

Captive Free East Coast 2007-08 Journal

Date: 10/3/2007

Submitted by: J.D. Sandifer

Journal Entry:

This last week we had the longest program of which I have ever been a part. It was for a youth night and I have to say I was definitely worried about being able to last through it. We started at 7pm with our experiential worship program (XP) and continued with games, an interactive Bible story, more games, and a Bible study and finished it off with a campfire-style worship session. It lasted a total of 5 hours.



J.D. Sandifer

Like I said, going into it I wasn't sure how I'd be able to keep going for that long. Being in front of people takes extra energy and I'm getting used to going to bed a bit earlier than midnight. As we started to get into the games and things I started to realize that even though I was feeling myself get more and more tired I was also having a blast! The games were fun and it was great to get a chance to hang out with the youth.

The night culminated for me in the campfire worship at the end. It was there that I really felt God's presence. There I was able to put everything else aside and just worship God. As I did that God blessed me with a reminder about why I was there. For the first few weeks of this tour I've been busy working out details and getting things done and haven't been able to concentrate on the ministry as much as I would like. But there in that worship time I saw the youth worshipping and God reminded me that that's why I'm there. My job on this tour is to lead people to God and just by being with those youth and providing that opportunity for them to worship is part of that.

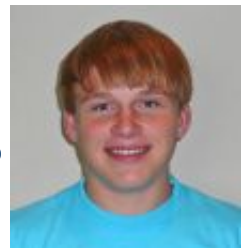
That simple reminder from God about why I'm doing what I'm doing was an amazing refreshment for me. At the time that I thought I'd be the most tired (and probably was) God gave me the refreshment I needed. As Isaiah 40:31 says, "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." I read that verse every Sunday morning during our acoustic worship set, but it's so good to be tangibly reminded of it in my life. God is good!

Date: 10/3/2007

Submitted by: James Mehring

Journal Entry:

This past weekend our team got to do our first lock-in routine. I was nervous going into it because it was a lot of time that we had to fill and we had never had to do that much for a group before, so it was a little stressful. When we first got there and we met the kids they were super excited to see us and pumped for the night. Then we found out that they have had other Captive Free teams come in and that made me even more nervous because I was thinking in my head that they were going to be comparing us to past teams.



James Mehring

We started our program promptly at 7:00 and it started out fine, we did our first set of songs and then JD did his talk and Rachel S., Doug, and I went in the back of the Sanctuary to get ready for the second part of our skit. When I was back there waiting I looked around at the kids and adults and realized how into the story they were and from that point on I started to realize that they weren't there to be critics of our show and our activities that night - they were there to hear the gospel and grow closer to God with us that night. So from there on I wasn't nervous anymore about being compared to other past teams or for messing up because they weren't looking for a mistake free night they were looking for a place where the passion which we have and they have for learning and feeling God was present!!

Now after leaving that church I am less nervous about being the best team and doing the perfect program because it doesn't matter as long as they feel God and hear his words. In life as humans we always try to reach a point of being content and that is not what God wants for us. He wants us to always be changing and trying to better ourselves to be more like Jesus and that is a task that no

one will ever be able to finish so we as Christians should always be opening our hearts and our lives to new people and try bring as many people as we can to God and Jesus.

God Bless,

James Mehring

Date: 10/31/2007

Submitted by: Nathan LeGreco

Journal Entry:

So, it's funny how God works inside the circles of people in your life. We went down to Hickory, North Carolina to do a show and found out that the contact that originally set up the show was no longer there. A few questions on both sides go by and we are ready to start working. We do our show and go to have some dinner and we are sitting there eating and talking with our hosts. Someone asks if any of us knew Nate, the old contact. We said that we didn't, and they went on to tell us that he was a YE alumni from years back that now does programs with his family. This I found interesting because I knew someone that did the same thing with his family in Arizona, and his name was Nate. So, I asked what his last name was. This is where my story gets funny. They tell me that his name is Nate Macavoy, and I start laughing. I ask if he used to live in Arizona, and they say yes, and I laugh even harder. Come to find out I used to go to Nate's home church in Mesa, Arizona. Even better, when I was thinking about joining team I talked to my DCE, and he in turn asked Nate what he thought about his time with YE and gave me his answers. So I can say that my decision to join Captive Free was directly influenced by Nate Macavoy - the one that originally set up the program in Hickory. The part of this story that makes me laugh the most is that after I knew Nate and joined team I moved away from Arizona to my mom's house. I was helping her clean out her garage and found some old Captive Free tapes that were bought when I was a kid. I started to read the songs and then the names of the teamers that year and low and behold I find the young Nate Macavoy. My home church in Iowa hosted Nate's team when he was on team in the early 90's. It just shows the funny ways that lives can intertwine around each other. God sure has some funny tricks in his pocket.



Nathan LeGreco

Date: 10/31/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Rentz

Journal Entry:

God works through our weaknesses. It's such a simple thing, but so amazing. The things we think we are the worst at are the selfsame things he uses to spread his love. I have never realized this more than I did last Sunday, in Atlantic City, NJ.



Rachel Rentz

We were just at the church for the Sunday morning service. We'd been at host homes in another town the night before, and were leaving right after the service for another place. We got there pretty early, set up, did the service, everything ran pretty smoothly. The main pastor for the church was gone, so the associate pastor, Pastor Joel, led communion. After the service, as we were loading our acoustic set back into the trailer, I started talking to Pastor Joel, and soon realized that he had quite a story to tell.

Pastor Joel is originally from Brazil, and speaks both Portuguese and Spanish. His wife is German, so he also speaks decent German and French, as well as the small amount of English he has learned since being in the USA. I speak mostly English, with a smattering of Spanish, French, and a tiny bit of German. Needless to say, conversation was challenging, but we managed, using a sort of strange hybrid of whatever words we knew in our languages. And as we talked, his story began to take shape.

Before he was born, his parents had three daughters. His mother prayed to God to grant her a son, promising that in return, she would give him up to God. She prayed for God to name her son, and

opened the Bible right to the book of Joel. When Pastor Joel was born, he lived in the church, went to school in the church, and helped clean the church – he was truly a child of God.

As he grew older, he joined the army, as a parachutist. He served in the army for quite a while. But when he was 40 – I believe – God placed a call on his heart. The way Pastor Joel told us says it best: “God said “You’re not supposed to be a parachutist! You’re supposed to be a pastor!” So he became a pastor.

Then he told us about the birth of his daughter – I believe her name was Arianna. His wife was pregnant for five and a half months when she gave birth. The doctors didn’t think there was any chance Arianna would live. When she proved them wrong, they said she would never walk, because she was paralyzed from the waist down – her muscles and nerves were underdeveloped.

Now keep in mind, we had met Arianna right after the service. She is a teenager now, perfectly normal and healthy, walking just fine. Pastor Joel told us of praying for her healing, and of God’s loving kindness in granting their prayers.

As we sat and listened – because by this time the rest of the team had joined us – I realized something. I barely spoke any Spanish, and yet I was helping him find the words and translate, using what little I knew, and then sitting back and watching his story unfold. I would never have called foreign languages a strength of mine. I’m not good at them, in general. But God took me, took what I know, and used it in an amazing way. Pastor Joel’s testimony is one that I won’t soon forget. His story is one of following God, and of God’s unfailing love, mercy, and grace. I cannot thank God enough for allowing me to hear it.

Date: 11/2/2007

Submitted by: James Mehring

Journal Entry:

Last Sunday our team did a Family Night on Sunday and we were getting ready to find out host home information. Me and Doug found out that we were staying at the parsonage and were pretty excited because we thought that maybe we would get the whole house to ourselves because the pastor had his own house and that would be a blast for a day off on Monday.



James Mehring

We had finished our show and everyone was doing their separate jobs to tear down so that we could load up. I happened to be putting the resource table stuff away when man came in and introduced himself to me, and said that he and four other guys were staying at the house, and they all had to go to bed early for work so he wanted to quick show me around. The parsonage was not quite what I expected, it was pretty much the bare minimum inside, and to be completely honest I was a little disappointed. We found out the next day that the house we were staying at was used for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts to get their feet on the ground and put their focus on God. Me and Doug started to talk to some of the guys on Monday and got to hear their stories and it was so amazing to here how tough their lives were, with crime and bad families, but through it all they found God and turned their lives around and it just amazed me how strong their faith was. It just showed me that you really can never give up on a person because God sure never does and he will always be there loving every person on earth no matter what they have done in their lives. His love is unconditional and we should give everyone a chance because everyone sins and everyone screws up and stumbles. But that is the time where we really find God and are preserved through all the hard stuff. Just remember that God loves everyone so we should too!!!

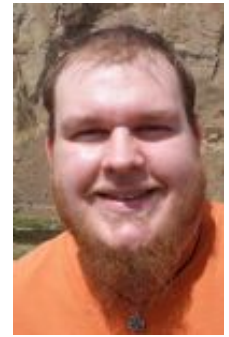
Date: 11/2/2007

Submitted by: Nathan LeGreco

Journal Entry:

It goes to show that good times come at the last minute. For quite a while the dates of the 30 – 31 of October stayed open on our calendar, and finally, a week before, we got

them filled. It was raced getting in touch with contacts and getting things organized because others had busy schedules just as we did. After everything, we got to Kingston, NY. Our contact was at a conference and we met with someone else who wasn't sure on any details but did everything she could. We had a small concert that night with a few problems, but after the show the fun started. We had all the kids come up and start asking questions about the music and the instruments. We sat there for close to an hour letting them play the drums, guitars, bass, and violin - Rachel even got her trumpet out of the trailer because they wanted to see it. I personally had more fun with them afterwards letting them play around than during the show. They all wanted to know so much about the music and it helped keep that interest alive in them. The next day we went to their school to do some chapels, and got to have more fun with sing-alongs, puppets, and bible stories. After lunch we got to go around to all the class rooms and talk to the kids more one on one. We found out that the older kids love The Sheep Song just as much as the little ones. All of this happened with no time to spare on our schedule and we really needed to fill these days, and it ended up being the most fun and we never knew it was coming.



Nathan LeGreco

Date: 11/2/2007
Submitted by: J.D. Sandifer
Journal Entry:

This last weekend we got to play at another camp! I love camps because the atmosphere is so relaxed. I find it incredibly easy to sit back, relax and just be when I'm at a camp. I don't know if it's being out in God's beautiful creation or just the fact that everyone is away from their daily routines and ready to relax, but regardless of what it is it's wonderful.



J.D. Sandifer

Camps have always been a great place for me to spend time with God. It always seems like God is more present and more near when I'm in a camp atmosphere. It also seems like other people are more ready to pause to listen to God, to nature, to each other.

It also seems like other people are more ready to play. In the world that we live in everything seems to be fast-paced and non-stop and taking time out to play seems to get lost all too easily. That's why it's so great to see people just run out to fields and start playing when they want with no particular need for outside organization or scheduling or anything else.

Maybe that's why I feel closer to God at camp. The playful atmosphere seems like it's more what God intended for this world - a world without stress. I'm grateful that even though we can't have that in this lifetime, we can experience it for a short time at places like camp and look forward to it in the next life. Thank you, God, for that hope!

Date: 1/3/2008
Submitted by: J.D. Sandifer
Journal Entry:

In the middle of November, we got the awesome opportunity to become an international team for 10 days - we got to go to Canada!

Some of you out there might be questioning whether going to Canada is all that different from the United States. For those of you would wonder about that, I can now say that I've been there and I know: nothing is different in Canada. Ok, I'm kidding, there are actually many differences between the U.S. and Canada, especially when you venture farther east. Everything is in kilometers, liters and degrees Celsius. People talk with slightly better diction and say "eh?" slightly more frequently than in the U.S. In fact, the differences are enough to make it feel slightly weird for us as Americans to spend time in Canada. You know things are different, but they don't look all that different. It's like something isn't the way it's supposed to be.



J.D. Sandifer

Now if I left it there, that would be an altogether unfortunate picture of Canada. While there we met so many nice people who took care of us that despite the differences we felt very much at home – well, as much as one can feel at home while on the road.

In fact, while in Canada we did a program at a small college and I couldn't help but remember my college days. The worship service we attended felt so much like when I was back with my campus ministry. It was very good to see that college students are so similar, both in style and how they relate to God, despite being in different countries.

As I reflect on our stay in Canada I can't help but reflect on the nature of God. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow as well as in every country of the world. Despite differences in culture, God's love and truth are still present and relevant. That's a very comforting thought! I'm glad that I got the opportunity to see that while in Canada.

Date: 1/9/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Rentz

Journal Entry:

Wow... I can't believe it's been two weeks since Christmas break. On one hand, it seems like it can't have been that long – on the other, I keep thinking it's been much longer than that. Coming back from break was tough, with getting back in to the swing of things and all, but it also felt like coming home. More so than going to my actual home did. Being back on team just feels... right.

It's a great feeling. I know, absolutely and certainly, that this is where God means me to be right now. Even on the bad days, when I'm exhausted, or annoyed with my teammates, I know that I belong here. In that knowledge, I can find peace, even in the most stressful of situations.

On New Year's Eve, the day after we all regrouped, we had a lock-in in Naperville, Illinois, at the home church of two current teamers, Kim and Brett. We were excited to be jumping straight in to team life again, but at the same time, we were kind of nervous. It had been two weeks since we'd done anything as a team, after all. We ran into some trouble on the road and ended up arriving later than we'd hoped, and were worried about having enough time to set up. Luckily, we found out that we wouldn't have to set up our sound system – we would just plug in to theirs. There was a bit of chaos with figuring out exactly what it was they wanted us to do, but we pulled together and everything happened wonderfully.

The lock-in that night was amazing. The kids were great – it was a smaller group, but we had an awesome time. We played games, did our XP, had a snowball fight, and then went into town for the New Year's Eve celebration.

Having such a great program right after coming back on to the road was such an encouraging experience. Going home brought with it all the reminders of what life off team was like, what being "normal" was like. That lock-in reminded me that I don't want to be "normal" this year. I want to be on team, serving God, in the most un-normal way I can.



Rachel Rentz

Date: 1/22/2008

Submitted by: Nathan LeGreco

Journal Entry:

Sometimes all you need is a little cowbell.

This last week, we went to the Penbrook Church of God in Harrisburg, PA. We did a program for them night before the Quake that weekend, and it was great getting to know the kids there. This was just a fun church to be at because of their connections with YE, alumni, current teamer's families, and future teamers. I had a great time hanging out with the guys there both at the church and the Quake. There was a group of them that kept hounding me for more cowbell in our songs. I don't typically use it, but I do have a couple with me for when the mood fits.

I finally told them that I would get a few of them up on stage at the event to be my back-



Nathan LeGreco

up cowbell players. They were all stoked when they heard that, and they waited for their time. One of the guys also mentioned that he played bass to Doug and asked if he could play a song as well. Doug got him set up on bass during the last celebration on Saturday night, and I told the other guys that during the second song it would be their moment of fame on stage. I announced from stage that there was a musical complaint of not enough cowbell and invited the guys up. They played along with me and had a great time. They told me later that it was one of their favorite memories of the weekend. All it takes is a little cowbell and you can give someone a memory they won't forget.

Feeding off this same idea, Jeremy and Paul from 100 White Flags came up during our last song of the event and started playing cowbell, then got a few kids up on stage and got them playing. Next thing I know Jeremy starts grabbing all of my drum sticks and begins to take every part of my drum set that isn't bolted on and a few that were to get more kids up on stage. By the end of the song I have no cymbals left but there is a hand full of kids up on stage playing along with us having a great time. It shows that you don't have to be a great musician to play on a stage in front of hundreds of people - all you need is a cowbell.

Date: 1/26/2008

Submitted by: J.D. Sandifer

Journal Entry:

So today I'm going to depart a little from my typical journal fare. I usually write about cool things that happen or things that I've learned at this place or that, but today I'm not going to do that. Today's journal is about God. That's not to say that I don't usually talk about God, but today is more about God and what he's doing with our team.



J.D. Sandifer

When I joined team again this year, I knew God would be watching over me and guiding me, but I didn't necessarily expect to see it in obvious ways. I expected to be able to look back on my year at the end and see how He had worked in my life and developed me into more of the person he wanted me to be.

Surprise! God's been a lot more active in my life and the life of our team than I expected. He's been working in various obvious ways, too. He's helped us to work through misunderstandings that I thought wouldn't easily be worked through. He's helped us be honest with each other even when we have tough things to talk about. And he's allowed us to be real, open and honest with how we feel, even when things aren't going so well. In short, it's easy to see God working in our team.

So thank you God, for our team. Thank you, God, for helping us to understand each other more and more. And thank you for giving us the skills and talents that allow us all to do what we do each day. Let it always be to your glory. Amen.

Date: 3/12/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Selbo

Journal Entry:

During a recent XP program, I was approached by a five-year-old girl named Rihannon. She was an adorable, outgoing, blond-haired blue-eyed little girl. Our XP includes a series of skits about a race in which the three competitors that are focused on have different ways of trying to win, such as relying on their own physical strength, using various material things, or following Christ. At the end of the second of the three skits, my character has given up on trying to use "stuff"- a map, extra shoes, a water bottle, and a big heavy bag- to try to find a guy who she's learned can help. It was immediately after this skit that Rihannon approached me. In her cute little five-year-old voice, she very patiently explained to me that "the guy" who I was trying to find was God.



Rachel Selbo

It was so refreshing to me to know that the message of our program was communicated clearly enough for a five-year-old to understand. Sometimes during all of our travels on team, we get so caught up in all the stuff that we have to do- the music, the games, the talks- that we don't stop to think about the impact that we can have on peoples' lives, or even whether we have an impact on the people we meet. My conversation with Rihannon was a great reminder to me of that. Looking back on it now, I am reminded that we should always "fix our eyes on Jesus" (Heb. 12:2), and strive to serve Him in everything that we do and say.

Date: 4/2/2008

Submitted by: Doug Standish

Journal Entry:

So this last week our team had a Quake in Raleigh. It was so amazing, you have no idea, unless you were there then I guess you would, but ya, it was sweet,. I got to meet some really amazing kids that weekend. There were three girls I got a lot of chances to hang out with them and talk about things and it was really cool to see how strong they were in their faith. Yeah, sure they hit me in the face with a door and destroyed my mohawk multiple times but I made them do all my random and crazy games, like the first one to eat a napkin wins, so I guess it evened out. All the people at that event were amazing (holla to my dance crew, whoo!!!) but it was really cool to be able to talk to these kids about weird stuff like how I ate the rainbow in crayons last week (I get bored sometimes n the van) but also about more deeper things. I love being there for people and helping them out so it was really a blessing to be able to talk with all the kids I did at Raleigh, yay!



Doug Standish

Date: 4/8/2008

Submitted by: Doug Standish

Journal Entry:

So about a month ago we got to do our last Zone in Cincinnati. I love Zones, they are amazing. Just being in that kind of environment is so powerful. But while we were there there was a gigantor snow storm which was crazy, but we got through it. I met some amazing people at this event, I got to play Pretty, Pretty Princess with a group of high school boys (ya, that's right) and I got to play some sweet games of snow football but I also got to be able to talk to kids about their faith life and what they've been going through lately. I've been through some of the same things they went through so it was cool that we could connect that way. It's always amazing to be able to see people move on and let go of what they've been through, and that happened a lot at this event. Watching kids come together and support each other and let go of what has been chaining them down has probably been one of my favorite moments I've had all year.



Doug Standish

Date: 4/8/2008

Submitted by: Nathan LeGreco

Journal Entry:

Showing up at the right place at the right time is one of those times where you see God's hand in the works. We were doing our event down in Raleigh, NC and I got invited to dinner with a group from Cary, NC that was going to be hosting us after the event. I thought this would be a great chance to give back to those that were being so generous to us. We were all gathering and getting ready to leave and I reintroduced myself as a member of Captive Free, and I hear one of the guys say to the person standing next to him, "Hey, there you go, now you can ask him questions." At first I thought that it might be someone interested in what we do or in joining team. He looked to be older high school age - might be a good find for the years to come. Next thing I know he tells me that he has just received his letter of call to be on Captive Free next year. Kevin, from Cary, just seemed to



Nathan LeGreco

have the right personality made for teamers. He was really excited for his upcoming adventure, but had some questions. We ended up talking all through dinner. He just wanted to know what he had gotten in to and what sort of things to expect. The YE office does a great job helping you out but sometimes you just feel more comfortable getting to talk to someone face to face. It can also be easier to ask questions to the people that are currently on the road because they can tell you what things they have encountered. It is just funny that God put us together to have dinner that night. I got a chance to meet one of the new people to take over next year, and had the opportunity to help him out when he wanted to know more. One short meal together and we both felt like we had gotten a lot out of it. Sometimes you don't need long just to be in the right place at the right time.

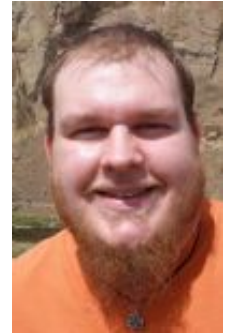
Date: 4/8/2008

Submitted by: Nathan LeGreco

Journal Entry:

Nothing like going to the park.

We just recently returned to Severna Park, MD for our third time now, and as always it was a great time. This has been our most visited group of youth this year and I feel that we have gotten to know them quite well. One of the reasons that I love the group here is that they always want to see something different. We had done the full XP program in the fall, then they saw us at the events, we came and helped out at a community wide gathering, and when we got in this time they just wanted to do more sing-a-longs and see the puppet show. They have seen different shows every time we have seen them, and have just loved the full spectrum of what a team can do. Past that, I feel like we are giving more to their youth by showing them what we are capable of. There is a difference when you don't just play the same songs that you have done before, or give the same talk that has already been said. It seems like they get to know us better with every visit. I also enjoy seeing the kids, host families, and contacts with every pass through town. It gives us a chance to follow up with people that we have shared our time with this year. We get to see how others are growing from our help, just as they get to see how we have grown from our ministry. I just feel very calm and collected when talking to people, or doing a performance because these people are no longer strangers to me they are friends and members of our team family. When you get to make connections with people like I feel we have here it just shows the many levels of how our ministry works. The easier things get, it is just like talking a walk to the park.



Nathan LeGreco

Date: 4/10/2008

Submitted by: Nathan LeGreco

Journal Entry:

Everyone likes to be a kid every now and then. We did a program in Laurel, MD and when we talked to the contact we wanted to know if there were any special songs that they would like to hear. They let us know that they wanted to hear the Sheep Song and the Hippo Song. They had been craving the fun sing-a-long songs and had not heard them from Captive Free in a few years. This was a little funny because it was our contact and two high school age youth, and they were extremely excited when they heard that we would do them. We went to sing a few songs for the youth choir before the family night program and again we asked for requests. Once again we had requests for the sheep and hippo song, and we said that we were doing them in our full program. Towards the end of our program we set up to do the sheep song, a puppet show, and then the hippo song. It was kind of our mini block for kid time. This ended up being one of the most active times of the whole program by both young and old. We had everyone from little kids up to their parents singing "I just wanna be a sheep, baa baa baa baa," and just loving it. The puppets went great and then the Hippo Song. We invited some of the youth up to do the actions with us and they were having such a good time I almost couldn't help but laugh through the whole song. The energy that was going on in the room was such a great feeling. It seemed like everyone went back to their preschool days and just left their reservations at the door. It just goes to show that sometimes everyone wants and needs to act like a kid. The spirit moves you in fun ways when you just let it



Nathan LeGreco

lead you.

Date: 4/11/2008

Submitted by: J.D. Sandifer

Journal Entry:

I know I work for a Christian music ministry, but sometimes I don't always expect God to work in the little things. Like I know that He's always watching over us and taking care of us, but sometimes I just don't think about how much He works in little ways.

Last week that changed.

I don't remember what day it was, but we were doing our program and I was going to do my sharing. This sharing is one that I had done once before, but I was still working on ironing out the kinks and making it clear so that people could really understand it.

As I was thinking through what I was going to say, I was pretty nervous. I think of myself as a decent public speaker, but that really depends on me feeling confident in what I'm saying. That day I wasn't feeling like my sharing was ready or I wasn't prepared or something like that. I just wasn't sure how things were going to go.

Despite that, I went ahead and got up there and started my sharing. As I was talking, I found myself adding in new thoughts that appeared to make my story clearer to the people listening. It also seemed like I was really able to show everyone just how funny my story really was. They were understanding it and laughing at it and I just felt like I was connecting with the people listening to me.

It wasn't till afterwards that I realized that God must have been there. I had never thought of some of the things I said or gestures I used until that night and I think God was responsible for that extra bit of inspiration.

It's funny that despite being in a ministry position I still need God to remind me of how much he can do, even in the little things.

Thank God!



J.D. Sandifer

Date: 6/10/2008

Submitted by: J.D. Sandifer

Journal Entry:

You would not believe who I met the other day... Peter Parker.

Ok, it was just a kid pretending to be Peter Parker, but he was still pretty cool. It was funny because this young guy didn't say much. In fact, he didn't say anything but to tell me how "silly" I was.

You see, this young guy got the chance to attend one of our family night programs. During that program, I told a story about me sailing up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan off of Lake Huron. I was up there with a friend sailing on a bay when things got a little stormier than we were ready for. We headed back for the dock, but I lost the rudder off of my sailboat and got stuck out there.

Thankfully, with a little prayer and a little help from some friendly motor boaters I did manage to get back safely. Apparently this was not enough to keep the young boy from thinking I was silly.

As I got to talk with him more I learned that calling me silly was not as straightforward as it sounded. It turned out it was a much more endearing phrase than I might have normally thought.



J.D. Sandifer

In fact, if he hadn't liked my story he might not have said anything.

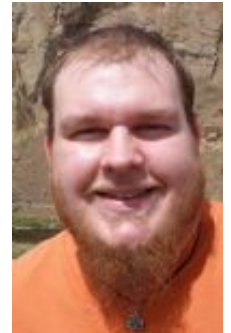
It's amazing how much kids can say with very simple words. It is things like this that I'm learning on team that make me love what I'm doing. God can speak to me through the simplest things and I love the chance to touch lives in simple ways - especially lives of kids like Peter Parker.

Date: 6/14/2008

Submitted by: Nathan LeGreco

Journal Entry:

We traveled through Fort Wayne, IN while we were heading back out from VBS training, and I got to stay with Sarah who is an alumna from a few years back. I always enjoy the chance to talk to past teamers, sharing stories, picking up tips, and getting the insight to what might come next. They always seem to understand what is going on and know how you feel. I had a great time staying up with her talking about our faith journeys. She shared with me what she has been doing since team, most of which centers around college. She let me know how she started out down one path and that God kept putting people in her life that made her look to becoming a pastor. This is the same path I am walking, so it's nice to hear the story of those that are a few steps further down the road. It's funny how we always ask for signs, and want to hear God but sometimes we don't pick up on him being there. We both talked about how it took us a while to finally understand that God was calling us. For me I kept getting the same answer to a prayer, for her she had multiple people tell her that she should look into it. She said that it wasn't what she wanted until enough people convinced her to think it over and hasn't turned back yet. We talked about money and scholarships, paying for school can be such a worry, she told me how it was holding her back from wanting to continue and how when hope was down she received a scholarship to pay for all of her seminary. She hadn't even applied for it yet she was going to and the people in the office put her name in without having the paperwork done. She received a call from the committee and they wanted to help her. Hearing her story helped to strengthen me and give me the faith to know that what is needed will be provided when it is needed. There is such a great support system that God has created and it amazes me how we find the right ones to be there when we need it.



Nathan LeGreco

Date: 6/14/2008

Submitted by: Nathan LeGreco

Journal Entry:

We have finished our first VBS in Lordstown, OH and I had the privilege to stay with the Hall family. I have always loved history, learning about old ways, seeing how things have changed, and so forth. Ken Hall was my host dad and it was a good match for me. For many years he was a history teacher, and has been a living history reenactor covering hundreds of years of world history. It was such a joy to talk to him about anything because he knew the little facts that help to make a story become real. Starting from the telling about the family history of the 154 year old farm house we stayed in, all through the events that he was planning to do this summer. He had a passion for sharing history which was something that I grew up with because my father was the same kind of person. It is a certain kind of person that takes the time in their life to learn the truth to the history that is becoming lost, and they will tell everything they know to try and keep that history alive. It was a treat to look through his uniforms from the 18 hundreds and seeing his weapons and how things were made better and more use full through the years. Ken was also a horse rider and did cavalry shows for most of his reenactments. Trying to find historically correct pieces became hard so he learned the art of leather work and started making his own pieces. Now he runs a small business out of his home and makes historically correct leather work for people world wide. He was also kind enough to take us to see his friend and teacher Ely who is a 70 some year old Amish man. Ely was the same way as Ken and loved to share the history that he knew. He gave us a small lesson in the ways of the Amish and answered any questions we had. I feel like I learned so much in my week in Lordstown and will remember the people that helped make that happen.



Nathan LeGreco

Date: 6/18/2008
Submitted by: J.D. Sandifer
Journal Entry:

Last summer I got the chance to join a team for just the summer. I got to experience the Vacation Bible School (VBS) season in Minnesota, Illinois, South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana on a team called Lifeline.

Because of that, this VBS season is a very special time of the year for me. I get to see all of the familiar things that go along with VBS. Things like sanctuaries filled with kids, group after group of kids coming to their music sessions and lots of sing along songs.

I love to see the kids getting involved in the music, games, crafts and snacks and through it all learn about Jesus and how we can live for Him. Sometimes things seem cheesy or even downright silly, but I've come to accept that anything that helps kids to learn about God is meaningful and totally worth it.

It's with that perspective that I've been able to approach this year's VBS season. It's been really great to see all of the kids getting involved. At one church, everyone got blue VBS shirts so the sanctuary was filled day after day with a blue mass of kids singing songs about God. It's one of the best sights from that VBS that I got to witness.

Sometimes, I'll have to admit, it can get really tiring. Doing sing along songs day after day for the same kids or running around in the sun for all five groups of kids at games without a lot of time to get re-hydrated can start to wear on me. But then I remind myself why I'm doing all of this. It's for God. It's to help kids to know Him better and know how to live for Him. And the Bible says that anything we do for the least of these we do for Jesus. That's got to be one of the best reasons in the world!

So even though it can be tiring, it's worth it in my book.



J.D. Sandifer

Date: 6/18/2008
Submitted by: J.D. Sandifer
Journal Entry:

As I mentioned in my last journal, I've been on a team before during the summer. One of the things I love about summer and being a part of Vacation Bible Schools is the kids that I meet. There are the shy preschoolers, the excited kids in the lower grades and then the more laid back middle school teens. Each group of kids is composed of different individuals with different personalities.

Last summer I met a young girl who was definitely one of the shy types. She came to our music sessions and always kept to herself and didn't sing much. Several times I went down and sang next to her and encouraged her to do the motions we were learning. Despite all of this encouragement, she didn't seem to respond much. She seemed to stay just as shy and reserved as she had before.

It wasn't until the last day of VBS that I realized the impact I had had on her. After the final closing ceremonies the girl's mother came with her back to me at the sound board. The girl had come back to give me a hug! This girl who I thought was not comfortable and not enjoying the music sessions really had appreciated my encouragement. With a simple hug she communicated so much to me about how loved she had felt.

It's still amazing to me how much simple things like that can mean. It was one simple hug, but it really told me about the impact that I was having. It reminded me about why I do what I do.



J.D. Sandifer

Thinking back to that time makes me really excited as I look forward to the rest of our **VBS** season this year. I can't wait to be able to touch the lives of kids – even some who I may never know that I touched. God uses what I do in ways that I may never see, but I love the times He lets me see exactly what He can accomplish with my faithfulness.
