

Captive Free North East 2004-05 Journal

Date: 9/21/2004

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

G'day Everyone!

We have had a wonderful first few days of our year on the road as Captive Free North East! Our first booking was at Mindoro Lutheran Church, Wisconsin at 8.30am and Lewis Valley Lutheran Church at 10.30am, where we worked closely with the Pastor participating heavily in both morning worship services. We were able to lead 8 worship songs throughout the services and were also asked to lead the Message for the day. It was an exciting experience for me as I was asked to prepare the message for the day.



Christie Lange

I spent the evening before reading the scriptures for the next day and preparing an appropriate message based on the reading from 1 Timothy 2:1-7. I spoke about how broken I am in my life, which manifests in my selfishness and pride. I expressed how I am unable to live a day without the mercy, grace, forgiveness and love of Jesus and how I must pray to Him in and for all things. I expressed how I have been praying for Him to convict me of the things that I need guidance in and to give me the ability to work through the stuff and to live a life of whole-hearted worship and ministry. I left them with a challenge to pray...to pray for the people who do not have much and are struggling to survive, for people who are suffering, for people in positions of power that they rule well and bring peace and to pray that God shows them areas of brokenness and where He is needed in their lives. We all had wonderful host family experiences and felt so at home and comfortable. Thank you to all our wonderful host families

Next stop...Reedsburg, Wisconsin. Sam's home town! We arrived, set up sound and sales and we're greeting people at the door 30 minutes before our program! (Oh, how the staff at YE would be proud!) This was our first Family Night Program out on the road and I can say that God really works wonders as we did very well indeed! Jeremy and I swapped our sharing over and he did the main one in the middle of the program. He shared confidently and brought through the real gospel message to the 100 people who attended the Sacred Heart Catholic Church Sunday night.

We had a fabulous day off! Slept in, did laundry, watched a movie and the highlight was when Sam's family took us to Wisconsin Dells where we went Go-Karting, played mini-golf and the brave ones went on the Sky Coaster and extreme ride! We then all went out for dinner at a restaurant that had a Giant tree in the middle of the bar! Great meal, great company! Thanks to the Oscar family and the Pichar family who hosted us in Reedsburg, we had a fantastic time! Oh the one extreme experience I had was...a mouse training for the swim across the British Canal however the little tacker was in the dunny!!! Yep, he had an extreme ride of his own...Godspeed little fella!

All in all our first week is going well, God is faithful and has placed us in the hand of many loving, generous and supportive people.

That's it for now...catch ya later! Christie

Date: 9/23/2004

Submitted by: Jeremy Thomas

Journal Entry:

Well we've moved from Wisconsin to Indiana and we had to go through Chicago in the process. Coming from Saskatchewan with small cities or towns I'm not really used to the idea of driving through really big cities, scares me a bit. It wouldn't be that big a deal but we need to do it with a 15 passenger van while pulling a trailer. So as a preemptive strike I decided to force myself to take the driving shift through Chicago...



and true to form God protected us through the whole trip.

Jeremy Thomas

If that were all that I had to write about it would seem like a really lame journal entry, but that's not all! We got to Bristol Indiana with no idea what to expect and were in for a real treat. Pastor Paul met us when we arrived and helped us get settled in the parsonage before we set up and had some time to rehearse. After supper we spent time doing team jobs so that the next morning and afternoon would be freed up.

Pastor Paul spent all of Wednesday with us and took us on a bit of a tour of the area. We ate lunch at the University of Notre Dame and toured the basilica and the gold roofed administration building. The art work and history there was so impressive, and it was a great chance to experience some of the Catholic Church. After a few hours at a university it was time to head to Amish country to learn about the Anabaptist movement. It was a really fun afternoon and we all learned a lot. The best part for me was getting a chance to spend more time with Pastor Paul. I really enjoyed conversation with him and as we headed back to get ready for our family night we as a team had a chance to talk with him and it all culminated in his challenging us to really explore our purposes in life and to focus on living a life that honors God in all we do.

Finally, our family night program got underway and it was awesome! The congregation really didn't know that we were coming more than a week before we came but they were really great to us. The people who came out got up and danced through out the program, they participated in the puppet show, and several of them commented on how they were touched by Shelley's sharing. God really moved last night not only in the congregation, but also in us. They really loved on us and poured out their love for us to overflowing. When it was all said and done Pastor Paul gave each of us a copy of Purpose Driven Life to do as a team devotional. God really used Bristol to challenge us and it's still early in the year. I can't wait to see just how much I'll be challenged, how much I'll grow, and how much I'll learn at the end of this year. It sure is starting off strong!

Date: 9/25/2004

Submitted by: Jorden Robinson

Journal Entry:

So today was such an awesome day! We traveled to Butler, Pennsylvania and met the folks there at Trinity Lutheran church. We attended the worship service that evening and later did a Family Night Program for everyone. It was really fun watching the kids, teenagers, and adults dance and sing and just praise God. Afterwards we had a mini lock-in with the youth (and we got some of the adults to join in!) where we played a couple of really fun games which made us laugh but also really gave us a chance to get to know one another. It was such a blessing to be here and meet with everyone. It is 'sooo' exciting to see how God works in peoples lives, and I'm certain that He has much more in store for us. That's all for now! Peace and blessings to all of you!



Jorden Robinson

Date: 9/26/2004

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Well, here we are in Marion Center, Pennsylvania and praise God for a fabulous first week on the road! My experience so far on Captive Free has been such a wonderful blessing...I love my team and this ministry! I am so thankful that God has given me such a great opportunity. Of course there are times when we are tired, challenged, and brought out of our comfort zones, but God hasn't failed in revealing to me his amazing work in placing me with my exact team and the exact families and communities I've been in. I am in awe every day with all He has blessed me with! I have already seen so much growth in myself as well as in our team and look forward to seeing God work wonders in all of us.

Last night we had a family night program in Butler, Pennsylvania at Trinity Lutheran Church and then afterward got to hang out with the youth...it was a bodacious time for all, and I really enjoyed getting to meet and chat with many of the members and youth. I really enjoyed the talk I had with one of the youth. It was nice



Samantha Oscar

getting to hear all about how life is as an eighth grader...wow...those days seem so long ago for me, but he brought back a lot of fun memories...thanks!!

We are also excited to report that we met a fabulous gal who is a senior this year and is seriously considering doing team next year. We encourage her to pray about it and know that we are praying for her as well. We also want her to know that we would love to answer any of her questions that come up. You rock!!

One more shout out to our contact and her family for taking us out to Panera Bread for lunch...it was such a great time of fellowship and awesome food! Everyone at Trinity was so encouraging and welcoming. It was a true blessing to be there! Our host homes were also wonderful to us and we felt such a warm welcome from them. So, we would really like to send out a HUGE thank you to our host families. We are so grateful!!

After lunch yesterday we drove to Marion Center and were so generously welcomed into United Methodist Church where we did a family night program....our crowd was small but incredibly energetic and we had a blast with them. You guys are SUPER dancers....rock on! We were all pretty tired before the show but you all woke us right up with your energy and enthusiasm!

Other exciting news is that Tiffany, our team director met us in Butler and is staying with us for the next few days....Tiffany beware....it's going to be a wild time with North East....haha. Keep rockin' in Jesus everyone and may God bless you!

Samantha Oscar

Date: 9/28/2004

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Well Sammy was right on when she said our time in Marion Center was incredible. The congregation and our host homes were so amazing. Some of us girls stayed with a couple a few miles from the church; they were a fantastic example of how God can bless two people with marriage. Their stories of life were an inspiration to us all. From what I hear, everyone else had uber good fun with their families too.



Cindy McPeake

Our day off proved to be an eventful day. Hold on to your hats kids!! Rev. Randy, a.k.a. Papa Sweet, took us to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. This may sound like no big deal; but not only do they have a Wal-Mart, but they are also home to Phil the groundhog. Who is this you ask, well he is the one and only groundhog that predicts "weather" spring will be right around the corner or a long 6 weeks away. That's right friends; Punxsutawney Phil is the famous ground hog we await anxiously every February 2nd. We also got to see Gobbler's Knob, where the whole event takes place. Yowzers!! To wind down the evening, Mama Sweet cut my hair. Yep, she shaved my head bald.....just kidding mom. That was awesome.

The next day took us to Spring Mills, Pennsylvania; New Hope Church awaited us. It was a quaint little church with incredible kids. That night we had a family night program for the community; it was a good turn out with lots of happy people. Perhaps the most fun was after the program. We had quite a few kids in the crowd and all were very excited to look over our equipment. Now, when I say "look over our equipment" you should read play the drums. Troy, our drummer, graciously allowed all the kids to play his drums. We definitely have potential teamers in Spring Mills. We will be heading back here for VBS in July; I am excited to be coming back to a community. Though we have only been traveling for a short time; I already feel displaced, almost like we have no home. After getting to know some of the kids and adults we will be working with in July we got excited, the prospect of going to a place with familiar faces is exciting!

This whole experience so far has been interesting. I am grateful for the people on my team; we have a bond that I wouldn't have expected to form so soon. We are bonded in humor. There isn't a day that goes by that we aren't laughing hysterically...that's fun!

That's all I got, well this too- You're not hardcore unless you live hardcore, and the legend of NorthEast is way hardcore!

Live Hardcore!
Cindy McPeake

Date: 10/1/2004
Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm
Journal Entry:



Shelly Schwalm

Wow!! So much has happened since we've started team and a lot has happened just in the last couple of days. Wednesday we had a work day in Spring Mills, PA. We were at the church pretty much all day doing some on-the-road training with our team director, Tiffany Schmader, who stayed with us for a couple of days!! We got to stay at our awesome host home for a second night with Donna and George. They were such a great host family. The first night we stayed there, I was so excited because Jeremy and I watched the WNBA with George and I thoroughly enjoyed discussing women's professional and college basketball with George!! It was so cool!!! It's been a while since I've talked to anyone that's been interested and knowledgeable about women's basketball, so that was really refreshing. Donna also graced us with wonderful breakfasts and her AMAZING monster cookies!!

After saying good-bye to our wonderful host home, we ventured on down the road to drop off Tiffany before we headed to Hammonton, NJ. It was beautiful driving through Pennsylvania with all the mountains and the colored leaves on the trees. We also had to go through Philadelphia to get to Hammonton, so that was neat to see some of the city. We also experienced some authentic Philly traffic!! When we arrived at St. James Lutheran, we were greeted by Wayne who made us an exceptional supper and directed us to the MOTEL that WE would be staying at for two nights!!! Our motel is across the road from a Wawa!! For those of you (like me) who don't know what that is, I guess it's a northeastern gas station chain like Amoco or something. We think it rocks!! Another interesting thing about New Jersey is it's illegal to pump your own gas!! That was so odd for this Kansas girl!

Overall, our team is doing well. We laugh a lot and have lots of fun together. I thoroughly enjoy the company of my teammates!! I must say that I met a lot of great folks as well at training and I miss hanging out with all those great people. God has blessed us with so much already and we've only been on the road for a couple of weeks. I have been struggling with a cold since the second week of training and Christie has got it too within the past week, but we are fighting through it and hopefully will be getting over it soon. In the meantime, some of our other teammates have contracted a little of the cough from us. Keep us in your prayers!!

This ministry is so much more than I ever expected; more stuff to do in a week, more singing, more puppets, more host homes, more driving, more fun (!!), more work, more laughter, more great conversation with wonderful people from many different places. (The only thing I could stand more of would have to be sleep. J) I don't think many people understand how much THEY impact US when we sit down and have a conversation with them. The Lord definitely speaks to us through other people. So far, He's got a lot to say to us!! For the most part, I think He's trying to tell me to totally rely on Him for the greatest of things to the least. From things like where we're going tomorrow and where I'm going to get my lunch from to things like "how can I get a hold of people at home when I forget my cell phone at Sam's house?" (Yep, I did. Thanks for sending it to me, Sue!!) Anyways, God is teaching me to trust in Him throughout this process, which is something I'm totally stoked about!!

Well, I'm pulling an energizer bunny here because I'm just going and going and going... God bless you all and I pray that the Lord works in you to trust Him to guide you to wherever you need to go. I'd like to make a shout out to all the other teams; you all rock my face off!! You're in our thoughts and prayers!! Also, hello to everyone back in Kansas!! I miss you guys loads and I hope that you guys will let me know what's going on with you as much as you can!! Pray for us!! God's peace and joy!

Shelly

Date: 10/2/2004
Submitted by: Troy Stevenson

Journal Entry:

Oct. 2, 2004

Friday the 1st of October was awesome! We spent the morning and early afternoon, doing team jobs and coming up with new puppet shows. We have a new puppet show now about lost sheep and it rocks! For dinner, our contact Wayne, cooked us a gourmet dinner and it was so good. Wayne, you are awesome and thanks for everything.



So then we did our family night program at 7 o'clock in the outfield of Folsom Field. This was our first outdoor program. This is where I get excited about the show! I am a drummer, and wow, I had so much fun playing outside 'cause I could play very loud and it rocked so HARD! The fact that we were tight as a band made it even better! In all just a great night! We met some great kids and many people left with smiles on their faces, totally worth it.

Troy Stevenson

Saturday morning was pretty laid back as we ate a late breakfast and did team devotions. We left around noon and drove toward Reisterstown, MD, a western suburb of Baltimore. We arrived at the church at 4 pm and started setup for our family night program. After that, they had made us yet another gourmet meal which rocked as well. After the family night program, we hung out with the kids at their lock in. We played games with them, sang worship songs, and did an interactive Bible study. We were done with the lock-in at 11pm and then we had to tear down and then got to bed, because we needed sleep!

Thanks for reading and look for a lot more to come!

Troy Scott Stevenson

Date: 10/3/2004

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

G'day! So we were in Reisterstown, Maryland Saturday 2nd of October and stayed with the Community at Trinity Lutheran Church until Tuesday 5th October. Sunday consisted of leading the Sunday school in sing-alongs and then the church service. The community at Trinity is amazingly welcoming and I was so blessed in all the conversations and encouraged by their emphasis on community and fellowship. The youth group was lots of fun and I am going to continue to pray for them as they look for a new Youth Director to continue building relationships and encourage a deeper relationship with God.



Christie Lange

My host family was so lovely and has such a strong family bond. It was so nice to stay with a family with a 3 year old and experience the love that flows richly between parents and their child. I felt so welcome and able to relax and hang out with them and we shared some of what growing up was like! I am so thankful for their generosity and eagerness to share their gifts with me. Thanks again!

Monday 4th October was our day off and we were so blessed to be shown around Washington DC by Jeremy's and Cindy's host families. Jeremy's host dad has been working within government buildings for many years and knows so much about the city! He was a fabulous tour guide and we were able to split up in the morning to go and see the things we were really interested in. I went to the Art Gallery, some went to the Native American Museum and the American History Museum, others went to the Holocaust Museum. Lunch was at Phillips for buffet seafood overlooking the river which was delightful! After lunch we visited the Arlington Cemetery, the White House and walked around the surrounding area, Lincoln Memorial and reflection pond, Washington Memorial, WWII memorial, Vietnam War Memorial and the Pentagon. It was amazing to see the Pentagon and where the plane had crashed into it on Sept 11, three years ago, you can see the different coloured sandstone where the new area has been built. Oh and when we were at the White House there were security guys on the roof dressed in all black and staring at us through binoculars, weapons close by. We were told by a lady at Trinity that there are missiles in the front lawn! Aaaahhhhhh! All up it was a fabulous day in the Capital city of America and I felt very lucky to be able to experience it with such knowledgeable guides.

We are now in Flemington, New Jersey and were able to drive through Philadelphia yesterday. What an amazing looking city! Extremely large! The housing around the city consisted of very closely packed terrace houses often 2 and 3 stories high, but different terraces to the ones we are familiar with in inner city Melbourne. Seeing all this housing which was approx 10 – 15 kms out of the city again highlighted to me just how many people inhabit America! Also the traffic around the cities and even traveling on the big interstate highways is quite intense and we have sometimes traveled along 6 lane highways. The interstate is usually 3 lanes! Much traffic and many people. It's quite different to Melbourne and I don't think I'll ever complain about Peak hour traffic again at home that's for sure! Hee hee.

Keep praying for us, Shelly and I are starting to get better we were taken to the Doctor in Reisterstown and now have anti-biotics to battle the Bronchitis and chest infections we have! But now Jeremy is feeling quite ill and a couple others have a slight cough. Please pray for healing and good health. We are also getting a little weary and some of us are having trouble sleeping, so please pray for restful nights. We are having a wonderful time and are continuing to get to know each other, our gifts and how we all can use them to glorify God each day.

Hope you're all having a great day and just to let ya know...we love getting mail and emails for you all!

Cheers, Christie

Date: 10/5/2004

Submitted by: Jeremy Thomas

Journal Entry:

Oct. 5, 2004

Wow, have we ever moved around a lot in the past few weeks. Typically I'm the type of person who loves to experience small changes in my every day life. Youth Encounter is the perfect thing to scratch that itch. We've gone, as you can see from our itinerary and our journals, from Pennsylvania to New Jersey to Maryland to New Jersey and now back to Pennsylvania. It's all a big circular tour around the North East, but it's strangely fun. I've talked to some of my host homes, well actually I've talked to *all* my host homes, and they keep saying how impressed they are with our courage to be in new places every couple of days. Granted we've been asking for prayer in our programs that God would give us courage and keep us from being intimidated, but it seems he's not only doing that but He's making it fun at the same time.

On a different note we got a chance to see the sites in Washington DC on Monday, which was really neat. Finally getting to see some of the places that I've seen on TV my entire life, and seeing where they are in relation to everything else in the city was a real eye opener (for example that the Pentagon is in the heart of the city and not that far from the White House). God has really blessed us so far with good team times and hosts who bless us beyond anything we could have imagined.

He is so good,
Jeremy Thomas



Jeremy Thomas

Date: 10/9/2004

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

October 9, 2004

Samantha Oscar

Hi there everyone! Wow....we have now been on the road for three weeks and it's been a blast! God has been so good to us by providing us with amazing host homes, friendly and welcoming communities, fun times, and so many opportunities to learn and grow in our relationship with Him! Every day I am left in awe by the



Samantha Oscar

incredible works of God!

On Thursday we drove to Scranton, Pennsylvania. We had the night pretty free so we chose to go out on the town and see the movie *Ladder 49*...we had a little trouble finding the theater but it was a good time for all once we got there. After the flick we tried finding the way back to the church only to find we had driven in a circle and ended up back at the theater (right where we started). We definitely had some laughs about that. Thankfully, we did find our way back to the church.

Friday we had a Family Night Program and lock-in with the youth from the church. They were all so excited and energetic....we had a super time with them singing, dancing, playing games, and leading a Bible study. Thanks so much to Peace Lutheran Church in Scranton for the wonderful day and great host homes! We even had pancakes homemade and served to us by a nine year old boy! He was amazing and had a smile on his face the entire time!

Today we are here in Robesonia, Pennsylvania where we just finished with a coffee house at Trinity Lutheran Church. We had a scrumptious meal, played some fun games, led a Bible study, and sang and danced with the youth there. They were tons of fun and we can't wait to see them again tomorrow morning in church! Thanks to all the youth for the tubular night and to the amazing chefs in the kitchen for the meal!

As for me personally, God is showing me how much comfort He provides when I communicate with Him constantly throughout the day. I have learned how much I need God to help me through the little things just as much as the big things in my day. After all, when I take the time to talk to Him and remind myself that He is with me, everything is so much simpler. He's soooooo incredible like that...let's keep praising Him!

Well, I'm about ready to get some sleep...to all you out there (as I always say)...keep rockin' in Jesus!!

Date: 10/10/2004

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Sunday October 10, 2004

Ah yes, journal time again. Lucky me. Alright, today we were in Robesonia, PA and soon headed to Boalsburg, PA. This morning was really exciting. We did special music for two services and lead a Sunday school in the middle. This community is very involved with Youth Encounter, so half of the kids could lead all the songs we did. The greatest part was the Hippo song. I LOVE the Hippo. I could basically sing it all day and be a very happy creature. One of the families loves the Hippo song so much that they bought a hippo for their kids to use when they sing the song- their kids are all teenagers! Rock On. The hippo made a special appearance in our puppet show too. He was very sassy.



Cindy McPeake

It was great to be in a place that is crazy about Youth Encounter. The night before we had a coffeehouse with the youth group and got to meet a bunch of people interested in joining team. I am still amazed at the far reaching impact that Captive Free has on youth- its fabulous to be a part of that.

On to Boalsburg. We had a family night program tonight. It rocked. Our team was totally on tonight. When I say that I mean we have begun to expand our program. We are lucky to be blessed with a very musical team, but lately we have been challenging ourselves to be vulnerable and share our stories. It's exciting to see the impact that our stories can have on other people. That's fun!

This week we are gearing up for a busy week. We are in new place everyday and at least 3 states in the next seven days. Tomorrow is our day off and we will all be resting!

Live Hardcore!
Cindy

Date: 10/12/2004

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Tuesday, October 12, 2004

Hello, everyone!! Wow, so much has happened since we've been on the road that I have to slow it all down and just remember what we did for the last couple of days. Well, Monday was our day off and we spent it in Boalsburg, PA, which is just outside of State College.

Christie, Jorden, and I were at the wonderful host home of Chuck and Joyce. We had a great day that started off with sleeping very late!! We sometimes don't get as much sleep as we should throughout the week, so Monday gives us a chance to catch up. We watched a movie or two and just spent the day hanging out around the house with their awesome dog, Hercules!! I also got a chance to work on my sharing and revamp it a little bit, so I'm more prepared now to share at programs with a message that teaches the Gospel more clearly. I've grown to like Mondays because I have an opportunity to sit back and get into God's Word. Some weeks are busy and draining and Scripture is the physical and spiritual recharge that I need. For the rest of the afternoon, I took a nap and was woken to the smell of Joyce's spaghetti and meatballs. We had a great meal with them and great conversation.



Shelly Schwalm

That evening, Sam and Cindy's host sister, Chandley, invited us all over to their house for a pajama party to watch the Packer's game (since we do have three people from Wisconsin on our team). The guys and I went over to watch the game and had lots of fun hanging out with Chandley in our pajamas, despite the Packer loss.

Tuesday came early the next morning. We met at the church for devotions and team huddle. We are currently reading Purpose Driven Life together and the chapter that we read was about full hearted worship and worship that pleases God. This was a very relevant issue to us because we do the same songs and discuss the same scriptures day in and day out and so it gets difficult to consistently keep your heart in what you're doing. The chapter went on to say that worship isn't for us and for what we get out of it, but it's to please God and to help others grow in a relationship with God. God isn't pleased by worship that is just a reflex for us. He wants us to make ourselves completely vulnerable to Him and just hand our entire selves over to Him. Another great thing is that worship isn't just in church or in family night programs; it's our entire lives!! Everything we do should be worshiping God. It doesn't matter if it's setting up equipment or cleaning the house or brushing your teeth. Worshiping God with your entire life should be your main focus, no matter if it's the first time you've done something or the millionth. Easier said than done, you say?? Don't I know it!! I have already caught myself whining in my head that I have to unload equipment again or put away the merchandise again, but I should do it to the best of my ability and with the best attitude I have so I can serve God better and please Him with my worship.

After tearing down, call-ins, and some job time, we were back on the road to Reformation Lutheran in Reading, PA. We got there about 4:00 pm and set up for a family night program. We got mail because Tuesday is mail day and I got a bunch of mail, including my cell phone that I left at Sam's house about 3 weeks ago. (Thanks again for sending it to me, Sue!!) I was also excited to get the newsletter from my home church, so I could see what was going on with the youth group and with my friends back at home. I miss you guys tons!! We ate dinner with our host families and some youth at the church. I had the privilege of meeting a couple that had lived in Lindsborg, Kansas and went to school at Bethany College!! For those of you who don't know, that's where I was planning to go to college this year. It was great to talk to someone who knew where I was from and understood my background. Although I'm still in the same country, there's definitely a difference in culture, so it was cool to talk to people from the Sunflower State. We had our program and Sam did her new sharing for the first time and did a great job with it!! We also got our second encore at Reading, so that was exciting, too!! After the program, we went to host homes and I stayed with Rich and Karen and their awesome daughter, Sarah. It was great to talk to and hang out with them. Sarah has two pet turtles and one of them just happens to be named...you guessed it...Shelly!! So that was exciting. They were a super great family and I had tons of fun staying with them. They were one of the many blessings that I've had thus far. I'm so amazed how welcome all of these communities and families have made us feel. We thank you all so much!! Also, we want to send a shout out to the other teams!! We miss you guys lots and can't wait to see you at winter training!! All you people from Kansas reading this, keep your eyes open because I know that Captive Free South Central is around in your area and they are an awesome group of people. Try to go see them and any team in your area!! God's blessings to you all!!

Jammin' for Jesus,

Shelly
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Date: 10/16/2004

Submitted by: Troy Stevenson

Journal Entry:

Today was a busy day. We arrived in Brick, New Jersey, and we were ready to do a

program, a worship service, and a lock-in all in the same night. Then the next morning we have to do three worship services all in one morning.

It is at these times that being on team can become a little bit stressful. You just have so many things to get done and be ready to go on time for everything.

This week has really been a good test for the NE team because we have had a family night program every night in a different place, and that's the toughest part. You feel like you need more time to talk to people in your ministry, but in reality you realize that this is a short term ministry, and that's what we do. I also feel like our host homes don't get to see as much of us as they and we would like to when our schedule is packed so full. We get to the host home after a program, and we're so tired that there isn't enough time to get to know the hosts. Then we have to get up early and do it all over again.



Troy Stevenson

So a big shout out to all and any host homes ever, and just know that you guys rock and that you're an essential part of our ministry.

Thanks for reading,

Troy Scott Stevenson, NE

Date: 10/16/2004

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

Hey There!

We have had an amazingly busy week and it has been a blast. We have visited a different place each day traveling through 3 states! Friday we left Brinningsville, PA where we had an absolute blast with the huge crowd that rocked up to worship with us at our FNP (Family Night Program) and from there we traveled to Parkville, Maryland where we had a FNP and led part of a lock in for the youth group. Our experience at Parkville was one I will remember as the youth group was all girls and they were such a vibrant bunch! Throughout the night we were privileged to see Troy blindfolded wearing a straw hat tied with a red bow, a green frog tied to his leg with a rope, sporting a purple noodle as a boa strutting his stuff as if he was on a catwalk! We have footage of this marvelous occasion also, oh and I forgot to say that I had a little fun and told the girl who was the only one able to tell him directions of the game to get him to bark like a dog! It was a marvelous game!



Christie Lange

I was also blessed to be able to lead the interactive bible study using our theme verse and was so happily met by enthusiastic participants who all acted their parts in such convincing manners that I would be hard pushed to split my votes for Best Actress! The small group session afterwards was an amazing time of sharing and I felt encouraged that the girls took much away from the session. I want to say thank you to all at St. John Lutheran Church, Parkville for your hospitality, sharing your hearts, lives and homes and for supporting us in so many ways including tangible ways but for mostly being so willing to hear the message that God had for you all through us. We feel truly blessed by your community and look forward to seeing you at a Quake in the not too distant future!

We then headed to Brick, New Jersey on Saturday, where we led a worship service, FNP and participated in the lock in and led some songs before we headed off to bed after 12am! What an amazingly exciting youth group! I think that this was the craziest FNP that we have experienced yet! The audience participation was off the scale on this one and I felt very encouraged by all the cheering for our team. It was a fabulous night and it was all organized by Kevin who is a former teamer and truly a great bloke! Thanks Kevin for all of your support and for being an absolute crack up, truly funny guy. We wish you all God's blessings as you continue to edify the church, working with the youth and congregation at St. Thomas.

I'd also like to thank Pastor Allison for all his support and encouragement. It was my pleasure to give the message at all 4 worship services that we led whilst we were working with the St. Thomas congregation and Pastor Allison encouraged me and affirmed me in that what I had to say was valuable and he took the time to encourage me after each service. Thanks Pastor Allison we will also continue to keep you and the congregation at St. Thomas in our prayers as you all go through this transition period.

We look forward to seeing so many of you that we have met at the upcoming Quakes and construction zones, it's just so exciting to be meeting you knowing that we will meet again!

I will finish off with a short note to tell you that I am super excited as tomorrow is our day off and we are going to New York!!!!!! AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH! I could not be more excited! I have wanted to visit New York for the longest time so my dreams and prayers have been answered and I can't wait...well a bit of sleep would be a good thing so I can make it through the day!!! Hee hee, but I am sure that you will hear from me about our day in the City that never sleeps!

Until then know that I am well again and am thoroughly enjoying this ministry that I have been called to and we as a team are doing well, evolving and continuing to get to know each other and laughing much! So, catch ya later!

Hooroo!
Christie

Date: 10/17/2004

Submitted by: Jeremy Thomas

Journal Entry:

Man, it's funny how God can really show his strength in our times of weakness. Today we got up after only six hours of sleep and took part in leading three worship services in a row. They were all really great, and I enjoyed it all, but not having the kind of sleep that I'd like was hard. Playing three services in a row was hard on my fingers, and I thought they were going to fall off at times, but God got me through.



Jeremy Thomas

The most daunting part of the day was the drive from New Jersey to Long Island, NY. The drive was to take three hours, and we only had four hours max to make the trip, so God was going to need to be in charge of traffic. Even through the six lanes of traffic and the overwhelming mass of cars on the road, we made it safe and sound and on time. It was awesome! We drove through the Bronx and got to see the skyline really well. Most of us had never been there before, so we were all in awe of the sights. It was a lot to take in but tons of fun and really awesome to see how God got us through a tight spot and brought us through like only He could.

Because of Christ,
Jeremy Thomas

Date: 10/19/2004

Submitted by: Jorden Robinson

Journal Entry:

Greetings from your favorite sound tech! Wow! It has been an awesome couple of days. I have the extreme pleasure of getting to talk about our day off in NEW YORK CITY. Which was very cool. If you didn't know, Monday is our much needed day off, and since we were staying in Long Island, NYC was just a short train ride away. Our very cool host mom Kristin acted as our tour guide as we traveled all over the city.

We got to see the Empire State Building, Ground Zero, Central Park, 5th Avenue (oh yeah, I love to shop), Battery Park, Rockefeller Center and lots more. We tried to get in to see a taping of David Letterman because several of my teammates are fans of his, and John Mellencamp was going to be a guest. Cindy is a HUGE John Mellencamp fan. Sadly we were unable to attend the taping of the show, but we did get to see Mellencamp as he was entering the building, so Cindy was thrilled. Yesterday was just a really kickin' day, and we had such a good time.



Jorden Robinson

Today we are traveling back to Maryland. We will spend much of this week working on some new program songs and skits and stuff. That is really all I have to report to y'all today. Until next time, remember to love your sound tech and rock hard for Jesus. God bless y'all.

Date: 10/21/2004

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Wow.....we have been very busy lately, but still rockin' in Jesus, of course! The last few days we were in Westminster, Maryland, and it was a stellar time! On Tuesday we arrived and met our fabulous host families....they just rocked!!! We are so grateful for them for putting up with us for three whole days! Thanks y'all in Westminster!

Wednesday we did our October team outing, and we chose to spend some time in Baltimore checking out the city. It was awesome as many of us are not used to the big cities. We walked around the inner harbor, spent a good amount of time at Barnes and Noble, ate at Fuddruckers, and then finished off our team outing at the ESPN Zone playing games in the arcade and watching the baseball series....go Boston!!! I would have to say that my highlight of the team outing was getting a chance to see Canadian bowling. As some of you may not know, in Canada they have five-pin bowling where they use smaller bowling balls that they grip instead of using finger holes...they had a game in the arcade that represented Canadian bowling, so I couldn't pass up the opportunity. It was a blast, although I didn't do so hot....I blame it on not being used to the unusually small bowling ball. of course.

On Thursday we did our Family Night Program for all our Westminster friends at Grace Lutheran Church after an amazing potluck. It was a bodacious time as the crowd was tons of fun!! Thanks to all you rowdy Westminster people! That church was bumpin!!!

As for me personally, God has just been so good these past two months. I have really enjoyed my time with Captive Free so far and am incredibly grateful for the many blessings God has granted me and our team. We've had amazing host homes, church communities, and sponsors, safe travel, and awesome fellowship with people and each other! We pray that we are able to touch others the way so many have touched us so far in our ministry.

Keep rockin' in Jesus y'all!

Samantha Oscar



Samantha Oscar

Date: 10/23/2004

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Hello friends! So the last few days have been interesting. I knew when we started this that we would be crisscrossing throughout the region, but sometimes it's crazy. We were back on Long Island today. We stayed with a wonderful family- the Fyfes. They are so supportive of our ministry; they have hosted many teams before and really enjoy spending time with us. Thanks Joe, Janis, Nessa and Cody! Friday night we went to their church and lead some games with little kids and then a Bible study with the older kids. We will be back there in about two weeks- yeah for going "home"! We sang a bunch of songs with the little kids- of course, The Hippo Song was on the list. I swear, I will never ever get sick of that song. Baby Hippos are so CUTE! We also played Potato Farmer; a very fun game involving a potato farmer, potatoes and french fries. The Bible study and games with the older kids also went very well. It really is wonderful to connect with kids and know that we will be back soon.

The next day we were off to Connecticut. Holy cow! It is so beautiful; I don't think I can even attempt to describe it. I decided as soon as we got into the state that it's where I want to live when I grow up. We had a FNP in a small little town called Poquonnock Bridge, very beautiful and very historic. I loved it. We started the evening with wonderful fellowship time over great pizza from a local joint, then it was on to our program. It went really well, and the community had a great time. Many of my teammates were approached about their sharings because their stories touched a lot of



Cindy McPeake

people. It's crazy to see how perfect strangers can relate to each other over different things. After the program, we led some games for some of the youth and had a rockin' time. We played some games that helped build trust and community. Their youth group is just starting, and many of the youth are still getting to know each other. Kristin, their youth director, was so thankful for the time we spent together. She said that in the short time we all were together, she could see the difference in some of the kids. Who knew that passing a pitcher around with your feet could build community!?

As far as our team goes, we are doing great. We grow together everyday and have really begun to create deep relationships. I can't believe we have only been together for a couple of months. It seems much longer than that (in a good way)! We are gearing up for a very exciting month of November- we can't wait to see what will happen!

Live Hardcore!
Cindy

Date: 10/24/2004

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Well, Sunday was full of great things!! We were in Noank, Connecticut. and Sam and I enjoyed a beautiful walk around the area to start off the day. We led worship at Noank Baptist Church that morning. The congregation was great and was enthusiastic and involved. Noank was a beautiful town full of big beautiful houses that overlooked the Atlantic. We were very generously cared for by the people in Noank and Pouquonick Bridge. They showered us with lots of gifts including prayer shawls and a shopping spree to the town second hand store. They were extremely generous to us and really made us feel welcome and cared for. After a fun time of getting new clothes from the store, we went back to Kristen and George's house on the beach. We all spent time in their hot tub and had a casual afternoon with some of the youth from both churches. It was great hanging out there with such good company and beautiful surroundings. After everyone enjoyed an afternoon nap, we returned to the church for supper with our host families, and after supper, we split up and went to our respective host homes. I had the pleasure of staying with an amazing girl named Emily. She was so much fun, and we had a lot of things in common. We got to their house and watch the World Series with her little brother, David, and unfortunately the Cardinals lost, but I'm still rooting for them. God has truly blessed us with great people and a great experience in Connecticut. It was my first time there and I totally dug it, especially when it is so beautiful in the fall!! Such great places with such great people and conversation remind me exactly what I'm doing here and what my purpose is here. God's love is showing so brightly through the people that we meet on a daily basis. I hope all you other teams are having just as much fun as we are!! I miss all you Kansas folks and would like to say Happy Halloween to all and Happy Birthday to my Dad!! Thank you for reading, and we hope to hear from some of you soon!!

With God's joy and peace,

Shelly <><



Shelly Schwalm

Date: 10/26/2004

Submitted by: Troy Stevenson

Journal Entry:

Greetings from the Northeast.

Well, we just enjoyed our day off at the Mystic Seaport, and now we are leaving Connecticut for Verona, NY.

The drive was quite long and tiring, but God kept us safe and we arrived on time. Again



Troy Stevenson

we had a chance to meet the people of the church and our host families *before* we put on a family night program. I still find this to be the best way of doing things. It is in these situations that the families and people of the congregation get to know us as people first, as opposed to having to make a first impression through our concert. This way is more relaxed, and I find that I'm more excited to play for people that I have met and have had conversation with.

Team life is changing and growing more and more. Even though it seems to me sometimes that we all have differences of opinion, often leading to conflict, I find that it's not conflict at all. We are actually getting things accomplished when we talk things over, and that makes me feel good. It says to me that our team is past the honeymoon stage and honesty prevails, and I personally appreciate it.

Troy Scott Stevenson

Date: 10/28/2004

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

Hello all!

We have just spent 2 days in Verona, New York and had a wonderful time with our host families and also the church community. We had a fabulous potluck with many members of the church and then led an exciting Family Night Program with one of the funniest puppet shows ever! Troy is a star performer as Skruft the dog, and the kids just love him. And we must mention our beloved Sirmonksalot our monkey who says the funniest lines to our puppet curtain holders!!! Classic show...gets funnier every time!



Christie Lange

It had been a little while since I had done my sharing, and when I was asked to share, I said yes but really did not want to. I was feeling quite weary, and when I thought about what I was to say, I could not think of my progression as usual and how I could most effectively share the Gospel message. As the Family Night Program sneaked closer, I was feeling more and more unsure of myself and what I was to speak about. As I stepped up to microphone I shot up a quick prayer -- it went something like this..."I hope ya got my back tonight!" I spoke with a new truth, vulnerability and clarity, sharing the true message of the Gospel. It's times like these when we doubt ourselves and our abilities that God uses to reassure us of his power and presence.

From Verona we moved on to a Lutheran camp called Son Rise Lutheran Ministries in upstate New York. We arrived and began to set up our sound gear when I heard a voice say my full name...hark, did I really hear an Aussie accent?...why yes, but who is it?...As the person walked towards me and his face came into focus..."It's you!" I yelled...Jon Westphal, a friend from home with whom I have spent many a camp hanging out and working in the Lutheran Youth of Victoria. Jon had been working at Son Rise for the last 6 months as a camp counselor and also Assistant Program Coordinator. Jon had a wonderful experience at Son Rise and wants to be able to work there as Program Coordinator again when he returns to the USA next year after a short time at home in the great Land Down Under!!! It was truly a great thing for the both of us to spend time with another Aussie to hear familiar language and concepts.

Speaking of home...I miss home often and it's not that I am not enjoying all the different experiences of team life and ministry life. In fact, it is the most awesome experience of my life, but I miss my family and friends. I miss my everyday involvement in their lives and theirs in mine. I miss the comfort of old friends knowing me and the feeling of familiarity and the easiness of relationships where things come naturally due to longevity of relationship and level of sharing over many years.

I have this thought that it's silly that I have to fly half way around the world to realize the intense importance of family and how much they mean to me and that the years of troubles in the past really mean nothing when we have the forgiveness and grace of God in our lives. I love my family and want to waste no more time by not telling them so. So, I love you.

As for my friends, they span the world and bring beauty, love and joy to my life. Thank you to you all for sharing yourselves with me, and I pray that you are all well and living life to the full.

That's all for now folks, cheers to ya'll from Long Island, New York!

Date: 10/30/2004

Submitted by: Jorden Robinson

Journal Entry:

Hey y'all! Hope everyone is doing well. I'm good, thanks for asking. Today was fairly awesome! We are at this camp in the Adirondacks called SonRise Lutheran Camp. Now if you know me, you know that I am not a huge fan of camps. It is just really not my "thing". So when we first arrived at SonRise I was kinda like, " This is gonna be horrible, it will be cold and wet, and I'll have to eat icky camp food." But such was not the case here. Actually I had a really awesome time. Now, we arrived on Thursday and the campers came on Friday evening. So the camp really didn't kick off majorly until Saturday.

Saturday was broken up into many different activities. We had break out sessions, which are like little classes where you can learn about puppetry or the Bible etc, etc. Cindy, Christie, Sam and I were in charge of the sessions on leading games. We each took turns leading a game and explaining how the game worked and why we play it. One of the reasons we play games is because they are fun, but another is because they use teamwork, communication and so on and so forth. So that was really exciting because I have never led a game before. We also had some Bible studies and sang some praise and worship songs.

This evening we did our family night program. It was fun because the campers had an opportunity to learn some of the sing-a-longs before the program and were able to really get into it. Afterwards we all got to hang out and just chat. I spent a long time talking with a group of girls and their youth pastor who drove 5 ½ hours just to come to the camp. That is so incredible! That is a really long time to spend in a van. It is really encouraging to see so many young people so very eager to worship God.

So despite my earlier misgivings about camp, it turned out to be one of the best experiences I have had on the road thus far. And the food was actually very tasty. Kudos to the staff at SonRise. I have to go now, but it won't be long until you hear from me again.

Love God and have fun
-Jorden



Jorden Robinson

Date: 10/31/2004

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Happy Halloween everyone!!! I'd have to say, it doesn't seem like Halloween around here without trick-or treaters and costumes. We are all hanging out here at Sonrise Camp in Pottersville, New York watching some movies. Christie just cooked us a scrumptious meal....mmmmm...it was soooo good! We've been here since Thursday doing a weekend retreat with 6th-8th graders....it's been a blast!! Today was a great day as we finished up the weekend retreat this afternoon. We led a worship service with the campers and the usual weekly congregation. It was a good time of fellowship, worship and sharing! They were such a fun group! Saying good-byes afterwards was hard because we met some amazing people this weekend whom we will definitely miss. It is incredible how attached we can become to people in just a few days. God is so wonderful bringing so many fabulous people into our lives!

Since everyone left, we've just been hanging out and relaxing. We are all pretty tired from the eventful weekend...however, we all agree that it was so worth it!! Thanks to everyone at



Samantha Oscar

Sonrise and also to the campers and congregation for the memorable weekend!

Right now I am personally excited with the way God is molding me to be more flexible with planning. I am someone who likes to know plans way ahead of time or I get stressed out and worried. Being on the road and not knowing what to expect in so many situations is really good for me, and I am excited to see how God will continue to form me into a more flexible and less structured person in areas where it's needed. For once in my life, I am comfortable not knowing exactly what I am going to be doing five years in advance (that is a bit exaggerated). God is so good! Happy Halloween to you all again and may God bless you all!

Of course....keep rockin' in Jesus!

Sam Oscar

P.S. I want to say a big I LOVE YOU to my amazing friends and family!!! I miss you all a lot and can't wait to see you at Christmas break!

Date: 11/2/2004

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Ah yes, another installment of journal time with Cindy. We are currently leaving or at least on our way out from Sonrise Camp, a lovely place located in the Adirondack National Forest. It was quite a nifty stay. The retreat over the weekend was just grand. There is nothing better than hanging out with a bunch of middle schoolers in the middle of nowhere. Every time I get to a camp and see kids change in a short time, I am reminded why camp has been such an important part of my life and how excited I am to finally be a camp counselor full time. It also reminds me that it is definitely not the length of time you spend with people, but the quality of time you spend with people. Though it can sometimes be the hardest part of being on team- being in one place for only a short period of time - it is also comforting to know that we can impact lives in such a short time.

Though the weekend was wonderful and fun, there was a definite calm over me and the rest of the team after everyone had gone back to their respective cities. Alone once again. I never really considered myself to be an alone time person, but I relished the secluded atmosphere of the camp and was uber grateful that we were able to spend our day off there. We watched some movies and hung out as a team. Monday night Christie, Troy and Jorden made dinner for us. A true Aussie meal (Jerm made the salad - it was good, too), or at least as close to one as we can get in the middle of the forest in upstate New York. It was wonderful team time and felt normal. That was grand! We also had a considerable amount of alone time. I woke up in the morning and sat on the deck listening to music and reading a book. Later in the afternoon I took a long hike into the mountains to explore. It was super beautiful. I saw the sunset over the mountains. It was a great time to reconnect with myself and work through things in my head. I could use a day like that every week!

Tuesday (Election Day, if you will) was full-on driving the whole day, literally. We started at 11 am and arrived at our destination around 6 pm. We were met by wonderful people in Fort Salonga, Long Island who understood that sometimes it stinks to drive in New York with a trailer. Though I will admit the drive was made longer by a few mix ups by the navigator (that would be me). We got turned around in the Bronx. Now, I am not from a small city by any means, but I was slightly nervous. I put on a happy face, though, and we made it out just fine =)! That night we ate out with some of our hosts and other people from the congregation, and then headed to the host homes for the night. Christie and I stayed together this time. We had a wonderful host home with super good hot chocolate and good conversations. I look forward to spending more time with them while we are here.

That's all I got for now. Stay tuned!
Live Hardcore!
Cindy



Cindy McPeake

Date: 11/7/2004
Submitted by: Christie Lange
Journal Entry:



Christie Lange

Working Hard...

What a week! We have been quite busy this week and have had some long drives, back to back lock in's and many worship services! Physically I have been extremely tired and stretched, with minimal sleep and no showers for days. Thank God for days off! Monday I was able to sleep in until 12.30pm and then snuggle on the couch at my host home with their cat watching TV! It was such a relaxing day.

Preach it Sister...

Sunday morning we were up bright and early for worship at 8am, then singing and doing a puppet show for Sunday School at 9.30am. After that we had a small break and then the 11am worship service. Another great experience with my words as the message reaching people where they were and encouraging people to trust that God wants good things for our lives, that He created us for the sole purpose of loving us and for us to love Him and to take everything to Him good and bad and know that He will hear and answer us.

Little Angels...

The highlight of the lock in for me, was the interactive bible study and the group time afterwards. The group really got into the Luke story of Jesus calming the storm and Troy led it for the first time and did a great job. The group time afterwards was amazing. I had a group of four 11-13 year olds. We talked and shared about the storms and troubles we have experienced in our lives. I am always so humbled when younger people than myself, well really anyone, feels comfortable to share their stories with me and again this group shared not only their stories of storms but their hearts and souls. I felt truly connected to my little brothers and sisters and was able to speak into their lives and speak the truth of the Gospel and the love that God has for them. I shared with them my recollections of parts of The Divine Romance, a book written from the perspective of the angels and the image of the angels collecting all the sin and evil in the world and dumping it into Jesus chest. Then the angels bring death kicking and screaming to Jesus and heave him into Jesus chest. Jesus dies. Then the miraculous happens and 3 days later Jesus rises. All sin and evil, dominions and powers, demons and Satan...no longer exist, all conquered. Death thought he had won and had laughed insidiously upon the Son of God's last breath, but the power of God is beyond death and so death no longer holds

anything in it's grip!

I met a guy in Minnesota at a camp and he wrote in my fuzzie journal that he was so pleased to have met me and that he was so excited to see me again when we meet again in heaven and sing together in the divine choir! I shared this with my little friends and upon my little friend Moo leaving the next morning he ran home and got his Koala puppet that he has had since he was tiny and gave it to me as a parting gift and with his words "if I don't see you at the Quake I'll see you in heaven." My reply..."where we will sing together in the divine choir."

Gifts from God...

I have such a gift from God and it is this opportunity for ministry this entire year and for the rest of my life. Some days I do not realize the effect that I have on the lives of my brothers and sisters in Christ and it is through experiences like my little angels in Philadelphia, that God shows me the good things he is doing through me and for me. I want to say thanks to the St. Johns congregation in Philadelphia and to Pastor Lee for all the encouragement, support and love. Pastor Lee rocks hard and it certainly was a great sight to a dude in funny clothes doing the actions to "The Way"!!!!

Love to you all my family and friends!
Christie

Date: 1/5/2005

Submitted by: Troy Stevenson

Journal Entry:

Hello, hello!

G'day from Baltimore, Maryland. Having a rockin time here at the Baltimore Quake number two, and it's super fun! We get to lead the kids in worship all day long, and we enjoy spending time with them. Still in awe about playing through an enormous sound system, which makes it very enjoyable for a drummer like me. There are a lot of great ministry opportunities at these Quakes and a lot of quality time to be spent with the kids during family time. We as a team are super busy running around doing things, and we get a little bit worn out. I am still battling a cold, and it's taking its toll, but the Quake is fun and will get me through.

Troy Scott Stevenson



Troy Stevenson

Date: 1/11/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Greetings, friends and neighbors! Captive Free North East is back on the road again and looking forward to an excellent Events season. Here we go with a quick recap on all the goings-on of us!

A few days after Christmas found us back in the Cities for a little regrouping with some other teams and a delightful training session with the Events crew. We are so excited for the upcoming Events, and learning about how they run and what to expect only increased the anticipation.



Cindy McPeake

We headed out a few days later to Pennsylvania for New Year's. We had very long driving days, but time to hang out at night. This was really good for the team, and me especially. The general consensus is that Easter Break is way too far away, and it was good to share those feelings with the team and to know that they were normal feelings. We are all wary of being on the road and the thought of spending so much time together was daunting. However, having time to just hang out and not have to be "on" for a few days helped us out tremendously.

Our first program was in Duncansville, PA. We spent the New Year with them and had a very fun time. We got to play games with some kids right up until midnight and then welcome the new year in with a worship service. This stop definitely prepared us for the upcoming leg of our year. We are starting to get into the swing of things again, and it's wonderful!

The following week was spent in Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland. Shelly, Christie and I stayed in a wonderful host home. They had been missionaries for six years in Tanzania in the early 70's and continue to go back every few years to help over there. They were such inspirations to us and could totally relate to traveling and spreading the Good News to the world. They were fantastic people and a great resource for us. They knew what it was like and knew how to give us the renewal and passion for this ministry again. Plus, they cooked us a meal from Tanzania which was uber delicious! We headed to Virginia next (my first time there) and just had a great time. The youth group was so much fun to hang out with, and we are really looking forward seeing them again (hint hint!). The day before the program was spent learning new songs for the worships and celebrations at the upcoming Quakes. We are all getting very very very very excited for the Quakes! The next day we headed to Maryland and got to hang out with Megan from CFEL 2003-2004. She is so cool and we love her. We were so blessed to worship with her church group on Thursday night. It was a very moving experience for us and we were touched by that time of worship.

Finally! The first Quake was upon us! It went so well. But we were terrified. There were so many people there and so many opportunities for us to build relationships with people. It was so great to see the kids gradually get more excited as the weekend went on. Here was the best part of the weekend...hold on to your hats!! I was so blessed to be a part of a family night on Saturday night. The group was wonderful. I met this young woman from Russia who has incredible faith. I asked how she got to America, and she said that she was adopted. She had lived in an orphanage most of her life, but about three years before her adoption she starting praying to be adopted. She prayed for three years, and finally, God brought her adopted parents into her life. She firmly believes that God brought them together, though for three years the others at the orphanage said she and her sister would never be adopted. Now she is so excited to be done with school and start traveling back to Russia to be a missionary there in orphanages. It was so incredible to see and experience her faith! The rest of the Quake was awesome, but that was definitely a highlight.

We are now in Westminster, MD (one of our favorite places) for a few days to renew friendships and get some much needed sleep before our next Quake.

Hope all is well with you all--God bless!
Live Hardcore!
Cindy

Date: 1/13/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

So we're back on the road and back in full swing!! We've done a Quake and been to several churches already. It's been busy since our return from Christmas break, but

we're finally getting back into our routine. Yesterday was Cindy's birthday!! It was exciting for us! Birthdays are always special days with your teammates. It's hard for them to be away on a special occasion, and it's our opportunity to make it special for them. We surprised Cindy with a couple of gift,s and when we got to the church in Gilbertsville, PA, there was a cake there waiting for Cindy that her mom had sent!! She was so surprised!! The church also gave her a little teddy bear. During our program, we also graced Cindy with the traditional Youth Encounter birthday dance, which was a blast in itself. Sometimes it takes those special days to really see how God blesses us through the people that we visit and through each other as teammates!! We meet so many people and go so many different places, and it's always good to be reminded how much each and every one of those people does for us. We get fed, housed, given different items and so much more!! Thank you to all of you who have so richly blessed us and other teams while on the road!! It means more than we could ever tell you!! As for my teammates, we are lucky to have each other as well!! I have been blessed with such a special team, and I see that now more than ever before. My teammates are great at looking out for each other and always trying to do what's right and what's best for the team. We also know how to kick back and have a good time together too, which is always a plus since we are coworkers, band mates, friends and family all rolled into one. I can't express how much I've grown to care about my teammates. They keep me sane (some times drive me crazy J), hold me accountable, cheer me up when I'm down, let me know when I've done something well, and always encourage me to keep growing. Christie listens to me, Sam gives me encouragement just when I need it, Jorden is always thinking of me, Cindy keeps me on track and organized, Jeremy gives me new perspective, Troy puts a smile on my face, and their hugs and prayers get me through the toughest days. It is so hard to explain what team is like, but I have never been so close to a group of people outside of my family as I am to my team. So to Christie, Jeremy, Cindy, Jorden, Sam, and Troy, I love you guys and I'm so glad to be in ministry with you. Thanks for all of the ministry that you do for me. Through good times and bad, we get through together. I am so grateful for all that you bring to my life. God has blessed me with you guys, and I'm so glad He has!!



Shelly Schwalm

Shelly

Date: 1/18/2005

Submitted by: Jeremy Thomas

Journal Entry:

So after another totally awesome Quake in Baltimore, we got a much needed day off. As luck would have it we got to go back to Westminster, MD, which is were we stayed last weekend as well. It's always fun to stay somewhere familiar ,and as we were there just seven days before, it was still really familiar and made for a relaxing day off.

It's such a blessing when host families want to help us enjoy our day off. Sometimes that means they're willing to just let us sleep in, and other times it's providing fun options that we don't normally get to do. This weekend my host family gave me a chance to go snowboarding, and it was so wonderful. Back home I love to go snowboarding, but being on the road, with a minimum of time and space, I have no way to go and transport any of my gear. This was the only chance I have had yet...and I don't foresee many other opportunities to go. So I took full advantage of it and had such a great time. I really can't stress enough just how great a day that was.

Jeremy



Jeremy Thomas

Date: 1/19/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

G'day! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all! Since it's been such a long time that you have heard from me, I thought I'd tell ya a few yarns from my holidays and comin' back on team!!

Midwinter Training...

We spent a glorious week all together as a giant team (all 13 teams!!) in McGregor, a small town in northern Minnesota. All the teams came back together after our first leg of ministry and life on the road! It was a good time of debriefing and evaluating our ministry, our jobs, team relationship building, checking our relationship with God, and spiritual renewal.



Christie Lange

I realized that I am truly an extrovert, not that I didn't know that already ;), but my batteries we recharged to full within a day of being back with my community of teamers. The familiarity of faces and the comfort of friendships brought much joy and laughter, stories of van rides and the beauties of our ministry. I spent time with friends that I had made at the beginning of our year and spent much time making new friends that had only been names and faces at the beginning of the year. The teams of 2004 – 2005 are so rich with people of depth, strength, humour and love.

The other highlight of Mid-winter training for me was that there was about 6 inches of snow on the ground!!! And it continued to snow over a few days that we were there. We had an afternoon of solitude to spend time reflecting and meditating, and whilst I was on my way to pick up my lunch, the snow began to fall peacefully to the ground. It was a calm day, the snow falling like feathers and a peace that I have never experienced in nature before. It is a beautiful thing to experience all aspects of God's creation and northern Minnesota was blessed that day!

Christmas Holidays...I had a lovely time over Christmas, a white Christmas at that! It was the coldest weather I have ever experienced--at one stage it was approximately -20 degrees Celsius. On the coldest day of the year, our furnace broke down and believe it or not, it was two days before Christmas! The family that I was staying with spent hours on the phone arranging to have it repaired, and as it turned out, a new furnace was required and we were the last family on the list that was able to get help. So, we were back in action and warmed up! We had three family Christmas celebrations and went to the midnight service at the Upper Room--a church where around 900 people attend every Sunday night for contemporary worship. Being a foreigner in another country away from my family and friends, family traditions and familiar surrounds, it was there in amongst 900 strangers that I knew peace. I felt part of a family; I knew God's presence in my life. It doesn't matter that I am on the other side of the world from all things I know, I am part of the family of God and His Kingdom is here and now all over the world.

Team Time...Being back on the road is great! We have Events each weekend, and we are now at our second Event. Youth Quakes ROCK!!! I have been having a really great time and enjoying the time that I spend with the junior leaders throughout the weekend. It is so encouraging to see the amount of junior leaders that are supporting their youth groups and giving of themselves to befriend and mentor kids younger than them in their churches. I want to thank all the junior leaders for their willingness to serve and to learn about leading, bettering themselves for the glory of God.

I wanted to say G'day to Bethel Lutheran Church and thank you for having me at your family times. Relationships are so important and to see how you interact with each other, share, support, pray , love and have fun with each other is an encouragement. I pray that you continue to care for each other and I look forward to visiting your church and seeing how you are all doing! Cheers!

It is an amazing thing to have 600 voices raising the roof and singing praise to God! Thanks to all the churches that participated this weekend in the Baltimore Quake; we hope that you all had great fun, but more importantly learned much about God and how he is always here for you, especially when times get rough and storms are upon us. Remember--he desires great things for you, is preparing a room for you, and until then, wants you to have a relationship with him, which is a joyous and beautiful thing.

So, I must be off and sleep. Until next time, live and love well!

Cheers
Christie

Date: 1/20/2005

Submitted by: Jorden Robinson

Journal Entry:

Hello friends!!! I hope this entry finds you well and hearty! I'm in an exceptionally good mood right now, which probably has something to do with today's activities. We left Fords, NJ and traveled to Chambersburg, PA. It wasn't an eventful drive, and we were only in town for housing, but it was still fun. Our lovely contact Sharron took us out to eat and then treated us to a movie. I love movies, so it kinda made my day. We saw "Coach Carter." It was cute--Shelly loved it because she loves basketball and hiphop and those were two big themes in the movie. It was a lot of fun to just hang out and "chill." It was a great way to relax before the quake this weekend. It rejuvenated us and we really needed that. So I am super excited for the quake and I hope to see a lot of y'all there. Have fun, be safe and God bless.

-Jorden



Jorden Robinson

Date: 1/22/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Well, we left Chambersburg Friday morning after devotions and headed to Harrisburg, PA for our third weekend Youth Quake in a row. Chambersburg rocked! We had a good time just relaxing and resting up for the Quake. So, we got to the Quake and set up and settled in before the youth arrived. About half of our team was struggling with colds, so it was a little harder to be enthusiastic, but everyone stepped it up and we had a good time with this weekend. There was quite a bit of snow in PA so some churches cancelled and didn't come, and as a result it was a little smaller than the two Baltimore Quakes we had the two weekends before. Our team really enjoys the Quakes because they're a change from the regular routine of Family Night Programs, we get to stay in a nice hotel, and we get to hang out with hundreds of people who are excited about God! Although we're pretty tired by the end of the weekend, it's all worth it! Daniel's Window and Captive Free North East (us, of course) were the bands there and Dan Scharnhorst was the speaker. Dan had some awesome stories and was a very entertaining and fun guy to hang out with, and Daniel's Window is a very talented band. Thanks for the great time, guys!

We're about half-way done with our year on team, which is crazy to think about when I look back...it seems to be going by fairly quickly. Then, on the other hand...when I look ahead, six and a half months is still quite a bit of time left. I still love going to different places about every other day and just never quite knowing what the next day will bring. Meeting new people and seeing different places is such a great experience, and I am so thankful for the opportunity to be here. God has been so wonderful by blessing us with such safe travel, wonderful host homes, and beautiful communities and places to visit.

For me personally, I have really seen God mold me these past six months. I have definitely been humbled in the sense that stage time at Events and at churches is my least favorite part of this year. I enjoy being on stage, but many times I find myself just wanting to be interacting with the youth and families that come to see us. The time spent with others has become so precious and valuable to me. I often find it hard to leave places, but I know there are many more amazing people out there that God has for us to minister to and learn from ourselves.

God bless you all...thanks for reading...and just keep rockin' in Jesus y'all!



Samantha Oscar

Date: 1/23/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

All right. So, the Harrisburg Quake is over, and man, it was rough for a lot of us.

The team as a whole is coming down or just getting over a pretty bad cold. Most of us were sick over the weekend and weren't at the top of our game. This is the third weekend in a row that we have had a Quake, and exhaustion is quickly taking hold of us. We are looking forward to a day of rest. We head to Ambler, PA today. We don't have a program tonight, so we get to hang out with our host families all night. We will be heading back here for VBS later in the year, and it's cool to meet them before that.

My host family is really cool. They are totally into Captive Free and have a bunch of funny stories from other teams in previous years. I must have a sign on my forehead that says "I want to go to Africa," because every place I go seems to have a connection with Africa. My host dad, whom I didn't meet, travels to Kenya once a year to help out with a rhino conservation project, and the parents plan to move there as soon as their kids are in college. It was fabulous to hear stories of Africa!

Hopefully our day will provide enough rest for all of us so that we are healthy for the upcoming week and for our last Quake in New England (at least our last Quake for a while)!

Live hardcore!

Cindy



Cindy McPeake

Date: 1/25/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Wow!! What a day we've had. There's so much to tell you about. So we started off in Ambler, PA. We left the church there around noon and headed north toward Connecticut. This means we had to drive through New York City, which was not a problem and we got through it with ease. The trouble came when we actually got to the town in Connecticut we were supposed to go to, Westport. We got a little turned around thanks to my superb navigating skills. We ended up on a dead end street where we had to turn around in someone's driveway. Pulling in the driveway was not a problem, but since it was at a decline, pulling out was another story. We were stuck in the snow and the girls and Jeremy even tried to push it out while Troy backed it up, but it didn't work. I tried calling AAA, but they wouldn't cover it because the vehicle was too big for the coverage I have, so we had to get it out ourselves. A neighbor came out and supplied us with a shovel and some salt. About an hour of maneuvering later, we freed our humble abode on wheels from the snow in a driveway. Praise God!! Thank goodness for not having a program!! It all worked out. It was a good time and a good story to tell. On the road with Captive Free North East...the adventures never cease!!

Stay warm!!

Shelly :D

Ps. 30:10-12



Shelly Schwalm

Date: 1/30/2005

Submitted by: Jeremy Thomas

Journal Entry:

Oh, the New England Quake...what can I say? It was awesome! The kids this weekend were so fabulous, and a ton of fun to be around. It's so refreshing to have an Event where the kids get into the sing-a-longs, the speaker is appealing to the students, and God is truly worshiped through the weekend. When it was all said and done, we were exhausted and ready for a break, but for the first time in four weeks, we had a program after an event. We'd really grown accustomed to having Sunday nights off, so this was a bit of a test of our endurance...but as always, God was faithful to provide the energy that was needed to both set up and perform. From there, it was on to host homes for a much needed day off...and a bunch of sleep. Next week looks like it'll be a bunch of fun as we get to reconnect with people we've seen before Christmas.



Jeremy Thomas

Date: 2/3/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

New Jersey! Yesterday we were at one of our favorite places we've been so far this year...it is sooo beautiful! We were lucky enough to be able to go back there to see our good friends from Noank! You guys are tons of fun! We had such a good day yesterday relaxing in the hot tub outside while checking out the beautiful ocean view! We were pretty worn out from all the Quakes we've been to lately, and it was incredibly nice to be able to relax. Later we watched a movie and ate pizza with youth from the church. It was so nice to see them again and catch up on what has happened since we were last there. It is always so nice to see familiar faces. God just continually amazes me with the loving, supportive, and generous people He puts in our path. Today we were in Fair Lawn, New Jersey where we played a family night program. It was a real good time. The people were real energetic and happy to be there! They were a real encouragement to us and our ministry. Our contact was actually the parent of a past team member, which is always a blessing. I had a wonderful time at my host home talking with my host parents about miracles God has brought them in their lives. Thanks so much....you were both such a huge blessing to me!



Samantha Oscar

Date: 2/5/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Hello young and old!

We just spent a lovely time with the kids of the West Berks Mission District in Reading, PA. It was delightful. We arrived on Friday night to set up and eat dinner with the youth director then headed off to host homes. The next day filled with fun. They were having a retreat weekend for their youth--it was just like a Quake, only smaller. We did some "power" sessions with them--lots of sing-a-longs and such. I love singing with middle schoolers; it takes them a while to warm up to the songs, but sooner or later they are doing the actions. Then we all broke into small groups for sessions. We led a "meet the band" type session. It was very cool to hear all the questions they had for us. They ranged from "What color do you like" to "What has impacted you the most while on team". It was really interesting to hear my teammates' answers and stories. I think sometimes we don't take the time to really process the time we have spent on the road and really look at how God has been working in us. We have all grown so much in the past six months--who knows what will happen in the next six months? It was refreshing to take a step back and examine our lives for a while. Later that night we did a program for them. It's so different to worship with people that you have spent the day with. It was nice to have that connection with them.

We are looking forward to hanging out with host homes for the Super Bowl and chillin' on Monday. Go Patriots!

Live Hardcore!
Cindy



Cindy McPeake

Date: 2/6/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

It's Super Bowl Sunday!! We're in Reading, PA!! So today was a day of worship

services, Sunday School sing-a-longs, sleep, and football. After the closing sessions of the retreat we did in Reading this weekend, we went back to our host homes and I crashed for about four hours. It was great!! I woke up just in time to catch about an hour of pre-game and Super Bowl miscellaneous. All this Super Bowl stuff made me think. How many millions of people watch the Super Bowl each year and get so excited about it? How many people display shirts, banners, and tons of sports memorabilia to show their loyalty to their team? The number is very high. Then after the game is done, how many people are disappointed that their team lost or the commercials or half-time show wasn't as great as they expected it to be? I'd say quite a few. So many people, including myself, get wrapped up in things like the Super Bowl, only to be disappointed in the end. What if we got that excited about our relationship with God? Everyday could be like the Super Bowl for us! As Christians, we can be excited about what Jesus has done for each one of us and we can know that we will never be disappointed by His love and His grace. The day we get to heaven, we won't have to say, "Man, I wish that this was as good as it was hyped up to be." God is bigger than we could ever know, and His love for us is always sufficient no matter what! He's so big that the pre-heaven hype will never be as awesome as the real thing!! So get excited!! Be excited about your relationship with God and your future in heaven because I guarantee it will be better than Paul McCartney at half-time!



Shelly Schwalm

God's peace, joy and love,

Shelly

Date: 2/8/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

Hey there!

Reflections on Ash Wednesday in Catonsville, Maryland: we attended the Ash Wednesday service at Catonsville and participated in a service, which focused on the fact that God created us and provides for us. Also Lent has begun, and we use this time to turn away from our sins and come back to God. A time to reflect on our lives, areas of weaknesses, and where God can help to free us from our burdens of life and sin.



Christie Lange

It was a great service, and I was touched by the fact that we sang a hymn that has much meaning to me in my life called "Abide With Me." It is an old hymn that we sang at my church as part of the strings band, and my friend Sue did arrangements for it so that we could play it the week after the Twin Towers were hit by the planes as a tribute to all the people who had perished. It has also been a strong reminder that God is always there for me even when things are really bad and I have trouble seeing any hope.

The choir at Catonsville also sang at the service and did a lovely job; it was nice to hear some very beautiful songs sung by them.

I wanted to say thanks to my host family in Catonsville, too! You guys were just so much fun to live with for a few days, and I thoroughly enjoyed all our conversations and sharing our stories! You have been a blessing and a delight in my life, cheers!!!

The next day we were on the road again to Virginia Beach, Virginia, where we stayed with Jenny Muth's family (Jenny is on Kindred). It was so lovely to be surprised by a family of our fellow teamer, and I was lucky to stay in Jenny's room! We had the night off so some of my teammates went to the movies, Sam and Jeremy went out to catch up with one of Sam's friends who lives locally, and Shelly and I sat on Jenny's bedroom floor. I scrapbooked some of the photographs I have taken whilst here, and Shelly made Valentine cards for some of her friends on other teams! It was nice to sit and spend time with Shelly and really talk as we haven't had many opportunities to really talk since Christmas as January has been so busy with Quakes. So, we enjoyed getting our relationship up to speed and investing time into each other, whilst being creative at the same time!

I really miss the freedom of being able to do creative things like I used to at home. I was able to leave my stuff on the kitchen table or on my bedroom floor and come back to it at any time. Things are more restricted, and I am taking advantage of any time I have to sit down and spread my coloured paper around a room and be creative! I think Shelly and I spent about six or seven hours in total with a dinner break in between!! It was lovely! Thanks to the Muth family for putting all seven of us up and for spending time with us. We really enjoyed our stay and were just so excited to meet the family of a teamer!

Well, that's all from me today. I hope you are all well and living and loving the life that you have been given!

Cheers, Christie

Date: 2/12/2005

Submitted by: Jorden Robinson

Journal Entry:

Hello again! Today we are in Dale City, Virginia, at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant. We had dinner and a program tonight, which was pretty fun. It was an absolutely beautiful day today, but it got fairly cold tonight. We were all at separate host home, except the boys. My home rocked. I'm staying with the pastor and his family, and they are all really fun and easy to talk to. I can't wait to spend the next few days hanging out with them and getting to know them. Sorry this is so short. Until next time God bless and rock hard!

-Jorden



Jorden Robinson

Date: 2/13/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Hi there everyone! It's already February, and it's halfway done at that. Wow! Time flies when you're busy in the North East! We are in Dale City, Virginia right now and these people are amazing--so generous, loving and supportive. They truly are a huge blessing to us. This morning, we had two worship services here where we played during communion and offering. It was nice to do our part but also be able to participate in the worship service as well. In between the two services, some of us attended the adult Bible Study. It was great to participate in that, too, and get some insight on the book of Acts. After the second worship service, we all went to our host homes. All of us were separate except for the two guys were together. We all had such fun host homes, and none of us are looking forward to having to leave this place. Sunday I relaxed and spent time with my host family watching movies, playing games, and talking. It was a good day and so nice to just be able to relax and enjoy great times with my host family. I also got a chance to talk to some people from home, which added to the lovely day. Tomorrow for our day off, some of us are heading to Washington, D.C., and I am sure excited for that! Although I have really missed home lately and the familiarity of family and friends, God has sure provided me with wonderful host families and congregations to help me out! What wonderful timing God has! Happy Valentine's Day, everyone, and may you all feel the incredible love of Christ this holiday! God bless you all, and as always...keep rockin' with JC!

Sam



Samantha Oscar

Date: 2/15/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Hey Folks!

Hope everyone is having a delicious February--I know North East is having a great time! We are in Dale City, Virginia, right outside of Washington, D.C. We all thought really hard about going into the city for another look around on Monday, but plans definitely changed when the weather was stormy. Most of us hung out at host homes for the day off. I think the most amazing part of team life is host homes. When I look back on team and think of what has had the greatest impact on me, it will definitely be host homes. On the road we meet hundreds of people that open their homes to us and say "WELCOME!!!" It is so incredible to me. They have all been such a blessing to our team and ministry this year. I had a fantastic host home. They were so welcoming and loving. I felt right at home; we had awesome talks and good laughs. It was like being back home again. And, as an added bonus, they had a hot tub. Troy came over, and we hung for a while until we got too hot and then went inside for yummy ice cream. Troy was in heaven, too, because my host dad had a '66 (I think) Mustang they looked at for about 45 minutes--crazy! The whole family was awesome and I really enjoyed my time there. God bless you, Cupls!



Cindy McPeake

Live Hardcore!
Cindy

Date: 2/17/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Hello friends and neighbors!!

So we have had a rockin' last couple of days!! We just came from our friend Megan's house where we had a blast and then headed off to Robesonia, PA!! This was very exciting for us because we've been there before, and we also got to hang out with that youth group at the Construction Zone in the Poconos!! They are an awesome group of kids, and once again, we had a blast with them!! I had the experience of learning a new version of rock-paper-scissors at dinner called volcano-earthquake-lightning. It was very interesting, and it's the new craze that's sweeping the nation--well, at least their local school. After dinner, we led our Lenten worship service, and as I came into the sanctuary I was shocked and amazed to see a familiar face in the congregation. My cousin, Stacy, came from three hours away to see me!! I haven't seen her in a few years and was totally surprised when I saw her there in Robesonia. We didn't get to talk long, but just to know that she cared enough to drive far to come see me was awesome!! God knows exactly when we could use a hug and a smile from someone we love dearly. We also got to hang out with Val and Andrea and their parents, which was a rockin' good time! Sam and I stayed with them the first time, and it was great to catch up. They even got the awesome experience of watching us do our new Tae-Bo DVD for the first time. Needless to say, there was a lot of laughing involved. Time always flies while we're in Robesonia because we have such a good time there!! Between coming back to a familiar place, seeing my cousin, and doing Tae-Bo, I'm doing pretty darn good!! Thanks guys!! We headed off this morning to Suffern, NY and did a program there. There was a bunch of high school kids we got to hang out with, and it was cool. We're heading off to Allentown tomorrow, and we're ready for the big Quake there!!



Shelly Schwalm

Kickin' it for Christ,

Shelly :D

Date: 2/19/2005

Submitted by: Troy Stevenson

Journal Entry:

Hey friends, Troy here to report on the Allentown Quake...it ROCKED!!! It was just a great weekend for all, and everyone was so pumped up for it. I'm just amazed at every quake because there are so many ministry opportunities. Staff gets to eat meals with

youth groups who invite them, and just hanging out with the kids is a blast. Also, we share their Family Times with them, which is also fun. Bottom line is that Quakes are fun for kids and everyone who attends or helps out.

Troy Scott Stevenson Outie!!!



Troy Stevenson

Date: 2/20/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:



Christie Lange

Aaaahh! Sunday at the Allentown Quake! Allentown was a happening place on the weekend where 300 junior high guys and gals gathered to praise God, learn more about their relationship with him, and get to know other Christians around the same age. I love Sunday morning of the Quake, apart from the fact that the kids look terribly tired from staying up all night! Sunday morning is the time when the message of the entire weekend comes to a crescendo and everyone has had some time to think about how God is working in their lives. Sunday morning everyone knows all the songs and is just so excited to be able to be together worshipping as a big group.

Sunday morning we also do a mini-concert where we perform songs from our family night program and share some stories from our lives with the kids. I found this Sunday morning to be particularly moving, and I felt like many people really heard our message of how God does care and how he is always here for us no matter what we are going through.

I was honored to work with another fabulous group of Junior Guides and was blessed to sit in on a Family Time that three of them led together. They did such a fantastic job and have great potential to become caring, encouraging and influential leaders. I was able to spend some time with them after Family Time finished to give some feedback and help guide them further into becoming awesome leaders, and I just want to tell them that they did a wonderful job with the group and are women of great heart and spirit.

The other highlight for me was seeing one of my most favourite pastors from Philly and two of my most favourite kids that I have met on the road so far! I have just been so lucky to have struck up a fabulous relationship with these wonderful people, and all of them have taught me so much. Being on the road and traveling to so many places, we meet thousands of people, and each person I meet contributes just a little more to my life that I would not have had except for this experience. I pray that I am able to contribute to their lives as well and leave them knowing that God is taking care of them and nurturing them in his love and grace.

The Allentown Quake will be one that I will remember for the rest of my life as a place that I experienced the Spirit moving through us like someone walking through a crowd lightly touching everyone on the shoulder. It was a lovely experience, and I thank Him for the opportunity to be involved in such a weekend.

Psalm 138...Read it!

Cheers, Christie

Date: 3/1/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Well, friends, today we came to a place called Gaithersburg, MD. We got there and got set up. We had a dinner with people from the congregation and got to spend some time talking with them. It was a very involved crowd, and they had a lot of fun with the

sing-a-longs and other songs in the program. This was our second program that we did without Christie, and it went a bit better than the first time without her, but it was still strange not having her there. Afterwards, I got to stay with an amazing host family. They were telling me all about when they lived in England. Their daughter was very excited about the Side By Side opportunities and really wants to get involved in it this summer. After my host family went to bed, I checked my email and went on the YE website only to find that a future teamer, Judy, had emailed me and was very excited about being called to team!! She had so many questions and was just bursting with anticipation and excitement for the upcoming year. I love hearing from these future teamers for the upcoming year. It reminds me of my excitement coming into this year and helps me remember exactly why I wanted to do this when I'm struggling through a tough day. It brought me to a verse from 2 Thessalonians 3:13. "And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right." Especially while we're all anticipating an upcoming rest, it's good to be reminded of how excited I should be to be working for the Lord every single day!!



Shelly Schwalm

Kickin' it for Christ,

Shelly :D

Date: 3/2/2005

Submitted by: Troy Stevenson

Journal Entry:

On the road again heading down to Newport News, near Virginia Beach. Before we could leave though we always have our team huddle and morning devotion, which is fun.

When we arrived in Newport News, we discovered that the electrical plug for our trailer brake lights had fallen off. It was totally destroyed, and it wasn't working anymore. It's kind of frustrating because we always put the plug in with the lock on it, but this is the second time it has fallen out, and I don't know how to keep it in. But I'll get it fixed and it'll be fine.



Troy Stevenson

After setting up for our program we had a really awesome dinner with tacos and more tacos. It was awesome. Our program went really well and it was so fun. Then to host homes after that, and a good night.

Troy out!

Date: 3/6/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Wow, Virginia Beach was totally awesome! It was tiring and we didn't get too much sleep, but all in all it was a really great weekend. I got a chance to reconnect with some of the youth from churches we've been to recently. A special shout out to all the folks from Flemington, NJ because you guys totally rock.

I think the very best part of this year on team is the fact that I have had the chance to connect with so many people here in the North East. I've been able to reconnect with these people again as the year has gone on and it is so good to see familiar faces. Quakes and Construction Zones are awesome times to reconnect and to be blessed by friendly faces.



Samantha Oscar

Sam

Date: 3/10/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar
Journal Entry:

Hello again!!! We are kickin' it in Westminster, Maryland again!!!! Yippee...it is definitely one of our favorite places, and luckily we have been there about four times so far this year. They are so great to us taking us in whenever we are homeless and in the area....thanks y'all! We really appreciate all the love, generosity, and support you never fail to lavish upon all of us! Today is just a **Samantha Oscar** down day where we don't have anything scheduled so we are enjoying hanging loose with our friends here in Westminster! The familiar faces are awesome!!



Yesterday we were in Arlington, VA where we did a chapel with the kiddies in the morning and then went to our great host homes for some relaxation time before coming back and getting to just participate in the worship service. Let me tell you--it was weird just sitting and participating but awesome at the same time to just be able to soak it all in! Everyone was so excited and supportive, and we really appreciated the encouragement we received. It has really been a great last few weeks! Praise the Lord for all the great host homes, contacts, and people we have gotten to meet!

Well, it's time for me to say goodbye, but keep rockin' everyone!!

Sam

Date: 3/10/2005
Submitted by: Jorden Robinson
Journal Entry:

Hey everybody! I hope y'all are doing good. I am doing quite well. We just had a program in Arlington, Virginia, which was a lot of fun. And my birthday was 4 days ago; I am now at the wise age of 22!!

Anyways, Arlington was fun. The people were super friendly and really welcoming to all of us. The program went really well, and the next morning we did a chapel service for the school kids. It was awesome seeing those kids, both young and old, just let loose and be silly. The Hippo Song really is great!

So today we are headed to Westminster, Maryland. We have been there several times so it feels almost like a second home to us. We are really excited to see the friends that we have made there. Oh, just so y'all know, Sam's birthday is on the 13th and Troy's is on the 19th. March is the month of birthdays for us.

Well, I had better get going. I'll talk with y'all soon. Have fun and God bless!!

-Jorden



Jorden Robinson

Date: 3/12/2005
Submitted by: Cindy McPeake
Journal Entry:

Ah, back in Virginia. It's starting to become one of my favorite places in the Union. I definitely like

hanging out around DC. There are so many interesting people here with interesting jobs. Tonight we have a program at Holy Cross; home to some event staff of Virginia Beach. It's good to see familiar faces. We started a little late tonight, but that was just fine. Shelly and I got to talk with our host family for a little longer before the program started, which was super cool. I really enjoy getting to know people a little better than just a "hi, how are you" before the program starts. Our host family was super funny, and we are really excited to spend the next few days with them. Originally we were only supposed to be here for a night, but then we found out that we will be here until Tuesday. More and more I have come to really appreciate spending more than one night at a host home. In the beginning of our year I really liked picking up and leaving every day--it was fun, and the time passed really quickly. But now that we are all feeling the effects of the road, being more tired and run down, some days going "home" at night is much more appealing than having to pack up and leave to meet new people. Extended stays at host homes allow us to become part of the family and have really good conversations with our new families. Plus the kids warm up to us a little more the second day so we have people to play with. It's nice to make connections with families while on the road!

Live Hardcore!
Cindy



Cindy McPeake

Date: 3/13/2005
Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm
Journal Entry:

Hey all! Today is Sam's 21st birthday!! We got up early and led a couple worship services and a Sunday School sing-a-long time. Between the services, Sam opened a package that she received from home. Inside she found some cards from family, a pair of flip-flops, and best of all, a DVD. I was anticipating the DVD because Sam's cousin, Kari, had emailed me and told me all about it, and I was very excited for Sam to watch it. We all sat down and watched it together, and it was great to see all of Sam's family and friends and how much they care about her. Her aunt danced, her grandpa sang, and her family left her all of these great messages. It was so thoughtful and sweet, and I know that Sam thoroughly enjoyed it! It's always great to be reminded of how much we are missed and loved at home, especially on days like birthdays. I know it made Sam's extra special! For the rest of the day, we got to go back to host homes and rest. I slept the whole afternoon away. That evening we ventured back to the church to hang out with some of the youth there. It was a great time!! We played a rousing game of Ultimate Frisbee!! It was very intense and tons of fun!! We had dinner after that, and they surprised Sam with a ice cream cake and a gift from the church! How thoughtful!! After all that, our team headed out to a restaurant for appetizers and dessert. It was great to just hang out together and just be friends and not co-workers or teammates. It was just a really great day, and it's really awesome to see all the people who came together to make sure Sam had a special day!!

Kickin' it for Christ,

Shelly :D
2 Thess. 3:13



Shelly Schwalm

Date: 3/15/2005
Submitted by: Troy Stevenson
Journal Entry:

March 15, 2005

A drive through Amish country was on the schedule for this morning, as we headed for Leola, PA. It was a pretty leisurely drive and pretty relaxing. After getting there right on time we just had a low key setup with almost no frustrations and it was appreciated.

The church had a birthday cake for the three birthdays in March--Jordan, Sam, and me. It was pretty cool.



Troy Stevenson

During our program everyone was really into it and that is always so fun, those are always my favorite kind of programs.

Troy

Date: 3/29/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

We just had a week off for Spring Break and were all lucky to go and visit friends and family during this time. I flew back to Minneapolis where I stayed with Ryan who was on New Vision a couple years ago. We met whilst he was in Australia and have been able to continue our friendship across the sea and here in the States. Minneapolis was a lot of fun at Easter time as I was able to catch up with many new friends I have made since being in America, a number of them in the Youth Encounter family! I also went to the University of Minnesota for a coffee shop kinda thingy where four Christian bands played until about 1 a.m. One of the musicians was Elizabeth Hunicutt who I had the pleasure of meeting in August last year when I first arrived in the States. She worked at Trout Lake Camp in the middle of Minnesota as the Worship Coordinator. She is an amazing woman of faith and is writing some great worship songs and inspirational songs that all ages can relate too. Elizabeth did a marvelous set at the U of M, and it was so nice to be able to hear her and worship with her again!



Christie Lange

Easter was certainly a different experience for me since for the last 15 years of my life I have been going to a camp run by the Lutheran Youth Of Victoria in Australia. Easter Camp runs from Thursday night to Easter Monday afternoon, and each year has a different theme. I have been a camper for many years and for the last 8 years have been involved in the organization of different aspects of the camp. It has been an amazing encouragement in my spiritual journey with God and through the different themes and the amazing grace of God, Easter Camp has been the catalyst of changes in my life. It has helped steer me in the truth and kept me accountable. I say this because my involvement has been for many months of the year with others in the Easter Camp community, and we have all urged each other forward in our journey with Christ as our Saviour.

My Easter experience this year was very different. I was able participate in a service on Good Friday with Ryan's parents at their church. They attend a Baptist church in the north-western suburbs of Minneapolis. It was a welcoming atmosphere, and the community is close and supportive of each other. The service was simple yet very effective in provoking thought on what Jesus went through the day he was hung on the cross and died. The one thing that really struck me this Easter was that the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom upon his death. This curtain, having kept secret the majesty of God and the intimacy with him, only previously allowed for the priests and holy men, now God revealing His desire to know us all and to invite us to Him. Through Jesus' amazing love for us he took on all our sin, all the bad stuff in the entire world because he wanted us to know our Father. He took it all from us, conquered death and the devil, and now we are free to have a relationship with our God who desires all good things for us!

Sunday morning Easter celebrations were at Ryan's church. He also attends a Baptist church in the northwestern suburbs of Minneapolis, but a different congregation to his parents. The congregation met at 9 a.m. to eat together a big breakfast of eggs and ham! The service began at 10 a.m. and incorporated many different music styles from a handbell choir to organ to piano and choir! The highlight of the service was the baptism of a young boy and girl. They had declared that they had accepted Christ and that they wanted to be baptized and made clean, invited into the family of God. It was a great occasion for them and their church family. This sparked off memories of my godson's baptism when he was an infant. It was such a wonderful occasion, and I as his godmother have such a responsibility in praying for him and helping to reveal Christ to him. I reflected how honored I was that his parents asked me to be his godmother and how I am still honored and feel so blessed to be involved in a person's life to that extent.

After Easter, it was back on the road, and we drove straight from New Hampshire to Philadelphia where Sam and I stayed at the seminary in Germantown with some seminarians. It was a fabulous stay, and we had much fun talking and asking each other a number of the "harder" questions,

sharing our faith and faith journey's with each other. It was a great time, and I thank Mark, Ben, Charles and Will for making our stay so great. Oh, and we got to go to a class on Pastoral Care which was very interesting and encouraging me more so to go to Bible College when I get home to Australia.

Well, that's it from me today!
Cheers
Christie

Date: 4/3/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Hey y'all! We are now in Towson, Maryland, and we love it here. We will definitely be sad to go. We are in the presence of many past teamers, which has been awesome. Hearing stories and having so many people that are able to relate to our lifestyle has been a huge blessing! Praise God for them! I love Towson too. The Baltimore area is definitely one of our favorite areas to be in. This morning we were in York, PA and had a Family Night Program this morning before worship...it was a great change of pace and a fun time to have a program on a Sunday morning. We led worship afterwards....good times! Our contact (and pastor) in York was amazing! He had two kids who did team in the 90's so he knew a lot about Youth Encounter and what it is like to be on Captive Free...he was such a huge blessing to us too. We went out to lunch after worship and had some one on ones at the mall (for those of you who aren't familiar, one on ones are an hour spent with a teammate one on one--we meet with each person for an hour about once every three weeks....they are awesome times because they help promote healthy relations between each person on our team!!!). After one on ones, we headed to Towson where we attended a contemporary worship service, which rocked. We had such a great time singing our guts out to the Lord, the worship band was stellar, and it was really refreshing to get to participate in a worship and be filled up spiritually! After worship we got to participate in a youth group gathering where we played Sardines, prayed together, worshipped, and even shared our highs and lows for the week! Awwwwwww yyyeaaaaahhhh!!!!

Our team is doing well. I think it was a little hard for us all to get back in the swing of things after Easter break, but God has helped us to bounce back with all the past teamers and great host families we've had! We're also mixing up our daily devotions lately too, which has been great. We've been reading books together and are continuing to do so but also doing some worship together, studying Scripture, having solitude, and taking turns leading devotions (we're getting creative folks!!!). Well, I'm going to sign off here, but our time together has been super! Keep rockin' in Jesus y'all.

God bless you all and sending tons of love to all you at home!!!!

Sam



Samantha Oscar

Date: 4/5/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Hello one and all, and welcome to yet another installment of Captive Free North East as seen through the eyes of me. Well, currently we are in Delaware--for those of you that don't know, Delaware was the first state in the Union. Yes, very exciting. Speaking of exciting, our program last night was an adventure. Last night we had the usual Family Night Program but with a twist. As we were setting our equipment up yesterday, the power went out. Whoops. Luckily it wasn't because of our equipment. I think the whole county was without power. We are still not sure. Now, our team has never done an acoustic program. Ever. But team life is all about being flexible. So we were and started our program. It was great. It really was. We had a wonderful crowd. We are a small community church with mostly older members, but that didn't stop them from singing and clapping (we encouraged



Cindy McPeake

them to snap as to not drown out the music!). About three songs in, the power came back on and the pastor asked us to do the rest of the program plugged in. The transition was uber smooth thanks to our wonderful sound tech. We continued the program electrically and had just a wonderful time. The crowd really showed us that it's not how loud you are, it's how positive you are about the situation!

To go back in time a little, we spent our day off around Baltimore. We all really love it there and always have a good time. Sunday night we spent with the youth of Ascension in Towson. We talked about serving God 24/7, something that we as a team are familiar with. However not everyone is on team. It was good to talk to the kids about what they can do every day, and how they don't have to be on a team like ours to serve God. It was also a reminder to us that we have a great opportunity to serve God this year, but that we also can continue our ministry when we are done.

One way that I plan to continue my ministry is by going to Africa. I really think God is pushing in that direction. I keep meeting people and staying with families that have strong ties to Africa and have done some kind of work there. Before team I was interested in going over to Africa because I had met some people from there and worked with them at camp. My interest was piqued when my camp sent over some counselors to South Africa for a few weeks to help do work at a camp that was just starting. I wasn't chosen to go, but ever since then I have wanted to go. Lucky for me Youth Encounter also has a couple opportunities to travel over there--I think I might just look into those and see what happens.

Until next time.

Live Hardcore!
Cindy

Date: 4/7/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Hey all!! Well, we're in Baltimore once again!! What a great area!! We got to spend yesterday driving from Delaware, but we got to spend about an hour on the beach in Ocean City!! Last night we stayed with our beloved Westminster host families that we've seen more this year than our own families!! It's pretty much our home away from home. Today we also got the awesome opportunity of returning to Augsburg Lutheran Home to share some music with the residents there, and we had a great time.

One lady that I talked to last time we were there remembered me. I got to sit down and talk to her again, and she said that she was so excited to see us there again. It really made my day. We enjoyed conversation with them and with some residents that hadn't heard us the first time. It was awesome to see some of the people singing along to some of the hymns that we sang, and it was really encouraging to hear how much they enjoyed us spending time to come there. After the program, we had lunch with the activities director there and really enjoyed conversation with her. From there we went on to Prince of Peace Lutheran and got set up for our evening program. We had dinner with some of the kids that remembered us from the Baltimore Quake and also got to meet Chris, who played some songs before we started our program. It was very cool to talk to him about his music and ministry!!

God is blessing and continues to bless us through so many different people in places all over!!

Kickin' it for Christ,

Shelly Schwalm :D



Shelly Schwalm

Date: 4/10/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

Bordentown, N.J. was a blast. We had visited this church last November where they had housed us all for a night before we drove to the Poconos for the Construction Zone last year in November. So, it was great to be able to come back and spend some time with this fabulous community. The church has a top quality sound system built in, so we didn't have to bring in much except for some of our instruments. We were able to spend some time with a few people for dinner before the program who we have been lucky enough to work with at many of the Youth Quakes and Construction Zones. Ryan and Katie have been on team before and have also been helping at events, which has been great for us as we have been able to see familiar faces and relax a while with people who have experienced team and are able to help us on our way!



Christie Lange

So the program at Bordentown was a lot of fun for all and full of energy from the congregation and especially the kids! There are a lot of children in this congregation, and it was fun to relate with them and encourage them! Our puppet show was a hit with the kids, and they always seem to remember the message that we are to tell everyone that God loves them!

Our day off was nice and laid back! We all went out for dinner at our default team restaurant, Applebee's, and had some fun and laughs! We went home relaxed and ready to go back on the road the next day!

Thanks to everyone at Bordentown for a great time!

Cheers
Christie

Date: 4/14/2005

Submitted by: Jorden Robinson

Journal Entry:

So today we drove to Oley, PA, which we were all really excited about because we've been here before and everyone is just real super duper nice. We were able to join a couple of the youth choirs in their singing and even show them a few sing-a-longs. Also, a few of the team members got to see a local track team, while the rest of us had a very relaxing nap in front of the church. I just love the weather the Northeast is having lately. There is nothing like a warm sunshiny day to improve a disposition. Indeed, I don't believe I have ever been this perky while writing a journal entry.



Jorden Robinson

Anyways, I hope y'all are doing as well as I am. I really love spring and am really excited about all the new things we will be able to do now that spring is here. So, enjoy the weather, and smile because Jesus loves you.....seriously.....I'm not joking.

Your friendly neighborhood sound tech,
Jorden

Date: 4/16/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Hi everyone! Hope everyone is doing well wherever you are. As for us, Captive Free North East, we are having a rockin' time here in Lancaster, PA at a family retreat with Grace Lutheran Church from Westminster, Maryland. We are huge fans of Grace Lutheran Church as we have been there a total of six times this year (by far the most times we have returned to a place). Needless to say, we have gotten to know our host families really well and are so thankful for the huge blessing they all are to us. We are incredibly grateful God has provided us with on the road families we get to see fairly regularly. Thanks to everyone at Grace Lutheran Church in Westminster...you guys rock!



Samantha Oscar

So, like I started to say....we are spending the weekend at a hotel in Lancaster, PA at a hotel at a

family retreat. It has been great meeting new people from Grace Lutheran as well as becoming closer to those we already know. The retreat is set up much like a Quake or Construction Zone with break-out sessions, prayer, testimonies, music and fun activities. We led some of the music and also led the 6-11 year old break-out sessions. It was a great time experiencing the joy little kids get out of simple things. We played kickball, drew and discussed our families, and did an obstacle course and relay games. It was a change of pace for us and really awesome to do something different. It was also so encouraging to see so many families coming together and "Getting United" (the theme of the weekend) in Christ. What an awesome thing for a church to do!!! Thanks again to Grace Lutheran Church, our host families and other families at the retreat, and especially Monte Leister for his amazing love, support and prayers throughout our year on the road. God has been so incredible gifting us with you!

As for our team, we have been realizing how much we need prayer. Don't get me wrong, we have been praying, but we have realized we need to be more intentional about praying for our team and other teams on the road. This is a hard time when the year is getting long and hard, and it isn't abnormal to be anxious for the end. Because of these feelings, it is easier for Satan to tempt us with negative feelings about ourselves and make us feel we aren't being productive in our ministry. We would appreciate your prayers for strength, endurance, health, confidence, enthusiasm and energy to do God's work and spread the Gospel. We want to finish this year strong and not miss opportunities to share God's love with others.

That's about all for now! Keep rockin in Jesus y'all....you're in our thoughts and prayers!

Sam

Date: 4/17/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Hello one and all. This weekend was spent with the lovely congregation of Grace Lutheran in Westminster, Maryland. What a weekend! The whole weekend was centered on family--something we are not accustomed to here on the road. Luckily for us, we know the families pretty well; in fact, we were pretty much part of one or two families there. It was so good to spend the weekend with them. It was like being at the retreat with our own families. I had a mom, dad and siblings for a weekend. Yahoo! It was really good to spend the weekend getting to know them better and worshiping with them. Though we have been with them so many times, we haven't played for them since October. It was good to do what we are called to do with them. We have built relationships with them over the last months, but it was good to give them music, which is something everyone on my team is passionate about. It was wonderful to share that with them.

After the retreat was over Sunday afternoon, the team (minus Shelly--she went home with her host family right away) headed off to Hershey, PA to make use of some hockey tickets a host family gave to us. Well, when we got there, we found out there was a cheerleading competition, not a hockey game. The team was in Connecticut for a few days...whoops. No worries, though--we drove around for dinner and ice cream and got to chill after a busy weekend. It was wicked fun to hang out on the grass eating ice cream with my teammates. I am so thankful for them. I am constantly amazed at how much fun we have when we are together. And so amazed that even though we will get into little tiffs about things, we can always push that aside and let loose. Yay for fun!

Live hardcore!
Cindy



Cindy McPeake

Date: 4/19/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Hey All!!

We're in Lexington Park, MD, and it's a happening place!! We drove here from Westminster, MD today and got the evening off to spend with our host families. It was really great to spend some time getting to know our host family--they have three girls, just like my family!! Christie, Sam, and I stayed there, and we got the rare opportunity to just hang out with each other for an evening and chat. Throughout our conversation, it occurred to us how heavily our team is being spiritually attacked right now. People become confused and don't know what's going on during songs we've done hundreds of times and can't explain what happened. While sending out an e-mail for prayer support for our team, a computer goes haywire. My voice has been constantly struggling, and no amount of medicine, rest, or water has cured it. We are trying to be knocked down by Satan in so many ways, but it's also encouraging to us that we have been a threat to him and his work. It lets us know that God is using us this year more than we can actually see. God is doing awesome things in the Northeast, and Satan is doing all that he can to stop it. Please keep our team in your prayers as we press on to do God's work. Pray for us to stay strong against Satan's forces. This experience has also been beneficial to us because we are learning to understand the power and importance of prayer. As a team, we're trying to become more dedicated to prayer for our team, for other teams, our family and our friends. We are understanding that we should be praying in all circumstances, not just in bad times. I pray that God will reveal His amazing power to you through prayer!! Keep knocking Satan down!!



Shelly Schwalm

Kickin' it for Christ,

Shelly :D

Date: 4/23/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

We drove for a really long time today! I think it was about 6 hours, but it seemed like 57 hours!! Some days the long rides just feel like an eternity. We try to sleep in the van to pass the time, and truth is, we are all extremely tired now and can't keep our eyes open if we are not the driver or navigator!!! The lifestyle of living on the road has caught up to us, there have been a few people on my team that have had colds recently, and there is a definite lethargy that has hit us. We have another four weeks until Memorial Day break and our week of Vacation Bible School training in Ohio, so we need to get more sleep and maintain our stamina until then.



Christie Lange

Anyway...we arrived in Hamburg, PA where we were greeted by familiar faces! We didn't realize but the Hamburg crew had bought a group to the Allentown Quake and we had spent some time with them. I had also spent some time with two of the girls as they were Junior Guides that weekend and had participated in the Junior Guide Treks that Shelly and I led. I also spent some time with the Hamburg group and another group for their family time, which was a fabulous experience.

We had dinner with a group from Hamburg and after that headed off to our host homes. We are staying for three days, and we are excited about it as we usually stay for a day or two at the most. Three days is luxury!!! Troy and I are housed at the same place and so far have hit it off with our host family and cannot believe how wonderfully funny they are and how we are all so comfortable with each other so quickly. I think it's the beginning of a beautiful friendship!!

We have two worship services tomorrow and a day full of activities as the Hamburg church are hosting a Youth Sunday event with workshops, etc. and our program Sunday night as the final celebration!

Hope everyone is well!

Cheers,
Christie

Date: 5/12/2005
Submitted by: Cindy McPeake
Journal Entry:

Hey friends!

We are in Westminster again today, but at a different location. We are playing for a Lutheran school in the area. We were supposed to do an outdoor concert, but it was pretty windy, and we didn't want the little munchkins to blow away!! The kids really had a good time and got into the concert. I really enjoy playing for kids that aren't afraid to do the actions or sing along with us. They are so fun!!



Cindy McPeake

Though we were in the same place, we stayed with different people--at first, I thought it was going to be pretty hard because I really connected with my first host family in Westminster. But God is really working in Westminster; there are so many great people. We were so blessed with incredible families again. We had an extra day there, so we really had a chance to get to know our families.

I say it time and again, but host families are the most amazing thing on team. They are all so willing to give and support us while we are on road. And there are so many of them! We stay with so many families while on the road, and all of them are fantabulous. I thank God every day for giving people the hearts to host us. He is truly an amazing God that inspires so many people to serve one another.

Live Hardcore!
Cindy

Date: 5/24/2005
Submitted by: Cindy McPeake
Journal Entry:

Hey all and greetings from Maryland. We are in Pasadena and Eldersburg today. We spent yesterday (our day off) with a great family (they will have to forgive me though because I can't remember how to spell their last name). They took the huge task of housing all of us for two nights--CRAZY! I can't imagine what it's like to have seven extra people in your house. It's weird to have the whole team in the house, but it was good to be able to just hang out as a team. So often we are too busy to just be friends, and Monday was a grand day to hang as friends. Most of the girls had a slumber party in the basement; we watched movies and did each other's nails--watch out, Elizabeth Arden!



Cindy McPeake

We headed to Eldersburg for an evening program. We have been to this church before and are always really amazed by the support and love they have for this ministry. It was fun to come back too and see people that we met closer to the beginning of our tour. Most kids were just starting school when we were there the first time, and now they are all getting ready to end school and start the school. I think that is one of the hardest things to remember on team--life goes on without us. I have friends that were also just starting school and now are graduated or looking for summer jobs. I even had a friend get married and have a baby while I have been here this year. Sometimes I think that life should stop while we are on team, and it doesn't. People are changing and growing this year just like I am. It's a little sad when I think about the things I am missing while away from my family and friends, but at the same time, they are missing all the things that I am doing, too. So at the end of this year, we are all going to have tons of stories for each other!! This time away from the people that are important to me really helps to appreciate them more, and I am excited to be back with them and share stories. God is really showing me this year that the relationships we form, whether with teammates, people we meet on the road, or the ones we had before team, should be treasured. I have had great opportunities this year to develop relationships and learn how to create healthy relationships; these skills will stay with me for the rest of my life!

Live Hardcore!
Cindy

Date: 6/7/2005

Submitted by: Jeremy Thomas

Journal Entry:

We're in Pottsville, PA today, but over the weekend we got to spend some time in Philly. During VBS we don't get an official day off, and it's something that I'm going to miss...but we did get one final free day, and it was spent in down town Philly at Independence Hall. It was good to learn a bit about American history, as I am from Canada and don't really know all the details of how the whole independence thing went down. It was fun to get out and to eat a bunch of Cheese Steaks...I highly recommend going to Philly, if nothing else, for the cheese steaks...they're good!



Jeremy Thomas

After some job time, we headed out to Pottsville and arrived in a really pretty town. The people here are really wonderful, and I've had such a great time with my host family. After Memorial Day break and VBS training, it takes a bit of effort to get myself back into the swing of things with relational ministry. It took a few minutes, but just like riding a bike, I got back into it and had such a good time as we all played pool and played a bunch of video games. The little stuff is always the stuff that I don't recognize but later I know that God used it and that I was blessed to be a part of it all.

Because of Christ,
Jeremy

Date: 6/9/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Well folks, we've got only a few more days until the start of Vacation Bible Schools, and boy am I excited!!! Right now though...we are spending time with our friends in Dushore, PA. It was a short but fun time. We drove a few hours today in order to get there by 4, played a program and had a potluck with them, and then packed up to drive four more hours to Bordentown, NJ to stay the night. We got to here (Bordentown) about 2 in the morning which was only necessary because tomorrow we are playing for a morning preschool carnival type thing they are having for the last day of school...good times!



Samantha Oscar

Yesterday we spent some time in Pottsville, PA. It was a wonderful time...we saw some friends we had met at a Quake earlier in the year, and it was so nice to see the familiar faces again...yippee! We played a program there also and were so surprised to see our good friends from Hamburg show up there to surprise us. Wow! It was so fantastic to see them. I personally stayed with a super fun host family, and I really had a good chance to connect with my host sister (she knows who she is)!!!

Other than that, God has continued to be so good to us keeping us really safe and gifting us with wonderful hosts and contacts! It's crazy to think we are going to be back to our real lives in just two months...wow! I was able to be really refreshed and spiritually filled up over my break and during VBS training, so I am ready to finish off this year with a bang rocking the Northeast! A big hi and I love you to all my friends and family at home! Peace out everyone!

Sam

Date: 6/11/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Hey all and greetings from Pennsylvania! We just arrived at our very first Vacation Bible School of the summer. We did a coffeehouse type worship tonight, but before I get ahead of myself, let's talk about yesterday.

Friday saw us in New Jersey again with the lovely people of Holy Cross in Bordentown. We love this place. It is a true testament to what relational ministry is. The ministry works from both ends too. We are so lucky to have known them and get to spend time



Cindy McPeake

with them. This time we got to hang out with the pre-school that is run through the church. It was so cool. They had a reptile guy come, and he had lots of fun animals to look at. Plus I got to help kids with sand art. Very fun! It was hard to leave them on Saturday but also reassuring because every time we come back we see what God is doing through us. So often we never see the effects of our ministry, but here it is evident and an encouragement to all of us.

Off to Pennsylvania! Tonight we had a great chance to do something other than the normal Family Night Program. It's fun to plan different worship settings, and I think the people who came really appreciated it. Some kids came that were planning to come to VBS, so we got to meet them beforehand, plus we found out that some of the kids that came to our program weren't planning to attend VBS but decided to come. Yeah for changed minds!

We are ready to start VBS and get on with the fun!

Live Hardcore!
Cindy

Date: 6/12/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Hey all!! We're in Jacobus, PA!! Rock on!! We came last night and did an outdoor concert. I'm staying with a really cool host family, and I'm really excited to get to spend some time getting to know them this week. My host dad is a chef, too, so I got a very nice supper tonight. They also have a St. Bernard named Daisy, and we went on a walk with all of Daisy's neighborhood friends. It's hilarious!! They call it the "dog parade," because all of the families in the neighborhood with dogs walk them all together, and all the dogs are friends. It's a riot. So we're really excited about our first VBS of the summer and really excited to be able to spend a whole WEEK in one place!! Wow...what a concept!! We've been so blessed lately with amazing host families that have just filled us to the brim with hospitality, conversation, love, and inspiration. I think this past week since VBS training has been one of my favorite times of ministry and the summer ahead is looking bright!! VBS was very spiritually filling for me, and I feel that my spirit has been renewed. God is so good, and I have learned more than anything this year to just trust. For the smallest things to the greatest things, you just have to trust He's got your back. That's one thing I've really seen this year. The second thing is that I can't renew or revitalize myself. The only way to do that is to sit before the Lord and allow Him the time to fill me up. I'm so excited for VBS because we will have more time than normal, and there will be more time to be still and know that He is God. In this book I've been reading, it quoted Psalm 23, and the verse said "He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul." The author thought it was interesting how God has us take a break in order to restore us. He wants us to sit in His presence and acknowledge that He is the only way in the whole world and beyond that we can ever be filled. He asks that we sit for awhile and be with Him and then comes the restoration. It also told a story about a pair of shoes. Studies show that if you buy a new pair of shoes and wear them every day for a year, they would last about six months. If you alternated every other day with another pair of shoes, they would each last about two years. What's the difference you ask?? Rest!! The leather has time to rest between wearings, and in turn, they both last longer. If you're always on the go without time spent "being still" with God, you are going to wear down so much faster!! So take time. If you haven't or if your schedule doesn't allow, if you're stressed, whatever the problem or situation, make time!! He is the only One who can make the difference!! God's blessings to you, and I pray that you will make time to let the Lord work in you. I guarantee it makes all the difference in the world and in your attitude, mind, and spirit!! Praise God!!



Shelly Schwalm

God's peace, joy, and love,

Shelly :D

2 Cor. 12:9

Date: 6/16/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

Our third day of VBS in Jacobus, PA! We have all been able to develop relationships with a number of kids and also adults! It has been amazing and encouraging that there are so many kids attending VBS and hearing about God's love and how he calls us to his family. The kids have been participating so well in all aspects of the program and have been learning many new songs! This year on the road has been great as I have learned a lot of new songs, especially sing-alongs for kids. The exciting part for me has been going to places that these songs are new to and being able to teach them and see the joy and excitement in their faces! It has been somewhat like that this week. We actually got to teach the Sheep song and the Hippo song, and no one knew them at all! So cool!



I have also met a woman very close to my age who has been a wonderful friend this week. We have been able to spend some time talking and sharing with each other about our lives, where we are at, hurdles we have gotten over and some we still need to, the possibilities of the future and the joys of travel! I look forward to continuing a friendship beyond this week and seeing how God continues to work in her life.

Christie Lange

We also got to go to the Harley-Davidson Motorcycle factory today in York, PA. The factory tour was so cool. We had a 45 minute walking tour throughout the main assembly area and saw the pressing of steel sheet into fenders, the cutting out of the fenders by giant laser robots, and the full assembly of five different bikes. The tour was especially exciting for Troy as he loves riding bikes and is going to become a bike mechanic after he finishes team. His family owns a Harley and, needless to say, he was fascinated at the process and quality of the bikes.

Well, that's all from me today.

See-ya
Christie

Date: 6/18/2005

Submitted by: Jeremy Thomas

Journal Entry:

After a week of VBS and the new routine that it brought, we got to review what we've done all year...lock-ins. This one looked like it was going to be just another over-nighter, but thankfully, God had other plans. In Boyertown, PA, God really showed Himself to be real, present and active. We played games and ate supper with the kids. It was a good time to connect and to get to know some of the kids.

But that wasn't all that God had planned. After the fun stuff, we did a bit of small group Bible study time. We separated the guys from the girls and then led them in the same study that we have led every other group in. We didn't say anything different than we normally say, but in His own special way, God really spoke to their hearts in a unique way. The guys had a great talk about the "storms" in their lives, and they were so willing to open up and share themselves. When we came in, we found the girls all crying...which has really never happened. I talked to some of my female team mates and found that they too said nothing different than usual, but again God did an awesome work in that small group time. He is so good, and He loves His children so much. He really does want to speak to and touch this generation, and He's doing it one person at a time.



Jeremy Thomas

Date: 6/21/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Hey all. We are back in Reisterstown, MD--we were here a while ago in October and had a great time, so it's good to be back. We are halfway through our second VBS, and everything is really coming together right now. We are all very comfortable with the structure, the music and the drama, so we have the time to concentrate on the good stuff--KIDS! They are great this week. They are all so excited, and we can really tell that they are loving VBS. I love playing with them, but let's be honest--I love playing games, especially silly ones.

Like always, it is so good to be in a familiar place. This year I really began appreciating knowing people and having a base with them. It has allowed us to get past the surface stuff and dig deeper. One of that coolest things I am looking forward to this week is spending time with my host sister. So far, every morning we hang out and watch the same morning show, but we get to talking about what's on the show, and that leads somewhere else. It's been great so far to get to know her--I am really looking forward to seeing what else we learn about each other this week.

It's hard to believe that we are nearing the end of our tour. I can remember October when we had over eight months to go, and now we barely have two! I keep looking towards the finish line when things get rough and remember how much more God has in store for us. We are starting to think about what happens after team. It will be wicked crazy to not see my teammates everyday. I think that so often as the end of the year sneaks up on us, we focus on what life will be like after team and how excited we are to see everyone we have missed this year, but we forget that we are leaving a family too. Our team family time is almost over, and I will miss it. Even though this year was tough and we went through hard times, those hard times have made us a strong group, and it will be tough to say goodbye to that soon. It seems that this year is all about meeting people and then saying goodbye. Lucky for us we will see each other in Heaven if we don't see each other again in this life! So see you in Heaven!

Live Hardcore!

Cindy



Cindy McPeake

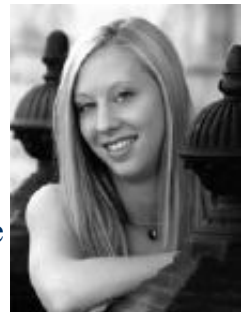
Date: 6/23/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Hey all!! We're here in Reisterstown, MD for our second VBS!! It's been going well!! Yesterday afternoon we got the opportunity of having a cookout with our Westminster host families. Throughout the year, we have been in Westminster more than any other place. I think we counted somewhere about seven times throughout the year that we've stayed with these same families. I have been at their house more than I have been home this year!!! So they are pretty special to us. The sad thing is that we aren't going to be staying with them anymore, but since we were so close to them in Reisterstown, we decided to get together for one last hurrah. It was a great time!! I love the Meyers family, and it was great to see them again. It's so amazing how God puts people in your life to be your family when you don't have any of your own around, and that's exactly what they've been to us this year. It's crazy how we are supposed to be the ministry team this year, but over and over again we are being ministered to by people along the way, and it almost feels like we are receiving more than we give. In this case, they didn't just care for me for a weekend, but they have been doing it all year long!!

Sometimes we're really sad to leave host homes because we know that we probably won't see them ever again. Even though I'm sad to say "See ya later," there's no doubt in my mind that



Shelly Schwalm

it's not going to be the last time I see these folks!! They aren't going to get rid of me that easily!! Praise God for amazing host families like the Meyers'!!

God's peace, joy, and love to you all!!

Shelly :D

2 Cor. 12:9

Date: 6/25/2005

Submitted by: Troy Stevenson

Journal Entry:

Familiar churches are always good; we've been to this church twice before, Breiningsville, PA. It's always nice to see friends that we've made more than once. Tonight on the schedule is a concert and a lock-in with the high school youth. Earlier today we drove from Reisterstown, MD and the drive went well. I'm starting to get sick with aching muscles, sore throat, and headache. It's not making anything easier when it comes to having to set up all of our equipment. All I want to do is lay down and sleep, but I know God will get me through. As the year is winding down and I can see homecoming right around the corner, it's making me miss my family and friends even more. Until that time, I have my teammates to rely on, and we'll get there together.



Troy Stevenson

Speaking of old friends, I was fortunate to have been able to spend the night with two people that I have already stayed with earlier in the year. We had a great time last time I stayed there and just had a great connection. This is one of the best things about team--making friends and seeing them more than once and knowing that you'll be in contact with them long after team.

Troy Stevenson

Date: 6/26/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

We have been having a great time at VBS and have learned more how to speak Jesus' love to younger people. It is so great when we hear that the kids have gone home singing songs that we had taught them and are even singing them before bed. It's awesome because the kids become witnesses to their parents about the joy that God brings.



Christie Lange

Host homes continue to be a blessing in the fun, laughter and sharing that we enjoy together. I have had the most amazing conversations with host families and have been more blessed by them than I think I could ever return! I love hearing family stories and the history behind the families in America. Especially families that have immigrated and even escaped their original countries! I just wanna say a big Thank You to all the families that have housed us; your generosity, love, care and concern have been overwhelming, and it has been an honour and a joy to stay with you and to share in your family life.

So, our programs have become fewer as we have VBS, and I kinda miss the ministry of the programs. I have enjoyed sharing my story and the impact God has had in my life. I have found that so many people relate to my story in many different ways and want to share it with me. I have been so honoured by the amount of people who have shared with me and the level that they have shared with me. There is a lot of hurt and pain in the world, and it is not meant to be borne alone. I praise God for always providing a listening ear and a sympathetic heart for us when we are in pain and hurting.

I was also so very blessed to visit with a host family in Hamburg, PA that Troy and I stayed with earlier in the year. We just made a wonderful connection and would love to sit and chat with them forever! Life on team has exposed us to a multitude of lovely people who I hope I will be in contact with even when I go back to Australia.

Speaking of Australia, I am looking forward to going home as I have decided to follow God's call and go to Tabor Bible College to study a Bachelor of Ministry. It is a 3 year, full-time course which I hope will assist in my future ministry of the church and potentially some special project stuff, like maybe something in World Vision. We'll see!

Well, I'm off to check the emails!

Take care and live well!

Love, Christie

Date: 6/29/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Hi there everyone! We are now in Ambler, PA doing Vacation Bible School for the week. It's near Philly. Wow...it is sure hot and humid here, but luckily the church has air conditioning...praise the Lord! I'm not a huge fan of hot and humid weather. All right, enough complaining. The VBS theme this week is a safari theme....fun stuff! We play music and do a puppet show for the opening and closings each day, and then we also lead some sessions. Our team is split up in groups of two leading preschool games, preschool music, and older kids music. Shelly and I have been having a wonderful time leading the preschool music time. It is so great to see the simplicity of the young children ,and it reminds me to slow down and enjoy the simple things in life and just find joy in the here and now. They just get so excited about the littlest things, and that's how we all should be. There are so many blessings around me each day, and I so often don't even acknowledge them, let alone get excited about them. So, although it is only Tuesday, these little kids have sure given me a few reminders! My host family here is great too...we were here in January (I think) for a night, and most of us were able to stay with the same families, so it was awesome to see familiar faces (not that we don't enjoy new faces). The community here has been so awesome! It's also been a morning VBS this week (our first one), so it's nice to have the afternoons and evenings off for a change as well. Tomorrow we are looking forward to a trip to Hershey Park after VBS. We've wanted to go there all year, and let me tell you...I love roller coasters...they are one of God's many AWESOME creations!

Well, I'm off to go spend some time with my super duper host family. They're singing "Hey Hey Mon" downstairs! Rock on! For those of you that aren't sure what that is....it is a goofy song we teach the kids at VBS and Sunday school! Have a bodacious week y'all! Sending all my love to Wisconsin and all the wonderful people I've met so far this year! Tune in next time, everyone. Mwah!
Sam Oscar



Samantha Oscar

Date: 6/30/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Well hello from Ambler, PA! What a week it has been. This week is holey-moley busy, and we have so much more in store!

Yesterday we went to Hershey Park, and amusement park in, well, Hershey. What a great time. I love roller coasters--they rank right up there with scary movies. I love the adrenaline rush. They had wicked rides there, too. It rained a little, but luckily we got to ride all of the big rides before we left. Plus we got to see some old friends from one of our earlier visits. And we met some new friends too. When you are so used to striking up conversations with people you don't know, it comes naturally even when you don't really have



Cindy McPeake

to. Sam and I met these great kids from Massachusetts--they gave us the low down on the good rides =)!

Today we have our program. Everyone is looking forward to it. Its' kinda silly that we used to get really worn out from doing our program every night, but now we look forward to them! Today we also found out that we are only six partners away from reaching our partner goal this year. We have been so blessed by people this year, and it really goes to show how effective our ministry can be and how much we depend on the support of people we meet. We love you all!

As another happy moment, Shelly's parents surprised us today! She knew they were coming, but it was a surprise to us. It's great to see parents on the road. Even though we don't really know them, it's like our parents have come because we all talk about them so much that is almost like we know everyone!

This week is winding down--another VBS is almost in the books. So fun!

Live Hardcore!

Cindy

"Jesus is walking on the same water I am drowning in."

-Brian Spahr, "On the Water"

Date: 7/2/2005

Submitted by: Shelly Schwalm

Journal Entry:

Hey all!! We're here in Ambler, PA, which is a suburb of the great city of Philadelphia!! We've been here all week long doing VBS for Upper Dublin Lutheran, and it's been a great time!! My parents came and visited us for the last couple of days, which was very exciting for me. Yesterday after VBS, we drove to Creation, which is a huge several-day Christian music festival in western Pennsylvania. It was awesome!! We got to see Superchic[k], Jeremy Camp, Casting Crowns, Bob Lenz, and the Newsboys. It was such an amazing night of worship!! My team and I have grown to love Jeremy Camp throughout the year and even play at least one song from each band that we heard. It was so awesome!! Bob Lenz speaks at a lot of Youth Encounter events and is a big part of why I'm on team this year. It was really great to talk to him after he spoke and tell him what an impact he had on me. Even though I love Jeremy Camp and Casting Crowns dearly, I think I personally (along with my team) got the most out of the Newsboys. The lead singer spoke very well, and he spoke about several things that we had been talking about in the past few days and some throughout the past year. It was amazing how God wants you right where you are. He talked about going through storms in his life, which is our theme for this year. He also talked about having faith that would throw a mountain into the heart of the sea, and we just did a puppet show about that. He also talked about spiritual bread and being fed, and we just did a devotion about bread and how it was like Jesus. It was so amazing to me how it felt like God was speaking directly to us. He talked about how Satan surrounds us and tries to drag us down and how we just have to rest in God and listen when He whispers to us "Don't be afraid." They sang three songs in a row that we do, and it was just amazing to be on the other side of things and not have to lead but just be allowed to participate. After the concert, we drove 3 ½ hours back to Philly and got back about 4:00 a.m.!! Crazy!!! Much to my dislike, my parents woke me early and we ventured into downtown Philly, which was crazy because of the Live8 concert going on. We had to wait for a long time for a train, and when it came we couldn't get on because it was full. A nice guy led us to the next train station, so we drove there and were able to get onto the train. We had a great day in the city and it was really fun for me to be able to show my parents around Philly. This evening we had a party with all of our host families, and my parents came also. It was fun, but the last two days have been plum full, and I'm SOO tired. Praise God for great



Shelly Schwalm

things to fill our days!! I pray that God will bless you with amazing things that show you His glory and love and fill you to the brim!! That's all for now...must sleep.

God's peace, joy, and love,

Shelly :D

2 Cor. 12:9

Date: 7/9/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Hi everyone! Well, we were on the road again today after a wonderful week in Spring Mills, PA for VBS. We are now in Easton, PA, and it is good to be back here. We were here earlier this year, so we already knew our contact and host families. This evening we led a worship service right after we arrived and then we headed off for our first night with our host homes for the week. I am staying with Cindy, and we are staying with three teenage girls and they have definitely been keeping us laughing. It was a good night just hanging out and relaxing.

Not a whole lot is new here, but we now have five weeks left of our year on the road...in some ways it is so hard to believe, but in other ways it is getting to be the time when we are ready to go home. It's been a long time. We are all getting tired, so we're really needing to depend on the Lord to give us the energy and strength to finish the year strong. We can do it, and we definitely know that God will provide!

Hope all is going well with all you at home. Happy late Fourth of July everyone! God bless!
Sam



Samantha Oscar

Date: 7/10/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Hey all and how's the weather??! Things here are HOT! But no worries. We have just started our fifth VBS, and it's going good! This week we started today, Sunday, which is a new thing for us, but it seems to work. We are in Easton, PA, a place we've been to before, and as I am sure you all know by now, we love coming back to familiar places. The week will be wicked awesome!

As a team we are sticking in there. Some days are harder than others, but luckily there is always someone to get us through. It's been an incredible experience getting to know my teammates this year, and I am grateful that each one of them was placed on my team. We have gotten to know each other pretty well and know what each person needs to be encouraged. In some ways it is sad that it's the end of the year; now we know how to function really well as a team and encourage each other. Just in time to say goodbye, it seems. The skills we have learned from this year will definitely show through in our other relationships, and we will be able to build really strong relationships because of it.

It's amazing to me that we have become so close this year. It really shows me that God knows what He is doing. The fact that we get along so well is a great testament to the plans God has for us. It's a wonder that I still doubt His plans. They always seem to work out, and I should trust that always. But as we all know, it's hard to let go of that control. Letting go is one of the things that I am struggling right now because my plans for life after team are so vague and up in the air. I want to know what is happening and when it's going to happen. God has a different schedule than me--or I guess my schedule doesn't exactly follow His! It will all turn out in the end!

Have a great day!

Live Hardcore!



Cindy McPeake

Cindy

"Jesus is walking on the same water I am drowning in."
-Brian Spahr, "On the Water"

Date: 7/16/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

Hey there!

We are doing well. Just finished a week of VBS in Easton, PA. All went very well with the group of kids growing every day! We were lucky as we got to spend time with the youth group as part of VBS and thoroughly enjoyed the older group. They had just been to Creation, the big music festival at MT Union, PA, which was an amazing experience, and then some also went on a mission trip to West Virginia where they were confronted by poor living situations and developed a real sense of understanding and empathy for the people they worked with. It was great to hear their experiences and see how God has changed them through the week that they were there.

We are all good, trying to continue well even though we are all quite tired. We are having many fun moments and lots of crazy laughs in the van! We are looking forward to homecoming and seeing the rest of the teams and then family and friends!!

Well, that's it from me today.

See-ya!

Christie



Christie Lange

Date: 7/20/2005

Submitted by: Cindy McPeake

Journal Entry:

Hello all and greetings from Virginia! We are well into our sixth week of VBS and still having a great time. Today we headed to a church down the road for an acoustic program for a senior outreach group. We had a really good time. We haven't really done a lot of programs for older adults, but every time we do them, it is a lot of fun. I love playing for them because they are always so encouraging--you can tell they love it by the looks on their faces!

Yesterday was pretty good, too. We headed "down south" to visit our Event director, Jen Miller, and her family. It was fantastic to spend some time with her since we barely got to at our Events because we were so busy. Plus it's great to talk with people that know what team is like and what we are doing. It was very chill-laxed (as Shelly would say). We are all getting anxious to be around people who know us, so it was a good break!

VBS has been going really good too--the curriculum we are using is really neat and the music rocks. We don't have any set responsibilities, so I get to hang out with kids and go to sessions with them. I like to see what they do in between opening and closing!

My team is rockin' right now. We are really focused on our ministry and making the last leg together really fun. The last few weeks are going to be great!

Live Hardcore!

Cindy



Cindy McPeake

"Jesus is walking on the same water I am drowning in."
-Brain Spahr, "On the Water"

Date: 7/21/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Hey there everyone! Right now we're on our sixth week of Vacation Bible School this week. We're in Sterling, Virginia, and it is mega-hot but beautiful here. We're doing a Serengeti Trek theme, and the decorations for it are AMAZING! I have never seen anything like them...there are close to life sized giraffes, hippos, and other animals. It's awesome! The kids are tons of fun too...there are about 100 kids and 50 staff, so other than playing for the openings and closings for each day, there isn't a lot more for us to do. We just get to walk around and interact with the kids...good times! I am really enjoying Vacation Bible School!

I am still in awe that there are only three weeks left until we are done...thinking about being back to my old life seems so weird because it's been so long. I am ready, though. Our team is just getting tired and ready to see our families and friends again. It's so sad, though, at the same time because we've been blessed in meeting so many beautiful people this year. I will dearly miss many of them as well.

On a personal note, I have recently read [The Prayer of Jabez](#), and I recommend it to any and all of you. It was a great book that talked about praying for God to bless you personally. Many think it is a selfish thing, but if we aren't praying for God to bless us, we aren't able to get the fullness of what God wants to give us daily. Asking for God to bless us is also another way to ask for God's will for you that day. So yeah...I don't want to give the whole book away, but that's a little preview for you all. I hope you enjoy it and get as much out of it as I did. That's about it for now.

Check y'all later and may God bless you all today!

Sam



Samantha Oscar

Date: 7/24/2005

Submitted by: Christie Lange

Journal Entry:

G'day!

Aaaahh, New York City! An amazing place. We are staying in New Jersey at the moment for a VBS in Summit. The VBS is huge with many kids--over 100!! It is going very well, and we have been able to teach them some new songs, which is always cool! We are doing music and games--human fooseball is always my favourite!!

But back to NYC!! We went to the city to see the musical Wicked tonight, and it was amazing! The talent of the performers was outstanding, and it was a funny, witty and very entertaining show! It was cool to be hangin in NYC again and enjoying the buzz of the atmosphere. I am looking forward to spending more time in NYC after I finish team.

We have two weeks left, and it's hard to comprehend that this year of ministry is almost finished. I am feeling sad about leaving my teammates and will miss the mini-family that we have together very much. I have learned a lot about living as peacefully as possible with others in close community and the importance of maintaining relationships and resolving issues immediately and having lots of fun and laughs! It has been quite a year and one that will never leave me!

Well, gotta fly, more work to do!

See-ya

Christie



Christie Lange

Date: 7/30/2005

Submitted by: Samantha Oscar

Journal Entry:

Hi everyone! Wow! This is my final journal for the year....how weird and sad...too many emotions....it just seems so surreal. Wow! It's just crazy! We're done with VBS now and starting to head back home....this is our last week in our region. Today we left Summit, NJ (our last VBS site....it was amazing...such great times!) and drove almost all afternoon to Smithsburg, MD! We were here earlier this year and have been looking forward to coming back for months now. Yippee!

We got here and led an evening worship service and then went over to a host home and had a party with lots of members and host families. It was a blast! The family we were staying with is so musically talented, so they played music for everyone there and people swam and ate lots of food....it was so good to see familiar faces and be so welcomed. This is our last stop in our region before we start heading back to the Midwest. I am not quite sure how I feel about it really being so close to over. I know I am going to really miss all the amazing people I have been so blessed to meet this year. It has been the hardest but most rewarding year of my life, and I will cherish it forever. I have grown and been stretched in so many ways, and I feel so blessed to have had an opportunity like this. I will cherish this year forever and am excited to see how this year will affect the person I am after team. God is amazing! He has shown himself over and over again this year. Praise the Lord!

Well, we're homeward bound....I am so excited to see all of you at home....and as for all of you here....know that you are very very special to me and each of you have left a footprint on my heart and I have been so blessed to meet you. Toodles!

God bless you all!

Sam



Samantha Oscar