

Captive Free South West 2002-03 Journal

Date: 9/19/2002

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

Today I looked back on our past week. It was hard not having continuous bookings because we didn't do too much else this last week. Today we had a powerful devotion. Sometimes I seem to forget the incredible power that prayer has. We just all went through our prayer requests and then ended it with prayer. The prayer was so powerful that it left me with tears in my eyes. It's so amazing how much God loves us. The minute we give ourselves to God. He overfills us with so much strength and goodness. Who could ever doubt such love?



Allison Schwarz

Date: 9/20/2002

Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

Seth Malmgren
Captive Free South West

September 20th 2002

The weeks have been somewhat long but fun. I have grown to know that I am in a place that is just right for me. What more could you ask for than playing the drums and traveling with a great bunch of Christian people.

I have just left a nice little town called Lytton located in Iowa. The host family house that I stayed with are great. I got to talk to them about what they do for a living. The best thing about them were their love for Christ. They are great Christian's and a great witnesses of Christ. They go to one of the local prisons and do a lot of prison ministry. They have touched a lot of people through there words and love that they show.

My next stop is Lincoln, Nebraska, my old stomping grounds. I was born in Kearney, Nebraska. So I am excited to see the great sun set on the plains and taste the great water from the sand hills.



Seth Malmgren

Date: 9/24/2002

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

Wow, what an amazing past month. My faith has grown in ways that I can't even express. While we were traveling in the van the other day, I realized what an honor it is to be on the road this year. Out of all the Christians and people in the world, God chose me to travel on the road and share my faith with others. When I first got accepted to go on team, I thought I was going to change so many people's lives by the ministry I would be doing. And yes, people's lives will be changed, but what I didn't realize is how much my faith would also be changed by the people I would meet. God is so amazing. As each day goes along, I am more and more excited to see what the next church will be like. GOD ROCKS!



Kelcey Guck

Date: 9/26/2002

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

We have been out on the road now for 2 weeks and God has been very evident to me every where we have gone. The many host homes that I have stayed in have been very

hospitable. They open up their homes to us and help us with whatever we need (Especially when we are missing caliber bolts on our brakes). We have also met so many other people while out on the road that I am always amazed out how much love they have for Christ and how much they enjoy sharing that love with us. I love that as we are praying for them they too are praying for us.

I am also amazed at how much our team has grown with each other. When we first met we all knew that we had one thing in common and that is our faith in God. And as we meet with each other through devotions, team huddles and 1x1's we continue to grow closer to each other as well as closer to God.

I ask that you continue to pray for our team and the ministry that we do. That we go to each spot open minded and filled with the Holy Spirit and God's amazing love.



Jennifer Loomis

Date: 9/29/2002
Submitted by: Heidi Evanson
Journal Entry:

We have been so blessed with host homes this far on team. People have been so generous and caring. I cannot believe the things people do for us. One night two of us stayed with this kind hearted woman who served us a huge bowl of ice cream and shared her life experiences with us. It was amazing to listen to all the adventures she and her husband had been on. I thank God for blessing us with the opportunity to meet that woman.



Heidi Evanson

Date: 10/1/2002
Submitted by: Lori Counselman
Journal Entry:

For a sunday night program we went to Mt. Olive in Loveland. That is where I met Amber. We sat close to each other at dinner and talked about life. At the end of the night we decided, since monday was my team free day we would hang out together. In the morning one of my team memebers called and said that their host family gave them free passes to Estes Park and asked if I wanted to go. I called Amber and we decided to go. Amber, some of my team members(Seth, Matt, and Allison) and I went to the town first to go shopping. Then we went up in teh mountains and saw elk right as we entered the park. As we got to the top of the mountain we got out and took pictures in the snow. It was so amazing to be able to look over God's beautiful creation and see the awesome colors of fall. This has been my favorite day off. :)



Lori Counselman

Date: 10/3/2002
Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis
Journal Entry:

A few days ago I went to the Rocky Mountain National Park. In Estes Park Colorado. It was awesome to see the mountains and how beautiful God's creation is. When I was looking at all the mountains a thought popped into my head: God carved each peak, crack, etc... with his very hands and in the same way that he created the mountains he formed me and my mother. So that just made me think about how wonderfully made I am. Psalm 139: 13-14



Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 10/5/2002
Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

Saturday,

We attended a church in Windsor Co the other night that was incredible. From the young children to the eldest of the adults they were praising God. It was so encouraging to see the whole group of people unashamed of what they believed in. They only thought of worshiping. It was so cool. Sometimes I try to look at my life and see if I sometimes worry too much about other things instead of glorifying and praising God.



Allison Schwarz

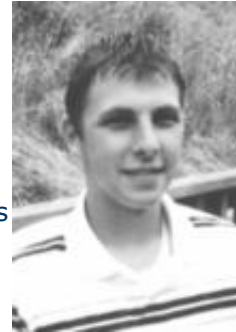
Date: 10/8/2002

Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

10-8-2002

Wow, things have been great. The team and I just got back from a care home where we got to interact with a lot of cool people. As well as last night we were tucked away deep in the Rocky Mountains. It showed how beautiful God's creation is. I have had my eyes open to many great things and I am feeling really good about my self. All thanks to GOD!!



Seth Malmgren

Date: 10/10/2002

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

We had a long drive the other day, but it was such a beautiful drive. We drove up through the mountains to Durango, Colorado. The leaves on the trees were changing colors and some of the mountains had snow on them. We saw a waterfall also. It was huge and absolutely amazing! My host family was also very cool. We didn't have a program that night, but the team played some songs for our host family. It was so fun to just sit around and sing praises. I watched Harry Potter for the first time...but sadly, I fell asleep half way through the movie. But, I am determined to finish it one of these days!



Kelcey Guck

Date: 10/12/2002

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

The other day we had the chance to visit our first nursing home as a team. I would have to say that it has been my favorite program we have done thus far. The group of adults were so welcoming of our type of music and our ministry. Often times as a society, people think that older adults only enjoy the music that they grew up with and at times I have thought that as well. But after singing songs like "God of Wonders", "Open the Eyes of My Heart", and "Every Move I Make" I have come to realize that many of the adults there just enjoy listening to the words of the songs as well as our voices.

After the program one lady approached me with tears in her eyes and told me "you brought me back to when I was a little girl." As I listened to her tell me this Matthew 19:14 popped into my head, it reads, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Many times we don't pay attention to older adults and we rebuke them. I believe that Matthew 19:14 is not just letting the little children to come to him but all those children and adults that are pushed away from knowing God.



Jennifer Loomis

Date: 10/15/2002
Submitted by: Heidi Evanson
Journal Entry:

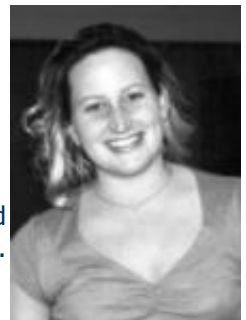
Morning chapels always seem like they are too early until the bright faces of all the kids come in to join you in fun sing a longs. we had a chapel at a small church/school this morning and the kids there were a riot. They danced, sang and laughed so much, we knew why we were doing this ministry, it was so much fun! Then later we went to our second detention center. I of course was so nervous even though we had been to one before. It was a small group and they did not really seem interested in what we were singing about but after our program we opened it up to them to ask us any questions they wanted to. One guy asked us a question that floored our whole team. How do i get faith in my life? What a powerful question. After questions we took time to talk with the young adults. Their honesty and openness really touched my heart. I left the detention center knowing they had impacted my life and a feeling of growth. 1 Peter 4:8



Heidi Evanson

Date: 10/22/2002
Submitted by: Allison Schwarz
Journal Entry:

Last night we were at a church in Phoenix, AZ. It was an absolute blast. Both of Seth's family and Jen's family were there. There also was four alumni there. It made it really fun. It was so fun to look out and see a bunch of people who are not afraid to praise God and just show their love for God. I, as usual was blessed with an awesome host family. Their daughter was an absolute doll, who was so much fun. We got the privelage of watching her sing all her VBS songs. It made me think about how sweet children are and how we as christians do need to accept the kingdom of God like a little child. Sometimes I too get so got up in things and do things for the routine and forget what is really important. I'm enjoying the beautiful weather and am not sad that i'm missing out on the snow back home(ND). God's blessings.



Allison Schwarz

Date: 10/24/2002
Submitted by: Seth Malmgren
Journal Entry:

10-24-02
Things are going pretty well. My Family came down to viset me which was a blesing. My sister was good to see as well. She just got engaged so i am getting excited to go to her weding. We have traveled to a detention center that was really fun to be at. God has opened up a lot seeds for some kids and is moving in some of them. It is nice to know how powerful he can work threw me and my team.



Seth Malmgren

Date: 10/25/2002
Submitted by: Kelcey Guck
Journal Entry:

Today was overall a good day. We did a morning chapel at a Lutheran high school in Phoenix, Arizona. It was so much fun to watch the students praising the Lord. We did some sing-a-longs and I did a sharing about not being ashamed to spread the word of Christ. Then we got in the van and drove to Yuma, Arizona. It was about a 5 hour drive...but it felt a lot longer than that! We didn't have a program tonight, but we did get to eat Chinese food. MY FAVORITE!!! My host family is so much fun. They have two daughters and one son and we just sat around most of the night and just talked and laughed. It's so fun to just hang out with kids my age. They took me out to Coldstone Creamery.



Kelcey Guck

For those of you who don't know what that is, it is an amazing ice cream shop, it's so yummy! All in all, I am having an incredible time on team. I love going to different host homes and talking to them.

Date: 10/29/2002

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

The other day we spent the day at a Lutheran School for Junior High and High School students in Los Angeles, California. We started in a Chapel and then had the opportunity to go to classes the rest of the day and just chat with students. It was a joy to just answer questions of why we are on the road and what we do. The students were so interested in what we had to say.

This school has not been the only school we've had the opportunity to visit since we've been on the road. We have probably been to 10 different schools altogether and each time it's been awesome to just have fun and answering questions with the students.



Jennifer Loomis

Date: 11/2/2002

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello,

We are in Los Angeles at a campus chapel. Last night we got to sit on couches and worship with the students. It was awesome to be able to share what we have on our hearts about God and our walk with him.

As we were trying to leave by backing up out of the driveway, we got stuck. We had a brick wall in front of us and a brick wall in back of the trailer. Someone said, "Let's pray" so we all put our hands on the van and prayed.

We decided to call AAA, just then Daniel, who was walking down the street, asked if he could help us because he was really good with backing up trailers. With his help we were able to get out of the driveway. I think of him as our "Angel!"



Lori Counselman

Date: 11/4/2002

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

A lot of funny things have happened while i have been on team but not a lot of them have happened during a family night program. Well tonight was the exception. The lovely town of Clovis, CA was where we were stationed tonight.

The program started out great. The congregation was alive and excited and our team had so much energy.

For a sunday night we were all surprised and a little confused at where all this energy was coming from.

About a minute into our puppet show Seth and I got a bad case of the giggles. The kind that is uncontrollable and

does not let you speak. The worst part about them is that the littlest thing can set them off. Seth and I were trying

to control them when Jen pops up with her boy puppet and shouts, "Hello!" in a very high pitched voice that we had never heard before.

Seth and i and now Jen could not control it, we were trying so hard to get out what we were supposed to say but everytime we would

get a word out it would turn into a laughing fit. We were blessed with an amazing congregation and they laughed along with us.



Heidi Evanson

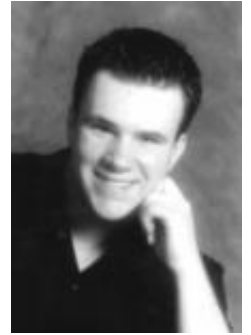
When we thought it could not get any worse we were shown we were wrong. The puppet curtain suddenly broke in half exposing all five of us behind the curtain. For a minute we had no idea what had happened. All of us stared out into the audience like deer in headlights, holding our puppets in one hand and the microphones in the other. Then the congregation and our whole team burst into the best kind of laughter. We had trouble finishing because the curtain was so out of whack but we did end the show. The congregation in Clovis, Ca applauded and laughed with us! Thank you Lord of Life!!

Date: 11/4/2002

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

our team has been having alot of fun in California. but the one thing i can do with out here is the traffic! it takes twice as long to get places than we estimate!and it makes me miss Upper MI were you have no traffic problems at all! so the other day on monday kelcey, seth and I decided to go to Hollywood and on the way back it should have taken us a half hour to get back but we're stuck in traffic for 3 hrs! so i just need to be patient and in the same way that i get impatient in traffic i get impatient with God and expect Him to give me everything i ask for and want right away. But I have to realize that he has his own timing and it's much better than mine! He has always provided for me in the past and why won't he now!



Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 11/7/2002

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

This morning we spent our third day at a Lutheran school. It's been so much fun. It's neat to see how excited kids get. Sometimes it's so hard to go out their everyday and sing the sames songs everyday, but when you see the glow in their eye when they know a song that they love to sing it brings so much excitment out of me. I wish I could live everyday the way that a child does. They live so carefree and never stop giving out their love. I think we as people can learn so much from the children in our lives. They made my day and even drew me pictures, who knew something so simple could be so brightening.



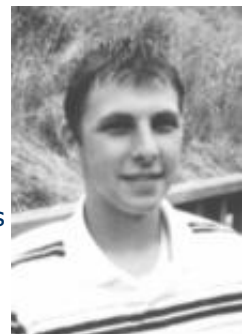
Allison Schwarz

Date: 11/8/2002

Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

Wow... It has been a great week. The host homes have been very nice and god has blessed me with some nice people. I was struggling a sour throat a little bit last week but now i have been feeling a lot better. I am starting to get a little home sick cuz i miss my friends a lot, but i keep on telling myself that this is where God wants me. Well, back to the team and on the road to head to my next place.



Seth Malmgren

Date: 11/12/2002

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

God has been really showing me how amazing He truly is. I have kind of been down in the dumps the past week, and didn't know why. On team,

it could have been multiple different things. I read my Bible, talked about it, and tried other ways to make me feel better. The one thing I was forgetting was prayer. If you just ask God to help you, He will. He's just waiting to be asked. So, I am glad to say that I am doing a lot better. We are still in California and it is beautiful here. Although, I must admit, I am looking forward to the snow in Colorado! The Lord has blessed our team with such amazing families and safe travels. YAY GOD!



Date: 11/14/2002

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

Today has been a hard day. Not a hard day in that things have gone wrong, but a hard day having to leave Elk Grove, CA. For the past two days we spent time at St. Peter's Lutheran School. It is a school for students First through Eighth grades. They were such a blessing to me. One of our program songs with them was "Open the Eyes of my Heart Lord" and as soon as we started singing all of the students and staff joined in but the cool thing is that they all did the song with **Jennifer Loomis** sign language as well. Most of the students have been taking sign language since they started school. It was amazing to watch these students praise God in another way.



Kelcey Guck

Date: 11/17/2002

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

Well Well Well, i have learned a couple of lessons while i have been on the road. Just a couple of days ago i learned a new one and it is : Do not walk at night in the fog in a place that you have never been to. Allison and I decided after a huge good dinner that we needed to go on a walk, especially since the tempting brownies were being served. It was a dark, foggy night in a small town. After about 15 minutes of walking on a deserted road a truck slowed down while he passed us. It kinda freaked us out but he went along his way. Not even 10 minutes later we heard the truck again so being the scaredy cats Alli and I are we jumped into the bushes and waited till he was gone. Then a couple of minutes later we heard the truck again and so this time Allison and I were really scared. We jumped into the bushes further and started praying really hard. I could hear him yelling not very nice things while the two of us were frozen in place. Up ahead we could not see a dog but we could hear him so we made a plan. We would get out of those bushes as fast as we could and run to the nearest house, hopefully there would be one. We did just that and when we got to the house the truck was on our tail and we were pounding on the door to let us in. Turns out the man in the truck thought we were two kids messing around in the fields.



Heidi Evanson

Date: 11/19/2002

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello Again,

It is going to be a pretty busy week. We are covering three states this week; Nevada, Utah, and Colorado. Right now I am close to Las Vegas, Nevada. We had a beautiful drive here today, the sun was just setting as we were pulling up into the church parking lot. It was amazing to see God's country illuminated by the sun as it was going down. I have seen some awesome sites while on team. The one that sticks out the most was when we were in California, and seeing the Pacific Ocean for the first time. Seeing the waves crashing into the shore. The sun was shining off of it, and being able to put my two feet in it.



Lori Counselman

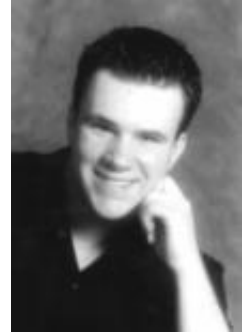
I have been blessed by some amazing views from God so far this year!!!

Date: 11/21/2002

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

hello again! right now we're in Las Vegas. we played at a christian academy 2 days ago and it was tons of fun! the students really enjoyed it. a few teachers came up to use after the program and told us that it's usually very difficult to get the students moving(7-12 graders sometimes have that "i'm too cool" thing going on) but after a few songs they cracked and everyone was being crazy and having fun praising God! it was very awesome to experience!



Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 11/23/2002

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

Greetings from Colorado.

I'm loving this state more and more each day. It is snowing. This is very exciting and it is reminding me so much of home. Yea! Anyways Saturday night we had program in Grand Junction, Co. I got into a great talk with the teenagers attending our program. They were currently involved in 36-hour fast. How awesome? I was so moved by what they were doing. We sat and talked about all the things they had learned. They got to see a different perspective of what life was like out of the privileges that we take for granted everyday. So anyways the point of this all was that our team now is going to try this sometime soon. I'm so excited!

Tonight we had a program in Gypsum, Co. So much fun. There was so much energy and I'm so thankful that I was given this opportunity to do this. I'm so thankful for each person that was put in my life. Each individual has taught me so much and I will forever carry these memories and lessons with me.



Allison Schwarz

Date: 12/6/2002

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

OK so here we are almost done with 1/3 of our year and let me tell you all that it has gone by so fast. It seems crazy to think we have just begun our journey but at the same time have already gone through so many adventures. Our team right now is housed together at a church in Iowa, we briefly met the Pastor but he was so generous. I was not too excited about staying as a team together when we had just rode in the van for about 5 hours together. Then someone announced that we needed to sit down and watch a program that had been taped awhile ago so that we could go over the good and bad things in our program and what we can work on. I WAS NOT EXCITED~ All i wanted to do was curl up by a fire and be by myself!! So after we all ate, we sat down to watch the program. It turned out to be the funniest thing we had done as a team in awhile. God works in mysterious ways. Earlier that day when we were driving i had prayed that God would put me in the place i needed to be that night. And even though i thought that i did not want to be here it turned out God knew what i needed! Imagine that.



Heidi Evanson

Date: 12/16/2002

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello again,

I am writing this right after getting done with winter training. I was not looking forward to having it before we went home for break. I couldn't understand why we didn't do the training after we got back from break but now I do understand. We just spent a week getting to see all of the other teams and also getting to hear their stories of ministry. It was nice to get ideas about programs from other teams. We also had team sessions where we got to meet with our events director and got to know them better. They lead the sessions and were mediators for any discussions. It was nice because we got to get all of our issues out on the table and talk about how we were going to improve them. I feel closer to my team now that we have gone through winter training and I am looking forward to the rest of this awesome journey that God has me on!!!!



Lori Counselman

Date: 12/29/2002

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

THIS IS ACTUALLY FROM: HEIDI EVANSON, KELCEY GUCK, KRISTEN AND BROOK EBERLE (OUR HOST SISTERS.)

So we are all very full from eating 10 tons of amazing chocolate dessert goodness! We all had a passion for chocolate before eating so much of it! Brook says she doesn't really care anymore. Kristen just shrugs her shoulders and laughs. This is what host homes are all about. Fun times with good memories. Our team is here in Wichita, Kansas! Kelcey and I wanted to write a journal with our host sisters cause they rule!!? (Kelcey likes question marks just not questions?) Here we are enjoying an absolutely delightful fire.! There is a cool cat here named smokey, (not from the fire) that is trying to eat the 5th grade class gerbil named salt.? Her husband, past tense, name was pepper. This is a glimpse into the life of Heidi and Kelcey from the Southwest team on the road on Captive Free in host homes with Kristen and Brook, and Teena and Russ and their animal Smokey and last but certainly not least the 5th grade class gerbil salt, remaining in our hearts forever and ever and of course ever is salt's husband pepper!?

Thank you and good day! love forever from Kansas!!!! always room for question ?



Kelcey Guck

Date: 1/2/2003

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

We are now in Garden City, Kansas. Yea. I love it. Last night we did a New Years Eve service. It was so much fun. It was the first time we used all of our hand drum instruments. So awesome! It was very exciting because I just bought a new rainstick and claves. So we got to use them. It's amazing how exciting two wooden blocks can be to a nineteen year old girl. We had lunch and dinner with two amazing families. The meals were close in comparison with a Thanksgiving meal. Again we were spoiled. There were two wonderful little 3 year old girls with so much personality. I spent most of the day watching them. We had chocolate cake and managed to get it on both of us. It was great, it's fun to get a little messy sometimes.



Allison Schwarz

Date: 1/4/2003

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

hey every one!
well it's great to finally be back in CO! the other night we got to spend the night with new dawn(international team). it truly was a blessing that we got to stay with

them cuz i know some of the people on our team were getting home sick and i think that was Gods little push to kinda get our minds off of home and kinda get us back in focus. it was very fun and refreshing! so than you God and new dawn!



Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 1/6/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

Well, on Sunday we were in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. We did a program that night. It was full of lots of energy!!! The congregation was a lot of fun. That evening, Heidi and I were housed together. Our host sister was going to go out line dancing and invited us to go. So off we went and we had so much fun! Heidi and I tore up the floor! Now, we didn't necessarily know how to line dance, so we made up our own moves. We tangoed across the floor, I jumped in Heidi's arms as she literally spun me around, and you might have even seen us doing the "Funky Chicken." After an hour and a half of dancing, Heidi and I found ourselves utterly exhausted and were ready to go home and fall fast asleep. It was a very eventful night in Highlands Ranch!



Kelcey Guck

Date: 1/9/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

Growing up and even now one of my favorite places is Winter Park, CO. Winter Park is a ski town and has some of the greatest views. Today we were able to travel through there on our way to Utah. I realize throughout my travels and seeing many of the different views that we see that there is a God. I see him in the trees that are covered with snow, the gorgeous snow capped mountains in the distance and the wind that blows through the trees. I recommend everyone to visit the mountains in Colorado because they are one of the greatest places I think! God's blessings to you.



Jennifer Loomis

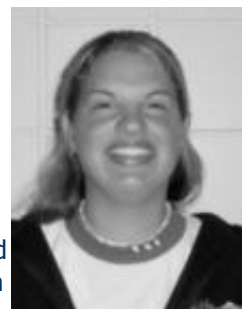
Date: 1/11/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

It was so much fun to come back from Christmas break, for one i got a Cow Bell from my cool teammate Alison. It has brought me great joy in programs. It has also brought a few laughs to the team, once while we were in a skit i said i was sad cause i could not play my cow bell very well. Jen said something which caused me to lose my thought and just start laughing which then set her off. I had to pretend to cry instead of laugh which went on for about 5 minutes. It ruled! Another thing that has been amazing for me to see is how much God is working in my teammates and how much they have grown in their faith. I can not tell you how proud i am of the whole group. We are really starting to become a family. One tip: Honesty is always the best policy!! No matter what being honest with a person is so important and can actually bring you both closer. It has been happening on our team and it makes me feel good.

Thanks to everyone who reads these journals.



Heidi Evanson

Date: 1/14/2003

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello Everyone,

We were in Salt Lake City in Utah on our day off. So we took the opportunity to go to the Mormon Temple and went to learn more about their religion. As we walked into the area there was someone outside the gates protesting with a sign and it said "Bible Critics" on it. It made me kind of scared to go into the Mormon Area but I went in anyways.

Right away one of the sisters came up and introduced themselves to me. I felt very awkward talking to her but she was very polite to me. The tour was very interesting to see the different statues and temples. We went into the tabernacle where you could be heard anywhere in the building. The acoustics were amazingly clear and we were surrounded by poles that were real wood that was painted over.

Most of the tour I just listened to what they were saying. However I did ask a few questions and they were very patient with helping me understand the answers. I learned a lot about their religion but at the same time it strengthened my beliefs even more than before. I am glad I went but I don't know if I would go again.



Lori Counselman

Date: 1/18/2003

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

So today we went out as a group fun time to Spagheetti Factory. Yummy. We also discovered that our team bonds the most around food. We haven't figured out why, but if there is distance among the teammates you can always count on food bringing us back together. Then we went to Old Sacramento. Very exciting. The best part was when we went and got old time photos taken. We're so cute. Just kidding that is being conceited. It was fun to be silly and wear clothes that we normally wouldn't wear. Or at least some of us!!!! I think one great thing about hanging out is that we can lead Godly lives without being in a church all the time. Someone once told me after they had found out that I was a Christian was like "oh so you go to church all the time" that's not entirely true. Why should people only live Godly lives in church? So hopefully while we were walking around people could tell that we were Christians just by our presence. For those reading, take time today to thank God for something that you never have before!

alli rae



Allison Schwarz

Date: 1/18/2003

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

well the other day we were traveling to sacramento,ca from fallon,nv and along the way allison said we should stop at Lake Tahoe,so we did and it was amazingly beautiful! i'm so glad we stopped! I'm loving the SW more and more every day! it's amazing all the beauty out here!God truly is a wonderful creator!



Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 1/21/2003

Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

1-21-02

I have had some exciting news this week. I have found out that my best friend is coming down to visit me with my family in Feb. It is a big excitement for me. I have not seen him for a while and I want to show him what Captive Free is all about. The cool thing about it is that I prayed alot for it and asked God if he could make it in his will to be done. I had it deep in my heart deeper than I



Seth Malmgren

ever really wanted a prayer to be answered and He answered it. I thank God a lot now for being so special.

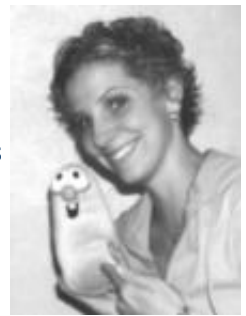
Date: 1/23/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

While on team, we come across lots of different types of yummy, delicious food. All of us have heard of Krispy Kreme doughnuts. Yes, yes, they are quite tasty. However, have you ever had one when it was straight out of the oven? Before going to do a morning chapel, my host mom made a quick stop at Krispy Kreme for some doughnuts. I got the privilege of eating a Krispy Kreme doughnut straight out of the oven. It was the first time I had ever had one that fresh, it was fabulous!

It's amazing to me how host homes are so giving of their time, their family, their food, their house...and the list goes on. I have had so many amazing host homes in the past. Thank you Lord for great people who are so full of your love.



Kelcey Guck

Date: 1/25/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

As I look back on our teams last 5 months together, I see all the changes and growing we have done. We have become a family. If you had asked me 6 months before for my year on team how I would live with 6 other teammates for a year I would have said I have no idea, I just hope we get along. But now when people ask how is it? I tell them it's like a family. We have funtimes and laughs and we even have ups and downs, disagreements and arguments but we all have one thing in common. We all put Christ in the middle of our lives. We pray with one another and work out our issues in a Christian atmosphere. This is what has made our team grow together and work with one another as a family. I wouldn't change my teammates for anyone. I have come to respect and honor and even look up to my teammates and I look forward to the 7 months we have left on the road.

Alli, Seth, Heidi, Matt, Lori and Kelcey - you all rock and I love ya and thanks for a great 5 months. May God be with you these next months. Jen



Jennifer Loomis

Date: 1/28/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

During a performance our team had the privilege of wearing headsets, so we had our hands free from microphones. Plus we got to move around the whole stage. We truly felt like rockstars! During Kelcey's sharing I was brought back to reality and the reason I was on team. She talked about not being ashamed of telling people about God's love for us. It got me thinking a lot.

The next day Allison and I had a long discussion about God and Him being in our lives. Actually this happens quite often. But something I started thinking about is a question that is asked a lot. It is, Why are you on team? A usual response is, I don't know, or to learn, or to have fun and travel and meet lots of people. Usually this satisfies me but that night it annoyed me. I thought if I take all that away, why am I really on team??

It is because God loved the world so much that He sent His son to die for us. Jesus came down and went through this world with the same temptations as we go through daily and not once did He sin. This amazes me because every minute of the day we slap God in the face by taking control of our lives and saying, you know what God I know I can handle this I don't need you. Or you know what God I don't feel like following you I feel like doing what I want to do, and every single time He takes



Heidi Evanson

our hit in the face and turns back around with his arms wide open saying, I love you! There is a love that God puts in my heart and a smile that does not fade when the spirit is in my soul, that is so incredible and dose not come from anything else. I want people to feel that love, peace , and joy. If i did not have God in my life then i would not be on team. As embarrassing as this is i have never once told anyone that is the reason i am on team.

So from now on if someone asks me why i am on team i will tell them the true reason, and that is because God loved me enough to give me life.

Thanks for supporting and praying for us~!

~heidi anne

Date: 1/30/2003

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

well we have our northern california quake tomorrow in scaramento,ca..... i'm very excited but nervous at the same time cuz we've never done one before this is the first one for our team! Seth and I are a little unprepared for our trek we'll be doing on saturday but i know God will work through us as he always does and i know it'll all work according to His plans. please keep us in your prayers!



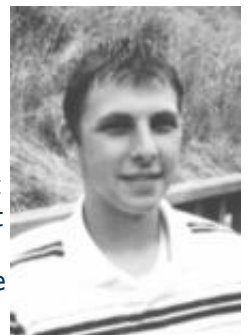
Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 2/6/2003

Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

Quake....Not really a earth quake.... It was so much fun spending time with kids that you have not seen in a long time. My 1st youth quake ever was a blast. It took a lot out of me but by putting things in God's hands it made things a lot easier. I have found that putting things in God's hands you can get a lot accomplished. He is always making things a lot easier for me when I cast my burdens on to him. That is a great song by the way.... Cast Your Burdens On to Jesus...lalaaaalheedooo...



Seth Malmgren

Date: 2/8/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

We were in Monterey, California when my lovely team-mates Allison and Heidi decided to pull a prank on Seth and I during a puppet show. Seth and I normally do a puppet show using two puppets that look much like a little boy and girl (Rocko and Shaniqua were their names). Well, our team-mates decided they were getting tired of those puppets. So they secretly switched Rocko and Shaniqua for a witch puppet and a puppet that was a plant. When it came time for the puppet show, Seth and I crawled behind the puppet curtain and were ready to go. Much to our surprise, Rocko and Shaniqua were no where to be found. But instead were these new puppets. We just kinda looked at each other like, what do we do????? Seth picked up the witch and I picked up the plant and the puppet show went on. Seth did a really good job at becoming the witch. He even had a witch voice. I, on the other hand, didn't do as good of a job at becoming my puppet. I was too busy laughing...but what kind of voice do you use for a plant? Plants don't even talk!

Life always throws unexpected things your way. I've learned that sometimes it's just best to laugh and go with the flow!



Kelcey Guck

Date: 2/13/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

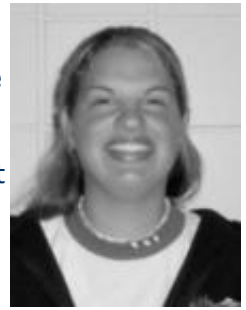
Journal Entry:

Wow today we arrived in Las Vegas for the second time. I was driving as we got into the city and it was night so it was dark. Now something that we do not run into a lot is traffic at night. I can deal with it during the day but at night I really need to keep my focus, especially when I am trying to drive and be careful along with looking for the right exit! It is hard sometimes because there are so many distractions, the lights of Las Vegas are very bright and cool looking. Also there are so many different things to see, but when I am driving I have to keep my eyes on the road or I could very easily have an accident. I relate this to my ever present faith life. I have to keep my eyes focused on God even though there are so many distractions to try to get my eyes to look elsewhere. If I take my eyes of God i could very easily have an accident.

Happy Valentines Day!

Love from Heidi Evanson

1 Peter 3:3-4



Heidi Evanson

Date: 2/15/2003

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello from Las Vegas!!

This weekend we are having the first ever Las Vegas Quake. It is so weird how for our last one in Sacramento which was my first Quake ever, I was so nervous but for this one I am very excited that it is here.

We had the first celebration last night and there were some things that went wrong with the sound but over all it went really well. Our team got to lead campfire. It was so powerful to see youth worship our Lord and Savior. They just opened up their ears and hearts to the words that the Lord was putting in our mouths. When I was their age I don't remember my faith being as strong as some of these youth. I am looking forward to what amazing things the Lord has planned for us tomorrow.

Love in Christ,
Lori



Lori Counselman

Date: 2/18/2003

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

well last monday we were in monterey,ca and seth and i decided to go boggie boarding. it was so much fun but it made me realize how outta shape we were! plus it was my first time in the pacific ocean! after that we went with out host family on 17 mile rd which is a beautiful road going along the ocean and the pebble beach golf course! it was beautiful! and probably one of my favorite and most relaxing days off!God bless!



Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 2/22/2003

Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

Sometimes you feel like giving up on things and not wanting to do anything anymore, and sometimes you feel like stopping, but after a while of thinking about what you are here to do, you thank God for what he has given you, the gift to do and the awesome opportunity to meet new people. That is probably the one thing that keeps you going is the gifts that god gives you and the people that he places in your life.

-Seth

Date: 2/25/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

Hello from Jen Loomis' house. We are in Chandler, Arizona, so Jen's family is housing Matt, Seth, Lori and I. The other girls are staying with friends and family who live near here. We just finished our quake in Prescott. There were 450 kids there and it was a blast! The pool boys were the musical guests and Pastor Bill Yonker was the event speaker. Talk about a good combination. The pool boys were just amazing and Pastor Bill could get anyone to listen when he talked. He has such a passion for youth, and you can tell by how he reacts with them. I can't believe that we are done with 3 Quakes already. We only have two left and one congress. SO SAD! I am the 5th to get sick with the cold that has been passed around through the van. Sore throat and a stuffy nose. Life is grand!!! I'm praying for a speedy recovery. No one likes being sick. "TRUST IN HIM THROUGH THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS AND THE LIGHT OF THE EMPTY TOMB."
kelcey



Kelcey Guck



Seth Malmgren

Date: 2/27/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

It has been a great couple of days being able to be in my home area. One of the greatest things is to see rain. While the midwest and the east are receiving the mounds of snow, Phoenix is actually getting hit with a ton of rain. It has been great to see a place that doesn't usually get rain, get it. Today happened to be a dry day and so our team decided to go and do church visits. We headed out on the road just driving from one place to the other and if we saw a church we would stop in and handout information about Youth Encounter. It was a very successful trip. The most interesting part of the trip was while out on the road we noticed a white 15-passenger van with a trailer, the first thing all of us did was look at the liscence plates and it was so odd to see Minnesota plates (how many vans and trailers are their with Minnesota plates in Arizona?) well we tried to catch up with them but they ended up turning before we got to them (we wanted to see who they were)(No speeding or wreckless driving was involved). So we continued on our journey. After stopping at a church and getting back into the van and starting out we noticed the van with trailer again and so we thought hey let's try again. This time we both got stopped at a red light. So Kelcey jumped out and ran to the van and said hi and who we were and they told her that they were a Christian puppet group out of Minnesota. It was so cool how God put this group into our lives. So you never know who you will meet out on the road in a 15-passenger van.



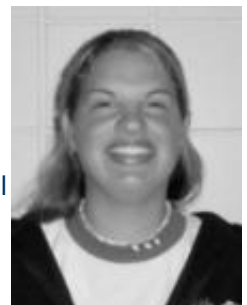
Jennifer Loomis

Date: 3/1/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

WOW!! I love being in the Southwest region! Today we all came together around noon to practice and stuff. It was sunny and gorgeous. Joy filled my soul when I thought of all the cool things I could do for God today. What makes me sad is how quickly that good feeling can leave me. I let little things get to me or annoy me or make me jealous. I took a walk and while the sun warmed my face I talked to God. I asked him to help me focus on him, I am not here to do things for myself but to do things for God. I get distracted so easily from serving him and I start to think I deserve things and should be serving myself!! But I am here to serve God and I guess I need some help! So once again I ask him to clean my heart so I can start all over again with the pure joy that can only come from him.



Heidi Evanson

Peace, Love, Joy, and Hope are all things I desire!
Love, Heidi

Date: 3/4/2003

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello Everyone!!!

I was reading the other day what a host mother wrote in my journal and she wrote this verse: Ephesians 3:14-19 "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." That made me think of the other night after a program we went and played games with the a church congregation. I was watching some people playing cards when I looked over and saw one of the youth sitting by herself. So, with Gods help, I went over and introduced myself to her. Before long we were teaching each other different songs that we knew. At first we just sat and sang but after a while we were up in front of everyone just dancing away to the awesome songs of the Lord. Then at worship the next day she came upfront with us and did sign language to the songs while we sang them. It was amazing to see the faith that she has for our Lord Savior:-) Love in Christ,Lori



Lori Counselman

Date: 3/6/2003

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

well yesterday we went on our team outing to a audio adreniline,mercy me,kutless,the swift concert! it was so much fun! i have never worshiped that hard in so long it felt so good! but one thing that hit me was why they(the bands) were doing the tour.... the tour was called the "go tour".... and the whole theme behind it was to encourage people to GO and make diciples in all nations just like it says in Matthew 28(i think that is where it says that).so at the end of the concert they had an alter call not just for people who wanted to accept Jesus but for those wanting to go on mission trips and encouraging and praying for them in that time! it was a cool thing to see! and really encouraging at the same time cuz on the road especially at the time we're at right now we're tired,somewhat bored, and just are in a routine of doing the same thing every day but it was a huge encouragement to just keep going and see how much God is going to bless us throught this ministry!



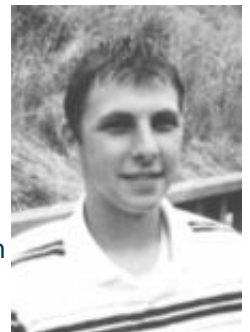
Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 3/11/2003

Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

Woop woop.. things on team have been great and some things have been not so great. I have felt the Holy Spirit work through me from time to time. However I have had some stomach aches lately, which is not all that great. I have been missing some friends back in Washington, but what I am leaning on is prayer. It is getting me through a lot more things then what I thought it would. It is nice to know that God is always there to listen to me.
-Seth



Seth Malmgren

Date: 3/13/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

The greatest place on earth...DISNEYLAND!

Our team got the opportunity to go to Disneyland today. We went to Becky Brubaker's church...she is on the Southeast team. Some people from her congregation worked at Disneyland and they got us in. It was so much fun to go and hang out with my team mates, laugh and even get a little sun-burned. It was great! However... Lori wasn't having all that much fun. Ya see, she has a little fear of roller-coasters. The first couple of baby rollercoasters Jen and I went on, Lori refused to ride on. She said that she wanted to be the "camera girl" and take pictures of us while we were on the ride. Well, these rides we were going on weren't that bad and we were determined to get her to ride at least one roller coaster. If she didn't like it, we would leave her alone. So, we started to encourage her. We got her to go on her first roller coaster that day. Well, you are probably asking yourself...Did she like it? SHE LOVED IT! She had a blast and the rest of the day she rode all the rollercoasters with us. Now, the point to my story is that without her getting encouragement from the team, Lori would have sat off to the side all day long and not known how fun these rides were. We all need encouragement in our lives. Without that extra shove from our families, some of us may not have applied to go on team, or we may not have studied that extra hour on our math homework. We all need encouragement in our lives. Are you encouraging your family, friends and team mates?



Kelcey Guck

Date: 3/15/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

Laughter is a great thing. It's a lot more fun when it is very unexpected. That was the case during our program yesterday in Las Vegas. We were doing our partnership skit and all of a sudden I don't know who it was on our team but someone started to laugh and then the whole team got into it and then even the congregation. The great thing was that it was uncontrollable and I just couldn't stop. It made the program even better and I pray that I will have the opportunity to laugh like that more often. It definitely makes a great way to bond with others. I encourage everyone to continue to laugh.



Jennifer Loomis

Date: 3/18/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

Here I sit, listening to the news. It could be war for us very soon, and truthfully it makes me so mad. For one thing we are supposed to love one another not fight. Sometimes it sounds so simple so it must not be what we are supposed to do. I mean of course little kids should love each other and teenagers should love their enemies but when it comes to adults and real matters than it is different. But that is so not true, God calls us to love one another, especially our enemies.

Another thing that kind of frustrates me is how people blame this on God and how if he wanted to he could give us peace. But hasn't God already given us peace. He has given us the tools to make peace happen, we are the ones that have messed things up. The Bible plain and clearly tells us how to reach peace and joy, but we go and complicate things. I am so thankful our God is a forgiving God. For all the things I have messed up in my life I need him, and so does everyone else. This whole war thing just makes me so sad.

In Christ's undieing love,
Heidi



Heidi Evanson

Date: 3/23/2003

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

On my last day off we were in Las Vegas. I got to go snow boarding with the youth director at the church we were at! It was so much fun but I had never been snowboarding at that elevation before and the thin air really wore me out, I had to keep loading up on water to keep from being worn out and light headed. In the same way I need God just as I needed the water to keep going on the mountain. Without the water I would've fainted and been really worn out. But I was fine when I had it. In the same way God is our water in life and it's his love that keeps us alive!



Date: 3/25/2003
Submitted by: Allison Schwarz
Journal Entry:

HELLO FROM THE GREAT STATE OF AZ. WE JUST FINISHED AN AMAZING EVENT WEEKEND AGAIN. WE HAD A CONGRESS IN PRESCOTT, AZ. IT WAS SO MUCH FUN. THE SPEAKERS, MUSICIANS, AND KIDS WERE AWESOME. WE WERE ABLE TO STAY A COUPLE EXTRA NIGHTS IN THE HOTEL WHICH WAS VERY FUN.



Matthew Mouzakis

SO CURRENTLY KELCEY AND I ARE WORKING ON A SONG TO SING WHEN WE GO TO HER CHURCH, NO NEITHER OF US WROTE IT, BUT ANYWAYS ME BEING THE PERFECTIONIST THAT I AM, I'M HAVING A DIFFICULT TIME. MY FINGERS CAN NEVER GET OUT WHAT THE NOTES ARE SAYING!!! SO AMIST ALL OF THE FRUSTRATION IT'S SUCH A BLESSIGN TO KNOW THAT I WAS GIVEN THAT GIFT TO BE ABLE TO PLAY THE PIANO. SO THANK YOU LORD FOR ALL THE AMAZING GIFTS YOU'VE PLACED INTO MY LIFE THAT I TEND TO TAKE FOR GRANTED.

Allison Schwarz

Date: 3/27/2003
Submitted by: Seth Malmgren
Journal Entry:

Things can get in your life that you don't want to, but sometimes I feel God puts those obstacles in the way so you can learn from them and grow stronger in Him. I felt like that this week. I felt that I was getting in the way of some things and thought it best if I would just stay out of the way. But by tackling that obstacle I over came a lot of things that were just putting me in the way of other things. I would not have broken down that wall if God would not have helped me through it. He can help you through anything even if you don't think He can. You should never underestimate His power.
-Seth



Seth Malmgren

Date: 4/1/2003
Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis
Journal Entry:

It's hard to imagine that we have been on the road for almost eight months. We have done so much in the last months that it's hard to keep track. But the cool thing about being on the road is my host home journal. You may be asking what is that? Well, when I go to a home I ask if they wouldn't mind writing some encouraging words or their favorite Bible verse. It has been a blessing in helping me to learn more verses, but also to get a different idea on verses. I look forward to reading it when I get off team. It also helps me to remember the different places that I have traveled and the different people that I have met. It's great to look up a host home and then write to them and see how they are doing



Jennifer Loomis

and tell them what is going on with me. It's great.

Date: 4/3/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

It was April 1st and it was no joking that I was tired, frustrated, and not wanting to be anywhere but my bed at home by MYSELF!! I sat and watched my team set up the equipment for a program at a detention center that we had been to earlier this year. I thought to myself, pull it together Heidi, you liked this last time we were here. Then I would argue with myself, but I AM TIRED!! So i continued to sit feeling sorry for myself. What a hard life i have! BLah Blah Blah, Whine Whine Whine!!! Then my concience(sp?) set in.....WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT??? You have the chance to share this amazing love that God has given you to all these youth that are locked up! Quit complaining and get to work, put a smile on your face and feel deep within the joy that God our father gave you!

I went on to pray with my team and start the program. I got the chance to say hello to the four girls that had been there last time. They told me they were so glad we were back. After the program we held a bible study which actually turned into a chance for Allison, Lori/Seth, and I to sit down with our own groups and just talk. My group began with Hi's and Low's. Wow I was surprised that all their Hi's was our team being there. I got the 2 minute signal for me to rap up my group. Man, I did not want these people to leave, I wanted to know their hearts. A couple of the girls stayed and talked with me, they told me why they were in and one even sang me a song. The hardest part was not hearing why they were in this place but after they told me i could not touch them at all! No hug, no handshake, not even a pat on the shoulder so that they could tell i cared!!!! All i wanted to do was give them the biggest hug, to share the love that God has shown me through so many hugs!! I could do nothing but stare at them. That hurts a lot!

I love going to detention centers cause they really show me that we are all children of God!
Thanks to everyone that has ever given me a hug cause I will never take them for granted again!!
Heidi



Heidi Evanson

Date: 4/5/2003

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello from Denver!!!

It is very cold here, but it is nice in a way because it reminds me of my home state of Wisconsin.

I am ready for my Easter break that we get starting on April 13th through April 21st, but that means when we come back we only have four months left. I never really realized how fast this

year was going, but it really has. It seems like just yesterday we were all meeting for the first time. I love how we have become a family in these last eight months. We love each other no matter what and help each other to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ all the time. I am a little worried to have to leave my team at the end of our year in August because right now I have six people who are caring and help me to understand the struggles in my faith. I know God has another amazing plan for me just like this year as it says in Jeremiah 29:11("For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.") I am just thankful that I got this opportunity to be on this team and get to see God's love working in so many peoples lives!

Thank you for all the prayers and support through this year. I greatly appreciate it!

Love in Christ,
Lori Counselman



Lori Counselman

Date: 4/8/2003

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

HELLO FROM COLORADO SPRINGS. WE HAVE JUST FINISHED A WEEKEND QUAKE IN DENVER. IT WAS A BLAST. ALTHOUGH I'M DRAGGING A LITTLE AND FEELING THE EFFECTS OF THE ELEVATION IT STILL MANAGED TO BE A GREAT WEEKEND. IT ALWAYS AMAZES ME THAT EVEN WHEN YOU ARE DRAGGING THE MOST AND REALLY FEEL LIKE THERE IS NOT ONE OUNCE OF ENERGY LEFT IN YOU, SOMETHING AMAZING ALWAYS HAPPENS AND GOD PLACES ANOTHER BLESSING IN YOUR LIFE. THERE WERE SO MANY GREAT KIDS THIS WEEKEND, BUT ONE PARTICULAR GROUP OF KIDS MADE IT SO GREAT. NOT ANY SPECIFIC THING THAT WE TALKED ABOUT OR SOME CRAZY STORY, JUST THEIR AMAZING HUGS TOTALLY MADE MY WEEKEND AND I WAS SO UNAWARE OF HOW MUCH I NEEDED IT TILL I GOT IT. THEY WERE SO GREAT AND I SEE THOSE GIRLS AS A BLESSING FROM GOD.

I'M VERY EXCITED FOR MY WEEK OFF IN A WEEK FROM TODAY, BUT I'M SUFFERING FROM SOME SILLY CHOICE OF MINE TO SEND ALL WARM CLOTHES BACK HOME WITH MY PARENTS. FOR SOME REASON IT DID NOT REGISTER IN MY HEAD THAT COLORADO IS A COLDER STATE AND THAT I'M GOING HOME WITH HEIDI TO SEATTLE FOR EASTER, WHICH THIS PROBABLY ISN'T THE WARMEST TIME OF THE YEAR. OH WELL MORE DECISIONS THAT I'VE MADE THAT I AGAIN NEED TO LEARN FROM.

I JUST WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED PRAYER, LOVE AND SUPPORT, YOU TRUPLY HELP ME TO KEEP GOING AND IT MEANS SO MUCH. THANK YOU ALL AND BLESSINGS
ALLISON RAE

PS. I JUST WANTED TO WISH MY DEVOTED AND LOVING MOTHER A HAPPY BIRTHDAY (APRIL 6TH) I LOVE YOU MOM



Allison Schwarz

Date: 4/11/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

While most people are bundled up in jackets, mittens and hats, the southwest team is in shorts and tank-tops. It is absolutely beautiful here in Tucson, Arizona. It is now April and the team has been together for almost 8 months. Now 8 months is a very long time. You get to know each other pretty well. In our eyes, it's like knowing someone for 5 years. Here is our reasoning. We travel in the van together, do programs together, get housed together, sleep in the same bed. Of course, girls with girls, guys with guys. We see each other happy, sad, anxious, silly, frustraed, on a spiritual high, on a spiritual low, when they have the flu at 3:00 am, we see it all. Yes, I have my days when I am so tired or frustrated and all I want to do is go home. But would I? NO WAY!! God placed me here for a reason...to be filled and to fill people with His word. It is the coolest feeling when you get done with a worship service and a little girl comes up to you and gives you a big hug. Now you probably only talked to this girl once or twice throughout the evening. But yet, she finds the courage to come up to you and give you a hug and say thank you. Then there are host homes. They are amazing people who open there homes to us and let us stay there for the night. I have had incredible talks with these people. They give me such a boost in my faith. It's so cool how God places me in a home that I really need at that time in my life. Then there are my team-mates. 6 people who once were strangers, but now I call family. I love you guys so much. Thanks so much for signing that letter of call and coming on team. You are all amazing and I can't wait to see where God takes you and your life. Kelcey



Kelcey Guck

Date: 4/22/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

He is risen! He is risen! He is risen! He is risen indeed! What an amazing reason to celebrate Christ. And for most of my teammates it was a time to celebrate this wonderful love at home with our families and friends. My break wasn't the best. I spent over half of the time in bed with a bad cold and even missed Easter services. But while sitting around with my teammates today doing high's and low's, I got to thinking that it really wasn't a bad break. I was at home with a family who loves and supports me. And who will even come home after worship, and know that I missed being at church, and sing me my favorite songs. SO all in all I did have a great Easter break.



Date: 4/24/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

Since we have been back on team from our Easter vacation we have had it hard! We stayed with Jen our teammates family for two nights and had an acoustic program at a detention center. Her mom is an awesome cook!! Then we left and had a program in Phoenix, AZ. The next day I got up around 9am went for a walk and then sat by the pool for a couple of hours, reading a good book! HARD DAY~~ Then after all that we went with the Youth Director to enjoy an excellent meal! Again, HARD DAY! So of course you can relate when on the way home, our contact, asked us if we would mind stopping at a shut-in couples home. My team thoughtfully said yes, when I was thinking, "WHAT?!", I am so tired I just want to go home and rest!" But I smiled and said sure I would love to. We got to the home and our contact introduced us, we then proceeded to sing a couple of songs. The minute we started singing I realized why God had brought us here. They were so sweet, and us singing to them meant so much! When I looked up at them, they had a glister of tears in their eyes and big smiles on their faces! Just seeing the appreciation from them melted my heart! I could not believe how selfish of my time I had become. God is so good, ALL the time. Why cannot I take 15 minutes to give back to people what he has given to me.

Dear God,

Thank you for all the blessings you put in my life.

Please keep showing me the love you have for me. Please forgive me for being so selfish of the time you give to me. I pray that I can use the time you give to me to serve you more.

In your precious name I pray,

Amen

Love

Heidi Anne Evanson



Heidi Evanson

Jennifer Loomis

Date: 4/26/2003

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello Everyone!!!

Today we went to the La Jolla Cliffs in California, which is where my teammate Jen played guitar for the first time. After we got done taking pictures we had a team worship time. Jen requested, "Dance with Me!" as the first song to sing. It was so amazing to be so far up, to feel the wind blowing throw my hair, and to look into the beautiful blue ocean. I love worship time with our team because it brings us so close as a family when we grow in our faith through music and singing. The verse that goes along with this, oh wait Kelcey is looking for it please pause....."Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious!" Psalm 66:1-2J Hope everyone is having a wonderful day and remember to always thank God for his glorious giving everyday!!!!



Lori Counselman

Love in Christ,

Lori Counselman (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Date: 4/29/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

This Journal is actually from Allison and Heidi! We just wanted to say that Orange, CA is one of the coolest places! Well I did not really see that much of Orange but St. Paul's Lutheran Church was so welcoming. Yesterday Allison, Seth, Matt, and I went out to lunch (to Baja Fresh!! The Best Place to Eat!!) with the junior high and senior high youth leaders! Then we went and saw a movie with them! Paul, Jake, and John work here at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, and man are they funny!! They are actually hilarious! You can not stop laughing when you are around them! They were also our host parents! Yes Joel was a host dad!!

Anyway Lori, Alli, and I had the priviledge of staying with Jake and his amazing wife Christy, who is expecting in a month!! Yah!! The first night we were there, they stayed up talking to us about life! Both of them are so centered on Christ! You can tell their relationship is based on Him~! It was refreshing to hear and be reminded how important it is to be based on Jesus Christ! So not only were they fun to stay with but we got to talk about deep stuff! God truly blessed us at the perfect time with all these people!!

Oh yah! And Paul is an awesome grill man!! BBQ's at his house RULE!!

Hopefully someday we will all meet up again! I love the ministry they are doing and I cannot wait to see all the things God is going to do through them!!

Heavenly Father,

Thank you so much for putting people in our lives that remind us how awesome you are! We pray that you continue to strengthen our husbands, and may they have a strong relationship with you! Bless all the people that we have met during this year!

We love you so much!!

In Jesus' Precious name we both pray,

Amen!

Heidi Anne and Allison Rae



Heidi Evanson

Date: 4/29/2003

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

the other day we're in el cajon ,ca. and i found out at christmas that my good friend russ was living a little north of there so i gave him a call up and we got to hang out ! it rawked! and now he's going to be working at our so cal quake with us i'm so excited and blessed that god has made it possible to see and hang out with some one i know very well especially when i know nobody in the south west.no family or friends. i'm truly blessed to have great family and friends! and I thank God continually for all of his blessings!



Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 5/1/2003

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

Hey everyone from Long Beach CA. Happy May Day!!!!

We just performed at our home church tonight for the second time. It was amazing. I do have to admit that at first I was a little worried going in. Our team had a down day and we were sorting through some issues so I was a bit skeptical going in. Then as usual God proved me wrong, thankfully.

So my host home at this church is wonderful. They have an adorable girl named Ashlin. She's awesome and I even got her to come up on stage. It was so great. Every time that I would look up I would see her big brown eyes looking at me, just waiting for me



Allison Schwarz

to give her the signal to come up and help. Then as soon as I would motion for her to come up, she would jump from her seat to join me upstage. It was so adorable. Then on our last song as she was jamming away I really wanted her to sing with us on My Redeemer Lives, so I whispered to her to sing it as loud as she could. Thinking that she probably wouldn't, but she did. She sang with all her heart! I look so much at my life that way too, except most of the time I'm hesitant and I back off. One of my favorite verses is from Mark 10:14-15. Talking about letting the little children come to Him. How we need to enter the Kingdom of God with the faith of a child. Ashlin was a perfect example of a childlike faith. With no thought involved just the love and the faith inside of her. Lord please help me to be more like a child, with a faith like child. Thank you for blessing me with a this gift of a child in my life that can show me that it all goes back to having a simple, but great faith. It was a true blessing to be here and surrounded with so much love; it makes everyday worth it.

Thank you all for the prayers and support. I love you all!!!!

Allison Rae

Date: 5/3/2003

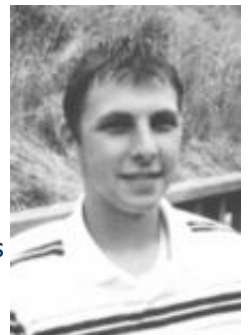
Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

At times you are not sure where God would like you to go. Or shall I say "I am not sure were I think God wants me to go." Right now things on team have been going great, but it is after team that I have been thinking about. I am not sure if I am going to go back home where I know would be best for me. Or should I go to Indiana where there is more opportunities for me. It is just some times a struggle to figure out where God should have me placed. I know by praying, God will open a BIG door for me to help make my choice easier.

Seth Malmgren

CFSW



Seth Malmgren

Date: 5/6/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

YEE HAW for CALIFORNIA!!! We just finished our last and final quake. It was very sad because not only was that our last quake, but we won't see Jen Noyes anymore...she is our event director from Youth Encounter. She truly has been such a blessing to our team. She is a woman who is always open for a hug, a laugh, can give you a Bible verse that will help you through the day, and gets you hooked on the saying "Oh Boy!" She is one crazy girl! It's Tuesday and we are hanging out in Riverside, California. We have been here since Sunday night. The family we are with is so incredible!!! They had gone to our Las Vegas Quake. So it was good to get reunited with them. We had a little Cinco de Mayo celebration last night. Good food, good laughs, and a good time was had by all. Since we have gotten to Riverside, we have just been laying low and getting lots of rest. It's seems that God knows when I need rest more than I do. He ROCKS!



Kelcey Guck

Date: 5/8/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

Life on the road has been good. We are now back in Phoenix, Arizona, my old stomping ground. Today we had the opportunity to go to our second Seniors care center. It was a lot of fun to worship with the older generation. One of my most memorable parts of our program was singing the song "Lord You Are Father" and just smiling at the people around us. There were about 30 people around and I felt that I had the opportunity to look each one of them in the eye and through that interaction some of them knew that



I was really saying that God is their Father. It was cool. It was also fun to sit and talk with them. They all have interesting stories to share.

Jennifer Loomis

Date: 5/10/2003

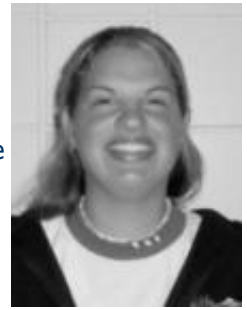
Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

Good Morning!! It truly is a good morning cause I had a good breakfast~ We are all here at our teammate Jen's lovely home! Her Mom and Dad has taken us in so many times! Each time we arrive they greet us with a big smile and a big hug from Jen's Mom!! It is so nice!

So let me take you back in time to May 8th 2003.....It is the day the cold started!! YUCK! I can not stand being sick because there is never time to just rest! Plus it is just a bummer! Even though I was not feeling well and all I wanted to do was sleep, God blessed me with an awesome host home! The family was just what I needed. They took Kelcey and I out to Ed Debevis, a fun restaurant! I had been to the original one but Kelcey had never experienced the joy of this place! We waited for about 2 hours before we got anything and the whole dinner process actually took about 3 hours to end! They were super busy and to top it off they are closing for good on Saturday! Sad for the city of Phoenix! The night after I awoke from a pretty nice sleep with the biggest sore throat EVER!! Ok I have had them before but they always seem bad and I do not have my mommy here to make me feel better! The day continues with a nursing home program and then my head pounding takes over and I do not think I can take it anymore.....But I do....I make it back to Jen's house we eat dinner, I am always fine when food is involved!! But then at 8:30 my body is yelling at me to go to sleep! Of course that does not mean that my body will actually let me sleep. I toss and turn and toss and turn until sometime in the night I drift off into the great world of dream land!! Which is another story!! But anyway my point is that not once during my complaining, aching, not having a very fun time with this sickness, did I ask for help from God! I just assume that everyone needs to go through this and I just need to deal with it and move on. But God is there to help us with EVERYTHING! Not just the things I know I cannot handle but everything! Funny thing is that the things I think I can handle are usually the things I need the most help with. God is there...He just wants to be asked!

Love ya
Heidi Anne



Heidi Evanson

Date: 5/13/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! We just arrived in Colorado today. I love being back in my home state. Well, lately our team has been discussing the five love languages. It is a way of figuring out how we express and receive love. Whether it be from words of affirmation, hugs or even gifts. Our devotion today was on...you guessed it...love. Each of us chose one verse from the Bible about love and read it aloud. A lot of them were about acting on love. I always just assume that my family and friends know that I love them. But do they really? How am I expressing to them that I care for them. Now men...I'm not saying you need to go out and buy your wife flowers everyday so that she knows you love her. And women I'm not saying you need to buy your husband the best steak the world has to offer. As Michael Bolton sang in one of his songs "Love is a wonderful thing"...or at least he said something like that. In the concordance of my Bible, there were about a hundred verses on love. God expressed love to us a lot in the Bible. He doesn't just assume that He loves us, He made sure we know it.



Kelcey Guck

Date: 5/15/2003

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

today we did a detention center at yos in colorado. this was our third time being to this center. throughout our program we give the residents a chance to ask us questions about what we're doing on the road this year. since it was our third time back they had already asked us alot from the last 2 times but 1 of the youth asked "what was the thing that you have learned the most this year on the road?" it took me a while to answer because i have learned so much throughout this year. but i think that i would have to say contentment was the biggest thing i learned this year. being content with the little bit of stuff i have on the road and every thing God has given me this year! I truely have been blessed by all that god has done this year in my life and i wouldn't take it back for anything!



Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 5/17/2003

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

Hello from Colorado. We are back again. Yea!!! I love it here. Although I was hoping to see some of this snow, but oh well! So we, having a day with no program did some more of our routine things. We had the normal devotion and highs and lows of our last day. We also sat around and did our prayers. For some reason today was a lot different then every other day that we do these. Allison, myself wasn't "feeling" like doing this. So if you can imagine a person sitting and doing a routine thing that she doesn't



Allison Schwarz

really want to do, I, myself probably was not being the most pleasant person to be around. Of course saving myself from showing that I wasn't into it. I in the process hurt people today. If you can guess I let Satan take over my emotions today. I was not able to swallow my pride, said a bunch of things that I didn't mean, and of course was snappy, and so on, the typical person that you try to avoid when they are not having a good day.

So to let you all make more sense of this: In the last week, I have been frustrated with things and teammates. Of course letting Satan get in the way again, I figured that it had to be everyone else's fault but my own. So luckily in a humbling experience, a teammate of mine (very brave) came and confronted me. They told me exactly what was on their heart, so thankfully we got to discuss things and got down to what the problem was. It's amazing how miscommunication can tear apart things. I always had a hard time understanding the verse in 2 Cor.12: 9b-10 it talks about delighting in weaknesses. How can a weakness be something to delight about, how can one of my faults that is hurting someone be something to be thankful for? Now I understand. I'm so happy that I have amazing people in my life, like my teammate that was bold enough to show me my weakness and still love me and want to grow from that. How awesome is that. I think today made me understand a little bit more of what God is like. I hurt him everyday, but if I'm willing to face those weaknesses and say "hey I don't want them anymore" he'll just love me and show me something even more amazing now that I'm willing to let go of those weaknesses. Although life can not guarantee happiness and I'm sure there are more hard times to face, I know that God is showing me his way and helping me to understand even when I think that there is anything wrong.

Lord, help me to keep my eyes open, and to put YOU first and before all my ways. Thank YOU also for those weaknesses, for today YOU have made me stronger and YOU are what gives me that strength to face those things that might not be "right" about me. Thank YOU also for teammates who love me enough to help me be a better person. Help me to show them the love that YOU first showed us!

Allison

2 Cor. 12:9b-10

'Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardship, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.'

Date: 6/2/2003

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

Hey, I again get the privilege of being in the wonderful state of Colorado. It is so awesome. Our team just finished up with our VBS training, which was such a blast. Going into training I was a little upset because of the fact that we would only get to spend time with 3 of the other national bands and not all of them. So yes, I was being selfish, but God again showed me how awesome HE is. I built such great relationships over the 4 days that we were there. God opened many doors and thanks to the support and hugs and guidance from those that I was around I've been thinking about lots of things.

We have started our first VBS, and it rocks. I have an amazing host family, who just is so loving and generous and all the kids are great. I really don't think that I could be more content with my life at any other moment.

Thanks God for your placement of people in my life. For those that I've known and got to know better, and for those that I've just met. Continue to work through me and guide me in the direction that You have planned for me. Thank you for showing me opportunities.

Allison Rae



Allison Schwarz

Date: 6/7/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

As we all know, summer is the time of Vacation Bible School. And when we think of VBS, we think of children getting educated about the Bible and our Savior. Well, God has really been working through Vacation Bible School with the kids we are working with. But He is also teaching me a lot of things. We just finished our first VBS in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. One of the songs that we sang there was called "God Provides." Well, Heidi and I were out on a walk one day and realized we were 20 minutes late to returning back to the church. We were supposed to do devotions and run through the day before VBS started, so we started running trying to make up for lost time. Well after a short period of time of running and being completely lost we said...God will provide. And He truly did. Allison's host mom spotted us walking and asked us if we needed a ride back to the church. We were incredibly grateful and hopped in the car and off we went. God provides in all situations in our lives. When we are stressed, sad, upset, anxious, happy and the list goes on. When in a situation you can't handle on your own, ask God for help...He will provide.



Kelcey Guck

Date: 6/10/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

We have started our second week of Vacation Bible School in Albuquerque, NM. I have had the opportunity to work with all the age groups doing games with them. One of the groups that I have the opportunity play games with are 3/4 year olds. These kids have been my favorite thing this past week. All they want to do is just have fun and pretty much anything that they do is fun. When we are playing games the fun thing is going down the slide for twenty minutes and giving me a high five and saying "God Rules" or playing hide and go seek. And when we are singing for opening and closing they are there trying to sing the words to the songs and doing the actions. They have just blessed me this week with the fun that we have playing and singing. They have helped me remember to just have fun.



Jennifer Loomis

Date: 6/12/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

Today was the last great day of VBS in New Mexico. Tomorrow we have a program and then we get to enjoy a baseball game as a team! Yah! Except our wonderful teammate Jen will be in Arizona for a wedding...Sad!

Well Jen, Lori, and I did the game section of this VBS! I was excited cause I love goofing around with the kids. These kids were awesome but they were FULL of energy. We tried our best on the first day to get some games going. For the last 20 minutes we had the 3-4 year olds, the green group. They were so excited to see the slide that for games, thats what we did, we slid on the slide! It was a blast.

Before games started we had dinner with the whole group and I got the pleasure of sitting with Julia who was in the green group. She always made sure you knew that! Two nights ago she said something and I responded with, You are very observant! Julia stopped eating, looked at me with a little bit of a frown and said, " No! I am BEAUTIFUL!"

The next day she came running up to me in line for dinner and said I am so pretty! (meaning herself, she had new clips in her hair!) Then she looked at me and said, You are more beautiful than Barbie, and then You are more beautiful than Britney Spears!

For the rest of the week she would greet me at dinner, on the slide, in the sand, or saying goodbye with You are more beautiful than Barbie! It was so cute, and true that we are all beautiful to God just the way he made us! I needed to be reminded of that this week. It was neat to hear God speak through a 3 year old.

I was not however more beautiful than Julia and she made that quite clear! :)



Heidi Evanson

Date: 6/12/2003

Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

Things are finally coming to some what of an end and I have made some great new friends and have some great new people to call family. I feel that I have learned a lot and also gained a lot this year. Way more than I could ever imagine. God had put me here and sometimes I still don't know why, but I do know He had wanted me to go out in the world and be a better Christian. I can feel confident knowing that I am not the only one out there struggling with things in life. That there are other people out there with the same problem. My team ROCKS and I love each and every one of them equally.
-seth



Seth Malmgren

Date: 6/14/2003

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello Everyone from Arizona!!

We are starting our third VBS here. I really enjoy it, because we get to know people better! I have had a lot going through my mind about what this year has meant to me. I have learned how to start a conversation with someone and how to led it towards talking about Christ. The amazing conversations that I have had because of being able to do this are endless.

God has taught me how to love someone no matter what the situation is. My teammates are amazing people but we have seven of the most complete different personalities. I have learned how to say I love you no matter what conflict we are going through right now.

We are reading the book "The five love languages" by Gary Chapman right now as a team and it has really helped me to be able to love my teammates the way that each of them need to be loved. It talks about how to fill up your love tank and what love language you are. For example: I am physical touch, which means I love hugs, handshakes, and etc. The way I fill up my "love tank" is



Lori Counselman

by peoples touch!!

No matter how we try to fill each other's love tank Gods love is the most fulfilling love of all I hope that all of you always turn to God for the most amazing love of all!!!

Love in Christ,
Lori Counselman

Date: 6/16/2003

Submitted by: Matthew Mouzakis

Journal Entry:

well this year of captive free is comming to an end and before it does i'd just like to thank my team for being awesome and all of their parents for being so supportive of us all and our ministry! God has move in awesome ways this year through me,my team and the people we've met! it has been awesome and i know it'll be an experience that i'll never forget because God use it to mold me more into the person he wants me to be!



Matthew Mouzakis

Date: 6/19/2003

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

So as I am sitting here trying to recover from a mini heat stroke (you think the getting sick on Sunday morning would of taught me a lesson to drink more water, but it didn't). I am blown away at all the amazing things that have been placed in my life at this very time. We had the privilege of going to the Grand Canyon as a team today following VBS. It was so great. I, among half of our team had not seen it, so we were really excited. When we got there we began with our 1x1 partner's. So today my person happened to be Heidi. So each of us had never seen this before. So as we were approaching this huge and amazing creation, that could only be built by the finger of God, we just stop and were like wow! It is so huge and so amazing and it was so hard to believe that it was right in front of us. I've seen it on pictures and videos and what not, and this was far and beyond any expectation I had. It seemed like every step and every ridge we'd look off of had it's own new beauty that had you caught in the moment again. Even if 5 feet you were just looking at it, it was just so amazing. It was so fun to look around at all the different people from all different cultures they're all enjoying and taking the beauty of it all in. Everyone around you is snapping picture after to picture to try and capture this HUGE beauty into a lifetime of memories. Among this wonder I also realized that my teammates are just as amazing. Just like most things in our life that we see day in and day out, we start to take them for granted. Well today was different and as I sat with my 6 amazing family members enjoying it all and really getting caught up in the true awe of it all, I realized how special and how uniquely God placed us together. Just like all the vast and grand things we see in our outer world, He did the same with the placement of us 7 together. It's amazing how 10 months ago to this day, (Happy 10th month anniversary team!!!) we have grown to such heights. We've laughed, shared, cried, hurt, and of course loved each other. All of these things have molded me into the person I am now. I have these 6 amazing children of God around to thank for growing with me and shaping me. As we have encountered the ocean, mountains, parks, Disneyland, aquariums, host homes, detention centers, deaths, marriages, and we have it all to give thanks to; the sole purpose and reason for it all. It's all God. Nothing greater could ever take the credit. I know from time to time, again and again, I start to want and forget that it's not at all about me, but serving the Creator of it all and doing it all for HIM. We as a team have helped put one another back time and time again and said, ok, it's all for Him; and that is something that we can never be reminded of too many times.

I pray you all have a blessed day, and today I challenge you to look around you and thank God for those amazing creations in your life that have been purposely placed there, and hand picked by an amazing Father that loves you.



Allison Schwarz

Allison

Psalm 36:5-6

Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep..How priceless is your unfailing love!

Date: 6/24/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

Hello from Dana Point, California. We are in our fourth week of VBS and it is so much fun! We just spent the day at the beach with the whole team and our host families. Well, last week we were in Flagstaff, Arizona. Our host family had 2 girls and a boy. Now the girls are very much into makeup. They asked me if they could do my makeup someday and I said sure. Well, this makeup is like the wet Halloween makeup you put on when you want to be a clown for Halloween. But I said go for it. After my eyelids were painted pink and blue, my cheeks BRIGHT purple, and my lips gray and orange, my host sister looked at me with a serious face and said, "You look beautiful!" Now, I have to say I wasn't looking my best that afternoon. But in a 7 and 9 year olds opinion I was stunningly gorgeous!. God is really teaching me this year that it isn't the makeup and styled hair that matter in life. It's the person that I am inside that matters.



Kelcey Guck

Date: 6/26/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

Hello to all

Today is the day before Allison's 20th birthday. Yeah! Allison is taking off for her brother's wedding today and so we as a team decided to celebrate her birthday with a surprise. We decided that we would take her out to breakfast. Well we had a VBS that started at 8:30am so it would have to be an early breakfast. So everyone arrived to Allison's host home at 5:45am and ran into her room yelling that she was late (Lori and Kelcey, who were staying with Allison, took her alarm clock the night before so she wouldn't know what time it was). We had her put on shoes and then took her in her pajamas out to Coco's where we presented her with brownie cupcakes. It was a lot of fun to celebrate her birthday in this special way. It's hard to believe that we have a little more than a month to go before we all go our separate ways. We have really become a family.



Jennifer Loomis

Date: 6/28/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

Hello to everyone out there! I am so stinking hot, I am not stinky, just really hot!! Longbeach, CA is my location. Before that we were in Palmdale for a night and before that we had a week long VBS in Dana Point, CA! During our time in Dana Point, we were all so blessed by the people there! Each day we felt so loved by everyone we came in contact with! I even felt loved by the waiter at Wahoo's Fish Taco! I mean sure he was probably just doing his job, but he was so nice! He went and got me a spoon when I needed one to eat my rice with! Talk about a servant heart! Two of the days we were there they took us to beach. Rock on! All seven of us got to go and it ruled. The day consisted of acting like little kids jumping into the waves and riding them in! For a couple of my teammates that did not have much ocean experience I warned them that the undertow can be dangerous and that the ocean is something to fear and love at the same time. I said if you get pulled under do not fight it so that you get tired, relax and let it take you in. So soon after that HUGE wave took us in and I got pulled under, when I came out I was reaching for air! My teammate Allison had been doing the



Heidi Evanson

same thing and she mentioned that she now understood what I meant about the power of the undertow. She said that that the whole time she was thinking RELAX, RELAX. I guess I had forgotten what I told her cause I said, where did you hear that? She looked at me like I was a little freakish and said, YOU! Oh yah, I said. But I was the one that was scared and fighting the wave. We laughed for awhile and jumped right back into the waves.

I got to thinking about my relationship with God and how I jump into the things he has for me but then I fight against them instead of letting him take me where he wants to take me. When I fight for what I want I usually get scared and end tired. Not what is helpful to my life!! :)

That's my thought for today! I hope it cools off or I find a beach!

Thanks for all your support Mom!

Love ya'll

Heidi

Date: 7/1/2003

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello From Long Beach, California!!!

This past weekend I got to do something that I haven't had to do before. Let me give you a little background...Allison was at her brothers wedding, Kelcey has a sore throat and Heidi just got a sore throat, so that left Jen, Matt, Seth and I to sing Sunday worship.

I was the only one standing in the front then Matt was directly behind me, Seth was in the middle with his drums, Jen was on the other side of Seth, and Kelcey and Heidi were in the back being at the sound board. It was very unusual to have just the four of us but the service went fine and I only messed up once when I started to say the benediction to soon:-) It was nice when Seth came to the microphone right beside me because then I didn't feel so alone. I sometimes forget that God is always at that other microphone so that I am not alone!

All in all it turn out just fine and it just helped me to realize why God placed each one of us on team. Through out the whole service I was just thinking and praying



Lori Counselman

Date: 7/4/2003

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

Well, today turned into being another amazing day. First of all it's the Fourth of July, which I happen to love so much, and I have been blessed amazingly!!!! So we are in Lodi, CA. This is the second time with have been to this particular church. So coming here I was quite excited at the though of maybe staying with my old host family I had stayed with before. Well, that wasn't exactly how the story goes. So we got our housing arrangements and I'm with a family by myself that I didn't know. So I'm excited to meet this new family. So first we had to stop at my host mom's office, no big deal and didn't think anything more of it. So I was sitting there helping run some copies and I started to cough. Ok, let me recap you all on what my health has been like for the last week. Kelcey got sick about 2 weeks ago and then Heidi, and you guessed it, me next. So then when I get sick, my body is like awwwww, and then my asthma decides to kick in and take my breathing organs captive. So to make a long story from getting any longer, I had to go to the ER the other night.... blah, blah things still remained the same and I began to pretend like they were getting better. So this is now where God shows Allison (me) that He is so much more powerful than all of that. So now back to my host mom in Lodi. So she begins to explain to me that she is a doctor and asks me if it's ok if she can check me out really quick. I was like sure. So an hour later after having a little breathing treatment (it's a fun little machine that helps you breathe!!!!) and finding out that I have an ear infection along with some bronchial thing, and realizing that I still wasn't breathing normal. So she got me hooked up with some meds and told me all about what was wrong. She blessed me and Heidi and Kelcey too. She gave us all medication. How crazy. It always amazes me to see how big God really is. I seem to think I know how big He is, but I don't, it exceeds all my understanding.



Allison Schwarz

I was so blessed today by one amazing woman and she now has helped to heal me along with housing me and taking me in for the night. I hope someday I can be that generous to someone else, and I too hope to bless someone's life the way she has blessed my life. Thank you Lord for showing me again that You are so much bigger than any other powers and having people so amazing placed in my life, even when I am so undeserving of them. Happy Fourth of July!!!
I love you mom and Happy birthday Allison Torbit;)

Date: 7/8/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

Hello from Saratoga, California! This is our third time coming back here, so it's nice to see familiar faces. I am housed with Jen for the full week which is really nice because I haven't been housed with her in a while. Well my host parents, their youngest son Cameron-3, Jen and I were all sitting at the dinner table last night. Cameron gave his mom and hug and his dad asked for one. However, Cameron was quick to say no. After a couple of seconds went by, he turned to his dad and said, "But that doesn't mean I don't love you." It was such a cute thing coming from a three year old. I was thinking that that is kind of like our faith in a way. We can't get that hug from our Father in Heaven. We don't get that physical touch. But that doesn't mean He doesn't love us.



Kelcey Guck

Date: 7/10/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

What a gorgeous day it was. The church here in Saratoga just took us all to the beach in Santa Cruz. It was absolutely amazing. A lot of the kids who had parents or older siblings working at the Vacation Bible School also came out and we all had a great hot dog roast on the sand and then some of us hit the freezing cold ocean. I am not one that likes the ocean. I am not that great of a sand fan and how it gets everywhere and anywhere. But I realized that it's fun to jump into waves and hang out and watch kids and even adults boogie boarding. I look forward to times where I can go back again.



Jennifer Loomis

Date: 7/12/2003

Submitted by: Heidi Evanson

Journal Entry:

Santa Clarita, CA, is my location. I am sitting next to two of my host brothers, two more are in front of me along with one of my host sisters. Yes there are a lot of kids in this family and three of us are staying here! I cannot believe how gracious this family is! They have so lovingly opened their home to three of us along with already having 6 kids at home! Dinner is fun!

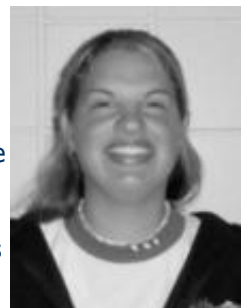
The VBS is a blast! About 200 kids show up everyday and it is around 108 degrees during the day! I feel like we are back at one of our events except it is 4 year olds to 12 year olds that are attending! Honestly the people in this church LOVE VBS and they are so caring towards us! Each day we have felt so welcomed by the church and by all the kids! We sing a lot of sheep songs cause the theme has to do with sheep! No joke we sing three different sheep songs! I just wanna be a sheep!! Baa baa baa baa!

I am really tired this week and cannot focus very much! But I am glad to be here and I am sure I just need to eat more bananas!!

God Bless all that read this journal!

He has blessed me in amazing ways! I love my team and so thankful they are mine!!

Heidi



Heidi Evanson

Date: 7/16/2003

Submitted by: Lori Counselman

Journal Entry:

Hello Everyone!!

A couple nights ago I was at my host families house watching a movie in my room when the electricity went out. At first I was upset because I really wanted to finish my movie but then I went downstairs and started playing cards with my host family. We spent the night playing cards by candle light!! I really think it was a blessing from God to have no electricity, it made us stop and spend quality time with each other. Also, it was nice to have candles all around the house because it reminded me of my mom and her candles that she lights in our house. After people went to bed I got to read my Bible by candlelight and read the words of the Lord. I am realizing more everyday how important it is to be still and listen to what the Lord has to say.

Love in Christ,
Lori



Lori Counselman

Date: 7/19/2003

Submitted by: Allison Schwarz

Journal Entry:

So here's a new and exciting story for you all. I'm so sorry mom, please don't get mad for this!!!! So the other day we were in Saratoga, CA. I had this mail packet that I really wanted to get sent off. It wasn't something that HAD to be sent, but I had it in my head that I needed to get it out that day. So I took my sweet time all day getting this package ready, making it as perfect as me, the non-perfectionist could get it. So it rolls around to be 4:00 and that's when it was closing, so my teammates were planning on taking a road trip so they were going to drop me off at the post office and then I was going to walk back. So they drop me off and I walk in and right when they drove away I realized that it was already closed. So being so crushed that I had worked all afternoon on this package and now I was going to have to walk all the way back with no ride and this package in my hands the whole way (poor me!) So there was a guy in there with his two younger kids and so I decide maybe there's still hope at mailing this. So I, in my sweet voice ask this man if there is any other places to mail the package. Then he replies that there was a bigger post office that stays open later. So being that I don't have a vehicle and knowing that I'm going to have to walk back I ask him if it's in walking distance. It turns out that it wasn't and so then he offers to give me a ride. I'm like you know it's not THAT big of a deal and I can just do it tomorrow. So he offers again, and he's like you know I'm not in that big of a hurry, if you don't mind I can bring you back too. So I thank him for the offer and so thanks anyway. So I'm finishing up writing something and then he's like are you positive, because I really don't mind and I'm not in a hurry. So without thinking I was like, ok! So I hop in the car and we drive along to the post office. I'm telling him all about youth encounter and where I'm from. Anyways, so I get the package sent (it got there on time too!!) then we talk some more about what I'm doing and find out that his sister got married at the church that we were doing VBS at. I told him that I normally would not get in a car with strangers, but for some reason I trusted him and he thanked me for trusting him and said that he enjoyed talking with me and then before I get out of the car he reaches in his wallet for money, and I'm like please no, this has been more than enough of generosity and he insists that I take it for the ministry. So he gave me \$60 and I told him that I would keep him and his family in my prayers and he drove away. Not that I'm encouraging people to get in cars with strange people. Also I'm promising my poor mother that's reading this, that I will never do such a thing again. I thought this was a not smart, but yet great thing that happened. I answered normal questions that I get all the time and just talked about how much I enjoy what I'm doing. By that it moved him enough to want to give something back to our organization. I pray that maybe something was planted in his heart to grow closer to God and I thank You Lord for protecting me and keeping me safe!!!

Thank you all who have supported me and kept me in their prayers. I miss you all!!!
Allison Rae



Allison Schwarz

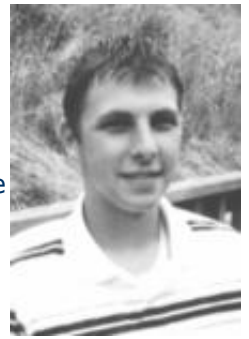
Date: 7/22/2003

Submitted by: Seth Malmgren

Journal Entry:

Well It is the first time getting sick on the road for me. i thought i would never get sick but now i can something more in common with other people who have gotten sick while on team. It is also nice to rest up an extra day and it gave me a lot of time to think about what all is to come in the next couple of weeks. I am sure that i can stay string and focus on what i am here to do and not get distracted from other things that are bothering me. I am glad to get back with my team and start jammin with them all again.

-Seth CFSW



Date: 7/24/2003

Submitted by: Kelcey Guck

Journal Entry:

It's so crazy to think that team is nearing an end. We have a week of bookings left, then we go to debriefing up in Minnesota. Thank you so much to all of you who have kept us in your prayers throughout the year. This experience has been absolutely amazing and God has given me 6 friends who will always remain in my life. However, we wouldn't be here without your support and prayers. So thanks to our families, friends and church congregations! Kelcey



Kelcey Guck

Seth Malmgren

Date: 7/26/2003

Submitted by: Jennifer Loomis

Journal Entry:

What a great last week of Vacation Bible School. It's hard to believe that we don't have anymore VBS left. This last week I had the opportunity to see some of the greatest sights I think of California. On Wed. we went to Sequoia National Park and on Friday a couple of us drove to Yosemite National Park. They were both breath taking and I am amazed at the work God did with both places. I have to tell you that when I first started out on the road almost a year ago I really didn't want to be in the Southwest region because that is where I am from I lived in both Arizona and Colorado and I worked a couple summers in California. So I thought well what else is there to see within that region. And let me tell you God really showed me a lot. I definitely wouldn't change the region for anything and am glad that God placed me here and with a great team. I don't take the time to thank Him for all that he has given me. SO THANKS GOD!



Jennifer Loomis