

Captive Free East Lakes 2003-04 Journal

Date: 9/16/2003

Submitted by: Macie LaCrone

Journal Entry:

Wow! I can hardly believe that we are already on the road. After four weeks of training, which I thought would take forever but flew by, we are finally traveling and doing ministry with Congregations!

Training was such a wonderful experience! I made some awesome friends and God really worked on growing the team together. For me, the first couple of weeks were a struggle because I couldn't contact anyone back home, yet God was faithful as He always is! He filled the void with my team mates and those at training going through the same experience.

Since being on the road we have felt thrown into some situations and under prepared. Despite these feelings, my teamers and I see evidence of God, in that we are prepared and able to communicate effectively. It is really nice to have full confidence, not in ourselves, but in the fact that God is our strength and He will enable us in every situation we are brought to!



Macie LaCrone

Date: 9/18/2003

Submitted by: Megan Johnson

Journal Entry:

Life on the road rocks!!! We've only been on the road for six days, yet, we have met so many amazing people. I have grown so much since I left home and even since I left training. Even though we are still getting a feel for life on the road, I know that God has some incredible plans in store for Captive Free-East Lakes. I'm excited to see what He does through this ministry! It is such an honor to be called to serve this year on team-I remind myself of this every day. Although we are in a different place every twenty four hours, the people we meet, talk to, and stay with have had such an impact on our lives. God is so amazing!



Megan Johnson

Date: 9/23/2003

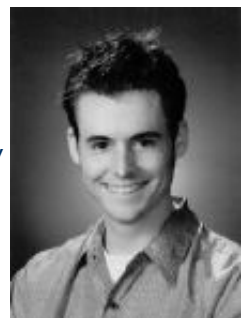
Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

Journal Entry:

Well, it's Tuesday and we are in Greenville, Indiana. We had the greatest time yesterday in Chicago. We spent our day off sleeping. Later, our friend, Dave, drove us around and we saw all of the cool things in the Windy City, like the Sears Tower, Soldier Field, and a bunch of other things.

For dinner, we went to Gino's Pizza. It was so different than the pizza that I'm used to in Louisiana. The pizza we ate at Gino's was more like a huge pie, I could only eat two pieces...well, two and a half. It still doesn't beat Shreveport's "Johnny's Pizza". I miss the food back home, but it's worth it to see all the new places everyday.

Driving through Wisconsin for the past week was awesome. It was absolutely beautiful. We've had such an amazing time playing at the churches and getting to meet so many cool people. Tonight, we went to a Nursing Home and played for some folks that absolutely loved us. Sunday night, we played at a worship service in Naperville, Illinois. There we met some cool musicians one of them being Kramer, one of the guitarists who leads worship there. In Chicago we also went to Wrigley Field and drug a sleeping Megan into the rain throwing her into a puddle in the parking lot. It was rather humorous...



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 9/25/2003

Submitted by: Josh Poencet
Journal Entry:

Salutations friends, family, and visitors!

Hi there-my name is Josh Poencet and I am with Captive Free East Lakes. We have been traveling for about 2 weeks now and are having a great time! We just got to share a program with some wonderful people in Lawrenceburg, IN. Our program was outside at a park and, aside from the wind, it was good.

I am enjoying playing the drums, everyday I just get even more excited to play them for others! Music is perhaps the greatest form of ministry and being able to share my love for music with all those I meet is so rewarding for me. I hope that God is with all others teams on the road and overseas with the international teams traveling. Take Care and may God Bless!!!



Josh Poencet

Date: 9/27/2003
Submitted by: Scott Egbers
Journal Entry:

We've been on the road now for two weeks and we've had a lot of different kinds of bookings. Every booking is very unique and we learn something from it. The lesson I learned from tonight's program is particularly deep.

We went to a children's assisted living facility in Wabash, IN. This facility cares for children who are disabled and need special care. Most of them are in wheelchairs and don't speak. I found it difficult to relate to them. I didn't know what to say to them or how to act. And I thought to myself, "Jesus loves everyone with the deepest love there is. Jesus loves all these children and I don't even know how to conduct myself around them."

It showed me how rich and deep the love of Jesus is and how shallow the love I can give is. All I could see was different those children than. Jesus barely even notices.



Scott Egbers

Date: 9/30/2003
Submitted by: Macie LaCrone
Journal Entry:

Man! It's already almost October . . . I can hardly believe it.

This week has been so full and so busy, but I've learned so very much! We began the week in Chicago for our day off, and we had a wonderful time seeing all the sights! That city was just so much fun, it would be a wonderful place to live.

Later on in the week Megan and I, on a crazy whim, decided to dye our hair a different color. Mine is now a red color and Megan's is brown with gorgeous blonde chunks/highlights. It was a fun time, and the best was seeing Megan in the cap that you pull hair through!

Probably my most humbling experience came on Friday evening when we played at Mount Vernon Children's home, a children's assisted living facility. It is an experience that I never, ever want to forget! The majority of children were in wheelchairs and couldn't speak. I just wanted to cry, it was very hard to sing for the first ten minutes. Sin has reeked such havoc on our world and it affects us in so many ways. I long for the day when Christ return and brings us to perfection. I learned so much from those children, I was very blessed to have been there and very humbled. I praise God for bringing our team there!

Yesterday was our day off after a week of running around like crazy! My host mom, Cheryl, took me out for THE BEST Ice Cream Sunday EVER!! The ice cream was stacked up (like 3 scoops!) between a cream puff pastry, then it was lathered in Saunders Hot Fudge. That was the best hot fudge you may ever encounter-it had caramel mixed into it! If you ever get a chance to try it, make sure you do!



Macie LaCrone

Date: 10/1/2003
Submitted by: Megan Johnson
Journal Entry:

This evening we went to a nursing home in Ohio to share music with the people there. I think nursing homes must be one of my favorite places to go. Those we meet there are so honest, inviting, and appreciative of our company. We did three sets of music for three groups of people. After our last set, the director of activities asked if we would mind singing for a resident who was terminally ill and was unable to make it downstairs. She faithfully came to see Captive Free each year, but couldn't make it this time. We were happy to accept the invitation, but nothing could have prepared me for what we were going to experience.

As we made our way upstairs we were informed that she had two kinds of cancer and could pass away at any moment. We circled around her bed and sang to her. She was so glad that we had come upstairs for her. She didn't have much strength, but applauded and thanked us none the less. When we left the room, Sarah, Macie and I couldn't help but to cry. You don't realize when you are so young the reality of death. I praise God that He so graciously gives us life after death. I long for the day when those in Christ can rejoice and give praise to our Father without the pain of sickness, disease and other earthly ailments. God is continually teaching and growing me through incredible experiences every day. To HIM be the glory!



Megan Johnson

Date: 10/4/2003
Submitted by: Sarah Hopp
Journal Entry:

We've spent most of the week in Ohio, and I can honestly say that it's taught me a great deal. Yesterday we visited a rehabilitation center for youth in Springfield. There we met and had dinner with youth that were junior high and high school aged. As we were setting up for the program that night, a staff member came into the theater and informed us that the kids were being very aggressive that day and they would probably be rude towards us. I hadn't even met the kids and I already had an unappealing picture painted of them in my mind. This definitely put me out of my comfort zone. But then I went into a cottage and met some of them for dinner. Although not all were as innocuous as people that age usually are, I found that most of them were very kind hearted and fun loving. They were open to talking with us about our year with Captive Free and open to honest discussion. God really showed me that I shouldn't put labels and presumptions upon people, especially those that I haven't even met. I learned more how to go on with our mission work this year with an even more open and understanding heart. God truly works in places and through people sometimes when one least expects it.



Sarah Hopp

Date: 10/7/2003
Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker
Journal Entry:

Hello, everyone! Ben here. I'm very energetic right now because I got a lot of sleep last night. Our day off was yesterday and I slept for most of it. Our host family was very nice; Joe and Sara took wonderful care of me and Scott. We got to hang out with their son Ethan, a senior at Celina High. Today, we're headed to the wonderful Toledo, Ohio where we will be playing at a Homeless soup kitchen. I am looking forward to seeing all the people and talking with them.

I am missing home since I watched "O Brother, Where Art Thou" last night and was reminded of the beautiful southern scenery that's so close to Louisiana. Listening to the folks in the movie talk normally (at least I think they talk normal). I'm also really excited about getting to read the bible a lot more and am currently doing a personal study of 1 Corinthians. After which I am moving on to either Ephesians or Philippians. There's so much to take in, so little time...



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 10/10/2003
Submitted by: Scott Egbers
Journal Entry:

As I am writing this, the East Lakes Captive Free team is driving from Reed City, MI to Farmington Hills, MI. We have had a great last couple of days. We were in Toledo on Tuesday and played at Salem Lutheran Church for people waiting for their dinner. Many of them sang along and some of them even did the Hippo Song. Wednesday we went to Saginaw for a program that night. Then last night (Thursday) we had one of the best programs yet. We were playing in Reed City at Trinity Lutheran Church and School. We played in a gym, which is always difficult acoustically, but it didn't hinder the energy that the crowd had for the Lord. They were some of the most active people we have played for. Since we have been on the road, I have never seen so many adults doing the Hippo Song as we did in Reed City! And they were doing well, even when it was fast! Over all it was a great time.



Scott Egbers

Date: 10/11/2003
Submitted by: Josh Poencet
Journal Entry:

Salutations again! This is Josh and we are doing just awesome! Yesterday, in Farmington Hills, MI, we played games, sang a few songs and had a wonderful time at our host church's youth night. Life in the road is going great, we are becoming closer as a team and having more fun with each other as the days role by. All of us are excited to do more and more! This excitement is because, as a team, we have all reached the point of trying to continually remember that this is a ministry for God, and God only! We are learning to play for an audience of one. Well take care and God Bless!!!



Josh Poencet

Date: 10/14/2003
Submitted by: Macie LaCrone
Journal Entry:

This past week has been so wonderful and so overwhelming all at once. Sitting in the back, keeping the sound board in check, I've seen my team connect marvelously with the audience. I'm always so excited to see our energy levels go up and just that powerful connection we make with others through the music. It is so wonderful—such a gift from the Father!!

For myself, I felt very challenged as the weekend came upon us. For our ministry, the weekends are always the busiest, and the most demanding. This past Friday we were all up way past midnight, which is very uncommon for us, especially when we have an early morning. The lack of sleep was definitely noticeable for the remainder of the weekend, but at all the places we were this past weekend God was there, always giving us the energy we needed, and totally blessing our ministry. Through everything, I know that I personally am learning more and more that "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)



Macie LaCrone

Date: 10/16/2003
Submitted by: Megan Johnson
Journal Entry:

"A day in the life of Captive Free-East Lakes"

A couple of nights ago, our team was booked in downtown Detroit to eat with the homeless at a shelter and then do a family night program. We got there but couldn't set up until 45 minutes before the program...so we hung out with the people in the lounge.

I met this awesome woman, Nikki, and her daughter, Faith. I talked with Nikki for about half an hour or so and found out she was close to owning an apartment. She asked me to pray for her and her daughter...so I am. Faith, her 2 year old, kept wanting to "hug the nice lady" (me). She was so precious.

After we ate dinner we set up very quickly...to top it off, we were hauling everything through the rain. The only thing that helped me to keep my spirits up was to remember the reason I was doing it and not focus on my own selfish thoughts. The program went very well and we were able to talk with a few interesting people afterward. We had such a great time.

So, we're tearing down and loading in the pouring rain...laughing and joking around the entire time simply because we were so exhausted. Once we had everything in the trailer and were ready to pull out, we came to the gate in the parking lot to find it was locked. No one wanted to get out in the rain, so I finally jumped out and went to the back door to see if someone would open the gate. I banged on the door, rang the bell, and pressed the call button...several times, but to my dismay, there was no answer. I went back to the van not exactly sure what to tell my teammates. Scott went to the door again to try his luck while I looked around for a space in the gate big enough for someone to squeeze through and go to the front desk. Nothing. By that time, we were all out of the van, in the rain, looking for possible ways to get out. Ben and Scott considered climbing over the gate, but that idea was vetoed when I pointed out the metal spikes at the top. We all got back in the van and tried calling our contact's cell phone number—the only number we had. For some reason, it was out of service. We tried calling information, and considered other 411 numbers, but nothing helped. Someone said, "Would it be ok if we called the police?" At first we were like, "No way!" but after once again looking at the locked gate in front of us and considering spending the night in the van in downtown Detroit—we called 911. It was pretty lame explaining our situation to the Detroit emergency service, but they assured us that they would send the next available squad car. After a few minutes, the gate opened and we were free! What an interesting evening. On the way back to our host church, Scott and I considered going over the bridge into Canada, because I have never been and I hear they have dog sled parking lots... anyway, it was late and we decided to wait for another time. We finished our evening at Wendy's with frosties and fries. I love Jesus!



Megan Johnson

Date: 10/18/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Hopp

Journal Entry:

Hello again, this is Sarah! We spent this Saturday in Springfield, Ohio. The church that we were scheduled to do a program at was having an Oktoberfest that evening, and we were to be the entertainment for the night. The evening was going wonderful; great food, fun crafts, and children running around playing everywhere. Then came our concert. We felt that things were going fairly well until half way through the program the entire first row of kids just walked out. Needless to say, this was a little disconcerting. The next morning, however, the pastor came up to us very pleased with the program and just talking about how it was a great success. This surprised me as I failed to see how most of the children walking out was a success. She continued to explain that those children were not part of the church, but were neighborhood kids whom had never even been inside of the church before. Those kids had seen the other kids playing outside and joined them, and then proceeded to follow them inside and sit in the front row of the sanctuary. Now that I look at it with that perspective, I can just see how mysteriously God works to bring his children to him, and that the measurement of our success on Captive Free cannot be accurately gauged by what we see alone.



Sarah Hopp

Date: 10/22/2003

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

Journal Entry:

Hey everyone! This is Ben again. Today is Wednesday, October 22, and we are in Pinckney, MI. Today we were given sort of a day off; our morning chapel was cancelled

and our afternoon booking was as well, so we are going to do a team outing, yay! I think we are considering going black light miniature golfing. So that will be fun. Yesterday, we were able to go to a school and lead some after school sing-alongs. We met some really cool people, which is always fun. I can't wait to do our first Weekend Event. Its in 2 ½ weeks in Niagara Falls. I still miss home and can't wait until Christmas.



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 10/24/2003

Submitted by: Josh Poencet

Journal Entry:

Hey there, this is Josh from EL and we are doing great. We were just in Detroit, Michigan and about 7 in the morning, we (the guys) were getting ready to head out to the car with our host. As we were putting our bags in the trunk I came to a realization. Then I looked over at Scott and Ben and said, "do you know what we get to do today?" Scott said "no," thinking that I was going to say something sarcastic, but instead I said "we get to play music today!" Scott was thrown aback and took it as a sign and used that story in chapel that morning and it was great to see him get lifted from something I said and I was kinda of joking, but now I think about it and wow, God must have been there when we needed some help to get through the day. Thanks be to God always!



Josh Poencet

Date: 10/28/2003

Submitted by: Megan Johnson

Journal Entry:

Well, our day off was so nice. Although we didn't have showers, washers, or dryers, we had a great time. We stayed at a youth house in Stow, OH...the six of us, guitars and movies! It was a great time. I spent a lot of quality time with my teammate Sarah- we bonded!

On our way out of town today we stopped at retirement home to do a short acoustic program. We were so blessed by the ladies there! After we finished singing, they came up to us and started such wonderful conversations. They were so encouraging and very spunky. One lady took a fencing stance at Ben with her cane...I almost fell over laughing. Good times.

Afterwards, we had our team huddle at a small coffee shop in town called "Coffee on Main". It was such a laid back and relaxed setting and it was really neat to be open about Jesus and pray in a public place. There was a man working on his laptop there who told us that he was very encouraged to meet us. God rocks!

From Stow, we made our way to Pittsburgh, PA. After getting lost downtown for about an hour, we finally made it to our booking. God is so good. We got to our booking at five instead of four, but didn't have to be anywhere until seven. It's all good.

We played the same acoustic set that we had earlier today at the other nursing home. The people there were so much of a blessing as well! There was a reverend there who seemed so happy to meet us and asked for information to book us later on this year. He prayed with our team along with every one else present. I have to say that it was such a blessing to be prayed over and be so intensely encouraged. If you have read any of my previous entries, you'd know how much I love going to nursing homes. Today was no exception! We got to go to two homes. Yea! God is truly blessing my life and my team...I can only look forward to the plans that He has in store for East Lakes this year.



Megan Johnson

Date: 10/30/2003

Submitted by: Macie LaCrone

Journal Entry:

I know its Thursday, but I just had this neat experience last Saturday night in Ottawa Lake, MI that I wanted to share with you. We did a family night program, and as the program came to a close, I looked up from the sound board. As I looked up, I saw this huge cross hanging on the wall above my team mates. I hadn't seen it there all night because I was too wrapped up in how they sounded or how the program was going; in essence how good or bad the team was that night. Yet, God totally reminded me what we are doing this for; Christ and his message of salvation. Whether we have an awesome performance, a mediocre one, or an awful one . . . it just doesn't matter. What does matter is Christ, He is the star, He is the whole reason we are out on the road, to Him be the glory now and forever!

**Macie LaCrone**

Date: 11/5/2003**Submitted by:** Ben Hunsicker**Journal Entry:**

Well, here I am again and today we have thoroughly enjoyed spending time at a camp in Bemis Point, New York. Our booking for the day had been cancelled, but we were able to find a place to stay. There was this beautiful camp on a lake and they had a building called the Redeemer Lodge where we were able to stay the night and enjoy a wonderful evening on the town. I was able to go to a mall and check out some bookstores and we saw the movie "School of Rock." It was rather funny. Now we are on the way to Northern New York, as it continues to grow cold. We are expecting snow by the end of the week. I am really looking forward to the bookings for the rest of this week.

I can't believe that our first event is less than 2 weeks away! I'm so excited about it, having never been to one. I can't wait so see everyone there and see Niagara Falls. We might even get to go to Canada! We have been having so much fun and I can't wait to see everyone at midwinter training.

**Ben Hunsicker**

Date: 11/8/2003**Submitted by:** Scott Egbers**Journal Entry:**

We've been on the road long enough now that I don't even remember if this is the ninth or the tenth week. I've gotten used to doing what I'm doing. No two days are ever alike, but there is a sort of routine. I've gotten used to staying in host homes. I am much more relaxed and being a polite guest has become a habit and is no longer a chore. Doing a program every night is normal and I don't get nervous. We can set-up and tear down our sound equipment almost in our sleep. This is now the normal way of life for me.

But there is still excitement. Just tonight we had a great game of silent football here in Pumpkin Hook (or Farmington). Everyone seemed to have a great time. And the night before I had a great conversation with my host parents. One night we were staying with college students in college apartments and my host was taking a midnight trip up to Niagara Falls to pick something up. I tagged along and got a midnight glimpse of the falls. I just never know when God is going to throw a little spice into this life on the road.

In Christ,
Scott

**Scott Egbers**

Date: 11/19/2003**Submitted by:** Macie LaCrone**Journal Entry:**

Wow, what a hectic week last week was, I just realized that we hadn't done any journal

entries, so then you guys just don't know how we are doing!

Last week we were getting pumped up and doing last minute preparations for our youth quake. The gathering was at Niagara Falls and it went splendidly. There were about 150 youth there and they all seemed to have a blast. I know that I definitely had a wonderful time getting to know youth groups and hanging out with them!

Yesterday we played at a youth home and really had a wonderful time. The pastor told us a couple of the youth had some amazing realizations because of our program. I am just always excited to hear this kind of news—it is such an encouragement to know God is working through us and speaking through us. God is so awesome and he chooses to use us to spread the Gospel; for that I am grateful and very humbled.



Macie LaCrone

Date: 11/20/2003

Submitted by: Megan Johnson

Journal Entry:

Wow, so much has happened in the last week, I can hardly believe it! As Macie said before, we had our first event in Niagra Falls and that was absolutely incredible! I have to admit that, at first, I was very worried that we wouldn't be able to keep the energy going throughout the weekend, but the kids were incredible and made dancing around and praising God together so awesome. I love events!

The youth place we played at the other night which Macie mentioned earlier was quite an experience as well. I wasn't sure how we would be received, but once our program started, I was quickly put to ease. The energy flowing in that gym was incredible! Our contact informed us the next morning that he had stayed up the night before counseling kids that came to him with questions! Sometimes it is so difficult to travel from place to place planting seeds, but not seeing what grows from them. In this instance, we received a few letters from kids about how much they enjoyed the program and testimonies. God is so incredible. He is so faithful in giving us encouragement exactly when we need it. Yea God!

Last night, we played in a restaurant with a very, VERY small set up. This experience was quite unique. The members of a local church do an outreach at this restaurant once a week and had booked us to do it this week. It was very neat because the atmosphere was so laid back. We had two hours to play songs and share testimonies—however we decided best. We didn't all fit in the setup area very well so we took turns performing and talking with customers. I can't say I took anything "big" away from this experience, but it was very nice to once again be in a different atmosphere doing a different thing. I have learned not to put expectations on anything but take everything as it comes and do my best to do the work God has assigned me.

This afternoon over lunch we read a passage from 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 and it talked a little about sowing generously and was very applicable to team life. However, I believe it to be very applicable to anyone! Check it out!



Megan Johnson

Date: 11/22/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Hopp

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! This is Sarah again. For the past few weeks we have been traveling through New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and now we are in Ohio. Needless to say, being from California, I'm freezing. I'm continually reassured by people that "this isn't cold", but that isn't much consolation. However, it was amazing to me that lots of people have tried to be so helpful. For example, last week one of my host dads looked a little worried and took me aside and said, "So Sarah, do you know how to drive in the snow?" Of course I didn't, so he was very helpful in reminding me of the basics of driving in the snow. It is little things like that that make me so thankful and grateful that God has given me so many friends and people all over the country to look over me and help me. All of the people that I am meeting this year have been a blessing and support to the Captive Free ministry and I find that amazing!



Sarah Hopp

Date: 11/25/2003
Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker
Journal Entry:

Well, today started out not so well. I had been feeling ill (probably due to a combination of the cold weather and some allergies), and we had to leave extremely early (8:30am) to be somewhere. We went to a place called Boys Village. It was a place for teenage guys to hang out when they couldn't live at home. They were celebrating Thanksgiving together and we joined them for lunch. There was background music provided by a saxophone player who had joined us for the occasion. He reminded Josh and I a little bit of Tim Curry, but with a saxophone. Then we played a concert for the guys, who seemed to enjoy the worship music almost more than the rock songs. We had a blast and I began to actually feel better.

Now, we are in Smithville, OH, where the guys are staying with a wonderful family who took us to a wonderful restaurant called "The Barn". I can't believe Thanksgiving is almost here. It's going to be so fun to celebrate with the band (although I miss my family extremely). Plus, the fall tour is almost over!! Christmas time is coming soon. I can't wait to see all my friends back home, especially my girlfriend, Georgette (sorry girls, I'm hopelessly in love with her.) But, I also can't wait for LANSING!! 700 kids!! ITS GONNA BE SO AWESOME!! Anyhoo, that's it from me, keep checking up.

Shout Outs:

Other teamers: Mike, Tyson, Liam, Wade, hope you guys are rocking like us!!

Back home: Austin Howe, can't wait to see you, bud. Haley and Sarah, hope college is still fun.

Michelle, keep workin' hard. Wink and Woolbert, miss you guys terribly. The entire Grace Youth, see you in a few!

Far Away: Craiggo, hope you aren't bored with the rest of the world yet, what with living in Nashville and all.



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 11/27/2003
Submitted by: Josh Poencet
Journal Entry:

Hi there!

This is Josh from East lakes, and we are doing just great. We spent this thanksgiving in Crestline, Ohio. It was fun! We even had to sing to get our food! We stayed with a husband and wife who were both pastors and they were great and had a wonderful sense of humor.

When we first arrived in Crestline, kids were running up and down the sidewalk with joy in their eyes, they were so excited to have captive free! Friday night was also fun; we had our first ICE STORM!!! It was a new adventure to drive back to our host family with the van and trailer while the roads were cover with ice! We made it safely and are still having a great time and looking forward to seeing friends and family over our Christmas break!



Josh Poencet

Date: 11/29/2003
Submitted by: Scott Egbers
Journal Entry:

So I woke up on Saturday morning to find a fair amount of snow on the ground and myself putting on my black slacks and good white shirt in an attempt to dress like a nerd. We were going to drive to Wabash, IN to do a scavenger hunt that was part of a lock-in. The interesting thing was that we as Captive Free members were the objects being looked for in the scavenger hunt. We were all dressed in some distinct and amusing way and then let loose to roam around the mall. The kids were supposed to then find us in the crowd (and it was quite a crowd on the Saturday after Thanksgiving) and get our signatures. So I spent an hour in a crowded mall dressed like a nerd, complete with black pants that were hiked up too far, white socks, my shirt buttoned up all the way, my hair slicked back, and of course, that one bit of hair sticking straight up in the back. I stuck out



Scott Egbers

pretty well and received a lot of weird looks. Oh the things Captive Free members will do as service to youth! It was a very humbling experience.

Scott

Date: 12/3/2003

Submitted by: Macie LaCrone

Journal Entry:

I can hardly believe it is already December. These past few months have flown by, and at many times gone so slowly. It's amazing to think I will be rejoining the Youth Encounter community at midwinter training in a matter of days. Then, I will be home again for a two week break!

Last night was really cool!! We played a program at Concordia University River Forest, basically a few blocks away from downtown Chicago. I LOVE CHICAGO. It's a very cool city!

We were greeted by a small group of previous teamers, who all were more than willing to help us unload our trailer . . . they said they missed it! Right now I really can't understand missing unloading and loading heavy sound equipment that is often times awkward to carry, but maybe someday I'll understand. Our contact had been on team last year, and he was a fun guy to be around . . . it really rocked being around alumni and swapping our crazy stories!

It was also very cool to be in a setting with solely my own peers. It's cool to have such similarities with people and be in the same place in life as them; trying to figure out just what my major will be, understanding the craziness and stresses of finals, and so much more! I loved staying in the dorms (something I never thought I would miss), it was the closest feeling of actually being "home" that I've had in awhile. Crazy huh? I guess it was just those many, many months of dorm life last year. Keep rocking out Concordia River Forest, and good luck on finals!



Macie LaCrone

Date: 12/30/2003

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

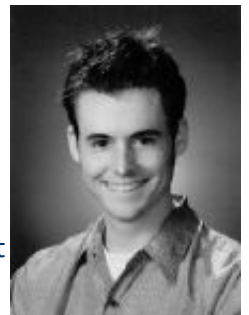
Journal Entry:

Well, we've officially been back on the road for 3 days and, for me at least, it's been a little tough getting back in the swing of things. Over the holiday break I was able to sleep in a bunch. Now I have to get back in the habit of getting up at 8am every day (which isn't that bad I suppose). But I'm excited about New Years...2004, never thought that 2004 would be a reality (I'll be 22 this year...scary.)

I'm also extremely excited about the Lansing Youth Quake this weekend. I hope it goes well. I brought back my wireless system for my electric guitar, which I've been using during Family Night Programs. In fact, last night several of the kids were having trouble getting into the sing-a-longs, so I just wandered out into the audience and played my guitar standing with the kids. Some of them thought that was cool. The rest of the band though it was funnier. I can't believe Event Season is here. If these events go anything like the one at Niagara Falls, this will be a fun 3 months! So anyways, I'll talk to everyone later.

Shout outs:

At home – Hey Austin, Jim, Woolbert, Wink, Steven, Wes – I'll see you guys hopefully in April.
Georgette – I love you. Momma Tania and my Parents – thank you so much for everything you've been doing for me.



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 1/1/2004

Submitted by: Josh Poencet

Journal Entry:

Hi there, this is Josh and we just had an amazing time at St. Luke Lutheran Church!

We had New Years with the congregation—it was a blast! To start off the night we played special music in a church service and then re-set-up for a "concert" which they asked us to do. So as we started to play the concert, we got all the people in the church dancing and singing along with us! They had a bunch of fun and it showed us that we actually can draw energy from a crowd! Well I thought it was an interesting evening of learning and playing music. Happy New Year to all!



Josh Poencet

Date: 1/3/2004

Submitted by: Scott Egbers

Journal Entry:

So here's the thing: God is big. Really big and so is God's love. Hence, God is worthy of very big praise. This weekend about 700 jr. high youth came together at the Holiday Inn in Lansing, MI to fellowship, learn, have fun, and praise God in a way that only 700 youth could. It was a great weekend and I got to meet up with some old friends from Kalamazoo and Farmington and make a lot of new friends that we hope to meet again on the road.



Scott Egbers

People often ask us how we all met and came together to be in this band. We tell them that we were put together by Youth Encounter and actually hadn't met each other before we came together for training. Combine this with the fact that we are a very diverse group of people, all thinking differently and coming from different backgrounds, and it seems like we should have a lot of trouble working together. But we work very well together and that is truly a testament to God's power. If you were to take 6 young people from six different parts of the country, who all think differently, and put them on the road in a van to live and work together for a year you should end up with a really entertaining and vicious reality TV show. It is really by God's Holy Spirit that things go as smoothly as they do. Saturday was a good example of our team working together. Saturday was a long day and we had people putting together set lists, power point slides, people leading treks, the six of us hosting and managing a variety show, a bunch of treks, and several sets where the whole band sang. And through all this everyone stayed cool and calm and worked together like a team. There was obviously a higher power guiding our ways

In Christ,
Scott

Date: 1/6/2004

Submitted by: Macie LaCrone

Journal Entry:

What an amazing weekend! We just spent the past weekend in Lansing, MI with 700 jr. high youth for our second Youth Quake of our tour! It was such an amazing experience, as we struck our first note of the weekend I could feel the excitement of everyone in the room mounting. We were all together for a weekend of fun, fellowship, and a chance to learn more about our faith in Jesus Christ. I loved the chance to be able to hang out with everyone there and share with them my experiences as well as hearing about theirs.



Macie LaCrone

One of the coolest highlights of the weekend was leading the "New Creation" Bible Study Trek (basically a mini 50 minute workshop). We set out six objects including toilet paper, a hanger, a box of Kleenex, and a shoe. We asked the youth in the room to "reconcile" the objects without having told them what reconcile means. At first we got blank faces and stares, but it was neat to see their brains turning and them working in groups of strangers knew to determine what they could do with the objects. As we explored the Bible study more in depth we got some very insightful answers to our questions. I loved seeing the seeds of faith and learning coming out in the youth!

If you are wondering yourself what reconciliation means, I encourage you to check out 2 Corinthians 5:14 – 21!

Date: 1/8/2004

Submitted by: Megan Johnson

Journal Entry:

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap the harvest if we do not give up" –Galatians 6:9

I have found myself having to look back at this verse several times since returning to the road after Christmas break. There is not one thing getting me down, in fact, I thank God each day for the opportunity He has blessed me with this year to do His work. The thing is, there are just days in which I am tired. I look ahead at the weeks schedule and think to myself, "We are doing the same thing we do everyday." Then I realize, well, yes we are. This is the very thing God has called me to do this year. To witness, share and minister to different people everyday. It's hard sometimes to not get caught up in myself and feel like I am performing a chore rather than a privilege. But God has always been faithful. He is always right there to tap me on the shoulder and say, "My child, I have great plans for you!" My God is so good to me and so often I take His goodness for granted. So, when I am tired, flustered, or lonely, God is there to lift me up and get me back on my feet. Prayer is such a powerful thing! TO God be all the glory!



Megan Johnson

Date: 1/17/2004

Submitted by: Josh Poencet

Journal Entry:

Hi there! We just had a quake in Cincinnati, OH and it was awesome! I want to tell you about the Variety show. Every quake there's a variety show for kids who want to show their talent or variety, it's not a talent show! You don't need talent to be in it. Well Ben and Megan were the MC's and they did a great job, and Megan tried so hard to be funny on stage and was having some trouble with it, so she invited me up to her out, and it helped a little. But after the variety show, and this is the best part, one of the kids came up to Megan and said, "Will you come to my family time, I felt sorry for you on stage when no one laughed." This kid was filled with compassion and wanted to help Megan feel better, and I think it helped her out, if anything, it gave her a nice laugh. Well that's a cool thing I encountered with youth, no pun intended, and yeah, bye.
Josh –(EL)



Josh Poencet

Date: 1/20/2004

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

Journal Entry:

Hey everyone. It's 11am (Eastern Time) on a Tuesday and we are headed to Kentucky! We just finished doing the Cincinnati Quake this weekend and it was a blast. Tangled Blue was also a phenomenal band to work with. Also hanging out with all the youth groups (and going to a midnight movie with one) was awesome. Now, as we look on to the next event (Pittsburg), I'm excited about going through Kentucky for the next few days. That's the closest to home that I will be all year, even though it's still probably six or seven hundred miles away. I'm also ready to play for Beth Gearhart at Pittsburg. That will be exciting. Also, Boo Wallace will be playing bass with us. He's a great guy. I still miss home incredibly. I get to go home at the end of March for my brother Beau's wedding. It's still extremely cold up here, but I'm getting used to it. I did however have a great experience with Captain D's. They actually had sweet tea...way up here. It was great. Also on a whim, I purchased a set of hair-cutting shears and had Josh shave my head...but not completely, there's still hair on my head, but it's just too short to style or brush. I hope Georgette (my girlfriend WHOM I LOVE VERY MUCH) won't be mad at me. By the time I get home in March, it should be grown out enough to look somewhat normal. So that's all that's going on right now, I'll talk to you all later.
-Ben



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 1/24/2004
Submitted by: Scott Egbers
Journal Entry:

So here's the thing: You never know when or how you are going to make a connection with the people you meet. As I'm sure you've heard us say before, we rarely see results from the ministry we do. We meet people, have short conversations with them and then we leave. On Friday though, we made a little more connection with a few kids. We showed up that night and there wasn't a program scheduled. We were just going to hang out with some kids for a while. Only two young men showed up, but we had a great time with them. We sang some songs with them, played some hang man with them and had some pizza. The boys seemed very shy through this all . . . and then the boys, Ben, Josh, and I and the two middle school students there started a game of five card draw. We used candy as chips and just had a good time and throughout that game the two boys stopped being shy. They were just themselves and had a good time. The one boys' father even showed up and played for awhile. In the end we ate most of the candy and really had a good time. Hopefully through this all we made a good impression on these two boys.

Scott



Scott Egbers

Date: 1/27/2004
Submitted by: Macie LaCrone
Journal Entry:

As I write this, I'm sitting in the youth room of St. John's Lutheran Church in Pittsburg, PA surrounded by couches, books, and an air hockey table. Outside the snow is tumbling down out of the sky covering the land in a blanket of snow. The road conditions are very bad and so we are going to be staying at this church another night. Nothing really new or exciting going on here, just the fact that it is very cold. This past week was the first time we've been in Kentucky and that was pretty cool. So now we've been in all the states in the East Lakes region. That's about all for now, so I wish you all warm wintery days, snuggled inside by a fire, or under lots of blankets!



Macie LaCrone

Date: 2/4/2004
Submitted by: Macie LaCrone
Journal Entry:

If any of you are big travelers, or have just been traveling through Pittsburgh you know that Pittsburgh roads are awful. Its not a city that was planned, but rather it just happened. Hence, there isn't a grid system for streets, streets just happen. They wind up and down and around hills, they may just stop, or randomly turn into a different street as it juts into an angle only made possible through some intense geometry. Here is the other thing about Pittsburgh: there are some pretty cool people in this town and in the surrounding areas. Last week, we got snowed in and some way cool people let us stay another night at their church! Then we met up with them and got to hang out again at the Pittsburgh quake.

I really loved being at the quake this weekend. It was wonderful to reconnect with some old friends and make new ones. My highlight for the weekend was during Beth Gearhart's (our Feature Musician) campfire time. She offered a chance for the youth at the quake to come up and share their moments of the weekend. It was very cool to hear how they had seen God reveal some cool things in their lives. Their sharings almost brought me to tears. (Don't fret . . . tears of joy!!) God is working through me, my team, and the staff at the quake. It meant so much to actually hear that God is working through us, to remember again why I decided to follow God's call to be on a Captive Free team.



Macie LaCrone

Date: 2/5/2004

Submitted by: Megan Johnson

Journal Entry:

The other night we had the privilege of working at a local soup kitchen. It is a regular community outreach that takes place in a building that used to be a church. When we arrived we found out that we were in charge of doing an entire service except the sermon. This would be no problem if they wanted our simple service but they wanted something more contemporary and less structured since people came in off the streets. Totally understandable, but a bit of a surprise. The awesome thing was that we were able to lead worship with no expectations or limits. I can say that for me, it was a blessing to be able to freely worship in a way that I felt close to God. We also did a puppet show for the children there which was super fun. When the pastor came up for the sermon time, he asked us if we wouldn't mind doing a little puppet improv. I have to say that it was very funny and really neat to see the pastor and Shaggy (the puppet) interact for that short 10 minute devotion. It was super cool.

Serving after the service was also a cool experience. A couple of the guys worked upstairs in the clothing rooms to help distribute clothes while the rest of us worked downstairs in the kitchen. It was nice to be able to serve others instead of going first in line at the potlucks which is something we are used to doing. We met and conversed with some very nice people. It's awesome to see the community outreach that goes on in various places. God is so cool!



Megan Johnson

Date: 2/10/2004

Submitted by: Sarah Hopp

Journal Entry:

Hello all! This is Sarah. Last night we had a lock-in, so when I woke up this morning to go on a run I was very tired and uninspired. Despite it all, I managed to drag myself out of my sleeping bag and go for a run. Going down the side streets I soon heard the sound of not only a dog barking, but also that of a dog chasing me. I turned to find a collie mix hurling down the street towards me. After trying to defend myself against the rabid dog, I soon realized that the dog was not attacking me and rather just wanted to play with me. I continued to run and the dog came with me. I decided that since we were such good friends that I would call him Berny (short for Bernard). We ran together for a good ten minutes or so and it was very fun. Then, all of the sudden, Berny stopped. He just sat in the middle of the street and would not move. I yelled and prompted him to come along, but he just sat there totally content. As I continued on my run I suddenly felt lonely and as though I was missing something, although I am usually very content with the solitude that my run usually gives me in the morning. And when I was on the second half of my run, returning to the church, I saw some tracks in the snow that I'm sure were Berny's.

This reminded me a lot of how my relationship with God is at times. There are times when I'm convinced that he is personally attacking me, and then I realize that he was all doing it for my benefit, growth, and joy. Then there are the times when I feel his presence strongly near me and completely supported. And finally, then there are the times when I feel that he is not near me at all, but I always am reassured by little "pawprints in the snow". Just like Berny.



Sarah Hopp

Date: 2/10/2004

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

Journal Entry:

Hey ya'll. The terrible thing about being in Captive Free is that we as a band never get to see the fruit that God reaps from the seeds that we plant. But, a gift from God to both parties, tonight, after our concert, a young person from the crowd came up and

revealed that we had truly prepared a place for God to come into our presence through the worship this evening. This girl said that we had helped her realize how close God really is to everyone. She told us about the very hard time she'd been going through and allowed some of us to pray with her. It was an incredible experience for us as well as for her. We are so blessed by God to be able to help change lives out here. It also gave me some closure that I was being used by God and that He would always be using me, even if I never get to see how. I hope and pray that God continues to reveal His closeness to that person.

We are really excited about the next few weeks. The Cleveland Quake is this weekend, followed by the Toledo Quake next weekend, and finally, the Cincinnati Congress after that. Then Event season is done! I'll sure miss it. But I know that God is unchanging in his plan of changing people's lives, and I'm glad that he is using us.

-Ben



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 2/12/2004

Submitted by: Josh Poencet

Journal Entry:

In February, we were at a church in Toledo, Ohio and we had just a normal family night program. What stuck out here was a little girl who didn't really listen to her grandparents. She threw a fit at dinner and I was thinking oh man what I am I doing here? So later on that night we played songs and had fun with the audience and afterwards that same little girl who wasn't listening to her grandparents came to me, (she was about 8 years old) and said thank you for a cool night with fun songs! And I noticed her grandma coming up to grab her, but she stopped and watched her granddaughter and I talk. She was interested in drums and wanted to tell me all about her uncle's drums and as I listened to her I could see excitement in her eyes. Her little eyes seem to say thank you for listening! She seemed to be a trouble maker, but still had God's love glowing through her. That was a cool God moment that I experienced this month and I wanted to share it. To all those reading, take care and may God Bless!!!!!!!!!!

-josh (EL)



Josh Poencet

Date: 2/14/2004

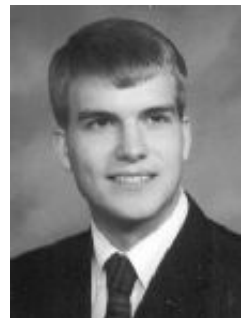
Submitted by: Scott Egbers

Journal Entry:

So here's the thing: Don't cry over spilled milk. There are some things that you just can't do anything about.

The Saturday of an event is always a very busy day. Today I woke up at 7:30 to have breakfast with the youth from St. Timothy's church. Then it was off to the morning celebration which included music from Shawn Smith, speaking by Bob Lenz and some music by Captive Free. Then I led a trek that was the Bible study on the theme verse. Then I had some great peanut butter and jelly and fellowship with the folks from Bowling Green. Then I helped lead a trek with Megan who is quite sick and I led a trek for Macie is sick as well. I helped Sarah host a very interesting variety show. Then it was time for dinner with some youth from St. Paul's Mansfield.

Now I am a person who likes to have a plan and who hates being late. I live by the motto, "If you're not early, you're late." But sometimes things are beyond my control. I was with the youth group from Mansfield and we were looking for a place to eat. We had plenty of time but, there was one problem. There were all of these male people taking all of these female people out to dinner in an attempt to create a better relationship for them. It is some kind of yearly ritual called Valentines Day that sells a lot of cards and has very little effect on me. Except that it slows down the restaurant business on February 14th, especially if it lands on a Saturday. So I didn't make it back to the hotel until 7:15 and I missed the entire first set that we played. My team was a little worried (in fact, they thought I had been in some sort of car accident and died. They couldn't even fathom



Scott Egbers

my being late). Jo, the event director was a little disappointed, but there wasn't much that could be done. The milk was spilled.

Date: 2/17/2004

Submitted by: Macie LaCrone

Journal Entry:

Sick, Sick, Sick! It stinks to be sick on the road. I was so excited in the week before the Cleveland Youth Quake, and then Friday night it hit me . . . some kind of food poisoning or stomach flu. I barely made it through sound check, and as badly as I wanted to be sleeping and lying in bed, I had to be there for sound check, I'm the sound tech (ha, ha, ha . . . I made a rhyme). I didn't make it through but 30 minutes of Friday night's activities, and then I absolutely had to go to bed.

All I wanted was my own bed, in my own home, and I especially wanted my mommy! I have come to the conclusion that no matter how old a person gets, there is something comforting and wonderful about having your mother or that special mother figure in your life, right there by your bed, in the same vicinity. I knew everything to do for myself to help calm my stomach down (my mother trained me well), but I still just wanted to at least talk to my mom on the phone if she couldn't be there. Alas for my poor, weary, sick self . . . my mother wasn't home! (okay, so I can be a little dramatic sometimes!!) Instead, she was being the best mother she could be for my brother and sister at home by her presence at a basketball game. So I curled myself in to a little ball in my bed and tried to sleep, waking up every hour because of how sick I was.

Never fear, I survived my sickness that never even had me close to the brink of death, I talked to my wonderful mother the next day, and by Sunday morning I was smiling and dancing! While others at the quake looked exhausted and tired on Sunday from a long weekend, I was thrilled and excited to feel so much better!

Here's the coolest part of the story, God totally showed me His amazing love and means of provision through those at the youth quake, especially my team mates. Each and every one of them picked up at some task that I was too sick to handle. Ben took care of any sound things I couldn't do. Scott did a trek for me. Sarah got me some ginger ale and was always there to offer help, comfort, and support. Josh went and got my blanket and some crackers for me. Megan, well she was sick with me, but she had a REALLY bad cold, and even she helped me out with some power point and made me some tea! Those attending the event asked how I was feeling, offered to get some things for me . . . and St. Stephen's Youth Group from Stowe, OH got me some chicken noodle soup that aided in a major way in my recovery. God rocks!



Macie LaCrone

Date: 2/19/2004

Submitted by: Megan Johnson

Journal Entry:

We are in defiance...that is Defiance, OH. Yep, we did a program here last night and this morning we did a chapel for almost 200 kids grades K-8. I have to say that our stay here has been super fun! The program last night rocked! There was so much energy from both the congregation and from us. It really was an awesome time. The family I stayed with was incredible and so nice. My host mom was a "teamer" a few years ago, so it was really fun to swap stories with her. This morning when we did our chapel, the kids were so awake and energetic! They participated with every sing-along and the interactive Bible study was hilarious! Afterwards as we were loading our trailer out back and the kids swarmed us! That's right, it was recess time! They just kept yelling at us to come and sign their note paper. I really enjoyed seeing how our boys reacted to this. I think they handled themselves very well. The rest of the day was wonderful. We got to relax and enjoy the weather. Even though it was mid-February, it was about 50 degrees outside and sunny! Gorgeous! Our team played a bit of Frisbee in the parking lot and finished the afternoon with some delicious fajitas!



Megan Johnson

Date: 2/24/2004

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker
Journal Entry:

So here I am, riding in the back of the van, as we spend the day driving across Ohio to our next booking, a church in St. Clairsville. Our day off was spent in Toledo, OH where we recovered from our recent Quake. Now, as we prepare for the Cincinnati Congress, I find myself a little bittersweet about event season coming to an end. While it was incredibly fun and exciting, I'm almost glad that we can now relax a bit.

Ash Wednesday is tomorrow and we have that day off to celebrate as we choose. I think I'm going to find a Methodist Service to attend. It's been awhile since I've been to one of my own services, so it'll be good to reconnect there. I'm also very excited to go see The Passion of Christ. I don't know what to expect, but as a movie critic, I'm trying to keep an open mind. I kind of have mixed feelings about it. I don't know what I'm going to come out of it thinking. Also, the start of the Lent season is also finding me a little anxious. This is only my 2nd time to partake in Lent. I'm not sure of how God will speak to me, but I know He will. This season is definitely filled with changes. It's hard sometimes to know where God wants you or how things are going to come together in the end. As I look toward Easter, this coming summer, and finally the return to my old life, I am just as anxious to see what God has planned for me. It's a scary place to be in, kind of like being on the road, not knowing where you'll be the next day, who you'll be with, or the impact you will have. I just hope I have enough faith to get me there.



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 3/2/2004
Submitted by: Macie LaCrone
Journal Entry:

So here we are, in Toledo, Ohio rehearsing on this lovely Tuesday evening. For the past week or so we've had lovely weather, sun-shiny days, and comfortable temperatures. It's been such a blessing and just what we needed to give our spirits a lift. It's wonderful to be able walk outside without a heavy coat on and to hang out in the great outdoors. We spent the last weekend of February in Cincinnati, Oh at the Holiday Inn Eastgate at a Youth Congress. It rocked! The atmosphere was definitely different than Youth Quakes but still very fun. Probably one of my favorite parts of the event was getting to work with the Pool Boys. Their music has definitely been a blessing to me in the past and was once again this weekend! I got to reconnect with Lance and his youth group from Sydney, Ohio. We went out and got some stuffed crust pizza at Pizza Hut, one of my favorite kinds of pizza and I haven't had it in forever . . . add that up with some awesome conversation and it equaled a good time! This event did bring about a tinge of sadness because it is the end of event season for us. It was always great looking forward to the weekends where we got to hang out with all kinds of cool people and to see Youth Encounter staff that we hadn't seen in awhile. It will be nearly six months before we get to see our Event Director Jo, and it was always an awesome time being around her and getting to know her. Despite being sad that event season is over, we still have some wonderful places to journey and visit ahead of us. God has amazing things still planned for us, and it is always exciting to think about the adventures and lessons ahead.

There are also about 5 ½ months left before my commitment to team is over. Although it does seem like a long period of time, it isn't; it is already March and I can't believe it. From what I've heard, this last portion of the tour will go by quickly. I really have to start making plans and thinking about what next year will bring but God, in His typical dealings with me, isn't letting anything become all that clear to me. After this weekend I have an insight and assurance that He does indeed have a plan and it is unlike anything I am expecting. Beyond that, I have no idea what He's leading me to . . . so guys, this means for me its time to really commit my plans for next year to prayer.

Have an awesome day and I'll talk to you later. Until then, may God's peace fill your heart!
-Macie



Macie LaCrone

Date: 3/4/2004
Submitted by: Megan Johnson
Journal Entry:

Well, event season is over but I have to say that while it lasted I had some of the best times ever! Our last event, the Congress in Cincinnati, was awesome! We had the privilege of sharing the stage with the Pool Boys and HappyFunTime. The weekend was a blast! It was such a blessing to participate in worship on Saturday night rather than lead it. I know that for me it was refreshing and uplifting.

After the weekend we went to Josh's house which was such a good time. We did a contemporary Lenten service at his church and then stayed the next two nights at his house. It was so relaxing and such a blessing to stay with a Captive Free family and feel a little more "at home".

Although life on the road is an awesome adventure, it does get tiring at times. Several times in the last couple of weeks, God has given me the opportunity to sort of unwind, and I thank Him so much for that opportunity. He has blessed me with incredible friends and families who have been so generous and hospitable. It's amazing how you can see His love—how it is so evident through other people. My friends, you have truly been a blessing to me and I thank God for you each and every day!



Megan Johnson

Date: 3/6/2004

Submitted by: Sarah Hopp

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! This is Sarah again! A day or so ago our team had a little bit of free time, in which we decided to go to the mall and hang out for a little while. I was wondering around when a woman approached me and asked me if I would like to take a survey. After assuring me that it would only take five minutes, and that I would be compensated five dollars for my time, I decided to participate in the survey.

The company she worked for had booths with computers in them set up for the survey. On the screen would appear a question regarding my experience with the internet and multiple answers. Before I even knew what was happening the woman was speeding through the answers – although I didn't answer a single question! Instead I sat there talking to her and she was telling me her life story. She had come over from Bulgaria with her two daughters a few years ago, and was currently in the process of becoming a United States citizen. She talked as though no one had listened to her in years. After about fifteen minutes the "five minute survey" had come to a close. I received my five dollars and the woman smiled and told me, "Thank you." She really looked happy and as I left it occurred to me that, more than our nightly programs; it is in instances such as these where we are spreading Christ. It is through love, understanding, and caring that we show God to others.



Sarah Hopp

Date: 3/9/2004

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

Journal Entry:

Well, we've been in Detroit, Michigan for awhile and we're not leaving for a few days, and it has been pretty decent weather outside. So right off the bat, I am doing great. I am also excited about selling my current Marshall amp and investing in a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe tube amp! After playing with the Pool Boys in Cincinnati and spending several hours with Rob Hockney in a Hotel Business lounge talking guitars and music, he persuaded me to "go tube" and he steered me toward the Fender Hot Rod series. I have to say that I am excited after playing several of them at Joe's music in Eastport, the anxiousness is building. But I must first invest in the ATA flight case (which is a sturdy box that will protect my amp), because (believe me) you don't want to have an expensive tube amp just getting thrown around in a trailer on a nonstop tour.

We are having a blast, currently doing our Lenten service which includes several modern worship songs (modern is a relative term, I'm finding). But, as I count the days until Easter break, I am missing my friends in Shreveport and I can't wait to see all of you back home!!



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 3/17/2004
Submitted by: Macie LaCrone
Journal Entry:

Okay, so here's the cool thing . . . today we are in Bowling Green, OH and one of the guys here has the name of Patrick! All of this irony on St. Patrick's day! I've been so extremely blessed these past few days to have individuals open up to me and tell me some of the struggles they are going through or have gone through in the past. Last night, I spent the evening hanging out with the guys playing some phase 10 at Josh and Scott's host home. It was a really fun time and while we were there I got a very cool glimpse into the life of their host father.

Their host father was such an amazing man and told us about part of the journey of his life. He told us about the struggles of fighting for the life of his beloved wife and how he had seen the power of prayer in that time of his life. He told us of one of the deepest prayers he'd ever prayed in his entire life. This man had grown to be an amazing servant and an awesome husband. I saw his devotion and deep love for his wife. I can never express in words what his story meant to me, but it impacted me in a deep way. I saw an amazing and loving God who works with people where they are at and who brings us from the depths to the heights and who is always working on refining us. God is awesome and it is wonderful to be ministered to when it seems we are always ministering to others. It is true; the Lord doth fill my cup! Amen.



Macie LaCrone

Date: 3/18/2004
Submitted by: Megan Johnson
Journal Entry:

Today has been a wonderful day...and it's only 10:30am! This morning I got up bright and early with my teammate Sarah and went for a 30-40 min. walk/run. Of course, she does this everyday and had no problem...but I don't and so I must say that I feel wonderfully refreshed and ready to tackle an entire day in the van as we head from Bowling Green, OH to Jeffersontown, KY. Maybe we will get a small break from the snow...maybe not!

One of the members of this church here in the wonderful town of Bowling Green offered for us to come over this morning for breakfast which was wonderful since we slept in the church. She was so wonderfully generous and the food was delicious! We had so many different choices (I had a bit of everything)! Then she offered a tanning bed in her basement she had acquired through a friend who owned a salon. Having gone tanning each spring break back home for the last couple of years I said, "Sure!" I didn't ask how strong the bed was and so I went for the normal starting time of 10 minutes thinking I'll be fine! She even had this bottle of tanning accelerator, so naturally I was like, "Ooooo!" So yes, I got lay in the wonderful tanning bed for 10 minutes thinking I would get a little bit of color back after a long winter with no sun...

Well, I have color...not exactly the color I was hoping for, but she sent me on my way with a nice little bottle of aloe, so I'll be just fine. I learned a few things today: 1. When you're out of shape, don't tackle too much distance at once- pace yourself. 2. Always check the intensity of the tanning bed. 3. Don't use accelerator after not having been in the sun for a loooooong time. 4. When you're super-white, don't expect too much.

These are all valuable things to take into consideration in the future and I can only pray that those of you reading will learn from my mistakes.



Megan Johnson

Date: 3/23/2004
Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker
Journal Entry:

Well, we're currently in Detroit, MI spending the week with a group of homeless people, we woke up at 5am this morning to cook breakfast for them, and then we spent from 4-8pm preparing and serving dinner. It has been a wonderful experience. We are also all staying in a huge house a few doors down from the church. Everyone has been really nice. We like it.

Date: 3/27/2004
Submitted by: Scott Egbers
Journal Entry:

So here's the thing... if we want to change the world, then we need to go out and do the work and be the change in the world.

We had the privilege of spending some quality time with some notable youth today at the annual Iroquois Avenue Christ Lutheran Church lock-in. The lock-in was centered on service so we spent the afternoon at various service projects around Detroit. I went with some youth to the Habitat for Humanity Restore, which is a store that sells hardware that has been donated to Habitat, at low prices. We spent some time sorting shutters and rearranging cabinets.

Later on that night I was talking with some of the youth. We got to talking about social justice, Detroit, and the opportunities that there are to help people. I began to realize that if I really wanted to help people that it would not be enough for me to volunteer every once-in-a-while and give money. If I want homeless people to have a place to stay and food to eat then I need to actually invite them in, cook them food and feed them. If I want them to have a place to stay then I need to go build them a house or help them find one.

All of the places that we went to this past week to volunteer needed more consistent volunteers. They had lots of people that come in every-once-in-a-while and a lot of places have full time volunteer coordinators, but what they really needed were people that could come in every week, learn their job and then be responsible for it. The Restore really needed someone that could come in every Saturday and sort the new shutters and rearrange the new cabinets without them having to show us how.

My eyes have been opened to a whole new meaning of service and giving my life to Christ. God has given me so much and is calling me to do his work on earth and to be the change.



Scott Egbers



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 3/30/2004
Submitted by: Megan Johnson
Journal Entry:

So, we were in Detroit for a week and it was one of the most incredible weeks ever! I love the inner city and I used to reach out to homeless back home in Washington DC and so this past week was super cool! I want to share with everyone a story of the adventure that Sarah and I had in the city of Detroit.

Sarah and I are pretty determined to exercise whenever we can and being in Detroit, we couldn't take our morning runs alone. We found some bikes in the basement of the church and got permission to use them. They must have gone without being used for like 10 years...or something. Anyway, we fixed the seats, brakes and tires and went for a ride. We went over the bridge to Belle Isle and it was beautiful. It was sunny and warm and we were surrounded by water. As we came back over the bridge, we looked out over the river and noticed the bridge to Canada about 7 miles downriver. Of course we thought it would be awesome to take a biking trip to Canada!

Thursday we didn't have to be anywhere or do anything until 2pm, so Sarah and I got up early, got our sack lunches and set out for Canada! We didn't have any directions, but figured if we just followed the river, we would eventually find the bridge...perfect logic I thought. We went towards the downtown of Detroit and about an hour later came to the end of Jefferson St... this was a problem... A car pulled up and rolled down the windows and inside was two valet boys from the Marriot hotel just up the street. They said, "You're not from around here are you?" We simply told them that we were from Maryland and California and we were trying to bike to Canada. They told us we couldn't bike across the bridge, but might be able to take the shuttle through Windsor Tunnel. So we turned around and rode back to the shuttle stop just outside the tunnel. We waited about 10



Megan Johnson

minutes for the shuttle to come and the driver said he could take us, but not our bikes. He told us if we went to the Marriot, we might be able to get a cab to take us across. So we headed back up the street to the Marriot. We only had about 20 bucks between the two of us, but we were determined to Canada, we decided once we got over there, then we would figure out how to get back.

Sarah went inside to talk to the concierge woman. As she was talking, the parking man over heard our situation. He said, "I'll valet park both bikes for 5 dollars." This was our chance! So, we valet parked our bikes, ran across the street and took the shuttle to Canada! Once we got there, the customs guy asked us the usual questions like, "I need to see ID, Why are you coming to Canada, how long will you be here?" I'm sure we sounded pretty silly saying we'll be here for about an hour. He was pretty much laughing at us by the time we left.

We took our sack lunches down by the river and ate in the park. The view of the Detroit skyline was beautiful. We hung out there a short while and then got a cup of coffee and ran with 1 minute to spare and caught the shuttle back to the USA. Sarah and I were laughing about our little adventure and just as I said, "Great times!" we passed the sign that said, "Welcome to Detroit Michigan- Great Lakes Great Times". It was a perfect end to a perfect adventure. Once we got off of the shuttle and were yelled at by a security guard because we were walking the wrong way, we got our bikes from the hotel and rode back to the church. It was one of the many adventures this year that I will always remember, look back on, and smile as I thank God for good times.

Date: 4/13/2004

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

Journal Entry:

Okay, so now we're back in Toledo, staying at our home away from home, Augsburg Lutheran Church (I believe this is our 3rd stop here) and we have a lock-in tomorrow. It's good to be back on the road. Easter break was awesome. I spent it at home in Louisiana. Josh came along with me to see what my home state is all about. He got to see an alligator! We went to New Orleans and drove by some real swamps and all kinds of stuff! And on Saturday, we drove over to Dallas to see Jars of Clay, Chris Tomlin, AND the David Crowder Band. I got to meet David Crowder again because we saw him walking through Six Flags (Oh, did I mention that's where we went to see all these bands play), and he actually remembered me from when we met last summer. I also caught a guitar pick from Steve Mason (my favorite guitarist) during the Jars of Clay set. So it was a pretty good trip (thanks to Momma Tania's love by purchasing the tickets for us).

But now as we get back to our last leg of the spring tour, I am trying to be still and let God work, I know that its hard to trust that He is working, but every time I try to call His bluff, He continually finds some way to clue me in on how little trust I have in Him. Can you love someone AND trust them? That's a question that someone sent me in a letter, and I'm finding I need to ask that to myself. Because if I love God the way I say I do, then I must trust Him with all my heart to know that He will take care of everything. I encourage everyone to ask themselves, "If I love God, do I trust Him the way I should be?"

Shout-outs: Austin!!!! You are a true friend to me. I can't wait to see you again.



Ben Hunsicker

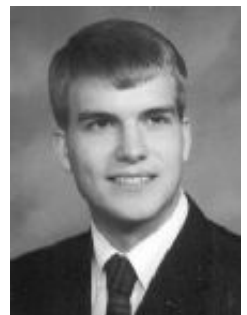
Date: 4/17/2004

Submitted by: Scott Egbers

Journal Entry:

So here's the thing... sometimes the greatest relational time happens in the kitchen.

This Saturday we woke up in Upper Sandusky, OH. It was a beautiful day. We did our team things and then set off for Thornville, OH. Thornville was having the same beautiful day when we arrived there. We had a fairly good program there even though the crowd wasn't huge and afterward we were supposed to have a lock-in. It turns out though that the only youth there were John and Amanda. The pastor decided that we would all just go home and not have a lock-in, but while this was all being discussed, we just hung out in the kitchen. They had some wonderful strawberry angel food cake. I think John



Scott Egbers

had about half a pan of it and Amanda had the other half. Fortunately there was another pan so I had some too.

I think most of the really good conversations I have had with people this year on the road have happened in kitchens; usually church kitchens but sometimes in host-home kitchens. The kitchen just seems to be the most at home and open place to be. I hope that I have many more great relational moments in kitchens this year.

Date: 4/27/2004

Submitted by: Megan Johnson

Journal Entry:

Once again, God has hit me right between the eyes...

The "winter blahs" are beginning to subside for our team now that spring has finally hit the Midwest and the sun has come out of hiding for the winter. Bookings have been really awesome since we got back from spring break. It's usually the same set up and gig, but it's been really nice to have consistency and continue to meet new and wonderful people.

I have to admit that today was one of my "blah days". I woke up extra early to go on a short run and then got to the church early to set up for our team devotion. Because of this and the amount of exercise I had gotten the day before I was pretty tired by the time we reached mid-afternoon. Our booking for tonight was at Luther Home of Mercy in Elmore, OH which is a home for handicapped adults. I felt bad knowing I wasn't very excited about going, and as hard as it is to admit, I was less than excited about going. Man, oh man, God does do some cool stuff! After we had finished setting up and eating dinner, we had some down time before the residents started coming in. Once they started to make their way in, my whole attitude immediately changed. The people we encountered there and were introduced to were so awesome. After starting the program, from then on out, the entire evening was so much fun and full (I mean FULL) of energy! The residents there were more enthusiastic and energized then almost anywhere else we've been! It was the most fun I've had at a booking in quite some time. God, once again, has taught me to remain faithful and He will give me the energy I need to get through any and every situation. Yea God!



Megan Johnson

Date: 4/29/2004

Submitted by: Macie LaCrone

Journal Entry:

They says Chicago is the windy city, but its not the only windy city—so is Wausean, Oh. Not only was it extremely windy in Wausean yesterday, but it was also the day for our first outdoor program of the spring. We were so worried that all of our equipment would blow over. It was crazy! As we were setting up we once again discovered that Duct tape is one of our team's best friends (Let me give a shout out to Otis the duct tape ball and Anastasia in Crestline, OH for taking care of him!!).

As sound tech I learned how cool God is and how he can work through our system when it gets kinks in it. Since it was an outside program we were pumped to get out our subs to really pump some bass out of our system, yet something kept happening and it just didn't sound good sometimes. So frustrating. We changed wires and tried tons of new things just like cool Karl taught us to do at training! Yet nothing worked. So we laid our hands on the sound system and we all prayed. You know what--He fixed it. God's cool.

The program ROCKED!! There were tons of people, high energy, outside, and lots of wind. And you know what, God is in a gentle breeze, and we even had some of those last night too! We even ran into a youth group from Stryker, OH and we are looking forward to visiting them in May. Might I also say that I had a ton of fun dancing back at the sound board with Chirs, a cool kid in the youth group at Wausean!



Macie LaCrone

Date: 5/4/2004

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

Journal Entry:

So we're driving to Alden, New York to do whole lot of nothing. We had a great time in Rochester. My favorite part was visiting the HOG (House of Guitars.) This was an absolutely incredible place where there were probably about 2,000 guitars (I am not exaggerating) and there appeared to be no system in arranging them. There were just shelves of guitars leaning on other guitars leaning on other guitars, most of them at least \$1000 in value. It was incredible. We played at the Friendly Home retirement community on Sunday night and it was rather enjoyable.



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 5/11/2004

Submitted by: Macie LaCrone

Journal Entry:

I don't have a ton of insightful things to share with you today. I just want to leave you with words of encouragement, a few of many things I've learned over the past year. We serve a God who is faithful. He is always there to encourage you, uplift you, strengthen you, love you, and so much more. Life throws its curveballs, good things happen, bad things happen. Yet, through it all God and his amazing love for us is always there. Wow, we serve an amazing loving God. Amen!!



Macie LaCrone

Date: 7/12/2004

Submitted by: Sarah Hopp

Journal Entry:

God is trying to tell me something, although as of yet I'm not sure what.

Here's the deal, for the past couple of weeks I have been staying at host homes that have three boys, all of which have been under the age of eight.

This has been an energetic experience. All of the kids have been very enthusiastic and FULL of energy - at the house. There is this magical and mysterious transformation that occurs once they come to the church; the boys became very quiet and sedate. It's brought the question to my mind then; what happened to all of the joy? What was going on in their minds that they all of the sudden became introverted at the church? Concurrently, this made me wonder how many people are like this in the church in general? The official mission statement for Youth Encounter states that the organization is attempting to "strengthen the church through the Christian faith and ministry of its youth", which I believe is an amazing goal and a wonderful thing to strive for. However, it often seems that the words "strengthening" and "ministry" put together in the mission field equal lots of energy put out and, more often than not, a response of half-energy. Perhaps God is showing me through these boys that the church needs excitement built into it as is in other parts of life? And perhaps these boys aren't really so different than myself, and if there is going to be



Sarah Hopp

earnest joy filling the church and its members it should begin with me.

Date: 7/14/2004

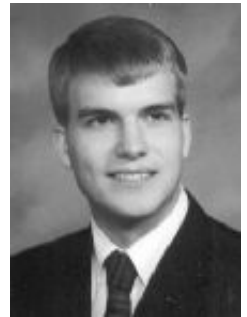
Submitted by: Scott Egbers

Journal Entry:

So here's the thing... children are not as simple as they seem to be.

We've been here in Royal Oak, MI all week, leading music for vacation Bible school. Most of the children that we have sung with have been very enthusiastic and excited. They sing all the songs and do all the actions and just have an amazing amount of energy. This is what I have come to expect from children. But there are always a few who are shy or just don't want to participate. It seems normal for a few children to be like that.

But the other day, after we had just finished a session with the 1st and 2nd graders, a boy who had not been singing and who looked like he was not enjoying the music, came up and tried to give me a dollar of his offering. I told him to give it to the offering, but he insisted on giving it to me. I think that he ended up giving it to someone else, but it shocked me to see this boy who appeared to dislike what we were doing showing his appreciation in that way. I realized that children are not easy to read and sometimes they enjoy things even if they don't participate. Their emotions and opinions are not always as obvious as I sometimes assume they are. Children can be just as complicated as adults.



Scott Egbers

Date: 7/16/2004

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

Journal Entry:

July 16, 2004

Hey Everybody! This is one of our last journal entries, and I'm really excited about our last few VBS's. We've been having a ball in Royal Oak (Detroit), Michigan, and I have to say as far as our concerts have gone, I don't think I have ever seen a more involved and enthused crowd. Plus, yesterday evening, We drove to Epiphany Lutheran Church on 7 mile and played an outdoor concert which was awesome. Josh also bought me a new guitar strap that has a picture of the Last Supper. I am also really excited about college in just a few weeks. I will see everyone later.



Ben Hunsicker

Date: 7/23/2004

Submitted by: Megan Johnson

Journal Entry:

July 23, 2004

Megan Johnson



Megan Johnson

Well, with team soon coming to an end, I have been experiencing mixed feelings. I am super excited to go back home to friends and family in Maryland, but very sad to be leaving my teammates, my good friends I have met through Youth Encounter, and the excitement of traveling almost every day. I am sure that God has some amazing plans for my life and how He will use me back home, but I have really had a lot on my mind during these last few weeks trying to prepare myself for so many things...

This morning I got up very early to go running and the weather was absolutely PERFECT! It was somewhere between 60 and 65 degrees and the air was dry and crisp. The house I am staying at this week is back in the country surrounded by lots of farms and rolling hills. So, with the sun rising to my right and beautiful green fields surrounding me on all sides for as far as I could see, I used this time to pray-to talk with The Creator. There were no people, no noises (except for the occasional passing cars) and no distractions. Of all the places we have been this year, this had to be one of the most beautiful-at least that I can remember. It was just incredible how God made His presence obvious to me. As I offered up all of my thanks, praise, joys, frustrations, concerns and stresses He blessed me with such an overwhelming sense of peace. Peace about everything...about finishing team, about going home and even the little concerns I had placed in the back of my mind. What a refresher-and what perfect timing! So, even though I am still sad that my year of team ministry is almost complete, I have a new joy because I get to have a new beginning. I get to take all of the awesome experiences, memories, and lessons I have learned and start over with a new ministry back home, in Bowie, Maryland. God, You ROCK!J

Date: 8/2/2004

Submitted by: Josh Poencet

Journal Entry:

The end is near! Well the end of our tour for the year. I have enjoyed the year through the ups and downs as they have happened. As I look back on what I did, I can't help but think "I could of done it better." But I have also learned that I don't want to live my life without regrets. There are things I would have been able to do better, but I only know now from these experiences of what I could have done differently. I thank and praise God for this year and what I have learned. In everything you do, do it for the Lord and He will reward you in heaven. To all those whom may read this, I wish blessing upon you and for your life to be enriched as mine has been. Praise the Lord, for it is a great day to be alive!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Josh poencet



Josh Poencet

Date: 8/6/2004

Submitted by: Ben Hunsicker

Journal Entry:

August 6, 2004

Hey everyone! Well, that's it. Tonight's our last concert in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It's been a great and wonderful year. It's kind of sad

to think that we won't be doing anymore concerts as Captive Free. But, we are on to



Ben Hunsicker

better things. I, myself, will be starting school on August

23rd at ULA in Lafayette, LA. I will be studying music and working on furthering the kingdom though whatever ministry God calls me to from there.

Thanks so much to all those who supported me in this endeavor. Your generosity has not gone unappreciated and I hope to see most of you when I

return to Louisiana. But before I sign off indefinitely, I would like to leave ya'll with a word of scripture. Luke14:26-27. (FIND A BIBLE READ IT NOW)

For any of you who ever have to make a big decision, always remember that the cost of being a disciple will be hard, but hath no greater treasure.

Thanks everyone for allowing me the chance to follow,

Ben Hunsicker
CFEL 03-04
