

Captive Free South Central 2004-05 Journal

Date: 9/18/2004

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Greetings from Hanlontown, IA and feel special. Here is our first journal entry. Yay!! It has been an amazing show of God's grace and the understanding of our host family and contact. We had a bit of a struggle getting here on time and of course, setting up our whole band for the first time on our own, but we did make it, until the equipment decided not to work. Oh well, we still had a nice acoustic service for the four (yes, four) people that were there. They were absolutely wonderful, and all six of us got to stay with the pastor and contact. Although it's a little nerve-wracking to be on the road, we are not quite alone yet. We have been blessed to have Dani with us. She seems really awesome, and we enjoy the spirituality of her praying. Something I'm sure we will start doing ourselves. And I've always said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Anyways, she is here to help us get accustomed to life on the road as well as life with each other. There will be many bumps, bruises, and even roadblocks, I'm sure, but at least we will have someone to call when all else fails and we don't know what to do. Well, here's Kimmi signing off. Peace.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 9/22/2004

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Right now we are in our 3rd day in Iowa and our third day on the road for the year 2004-2005. As a team we are thoroughly excited to be a part of this ministry and are enjoying ourselves. I feel blessed to be traveling with the group of teammates that I am. They fill each day with laughter and enthusiasm that easily rub off on their surroundings. God has been pouring his blessings out upon me through this ministry in such a short amount of time of beginning it. One of the many blessings that he has already given me is the opportunity to share the gospel with others and letting me be his hands and feet. God has also blessed our group with some amazing host families. We have also been fortunate to have the support that we have had from individuals within congregations who have chosen to help us with our daily needs. I am absolutely amazed how God is able to work through us and am excited to see what he continues to do through us.

I also want to give a special shout out to Scott on our music staff and my family and friends back home, you know who you are!



Josh Tomac

Date: 9/23/2004

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

This is Shannon Vitarius checking in... we've been on the road for ummmm... five days now. Whoo-hoo! We are all still alive and well. Our group is continuing to bond and learn new things about each other (as well as games not to play in the van!) We had our second real program last nite at Emanuel Lutheran in Strawberry Point, Iowa. It really was AWESOME!, just being able to stand in a sanctuary and praise God with so many Christians is something that is going to keep me going this year.

I love this opportunity to share my faith story with so many people. It makes me so happy that at every stop there is someone coming up to us afterwards asking about a song, asking about our faith, simply ready with questions to pose to us before our instrument are even in their stands. The kids all want to join our band and the adults all want to know how we do it.

Honestly there are times I don't know how we do it. It has only been five days but when we got in the van this morning after our devotion and I just fell asleep. (Thanks for a long van ride... which we're still on)



Shannon Vitarius

God's Blessings to all who read and a special little chunk of Grace to Scott... our team Ken Doll.

Shannon and Captive Free South Central ><>

Date: 9/25/2004

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Hey you guys! What's going on with all y'all? Well, let me tell you, we have had a very eventful last few days. Yesterday we did some rehearsing and stuff and we had this AWESOME dinner with Joannie and Kimmi's host family, the Carr's. It was such great food. Home cookin is my favorite! Anyway, so yeah, umm, today on the other hand was kind of sketchy and crazy. First, we had a crazy time trying to get everyone places on time. We are having some difficulty getting together on time lately. Hopefully it gets better soon. I have been seeing improvement, though, so that's promising. Yeah, so after we did devotions this morning at the church, we were leaving and we hit the fender of the trailer on a pole/gate that was on the way out. We didn't turn quite wide enough and, well, to make a long story short, we had to go to an RV place to get them to fix it. The good thing was that the guy at the RV place did the work for free! What a cool guy, huh? And so now we're driving on Highway 34 on our way to Red Oak, Iowa. So, that's been today already. It's crazy because it's only like 1:15 pm now. Oh well, we got through all of our tough stuff today. I was really worried that we weren't going to make it to our booking on time, so it was good that we didn't have a worship to lead til tomorrow morning, so it is good that we wouldn't be late for that. God is so great, you know? Seriously, just over the past few days that we've been on the road, I have felt God so much in everything that we've been doing. I feel so blessed to be with this group of people and be able to do this ministry. It is so amazing; I can hardly explain it to you. I thank God each and every day for everything and all of you. You are all such amazing people and I thank you for all the unending support you've given to all of us, though it may have been directly or indirectly. Thank you all again and may God's blessings be with you all.



Beckie Petzoldt

Captive Free South Central
"South CentRAL"

Date: 9/27/2004

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hey y'all, hows it goin? We are all doin well. we are in Hooper, NE. The team is all gettin along well. We get a little better with each time we perform.

Josh and I are staying in a really cool host home. They live on a nice farm and they have a hot tub. They happened to have an extra Mercades convertible for Josh and I to drive. So that was really fun.

We got to see Scott from training. That was fun. Scott, James (the DCE), and all of us on the team went and saw this really cool band called Remedy. They are out of Lincoln, NE.

And then the morning before we left we got to do a little presentation for the preschool. It was alot of fun getting the little kids to dance and stuff.



Jake Alborn

Date: 9/30/2004

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Can I just say that Seward rocks!?! Yesterday we had a program in Seward, Nebraska and we had a great time. The parsonage was donated to the church and it has to be the coolest place ever. The basement is always open to youth from the church and since the pastor lives on 1st Street, the basement is called "Faith on First". In the basement there are games, a pool table, ping pong, air hockey, indoor hot tub, television, meeting spaces, and an indoor swimming pool; just a great, safe place for the youth to hang out.



Joannie Bryan

Prior to our program we had a lasagna dinner, yummy and then we had an awesome crowd of dancers sit in the first row. We spent most of the day practicing so some of our songs, and we jazzed them up more. (So if you heard us prior to this booking then you should really book us again!!!) We got two awesome partners in Seward and my host sisters, Kallie, Kasey, and Kenna, went home with Captive Free gear, that they sported at school the next day. We are excited about the youth quake for the Seward area kids because we get to hang out with all of them again, and they were pretty cool.

Today we drove to Herington, Kansas and currently are awaiting dinner at the church with all of our host families. Tomorrow we have a program and we are going to the Junior High and High School lunches to promote everyone coming, since it will be a street performance in the middle of town (weather permitting).

Other than that, our team is having a blast on the road. Our four hour drive today seemed to go by in no time because we keep each other entertained laughing and decorating the roof of our van. If you have suggestions please fill free to let us know. Until next time, this is Joannie, over and out. God's Peace.

Date: 10/2/2004

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Hey guys. Greetings from Colby, Kansas. Wow, we have been on the road for two weeks now. How insane is that? As for what has been going on, well, we have just had a spurt of awesome host homes and places that we've stayed at. From Thursday to Saturday, we stayed in Herington, Kansas and Joannie and I had the privilege of staying at the Mayors house. I know, pretty cool, huh? We really enjoyed getting to the host home early because it gave us time to hang out with our host kids. They were so much fun. We played board games and watched Joannie eat about 15 chocolate chip cookies. And instead of doing our program outside (rain), we got to perform in an old school auditorium with a huge stage and everything. The kids were amazing and we had our first barrage of shirt signings. It was pretty funny. The next day, we set off right about our normal time, but we hit a little snag. Our tire went flat so we had to wait a good hour before we could get on the road but we still made it and did our program. And also, we had our first lock-in. I don't think it would have been so bad if we didn't have to be up and about by 7am and to sing at two services and two nursing homes. It was fun but I am definitely looking forward to our day off just to relax and catch up on some sleep. Well, now that I've rambled on for a while, I'll sign off.



Kimberly Rupp

Peace out!!

Ps, Hey Scott. What kind of Ken are you today? hehe

Date: 10/7/2004

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

It's a mystery--a night of chaos, confusion and Christ--where are we going next? Instead of the typical lock-in the kids all night were asking "Where are we going next?" Instead of keeping the kids locked in church all night, we go from place to place with our Christianity, able to enjoy a good Christian experience outside of the church.

The movies, arcade, even the pool became a place where we can enjoy the gifts that God has given us. I pray that as these kids return to these places with their friends, they remember the good times they had with us and other Christians!!!

Date: 10/10/2004

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Well, what can I say? So this year has been an amazing adventure, living with five other people and traveing in a van for a whole year, what more can you ask for. We are currently in Kansas and having a blast. This last friday we had an all nighter with a large group of junior high kids. There were about 40 of them and not once during the night did they lose energy. I however was caught asleep on a couch in the YMCA facility. Today has been a pretty compact day and not much free time, but thats okay because it has been full of laughs .



Josh Tomac



Shannon Vitarius

I am really excited because up to this point I have not been getting a lot out of our devotion time with each other. This is because it just has seemed very surface level and not much depth to it. This is going to change however, we have decided that we are going to read a book as a group during our devo times. It's going to be "The Purpose Driven Life" and as a group we think we will sincerely get something from it.

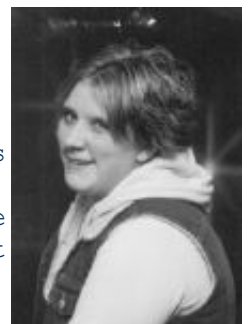
As I close up this email I would just like to say hello to couple special girls by the names of Emma and Abbie. I MISS YA LOTS!!! As well I would like to say hello to the rest of my family and friends.

Date: 10/10/2004

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Wow, how great is God, huh? Seriously, I can't believe how he has blessed us all in the short month that we've been on the road. Garden City, Kansas is such an amazing place. The people here are so great and, let me tell you, Trinity Lutheran Church is the most awesome place! Everyone is so great and we have had so much fun. We were just at this lock-in/mystery bus tour thing that was so awesome! Who cares that I didn't get any sleep for 40 hours! I was so insanely tired afterward, but it was so worth it! Being able to hang out with these kids and worship with them was a truly amazing and enlightening experience. I wouldn't have had it any other way. God has just so richly blessed our team so far with so many things from the places that we've stayed to the people that we've met. I can't believe that it's already been a month! Time's going to fly and, honestly, I don't want it to! I am having so much fun on the road that I wouldn't trade the



Beckie Petzoldt

experiences that we've shared together as a team for anything in the world. So, to everyone reading this journal, I just want to say thank you for all the continued support, love, and prayers you've given us all! We so appreciate it and have been so blessed to know you all. Y'all rock! (oops, Jake's Texas-talk is rubbing off on me. i don't think i'm allowed to say "y'all" in Washington!)

Beckie <><

Date: 10/12/2004

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hey y'all, this is jake again. Now we are in Hays, KS. We are only here over night then we are on to Wichita.

We got here and met Dan Conell. He took us all out to dinner and it rocked. Then we are all staying w/ this awesome family, the Shepkers. I get my own room which rocks cuz Josh snores alot. They also let us use their hot tub.

As far as team dynamics are goin. In my opinion, things are great. We love to laugh together and have a million inside jokes. At first things weren't so smooth but then we had a really productive meeting in a town called Colby. We got almost all of the bumps worked out. I think we are all better teammates, and a better family because of it.

Anyway, Im gonna go to bed soon. So I'll talk to yall later. Till next time.

- jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 10/14/2004

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

So, our journeys have brought us to Kansas City, Missouri. Yesterday we had an awesome program in Wichita, Kansas where we performed as part of the youth night. Ascention Lutheran Church has an amazing youth night where they get dinner and fun and bible studies all in one night.

I personally have to say that I have been blessed with my host homes so far, I can't speak for everyone on the team, but I am sure that they are as thankful for everyone they have met this far into our tour.

Tonight we had our team outing. We went to see The Forgotten in the theater and then we went out for dessert at Applebee's. Just to let you all know, Josh spent the entire movie clinging to my arm. I don't think he particularly likes scary movies.

It is getting cold here. Being from California, I am freezing, but thanks to my new jacket (thanks Jody) I should be able to make my way through when the snow finally comes, and I hear that it isn't too far off. Well, it is late and sleep in much needed these days. Thank you for all who read and God Bless.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 10/16/2004

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Greetings to all from St. James Lutheran Church. It has indeed been a blessing to go to this church and meet all the people. We did get off to kind of a rocky start. Joannie had mentioned our

team outing and so after that, Josh was driving everybody home and I was the last one before him. We decided (not by really any choice of our own) to take the "scenic" route to my host home. I don't suppose it helped any that I had not met or seen my host family yet so I couldn't tell him even where to begin. Oh well. Such is life. Last night was a youth night at the church. We basically played some games, ate pizza, and then CF did a sing-a-long. It was quite interesting because Joannie wasn't singing so we got to redo parts and see how things could work. Beckie did a fabulous job by the way. Yay Beckie!! While we were eating our pizza, I got to talk to this one kid. And he is so cool. For confirmation the kids are given a choice of how they want to express their faith in front of the congregation. Now i don't know about you guys, but I would probably take a good couple of weeks to right a statement out and this kid wrote his during one of his math classes. Just half an hour to write out a good page and a half. It just seemed really cool that he was so into his faith. He had also been doodling and when he explained the picture it was about him being in the shadow of christ trying to follow his word. Pretty awesome I think. Well, i know that we have a retreat at a camp tonight so I don't want to lose any more sleep than i need so I will say good night. God's Blessings on you all.



Kimberly Rupp

ps. A quick shout out to our very faithful reader, Scott. Hope all is well with you.

Date: 10/19/2004

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Today has been an eventful day. Our team traveled from Missouri to Arkansas, this translates into a 7 hour drive that was not very fun. But I am staying with a host family that I really enjoy. They took us out to a Mexican restraunt tonight and it was quite tasty. We have a program tomarrow night at 7:15pm which is very helpful. This means that we have all day to make sure we get everything set up and ready for a night of fun. I think that musically our team is really coming together and we are sounding good. It is really fun to watch our weaknesses become strengths and our talents blend together to make a joyful noise to the Lord.



Josh Tomac

Date: 10/21/2004

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

Shreveport, Louisiana--

Wow. Ummm, so Louisiana is a bit hot for me. But the people here are SUPER nice, and we are just enjoying the area.

God's peace!! <><Shannon<3



Shannon Vitarius

Date: 10/23/2004

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

well, well, well. today, we have just been driving. and driving. (and driving) but, anyways, all this driving has let me have some time to think. I have really been struggling with things the past few weeks. Being the paranoid obsessive person that I am, I have been trying to plan what I'm going to do after this year on team. As much as I try, though, I can't seem to put my finger on anything definate. I keep on stressing out about



Beckie Petzoldt

this and I just can't get it out of my head. I'm always thinking things like, "well, maybe I'll do this," or, "what if I tried this?" I was talking to my host mom from Bossier City, Louisiana, and she helped me so much. We were talking about this very thing and I had expressed my worry about this lack of "plan," if you will. She told me something that I've heard a thousand times over, but it never really clicked until that night. She told me that God has us just where He wants us. It may not make complete sense to us all the time and we may not be able to see the logic, sense, or possibility in the plans that He sets before us, but that's not for us to worry about. If we just give it all to Him and surrender our lives to His work, word, and service, we'll always be right in the path that He has planned for us. Phillipians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength." Nothing is possible without God's love and guidance for our lives. If we try to take hold of the reigns and bump God into the back seat, we'll end up steering ourselves down a path that is not God-pleasing and not God-centered. But if we just step back and say, "here, God, why don't you drive," he'll be more than willing to show you how to get where He wants you to go. Trust in His love and guidance; it's all that will get you through.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Give us the patience, peace, and trust that you have shown us so many times, Lord. Show us where to go and give us hearts that trust and live in your Word. I ask your blessing to those who don't know your way, Lord. Show them your love and compassion; the same love and compassion that we experience every day as followers of your word. Grant us peace and joy, in your son's name, I pray.

Amen

Date: 10/26/2004

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Sup yall

Well, its been about a month now. Things are still goin really well. We experience the trials of average "team" life, but, when they are addressed, God helps us through them.

Yesterday was our day off. We went into New Orleans. It was so much fun. I had been there before so I wanted to go to the French Quarter and to Cafe du Monde. We ended eatin lunch at the Bubba Gump Shrimp restaurant. It was an awesome witness to our waiter. He was really interested in what we were doin and our ministry.

Today we had a chance to do a mini program/chapel sevice for the children at Attonement Lutheran School. When your getting tired and worn out, the smiles on the faces of the children makes it all worth the work. Seeing them singing, laughing, and having a good time while all praising God puts a huge smile on my face.

Now we are finally back in Texas. Its good to be in my home state. We will be in the Houston area for a while. Then, in a couple of weeks we will be in SAN ANTONIO!!! My home city. I can't wait.

Yall take care of yourselves. To our family, friends and fans, we love you and miss you.

-Big Jake.



Jake Alborn

Date: 10/28/2004

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

God was really watching over us these past couple of days. We were in New Orleans with no idea of where we were going but low a behold we got a phone call from the office that said we were to head to Spring, Texas. The thing that really brought our team down was the fact that the message telling us where we were to go mentioned that we were sleeping at the church and that little or no meals would be provided. This fact brought our whole team down. On our drive to Spring we were really wondering what kind of church we were going to visit that couldn't house us and couldn't provide meals. God really worked on our judgements and shocked us by placing us in this awesome church with one of the most interesting DCE's I have ever met. It turns out that the church has no time to find host families so we slept in this awesome youth room. Talk about God taking care of us, we got some much needed team bonding time, sleeping in this 'upper room' of faith.



Joannie Bryan

Along with being completely taken care of, the DCE, John David, took us out to lunch and we spent the whole time talking to him about team and the experiences that we have had so far on the road. It really was the first time that we could really look back and think about all the things that have happened on the road. Following the theme of things just popping up, we got to do our puppet show at a chapel service at the beginning of confirmation. This seems like a slightly uninteresting event but the 'children's sermon' that we got to experience beforehand really touched me and made me so thankful for the small things that God throws our way. So, on top of all this unplanned stuff, we got the opportunity to sit in on a bible study for the high school youth group. This was the most ammazing blessing of the entire stay in Springs because God took us and filled us up with a bible study that we didn't have to lead but got to take part in and emerge ourselves in The Word instead of working to emerge others. The leader of the bible study, Brian, really challenged us with thought provoking questions and unique ways of looking at the familiar verses on God's goodness.

Sometimes we start to get to thinking too high of ourselves and we begin to take attitudes that need to be humbled and God takes us and turns us inside out and gives us a whole new apprieciation for every little thing placed in our lives.

Date: 10/30/2004

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

WOW!! God is indeed awesome. When we head out today for our next church we will begin the pre-planned section of the month. For the past two weeks, we have been finding out only a day or two ahead of where we were going. And we have been so blessed by all the different places. We are currently in Springs, Texas. And we met a past teamer. Caleb was on team last year with Zach, who in turn was the staff member who taught Beckie the drums. Yay for connections. He was totally awesome. We went out to dinner on Thursday night, when we first came in and it was so good to talk to someone who understands the "van fun-ness" and other "team stuff". Explaining how you had a four hour nap in a van and yet you're exhausted does not make sense to people who are not touring, so it was great that he understood and even sympathised with us.



Kimberly Rupp

On Friday, we participated in their halloween lock-in. And the costume contest actually included the kids having to explain their costume and why they chose it. Needless to say, it was quite hilarious, though my favorite was definitely "old Ladies Gambling in Las Vegas". We also introduced "Mighty, Mighty Scoop Noodle Challenge" to the kids and what a game. It was pretty cool to see the kids getting into it. Then, other than all the girls attacking the Ice Cream Gutter, that was about it for Captive free involvement.

I think that we are all excited to be heading out to do an actual program. I personally have felt quite useless many times in the past couple weeks. Not having a program, not being able to talk to the youth, not being able to really do anything can get hard after awhile. But hopefully, as we get closer to our first Construction Zone, things will pick up. God's Blessings to everyone who is reading this.

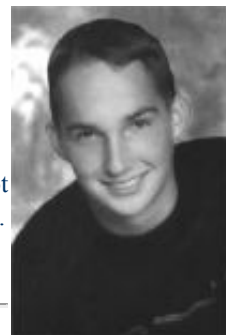
This is Kimmi Signing out.

ps. we hope you are enjoying the journals Scott. And expect an email sometime soon.

"What kind of Ken are you today?"

Date: 11/2/2004
Submitted by: Josh Tomac
Journal Entry:

Well, today we are in Pearland, Texas. The pastor at this church is really cool, and he took us out to a BBQ restraunt that was quite good. I had steak, and it was absolutely awesome. Being from Portland, Oregon I am not used to this weather; it's really hot in this part of Texas. But anyway, I am having a blast. Until next time....adios.



Josh Tomac

Date: 11/4/2004
Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius
Journal Entry:

Good ol' southern charm--in all reality I was raised to be one of the "G.R.I.T.S." (girls raised in the south)-- and here the people have been so nice, and I don't think we will ever beat our packing time to load the trailer!! I think I almost got packed in!! I love it when people lend a hand so willingly. It just makes for a VERY happy environment. I know it's the last thing people think of doing when they're having trouble, but in all my trials, I feel best and most relieved from my burdens when I'm helping someone else with theirs.



Shannon Vitarius

Peace out <><Shannon<3

Date: 11/6/2004
Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt
Journal Entry:

My Verse for the Day:

Romans 8:28-39

Being in San Antonio with Jake's family this past evening has, again, made me think of something that I, personally, haven't really taken the time to think about; the value and love of a family. Life on the road is so hard sometimes. We really don't know what to do with ourselves. Jokingly, we tell each other, "fine, I'm going home," as we laugh it off and continue on with our day. Sometimes, though, we "joke" about it but really think to ourselves, "what would/could I be doing if I were at home right now?" I think the question has, honestly, crossed the minds of each and every teamer on the road thus far. I, especially, can say that I have thought about it a time or two.

We pulled up to Jake's church, Crown of Life Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas, and I just felt my heart drop. I watched him get out of the van, see one of his buddies, greet one another (with one of those "manly" greetings that I, frankly, still am trying to understand the logic behind), and go on their merry way to go see everyone inside. I watched this and thought to myself, "why can't I just be home right now?" Meeting his family, his church family, and all his friends sparked a need and a want for something so familiar but, at the same time, so ignored and taken for granted.

I really didn't realize how much I'd missed home until that night. Of course at Training in August, things and emotions were pretty sketchy, but I got over it. With all the festivities we're constantly participating in, it's hard to just sit down and think about all that we've left at home.

Sitting and thinking about all of this makes me thank God for everything back home, but



Beckie Petzoldt

also be so incredibly thankful for this opportunity to participate in this ministry. God has blessed us so immensely on the road this far; I can't even begin to imagine what's coming. It's hard to think about all that we left behind because, for some of us, that means remembering things that we'd rather forget, or facing fears that we would just as soon put behind us. Facing these discomforts, fears, and regrets are what will, in the end, bring us closer to God. In removing the walls we've put in between us and our past, we begin to realize that, with God on our side, anything is possible.

Looking back at the past two and a half months, I see sadness, loneliness, and separation, but I see even more joy, blessing, grace, peace, and love. God has so richly blessed each and every one of us; it's so amazing to look and see what He's done. Even when we feel so alone and so far away, whether you're twenty feet or two thousand miles away from those you love, remember the importance of family. It's the only thing that will get you through.

Dear Heavenly Father,

I thank you for the opportunities you place before us. Help us and guide us to embrace those opportunities and use them to your glory. God, help us also to remember the importance of family. It is so amazing what you do for us, Lord. Help us to always remember the love you have for us and you show to us through family, friends, and those we meet on the road. Bless all your children in Jesus' name,

Amen

Date: 11/9/2004

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Howdy-

Well, today we left my home town of San Antonio. It was a great weekend. We did a program at my church, and I was able to see a lot of my friends. We had our day off in S.A.(that's what we call it for short). Joannie, Beckie, and I went down town to the famous Riverwalk. I got to take them to the Alamo and some other historic sights. We had a fun time and took a lot of cool pictures.

This week Josh and I get to stay at...MY HOUSE!! Ahh, to stay in my own bed again was wonderful. We stayed up late and hung out with my mom and sister. Josh and my sister, Sarah, had a blast playing Monopoly. It was an all around good time. Well that's it for now. Bye.



Jake Alborn

Date: 11/11/2004

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

So, as of Tuesday we (South Central) didn't know where we were headed. Then Kathy from the office called us and had a place for us to perform in Wichita. The performance was a request of a six year old boy, Nicholas, who saw a Captive Free concert this last summer. His mother emailed Youth Encounter and told the story.

Nicholas has autism and he didn't do well around people. When his mother took him to the concert they sat in the back and he was screaming because he didn't want to be around all the people. She was upset because he didn't want to stay and so they left. Later they found out that Nicholas had cancer and on one of his doctors visits he was singing three of the Captive Free songs without missing a single word. From that point Nicholas has improved so much. The once reserved kid now sings and dances, talks to people, and was even bold enough to



Joannie Bryan

ask his school to have the band come and perform.

We showed up at Calvary Christian School and the staff were so friendly and willing to help in any way. They had rearranged all the classes so that the day ended when we started our program. Nicholas' mom came and we got to chat with her briefly before the kids came in. We took the time to learn the three songs that Nicholas remembered and it was quite clear that he remembered them because he was in the second row clapping and singing and having a great time with a great big smile on his face.

I think that the most moving thing was watching Nicholas' mom sit in the back during "Believe" with tears coming down her face, because I knew that she could relate to the song. "Though it feels like no one cares what you are facing, I am here and I will be your friend." I can't even imagine having a child that has cancer and I have so much admiration for her, just for turning to God for the strength to go on.

At the end of the program we presented Nicholas with a picture of the band and signed it. He then promised that he would be at the Vacation Bible School this summer and we promised to see him there. It truly is amazing the way God works through people. Our team was sort of going through a rut and then God gave us the opportunity to meet Nicholas and it really gave us some perspective. Thanks God, we need that.

Date: 11/14/2004

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Wow!!! What an awesome presence God is. We have just completed the first Construction Zone of Youth Encounter. It was so much fun. There were two awesome bands, Fusebox and Summerville/The Pool Boys/"Changing their name again". (Don't ask, even I'm not exactly sure), The whole crew of Event Ministry Directors came down to see how it would run, Around 300 amazing youth and pastors/youth directors, and of course one very overwhelmed Captive Free team. But we held our ground and soon realized the wonderful job that we got to do. When I first learned about YE, CF, and the events, I had never even seen a family night program, let alone gone to a YE event, therefore I had no expectations or ideas of anything I could expect. And God has blessed me in experiencing one of the most moving weekends so far.

All of our team got to become servants for Christ not only by finishing all the odd jobs that make an event run smoothly, but by having time to sit down and really get to know these youth who have such amazing faith stories and experiences of their own. A group of just four girls were the first to arrive and as we talked to their youth leader, she explained that these girls had only started going to youth group about a year ago and that this was their first large group experience. I mean, how cool is it to come to a place and just worship with 300 other youth like yourselves, and to see that there are other people their own age who have such awesome faiths.

I have two parts of the weekend that I especially enjoyed. The first was the variety show/2nd stage that we, Captive Free, got to host. We had a variety of acts ranging from a girl reading her own poetry to different worship bands to a guy beat-boxing. And of all the acts, a girl came up and sang and played the guitar. I don't know exactly what it was, but the simplicity of it and the deep meaning and message of "belonging" really reached out to me. The second experience was during and about our servant project. YE has partnered up with "Feed My Starving Children" foundation for the servant project that will be at every Zone and at Kansas City, we had proposed to make around 45,000 meals. We not only reached that goal but went so far as to have made over 60,000 meals. And that is truly amazing.

Again I say what an awesome God we have. I believe that our entire team will be going back to the next few churches with renewed vigor (when we get some rest first of course) and excitement. I know I will.

Peace and Grace Be with you all. This is Kimmi signing out.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 11/16/2004
Submitted by: Josh Tomac
Journal Entry:

Hello! We are in Hays, Kansas right now, celebrating Thanksgiving with an amazing host family and some wonderful food. However, I was not expecting that I would become emotional about not being able to be with family during this holiday, and I found out that I was very wrong. But I am making the most of it because I am with my team, and they are just as good as my family.

Oh, I can't forget to mention that I made a new little friend while being here, and we had a lot of fun playing peek-a-boo...he even cried when he had to leave the festivities.



Josh Tomac

Date: 11/18/2004
Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius
Journal Entry:

Well, the road is being good to us right now. I'm a little tired, but we've had some awesome experiences since I last wrote. We had our first "return" church this past week in Kansas City where a girl continues to touch me with her life trials. She has meant a lot to me this year simply because I can see God working in her and even though she has still made a few mistakes since I saw her last. She has accepted Christ into her life and is constantly in my prayers that she may keep in touch with us and continue to grow in her faith.



Shannon Vitarius

We are now in Hays, KS and having a blast. Our contact here has been so supportive of us, and we had a full day yesterday with two nursing home visits and a program. It was nice to be running around!

At the nursing home, there was an adorable woman named Mimi who lifted our hearts when she responded to herself making the common dog be quiet. With a look of sheer joy on her face and a wrinkled fist shaking in the air, she yelled, "I did it!" with extreme pride in herself.

I'm doing pretty well myself and felt the need after surviving the first Construction Zone to have a similar reaction of "I did it!" This year is so full of awesome opportunities for ministry, and I look forward to taking them home and sharing the experience with my loved ones in NY and AL this Christmas. I've learned to appreciate all of them back home -- especially my boyfriend, who has been so supportive of me and what I'm doing, whether it's picking up a bill or simply calling me and telling me to chill and focus. God has blessed me with him and I keep him in my daily prayers. I'm so grateful to have surrounding support both on the road and at "home" with him.

May God bless you and your loved ones as we prepare for the holiday season (Joannie and Beckie are already playing Christmas carols!), and may the turkey not add too many pounds!!

Shannon of CFSC 04-05

Date: 11/20/2004
Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt
Journal Entry:

Howdy, y'all. I'm working on my southern drawl, and I figured since we're in Salina, Kansas, this might be the place to start taking notes. I don't really know. Anyway, I have the funniest story to tell you guys. At this church in Salina (which is absolutely GORGEOUS, by the way), we met these kids, one little boy, and one little girl. We were just hanging out in the kitchen downstairs helping prepare the spaghetti dinner that we were going to eat with our host families before we dispersed to our respective host homes. Well, Joannie and I were talking to them, and the little boy decided to inform us that "the devil lives in our church" and proceeded to ask us if we wanted to see him. Now, I don't know about Joannie, but I got a little nervous right about then, and reluctantly followed them both upstairs into the sanctuary, which was dark except for the red illuminated "EXIT" signs by the doors. Well, come to find



Beckie Petzoldt

out, if you stand in the right spot, the red from the signs reflects off of these two vents along the wall in the back, and it looks like there's a red scary face in each one. The kids thought it was funny, but it freaked me out! Then, Jake and I were talking to them a little later and, just giving them a hard time, asked them if they liked each other. The little girl looked at Jake with sheer disgust in her eyes and said, and I quote, "No, we hate uh-chother! We do karate on uh-chother." I almost died laughing! It was so funny! These kids were so serious, but they played together all the time, so that's why it was super funny. Kids these days, so funny without even knowing it!

Date: 11/23/2004

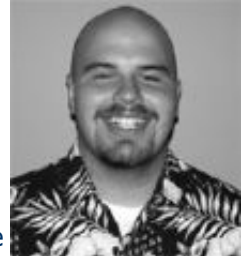
Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hi-

Right now we are in St. Joseph, MO. We are just sort of passing through here. Josh and I got an early Thanksgiving dinner. It was so wonderful. Tonight we are staying with the parents of Tyson Bibb. He was on Captive Free South Central last year. He is in Wisconsin for this week, so his parents are letting us stay in his room. I hear it might snow tonight, so I'll keep my eyes open. Take care. Bye.

- Big Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 11/25/2004

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Thanksgiving is all about family and friends, eating turkey and stuffing and pumpkin pie. God really threw us for a loop when Thanksgiving came along and we were in Iowa with no family around. Thankfully, we found ourselves surrounded by amazing people who pulled us into their traditions and made our holiday something special. We drove up to Sergeant Bluff, Iowa and on Wednesday night, we got to turkey bowl with the confirmation class at Spirit of Life Lutheran Church -- and boy-oh-boy, was it great. The turkeys were frozen and the pins were pop bottles filled with water. Let me tell you this, turkeys are not round and therefore do not roll in the direction you toss them. Thanksgiving day brought us to Pastor's home where we watched the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and peeled potatoes and met the family. They had all the fixings and really made our Thanksgiving memorable. After dinner, we watched movies and helped with the dishes. Being so far from home can be hard sometimes, but it is days like this that make us feel like we are with close friends and family.

The day ended with Beckie and me going back to our host family and watching our first Christmas movie to get into the 'spirit of Christmas.' Now that Thanksgiving is over, the lights can glow and the music can blast, all in anticipation of our coming Savior. Merry Christmas everyone.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 11/27/2004

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Hey all. It's Kimmi again. This time hailing you from Albia, IA. We have been blessed with the opportunity to forgo host home ministry for the night and all hang together at the church. While host home ministry is actually our favorite thing to do on team, a break is nice every once in a while. The only bummer part to this is that Josh is pretty sick. We had to take him to the ER, and that is not fun. At least it's a sinus infection, which is annoying but easy to treat with antibiotics.



Kimberly Rupp

I am totally psyched for our new puppet show. It is so much better than the first one we did. Joannie is pretty good about coming up with things. I think we will be showing it at the Midwinter training program. Here's a hint--I get to use my puppet. Yay! I hope it goes well. Oh well, there's not much else to say, really. God's peace to you all.

Date: 11/30/2004

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Hello! Well today we are in Nora Springs, Iowa. I have just been having an absolute blast while being on the road. One event that has taken place is our team Christmas party, and we all have been very anxious to open our gifts from each other. So, when team began, I hated reading, but my team member Joannie has changed that for me. And for Christmas, Beckie got me three of Nicholas Sparks' books. He is an author that I have really come to enjoy, and I am very anxious to begin reading more of his stuff.

Besides the Christmas party, which was so much fun, I also am quite excited to see my family for a couple of weeks during our holiday break. It has been about three months since I have seen them, and I am anxious to spend some time with them.

Anyway, I am gonna sign out....adios



Josh Tomac

Date: 12/2/2004

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

St. Paul--back to our office. Well, we've done the CD. I simply pray that it helps to remind people of our message of Christ that we are sharing on the road this year. Some of us are not feeling 100%. I thank God for the opportunity He has given me to be in this amazing ministry. Having Christ in my life defines me, everything I say and do is because of Him and the great joys he brings into my life. I remember when I was in middle school and I went to Quakes and I had Captive Free come to my house. I remember that although the visits were always short, they always left me feeling energized to go and share the Gospel. So take a look at our CD--not because we're good singers but because in it you can hear our love of Christ just spilling out of us. That's what I appreciate about this year the most. God has called me to a group of people I would've never met in my life and, in spite of all of our different views and lifestyles, He is using us as His voice!! What more could a princess of the King ask for?!!

IN CHRIST'S LOVE

<><SHANNON<3



Shannon Vitarius

Date: 12/4/2004

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Hey, everybody! Happy Holidays! I hope your December is starting off well! Ours has been great so far! We had our Youth Encounter teams/office Christmas party when we arrived back in Minneapolis/St. Paul, and it was super fun! It was so great to see all of our friends and reunite with people, for a little bit anyway. We ate, talked, sang Christmas carols; it was just so fun! And, I love Christmas music, so it was just fantastic! I wanted to start listening to Christmas CDs in the van right after Thanksgiving, but no one else was really down with that. We are in Silver Bay, Minnesota. We did a program this evening, and it was crazy because some of our sound equipment didn't work! So, we had to do a little



Beckie Petzoldt

jerryrigging of our own, but it worked out okay. The host home that Shannon, Jake, Josh and I are staying at is cool! Our host mom went out of town, so the house is ours. It was fun because I made a lasagna dinner (I actually put the frozen lasagna into the oven along with the bread and opened a bag of salad), and we all ate as a team like a family, and it was really cute! But, yeah, I don't have too much to say, so I hope you all have a wonderful holiday and a very Merry Christmas! Talk to you after Christmas! Take care, and God bless you this holiday season!

Date: 12/7/2004

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Howdy-

We are in Minnesota for our Mid-winter Training. It's pretty snowy here. The driving was tricky seeing as most of us have never had to drive in snow before. Going into the camp we got a little stuck, but the camp director came and pulled us out. There have already been a few snowball fights. I feel there will be more to come.

This week is a week for us to reunite with all of the other groups as well as work on our own group. A time to see old friends and also create stronger bonds within ourselves. I hope this week will go well for all teams. That's it for now. Later.

-Big Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 12/9/2004

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Well, hey, this is Joannie Bryan reporting live from Mid-Winter training here in Macgregor, MN. It is sure cold here with feet of snow and lots of ice, but you couldn't find a warmer place. All the teams are here, and it has been such a delight to meet up with all the other teams and get to hear all their stories about their ministry experiences.

Each team does a program in the evening, and it has been so much fun to sing along with those old familiar songs from the beginning days of team and hear those new ones that each team has learned over the last four months. It sort of challenges our team to step it up and see what new and exciting things are up ahead of us for the next seven months.

I am looking forward to going home and seeing my family for Christmas. So far it has kind of been just like being away for college and coming home for the holiday. I think summer might be the hard part of this year in terms of missing my family.

Well, this has been Joannie Bryan reporting. Until next time...



Joannie Bryan

Date: 12/11/2004

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

So I've decided to use the regular font. Call me crazy. Oh well. I have to admit that I wrote this when I got home for Christmas rather than try to at the camp. Hee hee. We finished Midwinter training with a bang. It was very hard to go to all the Meet By Team sessions, but if your team wants to survive the rest of the year, they need to break it down before Christmas or it's probably a lost cause. I am thrilled though at how well ours went once we started talking. And we had Dani there to help facilitate. All in all, it was good for us.

I am excited for winter break and the chance to see my family. It will be the only time this year I can, cuz I'll be



Kimberly Rupp

going to CA for Easter break. And it will be nice to not move for two weeks. Whoo-hoo. And I get to visit other friends of mine too. I will admit that it was pretty fun to see all the teams again. May God bless them on their journeys for the rest of the year. Especially the international teams who get to go overseas. Yay for them. Well I gotta go. Have a very merry Christmas.

Date: 12/28/2004

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

We are currently back in Saint Paul, Minnesota for Quake training. This is the time where we learn how to effectively run Youth Quakes and where we learn what are specific roles and expectations of us are. The days kinda seem long, but I am really looking forward to being a part of this youth convention; it sounds like a lot of fun to me. Anyway, it's time for me to go keep on learning.



Josh Tomac

Date: 12/30/2004

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

Being sick is not fun, so instead, a funny story of another teammate while we're here in Stratford, Iowa!!

Josh really wants to be able to handle hot food (like Jake and me), but today may have changed his spicy ambitions.



As we sat down for dinner (Mexican), our bottle of "Da Bomb" was brought out with a big warning. "All you need is a drop on one prong of your fork for your whole taco." So Jake and I take our respective amounts, and as the bottle reaches Josh, he gets the sauce on two prongs and says, "I'm tempted to just try it like this." Immediately the teenage sons and Jake start egging him on. Me, I'm nervous. I've just put two drops in my taco meat and stirred well, and my eyes are watering. Josh places the fork in his mouth, and honestly, if he were a cartoon, his eyes not only would have stuck out of his head, I think they would have fallen out!! After the rest of the milk and several spoonfuls of sour cream and a few flour tortillas, he was able to say, "That's hot!"

Shannon Vitarius

Well, I guess they don't call it "Da Bomb" for nothing!!

<><Shannon<3

Date: 1/1/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

"On the road again, just can't wait to get on the road again..."

Just thought I'd add a little bit of theme music to this journal! Well, it is so incredibly awesome to be back out on the road again with my team! Feeling so refreshed by having spent time with our friends and family is such a blessing. It's sort of surreal being in a van with five other people. You tend to feel kind of disjointed from your surroundings because you never settle down and stay anywhere for an extended amount of time. That's what this year is about, though. Spreading the gospel throughout the country and the world, not staying in one certain place and not being with all the same people; planting a seed and moving on. This is one thing that I have struggled with, however, throughout our first leg of this year. Not knowing what happens to the people we minister to dragged me down so much sometimes. I, being someone who has to do a job completely before moving



Beckie Petzoldt

onto the next task at hand, had a hard time adjusting to this reality. I know we can't stay in one place, because we are a traveling relational music ministry team who is out here for one purpose and one purpose only: Jesus Christ.

With every new year comes New Year's resolutions, kept and forgotten about, and plans for the future that seem to go down the drain with the rest of that bad holiday eggnog. As a Christian, I find that I talk the talk, but not walk the walk so much. I view this time of new beginnings as one more chance to make a difference. But what we tend to forget and overlook is that, with Jesus, every day is another chance to make that difference. Romans 8:37-39 talks about how in Christ, we are more than conquerors, and that nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In this time of promises, hope, and many trips to the after-Christmas sales at Wal-Mart, keep your eyes focused on Christ. Chaos is the result of not letting go.

Hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and God's blessings be on you all! Thanks for all your support and prayer! We love you guys!

Date: 1/4/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hi-

So right now we are in Cedar Falls, IA. It's pretty cold here. We just came from ice and canceled programs in Stratford, IA to snow and possibly another canceled program here. I'm glad I live in Texas. It only snows, like, every 20 years in San Antonio, and it's usually gone by morning.

We are gonna be practicing a lot this week. We have to get ready for our Youth Quakes. We don't know nearly enough sing-alongs. So, that's what we will be working on.

Josh and I are staying with a nice couple. Their children are all out of the house. We stayed up and watched a Bill Cosby DVD that I bought. We all really enjoyed it. They made this stuff for dinner called Taco Yum-yum. Josh liked it so much he ate about half of the pan. It was funny. Well, I'm gonna go. Bye.

-Big Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 1/6/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Sometimes life throws you curves, and you just have to take what you get. The curve for South Central this week was the snow. Lots of it. The forecasters said it would snow and they were right. We got about 12 inches in the last three days. We still met at the church and rehearsed so that we would be prepared for the upcoming Quakes, even though our programs were cancelled. We didn't let a little snow slow us down. We had a grand ol' time in the churches. Sometimes we would get some business done in the fireside room and sit by the fire soaking up all the warm energy or we would sing until our host families would pick us up. We laugh and sing and talk and make the most of the situation we are in because we are still meeting wonderful people and visiting some beautiful churches. We have warm food and roofs over our heads while the



Joannie Bryan

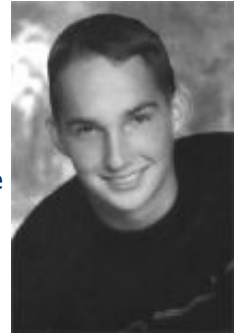
temperatures are sub-freezing outside. With all this snow we have so much to be thankful for that it is almost a blessing. Thank you, God, for the snow; it is cold but it has sure taught us a lot.

Date: 1/11/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Well hello! We are in Ottumwa, Iowa once again. We are with a cool host family. There are two little boys at this house, and they seem never to run out of energy, but they are definitely fun to be around. The only thing that is not overly fun about our experience here is the fact that it is still winter and all the roads are iced over, including our host home's driveway. No worries though....Jake decided to go out and buy kitty litter to help our van keep a little traction when backing down the driveway. But I truly am having a great time.



Josh Tomac

Date: 1/13/2005

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

Well, we are getting ready for our second Quake and I'm SO excited. It is so energizing being in a room full of young Christians. They all come together to PRAISE God and know more about him. Last week was awesome (especially for our first time), and this time will be another energizing week. I love hearing the kids' faith stories and seeing the changes that we can make in such a short time.



Shannon Vitarius

We got to meet a past teamer who is now a youth director at a church here in Davenport, and Hilary is such a blessing. Just being able to sit and have pizza with her, hang out and talk about her team experiences and find out that her trials were not so different from ours. It's amazing the way that God will put people on our path whenever we get nervous about something--He always has someone waiting with an encouraging word.

I'm doing the Calm the Storm/Weather Channel Trek, and I share a lot of my faith story. Sometimes I wonder about what I'm talking about or what my point was, but I always look at the right middle school kid or adult leader who gives me just the look of encouragement that I need. I love walking out of a Trek and having one of the kids find me later to share part of their faith story. I'm really looking forward to this Event season because I feel that it's going to be a new way to boost me up again and rejuvenate my excitement for this amazing ministry.

I had been nervous about team because I thought we were going to be doing the same type of thing every day, but although we don't change our music every day, our programs change for different congregations. We may go to one church where they thrive off of our upbeat songs like "No One Like You," whereas others may really enjoy our slower songs, and so we thrive off the energy they bring as well.

I am really loving team ministry and going to different homes and seeing new families. We are getting into the swing of things again, and life on the road is more fun. We are really enjoying each other as a team, and Joannie and Beckie have been making me laugh lately.

Well, until another time... <><Shannon<3

Date: 1/15/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Hey, everyone! This one's going to be quick because I'm at the Quad Cities Quake. I have ten minutes before I have to meet my group for dinner, and I still have to change clothes and find my shoes! So, I have decided that I love Youth Quakes! If I could do Quakes every day for the rest of the year, I'd be a happy camper! Seriously, they are so great! The kids are so hyped up, and they just get this fire for Christ, and it's truly awesome to witness. I love working with the Junior Guides! High school kids are so cool! Seriously, I wish I was as cool as these kids when I was in high school. They are so willing to help and talk and share; it makes my job so much better and so much easier. Well, I'm gonna go ahead and sign off. I still can't remember where I put my shoes. Shoes.....oh, shoes.....this room is a mess. No wonder I can't find anything. It is because we're messy! 'm going to go tackle the animal that is living in my clothes pile and eating my shoes so I can go eat dinner. God bless; always rock for Him!



Beckie Petzoldt

Date: 1/16/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Yes, it's not exactly time for my journal, but I felt moved to write one so here I go. I have decided that my favorite part of team has definitely got to be Quakes. We've only finished our first one, but it was so much fun with so much energy that I don't know where to begin. Well, first off the band is awesome. We got to hang with Tangled Blue who are formerly of Crosseyed. Joel and Amie are two of the coolest people ever. They just really know how to have fun and yet be praising God and setting an example for everyone. Also, we got to work with Jen. She is so cute and fun, and she says "Oh boy" like 20 times every time she does announcements. The Quake was so orderly and well run that I was amazed at how smoothly it went. And also we met Dan. He was the speaker for the Quake and his stories were so funny. We look forward to working with him at the Wichita Quakes. Well that's about all. TTYL.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 1/18/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hello-

Hi everyone. Today we are in Bettendorf, IA. This church had a group at our Quad Cities Youth Quake. They are all pretty awesome. We are gonna do a program here. I hope all the children will be as energetic as at the Quake.

Josh and I are staying with a really great host family. Their daughter, Amy, was at the Youth Quake. They are all so much fun. They have a hot tub, and it's looking quite fun. What better time than January in Iowa to use a hot tub?? Well, I'm gonna go. That hot tub is calling my name. Take care.

-Big Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 1/20/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

With every Quake we go to, we get to meet really awesome kids, so we are really excited to get to visit churches where we get to see the kids again. This occurred just the other day at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bettendorf, Iowa. At the Quake, my host family approached me, and I got to meet them ahead of time. When we arrived at the church, we met up again with all the formalities out of the way, and I felt like I really got to start getting to know them. Amanda and I got to play Dance Dance Revolution (which I completely stink



Joannie Bryan

at), and I watched "Blue's Clues" with David and ate breakfast with Matthew. One of my lunches was spent getting to talk to my host dad, Tom, and I got to drink some tea with my host mom, Linda. During our program, David came up to me while I was working the sound board for one song, and we danced together. I got to talk to Amanda about possibly being a part of Captive Free in the future, and school and everything. The coolest thing is that we get to return to this church this summer and do VBS. This really gives me something to look forward to in July. The 10th, to be exact. Now Bettendorf is in the past and we are here in Newton, Iowa with a new awesome host family, and we are watching Aladdin and chatting with Tehyn and Brooke. These girls are really cool and 'A Whole New World' just began, so I am going to sign out. Until we meet again...

Date: 1/22/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Hey, hey, hey, everyone! How are y'all doing? I really need to start remembering that you guys can't answer me back when I ask questions like that! Anyhoo, we're in Washington, Iowa this weekend, and it's really icy here. I was walking out to our trailer today and almost killed myself! I slipped and kind of slipped under the trailer! I was laughing pretty hysterically, but I am sore. Joannie and I are with such an amazing host home! It's so cool to be able to hang out with Junior Guides at Youth Quakes, but then to be able to stay with them at their homes when we go to visit is even better! You really get to sit down and talk to them about them, not necessarily about their youth group or anything. You're really just there for them, and they love it.

In this house we're staying in, our host family was telling us that it used to be an old house owned by the town Catholic church, and nuns used to live in it. There is a chapel built onto the house that our host dad made into his music room. Side note: he had the coolest table ever! He took an old bass drum and put music and stuff like that inside it and fastened plexiglass to the top, and that was his coffee table in that room! So awesome! I'm going to have one someday! But, this house was crazy; there was a scary room downstairs that was dark and stuff, and our host mom told us it was where the coal was stored, but we're convinced that it's where they kept the bad nuns! Just joking; it was really creepy, though. Well, we're having a great time on the road. Keep on rockin it for JC!



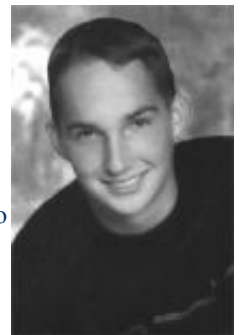
Beckie Petzoldt

Date: 1/25/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

So we are in Florissant, Missouri. We had this opportunity to go and perform for a school, and it was the coolest thing. The kids absolutely loved it and joined in on songs where they were able. It got a little crazy afterwards because we went and ate lunch with the kids at the performance; after we ate, we were bombarded with kids who wanted us to autograph a napkin for them since they could find nothing else. But we had an amazing time with them. It was also refreshing to see so many kids that had an enthusiasm for God.



Josh Tomac

Date: 1/27/2005

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

Manchester, Missouri

Well, we as a team decided to have a night on the town, and we ended up doing what we do best--eating--

We went to the California Pizza Kitchen and had a slightly unexpected entertaining evening. As we were waiting for our dinner to come to us, we had a great view by the window of...the mall!! Which is usually not an exciting place to sit. However, when you



Shannon Vitarius

put six young adults by that window looking for something, they find entertainment. MALL WALKERS!! I so want to be one, but where I come from, they don't come out at night. So we felt because they were doing something good for themselves (as we were preparing to stuff our faces with pizza!), we should encourage them--which leads to the odd ball sign. Josh took a permanent marker and wrote "YOU'RE PHAT!!" However the girls on our team told him that older women would not know that that is a compliment, so Josh wrote underneath "That means you're cool."

However Josh does not have really nice handwriting, so it looked like he wrote "That means you're old!" Needless to say, we opted out of holding signs so that we would not discourage their great walking skills.

So to all mall walkers everywhere, thank you for doing what many of us don't.

God's blessings

<><Shannon<3

Date: 1/29/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Wow!! Last night was CRAZY!! We are at the St. Louis Quake right now and unfortunately, there are NO STAIRS! Well at least, no access to them from the first floor. And this discourages people from using them on the second floor simply because if you were lucky enough to get into an elevator, you might as well ride all the way to your floor rather than have to get off at the second floor and climb the rest of the way up. Craziness, I tell you. It has been fun because we had a crazy game room. Lots of kids, so many that we couldn't fit them all in the room. Which was okay by me cuz I don't do too well with crowds. Just slightly claustrophobic. And then I got to sit out in the hall and talk to the youth that couldn't fit in the room. It was quite fun. I think that we'll be going to their church for VBS during the summer, and I can't wait to see them again. That's about it for now. Peace out, yo!



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 2/1/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hi everyone this is Jake. It's been a while since the last time I wrote. Welll, we all just came off of a wonderful weekend. The Youth Quake in St. Louis was awesome. There was so much energy and the staff was great.

Monday was our day off. We got to all stay at the same house, which is kinda fun some times. Our host mom was soo good to us. She and her husband have a beautiful home and they let us just relax all day. Relaxation was what we needed after such a busy weekend. We also got to wash our van and trailer for the first time since being on the road. Being able to do that felt great. I think some of us forgot the van was white.

Today we were able to play some music for a little pre-school class in St. Charles, MO. They were so cute, and we had a lot of fun. Then we drove to Kansas City. This is our third time in Kansas City, so it's nice to see a few familiar faces.

Thanks to all who are reading this. We all send our love. Take care.

Jake Alborn



Jake Alborn

Date: 2/3/2005
Submitted by: Joannie Bryan
Journal Entry:

An epic story involving a mall, pizza, napkins and walking.

Life on the road is getting very interesting. Jake, Josh, Kimmi, Shannon, Beckie and I (Joannie) are getting closer, and we're getting to the point where we really enjoy the 'team only' time that happens. One such time was on our team outing for the month of January. We went out to dinner at the California Pizza Kitchen at one of the malls in St. Louis, Missouri. We were seated right next to the window that faced people who were shopping the mall. We enjoyed our food and good times, but the best part was the recognition of the 'mall walkers'. Two women kept passing our window fairly regularly. Near the end of our meal we decided to make signs of encouragement on our napkins reading, 'You go, ladies', 'Captive Free South Central Loves Mall Walkers', and 'Keep On Truckin'. We ended up having such a great time that every time the ladies passed, we weren't paying attention. When the meal ended, I thought that our signs shouldn't go to waste so I walked the mall and caught up with our walking friends and joined them for a stretch of mall. I told them about Captive Free and gave them our notes. They told me that they were friends when they were five years old and then lost contact for thirty years, and now they walk the mall together. They said that they have been blessed with the 'gift of gab' and that they would visit the Youth Encounter website. It is amazing how you can reach out to people that you wouldn't even think about talking to in normal situations. This year on team is about taking chances and risks that you don't usually take; doing things that would normally be out of our comfort zone.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 2/5/2005
Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt
Journal Entry:

Well, well, well, how are we all doing this fine Super Bowl weekend? We are at the Wichita 1 Youth Quake, and Dani Tietjen is our event director. She's so great! For those of you who have had the privilege to know her, I know you'd agree with me! Well, we're going to finish out the weekend, and then we have On The Road Training here in Wichita at the Airport Marriot Hotel where we'll be watching the Super Bowl. I don't even know who is IN the Super Bowl this year. Being on the road and all, it's hard to keep up with news, sports, favorite TV shows, so I've just given up.



Beckie Petzoldt

I do find the Super Bowl interesting, though. Not so much the game as the idea of silly American traditions. If you think about it, I don't really know a single Super Bowl Party where everyone watches the entire thing. I think it's just another excuse to get together with friends (which isn't bad), eat food until you think you're going to explode (also not necessarily bad), and watch it solely for the commercials. Honestly, when we can come up with reasons to eat, watch TV, and hang out with friends and make it almost a national holiday, I say "God Bless America!"

I just find traditions humorous. We don't know exactly why we do things; we just know that it's a "family tradition" to do them, so we do it! So, until the burning question of "Why do we do this," is answered for me, I'll still be sitting here on the couch of the hospitality room eating cheeseey poofs and watching reruns of Saved By The Bell. Until next time, America...

Date: 2/8/2005
Submitted by: Josh Tomac
Journal Entry:

Well we are currently in Midwest City, Oklahoma. This has been an interesting experience here. So, in ten days it is going to be my birthday, and my team decided to throw me a surprise birthday party which I might add was

absolutely awesome. However, I feel really bad because I was kinda in a bad mood and not always so pleasant throughout the day, but they still threw a birthday party for the grouch.

Anyway, gotta go...adios!



Josh Tomac

Date: 2/10/2005

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

TORNADO!!!! Okay, not really, but we did have a tornado drill after our chapel. It was different; it reminded me of elementary school when we used to have hurricane warning drills. (Mmmm.... memories.) But the kids were very cute, and we as Captive Free joined one of the classes in the library who continued to show us their books as we were tucked away safe in the boys' bathroom. But my favorite part was when the younger boys came out of the girls' bathroom in complete shock that they had just been in the GIRLS' BATHROOM!!! Oklahoma City was a lot of fun, and we enjoyed our dinner with a ton of kids and corn dogs. I loved hearing the kids recite their memory verse in the morning. I am looking forward to more school chapels, and soon enough VBS will be coming!! I'm so excited!!



Shannon Vitarius

God's Blessings

Shannon

Date: 2/12/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

It is the second night of our second Wichita Quake, and I am slightly sad. Not for the Event because it has gone fabulously, but for the fact that we will not get to work with such a great team again. We have had the pleasure of these two Wichita Quakes with Swen and Dean (possibly our favorite band to work with), Dan Scharnhorst (Zaxon champion forever), and of course, our very own Dani Tietjen. It has been SO much fun, with SO much energy, and I will be very sad to see them go. At least I can take these memories with me. Also, we get to hang with Donna (our Team Director) tomorrow, so it's a late night at our host homes. It should be fun. I hope that everyone reading these journals is enjoying them as much as we enjoy writing them. Gotta go. Crazy dress night, and I still haven't picked my outfit.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 2/15/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Howdy-

How is everyone? We're great. Today we are in Liberal, Kansas. It is sort of in the southwest part of Kansas. We are gonna be doing a Wednesday night service here.

The first thing you notice about Liberal is that it's a meat processing town. Because of the meat processing plant(s), there is a wonderful odor that surrounds Liberal. Every time the wind changes, so does the scent, but we are getting used to it.

At this stop, Josh and I get to stay in a camper. Our host home has a little tent camper parked right outside their house. It's pretty cool. It has a TV and radio and a little fridge. We each get our own bed, which is always cool. We still go into the house and socialize and eat dinner and stuff, but it's



Jake Alborn

cool. We sorta have our own little place when it's time to wind down for the evening. That's it for now. I'll write more later. Take care.

-Big Jake

Date: 2/17/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

So here we are on the Kansas/Oklahoma border. When we first arrived here in Liberal, Kansas I thought that it was strange that people had Oklahoma accents when we were in Kansas but then I found out that the border is only three miles away. At Grace Lutheran Church, I got the opportunity to spend time with the high school youth group, and half of the group is from Oklahoma. How often do you find a youth group that is half from one state and half from another? Two of the girls from the youth group were junior guides at the Wichita II Quake, and so it was a blessing to get to hang out with those girls again. We talked to the group about what was the most important advice we could give a group of high schoolers, and my advice was to stay with the church. Many kids pull away from the church during some point, but I think it is so important to stay with the church because it is the group of people that will always be there for you and pick you up when you are down and need help. They will rejoice with you when things are going your way, and they will always be the first ones to pray for you when you need it.

Today we head for Dodge City to do a program and a chapel at a senior center. Sometimes it is fun moving around from place to place every two days, but other times you really want to stay and keep working on those connections you make with the people. Well, I am off to pack up my stuff and get ready to move on. Remember to keep God in the center of your life.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 2/19/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

I often wonder, "What am I doing?" Not in relation to anything in particular, just in general. So many times, like I've shared with you all before, I sit and wonder why God has plans like he has. Lately, I've been struggling with why I am on the road. It's so hard to keep focus sometimes, and yet, so hard to think outside the box. It's been so difficult lately to understand my place on team and what God's plan for me really is, until tonight. We did a Family Night Program this evening at Elim Lutheran Church in Marquette, Kansas. This small town, with an entire 638 people in it (could be an exaggeration, but I promise it's close), seemed so much like every other small Mid-western town we've visited. Except, they all just have such a heart for service. Five guys in the community met us at church to help us unload and set up this afternoon, and they stayed until we were completely done with set up. Then, during the program, it was just so amazing seeing so many different people from so many different walks of life coming together and enjoying the different elements of our program. We really had people from age 2 to age 92, all there to praise God in different ways. It was all just such an amazing opportunity. I really enjoyed myself in Marquette. They are just so amazing and so much fun. Thank you all for everything! You won't soon be forgotten! Well, I'm out, ladies and gentlemen. Until we meet again... Beckie



Beckie Petzoldt

Date: 2/22/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Well, my team is in Axtell, Kansas right now, and we definitely have been kept busy. I am amazed at how many singing arrangements can fit into a day. Today, we have done music at a school and multiple nursing homes; it

was quite fun actually. We are not used to being that busy, but it was a good change of pace.

I always seem to be amazed when we do a performance at a school because I don't always expect that much student participation; however, I always am proved wrong. They are always enthusiastic and ready for more music. I love watching youth respond to the message of God with a smile on their face.



Josh Tomac

Date: 2/24/2005

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

GOD is working ALL the time. So, in the past I have struggled with spreading the message on team. Sometimes I feel like we're preaching to the choir; I know that our message can change peoples' outlook on their faith, and strengthen their faith. BUT I'm the type of person that likes to go for extremes. I've been a little drained spiritually lately, and God is working to refresh my faith. First off, God is keeping us active as a team. We have something going on almost everyday lately. We've been doing a lot of nursing homes (sometimes even two in one day--which are possibly my favorite thing we do-- I rank them right up there with Quakes!!) and this week we went to TWO PUBLIC SCHOOLS!!! It was amazing. We went to a place where the government permits people to not say the Pledge of Allegiance because it mentions God and did nothing but talk about God in front of a gymnasium and a cafeteria full of students. When we did sing-a-longs, the kids were up and jumping, dancing, and even singing along with us. They laughed and talked about the puppet show on the way out, and a few even came to our Lenten service that night because they had seen us in school. I praise God for the constant activities He puts in front of us along our path and pray especially for the kids that heard the message for the first time this week. I also thank everyone for their prayers for us. We've heard about them and can see the difference. Thank you for all the support that we have recieved from all that we see on the road. (We even had a kid give away his drum sticks that he got for Christmas because he wanted to help!!) God is working with you in this ministry as well. God's Peace and Love, <>< Shannon <3



Shannon Vitarius

Date: 2/26/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

IT'S MY BIRTHDAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Yay!!!!!!!!!!!!!! My team is so cool. The girls decorated the van for me, and I got the middle seat all to myself (which is my favorite seat). And there were Twix. It was so cool. We then headed on our way to Lincoln, NE where we did a church service and got to eat out together as a team. It was quite fun. And I turned 23. Yes, I am that YOUNG!! Hehehe. I may be the oldest on my team, but there are plenty of other teamers that are older than me. Anyways, there's not much else to report. I am too sugar-logged to be able to concentrate anymore. Well, talk to you all later. Peace.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 3/1/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hello to all-

Today we are in Halen, IA. It's a really nice little town. The church is a big church. We're gonna be doing a Lenten service here. Also, before the service we're gonna do a little program of a couple of songs. It should be kind of cool.



Jake Alborn

Josh, Kimmi, Beckie, and I are all staying in the same host home. They made us a wonderful dinner

tonight. It's a nice house within walking distance of the church. Josh and I rarely get housed with any of the girls, so it's a nice change of pace. It should be fun. Well, that's it from me. Later.

-Big Jake

Date: 3/3/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Constant supprises, constant amazement.

This past week we were in Harlan, Iowa and were on our way to Davenport, Iowa. We had been to Davenport before and were all really excited to stay in a large city again so that we could venture around the mall and maybe see a movie during our day off. The thing was, first we had to visit a small town in southern Iowa called Chariton. We saw, by our Walmart Atlas, that there wasn't a Walmart around within 60 miles of Chariton and we all just were not excited to make this three day stop in the middle of nowhere. To our amazement we were greeted by of one the most fun pastors we have ever met, and the church was so giving and kind. We arrived one hour early and played frisbee on the rolling hills completely surrounding the church. Then we got free time in the church to play cards as a group until dinner. The team bonding was just awesome. Then dinner came and we got to hang out with the youth. We played games and got to know about 20 kids and adults. Our host families were so amazing and fun. They were constantly offering all they had to us and made sure that we were taken care of. The next day we sang for a childcare place and had lunch with the kids and then got set up an oil change on the van. Our program at the church later that night was so fun because all the kids were singing and dancing. There were even three wise women in the back that were singing and dancing along too. They made me smile. The girls on team got to spend some time in the spa at our host home and really had some fun talks.

All in all, we were completely blown away by the way that God could really shake us up and make us re-look at things that maybe we pre-judge. We loved Chariton, Iowa and would love to return anytime, even though they don't have a Walmart.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 3/5/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

"You never quite know what you have until it's gone." This, being a quote that many of us have grown up hearing both directly and indirectly, it sinks into the bottomless crevases of our brains, never truly thought about or dissected until it is brought up again by one of those cliché speakers or journal writers trying to tie it into whatever it is that they're talking about. I have been thinking about this and other instances like the one described in this quote often the past few days, and have come to a conclusion: we take for granted what is so good in our lives and, instead, focus on those things that we cannot control.

With winter slowly leaving us and spring creeping in just behind it, we begin to see more and more sunnier days filled with laughter, trips to the lake, and great family outings that will be etched in the memories of an entire family until the end of time. Along with those sunny days, we begin to appreciate how warm it is outside and how much more easy-going and care-free people become when they finally get a taste of what they've been missing. Having been in the Mid-West area since returning from Christmas Break, we have seen our fair share of snow, ice, and just really cold and unfriendly weather. Although, today was a truly beautiful day. It began with the sun shining through our windows and casting shadows across our walls and our faces as we lay in bed, dreading the thought of a cold bathroom floor, but looking forward to the adventures of the day



Beckie Petzoldt

ahead. Getting up, the temperature was a beautiful 65 degrees with a slight wind, just enough to keep it nice to where you could get away with jeans and a t-shirt or a light jacket and be completely comfortable. It was the most perfect day I could ever imagine. With the warmth, the scent of newly blooming trees, and the feeling of being surrounded by God's magnificent creation, it made me come to see that we don't know what we're missing until it's gone.

In our lives, God has blessed us with so many good things that we cannot even begin to express our never-ceasing love and appreciation for those gifts, both tangible and intangible. Although, with a tragedy-stricken society, it's so easy to get caught up in the down and out's of life and get stuck in the mud created by Satan to trip us up and unfocus our hearts toward the one true gift, Jesus Christ.

In this season of lent, I challenge each and every one of you to not only give God the praise and honor he so rightfully deserves, but take a step back and remove yourself from society's norms and enjoy the small little gifts and blessings he bestows upon us each and every day. Whether it's a picture drawn with care by a young child, or the beautiful weather outside, take in the small things in life. God created us in his image and the earth for our pleasure as men. Take in the divine gift and beauty of the things around you, for they are a blessing from above.

Date: 3/8/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Hello! Today we are in Columbia, Missouri. As a team we have really enjoyed our stay here. Our contact for this church has been such a blast to be around. He has taken us on a tour of the town, and we went on a walk around downtown Columbia. We stopped at any shops that caught our attention. Our stay here has been relatively casual and relaxing, which has been nice for us.

Until next time...



Josh Tomac

Date: 3/10/2005

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

So Joannie has been on an amazing lucky streak lately. She simply mentions in the van something that would be nice to do (like go out for Chinese), and that night we do!! But today floored me with a coincidence. Driving to Springfield today, we were discussing some things we would put on the needs list if we could put anything on it, and she said, "Wouldn't it be nice to have someone offer us a facial?" and we all shrugged it off, saying that that is one of those things that just doesn't happen on team. Joannie and I took the van to our host home that night and when our host mom arrived she said, "Well, I'm a Mary Kay consultant, and I think it would be a lot of fun if I could give you girls facials tonight." How amazing is our God that not only does he take care of all our needs but our wants as well? It may not have been the facial Joannie was talking about, but in all things God provides. Scripture says (I'm not sure where) that give and you shall receive a hundred times while on earth. We may be devoting a year to God, but He has given us a lifetime!! Praise Him!!

<><Shannon<3



Shannon Vitarius

Date: 3/12/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Greetings to you all from Ponka City, Oklahoma. We have not been to Oklahoma yet, so this is indeed an experience to remember. We have had such a fabulous time here. Joannie had just been commenting that BBQ's are her favorite and lamenting that we had not gone to one for a long time when, lo and behold, we got our BBQ. It was so much fun and was at the youth house. We all played some volleyball and just got to know the youth and adults. We also got to do something that was new for us. Although they already had their music set for the next day, we were invited to sing with them. The "Praise Singers" were all gone for that Sunday. It was actually quite fun to not have any instruments in front of us. Just mics, and we got to sing to a CD. All in all, it went very well, and we have been blessed by the experience.

God's peace,

Kimmi



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 3/15/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hello to all!

Ahh, how great it is to be back in my home state of Texas. March in Texas is usually very nice, and it is. For the next couple of days we are gonna be in Ft. Worth. Our drive that led us here was crazy. Any Texans that are reading this will understand when I say that we drove on I-35 through DFW coming down from Oklahoma at like 4:00. That's what I mean by crazy.

Josh and I are staying with the secretary of the church and her husband. While we were in Oklahoma, Josh had caught some fish. So, I'm looking forward to cooking those up tomorrow. I also head that we might get to go down to the famous Ft. Worth Stock Yards. I've been there once when I was little, but it's been a while. It should be fun. Well, I'm outta here. Please keep us in your prayers. Bye.

-Big Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 3/17/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

God has certainly graced us with His presence lately. Last night the South Central team was privileged to attend the Lenten service at Calvary Lutheran Church in Fort Worth, Texas. The interesting thing about this service was that the confirmation kids did everything. There was even a youth homily. It was such a blessing to see kids involved in church. I think it is a great idea to have the younger kids be a part of the service because then they might become more comfortable later on in life and be more willing to volunteer and help with other services, or it might make them think about going into the ministry. There was also another homily led by the Intern Pastor and he was up with the kids the whole time just helping them and making them feel like that was their place up in front of everyone.

That same night in church there was a small boy sitting in front of me. He was moving around the whole service and just being a kid, but when we stood up to say the Lord's Prayer, his little heart was in the right place. He knew the Lord's Prayer better than anything, and he was proud to say it with a voice loud and clear so that everyone around him would know. He was also one word ahead of everyone else, and it made me think about how impressive it is that a small boy could have a heart so large. He knew that he was in the house of God and that it was okay not to blend into the other voices. He stood alone, stood loud, and stood proud.



Joannie Bryan

My last words have to do with my host family. They are two of the most giving people I have every met. They have no children of their own but they have five godchildren and one of them they have taken into their home. How cool it is that God provides and creates situations that allow for others to provide. It makes me want to be able to give of myself in that way later in life. It just goes to show that one is never done learning. Faith is never at a stopping point; it just keeps on growing and growing--sometimes slow and other times in leaps and bounds, but growing, and that is all that matters.

Date: 3/19/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Hola, everyone! I hope all is well for everyone. Well, tomorrow we all leave for Easter Break, and I cannot tell you how excited I am! This year has been so great, but my team and I are just really looking forward to this time of rest and relaxation. I'll be going down to San Antonio for a week (being that we're in Grand Prairie, Texas, which is right outside of the Dallas/Fort Worth area, San Antonio is a whole lot closer than Seattle, Washington) and I am so excited. If y'all remember, we were there in early November, and I thought it was just gorgeous! I can't wait to go to the River Walk, go see the Alamo again, and just do some more touristy things around town! Well, I'm going to wrap this up, seeing as how I've got to get to bed early. We have a worship service to do in the morning. God go with you all, and have a blessed Easter weekend!



Beckie Petzoldt

Date: 3/29/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

So we currently are in Bridge City, Texas. I have found it interesting to be out here because of how they refer to everyone, which is much different than how I refer to people. It seems that most will say Mr. or Miss to you before your name. But I can honestly say that I love it because they add their accent with it, and it makes me wish I had a cool accent like theirs. But overall, I am just having a blast and loving life on the road, and the people that we meet are just so good to us. We are very blessed as a group each and every day.



Josh Tomac

Date: 3/31/2005

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

Morriton, Arkansas

Ummm, we just crashed for the night at a camp and are heading for a long drive. As we drive, others sleep. God guide our van and those we see on the road on the path you have laid out for us.

<><Shannon<3



Shannon Vitarius

Date: 4/2/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

I am so excited. And happy. We have just convinced this church to get us for their VBS on the Fourth of July week. Yay! Vicar Peter is totally awesome...and tall. Hehehe. We have also had the blessing of amazing host homes. We will definitely want to snag these ones up when we visit again. The

only confusing thing about this town is that there are tons of one-way streets. I'm already bad at directions, and then you add streets that I can't go down the way I want to. Oh well. We got to do a program for the school that is connected with the church, and the kids were so awesome. We ate lunch with them and just got to hang out and be a little bit sillier than if we were with people our own age. It was fun. Well, that's about it. This is Kimmi signing off.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 4/5/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hi-

Today we are in Warrenton, MO. There isn't much out here. This particular church didn't have much for us to do. So, this is some free time.



Jake Alborn

Josh and I are staying out in a rural area. We are staying with Kevin and Tracy. They are really cool. Tracy works nights so she sleeps mostly during the day. But, Kevin is at home during the day. He has been so great to talk to. He hung out with Josh and me, and we all sat in his garage and talked about our lives and our faith walks. Kevin has an awesome story. He has really turned his life around and really become a follower of God. It was a great inspiration. It really makes you think about your own personal faith walk.

-Big Jake

Date: 4/7/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Being the team leader for South Central, I got a leadership devotional book at the beginning of the year. Every day I read the Bible verse and the short passage that goes along with it. At the beginning of the month there is a picture that signifies a new month and a saying that goes along with the month. This month, April, the saying was "You can learn a lot about where your life is headed by looking at the people with whom you have chosen to spend your time and share your ideas." I began to think about my life and the people I spend time with. For the past seven months I have been spending all my time with Shannon, Kimmi, Beckie, Josh and Jake from my team. Now, although we don't always get along perfectly every day, I thought about the types of people they are. They are quality young adults with their hearts and minds in the right place. I thought about millions of people my age and the choices they have made for themselves. Many have created situations for themselves that God isn't even a part of.



Joannie Bryan

I am spending an entire year of my life with five other Christians. We are just trying to make the right choices and lead a Christ centered life by sharing our faith with everyone we come in contact with. Sometimes we make poor choices and we beat ourselves down because we did the wrong thing, but when you think about it, we can be secure even in our problems because we have Christ on our side. There are so many people out there that have no personal relationship with Jesus and are lost in a sea of people who think they have total control over everything that has to do with them. In the end, they really have no control. God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end.

I have no idea where my life is headed, but I know that with God and my friends on team, it's going to be a great adventure.

Date: 4/9/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Hey, guys! Hope you all had an awesome Easter! My break was great! Very relaxing, which was exactly what I needed to get recharged for the rest of this year! We are in Augusta, Kansas doing a lock-in tonight.

We met this girl who is applying for Captive Free 05-06, and she is so excited about everything this ministry has to offer. It's really refreshing to see someone so on fire and on the band wagon about what we're on the road doing. So often we get burned out by the things we do, we neglect to see the amazing opportunities that we're given each and every day. We get to visit different states, different communities and spread God's love everywhere we go. How awesome is that? Seriously, I can't think of anything better!

Well, I hope this finds you all well. I just want to send out a big thanks to all of you for keeping up with us and praying for us. Lord knows we need all the prayers we can get! What's one more to add to the list, right? Take care, y'all!



Beckie Petzoldt

Date: 4/12/2005
Submitted by: Josh Tomac
Journal Entry:

Well today we are in Blair, Nebraska. While being here, we have had the awesome experience of performing in this church's brand new sanctuary. It was also great because as a team we were able to see youth from this congregation pull a band together, so they did a couple of songs as an opening to our concert. They were really good, and the amazing part about it was they only practiced, like, three or four times prior to the show.

Jake also found a friend at this church because our contact was a loyal fan of the San Antonio Spurs, this being where Jake has grown up for the last seven years. God continuously blesses us all the time with wonderful people who are so supportive of our ministry.

Until next time... Adios



Josh Tomac

Date: 4/14/2005
Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius
Journal Entry:

SMOOOOOOTHIESSS.... kinda

Hebron, NE

So I've told stories of Josh and Joannie; now, one of Jake.

We are just crashing at a church and are alone so we've set up my laptop, speakers and projector and are having a good ol MOVIE night. Jake is doing smoothies--the first attempt was moderately amusing. He went to the kitchen for something to drink and was gone a while. Little did we know that he had attempted to make smoothies--with an electric beater--

PLEASE LEARN FROM OUR MISTAKES--DO NOT USE AN ELECTRIC BEATER TO MAKE SMOOTHIES--YOU WILL NOT MAKE SMOOTHIES, ONLY A MESS

But in all seriousness, I'm grateful for nights like these where we are able to relax as a team and for one night forget we are a band and have responsibilities together. Tonight we are just friends.

<><Shannon<3



Shannon Vitarius

Date: 4/16/2005
Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp
Journal Entry:

Hey guys!! It's Kimmi again. It's actually sometime in the morning this Saturday. I've found that on Quake weekends it's actually easier to do journals in the morning rather than in the evening when things are getting pretty crazy. This is actually a weird Quake for us because Jo is the only Event director that we've only gotten to work with once. She is pretty cool, and the band is actually old teammates of hers. Kinda crazy, but they actually remind me of my group of friends from school, so it was like home for me.

The Quake is in Omaha, NE this time around, and it's actually been about a month since our last Quake, so we actually have to get used to the timing of everything again. It's crazy how you start to depend on sleeping in on Saturdays when you don't get them for awhile.

Ok, enough complaining and woolgathering. It has been a lot of fun to be back at Quakes; one of the churches that I really connected with was Southwood from Lincoln, NE. The boys that are here from that church are not the typical "I'm too cool to dance." On the contrary, they dance and jump around, and it encourages other youth groups to get up and dance more. I think we will be at their church next week, so it will be awesome to see them again.

Well I do have to run, got a Trek to lead. God's peace to you all.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 4/19/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

We are in Lincoln, NE today. This church we are at had a bunch of their youth at our Omaha Youth Quake. So, it will be nice to see some of those kids again. We are gonna be doing music for their mid-week confirmation class. It should be quite fun.

For our stay here I'm actually housed with Kimmi and Joannie. It's a nice change of pace. The girls are on the main level of the house. I get the whole basement to myself. It's sweet. This couple has a nice house on a golf course. It's really nice. Well, I'm out.

-Big Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 4/21/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Being on team offers many ways to meet new people and visit new places while doing God's work, but there are some things that a teamer misses while traveling. Today's journal is a short synopsis of what one teamer misses while on the road.

I miss cooking my own food, not only the action of choosing my own food but the whole business of food preparation. I miss making weekly food meal plans and cutting coupons. I miss going to the grocery store and getting all the ingredients I need while still managing to be on a budget. I miss the smell of sauted garlic wafting through the house, and I really miss the finished product, knowing that it is something I created. I think that when I am finished with team, I will really have a new appreciation for the culinary arts. Cooking has always been a hobby for me, not just a task.

I think that God uses every person on team in an interesting way and teaches them what direction their life should be, or shouldn't be, headed in. With every day on team, new life lessons are learned and values are created. I think that one of the many values I have learned is that while the Lord is always providing, there are some tasks that we don't know how much we love until we don't get to do them.

This learning time with Joannie was brought to you by the letter S and C on a cloudy day in Kansas.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 4/23/2005
Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt
Journal Entry:



Beckie Petzoldt

...With Faith Like a Child

Hey, y'all! Greetings from good ol' Kansas once again! We are having a fantastic time on the road. Things are starting to wear on us, but it's rewarding and refreshing to go to a place that's just so full of Christ's love!

We were in this little hole in the wall town called Osboren, Kansas. Just like other small Midwest towns, we didn't really expect anything really awesome and amazing to come out of it for us, but once again, God has proven us wrong (you'd think we'd be used to this by now, right?). We arrived on Friday afternoon to no one at the church, so we just hung out and played baseball, read, and took maps in the warm Kansas sun. Soon after we arrived, though, the pastor got there to greet us. Joannie and I went in, like always, to check in with him and see what was on the agenda so that we were all on the same page. After checking with him, we had about two hours of free time before the kids came, so we just sort of hung out and charged up for the lock-in we were doing.

At 5:30 p.m. on the dot, people started arriving for the second day of their Vacation Bible School. That night, it was planned that they would have their opening, eat dinner at about 6 p.m., and then from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m., we were on to do games, Bible stories, songs, and all sorts of other fun things with these 1st-9th graders.

There was a certain kid, Jared, that really took a liking to Jake. He was so funny! It was so cute because every time Jake spoke, sang, turned around, or did anything, Jared was right there to do it with him and just paid such close attention to him. He really trusted Jake and called him his "goofy friend," which I thought was very fitting! I think the thing that just really appealed to me about Jared is that, no matter what, he trusted Jake with a trust and a faith that I've never seen before. I think I really saw that childlike faith that the Bible talks about in Jared, always willing to try and not questioning everything, but really trusting that Jake knew what was best for him.

So many times in life, we're challenged to have a childlike faith and to trust that God knows what's truly best for us. Many times, though, our human and sinful nature tells us that we can do it ourselves, and that we don't need any help, no matter how bad things are. We got ourselves into the mess we're in, and we can get ourselves out.

When I was a little kid, my dad tried so hard to help me out, but I wouldn't let him. Whether it was trying to ride my bike or tie my shoes, I'd just stand there with my hands on my hips and say, "No, Daddy! I can do it myself!" So, he'd let me try and do it alone, but he was always right there with open arms when I'd come running back with tears streaming down my red cheeks crying, "Daddy, please help me! I can't do it!"

Jesus Christ, the one who came into the world not to be served but to serve, is always waiting with open arms when we come crying, "Daddy, please help me!" Even when we don't need help, He loves getting little "thank you's" and "you're great's" from His children. Just like our earthly parents like getting little reminders of how much we love and appreciate them, so does our Heavenly Father. Being called as Christians to spread His Gospel and the Good News, we need to practice the childlike faith that we've stressed for so long for others to embrace.

Jared had the right idea. Even though some may not understand and may not be able to drop their need to control things in their lives, we can be examples for those who are lost. Just like that song "You Are the Light of the World" says, we need to be the shining light for all to see, leading them by God's joy, love, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

May God continue to bless you all as you go about your weeks in His Name. Allow Him to guide you to places, people, and things that are beyond your imagination! And remember, always rock for Christ!

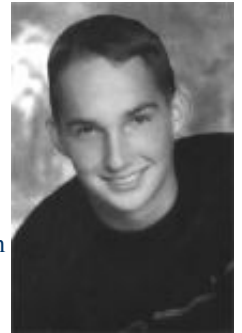
Date: 4/26/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! Today we are back in Salina, Kansas, which I am excited about. I love coming back to places that I have already been because then I get to see familiar faces while being on the road, and that doesn't happen that often. It is also nice because we are able to take some time here just to relax and rejuvenate. So far we have had some amazing meals, and we've watched movies in the basement without having to worry about anything on our agenda.

I also have found out that one of my oldest sisters has set a date for her wedding, which I am so excited for her. Anyway, I am enjoying life. So until next time...God bless!



Josh Tomac

Date: 4/28/2005

Submitted by: Shannon Vitarius

Journal Entry:

I love cleaning--probably more than anyone on team. I love getting into the van, putting on some awesome tunes (a little kj52 or some newsboys) and just going to town. I have a little vacuum and places to put things. It's simply great to get into the van the next day and know that if I drop a chip, I can eat it.

Thank you God for the simple pleasures in life that I not only can help my teammates but find it relaxing at the same time!!

<><Shannon<3



Shannon Vitarius

Date: 4/30/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

I seem to keep getting the Quake weekends, which makes it very hard to write. Once again, it is really Sunday evening that I am writing this, but the Quake was so crazy that it's hard to find time. I am slightly sad again because this was our last Quake of the season. It's a time that our entire team enjoys, all for our different reasons, and we are all sorry to see them go. This weekend was no exception to the "awesomeness" that we associate with Quakes. We were actually really moved by the musician. Lynn Duerksen-Stoneking is doing her style of music, which is deeply influenced by her own country roots, and she is rockin' at it. But unfortunately not a lot of youth are into that style. We were simply amazed by how much faith she has and her determination to not "follow the crowd" of musicians just to be heard. There were, of course, many youth who did love her music, and I feel that even those who are not a big fan of country still felt the emotion behind her music.

Well, I think it's time for me to sign off. But once again, Lynn, you were awesome.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 5/3/2005
Submitted by: Jake Alborn
Journal Entry:

Hola-

We are in Marion, IA. This place is so fun. We are gonna be doing a lot of stuff here. We are going to be doing music and games for their Wednesday night confirmation class. From what I hear, they have a large group that comes. We also get to eat pizza with them, which is, like, my favorite food. So that should be a blast.

Josh and I are staying with this awesome guy, Kyle. He plans on being on team next year as a drummer. He's pretty good, and it sounds like he has a pretty good chance of getting called. He is an awesome guy. We got to hang out with him and some of his friends. We had a great time.



Jake Alborn

Date: 5/4/2005
Submitted by: Joannie Bryan
Journal Entry:

HOLY COW!!!

So Beckie and I got this awesome opportunity to be hosted by a family that owns and operates a dairy farm. We got to meet the cows and the calves in the barns and got to take a cow for a walk on a leash, but she got a little crazy, and all Beckie and I could do was laugh and scream. I didn't have shoes on, so I let Beckie do all the work. Later in the day, we got to see the whole process of milking the cows. We even got to put the milking machines on our fingers so we could feel how it works. The baby calves sucked on our fingers because they are used to being bottle fed.

How awesome is it that we get to travel around and see how so many different people live? I honestly felt like I was on an episode of The Simple Life. On top of everything, the farm family we were staying with was so awesome. We stayed up late and ate cookies and ice cream and just laughed and laughed until we were crying. This is one of those places where you feel so much like home that you don't want to leave but we know that we must move on to the next town to continue the ministry. I certainly won't forget my stay here in Garnavillo, Iowa.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 5/7/2005
Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt
Journal Entry:

We are staying at the most amazing host home imaginable! We are currently in Garnavillo, Iowa, and we're doing worships, a lock-in, nursing homes, a program--you name it, aside from VBS, we're probably doing it. But Joannie, Jake and I are at this host home for this stay that is out of this world! They are the coolest! They live on a dairy farm, and our host dad took Joannie and me out and showed us how to milk cows, and we got to do it. We saw the calves and they sucked on our fingers (super slimy and gross, but oh so cute), then we went fishing in their pond right outside their front door. I mean, so awesome! And our host mom, dad, and brothers are just so fantastic! They, in a lot of ways, remind me a lot of my own family. Ohh, I can't get over it! This place is so great!

Sorry, so moving on, we're having a great time on the road. I think we're definitely starting to feel the Easter Break wearing off slowly but surely. We're holding it together pretty well, though, so that's great. We'll talk to y'all later! Remember to keep rockin for Him!

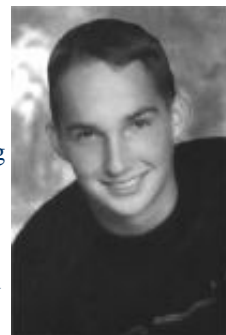
Beckie



Beckie Petzoldt

Date: 5/10/2005
Submitted by: Josh Tomac
Journal Entry:

Hello! My team is back in Omaha, Nebraska where earlier this year we ran a Youth Quake. I am actually staying with a family that attended that Quake. One of those nights, I stayed up pretty late as me and my host sister started talking about her plans for next year and how she wanted to apply for Captive Free but did not know if she was capable of fulfilling what Youth Encounter wants. By the end of our talk, she decided to apply and let God decide where he wanted her. I was really happy because I almost let my doubts stop me from applying, and I did not want her to miss a opportunity that she might regret. Anyway, the host family was just amazing and made my time in Omaha more enjoyable. God's blessings to ya'll, PEACE OUT!



Josh Tomac

Date: 5/14/2005
Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp
Journal Entry:

I think that maybe we are to be forever in Kansas. I'm not complaining, but it would be nice to see other places in our region. Oh well. As to where in Kansas we are...well, it's the lovely city of Topeka that we have come to.

We have had quite an interesting time today. We had another outside performance, and it's quite fun because Joannie's mom is visiting for a few days. There was a carnival with face painting and temporary tattoos and a huge thing of BBQ pulled pork sandwiches. Oh, so good. We really just had some fun doing our program and then a late night of games with the youth.

The thing I remember about this night was our game of Sardines. This is probably the best night of hiding places that I have seen this year. Let's see if I can remember some of the better ones. Ok, in a junk room with lots of storage stuff, Joannie and Jake actually hid under a table, but it was covered with so much stuff that nobody looked twice at the fact that there were two big lumps underneath. Also, Jake hid behind a couch, and while it was just an ok hiding spot, the pastor had seen him and simply threw himself on top of Jake. So funny; I couldn't stop laughing. And my favorite is there was a desk with open space both right where the chair went and also behind one of the drawers. I was sure that I had felt someone back there but was too scared to double check, and then when one of the other girls was checking, she actually screamed because she didn't expect someone to be under there.

I think my favorite part of the game was the fact that in the instructions, they actually had to tell the youth that part of the boundaries was to not go through the ceiling tiles. Apparently someone had done that the last time and had gotten into a locked room to hide. Obviously, no one found him for quite some time. It was quite amusing to be giving the obvious, no bathrooms, no lights on, and then a parent chimes in "and no ceiling tiles." Ah, the joys of strange humor. Well, it's well past midnight and I have an early morning. Peace out.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 5/17/2005
Submitted by: Jake Alborn
Journal Entry:

Omaha...again.

We are back in Omaha. This time we are at a different church. They have a beautiful, constant-flow baptismal fount. The cotton wood trees are all "shedding" and white stuff was blowing all over.

One thing that was really cool was that the pastor from the last church we stayed at in Omaha. He brought his sons along as well. Well, one of his sons remembered that in one of our puppet shows



Jake Alborn

the main puppet gets chased by a raccoon. This little boy brought his stuffed dog to help chase away the raccoon. After the program we felt bad because we didn't do that raccoon puppet show this time. So we all took a picture with him and his little dog. Until next time. Later.

-Big Jake

Date: 5/19/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Our stay in Blue Hill, Nebraska was a definite eye opener. So here's what happened. The day was going great. We were at a new church and were just starting our program when my host dad left. At the time I didn't know he was my host dad, but when he returned at the end of our program he told us that two high school boys who were on their way to the church got in an accident and ended up in the emergency room.

It really puts things in perspective when we think about all the awful things that happen all around the world. That car could have been any of us. I pray every day for safe travels for our team and for all the other teams. With all the distances that all 13 teams cover in the course of a year, it truly is a miracle that we make it through the year in one piece. I am positive that God's hand of protection is over us thanks to all the churches that pray over us when we leave and before we arrive.

Thank you to anyone who has taken the time to pray for us. We sure do appreciate it. Oh, by the way, those boys are okay.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 5/21/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Hey, guys. How is everyone doing? We are here in Abilene, Kansas, and it is such a great little town. My host home is great, and our stay has been awesome, but I got some bad news today that just really shook me up a bit. I got a phone call from my mom that said that I needed to call my dad ASAP. Now, I first accredited this message to the fact that I'm not a good phone-caller and I don't call Dad that often. But, when I called and he answered the phone, I knew it wasn't just to chat. I got news today that my grandpa had been admitted to the hospital and that his kidneys and other organs were slowly shutting down, and he isn't expected to make it through the weekend. This is so crazy. I don't even know where to begin. I've never had a close family member die before, so this entire experience is new to me.

My grandpa has always been such a strong person, and to think of him weak and helpless in a hospital bed with machines keeping him alive just kills me to even think about. So often, people get angry with God when things like death come around. But, thinking now about it, I thank Him for it. I know that when it is my grandpa's time, he will be with his Lord. He won't hurt anymore; he will be in everlasting paradise with God. That's such a beautiful thing to think about. It's like that song "I Can Only Imagine" says, "Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for you, Jesus, or in awe of you, be still? Will I stand in your presence, or to my knees will I fall? Will I sing hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all?" I think that is such a beautiful illustration of the greatness of God and the wonders of heaven. I pray that, when Grandpa goes, he goes with the knowledge that there is a heaven and that there will be someone there to intercept him, waiting with open arms, saying, "My child, welcome home."



Beckie Petzoldt

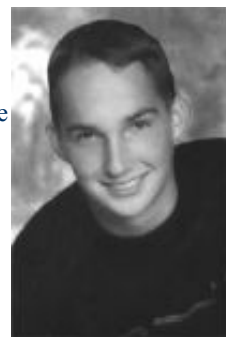
Date: 5/24/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! We are in Oniel, Nebraska right now. Lately I have been struggling while being on team because of a knee that I have injured. There is a possibility that I will have to go home for awhile in order to have my knee looked at, and I really don't want to leave my team. I am absolutely loving what I am doing, and I would not change this experience of being on Captive Free for anything. But I am just trusting in the Lord that he will take care of me. *Proverbs 3:5-6*

On a different note, this is a beautiful place, and we had the coolest outdoor concert tonight that I think we have had all year. It was just beautiful weather, and we had a awesome potluck before the concert. What can I say; the whole experience here has been just awesome!



Josh Tomac

Date: 5/31/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

God's Awesome Power-

Right now I am in Custer, SD. It is seriously one of the most beautiful places in the country. We are doing our VBS training up here in the Black Hills. The place is called Lee Valley Ranch. It's owned by Dick and Cynthia Borrud. They are one of the coolest couples I've ever met. They are so generous and welcoming. Dick is an awesome story teller, and Cynthia is probably the best cook in South Dakota.

Being out here is definitely an example of God's awesome power. There are more stars out here than are visible at my home in San Antonio and where I grew up in Illinois put together. The air is so pure and clean. No noise pollution. No T.V.'s. No phones. The wild life is everywhere. Watching the sun come up out here is truly amazing. If there was a place that God dwelled here on earth, I think this would be it.

-Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 6/2/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

We are out of our region up here in South Dakota. The Black Hills are beautiful but freezing. VBS training has taken this team to a new level. We work together at all times and have found an appreciation for each other that was lacking.

We are up here with North Central, North West and South West and having a blast singing songs and telling stories about team life. We sit by the fire in the evenings and play cards while learning new puppet shows and skits to get up and ready for Vacation Bible School.

I am very excited about this new time in our lives and what the summer will bring. We know all the places we will be traveling through and can't wait to return to places we have been and see the places we have yet to go to. I hope that summer is everything I am imagining it to be and more.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 6/4/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Hey all. It's Kimmi again. Wow! What an experience we have had at VBS training. We left pretty early this morning from South Dakota. It had been beautiful. I absolutely loved the camp that I was at and would stay there

for longer if I could. What was really amazing was the weekend before the other teams got there. Beckie, Jake, Shannon, and I, as well as Sean from North West, stayed for Memorial Day weekend instead of going home. And while we were there, a family reunion was going on. And what an amazing faith they had. The grandparents were there, and they had raised six wonderful children into faith-living and -seeking adults who in turn had their children there. I believe the turnout was about 30 people in all. While the entire weekend was just filled with example after example of how they used God's glory to their will, the time that stands out the most was when they held their service on Sunday before they all left. They let the five of us join them. And what happened was that each family would go up and they would give a Bible verse, sometimes for each member including kids, and explain why that verse was so important in their life. And then they said what they needed praying for most. And after each family, everyone got up and did a group hands-on prayer, having both an adult and a child pray. It was so moving and nearly brought me to tears thinking of how one simple family could hold so much faith and could share that intimate family moment with us. I just pray that I can cross their path sometime again in the future because I felt really blessed to have that first experience with them. God's peace and love to you all.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 6/7/2005
Submitted by: Jake Alborn
Journal Entry:

Hey everyone-

Well, it's VBS time. We just started our first one, and it is a blast. We are in Levant, KS. It's on the west side of Kansas, not too far from Colorado. Everyone here has been really great and super helpful. There are about 100 children attending VBS here this year. It's a great starter VBS.

We have also gotten some down time to do some swimming. That was really fun. I eventually coaxed my teammate, Josh, to go down the water slide. Josh is not a big fan of deeper water, so that was hilarious. He only did it once. I don't think he could handle doing it more than that.

Well, that's about it for now. I'll write more in a couple of weeks.

- Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 6/11/2005
Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt
Journal Entry:

Greetings, all! How is everyone? Not like you can verbally answer me, but I thought I'd be polite and ask anyway. There... don't you feel happy that I used my good ol' down home manners? Mama taught me well.

Anyhow, I'm here in St. Joseph, Missouri. Kimmi and I are staying with a host family with three girls. Kimmi, the girls, and I went to go play putt-putt golf today, and it was really fun, but super hot! Man, I'm a wimpy Midwest person! Give me rain any day! So, then we went home and had a "slumber party" kind of and watched the movie Cool Runnings. I love it! The point to this journal, now that I've given you all a little background of my stay here, is that the youngest of the three girls has Hermit Crabs as pets. They were so crazy and hilarious to watch, and I started thinking that they are really funny creatures. THEN...I started thinking about how, as Christians, we can be kind of like Hermit Crabs; we only come out of our shell/comfort zones when we are sure that nothing is going to hurt us or invade our privacy.

God challenges us to step out into the world and go out of our comfort zones in order to spread his Word. The Bible says, "Go and make disciples of all nations," and we cannot do that staying within the



Beckie Petzoldt

confines of our safe place. We need to go out there and witness to all people, that they might come to know God and have a relationship with Him like we do.

Well, I know that was kind of a random thing, but I thought I would share that with our faithful readers. Thanks again to all of you for your constant support. I know I say that all the time, but I just don't think you all fully understand how much of a blessing you are and have been to us and all teams out on the road. May God bless you in ways that are beyond all imagination!

The Getting to be Un-Hermit Crab,

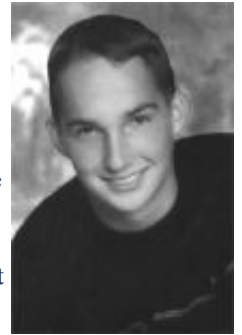
Beckie

Date: 6/14/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Hey, everybody! This week our team is in Burlington, Iowa. Same as usual, Jake and I are together for the week. But our time here has been fun. I had the unique opportunity to see Keith Urban in concert while we were here. He did an outdoor concert for the Steamboat Days, which is a festival that takes place for a week every year during the summer. I also have enjoyed spending time with my host family; they are fun but also laid back and relaxed. Jake and I have watched a lot of old Disney Classics while being here, and many of them I have not seen for years.



Josh Tomac

Date: 6/16/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Well, the VBS season is upon us and life sure has taken a change of pace. We have early rises every morning, aside from the occasional Saturday sleep-in, and we get to spend lots of time with our host families, really getting to know them.

This week we are in Burlington, Iowa, right on the Mississippi River. My host family is so awesome. They have all their family in town, so everyone stops by all the time and it's just like a huge party all the time. My host sister Jenni took me hiking and we walked the train tracks and just talked for about an hour. It sure is nice to have the time to really start to get to know someone.



Joannie Bryan

The kids here at Bethany Lutheran Church are so filled with life and the love of God. I get to work with the fifth and sixth graders, and we just have a blast. During our free time while we were waiting our turn for crafts, we sing 'I Like to Chew My Gum With God'. The kids love making up their own verses and making crazy sounds and movements.

Yesterday we went spelunking with the fourth, fifth and sixth graders. The first cave we went into was really awesome. Right when we went in we had to start crawling. It was really scary when we knew there were bats and spiders all around us. At one point we turned off all the lights, and even in all the silence I felt the presence of God in that brave group of kids. They were so encouraging to all and kept on going even though their knees hurt and the fear of getting stuck was with them. It truly was an awesome experience.

So that is two down and seven to go. I wonder what amazement is awaiting me.

Date: 6/18/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Wow!! Week three of VBS season has started with a bang. Chris is just a ball of energy,

and her five children are just as fun. We have just arrived, but she invited us all to her house for dinner and hanging out. They have a pool to swim in if we want. We also had some fun doing group games outside. Well, I mean if there are six of us plus my host mom, plus Chris, her husband, and five kids, we could get quite a game going. I did just watch. But it was still fun. They were playing a game with a basketball in which as you shoot, if you don't get a basket right away, you have to get one before the person behind you does or you are out, and of course, you want to be the last person in. Josh and Beckie had quite a competition going. I am really looking forward to this week. It should be a lot of fun. Cheers.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 6/21/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone-

This week we are in wonderful Port Byron, IL. Illinois isn't usually in our region, but the children from this church came to see us at the Davenport Youth Quake. They like to bring a group they are already familiar with to their church for VBS. This VBS isn't very big, but the people are wonderful. They are very involved with all of the sing alongs and are very good at doing all the actions.

This week Josh and I are staying at a wonderful house right on the Mississippi River. The back yard goes right down to the water. Watching the sun set over the river is quite a breathtaking sight. Another display of God's handiwork. I've even gotten to do some fishing, but so far nothing is biting. Wish me luck. Goodbye for now.

-Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 6/25/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Hey, guys! We are in Atlantic, Iowa staying just overnight and doing worship with the church here tomorrow morning. We did a worship service tonight, and it was great! The entire experience, though, was weird.

Now, before you jump to conclusions, hear me out. First, it was strange finally getting back into the just-one-night stays. We've been doing VBS's for almost a month now, and so we've become accustomed to the longer stays. Then, just being in a host home for one night is kind of strange in the sense of you have to get all the ministry you can into one night. Joannie and I had a fantastic host home, though. It was a pity we weren't doing a VBS there! It would have been a great stay.

Then, it was also weird because it was weirdly stormy today. Like, it only rained on half of the house! CRAZY! We walked outside, and only half of the driveway was wet! It was super weird. I think we're going to be one of those teams that carries rain with us wherever we go this summer! It has rained every place we've been so far at least once. Maybe that is a good thing, though.

Well, I'm going to hit the pillow. I'm pretty wiped out! This is Beckie signing off. Good night, and God bless!



Beckie Petzoldt

Date: 6/28/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Hey everybody! Today my team is in Lincoln, Nebraska helping lead a VBS. I might add that this church has a huge number of kids attending this VBS, but it rocks! The kids here are so much fun and have an enthusiasm that just helps to feed my energy. I believe that there are about 300 hundred kids participating this year. My host family this week is AMAZING; I have thoroughly enjoyed spending time with them. We went to a jazz festival one night, and that was nice and relaxing. Most of the nights this week I have spent playing music with my host sister Becca, who I might add is quite good at playing the violin. I also have enjoyed spending time with Andrew, who is my host brother for the week, and listening to him play the guitar. Last but not least, I have also enjoyed the late night discussions with their older sister who is working at a Bible camp for the summer. Anyway, I am having a blast!



Josh Tomac

Date: 6/30/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Running has never been a more humbling experience than last night. I asked my athletic twelve-year-old host sister to run with me, and boy oh boy, can she run. I had to run hard to keep up with her, and I sure didn't want to let her know that I was struggling so I kept on going. It was a great run, and we got to spend some time just talking without her younger sisters always asking questions.

I think I discovered more running with this girl than just sitting and talking to her. We challenged each other and kept the other one going. I think that this new running ministry could really take off, sorry about the pun.

My advice to you is to keep running and invite others to join you. You never know what you may gain out of the experience other than a healthy lifestyle.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 7/2/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Tonight was one night that my entire team has been looking forward to and I have been dreading. We had the opportunity to participate in some prison ministry. My reasons for not doing this are personal, but I will say that it is not because I was scared. You can ask me later about it if you want to.

The thing to know is that it was an amazing experience. At times I would close my eyes and listen to the men singing or watch their faces, and, except for the jumpsuits, it would be a regular service. The ironic part of this is that it should be that simple. I mean, someone messes up, and even if that person had not been caught yet, he might have sat in a pew at a church that we went to on a regular basis. The stigma that prison holds is ridiculous. Yes, some have done horrific crimes and are locked up for a reason, but a lot of men just made a bad decision and are therefore punished for it. But they still have emotions, and memories, and hopefully faith in God. The pastor that comes has been doing this ministry for a long time, and he has told us that he brought more than half of these men to Christ in the time that he has been working at the prison. I challenge you, therefore, to shed your own worries and inhibitions and join a night of prison ministry. You will not regret it. I promise.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 7/5/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Hello, all! I do know that it has been a while since I've written a journal, but I really felt the need to write this one, even though it's out of rotation and all.

Well, first of all, I hope you all had an extraordinary 4th of July! We are in

Hannibal, MO (Time Magazine's #1 place to spend the 4th!), and it's just such a blessing to be able to be back here amongst the people, places and history. Being that Hannibal is considered "America's Hometown" by many of the locals, and with it being the 4th, I've found a new meaning to freedom.

So often as Americans, we take so for granted what we cannot see. We think that if we cannot hold something in my hand and physically touch, see, smell, hear, or taste it, then it's not worth our time. Many see freedom in this very way, as did I. Growing up with such a thing, we blow it off as something that we've always had, therefore not finding the privilege in having such a blessing each and every day.



Beckie Petzoldt

I've come to find that freedom indeed IS something tangeble. You can touch freedom as you stand to say the Pledge of Allegiance, placing your right hand over your heart; you can smell freedom in the beautiful firework displays and the smoke that comes with them; you can hear freedom ringing throughout the land when the National Anthem is sung at a sporting event; you can taste freedom in the Jello casseroles (you know, the ones with the pretzel on bottom, then blue jello, then cream cheese, then red jello, then Cool Whip with an American flag built on top with strawberries and blueberries) that make it to almost every 4th of July barbecue; but best of all, you can see freedom in the faces of people worshiping together in the only way they know best.

This last week we did a VBS in Lincoln, Nebraska. It was an amazing time! The kids were great, the host homes were better, but best of all, we got to participate in worship on Sunday following that Vacation Bible School. We had been told that there was going to be a deaf interpreter there to translate the services, and we thought that was very cool. However, what really just gave me chills the entirety of the service was, during the song "America the Beautiful", this deaf community that regularly attends services here were signing to the song. They were singing the best way they knew how, and they did it with all of their hearts, because you could see the joy in their eyes, and they proudly signed "America the Beautiful" right along with the rest of us.

What a beautiful and serene example of freedom; the freedom to worship the Lord of heaven and earth as one. Though it may look different, we are all saying and lifting high the same cross that held the same Savior of each and every one of us. So in this season of patriotism and recognition, don't overlook the things that are not so evident, because those, my friends, are the most amazing of all. God bless each and every one of you and you journey through life in His steps!

In His Grip,

Beckie

Date: 7/5/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Howdy Y'all-

Hi from the great state of Missouri. This week we are in Hannibal. The childhood home of Samuel Clemens, a.k.a. Mark Twain. I have never seen an Independence Day festival quite like here. People travel from all over the country to spend their July 4th in Hannibal. We even got to be in the big parade. It was a blast. Right at the end of the parade, it started pouring down rain. Five of us decided that we were already wet so we walked back to the church. It was a really fun way to celebrate our nation's independence.

Josh and I stayed with a wonderful lady named Lucia. She owns a home out in the woods in total solitude. It was very nice. You couldn't hear cars, or dogs, or people. We had fun just



Jake Alborn

playing guitar, relaxing and taking some time to straighten up the van. It was very peaceful. Well, that's it from me for a couple of weeks. Until next time.

-Jake

Date: 7/7/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

So, here I am in the Midwest, and it rains at least three times a week. For a girl who grew up in California, this is mighty impressive. The first time I experienced this, I thought it was a freak thing that the town we were in was just having a strange storm, but then I discovered that this is a normal thing.

This last week I spent time outside during a thunderstorm and was truly amazed that it was warm and rainbows covered the sky. The storm was out in the distance, and we sat and watched the thunder off in the distance. It was a truly awesome sight, and the time spent with my host family was well spent, with good talks and new insights learned about the Midwest. I've learned that every family I stay with has its own tornado story, so I like to ask about each different situation.

Well, the weather outside is stormy, and yet the air-conditioning is on, which is still a strange fact to me, but I feel that this summer will give me plenty of time to adjust. It is amazing to think about all the families that never know a summer of dry heat and no storms. Maybe someday the kids I stay with will join Captive Free and then travel through California, and I will host them, and they will think it is amazing that summer can be not humid and have clear skies every day. Oh, think of the stories I could tell.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 7/9/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

All right, so can I just say..... I LOVE VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL?!?!?! Seriously, it is one of my favorite parts of this year! Everyone is so great and generous, the kids are fantastic, host homes are so phenomenal, there are always awesome opportunities for ministry; what else can you ask for? I mean, I wake up every day ready for another day with these kids, adults, and helpers. I thought that with all the cheesey songs and puppet shows and themes and stuff that it wouldn't be much fun, but boy was I wrong!! God has so richly blessed us with the people we meet and the opportunities we get to share our faith, but we also have others share their faith with us. It's amazing how God works in ways that are beyond our comprehension. He is so awesome! I thank and praise Him each and every day for these blessings that He's given us. Each person and each place we encounter is such a gift to us, and we love it so much! I've been told that VBS season would be my favorite, but I think even THAT is an understatement! Take care, y'all, and keep rockin for Him!

In His Grip,

Beckie



Beckie Petzoldt

Date: 7/11/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Every host home has its own special story, and this week is certainly no different. My host family here in Bettendorf, Iowa is getting their kitchen floor redone, so that means no cooking. So, for dinner tonight we went out to eat. I spent a lovely evening outdoors,

tracing hands, making crayons naked by taking off their "clothes" for better coloring effects, sharing drinks around the table, and frequent trips to the bathroom to go "potty."

Tonight's experience reminded me of my family and how much I miss them. My entire life has been spent with younger siblings and cousins always running around and being loud and just being kids, and dinner tonight was all that wrapped up into a fun-filled evening that reminded me of how kids are supposed to act. So many times grown-ups want kids to act older and more mature when they are truly acting their age.

God created people to grow at a certain speed, and each of those speeds has a development stage. Children are only young once, and God made them to play and dance and sing and make noise at some of the most inopportune times, and we "adults" have the privilege to watch and listen and play along if we so choose. Instead we punish and yell.

Being on Captive Free this year has given me the chance to play and sing and dance with kids, not because I am a kid, but because I get to experience it all again and share God with them while I do it. If more adults got down on their knees a little, maybe the future would not seem so scary. Knowing God's love today is what is truly going to make tomorrow's youth survive.



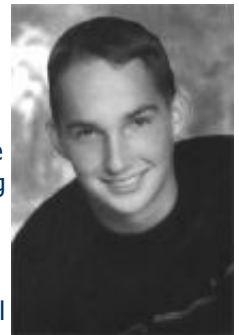
Joannie Bryan

Date: 7/12/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Hey everybody! This week I am in Bettendorf, Iowa. Once again I am having a blast. The VBS here is fun, and the kids are enjoyable to be around. But I have really enjoyed being able to be a part of my host family's regular activities, such as attending my host brother's baseball games. Andy, I HOPE you win the tournament, buddy! And playing cards every day after VBS with Amy and losing to Amy every single day. Then I play soccer frequently with my older host sister Katie, and she is also quite good at it. They all have just been amazing to me and so much fun to be around. And next week we are headed off to Wichita, Kansas. Until next time, adios!



Josh Tomac

Date: 7/16/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

As Joannie said also tonight, we are at Shelly's church for the night. It has been quite a lot of fun. Swimming in the pool, eating hamburgers, watching the end of Racing Stripes. Now I just have to see the beginning of it. I am continually amazed by the open hearts that people have to strangers that just come in for a night. But they have been amazing. It always blows me away how well we are taken care of. This church family has been no exception. We get to see the fireworks tonight, and I am told that it's quite a show. Even better than their Fourth of July shows. Well, we were in Hannibal for the Fourth fireworks, so I guess we'll have to see if this does compare. It should be fun, though. My host parents will be taking their grandson with us, and it looks like a full night. Well, I do need to run. Fireworks, here I come.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 7/16/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

What does a small town located in Kansas have to do with a Captive Free team traveling in the Northeast? Well, it's Shelly Schwalm's church, and we on the South Central team have paid it a little visit today.

Upon our arrival, Shelly's parents and pastor met us and offered many hugs of welcome. We spent the afternoon swimming and eating BBQ and talking of all the wonderful things that Shelly has been telling her parents and of all the fun we have had with her at training. What a surprise when Shelly called during dinner and we all got to talk to her!

Later that night we got to go to the Amelia Earhart fireworks show in the neighboring town. I thought it was the most amazing display of fireworks I have ever seen. I felt as though every minute of it was the grand finale.

We were so excited to get to visit a fellow teamer's home church and connect with those whom Shelly knows and considers close to her heart.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 7/19/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Hi-

Hello from Wichita, KS. As I write this it is pouring outside. It has been raining for like the last hour. This week we are doing a small VBS, but it's been very busy. Not only are we doing opening and closing, but we are also doing music class for two groups during the day. So we are jam packed with music all day long. We do get a break while the children are listening to their story for the day. The children here are a lot of fun. Every day so far, after VBS is finished, we get to eat lunch with a small group of the kids. They are really fun.

This week Josh and I are staying with the Haefners. They live on ten acres, and it's beautiful. I got to watch the sun come up through my bedroom window, and it was yet another display of God's awesome power. On their ranch they have a horse and a couple of rowdy dogs along with 15 barn cats. We have an abundance of animals we can play with. Well, that's about it for now. Talk to you later.

-Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 7/21/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

Kids really enjoy VBS. They love the music and the crafts and the snack and games. Then, there are those kids who love VBS. They look forward to it all year and can't wait until Captive Free is set up and ready to play songs until their voices run out. Nicholas Crane was one of those kids who loved VBS. Last year he sat in the back with his mom and over the course of the week eventually made his way down to where all the other kids were. He loved VBS, especially the music that Captive Free would play.

This year VBS didn't work out for Nicholas. He was so looking forward to all the fun times when he changed medicines for his cancer treatment, and his body didn't respond well. He needed blood transfusions, which made his immune system weak. This meant that when Nicholas wasn't in the hospital or at the doctor's, he was at home away from other kids that could spread harmless viruses that could threaten his life.

Today we did a private VBS program for Nicholas. He came in and sat with his mom and just listened as we sang. After a few minutes he started dancing and was up with his Bart Simpson doll and having a grand old time. We did a puppet show for him and took our picture with the VBS themed tent in the background. Nicholas ended his VBS adventure with a t-shirt signed by the team and a necklace so that he can remember this year's VBS and keep on looking forward to future years.

We had a great time with Nicholas and pray that God will keep watch over him and his family.



Joannie Bryan

Date: 7/23/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Well, how is everyone? Good, I hope! Well, we are 44 weeks into our 46 weeks of tour on the road this year, and to be honest with you, I think it's rather bitter-sweet. We are so excited to be able to go home and take what we've learned on the road this year and put it into action in our daily lives, but we'll have to move on from this place alone, without these five amazing people that we have just spent 11 months on the road with. Through good times and bad, confusing times and times when everything was completely under control, we've been there for each other through it all. Sickness, death, relationship trauma, ER visits (primarily Josh's ER visits), you name it, we've been through it all. So much of our focus has been on making the end of this year great, and this weekend has really helped our mission to do so.



Beckie Petzoldt

We are currently at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Kansas City, Missouri. This evening we did a Youth Worship Service where we did four songs and the Senior "Dei Lights" (a.k.a., Senior High Youth) led the entire service. There were between 40-60 people in attendance at this Saturday night service, and it went really well. We did not realize how well it actually went until we spoke with the youth after the service.

They were telling us about how the Saturday night crowd is usually some of the older folks who just sit there with stone faces and only sit when the bulletin says "sit" and stand when it says "stand." There is no clapping, no dancing, nothing out of the ordinary. Tonight, though, we happened to play "The Way" at the service, which is, for those of you who have heard us play it, is a pretty high involvement song. There are motions, clapping, dancing, AND jumping. Four strikes, right? WRONG!!! These people were up and moving, dancing in the aisles, singing their hearts out to the Lord!

It was amazing to see without knowing the information behind the "normal" Saturday crowd, but to know that the Spirit moved them in such a way to step out of their routine comfort zones and into just praise and worship like that was simply awesome. It still amazes me what the power of the Holy Spirit can do. To even get staunch old conservative Lutherans (like myself) to loosen up and just get down for Him is still a feat beyond all imagination! Well, I have one journal entry left for next Saturday, which is two days before the end of our tour. So, until then, my friends...

In His Grip,

Beckie

Date: 7/26/2005

Submitted by: Josh Tomac

Journal Entry:

Well, it is absolutely amazing to me that the year is really coming to a close with only one more week left after this VBS in Blue Springs, Missouri. I have had such an amazing experience this year and met so many new people, it's hard for me to believe that it is time for me to move on.

Anyway, I am having a busy but fun week in Blue Springs. Today it has just been pouring down rain. This is the second time we have been here this year, and we are excited that we get to be here for a longer time than the last visit here. This week our team has been helping with a morning and a night VBS. The church here is awesome; they definitely make sure that the youth of their congregation have an important role within the church.



Josh Tomac

God's blessings to you all! Bye!

Date: 7/30/2005

Submitted by: Kimberly Rupp

Journal Entry:

Everybody comments that team must have gone very quickly this year, but I feel that it's more than that. We have had about four different parts of team this year, and while each group went fairly quickly, they still add up into one very long year. That doesn't have to mean that it is a bad thing. There have been so many times that I've thought, if we do nothing else this year, this has happened at least. And that is a thought that has kept me going this entire year.

We are finishing up our week in Blue Springs, MO. It has definitely been an interesting experience. We got the privilege to do both an evening and a morning VBS. One thing that I will always take with me is the enthusiasm of the evening group. There was a class that is special ed, and they were always up and jumping and singing with us. But I'll remember Bryan the most. He was so excited about being here that he stayed up late each night practicing Sign Language for a couple different songs so he could come up and sign with us. It was just so awesome to see God's hand in Bryan's life. Well, we do have four worship services in the morning, so I will be getting some sleep. Good night and peace to you all.



Kimberly Rupp

Date: 8/2/2005

Submitted by: Jake Alborn

Journal Entry:

Howdy y'all.

This is our last week of VBS. We've been in Davenport, IA. For those of you who follow our schedule, you know that we've been here a few times before. This is, I believe, our sixth trip to the Quad Cities area.

The VBS here has a cowboy theme. Now, being from Texas, I know a bit about this subject. I was happy to teach my class some words and phrases specific to Texas and the South. They had a lot of fun with that.

We are all staying at the same house. It's a great way to wrap up the year. Our host's names are Tom and Sue Ervin. They are great. They have a pool, and we've enjoyed late night swims and doing creative jumps off of the diving board. It's been a blast.

Tonight we went over to another family's house for dinner. We had burgers on the grill with fresh sweet corn. We've been in Iowa a lot this year, but this was the best corn I've had yet. Then we all went to the community pool along with some of the kids from our VBS. We had a lot of fun. Well, this is my last journal entry, so take care. Thank you to everyone for your support and God bless!!

-Jake



Jake Alborn

Date: 8/4/2005

Submitted by: Joannie Bryan

Journal Entry:

It is the ninth and final week of VBS, and we are in Davenport, Iowa. The new and exciting thing happening for the South Central team is that we got Josh into the pool. We have been spending all summer trying to get Josh to swim with us, and every now and then we get him in, but he doesn't really do much other than stand around.

This week we had the opportunity to all stay together at the Erbins in Le Claire, Iowa and they had a pool in their backyard. By the end of the week, we had Josh touching the bottom of the deep end and swimming back and forth from each side of the pool. He even tried the hand stand with me, although we both prefer the one handed variation because our other hand is pinching our nose closed. Today was my big high because I actually got Josh to



Joannie Bryan

attempt doing a flip off the diving board, which is more than I can say for myself. He made me laugh at his many attempts, mostly just getting scared at the last second and falling in to the pool. The biggest thing was that he tried.

Josh has come a long way this year on the road, and I would like to nominate him as the "most improved" teammate, not because he was bad at the beginning but because he tried new things and expanded his world. Here's to you, Josh.

Date: 8/6/2005

Submitted by: Beckie Petzoldt

Journal Entry:

Memories... ah, the memories! It's so unbelievable that we're almost done with our year of ministry on the road! I distinctly remember sitting at this very computer in Stratford, Iowa writing a journal about how excited we all were to be back from Christmas Break and getting back on the road! And now I sit here, trying to write a journal that sums up all of my experiences, joys, tears, and hopes of this year and plans for the next.



Beckie Petzoldt

First off, I'd just like to send out a huge and heart-felt thank you to all of you who have hosted us throughout this entire year! We love our host homes! Without all of you, we'd be sleeping in our crazy messy (well,...used to be crazy messy, now it's uncomfortably clean and sterile) van eating 49-cent cheesburgers from McDonald's and gaining WAY more than the estimated average of 30 lbs. on the road! Each and every one of you have touched our lives in some way, shape or form. From Hanlontown, Iowa and Conway, Arkansas to Bossier City, Louisiana and our beloved Kansas City, Missouri, we have had such an amazing and life-changing experience in this ministry. Being that music is only roughly 10% of our ministry, it's you guys who make the other 90% possible! So, thank you for all you do.

The next thank you I want to send out is to all of our friends and family back home that have constantly supported us throughout this journey. This could not be possible without the support of all of you! Moms, dads, sisters, brothers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, best friends, and all the rest of you are what make it possible for us to get on a plane, bus, train or car and travel to Minneapolis, Minnesota to meet with 4-6 other people we don't know and basically begin a new life on the road together. I especially want to send out a personal thank you to my family in Washington State and California, both blood related and in Christ. You have all been so amazing to me and have helped me stay strong with the knowledge that you'd all back me 110% all the way. To all of you I owe this extraordinary opportunity! I couldn't have done it without you.

Finally, I want to thank everyone with Youth Encounter. All the 04-05 teamers, staff in the office, friends we've met on the road; we just can't seem to get away from the YE family! Wherever you go, whichever corner you turn, someone has some relation to YE, and that is the most amazing thing. To be able to connect with former teamers, relatives of former teamers or staff in the office, or just getting to know people currently involved directly with Youth Encounter and its ministries is a true blessing. So, personally, and for the last time as Captive Free South Central 2004-2005, we'd like to send out a huge thank you to everyone in the office--Donna, Dani, Jen, Jeff (both of them), Tiffany, Ryan, Amber, Trips, Michelle, Brant, Mary (even though Jake has called to office a few times to simply harrass her, we do apologize and do not condone his inappropriate behavior-- wink, wink) and all the others that work so hard for us and for this ministry. You are all true angels and have worked so very hard at making this your mission.

So, as a closing note, we love and appreciate you all more than you know. And as we leave this place and finish a beautiful chapter in our lives and begin to embark on a new, we will look back and grin as we think ever so fondly of our times with you! And, always remember,... keep rockin' for Him! I'll see y'all next year! Captive Free 2005-2006, here I come!

In His Grip,

Beckie
