

Mission trip 2012 to Logan, WV, was my very first mission trip. My daughter, Ashley, had already gone on three missions; my son, Josh, and husband, Tom, had been on one; and they were all going with me as a family on this special trip. This particular mission was special for a few reasons. It would be Ashley's last trip as a teen with TNT's youth group as she is now a high school graduate. It would be the final opportunity for us to all go together as a family because you never know what the future may hold. Also, the trip would be to help the community of Logan, WV, where my mother was born and grew up. Her side of our family is from that area and many still live there. My mother and her family were very poor when she was there. They didn't even have indoor plumbing until she was sixteen years old. My grandfather, who we called "Papaw," was a coal miner there for many years until he moved my mother and her mother to Chicago in search of better and safer work. They were hard-working people with a strong faith in God. They were successful in making a new and good life in Chicago. Quite a few of our relatives soon followed them to Chicago!

I'm not really sure what I expected on this trip, but I had some ideas of what it might be like. Let me just say that I truly had no idea! I went with the idea that I was going to change lives and make a big difference in Logan... who did I think I was? I thought that by being kind, caring, friendly, loving and helping in any way that I could that I would make a difference. I wanted to leave a footprint.

The first couple of days there I spent getting acclimated to the schedule (I thought the only thing that could wake me at 6am would be a fire!), trying to learn the names of all of the teens, adults, Youthworks staff and the other group we would be working alongside (don't they know people over 40 suffer from memory loss?). I was immersed in learning how to be a good chaperone for the teens by delving into my devotions, writing affirmations for others, really learning all of the different ways we can worship God, and learning how to lead our nightly small group discussions. I was trying so hard to learn and do well at all of these and working with the kids at Kids Club as well. We played games, did crafts, wrote poems, did skits, talked with them, listened to them, polished the girls' fingernails, and so much more! By the third day, I was completely overwhelmed! I began to cry at the smallest of things. I began to feel inadequate as a person and as a Christian. I felt as though I could not do enough and that I wasn't making a difference for the people in this community. It became very self-defeating for me. My feelings of inadequacy continued to build and I became more emotional, but I pushed on with the wonderful encouragement I received from Mrs. Pluchar, my husband, Tom, and Alyssa, the Site Director. Their love, support, understanding and encouragement were extraordinary.

The last couple of days I was able to help the community by doing physical labor. One day we were able to help the volunteers from the Appalachian Service Project (ASP) unload a truck full of sheet rock. A group of teens along with Mrs. Pluchar and I worked for about an hour and a half getting the truck unloaded and placed in storage. It was 100 degrees that day! You could tell the heat was getting to Mrs. Pluchar because she tried to kill me! (She almost accidentally pushed me off the truck through the side door with a piece of sheet rock). We were all so happy to be helping in some small way. The next day I was able to join another work group as they finished a few small jobs at a home they had washed and painted during the week. The homeowners, Mike and Kim, were the kindest, warm, loving people you could hope to meet. They hugged everyone from the group as we were saying our good-byes and the owner, Mike, was crying the whole time. The group truly made a deep connection with him and got to know him on a personal level. By the last day, Mike began to share some of the mistakes he had made in his life and tried to encourage the teens to continue on their faith journey and to stay away from bad influences. The Holy Spirit was with us!

After sadly leaving Mike and Kim's with tear-filled eyes, we went to help another work group that had been scraping layer after layer of paint from a home for four days! The home belonged to a sweet, kind, friendly, lady named Anita. Her home was being worked on by one of our groups and by the ASP. Our group was scraping and washing paint from the home...they scraped through 3 layers of paint (note to parents: these teens may have developed a phobia of paint scrapers!). The ASP was working on her foundation, which was being held up on one side by a car jack because it was sinking. Anita really enjoyed the teens and the leaders who came all week and invited them into her home to see her pets. The group really made a connection with her and her with them.

While in Logan, I had the opportunity to meet several people purely by chance that my mother went to school with, which was amazing to me. My children tease me all the time and say that I will talk to anyone. The truth is that I do talk to people and I enjoy talking to people. The truth is that if I would not have talked to those people, I would never have known that they knew and went to school with my mother (Ashley & Josh...those people I met knew and went to school with your grandmother when she was a young girl!) That is really awesome! On the way to a work site, we happened to drive through the tiny area, known there as a holler, of Monitor within Logan. Monitor is where my mother grew up. Words cannot describe how I felt when I

saw it. I'm sure God led me there. If I wouldn't have gone on that trip, I wouldn't have gone down that road which led us through the area that she was from. It just happened that way.

The time seemed to fly by and before I knew it, the week was sadly coming to an end. This was bitter sweet. It would be nice to go back home to family, friends and all of the comforts of home. However, it just didn't seem like we had enough time to do enough to help in all of the ways that you wish you could. As I ponder and reflect on the trip, I realize that it is okay to have high expectations. I just have to remember that everything we do as a group or as an individual does make a difference...it doesn't matter how big or how small. All of what we do on a mission is God's work. So, I pray for the people of WV and the people who come to help them.

It was wonderful getting to know so many of the teens during the week. They are such a terrific group! I had so much fun "bouncing" in the party van with Uncle Joe and my beautiful nieces! I cannot begin to express how grateful I am for having had the opportunity to go on this trip. Thoughts of the trip flood my head all of the time...and I hope to go on another trip like this one in the future. (Note to Tom: Those "Country Roads" took me home to my momma's mountain!)

Mrs. Melissa O'Donnell

Mission 2012 Reflection

My first thoughts when driving into the town were, "How can a place as beautiful as this be one of the poorest places in the country?" You would normally think that with beautiful scenery comes prosperity, but that was not the case with Logan. Logan is a poor area in rural West Virginia and we were there to change it. Everyone from Logan was so friendly and welcoming; they were almost the opposite of many people from around here. It also felt like in Logan relationships grew faster than anywhere else; you can find friends that will last a lifetime around every corner. All it can take is a sad child and a mutual need to help him or her, a game of four square, or shooting a nonexistent dart. Another thing about Logan was the pace that people lived. Everything seemed to be slower but filled with more. The days in Logan seemed longer due to their slower pace of life. The people there never seemed in a rush like we always seem to be out here. Every day I kept thinking of lyrics from the song "Mayberry" by Rascal Flatts, "Sometimes it seems this world is spinning faster, than it did in the old days." In Logan the world spins slower so you can really take in everything you see and really get to know people. Overall, Mission 2012 was an amazing trip and I am already looking forward to next years trip!

**From:** Shannon Kline <shannon.kline44@sbcglobal.net>  
**To:** smcp6 <smcp6@aol.com>  
**Subject:** Mission reflection  
**Date:** Sun, Jul 15, 2012 3:48 pm

:( I hate writing mission reflections that everyone is going to read. Feel free to causally forget to run mine off. :P

I have this plan in life... And that's to change the world. It's been something I have always wanted to do... But I never had the courage to make an attempt at it, or really set my mind to making a difference in life.

Mission trip this year changed that. I've gone the past three years, and it's always been a wonderful experience. I've always left with this feeling that God is calling me to do that for a living... To be with children and make them feel loved and like they matter and just try and change a little part of their day and make them smile just a little more than they were.

Unfortunately, every time I leave mission trip, the feeling trails off... I go back to life and focus on my unfulfilling minimum wage job and hanging out with friends and never set aside time to make people smile... Like time to intentionally go out of my way to turn someone's day around; to do something fulfilling.

But this time, I've decided to change.

This mission trip has taught me that I can and I will make a difference... And I have set aside time to make that happen.

The mission trip to Logan, West Virginia was my second mission trip and it was really fun and I enjoyed it. I couldn't wait to go on this one since the last mission trip in Cairo had ended. I had a great time in Cairo without knowing anyone really well, and now that I actually knew a lot of people it was better than ever. This time I had an idea of what would happen, but it was still very unpredictable.

When we first arrived we were greeted by the Youthworks staff and members from the other church. The other church helped us carry in some of our bags and I knew that was a good sign. It was really cool how right away we worked as a team without really introducing each other. The place we stayed in was very different than the one in Cairo. The place was separated into two different buildings unlike Cairo which was one building. I liked it. What was really different was that where we slept was air conditioned and had bunks. All of the seniors said the sleeping quarters were never this nice. The Youthworks staff was really cool and fun just like at Cairo. They loved their jobs and took pride in it. They started to get to know us right away. The staff did a really good job with the evening club. They were good with the music and put on some really funny skits. The place where we stayed also had a four square court which was really awesome. I don't know what we would have done if we didn't have that. It felt like someone was always playing it.

The way they did work sites and Kid's Club was very unusual. We would usually split up half and half. Half would go to work sites for two days and the other half would go to Kid's Club. After the two days we would switch. The Youthworks staff said that in West Virginia the people who live here were huge with building relationships with people, so we would stay in either Kid's Club or a work site for the whole week. This was the first time this happened with any mission trip. I got a work site and I was happy I did. I still wanted to do Kid's Club too, but I like doing the more physical work. On my groups site, I was expecting to do some painting since that was what I did last year. But, we were told that we would have to build a wheel chair ramp. I was really excited and my group was too. Everyone else was a little jealous that we didn't have to paint. I knew that building the ramp would be a lot harder, but I liked the work. When we first got there no one really had any experience dealing with wood and carpentry, except for Mr. Evans. Without him we would have gotten absolutely nowhere. Our whole group was thankful that we had him to help. On the first day, we had to dig around 28 post holes that were two feet deep each. That was probably one of the hardest things that I have ever done in my entire life. The second day, we finished the main deck that would support the whole thing. Again, without Mr. Evans, it would have never happened. On the third day, we had to set more posts and adjust some of the holes so they would line up. On the fourth day, we only finished half of the ramp, but everyone was still proud of themselves. At the end, all of us knew how to dig post holes and make sure things were square and level, thanks to Mr. Evans.

Overall the mission trip was an awesome experience and I cannot wait for the next one. I am really excited to find out where we go next. I thought I had plenty of friends before the mission trip and now that nearly doubled. The mission trips just keep getting better and better. I will miss anything to go on it again. It was awesome!

John Letz

JOHN LETZ

When I heard what the mission trip was all about, ~~it~~ it didn't seem fun or hard. So I didn't care much to go on this trip. The car ride was long, and I only knew 5 people. So by this time I had two things to do, find out what I'm supposed to do when I get to West Virginia, and meet most of everyone. So when I got there, I saw new ~~faces~~ faces from a different church/state. When we went to dinner, I thought we'd just get the same choices everyday. Turns out we ~~only~~ only got one main meal, different everyday, and that goes for breakfast. Now, I didn't expect to use my phone all the time, but if one of leaders caught you using it, ~~that~~ they take it away from you for a week. With this trip being religious, I thought we were gonna go to bed at 9:30 or 10:00, instead it was 11:00. Now, I didn't know that there were two groups, kids' club, and work's site. So I thought you got to choose and then switch off. Completely opposite, they chose for you and you had to stay with that for the whole week, I wasn't too happy about that. ~~But~~ ~~my~~ ~~first~~ ~~day~~ So they were explaining what we were to expect, kids thinking we're stupid, segregation, and them trying to start fights. So it didn't sound like it was going to be fun at all. But when they came

I had a blast and so did they. But sometimes I wouldn't when 20 of them are on my back asking for a piggy back ride. In the middle of kids ~~the~~ club they served lunch to us and the kids. After the kids left we had free time, dinner, then what we call ~~with~~ youth's works in the club room, we would sing, pray, and look upon what we did that day, and how god helped us. On Thursday, the last day, the ~~was~~ this story in the Bible. It was this lady who didn't believe in God nor Jesus. But one day Jesus was invited to one of the disciples house, and the lady came in covered ~~the~~ Jesus feet with tears and ~~was~~ dried the with her hair and sprayed her expensive ~~the~~ perfume on his feet do we did something like that, and after the leaders washed our feet, they would say a prayer and all the great things about ourselves. Then ~~at~~ just right after that I had an amazing ~~experience~~ experience, I had a conversation with my Uncle Mike. My Uncle Mike that had passed away when I was only six. So ~~in~~ in the beginning I didn't care much for this trip, but in the end it made a huge impact on my life.



When I signed up for the mission trip, honestly, I did it for the service hours. But after experiencing it, it was one of the most interesting experiences of my life. I got to see different ways that people live. It was all very interesting.

One of my favorite moments or parts of the trip was connecting to people from different churches and St. Julies church. It was nice talking and getting to know everyone. It made me feel good and I hope it made others feel good. Also, visiting the nursing homes made me feel good. All of the people I talked to were so happy to talk to me. It made me feel better.

This mission trip changed me for the good. I think it brought me closer to god and made me appreciate things more. It taught me to be grateful for what I have. I think I want to go on another one. Maybe three. I really enjoyed it and I hope more people should definitely experience this.

Mike O'Keefe

Ryan McGuire

10 t-shirts.

12 people crammed into a van.

13 hours of travel time.

50 billion bathroom stops

18 bottles of Mountain Dew

4 days of scraping paint

17 hornet nests

25 cats, rats, birds and snakes

5ASP workers

4 square

3 AM affirmations

2 bunk beds

1 God

1 Mission

.....COUNTLESS MEMORIES

Logan, WV

Jimmy McGuire

Love,

A powerful word

It means making strong friendships in one week

It means discovering all of God's creations

It means being a guardian

It means giving kids something fun to do

It means talking with residents at a nursing home

It means spreading God's word

It means playing 4 square

It means driving 11 hours

It means joking around

It means stepping outside of your box

It means having fun

It means going out of your way to help

It means taking time from your summer to serve

It means never wanting to leave

It means sharing your experience

It means looking forward to next year

It means a lot to me now.

Love,

A powerful word.

To all who have never been on a trip, or Logan was their first, I beg you to go again. It will be a completely different experience every time you go on a TNT trip. If you didn't like this trip, don't worry, this one was just a bit different than usual. If you loved this trip, next year will blow you away!

full of small memories waiting to be fit. I look forward to the day that Logan makes sense with my life. Until then, it is a piece chock complete. I was definitely not what I expected; perhaps it is the first piece to a new puzzle, with my TNT one not yet I guess I was expecting Logan to be the final puzzle piece creating a beautiful mural of my time in TNT. It mission trips made a drastic change in my life, they all built me to be who I am today. I cannot deny that TNT, I look back at some of the greatest memories, moments, and friends in my life. Though none of the beginning to a new life in college, new types of mission trips, new people. As I look back on my 5 years in I feel like this isn't the last year but I know it's true. But maybe this isn't the end. It's a beginning. A

I didn't like it. Of course I had tons of fun, but perhaps it just didn't measure up to the other 4. It's weird. I waited would spark some ideas but to no avail. The trip overall was pretty average, but that's not to say I made this trip momentous. I've waited a long time to write this reflection, in the hopes that the time I Gatorade bottles, dollar tree receipts, and something about clothes and 1.5 seconds, but nothing that place spoons streak, with Anne Pluchar in 1<sup>st</sup>, a full week of worksite to my delight, flipping over fences, was a tad disappointed. There was a lack of closure in it all. Sure there were memories, like a 5 year 2<sup>nd</sup> everyone was packing up the vans. To be honest, this trip was quite different from the previous 4 and I "is that really it? Is this really the end?" as I sat on the stairs with Ryan McGuire on the last day while racked my brains for the memories that stuck out, but I could not pick out any. I couldn't help thinking momentous ones. When asked what my favorite part of the trip was by my parents, I had no answer. I Logan culminated my mission trip experience with many little memories rather than

with Alyssa King in the corner on Thursday night. matching t-shirts, playing in a fire hydrant (and crossing that off the bucket list as well), and laughing my favorite mission trip of them all. I remember good morning guitar songs, partying hardcore with and hoping that for some odd reason that it could happen again. I could never forget Cairo 2011, easily something about 90 degrees as well as a big pile of mulch. I remember never going to kids club that trip Tallulah, cockroaches, being loose as a goose, and wondering if Collin could hear us. I remember standing guard at kids club, and all the card games that trip. I remember a very late night prayer in I remember crossing off the gospel church on the bucket list in Mon Valley. Four Square,

gone on Cairo 08. I happily have held true to that vow. forward to spending the next 5 years with this group having vowed to never miss a TNT trip after having remember figuring out Big Blue Moon in 15 minutes, and I remember the Monkey. I remember looking shape, I remember teaming up with Dan Cronin to wipe everyone in mafia out as a dirty cop, I Looking back at Cairo 2008, I remember being the newest kid there. I remember Pluto's color being a still, many things haven't. I have seen 4 classes in TNT leave and it the time for it to be me has come. 2009, Tallulah in 2010, Cairo again in 2011, and Logan in 2012. Much has changed in those 5 years, but Logan WV, the final destination after 5 years of trips. I had been to Cairo in 2008, Mon Valley in

From: smcp6 <smcp6@aol.com>  
To: Smcp6 <Smcp6@aol.com>  
Subject: Becca's Reflection  
Date: Tue, Jul 10, 2012 10:54 pm

11 minutes agoRebecca Carol Vahldick

Reflection:

This mission trip was different than what I expected but was still a great opportunity for me to participate in. I find it strange how close you can get to a group of people in only five days. Although some relationships were already there, they only grew more and more throughout the trip. Speaking of relationships, this mission trip helped my relationship with God and Jesus get stronger and stronger, and nothing can be better than that. Mission trips sure help you get a break from the outside world and it's great because sometimes you need a break from all your friends and family for a small time so you can connect with other things that are more important like your faith. Sometimes for me it is hard to connect with God in normal situations, but on these trips I feel it's easy as anything in the world. This helps me understand that the only thing that is standing in the way of me connecting and understanding my religion better is myself. And I suppose this mission trip helped me realize that. But lastly, this mission trip helped me get closer to my mom and helped me cope because it's harder than it seems. I just want the best relationship I can have still although she is in heaven and I am on earth. And every time I connect with God so strong it brings me closer to her.

## Mission Trip Reflection

When I think about my week in Logan, West Virginia the only word that comes to mind is indescribable. This mission was a great experience that I'm grateful to have had. Since this was my first mission, I had no idea what to expect. It turned out to be everything I could ask for and more. I spent my week at kids club. Truthfully, at first, I wasn't excited at all since I was never good with kids. However, by the end of the week, I loved seeing and talking to the kids everyday. I had built so many bonds with so many different kids and by the time Thursday came around, it was absolutely heartbreaking knowing that it would be our last day together. It's crazy how someone can take such a big spot in your heart in such a short amount of time. One day, I helped pick up the children from their homes. While driving to the kids' homes and seeing the poverty around them, I truly realized how fortunate I am. Seeing how they lived compared to how I lived really put things in perspective and makes me see things in a whole new light. I realized that I have so many comforts at home that I take for granted that others don't the luxury of having. It really made me appreciate what I have. Noticing how blessed I am to live in a nice home and have meals everyday drives me to work harder and help others whom aren't as fortunate as myself. This week has greatly made an impact on my life and I can only hope that in the 6 short days I was there, I made an impact on the community of Logan as much as they had made an impact on me.

## Mission Trip 2012

Hi there my name is Zachary Helm and this the second mission trip I have been on and still it never ceases to amaze me how TNT and all those involved are so accepting and giving towards other people. I am from Tampa, Florida and I look forward to this mission trip every year. It gives me a chance to see friends and reconnect with God.

I had my doubts when we first pulled up to the little church where we would be staying, but I will admit I was pretty excited when I saw that we had bunks this year and private showers.

On the first day my group, the goldfinches, had to make breakfast which I was not excited about. On my way down to the kitchen I went outside and saw the beauty of the Appalachian Mountains. There was a blanket of mist that covered the whole town. It was as if the mist protected the town. We also found out that we would be in kids club. At kids club we had to make up a skit where we were supposed to show what goodness is to the kids. I played the bad guy, named Mean Mike. I was suppose to throw a ball a Chris Sirvid but Josh O'Donnell stepped in and stopped me. It was pretty funny because the kids thought it was real and they were ready to step in and defend Chris. The next day we went to a nursing home. At first I felt like an idiot for the songs I would have to sing, but I soon realized that these people didn't have a lot in their lives to be happy about so I if I had to step out of my comfort zone for a couple of minutes to make someone happy I was fine with it.

As the week went on I could feel God's presence over the little town of Logan, West Virginia. Even though I was a little bit sad to say goodbye I felt that God will help these people through their hard times.

From: smcp6 <smcp6@aol.com>

To: smcp6 <smcp6@aol.com>

Subject: Chris Sirvid Mission Reflection 2012

Date: Sat, Jun 23, 2012 5:02 pm

Hey Ms. P I finished my reflection here it is.

Chris Sirvid

Mission trip 2012

The TNT mission trips to me are a vacation from home and a way to strengthen my faith. Half way through the car ride I saw the first miracle by God and learned a lesson. When we were driving down we stopped at a gas station to get gas, after we filled up the van I was in was listening to rap music so I said as a joke "we have to turn this music off so we don't get shot", 5 seconds after I say that we hear what sounds like a shotgun. Now Carl and I are freaking out thinking that we are going to get shot but then 2 men run towards the sound and yell call the cops. So we go to check it out, the 2 men were by the driver of the car who had a seizure and hit 3 signs before slamming into the gas station sign. The women in the car was fine even though her car was totaled, and I learned that's even though somebody may dress, talk, or act differently than me doesn't make them a criminal, which goes along with the saying "don't judge a book by their cover".

Once we got to Logan, West Virginia, I made a decision to try and help out with making the meals and cleaning up after. Having to wake up at 6:30 everyday to make breakfast and wash dishes is always a struggle for the kids at mission trip. During that week I was able to accomplish my challenge and received thanks for it, but I was not the only one that went that extra mile. Jimmy McGuire also took it upon himself to do the extra work without expecting to be thanked for it. The meal prep and clean up was the perfect time to get to know one another, talk to the youth work leaders, or vent about the week, and that was exactly what we did. It was great just to see the friendships being made and the frustrations being discussed.

For this mission trip we had to share it with another church group from Iowa. The struggles that you are faced with when you have to share the trip with another church are that you have to share literally everything with them. Normally on mission trips when the churches first meet nobody talks to each other, but this year it was different. As we got off our vans the church from Iowa immediately offered to carry up the luggage that we brought. After all the luggage was out we had dinner and instead of eating segregated from the other church we all ate together and got to know each other. As the week progressed the teens from Iowa seemed as if they were part of the TNT for years.

In past experiences with the nightly worship services, I never really felt the singing was meaningful. This year I when we would sing and sway, I could just feel the positive energy in the room and my mood was always elevated during the worship times. Looking around the room as we sang I could see everybody smiling and just joining together to thank God for everything we have and all the work that we have been doing throughout the week. After the worship we would go to our small groups and talk about the week. "Uncle Joe", Mr. O'Donnell was a great leader and really helped me strengthen my faith. Although the work that had to be done this year wasn't a lot and the youth work leaders that were so busy we couldn't fully get know, it was still an amazing mission trip. I feel that my faith is stronger and I have the same feeling as I did when I went on my first mission trip. It feels like work that was started, was finished and that God is always there for me all I had to do was let him in.



You're sitting on the steps. Behind you is a school turned church that is housing you for the week. At the top of the steps is a four square court you know you'll be on later. The steps lead to a small declining hill that stops at a cross wire fence. Beyond that fence is the town of Logan, West Virginia. It has a rustic, sleepy feel to it and it looks as if you can see the whole town from your spot on the hill. If you can see through the fog, you won't miss the endless green mountains that push their trees into the clouds. The sight is nothing short of breathtaking. Everyone stops for a moment to admire it, some to take pictures, some to just soak it in. This morning you sit in silence with your Devotional book on your lap. Just a few steps below you is one of your friends and everywhere else you can see is about seventy more. You all sit in silence writing, reading, or reflecting. While back home this might strike most people as odd, you suddenly realize that no one here minds. Devos are a time for you to spend with God as you wish and everyone understands that. You look at the view one last time before turning the page.

You're standing in a room filled with hot, sweaty teenagers. As you put one arm around one of your good friends and the other around your cousin, the lyrics to a song appear on the wall in front of you. A guitar starts playing and you do your best to put the words to a melody. Around the second or third time you get the hang of it. You sway sort of in time with the music and everyone sings along. *Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary.* You've sung them before, you don't even need to look at the lyrics by the end of the week. You close your eyes for a moment as you sing and sway. You then open them, wondering if anyone thinks that was odd. Everyone who doesn't have their own eyes closed is too busy singing to God to notice. The song ends and a leader gets up and begins to talk. Maybe his words last the week or maybe they last a lifetime, but in the moment you know he's speaking about God's love and you drink in every word. He ends with the theme for the day and asks you to stand again. Everyone's arms go back around each other and the guitar begins to play again.

You're at the bottom of a ladder, holding on so your friend at the top doesn't fall off as he scrapes paint off of a wall. You've been at this for about two hours now. You volunteered to hold the ladder so you could get a break. It's hot but you're working in the shade with a nice breeze. The ladder suddenly shakes as your friend flies down it, barely giving you a chance to get out of the way. He's seen a spider and will go nowhere near it. One of the girls at your site climbs up and kills the spider with her scraper. Everyone laughs, this is not the first spider to scare one of the guys today. You decide to take a bathroom break and head inside. When you open the door, you are greeted by four cats, twenty rats in cages, and a bird. The lady who owns the house has ten more cats across her living room and kitchen. You take a moment to talk to her and she tells you how she saved all the cats and the two dogs outside. She tells you how she's lost more jobs than you can count but she keeps going. She only eats one meal a day so she can afford to feed her animals and help support her son. You invite her to have lunch with your group and she says she'll see if she can. Outside, your group is talking to another group that is working on the same house. You all sit down to eat lunch and talk about the differences between your hometowns. The lady soon joins you and every shares food with each other. You take some strawberries as they're passed by you and ask the other group if people in Boston are addicted to Facebook too.

You're laying in your bed after lights out. Your voice is fading from talking so much during small group and your heart is still racing from playing volleyball in a tiny room with that same small group. Around you are teens and chaperones from all over the country. Some are from your church and some you only met this week. All of you have come together this week to help the town of Logan. You share your stories of work site with them and they tell you about the kids they met at Kid's Club. You grew closer to them this week over games of spoons, dancing to bluegrass music, and eating sometimes sketchy dinners. These people are no longer strangers and you are no longer the same

person that arrived a few days ago. The thing about Mission Trips is they change you in a way you can't describe. It's impossible to understand why exactly it is so funny to sing Katy Perry or why four square gets so intense. You wonder how you're going to write your witness when you get home and somehow convey those feelings. It's the little moments that make the trip so life changing. Maybe a glimpse into those seemingly unimportant moments will suffice.

Anne Pluchar

“Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” When I heard that line it brought “flashbacks” to a few short weeks ago as we were driving up I-65 in Indiana returning from the TNT mission trip. We were just close enough to Tinley Park to realize that the mission trip was almost over, and some much needed rest was right around the corner. That's when I realized, just as Jesus' apostles did in today's Gospel, that the Mission never ends!

The apostles return with many stories and accomplishments from their journey. They had been teaching and curing the people in need. Their mission is complete, or so they thought. But God had other plans. There were still vast crowds looking for all the Jesus had to offer. Jesus recognizes this and as a result he begins to teach them many things...

Not to worry, our Mission was different, it was focused, it

was well defined, it had a beginning and an end. We would go

to the town of Logan, West Virginia, we would teach Bible

school to the younger children, paint a few houses, spend

some time in prayer with Jesus and by Friday evening we

would be back home with stories to tell and pictures to share.

Our mission would be over. Then Jesus began to teach us

many things...

Some of us learned that the simplest of service can be

rewarding in it's own right:

I made a decision to try and help out with making all the

meals and cleaning up after. I realized that the meal prep time

was the perfect time to get to know one another, a perfect

time for friendships to be made.

Some of us learned that praising God in song is it's own

reward:

You close your eyes for a moment as you sing and sway

with your arms around your friends next to you. You open

them, wondering if anyone thinks that was odd.

Everyone who doesn't have their own eyes closed is too busy singing to God to notice.

Some of us learned that it's ok to step out of the “box” on

Mission:

As we entered the Nursing Home at first I felt stupid thinking about the songs I would have to sing, but I soon realized that for the residents I could step out of my comfort zone for a couple of minutes to make someone happy!

Some of us learned that God brings us closer to those we

Love:

This Mission trip helped me to get closer to my mom and helped me to cope. I just want the best relationship I can have although she is in Heaven and I am on earth. Every time I connect with God it brings me closer to her.

Some of us learned that Mission isn't about simply

completing tasks, it goes so much deeper:

I was told numerous times to “give up control and let God work with you,”. ... My group and I were assigned to build a wheelchair ramp for Ms. Connie.

Our Youth Works leader, Jesse, seemed to me to be more interested in chatting with her than actually building the ramp. In my professional life I am very driven and goal oriented and Jesse's seemingly *laissez faire* attitude angered me at the start. Keep in mind that I thought that we were there to build this ramp and that we only had four days to do so! Our group worked intensely all day and at the end we had the first part of the deck completed and a good amount of set-up work for the next few days finished.

We continued our work on the wheelchair ramp and I became aware that we would not finish the ramp during our stay. I was concerned at first with this but then I realized that our mission is not about the job, it was really about the people and the relationships formed. I have to admit that once God put this knowledge in my heart, my entire attitude changed and I looked at this mission trip in a wonderful new light. For most of the trip I focused on the wheelchair ramp as a job that needed to get done and missed what was really going on.

Our Youth Works leader Jesse understood this and what I perceived as a nonchalant attitude was really just his deep understanding of what this ministry truly meant! From that point forward I concerned myself not so much with the work but more with the people we were there to serve. In the end, I did give up control and I did hear God. I did not expect it and cannot explain it, but I know that it was profoundly moving and I hope to experience it again soon!!!

Our mission didn't end that Friday evening when we arrived back in Tinley Park, it began anew. We recognized that there was so much more to experience and learn. We opened ourselves to Jesus and as a result he began to teach us many things.

The only regret is that we had to travel 450 miles to experience it,

One has to wonder if Jesus isn't right here in our midst waiting to teach us many things...

Eric Kempke

- 6 SHIRTS
- 6 UNDERWEAR
- 3 SHORTS
- 7 SOCKS
- 1 PARTY VAN
- 8 MEMBERS
- 50 FRIENDS

# 1 MISSION

THIS HAS BEEN A MEMORABLE TRIP BECAUSE ALL OF MY FRIENDS THAT WERE SENIORS, IT HAPPENED TO BE THEIR LAST TRIP. I ALSO HAVE NEVER BEEN IN 105° WEATHER WITH 90+ HUMIDITY, IT AFFECTED LOADS OF ME. THE PEOPLE WHO WE MET WERE SPECTACULAR. THEY WERE SOME OF THE NICEST AND MOST RESPECTFUL PEOPLE I HAVE EVER MET. AFTER WE LEFT THEY WERE SO THANKFUL BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T WANT ANY OF US TO LEAVE. THIS TRIP TOUCHED MY HEART DEEPLY, NOT ONLY FOR THE PEOPLE BUT FOR THE VIBE IT CAUSED. I'M GOING TO KEEP THE PARTY VAN TRADITIONAL AND GOING WITH GIMMY AND WE WILL MAKE OUR FRIENDS PROUD. I LOOK FORWARD TO THIS TRIP EVERY YEAR AND IT NEVER DISAPPOINTS! I LOVE HEARING PEOPLE AND THIS TRIP AND GROUP OF PEOPLE WILL PUT ME ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

# LOVE YOU ALL!!