

# Captive Free East Lakes 2005-06 Journal

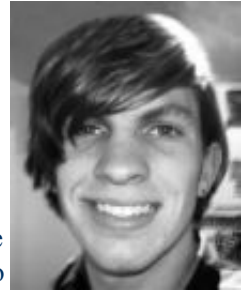
**Date:** 9/20/2005

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

Wow, we have been on the road for a couple days now. On Saturday, after we were commissioned, we kicked off our tour by stopping at Taco Bell. We headed to a small town in Wisconsin called Spooner, a city with a population of 2000. God had been blessing us with amazing travel and people. Right now we are in Illinois at Jon Glenn's house hanging out with his family. Tonight we head to Wauconda, IL and play a family night gig tomorrow. Take luck, you guys, and we hope to see ya on the road!

Dan



**Dan Dean**

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**Date:** 9/23/2005

**Submitted by:** Brianne Smith

**Journal Entry:**

We went to this awesome church in Wauconda, IL on Tuesday and Wednesday. It was huge. We had almost 150 teens there at our Family Night Program. They have the coolest loft for the middle school youth group with about 40 bean bag chairs in it. The kids were a bit crazy. The only time they settled down was when Dan and Jon were giving their sharings; the rest of the time, they were off jumping around or talking with each other. **A word to the wise, don't let churches turn on their sound systems while yours is on...bad things will happen.** It was awesome, though, for our first Family Night Program. The youth leader there was one of the coolest people I've ever met.

We are now at Zion Lutheran Church in Bristol, Indiana. We went to an Amish museum this afternoon; it was so cool to be able to see how they all started and how they live. Mika and Jonathan had never seen an Amish person before. We all stopped at this little Amish bakery on the way to the museum, and the guy that was working there wanted to know where we were from and what we were doing, so we told him about Youth Encounter and Captive Free and what not. He told us that if we sang for him he would give us free donuts and pumpkin pie, so we did, and we got free donuts and pumpkin pie. How cool is it that we got to sing for our food! We should get shirts that say "Will sing for donuts."

Ok ya'll, take luck!



**Brianne Smith**

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**Date:** 9/27/2005

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hey everyone,

In Bristol, MI we went to the East Lakes Retirement Home, singing and mingling with the folks. They were very interested in our ministry and told many great stories about themselves. It was fascinating knowing more about them and also sharing with them. After the retirement home, we headed to Gowen, MI, where we met up with Tiffany Schmader. There we had a Family Night Program in a 130-year-old church and visited with the congregation. On Sunday, we led the worship service and Sunday School. Finally, we headed to Sparta, MI, which is only 45 minutes away from Gowen. We had a Family/Youth night in the gym at Peace Lutheran. We played games and mingled with the parents and kids. Now we are getting ready to head back to Gowen, MI. Have an awesome day, and may God bless you.



**Melika Mindemann**

**Date:** 9/29/2005

**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen

**Journal Entry:**

Hi everybody.

I really miss y'all, but I'm getting used to "only" having my teammates around. Having Tiffany around was a real blessing to our team, and I was very happy having a person around who wasn't on the team but still knew what it was like.

But anyway, we made it to Gowen. It was amazing for me. I stepped in and the first thing I saw was Danish flags on the tables and a lady coming up to me and greeting me in Danish. Being the Dane on the team isn't always an easy thing. But this place we arrived to was a Danish settlement. It was amazing. We had a program in the night, and saying "I am from Denmark" and listening to the cheering after that was amazing. Our program went pretty good and we had a lot of fun, which I am beginning to realize is one of the most important things.

Dan and I went to the most amazing host home that night. Kim, Ken and Kody were amazing. We met people who had gone through struggles like no-one else and had come through it with their feet solid on the rock. It was amazing to talk to those people.

Sunday morning we had one service and Sunday school. It was good worship time and fun hanging out with kids.

We drove to Sparta in the afternoon. When we arrived to Sparta, we had a youth night with a lot of games and worship. Those kids were crazy. It was so fun. We played Q-tip war with straws. Oh wow. They had a youth director named Lisa. She was awesome, we had fun time hanging out with her.

Monday, our day off, I think not. We met at 12 o'clock and had sessions with Tiffany "DARTH" Schmader all afternoon. But we had fun, and Lisa came in all the time to hang out with us.

Tuesday morning Brie got a fish. Which she named Meijer after the store Jenn and Sara bought it from. It is now living in a water bottle funny funny.

Thank you so much for listening. Stay tuned next time for another journal journey with Jonathan

1. Cor. 13: 4-7



**Jonathan Nielsen**

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**Date:** 9/30/2005

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

Oh, the places you'll go....

We'll start in Gowen, MI, which we revisited for Tues-Thurs. Tuesday night we got the privilege of watching the Greenville Yellow Jackets, Kody's football team, who came back to a stunning victory against their opponent (shout out to Kody for some amazing plays). East Lakes were the most vocal in the stands (imagine that!) and had a blast rooting for the Jackets.

Wednesday, after a grueling day of working on puppets and sing-alongs driven by your resident task master (yeah, that's me), we headed over to Turk Lake Methodist for their kids' club. Games, sing-alongs, puppets galore, let me tell you. We had great fun with the kids there, and they even shared their ice cream and watermelon with us. Oh yeah, you betcha! Now, we left on Thursday, for Adrian. I don't know how many of you out there in cyberspace are familiar with the program "Streets and Trips," but that's our map/direction finding program. Apparently in Michigan, a highway can refer to a dirt road. Oh, don't get me wrong, it was quite a lovely tree-lined dirt road brought to



**Jenn Albert**

us courtesy of Streets and Trips, and we really had a rousing good time anticipating the next "highway" (two tire tracks through a forest glade?). Once we found our way to a four-lane highway, there was much rejoicing and happiness through the van.

For some, the van trips offer a fair amount of stress with directions and getting to locations on time and all. I rather enjoy the time, though. As a navigator, I've had some fantastic conversations with the drivers. As a member of the backseaters, I've had many the good laugh amongst my comrades of the back seat. And we all know I thoroughly enjoy a good laugh (well, if you didn't, you do now).

Upon arriving at our host home in Adrian, Sara and I were blessed with some excellent pot roast and...that's right...a backyard pond full of fish. The pond out there was swarming with catfish. "So what?" you say. Well, after dinner, Vernon (our host dad) went out to "feed the fish." Sara and I, being curious and all, followed along soon afterwards. Much to our surprise, we found a surge of activity coming from the pond. The fish were massive catfish which were swarming, swimming over one another in their frenzy for the food. It was spectacular. Sara and I kept urging the fish to come closer, get the food near the shore....

Team life is a constant learning experience. Learning about yourself. Learning about your teammates. Learning about the church, your host homes, music, technology, vehicles, and the list goes on and on (I'm proud to say I can add catfish to that list).

Alright kids, time to settle down, class, we're going to talk about this weekend's lesson. This weekend, I'm jetting away on a train to Chicago for my friend's wedding. It's been a constant source of frustration as I try to schedule the train, arrange pick up, coordinate the weekend program while I'm gone. Meet up with friends, learn a song to play and such things...

Never fear, the lesson is coming. Ben, my "date," once asked me why I stress so much over all of this... and he's right. It's all small stuff, and God's got a handle on life. "My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do." So, let's stop sweating the small stuff, focus more attention on things like...world hunger and reaching all the nations... it's all good!

Yay God!

Jenn

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**Date:** 10/2/2005

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

Hello Friends!

The adventure continues! Remember the fish that Brie was given? Well, sadly, in a rush to get to our host homes in Adrian, Michigan, our fish friend was left in the van. And, of course, it was the first cold night of the season. When we returned to the van the next morning, he was not in the best conditon. In fact, as the day went on, we began to accept that he had moved on to fishie heaven. We named him Meijer after the store where he was purchased and held a lovely funeral service for him. This service can be found on video on Sara's camera. We hope to upload it in the near future so that you can be a part of the fond farewell to Meijer. Or, if you should so choose, you can e mail us at [eastlakes@youthencounter.org](mailto:eastlakes@youthencounter.org) and request a copy.



**Sara Jo Berge**

But, never fear, dear friends, the water bottle is no longer empty. We made a quick trip to Walmart and found a new fish friend. He has 3 legal names: Jimmy Carlton (thanks to the youth at St. John's in Adrian), Jehosaphat and Yeshua. They're all beautiful names for a beautiful fish.

From Adrian, we journeyed to Imlay City, Michigan. We had a great time playing games with the youth there and praising God together through worship. We had some small (possible understatement) computer problems, but God provided great people to help us out. We have been truly blessed in our shor time on the road. We'll be sure to keep you posted on all the happenings on CFEL. God bless you all, and take luck!

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**Date:** 10/6/2005  
**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn  
**Journal Entry:**



**Jon Glenn**

"Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." -Isaiah 55:3,6

On Sunday we left St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Imlay City and set off on our journey to Trinity Lutheran Church in Utica, MI. The trip was going to take us about an hour, which was great, and what made it even better was that it was all state highways for the most part and I was in the navigator's seat. The trip was simple and straightforward--nothing really to worry about at all, or at least I thought. As we headed south on M-53, I saw the exit for M-59, and so I directed Sara, who was driving, to take it. As she pulled onto M-59, we came into the heart of what looked like a pretty busy town. Sara asked what the next direction was, and I said that Utica should be coming up.

It was at that time that I looked out my passenger side window and saw this large church sitting along the road; when I saw it, the first thought that jumped into my mind was that it would be really cool if our team was able to do something at that church. As we drove on, we eventually got out of the busy town and continued west until I began to see signs for M-150. It was at that point that I began to suspect that something was wrong. I looked at Sara and said, "I think we passed Utica." Her response was quick and to the point, "What do you mean we passed it; I thought you said it was right on M-59." It was at that point that it all came crashing down on me...the busy little town right on M-59 was Utica and the church that I had looked at and hoped to go to was Trinity Lutheran Church.

On team and, I think, in life in general, it is so easy to get caught up in the places where we are going instead of the places we are at. I know for me personally it is sometimes hard to live in the moment. Just like on our journey to Utica, I was so anxious to get to Utica that I missed the city and the church altogether. In the above verses from Isaiah, God lets us know what's up. Instead of trying to get ahead and getting caught up in the stress of trying to get to a place, we are supposed to be caught up by God and his ways. We are called on not to seek the next place we need to be; rather, we are called to seek God.

I will admit though that this is a hard balance to maintain. How do you seek after God without getting caught up in your search? I think Isaiah has a word to us for that as well. God isn't asking you to make this search yourself. God is simply asking us to incline our ear and come. The bad news is that we will all have our times of getting caught up in either our pursuit of God or our pursuit of other things and completely miss the relationship with God (or in my case the church) that we are really hoping for. The good news, though, is that our God is a God who untangles us from those things in our lives that we get so tangled up in. He frees us from those things, and his mercy allows us to come at his beckoning which does not cease.

As you move through your own personal journeys, I pray that the God whose ways are higher than our ways will strengthen you and slow you down in order that you might incline your ear, come to God, and know the full power of God's steadfast love and affection,

Peace,

-jon

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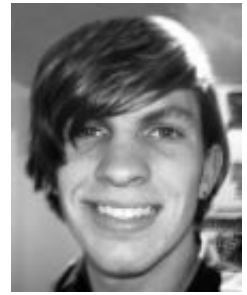
**Date:** 10/7/2005  
**Submitted by:** Dan Dean  
**Journal Entry:**

In Utica we stayed at a youth center at Trinity Lutheran with a past teamer, Patty J, who was our contact. She was on team with the very famous Jeff Rowdon (our

Recruitment Director). Yay Rowdon, she told us great stories of him.

We stayed here from Sunday night until Wednesday afternoon, in which all four days I did not take a shower. This wasn't my fault--the shower there didn't work at all and we had to wake up before 7 a.m to take a shower at the church/school across the street!

So, Sunday night a couple of us stayed up at the playground by the church until about 1 in the morning. Around that time, some cops pulled up and asked what we were doing. He was cautious because we were on private property; the playground belonged to the church. We told him about Youth Encounter and what we were doing as Captive Free, that we were with the church. He thought it was really cool, and it was really awesome to witness to a couple policemen about team. They were really respectful of us and left.



**Dan Dean**

Jonathan and I continued to stay up and talk in the park until 4 in the morning, because we knew the next day, Monday, was our day off. Oh, and what a day off it was. I started off by sleeping in until a whopping 2:30 in the afternoon, which I've never done before in my life and especially thought I would never do on team. I hung out with Jonathan all day, we walked a mile to the library for Internet, then another mile and a half on the highway to the movie theatre. The girls all took the van, so we got to walk which was awesome. We watched "The Exorcism of Emily Rose" which is a brilliant reminder that demons are in this world among us; a very freaky movie, but I would highly recommend it.

We played at Trinity Lutheran the next night; it was their confirmation class time, so we filled in a confirmation session with a Family Night Program kinda mixed around. It went really well, it was fun, and we all enjoyed the kids, about 50 middle school kids.

There have been big gaps in our schedule, but God has just been providing miraculously. It may be last minute, but this strengthens our flexibility trait as a team, and we know that we will have a place to go and be housed. Even if we end up playing a last minute gig, we're so thankful to play. That's what we're here for. To celebrate God together through music and to hang out with you.

We went to a church called Immanuel Lutheran in Mt. Pleasant Wednesday night. Now this church sounded familiar and looked familiar when we showed up. As soon as I walked into the sanctuary, I knew it. Spoke Folk played here in summer '04! I went on Spoke Folk in Michigan in the summer of '04, and we played at this very church, and it was really exciting to see. I enjoyed and loved it so much. Now, to further my excitement, we are in Saginaw, which is the home church city I went to for training on Spoke Folk. It's a Spoke Folk reunion.

Word is going around and, yes, the Niagara Falls Quake is rapidly coming. We are very excited for this and would be more excited if we could see you there! One of THE coolest Quakes of the year, and we can't wait. God bless everyone, have a great week, and take luck! -Dan

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**Date:** 10/12/2005

**Submitted by:** Brianne Smith

**Journal Entry:**

Hey all! We've been pretty busy. We arrived on Saturday at St. Luke's, Heather from Gulf Coast's home church. It was great! We did a worship service on Saturday, and then on Sunday morning we did two worship services with an electric setup (that was interesting). We also got to play Bible baseball with the seventh graders.



**Brianne Smith**

On Monday, a bunch of us went guitar shopping. Jonathan got a new acoustic. It's so nice!! We don't need a direct box, it's the best ever, and it sounds nice.

Grand Rapids was great! Everyone there made us feel at home. We have a 10-foot long metal puppet curtain rod now thanks to Heather's folks. Also very exciting. Heather's brother Josh was on team a couple years ago, so we got to hear some pretty cool stories about past teamers and staff members. Good times.

Well, take luck y'all!!

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**Date:** 10/13/2005  
**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann  
**Journal Entry:**



**Melika Mindemann**

Hey everyone,

We had an awesome last week in Saginaw, MI. We had two performances, and they were held at Peace Lutheran School and Church. It was awesome to change the routine around and have a program (assembly) at the school. We were reaching out to kids from K-8th grade. That was sweet action, dude! That was nice being in a school surrounding again because I miss it. Later that Friday night, around 10 P.M., we had a youth night at the coffee house in their church. The whole floor was dedicated to the youth and young adults. I have never seen that before. The kids made that floor their own by putting pictures up and decorating it, too. I love the advertisements of Christian groups and speakers. I tried my first Caramel Cappaccino. Tasty. Our host family for all of us was Keith and Kathy Minda. They were so generous and helpful showing us around the town and opening their lives to us. After that, we headed to Grand Rapids, which Brie mentioned in her previous journal.

After Grand Rapids, we met up with Dan Dean's friend Jess from Spoke Folk. She also did team last year on North Central (04-05). That is also nice to find out team stories from other teamers. Her family and her opened up their house to us. That was so nice of them to do so. Sara and I stayed at our host home together, and that was very cool. The Manning family (Patrick and Kris) were very generous and kind for opening their lives and house to us. Their kids, Logan and Rilee, were so excited to see us, and they read their night time story to us. They had bunches of energy. I really enjoyed hanging out with the Manning family. Big day ahead of us and good night. May God bless you all, and take luck.

In Christ, Mika

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**Date:** 10/14/2005  
**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen  
**Journal Entry:**



**Jonathan Nielsen**

Hi everybody.

Okay here I am again. I know you have all been waiting for my next journal entry. So here it comes.

Team life is beginning to get to me, and it strikes me that you really have to fight to keep focus on Christ all the time. It's only via prayer that I can keep focus. Satan is constantly trying to get us away from our ministry, and it makes team life so much harder. My prayer goes to everyone who is on team, that you may be filled with God's Holy Spirit and that he may set his guarding angels around you to protect you.

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

The last couple of days we have been staying at Jessica Makowske's (North Central last year) house. It has been very fun. Jessica is an awesome person, and we have really enjoyed our stay there. Tuesday night we went out in the backyard to the lake and Dan and I saw a paddleboat and we went out on a ride a little later. As soon as we got out, it seemed like the boat started leaking. So Dan and I started freaking out and turned around to park the boat. I went up to tie the boat, but all of a sudden I was standing with the handle in my hand. So what do we do then? We try and park it in the paddleboat parking lot. The only problem was that we realized that we were pretty close to the shore, so we just kept on getting stuck in the sand, but it was so fun.

Wednesday we had four chapels, but although we had four chapels and had to get up at 6 in the

morning, it was an awesome day. We had so much fun doing those. The kids got so much into it was very fun, so instead of becoming a day where we had to do four chapels, it became a day where we had fun with kids. Also Jessica was doing our devotion that day, so we went to the mall and dressed up like each other. Dan was dressing up like Brie, so we went to the first Aeropostale we saw and wow, that was fun. Dan became a pretty boy.

For dinner we ate at a Chinese restaurant, so that was also pretty cool getting some good food there--thank you Jess for everything the couple of days we stayed with you.

Next day, Thursday, we didn't really have anything, but we left for Warren, MI, another suburb of Detroit. We arrived at the church and found ourselves at home from the beginning. Our contact had gone to Valpo University together with her husband, so of course Jon Glenn was very happy, and when we heard that the husband also had been on team, it just became very cool. We stayed at different host homes almost everybody that night, and it was actually nice to stay at a place alone. I got the girl room at my host home and it was truly amazing.

Thank y'all for listening to another great journal from the Great Dane. I know that you have all been waiting for this journal to come to you. Stay tuned for the next journal entry from the guy from the great kingdom of Denmark.

God's peace,

Jonathan

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**Date:** 10/15/2005

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

Talk about a jam-packed weekend; it's been nearly non-stop since Friday morning. In Warren, we began with a chapel service at the Lutheran school there. Shout out to Peace Lutheran School for all their great energy to start out our weekend.

So in Warren, there's this movie theater where the first show of the day costs a whopping 50 cents. That's right. We couldn't pass that offer up, so for a break in the day, we went to the movies. Much needed, and yes, Fantastic Four, cheesetastic, a great movie to watch when you need a break from brain work and want to throw up all over yourself from sappy dialogue.

Anyhoo...to other things.

We went to Hope in Farmington Hills for our very first lock-in. The fabulous part of this lock-in...after finishing our Family Night Program, we went to a fun park. You know what that means? Oh yeah, laser tag and go-carts! Good times just hanging out with kids and each other, gaining a whoopee cushion to add to our random van ceiling collection (we have all kinds of fun papers and schtuff tacked to the ceiling in our van. It makes it more like a home).

Sat...that's right, we finally made it to Ohio.

Hey guys, what's tall in the middle and round on both ends? That's right, Ohio!

Ohio brought St. Peter's in Norwalk...and...a worship service followed by a lock-in, followed by two worship services in the morning (but Sara can talk more about Sunday). By the time we finished set up for the lock-in and talking with Pastor Bogen about using the sanctuary's sound system, we were a bit pressed for time for the 5:30 Sat night service. Things went pretty well, though; we had a wonderful salad, meatloaf, and pie dinner (mmm...pie and cobbler, shout out to Rebecca for that dessert, wow). On to the lock-in...the kids came, played games, rocked out,



**Jenn Albert**

studied the Bible; it was good times. I know we're here to love on kids, but a lot of times the kids love on us just as much if not more. I think that's the only thing that really keeps me going some times. I mean, God is great all the time, but the tangible support given by some of these kids just rocks my socks off. And I suppose that's how it should be in the community of believers. We all work to support and uplift one another because of the love that God has shown us. Isn't that awesome? God is so good!

-jenn.

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**Date:** 10/18/2005

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

Hello from Ohio! We are currently in our home away from home--Van #62 with Trailer #47 attached! I am writing this to you as we travel from Bowling Green, OH to Northwood, OH. Good times! We sure did have an eventful weekend. Lock-ins and church services and a Sunday school opening! Wow. On Sunday we drove from Norwalk to Bowling Green, where we set up our equipment and prepared for a 2 ½ hour long Youth Night! We played games, sang some songs, talked about Captive Free, and just had a great time worshiping together. It was a ton of fun and great to just hang out with an awesome group of youth. Rock on!

Yay for days off! After such a busy weekend, we were ready for some quality rest. St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Bowling Green was gracious enough to let us hang out in the Youth Room for our day off. We relaxed and watched movies. Later on in the day, most of us went out for supper at Panera Bread. It was the first Panera experience for three of us. It was so good! I think that may become a regular stop for our team...that and coffee shops. Speaking of coffee shops, we relaxed at a great one after supper and just enjoyed each other's company. What a great way to wrap up a relaxing day.

So, that brings us to today. We've spent some time working, rehearsing and loading up. It's been busy, but after our relaxing day, we're ready for the week ahead. May God bless and keep you all. Take luck!



**Sara Jo Berge**

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**Date:** 10/22/2005

**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn

**Journal Entry:**

"You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. You have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes." Song of Solomon 4:7, 9b

Our team tries to do devotions together five times a week. Although we each have our own personal devotional time, being able to do devotions together is a way that we connect with each other and discuss the things that God has laid on our hearts. But because there are only seven of us, doing devotions five days a week puts a strain on us, and so we are always thankful when one of our contacts is willing to lead us in devotions, a contact like Pastor Paul Reichert. We have been at Calvary Lutheran Church in Northwood for the past two days, and yesterday Pastor Reichert led devotions for us. His text was the story of the sheep and the goats, which is found in the book of Matthew. He talked about how for a Jewish audience listening to this story, the ending would have sounded out of place, because the sheep, who are often dumb and will walk off cliffs in order to find more food, inherit the kingdom of God over the goats, who are, by far, more intelligent animals and better able to defend themselves in the wild.

It was as we were discussing this parable that he asked what the difference was between our interactions with congregations when we first started our tour and the present time. As I thought about the question, the faces of the many people that we have been blessed to meet flooded into my mind, and the more people that I saw the more I realized how much less I knew about the people that I had just met over the people that I had met early on in our tour. The farther along we



**Jon Glenn**

have gotten on this tour, the more faces have blended together, the more facts have been associated with unrelated people, and the more times we all have had to ask, "What state are we in again?" The more faces that we see, the less distinction each person has, and the worst part about it all is that there is nothing that we can do to change it. Our fragile human minds can only take and recognize so many things, before they are lost.

The irony of this situation is that one of the songs we sing for our programs is called "Sea of Faces" by a band named Kutless. The chorus of the song goes, "I am not just a man/vastly lost in this world/lost in a sea of faces." The whole point of the song is that, to God, we are not just another person; each one of us is special and each one of us is worth dying for. This message really comes through during the bridge of the song: "If only my one heart/was all you would gain/from all it cost/Well, I know you would have still been a man/with reason to willingly offer your life." God loves each one of us so deeply, so deeply, in fact, that just as the song says, he would have given up his life even if he would have only saved one person. I have been reading Song of Solomon lately, and it was as I was reading this love song that I came across the verse above. It moved my heart when I thought of how God says these words to us. Each one of us has captivated God's heart because we are his creation, and there is nothing that we can do to stop it.

As we travel along and as we meet more and more people, I continue to be amazed at the way that God is captivated by every single person in every single city that we come to. I am in awe of the fact that God knows each one of us so intimately and can keep each one of us in order even when my human brain is unable to. And I am shocked at the outrageous love of a God who continues to search and to know me even though I have so often turned away.

May you know how captivating you are in God's sight, and may you feel the love of the one who laid everything down only for you.

Peace,  
-jon

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**Date:** 10/25/2005

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

Ok before we start here I absolutely have to say I LOVE Spaghetti-o's. Oh wow, haven't had these things in yeeaaars. Sara and I are chowing down some right now as we type!

Before the weekend started, East Lakes visited one of five Great Lakes we plan to visit this year. In West Lake, OH, we visited the great Erie Lake. It was a cold windy day that day, but we all went down to the beach. Many a rock and many a great sight as we look off to the east and see Cleveland City. Our entire team at the lake said they would either touch one part of their body into each lake we visit (mainly feet) or fully submerge themselves in each lake. In this first case, I was the only one to fully submerge myself into Lake Erie. Taking my swim suit and driving down in the van to the lake, I was excited. It was very cold and the water was freezing, but totally worth it; many teammates took this as a photo opportunity. I'm sure pictures will be up.

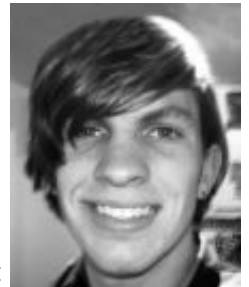
One down, four to go. This weekend was definitely amazing. We stayed in West Lake until Saturday and headed to Galiean for an amazing Saturday night gig. The kids Jon and I stayed with were amazing, like the exact replica house of "Little House on the Prairie," house was all heated by stove fire and everything.

Now we are in Brea staying overnight, had a great day off of looking at books and are heading to Pittsburgh, PA staying with staff members! Today is a visit with Paige (international team training staff) and then Tiffany Schmader (our director!). This is going to be fan-freaking-tastic. Super excited. Take luck and care. Put some goodness in you!

love!

Dan!

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**Dan Dean**

**Date:** 10/26/2005  
**Submitted by:** Brianne Smith  
**Journal Entry:**

Hey there!

On Sunday morning we did a worship service at Peace Lutheran Church in Gallion, OH. The people there were awesome! After participating in Sunday School class, we hopped in the van and drove to Berea, OH. We went to Berea Children's Home, where we did a short program for some kids who had been placed in this home for 18 months because they had rough home-life situations. It was hard for us to leave the home because we didn't get to do any relational ministry with them. After the program, they left for dinner, and we headed off to the church next door to hang out with the confirmation class. Those kids were awesome! In the confirmation class they were learning the 10 commandments. And this week's commandment was to "not take the Lord's name in vain." So first we took *our* names and learned what our name's mean. Like for example Sara's name means "princess" and Dan's name means "the Lord is my judge," and we went all around the room learning what our names meant. Finally, we went into small groups and talked about what it meant to "take the Lord's name in vain," and we had really neat conversations with the kids. We all had such a great time; we get to go back there in April!

On Monday we all stayed at the same host home. We hung out with our host parents, Sue and Roger, and their grandson David. It was a lot of fun. We went to craft stores, book stores, and all sorts of fun places. Then Sue made us a feast; like a huge Thanksgiving feast!

Wow, I can't wait to come back here in April!

Take Luck!

Brie



**Brianne Smith**

**Date:** 10/28/2005  
**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann  
**Journal Entry:**

Dear Family and Friends,

We have made it to PA. We heard they already received snow! Yikes! I'm excited to see it but not to drive in it. Wednesday we made it to Indiana, PA. The church was wonderful at Zion. We put on a worship/Family Night Program. Fantastic time putting it on. We did both acoustic and full set-up. I enjoyed it a lot. The people were very involved with our songs and very open to us at their church. As we departed, Jenn and I went with our host, Heather. She is going into her doctrine for literature. Amazing! She is into many horror/scary movies. Talking with her, we found out we had a lot in common. She made us see different perspectives on being successful. That was cool to know. And the great thing about this town is that we are coming back in three weeks! I can't wait to get to know more people here! Take luck!

Mika.



**Melika Mindemann**

**Date:** 10/29/2005  
**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen  
**Journal Entry:**

Hi everybody,

I am writing to you in a time where we have reached the state of New York, which, by the way, is very pretty in the fall. We have been driving through the woods of Pennsylvania and it has been very nice. Thursday we arrived to Fryburg, Pennsylvania

where we were going to see our Team Director Tiffany Schmader's church. We came to the church and felt ready to hear some good stories from the Schmader-childhood. (oh yeah). Father Paulson took us out for dinner at the local country dinner place; it was very neat. Father Paulson is a very cool person, and Dan, Jon and I were staying at the parish house in the evening.

For me personally, the experience at this church were very special. It was the first time I really have had a chance to talk to a Catholic priest, and that experience was very cool. We got a very good impression with the church. The sanctuary was just gorgeous with all the different statues and the altar was very beautiful. It would be fair to say that the whole thing really got to me. On the wall all around in the church, there were images from the passion walk of Jesus, and Jon and I took a chance to walk that in the night; it was a very cool experience, too. Also Jon and I had a very cool conversation with Father Paulson who explained a lot from of the symbols in the Catholic Church, and that was very neat. In the morning we went to Mass, which was yet again a nice experience. Overall, the stay at the church was a really cool experience to me and the whole team.

After this time at the Schmader-church, we drove onto Ridgway where we had a lock-in in the evening. It was a very funny night where we talked some about how to serve, and we had a bunch of games and a family program, and made pizza. At the end we had some worship. It was overall a very funny experience to just hang out with kids, talk about different kinds of stuff, and have fun with them. Next morning we ate breakfast, at the church, the whole American thing that was cool.

Thank you for sticking your ears to the radio, and remember cucumber doesn't taste like potatoes!

Jonathan  
Matt. 13: 31-32



**Jonathan Nielsen**

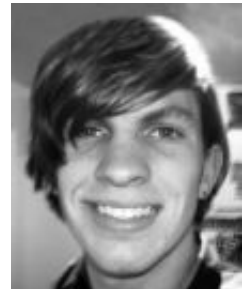
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**Date:** 11/1/2005  
**Submitted by:** Dan Dean  
**Journal Entry:**

Hello there, Dan here taking place of Jenn's entry this week. This weekend we are rocking our first Quake, and Jenn has a lot to plan for the Quake, which is part of her job on team. So I will take the liberty an anecdote to humor you in the meantime.

This weekend was a great one with much fun and many laughs. The fun even begins when we pull into the church parking lot in Angola, NY. We start to unload our trailer, I am handing luggage to Sara, and I turn and knock our spare tire out of the trailer. I figure it'll be fine, and I turn around and continue to haul stuff out. When I turn around once more, I see that the tire is rolling down and down the church driveway with outstretched arms Sara running close behind it. The FUNNIEST sort of running I've ever seen, a rolling tire followed by Sara chasing after.

On that note, I would like to say that Star Wars III is out today and that no Star Wars fan should wait until Christmas to buy it. Go for it now, get the special edition later. Have a great week, guys. Take care of your luck.  
-Dan



**Dan Dean**

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**Date:** 11/3/2005  
**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge  
**Journal Entry:**

Greetings from the Niagara Falls area! Our very first Quake starts tomorrow! Everyone is filled with a huge mix of emotions from excitement to anxiety and beyond. We had a day of Event Training to prepare us and had a great time with Jeff and Jon, who are our Event Directors for the weekend.

We've had quite a week leading up to this. We spent Sunday night and Monday night at Townline Lutheran Church in Alden, NY. We were set up with lots of great movies and a bowling alley right there in the church! That's right two lanes of manual resetting bowling fun. To celebrate Halloween, Brie, Dan and I went costume bowling. Dan went as a fairy cab driver, Brie was an angel and I was a beautiful butterfly! That night Mika threw us a beautiful Halloween surprise party complete with cards and snacks and books and all kinds of fun stuff!



**Sara Jo Berge**

Tuesday we were off to Messiah Lutheran Church in Greece, NY. We had a super fun Family Night Program there and had some great times with the wonderful people we met. We're looking forward to being back in that area in a couple of weeks.

From Greece, we drove to our current location, Cheektowaga, NY, which is about 20 minutes away from the Falls. We hung out with some of the youth on Wednesday night. Not only did we get to know some really cool people, we also got to play DDR (Dance Dance Revolution)!!!! It was a rockin' good time.

And that brings us to today. We set up for the Quake and got all filled up with crazy emotions. We had a fun evening out. Jon and Jeff took us to Applebee's for supper/dinner (whatever you call it) and then our new friend, Dwight, met us at the hotel and took us over to the Falls. They are incredibly beautiful. It's really fun to see them at night when they're all lit up. We'll get some pictures up soon so that you can all have a small glimpse of the wonder of God's creation. It's so amazing.

I hope and pray that you are all well. Always remember how much God loves you – He's always by your side! May He continue to bless you and watch over you. Take luck!

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**Date:** 11/8/2005

**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn

**Journal Entry:**

"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand hold me fast." --Psalm 139:7-10



**Jon Glenn**

This weekend our team performed at the first Junior High Quake of the year, held in Niagara Falls, NY. It was a great weekend, full of a lot of fun and a lot of learning for our entire team because some of us have never even been to an Event before. We got to meet around 200 youth and adults and share our gifts with them, and hear some phenomenal messages from Jen Jacobsen and be led in worship by Peder Eide, a musician from Minnesota. This was great because it freed up most of the team to just sit back and worship with everyone else.

For many of the youth who come to these Events, it is one of the few times in a year that they are able to experience the spirit and the power of God in a very real way and see hundreds of fellow Christian teens rejoicing in the greatness of our Almighty Father. A great example of this was on Saturday night during closing worship when every person gathered in the ballroom had their hands raised to God, and everyone was singing, "Abba I belong to you!" Even in my own faith journey, Events in high school were huge landmarks for me, and so it was great to be able to a part of an Event which allowed me to connect with God in the same real way that I did when I was back in high school. It was great to see so many youth recharged and wanting to dig deeper into their own faith journey when they got home, but at the same time it was sad to see the Event come to a close.

Before closing worship on Saturday night, I was sitting with a group of guys and I asked them what their favorite part of the weekend had been. They told me, but then one of

the guys sighed and said how sad he was that the weekend was over. Then another one chimed in and mentioned how disappointing it was that they were going to have to leave the next day. As I listened to them, the words that they were saying became familiar to me and I recognized them as my own. You see, although Events were my spiritual highs, when I left the Event, I eventually came down off of my high. My passion for the Lord, which I had asserted so mightily surrounded by hundreds of other youth, began to wane, and my growth began to slacken. As

I listened to those boys, I felt sorry for them because I knew that they were going to come off of their spiritual high sooner or later. Maybe in a week or maybe in a month, but it would happen.

For me and for those boys and for hundreds of other kids across the nation who will be going to Events this year, they will find themselves sitting on a mountain. They will know Christ in ways that they have never known him before, and it will be hard to leave the mountain, even though we know that we will. Somehow we will find our way down to the valley below. And the hard part about it is that we long for the mountain top because that is the place we have felt God the most. But the farther I get on my faith journey, the more I realize how much the mountain top cannot exist without the valley. But though we go up to the heavens or to the very pits of Sheol,

Christ is with us. Our God is a God who never leaves us, and when we have slid so far down the mountain that we are in the deepest part of the valley, Christ will be right beside us to begin leading us back up the mountain.

May God guide you along your journey, and may you see the presence of Christ whether you are on top of a mountain or down in a dark valley.

Peace

-jon

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**Date:** 11/10/2005

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

Hey and we're back!

Our day off right after the Quake was pretty amazing. We headed back to Angola and I went to Camp Pioneer with Jon and Jonathan, our "male bonding time". We went deep into the woods, found ropes courses and went even deeper, trying to look for a bear.

Though sad to say, we didn't find a bear, we found a huge branch caught, stuck dangling from a huge tree. So we spent a good half hour trying to knock down this huge branch and finally got it. We rocked the ropes course and visited Lake Erie as well. We wrestled the three of us on the beach and ripped my sweatshirt a bit.

This entire week has been amazing for me socially; I've had so many amazing conversations lately. With our host dad, he started a conversation with me, how much he appreciates our ministry and how much of an impact we have on the kids most of all. It's known now that we don't even have to do anything, just sit and be with the kids can be the most amazing thing ever to them. Also that same night I had a great conversation with Jon about male perspectives and ideas, ups and down of life and being on team. Next we have another teamer on another team that night talking for an hour about team life. The next day I talked to Brie about relationships in general. We've met some amazing people in the past couple weeks and we like to look back at our experiences and time with them.

Being social, one on one quality time, is one of my favorite past times ever. One of the reasons why I'm on team in the first place. To know new people and see God in others. Some people I've met



**Dan Dean**

really remind me of friends back at home and I really miss it.

But I really love the idea of social ministry. This has to be one of the greatest ways to serve other people. Even if it is just sitting and listening, it can make such an impact that can never be forgotten, and can change someone's perspective on anything completely.

So yay for God. Yay for people. Thank God for this amazing thing that he's done. People and conversation. Something that's so simple but can make the biggest effect on people. ever. Have an amazing weekend guys, we'll be rocking a synod here in PA.

Take Luck

God bless.

Dan.

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**Date:** 11/12/2005

**Submitted by:** Brianne Smith

**Journal Entry:**

So I was trying to buy a movie at Wal-mart on Thursday night, and the lady at the register carded me, and of course I didn't have my ID because I don't drive the van and I didn't bring my wallet with me. So Sara ended up getting it for me. I've never been carded before, first time, and it's for a movie at Wal-mart. Who would have thought?

Then this weekend came, and just when you thought we were done with events 'til Christmas...we're not! We had a synod event this weekend! It was very different than our Quake last weekend. The director of the event (Peggy) was dubbed by Jon "P Dawg", and everyone at the event (kids and adults alike) loved it, and P Dawg stuck. She was amazing! We had our reservations about the event, having just come off a Quake, where every minute of every day is planned out for Captive Free teams. Not as much of our time was assigned, so we were able to just hang back a bit and be a little more relational than we might otherwise have been able to if we had had more things planned out.

Sara and I missed our Event directors, Jeff and Jon, from the Quake, but it was good for us to know we can do it without them. And like I said before, P Dawg did an amazing job!

While we were setting up on Friday afternoon, Dan's folks showed up! We were trying to figure out where to put everything, and I look over and there's Mama Dean. Dan was in complete shock! He stood there with his mouth open for a couple minutes. It was really neat to meet his folks in person. Dan really enjoyed getting to spend time with his family after not having seen them for three months.

Overall it was an enjoyable weekend. The kids at the Allegheny Synod event rock my face off!! Have a great week guys, take luck!

Brie



**Brianne Smith**

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**Date:** 11/15/2005

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Dear World,

Another journal by me. Where do I start off? Mmm. Well, Sunday we finished our ELCA synod event in Altoona, PA. It went well; we sang songs for worship, and I led a song on keyboard with Jonathan and Jon for communion. Yay me! The weekend came to a close, and we said goodbye to p-dawg and headed to Irwin, PA to stay in home ministry with Jason and Tanya, but before we left, Jonathan got a boo-boo on



**Melika Mindemann**

his head! He hit his head really hard on the door frame while carrying equipment back to the trailer. He was lightheaded and dizzy, so we took him to the hospital. We chilled there for a couple of hours and finally went on our way when they said he was fine; we made it to our next pit stop and relaxed because the next day was our day off. We had a smooth day off; some went hiking and others went to Target. Sara, Jon and Jenn went hiking and Sara and Jenn ganged up on Jon to take him down, but then that was reversed onto Sara. Sara was cornered on a hill and fell onto it and proceeded to slide down the hill, even though she knew that it was a very muddy hill all underneath the leaves. So Jon called her "muddy butt," and when all of us saw her pants later, we called her that too and her new name stuck. Sorry Sara, you'll never live it down.

During that day I had fun playing with the host family's dog Shy; we also watched many movies like "Garden State" and "Edward Scissorhands" and "Fraggle Rock". Our team loves watching movies. Tuesday, today, is a new day for us because we were heading to Indiana, PA to see Mike and the people of the church again. We are all excited to come back. Take luck, you guys.

Mika.

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**Date:** 11/16/2005

**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen

**Journal Entry:**

Hey youn's guys

How are y'all doing? I am writing from Ridgeway, Pennsylvania. We have had a couple of days in Indiana, PA, where we did an acoustic Family Night Program, in which we included some new songs that was really cool, and the people there really liked it, so that was very nice. Dan, Jon and me stayed at the same host home, and we had fun.

There were two boys Brad and Shawn who really was into music, and one of their friends, Alex, came over in the evening. Basically the three guys jammed on guitar and drums for a long time, which was pretty cool. We really enjoyed listening to other people play instead of being the ones who played. The family also had a very nice hot tub, so we spend half an hour in that just relaxing Tuesday night. Wednesday before our program, we had one on ones, and Brie and I went for a walk downtown Indiana. We went to a Rite Aid to get some cough drops for Brie; at one of the stoplights, we were waiting to go over and Brie was looking to the right and started walking out on the street, and it was at this time I almost choked because I saw a car coming with full speed from the left, and I felt like there was nothing I could do. When the car almost was there, I shouted "Brie!!!" and grabbed her jacket, and luckily she didn't get hurt at all.

In the evening we had our Family Night Program, which, as mentioned, went well. The next day we had devoted to Jimmy Stewart, a famous American actor from "It's a Wonderful Life". It was interesting to see things about his life as an actor and a soldier who served in WW2.

After that we drove to Ridgeway, where we relaxed. And now we are off on a long ride to Rochester, NY.

That's all from here, see you soon.

The infamous Jonathan Nielsen



**Jonathan Nielsen**

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**Date:** 11/18/2005

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

After the craziness of two Event weekends, I was beginning to forget what the

craziness of other weekends looked like. Well, looks like it's as good a time as any to remind myself!

We began the weekend on Friday with a family night program in Rochester, New York at St. John's. Well, we got a bit confuzelled with driving directions, and, despite leaving PA a good hour before the projected drive time, we arrived at St. John's an hour later than expected. Yikes!



**Jenn Albert**

To understand my experience at St. John's, you all need to know two things about me. This past May, I graduated from Augustana College in Rock Island, IL. I am quite fond of Augustana, good ol' Augie, quite fond indeed, cheerio. But really, I learned a lot about myself, the people there, God, and my faith while at Augie, and there are definitely things that I miss about the crazy place. Aside from the gorgeous fall scenery on campus (sometimes I'm convinced they planted certain trees just knowing that they'd be amazing in the fall), I miss the people the most. There's no denying that there are some incredible people that I've encountered thus far, but when you live with some others for nearly four years, you become "quite fond" of them.

Cathy and I go all the way back to our freshman year small group. That's right, in the midst of all the confusion of freshman year, she was a part of the group that helped to ground me in God's word. Hey, guess what, Cathy is now going to grad school in the Rochester, New York area. Was I excited to be going to St. John's? Oh yeah, you betcha!

That was only one thing. Here's the second. The summers after my freshman and sophomore year at Augie, I worked at a camp in New Hampshire called Fireside. I am a fervent believer that every Christian should work at a camp in some capacity. It is such a growing, trying, exciting, draining experience (and so many more adjectives that I could go on and on and on...). Camp is a great place to find God, to find yourself, and how awesome is it to encourage kids to grow in God and themselves! It's amazing.

Alex was a counselor at Fireside my first year. He offered a great source of joy and laughter on days when I didn't want to deal with those amazing "whippersnappers" any longer. Did I mention that Alex goes to Houghton in southern New York? Alex also let me know that Rochester was not too far to travel to see me and to better understand what I'm doing this year. I hadn't seen him in over two years. Was I excited? Oh yeah, just a tad.

But Friday was a trial. Along with arriving late, Mika had contracted some kind of disease in which her insides decided to rebel and cast out things recently eaten (some might call this the flu, but I think she might want to go in for more extensive testing). Our sound board levels had been completely altered for the last event thing. There were things malfunctioning with the equipment. I slammed my hand into the elevator door. The lock-in that we had expected to follow the FNP was cancelled. Things just seemed to be working against us.

Have I ever mentioned that the kids at St. John's are pretty sweet? Oh, well, the kids at St. John's are pretty sweet. Oh, the adults, they're rockin' too. They were just so glad we were there. And things might have seemed off and rocky, but they just kept encouraging us. And Cathy showed up and gave me one of the most needed hugs I have ever received. And you know, God was there during it all too. I'm not going to say that the program went off without a hitch. We missed Mika, and the electric cord to the bass and left speaker was a bit temperamental, but it all went all right. And when Alex got in after Jon's sharing, it gave me a kind of boost of excited energy that I was much needing at that point. These are small miracles God grants us in order to help us along when we can't quite make it on our own. It's kind of interesting that our theme for this year is Stand on the Rock, because, for me, that's not

something I'm easily swayed to do. I mean, I'm not saying that God isn't trustworthy, but if I can do everything on my own and not trouble God with my insignificant little frustrations, isn't that more honorable? What? Do you see a flaw in that reasoning? Yeah, ultimately, I can't do everything on my own, and God isn't troubled by our little frustrations, but rather delights in us coming to Him with them. I'm not saying whining in prayer daily, but laying those things down, giving them up so that He can take care of them instead of us using up our energy sweating the small stuff.

I suppose that's the wisdom for now. Props to all the people I encountered in Rochester; God used you to humble and encourage me.

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**Date:** 11/22/2005

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." 1 Corinthians 12:27

Greetings to all of our friends and family!

It is once again time to update you on the comings and goings of Captive Free East Lakes. We have had an eventful weekend, though not filled with an actual Event. As Jenn wrote in the last journal, Mika was out sick. Well, when we got to the church on Saturday morning, Dan was also a little out of sorts. And when I say a little out of sorts, I mean a lot. So, Mika and Dan were both benched for our Family Night Program on Saturday evening at St. Nicodemus Lutheran Church in Marilla, NY. You may be thinking... "But wait – that leaves good ol' CFEL without a keyboardist AND a drummer! Whatever will they do?" Well, we pondered this for a little while and thought about the fact that our good friend Dan Dean had begun to teach me to play drums at training. Although that was quite awhile ago, we decided it was worth a try. And what do you know? It actually worked! Now, let it be known and proclaimed that I am not even close to our good friend Dan Dean, but it was a steady beat (for the most part). So, we ran through the program in the morning, tore down our system and loaded the van and trailer, all the while allowing Mika and Dan to continue resting.

After a wonderful lunch, we loaded into the van, deciding to let Dan and Mika spread out in the back seat. Now, just to give you an idea of what our van looked like, Mika and Dan were sprawled out in the back seat (which is the longest), Brie, Jonathan and I were in the smaller middle seat and Jon and Jenn were driving and navigating, respectively. It was an interesting ride, to say the least. Let's just say that it's not good to be ticklish and to have it known that I'm ticklish...

We arrived in Marilla, NY and set up--that was interesting since I hadn't really set up a drum kit before, but Dan was able to come and fix it for me! Once that was all said and done, we had a really yummy potluck dinner--only our second one on the road! The program went really well, all things considered. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it's true. I, Sara Berge, was able to be a drummer through an entire program! I only sang one song, which was odd for me. Props to Brie, Jon and Jenn who stepped up to cover the singing--if I didn't sing all those songs, I don't think I would have been able to pull off the words as well as you all did. Good work, team.

Sunday morning, Dan was back with us, but Mika was still out of commission. Worship and Sunday School were a lot of fun, and we had a great time with the kids there. Yay for fun games like People to People, Boppity Bop Bop Bop, and Dead Cow Live Cow.

One of the big highlights (or lowlights depending on who you are) of our time in Marilla was the fact that there was a good 5-6" covering of snow. Jonathan made a snow angel, and there was definitely some snowball throwing happening. Good times.

From Marilla, we drove to Jamestown, NY and stayed at First Lutheran Church there. We hung out with some super cool youth and just had a good time over pizza on Sunday night. We had a great time relaxing and healing (for the most part). Now Mika and Dan are better, but Brie is voiceless. We



**Sara Jo Berge**

may need to make a trip back to Marilla to reclaim that for her.

Now, as a teacher, I need to look back at this weekend and think, "What did we learn?" A week ago, we were at the Allegheny Synod Gathering where the theme was Body Building. We talked a lot about how we can build our bodies physically, mentally and spiritually to be strong for God. Another main theme of the weekend was the body of Christ, and how we are all important parts of this greater body. Although we have talked about how important each person is to the success of our team, this weekend we had the opportunity to see what happens when part of our body as a team is left out. One of our devotions a few weeks ago was centered around 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. This passage has shown us how God created us each to be part of a larger community. Our team is just one of many "bodies" that we belong to. With Mika and Dan out, our "body" was not complete. While the other parts were able to compensate for them, we were not able to fully take their place, and never will be able to as God has blessed us each with different gifts and abilities. May you know that God has created you with special abilities and gifts. He has a plan for you and will lead you to the "bodies" that he needs you to be a part of. Continue to love and trust Him. Take luck!

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**Date:** 11/24/2005

**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn

**Journal Entry:**

"For two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up."--Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10

The snow was falling all around us as we pulled onto US-30 just outside of Mansfield, OH. It was the first real snow that central Ohio had seen, and it was also the team's first attempt to try driving in the snow with a fifteen-passenger van and trailer. Fortunately, we made it safely to Upper Sandusky, although we were a little late, but the snow continued to fall through all of our set-up and most of our program. So the next day when I looked out the bathroom window of our host home, it was really no surprise to see snow covering the ground.

It was Thanksgiving Day, the wind outside was bitterly cold, and the snow, which was being swept around by the wind, hit and stung my face as I went outside to warm up the van so that the guys could head off to our Thanksgiving Day feast. Now, since we had gotten to the church back in Mansfield, which was hosting us at a later time than what we would have hoped, I decided just to take the trailer with us to our host home instead of dropping it off at the church, which really wasn't a problem until we decided to leave. I honestly thought that backing the trailer up was going to be easy--after all, I was the best backer on my team at training. But these conditions were a little different. So when we first tried to back it up onto the sidewalk that ran in front of the house and the trailer began to slide down the hill, I realized that this might not be such an easy task. So I pulled forward, but in my attempts to pull forward and turn the wheel hard enough in order to get the vehicle and trailer in a place where I could do anything with it, I realized how much traction I didn't have in the ice and snow on the ground, and so I found myself stuck.

One bag of oil slick, two pairs of mud splattered jeans, two mud splattered leather coats, a whole lot of digging, and a half hour later, and we still weren't out. It was at this time that our home stay father suggested that perhaps he try maneuvering the van and trailer while we try and push. The three guys didn't even need to push, and five minutes later the van, along with the trailer, was cruising down SR-603.

The people that I have met along the road amaze me. They have given so much to me and so much to our team at personal cost to themselves. Just to give you an example, this same home stay father who helped us out with our van is a recent cancer patient, and just this past week had gone through a treatment which made this week particularly



**Jon Glenn**

difficult for him, but he was still willing to help us when we were in need. And he is not the only one we have met. There have been so many who have supported us financially, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

God has created us to be not creatures that live as individuals, but rather to be a people who live in relationship with one another and with God. One can be the most introverted person in the world, but they still need contact with other people. This is God's gift to us, and this is the way that we can see God in each other. For as God lives in community, so do we. It is impossible for us to get along without one another, for as Solomon says, the man is blessed who has someone there to pick him up when he falls.

This Thanksgiving I am thankful for all those I have met on the road and especially for my teammates who are the community that I live with daily and who often pick me up after the many times I fall flat on my face. This holiday season, who are you thankful for? Who walks by your side, picks you up when you fall, and shows you the community of God?

Peace  
-jon

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**Date:** 11/26/2005  
**Submitted by:** Dan Dean  
**Journal Entry:**

Hello from Indiana! Our turkey day was an amazing one, followed the next morning by a trip to the YMCA, "Y" for short. We went swimming with an amazing slide that was super high up and just went around and around. Jonathan and I biked for 2.5 miles; it brought back Spoke Folk memories for me! Now today we are here in Indiana, slowly making our way up to Minnesota! We'll be recording our CD this Friday!



**Dan Dean**

Tonight we hung out with kids and made buckeye balls, which are basically peanut butter balls dipped in chocolate--hardened chocolate, man! Afterwards I got my hair cut! Not just any old haircut, but a super hard core haircut, probably the length of Jon Glenn there. Our "no shave November" is really taking heat. All the guys on our team decided not to shave for the whole month of November, and the beards are really starting to grow in. I'm excited to see the look of people back home when I go home for Christmas. Me, having short hair and a beard when I left home with long hair and a clean face. It'll be an awesome weekend and week as we head back to Minnesota. Have a great week guys. Take luck!

Dan.

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**Date:** 12/1/2005  
**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann  
**Journal Entry:**

Hey everyone,

This is your East Indian writing to you again. Let's see...on Wednesday, we headed to Beaver Dam, WI where we met our contact Susan. We traveled in the snow. YUCK!! Lucky for me, I didn't have to drive because I have never driven in the snow before. That late afternoon, we arrived at First Lutheran early and set up for a Family Night Program. We had such a huge stage area for our program. We were all happy for that, so we could actually spread our arms out without running into people. I was happy that I didn't trip over chords or get blocked behind my keyboard. I was anxious to practice our new songs



**Melika Mindemann**

for the CD, but today was not my day. I couldn't get my part and rhythm down. I got so frustrated, and then our projector didn't work and the laptop was bounced from bottom floor to top to see if it would work. Well, it finally worked after I left the stage to set it up during the program. I felt a little relieved. During the whole program, I wished that I had been better with my keyboard part. Whatever! I met awesome people there, hung out with some of the kids and talked to them at the dinner. It was awesome to know more about the youth and what they thought about the commandment to honor your father and mother. Later, Brie and I headed to the host home. They were amazing and their kids loved us and wanted to hang out with us, but they were in bed before we got home.

A new day arrived, and more snow arrived in WI. The family, Brie, and I squished in the car to head to the church. Nice and cozy. I haven't sat in the front-middle seat in forever. It brought back memories when I was a little girl. We arrived at the church and did our morning routine. Then we practiced our new songs before recording this coming Friday. I rocked on my part on keyboard. I had more confidence than ever. I knew this was a new start for my keyboarding skills. Amazing and fantastic! Now today we are heading to St. Paul, MN. Sara and Jon drove and we arrived later that night. Oh my, it feels like we have not been here for a long time. It felt great to arrive back at Christ the King Lutheran Church (where we had training and Commissioning). We went out to dinner and celebrate Jon's birthday (12/7) because we would be at training on his official day. We went to TGI Friday's. It was nice to hang out and have another amazing time. Sara's friend Molly came and joined us. It was nice to meet Molly after all that Sara has bragged about her. We sang Happy Birthday and headed back to the church to meet Gulf Coast and North East. We could not get in at the church because West Lakes had the key. So I ran around trying to get people's attention and trying to get in at the doors. I stood outside as others stayed warm in one van which had three teams in it. I finally got everyone in, and we had a terrific time catching up and goofing off with the pillows in the youth room. PILLOW FIGHT!!! Whoohoooo. Finally, West Lakes arrived and we had a blast with them too. We saw Tiffany Schmader (National Team Director) twice that evening, and it was great to see a familiar face from the office. We missed her so much. That is our summary for the last couple of days. Enjoy. May God bless your week, holiday, and New Year's. Take Luck.

Melika

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**Date:** 1/1/2006

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

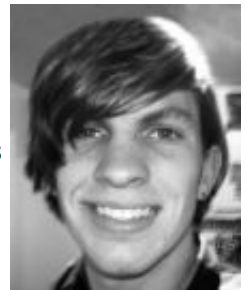
Hey yous guys. we want to start off back on the road by sharing with you multi journals of our Christmas break!

Christmas break was great! It was interesting to see how quickly I could return back to my "normal" life before team. I kept busy volunteering and singing at my church in West Fargo, polishing up my crochet skills by making scarves and hats, spending time with friends and family and just relaxing a bit. I really enjoyed being at home and having the opportunity to be at my home church. Some of my highlights from break included seeing my friend, Tammy Joe, who has been in Guam for quite some time and visiting my family up in Bottineau, ND, not too far from Canada. Although driving was interesting at times, the weather was decent and I just enjoyed being back in a familiar place with people that I love.

- Sara

Oh wow Christmas break was amazing! I really loved it. To switch back to my old Danish way of thinking. It was strange all of a sudden speaking my own language again. I enjoyed very much the time I spend just chilling and hanging out with friends. I met up with a lot of people I hadn't seen for a long time and it was great. Seeing my family can't be described in words, it was really nice and I played play station with my brothers had great conversations with my parents and I saw a good portion of my extended family which was great. It was fun how I tried in my mind to fit a visit with everybody in before I got home but when I got home I realized how little time I had. The transition into again thinking in Danish and eating Danish food, hanging without any form of ministry responsibility was really nice. Thank you friends and family in Denmark for giving me an amazing break from tour this year. As I said before words can't really describe how that made me feel. It was just amazing.

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**Dan Dean**

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- Jonathan

My break? Hodgepodge all the way...I started out with a lovely drive with my teammate Jon and Bria from Gulf Coast, eventually ending at Augustana, my alma mater. After spending five days at good ol' Augie, I was blessed to have seen a good number of amazing people, but I was definitely ready to head home. Let me tell you, going back to a place that holds so many memories, good and bad, without returning to your normal activities there (being classes) and without some of the major people you knew is just surreal. It wasn't bad, it was just strange to experience, and I'm so grateful that I got to see the people who are still finishing up their time at Augie and am excited to let you know that our whole team will be visiting on Jan 25, yay! I headed home after that to spend the next week working hard in my dad's floral shop. Let me tell ya, any retailer is just ridiculous around Christmas, and Dad and I spent most days at the shop from 8:30am-10pm with breaks for lunch and dinner. Christmas day with the family was a good time, although missing some key people due to sickness. Before I knew it, it was time to rejoin my team back in Minnesota. Wow, time flies, don'cha know?

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- jenn.

Break was amazing! A bunch of friends and I went to see the national Christmas tree in Washington, DC. None of us had actually been to see it. Can you imagine living in Maryland almost your whole life and never having gone to see it? Well, we took the metro into the city, only we got off at the wrong stop and wandered around DC for over three hours, at which point we realized it was past midnight and that the tree was probably not on. So we decided to drive into the city a couple days later. A much better idea! We found parking right away and saw the tree, and the White House, and drove back to College Park in about two hours. It was a lot of fun, and now I can say I've seen the national Christmas tree...and I have a great story about it too!! Christmas was fun, family and friends were fun. Over all it was a good time!

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Take luck all!!!

-Brie

My break was remarkable and brilliant, very relaxing and energy charging. I did a lot of sleeping in and felt like a complete lazy bum some days. But I think it'll be ok. For a start off I changed my image quite a bit by dying my hair blood red and having my labret pierced. I hung out with Brie one day, all day, went and got my piercing and she got a tattoo on her foot. I felt her pain the entire time; that's one hard core place for a tattoo. The amazing highlight of my break I would have to say would be spending a lot of "one on ones" with friends. I didn't really do a lot of group hang outs but one on ones with friends was really great. Having really good talks and catching up and really appreciating my friends because they really care about me. Hanging out with my best friends who are in my band with me, playing with them again was mind boggling. Not playing our songs for five months was an amazing reconciliation; it was a lot of fun. If I could say my most memorable and most crazy thing I've done over break, it would be these two things. First, I went to an Irish Pub with my uncle who did team 10 years ago. I've never been to an Irish Pub, and I'm Irish on both sides of my family, it was a big first experience for me. Though I did not drink, I sat at the bar with my uncle and talked, just about everything. A lot about drumming and Dave Matthews Band because we're both drummers and love that band. We compared our teams; it was a really good bonding time. My uncle Jim would definitely be the uncle that I am closest to. Lastly, the craziest thing over break had to definitely be this. One of the last days of break I spent the entire day with my best friend Rob. We raked leaves and at 4 that afternoon started watching Star Wars. We continued for the rest of the night and ended up watching all six Star Wars in a row, 1-6 like that. In total we went from 4 in the

afternoon until 5:45 in the morning. Drank Red Bull and did everything to keep each other up. That would definitely be the amazing thing that concluded my break. I love my family, I love my friends. At the same time I'm so happy to be back on the road and with my second family. This is my family for the year and I'm ready for it man. Bring it on. I love God. Thanks. Take Luck. -Dan.

Hey everyone, this is Mika. My break was great and resting. I was sick all break with acute bronchitis, which was very depressing because I had so many plans to do and didn't get a chance too. When I arrived home, my mom, Asheia, Masha, and Megan picked me up from the airport in Sea-Tac, WA. I was so excited to see them coming off the escalator. I went to my mom's second grade class, Mrs. Kuhlmann's second grade class, and Masha's fifth grade class singing with the students at Concordia Lutheran School. I missed the kids ever since I arrived home. I was already missing the road, so the fifth graders invited me to the Science Center for 3-D Polar Express Movie and science center. I went with them and had a blast as a chaperone. Friday, I saw King Kong with my friend Ashley and went to dinner after that. Saturday, I went to my old Tacoma Youth Chorus winter concert and saw familiar faces. I enjoyed it a lot. Sunday, I saw The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe movie. Later that evening, I saw my friend Jenny and her family. That was cool too. Next week I got really sick and almost sent to the ER. I was able to hold down the coughing with cola and relaxed all week. I had barely any energy and strength. Before I left, I saw my good friend Cammy (EL, Coast 2 Coast) on Christmas Eve. I saw family that weekend. Amazing! God bless. Melika

Over Christmas break not a whole lot changed for me. I still continued a heavy travel schedule so that I was able to see all those friends of mine who either had graduated from college last year or who still were in college. One of the high points of Christmas break for me was my day of spiritual retreat that I took at Camp Lutherhaven in Albion, IN. For those of you who are unfamiliar with Lutherhaven, this was the camp that I worked at during my summers in college, and one of the programs that they offer is a day away retreat program for anyone who wants to come. This was perfect for me because it allowed me to be in a place that was familiar and where I had met God before in big ways. That day God reminded me of his provision and also showed me that the only things that I really need to know is that God loves me and is never going to let me go. Some other good news from Christmas break is that I now have some sort of vocational direction for after team. I have narrowed it down to three choices, and right now I'm in the process of applying for jobs at various colleges within their undergraduate admissions offices, applying at different Christian camps, and also applying for seminary...so for all of you who said I should, I'm at least thinking about it. God's peace to all of you no matter where you may go. -jon

thanks ya'll. take luck!

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**Date:** 1/3/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, everyone!

It's amazing how Christmas seems so far away, yet we are still in the middle of the Christmas season. We all had the opportunity to visit our homes for break and all really enjoyed our time at home with our family and friends. Since returning, our team has jumped full force into team life.

We started off with a Synod Gathering in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Our team arrived halfway through the event, yet we were welcomed and accepted as though we had been there the whole time. This was our first time playing together as a group after break, and we realized the importance of continuously working together and playing together as a team. After the gathering, we visited Lambeau Field, home of the Green Bay Packers. It was a great cultural experience, and we took many pictures, as any true tourists would.

This weekend was even busier! We spent Saturday through Tuesday morning in Naperville, IL, a suburb of Chicago. On Saturday, we had a couple of programs and a lock-in with a small group of senior high students. It was awesome! We rang in the new year in style at the Carillon, a huge bell tower played with a keyboard. They dropped a small ball as we counted down to the new year and lights lit up the numbers 2006. We were all amazed that 2005 was already over. After celebrating the beginning of 2006, and playing a great game of Sardines, it was off to bed for a short night of sleep. We had the opportunity to worship on Sunday evening at 7:47. It was a wonderful way to close out the weekend.

On our day off, we played the tourist role again and took the train into downtown Chicago. Only three of us have been there before, so it was a fun experience for all. The sad part was the weather, as it was cloudy and rainy the whole time. But, we still saw sights including the Sears Tower, the Art Institute, and we ate Chicago Style Deep Dish Pizza at Giordano's!

All in all, it's great to be back on the road, and we've enjoyed sharing stories with each other about our Christmas breaks. We're looking forward to our time ahead. Thanks to each and every one of you who have supported us in the ministry of Captive Free. We pray that you are all doing well and that you are enjoying the start of 2006. Take care, God bless and keep in touch!



**Sara Jo Berge**

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**Date:** 1/8/2006

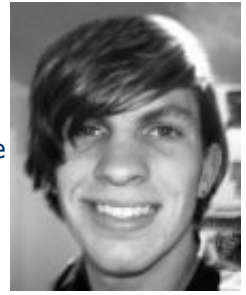
**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

What a weekend we had at the Lansing Quake! Moving into the hotel, walking down the hallway, the hotel was gorgeous; I love Holiday Inns. I turned the corner to see the door way of the ball room with SEVEN HUNDRED chairs set up with a huge stage in the front. I think I dropped what I had in my hands.

The Quake in general was an amazing weekend. Always going, being machines of ministry, having ten conversations going at once and just throwing up energy. My favorite speaker at Events, Bill Yonker, was there this weekend and did such an amazing job and really moved the kids, even me. I saw Yonker as a kid going to the Quakes and Congresses. I grew up with him, he even told his older stories when I heard him as a kid, but he adjusted the message to make it fit to the "Stand on the Rock" theme. Our band was Daniel's Window, who totally rocked the house. We all got really close with them; I bought a shirt and cd for 20 dollars! Captive Free discount, yeah buddy.

I loved the kids this weekend. I really connected with a couple of Junior Guides, actually, talked to them about just ministry in general. There's this girl that all she does is just travel and does ministry. She's been to more countries then I've been states. She's really interested in doing Captive Free, although she'd probably go international. I love doing Quakes, probably my most favorite thing about being on team. Most likely. It's been a super long weekend; these things drain you. That's why we have Mondays as day off. Yeah buddy. Have a good week. Take Luck. -Dan.



**Dan Dean**

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**Date:** 1/16/2006

**Submitted by:** Brianne Smith

**Journal Entry:**

Hey all!

We have been so busy! On Tuesday we went to this candy cane shop...only they did not have a single candy cane anywhere in the shop. Lots of ornaments, but no candy canes. It made Dan and I pretty sad. After Dan and I explored the shop, we went to swing on the swings. I haven't done that in years. It was so much fun!

Wednesday Jon and Sara were sick, and so when we did our Family Night Program that night, Mika and I had to sing. It was interesting, but a fun church in West Alexandria, OH.

We have a busy weekend coming up, but the Quake should be fun!

Take luck all!!



**Brianne Smith**

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**Date:** 1/17/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hey everyone,

This is Mika again. WOW, so much has happened in the last few days. Those days for me went by quickly. Friday was our Quake in Cincinnati. Whoohoo. We met so many new people and saw familiar faces. Here is where the famous Cincinnati Chili is made. Also, with Jon and Sara both sick (yuck), God blessed us all and we made it through this weekend.

We arrived and met up with Jon Henderson, Josh (Jon's friend helping out with the Quake), and Jacob's Road. We set up and got ready for the night. We also met Packer Dave (speaker) later that evening. We met some alumni from previous East Lakes teams like Amanda Topham and Kurt



**Melika Mindemann**

Scobie. We stayed with the Scobie family earlier in the year in Adrian, MI. That was wonderful to have connectons with these two. We also had Nate (Jeff Johnson's friend) who was our sound guy for the weekend. He rocked out on that YE board. Go Nate!!! We had a blast and survived that day with two people not singing. I sang more in the front of the stage and also on the keyboard. I multi-tasked. We had an amazing evening and were ready for the next day.

Saturday, a long day before us. Celebrations and Treks are in action and ready to go. Dave had wonderful messages. I enjoyed him a lot and what he said really touched me deeply. Thanks, Dave. Jacob's Road rocked out all weekend on stage, an awesome group to get to know. Listening to their songs gave me different perspectives on life and God alone. I worshiped so much more this weekend than before because I was lifted and touched by the Holy Spirit.

Sunday arrived, and it was hard to say good-bye. Sara was finally getting over from being sick and could sing much longer on stage than before. What a great high. We worshiped and packed. Headed to Amanda's house for housing. Time to rest and relax from a busy weekend.

May God bless you this week and take luck.

Mika

P.S. Thanks to all who helped out this weekend, those who supported us, and those we met and hung out with. We had a rockin' wicked time with you all. Thanks again and God bless.

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**Date:** 1/17/2006

**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen

**Journal Entry:**

Hi everybody

Grace, mercy and peace from God our father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

We have now finished our second qQuake in two weeks and are on our way from Cincinnati towards Springfield. Well, I am going to tell you a little about what we've been doing the last couple of days. Sunday our Cinci Quake ended, and we had to say goodbye to all the people we had met and connected with once again. After this, we went to lunch at Golden Corral, a very nice steak restaurant in Cincinnati. It was great! After that we went to Amanda's (East Lakes last year) house where we hung out a couple of hours and saw Steelers beat Colts and Manning away from Super Bowl. After that we went to our host homes. The three guys (which include me) went to a host home with two boys who had an amazing amount of energy. Sunday night we had a bonfire, and Amanda, Jenn and Brie came over. It was good times and very fun. After having fun by the bonfire, we went inside and played the funniest card game Fill or Bust. It was good times.

Next day I and Dan went hiking up a hill to play football. That was my first serious football game in my entire life. It was fun. Later Amanda came and picked us up and we went through Kentucky to get into downtown Cincinnati. Dan and I went to play video games, and that was good times. After this, we went to have some of the very famous Cincinnati chili. It tasted amazing. After this, there was a birthday party at Amanda's house. It was Amanda's birthday, and we celebrated that together with her parents.

Today we started out at Amanda's house; from there we drove to Osterlen, a youth mental health facility in Springfield, Ohio. It was absolutely amazing. The kids there seemed to enjoy our program a lot, especially our puppet show.

Now we are driving to Sidney, Ohio, where we are going to spend the night at the church.



**Jonathan Nielsen**

This is Jonathan, Van 62, directly from highway 75 in Ohio. Back to the studio.

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**Date:** 1/19/2006

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

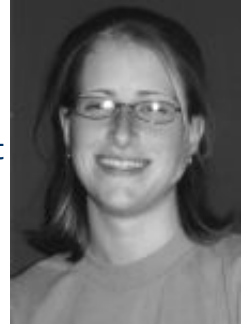
So, Events are always crazy busy, and my stress level rockets a bit. Don't get me wrong, Events are amazing. It's great meeting so many new people and all the hype at Celebrations. But it's definitely a relief to have a couple weekends of church visits. I think it'll help me really appreciate the Events again when they come.

I think my favorite thing about Events is seeing kids again later at their own church. On Tuesday we headed to Sidney, OH to St. John's, where we stayed two nights and did a Family Night Program. Not only did we get to meet some awesome kids (shout out to Emily, Mary, and Mitchell!), but we got to see some that were at the Quake this past weekend, and even used their help to teach a song to everyone at the program. We were so blessed by St. John's.

Thursday, we headed out for Fort Wayne, IN to visit Woodview Nursing Home and stay with Promise Church. That night, we went to Henry's house (our contact from Promise) for vegan tacos with some kids from his classes. It was good to hang out and eat and think like a college student for a bit.

In other news, as of this Friday, Jon can sing again. Hallelujah! I think he's slightly more excited than I am, but not by much. There are songs that just sound so much happier with him singing, keys that we girls just can't quite hit, and songs that he knows and we just kind of fudged our way through. But all in all, through Jon's sickness and doctor ordered singing ban, my team has really stepped up and impressed me so much. When I suggest a key change or ask someone to cover a vocal part, not once were there complaints or groans, but... "Well, sure, let's try it." And when we find out it's not working and just have to avoid that song, we can laugh at ourselves and move on. I'm used to depending upon myself in struggles, and it's not really comfortable for me to say that I can't do it all, and that I need some help. For my team to rise to the challenge so well, it's been some sweet action, yo! Thank you so much to everyone out there who has been keeping us in your prayers. God is always working in through all our lives, but sometimes it's hard to see His goodness in the hustle of life. Thank you for your encouragement!

-jenn.



**Jenn Albert**

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**Date:** 1/21/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

"Know therefore that the Lord your God is God. He is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep his commands." (Deuteronomy 7:9)

God is so good to us. He has blessed us in so many ways and has shown His love to us even more. We have especially seen this in our schedule over the past few weeks. Our first few weeks out were extremely busy. We have had the opportunity to visit many churches and meet many new friends. This week, however, has proven to be more restful and relaxing. We can see that God intended for us to have some time to recuperate after the few crazy weeks that we have had out on the road. Our days have been starting later, and we've had many chances to spend time together one on one and relaxing as a group. It's been great to



**Sara Jo Berge**

have down time with our on-the-road family.

On Friday, we were treated to a fabulous meal at a beautiful Italian restaurant in Fort Wayne. It was a local specialty restaurant called Casa Grill. It was a fantastic experience, and we felt completely pampered. From there, we piled in the van and made our way to South Haven, Michigan, back into our region. We have had great experiences here thus far. We spent Friday night with the confirmation students for their Faith Inkubators lock-in. It was great to sing songs and play games with the fun youth that we met there.

Saturday was a highlight for all of us. We got to sleep in a bit to recuperate from the lock-in and our crazy drive home in the snow storm. Then, we met at the church for some rehearsal. Since we were already at our destination, we used the time we would normally spend driving to have team fun time. We... went... ICE SKATING!!!!!! It was so much fun. The only downsides were that Mika couldn't join us because she was sick all weekend and that Brie got a blister on her foot. But, overall, it was a ton of fun and a great way for us to get exercise and spend time together as a team all at the same time. Woo hoo!

After our fun afternoon outside, we feasted at a wonderful potluck--only our fourth or so for the year. It was wonderful! Following that, we had a Family Night Program where we rocked out for God. It was such a wonderful day. God just continues to pour out blessings on us; from rest to ice skates to great food and great people.

I pray that you will see the many blessings that God has poured out on your lives. Take care and rest in the thought that God will always be faithful to those who love him and keep his commands.  
Love ALWAYS,  
Sara

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**Date:** 1/24/2006

**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn

**Journal Entry:**

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands." -- Revelation 7:9

We walked into the chapel on Sunday night to find it exactly as I had last seen it. The large moveable font still graced the rear of the sanctuary, the lectern, the candles, the large black box which supported the censer was placed exactly as I remembered it. And in the front of the sanctuary, the large statue of the risen Christ still reached towards heaven as it had when I had been a more frequent visitor of the place. I and four of my teammates had come to Holden Evening Prayer, held every Sunday night at the Chapel of the Resurrection on the campus of Valparaiso University. This event is extremely special to me, because not only am I a graduate of Valparaiso University, but in my last year I was the person in charge of coordinating the service. What made the evening even more special were the many reunions that I experienced as I got to see old friends and introduce them to my teammates. That evening as the warm glow from the candles filtered into dark places of the chapel, I was introduced to the warmth, comfort, and familiarity of coming home again, and got a chance to once again experience the love of the community that I had left a few months before.

The next two days were a lot of the same: more reunions, more one-on-one talks, more hugs, more chicken wings from one of my favorite Valpo restaurants, more warmth, more welcome, more community, and definitely more Valparaiso University chocolate chip cookies. There was so much more, in fact, that there were times when I got too caught up and ignored my teammates. It was so great to be back in the community that it almost began to feel like I had never left.

Someone once said that you can never go home again, and while I think that it is true, it does not change the tragedy of the situation. We as human beings, although many times some of us like to think that we do not need this, really do need the comfort of knowing that there is a place where we can feel truly comfortable and at peace. I think we also desire a community that can foster that feeling of comfort in us. Unfortunately, we live in a changing world. We live in a world where empires rise and fall, cities are built and destroyed, and people live and die. And because of that it is impossible to go home again, because once you leave a place or once you leave a community, it is lost to you forever. The sad situation was that I had left Valpo and was going to be leaving again, and so whatever feelings I had of never having left were not real. My community is gone and things



**Jon Glenn**

have changed on campus, and unfortunately I will never get that back here on earth. But what we see in the passage from Revelation is a completely different picture than what we see on earth. The passage shows us that the day is soon coming when the community will be reunited. But the strange thing is that this is a different community than anyone that we have been a part of, because this is a community of Christ. In this community, we not only get to experience those that we have known in our communities on earth, but we are also reunited with others that we have not known because on that day when all are brought to Christ, every believer that we meet will seem like we have known them before, not because we have, but because of Christ.

In this world of change we leave things behind and we can't go back for them, but know that a day is coming when reunions will happen, and on that day we will all come home again.

Peace  
-jon

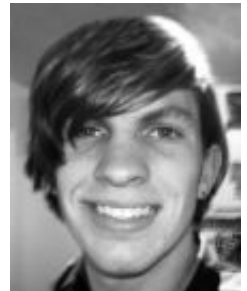
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**Date:** 1/26/2006

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

Having college graduates on our team, we get to move outside of our "boundary lines" as East Lakes to visit their colleges. As the East Lakes team headed west to Indiana, we headed even further west to the great state of Illinois where Jon and Jenn are both from, but more so for Jenn, where she graduated from college. Augustana University. This college is so far west in Illinois, it is right on the border line of Illinois and Iowa. So we could have been in either Captive Free South Central's or West Lakes' region, which is really funny. These past couple days have been amazingly cool because we're going college hopping and hanging around dudes that are our own age. For me as a recruitment coordinator for future teamers, that was pretty rockin' sweet.



**Dan Dean**

As we headed into the campus, I looked at the map to see where exactly Augustana is, and it is actually right next to a city in Iowa called Davenport, which is right where my aunt and uncle live! Not just any aunt and uncle, but my aunt had done team twice before in the late 80's. Her and I have an amazingly cool relationship, and I knew she would love to see me play at the college. We were doing a chapel service that night at 9 30. So I called and it worked out; my aunt, uncle and cousin came to see us play. The kind of embarrassing part was that morning. I didn't have time to shower and my hair is getting long again, so it was super greasy and, yeah, it made me stink. But it's ok! They came all the same and loved me for it. It was a great night for me; it was a late night there, but I was in full energy and filled with joy!

Thursday we headed into our region again--yes, we booked it from Illinois all the way to Michigan, in Stevensville. It was a long, fun, and hilarious car ride up there. I watched "Oceans 11" with Sara, a movie I have NOT seen in an amazingly long time. That is one of my all time favorite movies, and I was really happy to see it. We got majorly lost, and I really found it to be funny; we were laughing in the back as everyone in the front was frustrated. We got there and it was cool, we were all staying in one house, we ate pizza and played games, and then the sing-alongs came. We did sing-alongs in a hard floor basement with an entire eighth grade class. These kids were SCREAMING the words the entire time: "Who can be the loudest participant?" was the name of the game during the sing-alongs. It was really funny. To finish it off with a piece of technology that blew my mind: "Google Earth". I have NEVER heard of this idea of program at all. One can zoom in to any city and address in the world, and see in detail what your town looks like, what your street looks like in exact detail. It's like we were the CIA looking down on the earth with a satellite; it was insane. We continue to rock the great state of Michigan. Tomorrow we'll be in Ohio, making our way even more east to Pittsburgh for our Quake next weekend.

Take luck!

Dan!

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**Date:** 1/30/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hey everyone,

It is me again. Everything is going well. I have had a relaxing couple of days. On Sunday, we finished up two worship services in Lake Orion, MI. The services went well, and for me, it was hard to say good-bye to the host family I stayed with. We traveled to The Franciscan Care Center in Toledo, OH. We sang music and did puppet shows, which was fun to do. It was sad that Brie and Sara couldn't sing with us because they were sick. We headed to Mary Bull's house. She was on the WMD 04-05 team. It was cool to hang out with her family and get to know her until Wednesday. Monday arrived and we all slept in and had a relaxing day. I know I did. I watched lots of movies and chilled that day. Others went to The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe movie that night. Tuesday came along and we had a very Danish day. After we went to Lutheran Home At Toledo for singing and puppetry. We came back and Mary made Danish food for us. For Jonathan, it made him feel right at home. We all tried the food and enjoyed it. I loved it a lot. Later that night, Mary's mom Lise had a co-worker come over with her fiancée to meet and talk to Jonathan. The fiancée is from Denmark and was home sick. Listening to the Danish language and getting to know the others with desserts and coffee. I enjoyed the warm family feeling at the Bulls' house. That was pretty much our days of relaxation. May God bless you guys this week. Take luck.

Mika



**Melika Mindemann**

**Date:** 2/3/2006

**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen

**Journal Entry:**

Hi all you people out there

I'm writing to you from Steelers country. Down here they ain't got any Seahawks fans except for our Mika. Today we had a preschool chapel here in Pittsburgh, and all the kids came wandering in dressed in Steelers clothes, so they really think they are going to make it this weekend and maybe they are. But that's all I'm gonna write about Superbowl in this journal.

Yesterday we left my Danish home in Ohio where we had stayed with Mary from Watermark-DK last year for three days. We were driving towards Hinkley where our good friends Sue and Roger live. We played at a nursing home out there and it was great. Afterwards while packing up the trailer I cut my hand pretty bad, so now I am wearing a band aid, and it's just amazing. Sue and Roger provided us with spareribs that night and it was just truly an amazing dinner, where we also met our friend Mary. We played Ultimate Jenga and it was fun especially when the blocks of wood went down. We had an amazing time at this host home where we definitely got a lot of good conversations. Also I learned about the story about Denmark disturbing most of the Muslim world, which has disturbed me a lot.

After this we drove down to Pittsburgh to the church I started of talking about, David Strussenberg from ROP comes from here; his dad is the pastor here and it has been great hanging out with him. Tomorrow we are off to the Pittsburgh Quake where we are going to meet some familiar faces. That's all there is to it this time, but have a nice day

God's peace

Jonathan



**Jonathan Nielsen**

**Date:** 2/5/2006

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

Ah, Quake. Quakes always bring mixed feelings for me. There are moments of absolute high; all the kids bring so much energy that you can't help but feed off it. But by the end of a night, I am so utterly drained that I'm literally dead on my feet. As my team job, it's my responsibility to make set lists, among other things. Doesn't sound that bad, does it? I cannot make split second decisions. We were watching the Super Bowl, and joking about how if I were on the team, we'd get to that huddle before the snap, and I would sit there going "Well... I don't know, give me a second, I'll come up with something... if we... well, I don't like that, I just really wish we had some more plays, guys..." At a Quake, we get things thrown at us constantly. And there are definitely points at which I just want to throw up my hands, scream "I hate my job!" and refuse to participate any longer.

So, my lesson from this Quake... Something I've been gradually discovering as we continue in this journey through the world of youth ministry. Attention all adults. This is important. You are sooooo important in youth ministry. No, seriously.

At a Quake, if you have never been, Saturday is composed, mostly, of these workshops called Treks. Kids sign up for them, and then go hang out for 50 minutes with 10-70 others with topics ranging from God in secular music to the truth about girls and guys. These times can be some of the best and worst during a Quake.

Let me illustrate. This weekend, I led a Trek called "God's love in today's music" three times. The first, I had 55 kids... 55 for a trek based almost entirely on discussion. I didn't know how to quite handle that. The second, there were closer to 20. It was awesome. The size was nice, but that's not really what made it work so well. During the Trek, I had four adult leaders who were really interested and helped me to keep the kids really interested. I didn't really do things much differently (I mean, things were slightly different because I can never say things exactly the same and such... junk), but the kids were involved and cared. Now, I know that the size may have helped dramatically, but I had the Trek before with that size and not had it run so smoothly.

Adults, you might think that the kids find you dull, boring, and, generally, a drag... but you are so cool just for trying and showing interest. It is not solely the responsibility of the youth director to infuse your kids with the love of Christ and get them educated in the creeds and doctrines of whatever church you belong to. If you don't show the same kind of commitment and interest, why should the kids? One of the greatest tragedies of youth ministry occurs when kids are deposited at youth group every week without other adults expressing interest in the program by giving their time. Not just their time, but their attention as well. We've been places where the adults are there... but spend the whole time hanging out with each other, not bothering to engage the kids.

Kids aren't just the future of the church, they're the present. They can bring so much energy and excitement into a congregation, so long as they are encouraged.

Alright, I'll step off my soap box for now. To all those adults who are constantly pouring into kids and wonder if it matters... You have been blessed to be a blessing. Don't give up, you are impacting them.



**Jenn Albert**

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**Date:** 2/7/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." - Isaiah 40:28-31

"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." Over the past few days, we have been relying on that strength from God to see us through. We have been running from place to place and, without the strength God provides for us, we would have fallen long ago. I'm sure that all of you reading this have had times in your lives where you have felt so completely exhausted, yet know that you need to keep going. Sometimes, you can't even figure out where your energy is coming from. We praise God for providing us with those extra bursts of energy that we have been in need of lately.



**Sara Jo Berge**

Prepare yourselves for an update on what your good friends on Captive Free East Lakes have been up to since Saturday...

Sunday started off with a Communion service! It is tradition for an early morning service to be planned by some of the participants of the Pittsburgh Quake. We enjoyed sharing the sacrament with our friends from the weekend. After the Quake, and an enjoyable meal at Max and Erma's, we loaded up into our van and fought with the horrendous winds all the way to Wexford, PA. It didn't take us long, since Wexford is a suburb of Pittsburgh. Sunday night, we were all invited to a house to watch the Super Bowl. We were surprised to find that we were given our own private Super Bowl party! We had a whole area to ourselves complete with snacks and the Terrible Towels we were given at the Quake. For fun, I thought it would be great to wave my towel whenever I saw fans on TV waving their towels. It became a fun game, and we enjoyed watching the Steelers play their way to victory! It was pretty great to be in the hometown of the winning Super Bowl team. Sadly, Mika was a lone supporter of the Seahawks (a dangerous thing to be in Pittsburgh). But, she stayed true to her team, even after the loss.

Monday proved to be an interesting day. I have been sick for over four weeks now, with random symptoms that keep coming and going. I decided that I should probably be checked out, so Jonathan, our friend Paige, and I went to the Emergency Room around 2:50 p.m. I didn't leave that hospital until 9:35! That's right--15 minutes short of seven hours. And, after blood work and the like, I found out that what I have is a viral infection with mono-like symptoms. And, no, they cannot give me medicine--I'm supposed to sleep, drink more fluids and take Tylenol! What?!?!? I spent almost seven hours in the emergency room to find out that I should keep doing what I've been doing for the last four weeks? Oh, well. On the bright side, at least it wasn't mono and I'm still able to continue traveling with this great team.

Well, after spending nearly seven hours in the emergency room, I decided that I should have a treat. If you know me well, you know that I have a slight fixation on French fries. They are one of my weaknesses. Well, as Jon, Brie, Jenn and I left the hospital, I asked if we could find some French fries. Seeing as though we hadn't really explored the area, we decided this would be a good time. We drove around for a bit, finding great places such as Misty Pines Dog Park and a super cute part of town. In the end, we found a McDonald's and I had some fries!!!! The more adventurous part of our McDonald's visit was keeping Jon from scaling the walls of the building! We kept telling him that we didn't really want to return to the emergency room... We succeeded, by the way, although we got some strange responses from a group of high school students who were hanging out there...

Tuesday wasn't quite as eventful as Monday, but we still had a great time. We visited some of the cutest preschoolers ever and sang some silly songs with them. From there, we loaded up our van and essentially drove across the state of Ohio. We ended up in Fremont, which isn't far from Toledo. In Fremont, we visited a rehabilitation center and did some music and skits for the residents there. It was a great day, ending in plain, simple silliness.

Well, I hope you have enjoyed catching up on the happenings of Captive Free East Lakes. We have been running around like crazy, but thank God for the opportunities we have had to meet new people and to share His love with everyone around us. I pray that you will see those opportunities and that you will turn to him in the times when you need some extra energy. Take care and God bless!

Love ALWAYS,

Sara

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**Date:** 2/9/2006

**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn

**Journal Entry:**

"But you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" –Galatians 5:13, 14

I had met Jake when we first got to the church on Wednesday. I saw him just as he was getting out of basketball practice. He stands at about 4'10" with sandy blond hair and a huge smile on his face, which he flashed at me as I held out my hand to introduce myself as a member of Captive Free. I couldn't talk long, but I got his name and asked him if he was going to be coming to program that we were putting on that night. He said he was and I responded that I would see him there.



**Jon Glenn**

I saw Jake off and on through the rest of the afternoon, and sure enough, he was at the program that night. During the program, I would occasionally glance over toward his direction, and there was never a time that he was not grinning from ear to ear.

The next morning we got to the church fairly early so that we could lead the school's chapel that day. As we began to trickle in, we also began to tear down our sales table, which had been set up for the program from the night before. As we finished putting the last duct tape wallet into the bin, Jake appeared and without missing a beat, picked up one of our bins and started walking towards our van and trailer with it. When he got to the van and trailer, he put it down and went and got another one. We don't have a lot of bins, but if we did he probably would have continued to help us till it was all done. When he walked out with the last of the bins, I said "Thanks!" and then he said, "You're welcome," and went into class.

As far as I know Jake's service was completely spontaneous. He was not prompted by anyone; he just did it out of the goodness of his heart. To be a servant to another is to do as Christ commands, as we see from Paul's letter to the Galatians. But Christ does not command his disciples to serve because God said so, or out of fear; rather, the disciples of Christ serve because of a purer and altogether higher motive: that is who they are. For a disciple of Christ, there can be no motive or reason behind an act of service, and in fact it is for this very reason that the act of service takes on its special meaning.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus speaks to his disciples about service that is premeditated, "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men ...But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret" (Matthew 6:1a, 3). Christ desires not that our service be seen and noticed, but simply that it be a part of our everyday life. In fact, it should be so common to us that we should do it without thinking. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, "All that the follower of Jesus has to do is to make sure that his obedience, following and love are entirely spontaneous and unpremeditated... Otherwise you are simply displaying your own virtue...Christ's virtue, the virtue of discipleship, can only be accomplished so long as you are entirely unconscious of what you are doing. The genuine work of love is always a hidden work."

While I do not know if Jake actually had a motive behind helping my team carry out our bins, it seemed as though he didn't. For him it appeared to be an everyday act, one that he was used to doing for many people. I pray that we all might be able to find the same spirit of love and service for our brothers and sisters as Jake found for our team, in order that in us the virtue of Christ may abound.

Peace,

-jon

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**Date:** 2/11/2006

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

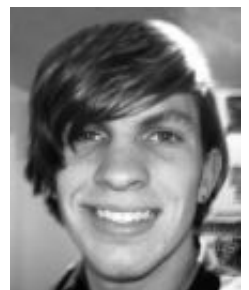
**Journal Entry:**

Yo, so its been awhile. We've been in the middle of nowhere, Ohio. No cell phone reception, no Internet. just ye 'ol plain country side. It's a beautiful thing.

The week has been rough with people sick, switching in and out of things. But hey, we are all learning new things, and it's fun to try something new.

Out of all this middle of nowhere nothingness, I have one highlight story:

We were all staying at this parsonage right by a church with a hidden shower at the top of the house. This hidden shower was in the very back of the house, past this tiny secret door, turning a corner--you had to walk up a half a flight of stairs. I say half a flight because there was an attic entrance type door to push up and all the way open, then to proceed, you hop up and over to get up to the top floor. Once you have reached this top floor, the shower is magically "right there". It's like this is the hidden sacred bathroom no one wanted to see. The thing was, this bathroom was plain and boring. All white, no decorations, like literally everything was white, the walls, floor, sink, toilet,



**Dan Dean**

window, curtains, shower. All white. Dead bugs on the floor everywhere. There was no curtain on the shower and the window was huge with everything in plain view staring right into that bathroom. When I entered the bathroom, I had no idea that the door had no door handle, but when I shut the door, it was only then that I knew. I looked down to make sure the door was shut and saw that the door had no door handle on it, just a hole where it should be. I immediately reach my finger into the door handle hole and try to pull the door open. Nothing. There was a towel hanger on the door. I tried to pull that to open the door, nothing. The options running low for me, I considered for a long time just jumping out the window in the snow in just my pj's. It would be impossible for me to yell for help considering where this hidden place was in the house. Luckily enough my large lungs did the job of yelling for help and Jon came to the rescue.

Out of all this barrenness, there is this flavored popsicle of a place. That was a random analogy.

That's me, I hope you're all doing well. Keep up the good work. Drink your milk. Take luck!

Dan

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**Date:** 2/21/2006

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

As timing would have it, I write to you after having completed another Quake, our last, to be exact. I have a mixture of feelings stemming from this. Quakes are always high energy, high movement, nonstop action, and they leave me utterly and completely drained. On a Sunday afternoon, it's all I can do to keep my eyes open and engage anyone in any kind of intelligent conversation. I'm thankful for the experience of Quakes, the people I've met through them (there have been some amazing ones), and the ways I've seen God work through them.



**Jenn Albert**

We spent a couple extra days at the hotel in Sandusky to meet with our Team Director, Tiffany. As times before when we've gotten to spend time with her, we were reluctant to leave her behind (we'd like to make her and our Event Director, Jon, a permanent part of our team...as excited as they both have been about this idea, they have a bit too much to keep up with back in the office to be able to hit the road with us).

But on Tuesday, we headed away from Sandusky and off to Adrian, MI. In Adrian there's a girls' center, kind of a correctional facility, and we had the chance to share a program with the girls there. It was truly an awesome experience and a different kind of ministry opportunity than we usually find ourselves in. As with any program we have, there was a range of receptiveness and involvement from the girls.

Following our program, as we were loading all our equipment into our trailer, one of the support staff at the center, Andrea, came back to talk to us a bit. During this time, we had the chance to encourage and pray for Andrea. There are times when we have no idea the impact that our ministry has on others, effects that we will never see or hear about. At times, God places people in our lives to encourage us, giving us little reminders of the good that is done daily. Then there are times that we find our purpose is to encourage those we meet who are struggling to share God's love in a variety of ways. I don't know how anything we may have said or done in that chapel on that Tuesday night might have influenced those girls, but simply being able to offer some support and encouragement to a wonderful person like Andrea made the night worthwhile. I so admire those who pour their lives out daily to others like that. To those who have the resolve and energy to engage kids who have been hardened by life, to constantly see the good and potential for good within them, and to continue to love no matter what...you inspire me. God calls us to follow Him and love Him through service towards His people. Andrea, wherever you are, thank you for your service.

-jenn.

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**Date:** 2/22/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hi everyone,

This is Mika. How are you all doing? Everything is going well so far. We are in Warren, MI. It's nice to come back to a place called home. Coming here brings back great memories, and it's also a cool town to hang out in. This is the place we went to see a 50 cent movie. As we arrived, we put on a teaser for the kids at Peace Lutheran School. We set up for a Family Night Program that evening. That program was amazing. Having people from all ages participating in the motions of the songs and singing along was cool to see. I loved being up in the front and seeing their faces out in the crowd. Another high for that night was that Sara rocked on the soundboard again. Thanks to her, we can move on and still put on a great program. The next day, we had a chapel with the kids again. WOW!! I love that school. They are so ready to see us in the morning and ready to get involved with the music. After that, we were able to have the day and go exploring the town and hang out with our families. Our team went to Panera Bread to hang out and play Rummy. I love their food. Delicious. Going there is different because I don't have Panera in Washington state. It was nice to try something different and love their food. Some of us were staying with kids who played volleyball. We went to their practice. Guess what? Dan, Jonathan, and Jenn played volleyball with them. Captive Free against the girls. Go, my favorite sports team, go! While they did that I was typing out my YE application for next year. Captive Free WON!! Dan, Jonathan, their host mom Dawn, Dan's friends, and I went to tattoo parlor. Whoo. They all watched Dan and me receive our tattoos of crosses. It didn't hurt at all. I am a brave little Indian girl. My host family the Paulings were so excited to see it. I enjoyed hanging out with them and talking about what has happened lately. They are amazing and I miss them. It was hard to say good-bye to them. Thanks Peace for all the wonderful memories. God bless and take luck.

Melika



**Melika Mindemann**

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**Date:** 2/23/2006

**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen

**Journal Entry:**

Hi, everybody

I'm sitting in a room trying to forget "Na, na, na-na-na-na-na"

Okay sorry.

We are having an amazing Quake here in Northern Ohio. Where a lot of kids have shown up to celebrate God. Our band this weekend is Fuller Still, which is an amazing group of people. But get back to the point, Jonathan. So we left an amazing church in Warren, Michigan yesterday, a place where we really have felt home and a place that is really close to our hearts. We left for the Quake here in Sandusky about two miles from Cedar Point. We are staying at a resort which is completely amazing and we really enjoy it. Brie is also back with us, which is really nice and is going on stage after a week laying sick.

Now we are having fun on a Saturday that has been full of surprises: a fashion show with both Fuller Still's clothes and Captive Free's clothes. We are having an amazing crazy dress night where



**Jonathan Nielsen**

crazy definitely is an important word. Hope you are all doing well out here in the big world, where so much is going on that we don't understand. Fortunately we all have a hope that one day Jesus will come and take us up to the place where there will be no more sorrow.

Jonathan - I am not in control of anything!

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**Date:** 2/24/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." -Colossians 3:15-17



**Sara Jo Berge**

These verses give us a gift. In our busy world, it is hard to let the peace of Christ rule in us. Our team has been blessed this week with the gift of solitude. We have been taking a week for spiritual refreshment. Each day, we spend an hour or more in solitude, connecting or reconnecting with God, and letting His peace rule in us. Many other great things have come our way as we spend time in Adrian and Farmington Hills. But the highlight of the last few days has been feeling God's peace surround us. I recommend setting aside some time each day. I pray that you can find the peace of Christ in your life and that you let it surround you.

In His Peace,

Sara

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**Date:** 2/25/2006

**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn

**Journal Entry:**

"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." -Matthew 6:24

World Vision is a non-profit organization whose goal it is to build a better world for children in developing countries through a variety of programs including: bringing food and work crews to communities and helping the communities to plan and create agricultural solutions that help the communities survive. Every year World Vision calls upon communities across the country to help them raise money and awareness for world hunger through their 30-Hour Famine program, which asks youth and adults to fast for 30 hours while raising monetary support for their efforts, which is then donated to the organization. Our team got to participate in the first of four of these events that we will be participating in this year on Friday at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Farmington Hills, MI. But while we were unable to eat, we were able to play some great games with the senior high (including a ferocious round of Silent Football and a newer version of Trainwreck), sang some songs, learned a little bit more about the effects of world hunger, and got to work with a group of developmentally disabled adults for a morning.



**Jon Glenn**

The time that we spent during the event was eye-opening because it helped all the participants to understand a little more clearly what it meant to be truly hungry. Not just the munchies kind of hungry, but the stomach gnawing incessant kind of hunger that comes with not eating for a long period of time. But although we got to eat at the end of the 30 hours, we were reminded that there are many people who don't. We were reminded that for some people this is not just a once a year experience, but this is a state of being. In this experience, I was once again confronted with the all or nothing nature of our faith.

As I mentioned in my last journal I am reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship*, and it is kicking my butt. Because every time I turn the page I hear Bonhoeffer telling me that following Christ is not something that you can do half-heartedly: it takes everything that you have. You need to give your all or not give anything at all. What strikes me about the 30-Hour Famine is that it is an all or nothing type of program. You go for the 30 hours or you don't make it. And it is the same way for the people that the event is trying to help. Either they make it or they die. Because of the life and death nature of what we are dealing with, we have a serious responsibility because we either help them by raising awareness and raising funds or they will die. Therefore this event is not just an event or a reason to hold a lock-in; rather this event sets the stage for how we live our lives and what we give ourselves to.

I think that oftentimes as we grow into adulthood, we tend to lose the black and white nature that comes with being young and impetuous, and instead we muddle it together for a shade of gray. And while compromise is an excellent thing, and while it is important to listen to people so that we might gain perspective, I so often find myself lost in the gray and unable to commit myself to a way because I see the good in all of them. But Christ in this passage from Matthew is not calling us to a shade of gray; rather, we are being called to make a stand. We are being asked to side with a master instead of trying to play both sides of the field.

In my experience, I think our culture has the ability to grow passive towards those who live a life that is not ours. But their life is our life, and their needs are also our needs, and if we don't help them to make it, how can we ever think that we will help ourselves to make it? Christ calls each one of us to make a decision to decide who our master will be, but not just to make a decision, but to live out that decision through a life of service to the one who has done so much to serve us.

Peace

-jon

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**Date:** 2/27/2006

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

Word up.

So our day off was amazingly exciting, so I want to tell you all about it and what we did.

I've been so used to getting up every morning around 8-830ish that I don't really sleep in anymore on my day off. Laying in bed as long as I could, waking up and falling back asleep, I finally got up at 10:30, which is really good for me on a day off. I played pool, air hockey and kicked Sara's butt in both of those games! My host sister has this little old school games kind of system box that plugs into the tv. So I rocked that out and played some Pac-man and Space Invaders, yeah buddy.

The real highlight of the day is when I went with all the girls and went SHOPPING.

Like OH my gosh.

Jonathan didn't go so it was me, Sara, Brie, Mika, and host mom and sister. We first walked into this amazing bargain place called Barnes and Berrys, brilliant store. Like, everything was six dollars. I got this amazing shirt for six dollars, the girls got good deals on clothes.

We shopped around and Brie and I got matching t-shirts from Hot Topic. I don't usually go to Hot Topic, but this place had Mae t-shirts, which is like our team's favorite band, so Brie and I got matching t-shirts from there.

That night our host mom's oldest daughter came over to dye Brie's, Sara's and my hair. We're all red heads; mine was just re-done because it was already red. Brie is rocking highlights. It was a great eventful day off.

Today on Tuesday we are still in Michigan, all hanging out at our contact's house. We watched "X-



**Dan Dean**

Men" and the original "Rocky." Our host parents didn't get in until close to midnight. So we hung around and it was good male bonding time. Just the guys.

Good ministry all around, ya know. Shopping and hair dying with your host family and just hanging out and watching movies with your guy teammates. It's ministry no matter what ya do. As long as it's for the glory of God.

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**Date:** 3/4/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hi everyone,

You get to spend two days with me. While I am writing, I am talking to my friend Kurt (EL 02-03) about team and the Zone coming up. He says hi to everyone. We are in Wyandotte, MI at Trinity Lutheran Church and School. We are getting ready for another 30-Hour Famine. We set up our gear and put on our Family Night Program. Then we got ready for our Famine. We had devotions and played a game called TRIBE. (deals with the Masai tribe). This was led by two college kids named Kelley and Mary who did a wonderful job putting it all together for the weekend. East Lakes had a great time watching the high schoolers dress up the tribe leader and try to survive. It was funny to watch them, but also a gruesome thing that people live like this everyday trying to make it in the world. I can't wait to do another Famine. I really enjoy watching kids grow.



**Melika Mindemann**

Saturday arrived, and we all have made 18 hours of not eating and still have 12 more to go. Way to go!! We all split up and went to Gleaners and Focus Hope, which we boxed up food and potatoes. I went to Gleaners and helped box potatoes and move the bags of potatoes from one place to the next. I enjoyed it a lot. I really like how other churches have different servant events to do because you never get bored from one to the other. We headed back and played TRIBE and had some down time. We split up in three groups to plan the worship service that night. Dan, Jonathan, and I were involved with the music. We helped the kids put it together and played and sang with them. I liked seeing other students get involved with music and also see how great their talents are. We had worship and the Famine was counting down to the end. Time to eat pasta and meat. Yum. After that, we just chilled and hung out. Some of the team went to a movie, and I stayed and rested. Besides that, we had a great weekend hanging out with the kids and Brenda. Thanks for letting us join you in the fast. Happy birthday to my cousins Megan and Kaity.

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**Date:** 3/7/2006

**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen

**Journal Entry:**

Hi everybody. Hope y'all doing well.

So this Sunday we left a church where we were this whole weekend. We had Sunday School this morning with kids from the church, and after that we left for Immanuel Lutheran Church in Macomb, Michigan. We arrived there and met with our contact. After that we went to our host home where the most amazing was being prepared for us. We stayed in a house that downstairs had a jukebox, a record player, and tons vinyl records. It was absolutely beautiful. At night we watched "Brokeback Mountain" and "Crash" fight over the Oscars.



**Jonathan Nielsen**

Next morning we had four chapels. When the second one had ended, I was on my way to the bathroom when I got stormed by a whole bunch of kids, and this was just the beginning to an absolutely insanely amount of autograph signings. At night we had a more down to earth program for the high school kids. It was great and a lot of fun.

Next day we had a worship for the kids there, and we all sat down with lines of kids that wanted us sign all different kinds of stuff.

Well, with that I am saying have a nice day

God's peace

Jonathan

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**Date:** 3/9/2006

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

After over a week of Captive Free ministry, our team arrived in Bowling Green, Ohio, exhausted and ready for the rest of a day off. I wish I could impress upon you just how important this time off is for a member of a Youth Encounter team. The day off gives us a chance to regroup and refocus, or... just to avoid thinking about much of anything. Generally, our team takes the time to crash, spending hours watching movies, sleeping, reading, writing letters, talking to friends on the phone... and occasionally, when feeling really adventurous, running out to the store to pick up things needed. This used to bother me, this feeling of laziness and of doing... well... nothing in general, but I've come to recognize the importance of this retreat from the normal non-stop motion of our lives.

Let me tell you a little bit about Bowling Green. We have been to St. Mark's before, and encountered their group at the Upper Ohio Quake. The kids aren't strangers to Captive Free teams. Our first visit to St. Mark's was good, and the day off we spent there on that visit involved my adventures in blue hair dye. It wasn't until the Upper Ohio Quake, though, that I really got to know some of the kids.

When we arrived on Tuesday, we went out to dinner at Panera with some of the high schoolers that would be at the Cincinnati Zone. Good food, good people, good times. The next day, our day off, was mostly made up of the classic movie marathon, a trip to the BGSU library, and trips to a local coffee shop. In the evening, St. Mark's had their Wednesday Lenten worship service. It's always a refreshing thing for us to go to a worship service without actually leading any of it. Now, don't get me wrong, I love leading music in worship and being able to share our experiences with churches, but to simply participate in a service is a welcome change of pace. We had a ton of fun connecting with the kids there again (as well as Kim and Mark), and are so excited to see them again this weekend at the Zone.

We all have these times of renewal, of stress, of quiet, of busyness, of joy, of mourning, of everything under the sun (Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8). And it's all necessary. We learn through the craziness, we learn through the quiet and the sorrow and the joy usually learn more through the sorrow than through the joy, but it's all needed and... ultimately good. God works in all things for the good of those who trust in Him, which is so hard to see sometimes, so hard to find any good in our slumps.

So my encouragement for this time is that whether you are at a place of rest or a place of wild activity, find God in that place and in the people who are sharing it with you.

- jenn.



**Jenn Albert**

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**Date:** 3/11/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge  
**Journal Entry:**



**Sara Jo Berge**

Real. What does this word mean? We have our first and only Construction Zone this weekend. The theme for this high school Event is "Real", which is connected to Ephesians 4:15-16. We've seen the theme for a long time and have anxiously awaited our Zone, but we didn't really dig into the verses until Friday. When we read the passage, we looked at each other in puzzled confusion and asked, "What does that have to do with the theme?" Due to our lack of time to discuss, we ended up discovering our own interpretations and answers to this question.

Personally, I think "Real" is a great theme for not only high school students, but for all ages. God is real. We strive to be like Christ. The only way to be like Christ is for us to be real before Him and real before each other. Not only that, but we also need to be real with ourselves, so that we can be part of the body of Christ.

We saw a lot of people striving to be real this weekend: Jenn and Ryan Alexander, our speakers, the bands (The Swift and Daniel's Window), the adult leaders, the Feed My Starving Children volunteers, and especially the youth. It was amazing to see people opening up to each other and to God. I've found that it's not easy to share your problems with others--including God. I want so badly to be in control and to show others that I can handle everything. But, to be completely real, we need to share the joys and the struggles.

I pray that you can all be real with God and that we can be real together to strengthen the body of Christ here on earth. Take care and God bless.

Love,

Sara

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work."  
Ephesians 4:15-16

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**Date:** 3/16/2006  
**Submitted by:** Dan Dean  
**Journal Entry:**



**Dan Dean**

So we're kicking it in Bexley, Ohio where the weather changes every 5 mins. I swear this entire state has mood swings. What state goes from 40 degrees in the morning to 20 and snow on the ground by the afternoon? What state pours down rain for 20 minutes then is dry and sunny for the next hour, then proceeds to pour for 20 more minutes after? Yeah, Ohio does.

So I'm here in the youth leader's office, super messy office, listening to Incubus, talk about an amazingly talented bunch of individuals. Sara is seeing a type of doctor that fixes backs. The name for the doctor has a super long name that begins with a "C", I can't spell it. Cayropractor? I dunno. (Editor's note: It's chiropractor, Dan. Spell check is your friend.)

Well, so on Wednesday we were at a Methodist church! Yay for Methodists, they're great, very similiar to Lutherans, except they don't sit in the back of the pews. Well, the kids there were amazing; our concert pretty much consisted of kids. High schoolers are my favorite.

Anyway, there at the concert, I saw him come up and I automatically knew it was him. The very famous Lowell from Echelon. That's right, Echelon doesn't tour as much anymore, but they're still amazing. The entire band of Echelon is very close to my family, all the members have done team together on the same team. They all know my aunt and uncle because they both did team. It's a crazy Captive Free world. Well, the concert was amazing, I broke two pairs of hot rods that night. Then proceeded that night to play Halo 2 with my host brother until way past his bed time.

So today we went to yet again another Methodist church. It's a marathon. We went to some random family's house and had dinner. Watched college basketball, and I played with this amazingly cool kid named Josh. Josh is five years old and just FULL of energy. He found a stuffed animal cat, and proceeded to play "catch" with me with the cat. In the house was a super high stair case, so I got the idea so have him go up to the top of the stairs, I stay at the bottom, and we'll play catch with the cat. So I would throw the cat alllll the way upstairs and he would toss is back down. It was then upstairs that Josh found a football. We substituted the football for the cat. It was a rocking good time, maybe a little dangerous at times, but he enjoyed it and his mom enjoyed watching.

Tonight the guys arrived at host homes where we automatically had excited, energy filled host parents, who are both retired but just so full of life and wonderful. So happy to see us, they have no idea who we are, and they're treating us like we're their sons. Angela, our contact, lives right next door and came over and hung out. As we're all hanging out in the living room, our conversations become very comfortable with each other and we become comfortable with each other to joke around and be sarcastic. It was a very informal easy going family. The idea of a prank came up within me, but it definitely had to be on Angela. You see, Angela is getting married in two weeks, and she needs a "pre-wedding gift", so this is what we did:

It was really funny because we brought the idea up, Jonathan and I planned it our, and our host parents were all about it! At first, Jonathan and I wanted to Saran Wrap Angela's car with toilet paper. Our host mom ran to get toilet paper when our host dad interjected. No! That's not good enough. I've got some bubble wrap in the shed; let's use that. Dude! This roll of bubble wrap wasn't just bubble wrap, it was the size of a monster truck tire roll of bubble wrap. And our host mom made a pretty bow to put on top of the car made of toilet paper. Jonathan and I, at 10:30 at night, gift wrapped Angela's car with huge bubble wrap. Ginormous, and we put the pretty bow of toilet paper on top. It was gorgeous. Perfect. The perfect prank.

Ya see, you need one of those every once and awhile. You meet so many people, so many amazing people, that can really have fun. It's even greater when the older folk join in and help. As long as you know it will be taken as a joke by all before ya do it. One of the many joys of being on team. People are great, espeically Midwestern people. I've learned to love the whole "down to earth" personality. The personality of putting you before themselves, the whole "what else can I get for you?" It's great. You can really see the love of God in so many, and this love just keeps spreading. I love it.

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**Date:** 3/21/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

DETROIT..... what a big place! The city is huge, beautiful, and run down in certain areas. Our team has heard so much about helping at the shelter, and we finally made it here. I am thrilled to stay here for a week. I still can't believe it.

Sunday.... we arrived at Iroquois Christ Lutheran Church. We met our contact Kirsten and Pastor John. We were shown around the church and set up equipment and got ready for dinner. I sat with three individuals named Ralph, Tony and Greg. They were really cool people to talk to and ask questions about. I realized that night, I was going to get along well with the people around because I have a personality where it is easy to be picked on. People can easily open up and pick on me. I stayed for late night watching old movies from the 80's. Until lights out at 11.

Monday.... each morning our team splits up different days to serve breakfast bright and early at 5 a.m. The others were able to sleep in and be ready by noon. The reason for the sleeping in was because we didn't get a day off. Sad. We had a wonderful time going to the 50 cents theatre in Warren, Michigan. All of us went but Jon because his friend William drove to come see him. We were able to hang out with him during lunch and catch up. Dinner time. I forgot to mention that during dinner different churches around Detroit area prepare supper for the shelter. We get to meet different people every night during supper. During the meal, I saw with two different men named Jason and Quincy. Two guys that picked on me and protected me also became known as my "bodyguards". I sat with them for the rest of the week ministering and was able to know more



**Melika Mindemann**

about "da ghetto" side of town, as they called it. Later that night... I played piano in the church for a guy named Jesse. He is a piano player and a singer. I learned a lot about this man and more on piano. Thanks Jesse for teaching me more about myself.

Tuesday.... late morning again. We worked on the clothes closet for the shelter. We sorted, labeled, organized and tossed out clothes. We also had a rehearsal, which we haven't had forever. We practiced and learned new songs. I am excited to play later down the road. We also had devotions and one on ones in the park. Jon and I saw reindeer. They are so small and adorable. We had dinner with the people again and just had a blessed evening. What an amazing week.

Mika

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**Date:** 3/25/2006

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

There are too many things to say, too many things that we have learned that leave us searching for more, trying to understand the events of just before.

As mentioned before, we've been at the homeless shelter at Christ Lutheran in Detroit since Sunday. You might imagine that this experience is a little different than our normal travels within the world of church ministry. You would have imagined correctly. Going into the week, I was excited and nervous; excited to stay in one place for nearly a whole week while doing hands-on physical service work, but nervous because I knew those we would minister to would primarily be a population that I would not have a ton of shared experiences with which to start conversations.

But I can't very well tell you about Friday without including some of the week in general.

Every night when we came for dinner, the volunteers from area churches took care of pretty much all of the preparation and a good deal of the clean-up. Our primary function became to spend time with the homeless people who came to stay at the church. I had my mixture of conversations during meals from incredibly awkward to incredibly entertaining. That first Sunday night I sat down across from a man named Robert who had come to be in Michigan after being relocated from Louisiana. Robert didn't mess much with the small things in life, jumping head first into the big questions about life and God. I was taken a little by surprise, first by his forwardness, but later by his positive view, despite the bleakness of his situation, so many miles from home with no support to speak of and not much of anything left to go back to. I suppose that sometimes the only thing we have left to cling to is our hope in something better and trust that God is faithful and working through all our struggles.

As the week went on, we got to meet the kids at the school and interacted more with those staying for the shelter. Friday was special. After working a little with an after school program elsewhere (we got to try all kinds of international foods), we went back to Christ LC to eat and get ready for the Talent Show. I wasn't really sure how things would go, as we only really had one person signed up to do anything, and I didn't have a solid set list for Captive Free. I had a feeling more people might decide to share or be encouraged to share. When the time started with only about 10 in the sanctuary (and in a large sanctuary, this felt overly empty), I was a little concerned. As fate would have it, the night went well enough, with others volunteering to share songs throughout the



**Jenn Albert**

time. Those who came were enthusiastic enough, especially enjoying the "This Little Light" skit, and, I would say, our puppets.

That night, Jon and I were on for late night duty. Our contact, Kirsten, is currently eight months pregnant, and, at this point, needs a little more rest than the week would normally afford. Where she would usually stay until around 11 just to be sure to have someone from the church there for the sake of being there, two of us would stay each night. I decided on grabbing my guitar before heading upstairs to the gym, one half the general hang out area, the other the men's sleeping grounds, as a means to either start conversation or entertain myself as everyone petered off to sleep. After visiting briefly with a few others still up and about, I fell into conversation with Robert again.

Are there any beliefs that you hold to be true that you don't have 100% concrete confirmation of their actual truth? I have always believed that actions are so much more powerful than words, that a genuine smile speaks volumes more than flowery words. Now, this probably stems a lot from a need to find adequacy in myself and my own gifts because I struggle a great deal with words and putting things into decent words (especially in general speech). Now, it's probably not accurate to generalize that actions are always more powerful than words, but I am certain that the things we do, the attitudes we display in our actions, in our demeanors, not the words, but the way we interact with each other, makes a enormous difference to... well... at least part of the population. That I can say with full confidence.

For Robert it was a smile, a sense of sincerity. We spent over an hour talking, mostly he spoke and I listened; his life, our ministry, the impact of our ministry, his plans, my plans, and life lessons. Throughout the time, I found that Robert had allowed me to impact him, not through my eloquence, but through my smile, not through my impressive theories of life, but through my enthusiasm, and most certainly not through a long winded journal entry, but through a silly motion sing song prayer.

You will never know how things like this will effect the people you come in contact with, who will carry the smile around with him/her past just the day.

Please pray for Robert as he tries to find his way, not only back home, but through life.

- jenn.

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**Date:** 3/28/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

I am a huge Veggie Tales fan. In the video (or DVD for all the newer Veggie Tales fans) "Are You My Neighbor?", they retell the story of the Good Samaritan. In this story, the veggies sing a song about how busy they are as they pass by poor Larry the Cucumber who was left hurt by the road. Sometimes I completely identify with that song—I feel like I am so busy I just can't stop. That, in turn, leads me to my confession for the day. For Lent, a few of us chose to give some things up. Mine seems a little silly when you first hear it, so prepare yourselves for silliness, but keep an open mind...

I gave up working on my days off for Lent. Okay, okay. I know. That sounds like one of those things you would jokingly give up for Lent. For example, in high school we would joke about giving up school lunch for Lent, even though our school lunches were amazing (thanks, Mom!). This strange sacrifice has proven to be absolutely wonderful for me. We have been so busy lately, and I have really needed to have time to relax and not think about work. I very easily get caught up in the work that I need to do and give up down time to make sure that everything gets done in a



**Sara Jo Berge**

timely manner. I have learned that while things do get done, it's not a healthy way for me to handle things. In order for me to best serve my team and the people we meet on the road, I need to take some time off. I encourage you to do the same. Let your day(s) off from work be relaxing for you. Enjoy just being. If God took a day to rest, we should allow ourselves to do the same.

We were able to do just that on Monday. We had a week packed with busy schedules and working. To fill you in, after we left Detroit, we drove to Imlay City, MI, where we participated in our third 30-Hour Famine and lock-in. The youth there were great—we had a lot of fun singing, having Bible study and playing games together. Sunday we got up early to help out with two church services and Sunday School. After breaking the fast with a huge breakfast, we packed up our van and headed to Howell, MI. There we set up our system and did a Family Night Program for a great crowd. We were blessed with a group of people excited to participate and worship with us. We then happily went off to our host homes to have some much needed relaxation. I did relax the entire day off—I enjoyed spending time with my host mom, Michelle. She and her husband David were amazing. I loved getting to know them. The rest of my team did some relaxing, but spent quite a bit of their day off wandering around. They decided to go to downtown Detroit to visit Hard Rock Café and the Mo-town Museum. However, the museum was closed! So, after wandering through Detroit, they drove back to their homes, which was quite a process as we were fairly spread out. But, it was a day off, nonetheless!

Tuesday brought some fun new experiences for us. We left our friends in Howell and drove to Wapakoneta, OH. Well, the church was actually in a small town called Moulton, but we were close to Wapak. We hung out with some super cool youth, singing songs and doing Bible study. We also got to have some amazing root beer floats! It was great! The highlight for me, however, was host homes. I stayed with Jon and Jonathan, so right there you know that I was in for an adventure. We had the pleasure of staying with a high school student named Vicky, who is absolutely amazing. One random fact about Vicky is that she is in 4H and she raises animals. One of the first things she said to us when we got to her house was, "Okay, who wants to go feed the goats?" Well, how could we say no to that offer? As quickly as we walked in to the house, we walked out towards a small building that Vicky built with her father to house her rabbits and goats. We started off by visiting the rabbits and eventually made friends with the goats—Baby and Tino! Baby, as her name implies, is tiny. As a full-grown goat, Vicky can hold Baby in her arms. Tino, on the other hand is bigger than me! He weighs in at over 200 pounds and is still growing. Jonathan calls him a "belly goat." Tino was a little miffed at Vicky, so we didn't get to see all of their tricks, but we did get to brush him, dance with him and "play" with him. Well, Jon and Jonathan played with him, as playing involves smacking Tino in the head and pushing against his head. No, they were not guilty of goat abuse, that's how goats like to play! I knew that this huge goat could overpower me in a second, so I stayed on the other side of the gate. After all that excitement, we were ready to call it a night. We sure enjoyed our time in Wapakoneta with Vicky and Tino!

So, that is the latest in our busy schedule. We are looking forward to lots of time in the van and hopefully some time to relax, rest and rejuvenate. You are all blessings to us. Thanks for your support and prayer. Know that we are thinking of you all and praying for you as well. Take care and God bless!

Sara

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**Date:** 4/1/2006

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

April fools!

Different April fools were tried, none really successful. Mika was accepted to Watermark Denmark for next year, and we wanted to convince her that Jonathan has been called to be the Dane on the Denmark team next year since they "couldn't find a Dane." So we made this whole story up to convince and get Mika all excited that Jonathan made team, this whole conversation going on between him and me. We got Mika involved in the conversation, but it really didn't seem to phase her. Pretty much her reaction was, "Oh great, you made team, that'll be cool." We're like, "Dude! We want more of a reaction than that." Because in fact Jonathan is NOT doing team next year, we wanted to convince Mika that Jonathan was. But it was funny all the same.



**Dan Dean**

So on Friday we left West Virginia for Maryland! We've been anticipating this weekend for about a week or so; due to cancellations, we got to go to my hometown! What a trip it was getting through West Virginia to Maryland. Man. We sailed down windy roads and massive mountain hills, causing some of us to get motion sickness, dizziness, that whole mess. We finally leveled out a little bit in the middle of nowhere somewhere in the mountains and got out to take a break. I was having the time of my life, I love the mountains. I got out and it was just gorgeous outside, 70 degrees, which is like 30 degrees more than what we're used to. I laid out in the middle of the street because we were in the middle of nowhere. It was a great moment to look up and enjoy and appreciate creation. The beautiful mountains God's made for us to see.

Finally that night we made it in to Brie's church which we were playing at that night. We set up and headed to Brie's house for dinner. It was great to see her parents again; I met them before. Their house is amazing, dinner was great. My mom came to pick us up and us guys headed off to Bowie. The amazing feeling of sleeping in your own bed. Sometimes it's really taken for granted, but I appreciated it so much more.

Today, Saturday, we headed to D.C. pretty early in the morning to meet up with everyone and take the metro down there. I brought my dad along because he knows D.C like the back of his hand. He was our tour guide. We took buses all day from place to place. Saw a lot of the monuments and museums. Even saw a family that saw us at one of the Quakes! Yes! We were at the Lincoln Memorial and this guy yells "Captive Free!" and it was a kid with his parents that we saw at a Quake not too long ago! What amazing opportunities, even on trips to D.C we see people who know us. It was an amazing time, quite tiring, but so gorgeous. It was the cherry blossom weekend, with pretty pink flowered trees. We got pictures.

That night we played at Brie's church. A lot of my family and friends came, it was amazing to see them all. Afterwards, we went to Friendly's with my friends, which is a tradition we do quite a bit after we "do things." I loved just hanging out with my friends and teammates. It's like showing my new friends to my old friends. I love home, I miss home. Spring Break is coming soon, and I'll see them soon enough. For now, we'll finish the weekend and the rest of the week full force and super excited to stay in the East Coast area!

God Bless!

Take Luck!

Dan.

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**Date:** 4/4/2006

**Submitted by:** Brianne Smith

**Journal Entry:**

It's funny the relationships you build. We were at my church this past weekend in Maryland. On Sunday morning we did a song and a puppet show at both services and just hung out with the high school Sunday School class. It was nice to see everyone at church, but a little surreal. There are those people who you know real well, and therefore you are excited to see them. There are also those people who you do not know well, but who seem so excited to see you. It was the same way at Christmas, and I imagine it's the same way for anyone returning from college or any similar thing that takes you away for extended amounts of time.

Hanging out with the Sunday School was a lot of fun. Many of the kids were ones I had gone to Sunday School with in high school. My little brother was there, and he's always fun to hang out with.

Later that night we went over to Dan's high school youth group, called "the station." We hung out for a little while, played games and did a little acoustic worship. My two best friends, Miriam and Brittany, were able to come and hang out with us. It was so great to



**Brianne Smith**

see them and be around people I knew. Sometimes on the road you don't always have time to keep up with everyone at home.

The collision of my two worlds was a little odd. Returning home was good, but it also made me miss it even more. Leaving was extremely hard.

On Monday afternoon we headed over to West Virginia. Once we got into the town we were staying at, we thought we were lost, so the driver pulled into an empty lot to turn around. Only it had been raining all that morning, and we slid and got stuck in the mud, jack-knifing the van and trailer. We spent the next hour and a half trying to dig ourselves out. Finally the wife of the pastor of the church we were staying at found a member of the congregation to tow us out. It turns out that if we had another minute the way we were going, we would have been at the church. It was fun, though. We got muddy, and decorated the van and trailer. Only we didn't have any showers the next day.

Tuesday afternoon we went to Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. It was so nice to see all the students from there. We know a bunch of them already because they had come to events we played at to be on work crew. When we got there we all went out to dinner. After dinner we went to set up in the school's chapel. In order to do this, we had to drive through the campus on the sidewalks.

The program that night was amazing; I don't think we've ever had a program where the audience was so involved. I started to sing the gospel song of response, and everyone started singing along. We've never had that happen. The students at capital are so much fun! I wish we could go back and spend more time with them!

This past weekend was really busy, but so much fun, and definitely worth it.

Take luck, all!

-Brie

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**Date:** 4/6/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hey everyone,

This is another entry from Mika. Whoo hoo!! Well, let's see, we are getting closer to Spring Break, and I am excited to go home and see family and friends. Let's start off with Wednesday. We traveled from Capitol University in Ohio. We hung out with friends from there who we met earlier in the Event season. The campus is beautiful, and I really enjoyed the college. East Lakes had a good day traveling to Wheeling, West Virginia. We made it safely and set up for our Lenten worship service. I enjoyed the music for Lent because we don't get to perform those songs as much and they are beautiful. Jenn and Jon did the message and did a great job reaching out to us and the congregation. As we parted for host homes, Jenn and I stayed with Judy and the boys stayed with Ron and Wilda. The funny thing is that the boys lived right across the street from us. I felt like I was in those old TV shows where you know the neighbors and can just run across the street and hang out. Like "I Love Lucy," but instead of apartments, they had houses. I loved their humor and love for each other. Later that night I was going through the refrigerator and Judy decided to order pizza at 10 P.M. Dan came across the street and ate with the girls. I don't remember when the last time I had pizza that late at night.

The morning arrived and it rained. Yuck. We headed to Ron and Wilda's house and had a breakfast feast with eggs, bacon, sausage, grits, fruit, and biscuits. Delicious. East Lakes was able to have a late start so we (Ron and clan, plus Jenn and me) went to a place called Prabhupada's Palace of Gold located in the boonies. We took the windy streets of West Virginia to this place. It was beautiful with



**Melika Mindemann**

the gold, statues of elephants and people, pretty flowers and designs around the whole palace. I was really happy to learn more about that culture. We headed to the church and went out for lunch with Pastor David. We went to an Italian restaurant and hung out with each other until we went to a school. Here we played games with the kids, sang sing-alongs, and had a puppet show. We also were able to eat dinner with them. These kids were so hyper because Spring Break was the next day for them. I enjoyed seeing the kids having fun and also the college kids who were getting credit for volunteer work too. The amazing part was seeing them play the "People to People" game. The way they moved around was hilarious. Then we parted for host homes after that. We all headed back to our cute neighborhood and I walked around with Jonathan and Dan. We saw two deer 35 feet away. I have never seen deer so close before. That is how we ended our day. Have a great rest of the week and Happy Easter. God bless.

Mika

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**Date:** 4/22/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

Here we are again, traveling with our beautiful van and trailer. Yesterday was a great day. We are spending time with our good friends, the Wall family. They took us to Settlement Lutheran Church in Gowen, Michigan. This area is highly Danish-populated, so it's a great place for us to visit and learn more about Jonathan's background. Yesterday morning at the church, we had the opportunity to taste a Danish breakfast food, aebleskiver. I really can't pronounce it, but they were Danish Apple Pancakes. They're round and yummy and you cover them with either powdered sugar or brown sugar. Oh, did I mention they're yummy? They're so great. I may have even convinced Jonathan to send me a special pan so that I can make them one day! From there, we went to First Congregational Church in Greenville, Michigan, where we set up and prepared for the late-nighter that was ahead of us.



**Sara Jo Berge**

The night we spent with the youth in Greenville was amazing. God was truly there. We did some music, had a great workshop and concluded the evening with a worship/family style program. It was absolutely wonderful for us to see some of the youth finally opening up to worship. Nothing we could do would open them up, but God and His presence were enough to bring them out of their shells. Wow. A great reminder that everything we do is not for us or for our glory, but solely for God.

Today we said a sad goodbye to our friends in Greenville and Gowen. We drove across the state of Michigan to Wittemore, Michigan. After setting up, we prepared ourselves for another late night. This was again a great experience for us to see God working through us in the lives of the youth there. Many important discussions took place and God was definitely there in all that we did.

Romans 11:34-36 says, "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him. For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen!"

God is in everything that we do, even though there are times that it may be difficult to see him. Remember that everything we do should be for the glory of God and not for any personal gain. God loves you and so do I!

Take care and God bless!

Sara

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**Date:** 4/25/2006

**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn

**Journal Entry:**

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God

of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." -2 Corinthians 1:3,4

Lately I have been feeling inadequate, particularly in the area of comfort. You would think that with nearly eight months of ministry under my belt, comforting someone who is suffering would be easy, but it seems to get harder the more stories I hear and the more people that I meet. On Sunday we arrived in Chelsea, MI, and when we sat down with our contact, I was surprised to see that it was a youth director we had met at two of our events and who had allowed Dan to sign his head with a Sharpie marker.



**Jon Glenn**

After our program that evening I headed home with the youth director, and the rest of the evening was spent talking with he and his wife who worked with the church's children's ministry. In talking with these two, I heard a story that was all too familiar; they were burned out. They had so many hopes and dreams for the ministry, but yet they seemed thwarted at every turn. They would try and get things to grow, but no matter how many times they tried and no matter how they changed the program, the results would always be the same, and they were getting tired of trying. While I did my best to pose different options and try to help them see the situation in a new light, the fact of the matter is that I wasn't able to do anything.

So after spending a day with this couple and their 15-month-old daughter, which was a treat for me, we set off to our next destination in Bay City. My host home there was one of the most faithful families that I have ever met. The family had endured quite a few medical emergencies, and the father was recovering from surgery when I got there. Over the evening, I got to hear about the different things that had happened to this family, and all that I could do was sit in stunned silence.

From these two events, I think you can begin to see I'm feeling a little inept lately and it is frustrating me beyond belief. To offer comfort to people is what I'm supposed to be able to do, and when I can't offer that comfort, it makes me wonder what the point is of me being on team. And to try and talk about God and "the peace that passes all understanding" seems trite and wrong. So I'm left with a dilemma.

But as Paul mentions, no one is without affliction. Sure, not everyone is going to struggle with the same things, but all of us have endured some kind of affliction and have had to take time to heal from the wound that it has left. I know that this has surely been the case in my life, but that still doesn't give me any better of an answer for people. But there is that bond of suffering between people; we are all living in the human condition, and I think that is the kind of comfort that Paul might be pointing us to. The kind of comfort that Corinthians is asking us to give is the comfort of commiseration, not really being able to give a complete answer, but just be willing to be in affliction with the other person, just as Christ became human to endure all our afflictions.

We are not always going to have the right words to say to people nor are we going to do the right thing in order to bring comfort, but we have to have faith that someone will. We have to have faith that our God wrapped himself up in our humanity to know our affliction in order that by this knowledge he might bring us peace. So it is when we put ourselves by the side of someone and mourn with them and are afflicted with them that we find Christ by their side, mourning along with them and bringing the comfort of commiseration and the peace that passes all understanding.

Peace,

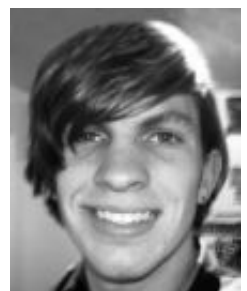
-jon

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**Date:** 4/27/2006  
**Submitted by:** Dan Dean  
**Journal Entry:**

For the past couple days, we stayed in a super small town in Ohio. This is the sort of town where everyone knows everyone. Even in the midst of going out for ice cream, the workers at the shop knew of us and that we were coming.

Mika and I went to a tattoo parlor that day and the artists even knew of us. Even in the



public we're doing ministry, and we should be doing ministry for everyone even outside of our "ministry setting."

**Dan Dean**

So in the tattoo parlor, Mika and I got tattoos, I added onto mine and Mika got a new one. It was a great eventful filled day.

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**Date:** 5/2/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hey Everyone,

How are you all doing? Let's see, the last time I wrote was right before spring break. Wow, that break went by quickly, and I can't believe I am already back and on the road. It was wonderful to see family and friends again. Besides that, we are getting ready for the Sunday worship service in Berea, OH. I really do enjoy this church a lot, and we had a good turn out for the service. We also were the entertainment for the lunch after the service. The music went by quickly and then on our way to Worthington, OH. We had great weather to travel in and arrived at a very nice and big church. When we went into the sanctuary area, we didn't have to bring in much equipment because we used theirs. Dan tried out new drums and Jenn played around with different pedals for the electric. They both had a blast during our family night program. We parted for host homes shortly after that. Jenn, Sara, and I stayed with the Lee family. They were wonderful. The family had food ready for us after we settled in. We watched movies all night and talked to the family. The next day was our day off, and we all relaxed. Mrs. Lee took us girls to a Korean restaurant. I enjoyed the food and spiciness. We had fun working with chop sticks and trying new food. We went back to the house and I watched lots of movies all day. We had a big feast for dinner. Having this meal made me realize how much I miss grilled food. We looked at the stars as we roasted marshmallows. We also sat in their hot tub talking and chilling. For me, this was one relaxed day and I really enjoyed it a lot. I am now ready for a new week of craziness. Tuesday, we packed and loaded in the van to Bowling Green, OH. We all love this place and the people here. The whole BG crew welcomed us and cooked us dinner before our youth night. I ran around chasing the cute ducklings in the yard. I wanted to take one on the road with me. We played ice breaker games and put on a concert for them with out Jenn. She fell ill that night. Jonathan played guitar with us, and he did a fantastic job for picking up chords and songs at the last minute. I mean last minute, too. Here is the end of my writings. Enjoy. Lastly, congratulations, Mark, on graduating from BG!! Have a blessed week. God bless.

Melika



**Melika Mindemann**

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**Date:** 5/6/2006

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

I don't believe I've ever had the chance to express just how wonderful camps are. Well, they are. Truly. We have been blessed with the opportunity to spend a full two nights at Camp Lutherhaven in Indiana. I never had the chance to attend a camp when I was a kid, not a real outdoorsy, cabin filled, building camp fires, sleeping under the stars kind of camp. I went to day camp at the park in our town. I went to choir camp on a college campus. I went to drum-major camp on another college campus...yeah, I was just that cool. It wasn't until college when I decided that I needed to work at a camp that I discovered all the wonders of camp life. I have always loved to be outside, to explore and discover nature, to see wildlife, to stargaze... It is God's greatest artistic expression. After spending two summers working at a camp in New Hampshire, camp is a beautiful place of growth, sanctuary, healing; a place which I have seen God use time and again to teach both the kids and the staff. When I heard we would be staying at Lutherhaven, I was uber excited, both at the prospect of being at camp and of seeing a place that I know is important to our teammate, Jon.

Granted, camp is not just butterflies and roses. Life on camp is hard. Life at camp takes ingenuity



**Jenn Albert**

and stamina. During a summer, counselors are worn, and by the end, seem to almost sleepwalk through days, getting by on what must simply be divine inspiration. The process of all that growth and learning usually comes pretty hard, involving the initial breaking, that painful and distressing realization of sin and fault, or some form of falling away of the unstable things one has built his/her life upon. It's not a fun or easy process to experience, but so good in the end. Living in that kind of close community can, sadly, bring out the worst in people (as well as the best). Just like with our families, those that live so closely with you will experience every part of you, and generally has to deal with the junk a lot more than the rest of the world.

Have I also ever mentioned how much I enjoy physical, manual labor? Ok, that may seem strange, but I really enjoy doing things that have a beginning, and, after working for a while, you can see your progress, you can see the change from where you started, and, therefore, know that you've accomplished something. One of our afternoons at camp was spent splitting logs, planting trees, cleaning up the sports equipment, and raking leaves. Aside from a slight bit of uneasy stomach, I had a great afternoon, hauling leaves and hearing camp stories from Jon. Three broken rakes later (all done by Jon, I'll have you know), we had taken the leaves from behind the cabins, and spread them along one of the trails. It was a beautiful thing!

For us, camp was a great time to rejuvenate and be energized for the coming weekend. I had my share of God moments, the beautiful and the painful, both necessary for me. One of the best reminders came in the form of a devotion given by the camp director's amazing wife, Brenda, on the topic of rest. It's funny how quickly we dismiss our need for rest as simply a weakness, something to be overcome. Our culture tells us to go and go and go, even when our instincts tell us that we need a break. Even our breaks have to be chock full of activity as vacations must hit the top 10 tourist attractions in an area in order to be a success. Meanwhile, God does not drop us neon signs. He does not send gigantic lightning bolts for messages. He comes, not in the loud winds, not in the massive earthquakes, not in the ferocious fires, but rather in the gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11-12), the gentle whisper that in all our rush and flurry of activity, we have no way of observing. And then we sit and wonder where God is and why He is so silent. We don't have the time or energy to be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10). Every inch of it must be filled by stuff.

How important and wonderful it is to take time to just be, without agenda, without productivity. Taking time to simply be still, to acknowledge God, and speak with Him without time constraints and the ever present ticking of a watch (I say this as much to other people as I do to myself--removing my watch is like losing a part of myself) seems impossible, but, for our own sanity and spiritual growth, is completely necessary. If even Jesus, the Son of God, needed to take time in quiet to refocus Himself on God, how can we dismiss such things?

- jenn.

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**Date:** 5/9/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

"There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience." Hebrews 4: 9-11

Sabbath rest. Something that God commands us to do, something that we need to do as humans and something that we often underestimate or overlook. Today, we on Captive Free truly appreciate Sabbath rest. We have been busy over the past few days in our ministry, and now the time has come to rest from our work.

On Sunday morning, we led worship in Sharon Center, OH. In between services, many of us participated in a Bible Study where we discussed Christian themes found in an episode of the Simpsons. Fun stuff!

From there, we made our way to Beaver Falls, PA. We were greeted by friends we had met at the



**Sara Jo Berge**

Pittsburgh Quake. It was so fun to see familiar faces. We set up our system, had a rockin' Family Night Program and tore down our system. We were grateful for the help that the youth gave us in loading and unloading.

On Monday, instead of our typical day off, we had many opportunities for ministry. Right away in the morning, we went to Mt. Olive Lutheran Church for a preschool chapel. Those little ones have so much energy and such beautiful smiles! Then it was off to Divine Mercy Academy, where we set up and did a concert for the 1-7 grade students. Wow. That was a fun time. I haven't heard so much screaming since our last school concert. After tearing down and loading up, we went back to Christ's Lutheran to help out at the Soup Kitchen. We were once again greeted by familiar faces as well as some new faces. It was wonderful to spend some time providing dinner music and also getting to know some of the people who came for the meal.

Now it is Tuesday, and we are truly beginning to understand the meaning of Sabbath rest. It's also become obvious to us that Sabbath rest does not need to happen on Sunday. It is important for us to work hard six days of the week, but then to accept the rest that God has provided for us, and commands for us, on that seventh day. I hope and pray that you will come to understand the greatness of Sabbath rest and find God in all that you do. Take care and God bless!

Sara

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**Date:** 5/11/2006

**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn

**Journal Entry:**

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." – Psalm 34:19

"Are you sure it will be okay to set up outside?"

"Don't worry about it. We have had you guys doing this for years and it always looks like it is going to rain and it never does," she said.

"Well if you think it will be okay, we'll get started." I replied.

We were at Trinity Lutheran Church in Wauseon, OH, a quaint country church in a great little community that we got to visit earlier on in our tour. But Trinity Lutheran is not special just because we had been there earlier in the year; they are special because they are a part of the Captive Free East Lakes tradition. You see, every year Trinity Lutheran Church books our team to come to their church to do a program outside on a flatbed trailer in their parking lot. We had heard from past teamers about this event, and so we were excited when we heard that the time had finally come for our outdoor concert. But our excitement began to fade and misgivings began to cloud our mind as dark grey storm clouds billowed in the skies above us hiding any hint of the sun and any hope of our outdoor concert.

But since we are always ready to do what the contact asks, and since she seemed so confident that it would not rain, and since she seemed to have history on her side, we began to unload our equipment onto the flatbed truck and set-up. But it was just as we were plugging in the last few cords and positioning the final microphone stand that it happened. It started small, just a few droplets here and there, but then it began to grow. Jonathan ran to unplug the main power source, I grabbed the tarp from under the front seat of our van and covered up a main speaker. Sara, Jenn, Mika, and Dan all ran for the trailer and began chucking out every single sleeping bag that they could find, unrolling them, and throwing them over every piece of sound equipment in sight. But then the real rain started, heavy wet droplets that plummeted from the sky and split into smaller drops as soon as they hit their destination. It was then that we decided that we would not be having an outdoor program that night.

After everything was inside, we took stock of our situation and called into the office (apparently this hasn't happened to a Youth Encounter team before). Brie came over and informed me that the system could not be used that evening for fear of electrocution, and so Jenn threw together a set list while all the rest of us were laying our cords to dry and trying to get dry ourselves



**Jon Glenn**

before kids showed up. But that night we pulled off what in my opinion was an amazing feat. And that evening a bed never felt so good.

We run into a lot of problems in this life, problems that often don't have an explanation. It was a complete fluke that it rained on us, just like it is a fluke when traffic gets backed up and you miss your flight, or someone runs a red light and hits an oncoming car. Bad things happen in this world for no apparent reason, and I'm not going to say whether it is God or not; I do know that God does not like to see his children suffer. And Christians don't get off any easier than the next guy. I know it says that God works all things for the good of those who love him, but still. That one verse does not change anything. In fact, things are often worse for a Christian.

The difference is in what happens after and in the midst of the event. Though bad things are going to happen to everyone, the Christian has the assurance that God is going to deliver them no matter what the circumstances. No matter what rain may fall God will be there. Just as he was there for us, so he will be there for you. In the midst of your storms and afflictions, my prayer is that you would know of our deliverer God and that you would experience his deliverance.

Peace,

-jon

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**Date:** 5/13/2006

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

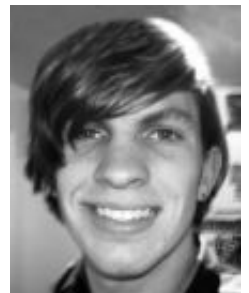
This weekend was super crazy at the lock-in where we got to hang out with kids who had just as much energy as we did! I love it when kids feed off of our energy and don't just look at us like we're crazy insane kids.

We rocked a lock-in, fun concert in which kids loved to play on my drums right after the concert! We played games and just hung out with kids, but this was my favorite part of the night:

Right after ending worship where we would technically "go to sleep" at midnight for Youth Encounter's policy curfew, I stayed up and talked with some kids. Talking with a 19-year-old girl about life, school, parties and piercing, you know, your normal stuff. In mid-conversation, another girl came up, and we started talking about karate. The words became actions as I tested her by giving a surprise kick to the shoulder and she totally blocked it. She started getting really excited and started bouncing up and down in her "karate position". I learned some karate moves that night, I acted like I knew karate, yeah I really don't. Finally to finish it all off, she asked me to pull a choke hold on her. So I went to choke her, trying not to hurt her, but she immediately grabbed my arm from behind and totally 180 flipped me over her shoulder onto the bean bag mats. It was amazing! Totally my highlight of the night.

That night I took a shower in a shower that could probably hold our entire team at the same time, and then some. If this shower had a size, it would be a 7X, for sure.

Dan.



**Dan Dean**

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**Date:** 5/18/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hi everyone,

It is my time again to share with you about East Lakes. Let's see...we were in Alden, NY for housing. Whoo hoo, a little time to ourselves and relaxation. We arrived in the rain. Yuck. Sun, please come back again. We



hung out with the youth for awhile with pizza and games. We played with **Melika Mindemann** the volleyball, parachute, and frisbee. I enjoyed warming up my hands and did pretty well with hitting the volleyball. The best part about this place, they have a bowling alley downstairs. I bowled and did better than I expected with the kids. The rest of the night was down time. We all chilled and hung out until midnight. I really enjoy how much Town Line has been so nice, open, and welcoming to East Lakes.

Wednesday, we are pretty laid back with team work and VBS preparations. I am so happy to have lots of time for my job. During this time, Jon was busy fixing the trailer fender again. Jon worked really hard and got stressed with it and tried putting it together. Thank God I don't work with vans or cars because I wouldn't know what to do. Thanks Jon. We also learned some new songs for VBS. A lot of plunking around the piano. My fingers hurt from playing that hard. I am happy to learn new songs and get ready for VBS in a couple of weeks. Here comes a new challenge, so bring it on. Sweet!! Besides that, we chilled and had a relaxing day. I participated in bowling with Dan and Jonathan. They both are very talented in bowling. I am not so good compared to them.

Thursday, rain, rain, rain again. Gross. We had another wonderful breakfast from the Vicar. We had some down time with team work. Headed to Brockport, NY where we have housing and a busy weekend ahead of us.

To all of you, have a fansastic weekend, and Jon, safe travels to your friend's wedding. Lastly, Happy Birthday and Mother's Day to Mom, Grandma, Margene, and Eleanor. God bless, and Melika has left the house.

Peace out!

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**Date:** 5/20/2006

**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen

**Journal Entry:**

Hey Everybody

I hope you are all doing wonderful now that the summer is almost here and springtime slowly has taken control over the weather. I am writing to you as I am listening to one of my favorite bands, Coldplay. I am listening to the song "Don't Panic" where the chorus goes like this. "We live in a beautiful world, yeah we do yeah we do, We live in a beautiful world, yeah we do yeah we do." Springtime for me is a time where I get back into feeling God as present all the time. It's good after a long winter to realize that God has actually not left this place but is in everything. It is not that he is not there during winter but during spring, the new life is popping its head up all over.

This spring is however a little different than other springs I have experienced in my life. Because this year I know that late spring means the beginning of the last chapter of Captive Free for me and it has meant a lot of wondering about what the future will bring. People keep asking us if we know what we're doing after this year and I keep on asking that I hope know when I get back. There is a for expectation that the plans are already made out in my head, but at the same time the focus still needs to be on what we are doing right now.

Well let's get to what we have been doing. Friday we were in Brockport, NY, where we early in the morning said goodbye to Jon; he was going to a wedding on Saturday. After he left, we had a busy day ahead of us with a couple of programs at two different schools and, after that we went on back to our church with our contact Steve. Later in the afternoon Steve took us to the beach at Lake Ontario. It was really awesome the sand was warm and had I had my swim shorts, I would



**Jonathan Nielsen**

definitely have taken a swim in the water. For dinner there was white Hot dogs (which apparently is a Rochester specialty) and turkey burgers and it was all great. We had a program in the church and it went great.

Saturday started slowly; we didn't get started until 11 am. We came to the church, got our equipment back in the trailer, and then we went on down to Colden, NY where we had a program that night. We had an awesome night with Pastor Dan and his congregation; it was awesome.

Hope you are all doing great wherever you are in this wonderful world.

God's peace

Jonathan

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**Date:** 5/25/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

Holy Toledo! We have been a busy, busy team. We were fortunate to have time to get some rehearsal in on Wednesday morning. The time has come to focus on sing-along songs for Vacation Bible School. Yay for fun songs with lots of actions!



**Sara Jo Berge**

Wednesday afternoon, we reverted back to our childhood and visited the Toledo Zoo. Highlights of our field trip include, but are not limited too, taking 308 pictures, watching a Komodo Dragon eat two rats whole, dancing through the skyway to "I Love My Zoo" music, and watching Dan freak out because of a small bird's very loud call. Overall, we had a great time at the zoo.

Back at the church, we saw our good friend, Angela, who came to see our program that evening. It's always fun to see familiar faces!

Today, I got up early and went to a kickboxing class. Woo hoo! It was so much fun. Our team later visited the Franciscan Care Center in Sylvania, OH. We were there earlier this year, but this time we visited individual rooms. Music is such a great way to share God's love with others.

Now we are in Bexley, OH, where we have reconnected with many friends from Bexley United Methodist, as well as our friends from the Gulf Coast team. Memorial Day Break and VBS training, here we come!!!

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**Date:** 5/30/2006

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert  
**Journal Entry:**



**Jenn Albert**

God never ceases to surprise me. Somehow He always knows what's best for us, even when we can't see it. This experience that we call team is not easy, it is not just a joyride, it is not always fun, and it is definitely not meant for everyone. I don't say that to leave one with the impression that teamers are just amazing and more special than any of the rest of God's children. I also don't want to scare people away from team, because, God knows, I've seen Him work in some amazing ways this year.

Now, take this how you will, but this is my interpretation of the events which led into and through our Memorial Day break. Sara and I decided that we needed to stay in the area in order to save money and avoid having to travel for a just a short break, so we were staying with a family from Bexley United Methodist which I had stayed with previously, the Ellisons. On Friday morning, our team was sitting in the fellowship hall of Bexley United Methodist Church eating breakfast. Jon is nursing his coffee and telling a story, mayhaps a dangerous combination as a few minutes later, I have the coffee in my lap. Jon really isn't klutzy, so the coffee dumped by his gestures was a little surprising. He offers to take me back to the Ellisons to get some clean pants. After leaving the church parking lot, we can hear a strange screeching sound when the van is moving. All right, weird, but we can't find anything wrong... until I notice that the back passenger side tire on our double axel trailer isn't moving. The sound is coming from the rubber dragging against the pavement. Now, the block we were on in Bexley was closer to two blocks, but we had no choice but to circle that block to go back to the church. Having no real way to do anything to help the locked brakes on that back tire, we simply had to drive, watching and hearing the tire drag, and pray that it didn't blow out. We made it all the way into the church parking lot before it blew. Phew! After running some tests, we decided that there was nothing we could do to help this, and began calling for trailer repair. The Gulf Coast Captive Free team was also staying in Bexley with us, and, together, we unloaded the entire contents of our trailer into the youth room, so that we could take off the bad tire and move the trailer with three tires. After running people to the airport, Kyle and Caroline from Gulf Coast, Sara and myself sat and talked in the van as we waited for this trailer repairman to come... which he never did... until later that night, after we'd left. Sara and I spent a small portion of our break trying to work out our trailer woes, calling our repairman, getting the tire fixed, loading the van in case it couldn't be fixed before camp this week. But most of the time was spent working on our own stuff and hanging out with our host family, the Ellisons, who are some of the most amazing people I have met.

Now, it would be easy to focus on all the bad of this situation, which I seem to do naturally, but, in a sermon this weekend, one of the keys to true happiness was to count your blessings, so I'll look at this differently. If Jon had not spilled coffee on me, we wouldn't have discovered the tire problem until today, Tuesday, as we were trying to travel to camp for VBS training. We would have simply detached the trailer to take people to the airport and not used it again until today. It would have only been Sara and I, trying to figure out what to do, and, possibly, unloading the whole trailer by ourselves. If the trailer had not busted in the first place (it's rather old and decrepit, it was bound to happen eventually), we would not have spent over two hours just talking together in the van on Friday afternoon. We would not have had something so crazy to laugh over, making fun of the decrepit trailer and its ability to spite us all. Sara would never have left message after message for a trailer repairman named Duane, and who knows what kind of an impact that may leave. Life has a funny way of working somehow, and God will use the most unexpected means to work His ways in us. Our break was truly blessed as we spent time in a God filled, loving household, constantly reminded that we were wanted there and constantly encouraged. As I sit and write this, I don't know that I would have miraculously fixed the trailer without any of this trouble if I could have. What can I say, it definitely makes for a good story!

- jenn.

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**Date:** 6/1/2006  
**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn  
**Journal Entry:**

Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has stuck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he

will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord. –Hosea 6:1-3a

From the moment I stepped off the plane in Columbus I felt listless about the ministry that I was going back to and desired nothing else except to go home and to crawl up in a little ball and sleep. I have to believe that God knew this secret longing, if no one else did, and so he granted me VBS training right after my arrival. For the week after our return to the road, my team and I hung out at Lutheran Memorial Camp in Fulton, OH going over VBS programs. Part of our training was also taking time to examine our ministry and refresh our ministry skills, which was how I found myself sitting in a team meeting needing to tell my team about my "less than enthusiastic" spirit toward our ministry.



**Jon Glenn**

As I sat in our meeting room, only half looking at the faces of my teammates, I began to form the words in my head as we looked over the ministry evaluation we had filled out the day before. The last question was a difficult one, "How would you rate your ministry overall?" The answer that I had marked bore all of the pain, angst, frustration and weariness of a life on the road: "One big area that I am scared of and I do not know how to fix." My big area was my apathy, and for the life of me I had no idea what I was going to do about it or what my team was going to say about it. So when the time came for me to share my answer and explain, I did so to the best of my ability. One team member was incredulous, others wore pity, and some wore the face of calm. Not necessarily the perspective I had feared, but after some discussion I still did not know how to retrieve the passion that I had lost.

Later on that evening, we had a campfire in the lodge and one of the Youth Encounter staff led music for us. At one point we sang one of my favorite songs, "All Who Are Thirsty." During the song there is a repeating chorus that says, "Come Lord Jesus, come." It was in that moment of worship that I was able to sing to God and to taste the passion that I was so longing for, and it was great to know that even in my moment of deepest apathy, God could still bring some passion to my road weary spirit.

To be completely honest...ministry burns you out! At least on our team that is the case. You come to a point where you just can't give anymore as much as you want to, and so like me you become listless and worn. It even happens to those not on the road. Even you I'm sure know of times of great apathy in your job or your relationships (spouses, children, parents, and friends). We pour out and then we can't go on.

But God's word for us from the book of Hosea is that we will be revived. We will be awakened, but it will take moments of pain. The reason why I think it takes "being struck down" is because I think we put other things before the relationship with God. We try and become passionate about so many causes and concerns that we miss being passionate about the only real passion of life, which is Christ. And so God did in the Old Testament with his people so many times; he put them through heartache and struggle to bring them back to himself, always because the relationship between God and his children was better than looking good in front of other nations. God wants us to be passionate about him, not about a ministry or any other cause, no matter how good it is. Instead we are called to know the Lord, to let that be our passion, and to let that be our ultimate revival.

Peace,

-jon

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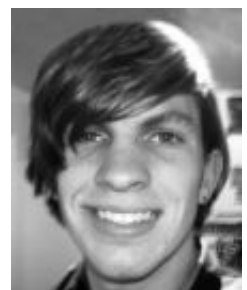
**Date:** 6/3/2006

**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

Wud up.

We made it back to Springfield, Ohio. We've been here before. Us three guys stayed at this super cool host family before. We arrived at the church, had rocking awesome Mexican food, and headed off to our host homes. We guys went out and hung out with our host family's horses, fed and brushed them. They also have a huge field and golf



cart type car that we took out and rode around the field.

**Dan Dean**

This was a good day just to relax. You can do ministry and worship in everything you do, even relaxing. Hanging out with your host family doesn't always mean you have to sit in a living room having deep discussions about theology. Relational ministry can be just enjoying each other's company, feeding horses and riding through fields. We worship God in everything we do, not just through church and music. It's good stuff.

Dan.

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**Date:** 6/8/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hey everyone,

The year is going by so quickly, before I know it I will be on Watermark Denmark next year. Besides that, we are in Canton, OH preparing ourselves for a fun cookout with the youth and adults. These kids came to the Northern Ohio Quake. It was great to see them again; we played games with them in the field. We played and everyone let loose all of their energy. Woohoo! Songs and music up next. We tried out new sing-alongs with them so we could get the practice for VBS. I had a wonderful time with this church and kids. Have a wonderful weekend. Take luck.

In Christ,  
Melika



**Melika Mindemann**

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**Date:** 6/10/2006

**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen

**Journal Entry:**

Hey there

Hope everything is well wherever you are in the world. Today and yesterday which is what I am writing about has been absolutely amazing. We has spent a couple of days at Peace LC in Canton, Ohio, and it has been like being invited in to a family. Wednesday we went to an attention center (which apparently is the same as a detention center just with a different name). During the program it was a little hard to get the kids into it, but afterwards they were all very open and we all had amazing conversations with these kids who all seemed to be aware of where they were how they had gotten there and what needed to happen.

In the evening we had a bonfire at Jon's, Dan's and my host home, it was awesome and we had a lot of fun just sitting and chatting with the folks there it was awesome (thanks for your great sounds, Mike)!

Next day we drove to Shepherd of the Valley in Warren, Ohio, which is a nursing home. Awesome program, where we really got to sing and talk with some old folks! Then we drove to our first VBS church in Lordstown, we ate dinner went to our host home, and that's all for now, folks.

Jonathan



**Jonathan Nielsen**

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**Date:** 6/13/2006

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

VBS, oh that blessed time of week-long host homes and hours of playing with kids. We're experiencing our very first VBS this week, and it has indeed been an adventure, and a test of my own reserves. I think I've

mentioned before that we all have different jobs on team, and part of mine is to put together the set list for our programs. This week, with VBS, this means choosing songs for opening, and five groups of kids, keeping in mind that each group has their own special song to sing in front of everyone else at the end of the week. Now, you have to understand, that making a set list, for me, is not just picking out songs, but trying to find songs that fit the age group, that won't be too repetitive, but offer some familiarity and that this group of kids will identify with. It really doesn't help that I overanalyze everything. By Tuesday, my host family has already determined that I am a workaholic.



**Jenn Albert**

Oh, my host family. These are some fantastic people, and I have to take this opportunity to brag about them. Cindy and Ed just work together. I'm sure that you have had friends or family that you've met, husband and wife combos that fit each other so well, compliment and obviously love each other. These two serve as inspiration for me for how I would like a marriage to look. They don't share all the same interests, it's not necessary. In fact, Cindy doesn't really care much for Ed's excitement over motorcycles, but she supports him through it. They shared the burden of chores with the kids, and purposefully give each other a night each week on their own. And that leads to the kids. Jessica and Jackylin offer a ton of amusement. Jessica, at 4, overflows with joy. She is one of the happiest kids I know. She is so loving and excited and has random streaks of shyness. Meanwhile at 2, Peanut is a hoot. She makes a kind of mumbling sound when she eats food she really likes. She plays games and gives me objects at home, but acts as though I am a big scary stranger when we're at the church for VBS, hiding her face, and running in the opposite direction.

This family has touched my life, undeniably, and I have been encouraged by their generosity and joy. To me, this is God's way of whispering to me of His love and providence, that with no fantastic doing of my own, He gives me a place to be filled and nurtured.

And so, I am torn on my verdict for VBS. On the one side, I get to spend, not just a couple nights, but a whole week with this family. On the other, there are almost 3 hours of sing-a-longs, which are great fun, but take a ton of energy and enthusiasm. The planning kicks my butt because I overthink things a bit too much. But we don't set up and tear down daily or drive all over creation but once a week. My jury's still out on this whole VBS thing, but even in my exhaustion, God blesses me. Thank you to all the families that open their homes for a whole week, opening their lives to us and taking us in as a part of the family.

- jenn.

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**Date:** 6/15/2006  
**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge  
**Journal Entry:**

"Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. *What we are is plain to God*, and I hope that it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than what is in the heart. *If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.*" 2 Corinthians 5: 11-13



**Sara Jo Berge**

"What we are is plain to God." I like that thought. God sees us as we really are, not as we try to be, or as we want to be, or as we think we should be. God sees us for who we really are, and yet, still loves us! What an amazing thing. We have nothing to hide from God, which is why I like the last part of this passage... "if we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you". I know that my teammates and myself can all come across as absolutely crazy. But, I like to look at that as us sharing our true selves. We are letting others see us as God sees us. Maybe it's crazy, but so be it!

The reason I go on and on about this is because we've been a little crazy in the past couple of days... Don't worry – we're all

okay! First of all, I must say that this VBS schedule makes it interesting to fill you in on everything that's happened. We all do so much apart from each other, there's no way that I can tell you everything. Fortunately, tonight, we got to do something all together! The good people of Lordstown Lutheran have a tradition going where the host families take the Captive Free members out for a Mexican dinner. Tonight we had the pleasure of dining at a restaurant called Cabello Bayo, or Horse Bay. It was wonderful food. This, however is where the crazy part comes in...

As we waited for our food, we munched on tortilla chips, which were provided along with salsa. Mmmmmm... Well, alongside the salsa were various bottles of hot sauce. A couple of my teammates, who shall remain nameless, decided to pour some hot sauce onto a tortilla chip and eat it. However, this was not just your average hot sauce. No, this hot sauce is known as Triple X Hot Sauce! Needless to say, Jon and Dan (oops!) had some burning mouths after that one! After that, Jon ate goat meat, Jonathan dared to eat fish, even though it was a bit spicy for him, and I ate pasta. Yup. I like Mexican, but for some reason the pasta just looked good. And good it was.

We had a great evening relaxing with our host families. It was wonderful to be a little crazy and show our true selves. I hope that you are all doing well and enjoying summer. Let loose and let your crazy side show!

Sara

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**Date:** 6/24/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Hey everyone,

It has been decent weather so far. In Ohio, we never know what the weather will be. Still beautiful to me. I like the humid and running around in the rain with no sweat shirt instead of cold rain and layers of clothes in Washington. Instead of talking about the weather, I am going to head into the last day of VBS. Knowing that we made it through another week with kids and sing-a-longs. We are tired and excited to say we knocked off two Vacation Bible Schools done and only have five more to go. Besides that we are also counting down the weeks until we are reunited with fellow teams, parents, and friends once more.

VBS in Austintown was amazing. I really enjoyed the kids, people, and host families. Something to mention is that I changed host families during the week. I loved each family I stayed with, but the family I joined later has two adopted children from India. The family requested me, and this was a great opportunity to minister and hang out with other kids who were adopted too. Being at their house, I enjoyed every minute of the kids and loved playing board games. I learned how to play CSI, and I found the clues and found the killer. I am a great CSI Investigator!! Maybe I'll be the next Nancy Drew. Hanging out with these kids made me feel at home and I loved them each and miss them too. Later that night, I tried Indian food for the first time with them. I LOVED IT!!! I want more Indian food. Thanks for the memories and learning more about my culture.

Friday we headed to Cincinnati to see alumni Amanda from East Lakes 04-05. We arrived and went out to dinner with her and her mother. It was great to catch up and have lots of laughs. Seeing Amanda thoughtout the year is great because we can catch up, tell her stories, and get perspective on places we have or going too. We chilled at her house and hung out too at her new place. That was grand and the next day we are going to Metropolis, IL. Home of SUPERMAN!!! My favorite, all time favorite super hero. We drove and drove for a long time. It is so cool to be only an exit away from Kentucky. We made it safe and sound. Met our contact at the rest area and headed to the church. We set up at the church for church and went out to dinner. Nice southern food. I loved the chicken and strawberry pie. We all loved our southern food. Went to the Superman statue. HUGE, GIGANTIC, AND ENORMOUS. We also went to the Superman store. I was in awww. I could not believe I was here. I am so thrilled about this week. Jon, Dan, Jonathan, Brie, and I are at a host home together. Fantastic family. We hung out with the kids that night and they are so fun to hang out with and get to know. Hey EL, can we take them on the road with us too?



**Melika Mindemann**

Have a blessed weekend. God bless and take luck.

Melika

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**Date:** 7/1/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

Happy July!

It's hard to believe that we're getting so close to the end. It doesn't seem like very long ago that we were nervous about meeting each other and wondering what the year was going to hold for us. But, now we are well into VBS season and I, for one, am starting to realize that, in a month and a half, I won't be seeing my teammates everyday.

We have been enjoying our time in Metropolis. Friday was a long day. Jenn stayed home sick, so we survived as best we could. The last day of VBS was fun. At game time, we played with water and many of us got soaked! It was great. We said goodbye to the kids with a lunch of hot dogs and macaroni and cheese! Mmmmmm.... Later that night, we had a program. The kids did a wonderful job singing and then we had fun rocking out for Jesus, although we most definitely missed Jenn.

Today, Jenn and I had a special treat at our host home. Our host mom, Diana made us her special Swedish pancakes. They were delicious!!! But, it was then time to say goodbye to good ol' Metropolis. We drove up to Columbia, Illinois, which is the home of the one and only Jenn Albert. We had lots of fun experiences. It was fun to meet her family and some of the people from her church. Then we had Imo's pizza, which is made with provol cheese and has a bit of a different taste. But, we all gave it the stamp of approval. Later on, we made a trip to St. Louis to the infamous Ted Druwes for frozen custard. We all had something called a concrete, which gets its name because right after you get it, you should be able to hold it upside down and the contents don't fall out. Well, I witnessed this to not be entirely true, as a boy tested it and most of his frozen custard fell out on the ground!

All in all, we had a wonderful time in Metropolis and have moved on to new adventures in Illinois and beyond. Thank you for continuing to follow our adventures and to pray for and support us in this ministry. We pray that God continues to bless and watch over you all. Take care!

Sara



**Sara Jo Berge**

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**Date:** 7/2/2006

**Submitted by:** Jenn Albert

**Journal Entry:**

Going home.

We all have a variety of reactions to our homes, our families, the places in which we grew up that are a part of shaping us into who we are now. Memories are attached, the good and the bad; the corner with all the loose gravel on my childhood street where I lost control of my bike when I was 9; the burnt out cafeteria at the middle school where we played volleyball while listening to Ace of Base's "I Saw the Sign"; the open field where we tumbled around, acting out stories of imagined places while we still had the free imagination to become people other than ourselves. Bittersweet.

It was over a month ago that I received the voicemail my mom had left telling me "and we're just pleased as punch that you'll all be coming to Columbia on the weekend of the 4<sup>th</sup>." No joke, pleased as punch. It took me a moment to fully comprehend these words. We had not heard anything from the office about going to Columbia, my home town; we hadn't even asked to go that direction. I was all a mix. I wanted my church to see what I had been doing for a year, to understand that, and maybe better



**Jenn Albert**

understand the next year with Youth Encounter. I wanted them to meet my team and understand the people I talked about when I came home on break. But... it would be a collision of worlds. What if my team wasn't as I had described? What if my church became the worst place we had been? What if I messed up during a worship service? What if the congregation didn't respond to the music or the message? What if our coming made them regret how they'd supported me during the year thus far?

We've found on team that when the destination is somewhere familiar, we suddenly have to completely rethink the game plan going in. Things have to be more flexible, the lines of communication become distorted as it doesn't make sense to have the person normally responsible contacting the church when the person they would contact is a relative of someone else on the team. The ways in which a congregation normally respond to you change dramatically. The teammate whose familiar territory it is receives a ton more attention. Things shift.

It's hard, but part of all of us wants to be able to share this part of our life with these other parts of our life. We don't know if the parts will take to one another... but when it does, it is the greatest feeling of relief.

On Sunday (July 2, for which this is written), I finally realized the parts had fit and accepted each other somewhere along the way. I realized this in the middle of the service, as Jon was directing an interactive Bible story. Members of the congregation were getting into their parts, truly, and the rest laughing and enjoying themselves as our team got a kick out of them as well. It was beautiful, and I have never been more proud of my congregation before.

Not that everything was all roses and butterflies... the time wasn't perfect as I stumbled through our sung communion response, and the Sonic was horribly understaffed for Sunday lunch, but welcome to real life. The important thing was walking away from my home relieved, and feeling cared for, and, yes, even missing the place. To those at home (because I know that journals end up posted on a board in the church), please understand that I do care for you and miss you. There are times that I want more than anything to be there, not to move so much, but to stay in one place. God never calls us to the comfortable. I have to trust that He knows better than I. He has shown that over and over, yet again with our trip to Columbia, IL. Your support means the world to me. God bless.

- jenn.

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**Date:** 7/6/2006

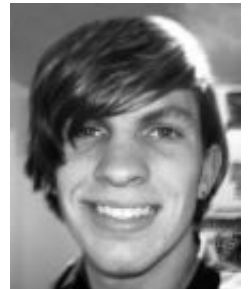
**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

For the second time we had the amazing chance to go out of our region and go to Jon's old Camp Lutherhaven in Indiana. We left Michigan for Lutherhaven, but first made a stop to a day camp where we hung out with kids all day, playing water games and helping with crafts. The next day, Thursday the 6th, we did the same thing, but there were two things that really stood out. First of all, I didn't bring a swim suit because I was not planning on getting wet, but the counselors at the camp in charge busted out a Slip n Slide, two of them put together making it twice as long. I was watching them slide, some were sliding pretty well, some not. Like, you couldn't get the whole sliding experience smoothly all the way down both Slip n Slides. So I got the idea to get the dish soap out of the kitchen. I ran in and got it, unscrewed the lid and poured half of the bottle all over the Slip n Slide from beginning to end. After that, no matter how slow you approached the Slip n Slide, you were really sliding on that thing. This inspired me to take off my shirt, roll up my jeans and try the Slip n Slide just once. It was beautiful.

Number 2. We didn't know what else to do with the kids for two hours because we already played music, did puppets, played games and water games. Had snack, crafts and football free time. What else do you do? Watch a movie, that's right! We watched "The High School Musical". One of the most cheestastic Disney movies I've ever seen. I had respect for it though, because the two high schoolers, the guy and girl, had obvious feelings for each other but respected each other physically in their feelings on the movie, rather than in other movies where high school aged couples would not. I guess it had to be because it's Disney. Well, it was good.

The ride home was pretty hilarious. I was pretty tired from the long day with kids, so I was asleep in



**Dan Dean**

the van on the way back to Lutherhaven. But all of a sudden, I am woken up by Jon yelling out the window to the car next to him. He's talking to some eight-year-old girls in the car next to him who were just staring at Jon. Apparently these girls were just staring at everyone in every car they passed, just to freak them out. Didn't work for us. We ended up having this funny conversation with them as we're in traffic on the highway. Things you can do while stuck bumper to bumper.

Lutherhaven was a gorgeous fantastic place. We got to hang out with kids my age, high schoolers, it's beautiful. That night we had a campfire worship for them in a big pavilion with a big stage for us, all electric set up. The worship was amazing there, all lights out, all God flowing through the pavilion. We received a letter of big encouragement from a girl who went there for a couple years but never really felt God, but tonight she did. It's awesome to know even though we do the same stuff all the time, it still affects people and God is flowing through us.

I love camps.

Dan.

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**Date:** 7/8/2006

**Submitted by:** Brianne Smith

**Journal Entry:**

This weekend was pretty exciting; very busy, but we got to hang out with familiar faces. Friday we went to St. Mark's in Bowling Green for the fourth time! We know them just as much as they know us; we've seen them at a Quake, a Construction Zone, and now for the fourth time at their church. Six times we've seen these guys.

We set up outside in a huge tent for a lock in and played an outdoor concert. We did games for a little bit, but for the most part, we just hung out. We played Ultimate Frisbee, hung outside, watched movies; it was relaxed. Usually we would have to have a minute by minute of scheduled things to do in a lock in, but this church being so casual with us, we just hung out and they loved it. The next morning, we even got to go to Panera Bread and have a picnic up on a hill. We are really going to miss you guys. A church that this team will always remember.  
Brie



**Brianne Smith**

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**Date:** 7/11/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

We made it to our fourth VBS! Woohoo! We're in Lima, OH, another cute little farm town with lots crops and cows, aww pretty cows. We got a really cool opportunity to play a church service outside getting ready for "Fiesta!" which is the theme for this week. So far we have done two days, and the kids are super energy filled! I love just playing with them and singing and showing them actions to all the songs. I wanna keep one of them, my host sister who doesn't want to leave my side! I'm making some really nice friends here that I'm really going to remember! We usually don't do Fiesta, but this week we get to try something new, like winging puppet shows and songs! It's always fun to try something new. Well, I am off I hope you all have a splendid week!  
Mika



**Melika Mindemann**

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**Date:** 7/13/2006

**Submitted by:** Jonathan Nielsen

**Journal Entry:**

Hey boys and girls,

How are youn'z guys holding up in da heat? Are you keeping up to the beat yo yo? Since Tuesday's horrific day where I spent two hours in a dentist chair, I have taken Vicodin painkillers, so I'm all drugged up, but that's okay because everything is more funny. (*Editor's note: Youth Encounter does not advocate the non-medical use of painkillers to make your life more funny. Just say no, kids.*) Tuesday I got a wisdom tooth pulled, and when I woke up Wednesday morning with a huge pain in my mouth, I had the first red spot of my life on my pillow. Wednesday was a fun day; I went along to the church, because I thought I was fine. I wasn't. Halfways through VBS I went and laid down, because the right side of my mouth was filled with blood, which is pretty nasty, mainly because of the very bad taste of iron you get in your mouth, but I guess that means I'm healthy...



**Jonathan Nielsen**

Today I've spent sleeping because I've been knocked out by drugs.

Th-th-that's all folks  
Jonathan

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**Date:** 7/18/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."--Philippians 1: 6b

It is great to see the good works God is doing around us. Today Jon asked me a question commonly asked on our team: "Where have you seen God today?" I think it's a great thing to consider each day. God is constantly at work--in every person, thing and situation. We just need to look for it.



**Sara Jo Berge**

Usually, when asked that question, I automatically think of people and the things they've done. For example, on Sunday, we all went over to a family's house in Royal Oak, MI for a pool party with the youth. On Monday, we met many new kids and had fun praising God with them. Today, we were encouraged by many at the church, and Mika and I were given a tour of downtown Detroit by our host. We are blessed daily by the generosity, smiles and encouragement of the people we encounter. However, it is also good to seek out God in the world around us--situations we find ourselves in, relationships with others, the beautiful creation surrounding us and so much more. God has begun a good work in you, in me, and in everything around us. He will be continuing these good works until Jesus returns. We just need to look for them.

It sounds so simple, but can be so difficult. As we are winding up our year together, we are growing weary, which can lead to frustration, little patience and other things that cloud our view of God's good works. There are so many things that keep us excited about the ministry we're doing, so many things we are looking forward to after our year together is done, and so many things we dread facing because our year together is almost over. In this mix of emotions and cloudiness brought on by weariness, it can be hard to see God's good works. But, I've found that when things are difficult, it's good to step back and say, "Where do I see God?" For me, the longer I spend thinking about it, the more I see that God is showering me with goodness and that things aren't as bad as they seem. Seeking out God's good works helps to lift me out of the clouds of darkness.

Thanks to all of you who have been and continue to be so supportive of our ministry. Your thoughts and prayers mean the world to us. Please keep us in your prayers as we finish up our year together. I will pray that you will seek God's good works and find that he has been blessing you the whole way through.

In His love and peace,  
Sara

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**Date:** 7/20/2006

**Submitted by:** Jon Glenn  
**Journal Entry:**



**Jon Glenn**

"And he said to them is, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?' But they were silent. And he looked around with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was restored."-Mark 3:4, 5

This past week we were able to spend some time with the great folks at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Royal Oak, MI. This suburb of Detroit is a booming metropolis full of urban flair. The main street is lined with boutiques, restaurants, and bars which provide entertainment for twenty and thirty-somethings who inhabit this trendy milieu. After a few weeks in more rural settings it was great to come here, and it was even better when we discovered that this town was the home to a Caribou Coffee shop. (Probably the best chain in the nation! I'm sorry Starbucks junkies, but it's the truth.)

And it was at this urban oasis that I found myself sitting with quite a few youth from the church on Wednesday afternoon drinking coffee and just talking. One of the best conversations that I had that afternoon was with a guy named Wes. We talked about social justice and service and how we both look at God. It was one of the best conversations that I had in a long time. It was good to be able to just rest for a while and do something that I like to do, and enjoy humanity and one of God's greatest gifts to humanity, a finely roasted coffee bean. But while it was a good conversation, I felt like I was holding back and not giving myself fully to the person I was talking with.

On Thursday, we were very surprised to have one of our evening programs cancelled, and so we took the afternoon and evening and each went our own ways. My path took me back to my host home where I fell on my bed and collapsed into a deep sleep, skipping the pool party that some kids from the Youth Group had invited me to earlier in the day. In fact, one of the youth called me in the middle of my nap, but I was too far gone to be able to understand anything that he said to me, and in fact I thought he was one of his sisters. But after I hung up the phone with him, I hesitated and wondered whether I should go or whether I should stay and continue my nap. I decided to stay and nap.

My need for sleep and my dependence upon caffeine to sustain my life are all signs that point to the fact that I'm weary, and not just me, but my whole team. This year has worn us out, and we are all observing it in each other. Today during one of our meeting times, Jenn said that her low was walking into the church on Thursday and hoping to get some energy from us, but instead seeing the same sleepiness etched in the faces of every single person. I have learned this year that weariness produces a coldness of heart. When you become weary, you also become more selfish and you hold back a lot more than what you do when you're well rested and comfortable.

I think we have all felt that weariness at one time in our life or another. The mother who has worked all day and then must come home and care for her small children. The student who is closing up his semester with finals. The old woman who has lived a long life. The Pharisee who has fought so hard to defend the rules of Sabbath he has not taken one himself. What we are dealing with in the passage from Scripture above is a group of people who have become so weary trying to defend a law that they have hardened their hearts so much that they can't feel any compassion for those they are trying to serve.

But that is where Jesus steps in. Wherever Jesus steps in, there is newness of life and reprieve from the weariness which dogs us. Jesus reaches into our life and defies our selfish laws and rule keeping and performs a miracle. Whatever your weariness is, please know that Jesus wants to work a miracle in it despite your selfishness and mine.

Peace,

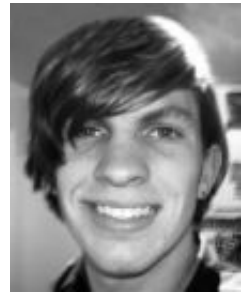
-jon

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**Date:** 7/22/2006  
**Submitted by:** Dan Dean  
**Journal Entry:**

Hot dog, we're headin up into Michigan! Today we made our way up north to Sparta, Michigan, home of the Michigan Spartans. Two big things in Michigan are the Michigan Wolverines and the Michigan State Spartans; there were true fans of both teams up here in Sparta.

Yesterday, the 21st, was Jonathans 21st birthday; what a day for a golden birthday in America. In Denmark, Jonathan could drink when he was 16 but in America, it's very different. So this whole year of being in America, he waited to be able to drink, which is a normal custom in Denmark. So our whole team went out to Applebee's so everyone could enjoy and Jonathan could enjoy buying a 21-year-old beverage.



**Dan Dean**

Today we made our way all the way up to Sparta where Brie, Jenn, Mika, Jonathan and myself were staying. A super big house in the middle of these corn fields, ironic.

Our time is quickly coming to a close--this VBS and one more, we're done. We will have done seven VBSes in a row, seven weeks of Bible School. Amazing, draining, they both rhyme and go hand in hand. But what's going to be cool is headin all the way into the Upper Peninsula; that'll be cool.

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**Date:** 7/27/2006

**Submitted by:** Melika Mindemann

**Journal Entry:**

Ladies and Gentlemen; boys and girls; WELCOME TO MELIKA'S GRAND FINALE!!!

This is my last shout out until next year on Watermark Denmark. Both happy and sad at the same time because it won't be with the same team, inside jokes, or memories of the East Lakes region. I am writing to you in Sparta, MI. Where Kevin (NE) is from. Hello Kevin!!!! It is great to be here in this town once again and see familiar faces. We were in Sparta at the beginning of the year (Sept.) and now ending here, too. Great time for the contact see how we started and send us off and finally end with us, too. Wonderful to meet new kids and especially Gunnar, future teamer for 06-07, who I will see at training in August.



**Melika Mindemann**

Right now, I am having a blast hanging out with the kids and helpers here at Bible Camp. It is so hott and humid in the building we are singing in. Before the first song is even done with, we are all sweaty, sticky, and exhausted. The great thing was, it was a week where we could hang out with kids and do team jobs.

Today, we get to have a normal day with kids at Bible School. Hot and humid, but the day went by quickly. We are really excited to have a Pond (Pool) Party. Hanging out with leaders, junior guides, and some kids. Lots of fun relationally and the boys had fun swimming in the gross pond. I decided not to swim and just chill with the people. Now the kids smell like pond scum. They had a blast with the boat, diving, dunking, and lots of laughs. I really enjoyed picking on Kevin's brother David. What a hoot. I am really going to miss that boy and his hyper and energetic self. It was also cool to hang out with Gunnar and to see what his perspective for team was, and what he is looking forward too.

Thursday, we get to have a worship service and do more than sing-alongs. I love that. For staying in one place for a week, we don't get to perform our other songs. I feel as if I haven't performed them forever. That night, we played our hearts out. I enjoyed it so much that I got goosebumps through my sweat. Jon, Jenn, and Sara did a great job putting together a different worship service. It was nice to see our friends, the Wall family and their friends, once more before we leave. It was really hard to say good-bye, especially when we all have grown close to them and built a fantastic friendship with. May God bless them.

I am counting down the days until we make it back to Minnesota. I am excited to see other teamers, and my mom and aunt, too. I am not hating team, I just want to try new things with my new teammates and see new places again. I want to start up a new busy year again, and I'm excited to see DENMARK!! One more VBS left in a place where they haven't had a team before. I am excited about that. Here we go. Those who are traveling to debriefing/Homecoming, have safe

travels and see ya there.

Take luck and God bless.

Melika

THANKS FOR COMING! CATCH MELIKA NEXT TIME IN THE FALL OF 2006!!!

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**Date:** 8/3/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Jo Berge

**Journal Entry:**

God continues to surprise me. It's amazing how life can seem so completely under control or very predictable and then, before you know it, God shows you his incredible power. We have been experiencing God's goodness and power this week. It's our last week on the road, and it's definitely a bittersweet experience. We are starting to discuss things that we are excited about after team, fears that we have about after team, and what we will miss after team. I for one have seen God working in our hearts and in our relationships, preparing us for a week of debriefing and to part ways in a short week. God has blessed us this week with a wonderful church in Hudsonville, MI filled with amazing, generous people. We have had a great time getting to know the people here and enjoying time as a team as well. Today, we had a great time with the Haberling family and our team all together, and we experienced a bit of God's power. Last night, we had decided to take a trip to the beach, because it has been unbearably hot and the church does not have air conditioning. So, a swim in Lake Michigan sounded lovely. This morning when we woke up the sky was cloudy and rain was threatening. But, we decided to press on. It rained the whole way to the beach, but as soon as we got there, it stopped. The sun didn't come out, but it was definitely nice enough to swim. About the time we were getting ready to head back to the church, it started raining again. We really felt like God was watching over us. We had a wonderful day playing in the waves and burying each other in the sand. It was a great outing to have together as a team within our last few days together. This year has been absolutely wonderful. Words cannot express how much God has worked in me and blessed me with and through my teammates and the people that I have met while on the road. I hope that you are enjoying life and finding God working and displaying His power in big and little ways. Take care and God bless!

Sara



**Sara Jo Berge**

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**Date:** 8/4/2006

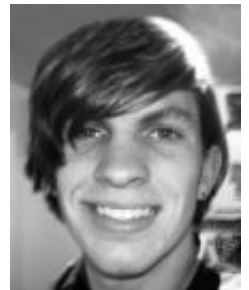
**Submitted by:** Dan Dean

**Journal Entry:**

Today has completed our last day of VBS and last VBS all together! Together we have completed seven full weeks of VBS. Our VBS season is over, as is our tour on the road. This weekend will be our last, and on Monday we will be heading into Minnesota for our final debriefing week with Youth Encounter.

Words cannot describe what kind of trip this has been. Things that have been said and unsaid in these journals and within ourselves on the road; Captive Free has been life-changing. Every person who does Captive Free has an incredible experience, but every single person has a incredibly different experience, but there is change in each person all the same. This year has been amazing for us, so many people have been touched by God, and so many people have touched us and will be remembered this year. We thank you all so much for support and prayers through our year on the road. The amazing memories and people will never be forgotten, we thank God so much for you, but it hurts so bad to leave. We pray that God goes with you in everything you do, that you will continue having teams to bless you and you to bless them. Truly what an amazing, tough, incredible ministry this is.

Jenn, Sara and Jon will all be going on a team together next year on the Community-Based Team in



**Dan Dean**

South Dakota. Many thanks from them for all support for their ministry next year. Mika is also doing another year of team going on Watermark to Denmark. She also is very appreciative of all support given to her and prayers most of all. Brie gives goodbyes to all as she is very excited to be going back to school to Valpo in Indiana; she will not forget you all. Jonathan is going home to Denmark, to work, hopefully wanting to work with kids, and he'll be taking care of Mika when she comes to Denmark. And I will be going home, and sleeping. Ha, working for a while then moving to Pittsburgh to be a youth leader. This is an amazing call that I'm so for sure taking.

Thank you all again, may God go with you. God's peace.

In His Grip -

Dan Dean

Captive Free East Lakes 05-06

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