

Captive Free West Lakes 2002-03 Journal

Date: 9/24/2002

Submitted by: Rikki Carissa Dold

Journal Entry:

Wow! Our team has only been on the road for about a week now and we have had so many opportunities. We have had times to share our faith with others and times where we could just sit and listen to others share their faith with us. Our first couple of bookings have been great blessings. We have led some family night programs and even some worship services. We also had the opportunity to participate in an activity called see you at the pole. See you at the pole gave us the chance to go to some local schools and pray with the students around their flag pole. It was so great to see the number of kids gathered around the flag pole praying and witnessing to the other kids around the school. The people have been amazing and it is very evident that our God lives in them. There were a few times things were a little rough for us. For example, we have had problems with our sound system, and even interpersonal problems, but there was always someone there to give us a hand or maybe even just some words of encouragement. Whatever the case may have been it was truly works from our God up above.



Rikki Carissa Dold

Date: 9/26/2002

Submitted by: Adam Slagsvol

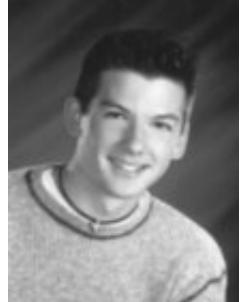
Journal Entry:

Thursday September 26, 2002

Last night we did a Confirmation Kick Off at First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. However, before that we had the opportunity to do an afternoon program for a group of retirees in the area. We had lunch with them and played/sang some songs for them. It was just like having 40 grandparents to hang out with. Being able to talk and laugh with them was so much fun. The biggest blessing to us was afterwards the pastor approached us and shared that the group didn't think that they would enjoy our company. It turns out that they, in fact, loved our program and the time we spent with them. Later in the day it came time to do the Confirmation Kick Off with pizza, games, and make-your-own sundaes! :-P ... This was great because it was the first time that we got to spend this much time with the youth. We finished the night with a short but awesome worship service. All of the youth were so great and into the worship. We realized that the two groups were quite similar. Both groups were naturally skeptical to begin with, but joyous at the end. It was wonderful to see that the joy we saw was for God. The excitement of the young and old blessed us very, very much.

In His love,

-Adam Slagsvol



Adam Slagsvol

Date: 9/28/2002

Submitted by: Kira Ehrlich

Journal Entry:

Well, what can I say? God is so amazing! It is wonderful to see Him work in so many ways! These past few days we were in Oconto, WI. We didn't do much program-wise, but we did get to see a small community in action. They had their homecoming game at their high school and it was so fascinating to see a whole town involved and giving support. Sometimes it is just as rewarding to sit back and watch others as it is to have others watch you. Oconto taught me a lot.



Kira Ehrlich

Tonight we had a small program in a boy's juvenile detention center in Tomahawk, WI. The supervisor, Bruce, told us that this place was considered a part of the prison system. Meaning, these guys have done a lot of awful things. Most of us were uneasy about going in there and talking about God to these juvenile criminals. I think we were all taken by surprise though. They were probably the most receptive audience we've had! It was so amazing to see God at work in these young gentlemen. Afterwards, we were able to go see the different dorm areas and we had the chance to talk to some of the guys. Their stories were so interesting. One guy we met, Paul, really made me wonder why anyone would ever give up on these guys. He sang a song that he wrote, it was a rap, and it was the best gift I think we have received on our journey so far. It was so heartfelt. I'm sure we all got goosebumps. I was reminded that I am no better than the worst criminal in there, but also that the kingdom of God is still big enough for the both of us. I don't think I will ever forget this experience for the rest of my time on team, and beyond. I'm so honored to have been a part of this.

Love in Christ,
Kira Ehrlich-West Lakes

Date: 10/1/2002

Submitted by: Annie Shoen

Journal Entry:

Greetings to you all and God's Blessings unto you!



Annie Shoen

So here we are....driving down the road in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan—and I think about the places we've been already. I try to think about something profound to write about, but really all that seems to be coming to mind is the reoccurring theme of each place that we visit—the generosity of the people we encounter!

You see, I am a college graduate. Much of the last four years has been trying to make ends meet after figuring in rent, groceries, education expenses, and taking care of "Margarita" and "Bertha"—my lovely two cars. However, ironically, as I am living in a van, without any money, and away from all that is familiar to me—I am making ends meet better than before!

Each place that we have been the church, host families, and all we have met have been more than generous! For example, we were in Roberts, WI and I was talking with a young girl there. We were getting a ride in their van and I looked over next to me in the cup holder. There was one of the BEST tubes of lip gloss I had ever seen! I love lip gloss and exclaimed "I love this stuff!" We talked about our girlish excitement over the flavored lip balm. The next morning before worship she walks up to me with a beautiful, generous, and warm smile. She looks at me and says "Here, this is to buy yourself some lip gloss." I looked at her in disbelief as she gave me a gift to buy something that I could not possibly afford myself this year. I'm not exactly used to this generosity from people that I have just met and am leaving soon.

But the generosity does not stop there! We have received many home cooked, as well as restaurant meals, snacks for the road, multiple "Needs List" check offs at most places, oil change and tire

rotation gifts, and of course our sponsorship monies! And just as important, people have been so gracious to give us complete comfort in their homes—comfortable beds, fresh, clean towels, their time, and their kindness.

In a world where most of what I focused on was the stress, the struggles, and the pain of our brothers and sisters, I feel so lucky to be peacefully set in one of the best opportunities one could have. To all we have stayed with and to those we are going to stay with—Thank you, thank you, thank you for all your generosity and kindness! You are truly displaying Christ through your love given on earth!

Take care,
Annie Shoen

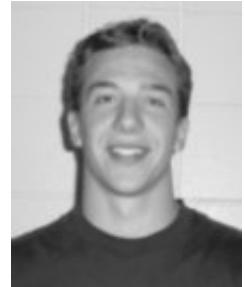
Date: 10/3/2002

Submitted by: Ryan Clark

Journal Entry:

Greetings and God's blessings to you all!

We are now in October. The weather here in Wisconsin has slowly turned colder, and the trees and plant life have started to turn incredible colors. I am from western Washington and we have nothing like this over there.



Ryan Clark

Life on the road has definitely become easier as we are in the third week of our travels. This is mostly due to our host homes and contacts, which have made our stays and visits very interesting. I would never have thought I would meet someone who farmed cranberries or that I would meet so many former teamers. I got to stay at a host home for a couple of nights in Beaver Dam WI and the first night my host brother and I wrote a song together. I am seeing a whole new world here in the Midwest. There are a lot more churches and these churches play a big part in the towns we have visited, especially the smaller towns.

At the beginning of this last week we didn't have any bookings set for thurs.-sat., but by the time we reached Thursday we had everything in line for the rest of the week. It's been fun to watch how things fall into place and we don't have to worry about them (although Diana our office contact was probably working hard to find us a place). We got to play some music for a women's group in Shenington WI that met on Thursday night and we got to visit and eat with them afterward.

Every place we go is different, but so far the atmosphere and kindness of people has been overwhelming. I didn't realize how great the generosity of people around here was.

God has been very good to us so far, and has blessed us greatly. With the fellowship of my teammates and the company of all the strangers we have met so far on the road. I thank you for all your prayers and support.

In Christ's Love
Ryan Clark

Date: 10/5/2002

Submitted by: Nick Campbell

Journal Entry:

Team life so far this year has been a great experience for me. There have been many different opportunities for us. Some of them I know that I will remember for the rest of my life. During our team outing on Friday we had many different things happen to us. Some of us team members were given gifts from an unknown person. It's still a mystery to us. We also dyed our hair. We all have natural hair color, but they are all different from our original hair color. I know that God will keep giving us interesting



Nick Campbell

things to do on team with each other and other people that we minister to. May God take care of all of you.

In Christ,

Nick Campbell

Date: 10/10/2002

Submitted by: Rikki Carissa Dold

Journal Entry:

Hey there! Man time flies you are having fun! It seems like we just started team and in 4 more days we will have been on the road for a month already! We just finished up a lock-in where there were over 65 youth let me tell you about energy! I think this was one of the craziest shows we have done yet. Between the fun games and songs we had a few sessions. This is where we divided the youth into 3 different groups.



Rikki Carissa Dold

Nick and Ryan led a session called Bible basketball the kids all seemed to enjoy that. Adam and Kira led a session on music and how many different styles of worship music there are out there today. Annie and I led a faith talk session, in this session we let the kids write questions that they had about their faith or maybe just questions they had for us about team. This was a great learning session for the kids and for us as leaders. Some of the questions they asked were: Where did the people go that died before Jesus? If God really loves us why do we suffer? How do we really know there is a heaven? And then there were the silly questions like can I have your autograph? These questions not only made the kids think but they made us think. We then ended the night with some sing alongs. After a long night of fun we had to prepare ourselves for another long night of more fun and games because we had another lock-in coming up the next day!

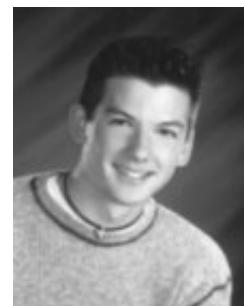
Date: 10/10/2002

Submitted by: Adam Slagsvol

Journal Entry:

Hello again!!!

We've been in Holmen, WI for three days so far with two more to go. This is a great town full of wonderful people! Today we had another opportunity to visit two more nursing homes and had a Sr. High youth meeting type thing. The two homes were mainly filled with elderly suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Residents of both places seemed to really enjoy having us and meeting us afterward as well. Again, it was just like being around a bunch of grandparents. It makes us so happy to see the smiles on their faces and to hear their stories they have acquired throughout their years; I loved it. Earlier this evening, we had planned on doing a Sr. High youth meeting. The turn-out nor conversation were what we had expected. Only three girls showed up for the gathering. (Two in ninth grade, the other in tenth.) However, these girls were willing to share their worst and best moments in their lives, as well as faith walks, thus far, without us asking them to do so. I think it's safe to say that this shocked and amazed all of us. The openness and vulnerability of these few young teens blessed and encouraged the team.



Adam Slagsvol

In His love,
Adam Slagsvol
Captive Free West Lakes

Date: 10/13/2002

Submitted by: Kira Ehrlich

Journal Entry:

October 13, 2002

Let me just tell you, this past week has been so crammed. I think we did more this week than we have on our whole time being on the road. I am looking around the van and everyone is totally out. We haven't been getting very much sleep. We are pretty much exhausted. This just shows us how cool the Lord is though. Somehow we were able to give a fun and energetic Family Night Program last night. I think it was probably our best performance yet. I don't know about everyone else but I was feeling very weak and very tired. I don't what happened, but God totally took over. We even had a lock-in right after that and we had a blast. The kids were so amazing. You think that you're the one going in to teach them something and you end up being the one who learns from them. It's crazy! It's really funny how you learn things without even realizing it. It has taken me a long time but I finally realized that this whole thing, this whole year is about just letting go and giving it up to God. It's about the youth. It's kind of hard to remember that especially with all of the things you have to do on team. It is so easy to focus on the little things and forget about what our ministry actually is. These kids were so excited to have us there that we couldn't help but be excited to be with them and talk about God with them. I am glad God placed us at such an awesome church especially when it didn't feel like we could do anymore.

Love in Christ,
Kira Ehrlich



Kira Ehrlich

Date: 10/15/2002
Submitted by: Annie Shoen
Journal Entry:

Well...Hello again! Here we are in South Milwaukee, WI a big city again! You know, a past teamer that I was housed with gave us advice to use if we're lost...simply look toward the sky to find a steeple. In most cases it has worked for us--as the self-proclaimed "West Laters/West Losters"--however, this time that advice would not work. I have to say that its nice to be in a big city again, though. :)



Annie Shoen

We got to do a large program last night for about 140-160 people at Trinity Lutheran church. It was so much fun! You see, we had a team discussion last weekend about how we, as a team, would like to make our programs more exciting, how we would like to help the people we are interacting with to feel like they're more of a part of the worship, and how we would like to help them have a more memorable experience. Therefore, our solution was to make a pact that we would each reach out to one specific person at every program. I cannot tell you the impact it has had on our programs! I am so proud of our team because our ministry and our program has improved ten fold! To watch the children's smiles when we ask them to be our egg shaker percussionist for "Follow You" or to see a father's face light up when we ask him to lead the actions for "Psalm 25" is so refreshing! Its so wonderful to reach out and to really get to KNOW our audiences. Then its not just a concert--but a true worship experience for everyone there.

I am also realizing how much God is going to allow us to grow and change this year! I was able to stay in a wonderful host home this past weekend! I stayed with an amazing newly married woman. She was great! Her hospitality and kindness was incredible! She had went shopping the day prior for gifts for our team, as well as, for personal gifts specifically for me! When we got home, she had baked cookies for me and had cinnamon rolls for breakfast. She insisted that I sleep on the bed, while she sleep on the couch. And she was bent on "pampering" me. But the best gift of all was that when we were both dead tired at 12:00 am, she was willing to stay up and talk with me until 2:30 am about marriage, college, her faith, and her family. Its exciting how much God works through an experience when you may think that it is the most impossible time for Him to move.

Now when thinking about this, I realized something...you see--we're a travelling ministry team...however, many times, we're the ones being ministered to. You see, I learned much from this woman about having a servant's heart, about hospitality, and about how I would like my home to be towards guests. She was so kind and her kindness touched me more than she will probably ever

know! What a blessing she was to me.

I keep thinking about how bittersweet it is to be away from my family and friends for a whole entire year and how much I miss them. However, this experience caused me to realize that God is helping me to grow and change. I am able to meet people like this woman because He wants me to be able to go home changed so that I may be a better person for those I love and care about most. Praise God for working in mysterious ways and Praise God for trusting me enough with this years experiences!

May God Bless you until next time...

Annie Shoen
Captive Free-West Lakes

Date: 10/17/2002
Submitted by: Ryan Clark
Journal Entry:

Greetings from Wisconsin.

It snowed today! It didn't stick, but it was awesome to see and drive through. These last two weeks have been the busiest so far on team. We've done almost everything you can think of. It has been a lot of fun and we have met some incredible people.

We were in Janesville yesterday for a family night program. We received 5 partnerships that night. It was unbelievable.

I got the chance to talk to my host family that night for quite awhile. I got to share a lot about my family with them. It was really good for me to reminisce about them and to remind myself of why I'm here and how they helped me get here.

Also while I was talking with my host mom, it came up that I hadn't read a good novel since I got on team (Usually I read nonstop). So in the morning when we were tearing down she stopped by and dropped off a card and the latest book by my favorite author. The kindness and thoughtfulness of people never ceases to amaze me.

After being away from home for two months, I have grown to appreciate my home church and how things are done there. But on the same note there are so many new and exciting ways to worship and praise God that I don't think I'll ever be the same or ever look at worship the same.

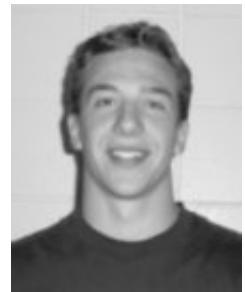
Thank you for all your prayers and support.

In Christ's Love,
Ryan L. Clark

Date: 10/19/2002
Submitted by: Nick Campbell
Journal Entry:

Good day everyone.

It seems that everyday on team gives us new and exciting ways to minister to people. Just yesterday we were able to do our program for a group of students at St. John's school in Portage, WI. It was neat to be able to sit with them during lunch, just like we were back in elem. school, and them pump them up with music for the Lord, just like a pep rally. We also had our first bonfire today where we sang songs, drank hot chocolate, and had smores. I had a blast with the campfire experience even though the temps. in WI are



Ryan Clark



Nick Campbell

starting to get chilly.

Not only are our different types of program type ministries great to experience, but our host home ministries are great also. I've had the chance to experience so many different new things. We had a few hour blackout in S. Milwaukee, which showed me that a few hours of no electricity can do some good for a family. Also, I was able to see some memorabilia of the Green Bay Packers, my favorite football team, at another host home. These among many other host home experiences has helped me be able to share fellowship with my brothers and sisters in Christ. May God Bless all of you always.

In Christ,
Nick

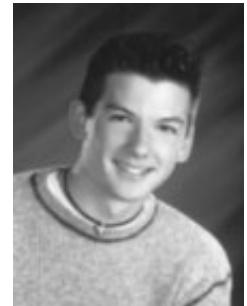
Date: 10/22/2002

Submitted by: Adam Slagsvol

Journal Entry:

Tuesday, October 22nd, 2002

Today we had the opportunity to go to a catholic grade school. We performed an acoustic program after eating lunch with the youth. (cafeteria corndogs, YUM:-P) The grades ranged from Kindergarten to 5th grade and all of the students were very receptive to our songs and skits. After our little program we all had the chance to go to different classes and hang out with the kids for about 10 minutes per class. That was a lot of fun to share with them everything from our faith stories to what our favorite color was. We also were allowed to go to recess with the students. THAT WAS AWESOME!!! I haven't had the chance to run around on a playground in so long. It was definitely something I miss from my grade school days...



Adam Slagsvol

Ryan and I also get to share a host home tonight. This is cool because our host brother and sister attend the school we went to! So we got a little bonus fun time with them. We also had the chance to play our guitars for our host parents for about three hours, which I think I can safely say was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

The biggest blessing today would have to be the students. I love being silly and crazy with, and just hanging out with younger kids. It reminded me so much of being home with my younger brother and sister (Christina: 9, Christopher: 8). It made me miss them a lot more but it was still a ton of fun getting to be around that age group.

In His love,

Adam Slagsvol
Captive Free West Lakes

Date: 10/26/2002

Submitted by: Kira Ehrlich

Journal Entry:

October 26, 2002

Guess what? I have a secret. Today is my birthday! O.k., so maybe it's not so secret. I have been driving my teammates crazy by telling them as often as I can how close my birthday is, and now it is here. Wahoo! I can't get over how wonderful our host parents have been on this my special day. It is hard not being at home when things like this occur, but I found it to be a whole lot easier because of the kindness of these strangers who have taken me in as their own. (This is also true at any other time besides just birthdays.)

You know, it is very easy to get comfortable with your surroundings and to get used to having



Kira Ehrlich

things that you know are going to be constant in your life constantly in your life. (Get that?) Team is not about that. Team is always being uncomfortable. Team is finding the comfort in the uncomfortable. I have to say though, that the people we have met so far have done a wonderful job of helping us to find that comfort. Team makes you realize that it's hard to experience new things when you only want what is common in your life in your life. I have learned to thrive on the uncommon, which is not easy. Though my birthday was uncommon (because I didn't have my family and friends there, you see), I still got a lot out of it and I learned so much about the kindness of people. It gets me every time. If you give people a chance their kindness can really surprise you. Christ just over flowingly shines through. He's awesome!

Love in Christ,

Kira Ehrlich

Date: 10/28/2002

Submitted by: Annie Shoen

Journal Entry:

Yo, Yo! It's Annie Shoen again!

So...life on team has proven to be interesting yet again! We are currently in Lake Zurich, IL and I am loving it! I am staying with a family of four and I have had the best time with them! Today was my day off and interestingly I have done much, yet this has been one of my most relaxing days and one of my favorite days yet! They have enticed me with their wonderful hot tub, comfortable home, and AWESOME food! Not to mention their company has been fun too! Praise God for wonderful people like these! However, tomorrow we must leave again...that's the part I hate. But--the experience has been wonderful nonetheless.

The awesome experience at Peace Lutheran in Lake Zurich has GOT to be the Youth gathering on Sunday night! You see--on Saturday evening we had a few youth come and hang out with us and learn one of our songs. Then on Sunday night--they played with us in front of the audience! IT WAS AWESOME to be able to have them up there playing with us! I think the mixing of the Captive Free band and the youth at the church was a special moment that captivated my heart. I got goosebumps hearing the crowd cheering for their peers, watching an adult of the congregation wiping tears from her eyes, and seeing the confidence rise in the youth that were playing and singing their hearts out on "Lifeboat". What a great blessing to serve this church in this way!

I think the "Insight from Annie" this week would have to be one of practical insight. Man-O-Man am I ever learning responsibility! You see--at training our team director mentioned that most parents, upon the return of their teamer daughter/son, say that they can't believe how much their son/daughter has matured! Silly me responded in my head--Well...I've graduated college--I don't have anymore room left for maturing! HAHA--thats when God comes in--and like my good friend from college says--WA-BAM! Those WA-BAM moments are those moments when you think one thing and God shows you the complete opposite while sitting in heaven laughing and shaking His head at you. You see--God is constantly showing me, already, how much He wants to change and mature me.

I am presently living off of a very small budget. I have never in my life had this little to live off of. Of course our meals and shelter--as well as many other hygiene and daily living items--are taken care of! BUT--what shall I do with out being able to go shopping and buy that cute pair of jeans or that extra pair of shoes on CLEARANCE!? Even though you may be laughing at me--I have learned much about discipline and simple living in the area of money! I have learned much about how greedy I have been in the past and how I have not been a good steward of the money God has given me. I am learning how to pay old debts--even off of a stipend of \$60 a month--and how to save for NECESSARY items. Instead of Target or the beloved JCrew--I now find bargains at the Dollar Tree or wonderful hand me down gifts from host families! I am so blessed beyond belief and when God talks to us about how He provides and that we shall never have to worry about what we shall eat or what we shall wear--I now listen to Him. I'm not always excited or even calm about this money-matter...but I am learning.

I am so lucky to be maturing and to be in the spot of humility and complete dependence on God. I have never been more secure in my relationship with Him and I have never been more excited about being simple. What a huge lesson! And mom and dad--be ready for the new and improved daughter--wink, wink.

God Bless you!



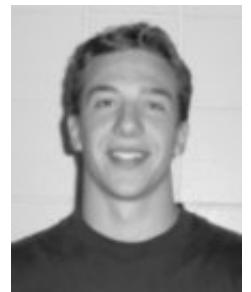
Annie Shoen

Annie Shoen
Captive Free-West Lakes

Date: 10/31/2002
Submitted by: Ryan Clark
Journal Entry:

Greetings from the Midwest,

It is now November. This last month and a half has flown by. We finally got down to Illinois last week and that was fun seeing a state I'd never been to. It's a pretty flat state.



Ryan Clark

We were in Green Bay the day of Halloween and the day before. We performed a family night program and the next night we did a hay ride and bonfire. Wednesday, the day before Halloween was crazy. We ended up going the wrong way to Green Bay a couple of times, we almost ran out of gas and our cord that runs from the trailer to the van ended up dying and so we had no lights on the trailer for a few miles. But, everything worked out and the cord got fixed.

On Halloween we led songs on a hayride on the way to a bonfire. It was so much fun. The weather was freezing that night so it was a relief to get to the bonfire. At the bonfire they had warm drinks and some snacks. There were quite a few people who came along and it was great to see so many families doing something besides hand out candy that night. But it was kind of sad for me because it was the first time in a long time that I hadn't gone out trick or treating or helped someone scare people. But that's okay.

I've been studying Romans for the last couple of weeks and it has really helped me understand the grace God has for us but at the same time what God would like to see out of us and ultimately demands of us. And so that is where His grace comes through so that even though we can't live up to His law we are made perfect in His sight.

Thank you for all the prayers and the support. God Bless all of you.

In Christ's Love,
Ryan L. Clark

Date: 11/2/2002
Submitted by: Nick Campbell
Journal Entry:

November 2nd, 2002

Today marks my first time in Indiana. It also marks our farthest drive on team so far. God has sent me to many different places to do many different things on team with only a little over 1 and 1/2 months in the bucket. Through this time God has taught me how to live with people 24 hrs. a day 7 days a week and compromise with different events that come up during this year. It has helped me to open up more with not being so shy, sharing my opinions, and expressing my feelings.



Nick Campbell

With being on team and singing Worship songs all the time, it started to feel like we were just singing them. I had no feeling while singing them like I had before, but God was going to help change all that. On Halloween we had the chance to go to a hayride and bonfire with some youth of Green Bay, WI. Not only was it cool because it was Green Bay, which being from Wisconsin I'm a big Packer fan, but there was an awesome experience that happened to me. While on the hay wagon, to the bonfire, we sang songs with the kids. We started to sing a song called "Light The Fire". While we were singing the chorus, "So light the fire in my soul, fan the flame it me whole, Lord you know where I stand, so light the fire in my heart again" the huge bonfire came into view. It was awesome

to see God lighting the fire for us. It helped me to get into the feeling of worship again. I'll talk with you all again at a later date. Until then, may God Bless all of you.

In Christ,

Nick

Date: 11/8/2002

Submitted by: Rikki Carissa Dold

Journal Entry:

Well another week has gone by and once again God has blessed us in so many ways. These past couple of days we have had many long drives and a lot of bookings. On Thursday we performed at a place called the Wright House. This was a home for the disabled. We were a little late arriving because of the good old Chicago traffic and when we arrived they were all waiting for us. As soon as we started playing their faces lit up and their smiles stretched from ear to ear. On Friday we performed in Chicago at **Rikki Carissa Dold** a Lutheran high school. We lead the chapel service for them in the morning and then spent the rest of the day going to the different religion classes speaking with the kids. Then on Friday night when we thought there was no energy left for anything else we had a family night and lock-in. Once again God provided us with energy and strength to have one of the best nights ever. We ended up playing many games, volley ball, basketball, and wall soccer. God has not only blessed through the many places we have been and the great people we have met, but God is teaching us so much through each other as a team.

In His Grip,
Rikki Dold <><



Date: 11/10/2002

Submitted by: Kira Ehrlich

Journal Entry:

NOVEMBER 10, 2002

These past few days we were in Chicago. It was pretty crazy. We had so many different things to do. We did a chapel at a high school, and then we hung out with them in their classes for the rest of the day. We then had to tear down and set up at the church. We did our family night concert and then we had a lock-in. I had a great time and I know the rest of the team did too. The next day we were supposed to hang out with the youth, but I think they were all too tired from the lock-in because only a few came. We had a lot of fun though. I really wish I could have been able to spend more time with them. They were a great group of kids. By this time, though, we were exhausted. Looking at what we had done and what we had to do I didn't know how we were going to make it through. God can give you some incredible strength though. We got through it. When you stop relying on yourself, God totally takes over. I think that is main thing we will learn this year. We aren't enough, but with God we can be enough. We can be good enough! We can be strong enough! We can be enough!

Love in Christ,
Kira Ehrlich



Kira Ehrlich

Date: 11/12/2002

Submitted by: Annie Shoen

Journal Entry:

HOLA AMIGOS!

WOW...Life as I know it is chaos right now. I cannot believe how many things God can put on your "platter-o-life" at one time. And then He tells us that He'll never give us

more than we can handle...but the saying goes "Well then--I just wish He didn't trust me so much!"

So there's many things going on in my life right now--and I'm going to briefly tell you about them so that I can share with you the "intelligent mush" that is floating through my brain right now. Okey Dokey?

My platter pretty much consists of personal things that are going on that seem to want to cloud my vision for this year. One of my biggest fears about being away from home has come true. You see--I was close to home last year, so if anything should happen to one of my nearest and dearest--I could be there in a heartbeat. My fear, though, was by coming on team--I can't commit to being there for them. Well I found out last Wed.

that my dad is going through some major health issues, which are causing huge changes in his life. Dad will also be going through some major surgeries and since he is one of the most important people to me, it breaks my heart not to be able to be there with him to hold his hand or smile at him. I would be what you call a "worry-wart" and thus, this has definately been on my mind throughout the past week.

Welp--then the inevitable happened--I GOT SICK. Geez Louise--can you ever have a stress in your life and NOT get sick? Not likely. So I have also been battling a head cold, trying to preform with the dry throat and sneezing attacks, all the while looking like Rudolph the Red Nosed reindeer from blowing my nose so much. Another barrier to giving 100%...

Last--I am finding out that I am the WORST at travel packing. You see--I've already lost all possible pairs of pants to wear for programs and am left with only skirts to wear--in the cold Midwest, left my winter jacket at a church, left my wallet at a host home, and left my CD's at another church.

HELLO--I'm second oldest on team AND I'm the team leader--you'd think I'd be doing a little better than that!

So this morning when our team wasn't exactly rushing to meet deadlines, hadn't gotten our job responsibilites completed, and we are 15 minutes late for our departure time--you can bet I was a little frustrated. With all these things on my mind--I simply got crabby! So this morning--I chose to wallow in the self pity of my anxious personal life and team issues--instead of turn to the source of strength and Savior from my chaos. Oopsie....let me tell you--NOT THE FIRST TIME I've done that. BUT--LIKE EVERY OTHER TIME--God reminded me when it was too late to clean up my act and just get over it. I ended up finding this out at our program--at 7pm! We are in Burr Ridge, IL at a WONDERFUL church and for some reason--God completely blessed our program tonight. It was one of those that we shouldn't have sounded good or looked good--but suddenly we were? We were tired, I had a stuffed up head, and we had the possibility of sound issues. But, lo and behold--God did it again! He completely turned things around and Rikki even told us "You guys TRULY sounded like Rock Stars!" while following us around with a paper to get our autographs. Silly girl...we sounded good because of HER!

Then--to top off the evening--we are staying at a house that has a BUILT IN raquetball court! MY FAVORITE GAME EVER! So Kira and I showed off a little--and then were COMPLETELY humbled when we started playing with our host dad. I think he hit that ball faster than the speed limit written on my last speeding ticket! It was the coolest thing ever!

So--God showed me the abounding goodness of life yet again--when I was walking around with a raincloud above my head. What a blessing to be here tonight, in Burr Ridge, IL...I still have troubles on my "platter" but its so refreshing to know that God cares about me so much that even though I was a walking mess of crabbiness--He graciously gave me a bit o fun tonight. Praise you Jesus--only you knew that I needed a few excited kids during "Gonna Dance", a group of college kids getting groovy during "Beautiful", and 4 games of raquetball. I love you, Lord.

Annie Shoen

Captive Free West Lakes

Date: 11/16/2002

Submitted by: Nick Campbell

Journal Entry:

Hey all,

The past couple of days have given me all different types of experiences. We spent most of the time in the suburbs of Chicago. We had the chance to perform for a Lutheran school, which was cool, and then we went to the classrooms to tell them about how God



Annie Shoen



lead us to team, and to also answer any questions that they had.

Nick Campbell

We then had two different youth events that we performed for. Both events challenged us in many different ways. Through these events God taught me how to be patient with other people. It's sometimes hard to remember that we are here for God and not ourselves. With this in mind, I need to not want things my way, but to go to where the kids are so that I can give them the message about God in a way that they will like and understand.

Talk with you all later.

In Christ,

Nick

Date: 11/26/2002

Submitted by: Annie Shoen

Journal Entry:

HAPPY TURKEY DAY....

This is the great, the one, the only Annie Shoen coming at ya with some cool thoughts to share. We're presently in Columbia City, IN staying with Rikki's family for Thanksgiving. Its great--we've got all six of us in one house...a good time for bonding! We've went shopping for Christmas presents, watched the Muppets "Treasure Island", met some of Rikki's friends, and we've eaten more Cinnamon Toast Crunch and French Toast Crunch than I have in a year! And don't even ASK how much egg nog Ryan has drank! A couple of pints and a full half gallon...crazy kid.



Annie Shoen

But its exciting to be getting ready for the holidays! Today we played in North Manchester, IN for a retirement home. It was probably the most fancy and most beautiful home we've been to yet...You drive into the turnaround to the home and see a huge statue in the middle, with pillars as an entrance. Then when walking in, you see a baby grand piano, a beautiful bird cage with tropical birds, and lovely christmas decorations. It was an elegant place with very beautiful decorations. We played an hour show for about 30 residents. Afterwards, though, was my favorite part!

First of all, I was able to talk with three lady residents there. We were talking about the usual--where they grew up, where I went to college, if they had any family, and if I had a boyfriend. It was fun to hear their stories. But then it got a little deeper and they were sharing their struggles as being "the widows". You know, I thought I'd be sad and ended up thinking "Wow...this is going to be heavy--God help me to be encouraging to them." However, at the end of the conversation I ended up being encouraged myself! You see, one of the lovely women simply told me "You know...I used to tell people my sad stories and I used to want to "vent" about my life. But now I realize that people don't want to hear the sadness of your life and they don't want to dwell on what you've struggled with. Instead--I've made it a goal to really listen to others and to bring them joy instead of pain." That was so interesting! I found her an inspiration--as well as the other two ladies--for listening to my life, hearing about the things that were important to me, and really showing me the character of God.

You see, Jesus could have complained about being on earth, He could have complained about how Judas--one of the twelve closest friends He had while on earth--was going to betray Him, He could have complained about how Peter--his best friend--was going to deny Him, and He could have complained about going to a cross for those who love Him, and even those who don't. But, instead, Jesus' life was a testimony of the love He had for other people! He ministered to the woman at the well, to the Lepers, to the adulterous woman, to the paralyzed, blind, hungry, and possessed...He didn't dwell on the things that tempted Him, the things that angered Him, or the things that brought His spirit down. Nope--Jesus was a loving, compassionate, selfless man.

Sometimes I rely on material gifts...sometimes I rely on the emotional gifts that friends and family give me...but the best gifts of all are the insight that I am learning this year on how to be a better

woman of God. Its so exciting to see a piece of Christ in each person we meet...Thank you God for the three widows and thank you for the example you set while on earth.

I love you mom and dad, I love you Shawn and family and Angi and family, and I love you Curtis. My prayers are going out to all the families we encountered this year, all the teams that are on the road just like us--as well as to the office, and to those at home that I love and miss. God Bless you and Happy Thanksgiving!

Love,
Annie Shoen
Captive Free West Lakes

Date: 11/30/2002

Submitted by: Nick Campbell

Journal Entry:

Hi all,

This past week has been a slow week for my teammates and I. We did a few programs, but not many. The nice thing, that I liked, about this week was that we spent the entire week at Rikki's house. It was nice to be able to stay in one place for awhile. It's not that I don't like going to different homes meeting new people each day, its one of the reasons I joined team, its just nice to take a break for awhile. The meeting new people part was still in effect this week though. I met a lot of people from our programs and going to both sides of Rikki's family for Turkey Day.

The slowness of the week has given me the chance to look back at all of the things that we've done on team so far. I can't believe that we will be at our mid-winter training in just 1 week and 2 days. Talk with you all after Christmas break. God Bless.

In Christ,

Nick



Nick Campbell

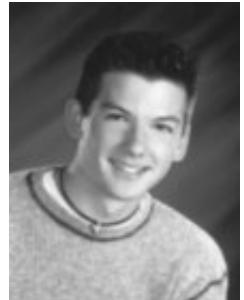
Date: 12/4/2002

Submitted by: Adam Slagsvol

Journal Entry:

So its December, Wait a minute, 3 months already?!? Schools back home are already well into their second quarter and there's Christmas decorations everywhere!!! Who would have thought that it would have gone by so quickly? I mean not even a week till mid-winter training and I thought I was just getting things under control!

Well, Sunday was a bit of fun. We lead two worship services, opened up Sunday school and even had time to go back to our host homes to hang out for a while before we had to leave for the next town! Sunday night, however, was a different story. We were supposed to play a forty-five minute program at a nursing home. However, after finally finding the right building we learned that the employees there had no idea who or what we were! So after a few bewildering moments of trying to figure out what went wrong and what we were going to do, we finally asked if we could just walk around the halls to the different rooms and go caroling. They agreed, and that's exactly what we did. Most of the residents had gone to bed, but we sang for those who were up and about. Even though it was only about seven or eight people, it filled our hearts with joy as we watched their eyes light up. Some of them even followed us out of their rooms to hear more. It was again another unexpected blessing. Its nights like these that help me remember what an important and wonderful thing this ministry is.



Adam Slagsvol

In His love,
Adam Slagsvol
-Captive Free West Lakes

Date: 12/31/2002
Submitted by: Annie Shoen
Journal Entry:

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!

Can you believe its going to be 2003 in a few hours? Sheesh....where has the time gone? I guess its true that when you get older, the time seems to go faster...



So, the West Lakes team is back from Christmas break and ON THE ROAD AGAIN! We have one of the busiest weeks ahead since we started in September and yet its going to be really fun too! We ended up getting to stay in MN one extra day because we got to help the North Central Captive Free team--as well as our very own Jeremy Rodriguez--with their Twin Cities Congress. That was a BLAST! The kids were so excited, the atmosphere was amazing, we got to see Swen and Dean (Dean is one of our team favorites) preform. We even got to hang out as a team in downtown Minneapolis watching the Holidazzle Parade and eating Chipotle. It was a good first day together again! Now, we're pumped for our events--WOOHOO!

Annie Shoen

We then travelled to Green Bay, WI for a youth event for about 50-ish kids. It was great! Most of the kids were from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan--so some of the kids that we had seen at our shows back in October were at this event also! What a blessing to see familiar faces and be able to hang out with them again. We had fun going to workshops, leading Worship, doing a couple of programs, and simply being in a hotel with 50 kids! I think my favorite part, though, was being adopted by the youth from Wakefield, MI. You see, we asked the youth at the event to adopt us for lunch and free time on Monday, so that we could spend more time with the kids. So--my "family" went to the mall that day and hung out. What a great bunch of girls! Aughhh! We just walked around, talked, got coffee from Gloria Jeans, and were silly. It was so fun to be with them--they really brightened my day.

Ya know--theres a passage in the Bible that talks about being careful about how you behave because you may be entertaining angels unaware (Hebrews)...and somehow I think these girls--whether they knew it or not--were my angels on earth. I had just gotten back from being with my family, my friends, all my loved ones, after a wonderful Christmas break--and was sort of emotionally weary. However, these girls that I was with brought my spirit up AT LEAST 12 notches (I don't know why I picked 12, but it was a good number...) and reminded me why I love team and why God needs me here. They were excited to talk with me, they wanted to spend time with me to get to know me, they asked me questions about faith, life, and team, and were so pumped to befriend me. Then later--they bought me a gift from the mall to show how much they cared about me and to help me to never forget them. The funny thing is that I didn't need the necklace to remember them--all I need is the memory of the time they spent with me. That was more precious to me than any material thing ever could be. So, thanks Wakefield angels--you're the best!

So today we are in Rubicon, WI and we're getting ready to do a New Year's Eve event. I'm sort of tired, kind of nervous to play, and wondering what 2003 will hold for me. All I know is that I'm where I need to be, I am trying to get back into the swing of things, and if 2003 is anything like the last four months--I'm going to have a year full of memories and growth! Praise be to God and glory to Him for His abounding and steadfast love! AMEN...

God Bless you all until we meet again!
Annie Shoen
West Lakes Captive Free

Date: 1/4/2003
Submitted by: Kira Ehrlich
Journal Entry:

Well, we are back! (I guess we have been back for a while) Anyway, already we are way

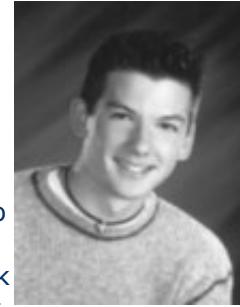
back into the swing of things. We have had a crazy last few days. Two lock-ins in a row! Count-em'! TWO! Unfortunately, two of our team members got sick before that and they were still recovering. I was getting sick, I still am sick. It was a little more difficult than usual, but we still had fun. For some reason, we played a lot of games. The kids really seemed to like that. I wish I could have done more and been more involved, but I was sick, like I said. I didn't feel very connected to the kids at all. I wanted to be, but I didn't have the energy. Plus, at both of the lock-ins, the kids treated us differently than other kids that we usually meet. Maybe it was from our lack of energy. We hardly got any sleep in the last few days. I don't know why but it just felt weird. I enjoyed the lock-ins but it was just different.



Date: 1/8/2003

Submitted by: Adam Slagsvol

Journal Entry:



Kira Ehrlich

Ah yes, another day in the wonderful state of Wisconsin. However, if you ask the locals, especially the youth, they are ready for their winter... by the way, they're not getting it!! With temperatures up to around 50 degrees in the cheese(and milk) capital of the USA, as my dad would always say, "The natives are gettin' restless!". But the lack of snow pleases some of us. Specifically Kira from California. ;-) But it will come in time, all in due time...

As for programs and ministry we were blessed to play in Reedsburg, WI. A bustling little town with a semi-new high school with probably the most impressive auditorium I have, and will ever see. Playing in that auditorium was so much fun! The crowd was so responsive and of course we felt way too cool, playing on a huge stage and everything. I had an incredible time tonight. It seems as if every program gets me more and more excited to do events!

I CAN'T WAIT!!!!

Thanks for all of your thoughts and prayers. God bless!

-Adam

Date: 1/10/2003

Submitted by: Rikki Carissa Dold

Journal Entry:



Rikki Carissa Dold

Ok so we have been back from Christmas break for about 2 weeks now and things seem to be as crazy as ever. I know for me break really spoiled me. I was able to sleep in and pretty much do whatever I wanted. Now it is back to the crazy world of early mornings and busy schedules. But through all the crazy work of team life there are the great opportunities that we have like the booking we had last night. We were in Sun Prairie WI where we did an assisted living show it was so great; all the people were so into our program. We even had one man come up after a show and tell us how he thought that the word was coming to an end but after seeing the performance that there might be hope for our youth after all. Those are the times that we really realize that all the hard work is worth it and that our ministry is really doing something in today's world.

In his grip,
Rikki <><

Date: 1/11/2003

Submitted by: Nick Campbell

Journal Entry:

Hello!

It's great to be back on the road again. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed going home and hanging out with friends and family, but it is nice to be back in the swing of things.

Friday night I had a blast. We were originally going to be doing a lock-in with some kids, but it ended up getting canceled. I was a little sad about this, because I was pumped up for a lock-in, but we ended up having a great time. We hung out with our contact that was around my age; we went out to eat and watched some movies.

Tonight we did an acoustic performance and then did a late-night with the kids. I had a blast with Worship, games, and talking with them. Then Ryan, Adam, and I stayed up later with our host parents playing cards.

May God Bless you all until we talk again.

Nick



Nick Campbell

Date: 1/15/2003

Submitted by: Annie Shoen

Journal Entry:

Hello Great Big World!

How are all of you? I'm doing good...keepin' on keepin' on. :) Team is good...gettin' back into the swing of things. Slowly, but surely. :)



Annie Shoen

WOW--did we EVER get to do an awesome program on Sunday night! We actually got to go to Kokomo, IN. It was great because we had a very spirit-led worship time! The congregation was amazing! They were all very excited about the program, they all seemed to be focused on God and worship during the whole time, and about half the audience was youth our age! IT WAS GREAT! I think that Kokomo has been one of the most exciting and fulfilling programs that we've done! It was also fun because we got to meet Jessica from one of last year's teams. She is actually the song writer of our theme song "Head to the Heart". So we got to talk with her and sing her song! AAUUGGHHHH! She was great!

Then, later that night I got to hang out with many of the young adults that were my age--we went and played games, talked, and hung out. I was really hungry for fellowship with people my age--other than my team--and God blessed me immensely! I have been feeling lonely for my friends back home and missing just being "silly ole' Annie"--outside of teamlife. I got to stay with a really sweet host "sister" who was a year older than me, I got to spend time with her brother, friend, and her friend's brother. It was amazing how God blesses you with certain people when you need it. We spent time laughing, talking, and just having fun. I really enjoyed it and it was a blessing from God to get to know these people for a little while. I miss them already!

We then went to Bluffton, IN and received visits from old friends--my host family from Fort Wayne, Rikki's parents--our team mom and dad, and Rikki's two aunts. They came to see our program. I have been dealing with personal struggles from home again, so it was so great to see them, get hugs, and chit-chat. I feel so honored that they care about us and follow our ministry!

Welp...that's about all for my journal tonight. Sorry--no insight, no crazy chatter, nothing exciting....but I'll leave you with a golden nugget: GOD IS GOOD--ALL THE TIME! ALL THE TIME--GOD IS GOOD!

God Bless until next time!

Annie Shoen

Captive Free West Lakes

Date: 1/18/2003

Submitted by: Kira Ehrlich

Journal Entry:

Have you ever done something so exciting that you can't come up with the words to describe it. Yeah, that is exactly how I am feeling right now. This weekend has been so much fun. I cannot believe it. We had our first event. It was a Quake in Indianapolis. We had five hundred people there (and this is our smallest one). I knew that events were going to be fun, but I didn't realize how all-encompassing that fun is. It reaches everything. I felt like a new person (and I the one helping to lead it.) I wonder how the Junior Highers who were there felt. I feel like I have made a small difference in the world. I felt like we reached these kids. It was so amazing and I am so exhausted. I can't wait to do more of these.

You know, going into this my team was pretty nervous, I think. We had no idea what to expect. I personally have never been to a Youth Encounter event in my life. So, all I had were stories to go off of. I had a picture in my mind, but that was it. But I wasn't afraid because I knew that no matter what happened it would all be o.k. The responsibility of a bad weekend wouldn't rest solely on our shoulders. The pressure wasn't completely on us. I knew that going into it, so I wasn't really nervous. Plus, I knew it would still be awesome no matter what happened. I knew God was going to make something good come out of this. And he did. I felt like I was able to step outside of myself.

**Kira Ehrlich****Date:** 1/24/2003**Submitted by:** Adam Slagsvol**Journal Entry:**

So yeah...

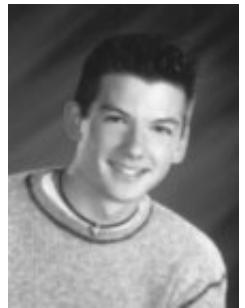
I suppose you may have heard that we do these little things called Events, better known as Quakes and Congresses. Just to let you in on a secret... THEY'RE NOT SO LITTLE!!!!

after doing our Indi. Quake and now heading full on to our Chicago Quake... i think we might get the swing of how these are run...

Indi. was insane... so many kids getting so into the music and into the speaker. I was amazed at how well they responded. Imagine 500 kids jumping up and down on their chairs after the first note was played on the guitar Friday night... yeah. it's crazy.

and now we are heading to Chicago... which is about twice the size... oh man. I'm gonna need a lot of sleep. hehe Doing such a an event was a blast; from the music to the treks to Campfire to Sunday morning when everyone was half-awake. All i can say is...

We only get to do 6 more?...

**Adam Slagsvol****Date:** 1/25/2003**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell**Journal Entry:**

Hello everyone,

How you all? Today we, my teammates and I, are on the last night of our 2nd Quake of the year. I can't begin to tell you the craziness that is happening. There are about 600 to 700 kids here all worshipping God through fellowship and treks along with singing and dancing with us and Peder Eide. Dan is also a great speaker who is touching my heart with God's Word as I'm sure he's touching the kids' hearts. It's great to see all these kids on fire for God, just like it was last weekend and Indy. It's also great to see again some staff friends that we made last week here with us this week. The next couple of months are going to be a great lifter for me as each day with these kids gets me more and more excited to spread God's love and kindness. Until we meet again may God bless you all as He has blessed me.

**Nick Campbell**

In Christ,

Date: 1/27/2003

Submitted by: Annie Shoen

Journal Entry:

EVERYBODY, EVERYBODY, EVERYBODY PRAISE THE LORD!

Hello everyone! So...that phrase up above is actually from a song by Peter Eide--the guest musician at the Chicago Quake this weekend! WOOHOO--what a rockin' good time! Let me tell you all about it!



Annie Shoen

So...we had the event starting on Friday night and there were about 600 kids. It was really weird to have such a large group, to have the big sound system up with HUGE speakers, and to have spot lights on us. I don't think that I really adjusted to it or liked it all that much? And because of that--I realized that my dreams of being a rockstar for Jesus are out the window--no stages, big crowds, or spotlights for me. I decided I like the smaller crowds and sanctuary atmospheres better. haha. But, none the less, I enjoyed my weekend. I got to see many kids that we had

previously met on the road within the IL and IN regions--WOOHOO! I love seeing people I know...its refreshing to actually look in a room and see faces that I recognize. Praise God! It was great. In essence, the weekend brought many new friendships, a weekend full of worship that we not only got to lead--but participate in also (yay Peter!), and many good conversations with kids. Praise the Lord!

Last night, Sunday--we were able to be a band for another CYM event! (Community Youth Ministry) They are so fun! And lo and behold--Dan S (the speaker from the Chicago Quake)--was also the speaker for the CYM Event! WOOHOO! He is really great! He had so many funny stories to share and so much insight into God's involvement in his life, as well as ours. I was excited to spend ALL WEEKEND with him! We had about 30-40 people there last night...and some huge technical problems! We actually were rushed for set up, we didn't have a working sound system, our computer wasn't projecting properly, there's four vocalists on our team and three of them had sore throats/colds, and then to top it off Ryan broke an electrical guitar string 2 minutes before our program! AUGH! So--we decided that the Lord must have wanted us to do an acoustic set! wink, wink. We had a great time and it was a smaller program--so I think the people enjoyed it. Again--God reminded us--even though WE were disappointed--that He can work through ALL THINGS. What a cool God He is!

I think my favorite ministry opportunity since the last time I wrote--that I'd like to share with you--is a conversation I had at the event last weekend. I had an amazing opportunity to meet with, talk with, and share with an amazing child of God in Chicago. I have no idea why or how--but God led a girl to meeting with me. We had done a celebration program at the event and I had noticed her in the crowd. She would smile up at me, while singing, but she seemed to have an urgency within her. I could sense it even while being on stage. But I had forgotten about it, in the midst of all the things going on. She didn't. She walked up to me on Saturday and asked if we could talk. It was one of those divine moments where God is in control and you, yourself, don't know how things happened--but they did. It was cool. So we ended up talking for about 20 minutes that afternoon and then two hours that night. She was from Jordan, had lived in Saudi Arabia, and had moved to the USA three weeks ago. She was a strong Christian, but through living in Saudi Arabia, had been friends with many people of different religions. She was dealing with feelings of guilt because of denying Christ while living in that country. She had had many conversations with those of the Islamic faith and she couldn't "fully worship God because she felt like she had let Him down."

I cannot even tell you the blessings I received from having this conversation with her. She had such an amazing heart for God--at age 14--and I--at age 23--STILL sometimes feel as if I need to deny God in certain situations. Do I always think twice about it? Do I always have strong convictions about denying the best friend I'll ever have? Nope....not always. I was blessed by her heart so much. And the funny thing? She was seeking to talk with someone to be able to hear about God's

forgiveness, His love, and how He still cares for her--despite the one time she denied Him. UMMMM...ironically--I think that I was blessed more by her child-like faith and maturity than she may have been from our chat. WOW. God works in mysterious, humbling, and completely amazing ways!

We sing a song, written by Andy Potsko, called "Wash My Feet". It talks about the story of the friendship of Jesus at the Last Supper and washing the feet of His disciples. It also mentions the fact that we continually walk in sin and have a need for our Savior Jesus Christ. And whenever we sing it--I think of Peter. He was one of Jesus' best friends--yet he denied Jesus at the time of His death THREE TIMES. I wish I could be like my new foreign friend and more easily recognize my sins. I wish I could hear the rooster crow in the distance to recognize every time I sin by denying Christ. But these are someone else's stories. But--here is mine. I met a girl this weekend that I will remember forever. She reminded me of the importance of living for Christ 24/7. She also reminded me that all sin is equal and just because God has called me into ministry this year--that doesn't mean that I've reached my full potential yet. He still wants to teach me and break me. Therefore, thank you for the realization this weekend, Jesus. Thank you for bringing this girl into my life and reminding me about my hard heart. But at the same time--thank you for softening it through this experience.

God is GOOD, All the time. All the time, God is GOOD!

Amen.

Annie Shoen

Captive Free West Lakes

Date: 1/28/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Clark

Journal Entry:

Greetings from the Midwest!

I have now known my teammates for almost 5 and ½ months, and I have also experienced more snowfall than I ever have before. It was a lot harder coming back after break, but in the month we've been back I have gotten to know my teammates a lot more and have been able to develop some deeper relationships with them.

It's good to have a two week breather between events. I lost my voice at both of our first events a little too soon at our second one. I must say that they are one of the most exciting things we have done this year.

Our musical repertoire is slowly growing and I think that has made our performances go a little easier.

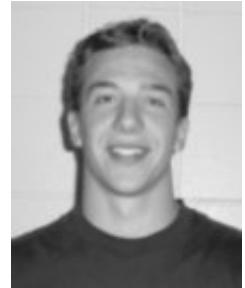
Tonight we had a youth night program we got to chat with them before hand. The program was awesome. They responded so enthusiastically they were a very fun group to play for.

A few weeks ago while we were in Waupaca WI. I discovered Psalm 62. I'd never read it before, but they had the 1st two verses of it painted on the wall. It starts like this... "For God alone my soul waits in silence from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock, my fortress I shall never be shaken that's all I can remember but the rest is just as good.

That about all from this west laker so I ask that you continue to pray for our team. And may God bless all of you.

In Christ's Love,

• Ryan L. Clark



Ryan Clark

Date: 2/1/2003

Submitted by: Kira Ehrlich

Journal Entry:

Man this has been a long week. I think we are all still worn out from the last week and the Quake. But on the bright side we have been having a blast. We had a lock-in last night. It was a pretty short one for us. What was particularly special about this place was that it was the home of Katie Baxter, who is on the North East team. We were able

to meet her family. It was her brother Sam's birthday I hope that she did not forget to call.

Anyway the lock-in turned out great I just wish we would have had more time to get to know them better. The night before that, we did a show and stayed at the church. Our team has been staying together quite a bit lately which is pretty rare. A few of us had a dying hair session. So my hair is now blonde, or at least supposed to be it did not turn out so good. The pastor of the church was very cool. For some reason, I called him Pastor Fred. Then I realized, hey that's not his name it starts with a "G". He just looked at me and laughed, so then I called him George. Nope, that was wasn't it either. My whole team was laughing at me. Duh, Kira, it's Gary. You'd think that I would remember that considering that's my dad's name. Oh well! Good times to be had by all. For me, at this very moment, team is going very well. It is very easy to get sick of the people you are with 24 hours 7 days a week but I have really been enjoying my team. I wonder why that is. I know that before, if we were to spend this much time together it would have been very hard for us to get along. Maybe we are changing. Maybe we finally started to understand one another. I don't know what it is but I do know God has had a big hand in it. I don't know if you could ever understand what it is like to be on team or how hard it all really is. Team demands much more of you than it feels like you can give. You have to interact with the same five people every day, sometimes every moment of the day and it can take a lot out of you. Most of the time you don't get the luxury of alone time. I am so amazed at how much strength God has given us to get through these busy times. I am very thankful for my team. A few months ago I don't know if I could have said that with as much conviction as I can now. God has done wonders!

Kira



Kira Ehrlich

Date: 2/6/2003

Submitted by: Rikki Carissa Dold

Journal Entry:

Well we are on our way to our next booking. As I am sitting here in the van, I look out the window and see snow covered trees they are so pretty! We were in Eau Claire WI last night and are heading to Tomah WI. We had a very busy night last night we had a show from 5:30-6:00 with the preschool – fifth graders. It was great they were all so in to it and looked as if they were having the best time ever. We then had a confirmation program from 6:15 to 7:45 which was also a lot of fun. After that we had the Sr. High from 8:00 to 9:15 where we lead them in a devotion and worship songs. It was a lot of fun to talk with them about how we got involved with Youth Encounter. So as you can imagine we are all quite tired. We have a Family Night tonight and then we are headed to the Dells I think our team is looking forward to that. Events really pump our team back up, so that will be really good for us.

In his Grip,
Rikki Dold



Rikki Carissa Dold

Date: 2/6/2003

Submitted by: Adam Slagsvol

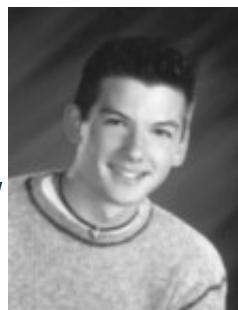
Journal Entry:

FINALLY!

it's actually beginning to look like winter around these parts with about 6 inches of snow on the ground in upper Wisconsin, Kira is feeling less and less comfortable. Im pretty sure everyone else is enjoying it (:-D .

So last night we had a couple of programs, one for grades K-5 and another for 6-8, later on we led a devotion and played some worship with the high schoolers. All programs as well as groups were alot of fun! With a few new sing-a-longs and puppet-show we had a blast and we're pretty sure the youth did too!

Wisconsin Dells youth Quake 1,



Adam Slagsvol

HERE WE COME!!!!

Date: 2/8/2003

Submitted by: Nick Campbell

Journal Entry:

Hey all! Nick here hailing from the Wisconsin Dells where we are, yet again, doing another Jr. High Quake. This weekend we have about 1,000 kids here, our biggest event except for the Sr. High Chicago Quake, that is planned to have 2,000. It's neat to see all of the kids and adults worshipping The Lord as we sing songs to Him. I've had the chance already this weekend to talk with some kids about different faith things, and even talked with some past teamers. Kira, Ryan, and I did the Bible B-Ball trek earlier today. The kids seemed to have a blast being able to shoot baskets while answering and learning things about the bible. Well, I'm going to go for now, get some sleep so I'm awake for our program tomorrow morning for the kids. May God Bless you all until we talk again.

In Christ,

Nick



Nick Campbell

Date: 2/12/2003

Submitted by: Annie Shoen

Journal Entry:

HEY--HEAD TO THE HEART, YO!

How's it going out there? I am in lovely Bone Lake/Luck, WI at a RANCH--WOOHOO! We are hanging out, checking emails, drinking chocolate milk, eating red velvet cake, and enjoying getting to know our host mom.



Annie Shoen

Let's see...what to share. Last night we did a program in Bloomer, WI and had a great time! I was so excited because Bloomer is near the camp that I worked at for three summers. So--God blessed me and brought me two of my favorite people I worked with--Dave and Linda. I was so excited to see them and to be able to visit. They have always been an encouragement to me and they came at a time when I needed it. I have been a little down and out--so when God blesses you with visits from those who know you, who love you, and who have history with you--ITS SO REFRESHING! I cannot believe the support and encouragment I have from so many around the country...praise God for my friends!

We also got to stay with a really great family in Bloomer--they had two little kids that were great! We had fun playing, watching the "Wiggles", and going crazy! However, I think that Ryan and Adam had more fun with their toys than they got to! haha. I love the innocence of little kids though--they are so carefree that its amazing to catch onto their contagious spirit. It was great. Then I ended the night with watching a couple of my favorite sitcoms "Three's Company". YIPPEE!!!

Tonight was great, too. We played at Scott Schaeffer's church (He's on the team in Denmark--Watermark). It was fun! There were quite a few people there and we had a great time...they were really into it and that makes it exciting too! We missed Kira though--she has been a little under the weather. She woke up this morning with a fever and as health coordinator--I thought it best that she sit out for at least one program. I cannot even believe the changes it makes when one person can't do a program...it really changes things up! We had fun though!

The coolest thing ever happened to us, though! The host family we are staying with here has a REAL LIVE PET DEER! I could not believe it! They had found her when she was 8 hours old, she is now tame, and we got to bring her in the house tonight! It was crazy! I cannot even tell you how cool it was to pet a live deer, look into its eyes millimeters from my face, and to watch it wobble

around the LIVING ROOM! Seriously--this is one of the coolest things we've seen as a team this year. Praise God!

So....I end this email thanking God for the simple things He's blessed me with. We sing a song called "Lifeboat" and it talks about how God saves us from the stormy lives we live. I personally have been struggling with some personal issues, but God has blessed me immensely with different simple things to keep my chin up, to remind me how much He cares for me, and to remind me to not complain because there is joy amidst the chaos.

I pray that God is strengthening you and keeping you in His grip...God Bless!

Annie Shoen

Captive Free West Lakes

Date: 2/13/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Clark

Journal Entry:

Greetings from Wisconsin!

The freezing weather continues to follow us wherever we go (or more like we are going were the weather is freezing) but it sounds more exciting to say the weather is following us. Anyways, we did a nursing home tonight for the first time in quite a while. It was a lot of fun. We got to eat with them and visit for quite a while beforehand. They responded to the music really well. It is really neat to talk with elderly people. They have so much knowledge and experience.

At every program we teach the "Wisconsin Milk Song" aka

"Moo Moo Buckaroo." So at tonight's program while we were singing someone in the crowd let out a very loud Mooooo towards the end of the song it was hilarious!

This last weekend we were at our first WI Dells event. There were a bunch of kids from churches that we had already been to. I even got to play the song I wrote with Brice from Beaver Dam during the variety show.

Romans Chapter 11 verse 34-36 says....

"For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him is the glory forever. Amen!"

Peace,
Ryan



Ryan Clark

Date: 2/15/2003

Submitted by: Kira Ehrlich

Journal Entry:

Smile, Jesus Loves you!!!!!!:) Hey everyone, how's it going? So, I know we are supposed to write about our team and what we've been up to, but unfortunately your going to have to ask my team that because I don't know. I have been sick and I have missed the last three concerts. It was awful. I think my team has been having fun though. I saw a video of our concert last night. It looked like they were having a great time. It was so cute, there was this part in the video that showed a whole row of elderly folks dancing and getting down with it. It just warms the heart. Meanwhile, I was at my host families house just miserable. But you know what happened. I think this is pretty amazing. The day before, I was feeling really really sick and Annie decided to pray for me and I knew that I was going to get better the next day. I unfortunately got worse before I got better, but by around 8:30 that night I started to feel great. Before, I was



Kira Ehrlich

dizzy and whoosy and just awful, but then I could get up no problem. This illness or whatever hit me really fast and really hard and it left almost as quickly as it came. I didn't feel too well today, but I think that is just because I haven't eaten for the last three days. We did a worship service tonight and i was able to be up there. I didn't realize how hard it is not to perform. It is going to be hard once the year is over. Did you know that tomorrow is our halfway point? We will be exactly halfway done. Calculate it! Aug 19- Aug 9. Wow! I can't believe it is almost over. I really don't know if that makes me happy or sad. This is probably one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, but I can't imagine not doing it. Anyway, I hope you all had a wonderful valentine's day. I didn't, I was sick. But I hope yours was filled with love.

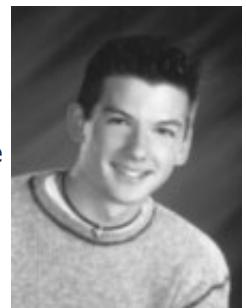
Date: 2/18/2003

Submitted by: Adam Slagsvol

Journal Entry:

So it's another Tuesday, another day in Wisconsin. And we're back hanging out with the folks in Oconto!. We were here earlier on in the tour for their homecoming events in autumn. So we have been reunited with our old friends. We just did a couple of nursing home programs and a Blue & Gold dinner...(cub scouts for those of you who dont know what im talking about...my mom does...) that was a bit of fun even though we did it acoustically and were trying to sing over all the people talking during dinner or "supper".It feels really good to see a few familiar faces. We played in Green Bay a couple of nights ago and there were several people we had met before sitting in the crowd. It's really cool to catch up with pastors and ask about host families and thats sort of thing. It is, however, quite a bummer that our Marquette quake got cancelled... It would have been cool to hang out with all those "YOOVERS" for a whole weekend... they're a fun bunch!

In His love,
~~~Adam~~~



**Adam Slagsvol**

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**Date:** 2/20/2003

**Submitted by:** Rikki Carissa Dold

**Journal Entry:**

Well it seems to be warming up around here it was almost 40 today. The past two days have been packed with new adventures and even some old. We had our first college program on Wed. night in Stevens Point it was a great time to worship and chat with people our own age. We stayed in their dorms it was a great experience for all. We have made our way back up to Ewen MI and were able to see some old faces. Tonight we hung out with the youth from First LC, we went to a volleyball game and had a very competitive game of floor hockey. I know there will be some new bruises from that game. We also had our very first team snowball fight today I am not sure who won but I think I was the wettest at the end (bummer). Tomorrow we head off for Lincoln Hill (the boys school) we will be doing two chapel services and eating dinner with them we are all pretty pumped to be going back to another familiar place. Dianna you ROCK OUR WORLD!!!! Well I best get going!  
In his Grip,  
Rikki Dold



**Rikki Carissa Dold**

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**Date:** 2/22/2003

**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell

**Journal Entry:**

Hi all,

Nick here again with some more team experiences. On Friday night we went back to Lincoln Hill. For those who don't remember, this is WI's Juvenile Detention Center. While there we again had a blast, though I got us there late so we weren't able to eat supper with them. The program went great. The first group started to get into the songs right away by singing and clapping. After the two programs we hung out with the CAP program group, this group is the boot camp, not jail, group. We had the chance to march from the gym to their cabin with them, and then talk with them. As we were getting to the building to exit, I stepped on what I thought was a solid patch of ice. It was apparently just thin ice with ankle deep water. My foot was freezing cold after that.



**Nick Campbell**

Then today we went to the Tomahawk café and did some affirmation stuff along with playing some card games. Our last round of spoons was probably the best round. While everyone went after the spoons, Ryan's coffee cup was spilled and the rest of the drink went toward Annie. She went crazy and started to push me off my seat so that she could move out of the way of the drink. Also tonight we went bowling with the youth. It was cool because they had the black lights on so the balls and pins glowed in the dark.

Well, I'll let you go for now. Talk with you all in a couple of weeks. Until then may God bless you all always.

In Christ,

Nick

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**Date:** 2/25/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

Hmmm, Hmmm, Hmmm...

Here I am in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan watching "American Idol" with my host family--woohoo! I'm beginning to see that missing a lot of television this year isn't all that bad :) These reality shows really get me...A funny thought--try watching US--your very own Captive Free West Lakes--for a day and then reality tv will get REALLY interesting! haha.



**Annie Shoen**

Naw, seriously, team life is good. Actually its really good. Its funny--right after Christmas it seemed to be a struggle for all of us to be away from home and to be excited about ministry. But again, God has proven faithful because suddenly we wake up excited for the next booking, pumped to glorify the Lord, and anticipating our next encounter with new faces.

However, I am finding that this year has definately proven to be challenging and yet beautiful. There are days where my heart aches to be home and then there are days where my heart aches about not being on team this time next year. Its a crazy ride of ups and downs, conflicts and sweet moments, and being on Cloud 9 and then in the lowest depths of the ocean. Okay--so I'm a woman and I'm moody--but still I also believe that this is what team life is about. You see--its like the old saying--you have to weather the storm in order to appreciate the rainbow...AH HA! So...THAT'S what that means. I am learning much about myself--especially the things that God wants to change in me (OUCH), about my teammates--the things I admire about them, about living with people 24/7, and about how God works through all things--what we perceive as good and ALSO what we perceive as bad.

So...we have had a few lazy days--we've had a few "housing only"'s and/or smaller programs in Tomahawk, WI and in Rhinelander, WI...in fact--tonight at Ironwood, MI, was our first electric set up in NINE days! So...I've had time to spend with my teammates--throwing snowballs, watching movies, talking late, playing cards, going to coffee shops, and just taking it easy. So--contemplation has been high and my mind has been moving a mile a minute--because it has had the time to do

that. Thank God for helping me to realize the preciousness of team and reminding me that He is building character in me this year. YAY GOD!

That's it...enough for the Annie Novel tonight...wink, wink.  
take care and God Bless!  
Annie Shoen  
Captive Free West Lakes

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**Date:** 3/1/2003

**Submitted by:** Kira Ehrlich

**Journal Entry:**

Hey, how is everything going? We are in Barron, WI. We are going to be here for a few days. I can only think of like one other time when we were in one place this long and it's only for four days. It should be fun though. We arrived here yesterday and hung out with some high schoolers. They were pretty cool. We played a dice game called Bunco or something like that. There are four tables that you are supposed to advance to if you win. Yeah, I never even moved my seat because I lost everytime. It was still a pretty cool game. I guess I am just dice challenged. Then when we were done with that I had to go to the Urgent Care because something was really wrong with my finger. It was so swollen. Yep, It was infected. I don't even know how it happened either. You may not know this, but my face got infected right at the begining of our being on the road. I even missed our very first concert because of it. I had no idea how that got infected either. So now here I am six months later with another infection. I just don't get it. I suppose I am just prone to infection. Anyway they gave me some infection drugs so hopefully it will get better. I really love the people here. They have a nurse here named Nan, she is actually Ryan's host mom, and tried to help me, but couldn't. She was so nice though.

Yesterday was Annie's birthday! She is now 23. Man, is she old. Rikki and I had fun surprising her with an ice cream cake from Dairy Queen. Unfortunatly when we got there her family was there and they had already made her a cake.(which was far better than ours, let me tell you) It was nice to sit and chat with them, though. I am glad they came.

This week looks like its going to be a tough week and it has been a little bit already. It is really hard to mentally prepare yourself for tough weeks, but what I have learned is you just got to do them and they aren't as hard as you think they will be. I think what the hardest part really is is waiting for it to come. Sometimes those weeks that seem like they are going to be hard really turn out to be your best. You just have to have a positive outlook on things. Which I noticed I have gotten worse at since I have been on the road. I wonder why that is. Maybe it is because I don't think I've ever worked so hard in my entire life. And that all the energy you once put into things like a posititive outlook now go into other things.

Anyway, Have a nice day and God bless.

Love your sister in Christ,

Kira Ehrlich



**Kira Ehrlich**

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**Date:** 3/4/2003

**Submitted by:** Adam Slagsvol

**Journal Entry:**

So a regular week of Captive Free goes kinda like this...

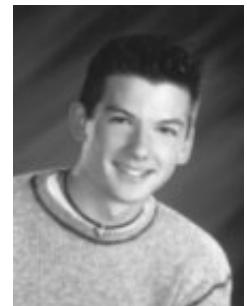
Tuesday-Thursday: Family Night Programs

Friday & Saturday: Lock-in's or Youth Nights

Sunday: morning Worship and a family night program

Monday: Day of Rest...

This week, however, our day off has been pushed back to Tuesday. At first we were a little bummed to have to wait an extra 24 hours to rest up our voices, emotions, and bodies. God, of course knew that it would be worth it all along. (He's good like that.) So we had our regular Sunday morning worship services with sunday school and then our youth night program that night. Now, our sound system has always been a little on the moody side. This time one of our



**Adam Slagsvol**

main speakers wasn't functioning... bummer. So, after several grueling minutes of trying to figure out what was wrong, it was determined that I needed to replace the speaker with one of the others in a monitor. With time no longer on my side I got to do the repair work while my teammates ate up delicious meal... bummer. But that's ok! cause now it works and without it working we wouldn't have been able to perform very loudly that night or the next day. Monday morning we were booked for a "Lutheran School Week" kick off! They pooled together 5 schools into a gymnasium where we were to put on our little show. Lemme say that we had a blast. Just picture 500 students and teachers squeezing each other's thumbs saying "moo moo moo moo". It was like a Quake, but on a younger audience so I guess it was more like a rumble... Anyway, After our program we were allowed to go around the school and sing songs with the kids and eat lunch with them and have them ask questions and everything. It was a lot of fun. We then had a 6 hour drive to Chicago which had its ups and downs with finding a new gas cap... ;-) but we arrived and there's a lot of snow now so... YAY! WHO NEEDS A DAY OFF?!?.... i do...

WISCONSIN DELLS II this weekend!!!!

WAAAAAHOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!

~Adam

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**Date:** 3/8/2003

**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell

**Journal Entry:**

Hey Everyone,

Here we are again at another event, our Wisconsin Dells II Quake. It's not as big as the first one, but the kids are as into it as the first group was. We've had to do some changes to our program for the weekend with our teammate Annie being sick, but God has helped us get through it. The Celebration tonight, Sat. night, was the best so far this weekend. The kids were on fire for God, dancing, singing, and just going nuts. Well, gotta go. Keep living for God and may He bless you always.

In Christ,  
Nick



**Nick Campbell**

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**Date:** 3/11/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

GOTTA LOVE THOSE QUAKES!

Hey everyone! So...what to tell, what to tell, what to tell...

The West Lakes team has been bustin' a move all across the region. We had our second quake this last weekend and it was interesting to say the least. I pretty much sat in my hotel room most of the weekend with a bout of sinus infection on the verge of bronchitis. Not exactly the best terms for ministry or music! It was really hard though because I realized how much time I spend with people and I ended up feeling really lonely. So part of Saturday and most of Sunday I stayed out and about--but didn't exactly feel the best....I just missed people! Am I an introvert? I THINK NOT.



**Annie Shoen**

We had a great time though. I got to see lots of people that I love--my Wakefield Angels, my friends from Lodi, and then our YE office favorites! Afterwards, we went out to eat with many from the office and as a team--that was fun! YAY FAMOUS DAVE'S! We had a great time though...just chatting, laughing, and eating...the three best things known to man! hehe.

Then we travelled on to Poynette, WI for a housing only night and our day off. That was great! I got to stay with a really great host family. Kira and I were hosted by a family of four and we were so excited because we had a twin sister and brother to play with! They were 17 months and it was so

refreshing to be around cute kids! I got to go shopping with them, out to eat with them, and along to a dentist visit! It was nice! Then our host Mom, Kira and I went out to see a movie!

You know--I think that sometimes I get caught up in the ministry of this whole year--that I forget what simple and real life is like! I really enjoyed watching the kids while my host mom went into the doctor's office, I really enjoyed running errands with her, and I really enjoyed eating around a table with wild kids screaming and throwing food in a simple setting. It was a blessing to be part of a family and not be seen as a guest. I enjoyed myself very much!

And last, tonight we are in DeForest, WI. We had a great program tonight--the congregation was really into the program! It was fun! I love this ministry and I'm so honored to be involved in it! Praise Jesus! WAHOO!

Well--all you people out there...Take care and I'll write again to you in two weeks...hope to see you somewhere soon!

Annie Shoen  
Captive Free West Lakes

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**Date:** 3/15/2003

**Submitted by:** Kira Ehrlich

**Journal Entry:**

WOW! What a fantastic week! God has really blessed me this week. We had a really fun program in Carol Stream, IL. It was Confirmand appreciation day or something like that and we spent the whole day playing for confirmands. It was really a neat experience. It would have been cool to have something like that when I was in confirmation. I don't know if the kids appreciated it so much, but I am sure once they get older and they understand how blessed they have been they will appreciate it. I love to see people on fire for God and for the youth and really supporting them. Speaking of that, Today I met to coolest guy maned Marcus. I have never met anyone so devoted to the youth. He has such a heart for youth ministry, which is fitting because he is a youth minister. But this morning I woke up at 5 am to go with him to the local high school where the high schoolers have a sort of a weekly devotional thing. We picked up a high school student and had breakfast and then went to the high school. We ate at the cock-a-doodle cafe. It was so much fun. What was great was the girl that came with us was from Rowanda. She is actually almost 20, but she is a senior in high school still. Her story was such a blessing. She has only been in the United States for 4 years and before that she was in refugee camps. She has such a strong faith. It was so encouraging. Sometimes my priorities get out of whack, but through just this one conversation God has really taught me a lot. And it was the same with Marcus. I was so blessed for just meeting him for one night. God has a funny way of doing that. It is so easy for this ministry to wear down on you to the point that you even forget why you are here sometimes. And you know its funny but it feels like I am the one that's supposed to go around and influence others and make a change in others lives, but it's been the other way around and I have needed it. God can lift you up when you least expect it. I love that. I didn't realize how down and out of focus I had been until God came in and lifted me up. Its like my faith just got a new pair of glasses. I just wish I wasn't the only one to experience it on my team. Anyway, God bless and you should check out Rainbow of Promises journals. They are some cool people.

Love in Christ,  
Kira Ehrlich



**Kira Ehrlich**

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**Date:** 3/18/2003

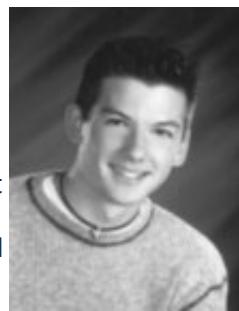
**Submitted by:** Adam Slagsvol

**Journal Entry:**

Greeting From INDIANA!

The warm weather has faded and we are now in Elkhart and played at St. John's

Episcopal Church. Our program in general went very well; we played several acoustic worship style songs. It was really cool and that's where I thought the crowd responded the most. After the 'show' we were about to walk out into the room where our table was set up to talk to some folks and bust out the relational ministry, when the youth pastor asked if the congregated people would come forward and lay hands on us. THAT WAS SO COOL!!! I love it when people do that. It's only happened a couple of times, but it's such a blessing for me and it really gives me a spiritual boost. I LOVE IT! Today was mail packet day! WAHOO! And I got a package from a specific group called Good Shepard Christian School. This school is supporting me while I'm on the road, employs my mother as a music/art/Spanish teacher, enrolls my younger siblings in 3rd and 4th grade, and doubles as my church! So we're kind of close. Enclosed was some wonderful financial support along with a handful of letters from some of the students. Pictures, letters of encouragement, notes of prayer, and some McDonald's \$\$\$ was all an overwhelmingly unexpected gift. Thanks a lot you guys. You really know how to make a guy feel loved! I'll do my best to write back to all of you. Until then, God bless, keep us in your prayers, and thanks for your support and love.



**Adam Slagsvol**

-----CHICAGO CONGRESS HERE WE COME!!!!!!-----

In His Love,  
Adam Slagsvol

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**Date:** 3/22/2003  
**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell  
**Journal Entry:**

Hi all,

Nick here from Chicago. We are in the middle of our Chicago Congress, for Sr. Highers. Its been great to see, worship, and talk with all of the kids here. When talking with them, we've had the chance to have deep conversations about God. I've also seen a lot of people whom I've already met on the road, Its been great to see how God has been using them since the last time we saw them. I have also had the chance to meet a couple of youth groups whose churches we will be attending in a couple of weeks. This is awesome because when we get to their churches I will already have a relationship with them.



**Nick Campbell**

Also, last Thursday night we went with some YE people to one of America's largest churches. I think its called Willow Creek, but I'm not 100% sure since I've had so much on my mind since then. I could feel God all around the room as we Worshipped and prayed. Also, the speaker also had a great message that has helped me to think about my relationship with God and my teammates.

Well, may God bless you always.

In Christ,

Nick

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**Date:** 3/25/2003  
**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen  
**Journal Entry:**

Hello out there!

How are you all doing? Good I hope...sheesh--its only been a little bit, but I feel like I haven't written a journal in AGES! And there's so much to tell! You know--I get a bad rap from friends that I write too much for journals--but God is AWESOME that I just



can't contain myself...so I apologize in advance if this is too long! :)

**Annie Shoen**

So--as Nick explained--we did in fact end our first and only Congress of the year on Sunday night. Let me tell you--after two days of setting up the stage area, the sound system, and the lighting, then doing three full days of ministry, being crazy and wild, and getting to meet and chill with so many different people...we were so tired going to our booking on Sunday night.

Okay--so we're human--and we were really quite lacking in the motivation area on Sunday, lacking on the energy levels, and lacking on the excitement. However, we arrived at the church in downtown Chicago, ate dinner, and lazily changed and

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**Date:** 3/25/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

Okay...here's the rest of the story that didn't get submitted :( Thanks Dad for seeing that! Here it is!

So we lazily changed and got ready for the show. But then something really cool happened! God completely changed our moods...we always do a "huggle" prayer before every program and after ours that night--we had TONS of energy! In fact--it was one of the best programs we have done in a long time! It was great! The music was fun and we really enjoyed ourselves...despite being tired! AND God blessed us with it all--because we got four new partners in our ministry AND many left saying how inspired they were and how much fun they had had. YAY GOD!



**Annie Shoen**

Our day off was then on Monday and we spent it having a Sabbath. We were all pretty much tired from the large event over the previous weekend...so we rested.

Tuesday we travelled to Brook, IN. We had a family night...so we set up and got ready. And I'll let you in on a little secret. I have not been emotionally "up" lately. I have been struggling with team life and I have to be honest--I'm excited for my Easter break in April. So things have been rough. But I enjoyed this particular program so much! I went into it thinking "Oh man--I don't know if I can do this, God!" But as soon as we started singing "Beautiful" at the beginning of the program--I was pumped! Then we had fun doing the skits, Adam had a GREAT sharing, and the people that were there were amazing! So, God blessed me yet again--when I didn't think I had the strength, God whooshed in and took care of me.

So--I ask you for your prayers for our team as we are getting weary--and I ask for your continued prayers to stay healthy and united. We are starting to feel the seven months of being on the road...luckily God is there to give us divine help! :)

I pray that you are encouraged and strengthened as well....God Bless!

Annie Shoen

Captive Free West Lakes

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**Date:** 3/29/2003

**Submitted by:** Kira Ehrlich

**Journal Entry:**

Hey everyone! It's Kira. These past few days have been pretty good. We did a lock-in last night. The kids were pretty awesome. We just played games for a while and then we played some card games. You'd think the game games would be more wild and crazy than card games, but they weren't. We had kids jumping on tables and I even got a little injured. Well not exactly injured, but some blood was drawn. Ewww! Just as a fair warning, card games can get violent so be careful. We actually haven't really had too many significant things happen in the last few days. The weather in Southern Indiana



**Kira Ehrlich**

was so nice and warm. I loved it. For some reason, my team thinks the air conditioner should be on if the temp. is over 50 degrees. Anyway, we got here to Illinois and it was freezing. The wind was blowing like crazy. Let me tell, it was not fun to unload. I am sure we all got smacked by the trailer door several times as we were carrying stuff in. The lock-in was a blast. Teamwise, I don't really know what else to tell you.

Personally though, I think I have seen better days. I am a little worried about what the future will bring for me. I want to go back to school and I don't know if everything is going to work out. I hope so. I know God has a plan for me. I shouldn't even be the slightest bit worried, but it is still hard. I am thinking of doing an international team next year, if everything doesn't work out with school, but then I run into some other issues. I guess I just have to have patience (patience? What's that?) and wait for God to lead me in the direction he wants me to go. So anyway all this stuff has been building up on me these past few days. And, like I said, I've seen better days.

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**Date:** 4/3/2003

**Submitted by:** Rikki Carissa Dold

**Journal Entry:**

Well the weather is warming up and the weeks are getting shorter. Our team had the chance to spend some time in the outdoors this week as we lead an after school program. We played some kickball, Captains coming, and many other games. We also had a family night program that night. It was a hard program for our team because we were missing Annie, she was out sick. We really need everyone to make our programs work. The next day the church gave us some free passes to a fitness center which was a lot of fun. I lifted some weights, rode 3.5 miles on a bike, and walked/jogged a mile and a half. This was also very relaxing for our team to just have some personal time to workout. We then had a booking at a church that we are going to be doing a VBS at this summer so that was fun to meet some of the people that we are going to be working with that week. That's about all that is going right now for the WL team.

In his Grip,  
Rikki <><



**Rikki Carissa Dold**

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**Date:** 4/5/2003

**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell

**Journal Entry:**

Hello!

Nick here again. We are again in the Chicago area, and we will be in the area most of the time till our Easter break. God has blessed us with many different activities for us to do in the past couple of days. On Wed. we were able to do some games outside, for The Lord blessed us with warm weather. It was great to be able to exercise in fresh air again. Then on Thurs. morning we spent a few hours at Riverplex in Peoria, IL (Its a health and fitness place). Ryan, Adam, Kira, a young fellow Peorian, and I played water volleyball while we were there. This really blessed us because it gave us the chance to relax and do some stress relief stuff.



**Nick Campbell**

On Friday night in Ottawa, IL we had the chance to help the youth with the Grand Opening of their youth room. The kids and some adults spent from last fall to Friday morning redoing the basement and adding things to change it into a youth room. It was awesome to see the before pictures and how much of an improvement their dedication to the youth this church has made the room so much better. We also had the chance to do a lock-in there.

Tonight we performed in Elk Grove Village, IL. We went after their Ministry Band. It was great to hear them perform and to be able to sing songs like we do and be in the audience singing along.

Well, I'll let you all go for now. May God keep you safe in your Easter travels, and I'll talk with you more after then. God Bless.

In Christ,

Nick

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**Date:** 4/8/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

Greetings to all of my brothers and sisters in Christ! WHAT'S SHAKIN'?!

Here we are--the Captive Free West Lakes team--on the move again in the Chicago area. We have been keeping busy as you can tell from my teammate's journals. But things are winding down as we get closer to the Easter break...we only have two bookings this week and then an event this weekend! WAHOO! It should prove to be a great week!



**Annie Shoen**

Since Saturday we have been to two new places...we were in Homewood, IL on Sunday morning...I absolutely LOVE Sunday mornings! We had the coolest thing happen too! We just happened to be the church was doing their first ever interactive worship service! It was so cool! We started in the Sanctuary, but then proceeded to the fellowship hall to learn about the freeing of the Israelites from Egypt and about the "Passover" meal. HOW COOL WAS THAT?! They had cardboard "houses" for the Israelites, they had a skit showing the plagues and Pharaoh vs. Moses, they had blood of the lamb to put over the Israelite people's doorframes, and they had unleavened bread and lamb (actually it was jerky...but lets not get technical) for the meal. It was so neat to see the kids get so excited and to watch the Pastor's face as it was all unfolding. You could tell he had been working hard on it and it was such a new, inventive, and creative idea for worship to teach all ages! It was fun!

That night we went to Elburn, IL for an open mic night, coffee house, and worship event with other area churches! It was cool...there were many different ages involved. I always seem to think that the youth are the only age we meet--however--it was neat to see that that is not always true. I was hosted with a retired couple and it was cool to hear how inspired they had been. They told me many times that we had a energetic, wonderful, and fun program that taught them more about God. What a blessing to know that we are intergenerational.

We had our day off yesterday...and may I ask--what is the deal with all the snow? It's almost the middle of April...I can't wait for summer....hehe.

And now--to bring you up to speed--we are in Lake Forest, IL tonight. We did a family night program for about 70-80 people! It was a great time! There are some programs where you are just "on" and everything seems to go well, you have some that are mediocre, and then some that just don't flow. Well--fortunately we were "on" tonight! I love having those nights!

And we have two new partners! WAHOO! I am so thankful for God's involvement of so many people around our region--I love having people from the congregations we visit join our ministry! Its such a great thing to see their hearts being moved to join us and our calling...I love it!

So...I guess this is goodbye until after Easter break! I pray that during these last days before Easter that we may really focus on what God has done for us. That we may recognize that He has given everything so that we may have everything through Him. He is Risen! Hosanna in the highest!

PEACE TO YOU!

Annie Shoen

Captive Free West Lakes

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**Date:** 4/23/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

Hey Everyone!

So...here we are again. We're back on the road after being rested and refreshed. Easter was great and I can safely say that I really enjoyed my time at home with friends and family! However...after a few days--I missed my teammates and missed the day to day team life!



**Annie Shoen**

There's not much to tell...we spent our first few days back in Machesney Park, IL (it's near Rockford). We had a really great time! The crowd was really responsive--they laughed at our skits and puppet shows! WAHOO! It was the best feeling to know that they were enjoying themselves. Seriously--I don't think there was a time where I made eye contact with someone who wasn't smiling. That was a rush--I love it when people are enjoying themselves while we're playing. It shows me that God is blessing them through our ministry!

Today we traveled to Sun Prairie, WI. We had another good family night! It was a "Buddy Bash" for the youth in the church--so there were lots of kids. It was a good time :) We had hot dogs, we chatted with people, and we played fun music! But lo and behold--there is always good with the bad :)

As health coordinator--I have been encouraging Rikki to go to the doctor about some wrist problems...for the last three months. She finally decided tonight that she needed to go. I realized she had to be hurting since she NEVER wants to see a doctor...so we took her. She has tendonitis. Poor girl....so prayers for her and her wrist would be WONDERFUL! She is most sad about not being able to play tennis in this beautiful weather we have had lately. BUT--Doctor's orders!

Well...not much else to tell! I hope all is well on your end!

Annie Shoen  
Captive Free West Lakes

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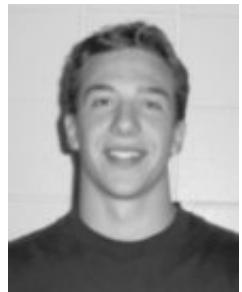
**Date:** 4/24/2003

**Submitted by:** Ryan Clark

**Journal Entry:**

Greetings from the Midwest,

We are back in the swing of things after our Easter break. We got to stay at a church where we will be doing VBS this summer and I think we all are looking forward to going back there. It was an incredible place for us to stay and it was what we needed to transition back into team life.



**Ryan Clark**

We have our last event this weekend. The 3rd Dells Quake. I am very sad that event season will be over for us. Events have been my favorite and most memorable part of team this year.

Last night at our program, my host parents from Poynette WI. showed up. It is always a wonderful feeling when you look out and see familiar faces, especially ones that you have stayed with.

If you want some real entertainment just come and watch Adam And Rikki duke it out on host houses. They are really animated and tend to act much like they were siblings. For example all I hear in the background is Rikki screaming and Adam telling Rikki to stop or scream into the pillow.

Well that is all for the moment and we will be enjoying the last of our events. God's Blessings on all.

In Christ's Love

Ryan L. Clark

**Date:** 4/26/2003  
**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell  
**Journal Entry:**

Hey Everyone,

Nick here. Today we are at our last youth event, which is taking place in the Wisconsin Dells. Its our smallest event, which is nice because we can get to know the people better. I did our teams bible study with Rikki and Annie for our Trek, which are sessions that the kids can pick. We only had about 5 people at each one, but it was nice because we just talked about stuff on our minds for most of the time. Tonight I shaved all of my hair off, so I will look completely different then I did at the beginning of the event.

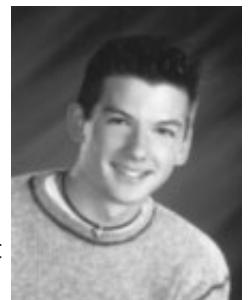
After this weekend we will be doing mainly family night programs until June and July. **Nick Campbell**  
During these two months we will be doing Vacation Bible School and spending a week at one church. We only hae to do program stuff for part of the day, and we get to have free time the rest of the day. I've been told that this is the time when we will get to know our teammates the most. I'll talk with you later. God Bless.

In Christ,  
Nick



**Date:** 4/29/2003  
**Submitted by:** Adam Slagsvol  
**Journal Entry:**

Happy birthday to me!  
Yes folks, it is my birthday today and what better way to spend it then with rainy day in Chicago! This past weekend has been a blast!  
With our last quake for events season at the Dells and a follow up with a wonderful host family in DeKalb, IL, there have been a plethora of things to be thankful for. Such as:  
Youth Quake in general! This event was one of our smaller ones at about 530 kids but it was very cool because the weekend as a whole had kind of a relaxed feeling to it, much different from the first Dells with twice as many youth there!  
So after the event we drove a few hours to DeKalb, IL which is a nice little college town between Rockford and Chicago. We have stayed here before. As I have said in previous journaling, it is really great to go back to a town where you have been before and catch up with past host families. I got to stay with the Motsingers again. This family has treated me wonderfully both times I have stayed with them, very accommodating and generous. During our stay in DeKalb, my teammates and their host families arranged a surprise party for me.



**Adam Slagsvol**

**Date:** 5/1/2003  
**Submitted by:** Rikki Carissa Dold  
**Journal Entry:**

Wow! our days are getting shorter and time seems to be flying by as we move into our VBS season. As I look ahead I see one more month of family nights, lock-ins and nursing home and then were are in to VBS and then we are done. This year seems to have flown by. Take today for example: We were up early and at the church by 8:00 (that's early when you are up till 1:00 in the morning). We did our usual morning routine Devos, huddle and all the other fun jazz we do every morning. We said our good-byes and headed out. That was hard for our team we had been in Greenville before and so we were all extra attached because we have had many opportunities to hang with our



**Rikki Carissa Dold**

contact and host families. We then headed to Port Washington where we managed to get our van stuck in their lawn. Yeah it was quite funny watching our boys try and get out of that mess. After an hour of trying to move the van they admitted defeat and decided to come and help the rest of us set up. We then set up and had a family night which was a lot of fun it was a small crowd but was a lot of fun. We had a great time of fellowship with them after the show. We then tore down our system loaded our trailer and I am now sitting here typing my journal at 11:00. Crazy huh? Well I wish all of you a great week. I thank you all for your support of the West Lakes team.

In his Grip,  
<>< Rikki >><

**Date:** 5/3/2003  
**Submitted by:** Kira Ehrlich  
**Journal Entry:**

These past few days have been crazy, let me tell you. Honestly we have met some really cool people, but we are exhausted. Last night we did a lock-in and it lasted, at least for us, until 1:30am. I can't tell you how tired we are today. Youth Encounter has this rule that we aren't supposed to be kept at a lock-in past midnight. I can understand why, because we were exhausted today. More than exhausted actually, but I don't think this church knew about the rule. Anyway, it was cool because we had a blast, and we were just tired today. It was really funny though because this morning when we were doing our highs and lows of the day I fell asleep during Ryan's. Ooops! I woke up and realized I had no idea what Ryan had just said. I felt pretty bad, but Ryan was very forgiving. Thanks Ryan! Yesterday was great. We had hours until we had to be at the church so we went and had lunch at Lake Geneva with funds from the church before. Then we went to Starbuck's and had some free drinks (thank you Duncan) and then we just hung out in Downtown Lake Geneva. It was so beautiful. The lake was gorgeous. The sun was dancing on the water. The weather was great. It almost reminded me of California. Then we went to the church and partially set-up. There was going to be a wedding rehearsal before we performed, so we had to set-up but still be out of the way. It was weird, but it worked. Then we did a show for tons of kids. It was crazy. Some of them had seen us before so they knew what to expect. Others hadn't, so it was a big challenge to try to get them into it. By the end I think they all pretty much warmed up to us. Halfway through our show we had a speaker and a little skit from some of the youth. The speaker was great and the play thingy was hilarious. Guess what they did it about? They depicted us. According to the skit, Rikki and I wanted to be famous singers. I know for sure I don't. I want to be a famous actress:) and I am pretty sure Rikki doesn't want to be a famous singer. In fact, I think she wants to go into something to do with Biology. I remember her saying she wants to be a forensic scientist. Then they said Adam wants to be a Greenbay Packer. Hmmm! That would be funny. I could hardly imagine him being a football player, let alone playing for Greenbay considering he is pretty loyal to New York. I loved their whole little play. It made us laugh. I don't know if the other kids got as much of a kick out of it as we did though. The kids were great and I loved their imagination. After the show we had to tear down all of our stuff since the wedding was the next day, which was a bummer because I wanted to hang out with the kids. Then we took a school bus and tons of mini vans to a bowling alley. I got to be in a mini van. We all had to have partners and I got Anissa as my partner. She was so cool. I had a blast bowling with her. We had all these little cheers that we did when we bowled. The other girls I hung out with were totally fun too. I have felt so blessed this past week by the people we have met. My host brothers and sisters from the day before were amazing. They inducted me into their group by painting my pinky nail a blue sparkly color. I felt so cool and included. Seriously, I think if they were at my college I totally would have hung out with them. Of course, they are only in High school, but I had a great time hanging out with their group of friends and stuff. Then later we talked forever when I was at their house. This was the place we got our van stuck in the grass. If you want to know more see Rikki's journal. We are so blessed to meet the people we do. You'd think we are the one's who are supposed to come in and change people. I know this year has changed me so much, just from the people I have met. Wow, am I lucky or what? No, that's definitely not luck.



**Kira Ehrlich**

**Date:** 5/6/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen  
**Journal Entry:**

Hello Big Grand World Out There!

We are housed tonight in St John, IN--near Valpraiso, IN. It is a nice town!

But let me start where Kira on her last journal--because I'm sure that you're just DYING to know what we've been up to! wink, wink...So after the lock-in that Kira talked about we headed off to Bensenville, IL. We did a family night there and were blessed--yet again--by this incredible wave of energy that we seem to get when we do programs! You see--we are so tired during set up, sometimes during dinners, and then once the program hits--we do a complete 180! We get this second wind that rushes through everything and we are blessed with energy to make it through one more night! Its amazing.



**Annie Shoen**

But then on Sunday morning we did our "Head to the Heart" worship service twice and got to hang out with some Sunday School youth. That was fun just chillin' and also getting to lead worship! What a blessing! AND--our contact at this church and my host mom had even lived in my hometown, Fairmont, MN! WHAT A SMALL WORLD WE LIVE IN!

My favorite part about the weekend, though, was that the six of us--through a gift from the Bensenville congregation--got to spend time together and eat at TGI Fridays! It was so much fun to just sit and hang out with eachother. We don't get to do that very often--so to sit like old friends and chit chat was great! I really enjoyed it.

Then we travelled to Oregon, IL. It was a small church--but a great one! We had a BLAST there! We did an acoustic family night and there were so many people there! That boosted our morale TONS and we just had a GREAT time getting to worship with them! They were a very alive congregation and very generous as well! They were so kind to us and welcomed us in immediately telling us that they were so honored to have us there! WOW...that's so humbling. However--it doesn't stop there...the church provided manicures and massages for all six of us (but the boys passed on the manicures....awwww.). We had such a relaxing day because of that--thanks so much Payne's Point, IL and thank you for making us feel so welcome!

And tonight?! We are in St John, IN. We were able to do a family night program and it was fun! I, personally, wasn't doing so well tonight--I couldn't form words and I kept stumbling in everything I was saying...it was an interesting night programmatically for me. But I really have enjoyed the people here!

So--that's about it for me. Please pray for us--the West Lakes team--we are ending our heavy travel schedule soon and we need to keep focus on our time now. As May has started we are getting "antsy" to play outside and rest more...please pray that we keep our focus on the reason that we're here--and that is to spread the message of Jesus Christ and to share His love with a servant's heart! AMEN!

Curtis--I love and miss you...Mom--Happy Mother's Day--Love you....Dad--Happy Birthday--I love you--wish I could be there....and Emily, Brandon, Curtis, Mike, and Rachel--Congrats on your graduation from college--WAHOO! Here's a big shoutout to my ever lovely and faithful sponsors, friends, family, the other Captive Free and International Teams, YE staff, and most of all to my God of truth, love, and majesty! Have a great couple of weeks...

Annie Shoen  
Captive Free West Lakes

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**Date:** 5/10/2003  
**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell  
**Journal Entry:**

Hey all,

The past few days have been exciting ones. First, we performed at a church in Seymour, IN, the home town of at least two of the members of the Christian group The Elms, singers of Hey, Hey and Lifeboat among others. We also had a huge thunderstorm our night there.

Then today in the morning we gave massages. It was a great way to relax some of the tense muscles that we had. God also used some of His muscles to keep us safe today. On our way from Seymour to Brownsburg we ended up sitting in the middle of a storm that had some tornados that had touched down in Indianapolis. It was kind of scary when the sky turned pitch black, but we knew that God would be with us. In the end we all made it safe to Brownsburg. Well, I'll let you all go for now. God Bless.

In Christ,

Nick

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**Date:** 5/13/2003

**Submitted by:** Adam Slagsvol

**Journal Entry:**

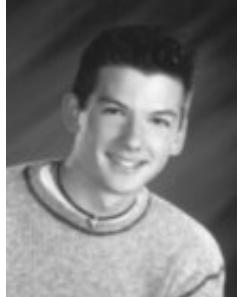
Tuesday, May 13, 2003

So we've been trying to persuade people to help us out and get us a new windshield through our needs list and development skit. Well, it actually worked! We were able to schedule an appointment for a new windshield. However, we needed to do it at 9:00 this morning. So we went to the dealership hoping that we wouldn't be too late leaving for our 5 hour drive from Ft. Wayne, IN to Dixon, IL. So we got the work done and started our trek onward. Probably half way, we were about to make a gas stop when a fellow traveler told us that it appeared as if our rear left tire was about to explode. Sure enough we pulled over and there it was, a bulge about the size of a baseball protruding from our tire. Luckily for us we pulled over across the road from an auto shop, so fixing the tire was no big problem, but a time setback to say the least. So we try to get moving again as quickly as possible and headed out on the open road again. Of course then you'd think that our troubles would be over, but no. we were already an hour late when we missed our exit and got to go the long way through a couple other towns and didn't get to the church till 15 minutes after we were supposed to start playing! Lucky for us the flyers were printed wrong and we were given an extra 15 minutes to set up for an acoustic show and cram some pizza down our throats. You may think that this sort of thing might get on our nerves and bum me out...

WRONG YOU ARE!

For some reason I was so ready to play for and share the good news with these people. Maybe it was the long van ride, maybe the fact that nothing else could go wrong, I'm not sure, but I was ready. The congregation was small but yet very responsive to our little show. It was a lot of fun and the program was actually the closest thing to flawless all day for once! So yeah, we had our little mishaps but we also had our little pick-me-ups. So here's to another day of long drives and hopefully no flat-tires or hour-long set-backs. God bless!

Adam Slagsvol



**Adam Slagsvol**

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**Date:** 5/17/2003

**Submitted by:** Kira Ehrlich

**Journal Entry:**

Hey kids! Well, we have been having a great past couple of days. We had a great concert on Friday. Not that it had anything to do with us really, but the people were so awesome and you couldn't help but have fun. Today, we really didn't have much to do. We had a housing only, which means we don't have a concert to give we just stay at



**Nick Campbell**

someone's house. This is a very rare occurance for our team. So, we had nothing to do really and we decided to do a team outing, meaning Youth Encounter gives us funds once a month to go have fun together. Unfortunately we don't usually have fun because we can never decide what to do and it just becomes stressful and someone always gets left out on what they want to do and someone ends up sulking the whole time. But finally, after eight months, we had fun. Yay for fun! We didn't do so well on the deciding part and it did get just a little stressful, but once we decided what to do then we had a great time. We went out to eat at Applebee's. You know, I can't recall a time that I had ever eaten there. It was really good. We had a pretty good time, just hanging out and joking around. Then we went miniature golfing. It was so cold outside. It was pretty warm earlier, but then it got cold out of nowhere. We played eighteen holes, boys against girls. It was pretty funny to watch Adam play because he got a six, which is maximum for a hole, almost everytime. And it was pretty funny also because the golf balls would fly off the course and into the grass way too easily and way too often. Rikki was the first to get a hole-in-one, followed by Annie, and then me. Needless to say, the girls won. Our team is very competitive, at least the boys are and me too. But the boys usually win, so tonight we took the victory. It was a great day for girls everywhere. West Lakes girls beat the West Lakes boys! Oh Yeah!

Anyway, this team outing was great because we actually got to enjoy eachother. We don't really get the opportunity to do that too often. From the moment we wake until the moment we go to sleep it's work, work, work. And we really don't have the option to do anything else. I enjoy what we do very much, but I didn't realize how much we needed to not be in a work-like setting and to just hang out and relax. So overall, today was a good day. Don't forget to have fun!



**Kira Ehrlich**

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**Date:** 5/31/2003

**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell

**Journal Entry:**

Hello everyone,

Today we just finished our week of VBS training, and we are at our first booking for VBS which is in Danforth, IN. It was great this past week to see other teams and hangout with them, share stories from the road with them and hear some from them. We had the chance to learn some of our VBS songs that we will teach the kids during VBS week. Talk with you later. God Bless.



**Nick Campbell**

In Christ,  
Nick

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**Date:** 6/3/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

WELL HELLO EVERYBODY!

IT HAS BEEN AWHILE SINCE WE HAVE LAST WRITTEN...SORRY ABOUT THAT. WE HAVE BEEN ON MEMORIAL DAY BREAK (MAY 22-27) AND THEN WERE OUT OF OUR TERRITORY IN OHIO FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL TRAINING (MAY 27-31). SO HERE WE ARE NOW--BACK IN FULL SWING, BUT DOING VBS INSTEAD!



**Annie Shoen**

IT WAS A GREAT BLESSING TO BE ABLE TO SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY OVER OUR LAST BREAK OF THE YEAR. NICK, RYAN, AND RIKKI GOT TO STAY AT RIKKI'S HOUSE IN INDIANA, ADAM WENT TO MICHIGAN TO VISIT THE SOUTH EAST TEAM, KIRA TOOK A WEEKEND IN WASHINGTON, AND I TOOK A WEEKEND IN WISCONSIN. IT WAS A GREAT TIME OF RELAXATION!

THEN WE GOT TO HANG OUT WITH LORI--OUR TEAM DIRECTOR--AND THREE OTHER TEAMS AT VBS TRAINING. WE WERE IN OHIO FOR FOUR DAYS WITH THE NORTH EAST TEAM, THE SOUTH EAST TEAM, AND THE EAST LAKES TEAM. I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW MANY TEAMERS VERY WELL ON THESE

TEAMS--SO TO BE ABLE TO HANG OUT WITH THEM AND SHARE SOME TIME CATCHING UP ABOUT THE YEAR AND RELATING ABOUT OUR EXPERIENCES WAS INCREDIBLE. I BELIEVE IT WILL BE ONE OF MY MOST MEMORABLE AND FAVORITE TIMES WHILE BEING ON CAPTIVE FREE.

AND NOW--YOU ARE UP TO DATE. WE ARE PRESENTLY IN DANFORTH, IL DOING OUR FIRST VBS TOGETHER AS THE WEST LAKES 2002-2003 TEAM. IT HAS BEEN FUN AND HUMBLING TO SAY THE LEAST! WE HAVE BEEN DOING THE "ZOOM ZONE" VBS AND BASICALLY SPLITTING UP TO DO MUSIC AND GAMES ALL DAY. THERE HAVE BEEN ABOUT 50-60 KIDS THAT SHOW UP DAILY AND WE HAVE BEEN HAVING A BLAST SO FAR! THE KIDS ARE HILARIOUS AND IT IS REFRESHING TO WORK WITH SOME OF THE LITTLE ONES! I THINK OUR BIGGEST STRUGGLE HAS BEEN HAVING TOO MUCH TIME ON OUR HANDS (WE ARE DONE WITH THE VBS AT 11:30 AM! USUALLY THAT'S WHEN WE START DRIVING TO OUR NEXT DESTINATION FOR A COMPLETE FULL DAY AHEAD OF US!) AND THE WEATHER HAS NOT BEEN COOPERATING FOR GAMES. BUT OTHER THAN THAT--GOD HAS BLESSED US AS USUAL WITH A PATIENT CONGREGATION!

IT HAS ALSO BEEN A NEW EXPERIENCE AS WE ARE NOT STAYING IN HOST HOMES THIS WEEK--WE HAVE TWO TRAILERS TO OURSELVES! YOU SHOULD SEE THE DECOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE BOYS AND THE GIRLS! IMMEDIATELY RIKKI BOUGHT AIR FRESHENER FOR OUR TRAILER AND THE GIRLS HAVE THEIR STUFF SET OUT NEATLY...ITS FINALLY OUR OWN LITTLE NOOKS AND CRANNIES! :) YET THE BOYS ARE STORING THEIR MAGAZINES AND BOOKS IN THE MICROWAVE AND HAVE THEIR BLANKETS BUNDLED UP ON THEIR BEDS...CRAZY KIDS. IT HAS BEEN SUCH A FUN TIME THOUGH BEING ABLE TO HAVE OUR OWN SPACE FOR A BIT...BUT I MUST ADMIT--ON THE FLIPSIDE--I DO MISS TALKING TO HOST FAMILIES AND BEING WITH OTHER PEOPLE THAN WHO IS ON MY TEAM...WINK, WINK.

WELL...WE'LL KEEP YOU UPDATED ON HOW THIS WEEK TURNS OUT! GOD'S BLESSINGS ON THE START OF YOUR SUMMERS AND MAYBE WE'LL SEE YOU SOON! TAKE CARE  
ANNIE SHOEN  
CAPTIVE FREE WEST LAKES

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**Date:** 6/7/2003

**Submitted by:** Kira Ehrlich

**Journal Entry:**

Well, we did our very first week of VBS and I am glad to announce we survived! We finished yesterday. It was crazy let me tell ya. Everything was kind of "fly by the seat of your pants" kind of stuff. I am pretty sure we all felt mostly prepared from VBS training. I know I did. But I don't really think you can be prepared, honestly. I imagined VBS being totally different. I don't remember what I imagined it being because I've gone through it now, but I know I was surprised. All year we have had to be pretty flexible and I'd like to think we are a pretty flexible team. VBS gives a whole new meaning to flexible. You just have to go with it. And besides that, we were pretty shaky on some of the songs and skits, but we know them now that's for sure.

So now we are finished with our first week of VBS. And I absolutely loved it. The people were great, the kids were great, it got a little stressful at times, but it was still so much fun. I am actually really sad it is over. Too bad we couldn't have stayed for the rest of our tour. You know, do a couple of month long VBS's there. Why not? I wonder if it is going to be like this every single time? I know most of my team wanted to cry when we had to say good-bye. You can't help but get attached to such cute faces. We did a little program for the parents for the closing of VBS. Each age group did a song of their choosing. I think the little ones were more confused than anything, but they were fun to watch. And then we all had a picnic, with hotdogs, together. And then it was time to say good-bye. Hold on! I got to hold back the tears. O.K., I'm fine now.

This morning we went to our contacts house. Her name is Libby Wilken and we all love her and her family and all the other Wilkens in and close to Danforth, IL. I am telling you, there are 450 people in Danforth and I bet you 90% of them were Wilkens. Everyone had the last name Wilken. It was crazy. My favorite verse is 1 Timothy 4:12 and I met a woman who's daughter was killed a while ago and they put that on her grave, so she took me to see it. I was very very touched. It was amazing to see how loved this girl was. And I was very touched that this woman would let me into such a delicate part of her life. We got to talking and I took a moment to look around at other



**Kira Ehrlich**

graves and I noticed that most of them said Wilken on them. I knew there were a lot, but I just couldn't believe it. But anyway this girl's gravestone is beautiful. It is a bench with all sorts of symbolic etchings on them to represent the things in life she was passionate about. And on the back was my favorite verse. It even had a picture of her on there. It made me want to cry. This girl was very very loved. I was proud that her mother wanted share that with me.

Anyway, we went to our contacts house and had a huge breakfast. It was so yummy. VBS is fun and all, but it is not going to be good for my waistline, that's for sure. People feed you so much and such fattening stuff too. So, then we had to go and, as you can guess, we were sad. It was hard to say good-bye for real. We said good-bye yesterday, but we were still going to be there. This time we were saying good-bye because we were actually leaving. It took us a very long time to say good-bye. I think we were procrastinating.

Finally, we left. And now we get to look forward to our next new and great adventure in VBS. I just hope it is as great as our first one. Of course, it will be hard crying every week.

Anyway, thanks for listening and have a great week. God bless.

Love in Christ,

Kira

1 Timothy 4:12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young. But set an example for believers in speech, in life, in love, in Faith, and in purity.

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**Date:** 6/14/2003

**Submitted by:** Rikki Carissa Dold

**Journal Entry:**

Well week two of VBS is almost over!!! How different life is when you are in one place of a week! Our team life has changed so much. We went from seeing each other everyday all day to maybe 5 hours a day. I must admit I miss them. Today (Thursday) we had the chance to hang out for a little bit. We went to the Maze... This is one of the big things to do here in Marion WI. I must say it was alot of fun even though I did get a little frustrated. We played Girls vs. Boys and the boys beat us but hey we had to let them win or they would have been mad right (wink wink)!! We then all hung out and played football and watched movies that was also tons of fun. So we are all still doing great getting a long and staying strong... We hope all is going well for you!

In his grip,

<>< Rikki



**Rikki Carissa Dold**

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**Date:** 6/14/2003

**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell

**Journal Entry:**

Hey Everyone,

How are you doing? I'm great. We just finished our 2nd week of VBS in Marion, WI. We had a blast with the kids singing songs, playing games, and eating lunch with them. We also had the chance to play softball with the kids and performing at a campfire. Also during the week we went to a maze where the guys raced the girls. The guys ended up winning. I'll talk with you all later. God Bless.

In Christ,

Nick



**Nick Campbell**

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**Date:** 6/17/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

## WHOOPPEE! SUMMER IS FINALLY HERE!

We are in full swing of our VBS tour...it has been great! I love this Vacation Bible School stuff! There are some pro's and con's. Let me share some of them with you!

### Pro's:

It is great being able to be with the little one's! I love the younger kids--they are so funny with the songs. Plus--they just enjoy singing and being crazy so much! Its fun to watch them! As we were doing our opening program this morning it was great to hear their little voices shouting out the words and singing! I think that that is one of the sweetest sounds in the world--hearing little children innocently sing and put their hearts into the music! Its great!



**Annie Shoen**

Another pro has been that we are able to stay with our host families for a WHOLE WEEK! The running around from day to day and driving all the time was starting to take its toll on us. I really enjoy being able to become closer with our families than just stay one night with them. I feel like I am part of something more than just a travelling band. Its a good feeling to know that you will be remembered as part of the family! One of my host mom's was so funny last week..she kept exclaiming "She's not a guest, she's part of the family!" That's so good to hear!

Another blessing is that we have more free time and alone time. It is great to be able to spend some time just relaxing and being able to bask in the sun, read, or run errands. Before--that wasn't always possible.

### Con's:

Life is still hard on VBS. While we are in a family (so to speak)--we still miss our own. Its hard to see families being so tight knit and having inside jokes--and we just seem to miss being with our families and having those same things. Father's Day was hard for me...I ended up calling home and I got to talk to my grandpa, my brother, my mom, and my dad. Our summer weekends are usually spent camping and they were telling me about their last camping trip. That's hard--but then again--it's all about growing up, right?!

Another con is that I miss being with my teammates. We used to spend so much time together and its hard when we don't get to see eachother as often. I think sometimes we also get caught up in the future and think about being done with CF. That seems to be our biggest struggle. So sometimes we seem to take eachother for granted.

So--as we are finishing out with our VBS season--please pray for us! We are in Clintonville, WI right now, on our third week. Please pray that we will stay focused on the ministry, on being good to eachother, and that we may serve others during this tour. Also--please pray for us and our plans for after team.

Thank you all for your support and your faithfulness to our ministry! God's Blessings--  
**Annie Shoen**  
Captive Free West Lakes

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**Date:** 6/18/2003

**Submitted by:** Rikki Carissa Dold

### Journal Entry:

Wow this week is going great! We are still here in Clintonville and the youth are amazing. We have had something to do every night. Last night they took us up to the camp here and we were able to go to the campfire. We had a fun packed night with them again tonight; we went to the rec. center and swam, played basketball, cards, and ate tons of pizza. After that we all came back to the house and watched a movie it is about 12:30 in the morning right now and everyone has just left. This week has been very busy. (Good thing this an afternoon VBS) Well I better get to bed we have



**Rikki Carissa Dold**

alot to do (today...) We have to reset up our stuff, do the VBS and then there is another youth night we are going swimming and horse back riding. I can not wait.

God Bless,  
Rikki

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**Date:** 6/22/2003

**Submitted by:** Kira Ehrlich

**Journal Entry:**

Hello! I hope you have had a bright and cheery day! We have been having a blast here in Wakefield, MI. This our last time performing in the U.P.(in case you don't know, that is the Upper Peninsula of Michigan) I am a little sad. But I am really happy because we get to hang out with some old friends. We met these guys in January, I think, and they are seriously some of the coolest people I have ever met. We've seen them here and there, but now we actually get to go to their church. We left from Clintonville, WI and had quite a far drive. Then after we stayed for like a night in Wakefield we come back and go to Appleton, WI, which is about a half an hour away from Clintonville. I think it is very funny how that is set up. I don't care though. I would travel even farther for these guys. These youth are just so on fire for Christ and they are a blast. Last night Nick, Rikki, Adam, and I stayed together with a family and we had a little campfire just for us. We told scary stories. We had s'mores (some more of what?(as Adam would say))Got eaten alive by mosquitoes. It was a blast. Then today we got taken to a secret waterfall that not too many people know about. It was so beautiful. I was wearing flip flops so I couldn't really go exploring. Bummer! But I got some pictures, so if you want to see what it looked liked I'll show ya. I can't believe we have only a month and a half to go. I am sure we will have a great time, though it is short. Well, talk to you later.

Love in Christ,

Kira



**Kira Ehrlich**

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**Date:** 6/28/2003

**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell

**Journal Entry:**

Hi Everybody,

How are you all doing? I'm great. We just arrived in Machesney Park, IL where we will be able to see the final closing Worship Service done by Spoke Folk, another YE Ministry Team who travels on bikes for about a week doing pretty much the same thing we do only with many more people, on Sunday morning. Its interesting that two different types of YE Ministry teams are at the same church at the same time.

Today we came from Fremont, WI (by Appleton) where we did a Family Night program. It was nice to do some familiar Ministry things like we have done in the past, brings back memories from teamlife before VBS. I did have a blast, and I'm sure my teammates can agree, at our Appleton VBS. Its always great to see the kids get so excited to learn about God. Makes this year just that more fun.

Well, I'll let you all go for now. May God Bless you always.

In Christ,  
Nick



**Nick Campbell**

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**Date:** 6/29/2003

**Submitted by:** Rikki Carissa Dold

**Journal Entry:**

Wow what a day! We are in IL and we had the morning off. We were able to sit back and leave the church service up to that spoke folk team! They were great and we all had enjoyed there program. There were many faces that we had met on the road this year on this tour. It was fun to hear about what they experienced over there two weeks. Tonight we are going to be doing our opener for our VBS this week. We are going to have a super week! This is going to be our first experience with a night VBS we are pumped.....(sleep in time)! Thanks again for all you prayers and support you guys ROCK!

In his grip,  
<>< Rikki



Rikki Carissa Dold

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**Date:** 7/1/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

Hello all of our wonderful family, friends, sponsors, partners, and groupies (haha)--

We are enjoying the summer sun here in Machesney Park, IL. We arrived here on Saturday (as Rikki wrote...) and have been busy at work!

We had an opening program on Sunday night--and to be honest--we played the best program since early this spring! It was great--we finally had another night where all of us were listening to each other, everything sounds together, and we were all in sync with our programmatic ministry! It was great--and so much fun!

Then we started our VBS last night. We are doing a VBS that the church has put together themselves! It's called "Miracles in Motion" and its about the miracles Jesus performed--and how they apply to our lives today! Its been neat so far--last night they learned about the feeding of the 5,000 and tonight its the healing of the 10 lepers. We have a pretty short week with the kids--only 3 nights of VBS from 6:30-8:30 and then a closing program on Thursday night. Its been a great week!

We had a couple of visitors yesterday too! "Hands in Motion" came to visit us! Their family of six drove all the way from IA to come and spend time with us! They are the signing ministry for the deaf that have been at all of our large events this winter--and we've gotten pretty close with them--so they came to visit for awhile! What a blessing! And guess who else joined them! The crazy, cool, and fun John, Jamie, and Mary from "Righteous Insanity"! They were here for the afternoon too! They are the Comedy Improv group for our large events also...so it was one big crazy and fun afternoon...what a blessing to hang out with friends for awhile.

Nick and I took advantage of some free time today and went hiking at Rock Cut State Park. It was beautiful and a good time for reflection on God's creation. I used to work at a camp during my summers and have missed the outdoors--so it was nice to go on a walk today.

It has been a good summer so far--we have had much time to relax, get to know each other better (even though it seemed impossible), and to play with kids. I have learned much already--I'm reading 1 and 2 Samuel and have been learning about myself. We have met many amazing people on the road and God has laid it on my heart to pray more about integrity. I have been the team leader for the West Lakes team and this year has taught me much about being honest, acting like you ask others to act, relying on God for strength, endurance, and guidance, and being true to your promises to Him. It has been good to look back and reflect on some of the things I have learned from being on the road, from my teammates, and from God. It has been a hard--yet AWESOME experience...and I am thankful for the examples God has provided me through host families, contacts at churches, YE staff, my team, other teams, and through David in Scripture. This year was definately NOT in vain...

Well--Mom and Dad--I miss you, Shawn--I love you, Angi--I'm sorry I haven't been better about keeping in touch, but I love you!, Curtis--you are the best and I love you, and to all the rest of my friends, family, sponsors, host families, and the other teamers--thank you for being so good to me



Annie Shoen

this year and I pray that your summer is blessing you as much as it is me!

Peace to You all!

Annie Shoen

Captive Free West Lakes

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**Date:** 7/6/2003

**Submitted by:** Kira Ehrlich

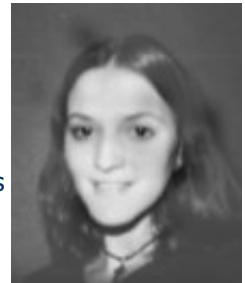
**Journal Entry:**

We have arrived in our new destination. Today we are in Merrill, WI. We had a great time last week in Machesney Park, IL. The church was just amazing and we loved the kids and their parents. I can tell that this week though is going to be just as amazing as last week. I got to meet my host family tonight. They haven't ever hosted a Captive Free member before. I could tell they were nervous. But they are such an amazing family. When I got there we played 4-square. It was my two host sisters, my host dad and my host mom just watched. they were a blast to play with. Then I taught them a card game, which they loved. Today we did some of the service. We only did a few songs. But there was a baptism and we had to learn a new song last night for it. It was rough, but we did it. It was really a beautiful hymn especially at such a beautiful moment. Then later that night, I went with my host family to their grandma's house. I had a blast. Come to find out. Their uncle Jon was a juggler. So he put on a little performance for us. It was really cool. Then he had me come up and do a little juggling thing with him. I couldn't believe I was semi-juggling. But then, here's the kicker, my host sister started to juggle with three balls, she was great, but then decided to give the balls to me and , no way!, I could juggle with three balls. It was so much fun. I can tell I am really going to have a blast here. God has blessed me so much. I have experienced so many things this year that I would never have experienced. At the end of the week I am going to a balloon glow. It's where they blow up hot air balloons at night, but tether them down so they don't fly away and just have the propane tanks shoot the firey stuff so the balloons glow. they say it's really beautiful. I honestly don't think I have ever seen a hot air balloon in real life before. I am so excited. Like I said, I get to experience so much that I never ever would have had if I just stayed at home and finished school or worked. Isn't God great? Yeah, I think so too.

Anyway, talk to you later.

Love in Christ,

Kira



**Kira Ehrlich**

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**Date:** 7/12/2003

**Submitted by:** Nick Campbell

**Journal Entry:**

Hi Everyone,

Today we left the city of Merrill, WI. This was our 4th to last VBS of the summer and 6th to last stop on our year long tour. I had a blast with the kids this week singing songs, playing games, eating snacks, among other VBS fun. We also had the chance this past week to hangout with the youth group to talk and play games. We also as a team got to waterski, tube, go up to see ROP, a YE International team, and go see a Baseball Game that had a few Packers there signing (which I liked because of being from Wisconsin). This upcoming week we are going to be doing a VBS in Oconto, WI. This will be our third time here, and is also the home church of a former teamer.



**Nick Campbell**

After team, I'm going to be working for till January when I'm hoping to start going to school at a Film School in MN. With working here, I'm hoping to end up making Christian or Christian themed movies, so if any of you have connections with someone in Hollywood let me know. :) Other than that I'm hoping to just help my church out with our youth group and other ministry areas.

Talk with you all later, and hope to see all you teamers, YE staff, family and friends back home, and

those coming to Homecoming all within the next few weeks. God Bless.

In Christ,  
Nick

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**Date:** 7/15/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

Hello Everyone!

Sorry that we haven't been very faithful in keeping up with our journals...I'll have to fill you in a little bit.



Here's the dealio...we are in Oconto, WI....kinda up north! We got here on Saturday and were very excited to visit--we've been here two times already! I love it here! The people that we know and love from this town are so laid back and so "real" that it just gives you that home town feeling. I love that they are so excited to have us here and that we know them pretty well already!

The kids are fun--we get to play music this week for opening and closing only--and then **Annie Shoen** the BEST PART--we get to float around with certain groups and be their "crew leader". I have LOVED this! By being their crew leader--we get to know the kids, spend some time with them, and see what they're learning! Its great to grow with the kids...I love music--but I think I love people more! :)

We have also been very blessed by the older youth of the church! They are some of the coolest kids I know! They are redecorating their youth room and we have been able to be a part of it! Its kind of fun to be able to take some ownership in SOMETHING this year...we haven't been anywhere that we can call "home" exactly--but to be able to participate and help with something like the big process of changing a youth room--has been a little, but a big thing to me. I really enjoyed spending the afternoon painting and dreaming up ideas for the room--as well as interacting with the kids and getting to know them better! They have been a joy to me and I am always amazed to go places and see kids that LOVE THE LORD! I think that sometimes it seems that we are constantly being plastered with kids who need spiritual help--and today I was blessed to spend time with young adults who are strong in their faith. Praise God for them! They have blessed me and didn't even know it! :)

I finally have decided what and where I am going after team life is over with! Or should I say that GOD let ME in on what I'm doing? --wink, wink.... I am really excited about that. It looks like I will be moving to northern Wisconsin to live in an apartment and look for a job! I think that I am excited and nervous all at the same time.

Lets start with excited--I am excited because I finally have a place of my own, I have a sense of direction about where I'm supposed to be after this year, and I have an sense of security about the future.

Now the scared part--I am terrified to actually MOVE AWAY FROM HOME, I am terrified that I, in essence, have about four friends in the big city of 70,000 that I'm moving to, I actually have to somehow find financial stability in all of this--after a year of being a volunteer, and I am leaving the people I have lived with for an entire year! Those are some huge changes--and I'm just a little bit nervous about it all...

But isn't it grand that God is faithful and will take care of me even when I feel so scared? I guess if I've learned anything this year--its that if you go where God sends you--He will keep you from harm. He is our shepard and if we allow ourselves to "graze" in His grand scheme of things--then the pack of wolves won't seem so dangerous! Isn't it ironic that this has been one of the hardest years of my life--yet when its winding down--I feel like I could NEVER have done without it?

That's a great feeling!

God's Blessings to you all!

Annie Shoen  
Captive Free West Lakes

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**Date:** 7/29/2003

**Submitted by:** Annie Shoen

**Journal Entry:**

Hey everyone out there!

Welp...our year is winding down--and we are a mix of emotions right now...at least I am. Some of our team is really excited to be done with everything--ready to move on and be settled for awhile. Some of the team cannot believe that the whole experience is over with and are already grieving the end. And some of us are in the middle--we have our good and our bad days.

This week is our last week of VBS--we are in Peoria, IL. This VBS has been tons of fun!  
We are entertaining the



**Annie Shoen**