

Captive Free South Central 2002-03 Journal

Date: 9/14/2002

Submitted by: Shawn Juers

Journal Entry:

Wow! After four weeks of training, we are on our way! I am anxious, nervous, excited and sad at the same time. Leaving the community that was formed during training was sad, but it is incredibly awesome to think that 82 people will be spread out across the US and abroad to show Jesus to all who will hear.

We had our commissioning service before we left. Because each team performed a song, each team had the opportunity to be a part of the audience and a part of the program. Seeing our training at work brought a tear to my eye. All the long weary days were worth this moment alone. Every team sounded great. Then, South Central took the stage. It was our turn to touch someone else, and we did, according to comments made after the service. We are finally ready to go out and do what God has equipped us to do, and all I can say is wow!



Shawn Juers

Date: 9/17/2002

Submitted by: Paul Corey

Journal Entry:

We arrived at Traer for our first booking and was met by Pastor Sheryl. Our night at our host home was wonderful, and we met an energetic 10 year old. He was loads of fun. On Sunday morning we were blessed to lead the worship time, and Sunday school afterwards. The kids really got into it. That night we attended a Youth Life bible study. The next day was our day off, and it was refreshing. That night, we were able to share our team huddle with the child and his mother.



Paul Corey

Date: 9/19/2002

Submitted by: Janet Linden

Journal Entry:

The days are going by so fast! Time flies when you are having fun. We had a recording on Wednesday night and while Becky and I went recording, everyone else went to watch another team's program in Minneapolis. Becky and I dropped off the far members of our team, and sped off in the "#13 beast", an old, beat up but still running van loaned to us while our "baby" was getting a bed installed. We were running late for recording after being rescued by my hero, Karl. What a night to remember!



Janet Linden

We have really enjoyed spending the last couple of days back in Minneapolis with other teams and hearing about their first experiences. We're all one big YE family now. God is truly doing amazing things through all of us, even through the "#13" experiences.

Date: 9/21/2002

Submitted by: Shawn Juers

Journal Entry:

I'm still coming down from the excitement and thrill of our first program two hours ago. Overall, it went well, and our audience really got into it. A few unexpected pauses lead to some hilarious glues, although not everyone thought them as funny as we did. Janet's sharing was excellent, and the puppet show was received with laughter and

amusement. Our first program successfully showed our enthusiasm for God, although we will continue to try to put more gospel into our program.

Tomorrow, we will be leading a worship and a Sunday school sing-a-long and puppet show. I am so excited about how well this ministry is received by the youth, and it blows my mind to think that the kids we reached were just a small fraction of all the people we will reach. Tomorrow, we'll be on our way to a new place to do it again!



Shawn Juers

Date: 9/24/2002

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

We've had humble beginnings out here in Iowa. We did our first program this last Saturday night and it was minus our sound tech Becky because she was attending a family funeral. But Julie Brown, our on-the-road-training staff member covered her role as best she could. I'm not sure if our program was too much better than that of which we did at camp, BUT, we had fun especially during sing-a-longs. I was amazed to see how many adults actually let loose and took part! The church was very welcoming and supportive. They made home-made pizza before the program and we fellowshiped (if that's even a word, but I think you know what I'm getting at.) for at least 45 minutes before hand with the youth and their families. Janet and I were staying at the same host home and we enjoyed playing basketball with a couple of youth afterward. Our host brother and I beat Janet and another of the youth, but it was all in good fun.



Elizabeth Hoffer

Sunday morning we did a worship service and Sunday school at the same church and it was fun to see many of the same people we'd seen the night before! A lot of the kids were excited to do the sing-a-longs even though it was early Sunday morning. They were such an energy boost! Afterward we "fellowshipped" again with the congregation and Becky arrived right at the end of the service so everyone got to meet this mysterious person we were telling them about. The pastor showed much gratitude for our presence. The congregation provided much encouragement and confidence as they knew we were only at the beginning. That night we hung out with a youth group in another small town. They seemed to know the Captive Free name well; most of them were wearing a CF t-shirt from a previous year. We are going back to their church in November for a program and Sunday service I think.

On our day off we all kinda branched off. Shawn shaved his beard off; Sarah cut and added highlights to her hair; Janet got a perm; Paul played video games; Julie Brown visited some friends somewhere; Becky was intent on seeing A Walk to Remember; and I took a 6 mile hike. That night Janet accidentally locked herself in the upstairs bathroom for like 15 minutes until our host dad got home from work. None of the rest of us could get the door unlocked! We were staying with newlyweds and they were wonderful! They made us fresh-from-the-farm bacon; delicious! Our host mom had been a counselor on a Spoke-Folk trip that Daryl from South East's team had been on.

Anyway, so far it's been going well, the people are so wonderful!
-Elizabeth

Date: 9/26/2002

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Today we left Chariton, IA after being there almost 2 full days. While we were in

Chariton we met a little girl named Emma. She was a host sister for some of my teammates, but she was a huge blessing to all of us. When we arrived on Tuesday we were able to have dinner with the youth, and Emma was there. At first when we met Emma she was a little shy, but as we spent more time there her smile came out, along with the giggles, and they became infectious. On Wednesday we did a program for the youth, but we were treated to dinner before hand. Emma was there again, only this time she had a bunch of hearts made from construction paper in her hand. As we were getting ready to join everyone for dinner Emma sought out every single team member and handed us one of her hearts and gave us a hug. The heart said, "We had a great time. Thanks for sharing God's love!" That little thank you card that Emma had made meant so much to us. We hadn't even done our "official" ministry of our program yet, and here Emma was thanking us for being there, confident that she would have a good time. Whether she knew it or not, Emma taught me a lot about faith that night. She taught me how amazing something so simple like the faith of a child can be. In Mark, Jesus talks about having faith like a child. He says, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" It is simple faith like Emma's that God desires, and it is that simple faith that I strive to maintain.

Becky Cordes :)



Becky Cordes

Date: 9/28/2002

Submitted by: Sarah Robinson

Journal Entry:

Grace and peace to you from God, as well as from the South Central team! Here we are on our way to North Platte, NE for Sunday morning worship. Tonight we'll stay with host families. The last few days we have been in Grand Island, NE. As we travel, one of my personal goals is to find out what is each town's claim to fame. In Traer, IA, it was the grand "Winding Staircase" of wrought iron. In Grand Island, it was the Longest Parade in the World. They are even in the Guinness Book of World Records for it. The parade is to take place next week. Too bad we have to be on our way, it would have been awesome to witness.



Sarah Robinson

Thurs. night we stayed at First Presbyterian in Grand Island. We were planning to play some Ultimate Frisbee with the youth group when we got there. Due to inclement weather, we ended up chilling in their youth room with pizza and Nintendo with a few brave souls who showed up, as well as the youth leader Dave and his wife. On Friday we were to have a regular Family Night program, but there were some concerns about how many youth would show up as it was Homecoming for the local High School. As program coordinator, it's my job to come up with what we are doing in the programs, so I geared it more for middle school aged students, with a few more sing-a-longs. As people started arriving, we realized collectively that what we had was very young children and their parents for the most part, so we shortened our regular program songs to about the first 20 minutes and did another 20 to 30 minutes of sing-a-longs. We had a lot of fun, and you could tell how much everyone was enjoying it. God really blessed us with flexibility, as well as the sensitivity to realize when we had to change our program. I'm trying to imagine how the program would have gone otherwise. We would have lost the youngest children, and we wouldn't have been able to minister as well. It's very humbling to realize how much we really are in God's hands, and how much He is taking care, and will continue to take care of us. I pray that He will continue to show us His powerful ways, as well as continue to be with and bless us. May God bless you and keep you in His continual care.

P.S. We're going to stop at a Pony Express Station/Museum here in a few. Yay for bits of history and "claims to fame" that keep the journey exciting!

Date: 10/1/2002
Submitted by: Paul Corey
Journal Entry:



Paul Corey

Oct. 1st

The last few days have been amazing! Life on the road is better than I expected. Sunday morning we were able to play music for 2 worship services. In between the two we were able to hang out with the youth group. They were a great group of teenagers; it reminded me of home. Right after the second service we had to get going to our next stop, which was a program that Sunday night. We had quite the mixed crowd. It was a load of fun. I was very happy with this program because it was my first try at recording us live with the laptop, and it worked! I'm so happy that it worked because now we can hear ourselves play, and learn from listening to ourselves! Our day off after that was great; the scenery around our host home's house was just amazing! The one thing though, was that our van was pulling to the right, so we had to bring it to a mechanic. On Tuesday night we were suppose to have a program and, well, we found that our van was not fixed yet, and no one has a clue what's going on with it. God, however, worked it out so that the program was canceled, so we didn't have to worry about getting to the next place on time. We did however get there, and it's a beautiful house, and once again I can't say anything more than it's a great life out here on the road!

Date: 10/5/2002
Submitted by: Shawn Juers
Journal Entry:



Shawn Juers

Oct 5, 2002

I watched the white discrete lines flash by out the window as I thought about the last few days on the way to Thackerville, OK. The days are blurred, as I can't remember where I've been and where I am going anymore. For some reason, though, I feel invigorated and strengthened by the view of the forever strait road that narrows to the next stop ahead. There is something so beautiful about it, and I am completely addicted.

Stickerville, I mean Thackerville, however, will always be a clear point in my memory. We pulled up to kids busy with various activities outside "The Upper Room" community youth center. This place was overflowing with what must have been all the youth from this small southern town. We walked inside to a small brick place built and run by the young and young at heart. As we took our focus off of the boat that was sticking out of the wall on the left and the foosball and billiard tables to the right, we looked up and saw a couple of disco balls, colored lights, and a laser coming from the ceiling. Then our eyes focused ahead to a layered stage with the front end of cars sticking out of graffitied walls that held more colored lights. Our excitement was visible as we started setting up for what would be an unforgettable experience. The southern accented youth were extremely excited to have us. During Welcome Home, our purposefully mellow third song required us to concentrate over the conflicting claps of hands and watch to make sure that the couple of lighters that were lit didn't cause any trouble. Needless to say, we made an intentional effort to continue to "duck" often, to make sure God was the focus.

The next morning we attended a Charasmatic church service. Although a bit different than the Lutheran service I am used to, it was nice to attend instead of lead a worship for the first time since we've been on the road, and it was nice to see such energy directed toward worship. Although we all got a bit of an ego boost from the night before, we left knowing our program was awesome because of God and the peoples response to His promises. And, the little pokey things on my socks, pants, and even on my skin, will help the memory of this place stick!

Date: 10/5/2002

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

The past few days have gone by quickly, but they've been good. Wednesday we got to Hutchinson, KS where we had a mini-program with the youth. After supper we had youth group with them. They were fun. We did some worship songs with them and they asked us questions about Captive Free. That night Sarah and I stayed with the same host family.

Our host mom brought us to Braum's (ice cream place) a first for both Sarah and I. We ate some back at the host home and it was delicious! Sarah had brought her guitar and our host sister was in a band of some sort. So, as Sarah played, we all sang and our host mom listened. Good times. It was just one of those times to sit around and jam. We flipped page by page through Sarah's mammoth song book and it was a bonding experience with our host sister.

Thursday we arrived in Yukon, OK – hometown of Garth Brooks, yay. Anyhow, we hung out with our host families that night and the guys got to go rock climbing with theirs! They both enjoyed that a lot. Us girls flipped on the 'tube' and chatted with our host mom who was grading her students' papers for school. That night we stayed up and had a blast just laughing and talking over a game of Mexican Train (Dominoes).

Friday, I got to drive by Garth Brooks' childhood home on the way to the bank. It was a house... in a neighborhood... with other houses and people and cars... but definitely and utterly thrilling...:)

That night they had an Italian themed potluck for us and my oh my, spaghetti pie! It was very good. I tried a little of every spaghetti dish, needless-to-say, I was FULL. But it was fun; we had our program after that. It was a great night. The congregation was very open and inviting; the program was good; and we got a lot of time to converse with the congregation. They made me feel like I was at home in the Twin Cities. I'm not very sure why, but the town itself made me feel like that. I felt like I could relate to the people of Yukon, or maybe it was the spaghetti, I don't know.

-Elizabeth



Elizabeth Hoffer

Date: 10/8/2002

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

Hey Everybody! Saturday was a great night at the upper room! The next morning we attended a church service in town. Though we love presenting the YE worship service and/or providing special music on Sunday mornings, it was very refreshing to ATTEND a service; listen and watch. Especially because that church used a different format than what

most of us are used to, so it was nice to be exposed to something new ourselves. A lot of

the youth that had come to the Upper Room on Saturday were there at church and it was fun to see them again. It's always great to have at least a short time of consistency!

That night we did a program in Lawton, OK. We were on a bit of a time crunch between the time we had to set up and to actually do the program. We had like, two hours plus we still needed to eat supper. We didn't quite get too much time between our sound



Elizabeth Hoffer

check and our program and of course something would be wrong with the system... aaagh! Loud noises omitting from the speakers – bad, when there is no singing or playing. So, due to technical difficulties and lack of time, we held an acoustic program which went well! The congregation was very accepting, understanding, and generous! Our day off was low key, but I seriously didn't see any of my teammates that day – it was kind of strange feeling. Sort of like a void... there was just something missing. Oh yeah! The other five members of South Central! Tuesday we traveled to Broken Arrow, OK. We ate pizza with the youth group and then hung out with them at a local coffee shop. It was fun to chat and just sit around with the aroma of espresso, mocha, coffee, and well, I think you get the idea –yum! I went to the bathroom (no, that's not too much information) when I came out, everyone was gone; I'd been left! Oh no, I didn't have any way of getting ahold of the team because I don't have our team cell #. What's worse – they were in two different vehicles so they probably wouldn't notice until they got all the way back to the church. Luckily I had the host home list, so I called my host mom (this was before I had even met her) and she went up to the church to make sure they knew they forgot me. I was stuck there for like 45 minutes or something close to an hour – so it wasn't all that long. I just got a few strange looks from the staff. Oh well, I don't think it's worse than Janet getting stuck in a bathroom... okay, we tie. :)

Anyhow, it was lots of laughs when I returned to the group of people back at the church. Sounds like the program we're doing for them Wednesday night will have a lot of people – I'm excited!

Peace and Chicken Grease!

-Elizabeth

Date: 10/10/2002
Submitted by: Becky Cordes
Journal Entry:

Journal for Thursday October 10, 2002
Becky :~)

Exhaustion. That's what I'm feeling today - exhaustion of the body, mind and spirit. NO ONE EVER TOLD ME THAT TEAM LIFE WOULD BE THIS TIRING!!!! :) :) :) Thankfully I'm not the only person on my team experiencing this type of exhaustion. If you were to look at the faces of my teammates today you would see 5 other tired teamers. I say thankfully because if I was the only one feeling this tired I would be really worried! Praise be to God that He knows our needs even before we do. We were blessed with a slow day today, which is unusual for a weekday. We didn't have to travel or do a program, so we were able to get some of our team work done and rest. Yeah for time to rest and relax!



Becky Cordes

Date: 10/12/2002
Submitted by: Janet Linden
Journal Entry:

Saturday was our first lock-in, yeah! It was also the team's first time in Texas, yeehaw! By the way, we have all begun to acquire southern accents. There were about four jr. high kids and three adults there, which made for a nice, intimate evening. The kids, and parents were really into the sing-alongs and the puppet show, which was awesome. I

was really tired but then Sarah introduced the game Dead Cow to all of us. It got all of the kids involved and laughing, including me. I was, literally, rolling on the floor laughing. I thank God for humor and the people on my team who always know how to brighten my day, even if it is with a dumb game like Dead Cow. I am learning daily how much I need to just lay all my worries before God and that, even when I am dead tired, He will give me strength to keep smiling and persevere. Thanks be to God!

Janet Linden



Janet Linden

Date: 10/15/2002

Submitted by: Paul Corey

Journal Entry:

Oct 15

We all just had a great day off; a bunch of us went to Dallas Texas, and Elizabeth got to stay around to hang out with the Pastor's wife. Shawn and I were able to go into the Reunion Tower which is a very high tower with a ball on top, and in this ball is a rotating restaurant; it was cool... Also we were able to see where JFK was shot... We took pictures and stuff... It felt weird looking at this with excitement, because a person died there... It was kinda freaky for me, but I found it interesting.



Paul Corey

On the way back to get on the train there was this big carpeted ramp going down to the station. Well Becky told Shawn that if he rolled down this ramp then he didn't have to owe her 4 dollars anymore It was SOOOO funny, it was embarrassing... but the night before I was more embarrassed, we did one of the silly camp prayers in a restaurant with the pastor and a couple of other the church folk... it was the pastor's idea. We did the "Yo ho yo ho, a Christians life for me" song. Over all we were able to catch a lot of rest, and now we are on the road to the next place.

-Paul

Date: 10/17/2002

Submitted by: Shawn Juers

Journal Entry:

So here we are in Odessa TX. Tuesday night we had a small campfire in the backyard of our host home. Some of the youth from the youth group came and we sang songs and played football. It reminded me of my last three summers as a camp counselor. Our program was attended by an older audience, and it was nice to see lots of adults singing and dancing during the sing-a-longs. We get to stay in the same house for 3 days, which is a nice change. Just a glimpse of stability has lifted everyone's spirits.



Shawn Juers

After our program, we were surprised with a very generous donation. Even more uplifting were the words that came with the gift. It's amazing how powerful words can be.

Soon we will leave for Iraan, which we have learned is pronounced Ira Anne. We will get to see some of the Texas scenery along the way. We were able to make a quick trip to see a crater hole while here in Odessa, and although it wasn't quite what we were expecting, we were able to take note that almost every plant growing wild in Texas is pokey. My goal is to see three cacti and an agave plant on the way to Ira Anne, and resist the temptation to touch them. Why is it so hard not to touch a pokey plant anyway?

God's Peace,

-Shawn

Date: 10/19/2002
Submitted by: Sarah Robinson
Journal Entry:

Oct. 19, 2002

I pray that God is blessing you as much as He has been blessing us. Although I've been struggling a little personally this week, as I know all struggle at some times, it is impossible to stay down for long when you see God working all around you. I continue to be overwhelmed by the graciousness and generosity of the people and places we visit. All over (Texas right now) homes and churches have had nothing but encouragement for us. And we are the ones in "ministry!" So far we really haven't been that busy, but I know it's going to get crazy really soon, and we're going to remember these earlier days where we were able to take things a little slower. Here in Iraan we were on the front page of the newspaper, next to the stories about marching band and football, the most important things going on in town. We even got to go to the local football game and see the other two front page newsmakers. Not only that, but Saturday morning we went to a "reenactment" at a fort, and everyone knew who we were. It was wonderful to be able to talk to them about what we did, as well as enjoy what they were doing. God be with you through-out this week! In Christ's Love, Sarah



Sarah Robinson

Date: 10/22/2002
Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer
Journal Entry:

10/22/2002

After making front page in small-town-West-Texas, we were rejuvenated. Or maybe should I say, encouraged? Excited? Well, I think you get the idea. That was just plain cool! And having us all get a copy was definitely a wonderful added bonus. Sunday morning we did a service at the church in Iraan (Eye-ra Ann). It was a small church with 'big' believers. The generosity of that community touched me. Our (the girls') host mom and dad made us huge sack lunches! It was yummy. Mmmm... which we ate at Alley-Oop. It's a park outside Iraan dedicated to the cartoon of the same name, with a big dinosaur to climb on and a huge head of a man (Alley-oop cartoon guy maybe) with a cigar. Needless to say we had fun taking pictures and climbing. Anyhow, then we were on our merry way to Sonora, TX. We did an evening worship service there. It was great! The spirit was definitely moving in that church. Though the youth have had some hard times recently, they seemed to enjoy themselves. Afterward we had a great time in fellowship over a potluck of sandwiches. There were a lot of different kinds of sandwiches, so I had to try one of every kind, literally. I was st-uffed! The cool thing about Senora was we got to stay in a doublewide by ourselves. We love our host families, but it was cool to have a space of our own and not worry about getting in anyone's way (beside each others). Though, our day off we spent at our contact's home. She was like a host-mom. We took part in typical day-off activities – laundry, TV, finishing work, movies, internet, craft projects (Janet and I anyway), and again, I think you get the idea. Tonight we came to San Antonio, home of the Alamo. Yee-haw! Our host family brought us to the beautiful RiverWalk! It was gorgeous! We went with our host brother and dad and a youth from the church who has just begun the application process to Captive Free! We had a great time encouraging and educating him! Plus we walked around and laughed all night. We took a boat tour of the RiverWalk and had a hilarious tour guide which made the night even more fun. The night concluded with chips and salsa, nachos, and drinks (non-alcoholic of course) at a restaurant there. It was a great evening of fellowship and no-stress, something I had needed. It definitely hit-the-spot!



Elizabeth Hoffer

Date: 10/24/2002
Submitted by: Becky Cordes
Journal Entry:

Journal for Thursday, October 24, 2002

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Wow! We have been on the road for six weeks! When I think back to training it seems like so long ago, yet it also seems like just yesterday. How is that possible? So much is happening in my life that I am having a difficult time keeping the days straight. Living a life on team is one that can cause you great confusion if you don't pay close attention. Take this week for example. We left Sonora, Texas on Tuesday and went to San Antonio. We left there Wednesday and went to Hallettsville, and today we're in Brenham. Thankfully we're staying here until Saturday...then it's off to Pearland where we'll be until Tuesday. Moving place to place everyday can be very confusing. Even in the writing of this journal I had to ask my teammate Liz to help me remember where we've been and where we're going! Being confused like that makes me so grateful that we have a God who doesn't forget where we are or gets confused as to where we're going. He isn't the one who tells me we're going to Pearland next, but He is the one who has a plan for my life that He is anxious to share with me. The thing is, I usually forget that God DOES have a plan and I try and do my own thing. In the process I get lost and forget where I am. Thankfully, God is right there beside me willing to help me remember where I came from and where I'm going next.
Becky



Becky Cordes

Date: 10/29/2002
Submitted by: Paul Corey
Journal Entry:

We had a fun weekend. We were able to do our "head to the heart" worship service 2 times in the morning, along with a Sunday school thing... And at night we ran a more contemporary service. The pastor was awesome, his sermons were very good, and I learned some new things from them. Our day off was enjoyable, we went to I Hop with a senior in High school. He was awesome... Today Shawn and I went to the music store in town to fix up his guitar a bit, that store was HUGE... I mean LARGE... It was so cool. I haven't been able to mess with a good set of analogue synth keyboards in quite a while. Anyway, I hope all of you in the "real" world are having a good and safe time!!
-Paul



Paul Corey

Date: 11/2/2002
Submitted by: Sarah Robinson
Journal Entry:

Grace and peace be to you. I hope this journal finds you well and happy. It finds us exhausted! Last night we had our second lock-in, and it was out of this world! There were 115 5th -8th graders geared up for staying up all night with us. I had never before been in a situation like that. We played icebreaker games and a mini program before we settled down for bible study. We were all impressed with the insights these middle schoolers were able to draw from the bible study based on our theme of this year "Head to the Heart." And although it was exhausting and crazy, this lock-in was one of the most amazing activities I have ever participated in, and one I will remember for a long time. God truly blessed us in



Sarah Robinson

our endeavor. Even with all those kids there, no one got hurt or sick the whole night. He also kept each of us going when we didn't think we could play one more game or keep awake for one more minute. It was great preparation for our 10 Youth Quakes we are going to have starting in January. I'm ready now... bring it on! With God by our side, there is nothing we cannot do!

Thought for the day: Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer... May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12:9-12, 15:13

In Christ's Love, Sarah

Date: 11/5/2002

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

So the last few days have been great! Sunday morning we did three services at the same church we did the lock-in at. It was cool to meet all of the 'winter Texans' also known as 'snow birds'. I think each of us had at least one person stop us and tell us they were from where we were from. I personally had many being that Minnesota is known for its cold winters (of which I am happily evading, so far...) and it is also directly north of Texas. It was fun to talk to people from up north and hear about what's going on up there. Especially with Wellstone's passing not too long ago and the election coming up, well it was today, but I don't know the outcome yet. There was also a woman who stopped me to tell me how wonderful it was to have us. She mentioned how the contemporary music we do and other she's heard is such a blessing because it puts praise into something that connects with the way we live. And it's easier to understand, follow and learn. I totally agree because it's closer the way I talk than a hymn would be and new Christians/seekers especially need something familiar and comfortable. It was great to talk to someone with those views outside the YE realm.

That afternoon Sarah, Paul, Shawn, our host mom (Sarah's and mine), the church vicar, and I crossed the border and went shopping in Mexico. It was fun to look at all the little shops and do something with my host mom outside of the country! We all along with the rest of the host family and the boys' host mom, went out to eat at a Mexican restaurant (back in America now), and enjoyed an evening of fellowship, laughter, and food... Mmmm...

Monday we were off to South Padre Island. It was rainy and very windy, but we were determined to go; we had to see it! The guys were smart they wore their swim shorts, but us girls weren't really planning on swimming, until after we arrived of course. Sarah, Janet, and I jumped in fully clothed! The water was so warm and we had a lot of fun playing, but we realized – we, or at least Sarah and I, didn't have any other clothes with us. So we all went to a laundry mat to dry our stuff. Thankfully Becky loaned Sarah and I something to wear while we waited for our warm, dry attire. It was a fun time at the laundry mat, but I won't get into that, I could go on and on about Cotton-eye-Joe and fitting into dryers... oops... I may already said too much. We did get home in time for an excellent supper with grapefruit pie for dessert. We (Sarah and I) also chatted with our host family all evening and had fun spending time with them.

So, Tuesday (today rather) was a beautiful, sunny day. It felt strange to leave a place we'd been at for so long. My host mom said it was weird to have us leave. We felt as if we were a part of the family. But we went on our way to Edna where we stayed in an empty parsonage. We went out for supper at a dine-in Pizza-Hut where I only got the buffet because I wanted the salad, honestly. Paul and Shawn recorded some songs or at least attempted to. It was a relaxing evening after a busy weekend.

Now I just gotta see who won the MN senate race...

Ciao, eElizabeth



Elizabeth Hoffer

Date: 11/7/2002

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Bridge City, Texas is where we were the past two days. Today we got stuck in the mud. Literally. Texas has had about 10 straight days of rain...and I don't mean a couple hours of rain each day. No, I mean 10 straight DAYS of rain that never let up – until 2 days ago. With 10 days of rain come lots of things a person could do without – bad hair, the feeling like you're a wet dog when you have to shake off every time you walk into a house, wet socks, and mud. Yes, mud...lots of mud. Our team learned a very valuable lesson today – our van and trailer do not do well going through mud. Now, you may laugh and think, "Duh! I could have told you that," and we would have really appreciated it, but we didn't really know we were in a muddy situation until it was too late. So, there we were stuck in the mud trying to get pulled out by our host Pastor when our host mom Netta comes out scolding Shawn for getting dirty while hooking the chains to our van so we can be pulled out. Netta didn't want Shawn going to our next destination all dirty, so she got down on the ground, climbed under our van and got dirty for Shawn. Our team was taught another lesson today – a lesson in servanthood like that of Christ. You see, just like Netta got down and dirty for Shawn, Christ got down and dirty for us all when He took our place on the cross at Calvary. Because of Christ's sacrifice we are clean. Thank you Netta for such a vivid reminder of Christ's love.



Becky Cordes

Date: 11/9/2002
Submitted by: Janet Linden
Journal Entry:

Everyday God reveals something new and miraculous to me, lately it has been the surprising beauty of a state called Texas. Any negative preconceived notions I had about it have been tossed to the wind, especially the thought that it would be flat and boring. It is honestly one of the most diverse and gorgeous places I have ever seen! We were fortunate enough to stay at Camp Lone Star in LaGrange. There was nothing on the agenda but to practice and enjoy the quiet of the forest. I particularly enjoyed the luxury cabins and scenic lake view! Those two days were just what we needed, to learn some new material, relax, and most importantly, grow as a team. We had some intense discussions regarding devotions and realized that focus for the team and our purpose was a concern weighing heavy on every mind and heart. I praise God for how much he has already aided us in that department! The pastor's sermon on Sunday was about God's purpose for us...awesome. That small retreat was just what we needed, a refreshing couple days in his sanctuary. These past few days gave me a chance to reflect on the abundant blessings he has bestowed upon me, and how I take them all for granted. I know my purpose in life is to love and serve Him with all that I am...my whole life. Daily I stumble, but it is through my brokenness that He can build me up. I possess a gift greater than any that could ever be given: the gift of eternal life with Him. That excites me, just to realize, in the spiritual fellowship and community we have on team, we are experiencing a foretaste of the eternal feast to come! I had been told prior to coming on team that it will change your life. I am only just beginning to realize how true that statement is. I keep thinking, I get to spend an entire year in a new family of believers, worshiping my God and experiencing Him in so many different ways. What a gift, huh?

Janet



Janet Linden

Date: 11/12/2002
Submitted by: Paul Corey
Journal Entry:

Hello its Paul again. I'm a little late on this one, however, I remember the events well. We were in Nederland, and they set up a stage for us in a gym. They had colored lights and everything. It was fun, even though I was still a small bit sick. Actually I was quite sick before the program. But just before the program I was able to talk to a kid, he was cool, and he kinda brought my energy up. But once I began playing, God just shot my energy ski high. I was playing normally, and I had all the energy I needed. God's amazing like that. I love him so much, he just does small stuff like that for me all the



Paul Corey

time, like when I was sick we had a few days off at a camp, so I was able to rest. And just this past Monday he set me up with a host family that has kids that like the same things as I did. Or even simple things like fall leaves. God is just amazing. Anyway, back to events on that Tuesday/Wednesday. Wednesday we were able to head back to Thakerville, which is in my opinion is the coolest small town ever! If you want to know more about Thakerville check out our earlier journal entries. We stayed the night at the youth pastor's house. I just can't stop saying that Thakerville is just the coolest place ever! Everyone there that I've met were very nice. Anyways that about covers all that. As for me, God is just showing me so much about what he wants me to do in my future. Just like I expected, God is using this trip to continue molding me into the guy he made me to be, and in the meantime I'm able to share my faith with an incredible amount of people of all ages. Not to forget I get to play the drums on the side, lol. I'm glad that playing the drums is not the only thing God is teaching me to do better! Anyway, I hope you all out there in the "real" world are having a great time!

-Paul

Date: 11/14/2002

Submitted by: Shawn Juers

Journal Entry:

"Honestly I'm tired, and worn out from this fight", "but the giants in this land keep trying to pull me down." These words written by Brian Spar were running through my head as I thought about our last program.

It was two minutes until we were officially on. Drumsticks were missing. Feedback problems meant no monitors (the speakers we hear ourselves and more importantly each other with). My acoustic guitar pickup was still having troubles which meant I would have to mike it. The acoustics of the room were interesting, but there was no time to EQ. All this on top of an amp that went out a few weeks before and not a single cord to spare.

Honestly, I was tired, and this plague that infected our sound equipment had affected me. I just wanted to put my guitar down and tell everyone I couldn't play. I had lost my focus, and became weak. How could I not want to give a message to a crowd waiting so eagerly to hear? It felt like the devil himself was pulling me down.

Despite myself, despite my weakness, God used my unwilling self anyway. It was only Him that allowed me to "stand up tall and not go down." And it was only His work that allowed His message to be seen.

Its struggles like these that brings about weakness, which is followed by strength. Losing my focus has allowed me to regain, now stronger and sharper, the focus needed to do His work. That infectious plague is still present, but it won't bring me down. And "next time I'll be ready for the fight".

Ephesians 6:10-11

A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the devil.



Shawn Juers

Date: 11/19/2002

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

Wow.

The retreat this past weekend was great. I finally feel like I connected with some kids on personal level. I must say, it's a lot easier to do in a smaller setting. We played games,

sang songs, and even had a Sunday morning "service" I guess you could call it. I was surprised to see how involved the kids were; I think that's partly due to the awesome sense of humor their pastor has. What a funny guy!

I'm noticing now, that I'm surprised by a lot. In every journal or almost every journal, I say that I'm surprised by something, I wonder why. Maybe it's because I had expectations of what being on the road and meeting people would be like. I'm noticing how outgoing, encouraging, generous, awesome, and amazing (to name a few) people are out here on this long road we call "team". People I barely even know bless me every day, how cool is that? Way cool.

So many host homes I've stayed in have been so amazing also. I feel like I'm imposing by coming in and eating their food and tying up a bed, but they are so open and hospitable, it's like I have a family away from home. Because of that I don't really get homesick as much as I thought I would. I miss people back in the Twin Cities bunches, but I feel like I'm at home and comfortable in the places I stay. So that's awesome.

I found out I get to go home for Thanksgiving, one word: yay!

Anyhow, that's what's going on here!

Word,

Elizabeth



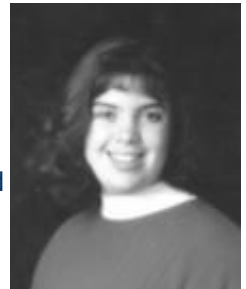
Elizabeth Hoffer

Date: 11/21/2002

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I greet you today from Clear Lake, Iowa where we have finally experienced winter-like weather. It snowed this morning! Thankfully not for very long and it was gone within minutes, but it was a vivid reminder that winter is just around the corner. Today was a very long, but very fulfilling 12 hour day. We started our day at the bright and early hour of 9 am (okay, so maybe it wasn't so early) and went to sing at the local nursing home. What a fun time we had! After spending about 45 minutes with them we left and returned to our host church, Zion Lutheran, to conduct our business of the day and get ready for a full 5 hours of programming in the evening. We had the privilege of spending the evening with 4th-8th graders. Zion has an after school program they run every Thursday for the 4th-6th grade kids in the area, and then they have confirmation for their 7th-8th graders immediately after that. It was like we lived our evening twice over. We hung out over pizza twice, did a "mini" program twice and played games twice. By the end of the night we were exhausted with very little of our voices left, but we were so fulfilled by all that happened throughout our day. I am continually amazed at how even when we are physically drained and so empty God continues to fill us through the youth we meet and the ministry He has called us to do. May you too be filled as you continue the work God has set before you.



Becky Cordes

Date: 12/3/2002

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

A-ha! The first journal of the month. Okay, so that's no biggy... but , yeah, no point there.

So, we just revisited a place in Iowa where we stayed at in the end of September called Boxholm – home of the Swedes (there town sign says that). It was definitely nice to see familiar faces. We spent the whole day at church on Sunday, 8am to 7pm or something of that nature. The time flew by, however. We did the morning service and workshops in the afternoon, followed by a lovely chilly supper and a program that evening. Because the 'audience' of the program consisted of a lot of the people who were at the workshops, it seemed much more personal. We had a wonderful time and I felt like we got our message across more effectively because of the added prior communication with the people.



Elizabeth Hoffer

During one of the workshops (of which all attended) we learned about prison ministry and the

Church of the Damascus Road (a local prison ministry – Lutheran based). We as a team really enjoyed the presentation and are looking forward to the possibility of going there sometime during our tenure. We are told the men at the prison especially enjoyed the worship time they got to partake in while attending a church service within the prison walls. I definitely would like to be a part of that experience and encourage their faith through music!

Monday night we all ate supper over at the pastor's house, it was delicious! We enjoyed a night of fellowship and laughter and ended it with a great game of Wizard of Oz trivia. It was sort of like Trivial Pursuit but instead of filling a pie, you build a rainbow, kinda cool, eh?

Today we traveled to Marion, IA (forgive my spelling of the town) where the youth director is friends with our very own National Bands Director – Julie Brown. We even got to see a picture of Julie in a pink 'cinderella' dress playing basketball (too bad we didn't make copies, that would've been fun) We love you Julie Brown! (a.k.a. Sista' Julie) We watched Men in Black II and ate pizza and salad! Paul picked out a fabulous ice cream for dessert– Peanut Butter Panic, we highly recommend it J Sarah even got to stay with her Great Aunt and Uncle who lived in town.

So let me end with a simple word of encouragement: Jesus Loves you and I and everyone else, even if you don't remember anything else from this journal, or any other journals for that matter.

Word
Elizabeth

Date: 12/8/2002

Submitted by: Janet Linden

Journal Entry:

I pray this journal finds everyone well rested and in good health. Our whole team has had an illness at one time or another but we are finally all well. Praise God!

Today was our last program before midwinter training. We were already running late and I accidentally missed a turn for Texaco. I pulled into a neighborhood to turn around and, after choosing a wide spot in the road, proceeded to drop the right tire of the van into a storm drain. Quickly, I drove up out of it an thought all was well..... but my hopes were shattered when I heard a loud hissing. I bolted out of the driver's seat to inspect the damage. My heart sank when I was the size of the gash in the tire. My team was, to my surprise, laughing about it. We had no idea how to lower the spare, where to put the jack, and etc. Then, the neighbors came out and changed the tire with their huge jack. What could have taken us hours was finished in minutes, with the help of Shawn and the neighbors. We had the chance to share a little of what YE was about with the guys who helped us out, which was awesome!

I thank God for those men who were willing to help us and for my team, who accepts me as I am, even when I do dumb things like this. I can only imagine how deep God's love runs, that he loves me and forgives me. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound . . .



Janet Linden

Date: 12/31/2002

Submitted by: Paul Corey

Journal Entry:

Hey I know its been a while sense I've written a Journal; oh well. Well New Years Eve was amazing. It was the first time I was at a worship service at midnight;. And I was helping run it, with not only my team but South East as well. We rocked the house, it was awesome! It felt like I was back at home with my worship band in my church; It was great; And it was great hanging out with South East. They were a load of fun! I haven't had a better New Years Eve.

And because I'm the first Journal entry since we got back together after Christmas, I figure I'll let you know how our days have been. I personally feel like I'm at home with these guys



Paul Corey

(my teammates). I feel like I left vacation and came back home. We all felt like we wanted to be at home for like a week more, but after like a day or two we all were very happy to be back on the road.

And to look on to the future, I am VERY excited, and VERY nervous about tomorrow night, which starts our first Quake. It's gonna be a lot of fun; however, we have a lot to figure out today and tomorrow morning before we get to the hotel. But I'll let the person who will write the journal for Thursday talk more about the Quake and the amount of stuff we need to learn!

Date: 1/2/2003

Submitted by: Shawn Juers

Journal Entry:

God is amazing. Our first quake is this weekend. We had three songs to learn before the weekend, not to mention skits, treks, ideas for time fillers, PowerPoint slides to make, a dance to DJ, and, well, you can understand a little apprehension about how this was going to be possible.

... Meanwhile, I can just see God up there going; ha, look at those guys squirm! Let's see if they've learned to put their trust in Me...

Well, we've gotten better, but of course we didn't rely on learning this stuff in our sleep miraculously. Instead, we ended up staying at Julie Brown's (our team director; a shout out to you Julie, you rock!) second home, the camp she used to work at. Well, this meant we could work on the songs as loud and annoyingly as we wanted, without worrying about what time it was or if it was bothering anyone. Throughout Wednesday afternoon and night we learned those songs, even put our own twist on them, prepared for the skits, and got the PowerPoint ready in a setting that was calming and relaxing. And how did this all happen? Well, through the work and connections of people in the office, but ultimately it was God of course. Thanks God. Yet again, you prove to be amazing.

Now God, how about a magic transporting machine so I can say a quick good-night to a certain someone? Oh well, it was worth the try. Good night Sara, I miss and love you!



Shawn Juers

Date: 1/4/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Robinson

Journal Entry:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, especially in this new year. I pray that you all had a beautiful and filling Christmas season. It's been a while since I've written one of these, and I'm so lucky I get to on one of the most exciting days in the year for us. Today is the second day of South Central's very first Quake! This weekend we are in the lovely city of Des Moines with about 200 rockin' fun Iowa youth. Both the musician (Tin Dorsey), and the speaker (Tom Matson) are fantastic fun to listen to, and have a great message of renewing your life for Christ and living on the edge for God. We were quite apprehensive going into the weekend because despite all our training, there is really no way to ever really be fully prepared for what Quakes and Congresses are. It has been really awesome to see the familiar faces of a couple of youth groups that we had met back in September and October. We love our peeps from Boxholm and Chariton, who are giving us so much support this weekend. Beside that, every time I turn around, there are more fun youth I have never met to talk to. I have the privilege of choosing Jr. Leaders to read throughout the weekend. Jr. Leaders are Sr. High youth that come along with the Jr. High youth groups to help out. This is a great bunch that are very fun-loving, and Christ-loving individuals. Now that we have survived our first so far, I am uber-stoked about the rest of our event season. I can only pray that these weekends are as effective for the youth that attend them as they have been so far for me. Until next time, may God hold you in His ever-giving and ever-loving hands because you are precious in His eyes.

In Christ's Love,
Sarah Robinson



Sarah Robinson

Date: 1/7/2003

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

Do I hear quake season beginning? Yep, that's right, this past weekend was our first of 11 events - 10 quakes and a congress! It was definitely a learning experience, but it got us geared up for the remaining 10. I personally entered the weekend having hardly a clue of what to expect, I just couldn't picture it, though other teams had explained at mid-winter training what to expect, well I get it now! Man did it wear me out! Luckily, Sunday night we traveled to Central City, IA and stayed with a past teamer. We relaxed and then some all Monday. Our host brother, Josh (from crossfire the year before last) shared some stories with us about his experience with an international team. Tuesday morning we left early to be back in Des Moines (where the quake took place) to do a chapel at Grandview college (a Lutheran school). It was a nice way to ease us back into rotation. They seemed to really enjoy our presence. It was sort of like a treat to have us considering they don't bring much music in. We got to stay at our contact's cabin in the woods and I made grilled steak and chicken for supper, it was kind of gourmet, kind of not considering I have little experience with a charcoal grill or any grill for that matter. Enough of that. Back to the quake - it was great to see people that we had met on the road earlier in our tenure. We got to spend quality time getting to know kids! It was also good to meet our speaker and (other) musician who also travel (maybe not as intensely) but they definitely helped me through the weekend. And though it was tiring, it was energizing in the same. They were all so thoughtful and awesome! It really let me know why I am here J
Until next time,
Elizabeth



Elizabeth Hoffer

Date: 1/9/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! What a day! I don't think I've spent a morning laughing more than I did today. Last night we did a program in Ames, IA and spent this morning tearing down and packing our trailer. As we were packing Paul was working on our bass guitar because it had mysteriously stopped working. Suddenly we hear a radio playing and it's coming from the amp Paul has the guitar plugged into! As Paul moved the guitar the signal became weaker and stronger depending on the direction. At almost the exact same moment all 6 of us burst our laughing as we realize our guitar is a radio antenna! Oh how we were laughing! Well, we weren't able to fix our guitar today, but we can have an AM radio station anytime we want! After getting over the hilariousness of our guitar turned radio antenna, we took off for our next destination.



Becky Cordes

Today we had the distinct privilege of traveling to Mystic, IA. I know, I know, you don't have the slightest clue where Mystic, Iowa is. Until today I didn't either, but now I will never forget. To help you out, Mystic is a small, small town in southern Iowa about 5 miles west of Centerville. Coming into town today, I have to admit, I wasn't too excited about doing our program. I was tired, grouchy, and I just wanted to crawl into a hole, and seeing the small town didn't help my mood any. God had other plans for me, though, and I was soon to find out what they were. Instead of letting me crawl into a hole, God introduced me to over 100 of His family members, and we had an AWESOME time singing and dancing and praising God. There were about 30 kids in the audience and we were warned that they weren't the best behaved, but I don't think I've ever seen kids who were more "into" our program as these kids were. By the end of the program almost all of them were in the front either on the floor or in a pew dancing and clapping with the music. People from neighboring towns came and the church was full! It was so full that we had to add about 4 rows of chairs in the back. How amazing! I would venture to guess that about 50% of the audience tonight didn't know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior and I can't even explain how uplifting it was to see every single person walk out with a smile on their face. I don't know if we made a significant difference in anyone's life, but I trust in God's plan for each person who was there.

Tonight, God taught me, once again, to never under estimate Him. Just when I think I know what a situation is going to be like...BAM! God surprises me with something I never imagined. But that's how our God is isn't it? He has plans for us that we could never imagine and continually surprises us with amazing people, places and events that we will remember forever. Driving into Mystic I was sure that tonight would be a let down. Now as I get ready to end the day I know that I will never forget this day. In the coming days and weeks ahead may you be able to see the surprises God has for you...they will be awesome!

Date: 1/14/2003

Submitted by: Paul Corey

Journal Entry:

Well that quake was exhausting. A whole lot of fun also!!! But our day off was well deserved! I'm gona miss Tim Dorsey, (he was the professional singer at our first two quakes) He wont be singing in the rest of our quakes... He was a very cool guy. Oh as a side note... if you're reading this... pray for our technology! Our projector is definitely on the fritz. No worries, God'll help us work it out. Wow, I'd like to say more, but I can't think of anything more to say. It was fun at the house on our day off. They had a hot tub! Talk about resting! I literally did nothing all day.. .just sat around on the high speed connection and surfed the web all day, and played some video games... A day well spent... lol. Anyway... yeah that's all I've got to say about dat.



Paul Corey

Date: 1/17/2003

Submitted by: Shawn Juers

Journal Entry:

Today was our first college program. We started the day playing for Bremwood, a children's home. I could really feel that our uplifting gospel message was an important ministry for this place. Becky's sharing had an extra umph of gospel in a way that really got through. Afterwards, we tore down and loaded up in 20 minutes with the help of some of the kids – a new record. That was especially awesome to have happened today because afterwards we went a couple of blocks down to start setting up in the Wartburg Chapel.



Shawn Juers

The acoustics of the chapel at Wartburg was awesome, and we fought the desire to ditch the PA. We had an unexpected turn out of just short of a hundred and had a blast sharing our program with peers excited to participate. With the rejoice filled clapping, dancing and singing, it was impossible to not have a blast. Afterwards, we made our way to several different dorm rooms. It was awesome to spend some time with peers in an environment I realized I miss. Being taken in and provided for by peers was an extra powerful ministry to me. Thanks to the members of Faith Alive for inviting us, and thanks to the awesome people who let us crash on their couches.

God's Blessings,
Shawn

Date: 1/21/2003

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

Journal for January 21st, 2003

Seven programs, one church service, and six towns all in six days – crazy! Needless to say we had a busy week especially considering we came off a quake with a program last Sunday night. So yes, we definitely deserved our day off yesterday.

First things first, as we may have mentioned, we went to Wartburg college on Thursday and it was AWESOME! Though we already had done a program that day, we gained a second wind and rocked Wartburg's chapel with a bunch of people our age – it was energizing beyond belief! We got to meet a couple people who knew some international teamers; they had just received word that the teams had made it safely overseas – praise God!



Elizabeth Hoffer

Anyhow, Saturday we returned to one of the first churches we played for in Chariton, IA. It was great to see people we had already met and see what has changed since our first visit. Sunday we did special music at the church service in Chariton. They had a traditional service which isn't what I'm used to, but I enjoyed it.

Moving on, Sunday night we went to a church in Newton, IA whose youth had attended the Des Moines quake a couple weeks ago. It was cool to see them because we recognized people. When we got to the church however, I was so tired! I just hadn't been getting much sleep which is mostly my own fault, but I was thoroughly exhausted from the hustle and bustle of our workload that week. However, I downed a couple cups of coffee and cheesy potatoes at the potluck (for energy, no less) and I was excited to begin the program! We had a great night and I felt like we got our message across clearly. I even wore a side ponytail for the hippo song (welcome back to the early 90's), so Shawn countered my hair attack by taking one of the bobbles that we use to wrap chords and put a pony tail in his own hair for the sales spiel, nice look Shawn, I think it really does something for you.

So think I'm about done with hair improvements? Oh that was just the tip of the iceberg – on Monday, 5 of us got haircuts! And Paul (mullet-man if you've seen any recent photos) chopped it off! He has short hair! Us girls have found our selves staring at it in amazement – we never thought the day would come when Paul would willingly let someone snip those red blazin' locks. The rest of us didn't change so dramatically, but now we feel all clean-cut with our cute hair! Thanks Newton!

So Tuesday morning, the pastor and youth director at that church in Newton did a devotion with us. We gave each other communion, spent time in peace and quiet, and prayed for each other. This was rejuvenating for me, I hadn't spent time in silence for a while and I needed it. It was so nice to be ministered to; we don't get too much of a chance to be the participants instead of leaders. I love ministering, but sometimes, be it only fifteen minutes, I just need a short break to listen and learn.

Tuesday night we did a program in Keokuk, IA where our director of national bands (a.k.a. boss) Julie Brown is from. We played at her church and met her parents. And try as we might, we weren't able to dig up much dirt on her as we hoped! But I found her confirmation picture on a wall and had a giggle to myself – it wasn't an incriminating picture of any kind, but it was congruent with the times of 1991 when it was taken, hey I support the era, I did wear the side ponytail just a couple days ago!

God Bless you! -Elizabeth

Date: 1/23/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Journal for Thursday January 23, 2003

Today we had the privilege of doing a short program at a nursing home in Florissant, Missouri. This was a special treat because we have only visited one other nursing home this year. We did a little more than a half hour of songs and we also did a puppet show. It was so awesome to hear all the adults laugh at the puppets! After our program was over we hung out for about 10 minutes and countless women and men came up to us thanking us for coming and asking us to come back soon. At least two of the women who came to talk with me had tears in their eyes and gave me tight hugs. Today was a huge testimony to me



Becky Cordes

that the ministry of Youth Encounter and Captive Free really is one for all ages. Except for the staff of the nursing home and some youth who came with us from a neighboring church, there wasn't anyone in that room under the age of 70 and I saw almost everyone smiling or tapping their toe to the music. I was reminded of the Head to the Heart Bible study we lead at our Quakes and Congresses. One of the passages we look at in the Bible is Ephesians 1:17-19. In those few verses Paul is praying for the church and one thing he prays is "that you may see the hope to which you've been called." When we visit nursing homes, churches, schools, detention centers, children's homes, and events and I see people of all ages, colors, economic statuses, and denominations praising God together I can see that "hope" to which we've all been called...the hope that one day we will all join together in worship and praise of our almighty and loving God. My prayer for you is that as you carry on day to day that you will be able to see that "hope to which you've been called" in your homes, places of work, schools, and churches. Blessings to you!

Date: 1/25/2003

Submitted by: Janet Linden

Journal Entry:

The long-awaited Quake season is finally upon us! I am so excited and still feel a bit awkward about being the Captive Free at a Youth Quake. These past couple of weekends have been awesome and rewarding, but exhausting at the same time. Saturday mornings come early.

In Jr. High, I really looked up to Captive Free and hoped that one day I could be like them. I see the way the kids look at us and realize what an incredible responsibility we have. We are ministering to them in everything we do, whether in front of them on stage, or out to dinner, walking the halls, interacting as a team, whatever - kinda scary huh? The best part of these weekends is getting to see different youth groups and how they operate. Family time is great, getting the kids perspectives on the day's events...okay, more like who danced with who on Saturday night. But really, seeing how excited the kids get about the weekend is really encouraging.

There have been many opportunities to talk one on one with some of the kids. What a gift, I cannot get over what a blessing this year is. What other situation would you be able to say you are a nomad, get all you require from the needs list, and worship with a different youth group everyday? (I know this is how I close all my journals, but I am still in awe.)

To all the other teams - even on the days you are so drained you want to collapse, just remember how you got here, how much you are worth, and how you want to spread that fire of Christ's love to all you come in contact with.



Janet Linden

Date: 2/6/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Busy, busy, busy! That's what we've been this week! After having an extended stay at the hotel following Wichita Quake 1 we have done a program every night and are now getting ready for Wichita Quake 2. Whoever said "time flies when you're having fun," was definitely right. It's difficult to believe we're 6 months into this outstanding journey. We have had some memorable moments on the road. There have been funny ones like Janet getting locked in the bathroom and us leaving Elizabeth behind (twice!). There has also been more serious moments like the night my mom called telling me my uncle had died. We have had programs we will never want to forget and those we wish we could! Our team has grown so much in the last 6 months. We came together as strangers then progressed to a "group" then "team" and now we're headed to "family". We have learned to take the good and the bad and love each other despite it all. Praise be to God we have Him to follow as an example! He takes our good and bad and loves us despite it all.



Becky Cordes

A prayer: Father God, thank you so much for your never-ending love You so freely give. May we take that love and pass it on to those around us. Amen.

All I have to say is if the next 6 months are anything like the past six months – BRING 'EM ON!
Peace to you!

Becky

Date: 2/11/2003

Submitted by: Janet Linden

Journal Entry:

I cannot beleive Quake season is almost half over! We just finished Witchita II, probably our most fun quake so far. It is so awesome to see old and new faces. It means so much when someone who you have stayed with or done a program for comes up and greets you warmly.

Ah, the life of a South Central Teamer, a different climate every day. The weather here is crazy! On day it's 65, now its 20°! Oh well, beats below 0! All of us are really anticipating our return to the great state of Texas. I can't beleive it is almost March! Whew! The year is flyin', but it's great fun.

God is really bringing our team together. I really feel like they are my family - how cool is that? That is one of the coolest things about this year, how God has brought us together despite our many differences. To all the other teams, I love you guys. To my family - all my love. And to Shawn - thanks for painstakingly copying this journal off a subway cookie bag. (Janet - that was wierd to type but anything for you - your awesome, and its my job :).) (<--- Whoa, the whole :).) part is wierd too.)



Janet Linden

Date: 2/20/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Yee Ha! We're finally back in Texas! This state has quickly become my favorite place in our region. Tonight we were in Temple, which is an hour north of Austin. I was so excited to go to Temple because our contact was an old college friend of mine. We were able to do a family night program for that congregation and we had a really good time. The junior high youth were planning on going to the Austin quake that starts tomorrow, so it was good meeting some of them. Other than that it was a quiet day on the South Central front. This coming weekend brings on Quake number 6 of 10 so we're finally on the downhill side of events. Well, gotta jet...peace out!

Becky :~)



Becky Cordes

Date: 2/25/2003

Submitted by: Paul Corey

Journal Entry:

Hey wuz up? It's been a while since I've been able to write a journal. Our computer needed to be fixed, and sadly it needs to be fixed again, but we are going to try to catch up with our journals and stuff before we send it back out to Dell.

Every time we have a quake we keep saying this was the best one yet! And we we're right every time. This past Quake was AWESOME!! Echelon was there, and Bob Lenz... it was great... Echelon was the other band there. They did basically what we do, except with a little bit more talent... Well let's just say they rock the world... Even if they do sing alongs, it sounds like a true rock concert... they were great... Shawn and I learned a lot from them. Anywho, right now outside there is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch of ice on the ground. We were going to do morning chapel with the local school here at Cedar Park, but there are three problems: Ice, A



Paul Corey

big hill, and a 15 passenger van with a trailer attached, that do not go together at all. But, we've got the computer back, yey for us! Anyway, I should end here, everybody else has journals to do as well.

Date: 2/27/2003

Submitted by: Shawn Juers

Journal Entry:

The Austin Texas kids are on fire! Last weekend was another quake, and yet again, this was the best one yet. Does anyone see a pattern here? Every quake is the best yet!

Well, after basking in the Texas sun Sunday (ha – sun on Sunday. Get it? SUN – day? Yeah? OK, sorry) a "northern" accompanied by freezing rain came rolling in, leaving us stranded for a few days. As you can see, being holed up has had its effects, so please excuse the format of this journal, which may contain some dramatization.



Shawn Juers

NEWS FLASH –

NEW RIDE OUTSIDE OF AUSTIN, TEXAS LEAVES RIDERS STRANDED.

"When we were trying to go one way, we started slipping the opposite way." This statement taken from a front seat rider of the new "Slip and Slide Van Ride," temporarily located on a hill near a lake outside of Austin, Texas, describes the beginning of a ride gone wrong during the first test run.

The ride, which consisted of ½ inch of melting ice on a 20 degree slope ridden on by a 15 rider capacity van with rear wheel drive and rubber traction appeared safe at first glance, but proved outright dangerous after the first test run.

"I had to crawl on my knees to get to [another rider] after the van had stopped," stated one rider who luckily escaped the ride before the worst of it.

Apparently, the vehicle, later found to be not properly designed for ice travel, had started slipping in the middle of the ride, much to the surprise of the test riders. The Van had lost all traction on the melting ice and got off track, slipping sideways. The Van initially came to a halt on the right side of the road about halfway through the ride, however, it was decided that the Van was not in an ideal location to leave. At this point, the secondary rider had gotten out, and stood beside the road. The remaining rider, in an attempt to get to the bottom of the ride, continued on, only to find the Van slip and slide again to the other side of the road, this time putting the tires in some huge muddy ruts. At this point, the Van was staying put for good. The secondary rider, wanting to reach the Van on the other side of the road, made a heroic trek across the icy slope by crawling on hands and knees (for maximum traction) across the icy hill. Upon rendezvousing with the primary tester, the duo made their way back to the rest of the eager crew, waiting back at home base. Janet, Liz, Paul, and Shawn were quoted collectively saying "we're just glad everyone is OK."

With the help of Captive Free's heroes of the week, Jo and Hermin, the Van was towed out of the ditch and the test crew taken care of. The crew was overheard giving praise to God for people like Jo and Hermin. Apparently, without such bold workers of God, Captive Free South Central would not be able to function.

Date: 3/7/2003

Submitted by: Janet Linden

Journal Entry:

Where did February go? Honestly, the days are flying by and it is easy to forget where we have been in weeks past. Spring has come in Texas...yeah baby! The past couple of days were spent in Hallettsville, TX, where we have been before, but it was awesome to

come back! (Although, the last time we were here it was our fault for the flooding happening. It was raining again when we got here this time too...guess who caught the blame for that?) I am blown away by their hospitality...they put us up in a hotel, gave us care packages and made sure we were as comfortable as possible. We did a program for them last night and, in that intimate crowd, I truly felt the presence of Christ. I pray we blessed them half as much as they blessed us. One of the best things about this year is seeing Jesus alive in His church. In the midst of the chaos of daily schedule, it is so easy to forget why we are here. Then cool people like those in Hallettsville remind us. To share the love and joy we have in Him with all we meet! We are currently on our way to Houston for another quake, the sun is shining and morale is high! God's blessings to everyone who reads this – I love you.



Janet Linden

Date: 3/11/2003
Submitted by: Shawn Juers
Journal Entry:

Our last Texas Quake has ended with the first ever Houston Quake. The smaller size of the Houston Quake gave for an intimate setting. By the end of the weekend most of us had spent some time with every church, and it was awesome to see just how much God was at work in each group. I really feel like a majority of the people there had a good understanding of our theme, as during our treks the kids made some excellent extrapolations. I must admit that another highlight of the weekend was working with Cathy Pino and Boo! Light of the World, That's Where He Will Be, and Servant's Prayer are three songs that our team plays that were written by Cathy Pino, so of course, we played all three this weekend!



Shawn Juers

Although our team is blessed with the opportunity to do 10 quakes and a congress, the realization that the event season is almost over is not as pleasing as one might think. Sure, events involve a lot of stress from the energy, flexibility, preparing, socializing, music playing, lack of sleep, sharing of yourself, on the spot come up with somethings, etc, that they require, and we leave exhausted beyond belief, but the ministry that happens at events is something that is so special and rewarding that it is hard to think we can't do them all year long. Somehow, I gain my energy through these draining events and always look forward to the next one. For example, after this quake this was one of my energy boosting thoughts.....

We are just one team and one year of ministry, just a speck in the youth encounter world, which is just a speck of the world wide church. How amazing to think that there are 7 other national teams and 5 international teams this year ministering right now.

Of course, that isn't deep enough for me so I continue in my thoughts ...

If that amount of ministry isn't mind-blowing enough, think about how many years youth encounter has been doing this ministry. And youth encounter is just one organization, one part of so many other ministries happening every day. The ministry that God has used our team for is so big, yet so small. I am so excited to be just that one little speck of God's work. And our team's last day of team ministry in August, with everyone back in Minneapolis, is just the eve before the first day for next years teams, who shortly thereafter spread across the globe. How amazing!

And my great conclusion...

God truly does transcend time and space, and is an incredibly active God.

I know, I know, once again my "deep thoughts" have concluded to a no-brainer statement. But it's those kinds of realizations that energize me to make the last goodbye at a quake the first move towards the next destination in my walk with God this year (after a day off of course), and excites me to continue being a part of the awesomeness of God.

God's Peace,
Shawn

Date: 3/13/2003
Submitted by: Sarah Robinson
Journal Entry:

March 13, 2003

Hello everyone! Grace and peace to you from God our Father! I know I haven't written a journal in a while, so it's good to get it going again. It's so great to read other teams journals, as they give me great inspiration to continue in ministry as well as to continue writing journals. Shout out to Scott on Watermark who has to have some of the greatest random journals ever. If you haven't read them, I recommend you do.



Sarah Robinson

Our time here in Texas is quickly drawing to a close, as we head up toward Missouri and Nebraska for our last few Quakes and Congress. We had three fantastic Quakes down here in Austin, Dallas and the 1st annual Houston Quake. We met so many awesome people and got to hang with Echelon, Pool Boys, and Cathy Pino (and Boo on da bass!)-some incredible musicians. One of my favorite parts of each weekend gathering is the Variety Show that happens on Saturday afternoons. It is a great opportunity for the junior highers to get up on the stage and be encouraged by everyone in whatever they do. I'm always amazed by the true variety of talents that are displayed. Singing, dancing, joke-telling and more. Today, I want to tell you about Barney. He was one of the jr. highers at the Quake in Houston. We had met Barney before when we were in Nederland, Texas in the fall, and it was great to see him again. Barney's varietous gift was storytelling. He wanted to share with us all how Jesus lifts him up when he gets down. He had everyone spellbound as he retold the account of his misadventure being someplace he shouldn't have been (the workout room) at some time he shouldn't have been there. Then he proceeded to tell us about how he was on the treadmill when things got a little out of hand and he ended up hanging on for dear life as his knees and ankles drug on the treadmill at what must have been like 25 miles an hour! The best part of this story was that Barney was actually able to relate this to God picking us up, as well as connecting it to a Psalm about turning to the Lord in the midst of adversity. Well, Barney told it better than me, but it was beautiful to be able to see faith in action like that. God bless Barney and all the cool jr. highers we've met down in Texas, we'll miss ya'll a lot!

Psalm 107:1-9
In Christ's Love,
Sarah Robinson
Write us at:
CFSC@youthencounter.org

Date: 3/14/2003
Submitted by: Becky Cordes
Journal Entry:

Lubbock, TX--our last stop in Texas before heading north for the rest of the year. Today is a sad day for me because I have quickly become attached to the state and people of Texas. The people we have met and the places we have been were all top-notch. I'd just like to take this chance to say "thanks" to all those we've met and stayed with while were in Texas. You have been a huge blessing to all of us on South Central. May God continue to bless you in all you do!



Becky Cordes

Date: 3/18/2003
Submitted by: Janet Linden
Journal Entry:

Okay, I'm sure other teamer will understand this. You know how there's that one food that everyone on team likes, and you buy it at every gas station, Walmart, wherever

you see it? Well, on SC its fritos cheddar ranch flavor twists. We buy them every chance we get. They are equal to no other snack - we love them.

So anyways, we think the fritos company is discontinuing the cheddar ranch kind cause we can't find them anywhere! This is extremely upsetting to all of us. We are going to start mercilessly calling the company until they remarket the product. If you actually read this journal and care in the slightest (I'm impressed) give fritos a call for us. We'd appreciate it. Thanks God for yummy things like flavor twists!



Janet Linden

Date: 3/26/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

HELLO! Where did March go? Backup... did we even experience February? It's difficult to believe it's almost APRIL! So, we're almost done with all ELEVEN of our events. Whew, talk about a crazy spring! We've been so blessed this winter and spring by being able to spend our weekends with junior and senior high youth. We've been able to hang out with over 3,000 youth during our weekend events... what a trip! And let me tell you... there's NOTHING like having 600 junior high youth rocking out to Christyde, like we did in Wichita. Or like the 500 youth we had in Dallas with the Pool Boys. Even at our "smaller" events with 150 - 250 youth--the youth were amazing and so energetic. So, here's to all the youth who were at Des Moines, Quad Cities, St. Louis, Wichita I and II, Austin, Dallas, Houston...THANK YOU! Thank you for who you are as children of God. Thank you for allowing us as Captive Free to hang with you for a weekend. We really enjoyed getting to know you! To those of you who want to keep in touch, check out www.youthencounter.org and visit the discussion forums. They're a great way to keep connected with us and with others who attended your quake. And to those of you who are going to attend the Kansas City or Omaha Quake... the fun is yet to come! Oh, I can't forget about the Kansas City Congress... we're looking forward to a weekend packed full of fun. God bless y'all. You have been a highlight of our year!



Becky Cordes

Date: 3/29/2003

Submitted by: Janet Linden

Journal Entry:

All I have to say about Congresses is... Coffee Houses rock! Wow. We were really worried about having enough material to last an entire hour and a half. In reality, we had enough to go all night! People kept coming up on stage (alright, after a little prompting) and sharing their musical abilities with us. Some highlights: Death metal nursery rhymes (had us in stitches), a lovely trio of ladies with amazing voices, and the birth of Strawberry Giraffe... a song written by me and Liz to the tune of our program song Welcome Home. Liz and I also jammed out with Shawn and Paul and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles song was born. We haven't laughed that hard in a while. Paul, Shawn, Liz and Sarah were all under the weather. It was so nice to make fools of ourselves and really weird out some highschoolers. I thank God for that memorable night that we'll all remember.



Janet Linden

Date: 4/1/2003

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

Ah, marvelous Tuesday... the beginning of another next week on Team. We had our congress this past weekend and Sunday evening traveled to a church in Olathe, KS, for an acoustic (no sound equipment) program. Though I was tired from the congress (Sr. high event), I somehow gained a second wind for the program. And it was a great

program indeed! The people who attended were awesome and energetic, we had a blast!

Before the program we had subs and chips with the youth during their lent bible study. I think it was a journey through the book of Mark, but I enjoyed learning along with them. The man who led it (I found out later) was my host dad, who ended up teaching me a lot during my stay. The first thing my host mom did when we got to their house was make chocolate sauce. As in - prepare from scratch, and it was mighty tasty on vanilla ice cream may I add--yum! On Monday night we attempted to conspire against my teammates - for April Fools was quickly approaching. However, we couldn't really think of anything, but it didn't matter, because on this very day, not one of us pulled a prank on another... well, except for the office.



Elizabeth Hoffer

We had to do something, it was April Fools Day! So Janet called the office in attempt to pull a fast one on them, but we came up unsuccessful, though laughing the entire time she was on the phone.

From Olathe we traveled to Nebraska and it was a long van ride. Becky and I are staying at a farm and tonight across the way, were train tracks... on fire! It looked cool so our host sisters and Becky went to check it out and had a dandy time doing so. Meanwhile, I chatted with my host mom about random topics and got re-acquainted with my email J
Word, brothas and sistas in Christ!
Until next time--God's Peace!
Elizabeth

Date: 4/10/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

What an amazing past three days! We have been so blessed by the communities we have visited. On Monday afternoon we arrived in Wilber, Nebraska a day early due to a snow storm we encountered on Sunday. We stayed with Irma who is 90 years old and still living by herself driving herself to work at the town's Czechoslovakian museum, which she has been working at since it opened 40 some years ago. While we were in Wilber, Pastor Jim was able to hook us up with a mechanic to FINALLY get new rotors on our van. On Wednesday we did a program for the community at the town's Lutheran church. We were so blessed to have almost 100 people there! The ladies of First Lutheran and Pastor Jim did everything they could to make sure we were taken care of, including helping us out with our mechanic bill! We discovered that small towns sometimes have the best restaurants! Yosties was a favorite of our team. The chicken fajita salad and their cookie dough Yostie were favorites of mine. Yum yum! Today we left our friends in Wilber and traveled to Osborne, Kansas for our first outdoor concert of the year! The members at Faith were so excited for our visit. They got a semi flatbed truck for us to set up on... we felt like rock stars! It was awesome to watch cars drive by while we were sound checking with looks of wonder on the passengers' faces. Some of the cars that drove by came back at 7 for our concert! It was so cool. When we first started our concert everyone was so far away from the stage, but by the end everyone had moved right up close to the stage. I don't think I will ever stop getting goose bumps when I see adults and children praising God together. Every time I am privileged to witness that, I think, "This must be what heaven is like." And I long for the day when that will be a reality. In Philippians 2, Paul says, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Look for those glimpses of heaven here on earth, embrace them, celebrate them, and make them happen more often! Grace and peace be to you!



Becky Cordes

Date: 4/28/2003

Submitted by: Shawn Juers

Journal Entry:

The last South Central Quake is now over. With Daniel's Window as the guest artist, Bill

Yonker as the speaker, and God's presence, I can say once again that this was an awesome event. Going into this quake I was concerned about the energy level, being that there were a smaller group of kids here (about 90). But, I was instantly proved wrong when the first celebration started. The kids were excited to be there and the energy level went through the roof. Anyone who might have had their excitement in reserve had to let go when Daniel's Window took stage. Seriously, Daniel's Window rocks my face off! They proved to be a huge inspiration for me. And Bill, with his pre message, hands in the air like you just don't care dance (or the Yonker as we've decided to call it) and excellent "I tell you that to tell you this" messages were the highlights of each celebration for many.



Shawn Juers

Tearing down Sunday afternoon was a bittersweet moment. It marks the end of the event season, and the soon coming vacation bible school filled summer. Had I not kept myself busy, I think a tear might have leaked its way from my eye. Instead, I interpreted the feelings that the little teddy bear that always accompanies me on-stage felt. An excellent diversion while I kept myself in control. Then I bought some of Daniel's Window's funky glasses that make everything rainbow colored and in groups of three or more. I tried to convince my teammates to let me drive while under the influence of this new perspective, but I was instantly denied. So instead, I settled for tearing down while wearing these glasses.

Tearing down is my least favorite activity ever. It always happens after the event or program, when you've already had to set up, meet people, perform with enthusiasm and focus, say goodbye, and get the appropriate thank you's out. Now all those things before the tearing down part are easier to do with joy and excitement, just by their nature; but having to tear down all our equipment and organize it back in the trailer after having done those things, that is not always the easiest to do with joy. But this time I had funky glasses on.

And I thought a lot about perspective as I hauled heavy speaker cabinets and awkward cases through rainbow colored hotel glass doors that insisted to close right as I got there. Although I was physically and mentally exhausted with the post-event down period of reflection and relief, and all those other things had come and gone, it was such a joy to be able to tear down one last time after an event. My least favorite time had turned to joy. Why? Well, the glasses helped, but really, it was a joyful response to be able to tear down after seeing God's amazing grace work through the lives of participants and leaders for one last weekend. This weekend, and all the others, God was present and lives were changed, seeds were planted and roots grew stronger, and now it was time to pack up and move to the next place where this would happen again. How could that not be joyful?

It's amazing what a change in perspective can do. Choose joy! And driving under the influence? I won't need those glasses to make that long drive a joy with this new perspective.

Date: 4/29/2003

Submitted by: Elizabeth Hoffer

Journal Entry:

Journal for April 29, 2003

Dear Diary,

Oh wait, that's not what I mean....

Anyhow, I am sad now that our quakes are officially over. We were definitely lucky to have so many (11). I was personally blessed by the experiences I've had at the weekends! It made the ministry that I strive for here on Captive Free more evident and purposeful to me. The hands-on aspect of the quakes is fun as well as encouraging. They defined the reason God has called me here and I will miss them dearly. Though, I hear VBS is also a great place to do more hands-on ministry as well, so I am definitely looking forward to it.

On Monday, we were staying in Overland Park, KS (right outside Kansas City). We did an acoustic program for the youth on Sunday night and went off to our host homes. Our host dad's roommate had a dog named Jumbles. Jumbles was a hyper pup and was easily excited when he got to come out and meet Shawn and I. I like dogs, not all of them, but a lot of them. It wasn't that I didn't like



Elizabeth Hoffer

Jumbles, but apparently he didn't like me or something. It could have been the fact that I stepped on a foot or his tail because when I bent down to pet him he practically tried to bite my arm off. Our host dad heard Jumbles growl and came in the room after the split-second confrontation. "Did he bite you?" he asked

"No," I replied in a nothing-happened-I'm-floating-on-air tone of voice, "he just nawed on me for a sec, but there was no blood shed, so it wasn't a bite. It's all good." But really it wasn't. That hurt and in the coming days a light purplish blue, then orangey-blue appeared around that area of my wrist. There were a couple places where he broke skin, but it was so minor, like I said, I didn't shed blood. But I hid the wound from my host dad under a sweatband for the remainder of my stay. I half felt embarrassed and ashamed that a dog bit me and it hurt, and half felt bad that it was his friend's dog. I felt that it would have been tattling on Jumbles had I said something. Sometimes I'm like that with God. Something happens and I try to hide it from Him. Instead of telling Him what's happening with me, I put a sweatband (or a mask of some sort) over a situation until it takes its time to heal on its own no matter how painful. But what I need to do is at least tell Him and trust Him, and know that there is no reason to be ashamed of what's happened or what I've done, because Jesus came to erase all that.

God Bless ya'll!

Call on Him when in need (which technically is all the time)

Word.

eElizabeth

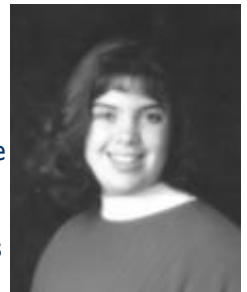
Date: 5/1/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Slow. That's what this week has been. We are in Joplin, Missouri today...we've been here since Tuesday, and we're not sure how long we're going to stay. I guess that's just one of the hazards of planning our schedule as we go along! Our stay in Joplin has been quite fun. Yesterday we took a road trip to Branson and visited Silver Dollar City. Thanks to a member of the congregation, we were able to go for free...what a blessing! We spent the day doing some team bonding while spinning upside down on Wildfire...there's nothing better than singing Daniel's Window while spiraling around at 60+ miles per hour! Today was exactly what our team needed...some time to enjoy each other again. This past winter we have been extremely busy with event after event, and while those were FANTASTIC they left us little time to enjoy each other as friends. I don't know why, but I am always amazed when God follows through with His promises. He promises to take care of us...to provide for our every need...even the need to have fun! Thank you God for keeping your promises!

In Christ,
Becky Cordes



Becky Cordes

Date: 5/3/2003

Submitted by: Janet Linden

Journal Entry:

Well, here we are in Wichita, KS, on a dark and stormy night. The air is humid and the sky looked volital when we arrived. We are camping out at the church tonight, which has been really fun so far (Sarah and I attempted to have a "dance party" in the gym but no one was very interested. Their loss! As the rain falls, all I can think of are tornados. Yup, it's spring in tornado alley and I am a little nervous about that. But, even if we do get caught in severe weather, I know God has the situation under control. i got to thinking about how much danger we face every day on the road. Crazy Houston traffic, lifting heavy equipment (the big black birthday cake as I 'affectionately" call it!) heavy wind and rain in Louisiana, deadly steanch from three month old sweat soaked sandals, well, you get the idea. Through all that God has sheltered us and let us have one of the greatest adventures of our lives. Well, I'm off to make some shells and cheese with sarahbear! I'm praying for all of you on the road and at home. You know I love ya!



Janet Linden

Date: 5/15/2003
Submitted by: Becky Cordes
Journal Entry:

Journal for Thursday May 15, 2003

We've busted out of the South Central region and have decided to expand our horizons. We've moved into the West Lakes territory for a few days...WE'RE IN FORT WAYNE, INDIANA! We have had an awesome time visiting Sarah's home town this week. Last night we did a program at her home church, St. John's, and then this morning we lead chapel for the kids at St. John's school. All week we have been on a tour of Sarah's life, visiting schools, meeting people, hanging out with her family...it's been awesome! We've been so blessed by Sarah's family...they have generously opened their home to all of us, and they're undergoing major renovations in their kitchen! Despite having the refrigerator in the entryway and the pantry in the hall, Sarah's parents and brother Matt made us feel like a part of their family this week. We were even able to get a new windshield to replace the cracked one in our van! Wahoo! Tomorrow we're returning to our region...our few days of joyriding in Indiana are coming to an end. I wouldn't have chosen anywhere else for our few days of joyriding...Fort Wayne has been good to us!

Thanks to Sarah's family for all they did for us...you were a blessing!

In Christ,
Becky Cordes



Becky Cordes

Date: 5/17/2003
Submitted by: Janet Linden
Journal Entry:

"Oklahoma where the wind comes sweeping down the plain." Yeah, we are back in Tulsa. Sarahbear and I had the privilege of staying with an amazing woman named Ruth who not only made us popcorn and watched Sword and the Stone with us, but told us wild stories from her adventures in Africa! It made me so excited to hear about them because one of my dreams is to live there for some period of time. The way her eyes sparkled when she told her stories truly kindled the flame, no threw lighter fluid on it, if ya know what I mean. She told me to follow that passion I have and seek God's will and favor. I have met so many really inspirational people along the way and I thank them for sharing their faith with me. Each conversation has built my faith and brought me to new grounds in my walk. God's peace and love!

in God's Grip,
Janet



Janet Linden

Date: 5/27/2003
Submitted by: Shawn Juers
Journal Entry:

Indescribable. The moments when you can just know God is present are indescribable. We started training for vacation bible school a few days ago at Lee Valley ranch in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The Black Hills are a very special place for me. It's where I spent the summer before team being a counselor at Atlantic Mountain Ranch, a Lutherans Outdoors camp that is literally a mile down the road from Lee Valley. Those of you who have had a camp experience may know the many deep memories that come when reflecting on your summer as a counselor. Naturally, being only a mile away made



Shawn Juers

those memories return very clearly. Amazing ministry moments around camp fires, living in God's awesome creation, all the friends made during the summer, all the campers who were touched each week, and the place where I met a friend I'd like to spend the rest of my life with; these memories were powerfully returned by the familiarity of the hills and landmarks that make the Black Hills a holy place for me. Just being there refilled me. It humbled me and silenced me. It brought back that closeness with God that you can feel burning in your heart. It brought back that indescribable moment of presence that I've been longing for.

After a few days in fellowship with the NW, SW, and NC teams, this place has become even more special. The time spent making a joyful noise with fellow teamers in worship and praise was icing to the cake. Sometimes, describing the beauty of God can seem so hard. We can see His omnipotent power in the creations He's made, we can feel the Spirit's presence in the moments that we strive for, and we can see His plans for us by reflecting on our past, but truly describing how beautiful God's presence is is simply impossible.

"You are my strong melody, You are my dancing rhythm, You are my perfect rhyme." Although insufficient, these words to me are a good attempt. "You are beautiful my sweet sweet song."

Date: 5/31/2003

Submitted by: Paul Corey

Journal Entry:

Hey its been a long long time since I've written here! But no worries, I will write a lot more from here on out! I had a great time at VBS training. The camp we stayed at was amazing! Lee Valley is an awesome camp! Dick and Cynthia (the camp Directors) are absolutly wonderful people! It was great to spend time with the other teams. It was hard at the other trainings because there were too many people there. I actualy felt like I got to know more of the other teams at this training, and it fired me up for not only the rest of our time together as a team, but fired me up for the rest of my life. I found many things there at Lee Valley - I found what God has made me to do with my life! Many of you guys from Lee Valley probably saw what I was doing toward the end. I found that I more than just enjoy recording, it feels like I'm doing the thing I'm supose to do. You know the feeling you get when things just seem so... right? When I was recording the group that was playing for the communion service, and when I got to record something for Alicia I just was so excited about it! So at this moment I am looking into recording schools, hopefully a christian school as well... we'll see about that! God has a plan for everything... I sometimes completely forget that! He's got my back, and this whole year I was worried about what I'm going to do with my life..... for no reason... God's got it under control... and I know that more now... and I hope to know that more and more every day... And begin to trust God more and more as well! I hope you all are having a good time at VBS - I know we are!

-Paul



Paul Corey

Date: 6/3/2003

Submitted by: Shawn Juers

Journal Entry:

It's amazing how much a person can learn from a preschool aged child. Sometimes, if you watch them, you can see through their eyes. It's no wonder that Jesus made reference to having faith like a child. When I think of faith like a child I think of an unconditional, innocent, completely trusting, completely dependent faith. It's a faith that is ironically harder to have as I grow older.



Shawn Juers

Why is it that as we grow older, and our faith grows "stronger", we so easily stray from the faith like a child that we're called to have? For me, it seems like the older and more wiser I become, the more easily I am distracted by thinking and worrying about theological issues, and loose sight of the simple and amazing fact that God is my father and I must need Him, love Him, and trust Him. I've learned that a return to the basics is an essential step to, and the foundation of

my faith.

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

A child who believes in Santa Clause is absolutely certain he exists. A child is sure that Santa will come Christmas morning, just as he or she hopes. The child isn't concerned about the troubling thoughts of how Santa is supposed to get to every house worldwide in one night, how Santa can eat all those cookies and drink all that milk, or how he fits down the chimney; the child simply believes that Santa exists.

Why is it a struggle to have the same faith in God? I see evidence of His existence constantly, yet the same questions that allow me to grow in my faith also hinder my faith.

This week, challenged with an understanding of different theological views, I fall back on the basics that bring comfort and peace. Regardless of answers that may be right or wrong or really of no importance, God is my God, and although I struggle with troubling thoughts of how He is, I can rest assured that I know that He is, and I need Him, trust Him, and love Him, and He loves me.

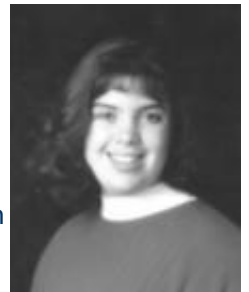
Date: 6/5/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Yeah for VBS!!!! I think the next two months will be my favorite time of the year. This week has been amazing. The children here in Levant are so loving and fun! We've been learning about the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness have been our themes this week. Tonight we had a program and picnic with all the kids and their families. At the end of the night we as Captive Free were told we were going to have a pie eating contest. Yeah, right. Give us six pies and we're not going to eat them! What was supposed to be an eating contest soon turned into a pie fight. We were quickly covered in butterscotch, banana, chocolate and peach pie! After showering off by hose we had to quickly pack our stuff before the rain came. Tomorrow we're off to Burlington, Iowa! Blessings to you all!

In Christ, Becky :~)



Becky Cordes

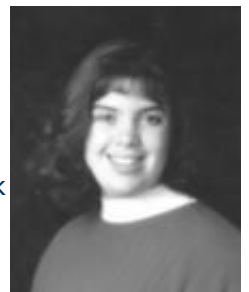
Date: 6/19/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes

Journal Entry:

Wichita, Kansas is where we're at this week, and I love being at Grace Lutheran! Janet and I are staying together and our host family is AWESOME! This has been a great week full of laughter and good times. As we've been learning about the fruits of the spirit again this week I've started to reflect on this past year and all I've learned. It dawned on me this week that we're less than 2 months away from being done. Our year is almost over! This year has taught me so much about how to Grow Love, Plant Peace, Produce Patience, Pick Kindness, and Sprout Joy. I've learned that it's important to be intentional, especially when times are hard and things aren't going your way. And let me tell you, there have been many times this year when things haven't been easy! But when I or one of my teammates was intentional about showing love, peace, patience, kindness or joy things were so much easier! So my challenge to you...be intentional! It's so worth it!

In Christ, Becky :~)



Becky Cordes

Date: 7/3/2003

Submitted by: Becky Cordes
Journal Entry:

Surprise, surprise we're NOT in the South Central region! We've had an uncontrollable break in our schedule so we took a trip to Minneapolis! This was a great surprise for Elizabeth and me since we are both from the Twin Cities. Tonight we went to Camp Patmos, a camp owned by Elizabeth's church, and performed a short program. It was so great being able to spend time with Elizabeth's church family. They were so warm and welcoming! This weekend we're looking to a little unusual R and R before heading to Blue Springs, MO for our last 4 weeks on the road. Happy Independence Day everyone! In Christ, Becky :~)



Becky Cordes
