

Captive Free North Central 2004-05 Journal

Date: 9/23/2004

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Being on Captive Free so far has been such an amazing experience...I don't even really know how to describe it. Being on the North Central team, we've been really busy. We've been on the road for 6 days and we've done a lock-in, sung at a Sunday service, a Family Night Program, chapel for a Lutheran school, and then led an entire midweek worship service. We have been doing so much, and God is really providing. Our host families want to feed us, give us stamps and phone cards, they are great people. Most importantly is the Lord. I know I've learned a lot since being out here on the road...making so many life changes, wanting to be a stronger woman of God. And it's easy to do here, while in the presence of so many Christians, it makes me strive to become the best I can be. A part of the Bible that has been with me lately goes something like "God will be with you till the end of age." I don't exactly remember where in the Bible it comes from, but that has been huge for me. Even when I feel alone, or confused, I know that the Lord is with me, wherever I go, whatever I do. Being the sound tech for CFNC has been somewhat difficult. At training was the first sound experience I've ever had. It's been a stressful path to walk down, but I know that I am meant to be here, and to serve my Lord in whatever way possible.



Whitney Sharpe

God's blessings to everyone!

~Whitney

Date: 9/28/2004

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

We have been on the road for one week and it has been amazing. I am not sure what I expected this to be like, but it is awesome. Our host families have been so incredible. I knew that people would always talk about how generous people were, but I had no idea!!! God has truly blessed us with amazing people to be around. I have already had so many funny conversations and laughs with my host families. It's awesome.

I also love to meet all these new young people. Each one of them bring such a great, new outlook on things. I enjoy sitting and listening to them talk about what is going on in their lives. I especially like playing all the games at lock ins. =)

God has already blessed us so much in our first week, I am so excited for what is to come!!

Valerie =)



Valerie Reiman

Date: 9/30/2004

Submitted by: Travis Thomas

Journal Entry:

Hi out there in internet land... my name is Travis Thomas and I play drums in captive free north central... yea so what can I say we've been on the road a week and half... and having sooo much fun... its just hard to believe that I get to live in a van for a year... with 5 girls..uhhhh... jk anyways I'd like to shout out too Word Of Peace you guys rock my socks off... that's why we weren't wearing any...anyways much love to everyone ... I love you, peace and see you in the stars.



Travis Thomas

Date: 10/8/2004
Submitted by: Jessica Makowske
Journal Entry:

Hey everyone!!!

I can't believe it is already is October! Life is awesome! It is so different being on the road all the time. I miss my family, but I can't imagine leaving my team, even at the end of the year. God has really been showing me what it means to be in a team. It is also so amazing to hear the stories of the families that I am able to stay with. One family even offered for me to come on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic next October, I really want to go.



Jessica Makowske

Being on team has really opened my eyes to how much I need God. It is so important that I am constantly in the Word and constantly talking to God. I thank God so much for everything He has given me.

Date: 10/8/2004
Submitted by: Nick Mullen
Journal Entry:

God is so amazing. We have been on the road for 3 weeks now and God has not stopped blessing us. We have had so many amazing host homes. They have opened their hearts and houses to strangers. It has been so humbling to have every need provided for by these children of God.

On a personal note things are going well. God is constatly teaching me to give Him all my concerns and worries. I have also learned that I need to give Him my desires as well. I trust that He will provide for me. Just like the verse/song says "You will hear a voice behind you saying this is the way"

God Bless

Nick



Nick Mullen

Date: 10/8/2004
Submitted by: Courtney Young
Journal Entry:

It's amazing the kind of emotional pendulum I feel that I'm on as I'm travelling with Captive Free. The very first day of training, my parents dropped me off and for the first time, I was really doing something completely on my own. I tried talking them into staying, quietly pleading with them not to leave me in a place where I knew no one. I saw the look on my dad's face that read, "I'm so proud of you" and heard the warmth of my mom's voice saying, "Court, by tomorrow morning you're going to have a brand new best friend." Their encouragement and love for me all throughout my life has brought me here right now, and I trust that although I miss them so much more than I expected, I am in the place where I need to be. I have been able to see love through other's smiles and encouragement as we visit new places almost every day. Just a couple days ago we got to visit a nursing home and although it seemed like it was just the next thing on the list to do, it was so much more than that. When we started singing hymns, the faces that I saw were no longer that of strangers, but of people who wanted desperately to hear the music and be reminded of God's promises to us. I could relate so much to them. I saw that there was no age gap, that we are all God's children and we ALL need Him desperately. I couldn't help but cry with them as we listened to words of the songs. My favorite was this: *When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride. Oh the wonderful cross bids me come and die and find that I may truly live.* And so my pendulum swings back from sadness, from missing my comfortability of friends and family back home, to that of comfort and joy that I know only comes from my Creator.



Courtney Young

Date: 10/15/2004
Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe
Journal Entry:

Well, it's mid-October now. Time is flying by fast, as well as slow. It's weird. We've been away from home for 2 months now. We just finished a program last night at a college in Willmar, MN, and it was pretty cool. There weren't too many people in attendance, but the people that were there made it really worthwhile. It's nice to see stuff like that, people truly worshipping for God.

Last night I remembered to do a devotion (not really good at doing them daily on my own), and I read from 1st John. It is really nice to stay in the Word. I feel more connected with God that way...I guess that's how it works, hehe.

God's peace!



Whitney Sharpe

Date: 10/15/2004
Submitted by: Angela Penner
Journal Entry:

Hey guys,

Team Life is different than I expected. It is good, but is not comparable to other group touring experiences. We live in a van together so we get to know each other quite well. That is a good thing except for when it is bad :).

We are busy doing different programs quite often. Last night we did our Family night program at a college which is a great opportunity. Worshiping with other people my age is a lot of fun! It is exciting to see non Christian colleges having Christian centers where we can come sing. We also have another family night program tonight. We are in Willmar, MN right now and in Hutchinson tonight and that is somewhat close to my home so it is nice to be down in my neck of the woods. Family didn't come but it is approximately 2 hours from home. So life is good on the road. Meeting lots of neat people! Not only are we ministering to others, but I am being ministered to as well. God is Good!



Angela Penner

Date: 10/15/2004
Submitted by: Valerie Reiman
Journal Entry:

Wow, I can't believe that we have been on the road for almost a month now. Things are going well, but we sure are busy. We have been meeting tons of really cool people. I just can't believe how much God has blessed our team.

A couple days ago, I met this girl who told me, "You can't truly live today while thinking about tomorrow." Wow, that totally hit me because I spend a lot of time worrying about what tomorrow is going to bring or planning how to make tomorrow run smoothly that I don't enjoy what I am getting to do today. So, I am definately working on that.

Also, praise God for laughter!! It is so nice to start a day laughing with your teammates.

Lots of Love,

Valerie =)



Valerie Reiman

Date: 10/18/2004

Submitted by: Travis Thomas

Journal Entry:

hey everyone out there in intranet world... this week has been so fun and crazy and running in circles with arms flying... yea dont believe me ask one of my teammates... oh and i got to watch the Hutch Tigers play some football oh yea... goodtimes...and we got to do this awesome POWERHOUSE... it was so much fun... dont doubt it... so anyway this last week was awesome i cant wait for this next week... see you in the stars

jesus loves you and so do i

travis thomas



Travis Thomas

Date: 10/27/2004

Submitted by: Nick Mullen

Journal Entry:

Well we have been on the road for over a month now and I'm really starating to get into the swing of life on the road. What has been really awsome is that we always have something special to look forward to each week. Last week it was the awsome lock in on friday night. Infladable = FUN!!!. This week we are celebrating Jess's birthday on friday night!

But the big news is the CD recording coming up in Dec. Its going to be so much fun recoding. We are starting to pick new songs that we want to record. Its tough picking songs because I love so much music and there is so much that I want to do. At the end of the week we should have an idea of what new songs we are going to learn. The hard part then is going to be finding time to rehearse to learn those new songs.

well I need to go set up for a Family Night Program.

Keep Rockin for JC



Nick Mullen

Date: 11/7/2004

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

During the last week we were fortunate enough to stay with a host family for five days and it was so nice because we were able to make their house our home. It actually is our home away from home since we visit them somewhat frequently, but this stay was our longest and really a lot of fun. On Wednesday night we were doing our usual family night program and after one of the songs I was a little mad at myself because I sang the words wrong and got thrown off a little, and instead of moving on I let my mind focus on that mistake. Soon after that when we had a small break in the program, the pastor stood up and said that sometimes they do something special for visitors and wanted to do it that night. He had all of us from the band leave the front (and back)of the church and stand in the aisle, and invited everyone who was there to stand up and put a hand on us and pray for us. Right in the middle of our program, God reminded me through that prayer and those people that I'm not doing what I'm doing to stand out or be perfect or even focus on myself at all. I'm here for Him and to share His goodness with others and forgetting the words to a song are meaningless compared to who He is. I needed that prayer that night to focus on what is truly important when we stand up and play for everyone. It's easy to think that people will focus on the mistakes we make or that we're being judged, but our job is not to judge; rather it is simply to love. And that's what the town of Taylors Falls did for us that night, they accepted us and worshiped with us and loved us. I know I



Courtney Young

needed to see that again, and I did.

Date: 11/9/2004

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Being on Captive Free North Central...man, what can I really say? We're super busy, always going from one place to another. This morning we did chapel at Trinity Lutheran School in Waconia, Minnesota, and then tonight had a Family Night Program there as well. Even though livin' with 6 other people all the time can wear on me, it's all totally worth it. Seeing all these people on fire for God...wow!



Whitney Sharpe

Date: 11/9/2004

Submitted by: Jessica Makowske

Journal Entry:

Hey yah'll!!!

It's been awhile since I've written in here. Life is going by so fast.

It seems like I just started team, but it's already November.

Our first quake is coming up and I'm really excited. I want to be able to see all the kids we have already met.



Jessica Makowske

One of the coolest things I have done so far was in Talyors Falls. LT, my host brother, and I had a huge Whip Cream fight in the kitchen. It got all over all the cupboards and the walls and the floors. The pictures are great, I'll have to post them soon!

If you are reading this please pray for strength for the year ahead. I have already been to the doctor's office twice.

Pees and Grace

JeSsIcA eVeLyN

Date: 11/16/2004

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

Life is good. We had the Quake this weekend. What an awesome time. It went so fast though. We had an amazing time hanging out with Fuller Still. The kids were SO much fun. One of my best memories was during family time, I was talking to these four girls about the Fuller Still song "Pretty Girl" and I was amazed by these girls. Life is tough, especially when the world is telling us how we should look and how we should act. But it was awesome to talk about how God can just fill up all those voids and insecurities.



Valerie Reiman

Another high for the Quake was watching all 300 plus junior high kids all singing and dancing and jumping for God. It was awesome to see all those people believing in God. =)

Other than the Quake, things are good. God has blessed me with so many wonderful host families. There are so many incredible people who are so giving. It is amazing how with all the terrible things going on in this world and all the horrible actions we hear about, but all these people who open up their homes and are so welcoming and giving to us. God is good!!!!

Good luck to everyone. God bless!!!

Valerie =)

Date: 11/21/2004

Submitted by: Nick Mullen

Journal Entry:

Hey everyone. This sure has been a busy week. Five Family Night Programs in a row can really take the energy out of you. Luckily we have met some awesome people at the churches here in South Dakota this week. They have totally energized me when I needed it the most. The best was playing "Conan" in Toronto, SD. Who knew a game of screaming could be so much fun? I'm really looking forward to Thanksgiving and getting a chance to reflect on all the things that God has given me this year. I'll share a few with you right now! I'm thankful for the gifts that God has granted me and the ability to use them for His service. I'm also thankful that God equips me when I lack the abilities. I'm thankful that God has provided for me and CFNC with wonderful host parents and churches who have given us so much. God truly does overflow our cups (Psalm 23). I'm also thankful for all the people supporting me and CFNC this year on the road, from parents to sponsors to YE staff to churches. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.



Nick Mullen

A Thankful Heart,

Nick

Date: 11/21/2004

Submitted by: Travis Thomas

Journal Entry:

Hello out there... Travis in here... everything is going good. We just finished our first QUAKE and it was so much fun and crazy go nuts...yeah. Saturday night at the Quake, I went swimming in my red long underwear -- that's right! I'm having so much fun running around and trying to figure out things. We are in South Dakota now, and it's... windy. We had an awesome night last night; we watched "Elf" with the youth from Our Savior's Lutheran and just had a lot of fun. Yeah, we did! Well, this is me signing off -- peace and see you in the stars...



Travis Thomas

Date: 12/4/2004

Submitted by: Travis Thomas
Journal Entry:

Well well well... it's crazy to think we've made it 1/3 of the year already. It seems like just yesterday we were starting... we have two more Family Night Programs and then we go to Mid-Winter training. I can't wait! These first few months have been awesome, but now it's time to kick back for a couple days, and then we'll meet up again. And then and only then will the rocking out for JESUS continue! Yeah that's right... just let it soak in a sec... all right, see you later.



Travis Thomas

Date: 12/4/2004
Submitted by: Nick Mullen
Journal Entry:

well things are starting to wrap up for our first 1/4 of the year. It has been such an awesome time so far. So many people, so many ways God has provided for us so far. I know that He will continue to care for us as we head to mid winter training and then back home. I'm excited to go home and see family and friends, to get recharged and ready for an awesome event season in the new year.

Things have been tough this last week for me. I lost my voice about a week ago. So singing has not been a daily joy that I get to experience. You really find out how much it means to be able to sing everyday, when you lose your voice. I thank God that He has given me the ability to sing and I pray that He returns that to me soon. Recording was really hard this past thursday. I didn't have much of a voice to sing for it. But I know God's work was still done when we were recording. It should be an awesome CD and we are super excited to be done recording.

well time to keep on keepin on.



Nick Mullen

Date: 12/4/2004
Submitted by: Angela Penner
Journal Entry:

Well, it is almost Christmas vacation. We have been to so many places and met so many people! It is amazing how many neat people I meet when on the road. People are amazing; all I need to do is be willing to get outside my comfort zone to get to know them. God has given me many many opportunities to do this. God is a good God and has many people in His kingdom, but there are still many more to reach!

This last weekend our team had the opportunity to go to my home church. It was really nice to be able to show them what I am doing this year and what they are supporting. I gave the whole team a real farm experience by letting them milk our cows and drink the milk right there. It was fun watching the team and their reactions to the farm. I kept myself real busy there, even on our day off, but it was well worth it.

Now we are almost done before Christmas vacation. It is exciting to see what God has all done and I am excited to see what He will do in the future. God is a good God!



Angela Penner

Date: 12/4/2004
Submitted by: Valerie Reiman
Journal Entry:

Wow, I can't believe that it is already December. Things have been going by so quickly. I feel so blessed by the host families that I have been able to stay with. We

have met so many cool people during our Family Night Programs and at the Quake.

God has really been showing me that even though I think I am in control of so many things, I don't have any idea! I feel like every time I have all these things planned or scheduled, sometimes they change and I have to start all over. I think I know how things should go and how people should act and how everything should just go according to my plan. But then God comes in and shows me how his plan is SO much better than mine. Not that it is easy for me to admit that. Hopefully, though, it will get easier.

I am really excited to go home for a while and see my family. I pray for a blessed Christmas season for all of you!! =)



Valerie Reiman

Date: 12/4/2004

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Hello hello! I'm really excited for Christmas break coming up. I cannot wait to see my family and friends, especially my niece!

But team is goin' pretty well. We had the staff/team Christmas party yesterday, and wow! So many familiar faces, so many hugs, so many things to catch up on! It's amazing how there are so many of us out in this world to spread the Great News of Jesus. It's truly amazing.

I have been realizing more and more how much I need and desire God in my life. I used to be one of those Sunday morning only people, with the rest of the week devoted to school and my job and my roommate and stuff like that. Now, being surrounded by God all the time, it's like, I really need Him just to breathe. And that is sooooo true.

I will leave you all with a Bible verse I memorized this morning as part of our team devo.

Colossians 3:2 "Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things."

AMEN!



Whitney Sharpe

Date: 12/4/2004

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

We've been pretty busy lately; we got to celebrate Thanksgiving with Angela's family, had some bookings, recorded our CD, and had a Christmas party. In a couple of days we'll be heading off to Mid-Winter training. I am anxious to visit with other teamers and hear their experiences and their program, but so many of my thoughts begin with an airplane that will take me back home. I am ready to enter a place with a little bit of normalcy, get to look upon familiar faces, and hear inside jokes that I haven't been a part of in so long. I am so excited to visit friends from college and hear about their horrors of being a college student again. I am excited to go back to traditions with my roommates that include at least once a week visits to El Vaquero, playing Scrabble at Javo Co., and arguing about nothing and then realizing that it's nothing and laughing about it for the next three years. And yet when I'm with my friends I'll be thinking of my family. Wrapping presents late at night with my dad, telling my mom she can't help pick out our Christmas tree because no one likes short fat trees, singing Christmas carols at the top of my lungs with my sister as we prance around the house pretending to be opera singers, sneaking presents under the tree as if no one notices, reading *The Night Before Christmas* and *The Polar Express* on Christmas Eve. And then that time will be up and it's back to team life, which I will have been thinking about while I wasn't there. Missing our little inside jokes and the crazy life of seven people living out of a van. Eventually I'll get to each one of these places, but being away from them now makes me realize how much I appreciate each



Courtney Young

one of these seasons in my life. I can't wait to see my friends and family and while my thoughts are consumed by that now, I wonder what I'll be thinking when I'm there. Will I miss my team? Will I be excited to celebrate my birthday in Moorhead, MN? What did everyone else do to make their Christmas memorable? I know I am looking to the future, but upon realizing that, I need to still live in the present. I am excited for today's booking, for a van ride, for a life that I never thought I would experience. And so for now, I relish in the thought that I am where I am supposed to be. And no matter what, life is good.

Date: 1/5/2005

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

I hope everyone had a very merry Christmas...it's been about a month since I wrote on here, but I'm back.

Being back on team has been...well, interesting. Our first week was just amazing. We had 3 days to rehearse in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, where Angela is from, so that was pretty cool. Her family is really nice...and I learned how to play dominos! Now I'm hooked. ;) After that, we went to Prior Lake, Minnesota, and we've been there before and got to stay with the same host families, so that was really, really nice. We spent the New Year there, and did an acoustic set on New Year's Eve, and then my teammate, Nick, and I celebrated the new year, with our host family Dave and Veronica, and their 3 daughters, Christy, Stephanie, and Lindie. They invited over 2 other couples and their children, and I was able to spend the evening playing and singing and dancing with all the kids, and it was a LOT of fun...so that was nice.

However, there has been some bad news from back home. I found out a few days ago that a friend of mine from high school passed away a few days after Christmas. I am still in shock and pain about that...we hadn't spoken in about a year, but I've never dealt with the loss of a friend and a peer. I don't really know what to do or say, and her memorial service is tomorrow, back home in Seattle, and it hurts knowing that I can't go. However, as my mom says, God leaves a gift in every situation. The last time I had seen my friend, it wasn't on pleasant terms. The Bible verse about not letting the sun go down on an argument has been coming to mind, and so I think (but do we ever really know?) God is trying to teach me, or is going to teach me, that I need to work harder in my relationships. I mean, I think I do...but we all can use a little more help!!

Anyway, we just got done with our first family night program since being back on the road...and as the sound tech, I got to play the bass for "Every Move" and do the shaker on "Maybe There's a Loving God." It was very nerve-racking, but exciting at the same time!

Okay, I think I have babbled on long enough! God's blessings to everyone out there in Internet land.

Psalms 23:4



Whitney Sharpe

Date: 1/6/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!!!

Being back on the road has been a whole new adventure. It has been so nice to be home for a while and to see some of my family and friends. Christmas is such an amazing season but it goes by so quickly. So we are back on the road and we are off.

Yesterday we got to go to our first new host home. We spent a couple days with the Penner family which was awesome and then we got to go back to our host homes in Prior Lake to bring in the new year. So we are at our first official new host home. Being here reminds me of why



Valerie Reiman

I love doing this. I LOVE host homes. It amazes me every time that we get to come into people's homes because they don't just welcome us into their homes, but they welcome us into their lives. They just amaze me!!!!!! God is really showing me how many incredibly generous and giving people are. It's hard to remember that there are bad things going on in this world when I get to spend time with so many good people.

I am excited to go to North Dakota for the first time. It should be fun and exciting to spend the rest of January there. =)

God Bless,

Valerie =)

Date: 1/8/2005

Submitted by: Travis Thomas

Journal Entry:

Hey everybody! This is Travis Thomas here, and I'm in North Dakota. Yaaaaaaaay! And it's snowing outside, which is, uh, fun, I guess. But oh man, I had a lot of fun last night at the Zion church in Mohall. It was so awesome. We did our family night program and played some games and did some worship and drank like a gallon of Kool Aid... I'm still kinda shakey. Anywho, today we go out deeper into North Dakota. It should be more fun and crazy and Kool Aid and...yeah. So I gotta to go get me a pizza sandwich burger...yeah. Bye!



Travis Thomas

Date: 1/13/2005

Submitted by: Nick Mullen

Journal Entry:

Well, it's CFNC's first blizzard experience! We are in North Dakota, and there currently is a blizzard warning, so we are staying put for a couple of days. Forty mph wind gusts have kept us at bay, but we should be back on the road on Friday in Minot, ND. It was really a bummer that we had to cancel our program last night. It was our first cancellation, and God willing, it will be our last. Even though this blizzard has changed our plans, God is still good. He has blessed us with wonderful host homes and church. They all have been so generous and eager to help us in any way. Again God is providing for us in every step we take this year.

Oh, and 81 days until Cubs opening day!!

In Christ, Nick



Nick Mullen

Date: 1/16/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

So things seem to be good here; not a whole lot going on and we're back into the swing of things. As we continue on, though, I'm feeling more and more comfortable with my role on team. Driving today and singing songs with teammates reminds me of friends back home, and it's nice to have things feel right. We played at a teen center tonight, and for some reason I had more fun at this program than I have in a while. I think it might be because I got to talk with some kids before and they seemed so excited to see us and have us with them. I just felt comfortable here. I'm having these little spurts of joy at random times throughout the days, which cements my feelings about this being right for me. I am getting to learn the keys on one song, and I'm beginning to learn the guitar as well. I know it's a slow process, but I'm excited for what it will bring. Overall, this week has been a good



Courtney Young

one for me and although nothing totally exciting and outrageous has happened, I'm content just where I am.

Date: 1/20/2005

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Hello again! I don't know what to say, really. We've been extremely busy lately. The last week or so has been like this: drive to a church, set up, family night program, tear down, go to bed, wake up, drive to church, set up, family night program, tear down, go to sleep, wake up, drive to church, set up, family night program, tear down...etc. While it has been somewhat stressful and very tiring, it's also very rewarding. It's so nice to meet all the people that we've met and to stay with the families we've stayed with. It lifts me up, every night, to see everyone and how they might be worshipping. A few nights ago during the program, the team was singing "Believe," and I was back at the soundboard. This one man in the back row was bobbing his head to the song the entire time, reading the lyrics that were up on the screen. "Please believe that I am listening/I know how lonely you must feel/I am here, and I am listening/Even wounded spirits heal./Don't walk away from this:/My head, my hands, my feet/I want you to see that this is the real me/Rejected and beaten, abandoned and scarred/I've been exactly where you are."

Sometimes, as the people leading worship and whatnot, we forget what the words are that we are singing. Or in my case, that I am making it sound good from the soundboard. But it's times when I see the man bobbing his head, or the kids dancing, that I really get lifted up. As cheesy as it may sound, it's really true. And I think it's something we all need to remember.

God's blessings to you all!



Whitney Sharpe

Date: 1/22/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

I feel like I have been on an emotional roller coaster lately. We have been to great churches and met lots of neat people, but I have been kind of down myself. However, it is amazing how God will just take that from you once you offer it to Him, and how He uses the people around you to lift your spirits--like maybe with an e-mail, a long talk with one of your teammates, or a fun night of playing board games with your host home. I am always amazed how God is able to use the people around us to get us back on track. Sometimes I forget how incredible the people around me are. I feel extremely blessed in that area.

Other than that, things have been good here. We are getting to see exactly what "cold" weather really is. Even though it is cold here in North Dakota, the snow is beautiful and the people are awesome. It will never cease to amaze me how generous people are. On the news and in the paper, all we hear about is the bad things people do and say, but being here on team, I have seen a whole new side of people. They are so giving when you give them a chance.

Keep smiling! =)

Valerie =)



Valerie Reiman

Date: 2/5/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

Lately I have been feeling kind of down and not really understanding why. I question it because I don't understand it. A couple of days ago the pastor of the church we were at led a devotion with our team about the Transfiguration of Jesus, and we talked briefly about how people just don't seem to be in awe of God anymore. I thought that he was right and knew that I was one of those people who doesn't always take the time to be in awe of God. So that was my prayer that morning. For God to help me be more in awe of Him. And I was hoping for it to be answered the way I was expecting, but yet again God's ways are higher than my ways and I know that that prayer is being answered in my life the way God answers. I wanted to be able to say "God is so good!" and things like that, but I wasn't realizing when I prayed that I would have to examine my life and see why God is good. What makes Him good? I have to ask myself. And I see it. I see all the things that I do or say that hurt others. I see ways I've behaved that I'm not proud of. So why is God good? Because He takes me as I am. He knows my heart; He knows my questions. He is love. So no matter what I do, He won't leave me and make me walk through this life alone. He's already given me His promise, one I can hold onto. So I'm beginning to see what it must have been like for Peter and James and John up on that hill when Jesus was transformed into radiant light. They were terrified; they didn't know what to say. And I imagine they were a little confused. Just as I am when I experience being in awe of God. But I still want it. I still want to be in awe of Him. Because He deserves it. Completely.



Courtney Young

Date: 2/6/2005

Submitted by: Angela Penner

Journal Entry:

Well, we have been in the Dakotas since Christmas, almost. We even got to do some touristy stuff this last week. We went to Mount Rushmore and to Wall Drug. I have been there a few times, but it was still fun. We have been in beautiful land. The Black Hills. Whenever I see big hills or mountains, I am reminded at how big a God we serve! He is such a creative God and is totally awesome. I think I told my teammates how much I loved the landscape every day we were over there. Now we are in western South Dakota again. It was nice to see the land here again. Corn fields that were combined last fall. It made me remember home and the farm. I was really missing the farm then. But God is good. He gives the strength to keep going and keep ministering to people. There are a lot of neat people out here. Very giving hearts--people ready to even serve us. God is a good God and provides what we all need! That is why this team life is possible.



Angela Penner

Ok, so this is some of what is going on in North Central team life right now. God is good.

Date: 2/7/2005

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Well, here I am again! We're in Stickney, SD right now. Tonight we did a Family Night Program, and it was a lot of fun. I met these two older men, and we sat and talked...they were so funny! It's great to see good friends here, or really anywhere. They were teasing each other and jokin' around; it was funny to watch. And then this woman, one of their wives, I think, came up and asked me if they let me get a word in edgewise. =) One of the guys was Norwegian, as am I, so it was nice talkin' to them. Quake is this weekend!! I don't really know what to expect. Even though we've done a Quake already, it's still a shock, you know what I mean? It should be fun. I hope we see a lot of youth groups there that we've seen before. I like meetin' kids there, they seem so excited, and junior high...it's a funny age.



Whitney Sharpe

God bless!

Date: 2/8/2005

Submitted by: Travis Thomas

Journal Entry:

Howdy, this your local Travis Thomas coming at you from the lovely state of Minnesoooooooootaaa. Yep, me and my team are having a little down time right now before our Sioux Falls Quake in South Dakota, which is going to be awesome Yeah, it will be and you know it! Wooooo! So anyway, we've been having a lot of fun lately. Well now that I don't know what else to write, I'll say goodbye...so long...goodnight...peace...and I'll see you in the stars.



Travis Thomas

Date: 2/9/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

Well. We are back in Minnesota for one night, and it starts snowing again. I thought maybe we would be able to enjoy this nice 60 degree weather for a little longer, but then I remembered where we are. =) Actually, things have been going pretty well. We are heading into the Quake this weekend. I am really excited to see some of our previous churches there and meet lots of new people also.



Valerie Reiman

We got to go home to Cheyenne for a weekend, and it was GREAT!!! It was so nice to see my family and friends again even if it was for just a little while. It was fun to do a program there so everyone knows a little more about what we are doing this year. What a weekend!!

I can't believe that we have been on the road for almost six months. Time really has flown by. But I am totally looking forward to another great six months!!

Valerie =)

Date: 2/23/2005

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Hello out there to everyone in Internet land! Team life is going all right...we've been busy on the weekends lately. We had our Sioux Falls, SD Youth Quake two weekends ago, and that was a lot of fun. We stayed at the Holiday Inn, and there were about 150 kids there. There were some mix-ups with the sound, which kind of stressed me out, but I got thru it, God-willing. I'm not perfect, I just have to remember that, eh? And then this past weekend, we were with our "home" host home in Taylors Falls, MN, and we went on a youth retreat into Wisconsin with their church group. That was a lot of fun and a lot of excitement. I just find it a lot of fun to hang out with kids all weekend. Even though we have "work" to do as well, like perform, set up, etc., it's still really fun, and that's what I enjoy. Sometimes I wonder if we're actually doing anything productive, or if we are just getting into that mindset where we forget to pay attention. But then I see these kids we're meeting and the youth leaders we're talking to. No matter what we feel as exhausted, tired, angry, lonely, homesick Captive Free members, the people at the churches we go to are being reached. That is something important to keep in mind. Even if I'm not in a great mood, or I'm missing my family back home, or whatever the case may be, God is still calling me to do my best. And hopefully, that is what I'm doing.



Whitney Sharpe

God bless!

Date: 2/23/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

It's time for another QUAKE!!! The first time I remember knowing anything about Captive Free was when I was in middle school and I got to see them at an event much like a Quake. For the first time, I realized that it was cool to be able to have faith, and I got to see people who were a little older than me (and by that standard, automatically cool) professing what they believed and standing up for that. I still remember how excited I was to be there and how I was so incredibly impacted by these strangers. Now I get the opportunity to be the stranger who may never know what kind of impact I have on somebody else. This weekend we stay in a hotel and lead short Bible studies and go out to lunch with awesome kids. We listen to other musicians and visit with other speakers. We have the opportunity to absorb the teachings of others instead of be the teachers all the time. I'm excited. I'm excited for little sleep and new faces. I'm excited to be completely exhausted on Sunday because I know all my energy was put into that weekend where God was moving. And I'm excited because I know that each time we have a Quake, a little something in me changes. So far God's calmed my nerves and shown me neat things about the way He's made me and who He's placed in my life, and I know that as I listen and open my heart, He'll show me more. So even though I'll be wiped out on Sunday, I'll be wiped out knowing a little bit more about the Eternal God whom I get to call "friend."



Courtney Young

Date: 3/7/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

Hey everyone!!

We just finished our third quake in the last four weeks!!!! It was great!! I can't believe how many AMAZING junior highers I got to meet. There were so many different kids and different stories. It is amazing. Great speakers and great musicians!! It has been a busy and a fun four weeks.



Valerie Reiman

We've also been able to hang out again with a lot of people that we've already met. It is so great to see people multiple times. It's a really comfortable feeling. I love it!!!

Another things I've been working on (or God has been working on) is finding a restful state. I feel like he is trying to show me my need for rest and show me the peace that I can find in him. But, I am just having a hard time finding that rest and peace. There are just so many people that I want to meet and so many things that I want to do that I just haven't found that balance. But I know that God help me to get there. =)

I pray for all of you out there, that you are able to see and feel God each and every day!!!

Valerie =)

Date: 3/15/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

We are back to our daily family night program routine. It was sad not having a Quake this past weekend. I had such a great time at the past Quakes. It was so amazing being with so many awesome kids listening to great music and great speakers. It has been a really good month.



Valerie Reiman

Tonight, I sat in my host home talking to Jess and Courtney talking about all the funny things that have happened over the last six months. We laughed and laughed. Even with all the little things that happen, there are so many great memories and funny times that I've

had. It's amazing how God works!! =)

I think back on all of the things that have happened this year, how much God has grown me this year, and it amazes me. I think about how uncertain I was to come on team this year, not sure that this was what God had planned for me. Then I think about how nervous I was once I was here, still not sure if I was doing what I am suppose to do. Now, I think about what I am going to do next year, wondering how I will know what God has planned for me next. . . And through all of this worrying and wondering I realize that I worry too much and I need to just let God work through me in whatever way He has planned. I know that I just need to believe and it will all work out.

I'd like to close with one of my favorite quotes from college ~

"Everything is okay in the end. If its not okay, its not the end!"

Date: 3/17/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

Today started as what seemed like any other day on the road, but man, has it been a great day! For the first time in my life, I left the country! Our team is spending some time in Langdon, ND, only a few short miles from the Canadian border and we thought, what the heck, why not go to Canada? So we did. We went through Customs with no problem and drove to a small town called Morden which was about 40 kilometers away from the border. We spent a short afternoon there and visited the coffee shop and thrift store wherein I purchased some awesome pink earrings for our crazy dress nights at the Quakes and a sweatshirt with some university on it. Overall, it was such a great trip. I remember when I found out that I was in one of the northern regions for Captive Free this year, one of my first thoughts was, "Oh, maybe our team will go to Canada!" and here we are. Well, there we were. For a couple of hours. Now we're back, but that trip just made my day. We've been trying to figure out for some time now when we'll be able to make the trip. It was such a huge blessing, especially this week because our Easter break is only four days away, and I have been so anxious to see family and friends that I haven't been enjoying each moment as much as I should. Luckily, today changed all that. We've been having some really good team time lately, and I can tell that our friendships are continually changing for the better. It's neat to be a part of something where I can see the change happening, and I am so glad that I got to have this awesome Canada experience with each one of my teammates.



Courtney Young

Date: 4/4/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

We just finished our Construction Zone this last weekend. It was such an amazing time!!!! I can't believe how many cool kids I got to meet this weekend. It was great to see old faces from past churches and get caught up on how things are going for them, and to see new faces and hear about their lives. There are so many things that we get to experience here on team, but I just love these Events. It is amazing how God works through these weekends.



Valerie Reiman

One of the neatest things about this weekend was on Saturday night during the late night worship service. I was sitting back in the back at a prayer station and different kids came back and talked to me about things going on in their lives, and then we prayed together. I completely admire these kids. I don't think I would have been able to do that when I was in high school, and yet I see these kids so freely talk about their faith and live with God. It is AMAZING!!!!

I am excited for the Quake in two weeks and the bookings leading up to it. Life is good!! =)

Date: 4/7/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

We spent the past day in Moorhead, MN and it was my "job," if you will, to give the sharing for the evening program. I really wanted to share something that has left a huge imprint on my life and so I did. I talked about how some friends and I had gone out T.P. ing one night and how my neighbors called at some ridiculous time in the morning to complain to my parents. I was so afraid to talk to my parents about it, but they were so gracious to me. Sure, I had to go clean up the neighbor's yard the next day, but my parents were so awesome about it. I remember how that night helped me see my parents as people who were once my age, who knew what it was like to do something they wanted to do even if there was a risk of getting caught and getting in trouble. I had a lot of fun sharing that story but surely didn't expect it to be a story for the non-teens in the group. However, I was wrong. After the program, a bunch of people came up and shared with me how much they liked my sharing, they teased me a little bit about the story, and they shared their own. It was so cool to hear grown-ups, people who we sometimes think never did anything wrong in their youth, share how they skipped school or snuck out or got into trouble when they were young. I was able to connect with so many more people than I expected because those people were given an opportunity to look back and enjoy the memories they had as children. I felt like that was the perfect sharing for me to give because it brought out so much more joy than I had ever expected from such an unsuspecting crowd.



Courtney Young

Date: 4/7/2005

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

God is amazing. I won't lie...lately things haven't been going that great. I've been feeling lots of anger, and I've been feeling very empty. However, I've been feeling really emotional. Crying a lot. And I've been stepping back and listening to what God has to tell me. That's really cool for several reasons. First off, it's cool that I can hear what He's saying. Second, it's cool because I don't think I've ever experienced that before. And I know that He's telling me to be more service-oriented, and I plan to take Him up on that after I get off team, and I can do that now, while I'm still on team, as well. I've been thinking about sponsoring a child from Compassion International. Another thing I can do is just help out with my teammates more. Carry in the monitors when no one else wants to (usually I'm the "no one else wants to" category), or volunteering right away to hop out of the van and spot as we back up...those are things that I tend not to do, since I know I won't get any recognition, or "thanks" for...but if I start to think about it...those are the exact things that God wants me to do. Do stuff that no one will notice. If all of us only did service jobs so we would get huge recognition, no one would do anything! And to truly have a servant heart, you don't want anything in return. So I have been learning a lot about that lately, and now I just have to put it into practice...which I'm sure is easier said than done, considering I've been "attempting" to have a servant heart for a long time now. So thanks for everyone for listening, and I hope all of you have a blessed day.



Whitney Sharpe

Date: 4/13/2005

Submitted by: Angela Penner

Journal Entry:

Well, it is April already. Amazing! We are enjoying the great warm weather here in MN. Today we went and hung out at a park in the afternoon. It was nice to lounge outside in the warmth of the air. We are having our last Quake this weekend. It is kind of a bittersweet idea. I get very little sleep at Quakes, which I really don't like, but I really like meeting all the kids. It is neat to watch kids change through the weekend.

What else is going on? Well....uh...I've got a cold again. So if anyone is looking for



Angela Penner

something to pray about, pray that I'll get better and stay better. Life is going good, though. God is stretching me, and God is a big God. Have a nice day now.

Date: 4/26/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone!!! I was making the schedule today and I saw that the end of the week is the beginning of May!!!! I can't believe it. This year has gone by SO FAST!!! When I think back on things, we have done a lot but it just seems like things are flying by. Our event portion of our year is over and that brings to close many incredible memories, like meeting so many AWESOME kids at the door of the hotel on Friday night to seeing them dance like crazy at the celebrations and listen intently to the speakers to rockin' it out on the dance floor to worshipping at campfire to great conversations at family times to saying goodbye on Sunday morning. The events are crazy busy, but such an incredible time. I will truly miss being there on the weekends. So we are back to our routine of family night programs throughout the week and lock-ins on the weekend. I am excited to return to some of our old churches and to be at the new ones. God has blessed me so many times this year with incredible host families (I do LOVE host homes!!!!), amazing youth, and thoughtful teammates. However, sometimes it amazes me that with all the blessings that are around us that sometimes we just get stuck in our own little ruts, which is kind of how I am feeling right now. But I know that God has a plan and that He can use this too!!! Valerie =)



Valerie Reiman

Date: 4/28/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

It's nice to have some "down" time when you're just not feeling up to doing what we're doing. The past couple of weeks I haven't been feeling 100%, so when we get a night where we don't have a program, I feel like I have been given time to rest. I forget that what we're doing is draining because it IS fun, but man, is it easy to get tired. The past few nights our team got to do some things together and enjoy each other's company. Whitney just had her birthday, so we got to go bowling, and Ang got to visit with friends since we were booked at her college. It's fun to get to see our teammates in settings they were in before team. It's hard to remember that everybody else had lives before team that were so different from what they are now. Mine included; I'm feeling as though that transition period from team to real world is happening to me, but I don't know how to deal with it since team isn't over yet. I know what I want to do and where I want to live, but I don't know where I'll be working yet, so I'm letting myself get stressed when there's not a whole lot I can do. This patience thing sure isn't easy! But I keep reminding myself not to be anxious about anything, and although that's easier said than done, it sure doesn't hurt to have the reminder.



Courtney Young

Date: 5/1/2005

Submitted by: Angela Penner

Journal Entry:

Happy May day. May 1, and it was snowing outside. At least it was warm the beginning of April-ish so the snow does not stick to the ground. It has been snowing the last few days. Maybe it will warm up soon.

Anyway, this week has been a good week. We had the privilege of going to my college this Tuesday and Wednesday. I attended Oak Hills Christian College in Bemidji, MN and graduated last May. It was so much fun to be there and see many of my friends! It was awesome to do my personal God time by Lake Marquette again, which is by Oak Hills. We got to do a chapel at school there, and it was great to show the people I knew what I am doing



Angela Penner

this year!!! So that was great fun.

Then we headed for two lock-ins in a row. It was quite tiring, but it was a lot of fun! We were in Starbuck and Coon Rapids, MN. I got to see my two sisters again! I met them at the Twin Cities Construction Zone. Plus I saw many others that we met at Quakes and Construction Zones. I really enjoy re-meeting people that we've already met. We have met and re-met a lot of amazing people this week! Hopefully, some of these people will write back :)....

God is an awesome God!!! I am so glad to be able to share Him with people and sing to Him and do whatever I get to do for Him.

Date: 5/5/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

It's May 5!!!! I can hardly believe it. Things have been going by so fast lately. We finally had another nice day today!!! Yeah, no more snow in May (hopefully, that is). Other than that, things have been going pretty well lately. Last night we were in Northbranch, MN, and it was so awesome!!! During dinner, I talked with this girl who is a senior in high school, and we had terrific conversation. Then we had a great program, we had some more good conversation, and then she left. Like, twenty minutes later, she comes back with this bag of groceries from the store. She had left so that she could go to the store and buy us some things that she thought we needed and wanted to make sure that we got them before we left. This kind of thing happens to us all the time, and I just forget how amazing it is. There are so many incredible people in this world, but sometimes I get so worked up about my problems that I completely forget all of the blessings that God puts in our days. It's really sad when I think about that, but it is still amazing how God continues to bless us even when we can't see past our own noses to notice it.



Valerie Reiman

We have been reading [The Ragamuffin Gospel](#) by Brennan Manning for team devotions. It talks about how incredible God's grace is and how it encompasses all of us. Sometimes it is so hard to hear about grace and how freely God gives it because it is an eye-opener for how we treat each other. It's one of those things where I know God is working on this with me, but sometimes I just don't want to change it.

Also, I am still LOVING my host homes. It has been such a blessing to stay with all of the people we have stayed with. And I am really excited for our homebound tour, which we will be starting in like two weeks!!! This year has gone by so quickly. Soon it will be time for Vacation Bible School!!!

God bless all of you!!!!

Valerie =)

Date: 5/7/2005

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! I feel bad; I haven't written a journal entry on here in over a month, but I'm back!

Anyway, my birthday was last month. I turned 21, and my teammates really surprised me. We were up in Bemidji, MN, and I was under the impression that we had a Family Night Program, so we're driving and driving, and then someone said we were lost, then everyone said they had to use the bathroom, so we pulled over in a parking lot and went into this bowling alley. At that point, everyone shouted, "Surprise! We have no program!" So we went bowling, and then we went to Applebee's for Buy-1-Get-1-Free appetizers (who's gonna pass that up?).



Whitney Sharpe

It was really cool, though, because I had been kind of bummed out most of the day that we weren't

going to be able to do anything for my birthday, and then that happened. It really makes me realize that I totally should relax and "let" God be in charge because He's got all sorts of crazy good stuff planned. Even if we did end up having a program that night, I'm sure my teammates would have done something (no matter how small) afterward, with what time we have. So yeah!

Well, it's off to do team devotions now...and I hope everyone has a great day. God's blessings to you all!

Date: 5/21/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

We are now done with the first stretch of our homebound tour! I can't believe after months of planning that this is here and will be over in five days. We had to get up at 5:30 this morning to make our drive from Chicago to Detroit, but so far everything has been so worth it. The first day of our trip, we had problems with our brakes and got out on the road four hours late, so we got to spend that time visiting with the International Teams at the office. While in Chicago, we got to hang out with West Lakes, Jess's sister, and MY parents! I was so excited they could drive down from Wisconsin for our program and see what I've been up to the past nine months. The whole day all I could talk about was getting to see them again, and it was such a huge, huge gift for me. It made the whole trip worth it for me. While in D-town, we get to do a bunch of stuff with Jess's church, but tonight we had a bonfire and met her friends; it was so fun! I'm really looking forward to the rest of it and to some rest during Memorial Day break. Until then, however, we'll be praying for energy for long drives, camping, and meeting even more people!



Courtney Young

Date: 5/21/2005

Submitted by: Angela Penner

Journal Entry:

We are now finally on our homebound tour. Our team has been planning and booking churches in some of our home areas. We just came from Chicago, IL, are currently in Detroit, MI, and will be driving to Cheyenne, WY. I am excited to be outside of our normal traveling region. My teammates all have very nice families and home churches. It was so nice in Chicago, we got to do the youth program outside in the grass, which our first outdoor program. It totally excited me up. We will be ending in Cheyenne for Memorial Day break, so many of the team will be hanging out there for the break. I am excited to see the mountains again and hopefully be able to hike in them. Soon we will be doing VBS's, and that is very exciting. Therefore, next time I write I will probably have info on how that is going. Until then, have a great day!



Angela Penner

Date: 5/28/2005

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Well, it's Memorial Day weekend, so I'm home in Seattle, Washington...perhaps the best city in the USA. But anyway, I'm really happy to be home to see my family. I flew in last night and will stay till Monday evening--a short visit, but very much needed.

We just got done with our homebound tour, which was pretty cool. I've visited several new states in the past few days: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Iowa, Nebraska, and Colorado (at least, I don't think I've ever been to Colorado). Not to say that there's a whole lot to do while driving thru the middle of those states, but the destinations are worthwhile. It was really cool doing a program at Nick's church in Barrington, Illinois, because we got to be outside on the grass. I was a little wary of the possibility of rain, being responsible for all of



Whitney Sharpe

our sound equipment, but it didn't rain, and being outside was pretty fun.

It's also cool being able to go to different states and explore different parts of the country. We camped out in Iowa one night, on our way to Wyoming, and I remember thinking, "A year ago, would I have ever in a MILLION years thought that I would be camping out in Iowa?? No." And yet, that was exactly where God had placed me.

It just goes to show...

Date: 5/31/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

Oh vacation....how quickly you have gone. Today's the last day of our last vacation before we start VBS, and I must admit it went by too fast. We got to do some fun things, like hike in the Rocky Mountains, pour concrete, sleep in, shop, etc., but it's over now, and tomorrow we have a six hour drive to South Dakota. I am really looking forward to VBS, but I feel like I have so much on my mind for when team is over that I'm not quite in the mindset yet. Hopefully a week of VBS training will help change all that. Okay, off to bed. I need some rest before our crazy busy week!



Courtney Young

Date: 6/7/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

Vacation Bible School is AMAZING!!!! I know that we are only two days into VBS, but I love it!!! It is so nice to be in one place for a while and to really get to know the kids that we are around. I have a feeling that this summer is going to be incredible. =)

I feel like things have really been going well lately. It was SO nice to be home for a while and to see Chicago and Detroit. I kind of feel like I have been on vacation for like a month. We had our homebound tour and then break and then training for VBS. It has been really nice to have more time to hang out as a team.

I feel like life is going well right now. God's blessing to all of you!!

Valerie =)



Valerie Reiman

Date: 6/20/2005

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Well, we're already into our third Vacation Bible School! We started out in Lemmon, South Dakota...moved to Pierre, South Dakota...and now we're in the VERY hot and VERY humid Buffalo, South Dakota. Today was our first day...it's hard to believe that we have nine total VBS's and we are on number three...the time sure is flying.

But it's soooooo hot here. Being from Seattle, where humidity is usually pretty low, it's weird being out here...yesterday was 71% humid...at 9pm!!!!!!!!!!!! That is just wrong. ;) But I do like it out here. There was a big t-storm and lightning storm last night. It woke me up because the house was shaking and I heard all these loud noises. And I looked out the window, and I thought the lightning was going into the backyard. It was really scary for me...having been in storms before, but not the shaking-the-house kind.

It's really amazing to see, though, what God can create. Sometimes I forget that things like this...that EVERYTHING...is God's creation. But it truly is. I saw stars last night, also, which was



Whitney Sharpe

really cool.

Nature is good...as long as I'm in the air-conditioned house. =D

Date: 7/11/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

I was making out the schedule and was thinking about what I would be doing next year, and then I realized that "next year" is actually in like four weeks!!! I can't believe that this year has gone so fast. I remember last year trying to figure out whether or not I would go on team and what it would be like, and now I am trying to figure out what I will be doing this August and what the next phase of my life will be. Today during our devotion we were reading some of the Psalms, and I was trying to focus on what the Psalm was talking about, and all I could think of were things that I could be doing next year at home. I feel like God is bringing me peace about it. It's awesome!!!

Also, I love VBS, and I know that I keep saying that, but it is so amazing how all of these families and kids just welcome us so much into their homes and their lives. They accept us and love us so much that it is almost heart breaking when we have to leave on Fridays. But then we get to another place and we start all over again. This summer has by far gone the fastest of anything we have done this year. I feel so blessed by what God has done for me this year!!

God's blessings to all of you!!

Valerie =)



Valerie Reiman

Date: 7/13/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

So I keep relearning how I've never been good at journaling. When I was younger, I used to keep a locked diary, well two actually, and most of my "entries," if you will, were about playing outside or what boy in school I had a crush on. There's nothing like your teacher allowing you to rearrange the desks so that the boy you like sits right next to you and all your girlfriends who like him too are somehow on the opposite side of the room...But as I was saying, I've never been good at journaling. I tried a bit this year; I try a bit every year. Sometimes it's better than others; I currently have about a handful of entries for my year on Captive Free. For my amazing and incredibly life-changing year, I have a handful of journal entries. It's a little sad, I suppose. At night sometimes I replay bits of the year and get to go to sleep with a big smile on my face. It's like that feeling you might get when you watch a movie with a good ending or when you just had the best brownies in the world. You're content, and you have the smile to prove it.

Last weekend I got to go home and see a lot of my family. One of my cousins was getting married, and I had the privilege to attend the wedding. I re-met some distant family and got to catch up with others about life, the good and the bad. And one thing I learned, one memory I'll always hold dear even though I may never write it down on paper with a pen, is that people are proud of you. When you follow your heart and risk failure, when you give up on what others say your life should look like and know without a doubt that you're doing the right thing, when you give up a year of your life to share with complete strangers how much God really loves them, people are proud of you. And God is proud of you. And YOU get to be proud of you. Because you didn't fail; you did the right thing; you shared the Good News of Jesus, and no matter how many people's lives you may have touched, you realize that your life is touched even more. You see that the world is full of people just like you, dying to know that they're cared for. When I went home, I saw it so much it almost overwhelmed me. And I liked that. I like knowing that I'm cared for, that people are proud of me. I can't wait to see what comes next. Now I'm ready for the next part of my journey.



Courtney Young

Date: 7/17/2005

Submitted by: Angela Penner

Journal Entry:

Doing VBS's for a whole summer is a blast. I love being able to hang out with the same kids for a whole week! Last week we were in Culver, MN, where I got to be the leader for the 4th-6th graders. I led them from activity to activity. I was able to do every activity that they did and hang out with them. I enjoyed that. This week I am looking forward to the many music sets and the 130 kids that are pre-registered to come. It should be a good week.



Angela Penner

It is roasting hot out this week. But my host sisters have this sprinkler thing on their swingset, plus a trampoline that can have a sprinkler under it, so I am looking forward to getting wet and hanging out with my host sisters. I have a great host family this week, as normal, so I am looking forward to getting to know them more as the week progresses.

I hope you all have a great day now that you have read my journal entry.

Take care,

Angela

Date: 7/27/2005

Submitted by: Whitney Sharpe

Journal Entry:

Well, it's been a little over a month since I've written in here...I always remember to...until I log onto the Internet and promptly forget.

Anyway, there isn't much time in the Captive Free year left...we're doing our next to last Vacation Bible School, then it's off to debriefing, then we have Homecoming, and then...home. It will definitely be weird to go home and NOT return to Minnesota. As much as I'm NOT a fan of the humidity, I have enjoyed many aspects...including our great host homes, and Upper Room (a Sunday evening contemporary service in Edina).



Whitney Sharpe

I have learned a lot about myself since being on the road this year. It's hard to do a hit and run...meet people for a day or two then run off to the next location. Most of the people I've met have meant a LOT to me...but I don't remember their names. So being at VBS has been nice, getting to know people for a week before leaving. In a way, though, it's harder, because then I get to know my host families or the kids at the church really well, and I have to leave, and I'm even MORE sad, because I do know them...instead of being sad because I WISH I'd known them. It seems like a no-win situation, and maybe it is...but I know there's a reason I'm here, a reason I met these people, a reason I came to these places...and maybe I won't realize it till several years down the road...maybe I won't realize it at all in my lifetime...but it's there. That much I do know.

God's blessings to everyone!

Date: 8/6/2005

Submitted by: Courtney Young

Journal Entry:

So the last journal entry of the year, I believe, and it's gone by so differently than I

thought. Rewarding, but different.

I learned that you don't have six instant best friends, but the friendships you make on team can never be understood completely by anyone else. I learned a lot this year. I learned that it's okay to sing into a microphone and be heard. I learned that (surprisingly) not everyone has the same sense of humor I do. I learned that standing up for yourself, although sometimes scary, is hugely rewarding and beneficial to the development of your character. I learned that standing up for someone else means you have given a voice to the voiceless. I learned that fair fighting can be very difficult when you feel like the only one who's fighting fairly. I learned that saying nothing can be heard more than saying everything. I learned that even though I may completely disagree with someone, that person may be right and I may be wrong. My parents always told me that hearing someone and listening to them are different things. I learned that very well this year. I learned that it's a lot easier to care for someone when you feel like they care for you; I'm not saying it's right, I'm saying it's easier. And sometimes life isn't easy. In fact, I learned that life is tough, and sometimes it takes everything you have to make it through the day. But looking back, seeing it come to an end, I am slowly remembering the good and forgetting the bad. I know I will be comfortable living with my beautiful friends from college in good ol' St. Louis who understand me and know me and love me, and I know eventually I will be comfortable looking back at my year of Captive Free and not thinking about the "If only I did this", or "I should've said that". I hope someday I'll get to visit Angela on the farm and see how Princess Jingles, the cow I got to name, is doing. I hope someday I'll fly out to California to see Travis play in his band back home. And I know that when I do these things, I'll think how thankful I am to know these people. And to know all of my teammates. And to know myself even better. Because even when you think you have to do it on your own and the day seems like it'll never end, there are those six people walking right alongside you, doing it with you, and giving you a bit of encouragement so you can all make it through the day. And maybe it was a long one, but in the end, it's a good one.

As the new teams arrive and ours says goodbye, I thank all of you for your support this year. I thank you for your emails, your words of encouragement, your thoughts, and your prayers. And I ask you to keep on praying for us as we're not done yet and as we leave for the next adventures in our lives. May God bless all of you!



Courtney Young

Date: 8/10/2005

Submitted by: Valerie Reiman

Journal Entry:

So here we are at Debriefing; I was kind of nervous about it. I know that this year has been full of highs and lows, and I was really unsure of what was going to be said and what I felt like I needed to say. I feel like that hardest thing I have done is loving the people around me. I know that sounds terrible, but when I let myself get too wrapped up with the things that bothered me about myself and others, I couldn't see the good in myself or others, especially some of my teammates. I wouldn't let God show me the good in anything.



Valerie Reiman

But we just had the best two team times of this whole year. I feel like there is so much peace on this team. There was forgiveness and love. I know that even if I wouldn't see my teammates ever again, we have cared about each other and even though we may not always agree on everything, we can be friends. It has been an amazing year and God has done so much in my life. I've met so many amazing people, and they have all touched my life. But I am most thankful for the six other people that I feel blessed to call my teammates!!!
