

Captive Free North Central 2005-06 Journal

Date: 9/20/2005

Submitted by: Bri Traquair

Journal Entry:

I'm on Captive Free. Again! Another year of away from home. Another year of living in a van. Another year of sleeping in a different bed every night. Another year of spending the majority of my time with six other people I've never met. Another year of eating peanut butter sandwiches. Every. Single. Day. Who talked me into this? When I remember, I'm going to track them down and...



Bri Traquair

...Give them a great big hug. I LOVE this! Some people would insist that I suffer from partial insanity for doing a second year of team, but I would beg to differ. So why am I doing this again? Right now, I can't imagine doing anything else. Last year was an amazing experience, and I can't wait to see what God has in store for me this year.

Currently we're staying with a family that is pretty much our home away from home this year. The Wright family has been the adoptive family of many teams in the past, and we were excited to hear that we'd be spending a lot of time with such a wonderful family. We've taken over their basement and set up a projector so that we can watch movies on their wall. We played cards, went four-wheeling, jumped on the trampoline, and have even made plans of having paint ball wars the next time we're here. It's so great that we get to hang out and relax with them.

Already being away from home for a year has taught me to truly appreciate the blessing of the families we stay with. It's hard to be away from my family for such long periods of time, but it definitely eases homesickness when I meet people who make me feel even a little bit of home. I've seen God work in so many amazing ways, and I'm so glad that one of the ways He chose to work is to give the gift of hospitality to these people. I wouldn't be able to do team without them.

Date: 9/27/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

I find that while I am on the road, the outdoors is what I miss the most. It's hard driving through beautiful landscapes, yet not able to be a part of it. Right now the leaves are turning amazing shades of orange, red and yellow. All I really want to do is go hiking! Yesterday, because of this great desire, I convinced a couple of my teammates to join me in a search to find a park. We were in luck!



Jenny Frantz

Osakis, Minnesota is on the banks of a lake. Spending time sitting by the water and writing letters is just what I needed the most. It helped me to not only relax my mind and body, but it truly helped my spirit. Even though I am having the most amazing time of my life, I find that I struggle constantly to find time for just God and me. Often the few moments I have I debate whether I should spend it writing letters, calling family and friends, or spend some alone time. Being an extrovert, the last choice is usually the least chosen.

Other than my urge to get outside and hike, everything is going very well. Barrett was wonderful. It was a wonderful experience of worship. It's rare to find time to just worship, considering we are usually leading it, but I am thankful for the moments I can find. God has truly blessed our ministry and our lives this year.

Date: 10/13/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

WE'RE AT CAMP! I LOVE CAMP!!! Park River Bible Camp (PRBC) has been a wonderful retreat. Since we're here for a number of days, we were able to bring our suitcases into our cabins, not just our overnight bags. I think it's surprising how much of a blessing that is!

Yesterday was one Miss Sarah Danielson's birthday! WOOHOO! We did our best to make it the best twenty-third birthday she'll ever have. About every fifteen minutes, all day long, Andrea yelled "happy birthday" at the top of her lungs. For our one on one, Andrea and made signs. We sang to her in the morning and during our program. Sarah also had what she called "the best phone day ever!" Hopefully she'll remember this day for a long time!

Speaking of the program, it was AMAZING! Becca, our contact, was expecting about 75 high school kids to show up last night. However, when we opened the doors to the high school gym, over 250 kids came pouring in! Churches from all over, up to 40 minutes away, brought their youth groups. I was so excited for PRBC; it was an amazing success! I was also excited because it was the first time on the road that I was going to give my sharing. I feel so blessed that God gave me the opportunity to share my faith story with so many! I pray that He uses my words to change even just one of those who were there.

I was also amazed with the energy in that gym. Becca and Jared (another PRBC program director) had a whole group of kids up and dancing the whole time. I could tell they were having a fabulous time, and that fed all of us on team. We had so much energy throughout the whole program, and it continued the rest of the night. Afterwards, I had the chance to talk to a group of high school girls. They were so fun and full of life! They showed me a foot cheer they had created and danced with us. After a while, they even invited us to their volleyball game tonight. Of course, we had to go!! So tonight, we entered the gym just after their game started. Park River varsity was playing Jared's (in addition to his PRBC job, he was also the assistant volleyball coach) college team. It was obvious they were all having a fun time. In the middle of the game, the girls looked up to me and yelled, "HEY, JENNY," and then proceeded to show me their foot cheer with the addition of a suggestion I had given them the night before. I was so flattered and excited! I hope we continue to hear from them. They were incredible young women!

I thank God for Park River Bible Camp. It has been an inspirational place for me and hopefully for many others!



Jenny Frantz

Date: 10/18/2005

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

So not a whole lot is going on right now...we are driving around a whole bunch and going from Dakota to Minnesota and then back to Dakota. The more and more I'm in South and North Dakota, I'm finding it convenient to just call it Dakota and not really specify which is the geographical superior. But we are staying at a really nice place, and we got to watch a volleyball game tonight as well. The best part, though, was that Aaron, Bri and I had a huge karaoke jam with our host sister...it was glorious!



Todd Thieme

Date: 10/20/2005

Submitted by: Aaron Fong

Journal Entry:

Okay, to give some background real fast. We were somewhere in the vastness of South Dakota, a.k.a. South Dakota! The place, Willow Lake; the day, October 20, 2k5. I was staying with Todd and Bri at this amazing host home; it was like, KICK BACK! And there was some MAD karaoke going on for the couple of nights we were there. By that I mean, whoa! Did that just happen?? So the first night, all's well. Hunky dory, you know, not even a mouse through the house deal. OH! Except there was a spider in the shower, so I poured shampoo all up on him. And yes, he died, smelling like flowers. The next day we put on a program for the local folk, and it was a lot of fun! Like I jumped in the air! And KICKED at the same time! Hahaha. And I pretty much almost kicked Todd's mic over. And then I forgot some words for a song. And then I pretended like I was a semi trying to hit our van. It was a



Aaron Fong

program to remember. So we wanted a karaoke night part II, so we hurried up and packed up. Karaoke night part II made part I look like the Mickey Mouse Club, which then turned into a pillow fight that ended in tragedy. So we decided to call it a night. We go to bed and we had to wake up before the sun was supposed to be up, and I'm all right with that because I haven't seen the sun rise in... forever. So when six A.M. rolls around, the alarm clock goes off. Todd didn't really get up because we could hear that Bri was in the shower. So I decided to go up and get some breakfast and say goodbye to our host sister. AND THEN IT HAPPENED. I stepped down off the bed and my socks immediately filled with a liquid so cold that an Eskimo would have been offended. And I'm like, um, Todd? The floor is wet and cold. He didn't believe me and walked over and he shrieked like a school child. We then made our way down the hallway clog-hopping through about a million feet of water. Like we thought earlier, we thought that Bri was in the shower. But no one was to be found in or near the bathroom. So we're like, uhmmmm? We look in and the toilet is shooting water out like a small army of kids gone wild with super soakers. So we decided that we should probably tell someone. So we go upstairs and tell our host dad, and Todd says very calmly, "You have a tremendous amount of water in your basement." So we all scurried down below, which then triggered flashbacks to when I served onboard the Russian submarine U-378. We stopped the toilet from its blasphemous activities and then I sat by the fire. And THAT, ladies and gentlemen, is the story of the flood. I felt so bad! We were all like, I hope we didn't cause it!

Ok so then we headed off for Apple Valley, Minnesota, which is like a million miles away. And we finally get there and we go to our host homes because we didn't have a program that night. And our host family was in Florida for Vacation, so we had a gigantic house all to ourselves for a few days, and it was awesome. And I got a hair cut! And we went to Wal-mart to get new windshield wiper blades, and so I was trying to take off the old ones in the parking lot, and I'm pretty sure it looked like I was stealing them. It was riveting.

Date: 10/22/2005

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

You know the saying, "Don't cry over spilt milk," well . . . let me tell you, this story puts a whole new meaning on that phrase. This is how it went down . . .

After arriving in Apple Valley and meeting two of the coolest youth directors ever (Justin and Andrea), we were shown to our host homes . . . Sara, Dana, Aaron, Todd and I stayed at this beautiful home together. The family was out of town and graciously lent us their home for the few days we were staying in Apple Valley. The house came with adorable animals, food and MILK! I was so excited to drink 2% milk. I grabbed the gallon of milk with my left hand, walked over to the counter and WHAM! My fingers let go of the gallon jug, and milk went FLYING! I grabbed the jug up as fast as I could and put it in the sink to drain out. Todd and Sarah scurried to help me clean up the milk. It was amazing, the milk got so much air! It hit the counter, the microwave, the stove, the window, the cabinets and the wall! I felt so bad! Nothing was harmed, thank goodness, but it was pretty funny, the mess was cleaned up and we did a wash of dish towels. Then Todd, Aaron and I went and got our hair cut. YAY for haircuts! The next day we did a Bible study on James, then did some cool discussions about what new songs we can add to our repertoire for the program and where they would go. Then out of nowhere, I got sick. It was sad. I don't think I had enough water. I felt better after consuming the entirety of the 10,000 lakes in Minnesota. (Okay, not really, but yeah . . . so . . .) That night we had a massive lock-in to play at with . . . da da da da! HAPPY FUN TIME! Kids were running around in their pajamas with their hair all crazy colors from hairspray. There was a room filled with inflatable games like jumping rooms and such. There was a video game room and a make-up room as well. It was so neat! We ended up hanging out there until the early morning. That day we had to leave Apple Valley to go to Florence, SD.

We arrived in Florence, SD and met the pastor. We ate some really delicious food and hung out until the kids arrived. When the kids arrived we played some fun random games, such as Frogger, Dead Cow Live Cow, and Silent Football. It was great to see the kids having so much fun. I played the name game almost the whole night. It really makes me sad that it is so difficult for me to remember names. So the whole night I was trying to remember names. This poor girl, Autumn, told me her name at least four times! But each time she told me, she said it with a giggle and a smile.



Andrea Laneri

Sunday morning we did a full worship service and a Sunday school program. The children were so much fun! There was high school on one side and the little little kids on the other side. When the little kids didn't quite know what to do, sit or stand . . . a high school senior named Rachael, who we would love to be on team next year (*cough* *cough* *hint* *hint*), helped them out. They were all dancing and singing, it was great! This was the first time the congregation clapped and sang along with the songs in the worship service. They were so involved; it was awesome! We really enjoyed our time in Florence.

Welp, that is it for me, for now. Keep checkin in and seeing what is going on with North Central! God's peace and love!

Date: 10/27/2005

Submitted by: Dana Reynolds

Journal Entry:

We had the absolute longest drive in the world today--not even 15 minutes! We left the ELCA church in Pierre, SD and went to the LCMS church. We played for the kids there after they got out of Wednesday evening classes. The church paid for the girls to stay in a motel last night, and we were all really excited because there was a pool and a hot tub and we all got to just hang out and relax. The boys stayed with the vicar at the church, and he was a nifty guy. We all went out to this place called Chickadillys, and it was a good time.



Dana Reynolds

The next day we drove north to Eureka, SD and promptly set up with the wonderful aid of Aysha. The rest of the team was a little jealous because I gave her a complete runthrough of the sound system and I haven't done that for them. Bri, Sarah and myself stayed with the nicest couple. We stayed up pretty late talking with them, and had quite a bit of fun. And then, we slept. Huzzah!

God bless!
~Dana Reynolds

Date: 10/29/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Staying in a host home with all seven of us is always a trip. God blesses us with these amazing host homes every once in a while, and it is always an experience. On Friday, we arrived in Minot, North Dakota and, after a brief trip to Goodwill, we found ourselves at a home with enough beds and food for us all. Wilma, our host mother, was truly a giving person. She prepared a marvelous dinner and allowed us to have a little space of our own. We even created our own "home theater." In these home stays, we as a team are forced to grow. Amazingly enough, it can feel as though we don't spend enough time with other teammates; these host homes help us to remember, one, we really do like each other, and two, why it is a good idea to have time apart. I really love my team, but as with any relationship, time apart is essential. I thank God for these reminders.



Jenny Frantz

Our short stay at Wilma's was followed by a morning at Trinity Homes in Minot. Nursing homes are always tough to visit. They remind me of pain and suffering, but once again God intervenes to remind me of the promise of life everlasting. It amazes me how many smiling faces greet us, how many people are willing to share their story, and how many people bless us and our ministry. I thank God for these hard visits and the reminders of His amazing love.

On Saturday evening, we arrived at our final destination of the day, Carpio, North Dakota. Almost

immediately upon arrival, we were whisked away to our host homes for the evening. More and more I stay with families that remind me of my own and, once again, it makes this year tough. I realize how much I miss my family and friends in Ohio. So much is changing there right now and I feel so disconnected from it. I am thankful for the postal service and my cell phone--my connections to friends and family. I find that much of my time in the van is consumed by discussions with family and friends and most of the time I should be sleeping is spent writing letters. I think of all the challenges this year has brought, being away is the hardest. I never thought I would experience that. I have been away from home for the last four years, but somehow, this is different. However, I find that in these times when I am wallowing in my own self pity, that is when I meet someone who is facing challenges so much greater than my own. God helps me to realize just how fortunate I am. I am so blessed by family and friends that support me while I am away, and I cannot wait to share my experience with them when I am home for Christmas!

Date: 11/1/2005

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

On Sunday morning we led Sunday worship at churches in Tolley and Carpio, North Dakota. Carpio Lutheran Church was having a really neat can drive that had almost collected 1,000 cans of food in only three weeks. The small kids in the church collected the cans that the members of the church had brought with tiny red Radio Flyer wagons up and down the aisle. It was really neat to see their efforts to give to others and how much they had accomplished in such a short amount of time. It's so amazing to see how little acts by a number of people can produce a great result! After church, we hit the road for Bowman, North Dakota--the hometown of one Bri Traquair! We stopped at her dad's house in Beulah, North Dakota. We met her dad Keith, stepmom Tessa, stepbrother Cody, and stepsister Sarah. We carved jack-o-lanterns for Halloween at their house. It was the first time that Todd had ever carved a pumpkin! We left behind three "frightening" faces at their home--a vampire pumpkin, a cross-eyed pumpkin, and well...a pumpkin a la Aaron Fong! We then continued the trek to Bowman. We crossed the time zone line on the way to Bowman, so this along with daylight savings time the night before gave us 26 hours that day. The longer van ride gave us the opportunity to discuss pressing life questions. What exactly is the "safety dance"? Is it in fact safer than other dances? Mambo #5...what happened to Mambos #1-4? We also wrote a song about Jenny to the tune of Relient K's "Sadie Hawkins Dance"... "There goes Jenny Frantz, in her khaki pants, doing the safety dance, oh...oh...oh!" The sun set at about 5:00 that evening. Aaron concluded that the lack of sights on the Interstate made the sun so boring that it left. We arrived in Bowman and met Bri's mother, Shannon, and her brother, Kristopher. We concluded our night with a "late night" NERDS-eating fest at about 8:00--10:00 OUR TIME!



Sarah Danielson

It was Halloween on our day off. We spent most of the day watching scary movies, and Aaron told me that "Michael Meyers was going to get me". Jenny got a haircut and she-mullet finally left Captive Free North Coast! That night most of our team put on Gothic makeup and black clothes to celebrate Halloween. Todd, Aaron, and Andrea went trick-or-treating and got lost in Bowman (population 1,600). In the meantime, the rest of us took part in some Dance Dance Revolution at Bri's house. Dana Reynolds has skills like you would not believe!

On Tuesday we played at the School of Promise, a preschool in Bowman. There was even a sandbox in the floor in a small section of the room. The kids were so cute. They would all dance and sing along with the songs that we did, and they loved the puppets. It was so much fun! One of the kids, Parker, even ended up coming to our concert later that week where he drew a picture of our group during the program complete with keyboard, bass, drums, and guitar. We spent much of the rest of the day at the church. That night we went to the house of Bri's aunt and uncle where we used our skills of athleticism to take part in some hard-core ping pong. Hey...ping pong is a sport! That night we went to see "The Corpse Bride" by Tim Burton at the movie theatre and chilled out for the remainder of the night.

Date: 11/6/2005

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

Hello all, Andrea here...I am here to tell you a fun-filled story about two boys and five girls on a wonderful adventure in Wahpeton, North Dakota. It all started out on a beautiful Saturday afternoon, after driving for a few wonderful hours in the van. We arrived in Wahpeton!!! YAY!! Todd and I went in and spoke to Pastor Stephens and received our long awaited mail packet--the FIRST, VERY FIRST one on the road EVER! We took a tour around the church and scouted out all of the hang out places for



Andrea Laneri

games and such for the program that night. We were so psyched that we almost forgot the rest of the team in the van...JUST KIDDING! After the team and Pastor Stephens met, we started setting the equipment up. We rehearsed a little bit and then ate with members of the congregation. Then came the super cool, totally awesome Family Night Program! We rocked the house fellowship hall with God's message. Bri and I were having so much fun with the congregation that we sort of forgot what words came next; the families and their kids were having so much fun with us that they didn't really notice. After the program, we took down our equipment and hung out with the kids and the families. Sarah's sister, Kristin, came to town to watch and experience the love we have for Christ. It was fun watching the two of them (Sarah and Kristin) interact with each other, they are so alike!

As the time grew closer to 10:00 p.m., the kids and North Central got really excited to go *EXTREME* bowling! But, alas, our van battery went kaput. SO Wade helped us out by jumping the van...with a running start and a ginormous leap he cleared the van AND trailer with graceful ease. Okay, okay, so not really, he just hooked his van battery up to our van battery, but still it was amazing! AND off to the bowling alley we went with the greatest of ease to dance in strobe lights and fog, to glow in the dark and hang out with friends, new and old.

Sarah, Aaron and I hung out with Jenna, Margo, and Brittany. They claimed to not be very good at bowling, but they all managed to break 100. Hmmmm I wonder...beginners' luck? We played on and on into the next morning. By 12:15 a.m., it was time to go home.

Bright and early on Sunday the 6th, Sarah and I got ready in the cutest bathroom ever! We then ate breakfast with our host mom, Deb, and dad, Dwight. Dwight, Sarah and I got into the car; I was excited to see frost all over--A L L over--the ground and on the windows. It was crazy! As we were putting our belongings in the van, Dwight told us that it was about 20 degrees outside. 20 DEGREES!!! Holy cow, that is cold; Arizona's low is about, uh, 50? I think. Anyway, Sarah and I walked into Immanuel Lutheran Church and waited for the rest of the team. We opened the service with a few beautiful songs and sang a song during communion. Now the nifty part about this service is that this 8:00 a.m. service is broadcast each Sunday morning on channel 8. It was really cool. After the service we chit-chatted and then headed over to Peace Lutheran Church in Barney.

On the way over to Peace, we started talking about being on T.V. and how neat it was to be filmed. Then Aaron started singing..."Lifestyles of the poor and half famous," to the tune of Good Charlotte's "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous". It was hilarious. We arrived at Peace and were ready to sing. We sang the two opening sings and then received the message from the president of the North Dakota Missouri Synod. It was pretty cool. The sermon was amazing; it really got to me. After the service we all went into the basement and enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving-like pot-luck. Jenny, Dana, Aaron, Bri and I had some great conversations with some women and some boys from the church while Sarah and Todd spoke with the president. After dinner/lunch, our team got up and spoke about what it is our team does for the year, what our mission and our purpose is, and how it is we came to be. It was great to see how interested they were. After that, we said our good-byes and headed off to Taylors Falls, Minnesota. BUT WAIT! Just as we started out our next adventure, we were passing the basketball courts at the church, and there, in the basketball court...sitting randomly, were two toilets--not ONE, but TWO! So I had to get a picture of something random to send to our sister team. It was amazing! We laughed for about 15 minutes in the van. ON TO TAYLORS FALLS with the Wright family!

Date: 11/15/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Thank you for Mondays! This weekend has been pretty crazy. We had a late night Saturday night that led into two services on Sunday and a Family Night Program Sunday night. I don't mind being busy, but these weekends definitely help me to appreciate the little time we have as well.

Sunday night we were in Fairfax, Minnesota in a small country church. The front was too small for all of our sound equipment, so we did the program acoustically. That is always a fun treat for me. Although I really enjoy playing the drums, I love the acoustic sound (as most of my friends know and proven by my taste in music). It was also fun because the church is Sarah's dad's home church. He drove up from Menno to see us--well, maybe more to see Sarah and his parents, but to see us as well. It's been really fun getting to know other teammates' families. I wish we could do that more.



Jenny Frantz

Sunday night (and last night) Bri and I stayed with Duane and Gwen. They were probably one of my favorite host homes of the year. The two of them have children that are grown and have lived in the area forever. One of their daughter's names is Jenny, and I stayed in Jenny's room. It was really a wonderful host home, and I feel blessed to have stayed there.

My favorite part of the past couple days was our trip into New Ulm. Being our day off, we all really just wanted to find a coffee shop and hang out. After traversing the streets and finding not much of anything, we looked and saw a little shop called "Bookshelves and Coffee Cups." It sounded promising. Sure enough, it was a fabulous little store that sold not only coffee but also used books! I really enjoyed browsing and even found a couple good books to read. I think maybe one day I would want to own a shop like it.

Today was also a crazy day. We heard that the weather was going to be bad so we got a head start to Minnetonka, our next booking. Though it didn't seem to be too bad, it was probably a good decision because tonight the road seemed a bit rough. I'm so excited for the snow and can't wait for the white blanket! I'm sure I'll see plenty of it this year, and I might even get sick of it, but I'm definitely excited! Thank you, God, for snow!

Date: 12/1/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Recording Day! Recording Day!! Recording Day!!! I have been super excited for this day for a LONG time! Of course, it was hard because of the challenges our team has faced. We weren't exactly excited to be recording without Todd, but if we couldn't have Todd on our record, we were happy to have Jeff Johnson. Jeff is our Event Director for our Quakes, and we were super pumped to get to spend some extra time with him. Did I mention that he is also an amazing guitarist? We only had about one and a half hours to practice with him before the recording, but he was so ready to help us out and try to sound exactly how we wanted. It was truly a pleasure.

In our break time from practicing we went to Davanni's to eat. I don't know if anyone else has mentioned this, but they have the best food! I just want to say that the white pizza with green olives is probably one of the best pizzas I've ever had. It was also a fabulous lunch because it was the hardest I have laughed in awhile. Adam (the National Team Ministries Assistant) and Jeff joined our team, and it was really what we needed. I think team has been hardest right now because we aren't having enough play time together. We spend a lot of time working hard at what we're doing and forget to just have fun. So thank you to Adam and Jeff for your craziness!

Finally at the recording studio, it was so great to see South Central and West Lakes. It's probably one of the best feelings to know that there are others outside of our team that know exactly what this year is like. Also, it was the day of the girl drummers. The studio was teasing that Youth Encounter only uses female drummers, but the other fun part is that none of the three of us have been playing longer than about a year. Beckie learned last year during training. MaryBeth started learning in the past year, and then there's me. We've all fallen in love with drumming, though, and really lean on each other for support!

The recording also went really well. I am super excited to hear how it comes out. I think it will truly be a reflection of our team. Even though Todd wasn't there in body, he was definitely with us in our thoughts and how we played. Hopefully this CD will bless the many who listen to it!



Jenny Frantz

Date: 12/28/2005

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Ahh, it's the first day back on team, and I got picked up by a van driven by Aaron and carrying several of my good friends from other teams. It was good to see them and feel welcomed back after missing Midwinter. The night was spent telling stories of Christmas break with families and me catching up with the guys. That morning I went to the office and got to see the rest of my team in the first time in over a month, it was good to be back, lemme tell you; I missed them all a bunch. On the 29th we headed to Mora, which was our first booking ever, technically our Rally Day booking, and had a Family Night



Todd Thieme

Program there. It was fitting to be our first program after break; a lot had changed since then on our team in terms of music, so it was cool for them to see how we changed. After the program, we all went back to our host homes. We are spending a year being homeless and serving God, so every day is a good day.

Date: 12/31/2005

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:



Sarah Danielson

Before the year began, I would joke with people about how I would be living in a van for the next year. Inevitably people would begin to quote Chris Farley and continue the statement to be that I was going to be "living in a van down by the river." Well, this line became a whole lot funnier on the day when our group found ourselves not only in a van down by the river but in a van down in the river!

On New Year's Eve, we headed to a town in North Dakota named Northwood to play a program for a New Year's Eve party at a youth center in the town. Our journey to Northwood was an adventure in itself, however. Todd was driving, and Dana was navigating. However, our map program was being stupid and only telling us to turn on "local roads." Well, soon we were lost on snow-covered gravel roads in the middle of nowhere. We came down this large gravel hill and saw a dark circle in the middle of the road below us. As we got closer, we realized that the dark spot was water in the middle of the road. Todd swerved to the side to try to avoid the water, and we ended up getting stuck in the embankment on the side of the creek. We later found out that what we had encountered was a "Texas crossing"—a place where a creek goes over the road and there is no bridge. That's right—a Texas crossing in North Dakota in the middle of January!

As Todd opened the door of the van, we could hear the water of the creek running beneath the van. Todd couldn't even get out of the driver's door, because the creek was beneath it. He had to "Dukes of Hazzard" it out of the window and over the hood of the van to get to the ground. The rest of us were able to get out of the van, because there was a small section of snow that we could walk out on to get to land in front of the van.

We realized that we were in a place where we had absolutely no cell phone service and really didn't have a clue about exactly where we were. Andrea and Todd began to walk to the nearest farm house to get help. (Later we discovered that this house had been abandoned, and no one lived there.) The rest of us stayed by the van. Soon two kids came by on snowmobiles. They asked us about what was going on, and we asked them if there was any way that they could find any help for us. The two kids drove back to their house to get their dad. He came back with his four-wheel drive pick-up. He helped Aaron unhook the trailer and pull it up the hill a little. He also helped tow our van out of the creek. Trying to get back to the van, I ended up stepping into the creek and needed to get into the van to warm my feet.

Ultimately the only thing that was broken was our trailer jack. The family that the girls were staying with in Northwood did trucking. Our host dad, Grady, actually ended up having a spare jack laying around his work shed and replaced our trailer jack that night. With Grady's help, there was absolutely no real damage done to the van or trailer.

Our experience became more incredible as new information was revealed to us. We discovered that the kids who found us weren't even supposed to be there that afternoon. Their family was going to leave for vacation that day, but their father was a bit late getting back to the house. Since it was going to be a little while before they left, the kids took one more opportunity to go snowmobiling before they left. If their father had been home on time, they wouldn't have gone out and wouldn't have found us. Even more intriguing was the fact that we found out that the kids never went snowmobiling down the trail that they went down that day. It had been completely out of the ordinary that they had gone that way and had found us. We were also surprised to hear that the boy who had come to ask us about what had happened was incredibly shy and never talked to strangers. He had come to talk to us, however.

There were so many things that worked together in unusual ways to protect and take care of us that day. It is truly amazing to see how God provided for us during what should have been a

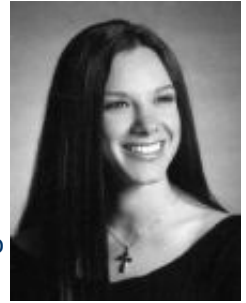
dangerous or bad situation. Instead of being a situation that broke us down, it simply brought us together. It was a time in which I really saw God watching over us, and it strengthened my faith in his presence with our team this year.

Date: 1/5/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

Midweek worships are very enjoyable for me. It is a time when families and friends get together in the middle of the week and celebrate Christ. What a beautiful thing it is to experience. Well, little did I know that the church actually set up their midweek worship to substitute for Sunday worship for those families who cannot find time on a Sunday to get into the Word. The town of Moorhead has so many activities going on for kids, it is amazing; hockey, dance, gymnastics, and the list goes on and on. Most of these activities take place during church time. What I think is pretty cool, though, is that rather than skip church all together like the families could . . . they attend on the Wednesday of that week to "get fed." It is super amazing how the community and the church can come together and make this service work.



Andrea Laneri

Well, when we arrived at the church, we were notified right away that we would no longer be worshipping in the sanctuary; due to the fact that the heater had broken earlier that day. SO we were to set up in the fellowship hall area, which was quite a bit more condensed, if you catch my drift. So we proceeded to set up, and we did very well with the space we had. We were wondering how the congregation would fit, though; we were told that the sanctuary on Wednesday nights is filled . . . and this room being, well, not the sanctuary, we just waited to see what would happen.

As people started to trickle in, we found that nothing would turn them away, not the loud music coming from our main speakers, not the absence of space to fit their four children and themselves; they just kept coming. It was so awesome to witness such kindness between people. If there were chairs in the middle or a row and another family couldn't find a seat, people would scoot down to make room . . . WHO DOES THAT?! That is so cool!

We began the service with great energy and excitement, as did the congregation. And we ended in the same way. The children were dancing and singing with us, they had such a great time worshipping God, in a different way than what they were used to.

The next morning North Central met for daily devotionals, job time and more planning. When Jenny and I asked the secretary of the church to mail a letter for us, she gladly accepted our request and then she began to tell us about her granddaughter. She was telling us of how her son was going through a divorce and that the kid's mother had them for the week, but since it was her granddaughter's birthday that Wednesday, she (the granddaughter) got to decide what she wanted to do. She had two options; one was got to Space Alien's Grill & Bar with her mom, the other option was to go to church with her dad and grandma. It turns out that she chose to go to church! Her grandma (the secretary) said that it was a major thing to be chosen over the Space Alien's restaurant and that we had made her granddaughter's night. She said that her granddaughter had so much fun and that when one of the girls was singing, we made eye contact and that just made her so happy. She said to her grandma, "Oh Granny, one of the girls singing tonight, she was singing and she looked right at me. RIGHT AT ME, GRANDMA!" It is so nice to hear stories like that.

That night we, as a team, all got together with some of Sarah's friends and went to Bannigan's. Moorhead is where Sarah went to college, so it was cool for her to see her sister and her friends that still attend Concordia. Later that night, we went back to our host homes and hung out for a little bit. At around 10:00 p.m., Sarah, Jenny, Aaron, Todd and I all got back together and went to Tabs (a worship service put on by the students). It was awesome to be able to just sit and relax and enjoy the sounds of other people singing and giving it up to God. It is such a beautiful thing, to hear, to see, to just experience and be . . . rather than lead. Oh I love worship!

The next day we did the same things; met at the church and had our daily devotions, one-on-ones, job time and such. We ate lunch and then did more planning. When we went back to our host homes that evening, one of my host sisters drew me a picture for my book. It was this beautiful

drawing of a few crosses. Around the crosses were names; mine and Jesus'. She wrote a blessing on the bottom and said she couldn't wait till I stayed with her and her family again.

It is amazing how God speaks through children. Well, till next time y'all . . .

Date: 1/7/2006

Submitted by: Dana Reynolds

Journal Entry:

Last night, we had a lock-in in the bustling metropolis of Nunda, SD, and I'm taking my teammates' word that it was a good time. I spent the night feeling not-so-great, sleeping downstairs because of a trial allergy medication's battle with my arthritis meds. Huzzah for modern medicine! Today, we were sent on our merry way across the entire state of South Dakota to Lead (which is gorgeous, by the way, and a very welcome change of scenery, especially after a nine-hour drive across the empty plains). When we got there, we took part in an acoustic worship service, and promptly crashed when we got to host homes. All-in-all, they were a good two days, even if they were tiring. I felt much better when we got to Lead, too, which certainly made our stay there more pleasant.



Dana Reynolds

Date: 1/10/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

This past weekend we spent in the mountains...or at least as close to mountains as South Dakota gets. The weather was absolutely amazing, which we completely lucked out on. Lead, SD is set back in the mountains, which make for some very steep hills. Our van doesn't like steep hills very much. However, the weather was sunny and warm the whole time. I feel so blessed to have the time to spend closer to nature than usual. I have found that while on the road that what I miss the most is the outdoors. I think I may have even mentioned this before. It's so strange to be around lots of parks, but not have any time to spend in them. Of course, weather this time of year usually does not cooperate very well. Our host home this weekend was set a few miles out of town on the side of a mountain. I was so blessed to be able to see the sun rise and set over the mountains. As I watch this daily event, I find myself reminded of God's continual presence. This year has been very challenging, and often times I think I may even slack on the ministry, the reason I am here. But I ask for these little reminders each day to show me just how great and awesome our God is. He brings us a sunset everyday. How blessed are we!

I also thank and praise God for the amazing teammates I have. Aaron and Todd always seem to know when we are struggling and just how to help. Recently, it's been so hard to find opportunities to worship. We are constantly leading, and though some of us can worship at the same time, I find it challenging. I am still thinking a little too hard about drumming. However, the boys immediately noticed how the team was struggling and planned worship just for the seven of us. Last night, they hung out with us at our host home for a bit and played music and we just sang. That's one of my favorite parts of team. Just sitting and singing. We don't do that enough. I thank God for the amazing servants on my team.

May God bless each and every one of you. May He remind you each day how precious all the little things in life are. May He provide people that love and care about you in your daily life. I am blessed. I pray that you can feel this way too.



Jenny Frantz

Date: 1/14/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

This Thursday we drove to Sioux Falls and are ending our brief stint in the Dakotas and heading back to the Cities for a couple of days before heading back out to the tundra of Dakota again. We are playing in a church, and our contact is a really cool younger guy that plays bass, guitar, piano, and drums--basically a one man band, and his wife is a phenomenal violin player. He's the worship leader, so after the concert he gave me some good advice that we can use as a team musically to help our program. At the program was this family that had two fun twin boys that were scared of me, I think, and therefore wouldn't hang out with me. Their daughter Danika, however, thought I was a jungle gym, and I had a good time chasing her around the sanctuary and playing tag with her. Afterwards, Aaron and I went back to the contact's house and listened to some Victor Wooten, who is possibly the greatest bass player ever, and were amazed. Then we watched Pitch Black and he shared some of his 'nectar of the gods' (a.k.a Mountain Dew) with us and we had a good time. From there we drove Evan, MN to stay with Becca and Lowell and had a great dinner and a good time hanging out together as a team.



Todd Thieme

Date: 1/14/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

We had just recently played in Sioux Falls, SD where Andrea and I had stayed with the sweetest host home. We had ice cream and hung out with our host family for awhile after our program. Our host sister Morgan was really fun. We talked with her, and she made buttons for us with a button-making machine. We also got to talk with our host brother Spencer for awhile. He was really neat to talk to and shared an e-mail about how God had watched over a family during an accident on a highway. It was really amazing to see how he, a young junior high boy, was willing to share God and a faith story with us. It was also really neat to hear how other teams had impacted their family in the past. A past teamer named Steve had really had a huge impact in Spencer's life. I don't really know if Steve ever knew how much he meant to that family, but it was really incredible to hear how his brief stay had really affected them and left a huge place in their hearts for him. It is truly amazing to find out how the small things that past teamers have done in the past have had such a huge impact on people. God truly works in every day in so many ways that we do not see.



Sarah Danielson

We headed up to Evan, MN from Sioux Falls. In Evan, we were able to stay with one of our favorite families. Becca, Lowell, and their two children, Jonah and Lily, have become like a second family to our team. Jonah with his huge baby blue eyes seems to be growing up right before our eyes, and Lily is sharing all of her joys over Dora the Explorer and new books with us. They are so sweet and are growing so much! We love being able to stay with Becca and Lowell because conversations and devotions with them are so refreshing. Lowell was on team before, so stories about his experiences are always fun to hear. It is also wonderful to hear Becca, a pastor, and Lowell share about their faith. Hearing about how God is working in the lives of others is always rejuvenating for our team.

The next day we headed up to Normandale, a church in Edina, MN. We ate pizza and hung out with youth at the church on Saturday night. We played a whole bunch of group games and taught our puppet show to the kids. Some of the older kids helped us lead Sunday School the next morning, so we gave them parts in the puppet show for the next morning. The kids were also really fun to sing and get crazy with. They had so much energy!

That Saturday night Jenny, Andrea, and I stayed with the most wonderful family. We talked with our host sister Anna for a long time. She was the most mature fourth grader I had ever met in my life! She shared pictures of Bible camp and her family's vacation to Costa Rica with us. We thought that one of the coolest things was that her family had given her brother Matthew and her the ability to choose if the family went to Disney World or Costa Rica for vacation, and they chose Costa Rica! Their pictures of the beaches and rainforest were amazing, and it was so cool to hear about the cultural adventures that she had experienced at the age of ten. Anna and her twin brother Matthew also went to a school where they spoke French all the time. It was so neat to hear her talk about how she couldn't even read English until third grade but also how she valued the ability to speak another language so much. Their family was going to go to France in the summer so that she and Matthew could practice more French and experience it in the everyday world. Anna was such a fabulous girl, and it was amazing to hear about the cultural skills and experiences that were being provided to her at such a young age. I hope that one day, when I have a family, I will be

able to offer similar experiences to my own children because it was so incredible to see how they had impacted her life and worldview.

Date: 1/15/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

WE LED WORSHIP IN A GOTHIC SANCTUARY THIS EVENING:

Wow! I was in awe when Kristen, our contact at Hennepin Ave. Methodist Church brought Todd and me into the sanctuary. Marble, stained-glass, vaulted ceilings, balconies, the ginormous organ, I could go on forever. It was beautiful.

We led an electric worship first. The kids got pretty into it, dancing, singing and clapping. I jumped in and out of the pews with the kids for a while, just to pump them up and get them to loosen up a little . . . it worked, they started doing the train around the sanctuary [that holds about 1,200 people] it was super cool to be a part of. It is so amazing to see so many kids get excited to worship God!

After the worship service we played a simulation game . . . it had to do with poverty. It got pretty crazy, some of us were civilians and others were workers; shop keepers, cops, journalists, pastors, and welfare workers. Each civilian was given some or no money, the object of the simulation was to produce a collage that represented you as a citizen. We had to buy supplies from the shop keepers, get loans from the welfare office. Cops would arrest you . . . it was crazy. People ended up stealing and such just to "stay alive". When the simulation was over we got into groups and talked about how the game was kind of like life now. What were the similarities and the differences?

My group came up with the thought that it is very sad to think and know that the world really is like the simulation. People will do anything to make it in this world. No matter what it is.

Later we went to the Upper Room (I will tell you more about that is a sec.) After the Upper Room we went back to the church and played the game Romans and Christians. Some of the kids were Romans and others were Christians, the Romans had to try and get the Christians to convert to the Roman's ways and beliefs. It was pretty fun. Then we had a discussion about it. About how back in those times Christians were persecuted for believing in Christ. Some were placed in jail, while others were put to death.

We had a later, acoustic, worship service that night. We had the kids take off their shoes as they entered the sanctuary. The lights were dark; the setting was calm and quiet. We played a few of our favorite worship songs, we didn't stand in front of the sanctuary, we dispersed ourselves within the group of kids. It was a more personal experience that way. Then we had a time of prayer, the kids got into groups and reflected on the day and prayed about what was on their hearts.

After the service we were off to bed. But for some reason I couldn't sleep. I sat in a balcony of the church, admiring the craftsmanship of it all; the stained-glass, the chandeliers, the ceiling and how it was put together. I was sitting in amazement of how you form a round ceiling. There were water-stains on the pillars. It was all just amazing, especially why it was built. It was built for worshipping our Lord, thinking about how much work it took. The men that built it must have been so dedicated. It was amazing.

WE WENT TO THE UPPER ROOM TONIGHT:

The Upper Room is a worship service that one can attend on Sunday nights at 7:00 p.m. in Edina, MN. But get there early, I would say about an hour, so you can be IN the sanctuary, there is room for about 900 people inside the sanctuary. Ha ha no joke it gets packed, if you don't get there in time there is an overflow room for you. This service gets so packed, that they had to start an earlier service at 5:00 p.m. or was it 5:30? Either way it has grown that big in 4 years! I know this because that is what the sermon was about that night.

It was so cool to hear how much the community was affected by the message this service brings. So much is given from the pastor there; so much has been taken to heart. The awesome thing is the people that take, they give back. They are so supportive of the ministry work that goes on there.



Andrea Laneri

I love it there because the way the messages are delivered are unique and wonderful, the worship music at this church is amazing, the atmosphere and the people are wonderful; dimmed lights and 900 + voices singing God's praise. It is just phenomenal.

Date: 1/16/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

My grandmother died this morning. As tears streamed down my face, I hung up my phone and I struggled for breath from my lungs I came to the realization that is was all okay.

Let me explain. In 1996, she had a stroke in her spine that paralyzed her right side. Ever since that year, she has had one or two small strokes that set her back further and further.

Am I sad? Of course I am sad, who wouldn't be sad? But the tears that I cry now are tears of joy. Well okay, a mixture of sadness and joy, but more joy. She has been unhappy in her earthly body for quite sometime.

I can recall (when I was about 13) her asking me why God was punishing her. I remember staying silent and thinking, "Punishing you? Grandma, he loves you and you have not done anything that he would ever punish you for." You see, I don't think my grandmother had a strong faith in God, though she wanted to. It was hard for her to feel loved by him while all of this was going on. Year after year losing more of herself. I can understand why she would feel so unloved and left alone by God. Yet I know she wanted to know him and to feel his love. We would talk about it a little bit sometimes. Each year got harder. Verbal communication became harder and harder for her, and soon just grunts and groans with small portions of words would be produced. At times it was difficult to understand her, but by the grace of God, more often than not, I could understand what my grandmother was saying to me. As the years went on, we stopped talking about God and more about the simple things around the room she stayed in.

Every time I left her side, I would ask God to hold her in his arms and welcome her to his undying love, to help her come to him. I think that is why she held on for so long. Well okay, so there were two reasons as to why I thought she was holding on. One was because she wanted to see me get married...the other was to come to Christ. I believe she did. I believe that the morning she passed on, she walked side-by-side, hand-in-hand with Christ and was welcomed home.

So am I sad? Yes, sad that I do not get to share random silly moments with her and to hear her voice when I talk with her. But I am happier for her, for she is home, she is finally home.



Andrea Laneri

Date: 1/17/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

Okay 2 things . . .

1)

born 1.17.06

5:30 p.m.

my bestest friend, Gina, gave birth to a beautiful little boy . . .

8 lbs. 11 oz.

22 in.

looks just like mommy and daddy . . . yaaaaaay!

and 2)

We met a girl named Allie in Wisconsin; they were going to Minneapolis, MN to listen to some stand up comedy. So to cheer me up, since my Grandmother had passed away this morning they decided I needed to go with them. It was so much fun, I had never been. Some were really funny while others were . . . well . . . not. On the way back home we hit a patch of ice and went sliding. We spun around one and a half times and came to a stop on the opposite side of the road in the ditch. Luckily we were not hurt and we didn't hit anything or flip. Todd and I were in the back and Aaron



Andrea Laneri

was in the passenger seat while Allie drove. The boys tried to push the car out of the ditch while some of Allie's friends were on their way to pull us out. It didn't work. When Allie's friends arrived they tried to help push as well but did not succeed. Allie's friends said that they could not help and so they advised us to call AAA, and they left. So we called AAA and got cut off about three times. When we FINALLY got through the lady on the phone said they soonest a tow-truck could arrive would be 2:30 a.m. It was about 11:15 p.m. at this time. SOOOOOO we called another tow company, they were able to get to us sooner. As we waited for the tow-truck Allie's dad showed up and hung out for a while then he lit the way for the tow-truck. Allie and Aaron paired up and Todd and I paired up and had thumb wars and played the slap game. We finally got out and were on our way back to the Wright's house (where we were staying that night) the car swerved a few times I thought we were going to spin again. All went well we got back just fine. Allie got home safe and the boys and I had a fun little story to tell the rest of our team and New Dawn (another Youth Encounter team [travels to other countries]). All in all it was a blast . . . Wow, God certainly protected us.

Awe I love out "up North till dawn" sessions . . .

Date: 1/19/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

Train sounds filled the air as we arrived in Casselton, ND. We pulled up to the church and Todd and I went inside to do our job; meet with the contact. Our target's name: Michael. As we entered the church we walked up a ramp, around a corner, past the children's library, and up another ramp. We came to the offices, yet we did not have to go any further. The back of a man faced us, it was none other than Michael, our target for the afternoon. How did we know this, you ask? Well, he is a friend of Sarah's, from the camp she works at over the summers. And well, all of Sarah's friends kind of look alike. As we approached the man from behind (he was in the middle of a conversation with the secretary.) When he finished his conversation he started to turn around. Immediately Todd and I said, "Hello, you must be Michael, a friend of Sarah Danielson's." He smiled and nodded and asked how we knew this. We replied, "Well, Michael, you all have the same look, almost." In all honesty, even I don't know what that look is, they just all look similar, like Sarah friends. Weird, I know.

So he showed us around the church, we talked about what he was planning on happening, and then we were divided up into host homes. The boys and I were in one house and the girls were divided up evenly. The boys and I were in a house not too far from the church, where we all decided to chillax and eat some pizza. Michael hung out with us as well, and we talked about travels and host homes, about being on the road and fun things. Then Bri got on the Internet, Sarah and Michael had their own conversation about camp, and I don't even remember what Todd, Jenny and Aaron were doing. I was watching everyone around me do their thing as I relaxed under the open window and listened to the deep hum of the train driving on the tracks.

The next day we arrived at the church to do our daily devotions and a little bit of job time. We headed over to the assisted living house and played bingo with the residents there. It was a lot of fun. The only problem was that they were used to winning things such as bananas. Well, we didn't have bananas; we didn't even know we were supposed to provide prizes. So, we dug through our needs bin in the van and pulled out some lovely stationery, some cookies and some fruit. It was fun. When we got tired of bingo, we just sat around and chit-chatted. Aaron and I sat at a table with three women. They decided they wanted us to play the guessing game, their ages. OH NO! NO WAY was I going to guess the ages of these women. But they insisted. So we started to guess. One of them looked about 63, so Aaron and she laughed and said that nobody at the table was younger than 76. We were so shocked! That was not what we were thinking at all; we thought that most of the women we were visiting with were between the ages of 63 to 75. It was crazy, the youngest looking woman was about 87! They were so beautiful, young and full of life. Well, after that they guessed that Aaron was 22 and I was 18 . . . hmmm, who would have thought? Ha ha. So after that we were off to the church again.

When we got back to the church, we started setting up for the program that night. When it was all ready to go, we started mingling with the kids and their families and then started the



Andrea Laneri

program. Some of Sarah's friends from camp came; Johnny, Laura and Rachel Fay. They seemed like they had a good time, they really enjoyed the puppet show, they laughed SO MUCH!

When we began to tear down, a few of the girls, Rhiannon and Kylie, came up to me and told me that they were shy and wanted to talk to me before the program, but they were kind of nervous. Then when we played they saw how fun, nice and bouncy I was that they couldn't help but talk to me. It is funny how things work out like that. So we hung out and talked, took pictures and then they went home. They were super cool girls, and their names . . . LOVED 'EM!

As we headed back to the host homes, Rachel Fay couldn't find her car, then saw it down the street. Ya see, where it snows, and it is super cold, [in small towns] people start their cars in parking lots and let the car heat up before they get into it. We couldn't figure out who had done it, then Todd started walking down the street to retrieve the car, turns out he moved it to play a joke on her. Then we see what kind of a car it was. It was a new VW beetle bug car, a lovely yellow color. Wow, did Todd look manly in that one!

After the car "theft," the boys and I went back to our house and hung out. We were looking through some poems I had written and came across one about rain, so the boys started playing the guitar, and we all started singing to it; needless to say we 'wrote' a song. Some of the words are now changed, but I like it a lot; it is beautiful.

The next day we did our normal team thing. We met at the church, did daily devotionals, job time and ate lunch. Then we were off to Starkweather, ND. Now this church was filled with some good times.

When we got there the pastor was super cool and talked to us, told us what was expected, and we started setting up. We were supposed to eat pizza with the youth that night, so we had to hurry a little. When the kids started showing up, er, when the group of boys came in, we all kind of stood in a line across from each other in front of the kitchen waiting for the pizza to cook. North Central started asking questions. What are your names? We got the names: Jesse and Jordan (twin brothers), David, Matt and a few others. The twins kept their hands in their pockets at all times, giving them the nickname(s) "Pockets".

The program went well. The boys kind of chilled at the end of their own row in the front few rows of the pews. The pastor's daughter was adorable! We later found out that these kids would be attending the Quake in Bismarck. We were excited. When we loaded up the trailer, we realized we got the van stuck in the snow, so David's dad (who ended up being out host dad) pulled us out.

Our whole team stayed with David and his family. We had a blast trading brain teasers and trick questions. They gave us really good hands on one. There were three glasses of equal size placed longer than a knife size apart in the shape of a triangle. We had to build a bridge with three knives, connecting all of the cups, without touching the table. It was so complicated! BUT Jenny came through and figured it out because she is that cool. And no, we are not going to tell you how it is done. Then Dana and I bundled up and were shown around their farm. I wore the coolest snow hat from the 70's ever! I fell in love with it, I showed Jenny and Todd how cool it was, and they too fell for it. It was orange and white and green, all my favorite colors with the exception of blue, that was missing, but still I LOVED IT! Anyway, everyone else was reading, playing music or something.

The next morning our van was being fixed so we borrowed our host home's truck and drove to the church for our daily devos and team stuff. When it was time to get the van back, Todd decided he was going to go by himself. He ended up driving halfway to Canada! He went in the wrong direction! He got back on track and retrieved the van. He came back, ate lunch and we loaded up. We were on our way to Mohall!

Too bad he forgot to give the family the keys to the truck! We had to mail them back from Mohall! And Todd had a surprise for me; our host dad gave us the snow hat Todd and I fell in love with, we trade days we wear it now! We are so nerdy, I know. . .

Until next time, God's blessings to you all!

Submitted by: Dana Reynolds
Journal Entry:

We had a blast for our day off in Williston, ND. We hung out with Pastor Brad and his wife at a stylish coffee shop and wandered around downtown looking in bookstores. It was a relaxing day, just hanging out. Andrea had some local college guys looking her way while playing with her laptop. I got a lot of reading done, and bought another new book. I'm beginning to run out of space to store them in the van. That night, Andrea, Todd, Aaron and I went to see Underworld 2 after going to get Aaron's lip pierced. There was more blood involved with that than I expected, but he said it didn't hurt too much. The movie was mediocre. Sometimes I just really can't suspend my disbelief, but it makes for good things to laugh at. Jenny and I had some neat conversations with our host parents, and heard the most detailed description of the organization Up With People we've heard yet. I'd never heard of them before this year, but it seems pretty neat. Tomorrow, we're supposed to be driving to Washburn, ND. I wonder what we're doing...



Dana Reynolds

Date: 1/24/2006
Submitted by: Andrea Laneri
Journal Entry:

We were in Lead, SD on our day off. The boys and I decided to go snowboarding. We got all geared up--by geared up, I mean layered jeans, jacket, gloves, a scarf, and a beanie. We filled out papers and paid. The papers asked about a group name, so we called ourselves "the killer bunnies." Then there was a part about goofy or regular footing; Aaron explained to Todd and me the difference between the two. I thought I had regular footing because of how I skateboard, then I realized as I was attempting to board down the bunny hill that I have goofy footing.



Andrea Laneri

Man, I hit that snow hard! So, needless to say, I switched my footing and headed down again, only to fall on my knees, again and again and AGAIN! As I struggled to get up from my knees, I looked down at the bottom of the hill, and there were Todd and Aaron waiting for me. These are not your average guys! Most guys, in my opinion, would have taken that time to get better at snowboarding, but they waited for me. *big smiles* Anyway, I finally got down the hill and got up to try again . . . and again . . . AND AGAIN! This time I got down with only five falls to my knees. My third time at attempting to conquer the bunny hill, I fell so hard on my tailbone I couldn't breathe. Then I got up and fell again on my knees, so hard that I was about to give up. I made it down the hill to find Aaron sitting at a table; he had twisted his knee pretty bad.

Todd and I went on the lift for more runs down the slope--okay, falls, but still. He told me to drag my hand through the snow to slow myself down. I took his advice and only fell three times! We did a few more runs before I called a time out for a little while; my fingers were going numb, and I felt like if I took another fall on my knees I might not get up again.

Todd and I went into the building where Aaron was. We had a little lunch, then Todd went back out to the top of the hill rather than starting on the bunny slopes. He fell and tumbled hard. Aaron and I sat inside and watched him try and try again. Finally I couldn't stand it; I got up, put my (now dry) gloves on and went for the bunny slopes again. My first run down the hill I didn't fall at all, my second and third were the same . . . the fourth, however, Todd and I were heading down the bunny slope at the same time, he was ahead of me, and all of a sudden, I hear this guy from behind me say "Watch out," and BAM, I hit the snow hard. I got the wind knocked out of me, and I smacked my head on the guy's board. Talked about getting rocked! Then a lady asked if we were okay, and we both said yeah, then she asked what happened and they guy said, "I was trying to stop, then she ran into me." Now I would really like to know how I could have hit him if I was in front . . . oh well. All in all, the day was amazing. Todd and I had a few more runs down the hill, and then we went back to the girl's host home to pick Dana and Bri up to go to the mall.

At the mall Bri, Dana and I went looking for jeans WITHOUT holes in them for Bri. The last place we went was Old Navy. Bri had no luck finding jeans, but I found a hat that reads "official cookie taster," as I was paying for the hat (that I found in the children's section). Bri asked the girl behind the counter about more jeans; we were in luck! They just put a new section in Old Navy! So we

went back and she grabbed a few pairs and tried them on.

While in the dressing room Bri put on a pair of jeans and was about to show them to me and she pushed instead of pulled and so she was stuck in the dressing room she was in, we had a good laugh about that. She had three pairs of jeans, the first pair was really cute, the second pair was as well . . . then she came out with the third pair and I couldn't decide if I liked the first or third pair better . . . then the dressing room attendant looked at them and said that they were the same. How dumb did we feel! We headed back to the host home again.

When we arrived we talked with our host parents for a little bit, then the girls went down stairs, but the guys stayed upstairs.

When Aaron and Todd came down stairs they had their guitars with them, they said that they knew how much we wanted to go to the Upper Room on Sunday and that they were sorry that we couldn't go, so they thought they would bring a part of the Upper Room to us, in the lower room. We had a great time worshipping through song and prayer. It was so amazing. It was our lower room! Aaron and Todd knew how much us girls wanted to just worship, rather than lead it, so, they brought it to us! It was amazing; I am so thankful for the guys we have with us this year. They are so thoughtful and true.

Date: 1/26/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Warm brownies and ice cream. Seems so simple, eh? Last night I enjoyed this simple pleasure with an amazing host family. Simple. Sometimes I wonder when life stopped being simple. I sit and I think about this year. I mean, who really does this? Who leaves everything they know to meet six strangers and live in a van with them for a year? Who leaves behind an apartment and friends to live out of a suitcase in a different home every night? I find that I am constantly pondering everything. I think about next year. I think about my team. I wonder what my friends and family are doing back home. Life is so complicated. But is it really?

I then remember sunsets, flowers, Birkenstocks, my favorite blanket, a good conversation, and warm brownies and ice cream. These things are all so simple and can affect my life so much. They make each day that much more exciting for me. It's then that I remember that life really is simple. I stop wondering when it became complicated and realize that it was I that made it that way. It's really simple. God loves me unconditionally. God forgives me of all my sins. God wants me to tell others about Him. That's life. Simple. Now if only I can remember that.



Jenny Frantz

Date: 1/31/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

After our awesome time with Madison, Jake, Nolan, and the other awesome kids in Hazen, ND, we headed off to one of our favorite spots—Pierre, SD. There we were greeted with huge hugs by Pastor Diane Jackson, one of the most energetic and fun people that we have been able to spend time with on the road. We had been able to meet Pastor Diane and her husband Wayne when we had stayed in Pierre earlier in the year, so it was wonderful to be able to see them again.

We played games and sang songs with younger kids at the church in the afternoon. The kids were so cute and really got into the games like the Scream Game and Dead Cow Live Cow. They had so much energy! That night we also played at the church's Wednesday night service. There was a group of high school students there who stayed after the service for extra music. The high school kids were dancing around, jumping, and singing. It was so crazy to see kids getting so excited over our acoustic music, but they were a lot of fun! I got to talk with a few of the kids after the worship as well, and they had a cabin near my old hometown. It was so weird to find kids in that city that had also been in Astoria, population 100, before. It was also fun to learn about the rivalry between people that lived in Pierre and Fort Pierre and hear them tease each other about



Sarah Danielson

which side of the river they lived on.

Dana and I stayed together with a wonderful older woman named Esther in Pierre. One of the things that we really enjoyed was being able to enjoy some of the beautiful January weather. We were able to take walks down to the river and enjoy fresh air in a nearby park. Being on the road all the time makes it difficult to be able to get outdoors and enjoy nature at times. There are times when I miss being outside because I always spend my summers outside, so getting a chance to go on walks or just be outside is really rejuvenating for me. Evening walks in Pierre just really lifted my spirit during our stay there.

Peace and blessings,

Sarah

Date: 2/4/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

Yeah for the Sioux Falls Quake . . .

Wow, so Friday we set up the ball room and got to meet the members from Lynn's band. The opening celebration was so much fun! Nothing makes your blood run more than rockin' music and some great motivational speeches!

I have never attended a Quake before, and being able to be a band member that performs is such a blessing. Quakes do so much for kids these days.

It is so hard to hear the life struggles that kids go through; the things that they have to deal with are so tough! I wonder if parents really know the things that stress their kids out! But then they get to attend a Christian function that promotes self-esteem, friendship and God. That helps. I just pray that these kids leave the Quakes with as much excitement for God as what they came with and exerted while there!

Saturday was super fun. Time for more crazy worship with Lynn and Captive Free, motivational speeches from Dean, Treks led by great and supportive people, and the nightly activities . . . prayer room, the dance, and hang out with Captive Free.

Aaron and I led the X-TREME LOVE Trek. The kids were great. We talked about how to show positive love, understanding and forgiveness, and how these three words are all connected through the eternal love of God. It was a blast.

After lunch and a few more Treks, we all got ready for crazy dress night and showed up at the Celebration dressed all funky. Wow, these kids were talented with the outfits they came up with on the spot.

The prayer room was helpful and filled with hope and love, the hang out with the band was pretty fun, and the dance was rockin'! After all the crazy festivities, Lynn closed the night with a beautiful Campfire service.

There are so many opportunities in life to see God, not just at youth Quakes. I pray that they leave knowing they can turn to God at any given time, not just when the atmosphere feels or looks right. Pray in public, speak out about Christ and how wonderful He has made life. I pray that these kids go from this place telling their friends what they did this weekend and be honest about the awesome fun they had while worshipping God!



Andrea Laneri

Date: 2/11/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

I am so excited to be able to write once again. WE'RE AT CAMP!!! This weekend has been absolutely phenomenal. We woke up late yesterday to drive to Luther Point Bible Camp

in Wisconsin. It's a bit chilly and snowy, but hey, I'M AT CAMP!

This weekend we are pretty much putting on a Quake for the First Lutheran, Taylor's Falls youth group. They are so much fun. I've found myself finding plenty of time and energy to not only talk to all the kids, but chat with all the adult chaperones as well! Michelle, our contact, is amazing. It's so exciting to feel at home. Though it is not my normal habitat, camp as whole just feels like home. I find myself associating it with so many great memories with the ability to create more.

Not only was this a fun weekend to hang out with an amazing youth group, but I found that this weekend was an amazing spiritual and relational recharge for me. Last night, I was able to sit up and talk to Sarah for hours. We haven't done that in forever, and I've missed it so much. Today, I found myself talking to Todd while walking for 100 miles (okay maybe not 100). Both conversations were ones that I needed to have. I've really found myself bonding more with my teammates recently, and that has completely changed my experience on the road. I cannot wait to grow in my friendships with these amazing people.

Today was also fabulous because of campfire tonight. The boys completely blessed me by offering to plan campfire worship for both nights (it made my life so much easier), and tonight they continued to show me how blessed I am to have them around. I found myself being able to sit and worship with the kids for the first time in what seems like ages. It's truly amazing how much singing heals my soul. Whenever I am most down, if I can just sing at the top of my lungs, it always helps. Tonight's worship moved me so much. Somewhere in the midst of words and music, I found a soothing hand on my shoulder. A reminder of God's continual presence. A reminder that I am a work in progress. A reminder that I need to allow Him to mold me. I praise God for music and words. Music that soothes and heals. Words that bond us together and make us one body in Christ.



Jenny Frantz

Date: 2/14/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Today we were in St. Paul at Concordia College for Valentine's Day. We got to play for the college students during their supper and then got to eat some really stinking good food. Aaron went to spend some time with his brother, who was going through a rough time. This meant we were left without a bassist for the program, which meant we had to rearrange some things. Bri switched to playing guitar, and I got to play bass for the first time in a long time, and lemme tell you ...it felt really good. I have been playing bass for about 10 years now, but only eight of them were spent really playing seriously.

I have been playing guitar for under one year, so it was nice to switch it up. The program was great, and my parents got to see me play, as they had come to visit, so it was a good night. After they left that night, I stayed with one of the students, and he was a dork like me with medieval reenactment as a hobby, too. So we stayed up and talked pretty late. The next day we got to chill with some of the college students and then headed to New Prague to a church we had been to before and met up with Aaron again. His family was there, and it was good for them to see him perform and be his crazy self on stage while his brother took over 2 million pictures and about three days worth of video footage from a 1.5 hour program.



Todd Thieme

Date: 2/16/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

We played in New Prague, MN on February 15. The church in New Prague was a church that we had played at earlier this year, so it was cool to be able to return. Paula, the associate pastor that worked with the youth of the church, was so much fun and had so much energy. The kids at the program were a lot of fun. Our program at the church was also special because Aaron's brother Jesse and mother came to the program. He was so excited to share the music and ministry of our group with his family, and it was awesome to see how proud they were of him.

That night Bri, Jenny, and I stayed with a family from Elko. The family that we stayed with



Sarah Danielson

had three sons, and upon entering the house I entered an intense discussion with Tristan about his favorite stuffed animals. He was so cute and was so excited to share about his life with me. He showed me all of his favorite stuffed animals and his *Magic Tree House* books. Then Tristan shared with me one of his favorite CDs by Go Fish. We went into the living room and had a dance party to a song called "The Ten Commandments Boogie." Then I talked with the other two sons about Monty Python and the Holy Grail. We had a session of quoting our favorite lines from the movie and laughing about how ridiculous it was. Before going to bed that night Jenny was given a special gift. Tristan, the youngest son, gave her his favorite stuffed animal to sleep with, because she was going to be sleeping in his room. Earlier, Tristan had been telling me that he couldn't sleep without Rabbie, but he thought that it was more important that Jenny have him for the night. It was so incredibly sweet and was such a special gift for her. It is incredible to see in the small moments how amazing people can be and how much they so generously share with our team on the road. We are complete strangers, and yet they are willing to take us into their homes, feed us, and give us a place to stay. Not only that, but people share their lives with us...their family bonds, their time, their "Rabbies". I just feel so blessed!

On the 16th, we were supposed to go to Wisconsin, but a huge snowstorm hit Wisconsin. We weren't really sure about traveling into the bad weather, so we called our contact. She told us that all of the roads there were closed and that all of the schools were closed. She said that it wouldn't be safe for us to travel there, so we ended up staying around the Cities instead. We stopped into the office for awhile and then stayed up in Taylors Falls with the Wrights. We were really thankful to know that there was a place for us to stay when we couldn't get to our next destination. The Wrights are such an amazing blessing to our group!

Peace and blessings,
Sarah

Date: 2/21/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

Okay, so there is this super cool kid on my team.

His name: Aaron Fong

His age: ALMOST 19

The reason for such a weird journal entry: we ate at the Outback Steakhouse for his birthday.



Andrea Laneri

So we arrived in Dilworth February 21 and set up all of our equipment. Since we were just going to host homes and we had a few hours to just hang out, we decided to go out for his birthday dinner (even though his birthday wasn't going to be for another few days).

Steak served as dinner while on Captive Free is a pretty rare occurrence. Supper/dinner consists of pizza, lasagna or spaghetti, and of course your choice of sides and yummy desserts. So Aaron's parents sent him money to take us all out [to a steakhouse] for his birthday dinner. So we went to the Outback. It was so good!

We ate supper/dinner, talked, laughed, shared food and just had a blast. We sang to Aaron and ate dessert; holy cow, it tasted so amazing . . . mmmm cheesecake!

It is crazy how well we all get along. I mean if you think about it, we are just a bunch of young adults that love God and want to serve Him, we apply to Youth Encounter to be in a worship band, and then we get put in a region on a team that best fits our spiritual gifts, talents, and the region's needs. We get along so well, like a family . . . and some life long friends. We are blessed.

Excitement tomorrow: hanging with the kids and families of the Dilworth Lutheran church!

Date: 2/23/2006

Submitted by: Dana Reynolds

Journal Entry:

Andrea, Jenny and I stayed with a fun retired couple in Dilworth, MN, and were excited to watch the Olympics. Tired though we were, we did stay up to see Sasha Cohen nail her short program performance (heck yes, figure skating). Before that, though, we had an awesome day. We actually got rehearsal time! It was mostly spent readjusting, but we all had fun. Sadly, we ate pizza again, but it was great fun to watch Todd coach Sarah through eating her 'second' piece. She had taken two pieces, but they were so small they amounted to one piece, and the three elderly ladies at the table were cheering her on, trying to get her to eat the second piece. After dinner, we played games with families. Todd was leading, and it wasn't quite what we had expected, but we played some sweet games of Heads up 7 up; Egg, Chicken, Raptor, Cool Person; and the Psychic Game (which I still don't know what they're doing). Most of the families stayed for the program right after, which went well, too.

Thursday

After a wonderful breakfast, we all headed to the church and teased Aaron that he would officially be old in a few days. Nothing too out of the ordinary happened. We had a Family Night Program, and met some really cool kids in Fessenden, North Dakota. Spirits on the team have been pretty high. We are truly blessed.



Dana Reynolds

Date: 2/25/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

The past forty-eight hours have been an excellent reminder of the simple pleasures in life. To name a few: puppies, playing cards, laundry, tickle fights, sleeping in, hot chocolate and Andes mints. Life on the road is often overwhelming and stressful, and I frequently forget to remember the little things that have always made me smile so much.

Fessenden, North Dakota was an amazingly welcoming town. After our program on Thursday night, Todd, Aaron, Sarah and I found ourselves staying in an old country farmhouse with two wonderful hosts. Katie and Laurie were fabulously fun. We were also excited to discover that their dog had had puppies a week earlier and we got to play with them! I miss my dogs so much, and sometimes I just need that puppy therapy. The seven puppies hadn't even opened their eyes yet, but they were so loving and excellent at cuddling. We were conspiring how to bring at least one of them with us. Todd and I were both "claimed" by puppies, and we thought they would be good choices to come with us. Of course, we would have had to do our laundry a lot more frequently!

After a late night with the puppies, Friday morning came way too early. Once again though, I was pleasantly surprised by a fabulous day. The whole team traveled to Harvey to go to a nursing home. Though it was a short visit, we met some incredible people. Andrew, age 103, walked up to talk to us after our program and talked to us. I can only pray that I would be in that good health when I'm seventy! After the nursing home visit, we had a rehearsal to start working on our Lent service music. Once again, I was surprised and thrilled with my team. God is truly at work through this family. Each person on my team has amazing gifts, and it never ceases to amaze me what wonderful musicians are on my team. It is an amazing pleasure to serve with these friends.

That evening, the junior high group made dinner for us. French Toast and homemade ice cream! I don't think I've had that much fun eating dinner in a long time. The spoons became people and the bowls battleships in the world of Aaron and Todd. I think they may have created an entire movie! We cleaned up afterward, and once again, Todd, Aaron, Sarah and I traveled to stay with Katie and Laurie. I think it may have been one of my favorite nights of the year. Katie is absolutely hilarious and fun to hang out with. The evening started out crazy and it continued all night long. It all began when Aaron pinned me down and both Aaron and Todd then proceeded to tickle me for a half hour straight. I don't think I've EVER laughed that hard. Of course, the entire time, Sarah and Katie were attempting to stop them, but their efforts were all in vain. Once I gained my breath back, we moved to a table and played card games for about five hours. I don't think I've laughed so



Jenny Frantz

hard in a long time. I thank Sarah, Katie, and the boys for the most fun I have had in a very long time! At midnight we all stopped to sing Happy Birthday to one Mr. Aaron Fong. I keep telling him he's so old now... 19!!!

This morning, Aaron's birthday, we got to sleep in. Thank goodness for that after the late night of fun! Once again, the day started fabulously. As a team, we are trying something new with our devotions. Every Saturday, we are planning worship in the spot of devotions. One of the biggest challenges for us on the road this year has been finding an opportunity to worship. Many of us often feel so drained, and it's so hard to find that spiritual refill. Saturday mornings are going to be to try to curb that. This morning was the first, and I would say it was definitely successful. I am constantly finding more and more enjoyment out of purely sitting and singing with my team. God speaks through the voices, and I feel closer to Him every time. I am so blessed. Then came the simple pleasure of hot chocolate. And not just any old hot chocolate, but Todd made it with Andes mints. If you have never tried this... you must! It is so good. What a way to start my day!

I now find myself in Bismark, North Dakota. We had a good program tonight and met two amazing young people, Chris and Christi, and two area youth who have started amazing things in the community. They told of us the area youth worship they started called WINGS (Walking In the Neverending Grace of our Savior). I don't know too many high schoolers that would spend their free time the way they are. God is truly at work through them! I am excited for next weekend when we will, hopefully, get to see them again at the Quake.

Finally, Sarah and I had a fabulous relaxing night tonight. Our host home is fabulous. After talking for awhile, we watched the Olympics. It's so funny, we are constantly traveling and though we are in the world, we are often clueless as to what is going on in the world around us. Who knew it was the last night of the Olympics? It was so nice to feel normal for an evening and watch some speed skating and then a movie. Life can get so crazy, and it's easy to feel so apart from the world. It's easy to become stressed and irritated. It is in these times that I need to remember the past two days and all of the amazing simple pleasures, scratch that, *blessings* that God has granted me.

Date: 2/28/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Today we are in Jamestown staying at a Youth For Christ building for the night. We don't have a program so we are just chilling. We hung out with the kids for awhile, then Jenny, Andrea and I went grocery shopping with our contact Dallas, who was an alumni of YE. When we got back, we cooked up supper while others hung out and chilled. As it was the day before Lent, it was the last day I could have meat or pop for a long, long time. Unfortunately, there wasn't much in the way of meat to be had, so I couldn't stock up for the long meatless period ahead of me. I am excited about the things I am giving up, though, for Lent. I hope that the period of some self denial and temptation I will be able to use to draw closer to God during this time. To me, it's not about 'ooh, look at what I'm giving up'. It's more of a secret in some way, between me and God, in an attempt to use the temptation as a reminder of what He gave up to be with me, and use the temptation as a reminder to draw close to Him.



Todd Thieme

Date: 3/2/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

Being on the road definitely has its ups and downs. We left an awesome time at the Youth for Christ Center in Jamestown, ND for a small town in South Dakota near Aberdeen named Groton. Our trip down to South Dakota held an unexpected turn, however—one to the east when it should have been to the south. We ended up taking a long detour through Fargo on our way down, but we arrived at the church safely a little later than expected. That morning I had woken up and hadn't been feeling the greatest. By the time that we reached the church, I definitely did not feel 100%. We played our first Lenten service ever that night at the church and headed back to host homes.



Sarah Danielson

I ended up spending the next day out of commission with the flu. The doctor's order, five days of no working and staying away from people, was a very difficult request to follow when doing ministry on the road. My host father, Pastor Grams, was so wonderful and really helped to take care of me when I wasn't feeling well. The rest of the group spent the day rehearsing and reworking parts for the Lenten service that they were leading again that night. When Andrea came back to our host home that night, she told me that the worship service had gone really well. I was so thankful that the fact that I was sick did not cause problems for the team and the worship service that they were leading for the people. God has truly gifted our team with many musical talents, and it is awesome to see how those gifts help to make our ministry successful even in tough situations. It definitely is not fun to be sick on the road and to not be able to be with the rest of the team, but it is also amazing to see how God gifts and strengthens our team during those trying times.

Peace and blessings,
Sarah

Date: 3/7/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

So today (Monday March 7) was our day off in Bismarck, after the Bismarck Quake. It was pretty sweet. The girl Sarah and I stayed with, Christi, was turning 16! But while she was at school the team met up to go for a little drive to Hazen, ND . . .

But before that drive, Jenny, Sarah, Dana and I went to the mall and got Christi a birthday gift and picked up some fun stuff for ourselves as well. After the mall, we met up with the boys at the church so we could all pile into the van and head off to Hazen.



Andrea Laneri

The reason we wanted to go to Hazen was to see this super cool family, the Frank family. The youth group from the church in Hazen attended the Quake. Well, when we were in Hazen for a lock-in and a worship service that Sunday morning, we were told that Jake and Madz were going to be at the last Celebration on Sunday at the Quake. When Mrs. Frank told us they couldn't go because of too much homework, we were all really sad, so we told her that on our day off we would drive the 1.5 hour drive it took to get from Bismarck to Hazen.

When we got there the kids were still at school, while Aaron, Sarah, Dana, Jenny and Todd got ready to surprise them I went with Mrs. Frank to pick them up from school.

They were super excited to see me and kept asking about the rest of the team . . .

Well, I couldn't say anything because the rest of the team was waiting for them at their house ready to get them with Nerf guns . . .

When we walked in the door, the kids were pelted with the suction-cup ends of the Nerf gun bullets . . . this created a war in the house. The rest of the day was filled with crazy fun. Nolan, a high school youth, came over as well and joined in the fun and then supper/dinner after.

Hazen is such a wonderful place, filled with amazing families and great kids.

When we got back to Bismarck, Sarah and I went back to our host home and hung out with Christi. We ate and talked for a little bit, wished her a happy birthday a bunch of times and went to bed.

We gave Christi her birthday gift in the morning; it was a picture frame with the team and her at the Quake in it. She loved it. Then we said our good-byes and left for our next adventure . . . an eight hour drive to Young America . . .

When we arrived in Young America, we met with the pastor and were taken to our host home. We stayed at this beautiful farm house that was owned by a gracious man named Scott. He was such an enjoyable man, we wish we could have spent more time with him. He gave us the tour of the house and then said, "All right, well, I am off to stay elsewhere, you have the house to yourselves."

That night we played card games, listened to music and talked about nothing and everything. It

was a ton of fun.

Date: 3/11/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Life is filled with so many random smiles; it's often hard to remember them all. On days like today, I try my best to remember each little thing people have done for me and I know that I will never be successful. I woke up this morning to find a text message from my parents. Now this is a fairly normal occurrence as my mother has become obsessed with the texting world, but today there was a picture of my parents with a recording of them singing "Happy Birthday" to me. It was the most incredible witness of technology and how it keeps us all connected. In addition to the blessing of cell phones, I was once again reminded of how much I love my parents and how blessed I am to have them support me in my year on team. I then started my day in the best mood imaginable. I arrived at the church we played at the night before in Eden Prairie to find that my host dad from the previous visit, Chapin, has gone out to buy a birthday cake for me and my team to share. Now this may seem a little silly and maybe even expected for many, but I have realized that while on the road, birthdays aren't possible to celebrate very much, and most of my teammates did not really get even the pleasure of a birthday cake. Chapin truly blessed my day, and I was so excited that he even made the effort. I am super excited to see Chapin, and the entire Eden Prairie youth group at the Twin Cities II Quake.

As the day continued, I found that I was truly happy to be celebrating my birthday with these people who were not so long ago strangers to me. They have become my best friends, and they each made my day so special.

When we arrived in Hinckley, MN, I was once again surprised to find out that the church had made the connection that is my birthday. No one had told them, they just noticed in the bios we sent ahead of time. Once again, I was surprised with a second birthday cake and more happy wishes. I cannot even believe all the happiness I found in my birthday. I have to be honest: I thought it was going to be incredibly hard being away from family on this day. The Lord has truly shown me that it does not really matter where I am. My family is who loves me. And my team has become my family. Life is very different this year, but I am so happy to be where I am.



Jenny Frantz

Date: 3/14/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

So we got to spend another day off at the Wrights today, and things were good. We got to spend some quality time together as a team, and hanging out together is always a good thing for us. We also got to help out the Wrights work on their new coffee shop and give back to them just a li'l portion of all that they have done for us. On Tuesday we got to have a li'l bit of change as I needed to have another CAT scan done and hopefully finish up all of the testing that I have had to undergo recently, so that was pretty cool cuz last time I had the scan they gave me this contrast through an IV. It's interesting to say the least. After it's been in you for awhile, you get really warm in the throat and ears and all over pretty much, then you feel it go through you, and you can tell when it's going through your stomach, and since it's warm and it's got this spreading sensation as it gets lower...it definitely feels like you pee your pants. So I got to experience that again so it was pretty cool. I felt bad though cuz I had to leave the team without a guitar player for a chapel visit to a school, but it was the only time I could get the scan done, so I had to take the opportunity. Jenny filled in, though, and did a great job. Then it was time for a li'l more R and R at the Wrights.



Todd Thieme

Date: 3/16/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

We took a short hiatus from a longer home stay with the Wrights to take a trip down to Faribault, Minnesota. I arrived at the church to find a surprise awaiting me. My father's cousin Kurt and his family attended that church. Kurt's wife Georganne was even a contact at the church for us. We played some music for the kids at the church and helped with their Wednesday night service.



Sarah Danielson

That night Jenny and I stayed with Kurt and Georganne. It was really fun for us to be able to talk with Georganne. Even though she is a part of my family, I've never really gotten a chance to get to know her very well, so it was like both Jenny and I were learning about her. We talked a lot about her family, her work at the church, and Jenny's absolute love for cheese. We also found out that Kurt worked at Malt-O-Meal. He came back and we talked with him about how the company worked. He even had a book that showed the process of how Tootie Fruities were made. Did you know that all of the different colors of Tootie Fruities (like Fruit Loops) have exactly the same flavor? It was something that I never knew before.

There was a huge snowfall that night, and we were snowed into our host homes a little later the next day, but I really loved getting to know Kurt and Georganne a bit better. After meeting at the church, we all headed up back up to the Wrights again. Oh man...good conversations, cheese stories, and learning about Malt-O-Meal. It was a fun time!

Date: 3/21/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

I love Quakes! The Twin Cities II Quake was amazing!

There were 650 kids that attended; we took over the Hilton hotel that weekend! Wow!

Saturday was a ton of fun; the celebrations were so intense . . . with Daniel's Window and Captive Free as the bands and Bill Yonker as the motivational speaker . . . I mean wow! And the man behind it all, Jon Henderson . . . how could we go wrong?



Andrea Laneri

After the Celebration, it was Trek time. Once again Aaron and I led the X-TREME LOVE Trek. It was packed in the rooms! But once again the kids were great with participating in the games and the conversational lessons we had. It is eye opening to hear all of the things that bring love to these kids' lives. There were three girls from Prescott, MN that had some super cool answers. (I got to get to know the Prescott kids really well, we went to lunch at the Mall of America and just chilled for a bit. I made friends. Yay!) By the end of the Trek, though, Aaron taught about God's extreme love, and we learned a lot!

Dana and I ate supper/dinner with a church that went to T.G.I.Friday's . . . it was at the mall and we were kind of pressed for time. When we were finished with our food and such, we headed up to the tram to take us back to the hotel . . . well, we were running late at that time so after we got off of the tram Dana and I booked it (when I say booked it I mean we RAN about 1.5 miles up hill) back to the ball room. I was so out of shape (haha) that when I got on stage to sing for the Celebration I about had an asthma attack in front of everyone. But I collected myself while the Jr. Guide was reading. After our Celebration time, I thought I was going to die from exhaustion. But it was worth it; the kids and adults at dinner were super cool!

The prayer room was again a success; filled with comfort and love. The hang out with Captive Free was filled with fun games and good conversation . . . and well, the dance was crazy as usual . . . funky dress, lots of dancing and crazy fun.

The Campfire service was great; Daniel's Window is a very blessed and talented music group. I had a kid named Sam sit with me during the Campfire; that makes four new friends. Daniel's Window did a cool thing at the end of each Campfire; they allowed the kids to stick around for a little while and pray while groups went back to their rooms for Family Time.

Sunday's Celebration was amazing! Such high energy . . . it was exciting to see places we had been rockin out for Christ; Eden Prairie, Valley City, Buffalo, and so many more. It was sad to say good-

bye.

When we were done with packing the ball room up, the staff from the Quake (Daniel's Window, Captive Free, Jon and the sales table people) all went to T.G.I.Friday's to eat lunch/dinner. It was so much fun! I love Quakes . . . and the food that follows.

Date: 3/25/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

This past weekend, our team has had the most amazing opportunity. We have spent our time in downtown Minneapolis with 300 high school students. This chance only comes for our team once, and we had to make the most of it. I was super excited to work on a Construction Zone, considering I had never even been to one. Going in, I really had no idea what to expect and thought it would be much like a Quake. Little did I know this weekend was going to be pretty different.

The highlight of the weekend was definitely the challenge we were presented with on Friday. Feed My Starving Children called Kelly (the Zone director) that morning to tell her that we were really close to packaging 1,000,000 bags of food at the Zones this year. Our original goal was 700,000 so one million would be just absolutely incredible! Of course, it would mean everyone working extra hard to package as much as they could during the weekend. It also meant adding a session Friday night to help reach the goal. I was a little skeptical, but knew that it was definitely possible!

Friday night, all of us on Captive Free, along with the emcees, Chad and Paul, and anyone else that could pack into the packaging room with about 100 kids. We worked so hard and completed 100 boxes, 3300 bags of food. The effort continued all of Saturday as well. We ended up coming up a little short, but Brad from Feed My Starving Children told us that it was out of our control. We had run out of rice during the day on Saturday and had to wait on the truck, so he counted it as 1,000,000 as long as one of the churches present promised to come in and finish the job. I was so proud of everyone there that worked so hard. I am so excited to be a part of an organization that really supports this ministry.



Jenny Frantz

Date: 3/30/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

We headed to Lewiston, Minnesota, home of the family of Amber Harder, Team Ministries Administrator, to help out with a Wednesday night Lenten service. Before the service we were able to have dinner with some of the kids from Confirmation and the youth group. For being a small town, Lewiston had a lot of kids at their Wednesday night service. It was also really neat to see the enthusiasm that the kids had for Diane, their youth leader. Another cool thing about being in Lewiston was that we were able to get to know some of the kids that we were able to see later at the Quake in Austin, Minnesota. Being able to play games and get to know them in their home environment really helped them to feel more comfortable with us at the Quake.

After being in Lewiston, we headed to Dodge Center, Minnesota. Our team was able to stay together as a group with a young couple that had a baby named Elizabeth. It is really fun when our whole group is able to stay together. It really doesn't happen very often, so it is a cool opportunity to get to spend time together in a different environment. Times when we get to hang out and not always be working are really fun and mean a lot.



Sarah Danielson

Date: 4/4/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

We stay with a wonderful family in Evan, MN. The Krogstads. They are such a blessing! Their children Lily and Jonah are adorable; we love hanging out with this family. Becca is the pastor at the church in town and Lowell is a wonderful father . . . and was a member of a Captive Free team years ago. We always play music with the family, watch movies and enjoy great cooking! We will miss them after this year.

Tuesday we drove to Philip and went to host homes. Dana and I stayed with a family a few miles out of town. We really enjoyed hanging out with the family. We talked about band, the old TV show Alf, and more. Prom was coming up, and they had a daughter that was going to be attending with a friend. It is always cool to hear about high school experiences and excitements from others.

Wednesday was a beautiful 87 degrees . . . we did job time outside all day, BUT this is not my journal date, so I will let Dana tell you about it.



Andrea Laneri

Date: 4/6/2006

Submitted by: Dana Reynolds

Journal Entry:

In Philip, SD, the weather was unseasonably amazing. Every one of us got a little crispy outside because it was too gorgeous. We did all of our work outside because inside just wasn't bearable. We also did an after school release program outside with the kids of the town, and they were so fun to play with. They were so excited to sing! We thought the floor of the sanctuary might not hold up to our jumping a few times, though, but it held. Grass stains abounded with rousing games of Dead Cow, Live Cow, Sleeping Cow and Egg, Chicken, Raptor, Cool Person. We played our Lent service for them that night, and had a chance to chat with some church members. Our sign had been in the middle of the street downtown! The next day, we drove to Sioux Falls, where we played another Family Night Program and had an ice cream social afterwards. Beforehand though, our contact had out the fixings for an amazing fix-your-own salad inspired by our resident vegetarian. It was tasty indeed. I stayed by myself with a family with two eighth grade girls who were super cool, Barbara and Karissa. They had to go to bed early due to school, so I didn't get much time to know them, but they had been at the Sioux Falls Quake, too, so it was neat to see them again! Barbara was really interested in hearing about some hard rock Christian bands, because she didn't know about many, if any, and she loved the sound of the music. God continues to bless us daily, and life is good.



Dana Reynolds

Date: 4/8/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Sunrise – lakes – breakfast – fruit – popcorn – missing salsa – excited youth – egg salad – nooma – sweatshirts – familiar faces – new games – prom dresses – practical jokes – laughter – music – fun – food – a year of ministry.

When thinking about the last forty-eight hours, these are all words that come to mind. I have truly enjoyed our visits in Barrett and Vasa, Minnesota. As hard as it has been to wait for Easter vacation, I am thrilled that our last two bookings before home were as incredible as they were. It's places like these that really make this year fun and exciting. They renew my spirit and help me continue on.



Jenny Frantz

Date: 4/11/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

So right now we are on our break for Easter, and it's been good to be home. I got in yesterday morning, and so far it's been nice to sleep in my bed and be able to leave my

shower stuff out for more then a day, but truth be told' I do miss the road a little bit. Today I went down to see some of my friends in Indianapolis. It was good to see them, and it's been interesting for them to watch my attitude and stuff change. I've always been a laid back guy and such, but they have been able to notice small changes in how I deal with stuff and just my attitude in general has changed for the better. It's been amazing for me to be on the road this year, to get back to what I feel is my calling. It's been great to be with kids and to play with them and to minister to them. It's been great to get back to worshipping my God and pouring all I have into it. I miss serving others and trying to be the man I'm called to be. So once again, my break from team has allowed me to look at my life from another perspective and to see just some of what God has taught, showed, and molded into me this year.



Todd Thieme

Date: 4/20/2006

Submitted by: Dana Reynolds

Journal Entry:

We returned to a church in Moorhead, MN and played for their Wednesday night service. It was interesting to get back into the swing of things after Easter Break, but it went well and we had fun. We each stayed with the same host families that we had had before, and the boys at my host home were a blast to hang out with. It was the first time that I've played Gamecube in a long time! I was excited. The next booking we were supposed to have had been cancelled, and the church didn't want to spring us on our host families without prior warning, so they got us two hotel rooms to stay in for the night, and we went out to eat at Bennigan's and had a good time just hanging out with each other. Yes, we get annoyed with each other sometimes. Yes, we might bicker. But we really do love each other, and I thank God for my teammates often.



Dana Reynolds

Date: 4/22/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

The last Quake of the year...wow! It's hard to believe that Event Season will be over for us tomorrow. Back in November, I was so completely stressed out about the first Quake. I had so much to do for it and to get ready. Every Event since then has been stressful because it seems as though something always comes up. I think it was best put this way; something great must be happening at these events because Satan sure is trying hard to stop them. As I look back, I realize how true that is. Each Event this year has been special in some way. I have loved every minute of them. This weekend has been the perfect way to close. Everything has gone off without a hitch, and our team has been better than ever. I am truly enjoying the kids I have met and it's been great to work with a band and Event Director that truly care and are there to serve.

Last night, I was super excited because I was invited to a Family Time for the first time! Usually on Friday night, I have to kind of politely invite myself. That's pretty normal. However, before the Celebration even began, I had somewhere to go. Now this was such a simple thing, and I was thrilled. I couldn't wait to go! Little did I know what would follow. I ended up in Family Time with two middle school boys. They were so incredible. They asked hard questions, and I really felt as though I got to know them and their faith. They were so open and willing to share of themselves. I was truly blessed to spend my Family Time with North Waseca.

All day today has been much of the same. I find myself constantly being blessed by the people around me. The meals I went to were truly a phenomenal time. Of course, Perkins was hard for the group I was with because they didn't serve Mountain Dew...but they were able to find their caffeine somewhere else. I am truly happy where I am. I love what I am doing. I feel so blessed to be able to spend my year with five incredible people and be able to share my faith with hundreds of youth. I praise God for this amazing weekend.



Jenny Frantz

Date: 4/25/2006
Submitted by: Todd Thieme
Journal Entry:

Today we are driving to Brandon South Dakota all the way from Lewiston MN where we got to stay with some cool host families and have a nice relaxing day off after our last Quake in Austin.

When we get there we get to go to a drum corps performance by a group that placed 11th in the nation while being about 3-5 years younger than their competition. It was amazing to watch them perform. There was a young group kids that were phenomenal. They were all about 5-8th grade. The next group was 6-10th grade and they were ridiculous. They had to audition to earn their spot, then the next group came out and they were just as stinkin amazing and did some marching as well. One of the host kids we were staying with was in the young group so it was fun to be with the proud parents. It was a family that Andrea and Sarah had stayed with before, so it was fun to get to know them.

The next day was extremely busy for us. We had two preschool mini programs for about 15 min each but working with preschool kids is always good. After those, we set up for our program that night outside. After setting up we had another after school group for about an hour and a half. The kids were so much fun to play with. We played dead cow and live cow and yes I admit it, I

I decided to leave this journal in its original format and not try to go back and finish it. I wrote this journal while I was navigating for Sarah and I know, hard to believe, but I was falling asleep. I would doze off mid sentence then awake realizing I had just made errors and go back and correct them and start off again mid sentence without really knowing what sentence I was in. I thought it would be more enjoyable for you guys this way.



Todd Thieme

Date: 4/27/2006
Submitted by: Sarah Danielson
Journal Entry:

We were able to return to Brandon, South Dakota and see the Smith family again. It was really fun to see them, because Andrea and I had been able to stay with them when we had played in Sioux Falls earlier that year. When we arrived in Brandon, we received a special treat. Our team was able to go see Spencer, our host brother, play in his drum line, Groove Inc. His group, along with two other drum lines, performed at the high school in town. They were so good! It was awesome to see! Even the younger kids were really skilled at their cadences. Their lead drummer was a girl that was absolutely cool in her expression the entire time. It was sweet! Our group talked about how the kids were so good at such a young age that they were going to be amazing by the time that they got to high school.

At the church in Brandon, we helped out with the after school program. We played a lot of games with the kids, sang songs with them, and ate some ice cream with them. That night we also had a Family Night Program outside. Our group joked about how our sound check may have been a bit distracting to the construction workers that were working on a building next to the church. It is fun to play outside. I feel as though our music and message can spread out further than we can imagine.

It was also really great to be able to spend time with the Smiths again. Morgan was so excited to meet all of the people in our group that she made gifts for each person in our group. Spencer also had a lot of stories to share and was an extremely cool junior high boy. It was just really wonderful to be able to rekindle relationships with the Smiths and see them again. I really love being able to connect with people more than once during the year. It makes it seem as though we have a huge family on the road.

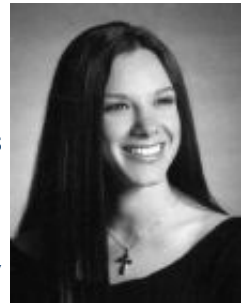


Sarah Danielson

Date: 5/2/2006
Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

Alrighty, well, here is what happened...our day off in Westbrook, MN was a dark and stormy-ish day. Sarah and I had to get up a little earlier than we would have liked so that I could go to the doctor. You see, I had been having problems with my vocal chords and hadn't seen a doctor, my voice was raspy and achy, I had burning in my sternum that carried up my throat. Sarah and I sat in the doctor's office with my host mom, Angie and my host sister, Tilly. We made cards until the doctor called my name, I sat down and answered the standard questions then she checked out my breathing and my throat. I opened and said "Ahhhhhh." The doctor asked about symptoms and how long they have been going on, what my diet consisted of and then she said, "I have reason to believe that you have acid reflux disease." For those of you that don't know what acid reflux disease is, well the definition is: "injury to the esophagus that develops from chronic exposure of the esophagus to acid coming up from the stomach." This is caused by having too much acid in one's diet! Bleh, so sad! Well after getting a sample of some prescription meds, we were back on the road and ready to eat lunch...just in time for Sloppy Joes! I ate some salad with ranch dressing. Man, now I have to watch what I eat pretty closely.



Andrea Laneri

After lunch was over we all gathered up into the van and followed Pastor Roy and his wife out to their cabin on Lake Benton. Wow, it was beautiful! We stayed there for the night, we watched the sunset on over the lake as the pelicans dove to catch their supper. It is so amazing the way God says good night.

In the morning we ate breakfast all together and did a devotion, we had God time in his creation. It was great; I sat on the shoreline of the lake and watched the little fish swim around and the bugs glide across the top of the water, the wind blowing through the leaves, causing a few to float down to the water and diving right in. When the time came to say good-bye we gave our hugs, said our thank you's and said we'd see them at the end of the month.

I find I get great enjoyment out of returning to a church that we have been to, we get to catch up with the people that we had met in our previous visit, feel comfortable a little faster than normal. Oh, the small pleasures in life!

Date: 5/8/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

I think someday I would like to own a coffee shop. A little hole-in-the-wall place that offers a cup of comfort along with a small children's book shop in the back. A place that people can come to relive their childhood or bring their own children. Any child can order from the menu a cup of chocolate or a steamer to their taste while the parent enjoys a cup of steaming coffee. (Of course, for those that aren't too fond of coffee, they could enjoy chocolate or a steamer as well.) There's something about a good coffee shop that I am just drawn to. I find myself relaxed and feeling at home. The incredible part is that I don't believe I'm the only one that feels this way. In fact, if you were to ask the average person between the ages of eighteen and thirty-something, I'm willing to bet that most people would say they enjoy the atmosphere a coffee shop brings. Not only is it a good place to sit and chat with friends, but for many of the college aged generation, it is an excellent place to study and work. I find that frequently when I walk into a coffee shop, I can point out at least a couple people working on business or school related items. Of course, this isn't that far off of the original "American Dream." The parent wakes up in the morning to sip on their cup of freshly brewed coffee and read the morning paper. Why is it that coffee brings such a sense of comfort to so many? What if God had a coffee shop? What would He sell? What would the menu look like? Would He sell the caffeine? Would it still be addictive? Would it stain our teeth? I like to think that it would soothe our souls as well as our need for the atmosphere. Of course, God would know exactly what we wanted to order and maybe there would be no menu at all. It would be ready when we walked in the door. Each cup would be served with a beaming smile and a reminder of His love. Now that would be a coffee shop. The ultimate in comfort. Today I had the chance to sit in a coffee shop for awhile. This particular coffee shop is one that I just love. Our team had the opportunity to help paint it and get it ready for opening. Now when I walk



Jenny Frantz

in, it's not just a coffee shop—it's a memory. Memories not only of times in this shop, but in almost any coffee shop I've walked into. I never realized just how much of my life has unfolded in these settings. Maybe that's part of the comfort in them. My life can be told in cups of coffee. Some of my closest relationships in life have been built over a cup of steaming brew; even my relationship with God. When I've had morning devotions, I frequently found myself reading the Word and sipping. I pray that this is common for many. The time is precious and amazing.

Date: 5/9/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Today we are staying with Dana's aunt and uncle. This past weekend we played at the Youth Encounter Spring fundraising Gala. The main discussion was just exactly how to pronounce gala; is it 'gay-la' or is it 'gal-a'? No one seemed to really know, and I decided to go with fundraising shindig instead and play it safe. The event was great and a good time had by all. It was fun seeing all the people that give to the organization that I have never met before and get a chance to talk to them and thank them for all of their contributions.

Dana's aunt and uncle live in a very nice area of St. Paul; it seemed to be impossible to actually be a part of St. Paul. It was fun getting a chance to chill and relax before heading back to normal life and get a bit of a day off after a long weekend.



Todd Thieme

Date: 5/11/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

We had just ended a fabulous night in the south end of the Cities with Dana's aunt and uncle, complete with a walk down to a beautiful lake when we hit the road to travel up to Shoreview on Wednesday morning. We arrived at a big church named Incarnation Lutheran Church early in the morning so that we could lead music with some preschool children. We had a group of about 30 or 40 preschool kids very quietly enter the hall that we were playing in. As the group approached us, we noticed that one of the girls named Greta was celebrating a birthday, so we tried to make the time together special for her by singing to her as well. The kids were really quiet in the beginning, but by the end of our time, they were dancing around and singing. We also were able to lead music for some preschoolers later in the afternoon. I always love how excited kids get to help Jenny find her lost puppy in our puppet show, to jump around during "Cast Your Burdens", and to yell "Jesus Loves Me" at the top of their lungs. They just have such joy to share, and spending time with those kids always brightens my day!

We were also able to spend time with Pastor Jean from the church. It was really fun to go out to eat lunch with her. She really seemed to enjoy getting to know our team and its quirks, like Aaron's obsession with playing Hungry, Hungry Hippos or the fun that can be had by squishing people with Love Sacs. It was also really neat to hear about the things that the church was involved in like their projects with Habitat for Humanity in the community and their mentoring confirmation times with middle school students. Even though the church was large in itself, it also sounded like the people of the church wanted to make a huge impact in the lives of people who were and who were not involved in their church.

Later that night, we played a program for one of their confirmation's last events. During our worship set, it was really amazing to see high school leaders stepping out in leading the middle school kids in worshipping and having fun. The front of the floor near the stage became a dance floor and crazy jumping pit by the end of the program! It was really great to see the enthusiasm of the people there.

That night Andrea and I stayed with the most wonderful host family. We talked with our host parents Tom and Beth Ann forever about families, crazy adventures, Tom Hanks movies, books, Halloween stories, pirate restaurants, and a whole lot more. The next morning Andrea and I even



Sarah Danielson

had to do monkey impressions for breakfast. (Beth Ann had cooked this delicious food called monkey bread.) They were so much fun!

On Thursday we met at the church and hopped in the van to head off to Fargo, North Dakota. We met a wonderful family, the Ryans--Bob, Peggy, Jennifer, and their loquacious cat Sam--and hung out with them for the rest of the evening. We were really excited about playing at Oak Grove High School the next morning.

Date: 5/16/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

I love little towns! People are so friendly; they wave to you while you are taking a walk down the street or filling up your gas tank at the local corner store. In Edinburg, ND we did a family night program there, but before we did that we ate supper. During supper Sarah and I sat with Pastor Eric and his son, as we sat there talking Pastor Eric's son started singing songs and asking us who we thought they were by. They all ended up being Johnny Cash songs. It was the cutest thing ever!



Andrea Laneri

So when we started the program, our little singer friend bounced in his seat and tapped his feet, it was adorable. After the program Jenny and I had a picture fight. Brad, a youth director in Williston, ND and I did that throughout the week. Anyway, so Jenny and I were having a picture war and then we tore down our equipment. It was our day off the next day, and we were all staying at the same house so we took our time. We danced around mic stands and sung into the empty space where the mic should have been. We arrived at the home of Harold and Alida. Dana went straight to bed, Aaron and Jenny hung out with Alida and ate ice cream while Todd checked his e-mails. As all of this was going on Sarah and I hung out and watched the funny parts of the movie; "Benny and Joon". Then we went to sleep.

I woke up at about 10:00 a.m. Jenny and I had talked about taking a walk when we were both up, so we took a walk at around 10:15. We walked the whole town and some neighborhoods in about an hour. There were beautiful parks and children playing in wagons and riding bikes. When we got back to the house, Aaron and Todd were up. I hung out around the house and did some laundry then decided to take a run. I got my tennies on and my iPod charged, I stretched and was ready to go. I think I jogged around the town once then stopped at the park by the highway and swung on the swings for a while. I did some sit-ups, and well, that's about it. I started to run back to the house, but I noticed that the sun was going down; there were train tracks a little ways past the feed mill, so once I hit the mill, I walked to cool down. As I got closer to the tracks there were kids speeding down the dirt road on 4 wheelers and dogs barking behind their invisible fences. There was a cat trying to sneak up on a bird that was sitting on the railing of a track. By the time he wiggled his back end and attempted to pounce on the bird fluttered away, so the cat rolled over and squirmed in between the beams. I continued on my walk and listened to the birds as I watched the sun sink beneath the green hills. I walked back listening to the band, *Flyleaf*.

I think that sunsets are my favorite thing. They are so beautiful, mmmmm yeah!

Date: 5/20/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Yay for beautiful weather! God is blessing us in this region with warm, sunny days. Because of this welcome change, we had an outdoor program last night in Buffalo, Minnesota. This was truly exciting for a few reasons. One, as I already said, it was absolutely beautiful out and we got to spend plenty of time in the outdoors. Two, we were back in Buffalo, a town that we have been to twice already this year. I have found that while on the road, familiarity is something that I really long for. It's been a challenge to be somewhere new all the time and meeting all new people. Every once in a while, it's nice to go somewhere that we already know some people and it's deepening those



Jenny Frantz

relationships that we get to use our time for. Sometimes I get very tired of answering the exact same question zillions of times. *Hello, my name is Jenny Frantz. I am from Wilmington, Ohio. I graduated from Capital University a year ago May, with an early childhood education and intervention education major. I also minored in music.* I love being able to answer questions that allow me to get to know someone on a little different level. Anyways, Buffalo was so much fun and we really enjoyed seeing some of the youth again.

Another thing that made this weekend special was that we got to see Todd in his element. A little ways back, Todd told us that he had found a Dagorhir unit in the Minneapolis area. Well, his day of fun came. On Saturday, we found ourselves in Como Park looking for a group of people dressed up in Medieval garb fighting with their foam weapons. It really was a lot of fun for all of us. We got to see Todd doing what he talks about all the time, and we had a little bit of time to relax together as a team. It's not very often that we really get the chance to see each person on our team doing something outside of music that they really love. It's a rare opportunity for us to see each person in their most natural state. When we get the chance, it's incredible because just when you think you know everything there is to know about a person, you get a glimpse into something just a little bit further. We have been so blessed on our team by our relationships with each other. I know that I can call every single person a friend. I know that I will be checking in with each of these people for the rest of my life, and I know that I will never know absolutely everything about them. God is so amazing. He can make us so unique and intricate that we will never truly know the inner workings of the people around us, but we can really know the people and who they are.

Date: 5/23/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Today we were back in Westbrook again getting to see familiar faces and meet some new ones. I got to start a bonfire which seems to be a current trend right now, and I'm alright with that. Aaron and I probably enjoy making fires a little too much, though. The bad news for the day is that I lost my contact yet again. I lost it once before during training while at camp during the first week there. I neglected to tell my parents about it for probably a month and then finally got one again maybe in November sometime. After going through several months once before with no depth perception, I decided to not make the same mistake and called them quickly this time. Thankfully they were willing to help out as they have been so many times this year, and hopefully within a month or so I will not be walking into doors that I think are further away.

The group has mixed emotions currently about the upcoming evening in the jail. I excited for it, but I also have concerns and wondering just exactly it will end up. It will be interesting just what type of impact we will have on them, and more importantly, what type of impact they might have on us.



Todd Thieme

Date: 5/25/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

We played the most incredible program inside a prison in Springfield, South Dakota. We were a bit apprehensive about the prison, but everyone that we talked to before going was really excited for us. A pastor from Westbrook, Minnesota told us that once someone had commented to him about how wonderful it was that people were able to bring God into jail. The pastor then responded to them, "We don't bring God into the jail; he is already there." He also told us that having guests in the prison is such a treat that the men would watch over us and not let anything happen to us. He said that the men would protect us probably even more than the guards. He was right. We were in a room filled with about 100-150 inmates all in plain white t-shirts and tan pants with the word "inmate" running down the left leg, and I felt incredibly safe.

The afternoon of the day that we were going to play in the prison, we went over to the jail early. We were debriefed on the way over there about how we shouldn't give out very much personal



Sarah Danielson

information, because there was a possibility of inmates seeking us out in the future. We were also told about the prison itself. It was a middle-ground prison—not for the worst criminals, but for men who had made a variety of mistakes nonetheless. We met with the prison's praise band, which was a group of inmates that led worship each week. These guys were so awesome! They were really fun to be around and had such a great spirit of worship. The piano and guitar players were incredible. It was so good to talk with the band, too. There was this bass player named Bill who couldn't wait to get out to start his own praise band. Playing and singing with them was amazing. The Spirit just seemed to fill the room.

Later that day we returned to the prison. We sang with the prison praise band and also gave an hour-long program. At the beginning of the program the men were all staring blankly at us. However, as we continued, they really warmed up. It was cool to see these men sing and praise unashamed of what others would think. Jenny shared a story about a time in her life that she felt alone and almost killed herself. She had not thought about what this story would mean to the men, but during our time of fellowship, many people talked to her about how suicide was something that had crossed their minds while being in jail. They also wanted to thank her for her message of encouragement.

The men even stood and danced for the last song of our program. They all cheered for an encore and joked about how we could keep playing for awhile, because "they all had a lot of time." We played another song, and they danced and let loose (at least as much as they could with the guards there). I think that the prison minister got a little worried when we encouraged 100 inmates to dance and get crazy.

We got to talk with some of the men during fellowship time and had communion with them. They were so open to share about their lives and often about why they had been sent to prison. There was a man who came up to talk with me. He told me that he was getting out in ten days after seven-and-a-half years in prison. He said that the only thing he was going to miss from prison was worship there.

The men in the prison praise band even had a special gift for our team. They gave us certificates to thank us for coming and playing. Now, certificates may not seem like a big thing, but to them it was huge. We later discovered that getting and having the materials to make those certificates was really dangerous for the men. If they had gotten caught with it, they could have been thrown into isolation or even taken to the State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls. They just gave us so much! The men were so appreciative that we were there, and it was amazing to worship with the men there. The Spirit was so alive and God was so present in the lives and hearts of the men. I never would have pictured myself leading music or worshipping in a prison, but it is amazing to see where God takes us.

Date: 5/25/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Today I got to milk my first cow!!!! It was amazing. Kinda intimidating, but sweet just the same. We left Westbrook today and headed to Yankton. Yankton was supposed to be where we got to do a program at a prison. When we arrived, we immediately started setting up for our program that evening and got to meet the kids of the pastor and get a feel for our time there. After the program, we tore down and headed to our host homes. We were staying with the pastor and her husband, who happened to be the pastor at the prison. The next day we headed to the prison to see what we were working with in terms of sound equipment and such. We had a chance to get to rehearse that evening with their praise band. Let me just stop and say that it was a privilege to get to worship with a band that was comprised of inmates. It was truly interesting. After that, we headed back to the church for supper then back to the prison. We got to start off the service by opening up with their praise band, then we did our own program. After our own program, we had communion with them. I was lucky enough to get to offer the juice to the guys for the communion. Never before had I seen people seem so grateful for communion, the body and blood of Christ. Then we finished up with some more songs with their praise band and got to hang out with the inmates some. It was awesome. I wish I could have gotten some more time to talk to them. They seemed so hungry and



Todd Thieme

grateful for us being there. Probably one of the most respectful crowds and attentive as well. It was just a blessing to be there with them. They made us certificates of appreciation, and I thought it was so cool to get even that. It was made cooler learning how much work and sacrifice had to go into it. After learning that paper had to get snuck in, unauthorized copies made, and everything else that went into it just made it that much more meaningful to us. The whole experience was possibly the highlight of the whole year.

Date: 5/30/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:



Andrea Laneri

Wow what a week! The team and I stayed together for Memorial Break. We were at the Quality Inn, in Rapid City, SD. When we first arrived we met up with some of the Captive Free members from the South Central group and the West Coast group along with Bri. Jenny and Aaron checked into the hotel while the rest of us visited with the others. When we were all moved in, Jenny and I took the South Central members to the airport so they could go home for the weekend. We also stopped off at a parking lot by the airport, this is where Rick (from West Coast) was, they got a flat tire on their way back from the airport and pulled into the area, the problem was that someone had stolen their spare tire earlier on in the year SO they had to borrow ours. Kristen and Bri were there hanging out waiting for Jenny and I to get there to help. We dropped off the tire and hung out for a while catching up with each other. The wind started to pick up and the clouds that were rolling in became darker. A huge gust of wind blew and shook the vans. Rick put on the spare as fast as he could and then it started to rain. He went off to camp, Kristin and Bri headed off to their hotel, and Jenny and I went back to our hotel to meet up with the others.

We all just chilled all week, slept in late...we had a rule where you were not allowed to use an alarm, it was great. We stayed up too late, sat in the hot tub, watched The O.C, ate out at Red Lobster one night, Olive Garden the next and Perkins one night, too. We were mall rats for a while. Jenny, Todd, Aaron and I headed off to Kohl's for a shopping run, only, we walked. We spent more time trying to walk there than we did in the store! But it was a fun adventure. It was a very relaxing weekend with tons of rest, alone time, phone time and letter writing time.

Our next journey was one we would never forget. We headed up to the camp, Lee Valley Ranch for VBS training. There we learned new puppet shows and new skits that went with each day's bible theme for the VBS curriculum. We had meetings about how to teach the Bible stories, sing-alongs, crafts, and games. We had some free time in which most of the boys from North Central, South Central and West Coast decided to partake in Todd's interest in medieval reenactment. They went out and fought each other with foam swords and shields. Some of the girls joined in as well, and by the end of the week, almost everyone was playing. I think that North Central and South Central have a duel that is planned to "fight" for the title of CENTRAL, at debriefing. We did 1-on-1's and team meetings. During one of these free times, just before dinner, Todd, Kristin, and I shaved...err, attempted to shave Travis and Rick's hair. It ended up looking pretty good.

We went to Mt. Rushmore one evening for a while. Oh wow! How crazy is that rock!? I mean just look at it, this huge rock with these faces, it is so huge! The thought and planning that went into carving into that hard rock is just so incredible. Wow, if you have never been there I suggest you take the time to go; it will make you feel so small.

Something else that made me feel small was time with God. I really love taking pictures and so every now and again I bring God with me, to show me what He feels is beautiful. I ended up walking through the woods of the camp and finding some huge trees with beautifully bright colored flowers growing under them. As the time came to an end, I was laying on my back looking up at the sky and watching the clouds form and gather together. It truly is amazing to watch these molecules come together to form this mass of beauty and think, "Who thought of that?" Then realize how small you are when looking up into the sky and seeing wide open space of blue and patches of white. God is truly amazing and what he has given us to live on and breathe in is such a gift, holy cow! I mean, what did we ever do to deserve all of this?! He loves us so much that he surrounds us with beauty every day.

Date: 6/1/2006

Submitted by: Dana Reynolds

Journal Entry:

VBS training has been a blast so far. They told us it was supposed to be a restful experience, but it wasn't, really. It was lots of fun, though. Todd made more padded weapons, and every afternoon during our break after lunch a group of about 10 teamers have gathered in the field to do battle. It was buckets-o-fun beating each other up with foam-padded sticks. I think Todd got a few guys from other teams hooked, which made all of us on North Central smile. Todd's a big nerd, and we love him. It was great to talk to other teamers. Most of them went home over Memorial Day break, while we all stayed together. We could spread out and see other people, which was good.



Dana Reynolds

Thinking about the end of training and heading out to our first VBS (which isn't right away, but within the week), we're more tired than when we arrived at training. Lee Valley is a beautiful camp, and seeing Mt. Rushmore was fun, but a long sleep is in order. VBS is an exciting prospect for the rest of the year, even if we fear the sing-alongs may turn our brains to mush.

Date: 6/1/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Right now we are in the middle of another VBS while in Buffalo, SD. I am staying with a great family that has an adopted son in high school named David. He and I share a room, and it's been great getting a chance to hang out with him and talk when we get a chance. He has had what I would call a rough child hood and some bad breaks in life, but the kid's faith and attitude toward life is amazing. He was thrust into an entirely different lifestyle when he was picked up originally as a foster kid, but he has faced the adversity with a smiling face and an attitude that betrays his age but speaks well of his faith. Being around him has definitely been a good time.

This VBS has been interesting for me. For those of you who don't know, I am a bass player by nature and learned guitar awhile ago and by some mistake by Jeff Rowdon and the rest of the recruiting dept, I wound up as a guitar player. I am also on a team of very talented singers, so my vocal shortcomings definitely aren't on display often. But not this week, with the way VBS was structured, one person was in charge of music. Since no one else can really play guitar and I can sing a lil bit, I got to do music all by myself. I had help when my teammates passed through with their groups, but overall...I was teaching stuff myself when I had barely sung it myself. It was interesting, it was fun but definitely interesting, especially music time with Aaron's group. As said before with snacks, Aaron and I take it up a notch and just generally shouldn't be in charge of others without supervision.

This VBS was also fun cuz the kids were great here. Andrea's host sister, Camryn, and her host brother, Zach, were fun to hang out with. Camryn made me her personal transportation device and I used her for exercise as I carried her around on my shoulders and she called me pony telling me where to go and trying to feed me leaves that I would not eat.



Todd Thieme

Date: 6/3/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Today we wrapped up the end of Vacation Bible School training. It's kind of a bittersweet day. I never thought we would get to this week. This year has seemed so long at times and I didn't think I would ever make it through. Now, here we are and it's June. We have just over two months left on the road. We have just over two months left in this particular ministry. We have just over two months left with each



other. This week has been incredible for renewing my spirits. I was able to get up every single day to see the sun up and the skies blue. I was able to take a walk every single morning in the fresh country air. I was able to play in the sun. I was able to talk to God constantly. I was able to worship with others around me. Finally, I was able to renew some relationships with people on other teams. People that I probably hadn't spent enough time with before, but was now getting the chance to get to know them and renew our spirits together. I am definitely nervous about what is coming this summer. There is so much to know and do, but I am confident our team is ready for it. I can't wait to take in every single day I can with the people around me that I love so much.

Jenny Frantz

Date: 6/6/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Today we left Hazen after doing a lock in, Sunday worship and a program. On our day off we got a chance to chill, and it was amazing to relax and get to hang out with the kids from there again. It was great to see Nolan again...especially since he always gets me Hot Tamales. We arrived in Bismarck and got ready for the first round of VBS that we would do.

We weren't doing the VBS stuff this week; it gives us an opportunity to get used to the flow of VBS stuff prior to being in charge of one so it should be good for us. Aaron and I were in charge of snacks. It was fun showing the kids how to build their snacks and tell them how to eat. It was overall really fun. Then we went to our host home for supper and got to meet our family. I got to eat red meat, so the day obviously was a good one for me. We were staying with Chris, which is a youth we had a met the first time we were in Bismarck. We hung out with him and played some Final Fantasy X and called it a night.

The next day we got a chance to relax in the morning and not start the day till 12.30. So I took advantage and used it to get up early and get some reading and writing done and go for a run. It was a great start to the day. Once there, we got a lot of job time done and then started getting ready for the kids again. This time we were in charge of the story time and telling kids about Jesus dying for us and saving us. We set up a superhero training camp for them, and I got to be my puppet, Doug the Turtle. After VBS we headed out for Waffle Cone Wednesday at TCBY and it was great...so many people there, it was ridiculous. Then we chilled at the house and watched "Constantine" with Chris.



Todd Thieme

Date: 6/6/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Back to Bismarck for us; we are staying with one of the youth that we met last time but wasn't at the Quake we did there. Chris is our host brother this time, and he is helping out with our first VBS of the summer. It's kind of a nice setup actually. We aren't doing much for this VBS, so it will give us a time to get some first hand knowledge and experience about what to do and what to expect while there instead of being thrust right into the leadership role as some teams have.

The last couple nights have been fun chilling with Chris. The VBS is an evening one, so that allows us to chill more in the morning and sleep in as well. In the afternoons is when we do our work and all that fun stuff, but Chris is at work so it works out. The VBS is very fun, and Aaron and I get to be in charge of snacks. Most time snacks is a cool time cuz you get to just eat and chill and eat junk food, but with Aaron and I at the helm, snack time gets taken up a notch...or four. So that has been a great time. The evenings are relaxed as well as we chill with Chris who is currently in high school. We go shopping at Wal-Mart, play video games and just generally goof off. The kid gets an 'A' in my book just cuz he got me some contact solution which I didn't have the money for



Todd Thieme

and also wasn't available through needs money stuff. My contacts were getting in pretty bad shape so Chris was a life saver and awesome to hang out with. Our 4 a.m. nights of talking and chilling will be missed...especially when sleeping in till noon is an option.

Date: 6/8/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:



Sarah Danielson

Andrea and I awoke on Wednesday morning to find the birds singing in the trees right outside the camper that we were sleeping in. That's right...we got to "camp out" with our host sister Christi in the driveway of her home during our stay in Bismarck. It was really fun to reunite with Christi, because Andrea and I had been able to stay with her earlier in the year when we had spent our day off in Bismarck after a Quake. We had gotten to know her and her good friend Chris when we had played in Bismarck earlier in the year.

We headed to the church to meet the rest of the team later in the morning. We spent a bit of time rehearsing and preparing for the weeks of VBS ahead. We got to spend a little bit of time doing some thrift store shopping for clothes for some of the VBS themes that we were going to be doing.

We had been asked to lead the Bible storytelling station for that evening, so Jenny was doing a lot of brainstorming to figure out how to make the story especially interactive for the kids. She ended up combining the many ideas from our team to make our Bible time into "Superhero Training Camp". She and I were superheroes named Flash Jenny and Super Sarah. Together we were training the kids, whom we called "super cadets", to become superheroes. On their journey to training camp, they were stopped by an evil villain, Aaron, and had to complete tasks like bunny hopping or jumping through a hoop to get to camp. After reaching camp, the kids still had to do a number of physical challenges to see if they were ready to become superheroes like running in place, crawling under a pole, and flexing their muscles. Our puppets Doug and Iggy also joined to do the physical challenges. However, in the middle of our training camp, Dana interrupted our tests with an important question, "Do we really need superheroes if we are already saved?" The lesson then continued about how Jesus is our Savior and about how we probably didn't need other superheroes if we had Jesus. It was so much fun! The kids really got into it, and I actually ended up being called Super Sarah for the rest of the week.

We had originally planned for the next day to be a day of swimming at the water park in Mandan, but when we woke up on Thursday to feel a cold breeze and hear of storms on the horizon, our plans quickly changed. We spent time at the church working on job time and ended up taking a lunch out to A&W Root Beer instead. Later that evening we joined the youth director, Cole, at his home for supper. He cooked steaks and grilled corn which was delicious. I love eating corn on the cob! It makes me think of summer—the sun beaming down on my face, warm breezes, baseball, calm and light spirits of people around me, and an attitude of joy that sometimes seems to wane in the winter months. Man, I love corn on the cob!

That night we had the final session of VBS. Earlier in the week, I had helped lead music, because we were teaching the kids some of the song, "Grace Like Rain", that we sing. However, on this night my role changed once again. I helped Cole out with his Bible storytelling time. It was the story of how Ananias helped Saul to receive his sight back after he was blinded on the way to Damascus. I was to play Saul—that's right...the incredibly scary, intimidating Saul that threw Christians into jail. The only problem with my fulfilling this role was that, try as I may, I have this incredible inability to be scary. I've tried. For months now, I have been trying to convince my teammates that in some way and at some time, I have the capability of being scary, but after almost a year together on the road, they all insist that it is a capacity still beyond my reach. As the kids entered the room to see Saul, I had my back to them with a robe and sweatshirt as a head covering on. When the kids did not know who I was, they were a bit scared, but as soon as I turned around, they all said, "Oh, it's only Sarah." The youngest kids, preschool and kindergarten, even came up to me and took off my sweatshirt hood and tried to fix my hair so that I would look more Sarah-like. Okay...I admit it. I guess that the fact that I cannot be scary is something that I am really thankful for, but may not be

as effective when trying to be "scary Saul."

That night, parents came to the church for the VBS program. The kids did an amazing job of singing all of the songs that they had learned that week. They did so well on "Grace Like Rain." I was so worried that it would be way too many words, but they did so well in just singing that first verse with all of their hearts. Hearing all of those young voices singing was such a beautiful sound—far more beautiful to my ears than any music that I could ever make. It was so much fun to get to know the kids at that VBS in Bismarck and reconnect with old friends like Chris and Christi.

Date: 6/13/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

WAAAAAAAAAHOOOOOO we are in Pierre, SD...AGAIN! Man, we just can't get enough of this place. The people are just so great and welcoming. This is our first actual Vacation Bible School that we are in charge of something for. The setting in this church was so sweet!

The whole altar area was transformed into a beach area with a real wooden dock and some really fun seagulls chillaxin on there. There were palm trees and beach balls. Welcome to Treasure Cove y'all! I guess that isn't quite Treasure Covey...let me try that again... WELCOME TO TREASURE COVE, MATIES! There, was that better? I hope so. Alrighty, so while we were here, Jenny and I were put up in a hotel for a few days; it was right across from the church so we were able to walk to VBS in the morning.

It was super fun; we started off each morning with energetic songs and fun dancing and then the kids went off to their classes. Aaron, Dana and Sarah headed up the game session while Jenny, Todd and I took the music session. Each day was another adventure with Captive Free, Pastor John, the Vicar Peter, and Chester the treasure chest. We wore a certain color each day, and we correlated it with the gem we were helping Chester find that day. Each day's theme had a snack that the kids made and ate, and the crafts were so cute!

Each night we ate supper at a different family's house. One night we ate at the Vicar Peter's house with a whole bunch of people from the church. It was a lot of fun, we ate burgers, listened to some really cool chill music and talked about the book "House of Leaves," as well as other good books on Peter's shelf. Another night we ate with a family with three little girls. We played a game that the girls made up with basketball, threw some baseballs, played in the backyard. It was so much fun! The following night we ate with a family with two boys and a girl. At this house, we played with hissing cockroaches and played the piano. We giggled until the sun was almost down and then one of the boys had to go to baseball.

Other evenings we ate ice cream at the Zesto with some of the helpers from VBS, and other nights we all played kickball in the church parking lot, the boys went wakeboarding and did Wal-Mart runs.

Oh! I almost forgot, how in the world could I forget? There was the sweetest little girl named Jordan; we became great pals. There was a root beer float night after one of the VBS days, and Jordan and I ran around playing follow the leader and taking pictures of everyone together.

We had so much fun here! I really hope that the message of Jesus' love got to some of the kids, they really were a blessing this week, so much fun and full of energy and love, what a way to kick off our VBS season!

We even got to say hello again to some friends of ours from Hazen who were taking a family trip to a wedding and stopped by to say hello, we ate a Pierre 347. Yeah, for friendships built on the road. It is crazy, you never know how much of an impact you make on someone's life in such a short amount of time, it is amazing. Sometimes you may never know, but those one or two children will carry the experience of meeting you and hearing God's promise of love and life with them forever.



Andrea Laneri

Date: 6/17/2006
Submitted by: Jenny Frantz
Journal Entry:

Tomorrow is Father's Day. Normally, I blow right past this hallmark holiday without a thought. It's a wonderful day to recognize how fabulous my dad is, but I'm usually with him to hug him and tell him how much I love him. For the past five years, I have been at camp and my family has arrived on Father's Day. This year is different. My family will be traveling to camp without me and I will not be able to hug my dad. If nothing else, this year has taught me how much I appreciate my parents. They have been incredibly supportive of me in all that I do. It would have been easy for them to at any point tell me that I am crazy and out of my mind, and then expect me to support myself. However, they have stuck through everything with me and helped me in all of my tough spots. I know that most parents have been just as supportive for most people on team, but I still feel blessed. I also have been blessed to become closer to my parents this year. I feel that my mother and I have talked more this year while I have been away than ever before. Anyways, I hope that even though I may not be in the same state as them, they know that I am constantly hugging them.



Jenny Frantz

Date: 6/23/2006
Submitted by: Sarah Danielson
Journal Entry:

This week we have been leading Vacation Bible School out in the western part of South Dakota in a town named Buffalo. I have been staying with a wonderful family, the Litzels--Zeke and Sue, and their grandchildren Shaile and Ryan. I really have a great time playing with Ryan and Shaile. They create entire worlds out on the propane tank in the yard. They sing concerts of our music from Vacation Bible School. Their bikes become huge construction vehicles as we go to work for the day in a make-believe world. A huge hole in their yard has become the home of their fort where they are digging, making signs, and creating special names for the members of their club. They even invited me to be a member. They have so much excitement for life and for the adventures that they create. It is absolutely wonderful to be around.



Sarah Danielson

I have loved the group that I am with at Vacation Bible School. Instead of simply leading opening and closing, or music sessions, we are staying with a group for the whole week. I am with a group of fourth and fifth grade kids, and I love the conversations that I am able to have with them. Having a small group that you stay with all the time has made me feel like I am back as a counselor at camp. My kids just stay with me, and we do all of the things at VBS like crafts, games, music, and stories together. I also feel like I've gotten to know them better than any of the other kids I have met at VBS this summer. Our group is together with an older class for the movie, crafts, and snacks. When we have movie time, the video always ends a little bit early, but it is still a fun time. During that extra time, we would teach the kids silly songs, and they really enjoy learning these crazy songs. My group especially loves the "Bananas" song. It is cool to be able to use some of the tricks from being a camp counselor on the road. It makes me feel more alive. This week has just been refreshing, because I have felt so intricately involved with the kids and alive in what we are doing.

This week we were also able to spend some time with the helpers from VBS as well. One night Aaron, Jenny, and I went out to have a bonfire with Jonathon, Aaron's host brother. Our bonfire didn't actually come to fruition, though. There was a thunderstorm that hit that night. Aaron built a bonfire, and we watched it fight the rain until we drove back into town. Aaron, Jenny, and I all love watching storms, so even missing out on a bonfire for a storm was a treat for us. Another day our group headed out to the same lake to go jet-skiing with a girl named Taylor from VBS. It was the first time that I had ever been on a jet-ski. Taylor drove while Jenny and I held on tight. One time the three of us all flipped off of the jet-ski into the water. Taylor didn't even know how we all flew off, but even falling off the jet-ski was fun! Our group really enjoyed time out at the lake to hang out with each other and with kids from the town.

I have also really enjoyed being able to have time to walk around the town of Buffalo. There are some places where I would not feel very safe walking alone, but Buffalo was small and offered a lot of comfort. The kids have been really fun, and I've really enjoyed getting to know them on a deeper level. That was something that I was really excited about when thinking about going into the VBS season, so it's really great to experience that. Buffalo has just been wonderful and I'm going to miss these amazing people.

Date: 6/27/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

Wow, each VBS just gets better! First we go to Hazen, then Bismarck, Pierre and now Mora! Wahoo, we are just hittin up all the places we have been to in the past. Hmmm, what to say about Mora, well, Sunday morning was quite fun. We went from church to church to church to church in Mora to play a song or two to advertise for VBS. It WAS fun and crazy at the same time. It was cool to attend all of the church services though, we were at a Lutheran church first, and we headed over to the Catholic church next, after the Catholic church we went to the Methodist church. We had fellowship with them and talked about our lives and what we were going to do after team.



Andrea Laneri

Jenny and I stayed with the same family this time, as we did the times before. Mary and Terry Ringler, and their kids and grandkids lived across the farm from them; Jeremy and his wife Jen with their daughters; Jessyka, Sissy (a.k.a: Jezalyn), and Jeryka.

The first time we were there we road 4-wheelers. The second time we were there we stayed in the house because it was so cold and snowy, but we got doughnuts in the morning and this time we just went crazy with fun! One night, while we were there Mary, Jessyka, Jenny and I road horses around in the pen. One of the horses, Cooper, was still young and tried to buck Mary off of his back. When we were done riding, Cooper decided he was going to show off and gallop and prance and run all around the pen. He would dance on his hind legs and roll in the mud. After we were done giving him the attention he wanted Jessyka, Jenny and I went around their archers of land on the 4-wheelers. We plowed over weeds and ducked under tree branches on trails. We said good-night and headed off to Jenny's room and finished up the last few episodes of the second season of The O.C.

In the mornings, we would wake up and drive through the country area to get to the church. We would open up each morning with some crazy songs and then send them off to their classes. While the kids were in class we would go visit each age group at the different churches and do their crafts with them, eat the snacks with them and play the games as well. It was tons of fun. Each day there were new activities, new songs and fun times with each kid. We sang Happy Birthday during the puppet show to all those with a birthday that week.

Sarah stayed with Ryan and Lora Jacobson; they were recently blessed with the adoption of a baby boy named Jonah. We were invited over to their house for supper. Before supper we played a video game where it rates a persons singing ability. Hmmm, interesting. After supper, we all piled into the van with Lora and we went to see the movie "Cars." It was super cute! Just before we left Ryan, Lora, Jenny, Sarah, Dana and I were standing around talking about what the family was going to do for Lora's golden birthday. I asked what she wanted for her birthday and she said that her birthday present was received eight weeks prior to her birthday and she couldn't ask for anything more. What a marvelous gift, something someone has wanted their whole life and finally the wish comes true. Really, what more could you ask for?

Date: 7/1/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Leaving Mora today was not like leaving any other town. Yes, it had many of the same characteristics—lots of people I don't know, lots of music, VBS, and of course lots of food. However, this time it was different. We have been to Mora three times this year

and each time, Andrea and I have gotten to stay at the same house. The Ringlers have become almost like family to us. Mary is quite the extraordinary woman. She tells us all about her latest readings and cultures us on how to "live in the country." This time she taught us how to pull rhubarb as our country living test. We've had such a blast spending time with her and her family. In leaving Mora, I really feel as though we're leaving family.



Jenny Frantz

Once we said our goodbyes, we headed for Wyndmere, North Dakota. This small town already has shown us just how promising it can be. All of the girls are staying in the same home with incredible host parents, Wally and Nancy. Wally gave us all fake names because he couldn't remember our real ones. I'm not sure how fake names will help, but oh well! In return we decided to call him "Rufus." I can already tell this is going to be a fun visit!

Date: 7/4/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

We are currently staying back in St. Paul, and it is my favorite holiday of the whole year pretty much. I absolutely stinkin love the Fourth of July. Andrea, Jenny and I headed over from the camp we are staying this week to Aaron's cousin house to chill and meet them and get to relax a little ourselves before the VBS camp starts. Once again I got to introduce some people to sword fighting, and Aaron's cousin and sister seem to like it, Then much to dismay, I learned why I will never live in MN--they don't allow aerial fireworks. It was almost sacreligious to me to go through a July 4 with only fireworks being lit off in a driveway and only a few illegal mortars the only thing to shake my body with their concusive explosions, but it was better then nothing



Todd Thieme

This week of VBS promises to be a different one. The Union Gospel Mission in my experience works primarily with inner city African American youth while most of our tour has been with upper-middle class Norwegians of Minnesota and the Dakotas, which might as well be their own country. I think the change of pace, environment and demographic though will be enough to make this week special and that much more meaningful.

Date: 7/6/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

This week has been absolutely amazing, because we have been at the Union Gospel Mission Camp in Shoreview, Minnesota. The camp is super-cool, because it makes a camp experience possible for a lot of kids from the inner city who might not be able to go to camp otherwise. The camp is run completely by donations and support from other people to make it affordable for the kids who go there. It actually costs only one dollar a week for a kid to go to camp. The kids are also bused from the city out to the camp where they can worship, play games, go swimming, paddle-boat, canoe, or just enjoy time with other kids and counselors.



Sarah Danielson

At the camp we were going to be helping out the counselors with the kids. Now I have a lot of experience at camp, but as soon as the kids arrived, I realized that this week would be completely different from any camp experience I had ever had. As I introduced myself to kids named Tehuti, Davonté, and Aaliyah, I realized that these kids were far different from those that had come out to camp in northern Minnesota. They were raw. Some of them were telling me about how their parents were in jail and would be home in a few months, or were sharing other heart-breaking stories with me. As I talked with them, I tried to remember what the program director had told us about these kids--do not feel sorry for them, help them to learn to grow and become strong no matter where they come from. These kids may have seemed different from other campers I have experienced, but they all had one thing in common--they all wanted attention and love.

I had the greatest time playing on the playground with some of the kids. They invited me to play tag, games with a monster in the sand, and even crazy games that were based on computer games like Halo. Some of the boys even created a fighting training course for me in the games that we were going to play. The counselors also had crazy energy and love for the kids who came to camp. One of the counselors, Eddie, would scream out "Yeah" like the Usher song whenever we would sing "Trading my Sorrows." The kids at camp also had more energy for "Every Move I Make" than any group that we have ever played for. Another thing that I really admired about the counselors was that they went out to visit the kids at their homes during the evening. They made an effort to show the kids that their entire lives and experiences mattered—not just the moments that they spent at camp. The time at the camp was a really amazing and eye-opening time for me.

Date: 7/15/2006

Submitted by: Jenny Frantz

Journal Entry:

Yesterday we had a day off!!! It's crazy to think about, but it's only our second one since Memorial Day. Needless to say, we made the most of it. Yesterday was so hot and humid, so we wanted to do something fun. We were near Duluth and have heard all year just how beautiful it is, so we knew we had to go. However, none of us really wanted to go shopping, so we had to ask around to find out what would be the best use of our time. We made plans to go to some falls and hang around, but we later found out the falls were a much longer drive than planned. Luckily, the Bernu family (one of the host homes) had an idea! We decided to go to Park Point on Lake Superior, a.k.a. the beach! I had never been to Lake Superior and was really excited to spend some time on the water. I have to say Lake Superior is much cleaner than Lake Erie. It was a hot day and the water felt great! Not only that, but we were able to relax and really enjoy ourselves and our time with Jan, Katie, and Emily.



Jenny Frantz

Later that night we were able to meet up with a woman named Andrea. We met Andrea earlier in the year when we were in Culver before, and we were excited to see her again. She told us all of how much she had looked forward to see us, and we could tell she was tickled. She wanted to show us her appreciation by taking us to dinner where she worked. It was a place that had just opened and we could all tell how happy she was with the job. I think one of the blessings we've had this year is to be able to create some relationships with really wonderful people. Andrea is one of them for sure.

On a little different note, we left the restaurant to find that our trailer hitch was missing from the van. Now, it definitely stinks to not have the hitch, but it was the second one in two days! That's right; our trailer hitch had been jacked two days in a row! We didn't realize they were such a hot commodity. Luckily, they aren't too expensive. It was just a pain to have to plan extra time again to go get a new one. Aaron was a thinker, though, and bought a hitch with a lock this time. Good luck to anyone who tries to take it again!

Today we traveled to New Brighton, MN to Christ the King Lutheran Church. This name may sound familiar to some people because it is the church we started the year at with all of the other teams for training. It's kind of strange to be back here without everyone else. At the same time, it feels strangely like home. I think home has become such a strange thing this year. We don't have one, so anywhere we've been before almost seems like home. Anyways, it's been great to already know the layout of the church and get to know the people who work here. Only a few weeks left on the road. It's hard to believe!

Date: 7/18/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

Aaron and I are staying with a family here in Arden Hills while we revisit where we all first met back August 21 at the start of team at Christ the King. We are staying with a

family that has two sons, two and six, that are adopted from Guatemala named John and James. The kids are fun to be around. They seem to enjoy our company; they prove it to us by waking up early in the morning and hitting us with inflatable bats. Evidently that is a way to say that I care in their culture.

The VBS itself has been going great. I get to lead music with Jenny and Dana, and that has been fun teaching all the different age groups the different songs. I just like hanging out with the kids in general, music just seems to be the easiest way currently to hang out with them. It's weird thinking that every new VBS brings us that much closer to each heading our separate ways after spending a whole year learning about each other and doing everything with one another. A fun thing that we did this week was getting to go do some miniature golf with the older kids and also some go karts. After spending so much time with younger kids all year, it was fun to get to hang out with some kids that were older and required different types of ministry.

We have gotten a chance to see a couple of John's soccer games this year, it's always fun to watch some good old fashioned bee hive soccer. The evenings have been very relaxing as they all go to bed pretty early which leaves Aaron and I too much time to watch movies that we really don't need to see. Theoretically we could go to bed early...but why would we wanna do that?



Todd Thieme

Date: 7/20/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

It was crazy to be back at Christ the King in New Brighton for VBS, considering it was the place where the people on our team first met each other this year. Upon entering the church, we were filled with sites of reminiscing, such as the table where we first ate together and incorrectly determined that Jenny was the oldest in the group, the fireside room—site of many a doodle during long sessions, the spot of grass where we first worshipped together as a group, and the beginning of our journey this year. It was so strange to be back in the place where our year began and realize that soon our time together will be over.



Sarah Danielson

Our time with the kids here at Christ the King has been really fun. Aaron, Andrea, and I have been helping with games and snacks while Jenny, Todd, and Dana have been leading music sessions. Jenny and I are also leading the preschool music in the middle of the day. This is one of my favorite parts of Bible School this week. Jen and I created a speed music game called "Turtle Rabbit" this week. We clap slowly and say "turtle" as the kids move slowly like a turtle around the room, but when we clap quickly and say "rabbit," they run around the room and become super-fast bunnies. It is a game that we created on the spur of the moment, but the preschool kids really love it. Whenever we yell "rabbit" they all scream and run around like crazy. It's so simple and they love it.

I think that simplicity and joy in its existence are some of my favorite things this year. I love the fact that kids scream and get crazy at the idea of being a fast rabbit and that regardless of the rest of my day, that moment makes me smile and gives me happiness. I love the fact that little Anton runs, and even trips on the way, back to give me a hug after all of the other kids are lined up to leave music. I love that tiny three-year-old Josh is able to finally relinquish his mouth's hold on his thumb long enough to play Jenny's drums, because he really wants to be a drummer when he is older. He doesn't have the courage to say many words to anyone in our group, but every day he walks to the front of the sanctuary and waits by the front pew for the drum set to open up for him. I love the fact that Kyle, crazy cool kid with wheels on his shoes, can break out the Star Wars Theme on my keyboard. I love the fact that I am surrounded with my team, my family, who understand me and whom I can understand on an amazing level after almost a year together. Okay...maybe the last one isn't really simple, but it stills brings me joy!

On Wednesday we were able to hang out with some of the older kids that were helping with Vacation Bible School. We ate pizza at the church and then headed out for mini golf. I had the coolest conversation with one of the kids, Isaac, on the way. I was a bit distracted that day, because it was the day that my sister was flying out to Tanzania where she will be until December, so I was waiting for her to call to say goodbye. As we were riding to the Liili Put, Isaac talked to me about Tanzania. He had spent two months there during the last year and was actually in some of the cities

where she is going to be. It was so cool to hear about someone's experiences over there, and it really gave me comfort in that moment of being worried about her over there. Isn't it amazing how God can seem to just drop people in with messages that you need to hear at the right moment?

I had a lot of fun with the middle school kids that afternoon. We decided to bumper boat, race go-karts, and mini golf in the rain. I guess that it is tradition for it to rain when the youth get together with Captive Free each year. Getting sprayed by the fountain and other boats when we were riding bumper boats really didn't matter, because we were getting rained on anyway. We all just joked about the cars driving past and how they might find us to be bit crazy to decide to mini golf in the rain. Considering how many times my golf ball found itself in the pond sections of the course, I don't think that water would have been avoidable for me anyway. Isaac, Amber, Samantha, and I spent most of our golfing time laughing about our complete lack of skills (or just extraordinary skills of hitting all of the rocky spots and even hitting the ball into a castle building) and agreeing that we were glad that we decided not to keep score after the second hole. I had a lot of fun with the kids from the church and really enjoyed our time at the social.

On Thursday we had our Family Night Program, and the kids were really crazy. In the middle of a song during the program there was a little girl that walked up to me and said, "Sarah, is it time for me to come up onstage now?" I told her that it wasn't the right time for her to come up. Later she asked me again if it was time for her to come up front yet. I told her that it still wasn't quite that time. Soon I looked over to the other side of the group to see her walk up to Jenny as she was playing drums during "Solid Rock." Jenny told me later that the girl had asked her if she could play the drums or the djembe during the song. While playing the drums and keeping the tempo, Jenny told the girl that she should wait until the end of the song to play. Jenny asked the girl if she wanted to have a root beer float after the program. The girl said, "Ice cream? Where?" Then she walked off toward the back of the church. This moment made me smile, because that girl was not afraid to come to us even in the middle of a program in front of a lot of people. We seemed safe, and she wanted to be a part of the music that we were making. I really enjoyed our time at Christ the King.

Date: 8/1/2006

Submitted by: Todd Thieme

Journal Entry:

We are currently doing our last VBS in Moorhead MN. This is our last full day of VBS with the younger kids. This week has been a great change of pace, especially after doing many similar ones. But the first two days of this VBS were in essence double days with a field trip at the end and then a half day on Wednesday to get in all five days of the curriculum. The rest of Wednesday through Friday, we will be at a camp with some older kids and doing some cool stuff with them. The younger kids have been a blast to play with, and the VBS itself is well organized and done well.

Today we went to a pool/lake that was about 15 minutes away from the VBS site as our field trip and fun activity. Normally when I get into water around young kids I am pounced in an effort to drown me. When the first kid jumped on my back, I picked them up and tossed them. The kids almost immediately formed up lines to wait for their turn to be tossed or flipped for the next several hours in which I got a few small breaks. But I enjoyed every minute of it. I enjoy being able to do something that others may not be able to, I like to be 'used' in that way and get value from it. It will possibly be the highlight of my week getting to spend that time with the kids and getting to know them more in that way.

Tonight the team decided to go out to the dollar theatre and see Over the Hedge. If you haven't seen it, I suggest you do...its stinkin hilarious.



Todd Thieme

Date: 8/3/2006

Submitted by: Sarah Danielson

Journal Entry:

We finished our VBS with the preschool through third grade classes at the school and

began to get ready for an adventure with an entirely new group on Wednesday. We were going out camping with a group of fourth through sixth graders at Maplewood State Park. We loaded up a bus with kids, sleeping bags, coolers, and excitement for a few days out in the woods. Going out camping with a group was something that was really exciting for me. I have spent the three summers prior to Captive Free working as a camp counselor in northern Minnesota and really have missed being outside in the wilderness this summer, so I was really pumped to be able to get away and camp out.



The first night camping was spent setting up tents, cooking hot dogs and s'mores over the fire, and getting to know these new kids. Some of the kids that came camping were **Sarah Danielson** also people that had helped at VBS, so it was really cool to get to know some of them better. We also got to hold a campfire actually outside in the wilderness around a fire. That's one of the things that I've missed the most from camp, so I loved being able to have a real campfire.

The sun greeted me at 6:10 the next morning to begin a day filled with activities and sweet campfire food (hoboes, pudgie pies and more). We spent a lot of time just hanging out with the kids. We played cards, played football, made bracelets, went hiking through the woods, and were able to talk with them one-on-one more. I played a lot of guessing games with the kids about middle names, people in families, names of lakes, and the names of the parks near where they lived. We decided to change a boy named Tanner's middle name from Jordan to Janitor just for fun and kept laughing about it for the rest of the time camping. We also tie-dyed shirts and went to the beach for awhile. Throughout the day, we would meet with small groups and have Bible studies about God. It was cool to get to know some of the kids in this smaller setting. The kids also played a game called Fear Factor where they were on two teams and had to eat 20 secret food items varying from chocolate milk to baby food to sardines in the fastest time. It was crazy. I don't ever think that I've seen a kid as excited to eat olives as Ezra was.

The kids that we went camping with were so much fun! They also really cared about each other, which was absolutely amazing to see! One evening I was talking with Tanner and Tyler about the stars. We were talking about how amazingly clear the sky had been on the night before. The stars had just glowed in white specks against an immense black sky, and we had just felt as if we were in a world completely away from everything. We were talking about how big the world is and wondered how far it was from the last star in the handle of the big dipper to the bottom of the cup. As we talked about this, I looked up and saw a star in the sky. "Hey, it's the first star," I said. Tyler turned to me and said, "No way. There have been stars out for awhile already. I saw the first star awhile ago and made a wish. My wish already came true." I looked up to see other stars in the sky and then turned to Tyler to say, "Your wish already came true? What did you wish for?" Tyler then said, "I wished that Ezra would stop crying, and he already did." Then Tanner and Tyler walked over to Ezra and put their arms around his shoulders and said, "We're glad that you aren't sad anymore." Ezra, a boy that had been feeling hurt by other friends, looked up to see the care of these two, and a smile slowly emerged where tears had been. The kids showed so much love to each other and to us.

Our campfire with the kids on our last night together was awesome! Campfire was being held a little later at night, so before we began campfire, one of the kids asked, "What if we are loud and disturb other people?" Then April, a girl in my small group said, "But our worship is about God-praising, so I'm gonna praise God." The other kids agreed that they were going to be loud and proud in their praising of God. We sang *Romans*, *I Just Wanna Be a Sheep*, and *I Lean* with the kids. They were all jumping and screaming and cheering through all the songs. They all were crazy and loving every minute of it. As soon as we finished a song, they would be shouting and cheering for us to sing it again. It was also our team's last campfire together, so we were a bit crazy, but the energy in that place was electric. The kids were just singing, dancing, and praising God with all that was within them without being held back by what others would think of them. They were just so free, and that made worship amazing in that place with those kids. Going camping with those kids was probably the best way to end my year on traveling on the road!

Date: 8/6/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

Wow, it is such a bittersweet feeling. We are finally done being on the road, we have a week of debriefing; teaching us how to live as individuals rather than a group of 5 to 7 people.

But today we led worship in Lowry, MN. Such a sweet little town, (the girls and I stayed with a family that lives in Starbuck, MN) the church was packed for a summer Sunday service. We played for 30 minutes, and then the pastor gave his sermon and then we sang a closing song. But the worship, oh the worship with these people was amazing. We always go to these cute quaint little churches where everyone sits in the back rows (yeah Lutherans), but people were standing, clapping and raising their voices to God, it was beautiful. I almost started crying in the middle of two of the songs because I knew it would be our last time as a team to sing these songs together in worship.

Wow, what a wonderful and blessed way to end the year.
Now on to debriefing! haha woohoo



Andrea Laneri

Date: 8/12/2006

Submitted by: Andrea Laneri

Journal Entry:

I read this e-mail the team got from Todd's dad, after reading it a few times I decided I was going to use it as a devotion, my last devotion with the team. It was inspirational to me, I hope it fills you with that same inspiration.

"Dancing With God

When I meditated on the word Guidance, I kept seeing "dance" at the end of the word. I remember reading that doing God's will is a lot like dancing.

When two people try to lead, nothing feels right. The movement doesn't flow with the music, and everything is quite uncomfortable and jerky. When one person realizes that, and lets the other lead, both bodies begin to flow with the music. One gives gentle cues, perhaps with a nudge to the back or by pressing lightly in one direction or another. It's as if two become one body, moving beautifully. The dance takes surrender, willingness, and attentiveness from one person and gentle guidance and skill from the other.

My eyes drew back to the word Guidance. When I saw "G: I thought of God, followed by "u" and "i". "God, "u" and "i" dance." God, you, and I dance.

As I lowered my head, I became willing to trust that I would get guidance about my life. Once again, I became willing to let God lead.

My prayer for you today is that God's blessings and mercies be upon you on this day and every day. May you abide in God as God abides in you. Dance together with God, trusting God to lead and to guide you through each season of your life. This prayer is powerful and there is nothing attached.

And I Hope You Dance!!!!!"

After y'all have read this; I pray that each and EVERY one of you realizes that you too can guide someone along their path to Christ; you don't have to be in a Jesus band [like Captive Free]; all you have to do is trust and believe. I also pray that you too will grow in your faith and love with Him, that you will dance, let Him lead; surrender yourself to His unchanging love for you.

Since this is my last journal entry as a member of CFNC . . .



Andrea Laneri

Something I learned at debriefing from Captive Free North East:

"Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,"

"OH YES WE WILL!"

Live it, love it, and share it!

Thank you all for a wonderfully blessed year, take care and may God continue to bless you!
