

Captive Free West Lakes 2006-07 Journal

Date: 9/19/2006

Submitted by: Dillan Howell

Journal Entry:

This week has been amazing. We started off with an acoustic service, and it went very well. The night before, we stayed with a host family that couldn't have done a better job. Then that same day we traveled to another church and had an XP (experiential) worship service; we totally rocked it out. It was great! Great people and a great pastor! I stayed at a host home about 15 minutes from church, and it was great. They treated us like we were their own kids. They let us do what we wanted to do. It was amazing! Suzy and Abbie's host home had a dairy farm, and it was very fun to see how things worked and how things went there at the farm, just amazing! I thank the Bell family for all!!!

Dillan



Dillan Howell

Date: 9/21/2006

Submitted by: Jamie Money

Journal Entry:

I can't believe we have only been on the road for one week. It is totally crazy! In this last week we have improved so much and have grown so much already as a team. We have already done two XP (experiential) worships, and both were amazingly fun. I was a little nervous performing these last two times seeing as I just learned how to play the keyboard, but my teammates are really encouraging, and they make me feel so confident! We have already been to Glenwood City, WI; Hustler, WI; Burlington, WI; and now we are heading to Rockford, IL where we will pick up our beloved friend Beckie, who will do some more training with us. I am so excited to have her travel with us. I am having a blast so far and am in a state of compete and utter joy! I cannot wait to keep on doing ministry because I can just feel the Holy Spirit moving through the crowd when we do our programs. I am so excited to see what this year has in store! Jesus rocks!!!

In Christ Who Strengthens Me,
Jamie Money



Jamie Money

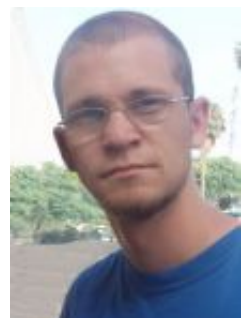
Date: 9/23/2006

Submitted by: Andrew Dodd

Journal Entry:

Wow, this has been an amazing week. We have been so busy, it is hard to believe that we have only been traveling for a week. We performed in front of seventy confirmation people in Burlington, WI, and we had such an amazing time. I can't believe how God has been able to show me so many things in just a week. The kids we have run across this week have made us laugh and praise God as we have seen them dance in aisles, throw their hands in the air and praise God! The XP's (experiential worship services) are going so well; we are having so much fun performing and learning about each other.

In His awesome name,
Andrew Dodd
Romans 8:31



Andrew Dodd

Date: 9/26/2006

Submitted by: Suzy Bakke
Journal Entry:

Greetings all! Wow! I honestly can't believe it's been over a week since we've been on the road. If time is going this quickly now, I can't wait to see how fast the rest of the year is going to go. We're all super excited to be on the road and to be doing what we're doing. We've had some amazing turnouts to our shows, and ministering has been so rewarding. Having Beckie with us these past few days as our on the road support staff has been a ton of fun. Our host families have been absolutely AMAZING, and we're so blessed to have stayed with the people we have. People's generosity and hospitality is absolutely awe inspiring and so overwhelming. We're so absolutely blessed each and every day. Please be praying for us each and every day to have safe travels, endurance, and patience. And let us know if there is ANYTHING we can be praying for you guys out there. Don't hesitate to shoot us a team email (westlakes@youthencounter.org), and we'll do our best to respond as quickly as we can. Thanks so much for all of your prayers and support and we'll catch you soon!

In HIM,
Suzy

P.S. Hi Mom J



Suzy Bakke

Date: 9/30/2006
Submitted by: Abbie Hoffman
Journal Entry:

So it is late Saturday night, and we just got done with our first lock-in!! I cannot express how happy I am on how it went. We played silent football!! Haha. Suzy's and my favorite game! Haha! She always talks, and I always pass the football to myself. We just do not know how to play very well. So it's been two weeks since we've left all the other teams. It is so exciting being out on the road!! I love it so much!! My team is truly awesome. We may have ups and downs, but it truly is all out of love! Trust me!! Anyway, we've been having a blast on the road! We have met so many lovely children of God on the road! All of them have truly been a blessing to the team and me! I would have to say that Hustler was by far the best time! Especially at our host parents' house!! Karen and Tim were awesome to us! They lived on a dairy farm!! Suzy and I both stayed there! She got to drive the \$120,000 tractor.... I didn't because I was too scared to handle that huge John Deere. Dilly also drove the tractor! I got to drive the Gator. The Gator is more like an ATV, so it was truly so much fun!!! I am having so much fun on team!!! I truly am! Even though I am a sound tech, I still have a blast back there. I know that God is working through me in so many other different ways! Tonight when we finished our XP (experiential worship service), a little girl came to me and asked me to show her how to run the sound!!! I was so pumped!!! So I showed her!! That makes me so much happier! Well, have a wonderful day!! And thank you so much for reading this!!
God bless,
Abbie



Abbie Hoffman

Date: 10/3/2006
Submitted by: Dillan Howell
Journal Entry:

Yo this is Dillan again. I forgot to mention that I got to drive a \$200,000 John Deere tractor a couple of weeks ago. It was awesome; Mr. Bell took me to see it because he had heard that I was somewhat of a Deere fan and he said, "It's all yours." I almost cried because it was huge..! But anyway, this week has been amazing! I have really been into the XP (experiential worship) services and have really felt that I have been doing what God has called me to do. All of my host homes and families have been amazing; they treat us like we are their own family, and let us do whatever we



Dillan Howell

want. ALSO, my family is coming up to Indiana to see us and my lovely girlfriend Emily. I am very excited to see all of them this weekend. GOD BLESS to all!!! AA-----MEN!!

Date: 10/5/2006

Submitted by: Jamie Money

Journal Entry:

Hey there, Jamie here. Well, here I am in Fort Wayne, IN. It's a lot of fun and I am having a blast. I am meeting new people every day, and it is super exciting. I miss my home, but that's okay because every home we go to make us feel like we are part of their home. Everyone is so nice! We are never told that we didn't sound good or that people didn't like our performance, which is a real morale booster when you think you didn't play as well as planned. But, it does not matter how well we did because someone out in the audience was touched. They may not realize it yet, but we can see it through them! That's all for now. Peace out and see you on the flip side!

Jamie



Jamie Money

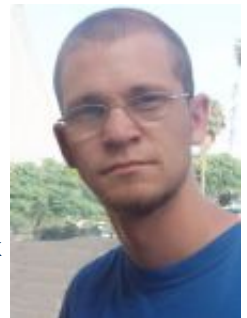
Date: 10/7/2006

Submitted by: Andrew Dodd

Journal Entry:

Well as I write this we are on Highway 69 heading towards Greenfield, Indiana. And as I have you here, let me tell you what I am seeing...corn...corn...and more corn! We just spent the night doing our XP (experiential worship service) and a lock-in at Faith Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, IN. It has been such an amazing week; we got to work with some awesome kids and see Christ working through them. Every day I spend on the road I can't help but think a couple of things: 1. I have never seen so much corn in my whole life. 2. That God is so amazing that he has given me this opportunity to go out and see his wonderful creation all over these states. Well, as I said before, we are on the freeway, and I am going to head back to my navigating job and continue to talk to Abbie as she drives. So may God truly reign in your life now and forever!

In His Awesome Name,
Andrew Dodd
AAAAAMEN



Andrew Dodd

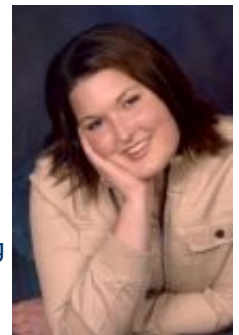
Date: 10/10/2006

Submitted by: Suzy Bakke

Journal Entry:

Hello loyal journal entry readers! Grace and peace to all of you from the great city of Woodville in the lovely state of good ole Wisconsin! I'm horribly behind in my journal entries and I deeply apologize for that, but things are so busy here in the West Lakes region, it's hard to find time to write. My teammates and I have been having an amazing time with the bookings we've been having. We performed for a weekend at a United Church of Christ confirmation retreat and it was fantastic! It was amazing to get to experience a different denomination and get kids fired up for the Lord.

Also, life on the road is getting really fun now that we're comfortable enough to change some things up about the show! My beautiful and gracious teammate Abbie is rocking out on the keys during Healer and doing an awesome job! I'm so proud of her. Also, dear, sweet Joe taught me how to play bass on Healer! WOO HOO! It makes me so happy! Even though I look like a gigantic dork due to my huge smile while I play, I really love it! Plus, I love telling people that I play the bass. However, what I love even more is watching Joe roll his eyes and laugh when he hears me say that. So now



Suzy Bakke

Abbie and I are both doing new things and loving it. I just can't wait until we get Dillan back at the sound board! Haha!

One thing that has really overwhelmed me since we've been on the road is the generosity and hospitality of strangers. Having had jobs in the past such as telemarketing and working retail during Christmas...you tend to see the nastier side of people. I came to this year of team with the mentality that people are generally mean until proven nice. Boy, was I wrong! Every day I am so taken aback by the absolute kindness of strangers. People are so gracious in letting you into their homes to sleep, eat, and live for a few days. Also, in terms of receiving items from our needs list and food for the van, we could not have had sweeter and more giving people. It makes you feel so good that people want to help you and your teammates out.

And speaking of my teammates....wow, what incredible people. They are not simply terrific band mates, but they are terrific humans. I can truthfully say that I don't think we would be where we are on this team without the hard work, energy, and dedication that my teammates have. Dillan is our rock and our foundation on this team. We look to him for so much and he's such a blessing. Jamie is my squirrely little creature and what she has, not many people can bring. Her high energy and ability to just keep going is so important. Andrew is so good at delivering Sunday morning messages, and I know we all feel good about what he has to say during them. Abbie's smiling face and cheerful personality keep us going. She's always there to brighten your day. And lastly, there's Joe. Joe is my official big brother on this team, and I couldn't survive without him. He's our constant hug giver and shoulder to cry on. What a tremendous group of people I have in my family. It is such an honor and a privilege to get to be with them every day. I feel truly blessed to get the chance to have them as my new family.

Finally, to wrap up this insanely long journal entry, I want to leave you with a verse that as of late has been extremely important to me. 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, "My grace is sufficient, for my power is made perfect in weakness." His grace is sufficient and He is powerful even when we feel weak, sick, sad, or hurt. No matter how imperfect we may feel during this year of team (and believe me, we all feel imperfect a lot) we always need to remember that no matter how weak we are...in our weakness He is made strong. Simply by being here and telling each other and youth around our region what our Jesus has done for us, we are perfecting his power. God is so righteous, so mighty, and so gracious that even in and with our faults and through our trials and beside ourselves, God is made perfect. No matter how we feel about how things are going, we are reaffirming to others the power Christ has. What an awesome thing!

So all in all, we're staying safe, happy, and healthy...or at least we're trying. Thanks so much for reading and in the words of Miss Abbie Paige Hoffman...I hope you're having a wonderful day.

In HIM and With Love,
Suz

P.S. Hey Jared

Date: 10/12/2006

Submitted by: Joe Ombres

Journal Entry:

SNOW! IN OCTOBER!! What is that all about? I mean, snow is nothing new to me, however, in the beginning of October, I'm not too into that. We got three inches of snow in two days, and the roads were a bit slippery. We passed by an overturned truck with a trailer and of course, it made us all nervous because we have a trailer. We made it safely to our destination at a church in Merrill, WI. It was quite chilly outside, and the wind was blowing snow all over inside our trailer. We got to hang out with a couple that lived not far from the church and got to watch TV and they made pizza and we had snacks. It was a great night that we got to just chill out for a bit. Good times with snowfall have begun!



Joe Ombres

Date: 10/14/2006
Submitted by: Abbie Hoffman
Journal Entry:

Dear Journal,

So this weekend was a blast at camp. Moon Beach was the name of the camp, and it truly was a blessing to be there. I enjoyed being with the kids and being relational! Pastor Phil and Pastor Mark were awesome! Also, the camp director Glenn was so sweet!! We bought so much store items there!! We were more than likely his number one customers! The camp was beautiful!! Even though it snowed, we still enjoyed ourselves. We had a huge snowball fight! That was so much fun!! Miss the snow already!! Ha-ha... well, sort of. Believe me, I love the snow, but I am able to wait for a little while before we start getting a lot of that beautiful snow! Right now I am sitting here with an awesome host family, Rosemary and Sara! They are really amazing!! We went to a football game and had a blast!! We met so many people!!!!!! We had a blast!!! I really enjoy being with youth!! I am having so much fun being on the road!! I truly am!! Now don't get me wrong, I really miss being with my family, but now I also have a new family, and that is my team. Wow, they are truly a blessing to me!! I love them! I am also having a blast being on the road with them! We all contribute so many funny moments! Like the other day, one of them asked if there are potatoes in potato salad! HAHA!! I just truly love them!!! We are all the same!! HEHE!!! Wow, we are a smart bunch!! HEHE!! Got to love us!! Well, chow for now! Peace out, Boy scout!!

God bless,

Abbie Hoffman



Abbie Hoffman

Date: 10/19/2006
Submitted by: Jamie Money
Journal Entry:

Hey there, world! Looks like Captive Free is at it again. I am totally exhausted right now, but I am doing fine! I am sitting in a church that is meant to look much like Moses' tent, but I can't help feeling like it looks like Noah's ark, which is equally as cool. Yesterday was our day off, and we went to Madison; it was wicked hard core fun. We got to go out to lunch with BJ, Suzy's cousin, and it was just really nice. It has already snowed twice whilst on the road. Ay, 'tis going to be an awful winter. Well, there is not much one can do about that, now is there? It is cold, but apparently colder in Flagstaff, which I find hilarious because, well, Flagstaff is in Arizona and we are in the Midwest. Oh well, it happens. I am getting kind of sick, which is no good! Por mis amigos que hablan espanol, no es bueno! Well, I have to go...
Vaya Con Dios,
Jamie Money



Jamie Money

Date: 11/4/2006
Submitted by: Joe Ombres
Journal Entry:

Our last host parents, Paula and Bruce, were awesome people. We got to sit and chat with them a bit about different things. We stayed at their house near Valparaiso, IN for three nights. They were a fun couple. After that we got to travel to our first re-booking, and it was at Trinity Lutheran in Roselle, IL. It was great to be able to see kids for the second time. They remembered us, we remembered some of them, and had a great time. We did a Family Night Worship, and I got to tell my story of how I got stuck in a rip current while I was boogie boarding when I was like 13. It was a great night for me because I got to see a good friend who lives in the area. My buddy Jeff and his girlfriend Pam whom I worked with in Mississippi came to the worship, and it was awesome to see them again. I will probably get to see them a few times this year, which excites me! Then later that



Joe Ombres

night it was a bit of a downer when I did a bass swing and my wireless transmitter flew across the church and broke. That's going to be an expensive fix. We'll see how that works out. Overall, though, the past week has been pretty good.

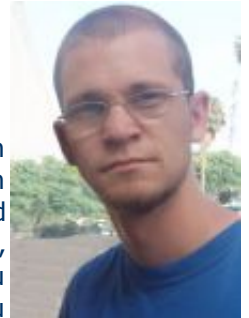
Date: 11/11/2006

Submitted by: Andrew Dodd

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone, how is everyone? We are headed right now towards De Pere, Wisconsin which is a suburb of Green Bay. It is starting to get real cold right now, and being from California, it is the coldest weather I have ever been in. But I love being on the road right now and working with kids from the entire West Lakes region. As I am writing this, I have a few things on my mind so I would like to throw them out there. 1. Do you think Jesus has a great sense of humor? (I personally think he does.) 2. How do you pronounce tour? (Team debate) 3. Is a zebra really a horse? (Team debate again). You see, these are things that come up on the road. But seriously, I am very happy with how God has and will continue to use me in the coming weeks and months. But I am also excited to go home soon and see my family, and then New Year's is coming soon as well! So let me close with a phrase I have patented on the road, and I think it fits for me and for many others. "Quitters never give up."

In His name,
Andrew Dodd



Andrew Dodd

Date: 11/20/2006

Submitted by: Dillan Howell

Journal Entry:

Hey, what's up, everyone? This was a really awesome and really busy week, but I enjoyed every bit. My host homes have been great they have treated us like we're their own. They let us do whatever we wanted to; it was really cool. We have had retreats, lock ins, programs...you think of it, we have had this past week. Life is pretty good, talking to some other teamers getting ready for Midwinter Training and going home to my wonderful family and friends. I think my good friend Dawg is coming to fly home with me because I am scared to death to fly, so I need someone to fly home with me... yeah, I know, pretty bad, huh? Well, that's all of me. I'll talk to you guys later. Cya.

IN HIS NAME
Dillan



Dillan Howell

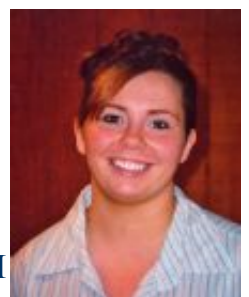
Date: 11/22/2006

Submitted by: Abbie Hoffman

Journal Entry:

Fellow Christians:

It's been awhile. We have been doing so much that it actually starts to take over! I love it, though! I am having so much fun right now that I don't even want to stop. Right now we are currently in Milwaukee! At Karla with a K! Loving it here! Recently we were in Chicago! Had a time of my life!! Some of my friends flew in and came to one of our programs! It was so nice being able to see them! I loved it!!



Abbie Hoffman

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving!! That means we can officially sing Christmas songs! Hehe!! Love Christmas songs! And that also means I get to go home soon to see my family! YAY!! Aw.... I miss them very much, but I am also loving how I get to meet some many different people this year! It's just so EXCITING!!! This year we get to spend Thanksgiving in Milwaukee! I am very excited, because we get to create our own Thanksgiving dinner! We are going to have so much fun! YAY!!! Well, I am going to go! Hope all is well!!!

God bless,

Abbie

Date: 11/26/2006

Submitted by: Jamie Money

Journal Entry:

Hello there from the wonderful state of Illinois. Here we are once again in the little, but lovely, town of Danforth. The last time we were here, the light of Christ shined through all the people we met, and this time is no different. The generosity of PJ (the pastor) is crazy. He is one of the most generous and kind people I know.



Jamie Money

Today, my teammates and some of the churches youth and parents went to go see "Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause." It was great to hang out with the youth and just spend time in fellowship with them.

I am enjoying myself, but life on the road is hard. I did not get to spend time with my family on Thanksgiving and I really miss them. However, the best holiday ever is coming up: CHRISTMAS! I love this time of year for several reasons. One, I get to see my family and be with them; two, I get to go to California; and three, it is the birth of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Triple sweet!

I am super excited to see what the future holds for me this day, this week, this month, this year, and years to come. I know that through Christ I can do great things. With Him by my side, I can do anything. I know not what I want to do yet, or what I am meant to do. I am merely following my shepherd, praying for the strength to stay on the path of righteousness.

Andrew recently gave a fabulous sermon on being a sheep of God. I liked it because it reminded me that though I may stray off the path of righteousness, but the Lord seeks me out, finds me, and brings me home to Him. At baptism I was marked with the seal of Christ, at Confirmation I accepted this seal, but the true gravity of this acceptance did not hit me until last night. I am a child of Christ, loved and understood completely!

MY PRAYER: I hope that, if nothing else, I myself might touch one person's life. I pray that God use me in different ways so that I may reach many instead of few. I also pray that God gives me the strength to change the things I can and the strength to deal with the things that I can't; this I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Date: 12/4/2006

Submitted by: Jamie Money

Journal Entry:

Hello there! So, I love the snow, but the cold is killing me! It was eight degrees when we got to our host home yesterday! YIKES! However, when we were in Burlington, we got fifteen inches of snow, causing a snow day in our ministry.



We were supposed to have a lock-in, but due to the awful roads, we couldn't have it!
Can anyone say SNOW DAY! It was sweet! We all went outside and sled and threw snow balls and totally got soaked, but it was fun. It kind of made me miss home and sledding with my brother on the gi-normous hill outside our house.

Jamie Money

Sledding can be a wonderful ministry opportunity, though. Christ is in the snow, and when you fall, you blame the devil for making you stumble! Just kidding, that was a little inside joke in Burlington!

Oh, did I mention I now know how to tap dance? Well, that's all on the Money... Love Ya

Jamie

Date: 12/4/2006

Submitted by: Andrew Dodd

Journal Entry:

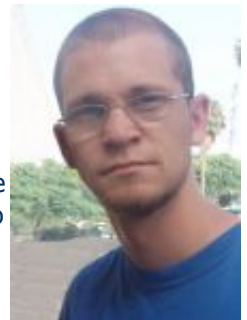
Greetings to you all. I am currently sitting here in Rubicon, WI looking at the beautiful snow on the ground. It has made me look around and think about some really incredible things. A snowflake a little frozen water particle that flows down from above and does so much for us. That individual snowflake God created, there are literally millions upon millions of these snowflakes floating and they were all created by him. It reminds me that he also created you and me, there are also millions upon millions of us in this world, and everyone is different just like the snowflake. We sometimes look at the snowflake and forget that without that little snowflake falling down, snow just wouldn't be snow. Just the same with you and me; the world just wouldn't be the same without us. How amazing is the love of our God that he has created us to show his beauty for all to see!!!

So my friends, as I get ready to depart, I want to leave you with something I have learned on the road--that the snow comes and goes, but His love will reign on forever!!!

In His amazing name,

Andrew Dodd~Rom 8:31

Jesus Christ the real search engine



Andrew Dodd

Date: 1/15/2007

Submitted by: Joe Ombres

Journal Entry:

Yo friends! So as you probably know, days off are quite a treasured time for us to sleep in, chill, do kinda nothing if we want, or go and have an adventure. Nonetheless, it's a time we look forward to. I often find myself looking past the booking that we have on Sunday night (when we have them, which is most of the time) to our day off. That means that my attention, focus and attitude is not with the people we are playing for like it should be. I know I shouldn't do this. God has definitely showed me a few times already how he can work when we are most tired and just not with it sometimes.

Before we arrived in Ironwood, MI, which is in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, it was already snowing a bit heavy. We were worn out from playing an XP worship Saturday night, a worship Sunday morning and a Sunday School sing-along set for about an hour after the service. So my first thoughts were, "Great, more snow. No one's gonna come tonight. I just want tomorrow to come."

Minutes before we began, I felt a sudden excitement come over me and a fire about that night. I felt like I had just woken up and was ready to show the people that showed up (around 60, which was great) a side of Christ's love that they had maybe not seen before. As we played, I watched some people's faces and reactions to us like I never have before. It was wonderful. We played the tightest we ever have and things went so well. I was passionate the entire way through. After we



Joe Ombres

met a few guys who were also in a band and their friends and were way excited to talk with us. We had some awesome conversations with them and a few of them began considering doing Captive Free at some point. I left with such a good attitude and I will be trying my best to not look past any program to our day off or whatever it might be that is not at that moment. After we left, I got to have a great conversation with Pastor Christian, who Andrew and I were staying with.

I got to sleep in on our day off. We met up at Carl and Kathy's, where the girls were all staying, for lunch. We ate pasties, which are meat and potatoes in a crust sort of similar to a pot pie. They were delicious. After that, Carl took a few of us out snow shoeing on his property. It was so much fun and it was gorgeous. His property backs up to a river which seemed to be the only unfrozen water around. I took some pictures, got a workout, and had a blast!! For dinner the guys went to Steve and Betsy's, where Dillan was staying, and had roast beef, potatoes, and broccoli. It was so good. We then played a game called Snatch, which is kind of the reverse of Scrabble but you can steal words from the other players. We had fun, laughed a lot, told stories and just had a good time.

I think this may have been the best day off I've had.

Ironwood, Michigan is definitely one of the friendliest places we've been to, and one of my favorites. I hope we get a chance to come back!

Date: 1/26/2007

Submitted by: Jamie Money

Journal Entry:



Jamie Money

Chicago Quake...anticipation filled the air as my team and I entered the Sheridan in Arlington Heights, entrance way to our second Quake and the excitement that Event holds. We quickly rushed around checking out the hotel: nice size ballroom, nice size pool, Starbucks adjacent to the elevator (sweet!), and, of course, nice size rooms!

We quickly found our Event Director, Jeromy, and went through the game plan: Dillan--set up your stuff and then help Daniel's Window; Andrew--help set up Jesse's stuff; Joe--help Bill and set up your own stuff; Abbie and Suzy--do whatever Drew (the sound guy) tells you; Jamie--erm, pray for everyone! Ha ha, Jeromy, very funny! Anyways, we get everything set-up, sound-checked, and fed, and got pumped up for the beginning of the Quake.

Never been to a Quake? Ah, well, let me explain what happens at the beginning of a Quake. Basically, 650 very rowdy, very excited kids press up against all the doors hoping to be the ones in the very front, nearest the band and nearest the stage in hopes that we, the bands, will pull them up on stage. We all lined up in front of double doors, screamed "3, 2, 1," then... STAMPEDE!!!! The kids were running in, they were running fast, diving and pushing their way to the stage.

Only five minutes until show time, my stomach dropped and I began to get super excited! At around 30 seconds we hopped up on stage... then the countdown: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1! Dillan begins playing and we jump right into our first set. The energy from these kids was amazing! They were jumping, shouting, and praying with us like I had never seen before. They were AWESOME!!!

So, the first night went off without a hitch, and the whole team had so much fun. These kids were so amazing that I decided to write this blog for you to read, so that you too could feel the energy and passion that I felt in that room.

My prayer for you is that you stop leaning against the doors, keeping God and Jesus out of your life, give in, and watch them come running, pouring, praising, diving back into your heart. Like those kids wanted to be close to us, God wants to be close to you. He runs to the depths of your heart wanting you to pull Him in, hold Him in, and to let Him shine through you with the same passion, compassion, and love that he has for you! Jay Gamelin said, "A father will always love his child more than that child will love him." In the same way, God the Father loves us more than we could ever even try to comprehend, let alone reciprocate. God loves you, and I pray that you know and love Him always.

AMEN!!!

Shout out to all the wonderful kids I met this weekend, my team, Jeromy Dorsing, Donna Gapinski, Jay Gamelin, Ryan Veil :p, the event crew and staff, and Daniels Window (<http://www.myspace.com/danielswindow>)!!! You all are amazing!!

Date: 2/21/2007

Submitted by: Jamie Money

Journal Entry:

February 21, 2007
ASH WEDNESDAY



Jamie Money

Okay, so here is a little known fact about myself: I grew up with a little bit of a Catholic background. My Grandma Carol and I use to have sleepovers on Saturday so that I could go to the Catholic church with her in the morning. She moved away when I was six-ish, so I stopped going to the Catholic church. Anyway, as I grew up, being the good non-church-going Catholics that we were (my family rocks!), we always participated in the practice of Lent. For those of you who do not know what Lent is, it is the imitation of Jesus as he was tempted by the devil while fasting in the wilderness for forty days. The beginning of this season is marked by Shrove or "Fat" Tuesday (AKA Mardi Gras). This is when you indulge one last time in the things you are giving up for the next forty days. Now, as you probably caught on, the normal practice for Lent is to give something up and/or take something on. After explaining this practice to Dillan, our whole team knew what it was all about and decided to give up/take on these things:

Abbie- soda and desserts

Andrew- taking on a nightly devotion and eating at least one fruit or vegetable a day

Dillan- biting his nails and soda

Me- desserts

Joe- soda

Suzy- soda and desserts

So, for the next forty days we will be deprived from our precious goodies/habits. Hopefully, after I'm done going through sugar withdrawal, I will be able to stop eating desserts altogether, with the help of God. We are all hoping and praying that God will help us these next forty days because tension will probably be as high as the temptation. God help us!!!

All that to say this: Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days in the wilderness, without the strengthening power of food, only with the strengthening power of God. God will help us through all the temptations of this world if we lean on Him. Too many times we wait until New Year's or Lent to give up the things we know are bad for us. I don't know about y'all, but I am going to try to leave desserts in the dark. I will not let them rule me. I am going to lean on God so that I can eat healthier and lead a healthier physical, mental, and spiritual life. May God help me!!!

~Jamie

Date: 3/1/2007

Submitted by: Jamie Money

Journal Entry:

So, today was my day off. Let me tell you what my usual day off entails: sleep, movies, sleep, eat, sleep. So, today I woke up around 10:30 (having gone to bed at 8:30), ate breakfast, talked to a friend in Denmark, and then I watched three movies: "Invincible," "The Pursuit of Happyness," and "Freedom Writers." This is what I got from them:



Jamie Money

"You will never amount to anything. You will never make any money. You are trash." -

Invincible

So many times in my life I feel like this. You see, I suffer from having a sporadic low self-esteem. Some days I wake up and the first thing I think is "Oh my gosh! You are so fat! Look at that hair, ew, and you really should wear make-up because your face is enough to break this mirror...how could anybody like you?" These times in my life kill me. I feel absolutely obsolete and completely inadequate, unlovable and repulsive. In these times, I have to turn to God. I know that no matter how fat, ugly, horrible, and repulsive I may or may not be, God still loves me. Even though I might think no one else does, God still will. I am not perfect, physically, emotionally, mentally, I am just me, and God loves that.

"He thinks your leaving. Here in South Philly, we don't got much, but we got each other. We're family, and you're one of us."-Invincible

I love this quote! It reminds me of team. We don't have much on team, but we have each other. We really are a family and we really stick together.

"Never let anyone tell you what you can or cannot do. They will try to hold you back because they themselves have fallen short" -Pursuit of Happyness

Never let anyone hold you back from sharing the good news of God. When I first was on team, I had non-Christian friends try to divert my mission from Christ and have me continue in my sinful ways. I have fallen short, too many times to count, but I am not going to let that determine what I can or cannot do. I will not let the devil hold me back from a ministry opportunity. I am no longer going to be that girl that *thinks* she should tell a friend about God, I am going to be the girl that *tells* that friend about God with the passion and fire that I feel for Him.

"There was a man who was drowning, and a boat came, and the man on the boat said "Do you need help?" and the man said, "God will save me". Then another boat came and he tried to help him, but he said, "God will save me," then he drowned and went to Heaven. Then the man told God, "God, why didn't you save me?" and God said "I sent you two boats, you dummy!" -Pursuit of Happyness

Man, I could write a sermon on this one. I am the man that says, "God will save me." "God will give me a sign." Yeah, the boats might as well run me over because for some reason I am oblivious to them. Boats come into my life, and I send them away, forgetting that I wanted God to send them to me in the first place. I am an idiot! I am so totally wrapped up in me sometimes that I forget the only important thing is to be wrapped up in Him. To be in His love, in His presence, that is the one thing. I swim around until I drown before God smacks me in the face and calls me a dummy!

**"That's not true! I love you!"
"No, you love the idea of me." -Freedom Writers**

Oh, how I love this quote. I love God, I really do, but sometimes I think I just love the idea of Him. I love the idea of someone that loves me unconditionally, who believes me perfect in every way, who believes that my romantic notions, my dreams, my decisions are not silly, merely a part of my life that contributed in making me the perfect person I am. I think of these things, and think that I would love this in a guy. To be unconditionally loved! Wow! No, I love the idea of this, not the reality. I love the idea of God, but sometimes I find it really hard to love God myself. I struggle sometimes, especially when times get rough, and I get weak; I falter, I sway and I break. I am that person. but I love the idea of not being that person.

"You are not invisible to me. I see you, do you understand? I see you." -Freedom Writers

And to wrap up my contemplations: an upside. God knows and sees me for who I am, what I am, and loves me anyway. It is like that Relient K song says:

You looked into my life and never stopped
And you're thinking all my thoughts
Are so simple, but so beautiful
And you recite my words right back to me
Before I even speak
You let me know, I am understood

Date: 3/3/2007

Submitted by: Abbie Hoffman

Journal Entry:

We are now in Wisconsin...the great state known for its wonderful CHEESE!! Our team LOVES cheese. Especially Joe! Hahaha!!! Well, Thursday we got stuck in Plover, WI, because the roads were just horrible!!! So we stayed at the Elizabeth Inn. Around 6, we decided that we were going to walk over to get some dinner at the restaurant next door. Well, I didn't quite make it over there. I took like 30 steps outside and I hurt my ankle... YIKES!!!! It still hurts. It is very swollen! Don't worry, tonight we are going to the hospital! Well, I am going to go now! I will get back later!!

God bless,

Abbie Paige!



Abbie Hoffman

Date: 3/3/2007

Submitted by: Joe Ombres

Journal Entry:

The Little Things

There are little things in life that each of us get frustrated with. Sometimes they're things that others do or how they act. Sometimes they are situations you cannot control. Through the help of God, with Dillan's kind words, I've learned to try and let go of the little things we can't control. We are here to glorify God and getting upset over little things that we can't control distracts us from that. Sometimes it's just about making the best of the situation you're in.

Event Director Jen Miller in her letter to the teams wrote about three different foods and how they react to boiling water. Carrots. Eggs. Tea leaves. Carrots when boiled allow the water to soften them. Eggs when boiled allow the water to harden them on the outside. Tea leaves when boiled change the water into tea. I will choose to strive to be like the tea leaves which change the situation it's been placed in for the better. I don't want to become soft or weak like the carrots or rough and hardened like the eggs because of the situation I'm placed into. I will try more each day to not let the little things annoy or change me. I am still currently struggling with the things about other people that annoy me. I will try my best to get past them and accept them.



Joe Ombres

Date: 3/3/2007

Submitted by: Suzy Bakke

Journal Entry:

I once heard someone say, "It's much easier to lead worship than to live it." I never really quite understood what that meant until recently. My dear friend Beckie Petzoldt sent out a wonderful package to all of us team Life Encouragers. And what I found was this...

The first devotion for worship leaders and teams talked about how being a worship leader is so much more than simply "leading worship." We need to not only be concerned that people are watching us as we lead worship during services, but that when people see us living our lives that we are LIVING worship. We need to remember that God is so much more interested in how we're living every moment of every day, not just that we can play, or sing, or attend some gathering that we've clearly entitled "worship." Because when push comes to shove...it's so much easier to lead worship than to LIVE it.

The most important thing we can do as worship leaders is to live by example. "Leading worship"



Suzy Bakke

should mean so much more than singing a solo or playing the guitar. We need to go before people not only on Sunday mornings musically, but also in battle--the battle of life. We (and keep in mind everytime I say "we," I mean ME) must understand that no matter what we do on Sundays, we need to live our lives in total worship so when people see us, all they see is Jesus.

To wrap up a really scatterbrained blog...no one could put it better than one of my very favorite people in the world.

"The only way for us to fully live our lives out for Christ is to be so hidden in Him and His word that others have to find Him to know us." ~ Meredith Matthews

Date: 3/3/2007

Submitted by: Suzy Bakke

Journal Entry:

A God Smack if you will...

Today has seemed to be one of those days that due to a rough start, everything else seemed to be turning to crap. Bugged down by an overly analytical nature and a tendency to replay things in my head, I started my day out so unfocused I'm surprised I didn't end up with my clothes on inside out and my shoes on backwards. And there is nothing I hate more than being unfocused. Trained by my family to be ever the overachieving hard worker, my train of thought has always been crystal clear and full attention is paid to the task at hand. But today, I seemed to be having no such luck.



Suzy Bakke

Then as I was making my bed (a task I've always had a strange adoration for...don't ask me why) I had a "God smack." For those of you unfamiliar with the phrase, contrary to popular belief, it did not originate with Sully Erna's band "Godsmack." The term was actually coined on Alice in Chains '92 grunge album Dirt, where the song "God smack" appears for the first time. The two different usages of the phrase both have very pertinent meaning to me. The band "Godsmack" refers to the ways that God can smack you down. If you're too self indulgent, if you're making fun of others, if you're too wrapped up in the things of this world, before you know it God will do something to smack you down. The Alice in Chains song "God smack" references how to some, God's name has become like smack, like drugs. Both interpretations of this impacted my day greatly.

Before going on the road with Captive Free, I was asked to choose a personal "theme verse" to be printed along with my bio. I always thought this was kind of silly, seeing as the entire Bible should be the theme for your life. However, failing to choose just one, I had to send them two. The first comes from Romans 8:31, which says "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Romans is undoubtedly one of my favorite books of the Bible, and this verse is a gleaming example of why. Such power and force have always driven this verse home for me. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Absolutely nothing could be more true. No matter what happens, I have a God on my side that is so awe inspiring, so frightening, and so ultimately indestructable, it makes me untouchable. This verse coincides with my other theme verse. James 1:2-3 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, for the testing of your faith develops perseverance." Growing up in today's world with all its trials and tribulations, we're bound to face problems of many kinds. And every single time, my faith has been what I have rested upon. Knowing that I have a God that is so powerful that nothing can be against me has always been the laurel I've tried to rest on. And in my life, let's just say there have been so many trials I can persevere with the best of 'em.

So this morning, as I was starting my unshakably bad day, I then took a second and remembered these things. I kicked myself for being so wrapped up in self-preservation that I seemed to forget all these driving forces in my life. So often I have to remember what it says in Proverbs, to lean not on my own understanding.

I looked out the window, and I gazed at God's amazing creation. All of it laid sweetly under a

beautiful layer of the whitest snow I had ever seen, and the world seemed to get quiet. I sat there and felt so filled by the Holy Spirit I thought I might burst. You see, even though you may have to shovel it, it may cause the roads to be bad, and it can easily cause you to stumble, snow has always been magical to me. When I was little, I always saw it as God's present He sent down just for me to enjoy. When it snows, everything is clean, everything is beautiful, and everything is still. With the snow comes peace, and with the snow comes a quiet I can't explain. And in my life, quiet is not a state I often fully employ.

In the midst of all of my thoughts and fears, I got so wrapped up in leaning on my own understanding that I was too worried to see past the end of my nose. In our relationship, God has always reminded me of what Matthew 6 has to say. "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself." I have a God who loves me so much that He provides for me. He takes care of me. He won't let me do it all on my own. When I fall, He carries me, and when I sin and continue to sin, He reminds me that He sent His own son Jesus to battle what I'm too weak to face. That, my friends, is love.

Patience has always been an area I've struggled with, but today I seem to be more patient than ever. I have such a tranquility, I feel I can't be touched. So the next time you feel that God is going to smack you down, remember--sometimes He smacks us in good ways. He smacks us to let us know He's there, and that He's taking care of us. And also, don't let God's name turn to smack in your life. Lean not on your own understanding, but on His, for who knows what His plans are for you?

And who knows what His plans are for me?

Date: 3/3/2007

Submitted by: Dillan Howell

Journal Entry:

Hello to all of my family, friends, and new friends that I have acquired on the road. At last, I am finally writing a journal to do an update on what's been going on with me on the road in the last couple of weeks or so. Let's start off with saying that the Unconditional Love that Jesus has for us is awesome. As day by day goes with me being on the road, my relationship with our Father has grown. I want to thank my family and friends for supporting me this year while I am on the road with Captive Free....prayers, donations, whatever it is, thank you for all. Last week, we got to go see a beautiful state, and that state, of course, is the state of Tennessee. Oh, and it was the South. For most people on my team, this was their first time being in Tennessee or just their first time being in the South. From what I heard, they loved it. I don't know if it was the South or my wonderful family. Now I am going to talk about my family, so when I say "my family," this is who I am talking about. My mother, Patricia. My father, Kyle. My wonderful step-dad, Rich. My step-mom couldn't come, she was out of town, but if she was in town she would have been there no doubt--her name, Joy. Logan, Trystan, Trevor, Trenna, Carson and little Ally. Yes, they are all my brothers and sisters. Now some more family...Kurt and Jeannie Houston, and their awesome, wonderful, beautiful daughter, my love, Emily Wren Houston. My awesome girlfriend!! Tomorrow will be our two-and-a-half year anniversary. Kelly, Emily's sister, wasn't there because she was away at college. Yeah, they were all there, and they are a great support to me with my ministry. They also hooked us up with some great steaks for dinner that Friday night we were there. I want to thank everyone for coming to the concert Thursday night that we had in Oak Ridge. Now we are located in northern Wisconsin, headed to Greenville to do a lock-in. Please keep praying for me and my team as we travel in rough snowy conditions and just throughout the year. God bless!



Dillan Howell

PSALM 150

Dillan Howell

Date: 3/5/2007
Submitted by: Andrew Dodd
Journal Entry:



Andrew Dodd

Well, greetings from Iron Mountain, Michigan. We are currently having our day off. So what should I do on my day off in Iron Mountain? What else but ski? I actually just came from the slopes right now, and I discovered two or three things while I was on the mountain, and I thought I would share those with you. 1. Skiing is much easier than snowboarding. 2. Be careful of ski lift chairs because they hurt. 3. When in doubt, fall on your butt.

But it was a great experience to have and enjoy something that I might not have ever had the opportunity to do in my lifetime. I think that is what makes these days of relaxation so good because you see and do things that you have always wanted. But I want to say that God showed me his creation today on top of the mountain. I can't wait to see what God is going to show me!!!

In his name,

Andrew Dodd
Isaiah 41:10

Date: 3/27/2007
Submitted by: Jamie Money
Journal Entry:



Jamie Money

Bread Ministry. Wow! What an experience!

So here's the run down: You go to a troubled area of town, stricken with poverty, and go door to door offering bread to the people there as well as prayers. The bread is a representation of Christ's body.

So, it is probably the most nerve racking thing when you first knock on the first door. You go and knock on the door, not knowing what to expect, who to expect! A person answers the door and can react any number of ways. We had people accept bread and prayer, just bread, say no thanks someone needs it more than them, others just slam the door in your face or renounce Christ all together. It is pretty intense and pretty in-your-face ministry.

We went to so many houses trying to give them bread; most were polite, but not all, but that's okay because we prayed for them anyways. It was such an amazing experience, one I never thought I'd ever do. It was very rewarding, and now I know that I am definitely bringing that ministry home.

God bless,

Jamie

Date: 3/30/2007
Submitted by: Abbie Hoffman
Journal Entry:



Abbie Hoffman

The sun is shining! The temperature is feeling HOT!! I am so in love with God's creation! I just have such an awesome respect for my God. We just came from New Haven, IN. Let me tell you that Joy Fellowship is one of my favorites! Guess who worked up the nerves to do bread ministry? That's right, ladies and gentlemen, Abbie Hoffman did! Haha!! If you do not know what bread ministry is, I will fill you in. Basically you go around to houses and give out loaves of bread and some kind of pastry for free. And

also ask them if they would like to pray with you. Now I know some of you are like, OH MY!!! That is scary!! Well, let me tell you that it is... at first. Then after you are up there talking to the families, you realize that this is the best thing in the whole entire world! Now let me tell you that not everyone takes the bread. Some do but don't want prayer, and some just don't want any of it. Or some just want prayer. It was truly awesome! I definitely grew in my faith. If you have the opportunity to experience bread ministry, please do! I just have to say that I loved being with Joy Fellowship. The youth there are really inspiring.

God Bless,
Abbie Hoffman
Philippians 2:14

Date: 3/31/2007
Submitted by: Joe Ombres
Journal Entry:

So we're currently in Brook, IN. This town has a library, two churches, three restaurants, a post office, and a park all within two blocks. Small town, to say the least. We have met some amazing people in this town. The Methodist church and the First Christian church do a lot of stuff together. We got to play a bunch of games with kids from both churches.

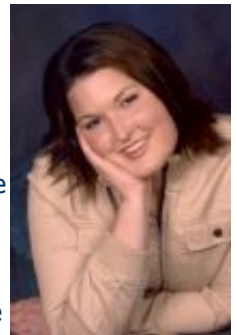
We have had an awesome day today/tonight, and it only got better when we started to bring things down for the night. We made ourselves available for prayer with anyone who wanted to pray with us. Before any kids came to us, they began praying on their own and with friends. Some got up and on their knees. Some of the most genuine love of Jesus and true submission to the Lord I have ever seen has happened in this small town of Brook, IN. It was absolutely wonderful. The Lord was truly in that place tonight. Two girls for the first time gave their lives to Christ. I had such an awesome experience of the Lord myself tonight also. Witnessing that kind of true love and worship really boosts my walk with Christ.



Joe Ombres

Date: 4/24/2007
Submitted by: Suzy Bakke
Journal Entry:

Oh my goodness! There is SO much to update you all on! Let me back up... Hello everyone! God has been revealing Himself to me and my teammates so much over these past few months, and it has been glorious! Spring Break was wonderful to our team, and we all came back ready to get back into the swing of things. The first weekend back, we headed to Chicago for the Chicago II Quake. We were so blessed to get to work with Jacob's Road again. We connected with them so much in the Dells for our Dells III Quake that we loved being able to work with them again. However, this time we had the pleasure of working with Carrie their lead singer. Due to the beautiful addition of sweet baby Taylor Grace to their family, Carrie wasn't able to come to the Dells, and boy, did we miss out! The boys of Jacob's Road are so fun and absolutely hilarious; nevertheless, Carrie's poise and grace were such a presence in Chicago. She is absolutely beautiful in every sense of the word. God's glory absolutely radiates off of her, and you cannot help but worship in her company. As a person, she is so sweet and engaging, and as a worship leader, the Holy Spirit uses her in such powerful and amazing ways. I feel so lucky to say that I've worked with her and to call her my new friend. Along with the addition of Carrie and Taylor Grace to our environment, we were so lucky to also have Josh's wife Lisa and their new baby Clark Andrew along for the trip as well. Having these babies around was such a blessing! Having these two beautiful babies there really reminded me of the innocence they have and the way they never think twice about asking for help. If they're hungry, they cry out. If they're lonely, they cry out. If they're sleepy, they do the same. We so need to emulate babies in our relationship with God. We need to never think twice about asking for help. So often we let our pride, vanity, conceit, and selfish ambition get in the way of asking for God's help. In the times when we are thinking we'd prefer not to be rescued, what we need to do is cry out to



Suzy Bakke

our Father who loves us so passionately, so completely that He assures us He will "never leave us or forsake us."plus babies are just really cute. After Chicago II, the weekend after was immediately followed by our last Event, Dells IV, with Tom Matson and Peder Eide. Wow! What a pair. We were SO blessed to have such an amazing last Event. After all was said and done, I was overwhelmed but this wonderful sense of accomplishment mixed with intense sadness. I felt so good that we had finished eight Events successfully, and had so much fun in the process. However, I was so sad on all that I would be missing out on. The connections we made with the kids, the amazing bands and speakers we worked with, and our phenomenal Event Crew were being left behind. Now, when I say "phenomenal Event Crew," that is a vast understatement. The West Lakes region is blessed to have beautifully engaging people on their Event Crew. They are so hard working, so accomodating, and down right fun to hang out with. I will miss them all (especially the Volden family) dearly. I think what I was most upset about was the fact that we would no longer be seeing our Event Director Jeromy Dorsing consistently anymore. Of course we'll be seeing him at Lifest and at Debriefing, but seeing him consistently over these past few months was so wonderful. Jeromy made sure we worked hard...well...REALLY hard, but more importantly, he made sure that we knew how much he cared about us, how much he wanted to listen to us, and how that no matter where, when, or what time, that he would always be there for us. Jeromy quickly became a member of our team and our family. Seeing him every month was like having a little piece of home with us. It was always something to look forward to. However, we all know that no matter what, Jer will always be a big part of who we've become as a team and as a family. I'm so excited for our upcoming bookings as a team. We have some really wonderful things to look forward to. We get to go to Joe and Abbie's churches soon, steal home for a short break over Memorial Day, and see our amazing friends from North East and East Lakes at VBS training. After I dried my eyes and remembered all of this, I was so thrilled to be moving on with our year. Nevertheless, we'll always have our eight blessed Events to carry with us forever. To those teams who have Events left: cherish them....they are there for a brief, fleeting moment, and then they are gone. I love you all, and wish you all the best.

Date: 4/24/2007

Submitted by: Abbie Hoffman

Journal Entry:

So right now we are at Kelly Volden's house for dinner. We are having the best time of our lives!! Oh how I love this family. Wow, I have so much fun with them. Today I went to the dentist. Turns out I have to get my wisdom teeth taken out in May. I am sad. It's going to hurt like no other. Me...sad.

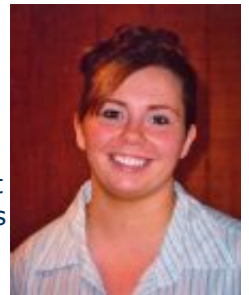
This past weekend we had our last Quake at the Dells. Sad. It was so much fun. Oh, how I love to be with the kids. Honestly, I am going to miss it so much. Jeromy was the best Event Director/friend. He is such an awesome person.

Well, Events are over and soon we will be starting VBS. You know what that means. Team will be over soon. I really am not feeling it. I do not want the year to be over yet. It seems like everything went by so fast. Wow...it's scary. Life is flying!!! Well, I am going to get going. I hope all is going well with each and every one of you!

God bless,

Abbie Paige

Romans 8:28



Abbie Hoffman

Date: 4/27/2007

Submitted by: Joe Ombres

Journal Entry:

So, our last Event was the Wisconsin Dells 4 Quake at the Chula Vista Resort. It was a blast! We got to share the stage with one of my favorites, Peder Eide. I got great

opportunities to worship with Peder, playing as if I was in middle school again. I also finally got to meet Peder's family, who were so much fun. They are a wonderful group of people who are so servant-hearted and inspirational. Praying with them was awesome!

Tom Matson was one of the most amazing speakers I've ever seen. Funny as anything, with such a straightforward Gospel message that is so easy to understand as he tells it. He was great to work with and an awesome servant of the Lord. Entirely an inspiration for me.

I had a great time with the kids this weekend as well. This was absolutely my most laid back and relaxed Quake. The Event Crew was so good, as always! They have been such an awesome backbone support for all that we do, and I cannot thank them enough. Kelly Volden is a great Event Crew coordinator and a great friend. She runs a fun group and can make some wicked hot wings! I had such a blast hanging out with them on Tuesday after the Quake.

Our Event Director Jeromy Dorsing is awesome. He gets stuff done, he gets us to get stuff done, and it works. At the end of the day, he's great to sit down and chill with. Great conversations, awesome inspiring servant. He's wonderful to work for and wonderful to hang out with.

I've had just an overall awesome Event Season. I'm gonna miss it; however, I'm not gonna be sad that it's over, just glad that it happened. Thanks to everyone who helped me grow closer to the Lord while having an awesome time!



Joe Ombres

Date: 5/8/2007

Submitted by: Joe Ombres

Journal Entry:

After our Friday, Saturday, and Sunday morning bookings, we were quite tired. A tight schedule was still ahead of us for the remaining portion of Sunday. We arrived at St. Stephen's Church in Wausau, WI early and had some time to set up early. That's always nice. We got set up and had dinner. The program went great, and I got to talk to a few people after the program. There were some awesome folks at this booking. We had a great night, got to eat some cookies and punch after, and it was great. Our contact was also hosting myself, Abbie and Suzy. Maria and Adam were both 23 and just recently married. Maria's cousin Hannah also lived with them. They were wonderful. Adam and Maria gave up their bedroom for Suzy and Abbie, and I stayed in the spare room. Myself and Hannah got to talking about Captive Free and her interest in joining and our shared passion for youth ministry careers with no plan of college. We connected right away as we began to share piercing and tattoo stories. Then we watched *Red Dragon* (prequel to *Silence of the Lambs*). Stayed up late talking about music and ministry and all sorts of random stuff. Fun times. I got to sleep in and spend most of my day off at their house and it was awesome. Their 8-week old puppy named Cooper was a lot of fun.



Joe Ombres

Then we went to Adam's parents' (Don and Lynn) house for dinner and recreational activities. Dillan, Jamie and Andrew stayed there, and so when we arrived, I had learned that they owned 80 acres of property. It came time for dinner and they had made steak for us. Bacon wrapped filet mignon, t-bone, and sirloin cuts were all available. Very well seasoned and cooked so good. I think the filet mignon and piece of T-bone that I had may well have been the best steak I've ever eaten. They were so tender and tasty! We also had potatoes, bread with homemade strawberry jelly, and the others had green beans (I passed). Super good meal. It may be my favorite on the road so far. We then went outside and went four-wheeling. They owned two and we all took turns driving the quads all over the 80 acres of property and it was awesome!!

I had so much fun and enjoyed every minute of being with these awesome people.

When we returned to Maria and Adam's, myself and Hannah stayed up late again and this time watched *American History X*. Awesome movie, awesome message.

One of my favorite bookings, contacts, experiences, and overall good times!

Date: 5/22/2007
Submitted by: Jamie Money
Journal Entry:

Today we are at a school in Pennsylvania, we have been on the East Coast-ish area for eight days! We have been doing so much! We have been to the Atlantic Ocean, Joe's house and church, New York City (twice!), and much much more! Everything has just been amazing to me, I have never been on this side of the country before, and I am simply in awe! I saw *Beauty and the Beast* on Broadway, and the funny thing was that I didn't realize that Broadway was a street. I thought it was a building! Silly me! Anyways, we have to do a chapel, more coming later! God bless!



Jamie Money

Date: 6/7/2007
Submitted by: Abbie Hoffman
Journal Entry:

I absolutely LOVE Camp Lutherhaven! Ahhh.... It is so awesome here. The camp is beautiful, and the staff here are AMAZING!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I truly am so happy right now!!! And today we get to go to Michigan City!!! YAY!! Love those people. This will be our second time there. I am sad to leave this camp, though! I really enjoyed being here. It was a pleasure meeting everyone here! I hope everyone is having a wonderful week!!!

God bless,

Abbie

P.S.--Remember to UP UP LIFT!



Abbie Hoffman

Date: 6/11/2007
Submitted by: Suzy Bakke
Journal Entry:

God's amazing grace and glory to all of you from the beautiful state of Illinois in the phenomenal city of Danforth! This is our third time being here and the people, church, and community of believers in this place are outstanding!

Unfortunately, I did not get to come here right away as I needed to go home to sing in my cousin Zach's wedding. The singing went great, and weddings are so uplifting. Watching him and my new cousin-in-law Jess express their love for each other and start their new life was truly beautiful. Nevertheless I was just biding my time until I could get home to my teammates.

The few days before I went to the wedding, me and my family of teammates had what was without a doubt one of my favorite bookings. Now, truth be told, Indiana is not one of my favorite states to travel, but I have been warming up to it lately. Shortly after VBS training where sadly I had to leave all my friends, not to mention my besty (Taryn, I love you!), we found ourselves in Albion, IN at Camp Lutherhaven. Now, to be quite honest, seeing as every teamer and their dog had been a counselor at Lutherhaven, I have heard tons about it and figured that it was incredibly overrated. However, I went in with an open mind and heart.

BOY, WAS I WRONG! Camp Lutherhaven could never in a million years be overrated because it is one of my favorite places in the world. Being West Lakes, we travel a super busy region, and it is really easy to become exhausted and feel a little spiritually dry due to lack of spending enough personal time with God. We arrived at Lutherhaven and were warmly greeted by Joshua, a past Rainbow of Promise-er and a past Cross Fire-er. Then, the program director Celine came in, gave us the run down, and said what we all really needed to hear. She encouraged us to take personal time



Suzy Bakke

with God; to sit in nature and just listen to what He is telling us; to sit with our Bibles and let God speak to us.

In a region where it is work, work, work all the time, we rarely get the opportunity to just take it all in, and that is exactly what Lutherhaven let us do. They invited us to the activities that the campers there were doing and encouraged us to hang out with them, but most importantly, they encouraged us in our walks with God. And it was EXACTLY what I needed.

We hung out with the campers, which was great, but I just sat on the deck with my Bible and read. I went down to the dock and listened for God. I took time for solitude, and it was beautiful. For once, I got to take a few days and just be. I listened to what God was telling me, read my Bible, and it was glorious. I can never ever thank Lutherhaven enough for giving me the gift of rest. On team, it is so hard to take and respect a Sabbath. Lutherhaven gave me this gift, and I will eternally be grateful.

Not only did I have an amazing time talking to God, but the camp staffers, counselors, and JSes. What an awesome group of servant-hearted, spirit-filled individuals! We got to hang out with them a ton, and they were so much fun. To be in a community of people our own age, having great conversation and tons of fun, was a great gift! We hope to stay in touch with them and stay friends because they were truly, truly tremendous people.

One of the staffers at Lutherhaven is actually going to be on Captive Free next year. We let him pick our brains a little bit and ask us some questions, which I hope were beneficial for him. However, I think it was more important for us to be around him than vice versa. For us to see that excitement and hope and passion that we all had at the beginning of the year was incredibly refreshing for me. It can be so easy to lose sight of your goals and dreams for the road as you travel it. Life simply gets in the way. Schedules get busy, drives get long, programs get changed, and you grow weary. Seeing his excitement was like a spark of creation. We got to see the early stages of his team being created.

I am thrilled to say that I am going to be a member of the 2007-08 training staff. So not only did I get to see this teamer before his year, but I will get to see his team starting out and I couldn't be more excited about it. Training was an intense time for us, and I hope I'll be able to lend an ear, a hand, or a word or two to any of the teams in training.

As of today, we have less than two months left. WOW. I really can't believe it. We started our first VBS this morning, and it really did feel like a beginning to the end. It is so fun and different and refreshing, but it really does feel like the year is coming to a close. Thankfully, Lutherhaven gave me just what I needed to finish with the energy I want to leave. So in conclusion, thank you, Lutherhaven...you gave me and my team a great gift. The gift of the Spirit.

Date: 6/12/2007

Submitted by: Jamie Money

Journal Entry:

Here we are at our first VBS. It has a whole new feel, like a Quake, but with younger kids, but not. I don't really know how to explain it, except that it is awesome and amazing. I love all the kids, and we are having so much fun here in Danforth. We get to see kids we've seen before and kids we've never seen before. They are all awesome, and we love playing music and worshiping the Lord with them. There is so much to do, and we are so busy, but we still find time to have fun. We are staying in trailers at the church, which is a new and fun thing. We get to hang out with all the neighbor kids and eat with all sorts of different families. It is really exciting and I am psyched to see what else God has in store for us! That is all for me!

God's peace and blessing,

Jamie



Jamie Money

Date: 6/13/2007
Submitted by: Joe Ombres
Journal Entry:

Camp Lutherhaven

My past experience with developmentally disabled folks has not been very extensive. It is still not by any means. I have had quite a challenge understanding most things about people who have mental disabilities. That may be due to the fact that there is an unending list of different disorders, disabilities, syndromes and behaviors which someone could have. Part of it may also be my fear to try to understand.



Joe Ombres

However, there is one common thing that I have noticed in our stay at Camp Lutherhaven in Albion, IN. That commonality is the simple lack of shame. By that, I mean shame for anything. They are willing to do whatever moves them regardless of who's around, who would be offended, who would be inspired, or who even cared.

We got an opportunity this afternoon to worship with a group at a different camp for a little while with some songs and puppet shows. They were a great group, and some of them really responded. I'm not going to lie, they don't always have the best rhythm (which makes playing quite difficult when you give them ALL different instruments to play). However, you could see them dancing and clapping their hands, waving their hands and just enjoying themselves. Most of them enjoyed the puppet shows and laughed a lot.

Later on in the evening we got to lead the last word/campfire devotional time for the group of developmentally disabled campers here at Lutherhaven. It was such a wonderful thing to see them all dancing, singing, clapping and praising. They don't care who sees them or how much they worship in front of others. There are days that I have a hard time understanding God, how he works, who he is, and these people today showed me all about Him. I saw some of the most genuine and simple understanding and love for the Lord today, from a group of people whom I've not been able to understand.

I just hope and pray that I can have their lack of shame or worry in my worship life. Tonight was one of the most amazing times for me on the road so far.

Thank you, Lutherhaven! Thank you, Jesus!

Date: 6/15/2007
Submitted by: Abbie Hoffman
Journal Entry:

Danforth, IL. The place to be! Well, today ends our last day of VBS with the Danforth crew... I am extremely sad, yet super happy to have the privilege of being with these fine people here. I love getting to know everyone here! They truly have a strong community, and that is what I love to see.

Thursday night, Whitney, Tessa, and I stayed up for a little while and looked up at the stars! It was so much fun. I got to learn what their thoughts on some things were, and they also learned my thoughts on different things. I am going to miss everyone here. But I know that it is time to go to a different place and meet new people all over again.



Abbie Hoffman

VBS is going to be a blast for me! I just know it. But yet, it is also going to be sad, because we are here longer, and when we get to know them, we have to leave again. I know the kids get sad. Hopefully, sometime in our lives, we will all meet again. I truly am never going to forget all the great times that we have with all the churches. God has created some mighty fine people out there... and we get to enjoy their fine company when we go out and do ministry.

Goodness, do I love life!!! I am so happy to be here right now!! God truly is working wonders through many people! I am so happy right now!! I hope everyone is doing well!! And being good!!! God bless, and remember to UP UP LIFT!!

Abbie

Date: 6/21/2007
Submitted by: Abbie Hoffman
Journal Entry:

This week we are in Bartlett, IL. Let me tell you... I am having a wonderful time here. Jamie, Suzy, and I are staying with an amazing family! Bob, Nancy, Morgan, Bobby, and Brian Flynn. They are such awesome people! VBS this week is a blast! The kids are so awesome and so pumped up for God! I truly enjoy watching these kids! They are so fun!!! They make me smile all the time! I feel like God has blessed me with amazing new friends. I have so much joy in my heart! Life is just amazing!! God has blessed me with so many things. I hope all is going well with everyone!

God bless,

Abbie



Abbie Hoffman

Date: 6/26/2007
Submitted by: Jamie Money
Journal Entry:

Welcome to Metropolis (home of Superman, and only ten minutes from Kentucky), a small and rural town full of wonderful people and a wonderful VBS program. We are staying with a man named Bill Kaine, and he is a riot. Yesterday, he showed me all 80 of his acres on the ATV. It was beautiful and pristine (other than the ATV tracks) and a great place to see animals. Bill is retired and so is his wife Connie. They have a lake behind their house where Dillan and Suzy and Andrew have all caught bass. Dillan has caught almost twenty by now! There are plots of grass for the deer to feed on, so when you go out in the morning, you are bound to see deer, turkey, or any other assortment of animals. This place is so surreal. You think you have explored every nook and cranny, and then you discover another food plot, an abandoned barn, or a stream.

God has truly blessed this town with amazing people and amazing environment. It is really humid but still beautiful. I have gone running in the morning lately and love looking at what God has blessed the Kaines with: beautiful skies, trees, and fields.

The VBS itself is wonderful, full of children who want to learn and are super duper adorable! I lead the first and second graders, Coralle, Hannah and Austin. They are so much fun; though we have a small group, we still have BIG fun! I have been having a great time and just wanted to share that with you all!

Jamie Money

To My Mother: Home in 46 days!



Jamie Money

Date: 7/8/2007
Submitted by: Joe Ombres
Journal Entry:

This is going to be a two-part journal.

Part 1 -

The first part is a topic I've been tossing around in my head for a while. When I get to really worship and give all that I have to God, and not think about anything going on, it's amazing. I'm not talking about when I'm playing bass or doing puppets; I'm talking



Joe Ombres

about when we get chances at training and other churches to just sit back and worship. Not often are we at churches that actually engage me and I can enjoy the service and worship. (More on this in part 2). I remember when I was in middle and high school going to events and truly worshiping. Usually, it involved myself and friends. I sometimes had trouble worshiping on my own. When I had friends that I loved and cared about and knew they cared about and loved me, I was able to worship hard.

Part of my growth both this year and somewhat before this year (but it took me until this year to recognize it), has been my ability to worship solely with God. I no longer have that subconscious 'acceptance in worship' mind frame. I worship God and that's that. There is nothing other than God that I need in order to worship anymore, and I truly value that growth. I'm proud of myself for taking that step, even though it was subtle and natural. I believe that is just a part of my spiritual strengthening. I feel as joyful and strong in the Lord Jesus Christ as ever even though I still question the actual 'doctrinal' beliefs that I hold. This is just something I have noticed about myself in the last month or two.

Part 2 -

This is a recently discovered passion that I hold. I will actually copy word for word (with some minor edits, you won't know because you haven't seen the original, so it's okay) the thoughts I had this morning in the church service we assisted with. These thoughts do not refer to just specifically this church, congregation or any specific group of people. This is a general statement about my ministry and a passion I now hold, and hope to begin pursuing as part of a career in youth ministry:

How often have you sat in church and heard children playing, laughing, talking, crying, complaining, whining, or anything else that distracts you from worship? How often do we fight to try to keep youth in the church? Do we give every effort to keep the kids in church, or do we simply temporarily pacify them? Are we showing the love of God in every single way possible to the children of our churches? Are we giving our very best to God in our showing these kids about Christ? Is there more we can do? Of course there is.

In order to keep kids in the community of Christ, we need to keep them engaged. I have been to hundreds of churches and seen thousands of disengaged children. Every Sunday we are at a different church with the same service. Take it from the children's point of view. The same BORING service! Isn't it time we gave these children something they can understand? Something they can enjoy. Where they have room and comfort to give their very best to God and in a way they can learn more about God than from a five-minute children's message sandwiched between hymns and a sermon? How about a full hour-long engaging service for kids in kindergarten through fifth grade? Sure, most churches do VBS programs and they're great, but they are only one week out of the summer. I'm talking about puppets, skits, stories, story book time, sing-alongs, dancing, games, pictures, painting, toys, drawing, shouting, playing instruments--yes, I mean the kids. Give them hand drums, shakers, and tambourines. If we're going to expect more youth to stay in the church and more importantly, stay in Christ, we need something new for these kids.

Isn't it about time we gave our all for our God?

Date: 7/11/2007

Submitted by: Suzy Bakke

Journal Entry:

What would you do in this situation? What if you went to a bank, and every day they put \$86,400 in your account? You can spend it however you like, but here's the catch...at the end of the day, whatever you didn't spend is gone. Every day you get a new \$86,400, but every day, whatever you didn't spend is gone.

That is how our devotion was opened up during our youth night in Merrill, WI. For once, it was a youth night where all Captive Free had to do was show up. No program, no



Suzy Bakke

leading a Bible study or a devotion...we just got to hang out. Of course, people starting thinking. If every day I had all of that money, but had to spend it immediately, what would I do with it? Of course the basics were thrown out. "I'd withdraw it and save it....I'd get out of debt....I'd buy a car, a house, a country..." the list goes on.

After about 15 minutes of deliberating the different routes people would take, the youth director, Tom, then said this: "Every day, God gives us 86,400 seconds to spend and to use, but every day whatever you didn't use or use wisely is gone."

This stopped me dead in my tracks. Wow. What an incredible analogy. He then proceeded to talk about how, in life we all waste so much time...time that God has given us to do great things, but how often do we waste it? We waste time by complaining, arguing, and a lot of time worrying about things that are out of our control. We waste time by not prioritizing. We think about the long drive to see a friend or family member, instead of the joy and thanks that will await after our visit.

As we sat there, my eyes literally welled with tears. Lately, even though my relationship with God has been so strong, the devil has been doing everything he can to thwart me. Our team has gone through the unfortunate business of losing a teammate, my family is going through some disheartening issues, and personally...well don't even get me started. I have felt like whatever I do lately, nothing is going right.

Being a worrier by nature and habitually over-analytical, I've spent a lot of time and energy as of late contemplating and worrying about the problems in my life. Tom was talking about how God has given us these 86,400 seconds a day and how they are truly a gift. Nevertheless, these seconds can't be withdrawn and stored for a later day. Like some of the kids said with the money, they would take it out of the bank, and save it all as one lump sum. We can't do that with time.

For the first time in my life, I truly realized why time is SO much more important than money. It can't be saved. Use it, or it is gone. I've spent a sickening amount of time worrying about things that are simply out of my control. I've wasted so many seconds wishing for more time, wondering if I could have done things differently, or just contemplating so many conversations, actions, and gestures.

But after tonight I was brought to one singular conclusion, and that is...that none of it matters. I'm in God's hands. I've been in God's hands this whole time. I just haven't been giving him the control. I've been treading water and struggling all alone, when all I needed to do was ask my Dad for help. He has wanted me to completely trust him this whole time, and I've been fighting it. And I'm done. I'm giving it all up. I'm so glad I don't have to be perfect, because I have a God who's perfect for me.

Obviously, in life we are imperfect people, and we will continue to worry and fret about frivolous things and even things that aren't so frivolous. But at the end of the day, no matter how much time we have wasted, we have a God who allows us to be steadfast if we trust in him. Why give the devil the satisfaction of knowing he is eating up our time? Take your 86,400 seconds a day and live them to the fullest. Dedicate all your thoughts, words, and actions to the Lord, and how can you go wrong? For all those who read this, I ask that you pray for me as I try not to waste my time by worrying about things that are out of my control as this has been a perpetual problem of mine. But right now...I have peace.

So how are you gonna spend your 86,400?

Date: 7/26/2007

Submitted by: Joe Ombres

Journal Entry:

Lifest 2007 and VBS in Appleton, WI

Arriving at Lifest on Friday, I was a bit anxious. We were informed prior to our arrival that we would have All Access wristbands. I was pretty stoked about that! Included with

Artist All Access was the awesome hospitality that was provided. We were able to get free: massages, haircuts, manicures, specialty coffee, great food, relaxation space, and shuttles between the event and the church providing all of that. Not to mention we were staying in a Radisson hotel. It was sweet. I've never been a part of something with that kind of treatment where I was on the receiving end. It's much different from how we are usually taken care of. Don't get me wrong--I'm not disappointed with any of the treatment we get on the road; it was just really cool to have all that extra stuff as an artist. On top of that, we could go on (behind, around, under, or anywhere else you could think of) any of the stages there.



Joe Ombres

Before I get carried away with excitement, I will first tell you of our experience playing at the KidZone stage. We got there and got our wristbands and loaded our stuff in near the stage. It was under a tent, and there was all sorts of stuff to do at the KidZone. There was a speaker on while we were loading in, so we had to keep our voices down. Once she finished, we began to set up and sound check. We had a great guy who was running the board. He was very accommodating and helpful. We got sound checked, and I was very pleased with the sound (on stage anyway; I couldn't hear the house mix). I cannot speak about us playing this stage without going to say that our wonderful friend and awesome drummer Beckie Petzoldt filled in for us since Andrew went home about a month ago. It was so much fun, and Beckie is awesome at drums! I was so happy with our performance/program. In fact, it may have been one of our best! We got to tearing down, and originally I had permission from the team to duck out of tear-down to go see Thousand Foot Krutch (TFK), but when I got over there, I found out they were running behind and that they were switching sets and wouldn't be playing until later that night. I went back and helped break down. We packed up and then decided we were on our own. We kinda split up and did our own thing. We crossed paths a few times and saw some friends and fans along the way.

I got to chill with some of the guys from War of Ages. Myself and their lead guitarist, Steven, wandered around just talking about ministry and our passions and our beginnings in music. It was great. I really was stoked to see them. I went and got the massage that I'd signed up for. Simply amazing! Elaine and I talked about my plans and passions as she massaged my neck and back. It was just great!

Then I went to see TFK from the stage near the monitor sound board and hang out with Thomas who was managing the stage (we worked with him at some Quakes; he's cool). It was great to see them from the stage and then go down and watch them from the floor with the kids. And back on stage again. They were great. I also stumbled upon a product called FastFret because I watched their bass player put it on his bass and asked him what it was. He told me it was a lubricant for your strings so they don't get sticky. I loved the idea, thanked him, and left.

I left a few songs early to head over to see War of Ages. Jeromy Dorsing (our Quake Event Director) was running lights at the stage that War of Ages was playing on, and it was good to see him, too. War of Ages is HEAVY! The way I like it heavy! And they were awesome, and they had a message for kids, and they had a nasty pit! I hadn't seen a pit like that since being home. (For those of you who don't understand my words, "pit" refers to a mosh pit, but it's not really called that anymore). I got to hang out behind the stage. I prayed while they played, and it was amazing, and I could feel God's presence in that place so powerfully. They were awesome, and it was great to see them play. After that, I headed right back to the stage that TFK was just on. Skillet was about to play. Quite a few of my teammates were there to watch Skillet. They rocked!! HARD!! I've seen them before, but they were just simply awesome!! Their drummer is a girl, and she can play! I taught Beckie how to headbang and swing her hair. It was a great show for all there. Everyone loved it! After that we headed to hotel.

The next day we slept in a bit and went to the grounds later. I headed to the church to get a haircut and ended up staying a few hours, and the girls cutting hair decided to attempt to mohawk my hair. Sarah and Stacie worked at it for about two hours. It didn't work so well, and so I had crazy random spikes emerging from a wild looking bun. Whatever. So I hung out while Beckie and Suzy got manicures, then decided to get a hand massage and a wax dip thing.

On my way back to the event grounds, I got a text message saying that a girl had fallen from the Air Glory ride nearly 100 feet to the ground and wasn't moving. Suddenly, everything about the event changed. Everyone wanted to know the details, people were curious as to what happened, what the status was.

At that point, I didn't really feel there was much to be done other than pray.

I wandered over to the stage that Red would be soon playing on. I saw them a few months earlier and really enjoyed them. I watched them sound check, and then they came on. Stellar performance! They rocked.

Emery was to come up next, but then everything on all stages ended up being pushed back 45 minutes. I didn't know what to do but felt a strange calling to go to the Youth Leader Oasis, which they had deemed the prayer and support hub for all that had just happened and was still going on (we had found out that Liz had gone to the hospital for surgery). I went there to lend my support as a leader for those who needed help. I arrived and stayed there for about a half hour or 45 minutes. I had expected floods of kids coming in, and I saw not three people come in. I was slightly confused and didn't understand the calling to be there with the other 30-40 youth leaders when there were almost no people coming in. I ended up leaving. I am still boggled by that calling as it was so strong, but I don't know what to do.

I made my way toward the rest of my teammates who were getting ready to watch Jars of Clay. They all came out dressed like 1970's gym teachers with the short running shorts and collared shirts. It was kinda goofy. Their tech crew threw out these large 25-foot round earth balls that the crowd knocked around for a while; that was the highlight of their performance for me. Emery was on the other stage, and I would have rather been there but didn't feel like walking that distance again through the crowd. I'll see Emery in September.

After Jars of Clay, I made my way over to see Decyfer Down. Before they were sound checked and ready to go, there were kids hanging out waiting for them. I went and chatted with some for a while. Then the emcee for the stage handed me a bunch of swag to hand out since I was just chilling sitting on the stage. So I threw out everything that was in the box, and it was great. Security, myself, kids, monitor techs, we were all just hanging out. Just before Decyfer Down came out and played, the Lifest event manager came on stage. His words were, "I wish I came to you with better news." He got a bit choked up and couldn't speak for a minute. "Liz went home tonight to be with Jesus." He talked a bit more, then prayed, and then introduced Decyfer Down. They came out, and, despite the events of the day, they rocked! They also prayed for her and her family. Everyone there was saddened, but no hope was lost.

Now, I'm not claiming that God took Liz, or that it was due to human error. I'm not making any assumptions as to why it happened. We know how it happened, when it happened, and where it happened. Why is a question that I am not prepared to answer, nor can I begin to try. What I can say is that God works through all things, including tragic death. Liz's death made this event a much bigger reality to me. It put everything into perspective. Life is precious. We celebrate the life we have in Jesus Christ, regardless of what happens to us on earth. It helped bring everyone closer. Barriers were broken, walls came down. I saw people being real. People were suddenly touched in a different way. Something so real, so close to people, now suddenly everything was on a smaller scale. Everyone could somehow relate. Thousands of other people either rode that ride or knew someone who did. Suddenly, everything was so much closer to everyone's heart. I believe God used the death of Liz to bring people closer to him. Again, I'm not saying it was or wasn't God that took her; I'm simply saying that he used what happened to draw people closer to Him.

The next morning, we were all pretty excited to see Chris Tomlin play and Bob Lenz speak. After the Sunday morning worship, Bob Lenz came and spoke. He talked about the difficulty in deciding whether to continue with the event or to shut it down. He said that our God is bigger than everything. Sometimes we can't understand Him, but that's why he's worthy of our worship and praise. He is bigger than our comprehension, and we cannot expect to be able to place him into a box that our finite minds can understand. With that said, he stated we would continue to worship our Lord as scheduled, and then he gave an amazing speech. It may have been one of the most passionate speeches I've ever heard. I was watching from the stage near the stairs. He finished speaking, walked toward me, fell onto the railing, and began gushing tears. I've never seen so much passion in a man's face before that moment. I could feel the passion radiating from him. I patted him on the back, gave him a hug, then he bolted down the stairs. Later on, Chris Tomlin came and played. I was sitting in front of the stage. Chris Tomlin led amazing worship. His band was great! I prayed without end for a while and worshiped in a way that hasn't happened for me in a few years. It was simply awesome. God filled my heart more than I could ever explain. I don't know what to say more about it other than that it was just simply inexplicably amazing.

My time at Lifest 2007 was a Spirit-filled one, and it will sure be something I won't forget. Thanks to all who were a part of it!

We left Lifest and traveled back to Appleton (where our hotel was) for our next booking. We all stayed together with the Wests. They have four kids. They were a lot of fun. We did all kinds of stuff with them including bonfires, mini-golf, go-karting, swimming, soccer (I didn't really do the soccer, I don't dig soccer), singing, and wrestling. We had a blast. It was definitely one of my favorite weeks and favorite families. The kids at the VBS were awesome! Amy was the VBS director, and she had three daughters who were adorable and so much fun. I really connected with a lot of the kids at this VBS. We had another temporary drummer named Nick for that week. He did great. It was a blessing to have him play with us. We got to see the new Harley that Amy just bought, too. It was tough to say goodbye to all of them, but they were wonderful. I always think about things that are coming to an end with the mentality of: Be glad that it happened, not sad that it's ending. Something else worth noting is that we had some trouble with our van leaving Appleton on our way to Roselle, IL. The Wests were so generous as to offer us to borrow their Suburban to tow our trailer here and leave our van where we were. They were willing to drive it down to us, too, nearly an hour and a half away. They are such generous people. Our van was drivable, and we ended up not needing their Suburban, but they offered it without a moment's hesitation. There needs to be more people in the world like the Wests. We thank them so very much and pray that the Lord bless their family.

Date: 8/2/2007

Submitted by: Joe Ombres

Journal Entry:

Thank you and goodbye.

Well, this year has been quite the year for me. I wasn't sure what this year would be like, what to expect, or even where I was going. When I found out I would be in the West Lakes region, I was kind of bummed because I had requested West Coast. I've never been to the West Coast and wanted to go. I soon learned that I was going to the West Lakes region not because it's where I wanted to go, but where God wanted me to go. Right from the beginning I had found myself being selfish and wanting things my way instead of God's.



Joe Ombres

I then discovered that this year would not be the walk in the park I had thought being on tour might be. We were not rock stars, and we weren't going to get treated like them. Pizza, pasta, "BBQ" (sloppy Joes), pop, cookies and sandwiches soon became the staple food group. Sharing beds, church floors, and futons became commonplace. As a team, we had times where we were ready to wring each other's necks, and we had times that were unforgettably fun or funny. We got to experience lots of new things, meet all sorts of new people, and try some new food, too (I like food). We've been through a slew of van/trailer problems and swaps, as well as equipment problems and disasters. We've visited all the major cities in our states (Chicago, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Madison, Green Bay), been through them countless times, and as well as seen more hours and miles of cornland than any human should be subjected to. On top of that, our origins, influences, and styles span across the country. We each have a unique ministry with kids, youth, and even adults.

On days that I felt like I had no more to give, that nothing was left in me, some of my greatest ministry occurred. The Lord worked through me in ways I never knew was possible. I've learned so much this year. I've learned about myself, worship, kids, music, music ministry, relational ministry, the Bible, communion and countless other things.

I would not have been able to learn all these wonderful things, experience this stuff, travel around part of the country without the love and support and prayers of all of you. Mom, Dad, Caity, Maria, Karla, my church family, all my friends, sponsors, partners, host home families, YE staff, YE volunteers, and anyone I forgot.

I ask that you pray for me as I continue in life and in ministry in the future.

Thank you all and God Bless you!

God's Peace and ROK ON!!

Date: 8/4/2007

Submitted by: Jamie Money

Journal Entry:



Jamie Money

Wow, the year has flown by so fast! I can still remember getting on the plane to St. Paul, wondering "What have I gotten myself into!?" I can still remember the anticipation of meeting my teammates, and my mother crying as I walked away from her and onto my terminal.

As well as I can remember leaving for the first time, I can remember everything we have done on the road. I remember every Quake, how excited I was and how excited the kids were. I can remember our first 'big' booking in Burlington, WI. I remember the good times, I remember the bad times.

Through this year, my team and I have had a series of ups and downs. I have watched and been a part of them all. However, through the many ups and the many downs I have been able to watch myself and my teammates grow. I have watched my teammates discern what it is they want to do with their lives. I have watched them come out of their shell and become the crazy cool person I know them as. I have watched my teammates grow mature, not only in attitude, but in faith and love.

I myself have grown tenfold in faith and love. I have a deeper understanding of God and his relationship with me, though I am sure I am not even skimming the surface yet. I have grown more mature, more aware, and more emotional with and for my God.

Here are a few things that I found important to share: sometimes it takes someone else to point out every flaw and mistake; it's okay to cry; no one can ever deny your feelings; how you look on the outside in no way affects the inside; vans get smelly when you have five people living in them; good communication skills makes the world a much easier place to live in; people are generous and kind when given the opportunity.

I would never have made it through the year without the people in my life supporting me, whether financially or prayerfully or whatever. I have met hundreds of people this year, all willing to support me and my ministry, all willing to house and feed me, all willing to do for me what they would like done for them. Most people gave without hesitation, like taking someone into their home was a no-brainer and feeding them was an upside. I hope to be one of these people when I am older and have a home of my own.

I want to thank everybody for supporting me this year! I couldn't have done it without you! Good bye and thanks for the prayers!

Jamie
