

Captive Free North West 2002-03 Journal

Date: 9/18/2002

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Wow, what an interesting day it has been. We traveled to Watertown, South Dakota today, and what catastrophe seemed to follow us!!! We finally arrived here at 6:00pm, which by the way was two hours late!!! We felt so awful, but with the addition of a huge detour and a miscalculation in the travel time it was impossible to avoid. We were just so thankful to arrive to see smiling and forgiving faces! We set up the equipment in what seemed to be record time and as quickly as we could, we got ready, because our program was scheduled for 7:00pm. This left us no time to sound check, which by the way...is not a good thing. We were all ready at 7:00, but we didn't have a whole lot of time to spend getting to know the crowd, although there were only about 15 people there. At first it almost seemed like nothing was going to work out tonight. Things just kept going wrong! How frustrating it was when 2 out of 3 guitars weren't working because of broken strings or no connection. In fact at one point Matt picked up one of those guitars and there was no sound coming out of it. AHHH!!! (That was my inward reaction) What else could go wrong????? What can I say? I was in doubt...I was almost positive that God had completely given up on Captive Free Northwest's ministries and he was just hanging us out to dry. It was only half way through the program that I remember thinking to myself, "Man, truth is, we're trying to make this night what we want, not what He wants." Personally all night I was thinking about how great our first program would be. We're starting to get pretty solid musically and we had a great time with our first program at training, so we were gold! No problems! We would just rely on our amazing music and charming smiles to woo the crowd. Yeah. Do you ever just have those moments when God completely humbles you? Those moments where you think you can fly on your own and he says..."uh...I don't think it'll work..." It's when you're lying there face down on the ground thinking desperate thoughts like "NOW WHAT?????" That He really reminds you that he's there. We had a great time in Watertown. The people there were just so amazing and hospitable, and we really connected with a lot of people. Even though at first I doubted God's presence he was so present. We learned a lot that night, but most of all God reminded us that it's not all about us or about the music, it's about Him!



Alicia Becker

Date: 9/23/2002

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

After a great worship service in Aberdeen, SD and a bit more training, we packed up the trailer and headed out on the road. After driving past endless fields of corn, we arrived in scenic Mobridge. We set up and got to hang out and talk to the youth group at Holy Cross Lutheran Church. Then after fantastic pot luck we had our second family night program. Our program consisted of a skit, puppet show, and a number of songs tying in to our theme for the year, "Head to the Heart." Both of these communities are in the farmland of South Dakota. The congregations and people we meet show so much love and generosity to us. The journey west so far has been an awesome experience for us, as well as the people we meet. It never ceases to amaze me how Christ works through so many people we meet in our lives, whether it be housing us for a night or just sitting down and sharing time with the teens in these communities.



Colin Byers

Date: 9/25/2002

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

It amazes me how many different things I've encountered since leaving home. Having never been to the west, there are many new sights to see. For example,

today in Lemmon we saw our first tumbleweed. We put it in our van and brought it back to the church and Matt and Andy proceeded to take it on a tour of Lemmon, taking pictures the whole time. They eventually made a slide show from the pictures and showed it to the youth group. Everyone thought it was very entertaining. They laughed at me often because I'd never seen a buffalo or a tumbleweed before. Lemmon is also the home of the world's largest petrified wood park. We were fortunate enough to have most of today off here and were able to explore the town. In addition to new surroundings, I feel truly blessed by the people we have met along the way. There are some truly wonderful people who are willing to invite us into their homes. It is such a pleasure for me to get to hear about the towns, hear stories about the people's lives, and connect to people in different ways in every town. Many nights I attempt to head to bed only to end up in a conversation about anything from pets to siblings to faith. For me conversations like that with people are the highlight of this ministry. It's a chance for me to really learn about the people and the towns and I feel that in doing so I learn a little bit about myself. Many of the new experiences I've had leave me wanting to move to the country while some remind me of home. I just love the fact that God is constantly showing me new things and continuing to open my eyes to the world around me.



Rebecca Bessinger

Date: 9/27/2002

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

Being an East Coast boy, I have never been to Montana. I have to say I was certainly impressed. God has created such beauty in this country. I was just amazed at how the scenery could keep my attention. One minute there were canyons with rivers carving through them, and the next was fields as far as you could see filled with crops colored in greens and browns. It certainly made me appreciate God and the amazing works he has put into making the world and everything in it.

Thursday the 26th started early because of a tight schedule. Lisa Lindstrom, an YE office staff member who had been traveling with us, had to be dropped off at the Billings, MT airport. I was the first driver of the day and this is how I was able to experience the great landscape. Arriving early in Billings allowed us to have some time to say "goodbye" to Lisa and also take in the town some. In the downtown area we stopped in a pawn shop. While browsing through the CDs, I found a pretty spectacular find. I found a Ghoti Hook album. I found this quite amazing because Ghoti Hook is a Christian rock band that now resides in Harrisburg, PA. The lead guitarist works at the local Circuit City, and I have seen the band play in the basement of an old elementary school. This experience was also a great eye opener. It has pointed out to me what such a small world we live in after all.

Also, Montanans(?) are very welcoming and hospitable. All our experiences with the people of Montana have been so wonderful. These people were friendly, kind, and loving towards a bunch of Christian strangers. We all could learn a lesson from this.

Well computer time is valuable so God's peace and love to all!



Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 9/30/2002

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

It is finally my turn to share some of my thoughts on the Northwest tour thus far, and I have nothing but good things to say about the people that we have met in Minnesota, South Dakota, and Montana. In the past couple days we have actually been in three cities. We left Billings, MT on Saturday morning after one host mother took the entire group out for breakfast! We then drove to Circle, MT, which should have been a pretty easy drive for us, but alas, it was not. I happened to be driving for the first part of our trip, which we started with half a tank of gas...(you know where this is going!) so...I started to notice that we were getting kind of low so I told Becky (who was navigating) that I needed her help to keep an eye out for a gas station where we could stop and fill up. As luck, or



Kristen Carter

fate, or chance would have it...there were no gas stations for at least 45 minutes and at long last our van started to sputter and finally died on the side of the road. However, we were less than a mile from an exit that actually had a gas station! We were so close, yet so far away. So, Becky, Andy and I set out walking down the side of the highway hoping that some nice person would stop and help us out. We had made it almost to the exit and suddenly a man in a suburban pulled up and told us that he would give us a lift. On the way to the gas station we learned that he had just helped another family who had run out of gas and had noticed us. I can only imagine what his wife at home was thinking, wondering where he was! That kind of generosity and kindness is not common, especially among people driving down highways. We all were thankful that God had worked in his heart and given him compassion on three young adults walking along the highway. We finally arrived in Circle, MT where we got to experience Town and Country Day! The town all comes out and there is karaoke, raffles and some good burgers. It was great to see the town united and some of its members up on stage singing some crazy songs! Matt even got up there and sang a little Johnny Cash. The next morning we led the congregation in a worship service, which was for us a very neat opportunity because it was in such an intimate setting. We really felt a part of the congregation and their worship because we were all in such close proximity to each other. We then had to pack up our stuff again and we headed to Baker, MT where we are right now, until our 5am departure tomorrow morning for Kalispell, MT! Here we were able to interact with the high school during one session and the elementary school aged children in another. I was amazed at the passion for God that most of the high schoolers displayed. They have a huge youth gathering here next weekend where they hoping to reach people and be able to share the gospel with them. They have been planning it for seven months and finally it is here. They were all so excited to share their faith with others that it gave me a renewed desire to continue sharing my faith with others. Finally, before we pack up and leave, we got to see the powder-puff football game at the high school because it is their homecoming weekend. God is so present here in Baker and I am excited to come back here this summer when we return to do Vacation Bible School!

Date: 10/1/2002

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

On Monday we spent a pretty laidback day off in Baker, MT, about two hours east of Billings (there was debate among the locals over whether the town should actually be considered part of Montana or just an offshoot of North Dakota, but we let them settle that amongst themselves). The day started off pretty early with a before-school breakfast and bible study...spent a little time with some of the kids we hung out with the night before, had a good time. We had high school folks stop by on their way to school, so they came from many different churches and youth groups, not just American Lutheran, where we were meeting. It was cool that our ministry bypassed all the denominational borders that hold people back so often. In fact, the folks in Baker seemed to be doing an awesome job of that...they had planned a big gathering for youth from all the surrounding towns and were encouraging all of the churches to come and have fun together. They also set up a rotation of local churches to host a weekly pizza and bible study for high schoolers and middle schoolers to hit during their open-campus lunches, so that was great to see. We took it easy for the rest of the morning...the whole team aside from Alicia and myself took off to chill at somebody's host home, leaving the two of us to wander the neighborhoods of Baker knocking on random doors, trying to figure out which house they ducked into. We hung out with more high-schoolers for pizza at lunchtime (or dinner, as we've learned some folks call it) and then after my little host brothers got out of school we all loaded up in a mini-van and took off to see the sights of Eastern Montana. My host family took us out to a sweet little state park called Medicine Rocks for the afternoon, about twenty miles outside of town where we spent a couple hours climbing around on huge sandstone formations, snapping pictures, playing with their monstrous Austrian sheep-guarding dog and getting ourselves good and dirty. The landscape was incredible! We got back into town just in time to clean up, grab some dinner (or supper, whatever) and walk the three blocks up to the local high school homecoming powderpuff football game. Very entertaining. I snuck in a quick phone call home to wish my dad a happy birthday and called it a night.

We met back at the church at the ridiculously early time of 5 am on Tuesday morning to get a jumpstart on what was going to be our longest haul yet...Baker to Kalispell, in the clear opposite



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

corner of Montana, about a 13 hour drive. But it turned out to be a pretty fun day. It's incredible how drastically the land can change just in a day's drive, from one side of the state to the other. We watched the expansive, empty prairies and rocky badlands of Eastern Montana fade in our rearview mirror and finally saw trees (yah!) and striking snow-capped mountains rising up in front of us. We survived our first snow flurries of the year, and eventually the windy mountain roads led us through the hills to the town of Kalispell, about thirty miles southeast of Glacier National Park, where we met a new pastor, new host families, a new youth group, and a completely new experience.

Date: 10/4/2002

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Kalispell, MT is absolutely gorgeous! We met with our contact, Sarah, who had actually been on team before and had traveled to India! Instead of doing a regular program, at this church we played a few songs and then spent some time teaching them to the youth because they were just starting a praise band of their own at the church. It was a pretty great experience and it was cool for us to be able to see a positive impact that we knew would last once we had left.

We left Kalispell the next day after having McDonald's ice cream with Jody, Sarah's husband. Interestingly enough we then stopped at McDonald's for lunch too! An amazing thing happened there. We had all brought our food to the table and had prayed, like we always do, and were in the middle of eating when an older couple came over to us and the woman thanked us and told us that it was such a blessing for her to see young people taking the time to pray. We were all kind of blown away, and it reminded us what ministers we are for Christ even when it is not intentional.

We continued the drive and now we're in Harlowton, Montana. What a great little town. We are even in the newspaper!!! I think that was a pretty exciting thing for me, although I was told by some locals that everything makes the paper because there's not a whole lot of news in a small town like this. Oh well. I think it's great. So we played a 5th quarter tonight. Now, to me this is so foreign. First of all, I know I'm not American and I do have some problems with the customary system, but when we learned fractions in school there were only 4 quarters. But for those of you who don't know, a fifth quarter is an event that is after the last quarter of a football game. So we played a lot of program songs, played some games, and then had some worship. It was awesome! Everyone there was so into everything! It was so awesome to just be able to fellowship with all of the youth and adults.

My host family here in Harlo is pretty awesome! My host sister Jill and I are almost like real sisters! We have so much in common! I've never had a real sister, so it's so fun! It seems so different to me, this whole host family thing. But at the same time, so incredible! These people who you've never met before welcome you into their home and treat you like you belong there! I can't even count the times that I have just felt so at home and so welcome in families. At a time when my own family is so far away and there is so much room for home sickness God has provided the comfort of family. I have only really felt homesick a couple of times, but it was at those times when I have found so much in our ministry and my life to be thankful for. God has so intentionally placed everything in our lives! I just think that's so incredible! Praise Him!



Alicia Becker

Date: 10/6/2002

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

Sunday October 6th I woke up and had a delicious breakfast in my Dillon, Montana host home and then headed off to Sunday school at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Dillon. We were greeted warmly with smiles and a group of kids eager to praise God through song. After a wonderful morning work out of singing action songs we met for worship. We then were given the chance to listen to some inspirational speakers at the local Baptist church speech on evangelism and showing love to teens. Our ears all perked up when one speaker read his favorite passage, Ezekiel 36:26, which just so



Colin Byers

happens to be Youth Encounter's theme verse for the year. I find day to day the links we have as a Christian community more and more awesome. I find strength every day in knowing that we have support from and do support all our family in Christ. After worship the team had some time to set up, and then went on to our host homes. I was lucky enough to get to hang out with some of the Dillon community in helping demolish a wooden neighborhood skate park to make way for a new safer one put in by the city. Getting to meet and talk to those people was a blast. I was reminded of the great community at both my home, and school. Monday, after seeing a bit of downtown Dillon, the team rolled up its sleeves to rehearse. We then were blessed with a wonderful potluck before giving a family night program. The people of Dillon made this awesome. It was so much fun to have a community celebrating the love of God. Unfortunately after such a great time I got to watch the unfortunate loss of the Chicago Bears to the Green Bay Packers. I was upset by the fact that my host brother was cheering for the Packers the whole time. However, this is just one of life's reminders that no matter who we are or what we do God still loves us. We may not win or succeed at what we attempt all the time but God helps us to get done what needs to be done in his eyes. God's THE MAN WITH THE MASTER PLAN.

Date: 10/8/2002

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

As we prepared to leave Dillon yesterday I had to stop and reflect on what an awesome experience we'd had in that town. While we were there they were planning to have a Christian radio show host come to speak at their town. It was a huge event called "The Storm." The plan was to reach out to kids through assemblies at the schools on Monday and Tuesday and then finish with a huge event on Wednesday night. It was just so amazing to see all the churches of the town come together in one huge evangelism project. They were all so excited about having Dawson McAllister come to their town and they all really hoped to reach out to the youth in the community. It was really great to see.

It was also great to arrive back in Billings. I've learned that I appreciate a lot about small town life, but it is fun to spend a few days in a bigger city as well. We had a high attendance at our program tonight and the youth director had a sign up sheet for the Bozeman quake. 11 youth signed up. It is really exciting to realize that we're meeting people that we'll have a chance to see again at events. My hope is that they'll invite friends to the events and we'll have a chance to reach out to even more people. It's really exciting to see God work like that. Although the event is still a month away, I am definitely getting excited about it. It will be a whole new experience compared to everything we've done so far.



Rebecca Bessinger

Date: 10/11/2002

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

For the past several days, we have had a slow time in Billings, MT. On Thursday the 10th we were able to have some time to hang out with a host brother. He showed us around the town, and it was a good chance for the team to get some much needed rest.

On Friday, we did not have anything planned, but it just so happened that Becky was staying with the head custodian of the local nursing/assisted living home. We arranged to play at the happy hour for the nursing wing and also for the retirement wing. I personally have not had many good experiences with this sort of situation before, but I was ready for a challenge.

Both groups of people were so excited and enthusiastic to see us and hear us play. After we were done playing we had the chance to sit and talk, and help the people back to their rooms. God had definitely placed us in this situation for a reason. We were the highlight of the day for many people. Just to see the smiles and to hear the stories was worth every second. God shone through us that day, and it was a good reward to see an instant result. Many times we don't see the results of our work in this ministry but when going to a home like this, it is just so prevalent. And we all thank



Andrew Wiedemann

God for this!

Well, it's that time.

Peace and much love to all!!

Date: 10/14/2002

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

For the past three days we have been in Big Timber, MT. Luckily for us this drive was only about an hour so it did not require an early morning start! We arrived around 4pm and were scheduled to meet with the youth at 5, eat at 6 and then put on our program at 7! We were a little concerned about the time crunch, but we managed to set up our instruments and system in half an hour!!! I know this may not seem like a big feat to many of you, but you must understand that when we first went on the road it took us upwards of an hour and a half to get everything together and now we are down to half an hour! Praise God because it allows us more time to get to know the youth and adults that come to see us. The program went smoothly and it always makes me smile when some of the adults in the audience are more excited than the youth about some of our sing-a-longs/do-a-longs. We also had a friend from Harlowton come up to Big Timber to hang out with us again, and what a blessing she was sitting in the front row!

The next morning we arrived at BTL (the pastor's terminology for Big Timber Lutheran) at 8am so that we could drive out to his other church. It seems to be a fairly common practice out here in the northwest to have two and three point parishes where the minister is responsible for more than one church. So we drove out to Melville and led the worship service there, had a few minutes to meet the parishioners and then turned around and drove back to BTL for their eleven o'clock worship. I almost forgot, although I'm not quite sure how, but we are staying at an absolutely gorgeous ranch about ten miles from the church. We are actually all here together and what a blessing it has been. We enjoy worshipping with others, but sometimes the peace and quiet of nature and the beautiful scenery and the rest and comfort we are able to find from it speak just as loudly to us about God's awesomeness. Today is our Sabbath day and everyone is out enjoying the beauty of our surroundings. I think I am going to go join them!
God's Peace.



Kristen Carter

Date: 10/16/2002

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

Tuesday morning we had to say goodbye to our Big Timber host family, took one last picture of the authentic Crowe teepee in their front yard, and drove away from the beautiful 740-acre Montana ranch that had been our home for the past three nights. From there we made the "short" five-hour jaunt up to Glasgow, another hip little spot in the northeast corner of the state. We rolled into town with, surprisingly enough, time to spare before we needed to be at the church, so after surveying our options around town we ended up pulling out guitars and chillin' like villians on the picnic tables in front of the visitor welcome center, where Andy and I proceeded to kick out four instant classic songs on the spot: "Canadian Thanksgiving Day" (which was just a few days ago, FYI) "The Greater Metropolitan Area of Glasgow," "The Weiner Walk," and "Driving All Day," all inspired by actual events.

After meeting our songwriting quota for the day, we headed on to the church where we met up with the youth director and ate at a community kitchen set-up, a pretty unique experience than anything we've had thus far. After a good meal, while we waited for our host families to pick us up, Andy and I pulled some folding chairs and my laptop into the men's room (which had surprising acoustic qualities) and set up a makeshift recording studio where we laid down our winning songs from earlier in the afternoon...look for the album out soon.

We set up and played a program Wednesday night and had the largest number of youth turn out



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

yet, which was awesome to see. And man, they were some incredible folks. Everyone was so welcoming and excited to have us there...they jumped right in on songs and cheering and put all their energy into everything that was going on. One girl even stood on her head for nearly two minutes just to get a Starburst from us.

We chatted with so many people after the program, and it was great...they all obviously appreciated us being there a ton and were excited about the chance to get to know us a bit. One little girl came up to each of us in turn and gave us a picture of ourselves she drew, colored, and labeled while we were playing ("Captiv Free- Matt," for example...complete with the hip-hop spelling.) I couldn't believe the generosity of those people; it was incredible. We were not at all hurting in the goody bag-hook up department. Even after everyone cleared out and we were beginning to tear down, one woman and her children came back to the church to give us a bag full of toothbrushes, batteries, and all kinds of other essentials they wanted us to have. We couldn't believe it.

After we cleared out of the church, we took another dive into local culture by hitting up a sweet pizza spot owned by Andy's host dad, and da-dang! We were all thoroughly impressed, both with the pies and again by the generosity of the owner Jeff, who kept the place open for us and gave us our food on the house without thinking twice about it (and who also dazzled us by tossing dough within inches of the ceiling without touching, among other pro pizza-making skills.)

I am continually blown away by the kindness and unconditional willingness to share we encounter daily from complete strangers, and the way everyone is so quick to offer whatever it is they have everywhere we go. Some folks own monstrous ranches and have log cabin lodges for us to crash in, some own pizza parlors and love treating us to a great meal, and others have bags full of toothbrushes laying around their house that they can give away to a group of kids with no money living in a van. The generosity all these people show us just amazes me and reminds me constantly of the loving family we are all a part of through the love of God. I was touched by the people in that little town, and I have a feeling their actions will continue to challenge me to reach out to others in the same way along our journey, in Montana and the Northwest and to all our brothers and sisters in Christ. Peace!

Date: 10/18/2002

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Greetings in Him! Wow, I'm thinking back on the past couple of days and realizing just how much has been going on. Yesterday we had a 16 hour drive that was from Glasgow, MT to Odessa, WA. That meant an early morning and lots of different scenery as we traveled. The beauty of the Northwest never fails to amaze me! But of course you've heard that all before. In our short time in Odessa we stayed with an awesome family! One of the teens in the family just recently applied to be on a Captive Free team so it was a lot of fun to talk to her about her application process and just encourage her.

The whole family was just so much fun to be with and even though we were all pretty exhausted from our long day of driving we all just wanted to stay up and spend time with them. Luckily we get to go back there pretty soon! This morning we headed from Odessa to Bellingham, WA to a camp called Lutherwood. It was great to be back at camp! Even if it's far away from home. We were able to play some sing-alongs and just hang out with some youth that were on a Confirmation retreat. They were a lot of fun. One of the boys was from Canada and had just recently moved to Washington, so we had lots to talk about. I feel like God speaks to all of us through the people we meet. It's a lot of times in a great conversation, fellowship over a meal, or just the time spent talking on a short drive to meet the team, that God's presence is most evident to me. I don't even know how to describe the feeling of joy that comes from just sharing and being able to listen to the stories and just the joys of others! Praise God for this great family he has provided for us!



Alicia Becker

Date: 10/21/2002

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

On Saturday we left beautiful Camp Luther wood and headed down the road to Port

Orchard, Washington. We had a quick dinner and set up with much help from the First Lutheran Congregation there. We did a family night program Saturday night and led worship on Sunday. We had such a fun time and we finally got far enough west to see part of the Puget Sound. We took off straight away after church to Wenatchee, WA. We had a youth night program with games, music and fellowship. It was a fun night for all. Youth from several of the area churches came and participated. Today, Monday, our day off we woke up early to visit the grand opening of a local coffee shop, hosted by a local radio station. After that we came back to breakfast, and much needed rest. We were able to get a lot of team job work done and I was able to convert our old TWIX box into a snazzy new prayer box to set out at programs so that we can pray for the specific needs of people we meet all year long. Today was productive, and we have a long haul to Montana in the am. Until next time God's PEACE.



Colin Byers

Date: 10/23/2002

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

Tuesday was another one of our long treks across the great northwest. Long drives are typical for our team and I'm always tempted not to write about the driving because it doesn't seem that exciting. However, I've been asked recently if we get bored on the long drives. Despite the fact that we spend so much time driving, the answer is no. We have our moments where we're bored, but for the most part we entertain ourselves quite well. When we left Wenatchee, WA it was fairly warm. The weather had been around 60 during our stay there. As we traveled through the mountains towards Helena, MT suddenly it was around 25 degrees and there was snow all over the ground. We stopped the van at a scenic overlook and got out to enjoy the snow. There was ice on the ground and we had fun sliding around for a little while. The view was also amazing there. It was encouraging to me that despite how many times we'd driven that road and how long we'd been in the van we could still appreciate the beauty of the mountains and enjoy the wonder of the first real accumulated snow we'd seen. We also occasionally have deep and meaningful conversations in the van. At the moment we are struggling to truly understand prayer. We know that God tells us to pray and tells us that he hears us, but we also know God has a plan for our lives and is capable of doing things without our prayer. So is our prayer really doing anything, or is it just for our benefit? If anyone reading this has some insight on the prayer topic, please feel free to share it with us. Today was a good day here in Helena. We sang a few songs for the preschool chapel and set up for our program. We led a relaxed worship and had about 200 people there. This is by far the most people we've had at a program yet. It was really great to see so many people coming out to worship on a Wednesday evening. We were encouraged to play loudly, which was fun for me as a sound tech. The people at this church are all really friendly. We all had a great time with all our host families. We'll be back in Helena in May and I'm looking forward to seeing all these wonderful people again.



Rebecca Bessinger

Date: 10/25/2002

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

Montana = Driving

Hello again everyone. For the past two days we have been doing some driving. We left Helena MT, on Thursday morning and arrived in Spokane, WA that evening. This stop was just housing for us, but we had the opportunity to hang out with the Youth Group and just have some fellowship and we got to play some games. The next day we awoke to another new day filled with driving. This time we made the trek to Sherwood, OR, (yea for our first stop in Oregon), only to find out that you can not pump your own gas in the entire state of Oregon. We just learn the most interesting things as we drive along. One thing that I think the team has really grown in and learned is to appreciate our schedule. We all



Andrew Wiedemann

realize this is fun and we get to great things, but there is also responsibility and jobs for us all to do. But the lesson we have learned is the checks and balances of our schedule, if we worked all the time we would be a bunch of grumps in a van, and if we played around and had fun all the time we would be a bunch of hooligans in a van. God has given us the ability to preach His good word but he has also provided us with an opportunity to see the country and meet many great people. One thing I hope the people we meet will learn from us is that being a Christian is FUN!!!!
Never forget to have fun!!

Peace and much love to all!

Date: 10/28/2002

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

Life on the road. It never ceases to amaze me. I feel like all I can ever talk about is the amazing generosity of the people that we meet on the road, but can I ever say enough? On Saturday we were in Sherwood, OR to play a program for some of the congregants as part of a Halloween celebration at the church called the Hallelujah party. It was so great! The audience was so into our program and we did all kinds of fun sing-a-longs/do-a-longs with them that they got so into (or so I thought!) After the program two older ladies apologized for their "reserved" congregation, but I laughingly told them that I had seen some of the funkier walks at that church from adults thus far! (if you're wondering what I'm talking about...funky walks...then maybe you should come hang out with us at a program!;-) anyway...the night ended well and we had to be back at the church bright and early the next morning to be part of three church services!

I say part because this was our first Sunday actually worshipping instead of leading the service, which was a nice break for all of us. The interesting thing for me was that it was a Missouri synod church and our first one on tour. I actually grew up United Methodist, and while the people are sometimes themselves reserved, the theology is actually pretty liberal, so the Icms church was a big change for me. I find that along the road we are exposed to so much and have a lot of time to reflect on our faith and I have raised several questions about different areas of my faith and why I believe what I do. For me it was interesting to sit in an Icms church service because it made clear to me some of my stronger tendencies, theology wise. I think it was good for me to recognize that. I chatted with one of my teammates afterwards who belongs to a Missouri synod church and we discussed the differences between the views of an Icms church and a united Methodist church and it was interesting to hear her perspective, but also to recognize mine.

The most amazing thing happened after church though. We were standing around figuring out what to do about lunch when a member of the congregation approached us and asked us if we would all like to come to his house right behind the church and he would barbeque for us! How cool! This man said he had just "felt the Spirit move" and he wanted to do this for us! God is so cool! We enjoyed a GREAT lunch of steak and salmon with him before heading to Winlock, WA. There we stayed with families, who out of the goodness of their hearts, put us up for two nights and we didn't even have a program at their church. Luckily, we will be back at their church in March so we can hopefully give a little back, but again, God was moving in this community preparing a place for us and I feel so unworthy. It truly is inspiring.

On that note, it is rather late and we have a fairly early morning so I will say goodnight!
Peace and joy always in Him!



Kristen Carter

Date: 11/1/2002

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Peace and love to all my brothers and sisters!!! Times are moving so quickly already this year! Halloween is gone already! Christmas is fast approaching! Where is the time going?

So we arrived in Portland Oregon at around 4 o'clock in the afternoon on the 31st. We

were all pretty excited because we were going to be trick or treating with the youth group here at Prince of Peace. So earlier that afternoon we spent a little time in the Value Village in Vancouver, WA putting together our master piece costumes. We all pulled together quite well in the costume department! We had everything from Grandma to Santa Claus. We were able to meet the awesome group of youth that we would be spending the lock-in with and even from the first few minutes of meeting them we knew that these were a remarkable group of kids. On Friday we had the opportunity of playing some games and having supper with some of the jr. high and middle school age youth. We had so much fun! Although there were only a few youth there they were full of energy for sing a longs and really into the games that we played. We even played this crazy game where you had to choose a fruit and say the name of that fruit without showing your teeth. The whole point of the game is that you look and sound ridiculous while saying anything, and you make yourself and everyone else laugh and show their teeth. Our lips were all pretty sore by the end of the night, but it was all worth it. It reminded me of how much I just love spending time with and getting to know and just having fun with youth and kids. They just give life a whole new meaning! They see things a little more freshly than we do and they can make even things as simple as a Guava fruit with your lips over your teeth, funny again! If only we could always see with the eyes of a child! I really think that's why we are to receive the kingdom of God like a child. We really need to keep things fresh. How many times do we overlook what a great thing faith is? A host mom was telling us the other day about a child in her pre-school. This child was only 3 years old and had never heard the story of Jesus death on the cross. When they were studying it in school our host mom said that the child was just so captivated. When he learned that it was a true story he was just awestruck. When was the last time that we sat back and just wondered over our precious salvation? So my goal for the next few months is to see things like a child.

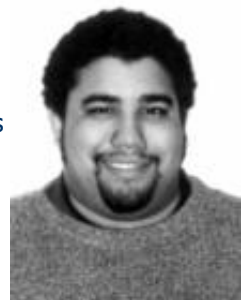


Alicia Becker

"Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."
Mark 13:17

Date: 11/4/2002
Submitted by: Colin Byers
Journal Entry:

We are in the Portland, OR area and after Thursday night's lock in, and Friday's activities we took the free time Saturday morning to get our brakes checked on our van. After that it was time to come back to the church and have mac and cheese with the middle school youth group. We sang a few songs that were going to be able to sing along with us during Sundays worship. We then had dinner with the middle school, with a surprise cake for Matt and Andy's upcoming birthdays. Then the high school youth showed up and we played some games and then we sang some songs and had a prayer, a great end to a great day. Sunday morning worship was a special All Saints service with a lot of songs and all the readings done by the high school youth. It was awesome to see young people getting in to worshiping helping out with whatever they could. After church, Andy and my host mom took us to the weekend market down town Portland. It was such a cool experience to see all the different ethnic and cultural differences all packed in to one small space. The colors, sights, sounds, and smells were out of this world. We then checked out a music store and I got a new guitar. The team spent Monday's day off walking around down town Portland and then hanging out with one of the Prince of Peace high school youth later that night. Our team is getting excited because the Seattle Quake is coming up this weekend. GOD ROCKS!!!!



Colin Byers

Date: 11/6/2002

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger
Journal Entry:

Tuesday morning ended our stay in Portland. We finished our time there with a chapel service for the kindergarteners. It was great to see their enthusiasm. They were dancing and singing and having a great time. Then we hit the road again. We were surprised to discover that with all the driving we've done we actually missed it when we weren't driving for several days. It was fun to be back in the van again. We felt like we needed a good five hour drive.

When we arrived in Marysville, WA we were excited to learn that we were staying in a dojo. Our host dad teaches Tae-kwon-do classes. It was a unique place to stay and we enjoyed it. Today we had the opportunity to lead chapel for preschoolers. Little kids never cease to amaze me. They're just so cute. In the evening we led a worship service, games with the youth, and a Bible study. We broke into small groups for the Bible study and I worked with 4 girls that were really insightful. It was so encouraging to hear how well they understand their faith and rely on God in their lives. I feel like I learned a lot from them. Our stay in Marysville was really and enjoyable and I could just see God working in the lives of everyone we met.

We also celebrated the first birthday on the road. Matt turned 19 today! The church had a cake for him after the Bible study and we sang to him during both chapel times. It was so cute to see him share his birthday with several of the kids.



Rebecca Bessinger

Date: 11/8/2002
Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann
Journal Entry:

Anxiety was running very high as we left Wenatchee, WA for the first Youth Quake of the year. We met Jen and Jeremy, our event hosts at the Doubletree hotel, and the adventure began. Jen and Jeremy were such a great encouragement as we are new to the running of a youth Quake. We also met Daniel's Window, the band we would be playing with and the band that would be sharing our equipment.

The combined efforts of the Youth Encounter staff, volunteers, Daniel's Window, and us, Captive Free, everything ran smoothly and was set up for the arrival of the youth. At first 200 6th to 9th graders can be rather shy when you strike up a conversation with them. After meeting them for a while, we got to play at the first Celebration. The youth picked it up several notches once the music started and they sang and danced their hearts out. Also that evening we played some slow worship songs at campfire, and from what I saw, they really worshipped.

The weekend was long, strenuous, exhausting, but worth every second. I hope this weekend really got youth thinking about their spiritual life and their relationship with God. I know it was a great boost for the team and myself.



Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 11/11/2002
Submitted by: Kristen Carter
Journal Entry:

WOW! Where do I begin?! I write journals every other Monday and it is always interesting because I have three days to write about and there is usually a lot to say, but this weekend was even crazier!!! Why?! Because we had our first quake in Seattle!!! It was awesome!! I could go on for pages and pages about what an awesome experience it was, but suffice it to say that it was an awesome experience for both us and the junior high youth that attended. We started the weekend at noon on Friday with a rundown of our schedule with YE staff, which took probably an hour...if that tells you anything about how much was packed into less than 48 hours at the hotel. The kids started arriving Friday evening in time for us to have a "celebration," which included singing, a speaker, a quiz gameshow by Faith Inkubators, and just some general craziness. We also had a "campfire" that



Kristen Carter

night, which included lots of slow, worshipful songs to kind of wind down for the night. Of course there were several activities mixed in and around those two things, but they set the tone for the evening and were repeated several times over the course of the weekend. There were 193 youth that attended the event and only 6 of us! We love to sing and praise God through song, especially when we can share that with about 200 other people, but a big part of our ministry this weekend was to meet the youth and really get to know them, as well as you can in 48 hours anyway! There were opportunities throughout the weekend to hang out with different youth groups during meals, family time or group building time. This increased the number of youth we really got to "know" exponentially! I think if we had played our music and then enjoyed the comforts of the hotel then we would have made much less of an impact on the kids. Personally, I made a special effort to learn the names of as many youth as I could and then when I saw them, to repeat their name and find out how their last session had been. I think each of my team members had a different way of connecting and it was fun to see them each step up and meet the kids where they were. I appreciate that we each had different ways of connecting because I think we were able to reach out to many more youth, as they could find someone they were most comfortable with and hang out with them.

As much as we ministered to the kids in our own ways, we were also ministered to by the amazing servanthood of the YE staff and how much behind-the-scenes work they did so that we had time to hang out with the youth. Another huge ministry for me was Daniel's Window, the other band that helped us lead music at the quake. We lead worship constantly on the road, in our programs and in church services, but it is rare that we are able to sit and participate in it. This weekend was a rare opportunity and I think that one of my favorite parts of the weekend was Saturday night's campfire, led by Daniel's Window. It was one of those times that you can just sit and feel the Holy Spirit present. I sat in the ballroom with all of the youth and their leaders, closed my eyes, and just worshipped God. It was an awesome rejuvenation for me, and a reminder of why I am on the road this year. We are here only for God, that he may use us so that others may have the same worshipful experience that I had just had.

As if it could get any better...we got to then drive to Odessa, WA and stay with two of the greatest girls! Theresa and Sarah rock our world!!! They LOVE Captive Free and have been hosting teams for several years. They are both seniors in high school and definitely have aspirations of someday being on a team themselves. This also is an awesome ministry to us...seeing others who crave to do what we have the opportunity to do makes us recognize what a blessing this is. It was an awesome end to an awesome weekend. Praise God!! Neh 8:10 - "The joy of the Lord is my strength!"

Date: 11/13/2002

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

Greetings to ya from the great state of Oregon. I tell you what, the action never stops here on the road with Captive Free Northwest. It boggles my mind to think of how far we've come since we first took off on our own in September, both literally in distance (we're a long ways from Minneapolis) and in our team life (we're a long ways from, "So, what's your favorite food?") As exciting as it is to constantly travel to new towns and meet new people, we have been especially blessed lately with being reunited with people that aren't quite so brand new to us, and that has been great.

The team spent the last couple days recovering from the Seattle Quake in our home away from home in Odessa, WA, hosted by the ever-welcoming Sara and Teresa Johnson. We met the girls nearly a month ago (so hard to believe) on our first push out to Washington, and they are both incredible energy-boosters for us. A couple of girls crashed at their house, while the guys and I took the van a few blocks up the road to stay with our host family. They were awesome folks! Turns out that they are the owners of The Barn, the community youth center where we played our program Tuesday night. That place really rocked. Our program went great and we enjoyed a lot of good fellowship with the youth of Odessa afterwards over popcorn, pool, and karaoke.

After we packed up at The Barn we all headed back to the Johnsons' for our last night in town, where they sprung a little birthday celebration on Andy and me. My birthday was a solid two weeks ago by this point, but I wasn't about to argue with ice cream cake.

The next morning, we had to say goodbye to Sarah and Teresa and the rest of the Odessa crew and hit the old dusty road once again. We were heading back to Prince of Peace Lutheran in the hip



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

town of Portland, where we had just pulled a five-day stint last week. We weren't camping out for quite as long this time around, but it was still fun to be back somewhere that felt at least slightly familiar, with people we had already met and beds we had slept in just the week before. After getting settled in, we reacquainted ourselves with the fine folks at Prince of Peace over chili in the fellowship hall. Some people we were meeting for the first time, but a good number remembered us from our first visit, and I really enjoyed talking to them. In a ministry of constantly seeing new places and faces, being around people who already knew us, even if we just met them once before, felt like we were reunited with old friends. A good number of the youth had come back to see our program tonight, and I loved to see that. Afterwards we all moved upstairs where the fun just kept going with an hour of our favorite sing-a-longs.

After our program, the team split up to head back to our homes. Once again, Kristen and I stayed with the church's Family Life Minister and her family, and on the way home she talked with the two of us about the effects she saw in the youth from our last visit to their church. It was one of the first chances we've had to do a program twice in the same place, and it was so encouraging and uplifting to hear her talk about what that time had meant to her and the church. I hope we receive more chances in our trip to witness the growth of seeds we've planted in our ministry.

Date: 11/15/2002

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

So after a long drive, (that's 10 minutes, and I'm kidding by the way.) we arrived in Tigard, Oregon to see the smiling and friendly faces of our host families. It's so awesome that everywhere we go, no matter how little we know about a place, smiling and friendly host families seem to be a constant! The congregation in Tigard, much like our host families, was also very friendly! And what a blessing they were to us! So many congregations don't realize how they bless us personally and in our ministry. I wish there was a way that we could give back to them that would really equal what they do for us! Everything that we do seems so insignificant compared to their love. Jesus has also given us such a great gift of love that is so easily taken for granted. We come to expect his smiling forgiveness when we've wronged, his unconditional love. We keep talking this year about how He has given us a new heart, and His love and his everything, and I can't help but think that what we have offered up through our actions and words cannot possibly equal all that He has first given to us. I just have to offer up my praises to Him and continue to pray and work for a heart that is always serving Him!



Alicia Becker

Romans 12:1

And so, brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice-the kind He will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?

Date: 11/18/2002

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

Saturday we did our first whole family night program in a few days, then I got to hang out with some of the people from the church afterwards. Sunday was only the second time this year when we got to just worship and not lead. That was an awesome treat. The congregation in Tigard, OR was awesome. We then stayed for a potluck and drove to Kent, WA in the afternoon. We got to spend Monday as a day off in Seattle. We visited a bunch of shops and walked along the water just past Pike's Place Market. It was a great day to just relax. This has been an excellent start to one crazy wild year!



Colin Byers

God's peace to all!

Hi Prince of Peace Waukegan and CURF

Colin.

Date: 11/19/2002
Submitted by: Kristen Carter
Journal Entry:

The northwest United States is SO beautiful!! But mostly what makes it great is experiencing it with five of the most incredible teammates you could ever hope to have. Winter is fast approaching, and on our last day off, the roads were not in the greatest condition. So we all stayed at one host home and played Taboo and Catchphrase. Good homemade fun. There was one round where Colin said like five Taboo words in a row. And his team still won!! They claimed God was on their side, but I think they were just lucky. Then we played Catchphrase, and Alicia chooses the most obscure clues to get people to say the word. Her word was "chair." So she says, "The best violinist in an orchestra sits first...." Why didn't she go with "you sit in a ..."? I think we are all a bit obsessed with music in this business. And Becky always tries to use sign language, but it doesn't help all that much, since none of the rest of us understand sign language. It's funny though. But all the time the beauty of God's creation is shining all around us. We're leaving fall behind, but winter has its beauty too. Although not so much when it's ice on the road. I just praise God for not only giving me all of nature to enjoy, but for incredible friends to share it with.
:-) Kristen



Kristen Carter

Date: 11/20/2002
Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger
Journal Entry:

Yesterday morning we left Kent, WA to head back down to the Portland area, I was a little sad to leave Kent because I really enjoyed our stay there. However, as usual, when we arrived in Beaverton I was excited to be there. Everywhere we go it's hard to leave, but exciting to arrive in the next place. We went to the Spaghetti factory for dinner and it was definitely a treat. We all had great families to stay with and enjoyed our time there. We led chapel in the morning and as always it was a joy to see the kids enjoying the music. We then spent the day setting up our equipment and rehearsing. Our program was really enjoyable in the evening. It always makes our job easier when we have an enthusiastic crowd. I continue to see God in the people we meet. It's such a joy to meet so many people!



Rebecca Bessinger

Date: 11/22/2002
Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann
Journal Entry:

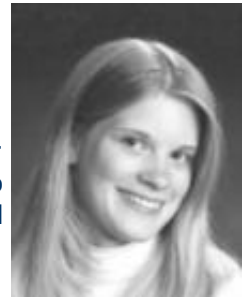
These past two days have been quite adventurous. We saw the Hershey Kiss Mobile; we slept on a kindergarten classroom floor, played a chapel for the kids, drove to California, stayed at a beautiful Bed and Breakfast, and had an awesome pre-thanksgiving dinner. So all in all it was fun.

All of these experiences helped us grow and learn. 1st-We have played many chapels for many elementary school kids, but this past one in Ashland, OR was special. The whole service was normal, but then the teachers asked if the kids could ask us questions. And of course we said yes! I was amazed at the in depth questions that came from K through 4th graders. And the highlight was when this cute little Kindergarten girl asked, "Can you come back again sometime?" This made the whole team say, "awww." I had been struggling with the fact that we had been doing so many chapel services and how God works in them but this question from an innocent child opened my eyes to how great our God is, and all the little things he does to make every second of everyday special.



Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 11/25/2002
Submitted by: Kristen Carter
Journal Entry:



Kristen Carter

I don't know if I have said this before, but I really enjoy writing my journals every other Monday because it means that not only do I get to write about our free day, but I get to write about our weekend too! On Friday we arrived in Grant's Pass, OR where we stayed until Sunday afternoon. Grant's Pass was an extra special blessing for me, not only because my host mom liked vegetarian type food and we did a three mile walk, but also because I got to meet the son, daughter-in-law and their baby of my host mom from Tigard, OR! I didn't have much time to chat with them, but it was awesome to make the connection and I felt like I already knew a little about them because I knew their mother. I would not like to overshadow the other blessing of the weekend – the opportunity to go ROLLER SKATING! Who has done that since they were ten?! Not any of us that's for sure! We hooked ourselves up and spent Saturday afternoon at the roller rink. We shared it with two other nine-year-old birthday parties, playing limbo, skating in reverse, and generally just having a great time!

Sunday's morning worship went well and we hung around afterwards to hang out with some of the youth and play some sing-a-longs...we even got to sing the Hippo song!!! My favorite! We then packed up and headed to Bend, OR where we hung out with the youth group for about four hours and slept on some comfy couches. Our time there was so short that we again packed up and headed out for our next destination less than 24 hours after we had arrived in Bend. We headed to Burns, OR...a VERY small town, but a very welcoming church. We arrived in the evening and assumed that we would have to go and buy our own dinners because we weren't doing anything for this church, but our contact Mr. Sneeva quickly volunteered that he would go buy us a chicken with all the fixins at the store! We were so grateful! Such hospitality is always shown to us, we did nothing but received housing and food, more than we would think to as for. God Bless this town! We leave thank you notes at every place that we stay and on the front it quotes Philippians 1:3 – I thank my God every time I remember you! How true it is for everyone that has been so gracious to us. What a good note to end on, but I would be remiss to leave out the birthday party that my team threw me the night before my 22nd birthday. I am the third one this month to celebrate my birthday so we had all of the decorations☐ They even bought me a cute little card! My family away from home! I thank God for them too!

Date: 11/29/2002
Submitted by: Alicia Becker
Journal Entry:



Alicia Becker

Hey everyone out there!!!! Peace from the West!!! And I guess...Happy Thanksgiving! Truth is I feel sort of like an outsider today. You see, in Canada, we celebrate Thanksgiving in October...so although I didn't celebrate fully with all of my Canadian buddies, it just feels funny to celebrate this late. No wait, not funny...just different. So, other than that, Thanksgiving has been awesome! We are spending our American Thanksgiving in Meridian, Idaho, which is just outside of Boise. Each one of us is with a different host family, and each one of them has welcomed us into their own thanksgiving traditions! It feels so welcoming! Not only that, but we were able to have a celebration all together as a team as well. Linda Leibrecht (sorry if I spelled that wrong Linda!!!), an awesome lady, invited us into her home, and then a couple of host families brought some food, so much work was put into the occasion, and it was so appreciated!! It was a great time to refocus and just really be reminded of how well God takes care of us! We really do have so much to be thankful for! Especially on our team! We have been so blessed by this time of rest and just in general throughout this time on the road. I may have written this before, but sometimes it just strikes me. God is so amazing! He has provided so well for us! Not just Captive Free, but everyone! It isn't really until being on Captive Free that I have really recognized that fully though. Every day we have to trust in God to provide a place for us to be, shelter, food, love. And everyday he supplies all of the things that we need.

Each day that we live, he provides for our needs

and gives us the strength of a young eagle.
Psalm 103:5

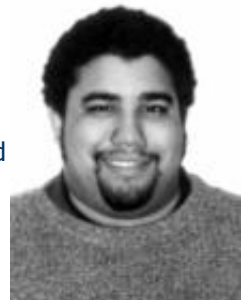
I don't know how strong a young eagle is, but each day that I wake up I take comfort and strength from knowing that God has given us everything that we need, and that we don't have to worry about it. (just one more verse to connect things up...)

6Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything.
With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God.
Phil. 4:6.

See what I mean? He's got us covered! Feels great!
P.S. Thank you to Diana Owens for the early Christmas gifts!!! Newsboys rock!!!

Date: 12/2/2002
Submitted by: Colin Byers
Journal Entry:

We have decided to take today as a day to be able to set up and rehearse. Normally this would be a day off, however, we have had a fairly easy last couple of days. This weekend we drove from Boise, ID on Saturday morning to Sheppard, MT, just out side of Billings, MT. We pulled up to the church around 9 pm after a not so eventful, but scenic 13 hour drive. We then got to hang out and meet our host families. After helping lead worship, and eating our way through a potluck, we got to hang out with one of the high school guys. We went down into Billings and payed a visit to the dollar movies. Monday's rehearsal was a great chance for us to work on some new songs and programming. It was a great time to get a bit more in-depth with our daily devotions and team meeting. I think it is awesome that we have only been together for a few months, and have so much farther to go, yet we have gotten to know each other so well. It's such a strange bond that forms. People told me before team that it would happen, but I didn't know to what degree. It is so cool that I can see God working in each of my teammates in different ways. Gods Peace to all. Hi POP Waukegan and CURF.



Colin Byers

Date: 1/2/2003
Submitted by: Alicia Becker
Journal Entry:

Greetings and Happy New Year! It's so cool to be able to write the first Northwest journal in 2003...What an honor.

So speaking of honors, we are here in Hazen, North Dakota (in the North Central region, thanks for sharing North Central!!!), and we had the opportunity to do a lock-in at the elementary school, with an awesome group of people and some really amazing youth. Now this wasn't your regular lock-in where a bunch of youth just get together to stay up all night and party because they can, although they still really did stay up all night and party because they could. But this time they were all there to celebrate...it was a New Year's lock-in! So throughout the night our theme was new beginnings and just being new in Christ. We focused on the verse from 2 Corinthians 5:17, which says: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (ESV) With the coming of the New Year what a better time it was to talk about our new hearts!!! And that made me start thinking - that as Christians, every day is New Year's day. It doesn't matter whether it's March the 8th or July the 17th, we have a new start every day with Christ. All our sins are washed away and our hearts are made new. He doesn't ask for extensive lists of resolutions, but simply a relationship with Him and our faith.



Alicia Becker

Because of the Lord's great love
We are not consumed,
For his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning;
Great is your faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)

Date: 1/4/2003

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

So today is Saturday the 4th day in the year 2003. We spent yesterday morning in the town of Glendive, Montana, where we were invited to share in a short morning worship and the Lord's supper with some of the congregation. We then had a short 4 hour drive to Billings, Montana where we got to meet our host families for the night. After dinner and a bit of getting to know each other we, "the guys," and the pastor's son decided to have a guy's night out. We got to hang out at a local restaurant we had stopped at before, and met up with some youth we had met on previous stops in Billings. It was a fun night to get to hang out with fellow brothers in Christ and share each others time. A few days ago we were driving through Wahpeton, ND and I just happened to look up through the window and saw the house I had stayed in 3 weeks before, so we stopped and ran to the door for a quick hello. It's so cool the way that God allows us so often to go back and see the people that we have come to know this year. It is such blessing getting to keep in touch with the people who took us in and made us part of their lives as well. Today we head off on our extremely horrendously long 2 hour drive. "Just kidding" I also promised I would say hi to my dear friend Rachel back at CURF. Hi. Gods PEACE 1John 4:10



Colin Byers

Date: 1/7/2003

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

One of the most difficult things about being on the road is it's so hard to remember where you've been after a day of traveling in the van. We get out of the van each day and people ask us where we came from and it's almost impossible to remember. Needless to say, this is even more difficult when I try to write a journal entry about the last three days. The easiest thing to remember is the most recent, and today that is also the most important thing I want to talk about. However, I will first quickly recap the past three days. We left Laurel, MT on Saturday morning and traveled to Bozeman. It was our first stop there and I must say it was a great experience. The people at Christ the King Lutheran church were extremely friendly and generous. We led worship on Sunday morning and it was an awesome experience. Sometimes I think we'll eventually get sick of leading the same worship service every week, but each week we're worshiping with different people and every week it still feels like worship to me. After the second worship service of the morning a couple from the church took us all out to lunch. It was a really enjoyable experience. I was glad we got to spend some time getting to know them. Then another family from the church took us to the Museum of the Rockies and the planetarium there. It was a great opportunity that we would not have known about if it weren't for this family. We got to learn about homesteading, and see the dinosaur display and learn the location of the stars above Montana. I enjoyed the museum a lot. Now, for the most recent and most exciting experience of our journey. I had not been looking forward to spending a week at different Lutheran camps doing "nothing." I signed up for a year of ministry and saw this week as a waste of time. However, God had different plans for me. When we arrived at camp Lutherhaven in Couer D'Alene, Idaho I decided to take a walk. It was dark and I've never been here before so I had no idea where I was going. I headed down a path towards the lake and I could barely see the steps leading down. It was a little scary but I was determined to reach the water. When I reached the bottom it was so clear that God had a purpose for us being here. As I walked I had been praying for understanding of why we weren't doing programs this week, and for encouragement in this time, and for a tangible way to know that God was still working in our lives. At the bottom of the path, looking out over the lake, were three crosses side by side. I approached them and walked up to the middle one and placed my forehead against the wood. It was then that I realized Jesus had been waiting for me at the bottom of that dark path. He had led me through the



Rebecca Bessinger

tough times for a reason and brought me to exactly where he wanted me. I put my arms around the cross and it was just like putting my arms around Jesus. I could feel his presence so clearly in the perfectness of the moment. I stared up at the stars and could pick out the constellations we'd learned about at the planetarium and as I was gazing up I saw a shooting star fly across the sky. It was so real and obvious that God knew I needed that moment and had brought me there very intentionally. There is nothing more real and obvious than death, and I was reminded again that Christ suffered through it for us. His love for us was that strong.

My time by the lake didn't change anything about my life. We're still going to have a week with no programs. I still worry about things at home that are beyond my control. However, my entire perspective changed last night. Despite the difficulties, I know God is walking with me and has a plan for me. He will carry us through this week and continue to guide us according to his will. This week doesn't seem like such a big deal anymore. It's just one more part of God's plan for us. God is here and that's all that matters.

Date: 1/9/2003

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

Happy New Year!!!!!! It's good to be in 2003. January is a very busy month for us. Well, except for this week. We are at beautiful Camp Lutherwood in Bellingham, Washington. This camp is one of the most scenic camps I have ever seen. It is nestled in between some mountains and sits right on Lake Sammish, and we have the privilege to spend a few days here to rest and rehearse before the big Youth Congress in Seattle. At first, we were kind of bummed out that nothing was planned, because we have been busy since we returned from Christmas break.

When we had arrived all we knew is that we were not doing anything and had to cook our own meals (well actually Colin did, thanks dude!). Even though we were expecting nothing planned in the way of ministry, we were ministered to. A full day at Lutherwood allowed us to do our daily team duties, set-up, rehearse, and hang out with Nichol, the program director. This morning, 1/9/03 I had to lead devotions for the team. I decided after reading in our devotion book about Jesus washing his disciple's feet, that I would share with the team, feet washing. I belong to a Church of God, which is mostly different than the Lutheran churches we have been staying at. Some of my beliefs about feet washing are good reminders to those of us that are on ministry teams. We are reminded that we are called to be servants, to express our love for one another, to minister AND to be ministered to. For our following bible verse we read from John about Jesus coming to Martha and Mary after Lazarus had died. Both Mary and Martha said "if you had been here". But they did not realize that he was always with them, and he had a plan for this event. And this made us realize that God is always with us, and he had a plan for this event. If we were not here and had time that did not involve outgoing ministry we would not have had time to rehearse for our biggest youth event, we would not have had time to come together as a group and share in feet washing, we would not have time to enjoy the beauty of nature on the complete opposite side of the country. This set of events really helped us realize that there is a reason for it all.

God's Blessings to all
Andy W.
Romans 14:8



Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 1/11/2003

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

As Andy talked about in his journal, we spent the last part of the week at Camp Lutherwood just relaxing and gearing up for our big event. Thursday was the last day of rest and we got to go out and explore the vicinity, specifically we went to Fairhaven, Washington, which was about 10 miles away and was such a cute little town with small shops lining the road and white lights strung up in the trees. Later that night, some of



the camp staff invited us over for dinner and fellowship. What a great evening! We played this great game called apples to apples (I think that was the name!) and if you haven't heard of it or played it, it is definitely something to look into!

Kristen Carter

Friday we left for Seattle and the big Youth Congress that awaited us there. We arrived early in hopes of setting up early and getting to meet Echelon, Jonathan Rundman, and Happy Fun Time (who were the three other leading groups for the weekend besides us) as soon as possible. However, since we were early, we had some time to spare and actually had a pretty relaxed afternoon before the craziness of the weekend started around 7pm that night. That afternoon I spent most of the time in my hotel room with the window wide open letting the breeze blow in because it was somewhere around 65 degrees and sunny, which is a rare treat in Seattle, especially in January! As I laid there it struck me that it was one of those perfect moments. You know there are just those moments that you don't want to end because you think you could remember how you felt forever and it is just so awesome? Well, that was one of those times for me. Recently I heard someone say that just to see the earth and the majesty of all of creation is enough to recognize that God is, that He exists. In that moment, I enjoyed the blueness of the sky, the feel of the breeze as it blew in my room and the majesty of Mount Rainier out my window, I felt at peace and surrounded by my God. Psalm 104 is all about God's creation and how he made the waters to flow down from the mountains and the moon to mark off the seasons and the high mountains. In that moment the simple act of seeing God's creation was enough, the search for answers was put on hold and there was just a silent joy.

Date: 1/14/2003

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

Howdy to all CFNW fans and diligent journal-readers. I hope all is well with everyone. Things on the road are great, as usual, and our team is just beginning to settle back into our unique lifestyle after a very brief brush with the "real world" while back home for our Christmas break. Hey, here's some big news from the front: we have just successfully completed, this very weekend, our one and only Youth Congress of the year here in bright, sunny (not true, not true) Seattle, Washington. We actually had the event in the exact same spot we were two months earlier for our Seattle Quake, the swank Double Tree Guest Suites just south of the city, where there's a sofa in every room and they leave USA Today outside your door!

We rolled into town midday Friday, coming from our usual Lutheran camp hangout in Bellingham, and reacquainted ourselves with the place, as well as with Jeremy, our new events director in the NW, as well as speakers Rich and Dana and eventually featured musicians Echelon, a fine bunch of young men. Friday night was a blast and got things off to a great start...a highlight of the evening for me was when members of Echelon grabbed me out of my seat during the first celebration, handed me their band credit card and dispatched me on an urgent mission to drive four blocks to Guitar Center and pick up a new snare drum bottom to replace the one Lowell busted off Andy's set. The store had closed ten minutes before but the guys called and had the manager wait on me to make my emergency trip, so I had to be met at the front of the building and let in to the store and I got to drop cool phrases like, "Oh yeah, I'm in a band" and "we're playing a gig down the street" and "thanks, you guys saved the show." Rock and roll.

The rest of the weekend went great. I was expecting to be even crazier at this event than at the quake because the numbers were bigger, and just because it's high schoolers, but there was actually less pressure on Captive Free for the Congress just because there was so much else going on. Two speakers, an awesome veteran band, plus Happy Fun Time, a hilarious Christian improv comedy group, there just wasn't as much focus on us as being the only up-front people, giving more opportunity for us to just sit back like everyone else every once in a while and bust a gut laughing at a Happy Fun Time sketch.

I hung out with a fun crew late Saturday night for Family Time, the closing devotions at the end of the day. We looked at a verse: "There is no greater love than this; to lay down your life for a friend" and discussed what that meant. I enjoyed thinking of the statement not just as a command to die for one another, but to lift others up by laying yourself down, and all kinds of examples from the weekend sprung to mind. Echelon, all former teamers and professional musicians who've played countless events, rearranged their entire stage set to accommodate the way we normally play and were constantly saying things like, "Anything we can do to make it easier on you, just let us know,"



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

and "We're just here to help you out." I was amazed at the humility and servanthood they put across, and that was within ten minutes of meeting them. And speaking of servants, some of the biggest help and support to us through the event came from friends and volunteers, local YE alumni not getting paid but came out just to help us through the weekend in whatever way they could: running the power point projector, working our sales table, and just running random errands. The example of laying oneself down was all around us, and such an inspiration in thinking about ways to better serve.

Date: 1/16/2003

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Greetings friends!

Time has flown since the last time I wrote! It seems like just yesterday! This weekend, as you may have read, was our Seattle congress, so we are just sort of coming down off of that, and getting back into the swing of life on the road. A hotel is a pretty huge luxury on the road, and it was great getting some time to just be, but I am just so glad to be back on the road again, (as our friend Willie Nelson would say). So right now we're in a town called Oak Harbor. It's on an island!! Last night at our program we played Cast Your Burdens, Caribbean style and we really just had to comment on how appropriate that the song had such an island style! I know, wrong island, but same idea...We played our first program in a week or so last night, and it made me remember how much fun we have at programs! So speaking of having fun, I have a prayer request for you...



Alicia Becker

Sometimes I feel like I know so little, I have so much to learn, there are so many around me who know so much more. More about life, more about faith, more of God's Word. I have so much to learn, and God knows that. So even though I sit here, like a child, so ignorant of so many things, and yet faithful, He still cares about me. There is no test to pass in order to love God, or in order for Him to love us. I desire to learn. I think that learning is what God put me here on the road for. But he knows that there are some things that I will never learn, and he still accepts my praises. I know enough to know that our Father in heaven has given to us some awesome gifts! The gift of salvation that could only come from Him. The gift of our minds so that we might learn more about His awesome word, and he has given us the gift of our hearts, that we might feel His awesome love. My prayer right now is for knowledge. I desire to learn so much more about Him. I want to know Him so much more than I already do! If you could be praying for me as I embark on this journey of knowledge also I would really appreciate it. I'll let you know how things are going. Until then, praises be to our God for all the wonderful blessings he has given to us. May you feel his awesome peace!!!

Keep smiling!

Alicia <><

Psalm 40:8

Date: 1/18/2003

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

So we spent this Thursday and Friday, at Camp Lutherwood in Bellingham, WA. It was a great time for our team to sit down and go over our programming and songs. We got to sit and talk about some of the things we wanted to get done in the next few days and also make sure we could hold our own down with Matt leaving for his grandmother's 100th birthday. We arrived early afternoon at the camp and after settling in we got pizza for dinner and got to catch up on the goings on with the staff since our last visit. Later that night, after a bit of TV, some of us got the bright idea of holding a polar bear swim. It sounded like a good idea at first. We are young and it was better than watching TV. So in our own sick way we made our way outside to enjoy the beach in January! All was well on the walk down. Then a flash of thoughts went through my head "What am I doing, I could get sick, what if I get hypothermia?" These were good questions to be asking, just that they had come in



Colin Byers

mid air about 4 feet off the water. We then decided to have a brisk jog to a warm building with showers, a heater, and towels. We all survived and are healthy. That concluded the night's adventures. The second day I had some time to sit bundled up, down by the not so cold during the day water, and play guitar. It was a great time of just being alone with God. After that we all had daily devos, and after a trial of pulling our van out of the mud and ruining a small bit of grass, (sorry Lutherwood) we made our way into town to spend our free afternoon. On our return we had about an hour of games and singing with some Jr.High kids from all over WA for a ski retreat. It was a blast hanging out with all of them.

Date: 1/20/2003

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

We are just finishing another pleasant stay in Portland, Oregon. We arrived in Portland on Saturday night and spent a wonderful evening relaxing with our host families. On Sunday we sang a few songs in the 10:45 worship service and then had lunch with the confirmation kids afterwards. Although there were only two of them we still had a blast talking and playing a few games. Then in the evening we had a lock-in with the 4th through 6th graders. The kids were really great to spend time with and we enjoyed the evening. They were so enthusiastic and fun to play games with. We played games, taught them a skit, sang some songs and actually went to bed early, which is unusual for a lock-in. However, it was fortunate since I played a few too many active games and managed to hurt my back pretty badly. Monday was spent mostly sleeping and recovering from the lock-in. All in all, a productive and yet relaxing visit.



Rebecca Bessinger

Date: 1/22/2003

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

Once again, it is journal time again. This journal entry is coming to somewhere in between Pullman, WA and Missoula, MT. That is where we have been the past two nights. One great thing that happened in Pullman, WA is we got to stay with Megan Nolting's family (teamer of New Dawn this year, and on CFEL last year). In this world we live in, we have come across many crazy degrees of separation and this was one of those instances. After being there only one night we moved on, over snowy mountain passes in Idaho to Missoula, and we were able to hang out with Paul, who was on Captive Free North East two years ago.

Being in a place where people know what you are going through and the experiences you encounter are amazing. It is great to arrive in a place and have an instant connection and bond with a set of people that you have never met before. These are the people who allow us to have some relaxation in our hectic schedule. These are also the people that always seem to minister to us more than we seem to minister to them. It is a refreshing and relaxing time when we are with people in the Youth Encounter family. God shines his light upon us through these people and lets us know that everything's gonna be alright. It is good to take a look around you sometimes and see who that light is to you. Well, until next time:

God's Blessings to all

Andy W.

Romans 14:8



Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 1/25/2003

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

I get to write a little bit about the event again! But first I need to tell you about the wonderful time that we had regaining our strength for this event in Helena, MT. We were blessed to be able to spend a night of relaxing with Sarah, a youth director in Helena, before heading off to a weekend of craziness! This past week was actually the first real snow that we have encountered since being on the road, which is surprising, at least to me, considering that we are in the pacific northwest and my hometown of Burke, VA, which is WAY farther south has had all kinds of snow and really cold weather! Anyway, this snow has posed interesting obstacles to us and has definitely slowed our travel time somewhat, but I enjoy the snow immensely because it makes everything seem new and bright again. It is one of my favorite God-things, like the awesome moment I experienced two weeks ago, that reminds me that God is good and that His beauty is displayed in the things he has created.



Kristen Carter

So, enjoying the snow was what this past week was all about and then we came to the quake!! So much more to be excited about! We had about 150 youth come to Bozeman, MT from all over Montana and even some groups from Wyoming! We arrived around noon on Friday, like we do for all of our events, and had a chance to unload, settle in and figure out what was going on before all of the youth showed up and the weekend got kicked off. Friday night's celebration was great! We just had the Seattle congress two weeks before so this event kind of snuck up on me, but once it began I remembered how awesome and unique each event really is. This weekend we had Tom Matson as our speaker and Rachel Kurtz and her friends as the other event peeps (for lack of a better word). I cannot say enough good things about them as Tom's talks were so youth-oriented and he told some outrageously funny stories that really endeared him to everyone there, and Rachel's group sang some songs with amazing harmonies. It was a spectacular evening that only got better as the weekend continued.

Date: 1/28/2003

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

We just wrapped up another successful event this weekend in Bozeman, MT. It was our third event and our second quake, for middle school and junior high youth, and Montana was a nice change of pace as both our previous quake and congress (the latter being for senior high) were in the same hotel just south of Seattle.

The final numbers were about 160 registered youth from 11 different congregations, and around 25 adult leaders on top of that, which made for one of the smallest YE events of the year, but a great sized group for getting to know nearly everyone and really creating a tight community in such a short time. It also helped that we had already visited nearly half the churches that had groups attending the event, so we knew a good number of folks coming into it and at least recognized familiar faces which was a lot of fun. It's not often that we get to see people again that we meet on the road, and we always love the chance to reconnect with folks later on our trip.

Saturday was a whirlwind of songs, speakers, food, and fun. At least for me, event weekends are of the best highlights of our year so far and really offer a huge energy boost to our travels. Although that's not to say that they're restful. By Saturday night I was so drained, but we were all having a blast. We run around a lot all weekend, but as far as being relational goes, it's not hard work at all. In fact it's about the easiest time to connect with kids we have, because there are just so many all the time. We can spend the entire weekend bouncing from one group to the next, going to eat with one set of youth, in the pool with another, playing songs with some kids and then hanging out in another group's room playing cards and Monopoly. It's so great! A couple hundred fun-lovin' youth all stuffed into one place, wanting to hang out with us and eager to praise Jesus. It's a teamer's dream!

After the closing celebration Sunday morning, we packed up the circus, cleared out of the hotel and hit up the traditional post-event meal with Kelly, our guest-star administrator and YE superstar from California, speaker Tom Matson and musicians Rachel Kurtz and co. We said our goodbyes and headed on down the snowy road to Butte, MT where we're now sleeping twice as much as normal people do and enjoying going the entire day without taking off our pajamas. Next event: Newport, Oregon quake!



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Date: 1/30/2003
Submitted by: Alicia Becker
Journal Entry:

Peace and greetings to all!!!! It seems like so long since I wrote my last journal! But I guess it's only been two weeks. Sometimes I wonder who reads these journals. I know that you do mom, and I suppose most of my family does, but really, who else frequents the Youth Encounter page to read our journals every week. I imagine it could be lots of people, or a select few; people that we know, and people that we've never met. Feel free to drop us a line sometime. We really do love getting mail, and it would be fun to hear that there are people out there who are reading our journals! And it would also be great just to hear from people while we're out here on the road!



Alicia Becker

So last night was pretty awesome. We played our first acoustic program really this year, and we played for a bunch of families with small children. They were so great! Everyone was really into it, singing along to everything from Psalm 25 to I Just Wanna Be a Sheep (the kids especially loved that one!). As I've written in my earlier journals, I love kids, and so this program was awesome! It was just so much fun! The kids were all over the place dancing around to "Gonna Dance." They were so neat to watch! It's always fun to see kids at our programs! From the puppets to the Do-Alongs they just love it so much. To see their faces light up just makes me smile so much!

Well, we have to leave soon, so I'd better go. Thanks so much for reading along with our adventures everyone! Can't wait to hear from you!

Alicia <><
Psalm 40:8

Date: 2/1/2003
Submitted by: Colin Byers
Journal Entry:

Thursday started off as a typical morning in Spokane for us packing up and heading out after devotions, but after a long hard search we were able to get in contact with one cool guy that happened to be on staff at our previous Congress in Seattle. So after a brief chat in the parking lot it was off to our home away from home - Odessa. We arrived after short 2 hour drive. Then we had a great pot luck where Andy got shown up by a freshman girl in an eating contest. We then had our family night program. We had a great turn out and had a lot of people come up to learn how to play some of the instruments. It was fun for all ages. After that we all packed up and headed off to our host homes. It was a great time to just sit and talk with some really cool people. The next morning we headed out to East Wenatchee. On the way out of Odessa we made a stop to make good on a one free ice cream cone ticket we received in the offering plate. Then the short 3 hour trek to East Wenatchee where we had a great time with a high school lock-in. We were able to play a short worship service during the lock in, which had a great effect on me. It was a great time for all.



Colin Byers

Date: 2/4/2003
Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger
Journal Entry:

It has occurred to me that time flies when you're having fun. This is our longest stretch of time on the road without a break and it's almost halfway over already. Our entire year is also almost half over. It just doesn't seem like it's been that long. This has been quite an action packed weekend for our team and that's made life on the road seem to fly by even more. We had a program in Federal Way on Saturday night



and played a few songs during each of the three worship services on Sunday. This is **Rebecca Bessinger** an exciting place for us to be in because we know so many people in this area through Youth Encounter circles. At our program on Saturday night we had a past teamer, a future teamer, and the parents of a current teamer. We had a great time chatting with them after the program. We had another program on Sunday night and the families of two current teamers attend the church we were at in Graham. We had a great turnout for the program and the energy level was exceptionally high. It was such a great evening. I had a great time with my host family in Graham. Sunday night I got to chat with my host sister a little on the drive home and on Monday I spent some time in the afternoon chatting with her parents and then in the evening she and I went to the mall together. It felt just like hanging out at the mall with my friends at home. It was a wonderful way to spend a day off. I just can't believe how busy we've been and how much fun we've been having lately. I can see God's hand working in every moment of the past several days. He's truly blessed us during this time of lots of bookings and lots of friendly people to spend time with.

Date: 2/6/2003

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

Imagine waking up in the morning and getting ready for work and then not knowing where work was. That is pretty much what happened to our group. We woke up on Tuesday morning in Graham, Washington and did our normal morning activities, but we had no clue where our next booking was - so were else to go, but to the mall. Well, first we did our daily devotion sitting the van, which was parked in the mall parking lot. After devotions, we needed to do call-ins, but we had to wait a little while because it was lunch time at the home office.

Well, Becky persevered and we found out that we were going to Janet Linden's (on Captive Free South Central) house. This is where we have stayed for the past two days and I feel it has been a great blessing for us, and for the Linden family. We spent much time in fellowship with Bob, Joan, Matt and Paul. It is always so much fun to know someone and then meet their family. I could see exactly where Janet would fit. Once again as I said in my last journal entry it also is amazing that we can enter a house of a fellow teamer and automatically be part of the family. It is always a great blessing to be in this kind of place. Also, I feel we were a great blessing to this family as well because we can remind the family of their daughter and also we are able to be there and calm their nerves and answer any questions they have.

This year has been a great experience for me to form relationships with fellow Christians all over this country.

So until next time.



Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 2/8/2003

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

Good Morning!

After hanging out in Puyallup, Washington for quite awhile we have moved on to new places, although the first one was only 15 minutes down the road! On Thursday we actually drove to the other end of town and stayed with families from Emmanuel Lutheran Church. These are the host families that think amaze me the most with their kindness and generosity because we didn't do anything at this church. We came in Thursday afternoon, two families housed us, and then we left them the next morning.

In my eyes, we didn't "do" anything for them, we just came into their home and ate their food and slept in their bed and then left the next day. Fortunately there is another voice in my head that tells me that that is not entirely true. I think a huge part of our ministry is just bringing something new and exciting to people's lives. Families and churches go about their daily routines and then bam!

One day we show up! Not that we are amazingly spectacular, but we provide that little variation in their routine enough to shake them up and remind them that Christ is and should be the focus of their lives. Everyone becomes complacent at some point in the faith, and I'm excited that we can



Kristen Carter

provide that little jolt that will hopefully help them to refocus.

I have to give a little plug to my host family that night because I stayed with all of the boys and we were fed amazingly! Our host mom makes everything by scratch! Dinner was absolutely amazing! Thanks so much!

On Friday we headed out to Naselle, Washington where we are spending four days – and are actually booked to do things everyday but our off day! Friday we arrived in town and set up for a program at the high school, after being told by the pastor that he didn't know how many people would show up because there was a huge basketball game going on – and sports are HUGE in smaller towns. So, we prepared ourselves to not see too many faces in the crowd, and what we ended up with was the pastor, his wife and son, and one of the other host families – so 6 in total. Our team has always said though, that if we can touch one person then we have accomplished something and that is all we can ask. This night held us to our word and in fact the one host dad could not stop talking about how much he appreciated our program and said "I was really touched tonight" exactly what we had hoped and prayed for! It is awesome to remember that God works in the small things as well as the big.
Peace and Joy.

Date: 2/11/2003

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

We took off from Naselle in the morning heading for Long Beach (Washington, which we were told blows Long Beach, California out of the water if you're actually interested in length...it is in fact the longest uninterrupted stretch of beach in the world, reaching 28 miles along the southern coast of Washington.) and after promptly cashing in our ice cream money at the Gas 'n' Grub we walked the couple of blocks to the water. We all had a hard time getting over the fact that we were strolling along the Pacific Ocean eating ice cream in the middle of February.

Our first stop was Cape Disappointment, the end of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail that we have had run-ins with since Montana and home to the Coast Guard station, a lighthouse, and the much-anticipated Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center we had heard so much about. The cape lived up to its name for us when we rolled into the parking lot and learned that center was closed for construction just for the week we were there.

After wandering in and out of shops for a while, Colin and I decided to track down Becky and her new kite. We strolled the few blocks to the beach and found her flirting with danger near the breakers, holding her cell phone to her ear with one hand and flying the kite with the other. We promptly swiped the kite from her and spent the next ten minutes running around trying to get it to dive bomb Becky.

I found a pay phone behind a gas station near the beach and dialed home. The message on the answering machine at my house told me to get a hold of my parents on their cell phone, because they were at my Grandparents' house on the other side of camp. I called the house where my mom picked up, and went on to say she had tough news to tell me: my Grandpa, who had struggled with growing health complications for the last two years and was steadily weakening since I left home in August, passed away that morning, Monday, February 10. The news was not completely out of the blue. I talked to my mom about a week and a half earlier about him and knew he was getting worse, and that the doctors that had worked with him for the last few years were now saying there was little else to do for him. But it still came as a surprise to me; no one expected this to come so soon and I had never considered the possibility that he wouldn't be there when I came home for Easter break in April.

I hung up the phone after telling my mom I would check back in later, and walked a block west until I hit sand. It was a pretty difficult time to do be away from home, on the complete other side of the country. Here I was, watching the sun lower in the sky over the Pacific Ocean, while the rest of my family was in North Carolina.

After talking through it with my parents, I decided to not try to get home for the funeral at my home church on Thursday. It would be a strain on the team for me to leave and a lot of time on airplanes and money just to rush home in time to sit in church and then turn around and come back. What made the decision easier was that I had just been home not even a month earlier for my great-grandmother's 100th birthday where the entire family had gathered for the celebration. I had a great visit and saw Grandpa then, so I stayed on the road this time.



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Date: 2/13/2003
Submitted by: Alicia Becker
Journal Entry:



Alicia Becker

Greetings friends!!

So here we are in Enumclaw. That's in Washington, in the Pacific Northwest of the United States of America, for those of you who haven't been following along very well... But anyways. Things are great here on the road. Lately we've been pretty busy, and so some of you may have noticed that I'm a little behind on my letter writing. Sorry about that! Don't worry though; the letters are on their way!

So last night we had a program here in Enumclaw. It was pretty fun. We were asked to do an energy packed fun sing-along type of program (which is definitely a favorite kind of program for me anyways), so we followed through with some of our favorite program and sing-along songs as well as our puppet show and skit. It is always such a cool experience when the congregation is full of energy and dancing in the aisles! That has to be one of the best feelings in the world! There were little kids bouncing around, and couples two stepping in the aisle during "Gonna Dance." But one of my favorite parts of the night was the very beginning of the night, before the program even started. Pastor Doug, who was our contact started off the program with a prayer, which is fairly common, it happens before every one of our programs, so there was nothing unusual in that, but this wasn't just your regular every day bow your heads, fold your hands prayer. For this prayer he asked the whole congregation to come to the front of the room and he asked us to kneel on the floor. He had the whole congregation lay their hands on us and pray repeating after him. It was such a neat experience. When we got up I just felt so awesome, and full of joy! We were so blessed by our time there in Enumclaw! And we say that so often, but it's so true. Each day as we travel, congregations all over the Northwest bless us with their love and generosity. I hope that we too can be a blessing to their congregations as they are to us! As we reach our six month mark as a team we are still going strong. I hardly believe that it's been six months at all, but we really appreciate your prayers for us and our ministry over these past six months. God's blessings and peace!!

Alicia <><
Psalm 40:8

Date: 2/15/2003
Submitted by: Colin Byers
Journal Entry:



Colin Byers

So yesterday was Valentines Day and things were as normal as can be in Bonner's Ferry, ID. Matt and I walked over the thrift store across the street where vinyl LP's were being sold for 79 cents a pop. Matt went a little overboard, but we found some cool stuff. We kicked off the day with a one-on-one and team huddle then had a bunch of time after lunch to work on some new songs. Later on that day we had a family night program that went fairly well. I injured my finger so it was a bit hard to play bass. Today is inventory day of counting and repacking for our 2 week Canadian Leg of the tour. We are about 30 miles south of the border and are ready to get going. So our time has come to a half way point. It's a good place to reevaluate our goals and plans for this year, and our lives. There is no doubt that God is working through to help some people change their lives, but it is even more so that God has changed us. I think I have learned so much in just six months, and still I have so much more to learn in the six months left. I think it's funny how some times we make plans and God just puts something else in front of us and it changes our lives. I miss every one back in IL Gods PEACE Colin 1John 4:10

Date: 2/18/2003
Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger
Journal Entry:

Someday I will learn to trust God even when times seem tough. For some reason I was feeling down on Saturday and within hours (after a little prayer and encouragement from others) things were once again going great. Saturday actually turned out to be a fantastic day. We spent the afternoon having a barbeque with all the host families we'd been staying with in Bonner's Ferry, ID. It was really fun to just spend a day enjoying some fellowship time. The boys had been unsuccessful in mailing our sales stuff to our first church after our time in Canada (long story that only they can really explain, but it involves getting stuck and running into several closed post offices) and their host dad was gracious enough to volunteer to mail it for us. The generosity of people we meet on the road never ceases to amaze me. In the evening we went to a high school basketball game and then spent some time watching movies. It was a fun and relaxing day for us.



Rebecca Bessinger

On Sunday it was finally time for us to head into Canada, an experience we have been looking forward to all year. We hit the road early and fortunately had no problems crossing the border. We drove through some beautiful scenery in both British Columbia and Alberta, and didn't have any problems despite the snow. Once again we are privileged to be in the hometown of a current teamer. We are in Cochrane, AB, home of Phil Knudtson. This has been one of my favorite stops of the entire year. We played an acoustic program on Sunday evening. It was a really nice and intimate setting for us and I enjoyed an opportunity not to be at the soundboard for once. Then it was time to head to our host homes and the place where us girls stayed was like heaven for me. It was such a beautiful place. We were on a ranch that truly reminded me of how awesome God is, and how amazing His creation is. They also had 4 dogs, 9 horses, 4 cats, 3 goats, 3 rabbits, and 2 ducks. As an animal lover, it was paradise for me. Yesterday while the rest of the team spent their day off in Banff, I had the privilege of remaining at the ranch and going horseback riding with one of my host sisters and my host mom. I've never been able to roam freely through the woods on a horse before, especially not in the snow. It was beautiful and it was fun to be back on a horse and get a little bit of exercise for the day. I loved every minute of it. In the evening the guys came over as well and we had a big dinner. We had an Elk roast which was a new experience for most of us and it was delicious. A perfect ending to a perfect day for me. I only wish we could have stayed forever. God has truly blessed us once again with a great place to spend our day off and wonderful people to spend it with.

Date: 2/20/2003

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

Oh, Canada! Wow, we are in Canada it's hard to believe. Currently, we are in Edmonton, Alberta, and we will be here for awhile. Our time in Canada is short, but pretty full, except for the next day or so. On Wednesday the 25th we had nothing scheduled, and once again God comes through and we get set up with a nursing home. Nursing homes are not my cup of tea, but I usually enjoy them and get something out of them. This time was no different.



Andrew Wiedemann

We showed up at the nursing home a few minutes late, and there was already a big group of people waiting to hear us sing and play music. We then performed for about a half an hour and afterwards we talk with the residents at the home. I first talked to a Croatian gentleman who thanked us for coming through his somewhat thick accent. Normally, I am a naturally good listener, but I had to really pay attention and focus a great deal with this man. He then began to talk to me about his life. This man then told me about working thirty years on the Canadian railroad fixing the sinking tracks with a hundred other men living in boxcars on the railway. This man had worked in many places doing much hard labor waiting a dreaming of his petition. I am amazed at how this five minute conversation has got me thinking.

One of the things I have been stressing about the most is what I will do after Captive Free. I am engaged and have a quickly approaching marriage and future that I'm not sure what I am going to do with. This man in the nursing home had lived simply and loved God, and God had helped him all along the way. And this was a great reassurance to me because I know that with God in the center of my life and my marriage that he will help us along. He will help everyone who wants it, unconditionally.

God's Blessings,

Date: 2/22/2003

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

Hey everyone! You will never believe what we did on Thursday! We went to a waterpark! Yes, we are in Canada in February and yes, it is -21 degrees Celsius (which I have learned is around -5 degrees Fahrenheit). However, we were in the world's largest mall, West Edmonton Mall and inside they have a waterpark! In the mall. Yes, it seems crazy to us too, but our contact, a teamer's mother, was gracious enough to get us passes so that we could have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to go to a waterpark in February. It was a great day! We all enjoyed getting smacked by waves in the wavepool and chilling in the hot tub and a few of us (not me) rode the waterslides. We are so blessed and grateful for the amazing opportunities constantly afforded us, that while we are on the road and focused on our ministry we are still able to experience new and awesome things in places we have never been before.

So, while we had Thursday to relax, Friday we actually had a program, which is just as exciting to us as hanging out so we were pretty pumped. Our program was at Trinity Lutheran Church in Edmonton, which was just down the street from Calvary Lutheran Church, where we had just spent a few days and had met some fun people. Before our program we got to enjoy a potluck, which hasn't happened in awhile, but was so good! We had a pretty good turnout at our program and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. We had about five youth encounter alumni at the program so it was fun to chat with them afterwards. There was one girl there named Daena who had been on the New Vision team two years ago, and her team was the reason that I am here writing to you now. They were the only exposure that I had to Youth Encounter teams and their program at my summer camp was a one-time deal – a team had never been there before and hasn't been there since, so I got lucky...or rather God was moving before I realized it! It was so fun to see her and to let her know that she had made a difference. In that moment I realized that even though I don't know if I'm making a difference, maybe there is someone out there that we have met that I could see next year and maybe they'll say to me, "hey, I'm on captive free because of your team!" I was glad that I could let Daena know that she had made a difference.



Kristen Carter

Date: 2/25/2003

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

Hello to all. I hope this find you well and enjoying these last few days of the winter, or rather enjoying the fact that they are the last few days of winter. I, for one, will have no problem saying goodbye to this weather. We're coming to you right now from Medicine Hat, Alberta (yes, Canada), the last stop on our 12-day Canada tour which has been, aside from the non-stop arctic blizzard, probably the most fun I've had on the road all year. Most all of our bookings up here have come through connections with former teamers or the families of folks on team now, so its fun that even way up here, so far from home, we're met by people in the Youth Encounter family. And everywhere we've been, folks just want to make us at home and show us a good time, this being the first impression of Canada for most of us. It's been great. And there's just enough little details to remind us we're not at home, like 110 on the interstate (in kilometers) or seeing the thermometer that reads 30 below (in Celsius) or wondering when Vanilla Coke started calling itself Coke Vanille.

After sitting in hot springs surrounded by the Canadian Rockies of Banff with Phil Knutson's kin (of Captive Free SE) and riding snowmobiles (or skidoos, to use some lingo) with folks from the original NW team in Edmonton, we made the short trip out to Camrose to the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute. I had originally thought this was just an average Lutheran college, but I came to learn that I really didn't understand what it was all about. The school offers a two year program, but the



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

majority of students just stay one year, not working towards a degree but just studying theology and missions and immersing themselves in an awesome, tight intentional Christian community. The school had 70-some students, nearly twice as much as last year and has had an enrollment as small as in the teens in years past.

It was such an awesome stop. Its fun just to chill with folks our own age once in a while, and they welcomed us into their group without hesitation. Many were also genuinely interested in our ministry, and after we played their Monday chapel service we spent a long while handing our brochures and talking with people, so that was affirming. That they would see us and then feel interest in checking out the possibility for themselves. That was the most hard-core recruiting we've done yet.

The feeling went both ways for me, though. I had never considered the setting of a bible college as a step in my plan for after team before, but seeing the community that these folks had created really caught my attention. It was such a cool group of people and an awesome place to do some learning while sorting out God's call, which is a lot what I'm looking to do. Who knows where I'll end up when my ministry with Youth Encounter ends, but at this time when I'm really struggling and praying over what direction I should head in, it's so amazing the way God will literally lead me to a place, drop me on the door step and say, "Think about this." Thanks, God. Peace out!

Date: 2/27/2003

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Hey everyone!!! Greetings from the road on our last day here in "Canadia" as my teammates and some others have so lovingly called it. We've had so many awesome experiences here in Canada, and all the Canadian jokes aside (from my teammates to me of course, e.g. "So Alicia y'all have the internet up in Canada?"...the answer for those of you who may not know...is yes, yes we do.) I think we all have learned a valuable cross-cultural lesson. Me especially. With all of the differences between Americans and Canadians (such as the pronunciation of words like out, about, pasta, and, the metric vs. customary system of measurement, the vast amount of space, as well as the crazy exchange rate.) There are so many similarities. There were a few days that if it weren't for the Canadian flags along the road I may have forgotten where we were. But anyways. Life goes on; today we're headed back into the land of Interstates and Krispy Kremes...



Alicia Becker

So, they tell me that this is the time of the year when people on teams start to think about what they want to do with their lives next year. So just to keep you updated on that and my search for more knowledge and my future as I know it: I have just applied to a college in the city of Kitchener, Ontario for a one year certificate program called mountaintop. I'm really hoping to get into that program, but if not God has already opened so many doors! So I would just ask for your prayers for God's guidance in the next few months. Who knows what I'll be doing. I'm just so excited to follow His call for my life. What an awesome gift it is to be free from worry! I feel so blessed to be able to just give it to God. I know He'll take care of it! As for knowledge, everyday I am learning more about myself, about His awesome love. Becky and I have been doing some one on one Bible studies in Romans, and everytime we do it I just feel so fed! So praise God for that.

Things on the road are great! We're all surviving, and being strengthened all the time in unity through Him! Thanks for your prayers, and all of your support!

Peace!

Alicia <><

Date: 3/1/2003

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

Thursday the last day in Canadia, we woke up this morning, in snow covered Medicine Hat, Alberta. After a quick devotion it was on the road back to the Good old U.S.A. For a few hours of driving we saw absolutely nothing but snow covered fields. Not one building

in over an hour. We finally made it to the White Horse border crossing. After laughing our heads off at the border guard when he asked if we had over 10,000 dollars on us "We are volunteers." We made our way past Simpson, Montana population 3 to Havre. It was there where we were greeted with the hugs of Sean from South Central's mommy. We stayed with the families of the church and called it a day. Friday we had the chance to play a program at the Boys & Girls Club of Havre. It was one of the few times that it stuck out to me that this was the first time some of these kids have ever heard about what Jesus did for them. That reminded me so much that we need to live our lives in the light as much as possible, because more times than you would imagine we are the only witness to Jesus love that people see. Gods PEACE Colin 1st John 4:10



Colin Byers

Date: 3/4/2003

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

We had quite an unusual weekend. It started out normal enough as we left Havre to head to Billings. However, during the drive on Saturday I was sleeping in the back when I heard Alicia tell me to wake up because we were getting pulled over. A very nice police officer came and told Andy that we had a tail light out on the trailer. Then after she went back to the car with his license a man came up to the window, flashed a badge, and said "I'm with the FBI, I'm going to need to take a look inside your trailer." He told Andy they were just checking for "domestic terrorist stuff." It was a strange, but somewhat amusing experience. We arrived in Billings on time, despite the run in with the FBI, and set up for a worship service that evening. It was the first time our team has ever done a full electric set up for a worship service, and it was kinda fun. Then we had to hurry over to the Billings Hotel for a confirmation retreat. We played games and led closing worship in the evening. In the morning we had to head back over to the church to play a few songs during worship. We had to tear down all our equipment in a hurry because we had a 4-5 hour drive and a program that evening. We stopped at the Billings Hotel because we had forgotten a guitar tuner there, and then we had our second strange and unexpected experience of the weekend. We had left the van running while Matt went in to check for the tuner and when he got back out we couldn't get the van out of park. It ended up getting towed by AAA and we sat around at the hotel until the evening when the pastor and his wife were kind enough to come back to the hotel and take all 6 of us to their house. We spent the next two nights at their house waiting for the van and then the wiring on the trailer to get fixed. They were so kind to put up with all of us and we really enjoyed the time, although we were sorry to have missed a program. I even got to go to a Concordia college choir concert last night, which was wonderful. It turned out to be a really good day off. Finally we are off to Idaho, and hopefully this time we won't run into any more trouble.



Rebecca Bessinger

Date: 3/6/2003

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

Galatians 6:9 says Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Many times we become weak and weary in our daily routines. It is very easy to lose sight of good, and the blessings he gives us in our everyday life. God has been able to allow us to refocus and realize with some events that have happened in the past few days.

The past few days we have been sitting in Billings, MT with nothing to do. The reason: vehicle troubles. Awhile ago we had some problems with the wiring in our trailer. Well it finally caught up to us and it caused a short circuit in the van which wouldn't allow us to shift out of park. After the van was fixed the mechanic strongly advised that we had the trailer wiring looked at or we were going to be repeating this again somewhere down the road, and probably somewhere not as nice (or populated, we are in Montana).

The time that we were without the van and trailer allowed me to realize what a blessing these physical items are to the ministry we are doing this year. Many times we get tired of a van ride, but



Andrew Wiedemann

now we know that we should not become weary of this.
So do not become weary in the things you do because god can easily take them away and then you will realize that sometimes we make mountains out of molehills.
Until next time,
God's Blessings to all!!!

Andy W.
Romans 14:8

Date: 3/8/2003

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

Thursday was an extra day in Meridian, ID. Due to our previously explained van and trailer problems we missed out on Anaconda, MT completely and showed up in Meridian almost a day late, but it has all worked out because we stayed another day here and then headed out to Sandpoint, ID a day early. I had high hopes for what our team could get accomplished on our free day. We had previously talked about starting to rehearse acoustically. Although we are an electric team, we often play acoustically on Sunday mornings or in programs that we do at nursing homes, and we felt that as part of our ministry it needed some work. The extent of our rehearsal was to pick up some much needed percussion accessories to help our sound acoustically at Guitar Center, which is like a mecca for our team! The reason that rehearsal was cut short was because Wednesday was Colin's birthday! It is great to be able to celebrate with each other this year, especially as Colin is the third of my teammates to turn 21 on the road! Because we were involved with the Ash Wednesday service at Christ Lutheran on Wednesday we didn't get to take Colin out so on Thursday we gave him the greatest birthday gift ever! (well, in my opinion) we took him to red lobster! Colin has been longing for crab legs the entire time on team and he, as well as the rest of us, figured that being out in the Pacific Northwest, there should be lots of fresh crab legs and that they should be cheap! Wrong. We have found very few places with crab legs and no places where they are cheap, which is very key given our volunteer budget! So, finally for his birthday, crab legs were served. I think it was a great day for all of us. Sometimes we need time just to enjoy each other and bond as a team because I think that our attitudes toward each other affect our ministry incredibly. Luckily for us, as a whole our team has gotten along well and we still can all laugh and joke together. I think that shows in our interactions with each other and with the churches we visit. God has blessed me with an amazing group of people to travel with this year.

As far as Friday, there isn't much to tell except that we spent the whole day in the van. We drove from southern Idaho to northern Idaho, although to do it we drove through Oregon and Washington too. Crazy, I know, but they tell me it was quicker! We arrived in Sandpoint around 8pm and were taken home by our host families and are back at the church again bright and early to do some team stuff and get ready for tonight's program!



Kristen Carter

Date: 3/11/2003

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

Warning: This journal entry contains ingrown toenails. Reader discretion advised.

Hey hey, all you Captive Free journal readers. Thanks for checking in and staying updated on our many adventures. This weekend our travels brought us to Sand Point, ID, an awesome town up in the northern tip of the state. We had actually passed through Sand Point about three weeks earlier, as we were in route to Bonners Ferry and eventually Canada, but we stayed in town just long enough to get lost, get our van thoroughly submerged in a snow bank in the gravel airport parking lot, hike to a house and borrow shovels to dig ourselves out, and eventually find the first house with a 4x4 truck in the driveway and ask to please be towed out of the hole our van was now sitting in (we dug too much, I guess.) But somehow we managed to put all past experiences aside and have an



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

awesome time in Sand Point this time around.

We rolled into town late and quickly split off into our separate host families. Colin and I went with an older couple who lived in a beautiful home up in the woods outside of town. We spent most of the night getting acquainted and hearing all about "those two nice girls" from Captive Free who stayed with them last year, and it made me wonder about what kind of stories they would be telling about us to next year's team. It's an interesting relationship we have to our proceeding and succeeding teams, because we have never met each other, but after seven months of staying with a lot of the same families, I somehow feel like I know each of last year's team very well and I hope I'm leaving good story fodder behind for generations of Captive Free to come.

Whoever gets to stay with my host family in Sand Point, ID next year is lucky, because they were great. The whole church was. Saturday was Alicia's big 19th birthday bash, and we celebrated with her hosts at a local restaurant they took us to. We got to know more of the congregation over the potluck that night. We had a great program, saw some of our friends who drove down from Bonners Ferry, and decided to stick around for church the next morning.

After church on Sunday a man approached me, extended his hand, and introduced himself as a doctor. "I hear you have something that I could take a look at," he said. What? I didn't know what he was talking about. "Like a toe, maybe," he finished. Ah, yes. I don't know how it came up in conversation, but somehow Alicia told her host mom about my little toe condition, and she immediately arranged for this doctor, a member of the congregation, to meet me. So we slipped into a side room, a small prayer chapel that became an examination room as I pulled off my sock and shoe. "Oh yeah, that's got to come out of there," he said, looking at my toe.

"I know," I told him, "and I'm going to have my folks schedule me an appointment for when I'm home over Easter. I was just wanting to know if I'll be all right until then, or should I get to an urgent care place as soon as I can?"

He said, "Well, I'll run you over to the office and take care of it right now if you want." It caught me off guard, and I really wasn't excited about having this done, but I agreed. He drove me a few blocks up the snow covered streets to his office, unlocked it and flipped on some lights (it was Sunday, and all closed up) and led me into an examination room where he did the dirty. It really wasn't bad at all, not even close to the extreme torture I had been anticipating and dreading for months. He ducked into another room and came back with a week's worth of antibiotics in little sample packets, a big box of Tylenol, and a pamphlet on caring for your toenails and we were out of there. It was incredible, and as easy and painless as it could possibly be. I thanked the doctor a bunch, and he just smiled, thanked me for our ministry and said, "I always like to help out where I can." Wow. What an incredible example of offering whatever gifts God has blessed us with. I was so grateful to him and thankful to God for providing for me

I could get into a theological parallel, if your toenail is evil then cut it out, but I'll spare you of that and just say that it all worked out for the best. Peace!

Date: 3/13/2003

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Ahh...here it is, a moment to take a breath and eat a cookie. Chips-ahoy chewy chocolate chip works just fine to get the creative juices flowing. What do they put in the cookie to make it chewy anyways? Maybe I just don't want to know. So right now we're in Monmouth, Oregon (pronounced Monmoth). Last night we led the mid-week lent worship here at the church. It was our first lent worship service and so provided a little bit more stress than usual. Last minute details were thrown together the hour before it all began. I was providing the message and so on our 4 hour drive from Odessa, WA to Monmouth I was piecing together my sharing on temptation. Now you're saying, "Alicia, you could have done that much earlier..." Yeah, you're right, but sometimes I just can't work like that. The Gospel lesson came from Matthew 4:1-11 which is the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert. Let me just tell you that my temptation was to ask someone else to share last night.



Alicia Becker

Sharing isn't really one of my most favorite things to do. I really do love to share the Gospel message and I love to talk, and I don't do that bad a job, but it always feels uncomfortable until I get up and start. It's that uncomfortable/nervous/not together feeling that makes me not enjoy sharing. Whereas my teammate Becky does an awesome job of sharing. So my temptation rather than doing it myself was to just pass it off. I could have asked Becky, or Matt, or someone else on the team. But I know that everything happens for a reason, and so when I told the team that someone would need to share at the Lenten service and they all looked at me as if it was just silly for me to even ask. Why don't you just do it Alicia? (That was the voice in my head) So I just said "I'll do it." So although I talked really fast, and felt a little discombobulated, It went fine, and although I didn't really enjoy it in the beginning I really just felt the holy spirit move through me as I spoke and I was taken by that crazy peace that is so hard to explain. It was such an awesome feeling. To just feel all that stress, and all of the confusion melt into peace. It makes me smile from the inside out! But anyways, in case you're lost, the moral of the story is listen to the voices in your head...because it just might be Jesus ;) Who knows why I shared that night, but I thank God for his peace.

Date: 3/15/2003

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

Thursday we had no programming so we made the best of the time we had to have an extra long team meeting and get some things sorted out with our programs. We then took most of the afternoon to rehearse as sections and work on our separate areas; then we took the time to work out some acoustic songs. We have been looking forward to doing that for awhile now. Thursday night was spent going to the Chamber and Show Choir concert at Western Oregon University. It was great to sit back and listen to some great music. Friday morning we made our way to Newport, OR where we set up and then kicked off our last event of the season. We were all sad that this was the last one so we made the most of it. It was a great quake, the kids were awesome and because it was a small event and later in the season we already knew just about half of the kids. It was fun to reunite with them and just have a ton of fun with the Friday night celebration and family time. Gods Peace Colin 1st John 4:10



Colin Byers

Date: 3/18/2003

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

This weekend was our best event so far, in my opinion. Everything seemed to flow very smoothly. I enjoyed working with Jen Jacobson and Peder Eide. They were really great to work with and that made the weekend even more enjoyable for me. There were also really great youth groups there. They really seemed on fire for the Lord. One of the highlights for me was the great songs that many of the youth requested at the dance. I was so excited to see that many of them obviously listen to Christian music regularly. It was a great weekend for connecting with God, meeting new people, and growing in faith. I loved every minute of it.

Of course, events like that always take a lot out of us. Yesterday we slept in pretty late (at least the girls did). It was a great day to relax. We went to see Chicago at the theater in the afternoon. In the evening we had dinner with the youth group at the church, which was a lot of fun. We got to spend more time with a great bunch of youth who had been at the quake. It's always good when we have more opportunities to get to know people.

Now, sadly, our event season is over. Today we return to life on the road as usual. As always it is exciting to think about what God has planned for us and where we will end up by the end of the day.



Rebecca Bessinger

Date: 3/20/2003

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann
Journal Entry:

Why is it that when you see a familiar face in a crowd it is comforting? The familiar has been comforting to me in the past couple of days. This past weekend we had our final youth event for the year (boohoo!). On Tuesday morning we were not sure where we were going as the day unfolded. We wound up going to a church in Newburg, OR. This church had sent a group the youth event so we knew many people already there. I was then housed with the family of one of the youth that had been at the event and I had talked to. During the weekend Mark and I had been talking about guitar and he asked me to show him something on the guitar. These weekends go by with a blur for Captive Free members and I never got to sit down with Mark. So here I was staying at his house for the evening and there was plenty of time to spend with him. It was as much of a blessing to me because I was missing the event season and all the fun we have there. So this was a good way for me to close things up.

It goes to show God does not let any loose ends hang. He will always find the perfect time to tie them up. What a great God we have.

God's Blessings
Andy W.
Romans 14:8



Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 3/22/2003
Submitted by: Kristen Carter
Journal Entry:

This morning I am writing this while not being fully awake because last night we had a lock-in, which means we were up kinda late and then this morning the youth were gracious enough to bring us breakfast in bed!! We ate chocolate chip pancakes, eggs, and bacon while sitting in our sleeping bags at their youth house. It is the small joys in life that really matter, like when you wake up at 7:30am for breakfast, at least you don't have to change out of your pajamas! We have been in Renton, WA for the past couple of days. We got in a day early on Thursday and had some time to bond as a team. Our team has also recently discovered the addictiveness of the game Skip-Bo so you will find us playing that periodically as we have little bits of free time. Friday was actually a full day for us. Often our host families or contacts assume that if we have a whole day that we will get to go out and see the sights or hang out or something else random, but actually there is a lot that goes into making team go smoothly. We sometimes get together and spend whole days from 9:30am till 5:00pm at a church and will not have seen the outside of the building because we have administrative tasks to do or rehearsal time or team health activities like one-on-ones to complete. Sometimes it amazes me, how we can fill up our days and still have just as much to do the next day. Yesterday was a long day, and while we saw the outside of the church as we walked from the youth house to the church several times during the day, we were busy from 10am until 12am last night! While this sounds like a long time, and it is, don't get me wrong, it is not unproductive or unexciting time by any means. We spent a lot of the beginning of the day getting our team stuff out of the way and setting up for our program and lock-in. THEN the youth showed up! We were pretty excited for this lock-in because we had heard about some fun games from an experienced lock-in chaperone at a previous church that we tried for the first time. One of the games involved passing a marshmallow down a line using toothpicks, another involved chugging cups of coke, and a third involved shaving cream and cheetos! You can only begin to imagine how much fun we had with the youth because they were all so energetic and excited to be there. Later, after everyone got cleaned up we sang some sing-a-longs and had a short Bible study about friendship with God. The line of questions that we used started off by asking about how a human friendship works and what qualities we look for in a friend and then moved to how our friendship with God is exactly like our human friendships. The same things we expect of a human friend – the patience, understanding, honesty – we can receive from God. In the same way, the same things we do to nurture a friendship on earth – spending time with them, listening, accepting – we should use these same tools to nurture our friendship with God. Breaking things down like this, being able to



Kristen Carter

understand a tangible example for what my relationship with God should look like, made the message of this lesson very meaningful to me. This morning I led devotions and used the same theme of friendship. I am reading *The Purpose Driven Life* and it noted that by meditating on scripture, we can begin to understand God more and incorporate Him into our lives. As part of my devotion I decided that I would begin to write up a verse on the window of our van with special markers so that we could all look at it often. This week's verse is James 4:8a: Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Feel free to meditate on this verse along with us! Peace and Joy!

Date: 3/25/2003

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

We've been a little more busy than normal as of late, mostly due to our first ever doubleheader lock-ins on Friday and Saturday nights. We ran on not much sleep through this weekend, so forgive me if there are any grammar errors or misspelled words or sentences that are abruptly cut short; I probably just dozed off while writing this.

We spent most of this past week in the greater Seattle area, bouncing from one suburb to the next, and that's where we found ourselves Friday night, at King of Kings Lutheran in Renton. It was a great stop, we were reunited with Karen, a youth advisor, Terri and Potsko who drove out for our program from Trinity Lutheran College, a bunch of youth we met at the Congress, and Nichol from Camp Lutherwood who drove down from Bellingham to return my long-lost camera and computer which she deceptively stole from me the last time we were up there. So it was reunions all around.

We hit trusty ol' I-5 in the morning, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, to make a return trip down to Winlock, WA for lock-in numero dos. Winlock is an awesome little town, equally proud of Mt. St. Helens and being home to the world's largest egg, and it was great to see the youth and other folks from the congregation again. We played a program, drank some Mountain Dew, and had an awesome lock-in.

Our host families came to pick us up sometime after midnight when we had finished our closing worship set, and Colin and I went together. The place where we ended up was really cool; the guy lived on a farm that had been in his family for some hundred years, although he wasn't much for farming. He was a potter; he had planted trees on a bunch of his 60 acres and converted the old barn into an art studio. We stayed in the farm house, which was under some renovation, along with his nephew and a family friend, while our host dad slept in a one-room cottage a stone's throw behind the house. The whole place just sent out a really vibe, and was one of those spots that I really wish I could have stayed at longer. Unfortunately, it was so late that they pretty much just pointed us to our beds, then turned around and drove us straight back to church in the morning. But I really connected with the folks out there in the little bit of time I had.

I also enjoyed myself at the post-service potluck the next day, where we Colin, Andy and I made up for some of the lack of conversation time with our host dad from the night before. We talked about art (my mom is also a potter,) music (traded favorite radio stations,) North Carolina (he has a daughter at Chapel Hill, I live in Asheville,) among other things and he was such an interesting guy. He obviously enjoyed himself, too, because when I said I would love the chance to come back and spend some time on the farm, he promptly gave me his address and number and invited me to come back anytime, and bring my mom. I don't know when or how, but I hope I do see him again, and it was so cool how much of a connection we could make in just a short time.

Before leaving I dug through my duffel bag and found one of my homemade CDs to give him, with original songs. He traded it for a mug he had made. "I love trading," he said. It was so cool! Now I have this awesome mug, and more than that, a reminder of a new friendship that's waiting for me in Winlock.



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Date: 3/27/2003

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Greetings from Graham!!! I feel like I'm writing a letter more than a journal right now. Speaking of which I still have a bunch of letters to catch up on. Sometimes it feels like even though we have lots of free time on the road I can never find the time to finish writing all those letters. But I promise that if you have written to me you will hear from me!!! Anyways. So here we were on the road, we happened to have a chunk of time where we were not yet booked here in the Seattle area. A couple days before this time we heard from our lovely booker Kim that we would be traveling back to Graham! I was so pumped! I really enjoyed our stay here last time! This is also the hometown of THE Ryan Clark and Becca Leaf!! Who are on the West Lakes and North Central team respectively. We once again got to hang out with their families and were welcomed back with such enthusiasm! It has just been a great stay! When we first got here, however, we thought that this would just be a housing and that we would not be doing any programming. That would have been fine, but I find that we feel pretty useless when we just go somewhere and don't do any programming so I wasn't really looking forward to one more housing. Apparently someone was looking out for us though because when we talked to our contact they said that their musicians for both the noon and evening Lenten services were unavailable on this day and they were hoping that we could help out with that. WOW! So Ryan Clark's dad Gary played the guitar for the hymns and we acted as the choir as well as doing an offering song. It was totally a God thing! So praise Him for filling our schedule when we can't! Other than that we've been doing great. We're all looking forward to Easter break, but I think we'll also be excited to be back on the road. Thanks for all your prayers and support! God's peace!
Alicia <><



Alicia Becker

Date: 3/29/2003
Submitted by: Colin Byers
Journal Entry:

Thursday morning we said our good byes the wonderful team families of Graham, WA, had our team devotions, and headed down the road to Kent. This was our second time in Kent, after arriving we had all night to spend hanging out with host families where I finally got to see Ice Age. Friday we met and did our normal Friday am routine with accountability partners and a team huddle and then were treated to I think some of the best Mexican food ever. We made it back to church in time to set-up and rehearse for awhile before the potluck and Family night program. It turned out to be a great program with so many people that we had met earlier on the road or at the Seattle congress. The church there was also a spot for recruiting some talented young people with the joy of the lord in them, for possible teamers in the future. It was so much fun to worship with old friends from the road. We can't wait to go back in July for VBS.



Colin Byers

Date: 4/1/2003
Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger
Journal Entry:

On Sunday afternoon we had an unfortunate little incident with our van. Andy lost control of the van and we slammed the trailer into a traffic light.

APRIL FOOLS!

Sorry, couldn't resist a little joke today. Actually, it was a very sad weekend. We are now a team of 5. Alicia no longer has permission to remain in the U.S. She has returned to Canada and we all miss her.

APRIL FOOLS!

Ok, so really, the weekend was fine. We all stayed on a dairy farm and spent the weekend waking up at 4am to milk cows. Colin got kicked by one, I got stepped on, and Kristen got licked by a cow.



Rebecca Bessinger

We now have an abundance of fresh milk in our trailer. We didn't really need all that sound equipment anyway, right?

APRIL FOOLS!

Actually, there was a small problem with the van this weekend. The little incident was the van getting hit by a comet, so there's not much of a van left. We don't mind too much, since now we don't have to clean it.

APRIL FOOLS AGAIN!

Ok. I'm done with the jokes. Sorry about all that. We had a very peaceful weekend here in Woodburn. We led worship on Sunday morning. I really enjoyed talking with all the people from the congregation. They are really great people. Yesterday I had a very relaxing day off. I slept in and then in the afternoon my host mom took me to see the tulip fields. I've never seen so many tulips in one place! It was pretty impressive. The boys rented a car and drove to Seattle for a concert. No, I'm not kidding. They really drove four hours each way to see a concert. They had a good time. Overall, Woodburn has been a really relaxing and pleasant place to stay. The weather has been beautiful, the people were friendly, and we enjoyed our time here.

Date: 4/3/2003

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

The acceptance from youth is a big thing that we have to earn this year. At our very first event Jen Noyes told our group something like - the bigger goofy dorks you can be the more the kids will love you. And generally that is true. For the past two nights we have been in Eugene, OR. Our second night here we ran the Wednesday night youth group at the church. Three of the local church youth groups all meet together to make a group of about 20 kids. We had an amazing time with them, singing, playing games and doing a bible study about friends.

I have been impressed this entire year by the youth of today. I wish I would have had the knowledge and the faith that these kids already have when I was growing up. I have been very blessed at seeing these youth and being a part in strengthening their faith. When kids remember who you are, months after the youth event they attended, and sit under dim church parking lot lights after youth group to fill out a little white card to receive more information about ministry opportunities, it just blows my mind.

In 1 Timothy 4:12 it says "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." This has been so true for many youth and I encourage everyone that reads this that the word young in this verse means young at heart to me. So I pray for myself and everyone else that we never be look down upon because of our young heart but to be an example of Christ. So many times, actions speak louder than words.

God's Blessings to All!!!

Andy



Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 4/5/2003

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

What an awesome town! We had the blessing of being the first Captive Free team to come to Good Shepherd Lutheran in Cave Junction, OR ever! We arrived here on Thursday afternoon only to be swept away to dinner at a restaurant that one of the host families had just recently opened. Friday night before the program we had dinner at a pizza place that was owned by other members of the congregation. That is one of



the neat things about smaller towns, that you don't even need six degrees of separation **Kristen Carter** to figure out who owns what in town, usually it's just one or two. The cool thing about the restaurant on Thursday night, besides my delicious teriyaki albacore, was that they were having an open mike night. Our contact, Linda, thought it would be neat for us to sing a few songs and tell people that we were going to be doing a program here on Friday. We were kinda nervous to participate, but finally decided that it would be fun so we got up after a couple other acts had gone and we sang Meet With Me and I Can Only Imagine. We got such an awesome response from the crowd for both of our songs and one guy actually came up afterwards to find out where the church was so he could come hear us the next night! It was cool to see God working even when we were so unsure of ourselves in that situation.

At our program on Friday night we had a pretty good split between older Lutherans and fairly young Lutherans so it was an interesting mix of tastes for us to accommodate, but it all worked out in the end. I say that because at the end of our program, during the last song, I sing harmony with Alicia and on our last line I totally wasn't paying attention to what I was singing and so forgot to sing the harmony. This was because it had suddenly struck me how God had worked through us during our program. If you had asked me at the beginning of our program if our crowd was really enthusiastic and excited about getting up and singing and dancing with us I would have given you a resounding "NO," but by the end that is exactly what happened. We introduced a new way of worshiping God to everyone that came and it was apparent at the beginning with our first sing-a-long, Blindman, when no one did any motions or even stood up. At that point I was a little worried, but then by our second sing-a-long, Gonna Dance, most everyone stood up, even if they weren't dancing or surfing! And by our last sing-a-long, The Way, almost everyone was standing AND doing all the crazy motions! It was an amazing thing to witness and that's why I forgot to sing my lines! It struck me that God is always faithful even when we don't expect him to be; He worked through us when I didn't think he would and I'm so excited that I can share that with you!

Oh! The new meditation verse is: Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Peace and Joy,
Kristen

Date: 4/8/2003

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

Word up from scenic Camp Lutherwood in Cheshire, OR, where my fellow Captive Free North Westers and I just spent a lovely and much awaited day off. This was the last stop in our southern Oregon mini-tour, and this afternoon we'll hike back up to the greater Seattle area (I don't mean greater than Oregon, that's just what they call it) where we'll be bumming around until the planes leave this weekend to carry us home.

We've been counting the days until Easter break now for awhile, and this last week has been trying. We're all still having fun, but with half the team sick and all of us extremely worn down, mixed with not much programming in this upcoming week to get excited for, we're anxious to get home. I, for one, feel like I need this break pretty badly. I'm just tired out and have been having a hard time not dragging as of late. We spent the weekend in the fun town of Grants Pass, OR where we caught up with some friends from events and an incredibly warm and welcoming congregation, so that lifted our spirits. But nevertheless, Monday the day off was a welcome rest.

We knew we were going to be on our own for the day, so we rolled in Sunday evening, settled into the huge main lodge that we had all to our lonesome, and headed out grocery shopping, with a Taco Bell pit stop. We came back, broke out the quit-tars, built a fire and roasted the mallows. A fun camp night.

I think Colin was the only one moving before 11 the next morning. I certainly enjoyed the rest but was glad that I actually fit a lot of activity into the day as well. We don't often have the chance to get outside and run around, and with just moving from church to church to church, with good doses of sleeping and eating in the van in between, it's easy to sometimes feel the tiniest bit lazy. So Monday was packed with hiking, disc golf, volleyball, and whiffle ball home run derby. But probably my high for the day off was not necessarily the most fun activity: I spent a little over two hours in the afternoon scrubbing out pool bathhouses with our host, the camp's site director. It was pretty



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

tough work, but it felt great to be productive and helpful, and it really cut down on his workload a lot. Andy showed up just as we were starting the second one and with him we flew through it. The director kept thanking us and letting us know that we really helped him out, and it was awesome to pitch in even on a day when we didn't have anything scheduled. It's hard to keep a generous servant attitude in all things, but when accomplished it is a truly rewarding life to lead.

Date: 4/10/2003

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Let me tell you...it's one of those days. This is sort of like the desert of our booking year. So, I don't mean that we're standing in the desert, Arizona is nowhere near here. It's the week before we head home for Easter. We are all really pumped about it. It will be so awesome to be home to spend time with family and friends, and just catch up on all of the things we've been missing. However it seems that we have a bit of a hole in our schedule, for about a week leading up to our break. That means no programming, and a lot of housing only nights. We have been so blessed these past few days already with God's awesome provision, and the tremendous amount of generosity that the people in the Northwest region have. So praise God, we have always had a place to stay, food to eat, and whatever else that we need. But here's the reality...It's hard. Now I'm not saying that we're giving up. And I'm not saying that we are just completely writing off this entire week. We have tried in most circumstances to find things to do (e.g. Last night we played a few songs at the worship service here at the church we're staying at, Friday we invited ourselves to hang out with a youth group in Renton, and we even talked about doing some open mic ministry. lol.) But it's hard. It is so easy to be tempted to just give up, to just sort of give in to the nothing, and do nothing about it. In the Gospels (see Matt. 4:1-11.) we hear the story of the temptation of Jesus. Led to the desert by the spirit, he was met there by Satan who knew what suffering he was going through, and used that to try to tempt him away from the Glory of God, and His Will. What is God's Will for our time here on the road? To reach people with the message of Jesus Christ, to be examples to them in faith, purity and love. What about when we have no bookings? No place to intentionally share that message? So we will make it our intention. We will come back at Satan in our suffering with the Word of God which says,

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race that marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:1-2

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:28

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."

Ecclesiastes 3:11

So although we cannot see the reason for this time of nothing we will continue on in faith, knowing that God has perfect time, and a reason for everything! Lord your joy is our strength! Your living water is all we need in the desert! We will never thirst again!

Peace! Alicia <><



Alicia Becker

Date: 4/24/2003

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

We're back in Seattle again!!! This past week was our Easter/spring break. It was great for us to all go home, or away for awhile. It's not that we don't love each other for every second of every day it's just that sometimes a break is needed. All of us got to spend some time with friends and family during our much needed break. A little dose of regularity is what we all need from time to time. But, we needed to get back to the ministry we were called to.

I was the first to arrive on Monday afternoon, and everyone else arrived on Monday night. As we all gathered back together, it was just like we had never really left one another. After the "how was your break?" question and answer session we headed out to go back Roberta Morrow's house, our gracious host who picked me up from the airport (Thanks Roberta!!!), we all agreed on a pit stop to get a bite to eat. Needless to say, you can always count on Denny's to be open and provide a nice, warm, mediocre meal. While there we laughed, shared stories of our break, and reminisced about our previous months together. At the moment, a sense of peace came over me because I knew this was where I was supposed to be. God has a calling for everyone, and he may have it pronounced from the mountain tops or it could be a small whisper of a child, but no matter where it comes from, you have to be willing to listen. Sometimes the call is hard. You may have to travel across the country and leave the ones you love behind but there always be that sense of ease and satisfaction to know you are doing exactly what God has called you to. So my encouragement to you is to listen and always be looking for God's calling.

God's Blessings
Andy W.
Romans 14:8



Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 4/26/2003

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

We're back in the land where the rain never ends! As Andy told you, we spent our first couple of days back on the road in Enumclaw, WA and Thursday we drove to Gresham, OR where we have spent the past couple of days hanging out at Trinity Lutheran Church. A bunch of the kids from this church came to our quake in Newport, OR so we were excited to come here and hang out with them again. We arrived on Thursday and got to spend the night in the high school youth room, which I have to say, was one of the nicest we have seen, mostly because it had enough couches for us all to sleep on plus some extras! Since we enjoy each other's company and we don't often get the opportunity to all go to the same host home, sometimes we do appreciate the chances to spend the night all together at a church. This was especially nice since we hadn't seen each other a lot because of our Easter break. When we arrived Kathy, our contact, took us all out to Red Robin for dinner, which I LOVE because they have fabulous fry seasoning! Then, Matt, Colin and Alicia went to the cheap theater in town and saw Lord of the Rings 2, while the other three of us stayed and hung out at the church. It was a nice restful evening for us and enough to gear us up for our first program back on the road!

Friday was spent doing a lot of team stuff, like usual. We are beginning to prepare for VBS and have broken it up so that we can do a little each week instead of being overwhelmed right before our training. So yesterday we went over the first day of VBS and discussed the themes of the two major curriculums and planned out some skits and puppet shows. Normally planning these things out is not our strong point, but yesterday we were struck with a creative lightning bolt and we had everything planned in the time allotted! It was amazing! THEN we got to set up and play together for the first time in probably two and a half weeks. It was a nice feeling to be back together again doing what we are supposed to be doing. We started with a potluck that changed forms many times before settling on chili and this amazing chocolate cake for dessert, then we had our program, which went pretty smoothly for our first go at it!, and then we led the Head to the Heart bible study for



Kristen Carter

the youth who stayed, while we all drank root beer floats! (yum!) so it was a full evening. This morning I led devotions and we sometimes use a Max Lucado book called, Grace for the Moment, which just has short devotions and this morning I used one that talked about being on fire for God and using your passions in order to serve the Lord. The verse was Psalm 40:8. It feels good to know that our passion for music and ministry has put us in the place God has prepared for us.

Date: 4/30/2003

Submitted by: Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Journal Entry:

It was a bittersweet weekend for us in Portland, OR as we made what was to be our last stop at our local hangout of Prince of Peace Lutheran. PoP so far holds the church title for most Captive Free NW programming for the '02-'03 season, ringing in at a whopping four bookings, some of which were for four or five days at a time. Our first stop there was way back on Halloween and into the first week of November, and we've had others scattered along our trip leading up to now. So needless to say, we established some strong relationships with the youth and other folks in the congregation. It is such a blessing, in this fast-paced, always-on-the-move lifestyle we lead, to have some long-term contact with a group of people we meet. We see so many new faces every day that just to visit the same town twice feels like we're coming home, so four times certainly makes for a warm reunion and a ton of fun.

But it's more than just fun to come back to Portland, and it's more than just a reunion. It's an affirmation of our ministry and a reminder of what we've been called to do out here on the road. This is a year of scattering seeds, not knowing which or how many or how often they are taking root. In staying in homes for sometimes less than twelve hours or having one evening to spend with a youth group, we rarely see the fruits of our labors, but rather simply trust that God is using us for His work as God always does. But coming back to the same place so often, and spanning so much time, we were able to witness firsthand the power of that work God does through us and the affect it has on many of the people we leave behind. The difference in the youth from our first visit in Portland to now is amazing. Pretty much the same core group has come out to hang with us every time we've been in town, a lot of them also coming to our Youth Quake in Newport, OR, and I can see so much change in many of them.

When we first met, the youth were less than enthusiastic about goofy games and sing-a-longs. But as time has gone on, the attitude of the group has changed to the point where, when we were last there and helped to plan a youth-led Sunday service, we had kids eager to volunteer for everything and suggesting what songs and motions we should teach their congregation. That change was made all the more evident on our last night with the youth, where we all just sat and sang together, and we could see the power those words had on many in the group. The church's youth leader approached us later to say that that was the first time she had ever seen her group open up and sing together like that, just because they wanted to.

The next morning we packed up and said our goodbyes, and now it's off to another church with more people we've never met before and will probably never see again. But I do trust that God is using me and my team, and if we keep our eyes open He is always giving us reminders like Prince of Peace in Portland.



Matt Canniff-Kuhn

Date: 5/1/2003

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Peace to all of our brothers and sisters wherever you are!! So we're still here. That's right, the Northwest team is still around, still praising God and still having a ton of fun! So right now we're in Edmonds, WA. Last night we played for three different groups within the church. First the Kid's club, then the Sr. High youth, and finally the Jr. High youth. It was a pretty good night. It definitely wasn't one of our most together nights. There were points in the night when I was just at a loss. Why is it that sometimes things just don't go right? Why can't everything just always be smooth? Unfortunately



Alicia Becker

that just doesn't happen. However at least we know that "God works for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purposes." So somewhere in the somewhat discombobulated night God used us. Sometimes I feel like I really need to rely on that. Rely on His grace to get me through, and to make an impact. But what a blessing to be an instrument. To be cared for, useful, and beautiful in His sight. May you all feel that blessing.

Date: 5/3/2003

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

Saturday May 3rd we started off our day ending a lock in. This was a great lock in, we had so much fun getting to hang out and worship with a few of the youth from the church. We started the morning with a short devo then some songs, followed by a gargantuan breakfast. After that we had some games, where I would like to say Matt and I schooled the youth group. It's a bit scary that after living this close to each other I could tell Matt was acting out soccer legend Paylay. That stunned people that we had the connection. That time was followed by another devo, and closed with a short time of praise and worship. It was an awesome experience to see some kids really light up the night before. It's so cool for us to be able to see people stepping out of their comfort zones, relax and open up. After we were done tearing down we had lunch together and headed off to host homes, for a bit of relaxing and watching baseball, I was a bit tired so I called it a night pretty early. So it's been close to 9 months on the road and things are going well. It was a little slow for me getting back on the road after Easter break, but after some time back I am reminded why we are out here. It is such a wonderful experience being able to spend all year worshipping, with other brothers and sisters in Christ. However we are blessed so much by the people we meet. It never ceases to amaze me how much we get out of this year. I hope that we can be doing the same for the people we interact with. I have learned so much this year and been witnessed to, and built up in my faith through the people we encounter.



Colin Byers

Date: 5/6/2003

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

We have had a really great weekend! On Saturday morning we finished up the lock-in we were at in Vancouver and had lunch at the church. I personally slept for most of the afternoon to recover from the lock-in. On Sunday morning we led worship at the same church. Even after doing the same worship service all year, I still find that parts of it really do feel worshipful to me. I love praise and worship music, so it's one of my favorite times of the week.

Sunday night was really exciting because we got to go to the church of a current teamer. We were in Seattle at the home church of Marcus from New Dawn. I felt really bad because we seemed a little discombobulated in the beginning of the evening. We were half an hour late due to a major accident on I-5 so that put us off to a bad start. I was really nervous about the fact that we hadn't had time to do a sound check before the program, but I think once we got started things started looking up and the rest of the evening was great. It was fun to get a chance to say hi to Marcus, too.

Alicia and I ended up staying up late that evening talking with our host family and we had a blast. It was such a fun place to stay and felt very home like and relaxed to me. I loved just sitting and talking and laughing and spending time with the family. On our day off we slept in (as usual for a day off) and then walked down to the marina. Alicia and I had never seen a starfish before. Our host mom and host sister arrived after we'd been at the marina for a while and pointed out the starfish and crabs under the dock. Then they drove us home so we didn't have to go back up the steep hill we'd come down to get there. We had tacos for dinner to celebrate Cinco de Mayo. Then they were kind enough to take us downtown Seattle to see the view from the space needle. It's always great to do something exciting on a day off. I was especially excited because it feels like we've been traveling up and down the coast forever and I still hadn't been downtown Seattle. I'm so glad we got to go and see the view. It was really beautiful. And it was a great way to end our time on the



Rebecca Bessinger

coast. Today we are off for Idaho. I'm really thankful for the way I've seen God working in my life through the people we've met this weekend. I feel really encouraged about life on the road and excited to meet more people. We are so fortunate to have met so many great people throughout this year.

Date: 5/8/2003

Submitted by: Andrew Wiedemann

Journal Entry:

Today we are here in beautiful Idaho. Sandpoint to be exact. One of the big activities we did today was we go to a little shop in the bustling downtown area and buy 266 postcards. Now you are asking, "Why did you buy 266 postcards?" Well, I would love to tell you.

This ministry is solely based upon the support of others. This includes Captive Free members' sponsors, friends, families, churches, host homes, host churches, youth, youth directors, partners and pretty much every one else that we meet along the way. So knowing that, the postcards are for sponsors, host homes, and partners. It's kind of the least we can do for the support that we have been given. The postcards are a way to say thanks and also to let them know how we are doing and what God is doing in our lives, and the people's lives we meet. Also, these journals are one more way to express our thanks and how we are doing.

As we are doing these different responsibilities, it has really made me think. The amount of trust we put in others is amazing. We trust in a place to sleep, food to eat, and a place to play music. We have not only put a lot of trust in other people but we have put a lot of trust in God. I feel I have grown so much in the trusting of God. And I also think that we all can trust more. Matthew 6:34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

God's Blessings To All

Andy W.

Romans 14:8



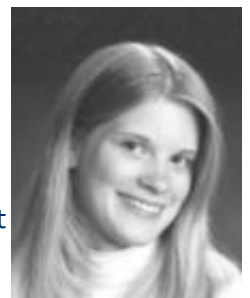
Andrew Wiedemann

Date: 5/10/2003

Submitted by: Kristen Carter

Journal Entry:

We're on the move! Most of the time we spend several days in one place, but we have been in a different place both Thursday and Friday and today, Saturday, we are headed to yet another. Thursday we drove from Sandpoint, ID to Lenore, ID. At first we couldn't even find Lenore on the map, and most people we asked about it had pretty much no idea what we were talking about, but we got out our magnifying glass and found a little dot on the map named Lenore. We actually met our contact, a collegian named Carolyn, in Lewiston, about 45 minutes from Lenore and followed her down some pretty long and windy roads, which led to more windy roads, which led to dirt and gravel roads, which finally led us to a cute little church on a hill, surrounded by nothing but fields for miles. We played a program that night, and were told that we might only see females in our audience because the males would be working away in the fields, but despite that prediction we had a pretty good turnout at the potluck that preceded the program and at the program itself. The church was on the smaller side, as most country churches are, which meant that we did not bring in all of our sound equipment, because it was unnecessary. This afforded us the chance to play a more intimate acoustic program, which we are not used to, but is a welcome change to our routine. The most interesting thing that happened was that during our puppet show, our puppet curtain rods broke! This is the second time that our puppet curtain has come crashing down in front of onlookers who were shocked to see that there were also people behind the curtain, not only puppets! As you might remember, it happened during our program at the youth camp in Naselle, WA. This time it was not so glorious, but made for



Kristen Carter

a bit of a laugh anyway. After the program we all headed to our host homes, which for four of us was 45 minutes away, although the family lived only "7 miles away as the crow flies!" Craziness! I still cannot get over the distances people travel in the country without batting an eye, in the suburbs of DC where I'm from, if you drive for more than 15 minutes to get anywhere you just don't go and you find something closer! The next morning we drove the 45 minutes back to church in order to do our meetings and to take off for our next destination, Missoula, MT.

It has been so long since we were in Montana for any length of time. At the beginning of the year we spent about a month just driving from one end of Montana to the other and we had some wild experiences. For the last several months we have been primarily in Washington and Oregon, whose cultures and lifestyles have been closer to those of our own. Becky and I were noting how much more interesting life is in places that we are not used to. Most of us come from around large cities and so to be around Portland and Seattle is no big deal. For us to come out to rural Montana and stay on ranches or in towns smaller than the size of our graduating classes is a whole other story. I'm getting ahead of myself though because Missoula, MT is no small town, well, for Montana anyway. So, we came into Missoula to do a lock-in for about 40 middle school and high school youth. We started off the evening with dinner and then our program, which the whole congregation was invited to. One of my favorite things about the program is Blindman. It is the second song that we sing and it is an interactive one. I learned it several years ago, with some particular motions, but since being on the road I have learned a newer version of it thanks to my teammates that includes a Spanish countdown in the middle along with some na nas. However, that is not the best part. My favorite part of this song is when we sing "show me the way, show me the way, show me the way, the way to go home," the motion is "the sprinkler." If you don't know this dance move, I urge you to find someone who does and have them show you because it is pretty funny. Now imagine that you are in the crowd at our program and suddenly we start doing this move and expect that in the next five minutes you will join us in doing it in front of all your friends and people you don't know that you may or may not be trying to impress depending on your age (read middle and high schoolers). It is hysterical! Everybody is pretty embarrassed, even I am embarrassed every time I do it and we sing that song often, but it breaks down the barriers between us and them. There is something about us looking dumb and them looking dumb with our encouragement that bonds us for the rest of the evening. In the psalms we are encouraged to sing and dance before the Lord and I am confident that even God appreciates the sprinkler.

Peace and Joy,
Kristen

Date: 5/15/2003

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Greetings and Peace in Christ! I am exhausted! I don't know why though. Life on the road just takes a lot out of you I guess. We've had a pretty relaxed week here in Harlowton with just a few small programs like the other day when we played outside the church on the deck at lunchtime... but I think Matt may have told you about that already. It was a really great time though. There were a bunch of youth from the high school just coming by and listening for a minute and eating Popsicles and tacos.

Mmm...tacos. But anyways. Last night we played a family night program here in Harlo (as the locals call it). There was a pretty good number of people there and it was a lot of fun as always. I really love playing music and praising God with my team mates and other brothers and sisters in Christ. Today is kind of a free day. Becky and Andy went to Billings with the Pastor here at the church. They both just wanted to get to a bigger city (Becky to see a movie and Andy to do some shopping that just couldn't be done here in Harlowton...now that's not to say that there's nothing here, but it is pretty limited). It's so interesting to go from a couple of months in bigger cities like Seattle and Portland to a small town in Montana. It's really a whole different world here. It is not uncommon to just drive for miles and miles just to go see a movie (we're talking 2 and a half hours or so). But on top of being different for the obvious reasons, small towns are actually pretty awesome. This particular small town is pretty awesome for a lot of reasons, but one of those sticks out to me the most. When we visited here back in October (see October 4 journal) I stayed with the Knudson family. I wrote about my host sister Jill, but what I didn't tell you about was my host brother Kevin. When we were here last time he had been diagnosed with Rheumatoid arthritis and was being treated for that. Well, just a couple of weeks ago he went in for blood tests and they



Alicia Becker

discovered that he had Leukemia! We continue to pray for their family. They have found a very special place in my heart, and I would just ask that all of you be praying for them too. For God's healing for Kevin and that the Knudson family would also just continue to seek God in prayer for His peace and comfort. Also special prayers for Jill that she would continue to feel the love of Christ through all those around her, and that she would give all her worries up and rely on God as her strength. Praise God for allowing us to meet such awesome people here in Harlowton. Praise for great coffee from Meg's coffee house!!! Thanks to all those who have been praying for us while we're on the road. We need lots of prayer! I love all of you guys back at home! Can't wait to be there with you, but until then just continue to pray for us! We're praying for you!!!

Date: 6/2/2003

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

Becky's Journal
6-2-03

Greetings all our wonderful journal readers! Many of you may already know that we have recently become a 5 person team. Kristen made the decision to leave us a few short weeks ago, and as you can imagine, they have been a crazy few weeks. You may or may not know that Kristen was the one responsible for posting our journals. So, this is the part where I, the person now in charge of this task, apologize for the confusion that is likely to occur during this transition. I have a feeling that there are a couple journals that were written that I can't find, so therefore I can't post them. I may also inadvertently post a journal that's already been posted, or something else crazy like that. Also, during our time of transition and then the subsequent time of VBS training, our team did not write any journals. So, above all, I would like to apologize for the weeks without journals. I will now attempt to re-cap the past couple of weeks.

The week before Kristen left was spent in Harlowton, Montana. It was a wonderful week for the most part. We had the opportunity to play at the Baccalaureate service in town and it was really nice. It was also the last time the 6 of us all played together. On Tuesday of that week we called the office and asked them to send someone to help us with the debriefing process as Kristen prepared to leave. We successfully made arrangements to meet the lovely Julie Brown in South Dakota. We spent Wednesday night in Billings and then met Julie on Thursday evening. It was nice to be able to re-assign jobs and discuss the changes that needed to occur before leaving for Memorial Day break. When we returned we had a week of training at beautiful Lee Valley Ranch. It was really great to spend time with other teams and really prepare for VBS. It was a really encouraging and uplifting time for all of us. On Friday night we had a wonderful communion service and then had a fun filled trip to Mt. Rushmore.

This has been a difficult time of transition for our team, but the most important thing is that God has gotten us through it. He has been there every step of the way and I've really been able to see Him at work in this team. No matter how hard things get, He is always there walking with us. Praise God even for the hard times and for all His help in our time of need!



Rebecca Bessinger

Date: 6/5/2003

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

Hey Everyone!

So I should likely come up with some clever first line to make you want to read this huh? I guess that if you really want to hear what's going on you'll read it regardless of a clever opening statement, so we will go without today. So it's been such an amazing first week so far. We're in Baker, Montana. This town has a long Captive Free VBS history, and they claimed right from the start that their goal was to break us in without breaking us. It's worked so far. These kids are really awesome, the volunteers all know



Alicia Becker

exactly what's going on, and so far it's just been a lot of fun to work (and play) here in Baker! Last night we got the opportunity to go and see the Captive Free North Central team at their program in Lemmon, SD. It was so great to see them again. We were just starting to kind of miss all of the teams from VBS training so it was good to check in with them and see how their first VBS was going and just hang out a little bit after the program.

So how am I you ask? Well I'm doing just fine. I really love Vacation Bible School. It reminds me a lot of camp generally and that's one thing that I saw myself really missing this year. I'm so glad for the opportunity to do children's ministry and just to be goofy all morning long. The sing-alongs that we've been doing all year long in congregations just take on this whole different light when you're surrounded by a bunch of k-6th graders. They just light up when they hear us start to play "wanna be a sheep" or "chew my gum with God." Anyways. I'd better go, but just know that we are having a blast and appreciate your thoughts and prayers so much over this last little stretch! God's awesome blessings and peace!

Alicia <><
Psalm 40

Date: 6/7/2003

Submitted by: Colin Byers

Journal Entry:

Colin's Journal
6-7-03

Hi to all who read this.

So today we leave Baker for our second VBS in Billings. It was a great end to an even better week. Baker was an awesome place to kick off our summer. We had about 100 kids for VBS, and we got a surprise visit from CFNC during our Thursday night program. I also had an awesome host family who broke me in to true Montana life. They made my Wednesday evening complete with the experience of my first branding. I got to help with pinning and vaccinating the calves.

At first I wasn't feeling up to the challenge of VBS, but with a little prayer and sticking with it, I thank God that I have gotten so much experience through this year.

God's Peace,
Colin
1 John 4:10



Colin Byers

Date: 6/10/2003

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

Becky's Journal
6-10-03

I have seen a LOT of Billings this weekend. Saturday we arrived at King of Glory and led worship. Then we went to Mckenzie River Pizza with the pastor of Messiah Lutheran. It's fun to have so many churches working together for VBS this week because it gives us an opportunity to meet even more great people. Our host families are all people from Messiah Lutheran, so after dinner the pastor led us to our homes. We were able to spend Saturday evening relaxing and getting to know them.

On Sunday morning we led worship again at King of Glory and then took down our equipment and discussed plans for VBS. Alicia and I spent Sunday afternoon going out for lunch and doing some shopping. It was nice to spend the afternoon together just enjoying each other's company as friends.

Yesterday was our first day of VBS here and so far it's a blast. It's being held at St. John's Lutheran Home and there are four different churches participating. It's so great to see the residents enjoying having the kids around. I was privileged enough to help with crafts for the preschool and



Rebecca Bessinger

kindergarten, or at least, some of the preschool and kindergarten classes. The majority of kids here are in those two age groups. Their excitement and energy can be contagious at times, and they also wear us out.

Our afternoon was a bit frustrating but it was also a learning experience for me. We had to go to the post office, which is easier said than done in Billings. We ran all over town and it took forever and I was tired and just wanted to go home. However, through this crazy afternoon I learned patience. I realized that it's not worth getting frustrated over little things. Although it seemed like we were wasting time, there is no way we could have known where to go without going to all the places we did. It may have seemed like we were running in circles, but we just kept going and it got done. I guess all of life on team can be seen that way. We just have to trust God to work through us even if we feel like we're running in circles.

Date: 6/19/2003

Submitted by: Alicia Becker

Journal Entry:

June, 19, 2003

Dear Journal (and I guess everyone else who may be reading this), I am exhausted!!!! Man. We are having so much fun here at VBS. It's really great to be in one place for a week, and also just to be playing all these awesome games and songs with really excited kids. The kids here in Helena are really excited to be here. There's about 170 of them and they're all just really fun. But as fun as it is, my body is starting to fight back. Thanks God for all of the energy we have when it feels like there's none left! So other than being tired I think everything is going well. We have been in sort of a transition stage for the past little while (with Kristen leaving) and we've had our struggles but I think ultimately we have come through the storm fairly untouched. The whole thing kind of reminds me of the story of Jesus calming the storm. There was a time during this transition that I doubted that it could possibly be God's will. I doubted that we would be able to handle it, but when I came back and when we called upon Him to guide and heal us it was so. God is good (all the time). We're doing fine. We've picked up a lot of new music and we've just been able to find new places on the team. God has granted us a load of grace in these past few weeks. Thank you so much for your thoughts and prayers! They are so welcomed, appreciated, and needed above all! God's blessings!



Alicia Becker

Date: 6/24/2003

Submitted by: Rebecca Bessinger

Journal Entry:

Becky's Journal
6-24-03

On Saturday we arrived in Dillon, Mt. and the fun began almost instantly. Andy and I have been busy as can be since we got here. Our host family is great and we keep doing so many fun things with them and meeting even more great people. Saturday night we dropped our stuff off at their house and went to a summer solstice party. It was held about 40 miles out of town in some of the most beautiful country I have ever seen. We roasted hot dogs and marshmallows and had a great time getting to know people. Sunday we got to relax for most of the day after church. We had a late lunch and Andy and I went to see a movie. It was a much needed day of rest. Then Monday began the fun of VBS again. The church we are at designed their own curriculum, so it's new and exciting for us. It's a T.V. studio kind of theme and the decorations are great. After a busy day of VBS and team stuff Andy and I went to dinner at the home of some of our host family's friends. We had the best Mexican food we've ever had. I had fish tacos for the first time and it was fantastic. And the best part, of course, is that we got to meet even more people. I think I've met more people in Dillon than anywhere else this year. Since meeting new people is the goal of people who go on Captive Free this has been a week of awesome opportunities so far. We've been having a blast. The most obvious way that I see God working this week, other than through the opportunity to



Rebecca Bessinger

meet so many people, is giving us energy. He's continuing to give us the energy to get through each day of VBS. Whenever I wake up tired and think there's no way I can keep up with the energy of almost 200 kids, God provides. I get to the church and start singing and suddenly I have energy again. It's a great feeling to be energized by praising God with all these great kids.
