

Reflection Paper for Cairo Mission Trip 2005

For me, this mission trip started much earlier for me since I sprained my ankle the day before. It was depressing to think that there is a chance I might not be able to go at all. However my strong will and Mrs. Plutchar's encouragement gave me the strength I needed to crutch myself to the church the next day. My handicap made me feel insecure at first, but people in my van made me feel like I belong. The long trip which consisted of bathroom breaks, car games, food and listening to various kinds of C.D.s was a great way to get to know people I haven't met before.

The instant we arrived in Cairo, IL I felt a deep sympathy to those who live there, just seeing the environment that they live in. However, it's a great feeling to know that I, along with other people will be helping them. The first day when we met with our small groups is also the day when the whole group prayed for my ankle to heal faster. Sure enough I didn't need to use my crutches the rest of the trip. This is something to thank god for and a miracle that I am grateful to get.

Working at the sites was not the easiest task. It involved 5 hours under the sun scraping paint off a much worn out house. Even though it seemed an endless task to work on, my fellow workers made the work easier with a few jokes and stories to entertain us with. However, this is not the end of the day's activities. The trip to the ice cream shop and the scavenger hunt was the features of the mission trip that I enjoyed the best. The sunset was quite exhilarating especially when it was reflected by the river. It's just one of the things I'm grateful of having during this mission trip. The last day of the work sites is something that I thought special. Armed with water guns and war paint, we

ambushed the other sites and ending our work with a big laugh. But this end is just the beginning to a new adventure.

Working with the children of the community was indeed a great experience to have. I helped entertain the toddlers with their art works, and gave them cross beads that I made myself. It was a great feeling to have a connection with these kids that I have never met before. Making them laugh and seeing their faces after I hand them the bead necklaces just made my day.

When the last day came, I was heart broken. That means that I might not be able to see these people again. It was something that I came to love during the week that I stayed in Cairo. I never realized how much I learned as a person and as a catholic, until that day. It really showed me how a week of time outside my comfort zone can change so much in my life. This experience is something in my life that I will remember forever. Indeed, god really did take me to a journey not only physically, but also spiritually.

Cairo!

Wow! Cairo....this was my first mission trip, and I loved it! It was one of the best experiences that I have ever had in my life. From being in "The Van Dango" driving down with Seatbelt Shane, Tess the Best, Steve Urwin, Dung, Mr. P., Aunt Kerry and a lot of others to being in Kids Club with all these extraordinarily amazing kids. There were about 90 kids, all coming because they wanted to learn about the Lord! The kids had so much spirit, and always had a smile on their face. It didn't matter what they had, where they lived, who they were with, they always put a smile on their face and thanked the Lord for everything that He had given them. There was especially one child that I don't think that I can ever forget. Her name was Cassie. She was an extremely soft-spoken, shy, amazing little girl, and she has changed my perspective on life. The first day she didn't really go up to anyone, and anyone that approached her she would back up from. If they asked her a question she would either give them this shrug <sup>and</sup> look down at her Spongebob flip-flops or give them an amazing smile. I spent the whole day with her trying to get her to respond to at least one of my questions, but I didn't really get any kind of answer out of her. The next day I was waiting at the door with my friend Rich for all the kids arriving, and I couldn't wait for Cassie to come through the door. All the sudden I got this amazing hug from her that I never expected! I looked down at her and asked her "How are you Cas?" I didn't expect a response until I heard her say, "Fine." It was a really soft fine, but she still said it! That lit up my day...now I was ready to give neck rides, hugs, and play with all the kids. We later went outside to play a water game, and me and a couple of other

girls and guys got extremely soaked by one and other so Ty, one of the leaders told us to stay outside and dry off while the kids went on to prayer. After we were dry Ty asked us to get the snack ready for the kids. I never realized that this would be the last snack that I would be giving them. When Cassie came out from prayer she stood by me until all the kids got their Popsicles and then she asked for hers. She hugged me so tight and said "Thank You!" I walked her to her ride, not really knowing that that was going to be the last time I saw her. It suddenly struck me when my friend Elise and I were sitting on the bleachers in the gym, and she said "I can't believe I got so attached to the kids in two days, and now I'm not going to see them anymore." As soon as I heard that I started crying! I never thought that I would cry over someone that I only knew for two days. Even though Cassie was only five years old she is one of my hero's in life. One other thing that made Cairo what it was, was when the kids of Cairo prayed. All day they would be running around, yelling, and playing until they got to prayer. They sat down, put their hands together, and stopped talking. They had so much spirit for the Lord, and thanked Him for the littlest things in life. At the end they would have stepping rhythm dances to different bible passages, and I was amazed at how well they did them. They had everything memorized, and their expressions were amazing. You saw how much fun they had doing them, and how much they believed in what they were singing and dancing to. I looked around at all the wonderful kids when they were praying, singing, step rhythm dancing, and I wish that I had prayed like them when I was a little girl.

Cairo also wouldn't have been the same without the worksite part of the trip.

My group included Aunt Kerry's small group and Mr. Rubino's small group. We all had so much fun together! We worked like everyone else except we made it fun for everyone. (Not saying that other worksite groups didn't have fun because I know they did.) We all shared different stories from our past, both funny and sad. We learned things about each other that I never thought would happen to someone. We were all filled with laughter as we were scraping the house. It's like all our troubles were gone for a while, and that feeling was so uplifting and amazing! It's like we were birds flying through the clouds with no worries about anything in life. The first day ~~we~~ at our worksite we didn't really talk to the family as much as we hoped, but we did meet the family's daughter, granddaughter, and humongous dog. The next day we met the owner of the house. Mr. Rubino, Aunt Kerry, and I got into a long deep conversation with her. We soon found out that she and her husband had lived in Cairo all their lives, and had three children. When she was little she had lived in a small two-bedroom house on the other side of town with three siblings and her parents. Then, when she had gotten married her husband moved in with them, and soon they had started their own family. So they were looking for houses like the one that she had lived in when she was a little girl. That's when she said "And this is the house we've been living in ever since!" You could see that she had so much passion and love for her little town. She soon said, "I'm never going to move out of here! I love this small town way too much. Even though it is a poor town there's no way anyone can get me out of my hometown, Cairo."

When I was in Cairo I never really realized how close you could get to someone. If it's to the people your helping out by scraping their house, to the kids that come to kids club each and every day, or even the people that came o the trip with you. I have learned so much from my first and defiantly not last mission trip. I've learned how to become closer to the Lord and especially to the people that came on the trip with me! I honestly thought that I would come out of this trip with just a couple of friends, but I came out of the trip with fifty friends, four of which are now my absolute best friends that I can rely on for anything, one hero that will stay with me forever, a much closer relationship with the Lord, and a much closer relationship with my sister. This trip was a blessing from the Lord, and I thank Him everyday for it!

By: Elizabeth Niemczyk

A once a year trip...A once in a lifetime experience

Rich Borucke

Why would 42 high school teenagers living in the suburbs want to go to a community in poverty? Why would they want to work and sweat in their time of relaxation? Why would adults want to take off of work and chaperone 42 teenagers who want to go to a community living in poverty? Why would living in 100-degree heat for 5 days appeal to anyone? Why would anyone risk living in a place where vehicles are broken into? Why go 400 miles when the movie theatre is a few blocks away? In the words of Robert Kennedy, 'You see things and say, "Why?" But I see things and say, "Why not?"'

*Teach- to show by example or experience.* For the first two days of the mission trip, my group was in charge of the crafts section of kids club, a place where the local children can spend the day and have fun. Each day we would put on a skit and show the kids how Jesus led his life.

*Learn- to gain knowledge or skill through study or experience.* Those same kids in kids club taught us how God's love is shown through the little things in life. To see a six-year-old hold the door open for another child makes you appreciate the simple things in life.

*Sign- something that suggests a fact, quality, or condition not immediately evident; an indication.* How much fun could bowling be on a mission trip? Well, when Jesus decides to pop in to fix you lane, you realize you are part of a bigger plan.

*Observe- to perceive, notice, or watch attentively.* Like when you're on top of the world right next to Jesus with those you love looking out at the world He has created.

*Labor- An exertion of physical or mental effort; work.* The kind that is spent outside all day in the heat scraping multiple layers of paint off of a house.

*Humor- The quality of being comical or funny.* Like when you realize the Deacon leading the trip looks way too dry and needs to cool off.

*Revenge- What was on Deacon Ed's mind after a pail of water just flew out of the air and landed right onto his head.*

*Calm- A condition of tranquility or peace; quiet.* The time we settled down every night and reflected about the day was a time of peace and serenity.

*Love- Intense affection and warm feeling for another.* We all fell in love on our trip...with the people, with each other, with Cairo.

*Mission- An assignment that a person or group of persons is sent to carry out; a task.* We all have missions in life, each one different in one way or another. The beauty, however, is when we can share our mission with those around us, inspiring both hope and faith and connecting us from around the corner, to around the world.



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CAIRO MISSION TRIP 2005 WAS AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY; A JOURNEY THAT I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER. I REALLY WASN'T SURE WHAT TO EXPECT, ESPECIALLY BEING A CHAPERONE. IT'S LIKE THE FIRST TIME I TAUGHT CCD, A LITTLE APREHENSIVE; BUT NOW MANY CCD YEARS LATER IT'S A GREAT EXPERIENCE. ONCE IT'S IN YOUR HEART & BLOOD, YOU WANT TO DO IT AGAIN & AGAIN & THAT'S HOW I FEEL ABOUT MISSION TRIPS.

I AM GOING TO SUMMARIZE MY JOURNEY LIKE DAVID LETTERMAN.....  
SO, THE TOP 10 REASONS TO GO ON A MISSION TRIP.....

#10 - THE JOURNEY BEGAN & ENDED WITH A LONG DRIVE IN A 15 PASSENGER VAN. THE DRIVE WENT BY QUICKLY AS I LISTENED TO THE JOY & LOVE IN THE TEENS LAUGHTER, THEIR CONVERSATION & IN THEIR SINGING.

#9 - WORKING WITH & PRAYING WITH THE EXTREMELY DEDICATED PEOPLE OF YOUTHWORKS, ESPECIALLY TY AND ANDY.

#8 - DAILY PRAYING, SINGING & PRAISING GOD WITH ALL THE TEENS & ADULT LEADERS WAS VERY INSPIRING & EMOTIONAL. WORKING WITH ALL THE ADULT LEADERS WAS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE.

#7 - WORKING ALL DAY ON THE PEOPLE OF CAIRO'S HOMES AND SEEING THE JOY IN EVERYBODY'S FACES, NO MATTER HOW HARD OR HOT IT WAS & NO MATTER HOW TIRED WE GOT. I COULD SEE THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS WORKING WITH US TOO.

#6 - TAKING TIME OUT AND TALKING TO THE PEOPLE OF CAIRO WAS INCREDIBLE. JUST LISTENING TO ALL THEIR STORIES & LIFE EXPERIENCES WAS TRULY AMAZING & REALIZING THAT WE ALL HAVE SO MUCH & CAN HAPPILY LIVE WITHOUT AS THEY DO.

#5 - SEEING ALL OF OUR TEENS PLAYING WITH ALL THE CHILDREN OF CAIRO WAS REALLY AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE THEY PLAYED GAMES WITH THEM, GAVE MILLIONS OF HORSEBACK RIDES, DID CRAFTS, SANG WITH & JUST TALKED TO & LISTENED TO THE CHILDREN. THEY DID THIS NO MATTER HOW TIRED THEY WERE OR HOW EXTREMELY HOT IT WAS. TRULY THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS THERE.

#4 - MAKING MEALS & FEEDING THE PEOPLE OF CAIRO WHO CAME TO OUR SITE. FOR MANY OF THEM THIS WAS THEIR MAIN MEAL OF THE DAY. THEY WERE ALL VERY APPRECIATIVE & WE WERE ALSO BECAUSE THIS GAVE ALL OF US A GREAT FEELING INSIDE.

#3 - EXPERINCING A SOUTHERN-GOSPEL CHURCH SERVICE WAS INCREDIBLE. THE NON-STOP SINGING, DANCING, CLAPPING & PRAYING WAS UNFORGETTABLE. IT WAS A GREAT CARDIOVASCULAR WORKOUT NOT SEEN AT ST. JULIE'S CHURCH. NOW I KNOW WHY THEY HAVE HANDHELD FANS IN CHURCH.

#2 - SEEING JESUS IN EVERYBODY'S FACE

#1 - GETTING CLOSER TO GOD; MORE THAN I HAVE IN A LONG TIME. TRULY KNOWING GOD LOVES US ALL & WILL BE WITH US FOREVER.

LARRY FRAZZINI

## **Meredith's Reflection; Yes, the anticipation can be over now...**

Why have I not written my Reflection for Cairo? Well, I can sit here and write thousands of reasons like how I'm in college now; I have no time; It always just seems to slip my mind; Wait, I haven't written one yet? But, in reality, I keep putting it off because I don't want to grip with the reality that Cairo was last mission trip as a youth participant. Going away to school, I almost feel as though I am not part of the greatness that is this group because I am so far. Cairo is my last big experience with TNT, and it was truly my greatest.

Mission trips can never be fully explained unless you have experienced it yourself. Every mission trip affects you in a different way, but they all allow feeling the same things, just in a different light. You are put into an environment that you are not used to and you learn so many things. You are brought out of your comfort level, and it is the one time in the year that you can be open to things you would never see or do back home. From my experiences, I never would be able to build a home, paint a whole house, meet so many extraordinary people, and make a child smile every day, even if it were for only a short time. I am able to take a leadership role I feel like I could never accomplish being an ordinary teen. Cairo was my second mission trip, and for the most part, I expected it to be like North Carolina the previous years before, but it totally superseded that trip. I was apprehensive that first year, not really knowing if I accomplished anything to help those in need, when in reality, I did so much more than that.

Never in my life did I ever get the strong feeling when I did something that this is what God wanted me to do. Sure I had feelings before that I knew God was happy with me doing, but never before in my life did I think He put me there for a specific reason. Like a typical teenager, I kept putting off signing up for Cairo but I thought there would be spots open by the time it came around, I mean, it was just in Cairo, Illinois, right? How many people wanted to go to that? Turns out it was a lot. If I had turned in my papers when I wanted to go I would have been put on a waiting list, furthermore, my family fell into some financial troubles that only entitled me to choose between one of the two summer trips: Cairo or Breakaway. Since I was a Senior Planner for Breakaway, my decision was made. I acted like I didn't care at first, but deep down inside something felt horribly wrong and I just knew in my heart that I HAD to go to Cairo. A spot opened up on the list as I was able to fill it with no charge for the trip. I thought it was fate, until my mother disagreed because "we aren't charity cases". I was torn apart. But with some of the best friends' I could ever have help and talking with Mr. and Mrs. P, my parents were convinced that there was something about this trip that was drawing me to it.

Cairo was like no place I have ever been before in my life. The poverty level for children alone there is over 95% and you could tell by just looking around. It wasn't until I was in Cairo that I truly realized what it was like to appreciate every little thing you have. Cairo was truly a week-long, Christ-centered, life-changing youth mission trip in every essence of the phrase. We got to work with the children at least two to three days a week and we completely fell in love with them. We made them a free meal and snack, played games that kept them active and interactive with the other children, performed plays to some Bible stories, and even let them make up their own step routines to

memorize their favorite Bible verses. The exhaustion from the heat, the tired legs from running, and the aching backs from all the piggy-back rides was more than worth the smiles on the children faces when they saw you the next day. While in Cairo, I was able to work on homes for people in the neighborhood who could either not do it on their own, or who did not have the finances to do so. It didn't seem as though we were doing much by just washing, scraping, painting and landscaping, but it meant so much more to the owners. Many of them couldn't stand to sit around doing nothing, giving a hand when it came to tasks one person alone couldn't accomplish, or supplying us with constant beverages and even occasionally ice cream on one hundred and five degree days. They themselves probably didn't have air conditioning or couldn't even afford a delicious treat like that for themselves at that time, and it was such an honor to receive such gratitude from them.

The thing that struck me the most about Cairo was the fact that the vast majority of the people and children I met had nothing, and I have never seen happier people in my life. The whole time I was there, I was able to step back and see how truly blessed I am to have what I have Back at home, I felt awkward and ashamed at times. Because my house wasn't huge like other peoples and I didn't have the best of everything. But in Cairo, none of that mattered. While you are on mission trips you have none of the luxuries that you have back at home; a nice warm bed (a sleeping bag is now the main choice), air conditioning, even sometimes a shower. And I felt ashamed for it. In Cairo, it was who you were on the inside that was the most important thing. You're put into a world that children lead every day of their lives. Many of the children in Cairo didn't have a nice home or a warm bed to come home to. They came home to poverty and sometimes even abuse. For many of the children we worked with, the meal they ate with us was the only meal they ate all day.

Not only did I get to grow close with the people of Cairo, but I don't think I have ever been able to connect with everyone of this trip as well as I did, especially my work site/small group. We did so many activities on this trip that brought us together as a team. Whether it was themed bowling with some the best Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles I have ever seen, a walk to the Family Dollar to purchase obnoxious toys that will probably never grow old, a stop at the cheapest and best ice cream stand in all the U.S. and the best 25 cent pop machines that are nearly empty of orange and grape soda from us drinking so much of it. Not only was it amazing to get along so well with everyone, but as well as to have one night that I have never felt closer to God in my entire life. We were asked to write down on a slip of paper all the things we wanted to finally get over and forgive/forget. This was very difficult for me and it took every ounce of my being to pin that paper onto that cross and accept a simple piece of yarn to tie on my hand or ankle to remind me what I promised God. I look at that string every day and I know He loves me regardless if I'm down in the dumps on some days and I let those things take toll on me.

I never thought that one week full of hardcore sweat, some blood, and many tears would have such an effect on me. I've never felt more secure about myself in my whole life. Many of my friends don't understand what it's like to be on mission trips and a lot of them just ask me why I look forward to going through that every summer in a new setting probably more poverty stricken than the last. But like I said before, it's something that just can't be explained, but you can feel the effect it takes on who you are. I no longer have any doubts about the person I am thanks to these trips. I know what it's like to live

in a world of loving whatever you have with all your heart, because when it's the best you can get, no one can take it away from you.

When everything inside me  
Looks like everything I hate  
You are the hope I have for change  
You are the only chance I'll take

And I'm on fire when You're near me  
I'm on fire when You speak  
I'm on fire burning out these mysteries

I don't think it can be explained how this trip made me feel better than that. Thank You. I love you all. God Bless!

## Cairo mission trip

When I woke up that morning to get ready to leave for Cairo I was in the worst mood. All I was thinking about is how I'm going to miss out a week with my friends. When I got to church I saw how everyone was happy and glad to see each other. Most of these people I didn't know but I have seen before. With me in my mood I decided I didn't want to meet any new people I just wanted to go home and be with my friends.

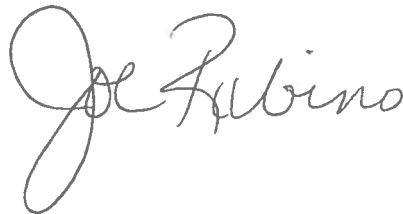
It gets a little boring when you're just standing around isolating your self from everyone else. I decided to finally talk to someone once we were loading the cars. We told each other funny stories. I so ended up talking with the rest of the people in my van. Sooner or later I was out of my mood and I was enjoying my car ride to southern Illinois.

As the week went by I realized how I can't be so attached to my friends, and that there not the only ones I can have fun with.

As I was up on a ladder painting our house at our site, I actually thought about what I'm doing for the family. Adam and I helped out a man bring dryers stoves and other things one man couldn't do alone into a shed. I really felt like I was making a difference in the community. When the kids clanged to all of us at the daycare, it was there way of showing how much they loved us playing with them, feeding them, teaching them, and singing with them.

I realized how much we have back in Chicago. We have people who will paint our houses. We have money to provide every need we need. These people of Cairo had to send their kids to a free daycare center so they can work all day to pay for food and a house so their their kids don't get into bad activities in the neighborhoods.

I know now how good I have it, and how other people wish they had what we had back in Chicago.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Rubino". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and "R".

## Cairo 2005 Reflection

After school activities, football games, movies, bowling, roller rinks, malls, chatting online, watch hundreds of channels on TV, talking for hours on the phone, and going on a ride with your friends, eating at a nearby restaurant, are all everyday activities we can participate in if we choose to. And yet we all sit at home complaining about being bored, having nothing to do, and no where to go to our parents, who in turn just give us this list of things that we could do, truly caring about what we do.

Imagine however, having very few after school activities, if any at all, no football games to see, movies are expensive and hard to come by, and computers, TVs, radios, are scarce, because they are not sold, and cost too much for your family. Imagine having literally nothing to do but go to a nearby park or if you are lucky, to the dollar store or ice-cream stand. For the smaller children, a daycare center until 3 is provided however, that is only in the summer. Cairo, a once prosperous and beautiful city is now in ruins, with vacant buildings ready to fall over with a big wind, small houses with old run down appearances, no air-conditioning, and people dressed in clothes that appear to be ancient.

What I experienced in Cairo can not be expressed in words, but only to experience it can you fully understand what a mission trip actually is. I decided, before I got there, that I would be helping out many people, a very rewarding feeling I was sure. Helping others. That is what I thought that I would be doing. How wrong I was. Do not get me wrong, we helped so many people, but while reflecting on the journey I had in Cairo, I realized how much more the people of Cairo have helped me.

During the first day at Cairo I realized a few major things.

1. No air-conditioning and it was very hot and humid
2. The food was going to be bad
3. I will not be sleeping... well not very much.

These few things however, did not affect my week at all, because while I was there, those things didn't matter. The first and second day at Cairo, my small group worked with the kids of Cairo. Both days I got close to a 6 year old girl who has taught me so much through only those few days. I learned how much faith someone at such a small age can have. I realized how much faith and hope they have in Christ. I can never imagine having to pray every night for food the next day, and thanking god for having at least 1 good meal that day. This is what they do however. They are so grateful and so prayerful every single day.

## Cairo Reflection

Our mission trip to Cairo was my first Mission trip experience with TNT, and honestly although I had no idea what to expect, I felt that I was called to go. From the start I decided to hold a positive attitude through out the trip no matter what; however, once we arrived, I found it wasn't that hard. You go into thinking "I'm going to help these people", but you come out saying , "They've helped me"

Maybe it was because there, in Cairo, isolated from most of my petty distractions, I saw the power of God, faith, hope, and love, ----- all of the things that Christianity is based around. In kids club, I saw the very aspect of my faith and what it means to be a servant in every Childs loving pair of eyes. Most of the young kids we worked with came from broken homes and trouble lives, but for a couple of hours "kids club" offered the kids and parents a safe place where kids could be, well kids. Before Cairo, I never would have realized the power of something as simple as a piggy-back ride or playing catch with an invisible ball. You really feel a sense of accomplishment every time you where able to bring out a smile.

As demanding as kids club was mentally, working group was physically. But it wasn't till this very moment that I realized just how hard it must have been. Working outside in the 98 plus heat on a roof didn't faze me, and I honestly could have done the entire week. I've thought about why what was a lot since those days in June and the only explanation I have is this: When people count on you to help them with their physical and emotional needs, everything is more intense, because it's another set of expectations you have to live up to, and through the power of the holy spirit I was granted the strength and energy to do so. And that right there, tells me that Cairo help me grow up a little bit.

I know I like many other that went on this trip, prayed before we left that God would changes us, and work through us, and he certainly did.

ADAM MIRANDA



## Reflection of Cairo Trip 2005

Cairo was the 1<sup>st</sup> TNT trip I ever attended and I can tell you all that from this trip I not only helped the poor and needy, but I also helped myself in many ways. The way I see it is that usually when you go out to do good deeds for the poor you get much more out of it then they do. From this trip I was amazed at all the houses that were torn down and deserted with no one around to help these poor people. I guess in a way it was very strange for me because I was used to pretty much everything that you can have. I never really realized before this trip how much I really had. After seeing these houses and people with just about nothing I learned to respect the things I have.

The 1<sup>st</sup> incident that occurred that really changed the way I look at things was when I had to serve lunch for the 1<sup>st</sup> time pretty much in my whole life. I never really knew how much work goes into preparing food even when its just a hamburger and some chips for each person. I guess that was the 1<sup>st</sup> time I really saw how much these people were in need and that's when I thought to myself, even when its just 1 lunch that were serving, we make such a difference. When I came to Cairo I thought to myself, were just 1 group or 45 or 50, and were suppose to help a whole town of poor people? But I realized that even though our numbers weren't high, we impacted everyone's lives that lived in Cairo, and when we leave, there will be another group coming in to start where we left off, serving the people of cairo any way they can.

I came to Cairo with a mind set that we would help the people a but, not much. I left with not only the feeling that we helped al those people in need, but I also left with the memories of the children asking us to give them neck rides, hot days in the sun scraping off paint off old houses, and the looks of the children's faces when we said goodbye for the last time. I had a hard time leaving those people, but I guess in a way we gave them something that's not tangible, but a never ending feeling of love and compassion.

In conclusion I would like to say that everyone in this world has something to give someone else, wither its helping an old lady with her

groceries, or scraping paint off an old house, and I hope everyone takes advantage of that opportunity sometime or another. Thank you for taking the time to read this and thank you for this trip.

## Cairo mission trip

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Rubino". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and "R".

Three years ago, I went on my first mission trip to Cairo, IL with St. Julie's. It was a new experience for me and I wish I could remember it more than I do now. It was different and it was something I didn't think that I would ever do. It was the first year that Cairo was a location for mission, and there were many things that we had to do on the fly.

This past summer, I went to Cairo yet again. It was by far my favorite of all missions and the best experience of my life. When I first arrived it felt nostalgic, it felt so right to be there and to be serving. The moment I arrived I felt like this trip above all other trips was going to help me as a person, and I felt that I could really help someone that week. I was assigned to have Kids Club for the first two days and not even momentarily did I feel that I couldn't do it. The second that the kids started to flow in by the dozens everyone was ready to serve. No one hesitated to introduce themselves to all the kids, and all the kids were ready to play. Right away I knew that I wanted to find a little friend so that we could bond and share memories together. It didn't take much, Kayla approached me and asked me to help her to get her something to eat. It felt right when we met, she was ready to eat and have a good time all day. That day I gave countless numbers of "neck rides" to Kayla, and even more to all the other kids that were just seeking some attention. Those kids in Cairo really needed someone to help them feel that they were special and someone to praise them when they did something well. That is probably one of things that I will remember most from this trip, all the smiles they shared when they sang, the way that they prayed at the end of the day, the emotions that they were able to share with all of the members in the group, the laughter when they had arts and crafts, and the happiness of feeling water on their face when the sun was just too hot for them. Every single child in Cairo was ready to love and to be loved. That was probably one of the best things that I saw. Yes, they got into their own fights and even at 5 years old they had their own groups of friends and

ways of showing that they weren't going to befriend certain others. It was just amazing to see them all together. Together to have fun, play, sing, and learn about the Lord. Above all watching them pray was the best part of the week. They were so young and they were able to pray for each other and for their families in group. They would be loud and crazy all day long, but when they knew that it was time to pray they became silent. They were ready to pray and to share each other's love for the Lord. You could feel the presence in the room of the Lord

I then worked with my small group for the next two days on a home. We met a boy there who was only sixteen. I shouldn't call him a boy because he had already been juvenile prison, shot in the back with a gun, and fathering a baby girl. This really put life in perspective for me. I saw how naive in actuality I really was. This was something that blew me away. It just showed that this is what the real world was like. A world that I am so unbelievably lucky to be sheltered from. We painted the house to the end, but that wasn't the best part the best part it was accomplishing something and knowing how grateful that family was for it.

I don't think this trip wouldn't have been what it was if it wasn't for my small group leader that led us in all ways. He pushed me to really think about what I believed in and he really made me think why I was there.

Every year after coming home from a mission trip I have had this amazing feeling of purity, that I did something for someone that no one could take away from me. In the past I have had that feeling for only a short time, but I can honestly say that I feel that I did something more in Cairo than I have in the past. I just knew I did something right.

"And every long lost dream led me to where you are, others who broke my heart, they were like northern stars, pointing me on my way into your loving arms, this much I know is true... that God bless the broken road that led me straight to you."

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joey Niemczyk". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned at the bottom right of the page.

This message has been scanned for known viruses.

**From:** Kerry Wetzel  
**To:** Smcp6@aol.com  
**Subject:** Cairo reflection  
**Date:** Sat, 17 Sep 2005 19:41:37 +0000

Hi Mrs. P!!!!

I am SOOOOO sorry that it took me SOOOO long to write this. I really wanted to have it done sooner, but that just didn't seem to happen. I hope everything with you is going well...I miss you! I won't be able to attend the reunion and that makes me sad, but hopefully you can still put my reflection as part of everyone else's and if you could save a copy for me that would be GREAT! Thank you Mrs. P! You're the best!

Kerry

Sitting here right now thinking back on my trip to Cairo I find myself trying not to cry. I don't know how I am going to be able to write how this mission trip affected me, if you were there you understand, if not I only pray that some day you will also be able to experience something like this. There is one word that pops into my head when I think of Cairo and that is *GLORIOUS!* Now many of you know I used that word now stop basically the whole trip, whether it be during late night adventures in the girls room, explaining Curse's craziness, tell how I was feeling, or just about anything else, but honestly that one word tells so much. It tells of all the memories that I hold deep in my heart. It tells of the bonds that were made. It tells of the laughter and tears that were shared. It tells it all. Cairo was my last mission trip with TNT, so everything there was almost surreal to me. I couldn't seem to gasp the fact that this was my last mission trip as past of TNT. As soon as we arrived in Cairo, after an amazing van ride with the best group ever, I was ready to help. I was so excited to be there and I could already feel that this trip was going to be different than any other, and I was right.

Ever since my first mission trip to Mexico, Kids Club has been my favorite part of the whole experience, and this year wasn't any different. I was so eager for Kids Club to begin and when it did there were kids every where and the excitement ran through my body. Some were shy and sat back, while others ran from teen to teen asking for a "neck ride". All of them seemed to want attention from someone even if it was just for a few minutes and all of us teens were ready to give them some of that love and affection that they needed. One my first day at Kids Club I formed a bond with these two adorable little girls that were sisters. We spent the whole day together and I couldn't wait for one more day to spend with them, but then that didn't happen. The next day I stood by the door greeting all the kids as they came running in, but my little friends seemed nowhere to be found. I started to get sad because I never really got to say goodbye and that's when I met Lauren. Lauren was a little girl who was about 6 years old and at the time I had no one just what this one girl was going to do for me. She was sitting on the bleachers by herself, so I walked over and we started talking. Well that was the start of a bond unlike any I have ever felt. In the short time that I was able to spend with her she touched my heart in ways I never expected. She was my little buddy always by my side holding my hand, sitting in my lap, and jumping on my back. During arts and crafts that day Lauren was busy making bracelets and key chains. Each time she would finish one she would hold it up proudly with a smile beaming across her face. I sat there with her on my lap smiling and honestly loving every minute we were sharing together. After awhile Lauren suddenly turned to me and said "I'm going to make you one!" and she did. She tied it around my wrist and I continued to sit there with that smile on my face. I told her that I loved it, and I did. That simple bracelet made out of foam beads means more to me than any diamond bracelet ever will. Although I do not wear it around my wrist anymore I still have it on my keychain and every time I go to open my door I think of Lauren and it reminds me of everything she did for me. As the day grew closer to an end I held Lauren close, trying to soak up each minute with her that I could. At the end of Kids Club each day there was a time for prayer and the kids were asked to raise

their hands if they had something or someone they wanted to pray for and as Lauren sat there quietly in my lap she raised her hand. With her hand bowed in prayer and her eyes closed she asked God to watch over her family and I found myself trying not to cry. This little girl already had so much faith growing inside of her that it helped my faith to grow. I don't think she will ever understand what she did for me. I went there to help her, but she helped me in return. She showed me what life was all about and how to be truly happy. That week was probably the happiest I have ever been and I owe a lot of that to Lauren. Before I knew it our time was up, but there was still one more thing I had to do. I had to give Lauren my cross. I pulled my cross out of my bag and told Lauren to come by me as she stood in front of me I explained to her that everyone that came on the mission trip was given this cross and that we were to give it to someone who touched their hearts and impacted their lives and I wanted to give mine to her. Once I was done talking I looked Lauren in the eyes and saw them glowing and her beautiful smile was once again stretching across her face. She jumped into my arms and gave me a huge hug thanking me for the cross and telling me she would think of me every time she looked at it. It killed me when she asked if I would be back tomorrow and I had to say no...I wanted to say yes and I wish I could have, but that was all the time I was able to spend with her. I walked her to the door and gave her what I thought was going to be our last hug and began to walk away. As I did tears began to run down my face. Everything was coming to an end. That was not only my last day with Lauren, but my last Kids Club...it broke my heart. I ran to find Joey and we both sat on the ground crying...the end was coming too fast for us and we didn't know what to do. To my surprise I was actually blessed with one more night with Lauren. There was a barbeque our last night that anyone in the town could come to and Lauren was there. We spent the night laughing, talking, and hugging...it was the *glorious*.

The next two days of the mission were spent painting and fixing up a house. I had so much fun standing up there on my ladder with Amanda next to me the whole time. I'm not going to lie, we were pretty awesome hehe. The days were long and hot, but more than worth it. Lunch time was a time when all three work sites came together under a tree to eat together and share stories and laughter. We were even lucky enough to have Sarah come and play her guitar so we were able to sing those songs we all love so much. I want to say a quick thank you to Mr. P and everyone else at my work site. You all were the best group to work with and made everything so much fun. I loved it all and I can't tell you how much it meant to me to drive past our house on the last day and see all the progress we had made. It was *glorious!*

Thank you to my small group, Team Awesome. You all touched my heart and helped to make me last mission trip what it was. You all helped me make it through it and held my hand when I needed someone the most. Just thank you for supporting me and understanding me and being my friends. You guys are great and I thank God for blessing me with people like you in my life. I know you all will continue to do incredible things with your lives. Thank you again and we really were TEAM AWESOME!!

*Thank you everyone, I am beyond blessed to have you in my life and call you my friends and role models.*

This is a little something for the girls, especially Al..."Once the bacon goes to sleep the sausage starts sizzling!"

I don't want to stop writing this because when I do it will once again hit me that this is over. Just like it did the last night as I lay there crying with my best friends surrounding me. All the emotions of the trip are running through me as I write this. I am biting my lip to keep from crying and I only wish that I could go back to Cairo right now. I only pray that I will again be able to feel that feeling that I received when I came back from Cairo. Anyone who has gone on a mission trip knows this feeling I am talking about. It's one that just fills you up and leaves you longing for more. I want to feel it again; I want to feel God in my life. I want to feel alive.

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