

## Our Trip Takes Us

By Becky Hirn

Hanging out in Phoenix for the month has given us time to tackle our to-do list. The list was getting pretty long too. So it's nice to check off a few things. I updated our website. Check. We got our tax papers together and mailed them back to Delphos. Check. Dan changed a balding tire on the trailer. Check. We also added to the little map of the United States on the side of the RV, placing stickers for New Mexico and Arizona.

We're also trying to get caught up on the kids' schoolwork. We fall behind because we take days off to gaze at the Grand Canyon or visit a science center. The way I see it though, our trip is one big learning experience for the kids. However, there are standards to meet and assignments to complete. I'd hate for Abby to get to the Ohio Achievement Test in April and not know how to use a protractor. So we've been playing catch up.

Last week Abby and I read the literary classic "Don Quixote de la Mancha." One of the best things about teaching Abby is learning, or perhaps relearning, this grade school material. I love teaching her about weather forecasting and superlative adjectives. It has occurred to me that there are reasons people like the show, "Are you smarter than a Fifth-grader?"

What I liked about the character Don Quixote was his perseverance. He lived a ridiculous life based on things he read in books about knights and chivalry. He was a dreamer. He worked to transform his life into what he admired. Success or not, he pressed forward, following the dream. In the end, his dreams actually got the best of him.

Today I was defeated by my own list. I don't know how it happens exactly, but my list grows and changes and is never really complete. My impossible list stretched the entire length of the RV containing all the usual suspects: get groceries, do the dishes, pay bills, sweep, and even write this column for the paper. I also wanted to go get some exercise, to read a little and make a few phone calls to friends. That big bully fate had something else in mind for me.

I woke up late. There was no milk for cereal, or clean bowls. The computer needed charged. I'd have to get gas before getting groceries. Abby and Carter were not in the mood for schoolwork.

So I looked at my own list and wondered who I'm trying to emulate anyway. Is it the good Mom, fixing healthy meals and buying the perfect ingredients? Is it the organized Mom who keeps the kids on a schedule? Is it the model on the cover who knows the top ten ways to save time cleaning? And do I really have to lose the belly fat before bikini season? I wear a one-piece. Seems like I got real life mixed up with the air-brushed life of magazine women.

As in Don Quixote, plans are just that, plans. Life almost never follows the bullet points on a yellow legal pad. It unravels, like a good book. So with my own overwhelming list getting in the way of life, I tossed it aside. Instead of checking off tasks, my day consisted of mixing up green Kool-aid with the kids for St.

Patrick's Day. We hiked up into the mountains and tried to guess if the cacti were taller than our house. We checked out the clouds, and tested our new weather prediction skills. We squatted down to watch little red ants carry tiny pieces of dirt to a mound in the middle of our trail. None of these things are written down on a to-do list, but they are so important.

Sometimes you just have to forget about living by the book, or the magazine or the list, and just live.

Becky Hirn is a Delphos resident traveling America with her family for a year. She documents the journey at [www.ourtriptakesus.com](http://www.ourtriptakesus.com). Follow the Hirn family in photos, blogs, on Facebook and Twitter. Or learn how to partner with the trip as an advertiser. You may e-mail Becky at [beckyhirn@ourtriptakesus.com](mailto:beckyhirn@ourtriptakesus.com)