

Captive Free North East 2002-03 Journal

Date: 9/20/2002

Submitted by: Jessica Smith

Journal Entry:

Wow, one smile can really change your outlook on a day. Although we've only been on the road for a week, we've had all kinds of audiences. Sometimes you'll be standing up there singing your heart out and people look at you like they really don't want to be there. But then like a ray of light peeking through a cloud covered sky, someone smiles and your job becomes just a bit easier. A simple smile allows me to see how God is working through my team and me. God has really blessed our team with some awesome host homes too. People are so eager to make us at home in their homes. God is so amazing!!! Ps. 8: 4, 5



Jessica Smith

Date: 9/23/2002

Submitted by: Heidi Luft

Journal Entry:

As a member of a traveling ministry team, I often start the day off by reminding myself what city I'm in. Once I realize that I'm a thousand miles away from home, I'm amazed with God's vast plan for me. We're still at the beginning stages of our trip and I can remember details about all the cities and host homes that have welcomed me so far. I know that's going to change; it's exciting to try to comprehend how many people I will meet this year. The disappointing part of meeting all these wonderful people is the realization I may never see them again. I will never hear the end of their faith journey. It's a huge challenge to keep myself motivated because I don't often get to see the rewards of my ministry. Though every time I get to a low point God opens my eyes and picks me up. To have a parent or pastor come up to you after a program and ask how in the world you twisted their kids arm to read a verse or sing in front of everyone, I know I made a difference. It may not be anything I said to their child, but I'm still confident that the presence of our team has made a difference in each congregation we met.



Heidi Luft

Date: 9/26/2002

Submitted by: Leroy Leese

Journal Entry:

Well, we've been on the road for almost two weeks and have had wonderful ministry opportunities. We visited a rehab facility this week and it was amazing. The patients were very responsive to our singing and even joined us for some of the sing-a-longs. Our host homes have been awesome and generous. I think I've gained about ten pounds already, the food has been so good. In Ohio, we had the opportunity to meet with two different church youth groups and got to do some great relational ministry.



Leroy Leese

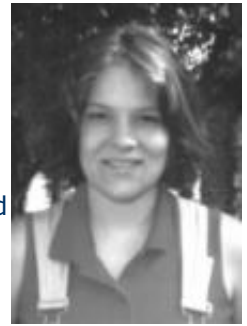
Some of the programs have included large audiences and some have included smaller audiences. I think that each size has its perks. Large groups can build energy and small groups allow for more personal ministry opportunities. I think we have enjoyed both the small groups and large groups experiences because we each flourish in both one-on-one and performance ministries. Watching my teammates in both settings has been very cool!

Well, talk to you later, thanks for all your support.

Date: 9/29/2002

Submitted by: Katy Baxter
Journal Entry:

There are some things that God has been teaching me on the road that I would like to share with you. The main thing is the generosity of others. I have gotten so much support from my home congregation that I am a somewhat recent member at. It was an amazing thing to be faced with and I just felt so warmed by the help people gave and the love they showed. I am also so thankful for the giving hearts of those that take us into their homes to shelter us and feed us. I have been in awe of all the generosity we have received, and it has really been a blessing to have homes away from home. It still doesn't seem real that I am in Captive Free. But God has been using this experience to help me grow more in Him. He has been changing my heart and attitude. I have learned not to rely on myself, but to rely on His strength. I know that I would not be able to make it through without Him. I pray that we all have a desire to know Him more and take some quiet time with Him. God is so incredible and has blessed us with such a wondrous creation. Traveling through the different states has given me a chance to see something other than Wisconsin land. It is all so beautiful, I just hope we can all appreciate what we have been given. HUGS and God Bless.



Katy Baxter

Date: 10/1/2002
Submitted by: Sam Burk
Journal Entry:

Yeah so this is my first journal, and I guess I'm really new at this so if this thing gets all jumbled cut me some slack. Ok before this year had started I was going in every direction but one that would do God and Jesus justice for what they did for me. I was struggling with my future my past and present. I would go to church and listen but not really hear what was being said.

Now that I'm on team I have started listening and find myself growing in ways that I never thought I could. Seriously my lifestyle is completely different not just because I'm on team but because I listen and choose to try to live a Godly life now. I've fallen in love with scriptures and do devotions daily. My father wrote a letter to me while I was in camp and it had a quote in it from St. Augustine that stated "My heart is restless until it rests in you O Lord", how true is that I was lost until I found you God thank you for leading me onto your path.

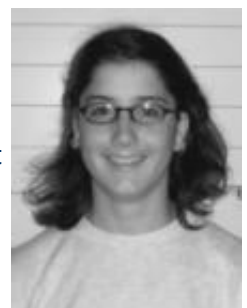


Sam Burk

Date: 10/3/2002
Submitted by: Katie Bombardi
Journal Entry:

Life on the road is like nothing I have experienced before. Not that this is a new concept to any Captive Free member, alumni or person who knows someone who is a part of Youth Encounter but I thought I would start this journal out with a deep thought. Now that we're friends it's great to be able to connect with the masses over the internet. If you don't know me, I'm Katie Bombardi, the Katie from Ohio. The other Katy on my team is spelled a little different but we have actually grown as one person. It's strange but we even dress alike...oh ,what team does to people is amazing. But I have kept my individuality pretty well.

It's October, big deal you say, but I am already making my plans for Christmas break. Every so often I call home or talk to my boyfriend on the other coast and I get in touch with the real world. Something came to me last night while I talked with Matt, the boy on the other coast. He is so very supportive of this life of ministry and often expresses how incredible it all is. But it's fairly easy for me to drive around in a big van and spread the word of God to young and old adults. When I tell people that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins they don't look at me as if I were from another planet. The people we meet expect us to be crazy about God and when we sing songs praising God everyone cheers! But I realized that the real mission is the life that Matt leads. If he were to walk around proclaiming the word of God to his friends they might think he was crazy. Or if my mom were to sing praise and worship songs in her furniture store some might say she was nuts.



Katie Bombardi

I am inspired by those of you in the "real" world, chugging away at everyday life. There is something that being on team does to you that makes you more aware of how people interact in places like Walmart or restaurants and it can be a battleground. So in this journal entry I lift you up! The joy I find in knowing that you are out in the world living life for Christ is amazing. Giving up a year to travel around in a big van with other Christians is a great mission but I admire those of you in the trenches. "Let everything that lives sing praises to the Lord!" Psalm 150:6 Sing it out! Let everything that you do praise the Lord! Even if you have never thought about it before or even if you have heard this a thousand times let me remind you "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do you put it under a basket, instead it is put on a lamp that it may give light to all the house. In the same way, let your light so shine before all men that they might see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16 Your light can be bright or dim but it is always shining. Thank you for being a light for others.

Date: 10/5/2002

Submitted by: Ferdinand Storm

Journal Entry:

Well, this is my first journal I'm writing in English. Of course I have about 100 pages of journals written out so far but they are in German and so they won't be very satisfying for you. Team life is going very good for me. When I got here (more than two months ago already) I wasn't quite sure what to expect from team ministry and how the whole thing would affect my way of thinking about things. I think that team ministry kind of forced me to think about a lot of Bible verses, quotes and about the way I'm living and interacting with people. Before I started this ministry-year in the USA, I was going to church in Germany of course and I also attended but I guess I didn't make up my mind about the whole awesome story how Jesus went to the cross and died for my sins. This is basically my biggest progress in my faith I think. I'm also getting better in the way I'm interacting with people. This is gonna make life much easier even when I'm back home next year.

OK. This is what I wanted to tell you so far. Team life is awesome and exciting every day. Right now we're on our way to Frederick, MD and I can't wait to meet our contact person and all the people we're gonna minister to tonight.

God bless, Ferdi



Ferdinand Storm

Date: 10/8/2002

Submitted by: Jessica Smith

Journal Entry:

Well I've been away from home for 2 months and 1 day. The funny thing is that I have been so busy I haven't had time to think about the things I miss. We are so busy doing ministry that we don't even realize all the places we have gone or the places we will go. One of the most rewarding experiences I've had so far has been staying in a host home for 2 nights and getting to know one of my host brothers really well. It is amazing how much you cherish relationships and familiar faces. That Monday was the first day I've spent away from my team in 2 months. I spent my day off getting to know my host family and seeing a movie that reminded me of home... "Sweet Home Alabama"! When I went to bed on Monday night I said goodnight to my host brother and he said, "This is what I imagine having a big sister would be like." It almost made me cry because I really felt like I had done real relational ministry by just lending a listening ear. I will never forget that host family. God is so gracious!



Jessica Smith

Date: 10/10/2002

Submitted by: Heidi Luft

Journal Entry:

God is showing me that He is definitely in control. There is a reason for everything that happens. For example, when we pick out kids to be puppet curtain holders or participate in our interactive bible studies, we often find out that our choices couldn't be any better. I remember the first time Captive Free came to my home congregation. I was indeed a puppet curtain holder, and although I didn't show it outwardly - I was beaming on the inside! I felt so special. I wasn't a kid that would volunteer to come up front. Why did they pick me? It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that I was chosen then, and it's by the power of the Holy Spirit that we know who to pick in our programs now. Another example of God's intercession, we were preparing for a lock-in. In the initial contact with the church they told us that there wasn't a theme. I had prepared games and a bible study for the night only to find out when we arrived that there was a theme for the night. Low and behold...the games and bible study fit perfect! I easily could have had to find new games in order for things to fit. It's amazing when I notice these things happening. Normally I wouldn't think twice about it and just say, "Hey, that's kind of cool how things all works out!" Again let me say...it's not coincidence...it's God!



Heidi Luft

Date: 10/12/2002

Submitted by: Leroy Leese

Journal Entry:

Who knew how cool God is? I mean, I sort of knew, but man, he works in awesome ways. We had a program in Brodheadsville, PA, and it was the same night as a postponed homecoming game. So the turnout was not as many as it might have been. BUT, we still had an awesome time and the people were so absolutely giving. From the food we had, which was amazing, to the enthusiasm of everyone worshipping with us - wow. The parsonage was awesome too, it had a spa and even though we didn't get to use it - it was made available to us which was cool. People have been so generous in the sharing of their homes and their churches.



Leroy Leese

Some people have said to us that we give them hope for the future. That seeing us caring about God and sharing the Good News, is inspiring to them. Actually, I feel like the one who is inspired because these are the people sharing their homes and families with me. It is a symbiotic relationship - each of us needs the other for mutual benefit.

I've never had a solo album. KISS did it back in the early or mid eighties and it was a bust. Art Garfunkel did it too and it didn't really work out for him. In much the same way - I think that our team would not be nearly as effective if each of us were out on our own, but the dynamic of all of us together is a winning combo. Its been great to see each of my teammates grow and even myself grow as we finish out one month of touring.

Date: 10/15/2002

Submitted by: Katy Baxter

Journal Entry:

So has anyone seen the Veggie Tale movie Jonah yet? We are hoping that we will get to see it soon. I have the soundtrack and it sure makes me laugh. But anyways, it is very beautiful out here. I had a photography day last week, and couldn't stop taking pictures of God's marvelous creation. Our host home let me wander around on their land and I did so for a few hours.

During a church service, while I was singing hymns and songs, I realized how sometimes I don't always listen to the words that I am singing. Usually I get so focused on singing the right notes and harmonies that the words are not on my mind. After I realized that I tried to really think about and mean what I was saying and singing. The words came alive to me today, God's spirit really opened my heart and mind. I hope it is something that stays with me because I never want it to become something that is meaningless.



Katy Baxter

Until next time...

P.S. I miss you friends and family and all those I have met. Thank you all for your support.

Date: 10/17/2002

Submitted by: Sam Burk

Journal Entry:

Wow God, "You had me from hello" , Even though you never really said hello you don't even have to. Knowing you sent your one and only son is enough for me. I really thought about it this week I stayed with a lady who takes care of a seven month old child named Johnny, he was a pretty awesome kid, and I kinda got attached. I thought to myself how precious this little being is and the awesome control God must have. God who is creator, stood over Jesus watching him change the world with his life, probably making God more proud than any parent could ever possibly be, then to let this child, who changed the world forever, not only die but suffer the death that he did. God had all the power in the world to just say the words and end it all, but God had the control over himself, to allow his son suffer the death he did for a sinful species. It really is an Amazing Grace, this gift given to us. It's just something to remind me never to take Gods love for granted. This line from Jerry Maguire "You had me from hello" expresses that feeling I now have inside of me, a feeling of thanks for the love that was shown to me, a sinner, who wasn't alive, but part of your plan, no less, a feeling or call toward discipleship, the least I can do to show my gratitude is TRY to follow in your sons footsteps, Even though we've never had a conversation together, and at times when my faith has been doubted in the past, knowing your son died for me is enough "You had me from hello".



Sam Burk

Date: 10/19/2002

Submitted by: Katie Bombardi

Journal Entry:

Saturdays are crazy! Most of the time I never know what day it is but there is something about Saturday that you know exactly what day it is. Today we went to a lock-in at a church in Maryland and I had a great time with the youth! By the time midnight rolled around I was on my second wind. We did a late night Bible study and some of the things I learned were so cool. I was partnered with a girl during the study and we talked all about Jesus and how he taught us how we can live our lives for God. I thought a lot about that conversation and realized that God puts us in situations that we least expect. I would like to think that I know a lot about God but even when I talk to someone younger than me I am amazed at what I learn from their faith. Faith the size of a mustard seed; that's all we need. This seed is the smallest yet it grows into the largest of the garden plants so that even the birds can nest in it. I can't remember what verse we looked that up in but we were finding things that I had forgotten about!

As we make our way across Maryland today I keep thinking about all of the other young people I am going to encounter this year. Sometimes I am afraid that I might say the wrong thing, or be in the wrong mood and somehow turn them off to the Truth. But as we learned yesterday, even Moses had a speech impediment. Jeremiah didn't want to spread the word because he was just a boy but through both of these people God worked wonders and if he can do that with them then he might be able to do something with me. Mark 7:7 reminds me that all I have to do is seek, ask and knock. If I don't ask for the ability it will never come. God is so cool.

Speaking of cool..have you ever been to the East Coast in the Fall? (for those of you who don't live here already) It is so beautiful! The mountains are so much bigger than I remembered. After spending the summer in Idaho, they kind of remind me of the mountains out there. They just have different trees.

I am bummed and excited at the same time for next weekend because my dad is getting married. Don't get me wrong, I'm not bummed because my dad is getting married, that is the exciting thing. Leaving my team is going to be strange! We've been together almost non-stop for 9weeks! Well, I do get to go to Florida and see my family! (and the cutest nephew in the world! Curtis here I come!) God's peace to you all and I pray for all who support this ministry! THANK YOU!!!



Katie Bombardi

Date: 10/24/2002

Submitted by: Jessica Smith

Journal Entry:

I never knew that you could hit your high and low for the year so far in one night. We gave a concert at a lock-in for mostly kids, but there were some families there. I felt like I was standing up there and my lips were moving but nothing was coming out. I would try to make eye contact and I just felt like I was getting no response! I wanted to cry in the middle of the concert. But there were two boys who stood up and did every sing-a-long and smiled at me throughout the concert. I went up to them after the concert and told them how much their enthusiasm meant to me. After this concert that I thought had done no good, I had so many people come up and tell me how much they enjoyed it and how much they needed it. Some people just have a different way of responding to things. I had hit the bottom during the concert, but those two boys and the people after the concert started me back on my upward "I think I can" curve. During a Bible study later that night I got the opportunity to pray with a girl. That was the first opportunity I had gotten like that this year. At that point, holding the hands of this girl, I knew that I had a purpose for this year. Later one of my teammates approached me and said, "I saw you make a difference tonight. That one girl's heart might be the one reason why any of us are here this year." God will make it clear to me when I need it most that I am here for a reason and I am so blessed to have so many opportunities this year.



Jessica Smith

Date: 10/26/2002

Submitted by: Heidi Luft

Journal Entry:

For all of those who know me well, you know how truly I'm excited to say.....IT'S SNOWING!!! There are kids outside right now having a snowball fight in October. I love it. I have a permanent smile on my face today :) Our theme for this weekend retreat is "Go Fish". We're talking about Jesus' disciples leaving their nets and following Him. When the speaker asked the kids about whether they were comfortable talking to strangers about Jesus, I just smiled...not only because it's snowing outside...but because I truly left my home and all the conveniences and all the comfort I found there...and followed Him. I don't know if it will ever sink in what I'm doing this year. I'm living out of a suitcase and traveling in a 15-passenger van together with six other people spreading the word that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. Sure it's not the loveliest of all lifestyles or the easiest, but it's amazing. To be totally focused on Him and living according to His will by sharing the news and making new disciples. Wow! I encourage you to be a fisher of men too...only then will you understand the rewards that I'm experiencing.



Heidi Luft

Date: 11/2/2002

Submitted by: Sam Burk

Journal Entry:

I'm broke, No Joke, bummer Dude. My wallet is empty, and I guess society would say, I'm worthless. HAHAHA boy are they ever wrong I feel more wealthy now then I ever did before when I had nickels and dimes to spare. I'm pretty happy knowing that what I'm doing is bringing people closer to God. In Ecclesiastes it says those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings happiness. I am happy knowing that my time here on earth is temporary and that this is a pretty safe bet for me be, that in Mark chapter 10: verse 21 Jesus says " Go , sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me." Holy Moses I feel like I'm gonna be a pretty wealthy man, in the afterlife now. Ummmm I gave my jeep to my little broke brother. And I'm working on following him. So yeah that's bout where I'm at now I am completely out of any sort of currency, and God has pretty much taken care of any needs



Sam Burk

that I have except for one of my teammates birthday gifts, however I put it on our needs list so I think it will get taken care of. (hahahahaha)

Date: 11/5/2002

Submitted by: Katie Bombardi

Journal Entry:

So my birthday is on Thursday but I got an early gift yesterday on our day off. We were staying in New Jersey just outside of NYC and the opportunity to check out the city was at our fingertips. Since my grandparents live there I have spent many hours walking around, exploring. However, all I wanted for my birthday was to take Ferdi to NYC and I got it! We stayed at the same host home and left early Monday morning for our adventure into the city. Ferdi almost didn't want to go because we would spend more money than he wanted to but I told him not to worry about it because it was all apart of my birthday present. I hadn't been that excited to go into NY for a really long time. I felt like a kid again! The first thing we did was go to the Statue of Liberty. We couldn't go up to the top because it was closed but we took a lot of photos and checked out the gift shop. It was drizzling as we arrived back to Manhattan and so we made our way uptown via ground zero. The last time I saw the place was December and it was all too clean. I couldn't believe that it was the same place I had visited when I was a kid...or even as an adult. Back in December you couldn't look upon the site but now there are holes in the fence where people stare at the large hole in the ground, the large hole in our nation. Ferdi asked me if I knew what they were going to build now. I didn't know. Every thing was different.

I actually bought a map.

Spirits indifferent we made our way up to Times Square where the lights of the city glowed in the early afternoon. As I drooled over each theatre we passed, Ferdi's eyes nearly popped out of his head at the sight of so many television screens and billboards surrounding us. I pointed out some of my favorite shows and where the ball drops on New Year's not thinking if the ball drops in Germany too. We passed by the Good Morning America studio, empty and asleep. My stomach growled and we crossed the square for a delectable cuisine of McDonald's. The most expensive chicken McNuggets I have ever tasted but the view was worth it. By the view I mean the smile on Ferdi's face. This is what I must have looked like when my dad first brought me to the city. Our day was cut short by the train schedule, so I gave Ferdi the whirl-wind tour of uptown: St. Patrick's Cathedral (like he's never seen an old church before), 5th, 6th, & 7th avenues (always a must), the NYC library, Radio City Music Hall, Rockefeller Center, The Empire State Building, and Madison Square Garden. This was one of the best birthday presents! He still doesn't get it. I can't wait to go back with him. We've already decided to return as soon as we can.

What does this trip have to do with my faith in God? Tons!! Giving Ferdi this trip into NYC was like God asks us to do every day: give all that you have and follow him. Well, I didn't give all that I have but I didn't make any money on the deal. It's like how God says if you give you will receive. I don't know what Ferdi got out of the day (other than a few postcards and photos) but I got a great feeling of happiness. I wish all of you could have spent the day with us! We had so much fun! I learned it all from my family; thank you Elisabeth. GIVE ALL YOU CAN AND FOLLOW HIM!
Acts 20:35 It is more blessed to give than to receive.



Katie Bombardi

Date: 11/9/2002

Submitted by: Jessica Smith

Journal Entry:

This little country girl from the South has finally had more than her breath taken away. I've truly seen some beautiful countryside and places, but for the first time I saw the skyline of New York city. Not in a magazine, or a movie, or on TV, but with my own two eyes I beheld a dream. I was actually en route to Long Island and I was watching a DVD. Ferdi tapped me and said, "You want to see the Empire State building?" I don't think I realized what he said, but I looked up and immediately tears just started to well up in my eyes. This imaginary place that I had heard about so many times in just a few seconds became a reality. However, not all of the tears were tears of joy; I also cried in



Jessica Smith

sympathy for a people that must still be so devastated and my heart just went out to all of the loved ones that were left behind by the attacks on September 11th. I guess being so many miles away from the city and never having seen it before, once I saw New York it became more clear to me that these people and these lives were real. God has given me so many opportunities that I don't deserve. I was just listening to the song "When You Love Someone". I realized how He loved me and he did anything and everything for my simple life. It is because of His ultimate sacrifice that I am here this year having the experience of my life. As a continue to see new things and new places and people I hope that I can continually thank Him. I know that it will never be enough, but that's where His grace covers me. "...But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." ~ Romans 5:20b-21

Date: 11/19/2002

Submitted by: Sam Burk

Journal Entry:

For the love of doughnuts, I mean seriously KUMBAYA! If I never have to load or unload that stinkin' trailer ever again in the rain, it'll be too soon. I mean God has this way of punishing me. I'm constantly sore from hauling that forsaken sound equipment, to make matters worse it seems like it's only going to rain whenever it comes time to unload or load that silly trailer. Wow spreading God's good news is hard work, I never thought it would be easy, and I love being relational, but I get sick to my stomach every time we arrive, or get ready to leave, cuz I know how much work comes with that. I can't ever say that I know how Jesus felt, but this ministry is shedding some light and now it's a little easier to empathize with Him, when He had to carry His own cross to His death site for us. It's makes my work easier to accomplish, and keeps me motivated knowing this is chump change compared to the price he paid for me, so KUMBAYA, praise the Lord in all we do!!!!!!

P.S. I'd like to give a shout out to Katie (CFSE), Ryan Legler, Marcus (ND), and Jeni (Watermark), my new prayer partner. My family Love you all, everyone in the office, who puts up with CFNE and all of my extended families (host families that is) who put up with me and all my shenanigans (sp?). All my love, God bless you all! You're all in my prayers, can't wait to see you all again soon.

KUMBAYA!

P.P.S. I kid you not, not even an hour after writing this stinkin journal, we were backing up in Leroy's Grandma's front yard. The ground was really soft and our tires sunk ten inches into the soft grass. We had to unhitch the trailer, to get the van out of the mud, this was hilarious because Jessica was pushing behind the back left tire, with Leroy behind the wheel. When the van gave way so did Leroy's foot. Pedal to the floor which , made the tire spin at great rotation, flinging mud off of the tire and right into Jessica, she was caked in mud head to toe. (we have it on all on video for everyone @ midwinter training.) Then we tried to move the trailer to the driveway by man/women power. This was a major bummer, because in order to move the trailer, we had to make it light by unloading all of that silly sound equipment, then move the trailer ten feet and load it all back up. IN THE RAIN! KREICKY! Making us late to our next booking, missing dinner, and unloading the trailer, IN THE RAIN AGAIN. KUMBAYA! Thank you God for your sense of humor.



Sam Burk

Date: 11/21/2002

Submitted by: Katie Bombardi

Journal Entry:

Thought of the day: Who ever came up with talking vegetables? I don't know about you, but I really like them. Katy and I stayed together on our day off and finally made our way to a theater in York, Pa to view the first full length Veggie Tales Movie Jonah! As we were in line for tickets our excitement bubbled over to the people behind us. "Two for Veggie Tales, please!" The couple behind us chuckled as we started to sing silly songs. Of course I had to get popcorn with extra buttery butter. We entered the theater with high hopes and to our pleasant surprise we had the pick of any seat in the whole place! After we sat down only 5 other people joined the show. And then the film began to roll and it was all I hoped for. Tomatoes, peas, and cucumbers! We laughed, we cried, we sang! But above all I



Katie Bombardi

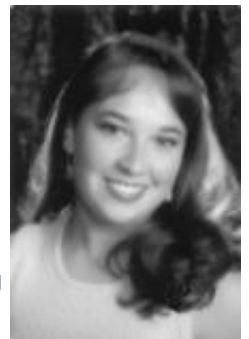
was happy with how the story of Jonah was told. If you think about it, usually when people tell the story they leave out the whole part about how even after Jonah delivered the message to the Ninavites he still thought God would destroy the city because Jonah didn't think they deserved God's mercy. That's the point of the story I always missed as a kid. I just thought it was amazing that some guy was swallowed by a big fish. I mean, how did that really happen? But the lesson is in how what we think about other people doesn't really matter. God is the one who decides how people are dealt with, not us. We haven't been to any prisons yet but we have been to a boy's home where the kids who live there may have committed some kind of a crime. It was strange for me because I kept thinking of Jonah and how he condemned the people of Ninavah for the things they were doing even after they turned to God. I didn't know the past of anyone in the room and it wasn't for me to know because I am not the one to judge what's in the heart of others. God forgives. God is mercy. Once I remembered that, I had one heck of an evening! So, if this convinces you to go see the Veggie Tales movie then my job here is done. If it convinces you to think twice before you condemn other people for what they have done then God's job here is done.

Date: 11/26/2002

Submitted by: Jessica Smith

Journal Entry:

My "sharing" on team this year is about when my best friend moved away. I thought God had it out for me because she was best friend number 5 in 6 years that moved away. I have since realized that God puts people in our lives and takes them out as part of His precious plan that only He can see. At the Northeast Congress this year I met a guy who had gone through like the same thing. We talked about the struggles of feeling alone and the disappointment of seeing old friends change. A lot of times we go into each day wanting to change people or change areas of our lives. Only God can change people and things in our lives. We have to trust Him and His plan to work in His time. And sometimes as I have realized on team, we go into ministry thinking that God uses us to work in other people, but actually more than expected, God uses other people to work in us. So I encourage you before you go into new places and new surroundings to let God take control and simply use you as an instrument of His peace.



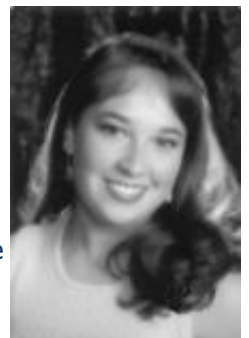
Jessica Smith

Date: 12/28/2002

Submitted by: Jessica Smith

Journal Entry:

It's amazing what a two week break will do for your spirit. While our ministry is quite rewarding, as in most ministry fields, it is very possible to get burnt out. I guess when you are "feeding" but not getting fed you get hungry for your own time with God. Out on the road where everyday is a new adventure with new faces and new places, it's nice to get back home and kind of reconnect with family and friends who have gotten us where we are today and supported us all the way. Coming back to team yesterday was a day that I half dreaded and half couldn't wait for! God has just used the couple of weeks of break to restore my spirit and feed me so now I am ready to go out again and to feed the flock. Reading my devotion last night in "A Heart Like His" by Beth Moore, I realized the God gives us so many talents and we try to use them as best we can. However, we often overlook the struggles we've gone through, or the bumps in the road that He also allows us to use in so many ways. I just thought about how all the valleys we go through in our lives He turns into mountains for ministry. The struggles and even stuff I regret in my own life have been tools for connecting with the thousands of people I've met already this year. It amazes me how my trials are His triumphs. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us and eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 In this verse if find encouragement that God uses our "light and momentary troubles" for a result that is unseen. Unfortunately we often don't "see" the long term effects of our ministry, but what is unseen can be eternal. I pray that God continues to use each of us to make those eternal effects, to plant the seed



Jessica Smith

so that He can tend it and watch it grow.

Date: 12/31/2002

Submitted by: Heidi Luft

Journal Entry:

Happy New Year to everyone! What a perfect time to try something different. I don't know about you, but when it comes to some kind of life-changing resolution - I'm one to say I'll start tomorrow, but there's no excuse anymore...today's the day! In September at the commissioning service of our thirteen teams this year, Larry Johnson spoke to our family and friends about how we'd be different people when we returned after a year on the road. I didn't quite believe him. Sure I knew we'd have a lot of stories to share, and we'd have a unique experience to add to our resumes. I just quickly want to share with you my life changing experience and how this year is going to be different for me. I've learned happiness is what you make it to be. It's not your boyfriend or girlfriend that does something to make you unhappy. When you come home after work, it's not your job that makes you unhappy. Unhappiness is your choice. It's your chosen response to the particular situation. My challenge to myself and to you this year is to be happy and smile as much as you can. Start now. Talk to that person with whom you have unsettled business. It's an amazing feeling to go to bed at night with inner peace. Don't think it's impossible, because with God all things are possible. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."



Heidi Luft

Date: 1/4/2003

Submitted by: Katy Baxter

Journal Entry:

So we have been back on the road for about 2 weeks or so and sometimes I still feel rather exhausted. That feeling is hard for me because I want to be energetic with the kids we meet, especially at events. I don't want to feel blah and have really been asking God what's going on with myself, because I can't really pin-point any reason this blahness that I sometimes feel. No matter what I am feeling though, I have learned that I just need to go to God with it right away, and keep talking to Him about it. Usually I try to figure it out all by myself but I no longer want to do that. Our God is such a trustworthy God, so why should I not give Him my concerns and my cares. When the new year came around I told myself that it was a new beginning. But I was reminded by a good friend (who has the same name as me) that we get a new beginning in Christ everyday. And even though I knew that, it was very good to be reminded of it, and it came to hold new meaning for me. I thank the Lord for all the people in my life who have been used by God to show me new things and to remind me of His love. I have two younger brothers who both have birthdays this month. And I have been searching for something to get them, but at the moment I have still not succeeded in finding anything worthwhile. I guess I really wanted to get them something to remind them of how much they mean to me and how much I love them. Even if I do find something to give them it won't compare to what is really in my heart. That made me think of God's love for us, and how He gives us so much to show His love for us. I pray all of our eyes are open to His love, and just think how the gift He gave us truly expresses His love. God's love doesn't end with the holidays, there are really 365 days of Christmas each year.



Katy Baxter

Date: 1/7/2003

Submitted by: Sam Burk

Journal Entry:

Attaining proper weight for me on team has been a serious issue. My teammates say I'm worse than the stereotypical girl...always complaining that I'm too overweight, etc...

My weight has been motivation enough for me to do something about it; however, I've found that motivation is only temporary. I need to be driven by something. I asked God for some help, and this is how He's helped. I've been doing some serious studying, and I've been able to come up with a system that adapts well with the team lifestyle. On team I haven't been able to find the time to wake up and go running in the morning, take my regular trips to the gym, or get involved in a recreational sport of any sort. This system allows me to burn calories while simply sitting in the van, in a church, or taking care of team business.



Sam Burk

Here's my guide to calorie burning activities and the number of calories per hour one might burn. *

- Beating around the bush.....75
- Jumping to conclusions.....150
- Stopping the awareness wheel.....140
- Swallowing your pride.....200
- Passing the buck.....100
- Making mountains out of molehills.....600
- Bending over backwards.....200
- Turning the other cheek.....500
- Loving your neighbor as yourself.....400
- Climbing the ladder of success.....170
- Running around in circles.....500
- Pushing your luck.....300

*Simply follow these steps and soon and very soon, you'll be on your way to being slim.

Seriously now, I'm out of creative excuses used for turning down food. Usually I say, "No thanks, I've been trying to watch my size, and all it's been doing is growing", or "No thanks, I've been watching what I eat, but it continues to disappear in my mouth". Don't get me wrong. I love the fact that I'm getting treated this way. No joke - people are really splendid, and I'm amazed at the treatment my teammates and I have received. God really does take care of us. I'm sure I'll be able to get things under control with the help of this system. Thank you to the Provider and Creator for all the work your doing in my life. And allowing me to surrender my priorities to do your work.

Amen,
Sam Burk

P.S. Another shout out to Family, Kt's Family, Host Family, Kt, and Friends love you all!

Date: 1/9/2003

Submitted by: Katie Bombardi

Journal Entry:

Sometimes it's hard to believe that it's a new year. I don't really feel like anything has changed, except the date. However, things are different. After our Christmas break our team has really come together nicely. Not that we were falling apart but we picked up where we left off. It feels good to be on the road again. Almost like this is my normal life.

We have just started event season and are currently between Baltimore I and II. I have decided that I love event season. It is my cup of tea. Being an extravert I get most of my energy from large groups of people. The only problem is that I lose my voice from talking too much and by Saturday night I am almost spent.

Today we went to a church that was at the Quake this weekend so it was really fun to see some of the same youth and adults again. But the best part of today was my host family. In fact all week I have had some amazing host families. The kind that are more of a minister to you than you might be to them. Host families are such a blessing to this ministry! I want to be a host family when I grow up.

I really don't have anything witty or enlightening to say in this journal. I just had a great week and I am looking forward to the rest of this season! I am really learning to live in the moment. There are things that I have to think about for my future but for the most part I am so excited about what is going on right now! Praise God for all the things He has given us! Peace to you all through Jesus Christ who gives us life. If I can inspire you to do anything it is to read Romans Chapter 12 RIGHT



Katie Bombardi

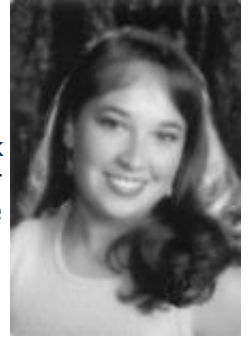
NOW!!! Get up from your computer and read it. Peace- Katie Sally

Date: 1/14/2003

Submitted by: Jessica Smith

Journal Entry:

It's amazing how God can turn our blunders into blessings. Katy Baxter and I lead a trek at the events called in God's time. It talks about how we often try to make things in our lives happen on our time rather than His. We use the first part of Ecclesiastes 3:11, "He has made all things beautiful in His time." For a visual demonstration we pick a kid that just looks like they could really tear something up. We hand them a partially opened rose and ask them to open it up by tearing off petals or whatever method they choose. Of course all you end up with is a demolished rose and a mess. We then pull out an opened and beautiful rose and show how even with sunlight, water, and soil, the rose still needs time to become beautiful just like our lives. Half way through the trek I realize that I left the roses in the hotel room! So I tell Katy to take over and I ran to the elevators which of course, if you've ever been to an event are impossible to get on. I bolted up the stairs and got the roses out of my room. As I walked back down the hall I noticed a maid and since I had extra roses I figured I'd make her day and give her a rose. I handed her the rose and told her it was for her and to remember that God loved her. She stared at me in bewilderment and then handed the rose back saying, "No, no... no hablo ingles." I took two years of Spanish in high school so I said, "Oh, tu hablas espanol?" Before I could finish she was nodding her head and saying, "Si, si!!" I then gave the rose back and told her, " Es para ti. Dios te amo." (Translation: "It's for you. God loves you.") She gave repeated "Gracias!" and I turned to go back to my trek with one less rose, but with a new heart that was blooming with a feeling that it "grew three sizes that day." It is amazing how God combines a forgetful mind, a humble knowledge of Spanish, and a simple rose to make two peoples' day.



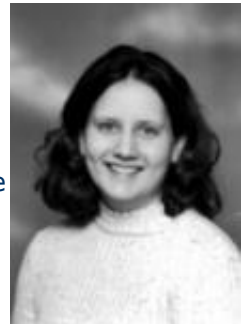
Jessica Smith

Date: 1/16/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Luft

Journal Entry:

Even though this journal is dated January 16th, I'm actually writing it on January 30th...which is four days after my 21st birthday!!! The weekend of my birthday we were at the North East Quake in Massachusetts. My prayers continue to go out to Shawn Smith who was so sick he was unable to perform most of the weekend. That left us flexible Captive Free members to do quite a bit more than usual. Anyways, as the news of my birthday spread, many were afraid of me not enjoying my special day being so far away from home. I can honestly say this was one of my favorite birthdays. I got a yellow rose (my favorite color), a balloon (which is still floating around in the van), and many cards from family and friends back home. But the most memorable event; there was a group of kids in the front row that held up letters that spelled out "Happy Birthday Heidi". It's so neat to be reminded that though we are away from home, people are very thoughtful and kind-hearted. The next host family treated me to a Dairy Queen ice-cream cake and even took me skiing (my favorite sport) on Mount Southington in CT. What more could I ask for? I am so content with life right now...it's great! All my needs are met - both in the physical world and spiritual world. Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find..." Keep asking and searching for happiness, and I know you will find it.



Heidi Luft

Date: 1/21/2003

Submitted by: Katy Baxter

Journal Entry:

One thing that is really neat about getting to meet a lot of different people, is that they all have different interests and hobbies. Well the other evening I had a host mom that

really liked to knit. Knitting was something that I'd never done and thought it would be neat to learn. So my host mom sat down and showed me what knitting was all about. She took me step by step through what I needed to do. I made lots of mistakes at the beginning, yet she just patiently kept getting me back on track. She had left for the evening and I messed up big time on the scarf that I was making and decided to start over. The only problem was that I couldn't remember how to start again. So in the morning I bashfully asked her to help me again and she was willing to do so. Now I have begun to knit scarves for most people I know. It has been something to keep me busy in the van. Plus a lot of our team has learned to knit and I think it's kinda funny when we are all sitting in a row knitting together. I think the think I like best about knitting, is when I get to give something that I have made to someone else. People I've met this year have just shown me the joy of giving, and I hope that I can give back as well.



Katy Baxter

Date: 1/25/2003

Submitted by: Katie Bombardi

Journal Entry:

Yeah, another great event! The thing I was wondering about the New England Quake is what exactly is New England? I can't remember what states are included. But that really isn't the topic of this journal because the states that are represented here remind me that we have been just about everywhere and if we haven't been there then we will be soon.

Grandma: that's what my team calls me now that I learned how to knit. This is something I picked up way back in November when we were in Noank, CT (not Norwalk, Noank). I always wanted to learn how to knit and it happened one day, very randomly. The next thing I knew I was apart of a prayer shawl ministry through the Noank Baptist church. The materials of my first prayer shawl was donated to me along with the dedication of the official Captive Free North East prayer shawl! There was a whole ceremony involved and it was incredibly cool! I was touched by the gift because these shawls have been going to people who might need a little extra love in their lives. Some have been given to people in nursing homes and one was even given to a dog who had gone through a rough time. I learned all about how the ministry was started and some personal stories about how they have touched peoples lives. God is as close to you as the shawl around your shoulders.

The funny thing about my first prayer shawl is that it actually turned out to be a prayer cape. I didn't really know what I was doing and I added about 26 stitches by the time I was finished. I didn't know what to do with it at first because we were on the road. One time I was staying with a family and I told them all about my prayer shawl so my host mom wanted to see it. She took one look and said that she could fix some of my holes. I didn't know that they weren't supposed to be there in the first place. So it was mended and I moved on. When I was ready to finish it off we were getting ready to head back to the home base for winter training. The bummer was that I didn't know how to finish my prayer shawl. And once again I stayed with another knitting angel who helped me "cast off" my creation. (I even learned a few new terms!) I took one look at it and thought that it looked like it should go to Superman because it had such a crazy cape shape! But it did go to a superman. My first prayer shawl was dedicated to a good friend of mine who has cancer. So my family gathered for the ceremony in my aunt's living room to pray over the shawl for her father-in-law. I wasn't sure if I was going to cry or rejoice in the Lord for the gift He has given us. People are such wonderful creations and each one is a blessing. Life is so amazing and I am thankful for the life that has touched me for so many years.

Over Christmas break I bought more yarn and started my second prayer shawl. By the middle of January I was finished. Not only did I bust it out in no time flat but once again I stayed with someone who knew how to crochet and added a little scalloped edge! It has been such a blessing to meet all these people who have helped me out with this ministry. The best part about my second shawl is that I didn't know who to give it to because I was on the road and we meet so many people every day!

So, this event is extra special because some of the people I met in Noank I saw again!! I was able to hand off my second prayer shawl back to those who gave me the knowledge. It was so great to be able to return the favor. Now I'm halfway through my third!

It's great because now more than half of our team is knitting and Leroy and Jessica are both



Katie Bombardi

working on their first prayer shawls! Praise God for this blessing to our team!

Date: 1/30/2003

Submitted by: Jessica Smith

Journal Entry:

I have lost count of how many times I've been humbled when my own problems seem insignificant after hearing the trials others go through or have been through. We had a rather unusual booking the other night at a singles meeting for about 50 people. The people that were there had either never been married or lost a spouse to death or divorce. We did some acoustic praise and worship type stuff as well as some performance songs. One of the songs we sang was "Trading My Sorrows". As we were singing I was like wow, sometimes I get down because I'm single or haven't found that special one yet, but some of these people are really hurting from loss of something that was once so wonderful. I realized that we don't have to hang on to the hurt in our hearts. We can trade them in for joy! Kind of goes along with the theme! Four of my teammates gave sharings about either their family situations or topics that could be easily related to the audience. After the closing song we had a brief question and answer session. One lady just added a comment that made me tear up. She said, "I just hope my girls turn out like you girls." I was like wow what a compliment! Then we all circled up and held hands and prayed together. People from all different religions, denominations and backgrounds were there with the common ground of supporting each other. Christian fellowship is so amazing!



Jessica Smith

Date: 2/6/2003

Submitted by: Katy Baxter

Journal Entry:

I had a wonderful day off the other week. Heidi and I were at the same host home and they decided to take us out to dinner. We ate at the Crab Barn, and at this restaurant they sold these really neat crab hats. I had mentioned how neat they were and our host parents decided to get us each a crab hats. Now these hats are rather interesting. They are red and have wire legs and eyes, so they are able to bend in different directions. So when someone is wearing this hat they look somewhat silly. Some people might call the hats embarrassing and would choose not to wear them. Heidi shared with me how the crab hat can be like Christianity. Sometimes we like to wear the crab hat/show our faith when its easy and when there are others around us also wearing the crab hats. But it gets harder and might be embarrassing when we are with those we don't know and in a place where we might not want to stick out. So what do we do? How do we keep wearing the crab hat even when it's hard? Living for God is not something that comes easy. Through many things satan tries to draw us away and scare us from God. Jesus even told us that in this world we will have trouble but He also tells us to take heart, that He has overcome the world. Our refuge is in God, our strength is in Him, He helps us go on and live for him. He helps us to wear the crab hat.



Katy Baxter

Date: 2/13/2003

Submitted by: Ferdinand Storm

Journal Entry:

Hey - Ferdi is writing a journal. Pretty rare thing to happen since this is not one of the most comfortable things to do for me. However let me just tell you a little, it is more about my days and weeks and months on team so far. On this specific day, my brother had his 5th birthday so that was kind of fun to call my family in Germany one more time. Although I am totally not homesick for my country I do miss my family a whole lot especially on days where not everything is working out the way it is supposed to. It is kind of difficult for me to have good conversations with my host homes in the last couple of weeks. Almost every host dad is asking me why "Germans" don't like Americans. Weird,



Ferdinand Storm

because that is a generalization which is not really true but is difficult for me to explain that to my host parents when every single news channel is talking about it on TV. But of course there is also a lot of good times. I get more and more comfortable with all the sound equipment I do control and Leroy bought a brand new compressor so that's kind of fun to work with. I also got to love the snow after a while. Even if I used to be a SW teammate and I love warm days, I appreciate when everything is covered with a white blanket . Just don't let it rain god because that is really nasty when it's cold!! All in all I am doing good and I would do another year of team if I would be able to by German laws and I am not (unfortunately). Ttyl

Date: 2/18/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Luft

Journal Entry:

Let it snow...Let it snow...Let is snow some more!!! We have over a foot of fresh snow out east here which cancelled three of our bookings now. Thank God for a much needed extra day of rest. Last weekend was our 5th Quake since Christmas...we've finally figured out the tricks to give our all, yet find some rest to make it the whole weekend. Ferdi, Katie Huck (last year EL teamer), and I were hanging out in the hospitality room when we heard some sirens outside. When they stopped outside our hotel we hung our heads out the window only to see flames on the sidewalk. After awhile it appeared that the flames were only two little torches set out by a storeowner. It took the firemen about 20 minutes to assess the situation and then leave. We had quite a laugh about the whole situation as we watched the torches continue to burn after the firemen left. I could try to tie this story into some God parallel, but I just really wanted to tell you that story. Back in the van, after a refreshing Quake and a few days snow break I'm grateful for a refreshed spirit. I pray that God continue to make you laugh and refresh your spirit as well.



Heidi Luft

Date: 2/22/2003

Submitted by: Katy Baxter

Journal Entry:

Have you ever locked yourself out of your house? Have you ever locked yourself out of someone else's home? I can now say that I have. For on my day off I was home alone. My host family had gone to work and to school. They left me a key to the house also, in case I decided to go somewhere. It was about noontime when I decided that I wanted to play with the new puppy my host home had gotten while I was staying with them. But since the puppy had not yet been potty trained I wanted to take her outside before I let her run in the house. So I took her out of her cage and ventured outside. I unbolted the door and went out. I let Maggie down and walked in the yard a bit. It was somewhat cold out and I realized that I was still wearing my pajama pants and a t-shirt. So I went to go back inside to get a sweatshirt, but when I went to the door it wouldn't open, and I realized that is was locked. I kinda laughed to myself and thought that this would be a funny story to story to share later. Of course the spare key I had left inside. I checked one of the other doors in the back, but it was also locked. Then I thought, well if the family had left me a key, that probably means all the doors are locked. I wasn't too sure what to do at first then I decided to find a phone. I went to one of the neighboring houses and knocked on the door. It wasn't until the door was answered that I felt dumb. Here I was still in my pj's and looking like I just got out of bed at a strangers door locked out of someone's home that I'd only known a few days. I sheepishly shared how I locked myself out of the house and asked if I could use the phone. Then I realized I had no idea where my host family worked. I then though my best bet was to call the church that we were at and was able to talk to the secretary helped me get in touch with the dad. While I was on hold, the neighbor said he found a key that he didn't know what it was for and told me to try it out on their house. The key worked, and I was able to get back inside. I also went to get Maggie and bring her back inside. I then looked at the door handle and it was one that you could open from the inside even though it was locked on the outside. So that helped me feel a little better. But I have enjoyed getting to share this with others, and maybe it will be a reminder to make sure the doors are unlocked when you take the puppy in the back yard.



Katy Baxter

Date: 2/27/2003

Submitted by: Katie Bombardi

Journal Entry:

Ok, I realize that today is not actually Feb 27. It's actually March 13 and I just got around to writing my journal for Feb 27 so I'm not going to pretend the original date of this journal. I really want to talk about my Virginia Beach experience. First, I would like to let you all in on a little secret: I want to be a pro surfer when I grow up. I don't know the first thing about surfing (well, I did find out what "hang ten" means) and I have never lived near the ocean but I think this is an attainable goal. The first thing I needed to do, however, was get a skateboard. You see, when you are land locked you need to practice surfing skills at all times. Hanging out in Virginia Beach only fueled my passion for surfing and when I was getting ready for one of the celebrations under the big top I spied a youth with a skateboard and decided to see if I could get some advice. Actually I asked him if he would let me borrow his skateboard until August. But I could tell right away that this was a serious skater because he didn't really laugh when I asked him that question. He did, however, offer me one of his other skateboards he had at home for more than I could afford. I tried to talk him down to \$5 but there was more to this than I thought. It wasn't until he offered me the number to his sponsor for some discount when I realized that I was in the presence of someone totally cool. I was just small beans in the skating world and he was big beans. So I just tried to make a funny joke about how I wanted a skateboard because I was going to be a pro surfer when I grew up and we both laughed at that one. I had to move on so I smiled and walked up to the stage. Little did I know, he approached me about five minutes later with a skateboard offer. But this time the board was free. I asked if I could offer him any price for it and he said no. Then he told me about how the ministry is so cool and that we give so much to youth through our lives. I wanted to cry! Well, about the ministry, not the skateboard. He went home to get it and we met up in the middle of the Saturday evening celebration. It was the coolest skateboard I had ever seen. That may not mean much but I was so excited I had to tell everyone the story! When I checked it out closer I saw that it is shaped like a surfboard and the art on the bottom is by Kelly Slater. Well, those of you who aren't surf savvy, Kelly Slater is a really cool surfer and I have a surf movie that he is in and I was stoked that I even knew all this stuff!

After the congress I went skating with Todd Miller and he showed me the ropes and I even think he was jealous of my skateboard! On my day off I took my board and we spent two hours getting to know each other on the board walk. We even got to see someone skim boarding! I didn't even know what that was!

Well, I'm on my way and hopefully one day I'll be surfing it up somewhere! All thanks to Blake.



Katie Bombardi

Date: 3/4/2003

Submitted by: Jessica Smith

Journal Entry:

Has anyone else ever noticed how much the weather affects your mood! I tell you, all my life I have been accustomed to nice warm weather in Alabama. God sure picked the winter of choice to call me to team in the North East region! I've heard people say that it's usually not this cold, but man anything below 55 is cold to me. I have seen more snow in the last 4 months than in my entire 18 years combined. Finally when I didn't think I could handle it anymore, God sent me this wonderful gift called sunshine. This everyday circle of light, warmth and life, I had begun to take for granted. We often don't realize the significance of many things until they are absent from our lives. These things can be as simple as sunshine and as special as a friend, but I am always amazed how God's timing is so perfect that we don't even realize it. Here in the North East we have spent the last couple of weeks in Virginia and we have been blessed with some "t-shirt days". Blue cloudless skies are so wonderful! Don't take simple things for granted. Look around you and try to count your blessings...(just a hint: you will never get done)



Jessica Smith

Date: 3/11/2003
Submitted by: Katy Baxter
Journal Entry:

This past evening is something that I will never forget and is something that changed my life.

I have a stuffed bunny named Bunny, and Bunny usually hides out in my duffle bag until it's bed time. But this evening for some reason I started talking with someone about stuffed animals and decided to share with them Bunny. So throughout the program I would look over and see Bunny being taken care of by my new friend. It made me smile every time I looked their way.

During the program we always offer to pray with anyone if they'd like to. But it isn't often that we are taken up on that. That night was the first evening that we were all brought together, our team and some of the church members, and we joined in prayer over one of the congregational members. And it happened to be the one who had been holding my bunny. Praying that evening I learned just how fellow Christians can come together and hold each other up. I learned that even though we may be strangers we have a common bond in Christ. After the prayer was over there weren't many dry eyes. I went to finish tearing down our equipment, but my mind wasn't really focused, I was distracted by the one who had held my bunny. I thought that maybe it was time to give something away that really meant a lot to me. I don't know why but I wanted to share something that I loved so much with someone who just had Jesus shining out of his young life. This was the first time that I had ever wanted to part with something I held dear. A few weeks earlier and still to this day I have been wanting to really learn how to give and to share things more. That evening I think it was finally clear to me what it means to give something from the heart. I just pray that God will give us all opportunities to share something deep within us with others. I also pray that God will heal all of those who are hurting spiritually and physically. Thank you to Hope Lutheran and all the members there who have changed my life.



Katy Baxter

Date: 3/13/2003
Submitted by: Sam Burk
Journal Entry:

Be careful what you pray for, Rely on God's perspective.....

Ok it's been awhile sorry out there to all my faithful journal readers. It's not that anything hasn't happened to me lately, just haven't found the time to doctor a journal up. Here's the latest, and greatest, some of us have needed haircuts, so we decided to put it on our needs list. A beautician in training came in early to the church with their clippers and I decided I'd go first. So I go into a room in the church take a seat on a stool and get an apron placed around my neck. She asks me what I'd like done and I reply number two all over. Which is what I normally get. So she put a number two guard on the trimmer and go to it. She mentions to me that she had been experiencing some difficulties with the trimmer, and at that second it cuts out in the middle of my haircut. (yeah go ahead laugh it up). So she takes off the trimmer guard number two gives it a shake and it starts up again, however when she went back to my hair the trimmer guard was no longer on it, and I acquired a bald spot, and heard oops. We were in a room without a mirror so you can only imagine what I was imagining. HAHAHAHAH I am able to laugh now, and I am very thankful to God and the giving beautician for her service and much needed haircut.

Anyway to make a short story boring, Leroy gave me his beard trimmer and a bic razor and afterwards I took matters into my own hands. I now look like MR. CLEAN with a shiny head (a couple bandaids) and two big hoop ear rings, I think I'm more handsome than MR. CLEAN but never the less, it put things into perspective for me, all of my trite problems amounted to squat. ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD, FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD AND ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. Who really needs hair anyway! Thank you God you never cease to AMAZE me.



Sam Burk

Date: 5/8/2003

Submitted by: Katie Bombardi
Journal Entry:

Wow! Driving can be tiring! Get out your map kids and follow this one. We left Mastic Beach on Long Island and headed up to Framingham, Ma and it only took us a few hours...more like six. But the fun part is that we drove through Rhode Island and we only have three more states to go until we have visited our whole region!

But the most exciting thing going on is that I have been accepted to Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary for this fall. Yippie! I am crazy enough to be a pastor! It's such a blessing to have a direction for my life. I know God has been calling me down this road for a long time, I just never picked up the phone.

This journal is a bit on the ODD side because I also want to mention that we had our last event last weekend :(It was so fun and I really loved event season! I'm so glad that the NJ Quake was our last because it was so super cool. I had a great time and the people there rocked! I hope to see many of them again soon. Vacation Bible School is coming up and I am also stoked for that too. I hope I can keep up the energy.

If I could ask everyone who is reading this right now to say a little prayer for my prayer partner Rachel Bolte, she just came back from Australia and I hope she gets rest before her last three months on the road.

Thanks to everyone who supports Youth Encounter! You are doing a great thing! Always listen.
~Katie



Katie Bombardi

Date: 6/7/2003
Submitted by: Katie Bombardi
Journal Entry:

Oh the weather outside is frightful....no, it's not snowing, yet. I think I'm in the wrong region because it has been raining for about a month and I am not in the Pacific Northwest. The confusion never stops. I think the USA should consider adding the North East to it's list of tropical rain forests. Although, tropical it isn't, rainy it is. But this all brings me back to a simple little fact: I complain way too much about things I cannot control. Well, I don't really verbalize my true feelings to my teammates because I'm not ready for them to vote me out of the van, but I have to tell myself to "suck it up" every now and again. But when I look around at this beautiful world I think, "God, you are amazing!"

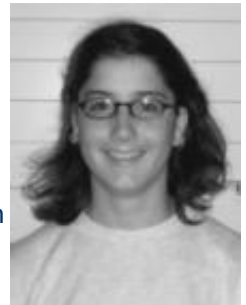
What a blessing we have everyday to be able to breathe air! Thank the Lord for colors, sounds, and even beltway traffic! So remember that you may complain sometimes but God has more reasons to complain about us yet He still sticks by our side. Always listen.

Peace,
Katie Bombardi

PS to those who check our journals on a regular basis: I'm sorry we don't write more....but WE LOVE YOU!!!

PPS we have successfully reached all the states in our region!

PPPS we went to a pool party and I didn't have a bathing suit...well it was just mispacked
PPPPS I love Litiz, PA!



Katie Bombardi

Date: 6/8/2003
Submitted by: Katy Baxter
Journal Entry:

We were able to visit the ocean last week, and while I was out climbing rocks I saw a mother duck and her baby. The baby duck was very tiny and was a cute little duck. I saw them and wanted to take a picture. So I tried to get closer, but of course I scared them in the process. The mother duck flew off into the water leaving the baby practically falling over the rocks trying to get away. The baby tried to hide but I found it huddling in between a bunch of rocks. At first I was very upset at the mother duck.

Why would she leave her baby if there was danger, she just flew away even though her little one couldn't follow. But as I was still by the small duck I saw the mother off in the



Katy Baxter

distance calling out to her baby. I knew that I had to leave in order for the two to find each other. I left wishin that I could have helped them more, but knew it was best for them to do it on their own.

Date: 6/12/2003

Submitted by: Katy Baxter

Journal Entry:

I have never had a sister. But just recently was able to experience what it might be like to have a younger one.

My host sister and I were waiting for a ride to dinner, and while we were waiting decided that it would be fun to dress up a little bit. So first we each did our hair the same, in pig tails. We each found a visor, pair of sunglasses, a necklace, bracelets. We each had the same number of bracelets and the same colors too. We put on some sparkly stuff on our faces, and she painted my nails the same color that she had on. We were all ready to go dinner and show everyone how we matched. We even took a picture together, although I am not sure how it turned out yet. After dinner I was asked to play hide and go seek. The first time I was one of the hiders. I found a nice spot behind a bush. I stayed there quite awhile, and then heard that everyone else had been found but me. So I got up and went the other direction so they wouldn't know where I had hidden. Once they saw me, they insisted that I show them where I had hid. I said,



Katy Baxter

Date: 6/27/2003

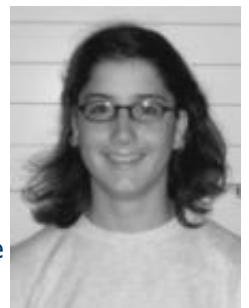
Submitted by: Katie Bombardi

Journal Entry:

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL ROCKS THE HOUSE!!!! Well, if you can't tell I had a BLAST at our first VBS! I can't even begin to tell you all the fun that went on for the week and it never rained!! I stayed with Katy Baxter in a great host home with super kids, wonderful parents and some awesome dogs! (and cats too) When we weren't at VBS we had so much fun playing with Cookie the dog and I think Cookie would even come with us if she could! But the real fun was at the church during the day. Katy and I also lead the music section of the day and sang our guts out for about three hours. Needless to say my voice is next to gone. The kids had a great time and they learned the songs so well. Our program on Thursday night was packed with the most little kids I had ever seen all year!!! What a blessing. I really felt that I was a part of the church family by the end of the week! Next week we will be in Manhattan...Look out NYC here comes CFNE!

Peace, Joy, and Love

Katie Bombardi



Katie Bombardi
