

When I went to Mon Valley I really didn't know what to expect. At first the town didn't seem too bad it just looked like a small town where everyone knew each other. Then we went to the hill where most of the town lived. That was where all the underprivileged families lived. Across the basketball courts was where most of the kids that came to the play group that we put on during the day. I really only got to know one little four year girl named Nicole. She had several siblings older and younger but she didn't really like to hangout with them she kind of stayed clear of them. Kids club was half the day and when we got back we got free time to play outside with both church groups and a couple older kids from the town. We played four square the most. I never played it before the trip and I found out it's a pretty sick game. We also played basketball a lot, even Father Artur would join us in a game and we would take a walk to the dollar store afterwards. During the night time we had an activity where we would do

different things one night we went on a prayer walk, one night we went a Baptist church service, etc. Seeing what I saw in Monessen words couldn't even explain. I learned not to take so much for granted and start appreciating the life I have.

Mon Valley 2009

Did you know the Salvation Army was a church? Yes, just like that! That was the look I had on my face when I heard the news for the first time. I use to think that is was nothing more then a place to donate what one may not need anymore. I was not the only one who thought the same and this is where my week begins.

The group spent the first two days at a Salvation Army church. The church is small and services families in the area. We were told about a "no pay" sale they were going to have at the end of the week. So we went to work cleaning up the yard and organizing everything, I mean everything, in the gym. Boxes of Hallmark cards, holiday and seasonal decorations, make-up, and books needed to be sorted and placed on tables. Did I say boxes? I mean rooms! Teens outside were busy cutting the grass and bushes. Wrapping up gifts and signing cards for those who volunteered during the year. My "YA GOD" came at the end of our service. A Salvation Army church located about three hours away called for help. They had just experienced a flood in the area and they were looking for any food or supplies. The teens dropped their lunch and started to load the car with food. The best part...the teens asked if they can go with caption to help unload and do anything else that needed to be done. Now we understood why we were there.

The end of the week was spent with the teens and children of the community. From planning to participating in Kids Club was full of excitement. While in Kids Club we sang, played games, and working on crafts that relate to Jesus and his influence in our lives. The time ended with the teens spending time at the homes of the teens and children in the community. In the afternoon, we lead all the teens and children to a near by park. While there, let's just say the grass is thankful. Water balloons and water fights started as the Youth Works staff delivered them. I do not think there was a dry person at the park. It was not long, maybe five minuets, before they had to go back and get more. Basketball and playing on the swings were two common activities for teens and kids. Our day ended with eating popsicles and walking the kids back to their homes.

"You are the Price of Peace, I will love my life for you. " One phrase, one song that I have not heard since I was on a mission trip as a teen. Evening club and activities had the same outline. You would go to an activity, sing, talk, and listen to what God has done in the day. We were one of the lucky groups. We were able to spend some time at a church completely different then the one we see every Sunday. Teens were singing and shouting as words of encouragement, pride, and self flowed through

the air. As it was implied knowing who you are and where you are going, you are "Living on top of the World." "YA GOD" for understanding, sharing, and knowing what to do next.

"YA GOD" for a week of friendships and service with the same church, other churches, and the community members of Mon Valley. "YA GOD" to teens who are willing to give up a week of summer to serve others.

Adrian Mungcal

At Mon Valley, PA life is very different than it is here in Illinois. In Mon Valley there are drugs that are sold everywhere, violence in the neighborhood, and gangs in the streets. The drugs used to be worse than it is now in Mon Valley but there is still a lot of drugs abuse there. In one instance while my group was going down to pick up kids there was a man smoking weed when we passed by. Also during a walk around the neighborhood we had a guide telling us about the history of Mon Valley and there had been a bar where that was secretly selling drugs and was caught and shut down. Moreover there has been a history of violence. I believe that there is a lot of gun violence and people fighting. Also with the gangs tied into the violence there was a lot of gang wars. There are a lot of gang problems in Mon Valley. In fact we were not allowed into this one hill because of the gangs on that hill. Also a person that had helped us in kids club used to be in a gang but quit. Through our actions I believe that we had helped the community greatly.

My Reflections of Mon Valley...

Without hesitation, I said “YES” to this year’s Mission Trip! This was my daughter Gabby’s last year, last mission trip, and my last teen in TNT! What more of a better reason could there be?

I packed very lightly and directed a lot of questions to my daughter as to what not to bring. “Just the basics and ALOT of work clothes”, she stated. Ohhh...and might I mention, no hair dyer and no makeup either?!

We headed off to Pennsylvania on a bright sunny day. I was very apprehensive but being teamed up in a 12 passenger van with Fr. Artur (who was already a “rookie”) put my mind at ease!

We arrived in Mon Valley after approximately eight hours. We were greeted by the Youth Works Team and also another group from Springfield that would be sharing the week with us.

We got acquainted and situated in our “home away from home” for the week... a non-functioning school, but still utilized by Mon Valley as a Community Center for the neighborhood. Our sleeping quarters were to be the floor of a classroom!

As the teens got acquainted, the chaperones met to plan out their week of chores and activities. My group met first with the Kids Club. We were so excited and ready for them with our projects at hand! It was a bit chaotic at first, but by day two we had better control of the situation. On this day we had decided to walk to their housing and pick up the kids for Kids Club. It was nice to meet some of the moms of these children.

Our week continued with improving a park in one of the government housing areas. As soon as the kids would see our white van pulling up, they would come running. Some were eager to work and some wanted to just watch. Quite a few TONS of bark were delivered and despite how hot, miserable and tired we all were...we managed to finish it in two days. (The icecream treat helped also!) I don’t think I have ever drunk as much water as I did that week!

On our second day of shoveling, this sweet little old lady came from across the street with ice water for us. I had noticed her prior to that because she was tending to a beautiful garden she had. I mentioned how pretty her flowers were. She said she was of Italian decent and had immigrated to Mon Valley in the 50’s . She started a small business but eventually closed down due to the violence in the neighborhood. She was not happy how the area was changing and tried to teach the children about Jesus. She would buy them crosses, hoping to spike their interest.

As we left the work site that day, she brought me a bunch of shasta daisies all wrapped up and instructed me on how to plant them properly. I look at them in my garden now, and it's a nice reminder of her!

My most memorable experience was the neighborhood walk and trip to their local church for a service. I have never felt so much energy from one sermon and singing in my life! I literally left the service in tears because it was so moving!

As I look back at my week in Mon Valley , I am simply amazed at the "connection" these teens have for each other. They are not pretentious. What you see is what you get! They are willing to accept anyone as a friend and not be judgmental.

For my group ... they truly were on a mission that week! Their goal was to better someone's life if just for that one week! They succeeded!

As for myself, if I could, I would have taken all those children home with me! They were so loving!

I've come home appreciating all that I have... family, friends and a secure and safe home. And in reality... you shouldn't sweat the small stuff. I think how some of their problems were so overwhelming, and yet they plugged along to survive and worry for their kids. They want them to have a better life.

I am grateful for being asked to go as a chaperone and appreciate the shared week with my other fellow chaperones. We made the best of it and I know it has humbled us all!

Loving thoughts...

Carol Wydra ☺

Mission Trip '09

Nina Ramos July 8, 2009

This year was actually my first mission trip ever, and I'm thankful for being a part of it. Our TNT group decided to go to Mon Valley, Pennsylvania this year. Going on this trip, I only knew a few kids from the church, but I made lots of more friends! The ride to Mon Valley was about thirteen hours, but it flew by fast. We made friendship bracelets, napped, and ate lots of food! Finally, we got there and as soon as we jumped out of the van, the other church that would be spending the week with helped us bring our bags to our rooms. They seemed very nice. That day we got there was just a mellow day trying to get use to everything but after that was when the real work began. To start off, every morning we would wake up at 6:30am and have to be down for breakfast at 7:00. After eating breakfast we would pack our lunches and go off to our work sites. The first two days I went to a work site called kids club. The kids were absolutely adorable and I loved every single one of them. We played games and made crafts with them all day and sometimes you might even have a little kid take a nap on your shoulder. It was an amazing experience. When not at kids club, my work site was at a community. At the community, we picked weeds, cleaned up house areas and my most favorite; we put 50 tons of mulch into a play ground. We used shovels, garbage cans and one bobcat to put all of this mulch into the park. It took all day, but it was worth it in the end and we got ice cream for our hard work! After every worksite, we'd come back to our rooms at around 3ish and it'd be time for our evening activity. There were different activities every night such as going to the

public pool, walks or church. My favorite part of the whole trip would defiantly be the church. The people there were just so loving and caring. The songs we sang had so much energy and all of us understood more from going. Once the evening activities were over we would go back and eat dinner then have club and group time. Club was when us both churches, and our leaders got together and we all talked and sang songs and expressed our faith. Group time was just when our separate churches got together and talked in little groups. Everyday consumed of this little routine, and I loved it. From this trip, I learned that we have a lot compared to others and the things we have sometimes aren't needed. I feel like I appreciate more than I ever did. I came home wanting to help around the house because I was use to helping people out in Mon Valley. And the most important thing I learned is that Jesus is always going to be there, no matter what situation you're in, if you just call his name and ask him for help, he'll be there. Mon Valley was the greatest experience I've ever had. We had our laughs and cries but in the end we all knew that we did this for the people in Mon Valley and for Jesus. I know that after this trip God sees me as a better person and I'm proud of that. I hope I made a difference on the kids at kids club or the people in the community and I'm thankful for everything I have and the chaperones that got to experience this wonderful trip with us. On this journey, I'm going to continue on helping others and appreciating everything I have!

KRISTYNU ☺

So for my reflection I was going to do a Windows Movie Maker Project, but I couldn't finish in time. Therefore this is my temporary reflection until I finish the other thing. And after Breakaway I am on vacation so you won't get it til the first week of August ☺.

Mission Trip at Mon Valley, Pennsylvania was amazing. I thought it was better than Cairo, actually. I really didn't expect the community to have so much, though. I didn't expect the pool to be so big and nice. I also didn't expect the grocery store to be as nice as it was. I likes the town because it was a little like a downtown Chicago-ish area looks wise, although most of it was shut down.

Kids Club was really a great experience because we were dealing with different kinds of kids than we normally deal with. They had a lot more attitude than I expected. As they taught us how they live there, we kind of taught them how we live. It was hard to say bye at the cookout, knowing we probably won't see them again, and see what kind of kids they grow up to be. Although they had attitudes, they were always up for helping, which I think is a great quality. When Nick and Juwan came and talked to us about there experience with gangs and stuff, it showed how much a person can be changed by God and God's people.

Work cites were a lot of fun, yet very productive at the same time. The first day, after I finished painting trim around the apartment, I went upstairs to see if anyone needed help. I got to drill drywall on the ceiling which was pretty cool, and it will help me in the future. The second day,

since I had gotten sick, I went around visiting all the work sites and kids club people at the park. As much as I wanted to help, I still enjoyed going around and seeing everyone's sites instead of just mine.

I'm really thankful that Mr.P got me involved with TNT and mission trip. After a year of time that has passed since last mission trip, it was great to be able to go on it again this year. It gave me a chance to refocus on God and what God wants of me. It also let me re-realize (if that's even a word) how great I have it back home. After a year of time, you sometimes start to forget. Its great to be reminded not to take things for granted, to be thankful for everything you have, and to not get mad at the smallest things ☺.

Well, that's about it for my temporary reflection. I am so excited for Breakaway, and I hope it has as much impact as mission trip ☺.

When I first arrived in Monessen and saw how these people were living and what they were dealing with I was in awe. Most living in small houses or the projects with more then the average family, these homes were wither very dirty or damaged. In the projects the people had a threat of gang and drug violence. I couldn't imagine what it would be like to live in these indecent conditions.

One of the places we worked was kids club. Kids club, only running in the summer, were most of the kids from Monessen went during the day to play and have fun. Kids club also served the purpose of keeping the kids out of trouble. The kids really liked us and I think they had a lot of fun. I was really glad that I got to help these kids and also have fun at the same time.

For the days we weren't at kids club we worked at one of the work sites in Park Manor. AT the work site we helped move 50 yards into a park. One of the kids, Tyrik, helped us move the mulch. Tyrik, who had been a bid misbehavior at kids club, was probably the hardest worker of all of us. When I saw the kids when they got back from kids club and they saw the park that made carrying all that mulch worth it.

At the end of everyday wed go back to the Youth Works building and have club. Club was were we sand, prayed, worshiped god, and reflected on the day. AT first I didn't like club but then I got into it and I started to really like it.

When I went on this trip I knew basically knew no one but I made friends and had the best time of my life. I'm glad god and Mrs. P gave me the chance to go on the trip. I cant wait for next year.

Mission Trip 2009 Reflection

Every day, as I watch the evening news with my parents, I am always told how great of a life I have and how others are less fortunate than me. I always believed that I did in fact have more than these people, but I was also naive enough to think that their life wasn't so bad and the poor card was extremely over played. As long as they are living, they don't have a legitimate reason to complain. Luckily, I was able to attend the mission trip to Mon Valley, and witness firsthand what it can be like to live in an area where on a daily basis, drugs and violence take apart in everyone's lives. It all began to hit me why these types of towns cry out for help. I realized that there truly is a big difference between towns like Mon Valley and towns like Orland Park. I learned that every prized possession of mine should be loved because many parts of the world are not fortunate enough to own it. I strongly believe that what you have can't be truly appreciated unless you have witnessed the lives of others who can't afford much.

I mostly enjoyed helping build apartments and moving mulch in Highland Manor. It was wonderful to see the smiles on our faces knowing that we are slowly making a large difference in the community. I loved how we were able to make our own fun of it as well. Whether it was listening to radios and singing along or creating songs about mulch, we made sure we stayed motivated to help the community.

I was surprised in two different ways about Mon Valley, negatively and positively. I was negatively surprised at how drugs and gangs play such a big role in the town. I was shocked to witness how much of the gangs the children were exposed to. While working at Kids Club, I heard some of the children actually talking about gangs and drugs. Hearing this scared me about what the future might bring for these children. I just hoped that they would be able to avoid the

drugs and gangs throughout their life. On a more positive note, I was surprised at how big of a difference YouthWorks has made in this community. I mainly learned about the YouthWorks impact while we were on the prayer walk. Visioning what was the number one drug alley and the death wall really scared me at first. Then, actually witnessing an empty alley and a freshly painted wall with no names or victims gave me a promising feeling about the town. I was strongly impacted by Nick and Jimmy, who were former gang members and later found God and got back on the right track. Listening to their stories really showed me that no matter what or how many mistakes we make, God is forgiving and is always there to help.

The community taught me that just giving little bits at a time can really make a large difference. This point was enforced when we went on the prayer walk and witnessed firsthand the progress that is being made. The community also taught me that we can have fun with the smallest of thing in life. God chooses to bless some with an abundance of personal possessions and others with a small amount of personal possessions. There was one game in particular that I remember thinking that I will never play again when I return home. The game was Four Square and day or night, whenever I had the chance, I was playing with my peers from church and the children in the community.

As I return home I would like to pray for three things. I pray for the children, that they can grow up and live normal, happy lives without gangs or drugs. I pray for Nick and Jimmy, that they can continue to follow God and never return to their lives as gang members. Finally, I pray for YouthWorks that they can continue to slowly put the pieces back together and make Mon Valley a better place. I am a different person after my trip to Mon Valley. After witnessing what I witnessed, it is hard to imagine how naïve I was. I now 100% cherish my possessions as well as my family and friends because I now know how lucky I am to actually have them. I will

continue my journey by visiting the elderly and children with special needs. I will also continue my journey by helping those who are in need, no matter how small the task. May God continue to bless the community of Mon Valley.

Summer Mission 2009 – Monessen PA.

We Plan and God Laughs - author unknown.

How very true. As I was reflecting on this past trip to Monessen this reality came to full light for me.

Back in May we had our lock-in to prepare for the trip. My breakout room focused on impressions and perceptions. As I have shared with the teens for the past few years we talked about the nature of the trip being more around the development of relationships and not necessarily about the physical work or completion of tasks. The Youth Works staff confirmed and reinforced this with us once we were on site.

On site I shared with my small group that I thought a successful trip would be our ability to “touch someone’s heart” during this week and even make a difference in their lives. I challenged them to see if they could have an impact. I too took that challenge.

Enter Jada. She couldn’t have been more than 7-8 years old and maybe 3’ 6” tall. On the first day there, during “Kids Club” I met Jada, actually it’s probably more accurate to say she found me. We had been warned by Alyssa that the children will ask you to be their “Buddy” so they can get 1-1 attention and not “share” you with any other children, and we were to reply “I’m everyone’s Buddy”. Well that’s exactly what happened. Jada came right up to me and said “You’re my Buddy”. I replied as instructed and she said “I know – but you’re my Buddy anyway!” We proceeded (for most of the rest of the afternoon) to hang out and watch all the other children running around and playing games and we then went downstairs to work on coloring books, riddles, and connect the dots pictures (52 – we counted). She rode home that afternoon in the van I was driving and told me she would see me tomorrow.

Tuesday came and there was Jada, in line for the ride to the Youth Center. We spent most of the time (after the skit and craft) outside drawing pictures with chalk on the side walk (must have been 100 or more) while we each tried to guess what the other was drawing. Again she rode home with me in the van pool and asked if I would see her tomorrow. I told her I was on a worksite and she replied – “That’s OK – I’m sure I’ll see you around”.

Next morning – we went to Highland for our worksite and as we were waiting for Justin (supervisor for the site). I hear Jada across the parking lot – “There’s my Buddy” as she ran over to give me a hug. We talked for a little while and she proceeded to play with her friends while they waited for Lunch and the trip to Kids club.

Thursday morning – same routine – there was Jada up at Highland playing with her friends, runs over to say hello and give me a hug. I asked her if she would be at the cookout and she told me yes.

Thursday evening – from across the parking lot I hear Jada again – “Hi Buddy!” She runs over and we talk again. She then proceeds to show me some of the picture we drew (now under the chairs and tables) and reminds me what they were. We part without saying good-bye; neither of us realizing that we won’t see each other after this cook out is over.

Friday I find myself reflecting on the time spent with Jada and the challenge I shared with my small group – that we should strive to “touch someone’s heart” this week and I come to realize..... She has.

Ryan McGuire

It's been over a month and I can't stop thinking about mission trip. It was the best week of my life in more than one way. Not only was it a chance to serve and have fun with all the new friends that I had made, but I grew closer to God than I ever had been. I was going into mission trip with nothing to expect, I had never been on a church retreat before. I was starting to form an idea in my head of what it was going to be like using what other kids were saying about previous years. Mission trip was nothing like that. I bonded with kids from the community, both young and old, as well as kids from the other church and kids from St. Julies too. But mostly, I bonded with God. Throughout the week, I could physically feel my faith growing in God. Honestly, I can not remember the last time I cried before that trip. I nearly cried twice, the first time when that teenager who was a former drug addict and gang member said he wasn't worried about the gang members going to hurt him because GOD WAS PROTECTING HIM. That was really moving to me to see that God changed these kids like so dramatically. The second time was at the

end of the baptist church service when we were all up at the altar praying our hearts out. I could feel Gods presence moving through me, willing me to help this community.

All my emotions and tears were all bottled up until the last night, during club, when they did the feet washing ceremony. I couldn't hold it in anymore. I was crying for joy. I had discovered a new person in myself. I know this all sounds really cliché, but it was totally true. I had this immediate desire to serve for God and to love his children. I know everyone around me was feeling the same way. It was the most moving experience of my life. I am SOOOO glad that I went on that mission trip. I feel like it changed me forever. Can't wait till next year!!

Mission Reflection

I have been on a total of three mission trips now, and until this last one in Mon Valley, Pennsylvania I had gone just to earn service hours and have fun with friends. Which, sure that may be a part of it, but definitely not even half of the reason why we are there. I realized that I was going as a disciple of Jesus and that meant that I needed to share my heart and guiding hand to all. Then after a week of work out there, we all came home. But I felt unsatisfied with what I had done, I felt I needed to do much more. So I looked around and saw nothing, but my own home. So I was determined to find something, the only thing I found that needed to be done was a few small household chores and I thought “Wow, did it really take me this long to realize that there is work to be done everywhere”, I couldn’t believe that I had taken all of my luxuries for granted until now. This trip really opened my eyes wide and made me realize that everything I can do to help should be done. And everything that I do is through God and this helps me a lot to understand that God is always with us, through good and bad times, and we should always look to him for help no matter what, because he has all the right answers and is there to guide us through life.

~ Phil Kawczynski ~

Mission trip reflection - Chris Sirvid

What I learned from the mission trip...

From this mission trip I learned more than what I thought I ever would. The mission trip really did open my eyes. I can understand a lot more stuff because I had the opportunity to go for this.

First, going to Mon valley helped me notice that Orland Park is so much nicer. It is defiantly different because here you can walk the streets at night and not get killed, rapped, or beaten up, but in Mon valley you're not even allowed to walk the streets. Also in Orland Park almost everyone has a car or everyone is in a nice home, but in Mon valley you're lucky if you get to drive a car, you're lucky if you even have a job, and also most of those houses are as big as my shed. That's why I can understand this trip and the people.

While in Mon valley I realized that almost every kid is either raised to fight, have self-pity, or take care of them self. That really made me feel bad I thought about how lucky I am to be able to hang out with anyone from my town and just be able to get along with all of them. Like while I was there I saw kids fighting because they missed the ball in a game. But I didn't just think about that I thought about how the kids blame themselves for everything or calls them self-names because of something they did. While I was there I ran in with a kid who would always say that he's bad and that he dumb and I tried to help him but he had a voice telling him to do the wrong thing and don't listen to anybody. I felt bad but I realized that's what the devil does he tries to get into the weak and young. But the worst thing I saw was the little kids just playing by them self pushing themselves away from anybody that was trying to help him or her. So now I still think about them and think about everybody that's there trying to help them and raise them because their parents can't.

Also while there I had a flash back about how I would help out the community for service hours and the fuss I would put up for it then I came back to reality noticing that I was at a whole different state doing hours helping out a different community and loving every second of it. Because of the trip I feel so much better and I just want to get up and help out the neighborhood and keep going to soup kitchens and going to day camps helping the kids to get watched. And because of this trip I go to the park everyday and every night just reflecting on how lucky I am, how little I do, and what can I do to help my parents.

This trip also changed me because I have a whole different look on Activities. Before the trip I would just start yelling at my mom because she would yell at me and just start a circle of hate but now, after the trip, I just stay calm and talk to her as nice as I can, and I found out doing this makes me happy and makes her happy and lets me be able to have more privileges.

Because of this trip I think that I feel more of a disciple because I stay strong at the weak times think and knowing that God will help me out and carry me through my struggles. Before I would just relay on myself or other people to help me out or make me feel better because of my wrong doing, but no I can say that God helps me and I always go to him first and ask him for forgiveness. And that's what I think the disciples use to do, go to Jesus first.

Thank you for letting me have the opportunity to go on this trip, and helping out others instead of myself.
Chris

Mission Trip 2009 Reflection

This was my first mission trip with the church and it was amazing. It helped me as a person and showed me that I'm not the only person with problems. I liked the experiences that I had there as well.

The first few days up there let me hang out with the kids and learn about their lives and what they go through everyday. I made some close friends that were almost like brothers to me. Their names were Andre and Kesean, both were very close seeing as they were brothers and they looked out for each other. I spent a lot of time with them because we all got along well because I'm still in touch with the kid inside me and would talk with them about different kids television shows like power rangers and yugioh and talk about games that I play on different video game systems that they have either played only once or twice or only heard of. When I hang out with some of the other kids, I felt like I was helping them just by giving them something to do instead of staying home all day. By talking to them, I found out that they had had a hard life like I did because of problems in their family and in their neighborhood. They told me that they had been bullied a lot and gotten into fights because they wouldn't give up. These brothers showed me how strong people can be when they can work together to try and accomplish one goal.

Another thing that helped me change was hanging out with the older boys like Nick and Desmond. They told me about the gangs and things out there and explained to me how they were able to get through it. They helped me see that no matter what the obstacle, you can overcome it with hard work and determination. They were great guys to be around especially because the little kids all respected and listened to them when they

said something. But they also showed us around the community and showed how the community pulled through all the hard times that they had had throughout the years.

The last thing that helped me change were the people that were around me all week long from youthworks and the churches. The people from youthworks helped me by getting me more involved with God during the week. I also hung out with them and they let me talk about my problems and they helped me find solutions that actually worked when I tried them out. They also gave me someone to look up to and something to look forward to. I looked up to them because they are great people and they went through things that were either similar or worse to my own experiences in life. The people from the other churches gave me people to talk to at night and during the day when I was a little down. I met people that were really cool and caring and that showed me friendship right off the bat. The first time I saw this was when they came out and offered to help us carry our bags up to the rooms even though they had no idea who we were. I got along with them right away and they helped me to enjoy my week in Mon Valley, Pennsylvania.

All in all, the trip was a great experience for me and it helped me see a sides of myself that I haven't seen before or haven't seen in a long time. With everything that happened that week, I was influenced to look to God more. I also saw that I had places to go when I was down. Because of this trip, I will probably try to get more involved in the TNT group. I will also definitely be going on more church trips through the years. So the big picture is that this trip was a life changer for me in so many ways and I hope to be apart of so many more trips and events with the church.

Date June 25, 09

Subject TITLE - "FREE TO love & Free to SERVE"

Perhaps this story that I'm writing about today doesn't mean anything much to anyone if you weren't there in Mon Valley Pennsylvania, but I would love to share the experiences I endured on this youth mission trip from ST. JULIE PARISH with my granddaughter Nina & all the other mission youths & chaperones that were there.

In this small town in Mon Valley which at one time was a prosperous STEEL manufacturing town has become a poor poverty stricken area where violence & gangs & drugs at times controlled this town of almost hopelessness daily living conditions.

We endured children that were suffering FOR love & attention & the 'important opportunities^{OF} a life growing up with the right morals as a child should have in there early years growing up. But there were also some kids that come from loving ~~homes~~ ^{CARING homes.} But my hope was when I got there that God would give me the strength & others that made this trip to overcome any obstacles & negative feelings & thoughts & make us all think positive to do his work as a human being with all our hearts which I believe came through when we finished his work.

June 25, 09

The challenges that these mission youths faced came out from their poring hearts with love & admiration to these young poverty kids ~~who~~ ^{who} were mostly African American.

Yes we even got an invitation from a Black Christian church with a preacher that gave his blessing words of wisdom & love & music & song from his heart to all of us that came to his small church. It was a lovely experience for all.

Even the task that ~~the~~ ^{these} young youths perform like drywalling and painting apartment complexes or visiting nursing homes & attending Salvation Army & helping with kids club & landscaping projects never let these mission kids down. Yes they would give each day 110% of their time with no complaints knowing they were doing the work for God. Yes I believe that this trip made a impact on these young teens from St. Julie Church & the other parish that joined us from St. Mary's of Fatima Church in Peoria to intermingal with each other which they did very ~~well~~ well & make both groups understand how much they have to be grateful for to ~~grow~~ ^{grow} up in a wonderful environment with loving & caring parents.

So in closing I thank God for letting ^{me} make this trip & let me always reflect on this small town in my thoughts & dreams that there will never be anymore impossible dreams for these people in Men Valley, but only real dreams that will come through with joy & hope happiness to all.

Dear: FATHER Arthur when I was on the trip with the kids in my free time I wrote a story that thought was important for me to write on how I felt on this mission trip & if you wish to put this story in your Bulletin it would be most gratifying to me, because I would like to let everyone know how wonderful this trip meant to me & all that participated in it.

Yours Truly

Bob DiTuri - chaperone

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"Supplement to the end."

LASTLY I wish to thank the group I was with yourself father Arthur, Deacon Ed, Sheila, CAROL, Kelly Eclin & the other group from ST. MARY'S of FATIMA & the four Co-ordinators - TRAVIS, ALLYSSA, MATT & ASHLEE for a wonderful experience of Joy. "God Bless You all"