

Cairo 2014

**“The world only sees
what you do,
God sees why you do it.”**

Cairo, IL

***..a town with a heart
and a future.***

Becca Macijunas Mission Trip Reflection:

Although I am a senior, this was my first mission trip. I was nervous about going and did not know what to expect; but at the same time I was excited. I had heard so many different things about Cairo, and could not wait to spend the week there to experience and learn about the community.

Even though I did not really have expectations of Cairo and the mission trip in general, I was very pleased with my experience. The community was so loving, and their faith and positivity was so strong. It amazed me that even when people have nothing, they still keep hope and their faith in God is what drives them. At times they might not be content or happy with their situation, but instead of dwelling on the negatives, they focus on the positives and what they hope their city will become in the future.

The first day we were there we had the opportunity to sit in on a panel to get to learn about the community and all the different people. They shared facts and the history of Cairo, and their hopes for the future. There were people of all ages, so we got to see how each person felt about the community they lived in. We met Helena who is a 12yr old girl who loves Cairo with all her heart. The sad thing is that her family is moving 2 hours away, and she doesn't want to leave. She loves the place that she lives and the place she grew up, no matter what other people think. It was awesome to experience this panel because the only things that were brought up that were negative were others' opinions. Every person on the panel talked about their future plans and the positives about the beautiful place they live.

For my work site I got to go to David and Richard's house. David and Richard are father and son and their family home had caught on fire the week before while they were on vacation. Although the structure was okay, everything inside their home, especially the basement was burned and ruined. We helped them remove things and inventory them for the insurance company. I couldn't imagine going on vacation and coming home to a home that is unrecognizable. Although they had lost literally all of their possessions, they were so grateful that we were there to talk to them and help them. It was hard to watch them throw out almost everything, but I think having us there helped. We showed them that people care about them, and are more than happy to help them with whatever they are going through. They were some of the most loving and appreciative people, and I know that I will never forget them.

Kids Club was probably the best part of the week. As our vans drove down the streets to pick them up, it was incredible to see how excited they were. They would run to the vans as soon as they saw them. A lot of the kids don't receive a lot of love and attention at home, so even if it was for just a few hours, our time and love meant the world to them. I never knew the amount of piggy back rides or the amount of little girls that would do my hair, but I enjoyed every minute of it! In particular, I bonded with 5yr old Airyn. She had the sweetest heart and didn't want to leave my side. She rode on my back a countless number of times, and loved playing with my hair. At one point she asked me if she could be my sister, and if she could come home with me. This melted my heart, and I said we would be sisters but unfortunately I couldn't take her home with me. I gained a sister, and I love her as if she really was my sister.

Another highlight of the trip for me was the prayer walk with a community member. We were fortunate enough to take a walk with Stacy. She is a wife and a stay-at-home mom, and has lived in Cairo

for the past 10 years and loves it. She helps out in the community, and her faith and hope for the community is so strong. She truly views Cairo as everyone should: a beautiful place with tons of hope for the future. It was nice to walk through the community and hear stories about the places and people we passed. It was also nice to just take time to stop and pray for whatever and whoever came to mind.

Through this mission trip, I grew not only in my faith but in my heart. My relationship with God strengthened, and I realized that I needed to let go of the things that were acting as barriers in my relationship with God. It helped me to understand and learn more about others in need. We always hear that we should appreciate and be grateful for all that we have, and I understood that. But until you experience a different lifestyle and community, it is hard to truly understand what other people go through every day. This mission trip really showed me that my passion is helping those in need. To be able to help people and connect with them at the same time is an unexplainable feeling. I am forever grateful for every opportunity that I am called to serve, and I will take advantage of every chance I get.

I never imagined I would build such strong and loving relationships not only with the community members but with other members of TNT. I knew we would be together with the community members and each other, but I had no idea the kind of bonds that could be made in a week. I can now call Cairo a home away from home, and TNT is my second family. I have created relationships that I will never forget.

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience in Cairo. I had no idea how much my life would change in one week. I wish we could have stayed longer, and when it came to Friday I didn't want to leave. I became connected to Cairo and I cannot wait until the day that I can become a chaperone for mission trips so I can go back. I hope that Cairo will start to receive support from the nation so that they will soon become the beautiful city to match all the beautiful and positive people.

Becca Macijunas

Cairo Mission Trip

Cairo, IL was an amazing location to venture to for my first mission trip!! Everything there had beauty hidden inside of it, from the community members to the children and even to the run down buildings and streets. I did not know what to expect from the trip but I did know how nervous I was to meet new people. Two minutes into the ride, I felt comfortable and open with everyone. The entire trip from then on exceeded my expectations. To start off with, I really enjoyed the Youth Works staff! The time, effort, patience, and faith they put forth and showed was truly inspiring. Praying multiple times everyday and sometimes every few hours was something that I was not accustomed to but I loved it anyway! It helped me to connect with God and realize that God does listen. The lesson I remember the most from Youth Works was that God did not just send us out to serve blind. He himself had been the example for his disciples and children. I loved knowing that what I am doing is something that God himself has done before me! The first two days I worked at kids club and had an amazing time!! One boy ran up to me and said, "Will you be my friend!?" Right then is when I realized that all kids want attention and some do not receive enough. Also I played UNO with a group of boys and they were apologetic when they had to lay down a skip or draw two card. These moments is what truly made the trip special for me. To know that these children are open and loving to strangers restores my faith even more! The final two days I worked at Mrs. Noleen's house to paint her garage. She made us brownies and bought us soda. Although she had little and her house wasn't in the best shape, she still wanted to thank us properly. This alone put my faith and thoughts into a whole new perspective. Most people who do have plenty of money would not be willing to do a deed like she did. I now know that a

Nicole Ward

small deed can mean the world to someone who has little to nothing. Those people know how to appreciate the little things in life like family and community instead of material objects and that's what I love about Cairo. At the panel discussion, one of our church members asked if the entire community of Cairo was positive like the five people in the panel. They laughed and said that there is negativity but if a few people have much positivity then it will overcome anything. The panel discussion opened me up to the fact that having faith and trust in God is the only thing that is needed to get by. He will bring us back and help us from our struggles. The community cookout was amazing and sad at the same time. The kids were such a joy to be with, especially when we played FOR NARNIA!, but it also made me think that we were leaving the next day which was heartbreaking. The sadness was suppressed when we scared Mrs. O'Donnell. Josh jumped out of a tree as she was running by! That's when I knew that these new friends would be close for awhile. I did have one regret when I got home. I wish that I had been brave enough sooner to go on the previous mission trips but I'm glad I got to experience sooner than later. I enjoy putting people before myself and this trip helped me to do just that. The hardest thing will be continuing the faith back in Tinley Park. It is easy to say you will do something but the difficult part is putting words into actions. My trip was phenomenal and I would not change anything about it!! I went to Cairo to complete a mission and ended up coming back with new friends, a new perspective, and most importantly, a better understanding of the purpose that I have here on earth!

Mission Trip 2014

This summer I went on the mission trip with my church and we went to Cairo, Illinois. It was for about 5 days and I can honestly say it was an amazing experience for me! We helped so many people, I made some great friends, and the people in Cairo were so positive they made me into a better person.

To begin with, at first I didn't really know if I wanted to go on this trip but my mom kept telling me I should, so I finally agreed. When this trip started we did things like day camps for kids, helped in a health clinic, and helped clean up houses in the neighborhood. All the things we did really helped people and it made me feel really good to help people in need. Plus during this trip I made so many new friends! Because of meeting so many people and helping out this community, I really enjoyed this trip!

At St. Julie we do mission trips every summer and we always go different places, however every 3 years we always go back to Cairo, Illinois. I totally understand why because the people in Cairo are so nice and positive. Even though there are a lot of problems in their community they stay positive and really try to make their community a better place. The people in Cairo really appreciated everything we did for them which made me feel really happy.

The mission trip to Cairo this summer was my first mission trip and it was an amazing experience for me! We helped so many people whether it was just a day camp for little kids, writing letters to soldiers or helping cleaning up houses. I made many new friends and the people in Cairo were so positive they made me feel really happy. I loved this trip and I hope to go on another one next summer.

Annie Siebenaler

Michael Letz

Cairo Reflection

I was glad to have Cairo as my first mission trip location, everything was so much fun and the friendships I made were even better, even the car rides there, and back were amazing! When we arrived in Cairo I looked around and I saw grass growing over the sidewalks, graffiti on abandoned or rundown buildings and houses and it was awful, but I also saw people sitting in front of their houses smiling, and waving at us as if everything else was invisible to them. When they assigned me and my group in kids club the whole week I was disappointed that I couldn't try out worksite but when I met the kids it wasn't that bad. All the kids knew each other's names and they all were friends, I remember going to the Baptist church they asked us, "If you could bring something to our community to yours, what would it be?" My friend replied, "I think I would bring the positive spirits of the people, how they're so close with each other and everyone knew each other." When she said that I thought I couldn't have said it any better. Also the people were so proud that they lived in Cairo and I thought that I shouldn't complain about the things I don't have, instead I should just be happy for what God gives me and

Michael
LETZ

accept it. I was so glad I went on this trip and it made me feel like a better person and it also made me more of a religious person. This trip was a revelation to me showing me there are better things in the world besides the latest cool new stuff coming out, instead it was to get out into the world, meet new people, and spending time with your friends or family. I'm so glad I went on this mission trip and I can't wait to go again!

Kelsey Wegg

Mission 2014 Reflection

I am so glad that I went on mission this year. Katie Ruane had told me about it and how much fun she has every year. She also introduced me to all of her friends she had made on previous mission trips with St. Julie. A lot of these friends were kids that went to our own school, but she would not have met them otherwise. As I met Katie's new friends, more and more stories were told about how the mission trip was the one week of the whole year that everyone looks forward to. After hearing so many good things about the trip, I knew I wanted to be a part of the fun. Not knowing much to expect besides great memories, I was excited to go.

After the first day, I was actually surprised how little time we actually spent working, for either Kids Club or the work sites. I somewhat felt like our presence was being wasted. I wanted to do more for Cairo. After some time, though, I realized that our restricted time helping left a huge mark on the people of Cairo. It didn't matter that I was only with the kids for two hours a day and it didn't matter how fast I helped paint Mrs. N.'s garage. Cairo was thankful for any help they got and I was thankful for helping them.

Whether I was working, eating, cleaning, or attempting to sleep, I made some unforgettable friends, as promised. No matter who I talked to, all of the kids were so friendly. I am so glad I got the chance to break out of my comfort zone and start talking to some new people. I am no longer afraid to get to know kids outside of my grade or outside of my school. I feel like that was an opening to long lasting relationships. And I can already see a change. Even the day we got back from mission, a bunch of us met a few hours later to support Josh O'Donnell and John Letz at their baseball game. The St. Julie TNT obviously cannot be away from each other for very long.

The one part about my first mission trip I will never forget, however, was the visit to the Baptist church. All of the speakers seemed like family to each other by the way they talked. The one part of the visit I will always remember was when one of them said, "If you ever feel alone, you can come back here; because you'll always be loved when you're here in Cairo." That's when I started crying, and couldn't stop crying. That's when I realized that Cairo could help us more than we could ever dream to help them. Lots of people think that Cairo is dead. They think that Cairo isn't worth saving. But I think that that city will reach new heights. I hope that Cairo spreads its positivity and spreads its friendliness to far places. Others think that Cairo needs our help. But I believe that we need their help. I think that people coming to work in Cairo should be a little less in control, and a little more open to the change that amazing city can make on them. I think we should all be a little more like Cairo.

Lexi Benakovich Reflection

I am so happy I went on mission trip this year! It was such a humbling and rewarding experience for me! It was an amazing feeling knowing I was helping others and helping to rebuild the entire community of Cairo. I made so many new relationships with people in the community including Taree, Halayna and Italy, they were amazing kids. I also became closer to God and became stronger in my faith! I am excited to grow even closer to God every day! It was so fulfilling and I can't wait to go again next year. I loved it and I wish we could have stayed longer in Cairo, it was so amazing of an experience.

- Lexi Benakovich

P.S. Mr & Mrs O'Donnell are great chaperones and people. They both made my trip the best it could possibly be. And Shay was also so positive and it was great to get to know her and listen to her advice she is wonderful.

Footprints in the Sand

"One night I had a dream...I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and across the sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonged to me, and the other to the Lord. When the last scene of my life flashed before us, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that many times along the path of my life, there was only one set of footprints.

I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in my life this really bothered me, and I questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you would walk with me all the way; but I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why in times when I needed you the most, you should leave me.

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child. I love you, and I would never, never leave you during your times of trial and suffering. When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you."

June 22nd through June 27th St. Julies helped carry Cairo Illinois. Everyone who went on the retreat was able to help the youth of the community by being their friends and helping these strangers who treated us like family with tasks they were unable to complete without help. As much as people believe we were there to help the people of Cairo, the people of Cairo were around to carry us as well. While talking to members in the community and hearing everything about their lives they took the time to ask us questions about home and about our families. Each person that lives in Cairo has a unique story that opened your eyes to the different lives everyone has. A woman I met told her story of growing up in Cairo, moving out right after her high school graduation, and then after a few years being drawn back to living in Cairo to raise her family. The people of Cairo are not stuck in their poverty, they stay or come back because they have faith God will carry them through the hardships.

Natalie Harmening

Mission Reflection

Hannah McCorry

I was excited to go to Cairo this year for our mission. This is the highlight of my summer going on mission trips and seeing what an impact we can make on a community is amazing.

Working with the kids really opened my eyes up to what love is. They always had a smile on their face everyday, and a need for piggyback rides. All they wanted to do was play and have fun. These kids were really the symbol for God's love. They were kind, and caring, and had love in their lives even if they didn't have much. Many of them faced hardships everyday but they came with smiles on their faces, and enthusiasm for Jesus. I think that kids camp was my favorite part of the week, many of them seemed uneager to leave everyday just like we were uneager to leave. I hope that youthworks continues to make the kids of Cairo have a fun filled summer.

Working at David's house also made me realize that what we have can be taken away from us at any time like your house from a fire. Helping him clean out his basement, I saw everything that he was, a parent, a veteran, and a collector of cans. It has made me more generous and thankful for the things i have in my life. The appreciation and thank you's i received, showed how i can really make an impact on someone by doing something so simple as throwing things into a dumpster.

The Lord filled me up with happiness and satisfaction the last day of worksite by serving others instead of myself for a change. I want to continue doing things for others. All in all i think that my mission to Cairo helped me spiritually, emotionally, and socially. All the friends i made will last a lifetime. I can't wait to go again next year.

Reflection:

This was my first mission trip ever and I had an overall positive experience. There was more good than bad on this trip. I was able to help those in need and meet many new amazing people. This trip made me realize how grateful I am for the life that I live. I hope to go on another mission trip again next year with St. Julie's. Thank you for the opportunity.

Kelly Levigne

Cairo Mission Trip 2014

This year would be my second trip on mission. The first one went so swimmingly I figured why not go? Once again I had the greatest experience of my entire summer there.

The first two days I was at Kids Club. The workers told us many times that these kids came from rough homes and just needed a place to be for a little while. I talked to a few kids and they told me their stories and it was just heartbreaking. A few times I found myself close to tears but I held it in because if a stranger couldn't be strong for them how could I expect them to be strong? The two days I worked at Kids Club I realized that we have it really good here in Orland Park and Oak Forest. We may complain but it's only because we have different conditions. Someone here can complain about missing their fries while these kids are upset because they can't eat at all. Everyone where I live complains about the small things and while these kids could complain about large problems they have, they choose to stay silent. The YouthWorks volunteers showed me their dedication all week. It must be hard for them to give up their whole summer and deal with new groups each week and kids that don't want to behave but they do it all with a smile.

The next two days I worked at an old motel. The women who owned it wanted her garage to be painted. She was very welcoming and made us brownies. She even wanted to send us letters to thank us for our hard work we did for her. I don't know if I would've been as welcoming to strangers as she was. During those two days I realized that I can make a difference in the community and it doesn't even have to be a big change. Something small can mean the world to one person.

The other church that came was from Minnesota. They were all very welcoming. I made new friends with all the people there. I am very glad that they were the other group because the friendships I made will last me a long time and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Looking back to the first time I heard about mission I can't help but laugh at the fact that I thought I wouldn't fit in there. Everyone was so accepting and nice. Going on mission for the second year in a row was definitely one of my best ideas yet. Everyone that can, should try to go on mission at least once because it is life-changing.

Cairo Reflection
“Bye, bye Miss American Pie??”

Tom O'Donnell

By God's grace or my good planning, I traveled in a truck by myself as I towed the trailer that was full of luggage, supplies and donations for Cairo. Although it was quiet, I still wondered what was going on in the vans as I looked at them in the rearview mirror. I know I had to be missing some funny stories, strange conversations or loud music on the radio.

To my surprise, at our first stop I overheard several teens singing “American Pie” by Don McLean. I was surprised they knew the lyrics as the song was from the early 1970's.

I thought, “How did they know this song?”

I learned that one of the chaperones, Shay, had made a disc of various songs for each of the vans. She gave one to me but did not use it yet as I was listening to the radio while I thought about the week to come. But still the song haunted me as we continued to Cairo, so I finally put the disc in and found American Pie was track 9 and I played it several times as I always did enjoy listening to it.

I always wondered what the song meant and when I did some research I found that American Pie is a song about many things but the only part of the lyrics that Don McLean has ever stated publically as fact is about Buddy Holly dying in the refrain “the day the music died”. The remaining lyrics have been a mystery but Don McLean has said most of it is about the ever changing American Dreams of his generation.

As the week started in Cairo my small group had kids club and we need to get prepared. The teens did a wonderful job and the kids of Cairo were great. Our teens and the kids welcomed each other warmly. They played together, worked on various crafts and sang songs about Jesus together. The next day as the kids arrived they were anxious to see the teens again and start up where they left off the day before.

My group also helped out in the local grade school in cataloging the books in the library as the database had lost all the records recently. The rest of the week we spent time at the home of an Army veteran as his house caught fire while he was out of town to see his daughter compete in a gymnastics tournament. To help him with his insurance claim, we helped remove, catalogue and take pictures of items destroyed in the fire. You couldn't help but think a family's belongings are now gone, proudly worn military uniforms gone, toys and clothes gone but they still have each other.

In the evenings we had different community events. We had a community cookout, went to a local church to meet with the congregation, and met with local community, civic and church leaders. Many of us also had the chance to visit a local museum of history that covered Cairo from before the Civil War the start of the demise of Cairo in the 50's and 60's.

Just as the song American Pie haunted me as we drove to Cairo, this week had a different feel. I was here 3 years ago on my first mission trip. It was a truly fulfilling week but this week was so different. The town was different. The people were different.

The first night there we watched a video on Cairo and heard and saw images of the past. Cairo was an extremely divided city. Not just rich or poor but white and black. Racism was in full force in the town. This led to the town's downfall just as much as the improvements in transportation led companies to locate wherever and still gets product delivered with ease. Cairo was a troubled city and this was all news to me.

The night we met with local community and church leaders allowed us time to hear their perspective on Cairo and ask questions on Cairo's future. This was enlightening as the video. They all spoke of things to come. They were working on getting rid of destroyed buildings and clearing land for future development. They all spoke of their love of the town and its bright future. It was simple to them, pray for change, be part of the change and pray some more. Don't feel sorry for us, pray for us that we continue on this path.

Three years ago in Cairo our teens were talking to a few of the teens from Cairo and when I asked our teens about the conversation, they said they are just like us. They want to go to college, they want to get jobs, go to a school dance, and just be like kids in Tinley Park. This past year the Cairo High School, with support from parents and community organizations, held their first Prom in years. It was described as a huge success and brought Cairo together. Plans are now in place for next year.

When we were cleaning out the Army vet's house I asked him what was next for him and his family. He was unsure as he thinks it might be time to leave the town but his wife was raised in Cairo and is not so quick to leave. This is her home, where she was raised and she has raised her children. She knows where Cairo has been and believes in where it is going.

During the week and as I drove around town I put in the disc and played American Pie. I did this every day and the song just seemed to be a perfect fit. There was a new vibe in the city, a new hope. Cairo's history plays a role in its future; Cairo was entering a new phase.

For the people of Cairo, it is..

about the American Dream and being part of the changes.

about what is good in the world and being stewards of God's gifts to us

about believing in and helping others.

about praying and asking others to pray for Cairo.

It time for the American Dream not to be given to the people of Cairo but built by the people of Cairo and all this will happen through the hard work of its citizens and through the grace of God.

Mr. Tom O'Donnell

Cairo Illinois

Going into this year's mission trip I didn't know what to expect. I heard so many positive things about this town from other members of TNT who went on a past mission trip. However, when I searched this town on the internet I got opposite results. It looked like an old run down ghost town. The town looked old and forgotten. When we first pulled into the town those were the adjectives I would have used to describe Cairo. After spending a week down there I would completely change my vocabulary. I would say this town is full of life, love, joy, beauty, and hope. There were so many old historic mansions. Granted they could use a little tlc, they were still full of so much beauty. It all depends on perspective, and the people of Cairo have truly taught me to go into things with a good perspective and not judge a book by its cover.

The first half of my week was spent at work site. We were working at a woman named Ms. Noleans house. We were scraping and painting her garage. It turns out her garages used to be old motel rooms. Now she has turned them into a reading nook that she sits in every morning and storage space. Ms. Nolean welcomed us with open arms. She invited us to eat lunch into her home and offered us drinks throughout the hot day and even made us brownies. I got to learn a little bit about her and her family. Ms. Nolean had friends dropping by all day and they would never hesitate to stop by and say hello to us. At the end of the week she asked us for our names and addresses to keep in touch. I look forward to hearing from her.

The second half of my week was spent at kids club. Both days, I was part of the group that would walk and pick up kids. Once we got down to where most of the kids live we would just call out, "Kids club! Kids club!" The neighborhood kids would literally come running out of their houses. The little ones would come right up and hold your hand or ask to get on your back for the rest of the walk to the church. The older ones would go and get their friends to come. Right away I knew I would have a great day with the kids just from talking to them on the way to kids club. They were all so full of love from the start and so excited to start playing. Last year I found myself hanging around with the younger kids but this year I formed relationships with some of the older kids. Within the first ten minutes after getting to kids club I had a group of older girls I spent the whole day with. All of their personalities were so fun loving and they have really impacted me. The girls were fun to joke around with and got my sense of humor. I let them braid my hair and we swapped bracelets and laughed the day away. I think of these girls every day and miss each of them dearly.

Some of the other highlights of my week was going to the school and working with the older kids on their positivity rap. A large majority of the children in Cairo listen to rap music, which is not

always the most positive genre of music. A group of the kids got together and they are making a positivity rap. Sara and I got to go down and listen to them practice. I was surprised by how into they got and how good their lyrics were. They added in free style rap and dance moves and it was really fun to watch and talk to them about it. I also loved going to the panel and service at the Baptist church. When we intermixed with the local people at the service they were all so welcoming and loving. The community cookout was one of the highlights of my week. I saw some of my friends from kids club and made new friends. The rain didn't stop anyone from having the time of their lives.

This mission trip truly changed me for the best and is an experience I will never forget. When people ask me about Cairo, Illinois and assume the town is full of poverty, I will respond with how hopeful and beautiful the town and people really are.

Abai McCorry

Mission Trip 2014

Cairo, IL

This was my second mission trip with TNT, and it's my third overall. I think this was the funniest and mind changing mission trip I've honestly been on. This trip though I didn't just learn something from the sports camp or the other activities we did that week but also the other teens in TNT and from the chaperones. Between the mission trip this year and last year I have been able to spend more time with the other teens in TNT and grow my relationship with all of them. We all have our inside jokes and spend time together in small groups or in large either at school or out of school. Sometimes people I talk to at school don't understand how I'm so close with a handful of upper classmen and kids from our rival school (Sandburg... Love ya'll). They are all very open and loving to any one and they're willing to meet and gain new friends each passing year no matter what grade their going into. I think this year the most has helped understand and know which people I can count on and trust to have my back no matter what happens. Between the other teens in Van 1 on the way home and back the ride to Cairo and the ride home was very memorable. Between getting yelled at for eating water flavoring and laughing at each other's faces when it was sour or yelling "Do it for the Kline!" (Got you Mr. Kline) from the start of the trip to the end we all got closer. Even as events from the week went down and it got hard to handle, people stepped up to back me up with my choices. Complete strangers from the other church had my back and supported me and each other while only spending five days together.

The people in the community showed me that family and friends are the most important things you could have in life. In the retirement home these two ladies were in their eighties or nineties and they were cracking jokes at one another and the workers, just having a good time in each other's company. Even at the community barbeque and the sports night, the kids in the community stuck together with new strangers coming into their lives every week they hold together and they gain ties with these strangers. The parents gain the ties through their kids, or talking to the adults at the different activities, and their kids gain it through OSC (Outrageous Sports Camp) or kids club. Two people on this trip ended up saying good bye to a little boy at the community barbeque and he started to get very upset that he wouldn't see them again, and while they talked to his mother she had said that he had never gotten this upset over any of the other volunteers in the past leaving. Having those two people have to go sit alone thinking about how much they were going to miss that little boy and having the mother saying that, you knew that they both had made a change in that little boy. All while keeping up with family and friends. I admit not everything that happened that week was what I hoped for but it helped me grow as a person and show me how important it is to have family and friends support you. It ended up causing some changes for the next Trips TNT takes and I hope it helps the next person to come into TNT who faces the same problems I've experienced, showing them that having the supports from their family and friends is something that they should always treasure. I hope it makes their time with TNT the best experience they can have even as me and my friends go to college and not being able to supports who they are. I can honestly say that TNT has some of the greatest people I have come to know and love. I hope that they never change because they are considered my family no matter how silly or how awkward they are.

Victoria Wyleta

Mission Reflection

Cairo was my first mission trip when I was in eighth grade, and I was very excited to return. I was looking forward to see how Cairo had changed since the last time TNT was there. The community looked better since I last saw it, but there was still plenty of work to be done. I could not wait to help by being in a work site or helping out at Kid's Club. I ended up not doing either of those. Instead, I helped out at the Outrageous Sports Camp. This was new for me and I did not know how I felt about it at first, but I am glad I did it. What we did there was play basketball with the kids that were too old to participate at Kid's Club. I was amazed at how great the kids were at basketball. I was even more amazed at how they listened and cooperated more and more as the week went on. We also had small group huddles to discuss how we can be a good Christian example while playing sports. What I learned most while on this mission trip Cairo was how hopeful the community was in general. They had hope that their community would keep growing stronger and stronger. To be honest, if I lived there I would think the best option would be to leave and find work where there are jobs. No one in the Cairo community had that attitude and I give them a lot of props for thinking the way they do.

Mr. Michael Kline

I wasn't sure what to expect when I was asked to go on the mission trip to Cairo, Illinois. I wasn't sure how bad the community was going to be, how the people were going to be: I was a bit apprehensive of the whole trip. Even though people can tell you what it's like to go on a mission trip, the only way you can truly understand what it is like is to experience one yourself.

The main thought that I came away from the mission trip with was that one person can make a difference in someone's life and I can be that person. I could see that happening during the week I spent in Cairo. I saw it when we were working with Mrs. Noleen, painting her garage. I could see how much of a difference that was making in her life and how positive of a person she was in regards to Cairo and her life there. I saw it in the pastor and elders at the Baptist Church and how they said that this is their home, they aren't trapped, and they are going to make a difference in Cairo. I saw it in Trey's witness: he said that the pastor that was running a sports camp made a difference in his life and now he plans to do the same. I saw it in working in the Kid's Club, and with a number of kids. I saw it when I made a difference in a child's day. I played catch with a child who thought no one would play with him. I saw it in the teens: they are able to make a difference in the lives of others. They were willing to accept everyone and treat everyone with respect, even when there were people of different backgrounds that they were not accustomed to. The teens were selfless. They were willing to do whatever they could to be the difference in the kid's life, whether it was giving piggyback rides or letting them braid their hair or joining them in the sprinkler.

I'm actively trying to keep up with this "you being the difference in someone's life" attitude. Mission trip has made a positive impact on my life and I look forward to the differences I know I will be making. What my expectations were for the mission trip were far exceeded. I was apprehensive about going, but on the way back I knew that it had made a positive difference in me, in the teens, and in the Cairo community.

Cairo 2014 would be my third mission trip and as the weeks drew closer to our departure, I found myself asking God to help me let go of anything that could get in the way of my devotion to this service mission. I prayed that He would help our group serve the community in a way that would respect and value the people in Cairo, and empower us to reach out with love and compassion.

As we drove south toward Cairo, I was sure it was going to be a fantastic week with the most amazing teens. My van was chosen for me...Van 3, occupied by ten rowdy teen girls, another chaperone and me. We were rolling down the highway listening to our "mission" CD, sharing a smorgasbord of snacks, telling stories and jokes, laughing at the occasional snort, "bouncing" to the tunes, and just loving being together.

At the first glimpse of the town of Cairo as we drove into town, the music was turned off and a hush overcame the van. I felt a chill run down my spine as I saw the outskirts of town for the first time. It looked like a ghost town – eerie almost. There was even a sign that read, "Future City." So many buildings stood deserted. During our week we saw much more of this once prosperous town. Scattered throughout we saw more dilapidated buildings and homes long left vacant, the "projects", and some very nice modest homes. What surprised me were the grand mansions with awesome grounds. Many were left vacant and run down, but many were still inhabited and just as beautiful as ever.

My work crew, the "Love" crew, worked at a few sites, but helping a local family really made a place in my heart. David was an Army Veteran who served three tours overseas. He is now disabled due to a horrible helicopter accident. David is married and has a son, Richard, and a young daughter. The week prior to our arrival in Cairo, David and his family were on vacation and returned home to find out their home had burned. Only the structure of their home was spared. All of their belongings inside were a total loss. We assisted them in carrying out the black, charred, wet items from their home. We took photos of the items and cataloged each item for insurance purposes. Something that really surprised me about David was that in light of just having lost everything they had, he was still smiling, kind, friendly, laughing and incredibly positive. David and Richard were seen volunteering at a local church the prior evening, even though they had so much to do for themselves! It didn't matter what they were going through, their spirit was not broken. They were strong Christians who knew that God has a plan for them and they trust in Him. They were so inspiring to me and I will truly miss them.

The next couple of days the Love crew worked at Kids' Club and for the first time I was one of the drivers who went into the projects and throughout town to pick up local kids and later drive them back home. I thought I would be afraid to drive through some of the areas, but the people of Cairo truly surprised me. Everyone waved to us when they saw us driving by and many waved us through intersections as if to let us know that we were welcome there and they were happy to see us! I was so happy driving that van and picking up those wonderful children who ran toward us when they saw us coming! My soul was filling up with the Holy Spirit and it felt good.

The entire week in Cairo was a spiritual journey for me. God answered my prayers when I asked Him to help me to let go and guide me. Nothing was about me this week because I was able to let it all go to serve the people of Cairo doing God's work. When we returned home I was so full of the Holy Spirit and love for others. I still am today. Thank you, God. You are an amazing God!

Mrs. O'Donnell

Cairo 2014

Although this was my second trip to Cairo, it was nothing like the first. My first trip I was still reluctant to participate in anything to my fullest extent, whether it be small group or club. I didn't understand the meaning behind everything and how there was an opportunity to expand my faith around every corner. I still didn't feel like I fit in with the group since everyone was already really good friends. This year, however, was my fourth trip and I knew the ins and outs of the trip. This time I was ready to experience Cairo. On the first day I decided to try and serve anytime I could, and it really paid off. I had the best small group/work group, I had fun with friends, old and new, and I built on my faith. I learned how much a small group of people can do with the help of God. I saw God working at all times in the town. I had never felt so close to God than I did in that town. The only true disappointment I have from the trip is missing water day, AGAIN!

Michelle Rubino

Mission Trip Reflection 2014

Words cannot describe the experience I had on this trip. Going back to a community I had served a few years before was eye opening because you go to these places and sometimes you wonder if what you did will actually change the community. Going back to Cairo showed me that everything you do even if its small changes the community. I got to see the progress that Cairo has made over the years. Seeing what it was like the first time I went there compared to this last time, so much has changed. It's inspiring to see how much the littlest things can be a big impact.

Gandhi once said "Be the change you wish to see in the world," this is one of my favorite quotes because when you go on these trips you get to change another community the way you want. You get to change a part of the world the way you want and being able to do that inspires me to take what I have learned on these trips and apply them to my everyday life.

Cairo was truly eye-opening for me because it got me to reach out to others. There was this little girl named Shamaria, she was the cutest little girl. She was very quiet at first and hardly ever talked. I was at reading post with her. I asked her if she wanted to sit on my lap and I would read to her. She shook her head. I sat down and pulled her up on my lap. Her shaking her head was her first communication with me. It was the start of a friendship. Throughout the day I got her to talk and communicate more and more. She was a very shy girl but she opened up fast. She inspired me throughout the week to work harder and harder on changing the community but not only was I changing the community it was changing me.

I look back on Mission Trip 2014 fondly and I can't wait to see what the next trip will bring.

My Cairo 2014 mission trip experience was amazing. I learned so much about my friends, the community and about myself. I worked at Outrageous sports camp for the week and I had an amazing time and I'm sure the kids did too. I felt connected w/ them as we played basketball together and I am still in contact with some kids from the camp. These kids showed me what kind of person I am and

I taught them about how God has affected my life and how it will affect theirs. I felt very spiritually connected by going to Cairo and it is definitely my favorite mission trip so far. I won't forget my experiences I had with the youth work staff, adult leaders, friends, and the community of Cairo. Everyone here has touched my heart and I feel changed after coming back from this trip and I will continue to go to mission trips to fulfill my life with Christ.

Thank you!

James Kut

Cairo 2014

Emily Macijunas

It only took one week, one community and its 3,000 residents to change my perspective on life. This was my first mission trip and I'm not going to lie, when I signed up for it I was a little skeptical. I try not to shelter myself; I had always understood that there were people scraping by and I knew I had it pretty easy. Reading about those situations is one thing, but to put yourself right into a place where things like that are happening is a whole new world. My expectations were along the lines of finding a depressed neighborhood in need of serious help and I was completely wrong. Cairo is a place where yes, the people struggle but they are in the mindset that the present is just a bump in the road. People in Cairo are not helpless. My work crew was painting the garage of a sweet old lady named Mrs. Noleen. She was showing us a window she was going to hang up and mentioned that she planned on painting it later. My crew already had the paint and brushes so we offered to paint it for her saying that it would be no trouble and she replied saying if you don't mind that would be great. Even though we were there to help her, she didn't use us or assume that we'd do anything she requested. She knew she was capable and didn't mind doing what we could also do. I aspire to be like Mrs. Noleen and the people of Cairo, because they are the most amazing people I've ever met. One evening, we had the privilege to talk to a panel of community members one night and you could tell that every single resident wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world. Their positive attitudes are contagious and when you're around them you can't help the smile that comes to your face. One of the women I met said something that really got to me; she said "You accept the positive, adapt to the negative and move on". Everything in my life seems little now. My teenage angst problems are so miniscule in the scheme of life. If people who work for everything they have can keep their head up and be so happy with life, what gives me the right to complain about all that God has gifted me with? People, myself included, sometimes get this idea that people in poorer conditions are trapped but they are the farthest thing from it. The majority of Cairo is full of people who believe in their town so much, that they would never imagine leaving. When you enter Cairo, there's a sign that says "Cairo , future city". Someday I hope to have something that I believe in as much as they believe in Cairo. Everyone seemed to know each other and that sense of community is something I don't see every day. Anytime our van drove down a street or even when we walked out of the church we were staying at, everyone waved. No one I met was ever unfriendly, especially the kids. At kids club, the kids were so loving. They loved piggyback rides, and even though our backs ached after all the rides we gave, they were impossible to say no to. It felt so good seeing them smile and laugh as I played with them and got to know the kids. Some of them didn't want to leave and the feeling that I may have made that kid's day better just by giving him or her some attention is indescribable.

What also made my experience so unforgettable were the teens of St. Julie. This was my first mission trip and I went into it pretty blind, being familiar with faces but not really knowing anyone personally. When we loaded up vans, to be truthfully honest, my van was kind of the leftovers. People like me who knew people, but didn't one hundred percent belong. The ride there held occasional conversation and the awkwardness you would expect from ten people who really didn't know each other. It got me thinking, wow I hope the week isn't just me being the odd man out. But during the week I felt so blessed to be around the people on the trip. The

majority of the teens made an effort to get to know me, which I was eternally grateful for. The entire group, excluding those who only stick to their own group, feels like a family and similar to how I feel in love with the people of Cairo, I feel in love with the TNT family. When we weren't working, we had fun with the community and adult chaperones, just ask Mr. O'Donnell. I think I laughed and talked in the van ride home more than my entire life and six hours wasn't nearly enough time to spend with my new best friends. It is because of that van that nearly every song I hear makes me nostalgic to that time we heard it in the van. Cairo mission 2014 is a week that will forever live on in my heart. It has changed me for the better, improved my relationship with God, and because of it I am able to call fantastic people my new friends.

Emily Macijunas

Shay O'Toole
Mission Trip Reflection

Although this was my second time at Cairo, IL my experience was completely different and unforgettable. When I decided to chaperone I somehow failed to realize how much my service would be directed towards the teens instead of Cairo. On my previous two mission trips although I was doing service for others I felt that the experience was very self centered. I was only focused on what I was doing for others and what I was getting out of the trip. At first I was bummed when I realized how much I had to shift my focus away from serving Cairo, but facilitating the trip for the teens, getting to know them, and setting an example for them ended up being fulfilling in a whole different way. Reading my affirmations and hearing from Mrs. O'Donnell—who so kindly told me what the teens had to say about me—make me so happy to be there for them to serve as an example of a college student just a few years older than them that was still doing service and engaged in her faith! I am so hopeful that I inspired at least a few of them to continue their relationship with God and service after TNT and YouthWorks mission trips. The only thing more powerful than serving others is encouraging others to live their lives in a way that serves others as well.

Being with the teens was so inspiring to me and really made me realize the value and knowledge I have to share with them about their faith. It was so interesting to interact with the teens and realize my own growth since high school. I feel that there really is great value to having younger leaders as well as parent chaperones because I really felt that while I have grown a lot in the past few years I could also connect with them very easily. While I could see some of the silly things they got upset over I also still remember quite vividly what it's like to be at their level. I loved spending time with these teens and being with them made me think I might like to work with a youth group one day and would love to spend more time with these teens as my crazy school schedule allows! It was really great to be able to experience service to teens and a different community all in one trip while also having personal growth! I thank God and Mrs. P for giving me this awesome opportunity! I hope to help next year! (:

Nick Macijunas Mission Trip Reflection

My first mission trip was to Cairo, Illinois. A town filled with run-down buildings, abandoned homes, and problems in the past. Cairo also has some of the most positive and motivated people you will ever meet. These people are dedicated to restore Cairo and make it a beautiful and populated city, and really inspired me to do what I was doing on the mission trip.

My mission trip started with finding out that I was going to be in a group that would be doing Kid's Club all week. I didn't even know what kid's club was, but knowing that I wouldn't be able to go to a worksite during the week left me sad. The first day of Kid's Club my group was assigned our role of Reading Post. Although one of my group members was upset with this role and left our group for another one, I got the chance to get to know the people in Reading Post with me during the week, and it was a lot of fun. The thing that made being in Kid's Club all week awesome was being able to meet some awesome kids who loved you and never wanted to go home. They just wanted to stay with you all day! That told me that some kids don't have the best place to go home to, which made me glad that at least we got the chance to make these kids really happy while we were with them.

On Tuesday, Bella and I were told to leave Reading Post, and be the leader for the nine and ten year olds. We then were able to experience all the stations and have even more time to bond with specific kids who were that age. I got to know Ashaiyah and her three siblings, and it was an awesome experience getting to know about their lifestyle and how it's nowhere like mine in Orland Park.

Tuesday was also the day when I really got a feel on all the small group activities that we did at night, including church group time, devotionals, and the beyond site activities. At night, when I was tired from a long day, I enjoyed having church group time to discuss my day with a small number of people. It was a good way to hear what other people had to say about the day. Devotionals, in my opinion, were too early in the morning to be successful in their purpose. Over half of the people during devotional time at 8:30 just laid out in the pews and slept or relaxed for the half hour. When that was over, the beyond site started. The first day, my small group went to a retirement home and played bingo with some of the elderly. Most of the elderly didn't talk, but it was nice to see the smiles on their faces when we got there. Other activities were a prayer walk and power washing the parking lot around one of the auto body shops.

Probably the best part of the week was going to the Baptist church for service. The service was a lot of fun, filled with songs and chants and a great homily by the Pastor. He brought up a lot of good morals that we all should follow, and I took a lot away from that service. Another thing we did during the evening was a community sports night, where people from the community joined our church and another church in either a game of kickball or football (we also got to play a noodle game that was awesome).

On Thursday, thanks to Meg, I got my wish during of getting to experience a work site for one day at least. I joined another group and we all went to David's house, a member of the church, and we all helped him clean his basement, which had caught fire while he was on vacation. I was astonished to see him working so hard, yet he didn't show weakness to the fact that many of his valuables were destroyed in a fire and flood. His strength in his situation motivated me to also have strength in the problems that I have in my life.

This mission trip helped me to open up to people, to let go of things that hold me back in my life, and gave me inspiration to have a positive outlook at life. I look forward to my next mission trip next year!

Isabella Escobedo

Cairo Mission Trip 2014

July 10, 2014

The week of June 22nd 2014, God granted me a fantastic opportunity to visit Cairo, IL. I had experienced a wonderful opportunity in the beautiful community of Cairo. The whole community was very welcoming, friendly and excited to see involved teens helping out a fallen community. I never would have thought I would have so much fun on a mission trip, but I had the best time of my life. This mission trip was the highlight of my summer because I was able to make children smile and I had strengthened my bonds with God.

A major reason for why the mission trip was the highlight of my summer was because I was able to make children smile. My small group on the mission trip had to run Kids Club every day, so I was able to get to know the children very well. I met this wonderful 10 year old girl named Kristiana. She stuck by me every single day in Kids Club. The first day I met her she seemed sad and I found her crying in the bathroom. She said she was having a bad day so I gave her a hug. From the moment I had given her a hug, she started to cry even harder knowing that I was there to comfort her. Once I had experienced that incident, I realized not all children get the feeling of being loved or cared for. Some children raise themselves or have no one that is there who actually takes the time to talk to them. I felt like it was my job to show the children that people care for them, and God will always love them no matter what. I also had to take care of a 2 year old in Kids Club his name was Jahil. Every day when he saw me he would run to me and I would hold and play with him all day. Not only did I make him smile but he made me smile. At the end of Kids Club when I handed him a bag of cookies he smiled and gave me a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. He was very thankful that I was feeding and caring for him. The last day I saw him at Kids Club he wouldn't let me go. When his aunt tried taking him from me he started crying because we had such an amazing time together. Jahil was one of the cutest babies I have ever seen and he would always make my day. Along with Kristiana and Jahil, there were several other children who would be grateful and happy just because I took the time to sit down and talk to them and get to know them. I loved making the children laugh and smile because it made me feel happy to know that a small gesture can make a huge impact on their day.

A great factor for why this past mission trip was the highlight of my summer was because I was able to strengthen my bonds with God. Every day everybody would pray before meals, throughout the day, and before bed. I would ask for forgiveness on myself and on others. I prayed for the sick, for the less fortunate, for family, and for Cairo's community. I saw God's work throughout Cairo because everyone had faith and hope that their community would change for the better. Members of the community and some of the Youth Works leaders would

share their stories on how they have experienced God and how he made an impact on their life. I feel much closer to God after the mission trip because I feel like he touched my heart in several ways making me realize when things are tough it can only get better from there. God made a huge impact on my life that week; he gave me a wonderful opportunity to experience things I have never experienced before. God granted me new friends and friendships throughout this trip that I am very thankful for. Ever since this trip I can't go a day without praying to God and thanking him for everything he has done for me. God is wonderful, and he does amazing things that is thought to be impossible. I cannot thank God enough for how fortunate I am compared to others living in Cairo and other poor places in the world. I am so thankful to be a child of God.



In conclusion, I am very thankful I went on this year's mission trip because I was able to make children smile, and I strengthened my bonds with God. This year's mission trip was the highlight of my summer. I am very thankful for God granting me the opportunity to go on this trip and for being a part of my life. I believe this mission trip changed my life for the better making me feel much closer to God. I am so thankful I was able to experience this wonderful event and I cannot wait for next year's mission trip.

Isabella Escobedo

Jonathan De Jesus Martinez

Mission is not only to help out the community but to also never forget what you did for them. Mission is not only a way to meet new people but to create great bonds with them and to never forget it.

The Mission at Cairo was just a blast. Many think that it's just an old broken town but it really isn't. Cairo has grown and accomplished so much. Most people look at it as rundown but it is really gaining progress.

The people in Cairo are the nicest sweetest people you will ever meet. Stereotypically here back home if there is a white van all kids are told to run but in Cairo the kids there jump into the van with joy and not thinking about what might happen next.

The people have small homes but that is what they only need. Cairo was just an amazing experience and I just can't wait to come back in the next 3 years.

Cairo 2014 was the best week of summer. It was such a great experience and I am glad I got to spend it with my closest friends. This trip has changed my life for the best. It was amazing to see how the community was so welcoming of everyone no matter what, and how everyone always looked at the positive in everything. One thing that really stuck out to me was everyone kept saying how they are not stuck in Cairo they chose to be in Cairo and love the town. This really embraced the closeness of the community and the love they have for one another. While in Cairo I never saw one person complain because they didn't have the brand name clothes or the most up to date technology. This showed me how much we really have because we will complain about the smallest things in life. This trip has showed me to not sweat the small things in life and always stay positive. One thing I will never forget about Cairo is the kids in Kid's Club. They were the happiest people I have ever met and they always encouraged you. Even during all the shoulder rides and all the kids saying "Can I get on your back?" they always had a smile on their face. While I was playing catch with a little boy named Donavon I threw the Frisbee and told him that it was a bad throw and he told me that that was a great pass and I am doing a great job. The second day I was at Kid's Club Donavon ran up to be before I even noticed him and gave me a big hug. He showed me that no matter what happens always be happy and stay positive. This trip was a great experience and the absolute happiest week of my summer!

Cairo is a town stricken with poverty, that's the part that's easy to see. It's everywhere, from the crumbling building to the abandoned houses. The lack of people, even in what is supposed to be the center of town. Seeing the bad is immediate, finding the good seemed impossible. At least that's what I thought until I actually meet some of the people who call Cairo home, that's where the good in Cairo comes from. It's in those who have hope and love for their town even though they know outsiders see it. To the rest of the world Cairo is seemingly worthless, but to these people it's everything. They spoke of only the best in Cairo, of how they have and will continue to improve it, how they not only think, but know one day, with the help of God, Cairo will be a thriving town again. To have such a positive attitude after dealing with so many hardships is truly a gift and it is one that I feel blessed to have witnessed. I thank God for introducing me to those people who love Cairo because they taught me how powerful the gifts of hope and love can be, especially when they come from Him.

Sam O'Sullivan

JOHN LETZ

This being my third mission trip, I have to say, this was the best one. Before actually entering Cairo though, I did hear stories and I saw the stats, and for a moment it did get me nervous. Even as I entered I could tell the stories were true from the uncut grass to the vines surrounding abandoned houses. So it all started when I myself signed up for Outrageous Sports Camp. This camp does a different sport every week and that week we were supposed to play football, that immediately made me raise my hand to sign up. But then when we got there, Show, our Youth Works leader, made a mistake and it was actually basketball we were playing that week. I wasn't too disappointed, at least we didn't have to play outside in the boiling heat. So first day right? I knew what to expect, kids are always animals on their first day. Cursing here and there, throwing elbows, pushing and shoving. After the first day I thought to myself, there is no way I'm going to survive for the next three days. Second day, I swear I thought I was dreaming, the kid's moods changed in one day, one day, just like that. It was unbelievable how these kids treated each other, with respect, and kindness. Even as I saw them play a game of basketball, high-fiving each other, even if they missed the shot they would say "Nice shot." So as I found myself closer to this community, the people inside it, it was just an ordinary neighborhood. Sure it might have poverty, it just needs some fixing up. But I don't think of myself as a hero, or a better person for doing this, I just hope I can use what I did in Cairo, in my community. Every town needs to be fixed somehow, nothings perfect. So what did I get out of this trip? To help communities and people out of altruism. Not expecting anything back. That is what I got out of this mission trip, and I'm glad this wasn't my last one.

Cairo mission trip 2014. Mr. Tim Macijunas

To live like Jesus: Reflection paper

“I am not going to just read all day.. That’s boring.” “I didn’t sign up for the mission trip to do this.” Why can’t I go on the van to pick up the kids, I was told I could go.” “I am tired.” “Can I switch groups?” These phrases were made by a few of the youths on the opening day of mission trip 2014. For someone who had never gone on a trip before this was not a good first impression. These views were a small majority of the teens, probably teens that should have not been on the trip. This being said my experience was one that truly changed my life. The overwhelming majority of the teens were wonderful. They were respectful, hardworking, supportive, work well together and respected the community of St. Julie well.

As a first time leader on a mission trip, there were times that I was not sure what I should be doing, and that lack of knowing sometimes made me feel that I should be doing more to contribute than I did. As someone who is usually quite organized, the lack of not knowing what was happening at times was uncomfortable. I was very fortunate to be able to spend time with Tom Nolan. His experience as someone who had gone on many trips served as a great support to me and was also helpful when I needed help. He is a dedicated individual to go on the trip especially since it was many years since he had a child young enough to go on the trip.

My small group that I worked with was amazing. It was appropriate that our group was named “Strong”. They were strong willed, strong communicators and a strong cohesive group. They were hard working and very dedicated to what they were trying to do, from painting a house, to planning a garden and facilitating kids club. The work project time that we had was one of the highlights of the trip for me. It gave me an opportunity to get to know the teens in my small group and the way that we interacted throughout was special. Planting the garden and helping things to grow was somewhat symbolic to what were trying to accomplish in Cairo, hoping that the town of Cairo would grow into the city it once was. We also hoped to grow as a result of the trip but personally and spiritually.

My small group also knew there was more to the mission trip than work. I feel that the small group discussions after club went well. They were respectful. Since several of the teens were veterans and had gone for several years I asked them to assist in facilitating the discussions and the teens seemed to respond to them well. Outside of my group I was impressed with the cohesiveness of the large group. The interaction that they had with each other was something to watch. They generally knew when to be serious and when to have a good time.

Doing devotions were new to me. After spending time doing them on the trip, I will find time to incorporate them into my daily life. I feel it helped me focus and get my day started on a very positive note.

Some of the highlights of the trip for me included the time spent with members of the community. There were so many positive people. There was Mrs. Noline, whose house we helped paint. Her story was amazing, the hope that she had for herself and the community was inspiring. The panel at the church provided me an opportunity to meet other people who shared a similar positive outlook towards the development of Cairo. One of elders at the church, Elder Tonzo Graham, his enthusiasm towards what we were doing and his interaction with our group was heartwarming. A few more highlights for me was the foot washing on the last night. It was impressive, once I got over the initial fear that I would not be able to make the experience as memorable as it needed to, I felt it was a great way to end the week. On a personal note a highlight for me was to see how much my children grew during the week. They were able to

meet new people, develop relationships that are stronger in the weeks since the trip, and to see how the trip changed them was overwhelming for me. Listening to my son describe the work he did at the man's house that had caught fire, and his response to it almost brought me to tears. One final highlight and sums up the trip for me was the van ride home from Cairo. It was also very cool to see how some of the teens had made relationships with others they did not know previously. My van going down there appeared to be comprised of those people that were not part of other groups. The ride down there tended to be fairly quieter than expected, but on Friday that same group was in my van and it was amazing how much they were talking, laughing and getting along. Several of them commented that it was because they had spent the week getting to know each other. In the initial meeting with the leaders, I remember being told that the ride home would be quiet due to everyone being tired from the week. I was pleasantly surprised that the opposite was the case. There was only one person who slept. The others were singing, laughing and reminiscing about the week. I couldn't have asked for a better ending to an outstanding trip. I came into this week not sure what to expect, somewhat nervous, but it was a great week, and I look forward to going on future mission trips.

Mr. Tim Macijunas

Kayla Wyleta Mission Trip Reflection 2014 Cairo, Illinois.

The 2014 missions trip to Cairo Illinois was my second mission trip with TNT.

This trip by far made my summer great. Spending five days in Cairo changed my perspective on life. Everyone has different opinions about a person or a place, and all the bad things I had previously heard about Cairo were proved wrong. The community in Cairo welcomed us with open arms since day one. From waving to us when we passed, to the kids in kids club asking to get on our backs I never once felt alone on this trip. While in Cairo I realized I wasn't there because they needed me, I was there because I needed them. The positivity the people showed was astonishing to me. My favorite part about this week though was my two days on worksite. I went to a women names Ms. Noleen's house to help scrape and paint her garage which was previously a motel. While being there she had offered us ice cold drinks, bakes us brownies, and allowed us to eat lunch in her home on hot days. Talking and learning about Ms. Noleen's past and why she loved Cairo was very interesting to me. Also throughout the week we went to three community events which included sports night, mass, and a cookout. At all these events there was never a dull moment. Everyone was active and social with each other. I was going through my bible and found a passage in John 21:25 "There are also many other things Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the book that would be written". This passage made me think of all the wonderful things that I had learned in Cairo, and how it

Kayla Wyleta Mission Trip Reflection 2014 Cairo, Illinois.

would be impossible to write all of it. Saying goodbye to Cairo was really tough for me because of all the new friendships I made. I can't wait till I go back in 3 years.

My trip to Cairo, Illinois has been a journey I will never forget. This mission trip was my first time on any mission trip, and I am so glad that I decided to go on this one. Cairo has opened my eyes to the life around me, and has strengthened my relationship with God. The people and the town of Cairo was amazing, and I would go back there in a heartbeat to visit again. Even though Cairo was, and is still, considered one of the poorest towns in America today, when I look around at Cairo, I can see it's potential. Sure, the buildings may be run down, but the people's spirits are still high. They believe that their city will be great again like it once was. I also believe that it will be beautiful again. My favorite part of the city was the museum. It was one of the oldest and coolest buildings there. The history of Cairo is what really got me. To see all those pictures and artifacts just showed me that this town had a history, like everything else in the world. Everyone and everything has a background that has gotten them here today. The artifacts in the museum were amazing and interesting to look at. My other favorite location was at the tip of Illinois. Standing there, you could see where the Mississippi River met the Ohio River and became one. On either side of the river, you could see Kentucky and Missouri. It was such a beautiful sight to see. I didn't just fall in love with the appearance of the town, but I fell in love with the people of Cairo. Just driving into the city made me realize how friendly the people of this town were. They would wave to us as we drove by in the vans like they already knew us. The first people that I met in Cairo was the firefighter who does it all and the pastor. I can't remember their names, but they really made an impact on my life. The way they looked at life even though they had barely anything was amazing. People in today's society take everything we have for granted. The people of Cairo really appreciate everything they have, especially their friends and family. These two people really changed my perspective on things. They had su-

a positive attitude on life, and they believed that was their plan for them. He planned our lives perfectly imperfect. God wanted it to be this way, so this is how it has to be. Also, these two people of Cairo were hilarious. They were always crackin jokes. It was nice to see that they still kept a sense of humor during this time of hardship. The next set of people who changed my life were the group of kids I got to see everyday. Crew One was scheduled to be in Kid's Club all week. At first I will admit that I was a little disappointed, but as the week went on, I was so glad I got to stay. The kids were just the best. They were such a lovable group of kids, and I couldn't have asked for anything else. The kids always wanted to braid our hair, or get on our backs. I didn't mind either of those because they were so cute and lovable. My favorite part of Kid's Club was that we were assigned to Reading Post. We read the story of Jonah to the children, and just watching them comprehend the story was adorable. The reason I loved reading post was because you actually had one on one time with the kids. They would sit on your lap during the story, and then they would talk about their home life and their family. The one boy who got me was Jermar. He was only five years old, but he talked and acted a lot older. Jermar was the most adorable kid ever. ~~He~~ had this strong accent that hooked me from the beginning. Then he started to tell me about his family, and what he liked to do for fun. He was just like any other kid. Jermar still watched movies, played Xbox, and went to Chuck E. Cheese with his grandma. I could tell that his parents were trying their hardest to give him a normal childhood. Everyday, Jermar came back and just talked to me about everything and anything. Being in Kid's Club all week allowed me to create a bond with Jermar that I will hold close to me forever. Water day with the kids was so fun! The sprinkler system was so cool, and the kids just had a blast. Also, during the community cook out, I met this little kid named JJ. He was only two and just full of energy. JJ and I played at the park together, and he had the most contagious laugh. JJ was just the cutest thing. The kids of Cairo really hit me hard. I thought that they would have nothing, but they were so grateful for what they did have. The next thing

Missouri. My group went to Missouri to visit a nursing home. The elderly really appreciated us being there, and we had a blast playing bingo. We also got to go to Kentucky. At the end of our trip, we visited the cross in Kentucky. It was very big and beautiful. Going to different places and states really made this trip memorable. The last thing that really stood out to me during this mission trip was how much our faith played a role in this community, and in ourselves. Being Catholic and believing in God has made a difference on this trip. The people of Cairo really cherish their faith as well. I believe that is why they have such a positive outlook on life. God created us and the world exactly how he wanted it. He did everything for a purpose, and going on this trip made me realize that I was sent there for a reason. I was sent there to help people who are less fortunate than I am. This trip was an eye opener for me. The people of Cairo will change their town. With the attitude they have, anything is possible. We may have left our handprints there, but the people of this town will leave their whole heart and mind in their community. The people that I met in Cairo were just amazing, especially the kids. The town was gorgeous, and I would love to go back and visit again. I also made many new friendships with the other teens on the trip. I feel like we are one big family now. I have created a lot of memories on this mission trip to Cairo, and I can't wait to make more memories next summer! :)

Melissa Ward ♡

Cairo Reflection

Kendall Ericksen

Cairo, IL.

I have previously done one mission trip prior to this one. I chose to go on this one because I fell in love with Cairo the first time, but it defiantly did not impact me the way the first one did. A few things I did enjoy were making new relationships for example meeting Robert and having a positive impact on his life. For example I taught him how to hug. A few things I disliked were the way the Youthworks leaders preached to us almost feeling like we were unwelcomed and uninvolved with this trip. Another thing I disliked was small group. I felt judged. Most of the week I looked forward to talking to Robert and the children at kids club. Work cites were not very productive this year which was unfortunate because I felt like there was a lot to be done in the community and I felt like I wasn't making an impact. Thanks for the memories and giving me a positive opportunity to serve God.

Emily Evans

Mission Trip 2014

Cairo, IL.

At the end of every day on this year's mission trip we were asked to choose one word to describe that day overall. One word to describe this mission trip to Cairo, IL would be interesting. My first trip to Cairo was one of the best experiences of my life. My second trip here, simply stated, did not meet my expectations. I worked hard, learned a lot about people and enjoyed spending time with the children at kids club. Not everything always turns out the way we want it to, but God has a plan for everything. This trip I really focused on building relationships with my fellow youth. I bonded with many people, especially those in my small group. My small group was like my little family for the week. We worked well together and we always knew how to make each other laugh. Whether it was quoting movies or singing along to them, we were always smiling. This was by far the best small group I've had yet. Mission trips are always a good way for me to get away from everything and give back a little. Everyday I thank God for all of the blessings he has given me. I couldn't ask for a better family, church, or place to call home. All of these things are God's doing and these mission trips make me realize how fortunate I am. I am grateful for the opportunity to go on these mission trips. They truly change my life.

Emily Evans

Mission Trip Refelction

John 15:12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you..."

This verse explains my experience at Cairo, Illinois. Cairo was my second and final mission trip with St. Julie. I feel that this trip has changed not only my relationship with God but also my love for others. Before going into mission trip I was told what Cairo was. Cairo was supposed to be the Chicago of the south for those that don't already know. Back in the early 1900s, Cairo was used as a port for ships due to the fact that it connects the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Over time, Cairo lost the population and fortune it once had. Today, people see Cairo as a deprived city. When told about Cairo I was expecting the worse. When the white vans first arrived, I didn't know what to think. There were so many half demolished buldings. I saw graffiti on the outside of homes. I saw bordered up buildings that looked absolute helpless. I was nervous when first entering Cairo. I didn't know how we were going to fix a town this broken. When we first arrived at the church, I couldn't wait to start helping. Not knowing what our exact plans were, I was ready for anything. For this being my 2nd and final mission trip, I wanted to do as much work and helping out as I possibly could. Meeting the community completely changed my perspective on everything. I couldn't be more thankful and blessed for the opportunity I was given. I made great friendships with most of the community. I was amazed at how positive and loving they all were. I couldn't believe that in a city this poor and deprived, the community still had a positive out look on everything. The baptist church that we visited talked about the struggles the town was going through. They never lost their faith in God. This trip brought my relationship with God so much closer than it already was. I learned to care and love for others. This experience taught me that God wants you to love others and go out of your way to help others. Cario will forever be a home to me and I couldn't be more blessed. I will never forget the experience I had and the amazing friendships I've made.

Brandy Gran

MaryKay Junis

Cairo Reflection

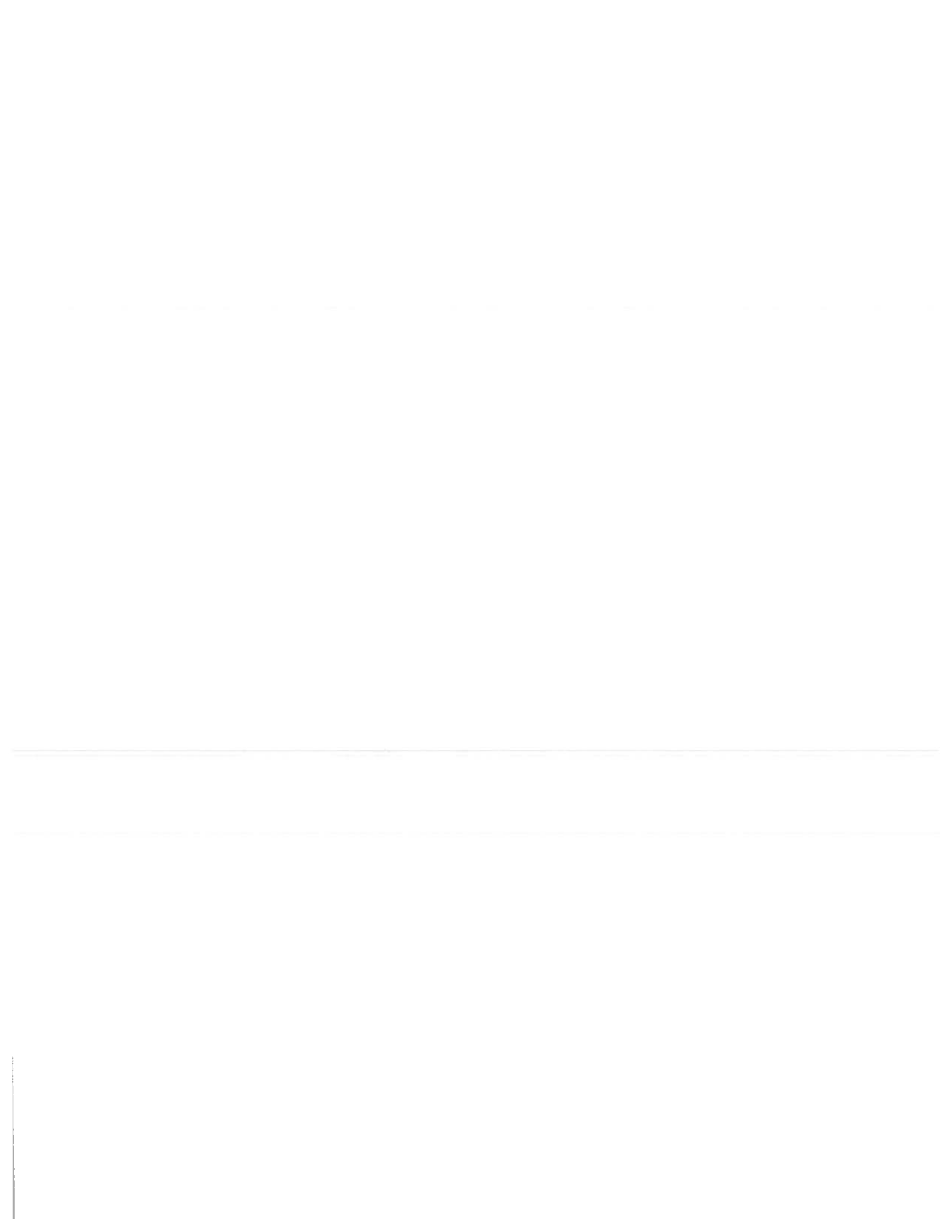
I liked this mission trip more than I liked Cass Lake, only because of their attitude and kindness in Cairo, TL.

I think we all learned a lot from the people of Cairo in one week. For example, how positive most of them are and how open they were. A lot of times, we take what we have for granted. When I got home from mission trip, I was so grateful to have what I have. They stay positive in a negative community.

The kids there usually haven't been out of Cairo, so they haven't seen big cities, or rich communities. They know they don't live in the best place, but they know that it's home.

I can't wait to go back to Cairo in three years for my last mission trip.

I hope they make improvements and stay positive throughout the year!



Cairo 2014

Until this trip I never realized how much of an impact the community and the people we were serving had on me. If I am going to be completely honest, I can't say that my mission experience was completely positive. The trip definitely had its highs and lows. There was a lot of drama between some of the people on the trip, which really put me in a bad mood. However, the one thing that I could always count on to make me smile no matter what happened that day was the kids in kids club and the people we interacted with. The whole Cairo community was always so hopeful and able to see the good in any situation that God had put them in. I had never realized how much I had to learn from them. Just as much I was helping them, they were helping me too. They taught me that God doesn't make mistakes. Everything that happens in your life happens because God wanted it to. Being with the people in the community really showed me what these mission trips were about. It's not about getting a house painted, getting community service hours, or hanging out with your friends for a week. It's about building relationships, caring for one another, sharing your faith, and learning from each other.

**Cairo, Illinois
Reflection Paper**

At the end of June, I went to Cairo Illinois with some amazing friendly people. I worked with kids throughout the week. At night we ate snacks we talked and had all kinds of fun with each other and, of course, went to bed. The last night was the most fun. Just being with my friends late at night was fun. Some of my friends were super hyper and others not so much. The last day with the kids was the most fun as well. The whole water day thing was amazing.

I learned how to make friends with people I didn't know at all. They are amazing friends. I will never forget them. I also learned how to work and have fun with kids. I remember there was a little girl who asked me if she could braid my hair. My hair was short so it was sort of a silly question to ask but I liked that she asked it. I learned how to get along with people as well, mostly on the van trip there and back. I listened to talking, laughing, snorting, and music as I tried to nap.

I am thankful for the awesome friends I have made on this trip. I cannot describe how much I miss them. I am also thankful for the opportunity to help others in need. It was nice helping out with the kids. I am thankful for the kind adults as well. If it wasn't for them, and I appreciate their efforts, I would not have meet all of these amazing friends without their help.

Kelsey Wegg

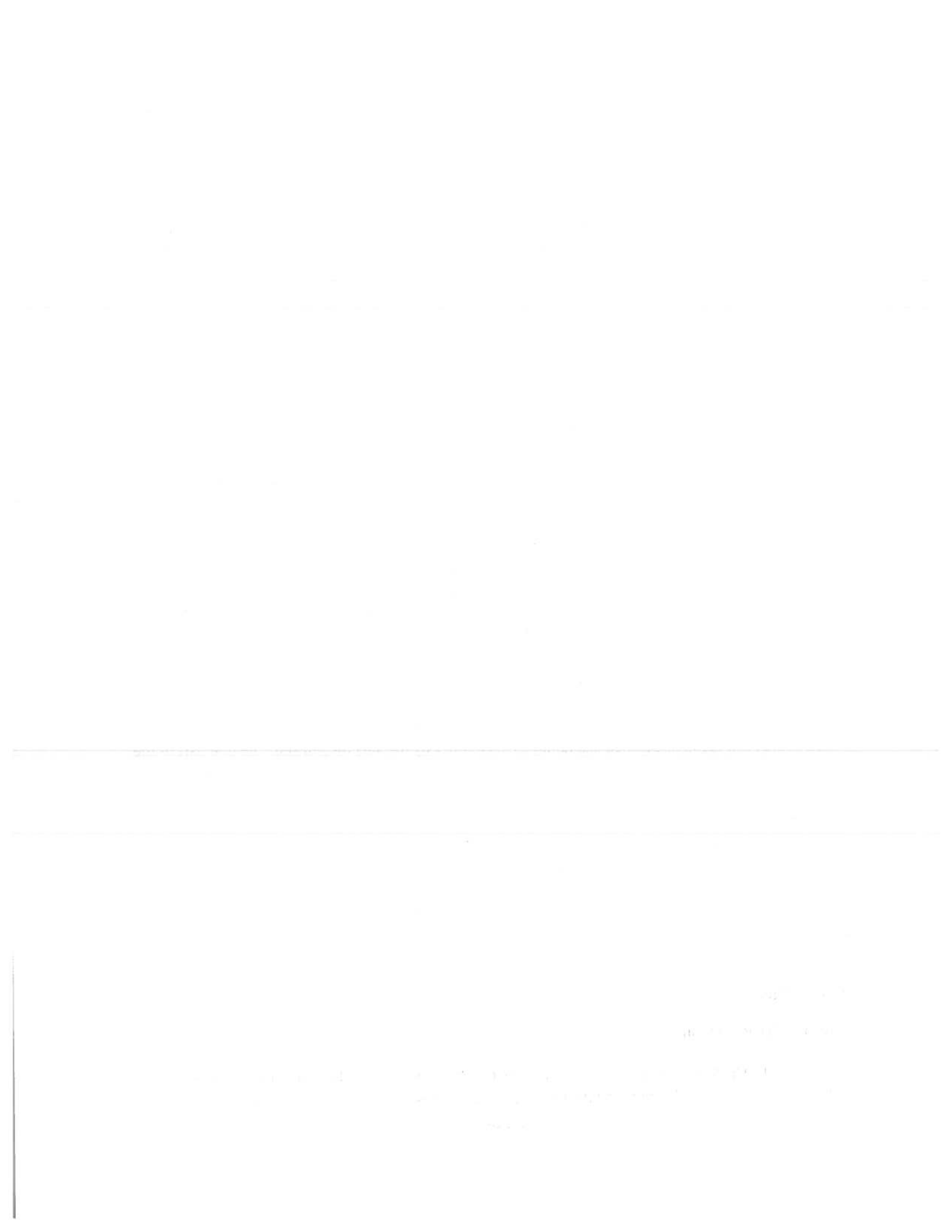
Mission 2014 Reflection

I am so glad that I went on mission this year. Katie Ruane had told me about it and how much fun she has every year. She also introduced me to all of her friends she had made on previous mission trips with St. Julie. A lot of these friends were kids that went to our own school, but she would not have met them otherwise. As I met Katie's new friends, more and more stories were told about how the mission trip was the one week of the whole year that everyone looks forward to. After hearing so many good things about the trip, I knew I wanted to be a part of the fun. Not knowing much to expect besides great memories, I was excited to go.

After the first day, I was actually surprised how little time we actually spent working, for either Kids Club or the work sites. I somewhat felt like our presence was being wasted. I wanted to do more for Cairo. After some time, though, I realized that our restricted time helping left a huge mark on the people of Cairo. It didn't matter that I was only with the kids for two hours a day and it didn't matter how fast I helped paint Mrs. N.'s garage. Cairo was thankful for any help they got and I was thankful for helping them.

Whether I was working, eating, cleaning, or attempting to sleep, I made some unforgettable friends, as promised. No matter who I talked to, all of the kids were so friendly. I am so glad I got the chance to break out of my comfort zone and start talking to some new people. I am no longer afraid to get to know kids outside of my grade or outside of my school. I feel like that was an opening to long lasting relationships. And I can already see a change. Even the day we got back from mission, a bunch of us met a few hours later to support Josh O'Donnell and John Letz at their baseball game. The St. Julie TNT obviously cannot be away from each other for very long.

The one part about my first mission trip I will never forget, however, was the visit to the Baptist church. All of the speakers seemed like family to each other by the way they talked. The one part of the visit I will always remember was when one of them said, "If you ever feel alone, you can come back here; because you'll always be loved when you're here in Cairo." That's when I started crying, and couldn't stop crying. That's when I realized that Cairo could help us more than we could ever dream to help them. Lots of people think that Cairo is dead. They think that Cairo isn't worth saving. But I think that that city will reach new heights. I hope that Cairo spreads its positivity and spreads its friendliness to far places. Others think that Cairo needs our help. But I believe that we need their help. I think that people coming to work in Cairo should be a little less in control, and a little more open to the change that amazing city can make on them. I think we should all be a little more like Cairo.



MaryKay Junis

Cairo Reflection

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