: Spending time with my family and friends, shopping, reading my bible and listening to gospel music.
Q: What are your Plans for Christmas?
A: 3 months in my current position but 4 years total at UMC (previously worked in the Financial Aid Office)
Q: Tell us about your family.
A: 3 months in my current position but 4 years total at UMC (previously worked in the Financial Aid Office)
Q: Tell us about your family.
A: I have a wonderful husband Michael Thompson, Sr whom I have been married to for 21 years and we have two beautiful children. My son's name is Michael, Jr and my daughter is Miyah Christinee'.
Q: What is your Plans for Christmas?
A: My job, meeting new people, my bosses, Dr. Steven Case and Dr. Peggy Davis, and my co-worker, Kimber Dallas. They are a family to me.
Q: What is you favorite TV show?
A: CSI Miami
Q: What is your Plans for Christmas?
A: Spending time with my family and friends, shopping, reading my bible and listening to gospel music.
Q: What is you favorite Food?
A: Student Admissions Officer II
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Q: What is you favorite Food?
Merry Christmas! What a wonderful season for family, friends, and food. The Christmas season is my favorite time to get a little creative with baking. For this edition, I’ve gathered some ideas from several of my “artsy” friends and ended up with some beautiful sweet treats certain to make Santa—and everyone else—a bit more satisfied after a big Christmas meal.

For your Christmas parties or even just to give away as inexpensive, thoughtful gifts, the truffles are the perfect pick. They are easy to make and turn out beautifully every time. The recipe given is for Oreo truffles, but you can make these with any kind of cookie. I tried peanut butter truffles with Nutter Butter cookies, and these were a crowd favorite. You can also use red velvet cake and mix it with cream cheese or frosting—depending on your desired level of sweetness—and you have an especially festive treat. These truffles are a delightful alternative for Santa…I heard he gets tired of cookies.

Now, of course, red velvet cake is a holiday staple. We took an easy recipe and dressed it up a bit. We melted white almond bark candy coating in a plastic bag and snipped a hole in one corner. Then, we piped onto wax paper snowflakes of various sizes and decorated them with shimmering cupcake beads. The snowflakes were so fun and easy to create, and they really made the decadent cake special.

I included my recipe for hot apple cider, just so you can have it on hand to serve with your holiday desserts. Pop a candy cane into each cup for a unique touch. Have fun with all Christmas has to offer, especially with dessert delicacies. Happy, happy Christmas!

**Oreo Truffles**

1. In a blender or food processor, blend 4-5 Oreos at a time to a fine powder. Pulse if larger pieces remain. In a large bowl, add cream cheese to powdered Oreos. Knead together until smooth consistency is reached. Roll the Oreo mixture into small balls—between a teaspoon and a tablespoon—and place on pan. Allow these to chill in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.
2. Melt the candy coating (preferably white first) as directed on the package. Dip the Oreo balls into the white coating. Use two forks to cover as this will allow the smoothest finish. Drizzle with chocolate candy coating for garnish. Yields approximately 5 dozen truffles.

**Alexandra’s Red Velvet Cake**

**Cake:**

- 1 German chocolate cake mix
- 1 3/4-oz package vanilla instant pudding mix
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 bottle (1 ounce) red food coloring
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven at 350 degrees. Grease 2 9-inch cake pans. Place the cake mix, pudding mix, sour cream, water, oil, and food coloring in a mixing bowl. Blend on low speed for 30 seconds, adding one egg at a time. Once ingredients are blended evenly, beat for 2 minutes at medium speed, scraping side of bowl as necessary. Fold in chocolate chips. Divide the batter evenly among the two pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 28 minutes. Test cake by inserting a toothpick in the center. If cake is not done, try two additional minutes or more of baking time. After cake cools, frost with cream cheese icing (see recipe below). Decorate with white candy snowflakes.

**Cream Cheese Icing:**

- 1 8-oz. packages of cream cheese
- 1 pound of butter
- 1 tsp. vanilla flavoring
- 2 pounds powdered sugar

Cream together cream cheese and butter with a mixer. Once blended, add vanilla and slowly add sugar.

**Christmas Cider**

- 1/2 gallon apple cider
- 1/4 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1 tbsp. whole cloves
- Candy Canes (optional, for garnish)
- 1/4 tsp. maple syrup
- Cinnamon sticks (for garnish)

Combine first six ingredients in a large pot and bring to boil. Once boiling, turn heat to low and simmer for about 20 minutes. Serve warm with cinnamon stick and/or candy cane.
Mary Charles Dickens: MSN, CNP
Ms. Dickens is married with 2 children, Harrison-15 and Kate-4. She started at UMC in August of 2009 and will be resigning in December of 2009. Ms. Dickens worked as an instructor for UMC’s SON- Oxford Campus, but to her students she was much more. “From classroom to clinicals, Ms. Dickens really took us under her wing and taught us what it means to be a nurse,” commented one student. Ms. Dickens’ reason for not returning second semester is because she missed clinical practice. Before her job as an instructor, Ms. Dickens worked with the Oxford Pediatric Group. She will be returning to her former job, as well as working with the Urgent Care Clinic of Oxford.

Some fun facts about Ms. Dickens:
- Favorite restaurant in Oxford: Yocona River Inn (before it burned down)
- Favorite Christmas tradition: Watching my kids open their presents on Christmas morning!

Dream vacation: During these cold months? One way ticket to someplace warm! Take the family to Amelia Island and stay at the Ritz Carlton Hotel for 2 weeks and only order room service!

Mr. Dickens went to Ole Miss for 3 years before transferring to UMC in Jackson and obtaining her BSN in Nursing. She attended Delta State for her MSN degree and FNP license.

THE OXFORD SCHOOL OF NURSING
The SON in Oxford. Well, we’re a group of 20. 18 girls, 2 guys. “School” consists of a hallway. In Kinard Hall, on the backside of campus. Since we’re only 20 people, we don’t require a lot of space. We have one classroom that we stay in most days from 8 or 9 am until 4 pm. We’ll complete both our junior and senior years here. We’ll travel to Jackson maybe once a week, for a month of clinicals. But other than that there is really no reason to go down to Jackson, except visits of course! There has been talk that we’ll even be given the choice of having our graduation ceremony held here in Oxford.

When students were asked: “how do you feel about SON- Oxford Campus and what the experience has been like for you as student?” the answer was pretty unanimous—We love the small, close-knit group!...
- We are really close and work together really well. It’s also nice to still be able to stay involved with Ole Miss campus activities.
- I like how we are able to work together, all 20 of us.
- We are much closer here in Oxford, and we all look out for each other.
- Besides the DL problems, it’s great! We get to stay in Oxford. (is there any better place?)
- I like how close we all are and how all of our teachers know us on a first name basis.
- The small classroom and the personal learning environment really make a difference. We’ve gotten close as a group and our cram sessions really help us all learn.
- The small class size gives us a great opportunity to get to know one another.
- You get the best of both worlds! You are challenged professionally while still being able to experience the extracurricular activities and events that make Ole Miss special.
- From the grove to clinicals, we always have a good time!!
UMC Family Christmas Traditions

The MURMUR staff invited UMC students and faculty to tell us about their Christmas traditions. Here is what they said...

LouAnn Woodward, Dean of the School of Medicine

“Each Christmas, our family plays a football game after we eat lunch. Over the years, we have gotten pretty serious about this, even to the point of ‘recruiting’ friends to join our team. The smack-talking starts in early November!”

Laura Marion, M2

“Tis the season to be jolly, especially in the Marion household—ringing in the Christmas season with a well-known carol known as ‘Happy Birthday’...times three. In a week time-span between Thanksgiving and Christmas, my brother, my sister, and I kick off the holidays celebrating all of our birthdays -- with the traditional holiday festivities closely following. Whether it be baking cookies for Santa, attending the vesper service at church on Christmas Eve, watching ‘A Christmas Story’ for the gazillionth time on television, or spending time with our cat Cookie who was a present from Santa 17 years ago this Christmas (see picture), we always make time to get together and remember the true meaning of the holiday season.”

Evan Underwood, M4

“One of my favorite Christmas traditions was always choosing our tree. All year long we were careful to notice cedar trees growing in the woods near our home. Every year a week or two before Christmas, my dad and I would saddle two of our horses and go out with an ax and rope. Often we just spend most of the day riding through backwoods and old logging trails, enjoying the wildlife and horses. While finding a cedar tree is not difficult, finding one that is large enough (8’-12’), well shaped, and with a single trunk can be kind of fortunate. Fortunately for us (and the horses) Christmas trees don’t weigh too much, so with a good axe we were usually able to fell one quickly, and one horse was always able to drag it back to the house or at least to a road where we could get to it with the truck. I’ll always look back fondly on an afternoon spent with my dad, a good horse, and the scent of cedar.”

M2 Candy Drive

Clare Bush, M2

At this time of year, with Santa and toys all around, it can be difficult to remember that Christmas is not only for the children. Over the past few weeks the M2 class purchased bags and bags of candy to be used as stocking stuffers for some of the elderly in our community. With the help of Sister Donna Gunn, the M2s are helping to make sure that people of all ages can enjoy the spirit (and flavors) of Christmas.

Pediatric Interest Group

Pig plays Santa! The Pediatric Interest Group loves making the children of Batson feel extra special while they are away from their homes during the holidays. What better way to do that than surprising them with some Christmas treats! Several M1’s took time out of their busy schedules while studying to stuff one hundred goody bags with candy canes, snowflakes, ornaments, activity books, Santa straws, and a plethora of other fun items. While we won’t be able to pass out the bags ourselves, we hope that the Batson kids enjoy their goody bags just as much as we enjoyed putting them together and that these little treats will brighten their day and put them into the Christmas spirit!

What Our Students have been up to this Christmas

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>M2 Candy Drive</th>
<th>M2 Girls: Taking a break after the Drive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Amika Sood, M2</td>
<td>Clare Bush, M2</td>
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<td>Laura Marion, M2</td>
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<td>Olivia, Laura Leigh, Julianna, Jack</td>
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<td>Justin Cobb, Graduate School</td>
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  - PIZZA
  - WOOD-FIRED PIZZA
- **BROAD STREET**
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  - STEAKS & RIBS
  - SUSHI & BURGERS
  - DESSERTS & COFFEE
- **HISTORIC BAKERY**
  - BREAD & BAGUETTES
  - COLD CUTS & CHEESES
  - CAKES & PASTRIES
- **SANDWICHES & SALADS**
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  - S Healing Foods
  - CAFE

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Choose from one of our award-winning restaurants!
Drs. Jerry Clark, LouAnn Woodward, Loretta Jackson: “We know whose been naughty or nice......”

OT1s: Megan Slay’s Surprise Tacky Christmas Wedding Shower

OT2s: 2nd Annual Ornament Swap

PT3: Tacky Christmas Party

Lyssa Taylor, M2...she heads up our ASB Hospitality committee...and writes about it for the MURMUR. Thanks, Lyssa.

Above and Below...our UMC D3 Dental Students

D3 Class Party

John Paul Frederick Howard Vanderloo, M4 Dental Hygiene Seniors will be selling Crest Whitestrips Supreme only available in a dental office from now until March 30th. Regularly $50-75 per box, DH Seniors will be selling them for $40 a box!

To Order: Please contact ECarr@shrp.umsmed.edu
Movin and Groovin

The Man...the Myth...the Legend...
My former roommate...John Ma
And his lovely fiancee, Ying

Along with Food and Fellowship, the Claus Ball brought an opportunity for Christmas Service...a Toy Drive.
I have the privilege of associating with a most talented and energetic group of creative writers. They tolerate my numerous emails and deadlines, quickly responding to any requests I have. They deserve nothing less than the high praise the publication has received during this last academic semester. To Nora Oliver, Jon Stockman, Patricia Jones, Jenny Young, Prato Santostato, Ben Lambert, Newton Wiggins, Lindsey Miller, and Lauren Barry I give particular thanks. For your articles that are always well thought-out, well researched, funny, creative, and never mediocre, I say Thank You.

On Monday night, December 14th, I enjoyed hosting a MURMUR Christmas Party at the UMC Student Union. All staff and guest writers were invited, along with a few faculty sponsors and supporters. Thanks to Dr. Jerry Clark—a man who has spent the last several months consistently raising bars around UMC—there was plenty of party. With XM radio blasting Christmas tunes in the background, the MURMUR crew spent a little time giving Christmas service. Brightly colored markers and metallic green stickers helped us decorate and prepare 300+ Christmas cards to be sent abroad to the wonderful men and women of the United States military. I was touched that despite other parties or studies, the MURMUR crew stuck around until every card became personalized with a meaning-ful, supportive message and decorated with at least one festive sticker. My goal for completed Christ- mas cards was easily surpassed thanks to my group of colleagues and friends. I thank them for sharing their evening with me. I thank them for their unselfish service to UMC and to our armed troops.

As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I had the opportunity to serve a two-year mission in Guatemala, Central America. Yes, we are those guys who ride bikes and wear white shirts with ties. Yes, we are those guys who hand out books and videos. Though I understood Christmas.

We sang two Christmas carols from our pocket hymnals, presented them our small gift. The young mother began to cry. It was the first time that I remember feeling as though I understood Christmas.

Nevertheless, presented them our small gift, and wished them a happy night and Merry Christmas. I remember well the young couple's reaction as they purchased a package of chocolate stuffed cookies and one large pineapple. I offer my companion and I managed to pool together enough funds to make a quick trip to the nearest Tienda. We bought several items, including a box of chocolate stuffed cookies and one large pineapple. We then went back to the young couple's home and visited with them. They were very appreciative of our gift, and we were glad to be able to help them.

I was living in a small town outside of Guatemala City, called Satelite. The road leading into the town was long and steep, accessed usually by large red buses that charged one Ouarter for passage. On Christmas Eve of 2004, my missionary companion and I decided to pay a visit to a young family who lived on the outskirts of town. The husband was struggling to find stable work in construction. The wife had a small gift, and was several months into her second pregnancy. Their home was humble, made only of concrete blocks and corrugated tin metal roofing. We dropped by to share a brief Christmas message. Nothing extravagant. But as we visited, we learned of yet another recent layoff from work, a sick child, and a rather lonely family without relatives or close friends in Satelite. Life’s frustrations had begun to cause tension in the young couple’s marriage. There was nothing festive or pleasant about Christmas for our friends. There were no toys or delicious Christmas dinner, no stockings or lights. The house was cold.

If you thought cheap college guys could not out their helping of Roman Noodles, you should spend some time with two LDS missionaries. Despite our meager funds at year’s end, my mission ary companion and I managed to pool together enough funds to make a quick trip to the nearest Tienda. We purchased a package of chocolate stuffed cookies and one large pineapple.

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