

## A Happy New Year for 2009!

Our newsletter and wishes for a great new year are a little late in coming this year. But, we figured, better late than never! The year has been eventful, to say the least. To start off, Tara's Lego team won the best research quality award at the State level, which was all the more special since their research project was on how to make our new home the most energy efficient. The judges commended the team on their "tour de force" and detailed cost benefit analysis regarding the many ways in which we could (and have) decreased the use of energy—geothermal, insulation, fluorescent light bulbs, etc, etc. Indeed our new home turned out to be quite a project, consuming most of our own energy and time for the first half of the year. Well, worth it though, we absolutely love living in it! To mirror the "before" shots from last year's newsletter, here are some "after" snaps.



The back-view of the house, don't miss Rob's big garage that slants past the tree! On the right is the view to the front entrance, through our hallway that includes our memories wall.



Our kitchen includes lots of workstations, since Rob, Rajshree and Tara enjoy cooking, and opens to a three-way fireplace for the dining room and the breakfast nook.

While we weren't able to go camping this year, we did have a great getaway at Cedar Point in July. Grandma joined us once more on the roller coasters, as did our friends Kirsten and Ben Campbell.



Rajshree finally joined Rob in dream-cruising Woodward with the entire extended family, including Uncle Neil and Aunt Sharon.

In late August, Rob turned 50!! Our firefighter friend Tim had to bring out the lit cake, and the kids surrounded the perimeter with yellow caution tape. Joe roasted Rob, and a great time was had by all! (Rob got even at Joe's surprise 50<sup>th</sup> party a week later).



Sadly, September brought in bad news, with Michael Gort's diagnosis of an aggressive form of cancer. The rest of the family was very supportive when Michael entrusted Rajshree to become his medical surrogate, and we put our lives on temporary hold. While the responsibility was draining, Rajshree is grateful for the many special memories, as Michael remained mentally sharp till almost the very end.



Michael passed away in November. The memorial ceremony in Buffalo was a beautiful celebration of his life and work, and Rajshree knows she is not alone in continuing his legacy.

The girls at Halloween—Tara the she-devil, and Alisha the witch!



We spent Thanksgiving with Rob's family in Detroit, Shirley cooked a great meal, and we were all thankful for being together—just what Rajshree needed, as she coped with brittle emotions and the loss of her mentor and surrogate father.



It also helped that Rob and the girls joined Rajshree in Salt Lake City in an extension of her conference travel, and that Protiti, Kevin and Ben basked with us in the steaming hot-tub while the snow fell gently down. And while Rob and the girls skied the steep slopes, Rajshree conquered the bunny hill!

Indeed, December was a whirlwind of activity, no sooner did we get back from Salt Lake, we went back to Detroit for Christmas. Mom remarked how happy she was to have the entire family together at the table, and we were too!



And last but not least, the girls Lego team is advancing to State for a third time in a row, having won first place in the Robot performance award. Rob had taken over the coach duties from Rajshree mid season, and the girls definitely appreciated his input.

Our best wishes for a happy new year!

**Rob, Rajshree, Tara and Alisha**