

This is my second time on a mission trip to Cairo, Illinois. The first time was my first ever mission trip. When I was there, it was Youthworks first year also, so everything was new to the community. The first year was way different from this year for one reason: involvement with the kids. In kids' club there were over 50 kids compared with only 20 or so the first year. It was overwhelming. All of the kids were there having fun and we were there to provide the fun from the kids' perspective: "Neckrides".

For the work project my group was assigned to a house that needed to be scraped of all its paint. We did a heck of a job. We worked so hard. I was a little upset because I really didn't talk to the people that lived in the house I was working on, but I made it up by getting to know my workgroup. I was able to bond with many of the people in my small group. It was an amazing experience.

Pete Moritz

I just want to say that Cairo was amazing. It was an awesome experience. Nothing can top the fun, laughter, and faith that I gained in Cairo. I loved every activity, every kid, and every smile that I saw in Cairo. First off, I loved the kids. The energy, excitement, and joy was unbearable. The feelings that I got in Cairo was mostly from the kids.

Nothing mattered to me when I saw the kids, all that mattered to me is that the kids were having fun. The "neckrides" were awesome as well, even though that your neck felt like it was going to snap off at the end of the day. During the whole trip I got closer to everyone, and especially brod. I got so much out of Cairo, it is indescribable. The relationships of Cairo will last forever, and that is what is so great about mission trips and TNT.

Dan Cronin / Mission Trip Reflection

5 hours and 35 minutes 354 miles away lies a city in desperate need of help. Abandoned buildings fills the town and main streets. Kids with no activities run the streets day and night. You may be thinking that this is one horrible town with bad people. Not even close. We would walk to the local Ice cream parlor in our freetime and see people walking on the street. Everyone we seen would say hi and have a conversation. Everytime they said thank you for keeping our children happy and company at kids club. The week was split in two the first two days we play with the kids of the community. We played water games due to the heat and even played the 10 year olds in a game of 5 on 5 basketball. The last two days we painted a house. The owner of the house had two kids a 9 year old girl and 15 year old boy named Ricky. Ricky told us story of how the police shot him in the ribs. These story were the main reasons why I brought information back to Tinley. Ricky also told us that a year before he had his 1st child. Ricky was only 14 when he had Jasmine. The stories, worship, leaders and ourselves shared the power of God and that he truely is **EVER WHERE**.

Subj: Cairo
Date: 9/11/2005 9:16:19 P.M. US Eastern Standard Time
From:
To:

Ok.

Being the fool that I am, I expected Cairo to be an ordinary mission trip. The most bewildering thing about my foolishness is that I have had my expectations exceeded and buried on all previous trips; according to precedent, I should have expected an extraordinary trip. Such is my wisdom.

This year, I learned about pride and perfection. Essentially, I was proud of doing things perfectly, or of doing them with such efficiency that it would be hard to improve. Kids' Club challenged my sense of orderliness, patience, and humility in ways I have never been tried.

First of all, the kids were bursting with energy, but it wasn't always positive - as often as I turned my head, there was a fight about to break out, and I had to rush over and break it up. Off to the side, another child climbed the fence and started running home...about 50 feet from the playground we were at. I brought him back, and then another girl promptly ran for the fence and began climbing. This girl was more gamely, though, and simply relished the attention of someone chasing and catching her. A boy was insulted and left by himself, lost in the mess of legs scrambling and rocks flying. Twenty minutes of chasing rebounds while he shot at a basketball net made his day brighter, and a few other kids seemed to catch on to this. But try to organize them to play a game of kickball, and we had one inning played after 40 minutes of trying! Just as difficult was keeping kids without nametags in the gym, and, later, keeping kids with nametags out of the gym! This involved physically barring some kids from passing through the doorway, chasing runaways through the jungle gym and carrying them back, bartering time in front of a fan for staying put outside. A day of this will drive you crazy!

It was at the end of a day like this that I wanted to sleep, to find peace and horde it. Least of all did I want to do anyone else's work, but at my "wit's end," this is exactly what I was asked to do. No human being asked me. The question came in a whisper, and it was not a demand. I could have chosen not to. But the Whisperer asked in such a way that I knew I would grow from it, that a dozen dozen prayers would be answered by it, and that I would not be the same after it. Imagine a chore like cleaning out a cooler having the spiritual resonance of an earthquake! That is just what happened, and it taught me that my best, imperfect effort was not wasted. It is the willingness to keep giving, even when you feel there is nothing left, that God really wants.

Michael Fashingabuer

Cairo was just as amazing as my first mission trip to North Carolina. They were similar in some aspects but in other totally different. All the hard work could not compare to what each person got out of the trip. The people of Cairo showed me that love is everywhere. The struggles of poverty could be seen allover the town. The volunteer work is helping the community look better, and gives the children of Cairo a chance at success. During kids club I began to see what every day life was for the little kids. At a young age they were dealing with death and other struggles. To this day I still don't deal with what the young kid go through and I am glad that I could help them as much as I

Amy Frazzini
Mission trip to: Cairo, IL

I came into this not knowing much about the people we were going to be helping or even the people in this TNT group. At first I was very shy, but many individuals accepted me very quickly. I was in a group of all guys, but then at the last second when we got there we got another girl in our group. Mainly my small group I think really brought me out of my "shell" (Mrs. O'Donnell, Rich, Pete, Chris C., and Elizabeth). When I had become friends with more people I think it helped the experience b/c it made me feel very welcomed and just happy. We drove down there and the car ride there it was only me and Adam talking like the whole time and sometimes we would have bursts of energy from Johnny Benz, but that's about it. The first couple days I was going to be with the kids and I was very excited b/c I love little kids and I want to be a teacher for that reason. Tye had warned us about "neck rides" I didn't think they would be a big deal and they wouldn't all want neck rides, but man I was wrong, these kids have TONS of energy! I learned it's not how happy you are with things you have (wealthy wise), but how happy you are spiritually and mainly with god. I at that moment figured these kids don't need all the bets toys in the world, but yet that have very loving families (most) and have tons of friends and they don't care about all those toys, but they just love to have a good time and play with anyone who will give them neck rides! Over just two days (12 hours) with them I became VERY attached. When I had to see them go after those two days I wanted to cry and then again after the barbeque, just seeing some of them walk into a far distance alone all the way home and I will probably never see them again, except in my heart and my mind, I was heart broken. I felt I knew these kids for ten years and now I'm moving away or something. I thought the kids showed you a lot about there society, and even the older kids showed that they were very mature and didn't argue with us at all and helped us with the little ones that may have had problems. Then the next few days I was going to be going to the work sites, I was very excited b/c I thought I was going to be able to paint, until I found out our house wasn't ready to paint yet. We got there and there was a six foot dog (Atikus) there and it was SO gentle and loving, along with the family we really got to know in the house! As I said I was disappointed we didn't get to paint, but then after we started working and laughing around and having a good time while we were helping God's people I didn't care what we had to do. At this point I think I had made even more progress socially, but I don't even know how to explain it was just so much fun and it touched my heart so much that I was willing to go into this not knowing really anyone and I came out with SO MANY GREAT friends! These people may not be as wealthy as all of us in Tinley and Orland, but in many ways I would rather be living how they are. Just b/c they are so spiritually filled and I loved it! I can't even really truly explain how much this all touched my heart and how much I now look at life in a different perspective, yet it has in so many ways. I loved putting in so much work and effort, for ex. The tough work of scrapping and playing with the kids, yet I got so much out of this. I put in a lot of work (as already stated) but again, I got so much more out of it. Just thinking about next yr I can't wait till school is over to go on another one. But I didn't have to leave everything behind, like my new friends (the kids) I made and the memories and the houses and families, but I have made so many new friends (that live in Orland or Tinley) and I hang out with them so much and they are just the best group of kids I know, and I mean that! Thank you for making this all possible, I can't wait till next yr!!!

This week in Cairo, Illinois has been so much fun for me. Everyone gets along so well with each other and I met a lot of people that now I seem like I've known them forever. Even know working at the worksites were hard scraping off all that paint, you really feel good about yourself. I know I did. Helping out other people makes me feel real good and I believe I have. I had all the small group conversations, because you can just let out what you think and it feels good that someone listens. It made me feel bad when I saw old downtown Cairo. It kind of influenced me to work even harder for them. The church we went to on Tuesday was so cool. Everyone was so excited and thanking God, the entire mass. Then we all got blessed. It was funny because people were yelling and dancing and clapping the whole time. The water fight at the worksite was so much fun. Everyone got soaked, but then we went back to work. At my worksite there was an 8-month old puppy that looked like its been living forever. It was the biggest dog I've ever seen. It was also the nicest dog I've ever seen. We could pet it whenever. The kids in Cairo were so nice. I already miss them. I would definitely advise people going to Mission trips. After doing it, you feel very good in the inside.

My Reflection from the Mission Trip to Cairo Illinois

Although this was my first mission trip, it had a great effect on me. I had an awesome experience helping the kids during Kids Club, and I also liked painting a house, I never painted a house before. It really made me feel great because I knew that I made a difference in the people's lives. Whether I did something little, or something big I wanted to make a difference and I believe that I did accomplish that goal. Before we got down to Cairo I kept thinking about how I wanted to make a difference, and then after we got there I realized that it didn't matter what I did, everything that is done there makes a difference for the community of Cairo. Even though some of the kids got out of hand a little bit, I still had a lot of fun and wished that we didn't have to leave so soon. When we were leaving it seemed like we had just gotten there the day before even though we had been there for 5 days already. Since I had such an awesome time on this mission trip I am really hoping to go on the mission trip to Mexico next summer, but first I'll have to convince my parents to let me go. If we did a lot to help the community of Cairo, I couldn't even imagine what we would be doing to help the community of Juarez since they live in such a poor community. Whatever it is that they do in Juarez, I really want to go and contribute to that. I really like making a difference in people's lives; it makes me feel really good inside. That is one of the reasons that I would like to become a teacher someday.

Kaitlyn Kawczynski

Reflections: My thoughts on the Mission Trip

Before I left for the mission trip, I had a very good idea what was to come. My brothers had gone on missions trips before and had told me stories about events that had happened. Also, some of my friends who had already been on trips with St. Julie's youth group told me what to expect. Poverty isn't something that was strange to me either. I knew how poor people lived, so that wouldn't surprise me when I arrived in Cairo. However, with all that I knew and was expecting, I was still startled by one occurrence. This didn't have anything to do with the work we did or the kids we met, even though that was extremely fun and moving. Likewise, the thing that surprised me so much was in us. I was absolutely astonished by how a group of fifty teens worked, worshiped, and lived together so seamlessly.

My workgroup and I were assigned to a house which had already been stripped of its old paint, so all it needed to do was be painted. Throughout my entire two days and the worksite I didn't hear one argument on how to do something or when to do it, we all just took each others' advise and worked together to complete all the painting. It was amazing how much we got while still having fun, and it was all due to teamwork. There would have been no possible way for any one of us to complete the workload by ourselves, so we did what we had to do and finished as much as we possible could have done. Besides a few occasions, there were no foul words spoken to anyone or behind anyone's back, and I find it completely amazing that people could work that long with

each other without there being one single fight. It was like nothing I have ever experienced.

Every evening of the week we were there we had a worship time that was incredible. To see people my age holding hands and singing songs to God was just breathtaking. Nobody cared about looking foolish or not singing well, we were all there to worship for the Lord. We were all so close to each other that we didn't care what anybody else thought. By the end of the trip we have all lived together for almost a week and we felt completely comfortable around each other. Everyone was sweating, everyone smelled (some more than others) and yet no one cared. We were all just so happy and excited to be there helping and around our friends that we didn't focus on ourselves.

No matter how many people we helped, or how many houses we painted, there will still only be one thing that I remember the most, which are the friends I've made. We traveled in a group of fifty people, and I firmly believe that I talked to each and every one of them. It's not only the friends that will stay in my mind; however it is also the fun we had, the work we did, and the feelings we shared.

Andrew Withrow

Caitlin Murray

When I think back to Mission Trip 2005: Cairo, Illinois, I think of a lot of different things. I think of the work sites, kids club, The Dairy Hut, the evening activities, the new people I met...and I think of myself- actually opening up in small group. But, I especially remember all of the feelings I had felt during that week. I felt happy when I was playing with the kids, painting the houses, and knowing that I was doing something to help people. I felt sad on our last night there and on the day we left because I didn't want to leave. But, most of all, I was scared. I was scared of what might happen during the week...Scared to open up and talk in small group and to everyone else on the trip. I was scared to go on the ladder at the work site because I really hate heights, and most of all, I was really scared of those 50 pound wasps that were coming at me at like 80 mph.

The mission trip was so awesome. I loved the fact that even though I already went on a mission trip before, I still didn't know what to expect. I really do feel grateful to go on these trips because of how I feel about myself afterwards--It's a really good feeling that I could never be able to explain...It's just really awesome.

Cairo Reflection 2005

I knew that this year's mission trip would be great as usual, but since it was in Illinois I wasn't expecting something amazing. I was mistaken because Cairo, Illinois may be a small run-down town bothered by many troubles, but it is filled with love, passion, and a willingness that most towns don't have.

Kids club was a whole new experience for me. We started out by serving the kids a free lunch. I learned that this free lunch program was the biggest in Illinois and that these children wouldn't get a good meal if we weren't here to serve them. The day that we worked, the program broke a new record and we served their all time high of about 130 kids. It was pretty cool to learn that I was involved in such an awesome program! After serving lunch things got pretty crazy. There were about 5 little kids to every teenager and at first we had no control. It felt like I was constantly playing mom and reprimanding everyone for everything. But by the second day we had all found some way to avoid chaos. We actually got the kids to play games and got them all quiet enough to watch the skit, pray, and sing. Those little kids were amazing! We all got to know a few of them and their stories and prayers astounded me. The little kids I met made me wonder how they could all be so happy and so joyful when their struggles are so great.

Worksite was amazing as well. Although we only talked to the people who owned the house for a short while, I could tell that we were doing something for them. The three little kids who lived there kept sneaking out with wide eyes wondering what we were doing and they were so eager to talk to us. We kept asking them about kids club, since that is where they were headed soon, and they were so excited because the fire truck was coming that day! My workgroup seemed to mesh together so well and I was blessed to work with

every one of them! We all had our separate jobs to do, but we were always singing and telling stories together and taking small breaks to check out each others progress. I felt like we got so much done in those two short days. When we finished and took a step back to see what we had done, it looked like a whole new house! Just thinking that a bunch of teenagers, most whom had never painted before, turned a run-down looking house into a home to be proud of is really something to marvel at!

I really think that the trip was great and our group again did a wonderful job breaking apart cliques and knocking down barriers. We included everyone, acting as one big family and we built relationships with everyone within reach! I will never forget my mission trip to Cairo in 2005. Not only did it open my eyes to a whole new world, but at club every night I felt that I became closer to God and all his awesomeness!

Ellie Maglia

Simply “Awesome”

Reflections from a first time Mission Trip Participant

One of the main reasons I decided to go to Cairo as a chaperone was to share a religious experience with my son. What I received from the trip was unbelievably so much more. The week in Cairo is one of the most moving and rewarding weeks that I have experienced in my short 45 years. One word to describe my experience is “Awesome”.

The weeks leading up to the trip were normal – hectic. I was swamped at work and life at our house was getting back to normal after throwing a graduation party for our two daughters. I thought about the mission trip but did not ponder what I might experience. Thinking back, I wish I had prepared more for the trip. As the week in Cairo unfolded, I realized I was so envious of the 42 teens that represented St. Julies. They were doing God’s work and were only 14-18 years old. To be involved at their age in a teen group like TNT is unbelievable. To go on a mission trip to help the unfortunate and put a smile on the faces of under privileged kids is simply “Awesome”.

We started out the trip by attending 7:30am mass on June 19. It happened to be Father’s Day, my wife’s birthday and the 8th anniversary of my father’s death. Naturally, my mind was full of these events, but when Father Tom blessed the 42 teens and 8 Chaperones to have a successful Mission Trip, I felt God’s presence for the first of many times that week. At that moment I was feeling both blessed and privileged to be one of only 8 chaperones for the trip. I knew at that time that I was in store for one heck of an experience.

When we arrived in Cairo late Sunday afternoon, I could see that this town had fallen on hard times. Buildings on the main street were boarded up or vacant with for sale signs in the windows. We arrived at the former St. Joe’s School and were eagerly met by the four staff workers from YouthWorks. As the week passed, we were able to get to know these four fairly well. The oldest one was only two years out of college. Their experiences in doing the Lord’s work was well beyond their years. We prayed, we played, we worked and we sang with these four and it was if we had known them for much longer than one week.

From picking up kids at the McBride projects, to playing with the young kids, to serving free lunches to anyone under 18 years old, to visiting a nursing home, and to painting houses in 98 degree weather, this week flew by. I am still amazed at how these 42 young adults and us 8 “older” folks bonded together and completed our mission with no one complaining and all of us enjoying ourselves. I hope that parents of the 42 kids are extremely proud of their kids for going on this mission. These 42 young adults and 7 chaperones are very special in my heart.

It has taken me 45 years to experience this. God has blessed me with many things; a great job; a wonderful wife and fantastic kids and most of the time, good health. We

have donated cash to the poor, Catholic Charities, and even sponsor two kids in a Mexican orphanage. But nothing has had an effect on me that this week in Cairo did.

This mission trip has allowed me to get closer with God on a personal basis. Every day, when Sarah prayed (site director in Cairo) she always referred to God as “Awesome”. It didn’t hit me until hearing her say this on the third day, just how “Awesome” God is. For my 21 years of married life, my wife has always been the one to promote our religion. I was always a follower. I pray that I can keep the feeling that I had when the trip concluded and can lead our family, with my wife, promoting our religion and doing much more of God’s work. I firmly believe that God led me to Cairo for a reason, and hopefully, I don’t forget this reason for the rest of my life.

Several people or groups of people will always have a special place in my heart:

- 1) The four camp directors. They led our group, and what was amazing, we never felt like we were being led. They are the epitome of God’s helpers.
- 2) The Pluchar Family – Especially, Mr. and Mrs. Pluchar. TNT is absolutely the best teen program that I have ever seen. The main reason for this is Mr. and Mrs. Pluchar.
- 3) My small group in Cairo. I was extremely blessed with having Andrew, Joey, Bill, Jake, and Kaitlyn in my group. I was designated as the lead, but realistically, they led me.
- 4) My fellow chaperones. What can I say. This was the first mission trip for half of the chaperones. I am very appreciative to each of them for showing me how to be a great chaperone.
- 5) Last but certainly not least, my son Sean. Andy, one of the mission directors, told all of us to thank our mentor if they were on the trip. I believe that he was mainly speaking to the teens to thank the adults. Well, in my case, it was the opposite. My mentor is my son. Sean has been with TNT for three years and we have seen him mature and grow spiritually. As a parent we could not be more proud. God has worked through Sean to get me on this trip and rejuvenate my faith. For this Sean, I say thank you from the bottom of my heart.

As I reflected at the beginning, this has been one of the most moving and rewarding weeks of my life. I will never forget this trip and the wonderful people that touched my life. There is only one word I can use to describe this week (and, yes, you guessed it) “AWESOME.”

Jim Anderson
First Mission Trip at 45 Years Old

A week to remember....

There was so little time and so much to prepare. The retreat was over, my bags were packed, and passenger vans were already picked up and ready to go. Yet I felt that there was so much that needed to be done....

The trip down to Cairo was uneventful, typical rest stops and lunch. The teens were quiet during the first leg but got louder as the trip progressed. Chatting, singing and laughing, just having a good time.

We arrived in Cairo around 5PM, a very economically depressed town. The temperature hovered around 95 degrees. There are very few people on the street, very little traffic and many vacant storefronts. We find Cross Street and Old St. Joe's Catholic School, our home for the next week. It is a vacated school, a single story complex with no more than 8 classrooms and a gym.

We meet our hosts, Sarah, Shayna, Ty and Andy as they assist with the unloading of the vans. The boys are placed in one room and girls in another. No time to unpack or relax, there is so much that needs to be done.

The first time I met face to face with God was my first trip to get the children for kids club. As I drove the big white van to the Elmwood Housing Project, I was not prepared for the series of events unfolding before me. Poverty was everywhere. Homes were boarded and many burned to the ground. There were very few people outside in the heat of the day. But the children come running at the sight of the white van. They are happy and smiling, they are excited and inquisitive. "Where are you from, mister?", "Do you have any candy?" Go down this street, there are some kids over there". A myriad of voices, I was in overload but in every child I felt as though I was their hero. I was their courier to a magical place. A place they felt safe, secure and loved.

Their innocence totally amazed me, there is no fear, no need to tell mom that they are leaving the area; they just hop into the van with a driver they have never met before. My senses tell me that this is not normal, there are bad people out there, and kids don't just jump into a van with a man that they have never seen. But this is Cairo, the children are innocent and our fears are not theirs. This is survival and to obtain lunch means trusting the man in the white van.

After returning to home base, I assist with the lunch program and help the kids with the meal placed before them. I jump from chair sitting with this child and that child. I stumble upon a sweet little girl, Cassie who I believe to be six years old. She does not talk and is covered in scratch marks. I talk to her as she smiles and slowly eats her lunch. Ezekiel, a little monster tugs at my heart also. He is rebellious, rambunctious and a real character. A complete and total opposite of little Cassie, yet he makes an impression. They are the face of God, the innocence of a child.

Jim Anderson and I are run the outdoor games. It is hot and it is extremely humid. They are having a great time, laughing and playing in the heat. Ty comes and teaches them Bible verses which they chant enthusiastically. We have water fights and "neck rides". We are trying to take all this in but are in constant amazement at the children, their enthusiasm, their energy, their trusting nature. Kerry and her team are inside making crafts and everyone is having a great time. The face of God, the innocence of a child...

.I spend the morning of day two with my team doing community cleanup. We walk a few designated streets picking up litter and trash. It amazed me the number of people who honked their horn or waved as they passed. The people who came out with a friendly smile or a warm hello took me off guard. The number of people who simply said "thank you" amazed me. The afternoon is spent with the children. First lunch, games and their amazing energy at learning scripture simply was incredible. My two days of Kids club come to a close. The face of God, the innocence of a child.

My two days out in the field were spent scraping a frame house. We were in the heat, in the sun with no respite. The home was in terrible need of not only paint but replacement boards, gutters, soffitt work and fascia. We were instructed to do the best that we could. Again, the outpouring of southern hospitality as people passed and would honk and wave. The elderly couple whose home was not being repaired but still allowed us to have lunch on their front lawn and offered their home so that we had a washroom to use. The face of God.

Thursday evening was the big cookout in the park. All of Cairo was invited. Larry and I are cooking for who knows how many. The grill is in place and we begin. Dozens and dozens of hot dogs and hamburgers are made. The heat continues and the flames from the grill are fierce. When we have cooked all that we have, Larry and I get in line and who should appear but Cassie. Elizabeth is with her and tells her the Mr. Mike cooked the hamburgers and hot dogs. Without uttering a word, Cassie blows me a kiss and gives me a big hug.

Through the innocence of a little child, I was once again face to face with God.

Mr Rubino

Where did you see God at Work today?? That question greeted us everyday at our leaders meeting and as the week progressed it really got me thinking. I had started the trip with a few minor concerns due to the fact that almost 50% of our group was on their 1st mission trip, students and chaperones alike, however that was offset by the fact that I “knew” what we were getting ourselves into, this being our 2nd trip to Cairo.

Reality was the concerns were unfounded and the fact that I knew what we were getting into was off base. You see God was at work from the 1st moment we drove onto the school property. God was present there in the hands & feet (and voices) of the 4 Youthworks counselors who greeted us that evening. It took me a little while to notice but as the week went along I think I caught on. God put them there at that point in our life to guide, encourage, enlighten and teach us about his work there in Cairo. In my previous 8 trips I've never seen a better match between the needs of a group of 50 missionaries, a wonderful community like Cairo, and the 4 young adults who became our spiritual and logistical leaders for the week.

Sara was the site director, a somewhat quiet but yet strong leader who's personality fit perfectly with our group and her teammates. She didn't say much and in retrospect she didn't have to. She led by her example, she's been living in Cairo for 2 years and has dedicated this time of her life to the community. She was also the musician for the week and always seemed to hit the right songs at the right time during the week. She brought God alive in the music throughout the week. Who could forget the thoughtfulness and compassion she showed by actually coming out to the worksite and leading a prayer service with us during lunch? The site had a true calming, easy going atmosphere and that was God's will, working through Sara. For most of us we didn't feel like we were “visitors” but part of the community.

Shay was the coordinator of the Devotion time and the Club reflections. She displayed an energy and care-free spirit that attracted her to the teens and truly made them think of her as one of them. This was the 1st time I've actually seen a counselor connect at the level she did. She was able to talk to us, especially the teens, in our language and yet convey the message that God had given her. Normally these talks are thought provoking, hers touched the soul. I've never seen the teens react the way they did during this prayer & reflection time. It wasn't a lecture it was a connection, a connection between us and God through Shay.

Andy was the work site coordinator for the site. He was an easy going, fun loving (check out the water fights) and yet safety conscious and driven to accomplish the tasks at hand. He brought a strong presence to the community and it showed. In the 2 days our group was on the site we had no fewer than 6 members of the community approach and ask how they get an application for the same type of help. We had 2 members of the community ask how they could help / donate, and we had numerous members of the community offer thanks and encouragement for the work that was being done. The constant out there on the site was Andy working with, talking with, encouraging and directing the teams to do the work of God right there in the community. Other worksites I've been on were task driven; this one was truly about building the community and relationships through the tasks we were doing. Andy made sure we didn't loose focus on the tasks that God really wanted us to do.

Ty was the coordinator of Kids Klub. Plain and simple he blew me away with his maturity, energy, love and understanding of just why he was there. He was a 20-year old student truly in touch with his faith and the calling that God has entrusted to him. He had been there only 3 weeks (we were the 3rd group through) yet there was no mistaking the impact he had made in that short time with those children. He commanded respect and obedience from them in everything that they did, the sort of respect you give to a father figure or big brother and he gave the same respect right back to them. He took his “lumps” at times with unruly children or unreasonable parents but you could see deep down the Holy Spirit was at work within him and he bounce back without missing a beat. It’s not often you see such a match “made in heaven” – we did when Ty took on the Kids Klub assignment for the Cairo site.

Cairo is truly a changed place from our mission 3 years ago. There is energy in the air around community and rebuilding. There is a pride in the community as well as an outreach to help those in need. There is true sense that the Lord is at work and the community is on the rise with better days ahead, one can only imagine what it will be like the next time we travel down there. The Lord is doing amazing things through the 4 young adult counselors, through Gary, his wife and their daughter Christine who have dedicated their time to helping in the community wherever they can, through the inter-faith gatherings being held throughout the summer, through the community dinners in the park, and in a small way, we pray, through our week there.

Mr. Plueha
(Deacon Ed)

Reflections: My thoughts on the Mission Trip

Before I left for the mission trip, I had a very good idea what was to come. My brothers had gone on missions trips before and had told me stories about events that had happened. Also, some of my friends who had already been on trips with St. Julie's youth group told me what to expect. Poverty isn't something that was strange to me either. I knew how poor people lived, so that wouldn't surprise me when I arrived in Cairo. However, with all that I knew and was expecting, I was still startled by one occurrence. This didn't have anything to do with the work we did or the kids we met, even though that was extremely fun and moving. Likewise, the thing that surprised me so much was in us. I was absolutely astonished by how a group of fifty teens worked, worshiped, and lived together so seamlessly.

My workgroup and I were assigned to a house which had already been stripped of its old paint, so all it needed to do was be painted. Throughout my entire two days and the worksite I didn't hear one argument on how to do something or when to do it, we all just took each others' advise and worked together to complete all the painting. It was amazing how much we got while still having fun, and it was all due to teamwork. There would have been no possible way for any one of us to complete the workload by ourselves, so we did what we had to do and finished as much as we possible could have done. Besides a few occasions, there were no foul words spoken to anyone or behind anyone's back, and I find it completely amazing that people could work that long with

each other without there being one single fight. It was like nothing I have ever experienced.

Every evening of the week we were there we had a worship time that was incredible. To see people my age holding hands and singing songs to God was just breathtaking. Nobody cared about looking foolish or not singing well, we were all there to worship for the Lord. We were all so close to each other that we didn't care what anybody else thought. By the end of the trip we have all lived together for almost a week and we felt completely comfortable around each other. Everyone was sweating, everyone smelled (some more than others) and yet no one cared. We were all just so happy and excited to be there helping and around our friends that we didn't focus on ourselves.

No matter how many people we helped, or how many houses we painted, there will still only be one thing that I remember the most, which are the friends I've made. We traveled in a group of fifty people, and I firmly believe that I talked to each and every one of them. It's not only the friends that will stay in my mind; however it is also the fun we had, the work we did, and the feelings we shared.

Andrew Withrow

Caitlin Murray

When I think back to Mission Trip 2005: Cairo, Illinois, I think of a lot of different things. I think of the work sites, kids club, The Dairy Hut, the evening activities, the new people I met...and I think of myself- actually opening up in small group. But, I especially remember all of the feelings I had felt during that week. I felt happy when I was playing with the kids, painting the houses, and knowing that I was doing something to help people. I felt sad on our last night there and on the day we left because I didn't want to leave. But, most of all, I was scared. I was scared of what might happen during the week...Scared to open up and talk in small group and to everyone else on the trip. I was scared to go on the ladder at the work site because I really hate heights, and most of all, I was really scared of those 50 pound wasps that were coming at me at like 80 mph.

The mission trip was so awesome. I loved the fact that even though I already went on a mission trip before, I still didn't know what to expect. I really do feel grateful to go on these trips because of how I feel about myself afterwards--It's a really good feeling that I could never be able to explain...It's just really awesome.

Reflections from Cairo

First off I must say that I was against this mission trip from the beginning. I didn't want to miss work and I didn't want to miss hanging out with my friends. Needless to say I firmly believed that I wouldn't have fun on a trip where I knew only 4 other people and the rest went to Andrew.

However, I had some of the most fun times I can remember and I made some really close friends, considering I had only known them for a week. Since the end of the trip, I have continued to hang out with TNT and have made so very close friends.

This trip was awesome beyond words. I made many close friends who share my interests and built a better relationship with God. I'm just dismayed that I waited until the summer before my senior year to go on this trip because otherwise I would have made such close friends early on in my high school career. Furthermore, during this trip I became much closer to God than I previously was and I thank the people who were on this trip for that.

I also learned a lot from the Cairo community while on this trip. Even though this community was in poverty and did not have many material possessions, they still had so much faith in God and it helped me to realize that faith is not something that should be taken for granted.

Caita Zoos

I wasn't sure what to write for this reflection, so I am just going to write what I feel, and what comes to me.

This was my first activity with TNT, except for the lock in, and I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know what to expect of the community, the people on the trip, and if I was going to have fun or make a difference. But I am glad to say that I had a great time, I met new people, made new friends, helped the community, and got closer to god.

Going into this mission trip I had a negative outlook, I didn't think I was going to have a good time, I didn't think I was going to make any friends, I didn't think I was going to make a difference in the community, I thought it was all going to be a big waste of time. But it wasn't, I also ended up going to breakaway too which was a lot of fun. Everyone should go on a mission trip or to breakaway if they get a chance.

Grateful for the experience,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ian Eisen".

Ian Eisen

Tess Wolfenson

Cairo had a major impact on my life. Since I went on a mission trip with St. Michaels last summer, I was not really looking forward to this one. As the St. Michaels trip we would work all day and then go back to the place we were staying and just hang out. At Cairo, we met with small groups, had large group discussions, and prayed. These times had a real impact on the trip. It made me not only feel like I accomplished something for the people of Cairo, but also I had accomplished something for God. I learned so much about everyone and realized that I can be open with these people. This trip changed my perspective on mission trips. Before I thought they were just for service hours and was something to do. Now I realize that they show your dedication to God and also help the people of the area. I did not make any lasting relationships with St. Michaels as I did with St. Julies. I had the best time and made so many great new friends. I had an awesome small group and Mrs. Mags was the best small group leader. We had so many great discussions. Another thing that had a major impact on me was the children of Cairo. They had so much energy and were so happy to have us there. All the shoulder rides and jokes they told made me realize how much they appreciate us being there. The trip was great and we made so many friendships with the children and did a lot of work on the houses there. We had so many good times in the girls room and I will never forget all the fun I had. I have realized how great this youth group is and I am so glad that I joined!

ultimate mission at the end of there speech. Then is suddenly hit me, M.Y.L.T.U.M. meant make your life the ultimate mission. Then Mary Kohle's read her speech and said

"I'm really happy that you were in my small group this past week. I hope that you were able to show your true self to everyone here. I know at the beginning of this week was harder for you. But even though it was hard you have shown us the courage to not let it ruin the week for you. You are very easy to talk to and I'm glad that you were able t benefit in my small group. I can tell you that you truly have a kind and giving heart. I hope that you will stick with TNT it can do a lot of great things for you. Josh Lillie, make your life the ultimate mission."

That night everyone stayed up all night and looked at the stars and just hanged out. Early that morning we went to the dunes. When I got to the top I looked out and saw the golden sun rising and the lake below shimmering with beauty and I knew that this was the greatest summer ever.