

# the Famlet monthly

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## Dear Family,

For the past two years I have written very sparingly (and cryptically at that) about where Lucy goes to school.

Nearly ten years ago, when the Famlet transitioned from its original targeted mail/e-mail newsletter distribution to its current blog-like format, I realized I would probably have to be more thoughtful and careful about the things I wrote in it. The original intent of this letter (see “About the Famlet” somewhere on this page) was to let my grandparents know what I was up to. I have sought to continue this as my children have grown up while respecting their privacy and the privacy of others.

This is not always an easy line to walk. While I generally feel that I err on the side of non-disclosure, there are doubtless times when I reveal too much. In any event, I’m just doing the best I can here, and to borrow a tired phrase from countless professional athletes and other celebrities after saying or doing something stupid, “I’m sorry if I offended anybody.”

Which brings me to Lucy. At some point during the last month, Lucy read something cryptic that I wrote about where she goes to school and said to me, “You should just tell people about me. I don’t care.”

The expression *I don’t care*, particularly when spoken by a loved one, can be perilous. In different contexts it can reflect a huge range of emotions—from benign indifference to apathy, sadness, resignation, frustration, even joy and contentment.

Correctly ascertaining context can be difficult with 16-year-old girls. I understood Lucy to mean that she was comfortable with my writing a little more detail about some of the challenges she is facing. It may (or may not) surprise you to learn that the biggest fans of this letter are my children and my parents. I write primarily with them in mind. My daughters in particular think I’m *really, really* funny and at various times have taken to sharing past Famlet editions with bemused friends whose polite smiles reveal that they do not necessarily share my daughters’ assessment of their father’s comic genius. Crystal does not think I am funny at all, but she goes along with the act.

To be safe, I’ll ask Lucy and Crystal to approve what I write next, so you can be assured that I am not relying entirely on my own interpretation and intuition.

Pursuant to some incidents in middle school and early during her freshman year at Montgomery Blair High School, Lucy was diagnosed with a number of mental health issues that led a team of special education professionals to conclude that Lucy would do best outside of a “mainstream” high school program. After examining the options available, it was ultimately decided that she would attend the John L. Gildner Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents (RICA) in Rockville. RICA is a school administered by Montgomery County attached to a mental health facility administered by the state of Maryland. This rather ingenious setup enables RICA students to have their educational and therapeutic needs met in one place. As a RICA student, Lucy takes standard Montgomery County high school courses (tomorrow she sits for the AP exam in “Environmental Chemistry,” whatever that is) taught by special educators in

very small classes and has an assigned on-site therapist (of which there are several) and psychiatrist (I don’t know how many of those there are, but I have met three of them).

Lucy began attending RICA as a “day student” (i.e., she returned home each afternoon) in the spring of 2014. In January, her treatment team concluded that Lucy would benefit from being a residential student at RICA. Crystal, Lucy, and I required varying amounts of persuasion to be convinced of this, but we eventually all came around and Lucy has been living there, in what amounts to a boarding school, since January.

My sense is that things are going well. Lucy seems happy when we see and speak to her. She gets to come home on weekends (not all residential students do) and is given a pass to attend Young Women’s activities on Tuesday nights. Last week we attended an awards banquet for all the residential students and their families. It was held in the RICA gym, which Lucy had helped to decorate to such an extent that you might not have known it was a gym if not for the basketball hoops. They even covered the floor. Lucy received awards for her participation in flag football and ping pong, which surprised me since I did not think she was into either of those things. Lucy will participate in the residential summer program when school ends, which complicates some of our travel plans, but we believe it’s for the best.

Recently Crystal and I attended a meeting with a school administrator and three doctors to discuss Lucy’s treatment. It occurred to me that I wasn’t being billed for any of these professionals’ time and I would never have just cause to complain about my state and local tax burden. This may or may not actually prevent my complaining, but we are nevertheless grateful to have these services available to Lucy.

I can hear Grace practicing the piano down the hall. She has the metronome going and keeps getting ahead of it and it’s driving me crazy. I’m not going to be able to write any more until I help her.

Okay, I’m back. In other news this month, Crystal helped drive Grace’s Girl Scout troop to Savannah, Georgia, where they spent three days and visited the birthplace of Juliette Gordon Low, founder of Girl Scouts in the United States. Lucy was allowed to come home from RICA for spring break and so she, Sophie, and I held down the fort and frequented several fine local eating establishments (Subway, Papa Johns, and I forget where else). As usually happens when Crystal travels, she came home to an immaculate kitchen

Hannah was transferred this month “up north” to Cottonwood, Ariz., When I searched it on Google maps, the first image to come up was of a Jack in the Box restaurant, so it’s got that going for it. Hannah’s area covers Cottonwood and the even smaller, adjacent town of Cornville. She writes, “I never thought I’d live in a place called Cornville, but it’s the best.” Her letters continue to brighten our week. They exude a genuine joy in serving with the people who live in her new area and love for her new companion and the work.

For all this and many other things we express our gratitude.

Love, Tim





Sophie is serenaded by her loving father on her 14th birthday.



Crystal and Grace with Juliette Gordon Low and her dog. Savannah, Georgia.





Grace (left hand on gate) and her Girl Scout troop in Savannah, Georgia.



Grace (right) and a fellow troop member in Savannah, Georgia.