

Captive Free South West 2004-05 Journal

Date: 9/18/2004

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

Here it is! It's the very first journal entry and I have the awesome privilege of writing it. For me, it's hard to believe that training began just a month ago. I've seen myself grow so much already, that I'm definitely looking forward to see what God has in store for me, as well as the rest of the teamers, for the remainder of the year.

Sometimes when I sit down and really think about it, I'm in awe that I'm on a ministry team with seven people that are supposed to travel around the U.S. for an entire year. Not just travel, but travel in a van... With a trailer... In rush hour traffic. And to do this ministry, we're staying up late, getting up early, and sleeping somewhere different almost every day. I'm trying all kinds of new foods, meeting new people, and adjusting to a very new schedule. And sometimes when I really think about it, I don't know how I'm going to last a whole year.



Brianna Traquair

This reminds me of when the Israelites were complaining to Moses that in Egypt they had plenty of fish to eat, but in the dessert, all they had was manna, and they were sick of it because they wanted meat. God heard them and told Moses to tell them to purify themselves because he was going to send meat. Moses kinda said something like, "Hey, God, I don't know if you're aware of this, but there's over 600,000 people here... how in the world are you going to feed all of them?" Moses knew the meat from the animals they had wouldn't be nearly enough for all those people. And God said, "Has the Lord's arm been shortened?" (Num. 11:23) which basically means, "I can do anything!"

Sometimes great things happen, and it's easy to get excited about them and to praise God for being there for us in our good times. However, in our troubles and trials, God is there, too. It's so easy to get discouraged or dismayed when something doesn't work out or something goes wrong. It's even easier to just focus on your own sorrows or frustrations rather than bringing them to God to help you out. But, God is so amazing, that He can do anything. He promises in 2 Peter 1:3 to give us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" so that we can live the life we're supposed to live for God. This doesn't mean that we win a brand new car, the lottery, or a vacation house in the Bahamas. But any physical, spiritual, emotional, financial, or any other needs, are totally covered by God.

I encourage anyone reading this to really trust God with your life. He can do some amazing things for you! God bless you all!

Love, peace, and chicken grease,
Bri Traquair

Date: 9/24/2004

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:

Well, we just finished in Walbach, Nebraska. Last night, we went to a volleyball game then the girls went to our host home. Christy helped one of our host sisters with her homework while the rest of us talked with our host mother. They had five black lab puppies that we played with, they were so cute. The program went really well and we got our first three partners. There was a really big storm and after the program when Amanda and I were just about to run out to the van this huge clap of thunder made us jump and our host family saw us and started laughing at us. Man, is it fun to meet new **Amber Ferguson** people! Anyways, I'm signing off now! God Bless ~Amber~



Date: 9/26/2004

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:

Well, we finished everything in Womack, and headed to North Platte, NE. We did a chapel service at a Lutheran School for a ton of kids. It was really cool to see how excited they were to see us there—their energy was great. Drew, Robert and I stayed at a really beautiful house with some awesome kids that we played video games with. We had a day off on Friday because our usual day off, Monday, was full of some on-the-road training stuff. Drew, Robert, and I hung out with our host siblings all day, and that evening we went to a local music festival in the middle of down town, where we met up with Bri and Amanda. At one point during the show, they asked if anybody would like to get up on stage and play some songs while they did some setting up for the next band, and we decided that sounded like fun, so we went up there. We really got a lot of response from the crowd, which was awesome. After that, we went to our host families.

**Steve Seybold**

The next day, we left Nebraska and headed to Denver, CO. We dropped Bri off at the airport (she had to fly home for her friend's funeral) and drove to Broomfield. Before the show that night, we got to hang out with the kids and play games, and then we had a great program. Drew, Robert and I got to stay at a really cool host home. Our host dad was an engineer for Lockheed Mart. We had really great conversations with him about faith, which was really empowering.

On Sunday morning, we participated in three services. After having lunch, we headed to Westminster, about fifteen miles away. When we arrived, we set up for a family night program that we did that evening. The program went well, and we met some pretty cool high school kids. That night, Robert and I stayed with a couple that was really open to talking with us. All in all, it was a pretty eventful Sunday.

Date: 9/30/2004**Submitted by:** Christy Schmahl**Journal Entry:**

Wow!! It's been a great and busy first week. Yesterday we finally had a day off. We all decided to sleep in until 11:00. We then went shopping. The guys found a guitar store and I thought they would be there all day. Maria called us and asked if we would like to get together. Maria was a YE staff member that toured with us for our first 5 days. We decided to meet up with her in Boulder, Colorado. We went to the walking mall when we were there. It was fun to see musicians performing on the streets singing their heart out. It was a very relaxing day that was needed. I'm exciting to see what this week has in store. God's Peace- Christy Schmahl

**Christy Schmahl**

Date: 10/2/2004**Submitted by:** Robert Fillinger**Journal Entry:**

Hi, this is Robert and it's my turn to tell you how it's going. So... here we go: We are on our way to Pueblo, CO right now. Our last two days have been really cool. We stayed in Parker, CO from Tuesday night to Thursday morning. On Wednesday we had to travel to Longmont, CO, which is about one and a half hours away from Parker to do a chapel program. It was so much fun. Although we had to get up early to get there on time, it was so cool to see all these little kids having smiling faces when we did the puppet show or the interactive bible study. And they did a real good job of joining in the sing-a-longs. It was awesome!

**Robert Fillinger**

On Wednesday night we did a family night program back in Parker. And that was cool, too. I think it was the best program we did so far concerning the flow and even the music. It was great to see people dancing and singing with us.

Personally, I have a couple of things I want to share with you.

I wasn't able to be in contact with my family, friends and sponsors back in Germany for almost one and a half months because I couldn't hook up my computer on the internet properly. Now it works

finally and I am so happy about that!! But still, calling home is a problem. When we're on the van travelling I can't use a cell phone to call home. And when we are at host families at night, people in Germany are a sleep (it's 8 hours earlier there). That bothers me and I really have to be patient and not to be too disappointed about that.

I feel really challenged being on team. Since I am an introvert and love to have time on my own to reenergize, I have a hard time finding those spots where I can some lonely-time. Being around people 24/7 is really exhausting for me, but I try my best and I think I am doing good so far.

Back in Broomfield I met two elderly people, Doris and a man I forgot the name of. They really impressed me. We did a game to get to know each other during an ice-cream social. The question was: "Where do you see yourself in 10 years?" And while we were talking about it, the two of them said, that they are ready to go to heaven and see the Lord. We should always have a kind of readiness, say said, but they just lived long enough and can't wait to see Jesus. This was really impressive.

And the last thing I want to talk about is how great God is. During training and the time being on the road I realized how many broken people are travelling with Youth Encounter this year. And still God uses us. We all have so strong weaknesses and yet God does not hesitate to use us to spread his love. This is really amazing. He really has been so good to us.

Date: 10/4/2004

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

This has been a great experience. So far we have done shows at everything from detention centers to chapels and worship services. God has shown his love to us everywhere we have gone. Our host families have welcomed us with open arms. On September 30th, we played at a boys ranch and a detention center. At the detention center, we played two shows, one for the girls and one for the boys. The boys ranch was really cool. I think they really enjoyed it. They even started dancing. The detention centers were awesome. The participation and enthusiasm shown was great.

The girls at the detention center totally made my night. There were only 10 of them but they danced to almost every song. They were awesome! The guys at the detention center showed their support differently. They didn't dance but they did help us move all our equipment and set up and tear down our stage. Everyone we have met has been very encouraging. I am so excited about this year. God is good and I know He has awesome plans for all of the teams traveling this year. So far we have traveled to Iowa, Nebraska, and Colorado. I have enjoyed them all but am very excited about seeing all the other states we will visit and talking to all the other people. To everyone back home....Love ya lots!!! To everyone I have met...Thanks for all the support!!! And to those I haven't met....Hope to see you soon.



Amanda Bradley

Date: 10/13/2004

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:

Hi again, Steve here! Sunday we left Shepard of the Hills in Flagstaff, AZ, after doing two services and Sunday school at the church. Our contact at the church was a youth leader named Ashley. We showered at her house before the services in the morning. At her house I found out that she was a huge Weezer fan, which is my favorite group. We got to talk about music and our pasts which were really neat to hear about. After leaving Flagstaff which headed towards Williams, AZ. Once in Williams we played a show for the church there. There weren't many people there actually about ten but it was a pretty intimate service because of so few people. Drew and I stayed at a 91 year old man's house. His name was Ed Paine but he liked to be called "Special Ed". The next day we had our day off which we spent at the Grand Canyon. I can't say I was too impressed simply because every person would



Steve Seybold

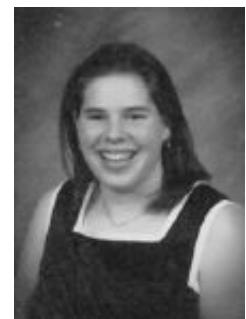
exclaim how they saw God in this. It bothered me a little because I couldn't help but question why it took the Grand Canyon to recognize that this world was the work of the Lord. But otherwise it was very beautiful and peaceful.

Date: 10/14/2004

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

We arrive in Cottonwood, Arizona and I had a feeling that this was going to be a great experience right when we met our contact. He welcomed us with open arms. I was excited for what we had planned for the next two days. Our first stop was at a nursing home. I learned piano when I was in second grade and ever since then I have gone to nursing homes to play music for the residence. I have enjoyed spending time talking with them and hear their stories. So when I found out we had a booking at a nursing home I was ready to go. When we arrive there was a lady in a wheel chair that caught my attention. I spent about 5 minutes before the program talking with her. She told me she was from California and was missing her family and home. I feel bad that many of the residence at nursing homes don't have people to visit them. It reminds me of my grandpa who is now in a nursing home. He doesn't have family close by so he gets visitors once in a while. I know if I went a few months without seeing family or friends I would start feeling depressed. Luckily I have a great team this year that is slowly becoming a family to me.



Christy Schmahl

One Wednesday our contact made a homemade breakfast for us. It was nice to sit down as a whole team and eat a breakfast together. Meal time is an important part of my life. I feel that it's a great time to get to share how you are doing and what's on your mind. Most of our meals we don't eat together, because we are at different host families. If you think about it one of the most important events in history happened at the table- the Last Supper.

After breakfast we packed up our lunches and headed to Sedona, Arizona. Our contact took us hiking in a beautiful area. It's amazing how you can see God in people, but also in his creation. The mountains were amazing. We were able to climb a fair distance up one. There was an amazing view of the valley and the surrounding areas. I can't wait to see my pictures I took. On our way back to the vehicle Amanda and I met a couple from California. They were really nice and were very interested in who we were. Those are the moments I like when you meet random people and get to minister and share a bit of your faith with them.

Today we rehearsed most of the day preparing our selection of music for Quakes and Construction Zones. It was nice to have a little time off. Tonight we gathered at the boys' house for supper. The presidential debate was on TV when we were there. We all sat down and watched it. For me it's hard to believe everything what the candidates say. But there was something that moved me and my whole team when we were watching the debate. President Bush was asked how his faith affected his job and the decisions he made. He then said that prayer is a major part of who he is and when his life gets hectic prayer helps him "Calm the Storm". For those of you who don't know "Calm the Storm" is our theme this year. So to hear the President say our theme when describing his faith sent chills down my spine. His speech helped me understand how important prayer is especially for our leaders in the world. I am so glad that God has called us here to Cottonwood. God's presence was very noticeable here for me.

Date: 10/17/2004

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20



How many times have you heard that verse? Personally, I know I've heard it **Brianna Traquair** at least a hundred times. But for me, this is one of those verses that I've heard and believed, yet somehow it's lacked a big impact on me because I've always felt that the more people at a worship service, gathering, or prayer group, the more spiritual the event would be. However, last night, this verse became so real to me, and I'm SO excited I get to share it with you!

You see, we were scheduled at a youth night in Phoenix, AZ. Robert, our schedule guy, told us that there were about 20 kids expected at the event, it would run from six to ten that evening, we'd play some games first, then have pizza, and then have some music worship. Awesome, right?

Well, 6:00 rolled around, and only one kid and her youth leader had shown up. I thought to myself, well, that's okay, because when I was younger (er... actually, I still do this) I was always late. So, no problem. We threw a football around, played some games, and just hung out. By 6:30, there were two girls and their youth leader. If you're not good at doing math in your head, that's three people. Those who were on Captive Free South West more than doubled those who weren't on team. That was kind of weird and disheartening for me. At training, we were always told not to expect huge crowds at every single event we did, but I at least expected more people than we had on team.

We had eaten pizza, played "Silent Football," (A good game to request if you're reading this and will see us later ;)) and decided it was about time to start worship. I was really interested to see how this worship would go, because I wasn't expecting a tremendous amount of energy. After all, it's three people... just how much energy can they have? Boy, was I wrong.

The music at first was really upbeat, fast, dancing sort of songs, and we did all of those electrically. Then, since there weren't that many people, Drew decided we should go "unplugged," bring a guitar and djembe, sit in a circle, and just worship with this group. So that's what we did, and let me tell you, it was incredible for me. The intimate setting, getting to know this group closely, and everything else that went into the evening was just so awesome.

That's when I thought of the verse Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Isn't God amazing? So many times we think it takes a lot of people to make God real for us. So often, when turnout is small, our first thought is a pessimistic one, saying, "There are only three people here?" Rather than, "thank God that these three people are here."

Worship is not about the size of the congregation, youth group, or Bible study crew. God is with you when there are two or 2,000. That, my friends, is just another reminder to me that God is overwhelmingly amazing.

Date: 10/19/2004

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

On Monday we had our first month anniversary. I can't believe we are on the road for one month already! It has been a great time so far and I do not regret any minute. Every time we get into new host homes or we get to a new place to play at, I am so touched by their kindness and generosity.

Today I want to tell you about the last couple of days: On Sunday we had a joint concert with Kindred. It was so nice to see this team and to spend sometime with our new friends. The concert was so much fun. We did some songs together and some by teams. Our Monday of we spent together too. Steve and I also had to bring our van to a shop, because something was wrong with the transmission. During the day we got a phone call, that the van needed a new transmission. So we unfortunately had to cancel the next booking in Huntington Beach, CA and stay at Mesa, AZ until Thursday morning. But it's really nice here. The people are really friendly and welcoming. (And the weather is nice, too. About 80° F) We also have some time to relax and talk about some team stuff. And I have some time to spend on my own. I really need that to get reenergized.

In the last couple of days I've been reminded of Moses, Joshua and David. These were three men, called and equipped by God. I really like the way God gave them their tasks.

He told Moses that He'll be with him and that He'll give the words to speak. To Joshua God said something similar. Joshua should not be afraid, because the Lord is with him. And God chose David, because he looked in his heart and was pleased with him so he made him king of Israel.

Sometimes I am discouraged. I see all the mistakes I make. How often do I fail in this ministry and even in my life? But yet I know, that God is with me. He looks in my heart and gives me all I need



Robert Fillinger

to accomplish the task he has for me. He is with us and we don't have to be afraid. That is so amazing. He is so merciful. And I really like to be on the road to tell people about this mercy and love!!

I want to encourage you, to take risks and really commit yourself to God. For the Bible says: "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13) and "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." (Luke 5:10)

Date: 10/20/2004

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:

So yesterday we ate lunch with the kids from Cathedral Church of Light. It was Mismatch Day at school, so most of the kids were wearing goofy outfits, like two different shoes. It was so funny that they were just having fun not matching. We did another chapel for them, and the kids just went wild dancing in the aisles. The kids were just so fun! After they danced the chapel away, we had to take Drew to the airport on our way to King City. When we got to the church, there were people there to help us take in our equipment. We've had help taking things out to the trailer, but we have never had help carrying things in; it was nice. So they helped us set up, as much as they could, and since we didn't have a drummer, Steve asked if any of them could play. They ended up calling their drummer, so we had a youth from the church play with us for the program. It was so cool because we thought we wouldn't have a drummer with Drew gone at home. The night rocked!



Amber Ferguson

God's blessings!

~Amber~

Date: 10/21/2004

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

Okay guys!!! I am so excited because we have our van back.....Yeah!! The transmission on our van needed work, so we have been without a van for the past couple of days. Luckily, we had some awesome hosts who let us stay with them until the van was fixed. The hosts were great: they drove us around and we even borrowed one host's minivan to tote the team around. So far, team has been amazing and I know it will get better each day.



Amanda Bradley

Today is Thursday and we are going to be hitting the road again. We are heading to California which is very exciting. God has been so good to our team. He has blessed us through amazing hosts and wonderful crowds. It is totally awesome. We have been able to share God's love through our performances. We have performed for close to 100 people and we have also performed for 3 people. The numbers make no difference. Our performances have been beneficial to both the audience and the team no matter how big the crowd was.

I am so glad I came on team. I have met people and been to places that are totally amazing. Arizona was absolutely beautiful. Colorado was awesome. New Mexico was wonderful. The people we have met are fantastic. They take care of people they have never met. They take us in and make sure that we are fed and have a place to sleep. They are so wonderful. To all of you back home...Love you!! To all of you I have met on the road...Thank you!! To all of you I haven't met ...Hope to see you soon!!

Date: 10/23/2004

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

Today we are in La Verne, CA. Soon we'll be heading to Long Beach. It's awesome to be here because it's beautiful and I've never been to Cali before.

Yesterday we did a chapel at a Lutheran high school. It was great because some kids from the school came up and did some songs with us. Lots of fun! After that, they helped us load our equipment back into the trailer, which is always greatly appreciated!

My host family was amazing!! It was my host brother's birthday, so they had his grandparents over and we all had burgers and cake. We sat around and joked and told stories for a while, then we moved into the living room, where Christy, me, and my host sister all played some songs on the piano. My host dad brought out his bass guitar to show me a thing or two, and we all ended up playing some songs and singing together. After that, my host brother broke out his guitar and showed us some songs. He was awesome--especially since he hadn't played for very long! God definitely blessed him with a great gift.



Brianna Traquair

It was amazing to spend time with this family, because right away they welcomed me into their home and I felt like I was a part of their family. It's incredible that after only one night, I felt so close to these people. I guess that's the great part about being a part of the family of God, eh? I mean, you're already family, you just might not have met each other yet. And when you do meet each other, it's like you already have this strong bond. It's awesome! I love it!

Families like these and days like these make all the tough stuff on the road totally worth going through. It's a lot easier to know that when I'm going through a day when I miss home like crazy, or when I really don't want to be in the van for another six hours, I have an awesome moment waiting for me. God's cool like that.

Love, peace and chicken grease,

Bri

Date: 10/30/2004

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:



Steve Seybold

Hey again everybody! This is Steve here. Well, what has been going on? It seems like our van is constantly falling apart. On the 30th we went to a town in California called Stockton. There while setting up, Bri knocked a main speaker into her toe and broke her big toe nail down to the root. After she and Robert left to the emergency room, the rest of the team got to hang out with this sweet group of kids for their Halloween youth group party. We dressed up and made masks and bat hangy things. We had to make a costume with toilet paper and random stuff, and our groups wrapped our costume person all the way around head to toe and then put a naval officer hat on top. She was an albino amoeba who wants to be in the Village People. It was awesome! After the party we went to go pick up Drew from the airport, but our van would not participate. After much pleading, Cool Runnings still refused to function. So instead we went to our host home and used their vehicle to go and retrieve Drew. After we got him from the airport, we went to our host home and slept. The next morning we did the National Band worship service, which went over really well. Robert got to talk to some kids in German, which really helped them relate. Later that day we sorta figured out what was wrong with the van and managed to drive to our next booking. At which we did a great Family Night Program for Halloween. It was hilarious because we all dressed up in different costumes. Bri taped masking tape on her ankles and went as North. Very funny. During our puppet show we got to throw candy into the audience. Kids went nuts. Good times. After that we went home and slept--yeah! The End.

Date: 11/2/2004

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

Hey all!! Today is our day off, and it is so good to have another break. Last week we didn't have a day off because Monday we were traveling. Funny, we can't travel this Monday - our vehicle's in the shop - again. You might have heard that we kept blowing fuses. After a couple hours in the shop we found out that nothing is wrong with our van, which means that the trailer is the cause of the fuses' shortage. Well, that's good to know. Hopefully we will be able to get the trailer fixed some time.

The rest of the day was really good. The girls are staying at a house that is in the woods. There's lots of wild life out where we are, including owls, bears, foxes and mountain lions. So here's a story for you. Bri was outside talking on the phone and she heard a noise. She freaked out because she thought it was a mountain lion. With her injured toe she ran full speed up the hill to get away from the sound she heard. Turns out the sound was not a mountain lion, but a branch falling off a tree. Luckily Bri has recovered from her traumatic experience.



Christy Schmahl

Tonight we had a great supper with our host family. They made us roast and potatoes, which is the main food substance of my state - South Dakota. We also had a great conversation. We never met our host parents' kids, but we found out that one of their daughters was on MTV's Road Rules. She had struggles when she was on the road, but she also had wonderful experiences. It sounds like us. Even though we have down times, the people we meet, the stories we share, and the roads we travel make this year worth the trip.

Date: 11/4/2004

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

Hi everybody! Today I write from Modesto, CA. We had a great chapel and Family Night Program at the Grace Lutheran Church today. I really like to be in this ministry. Since I am not a great talker, music is just an awesome way for me to tell people about Jesus. Both the chapel and the program have been so good. It lifts up my mood. Especially in the last days, when I am down, making music and singing to and about my God just reminds me of how good he is.



Robert Fillinger

Anyway. I want to talk a bit about challenges. Being on team is challenging! Meeting new people almost everyday, getting along with 6 other personalities, being around people 24/7, all the stuff that happened to us (of which I am sure you can read in all the other journals J) and so on. And today there was another challenge for me. We had rehearsal and throughout the day I had been in a not so good mood. I think you would call it being "blue". Don't know exactly why I was blue, but that happens from time to time. Well, we were about to rehearse the song "Enough" (written by Chris Tomlin and Louie Giglio). And because Bri sings it, my team asked me if I could play bass on this song. But I don't know this song, and I don't know how to play bass. The sheet music has the chords in the wrong spots and usually I need more time to learn new things. So I told them that I'd prefer not to play. But they kind of made me do it. Steve taught me the chords very patiently and we started to play. I don't know why, but I almost began to cry. It was just too much for me. My mind says, "It's not hard, you know you can do it. It's not a big deal. It's easy and everything is all right" But my heart said something else, " It's too hard. Why are they making me do that? I don't want to this. It's just too big for me." Well, after playing it two times I found joy in doing it and it was really fun. So I am really glad my team made me doing it. But on the other hand: it was a challenge for me. Greater than I expected and yet doable.

And so it is with life. There are challenges everyday. But the God we believe in is greater than these. We know that with God all things are possible so let's trust him. When he stretches us, it's only for our good and it helps us to become more like Jesus. When God is for us, who can be against us?

Date: 11/6/2004

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

Okay, so I am back again!! Yeah!!! So, things are a little crazy right now! Everyone is super busy because we are getting ready for a Quake. The other night I stayed at a house with Katie, who is totally rockin'! She has been on Spoke Folk (Youth Encounter's two-week biking ministry) three times. She has so many awesome stories from Spoke Folk. Watching her video from Spoke Folk and hearing all her stories was so exciting for me. I think that I will definitely do Spoke Folk someday. Just the idea of meeting so many people in such a short time is so exciting. I am so happy that Youth Encounter has ministries that young people can get involved in. I also love that there is no age limit. The idea that anyone any age can be a counselor on Spoke Folk or Side By Side (a month-long global work crew) is so cool.



Amanda Bradley

Team is going great and I totally love it. Being away from home has really made me appreciate everyone back home so much more than I ever did before. Meeting my team and getting to know them has given me such an appreciation for the differences in everyone of us. I have loved all of my hosts. It is so much fun to meet new people and see new places. Everyone has been so wonderful to all of us. To everyone back home...miss you and see you soon. To all of those who I have met...thanks so much you guys are great. To those I haven't met...see ya soon.

Amanda
1 Tim. 4:12

Date: 11/9/2004

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

Hey guys! It's Bri again! Yay! I'm so excited to be writing a journal today because I always enjoy telling people how God has blessed me.



Brianna Traquair

Right now we're hours away from our first ever YOUTH QUAKE!!!! EEEEEE! Haha—sorry about that—I'm so pumped because Youth Quakes rock my socks off. I've been going to these for so long, and now I'm on the other side of the fun, so I'm super-excited because I can have the experience from two different aspects.

Well, since it's November, the season of Thanksgiving, I'm going to give you a list of things I'm thankful for.

1. My families back home—Mom and my brother Kristopher have been so supportive of me being on the road, which is really cool. And they always leave me fun messages on my phone to make me smile. Dad and Tessa, Cody, and Sara have been really excited for me being on the road. My dad actually was a musician and toured the road quite a bit, so he gives me a lot of great insight on what it will be like to live in a van for an entire year. (Happy Birthday to my brother on the 9th, he's 16!! And Happy Birthday to my mom on the 11th, she's.... beautiful! :))

2. My families on the road— MAN! If it weren't for our host families, I don't know what I would do. We would have to sleep in the van, and that would get really cold during the winter. Christy and I are staying with this awesome host family right now. I especially loved getting to know my host sister Linnea - she is so cool! We played piano together, watched movies, talked, and even did the "juice box dance." (Words cannot describe the coolness of the dance. Only one who has seen it can truly appreciate it. ;)) It's so cool to be able to get to know people so closely. It amazes me how willing these families are to give up their beds, food, laundry rooms, or warm water (if they're hosting all seven of us who shower in the morning). They give us so much and don't expect anything in return. What a blessing it is to be in the family of God!

3. Friends—some I've known for years, some I've only known for hours. I've already met so many incredible people. There's the people on the other Youth Encounter teams that I met at training, the people I've met on the road, and of course, my own team. The bond that you form with people after knowing them for such a short time is so amazing. I'm also so thankful for the friends I have back home. You guys might know that one of my best friends, Ashley, recently passed away, and even though I'm so sad that I won't get to see her for a while, I'm so thankful that I knew her as long as I did. She was an incredible person with a heart of gold, and has really inspired me to

become a better person and put my whole heart into ministry. Most importantly, I am thankful for God's grace, mercy, and overall presence in my life. Without God, I don't know what I would do!

Sometimes in life, we get so overwhelmed by the bad stuff in our lives that we forget to be thankful. Not just thankful for the good stuff, but for everything. After all, if everything was good, how would we appreciate it? How would we grow or learn?

I know that I sometimes struggle with being thankful all the time, and not just when things are going well. In those times, I like to turn to Psalm 138 because it talks about what we should be thankful for. Verse seven especially speaks to me during the bad times. It says, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me; You will stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand will save me."

It's important to remember that God is always there for us because He loves us so much. Who wouldn't be thankful for that?

Date: 11/16/2004

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:

Hey, once more this is Steve! Aren't you glad to hear from us again? We just finished our first Quake, which was amazingly fun! We got to play quite a bit, which I enjoyed immensely. We got to see tons of people we had stayed with earlier in the year, so it was like a big fun reunion. Personally, I got to meet a great church from Sunnyvale--a city in California where I used to live! In fact the church turned out to be Travis from North Central's home church. I actually met a couple of kids who go to the school that I went to when I lived in California. So I got to hang out with them most of the weekend and got to know their youth and their leaders. We went to dinner together where Teres, one of the leaders, and I sang STYX and Matt, Paul, their dad and I sang some barbershop in the middle of this restaurant. It was so great to really be appreciated by people, even if I didn't know them that well, I really felt loved and wanted, which was so encouraging. So I thought that I was just enjoying their company hanging out, but the next day when I got to talk to their youth leader, he explained to me how much fun all of the kids had and how they really felt God's love enveloping them and the whole weekend--pretty emotional stuff and very cool. After the Quake finished, we headed out to our host homes for that night where we were staying for Sunday and our day off. Monday we went to a few thrift stores and basically just chilled out for the whole day. Tuesday we headed out to Nevada where we stayed at a church and made dinner for ourselves. When we got there, though, we realized that they did not have much cooking equipment, so Bri decided to go to the neighboring church to ask for pots. They were very generous in letting us borrow them, and we made ourselves a spaghetti dinner. So here we are still in Nevada, and it's pretty cold! That's about it--I'll see you guys soon.



Steve Seybold

Date: 11/20/2004

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:

Well, last night we had a lock-in at Ogden, Utah. We played games like Cowboy, Chicken, Conqueror and Romans and Christians. Then we had a little worship time, and it really touched some kids' hearts. It is so awesome to see kids that have been through so much and they still trust in God. After worship which ended at midnight, we had free time till three. Some of the team played Rapid Recall with some kids. Amanda and I had a time trying to learn hackysack. So the kids had to get to bed at three because they had to get up at six to go home at seven. We had to play for the kids at six-thirty and it was so funny to see all the kids that earlier had so much energy now just staring blankly at you. We all went to host homes so we could get some sleep after the lock-in. Amanda and I were in a home together, and we went to see some snow because Amanda has never seen snow. It was funny because Amanda tried sliding down the hill without a sled. We went back to the host house and sat in the hot tub for an hour; it was so beautiful looking at the mountains



Amber Ferguson

that they had as a backyard. Amanda and I had fun hanging out with the family - they were awesome people. It's just so great to see God working through so many people. It really touches my heart to see kids seeking God with all they are.

Date: 11/25/2004

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

Happy Thanksgiving!! I can't believe that it is already the holiday season. It seems like it came so fast. Christmas break is less than 16 days away. We arrived in Steamboat, Colorado on Tuesday. Our host family was really nice. Yesterday we enjoyed the free time of not having any commitments. It was great to have time to work on jobs and spend time with each other. We watched "Bruce Almighty" as a team. What a great movie. We discussed if we had the power of God for one day what would we do. I can't imagine having God's power. To be honest, I don't think I would want it. Wednesday we went to a church service that was ecumenical - mixed denominations. It was great to worship with other churches. To me we are to be one body in Christ praising God. I wish every day of the week we could worship with one another. While at the service, I learned that all the churches in town are working together on a program called Lift Up. This program provides food, transportation, housing funds, and housing for those who are traveling through town and don't have the funds to stay at a hotel. These churches provide all the funds for this program and it just amazes me. They are really reaching out to their brothers and sisters in need. Why can't we all reach out to our brothers and sister in Christ who are in need? I encourage all those reading this to really think about ways you can help your neighbor out. This season provides many opportunities for us: you could donate food or clothing to a shelter, ring the bell for Salvation Army, buy a gift for a child whose parents can't afford to, or invite someone over to your house for a meal. This year I don't have much money, but I still plan on doing what I can. During Christmas break I am going to ring the bell for Salvation Army. I encourage you to pray about this issue.



Christy Schmahl

Today was a lot of fun. Amanda and I went outside and played in the snow. Amanda made her first snowman ever. Our snowman was the coolest; in fact it had a bass guitar made out of snow. We also had a little snow fight. I love snow. We then had Thanksgiving dinner. There were 12 of us eating at this long table. It was an amazing meal. The food was great and plentiful. But what made the meal even more special was that I was surrounded by my friends - both my teammates and our host family. I felt close to everyone at the table. The one thing that connected me to all of them was our faith in God. It's amazing how faith binds people together. After supper we played a few songs. It was great to sing together again. This was a great holiday that I never would have even expected. Anyway, I'd better go. May God bless you this holiday season.

Date: 11/27/2004

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

Being on the road is definitely an adventure. On Friday we were on our way from Steamboat Springs, CO to the Aurora, Denver area. We had to go over a pass shortly after Steamboat Springs. Unfortunately it snowed unexpectedly in the night from Thursday to Friday. Since we stayed at an empty parsonage on our own we had to go to our host family, the Warner Family, for breakfast. But we arrived about 45 min late. So we had this great American Breakfast and then it was time to leave. As soon as we left the town we had to put on chains on our van. The only problem was that the chains we had were too small. We tried for an hour to put the chains on until we called our host-brother, Matt, for help. Matt helped us to get some new chains and to put them on. And off we go! At this time we were about 2.5 hours late, but not far away from Steamboat Springs. I drove the van on this day. We went over the pass and that was quite adventurous. It was icy, snowy, windy, foggy and sometimes slippery. We could only go about 20 m/h. But – we finally made it – safely. Thanks be to God!



Robert Fillinger

So we only arrived about 3.5 hours late at our next booking. It was a Hospice and I really enjoyed playing music for the people there. We did something we usually didn't do. Usually in places like that

they gather the people in a room and we play for them. But this time we went from room to room and sang a couple of songs and prayed. It was a really neat experience for all of us. The people at the Hospice enjoyed our singing very much. We can tell that it touch their hearts and gave them a little comfort and hope. It was great! I love it J

Now we are in Brush, CO. Tomorrow we have a National Worship Service here and than we'll be on our way back to Minneapolis for Training and Christmas break. Unbelievable that we already head back. I mean, we've been on the road only for a few weeks! But so far it has been an awesome experience. Beside of all the ministry we do and all the people and places we see, I really like to be challenged in my faith and personality, stepping out of my comfort zones and gaining new and better attitudes. God has been so good to us and He has blessed us so much. To Him be glory.

Date: 11/30/2004

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

Hey guys--so, we are so blessed! We had a couple of wonderful host homes that kept us longer than we were supposed to stay. Yes, there was so much snow between Colorado and Nebraska that we had to stay in Colorado an extra day. God was definitely looking out for us because our hosts were more than willing to keep us an extra day. We rented movies and hung out around the house it was great. I wanted to play in the snow so badly. I did that recently for the first time. That's right. I had never before really seen snow that was more than just frost in the morning. It was so awesome to go outside at noon and see INCHES of snow on the ground. In fact, on Thanksgiving, Christy and I built a snow man. That's the first time I'd built a snow man. We still made it to Nebraska in plenty of time for our chapel in North Platte. It was really cool to go back to North Platte and do a chapel for a group that had already seen us. The kids were really excited. It was totally cool. We have really had great hosts in general. God definitely watches out for us. God rocks!!!! I am super excited because later this week we have a Christmas party in Minneapolis. Then we get to go to Watertown, SD, which is Christy's home town. It is going to be so cool!!! I can't wait. Oh my goodness, and Midwinter training is coming up. So is Christmas break. This year is going so fast. August will be here before I know it. Well guys! To my friends and my family... I will be home soon and get to see you! To everyone else....if I have met you maybe I will see you again and if I don't know you maybe I will meet you soon.



Amanda Bradley

Date: 12/2/2004

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

On Thursday, we were in Elkhorn, NE. This time, the whole team stayed together at a host home, which is rare... probably because there's seven of us.

When we were here, we did chapels at two nursing homes. I love meeting people at these nursing homes because they always have good stories to share.



Brianna Traquair

Our host family was awesome. Especially our host sisters. Our youngest host sister, Melissa, was so cute. When Robert walked into the door of our host home, she looked up at him, turned to her mom and said, "I don't like him." Robert was great about it, though, and I think she grew to like him by the time we left. That first night, we all ate supper together and then the team and our host sister played Uno. It was a lot of fun. The next night we were there, Amanda, Amber, and Amelia made animals out of beads-- they just did a pattern and melted the beads together with an iron. It was pretty cool.

Mid-winter training is coming up soon. I think we're all pretty pumped that we'll be recording our CD. I'm personally looking forward to see all of the other teamers I haven't seen in a while. We get to share the crazy stories from the road, and it will also be awesome to hear how God is moving in other teams. It's sort of sad, though, because it will be the last time I see some of the teamers until debriefing in August. But probably, before I know it, August will be here and the year will be over, because time has just flown by so far. That makes me a little nervous because I have to start thinking about what to do in August. I'm strongly considering doing another year of team, because so far I've loved the experience I've had and feel like I could do so much more in another year. I guess we'll just see what God has in store for me, eh? Until then, I'll just enjoy what God has for me now and trust that whatever the coming days will bring, God will be right there with me.

Date: 12/30/2004

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

Hey guys!! It's Bri here, and I have the great privilege of writing our first journal back on the road after a two-week Christmas break! Yay!



Brianna Traquair

So, what's happened since our last journal entry? We've finished Mid-winter training, taken our first vacation from the road, and have now reconvened in St. Paul, MN. It was awesome to take a break from the road and see our families and friends again. But, I was so excited to get back to see my teammates and get back on the road. Right now, we're heading through Nebraska, and soon we'll be going to places we've been before. It's so cool to be able to go back to places we've been because it gives us a sense of familiarity when so many things are unfamiliar. That's totally not a bad thing, either. I mean, being from North Dakota, I've seen strange things on the road, like, the Internet and automobiles...okay, seriously, it's awesome to be able to experience new places and meet all kinds of crazy new people.

I think it's so cool that God has brought me so many new experiences and we're not even halfway through the year! I'm so excited to see what God has in store for us the rest of the year, because I know that amazing things will happen. I can't wait! Yeah, sometimes it can be scary, because we don't always know where we're going or what we're doing, but we have to remember to trust that the Lord is with us no matter what is (or isn't) on our schedule.

Joshua 1:9 says - "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the LORD your **God is with you wherever you go.**"

No matter what our life has in store, no matter what storms we go through, or what joys we experience, God is right there with us. There's no need to fear the future, because God is already there. Pretty cool, eh?

Date: 1/4/2005

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:

Well, I'm writing my first journal after Christmas break, and it feels good to be back on the road. We were at Wheat Ridge and did our first morning worship service since being back; it was fun trying to get back into the flow of things. After the service we drove to Colorado Springs. We did a program that night in a really nice church that made us a very tasty potluck dinner. The next day was Monday, which is usually our day off, but we have a lot of free time this week, so we had a day of practice and job time. We all went to the mall to look for misc. stuff, and Robert almost pierced his cartilage but he got a cuff instead. He didn't want to go through the pain if it didn't look good. After the mall, all of the team went to the host home that Christy, Steve, Drew and I stayed at and had lasagna that was just awesome. Well, I should probably get going, so talk at you later.



Amber Ferguson

God bless you!

~Amber~

Date: 1/7/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

This morning we woke up to three inches of snow. God has blessed us with seasons and I feel that snow is one of the most amazing things that He made. You may disagree, but everyone has their own opinion. I only thought this weather happens in South Dakota, where I'm from. We arrived safely in Zuni, NM. Zuni is on a Reservation and it was definitely a different lifestyle. Life was at slower pace and people seemed to enjoy each other's company. We met a guy who was walking and he stopped to talk with us. He was on his way to check on all of his friends to see if they were safe and needed anything before he headed home for the night. I think some of us have lost the value of taking care of our neighbors. It reminds me of Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others."



Christy Schmahl

Today we are heading to Payson, AZ to have one last day before our Construction Zone. I am excited to have a weekend of worshiping with teenagers. After team I am considering to do youth ministry and this weekend might help me know if this is what God is leading me to. Well, I better go; have a great weekend.

Christy Schmahl

Date: 1/11/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

Hi guys!



Robert Fillinger

We just arrived in Tucson, Arizona. It isn't a long drive to get there from Mesa. But I really appreciate to travel. We see so many different people and places, churches and landscapes. Right now in Arizona everything looks a bit reddish and there are lots of cactae. Travelling through so many different countrysides shows me how wonderful and diverse God created the world. And everything was good.

This last weekend we had a Construction Zone, a youth event for high schoolers. It was a very good weekend. So many people have been touched. I especially enjoyed to get to know Michael. Michael needs a wheelchair. He basically can't move anything underneath his neck (except his right arm), because he broke his neck in an car accident. He and some friends drank alcohol and just had fun time when they got into this accident. But through this trial, Michael grew in his faith and now goes to many places to tell people about Jesus' love and salvation for us. It was really good to talk to him.

Tonight we're going to hang out with some youth that are going to the Youth Quake in two weeks. That'll be fun to get to know them a bit and then see them again for this weekend.

The coming weekend we're going to Cottonwood, AZ. This is really neat because we already stayed at this church. To me it is nice to come to places we've been before and just enjoy the community.

Robert

Date: 1/13/2005

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

Well, we are back on the road! So right now we are in Tucson, Arizona and it is gorgeous. The sun is out and it is really warm. Right now we are spending time at Resurrection Lutheran Church. I am having so much fun and my team has become my second family. We are actually staying here for two or three days. It is kinda nice to stay a little longer in a town. We were here long enough to perform a couple of times. We did a Family Night Program and we had a youth night. It was so much fun hanging out with all the different families. At the youth night we played games, hung out, and then we sang some songs to worship God. God is so good to us! After the Family Night, I had fun too. I got to go home with my host family and we talked for a while. In talking to them, I found out that they are friends with a girl who is on team this year. It was so neat because they didn't know she was on team. I mentioned her name and where she is from and they automatically knew who I was talking about. It was so neat to find out that they had known her since she was little and their families were close friends. It really is a small world. We talked about lots of stuff. We talked about how my hosts like to go skiing, biking, hiking, and running. In fact, my host mom told me about some marathons she had run in. My teammate Christy stayed at the house with me. She and I were talking about it later and the marathons reminded Christy of a verse. I really liked it and would love to share it with you. The verse comes from 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." I think this verse is an awesome example of how we are to live our lives. We are to live our lives in a way to get the prize, even though the prize has already been won through Jesus Christ. We don't have to be perfect. We just need to love God, and because we love him we should live our lives for him.



Amanda Bradley

Date: 1/15/2005

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

Today we headed out of Tucson, AZ and into Cottonwood, AZ--a place we had been before to play for a nursing home and have housing. It was awesome to see Pastor Brian and his family again. We did a Sunday morning service and helped with Sunday School, which turned out to be so much fun. Occasionally during a service, we do what's called an interactive Bible study, where one of us takes a story from the Bible and tells the story with the help of some volunteers. Well, I was telling a story from our theme verse, Luke 8:24, and I asked for someone to play Jesus. Well, the only person that was raising his hand was this little boy, maybe two years old. I called on him, and he came up to the front of the church and he put his arms up toward me to get me to pick him up. I picked him up and we got to the part where Jesus fell asleep, so I asked him, "Can you fall asleep?" and he closed his eyes so tightly--he was trying so hard to be asleep. He said everything he was supposed to say, but whispered it. I can't get over how cute this kid was. I told this story to our team director, Donna, and she said, "I think of that with the 'faith like a child' thing that Jesus talked about. Isn't it something that he doesn't even know you, yet he trusts you enough to ask you to lift him up and hold him? And he trusts that you won't drop him, too!"



Brianna Traquair

Isn't that awesome? It's so simple, too. Be like a child-- trust that your Father in Heaven will take care of you.

Love, peace, and chicken grease,

Date: 1/20/2005

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:

Today we walked around to different preschool rooms. Even though they were small, each of them had something to offer to God. After we had lunch we did a chapel for K-8th grade. It was awesome because the room was full of youth praising God. I had a nice one on one with Robert. We went for a walk around the school; it was really gorgeous and warm outside. We all went back to the girls' host home and rehearsed out on the front porch. Some of the neighbors that heard us the day before practicing came over to listen and worship with us. Then we went to youth group and we played some songs. We had the opportunity to share some of the uniqueness of each team member. Then the boys dropped us off at our home and we played Disney Scene-it with our host family.



Amber Ferguson

Thursday we didn't have much to do so we decided to rehearse outside again. While practicing "Getting Into You," a police car pulled up to our trailer and van parked out front. Our host mom walked out there and had a lovely conversation with him. After we finished the song, she told us that the officer thought we had a very beautiful sound, but we were being a noise disturbance and asked us to move it inside. Not only did we get the police called on her, but we also broke her swing. It's amazing what you can do on team.

Okay, so we can do some pretty crazy things. But, the ministry that we do and the people we affect is worth almost getting arrested. It's a lot of fun.

Date: 1/27/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

Hey, this is Robert again! Today we came from Payson, Arizona into Phoenix area. We had a very good time in Payson at the Mountain Cross Lutheran Church. They housed us already when we were on our way from New Mexico to Phoenix earlier this year. This time we stayed for two nights, and we already knew some kids from the last Youth Quake in Phoenix, so it was much fun! I stayed with the Rombergers. Alex is a dentist and offered us free teeth cleaning. Amber, Bri and I went to his office and Alex checked and cleaned our teeth. Unfortunately he found that Bri and I had cavities. So we had to go there again today to get it fixed. Okay, I don't think it's that nice to talk about a cavity in a journal, but what really touched me is that Alex did even that for free. We didn't have to pay anything. I am really overwhelmed by this generosity and I think that belongs to the encounters I won't forget.



Robert Fillinger

At this time of the year not too much is happening. Although we have a downtime at the moment, we keep ourselves busy. Besides all the time we need for our jobs to be done, we rehearse and spend some one on one time with our team mates. And still God has remained faithful. He provides people, homes and food and all the other things we need. We are very thankful.

Date: 2/1/2005

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

Hey again everybody! Today we're on our way to Las Vegas, NV. It's pretty exciting because this is yet another place I've never been. Let's see... what's happened since

our last journal entry?

Well, Sunday morning we had two national worship services and a Sunday school program. It was so awesome to be at that church because they had a lot of youth and adults at the Youth Quake last weekend, so we knew the faces and got to hear more feedback about the Quake. It was so cool to hear what they thought. See, that's one of the difficult things about this ministry. We travel so much, it could be almost everyday that we're in a new place, and it's tough sometimes to see if we're really making a difference because we don't see where people take the message that we give them. So that's why it was so cool to hear that the kids that went were still talking about how awesome and moving the experience of the Quake was for them. They're even doing a service next Sunday with this year's theme, "Calm the Storm"-- how cool is that?



Brianna Traquair

Sunday evening we went to another church and played a song for offering at their Sunday evening worship service, and then played at a youth worship service afterwards. I had a lot of fun at the evening service. It was cool to just be able to sit and worship and not have to worry about leading the service. We only played one song for it, so the rest of the time we could just sit back and just get into the music and worship. Another reason that this was so much fun for me is because the worship band was actually a bunch of youth from the church! That's so awesome to me because I love to see younger people getting involved with the worship. They were so awesome, and you could just tell that their hearts were totally set on fire for God. It's such an encouragement for me to see that with high school kids. I loved it! Afterwards we just sat with some kids and had a casual worship service. That was great.

Oh! And I know Robert mentioned this in his journal before, but I wanted to share my view and experience on it as well. You see, a few days ago, one of our host dads volunteered to clean our teeth for free. (He was a dentist. Not just some guy.) I was overwhelmed by his generosity. Well, in the process of cleaning my teeth, he found a cavity! I couldn't believe it. You see, I'm one of those people that brushes my teeth all the time. I mean, three times a day, brush, floss, and mouthwash. The works. But here I was, in the dentist chair, being told that I had a cavity and would have to come back the next day to have my tooth drilled and get a filling.

When I really thought about this cavity (now this is going to be corny, but follow this, okay?), I thought of how you can totally compare this to sin. (Keep reading! I promise this isn't lame.) See, I basically thought that I was immune to cavities because I brushed and flossed and rinsed and drank my milk and all that jazz. But, I still got a cavity. We can be that way with sin, too. Sometimes we can get comfortable. We read the Bible, pray, worship, and stay on the right path all the time. So we think to ourselves that it isn't possible to submit to sin because we've taken such good care to avoid it. But sometimes it can sneak up on us, just like my cavity. We let our guard down because we think it could never happen. But, we should always be aware that sin can get us when we least expect it. We are never immune to sin because we are human and we will always fall short of the glory of God. But the coolest thing that we should always remember is that God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to earth to die for our sins so that we could have God's mercy and love and forgiveness. Being aware of our sins and asking for forgiveness brings us closer to God because He wants to be a part of every aspect of our lives. Okay... my illustration is kind of lame... but it's still pretty awesome, don't you think?

Love, peace and chicken grease,

Bri

Date: 2/8/2005

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:

Today we stayed at a mission school/church in Rockpoint, AZ. We got to hang out with some sweet kids on an Indian reservation and play a chapel and program for their school. We also met a dentist who was taking time away from his practice to come and do work for the community of the mission church we were staying at. It was encouraging to see a man and his family who were doing a service similar to the



Steve Seybold

situation that we are in on team. His practice is in Kansas, and he annually gives up this time to God and serves these people who would not have the opportunity to receive this medical work otherwise. Our team stayed in apartment-like buildings on the school's campus. I really got to enjoy the environment that was unknown to me in the area of poverty and seclusion from the world. Seeing that God's arm reaches out here is a beautiful thing.

Steve

Date: 2/10/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

I am glad we are finally out of the vehicle. We were in Rock Point, AZ and traveled today to Albuquerque, NM. It was about a six-hour drive, and what a beautiful drive it was. There were red rocks and snow-covered mountains. God has really made some amazing places for us to live. Rock Point was a great experience. Rock Point is located on the Navajo reservation. While there, we did a chapel for the school students, and then later that night, we did a Family Night Program. People walked from a couple miles around to hear the message that we had to share. After the program, there was an appreciation dinner for a dentist that had come for a week to do free dental work for the town. This was the third year in a row that he had come. This is a great reminder to me that no matter what your vocation is, you can use it to praise God. We each have been blessed with gifts that we can use in our everyday living, including our jobs. *Together, you are the body of Christ. Each one of you is part of his body. First, God chose some people to be apostles and prophets and teachers for the church. But he also chose some to work miracles or heal the sick or help others or be leaders or speak different kinds of languages (1 Corinthians 12: 27- 28).* Each of us has one or more of these spiritual gifts that we can use in our jobs, school, family or daily life. I encourage you to be like the doctor and search out ways that you can use your gifts to praise God.



Christy Schmahl

We are now in Albuquerque, and we will be doing a program at a detention center. It has been a while since we have visited a detention center. They are some of my highlights. We are able bring the message to kids who really need to hear about God's love and forgiveness. Well, I'd better go. I hope that each of you see God in a new way in the next few days.

Christy Schmahl

Date: 2/12/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

"When a mom believes in God, I mean, really does believe in God, church and all that stuff, is it okay for her to get drunk at night and beat her children?"



Robert Fillinger

That was one of the questions I got when we were at the Detention Center in Albuquerque, NM. We've been there on Friday, and we just had a great time. Right now about 57 kids live there; eight of them are murderers. After our one hour program in the gym, we had supper with some of kids. One girl at the table I sat at asked me this question, and so we got about a conversation about how we all, although Christian, are still sinners and daily depend on the forgiveness of God. It was great. I really enjoy this place, although, at the same time, it was depressing. Usually they are not allowed to talk during meal times and they are treated like "dirt." This is what the girls told me. And there are many kids that don't want to change, but those who want have a hard time to do so and feel unable because of how they are treated. Yet to me it was so powerful to sing songs about God and his amazing love and to talk about him at dinner. The last sentence before the good-byes of one of the girls was, "I miss going to church."

We wanted to stay longer, and almost did. The trailer was parked on the sports ground, and we just wanted to pull out of the grounds when Steve and I decided to not go in between the fence and a pole but just go right of the pole. Well, we got stuck in the sand. Since it was raining all day long, we

even sank into the sand. It took us about an hour to get out of there. With the help of boards, snow chains and unhooking the trailer, we finally made it. That was an adventure itself, but it was really funny. We all laughed about it.

On Saturday we spent sometime at a strip mall. Steve and I had lunch at Taco Bell. We had a good lunch. After the meal we went out of the restaurant, stopped at the door, and Steve said "I'm full!" very loudly and I replied, "Eh, I am a pirate." (I hope you know the Taco Bell commercial.)

God's peace to you!

Date: 2/15/2005

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

Well, today is Tuesday, and I just want to tell you that I had a great time yesterday on my day off. Christy and I stayed at a host home together, and we had a great time. We met the other girls on our team for lunch, and then we went and hung out at some stores. Just kinda a girls' day out. It was a lot of fun. Our host parents were so sweet. In fact, our host dad bought us strawberries and chocolate dip for Valentine's Day. Our host mom made this awesome dinner. It was such a fun night. I am constantly reminded of God's love. People take in total strangers and treat them like their own children. People give us their beds or their guest beds or the floor. The point is they give us whatever they have to give. Through these people, God is providing for us. I should tell you about today. Today, we are heading to Durango, and I am excited. It should be a really fun drive. We get to drive through some mountains. I love seeing the snow on the mountains. It is so pretty.

Well, that's all I have for now. Remember, God's love is everywhere.



Amanda Bradley

Date: 2/25/2005

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:

Today we are at Joannie from Captive Free South Central's home church in Lodi, California. We are doing a program tonight and services Sunday morning. Lodi is such a close community. It's interesting to see how tight everyone is with everyone. Did you know that there is a cereal factory in Lodi? Now you do! Drew and I are at Joannie's house. Today we did one-on-ones at the church, and we all got to walk around downtownish Lodi. California is a beautiful place, and after spending a lot of time in the reds and grays of Arizona, Utah, and Nevada, it's refreshing to see green grass and trees—that really reminds me of home. All is going great on team for us; people are giving so much, and recently we have had quite a few partners. It's mondo encouraging to see people give so much in their lives and monetarily. Sometimes the love of God that comes through these people is mind boggling.

Steve



Steve Seybold

Date: 2/26/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

Today I am reminded again how nice people have been to us this year. Yesterday we left Fallon, NV and headed for Lodi. We were not supposed to arrive in Lodi until today, but we had no place to stay. We called them up about three days ago, and they were willing to host us an extra night without any complaints. When we arrived, they welcomed us like we were their own children. In fact, one of the church members at Emmanuel Lutheran, Joannie Bryan, is on team this year. She is traveling with the



South Central team. Her mom was one of the hosts. It's always nice to have connection with one of the teamer's parents or with alumni. They seem to know what you are going through and are there to help give encouragement.

Christy Schmahl

When we arrived at the church this morning, there were a few youth that came just to help bring in sound equipment. They were a big help. I don't think at their age I would have volunteered one of my Saturday mornings (those were meant for sleeping in) to help carry sound equipment. After setting up the sound equipment, we had a chance to enjoy the beautiful day that God had blessed us with. I took a walk and noticed how everything here was so green. It was a little weird to see green grass instead of snow on the ground this time of the year. I forgot that green was a color used to decorated God's land. Lately, all we have been seeing is brown, gray and white. I'm thankful for the variety of colors and shapes God had used to create an amazing earth for us to live on. May God bless each of you this week, and may you find joy in those blessings.

Christy Schmahl

Date: 3/1/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

Hi! It's me, Robert! How are you guys doing? I am doing good. We are in Salinas, CA right now, and it's sunny. It's really exciting to back in California. After many weeks in Arizona, Utah, and Nevada where we saw a lot of desert land, we are back in green hills with flowers and trees.



Robert Fillinger

We had a busy but great Sunday. Our first service started at 8:30. After that we had Sunday School, then hanging out with high schoolers, and then the second service at 11. The second service ran late, so we headed out later and arrived in Salinas later than we were supposed too. But everything worked out fine. The team did a great job in tearing down, traveling and setting up again. The Family Night in Salinas was a great time. Some of the youth we already knew from the Youth Quake in Concord, CA.

Today we have a day off, and guess what we do? Yes, that's right. Nothing. We're just hanging out. Steve is playing video games, Drew is watching TV, and I am writing e-mails and journals. Later this day the girls will come over, and we'll have Chinese food for dinner at our house.

Although it's our day off today, I have to do some booking calls. It's really interesting to me that I enjoy my job as the Schedule Coordinator for my team so much. Before I came on team I hardly did call people because I was afraid of it. But now I call people almost every day. I do not know them, and yet we have pretty nice conversations. I do like it a lot. It's just amazing how much I've learned so far being on the road. If you still have the opportunity to take a year off and come on team: strongly recommended!!

God's peace to you!

Date: 3/3/2005

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

Hey guys. So, we have had so much fun. Yesterday we had two chapels and a Lent service. I totally love chapels. I love spending time with little kids or big kids or high schoolers. I love kids and being at schools. That's why I love chapels because I love spending time with kids. The coolest part is that both of the schools were schools we had been to before, so we knew the students and they knew us. We were at St. Peter's in the morning for chapel and Cathedral of Light that afternoon for chapel. Then we went to Our Savior Lutheran for our first Lent service. It was a lot of fun to do our first Lent service. I was kinda nervous, but it went well.



Amanda Bradley

So, today is really cool we traveled to Berkley to have a Family Night Program. It is especially exciting because our contact at the church is a former teamer who was at our first Quake, so we already know her. It is really cool to see so many familiar faces mixed in with the new faces. While we were at the church in Berkley, we met some homeless youth. The church we were at runs a homeless shelter for people 18-25 and for their kids. It was a really awesome program. We met some of the people before our Family Night. There was even one guy who came in to watch our program a few times. It was neat to talk to him and see his perspective on life and faith. God is so awesome. He has given me the chance to come and be on team. I have met so many amazing people. I continue to be amazed and surprised by this year.

Date: 3/13/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

Today is my father's birthday, and I was feeling kind of down because I couldn't be with him. But I was blessed with many things to cheer me up. One blessing that happened when we were in Sunday school was my host sister got so excited because we sang her favorite song. After Sunday school I went to the sales table and was helping people when I noticed someone I knew. It was my friend Mollie, who I worked at camp with the past four years. She just moved to the L.A. area from South Dakota. It was great to catch up with her. Those two hours of talking with her made me feel like I was back home. After worship today we then went to Orange, CA. Yes, Orange is in Orange County. We participated in a youth worship they had there; I felt that God was moving in the people that were gathered there tonight. After the worship service, Bri and I got to meet our host family. They are amazingly nice and friendly. They showed us their horses and lit a fire in their fireplace for us. God has truly blessed me today. Even though I could not be home for my dad's birthday, I was blessed with people who were full of joy and love and were willing to share that with me today. Well, I'd better go. I hope this week treats you well and that you find little blessings from God that pick up your spirits.



Christy Schmahl

Happy Birthday, Dad!! I hope your day was full of blessings like mine.

Date: 3/17/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

"The happiest place on earth....." – Disneyland! On Thursday we stayed at a church in Anaheim. They have been very generous to us anyway, but they also took the whole team to Disneyland. Some of the church members work there, and so they could get us in there for free. It has been a very fun day. The weather was good and the mood was right. We did many rides and just had a very precious time to hang out together.



Robert Fillinger

Well, Easter Break is coming up. I think I'm going to miss my team. It is weird to me since I am an introvert and need some space from time to time. But by now I have learned that it is so nice to be around people, and I almost don't want to let them go.

Amber and I are going to stay in L.A. area. We'll stay at a couple's house who visited Germany with their church choir and my family hosted them. Since we're going to stay in such a big and famous city, Amber and I have lots plans to do sight seeing.

Lately I've been thinking about God's grace. It just amazes me how unconditional His love is for us. We fail and sin and yet He is there saying "I love you". Amazing....

Date: 3/19/2005

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

Wow, this is such a cool journal to write. Tomorrow we are flying home for Easter Break. A few of my teammates are staying in Los Angeles over their break. I really hope they enjoy it. The past couple of days have been awesome. We have stayed with some really loving and caring people. I am really excited about going home and seeing friends and family. It should be so much fun! I know I am going to miss my team, though. They have become my second family. They are my home away from home. It is amazing how much six people that you have lived with for seven months can mean to you. I love this year. It is so amazing to meet so many people on a daily basis and also to have your team to come back to every day. God is so awesome and amazing. He sent his son to die on a cross and then rise again. Wow! It amazes me every time I think about it. He sacrificed his ONLY son for all of US. I hope everyone has a great Easter.



Amanda Bradley

Date: 4/5/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

Yesterday we arrived at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Las Vegas. I had gotten to know a few of the youth when they came to the Phoenix Construction Zone. It was great to see them again. Last night, I had a host home to myself, and it was kind of nice. As soon as I got there, my host brother and sister introduced me to Dance Dance Revolution. What a great time and workout. After dancing, we then headed to an awesome mini-golf /arcade place. On the very first hole, I got a hole-in-one. My golfing skills went downhill from there, but that doesn't matter; I had a lot of fun. While we were mini-golfing, one of my host brothers, Ryan, got a call from his girlfriend. He was really down and out when talking to her. His other brother told me that Ryan's girlfriend of two years was moving the next day to Iceland with her family. After talking with his girlfriend, we had a time of prayer for them, right there on the golf course. It just goes to show that you can pray anywhere. After mini-golfing, we went to the arcade and then In-And-Out. I will miss In-And-Out.



Christy Schmahl

Today we had a time of solitude and prayer. I had a chance to go outside during this time and enjoy the beautiful day that God blessed us with. I miss having time every day to sit and listen to God speak to me. The program went really well tonight. I think we really connected with some of the people that came tonight. Hope you guys have a great week and remember that you can pray anywhere.

Christy Schmahl

Date: 4/9/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

Viva Las Vegas! Hey guys, yesterday we arrived at the hotel that we are having our Quake in. We are pretty excited because we are doing this Quake with Swen and Dean again! And it is also exciting because there are a couple of churches that we've been to before and that we are going to next week. Well, we set up in the afternoon and before the Quake started, we had a little downtime. Then it started: the kids, about 140, are just awesome. They dance around and pay attention. It impressed me that they were so calm and respectful during campfire. Overall I think that God is doing amazing things during this weekend!



Robert Fillinger

As you can see, we're having a blast! And we're doing well anyway. Me personally I am doing well too. This weekend I really enjoy talking to Jo from the Youth Encounter office. She is at the Quake and is responsible for the Resource table here. Jo is from New Zealand and we had really good talks about culture stuff. Since we are both foreigners it was interesting to exchange thoughts about America but also to learn about each others' backgrounds.

What I really came to appreciate in the States is the room you have here. I mean, you have big

houses, broad roads, big TV-sets, water everywhere, big cars and everything is so convenient. I also learned that Americans are generous people and very giving.

Well, there are about four months left for me in the States and I am looking forward to experience even more of your country. Thanks for having me as your guest.

Date: 4/12/2005

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

Right now we are in Las Vegas. There are some really great people in Vegas. Christy and I are staying with an awesome family. This particular family has one daughter who is four. I love staying with them. It is like going back to my childhood. We have played dress up, My Little Pony, Barbies, princesses, and we even watched Charlotte's Web. I love it. I played with toys that I haven't seen in ages. I love kids, and it is so great for me when I get to spend time with them. I am so happy that I got to spend time with this family. I wonder if God looks at us like that, as little kids that he loves and loves to spend time playing with. That makes me happy. I love playing with kids. It brings me joy to see the smiles on their faces. I am sure that God has joy when we smile, too. God is so awesome.



Amanda Bradley

Date: 4/28/2005

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:

Hey again...this is Amanda. So let me clue you in as to what has been going on. Well, we were hanging out in the Denver area for a little while. We met these awesome youth and had a blast hanging out with them. In fact, we needed some help with our program because one of my teammates was sick. This awesome guy named Matt offered to sit in for my teammate. He practiced with us and totally rocked out with us that night at our program. It was awesome! Unfortunately, we had to leave. So then we went to Lutheran High School in Denver. We all stayed with Denise. She is awesome. In fact she is so awesome that we are her second team she has hosted this year. She hosted Kindred, another Youth Encounter team, earlier this year. It was so neat to look at the fridge and see pictures of our friends. We got to talk to her about Kindred and how they spent Thanksgiving at her house. It was awesome to meet someone who knows people that we know. Hope everyone is having a great day. Talk to you again soon.



Amanda Bradley

Date: 5/5/2005

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:

So we are here at Rainbow Trail, which is a camp in the middle of Colorado. We are here for almost a week, which will be a good thing for us so we can rehearse with me playing drums and Rob playing guitar. Christy might get a job here for after her year on team. This is a beautiful place--full of excitement and peace waiting to be enjoyed. Now that we finished our Quake season, we are really starting to focus on the upcoming VBS season. It's full of unknowns and wildly fun kids that we will really get to know even better than we have so far. I think it's probably because we'll get to stay in one place for a week—that's something we haven't gotten to do yet. Well, I'd better go rehearse those drum parts. Bye!



Steve Seybold

Date: 5/6/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

Happy birthday, Drew!!

Hello everyone, I hope that your week has been as refreshing as mine. Since Tuesday we have been at Camp Rainbow Trail in Hillside, CO. Today we are heading to Steamboat Springs, CO. I have enjoyed my time here and will miss the solitude that came with it. Each day we have had free time, and I have enjoyed hiking and seeing God's amazing creation. The staff here has really been a blessing, and I wish them the best of luck for this coming summer.



Christy Schmahl

Happy birthday, Drew!!

The drive to Steamboat Springs, CO was nice. Steamboat is where we spent our Thanksgiving break. It was nice to return and see how the town has changed now that it is a new season. When we were there in November, there was lots of snow and skiing was just starting to pick up. Now there is no snow and there is green everywhere. It's pretty in both seasons. When arriving at the church today, we received our mail packet. In the mail packet were puppets and information about Vacation Bible School. It's only a few weeks away, and I am getting very excited about working with children again. Well, I better go and get some work done. But before I go I wanted to let you know that today is our teammate's birthday. Happy birthday, Drew!!

God's Blessings,
Christy Schmahl

Date: 5/17/2005

Submitted by: Amanda Bradley

Journal Entry:



Amanda Bradley

On Sunday night we did a Family Night Program in Loveland. It was so much fun. We had dinner with some of the church members, then we played Ultimate Frisbee. That is a fun game! Oh, and there were these really cool dancers who danced twice during the Family Night Program. They are liturgical dancers. It was really awesome to see them share God's love with their dance.

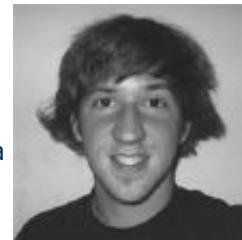
So yesterday was our day off. I had so much fun! We watched Disney movies and Veggie Tales. I love movies! We stayed with this really cool family in Loveland. Both of the kids were involved in scouting, so we shared scouting memories. We also talked about camp experiences. I really enjoyed it.

Today we got to hang out with some high school students. We sang songs, and Bri shared a story from her life. We even got to go hang out in some Bible study classes. It was a really nice school.

Date: 5/19/2005

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:



Steve Seybold

Hey guys, and hey Captive Free, too--I'm back from my sister's graduation, which was a great time. Right now we are in Aurora, CO, just south of the Denver area. Tomorrow we are staying at my aunt's house, I'm really excited about seeing her again, but in the meantime we get to go back to a hospice that we visited earlier in the year. I suppose it should be frustrating to be playing at places like nursing homes but the joy, however brief that it may be, that we bring to the people at these places is so encouraging and uplifting for us. Anyways, always rocking good times on the road bringing love and fellowship to the world. See ya soon.

Date: 5/21/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! Hope that your week has treated you well. Yesterday we left Steve's aunt's house. We stayed with them earlier in the year. It was good to be back with them. This morning we watched Veggie Tales as part of our Devotion time. Veggie Tales puts God's message in a great way for all ages to understand. Today we also started practicing VBS music. I am getting excited to work with younger youth. After practicing we went to Bethel Lutheran Church in Aurora, CO. We had been at their church about two weeks, so it was good to see familiar faces. When we got there, they were having a car wash. Our van got a much needed wash. The money they collected from the car wash is going towards their trip to Florida this summer. They are going there to help rebuild after the hurricanes from last year. It's been many months since the hurricane, and I'm happy that people are still willing to go down and help those in need. I wish them best of luck. Well, I better get going, have a great day.

Christy Schmahl



Christy Schmahl

Date: 5/24/2005

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:



Brianna Traquair

Hey everybody! I hope you're all doing well. Let's see, what's been going on with Captive Free South West lately? Today we arrived in Cheyenne, WY, and met up with Captive Free North Central. It was so great to get to hang out with another team for a while. Nick from North Central taught us this game called "Striker"—a crazy game played on a pool table with the cue ball and the eight ball. It's so much fun—I wish I could explain it, but I can't. Just know that it was fun.

I'm SO excited because tomorrow we're going to my hometown, Bowman, ND! I haven't been home since Easter, and I can't wait to tell my congregation what I've been experiencing on the road. They've been so supportive of me being on Captive Free—it's awesome that I get to give something back to them now.

Thinking of home and hanging out with my church has really made me think of how blessed I am to have such a wonderful community in Bowman. I have a family that loves me, friends that are there for me no matter what, and people that don't know anything about me except that I'm doing this ministry and support me in it. Amazing, isn't it? I so appreciate everything they've done for me. Thanks, Bowman!

Well, I had better get going. God bless you all!

Date: 5/24/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:



Robert Fillinger

"When something is familiar, that's as close to home we can get this year." This is what Bri once said. On Sunday morning we've been back to Bethel Lutheran Church in Aurora, Colorado. Three weeks earlier we did a worship service there and on this Sunday again. It was nice to see familiar faces and to hang out with the congregation. This church-family has been so generous to us! They helped us out with new van tires and provided for our needs list. That is so amazing and we are so thankful!

After that we made our way to Ault, Colorado, which is a little north of Denver. There we performed an acoustic family night program. It was a great evening! This church as well welcomed us dearly. We had a good dinner before the program and also we found another guy, Stan, who helped us out with new van tires as well. So we are all good to go now and safe.

On Monday we had big tour to Denver. We had to drop Amanda off at Steve's aunt's house because she left on Tuesday for Florida to celebrate her brother's graduation. On the way to Denver, though, we picked up some stuff that some of my team mates left at places. So that was a nice thing to do.

Unfortunately I felt sick that day. My stomach was upset, I was weak and really tired. But today I feel a little better.

Tuesday we went to Cheyenne, Wyoming. There we stayed with Reimans'. Valerie Reiman is on Captive Free North Central this year. It was great to meet her parents. But it was also a lot of fun to see CF North Central this night! They made their way from Iowa to Wyoming to be with Valerie's parents and to be with us. We had good times hanging out with them. Soon we'll see each other again at Vacation Bible School Training. Awesome!

Date: 5/26/2005

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:

We drove to Bowman yesterday; we left pretty early and drove for like, eight hours. We met Bri's mom and brother; they were really nice. We set up and met the church secretary, Sharon. The concert went well--we missed Amanda, though. Bri's church family was such a loving and caring community. They were so giving and great to talk to. Kristopher, Bri's brother, did a dramatic piece for us and it was really good, he really draws you in.

We are going on our Memorial Day break this weekend. Bri, Steve, and I are going to visit some more of Bri's family; I'm really looking forward to it. Well, I should get going now; TTFN.



Amber Ferguson

Date: 6/7/2005

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:

We are at our first VBS of the season, and we are having a blast hanging with all the kids, doing crafts, playing games, and singing songs. We had a week of training after break with some of the teams. It was great to see the other teams and to hear how well they're doing. The camp we stayed at was very nice and so welcoming; it was also very pretty. We are in Wheat Ridge, CO; we went to this church before and had a blast, so we're excited to stay here for a week. Road Ramblers is the VBS we're doing; we start the trip in Washington D.C. and end up in Knots Berry Farm in California at the end of the week. Well, I should get going TTFN.



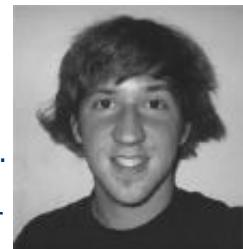
Amber Ferguson

Date: 6/11/2005

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:

So we are on to our second VBS of the year at Our Savior Lutheran in Albuquerque, NM. Rob and I are together and our host family is a couple who moved here from South Dakota. They have been extremely friendly and interested in what we are all about ever seen we have arrived here. We went to dinner last night at a local New Mexican restaurant and got to talking each other and learning about what we are involved in, how the church is and everything from friends to fish. It was a great evening, and I can only hope that it is a sample of the week we will have here and the great times and awesome kids we will get to hang out with. All right guys, keep praying and have fun serving the Lord wherever you are out there.



Steve Seybold

Date: 6/14/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

Hi everyone! New Mexico has us back! The weather here is gorgeous!! Today it is

supposed to get like 95°! Yippie. I enjoy this climate so much. Our second VBS has begun, and it is a lot of fun! The kids are warming up and every day they dare to do the actions to the songs a little more!

We have been very warmly welcomed at Our Saviour Lutheran Church here in Albuquerque. The people are just great, and they help us out a lot. I am excited about what we're going to experience here throughout the week.

Last week we found out that I am not allowed to drive our van for a while. Since Youth Encounter switched insurance companies and they are not able to get my driving records from Germany, I have to get them and that might take a while because of the long distance shipping. Until we get the records, our team has only two drivers. I really hope it'll work out.

We miss Drew a lot. It's not only hard for us musically but also not having him around as a friend is tough. Please pray for Drew that he might get well soon and for us as a team who struggle with him not being among us.

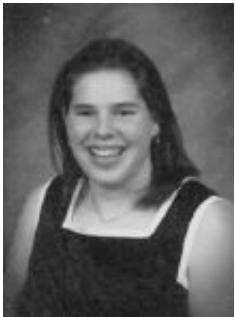


Robert Fillinger

Date: 6/16/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:



Christy Schmahl

VBS!! Yes!! This is what I was born to do. The past two weeks have been amazing. There is something about little people that cheers me up. This week I got the chance to work with Amanda leading games. One of my highlights for the week was introducing a new game to the third and fourth grade, and they loved it. We usually had supper at the beginning of the night and then there was a break before opening music. Last night I was eating when one of the other teachers camp up to me and said that the kids had already started playing the game I taught them, and no one was out there leading them. It made me happy that I found a game that they like and can go share with their friends. Now my only hope is that we taught them some new exciting things about God this week that they would also share with their friends. Well, I better go, hope you all have a great week and remember, life is about playing and having fun for the Lord. So go PLAY!!

Christy Schmahl

Date: 6/23/2005

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:



Amber Ferguson

At the VBS this week I got to help with the crafts. The crafts were really enjoyable, the kids had a blast making everything, and it was all put together so well. Christy helped with the games and Robert, Steve, and Bri helped with some of the classes. Amanda led the preschool class, and she really had fun. Steve, Robert, Christy and I went over to a house for dinner one night and had some awesome homemade Mexican food. We went swimming afterwards and played Marco Polo, had a blast. Amanda didn't come because she went to see the movie Herbie with her host sister. Bri left Tuesday night to go home for a few days, so we had to do the concert without her. The concert was fun; we mostly did sing-a-longs so the kids could show their parents what they had been learning. Well, I'm going to go, so TTFN.

Date: 6/25/2005

Submitted by: Steve Seybold

Journal Entry:

So after a grueling ten hour drive to Dana Point, CA, we finally made it and are here! Gloria Dei Lutheran is the church that we are at here, and it is only five minutes away

from the ocean. The rolling hills and water are sooooooo beautiful, I can hardly believe it. Rob and I are together once again and are once again staying with a couple with a beautiful home and a killer view. Just when we think we have it all, God blesses us with more and more. He also gives us opportunities to spread his love and play music too! Captive Free is a lot of fun, and I am very fortunate to be able to have experienced it. Tomorrow we are kicking off the week with our playing in the Sunday morning service. I'm pumped for this week--have a good one!



Steve Seybold

Date: 6/28/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:



Christy Schmahl

We arrived in Dana Point Saturday June 25--what a beautiful place. On Sunday we got to do the children's sermon and hand out Madagascar masks. The theme this week at VBS is Prayer Safari, and the animals from the movie Madagascar go with the theme. After church we had an all church picnic at a park nearby. That was a lot of fun. We played games with the youth and then everybody played softball. Robert, who is from Germany, knew nothing about the game of baseball until he came over ten months ago. He has learned a little. He joined us on Sunday and did pretty well, except for one time. Robert hit the ball and Steve caught it, which means that Robert should have been out, but he didn't know about that rule. Not knowing that, he stayed on first base and continued playing. Later when he ran into home, he was actually out, but we felt sorry for him and didn't tell him. We all learned a lesson there--that the only person who you can trust to lead you along in the game of life is God. Others who have been living the game of life for many years may think they know how to play, but they don't. The only one who really knows how to play the game of life is God. The best way to find out about the rules is from the Bible. What a fun time.

Yesterday VBS went well. I really liked the theme this week. It was easy to take games that I knew and convert them to games that deal with being in the jungle. After VBS we went to Newport beach and met up with Kindred. I had the chance of going up to the pier and watch fish being caught. It reminded me of my childhood. Every Sunday my father and I would head to the lake and go fishing. After moving away from home, I no longer had a chance to go fishing. To me fishing was my special time with my father. Each of us should find an activity to do that can bring us closer to our family members.

Today was another great day. After VBS I went with Bri and my host family to the beach. My host mother showed me how to boogie board. It looked a little dangerous to me, but I learned that to have fun you need to try new things. So I hopped on the boogie board and gave it a try. I had an amazing time. In fact, for the next two hours I remained in the water. Well, I better get going, lots of things to do and people to see. God's blessings this week.

Christy Schmahl

Date: 6/30/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:



Robert Fillinger

Unbelievable that there are only five weeks left of Vacation Bible School. In six weeks I'll be home. Thinking back of this year, I come to realize how long it actually was. Throughout the year it never felt like a long time since we were so busy and kind of restless. But now during VBS, we have a little more time to reflect. For our family and friends back home, it must have been a longer year than for us. At least this is how I feel.

It was a great year. We saw many people, many places and did so many things. I am thankful for this opportunity.

Looking ahead is a little weird. I am looking forward to come back to Germany and to see my family

and friends that I haven't seen for a year and with whom it was not always easy to communicate over the distance. And yet I am already sad. Who knows when I will be able to come back to the States and visit my new friends? I enjoyed and I am still enjoying my time here. Speaking English was fun, travelling was great and the people I lived and worked with became so precious to me. I thank Jesus for this great blessing.

Oh, well. We are in Dana Point, CA for VBS. Only one day left. It has been a good week. The kids are amazing and it was just fun to play some music and to hang out with them. The servanthood of this church also impresses me. They really took good care of us. Talking to some of the church members I was impressed how often the conversation came back to Jesus, prayer and Bible verses. I enjoyed that a lot.

Date: 7/7/2005

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:

This week we have had a great time with the July fourth concert, and we have had a great time with the kids playing the music. At the beginning of the week, we found out we needed two new tires. But when we went to get it taken care of, we found out that we needed four new tires instead of two, and the church was so generous--they covered a whole new set. This week we only had three days of VBS. It went really fast. Steve's and Robert's host brother Will played drums for us all week long. Thursday night we had a little program where they showed a video of the things we did. It was really neat. Tomorrow is my host sister's eighteenth birthday and she is having a party. I am looking forward to that. Happy birthday, Hannah! Well, I'm going to go, so TTFN.



Amber Ferguson

Date: 7/14/2005

Submitted by: Robert Fillinger

Journal Entry:

Hey everybody! The weather here in Santa Clarita is just gorgeous! Today it was about 105° but dry. That is so cool.

Yesterday night we hung out at a pool with the youth group of the church. It was fun. We also played volleyball and basketball.



Robert Fillinger

Today we had one of these strange days. When I got up in the morning and just out of the shower, my host mom Andrea came to me and said that we should leave earlier today because of a break-in at church. We found out that both of Steve's guitars were stolen and also some stuff from the sales table. Also the robber took a computer from the church and a couple of boom-boxes out of the classrooms. They took a fire-extinguisher and sprayed it all over the kitchen. It was crazy. Steve reacted pretty cool to his loss, and one of the first things he said was, "I forgive them." The church members pulled their sleeves up and began cleaning. It was neat to see how helpful everyone was and how this incident pulled them together. Somebody was so nice to lend us a guitar so that we could play. VBS started and it was lots of fun! The kids are so cool and there are a lot of them!! About 250 was the count today! After VBS all helpers came together to pray about what just had happened that night. The pastor reminded us to love our enemy and pray for those who persecute us.

In the afternoon Steve went shopping for a new guitar. Since the church is insured, it's not such a big deal.

Later today we went out for dinner to the Universal Studios City Walk. That was pretty neat and we had a good time.

Although this day was kind of crazy, I feel peace inside and I am thankful to know God is there.

Date: 7/14/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone, how are you doing? I am doing well. We arrived in Santa Clarita, CA on Saturday night after going to Magic Mountain Six Flags. Our host families were so welcoming. Sunday was a fun day--after church we went to a nursing home and sang for the residents there. It has been a while since we have been to a nursing home; it's one of my favorite spots to see God work in new ways. After that we went to the boys' host family and had a BBQ with all the host families. We played tennis and had good conversation. Our first day of VBS went really well. There were about 300 youth that showed up. I have never been to a VBS with that many kids, and they all had fun. It was pretty hot this week, but we got a chance to play water games with the kids.



Christy Schmahl

Today was a fun day as well. After VBS the girls and my host sister Paige went to get a pedicure. That was an experience for me. It was a nice bonding experience for all of us. Tonight all of us and our host families got together and went bowling. As I was picking out the ball I heard my name. I looked up and there was Crystal, who was a friend that I had while in college. Her husband was there as well. It was an amazing thing to see them. They had just moved to the area on Sunday and I had just got to town on Saturday, and for some reason we both ended up going to the same bowling alley on the same night at the same time. That was truly a God thing. We were able to catch up on what was happening. They moved there because her husband was going to be going to seminary. I have had a great week, and I look forward to see God in new ways later this week.

Christy Schmahl

Date: 7/21/2005

Submitted by: Amber Ferguson

Journal Entry:

We are at VBS from 8:45--noon. Some of us are doing the puppets while Christy leads games and Steve, Bri, and I lead music for the class times. It is so fun! I've learned to play a lot more bass since VBS started. I enjoy watching the kids dancing and having fun with the songs. I can't believe after this VBS we only have two left; does time fly when you're having fun! Amanda and I went and walked around the Stanford campus with our host parents; it was really pretty, and all the artwork they have is really intriguing. We also met up with Kindred for a little get-together and worship time that was cool, too. Thursday night we have a VBS ice cream social. It's nice to see the parents of the kids that we got to know over the week. Well, I got to go. TTFN



Amber Ferguson

Date: 7/23/2005

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

Hey all! I am writing to you from Saratoga, CA. We are celebrating Circus Spectacular here at VBS this week. The decorations of the church are really impressive--it's like we're in a circus! The volunteers for this church did a really nice job of putting this program together.



Brianna Traquair

So this week is interesting. We went from having about 300 kids last week to having about 30 this week. Some would say that it's easy to get discouraged. I mean, after all, it's a huge difference in numbers. But you know what's really cool? That 30 kids need to hear about Jesus just as much as 300 kids do. It has been a great week so far with the kids. They're a lot of fun.

This week we also had the opportunity to meet up with Kindred--another Youth Encounter team. It

was great. We had the opportunity to do communion with them, and some worship songs, too. Then we just sat around and shared some experiences on the road thus far.

I'm getting pretty excited because I'm doing team again next year! I'm not sure if it's international or national, but it's still pretty exciting because I love this ministry. Well, wherever God takes me, I guess! But anyway, I had better get going! God bless you all!

Date: 7/26/2005

Submitted by: Christy Schmahl

Journal Entry:

Wow! This is my very last journal of the year. It's crazy to think that we have traveled over 30,000 miles, to 150 different towns, and visited people from all over in only one year. This has been a great year. I have been able to experience God in many new ways. One of the best ways is through the people I have met. They have been loving and compassionate to our ministry and opening up their lives to us. Thank you to all the host families I have had this year--you have meant so much to me. I have also seen God in all the amazing creations that God made, like the Grand Canyons, Utah Arches, Hanging Lake, and the ocean. God's face has appeared to me in new ways this year through all those we visited in homeless shelters, nursing homes, and detention centers. I would not trade this year of my life with anyone. My team has shown me God in amazing ways. They have shown me grace and love beyond understanding. I feel blessed to have had a chance to travel with them and learn what an amazing creation they are. I hope that throughout your life, you can see God in some radical new ways. Thank you for all the prayers and support that you have had for our team this year. May God bless each of you and know that you are an amazing new creation in his eyes.

Christy Schmahl



Christy Schmahl

Date: 8/4/2005

Submitted by: Brianna Traquair

Journal Entry:

As our year comes to an end, I often find myself answering the question, "So, how have you changed this year?" Good question, eh? I mean, I look in the mirror, and not much has changed. My hair's a little longer (and a different color), my face is thinner and a bit more tan, and I have chip in one of my front teeth from hitting myself in the mouth with a microphone. But, if I look inside my brain, I think that's the area that would show the most change. I just graduated high school a year ago, and I can't believe how different I am. I have learned that for every time I've gotten the question, "You haven't been to college yet?" there are some things that you just can't learn from a text book. And I'd like to share with you some of those things.

I have learned that for every time I missed my family, there had been a host family that made me feel like I was home.

I have learned that for every time I had to get up early, I've had a host family that's gotten up even earlier to cook me breakfast.

I have learned that for every time I've had to sleep on the floor, I've had just as many families give up their only bed for me to have a good night's rest.

I have learned that for every time I've had to answer the question, "Does North Dakota have computers?" I have had the opportunity to share with people a place that I love.

I have learned that for every time I've complained about having yet another peanut butter and jelly sandwich for lunch, there has been somebody on a street corner begging for food.

I have learned that for every time at VBS that I wanted to scream from singing, "I Just Wanna Be a Sheep" over and over again, there were kids at that VBS who had never been to church and will want to go to church because they loved that song.

I have learned that for every time I have had an argument with one of my teammates, there have been twice as many times when I have thanked God for their presence on my team.



Brianna Traquair

I have learned that every time I've had to go a few weeks without doing laundry, I should have been thankful that I had clothes to wash.

I have learned that for every time we spent twelve hours in the van, I should have been thankful that there was a place that wanted us.

I have learned that for every tragedy that I've endured this year, I've experienced ten times as many blessings because God is amazing, wonderful, powerful, and loving.

I didn't ask to learn all of these things. I wasn't begging for God to schedule 4:30 a.m. drives, or to put peanut butter and jelly in my host family's pantry just so that I could learn some sort of lesson. But I am so glad that He's taught me these lessons, and I can't wait to see what He has in store for next year.

I pray that God blesses you all! This is our last journal entry of the year. Thank you for being so faithful in reading them, and thank you for your prayers! God bless!
