



**MISSION 2004  
SMOKY MOUNTAINS, NORTH CAROLINA**

**JUNE 19 THRU 26**

*The mountains and hills will burst  
into song before you.*

*Isaiah 55:12*

**ARE YOU READY FOR A  
LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY?**

## Mission Trip Reflection 2004

My reflection of our mission trip to North Carolina actually begins with all of us meeting on a Friday night a few weeks prior to our departure. We were asked to write some thoughts in our journals and I began to think of the good feeling I was beginning to experience again. It was the feeling of being able to forget the everyday hustle we go through in our everyday lives and become immersed in the peace and spirit that I felt last year in Mexico. What these trips do is remind me that it is so important to slow down the hectic pace of life and to get back to what is really important.

In traveling to the Smokey Mountains in North Carolina, you can't help but think what a beautiful country we live in. We traveled through and ended up staying in some of the most scenic areas I have encountered. That is just a side benefit from being privileged to make this trip. The real benefit is to be able to serve other people and live your faith with these young people and their adult leaders.

What I will remember the most is the enthusiasm of our group to try to accomplish as much as we could. The Youthworks leaders were so great at being flexible in finding many new projects for us. This enabled our work crew to help a man with poor health who needed some work done on his property. On a personal level it enabled me to make a connection with him because of shared life experiences. It was at that point I felt that I had made a small difference in someone's life.

The key to making these trips is to try to bring back the experience of service and faith and to live it back here. Whenever things begin to get busy and hectic back here at home, I try to remember that week in June and use it to focus on what is really important. I am very grateful to have been able to share this experience with such a wonderful group of young people. I am also very grateful for the inspiration and friendship of the adult leaders who helped to make this week so special.

Tom Moritz

“It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor...It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you say it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship...”

- C.S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory”

Ask any teen what the purpose of a mission trip is before she has been on one and she’ll say, “To go and serve those less fortunate than us.” Ask the same teen, immediately after the trip, what it was like to be a missionary and she’ll say, “It’s an indescribable feeling. Not only did I get to help others, but they also helped me look at the world in a new way.” In my first mission trip as a chaperone, I had the unique opportunity not only to observe our teens serving the people of North Carolina (and the people of North Carolina serving them), but also of our teens serving their fellow teens.

I’m not writing, however, to tell you about something merely unique; I’m writing to share with you one of the holiest moments of my life.

To save embarrassment and any other unpleasant effects, I am going to change the names of two of our teens. Naturally, other people on the trip will know who I’m talking about; yet, what they don’t already know will, hopefully, invite them to see the glory C.S. Lewis wrote about.

First we have Zach. Zach is a young man who felt tremendous pressure to fit in among his peers in TNT. Yet, he met with a good deal of failure – He knew that, occasionally, some people wanted to be talking to someone else. He struggled to find common interests with other teens. Worst of all, he felt (and was) mistreated at times. He has been made angry by this.

Secondly, we have John. John is a lively, helpful, athletic young man, though a bit awkward at times. John had a good deal of friends, and usually enjoyed mutual respect with them. However, he, too, was sometimes mistreated by his peers, and perhaps most severely by his friends. He was often made a scapegoat, and blamed for things his accusers would never bear responsibility for themselves. He has been made humble by this.

One day, I jumped into a game of “Elimination Volleyball” just a few rounds after it had begun. The game is played in a circle, and the volleyball is passed around in “popcorn” fashion, using standard

volleyball hits. Once a player makes a mistake, he is eliminated. Shamefully, I was eliminated just a few rounds later.

About the time I was eliminated, Zach attempted to join the game just as I had. Whereas I had been welcomed, Zach met with verbal opposition. "It's too late, Zach." "You'll have to wait for the next game." "Zach, you can't play this game!"

Zach, I'm certain, watched me join the game late, and figured there would be no harm in doing the same. Moreover, I'm certain he felt quite rejected by the response of his peers, even before he became visibly angry.

Zach responded to his expulsion with fury. He glared at the teens who had forced him out. He expressed his fury with harsh words. Then he stalked off.

I knew, especially because his mistreatment was starkly contrasted to the welcome I received, that I ought to talk to him. But in the time I spent thinking this thought, holiness had begun to act elsewhere.

I looked up, about to take a step toward Zach, when I saw John walking toward him. A moment later, John put his arm around Zach, and they continued walking. Presently, I was proud of John for keeping his promise to look out for Zach, and trusted that God would guide him in consoling Zach. It wasn't until the next day that I truly understood what I had witnessed.

I want to be clear as possible on this point, or you will understandably think I have been pedantic all along. When I saw John put his arm around Zach, I did not see John merely do something good. Nor merely what a Christian should do. Nor something merely Christ-like.

I realized that I saw Him. I saw Christ Himself, the way that St. Paul says, "Not I, but Christ lives in me." John died; Christ lived, right there, in that moment. I fell silent, the way one falls silent when he cries.

Recall, for a moment, Lewis' words on the glory of one's neighbor: "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you say it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship." This was the very thing I witnessed! This is what makes Saints Saints and, as Lewis was referring to, what makes

the children of God the Heirs of Heaven: That we would allow Christ to live so thoroughly in us we become divine like Him.

Let me point out at least one major consideration. John struggled, much as Zach did, to fit in. The very fact that they struggle means that they were *trying* to fit in. Give that some thought, and consider the average teenage mind: It is not good strategy to rush to the aid of the outcast when you are trying to win the approval of the kids who drove him out. John, with all his struggles, DIED at that moment. His body did not fall lifeless, though; Christ Himself took over John's body, and rushed to console Zach. It goes without saying that this is something, were He there, that Christ would do.

I read this passage from Lewis about a month later, and I began to weep, joyfully, all over again. I've known John for a couple of years now, and I have to say that, while I've never actively put him down, I have been slow to pick him up. He seemed to me to bring his struggles on himself, and I would have to demand a total change in his personality to really help him. That is not a fair price for mere popular acceptance.

After witnessing the only change of personality that can ever be fairly demanded, I now take John much more seriously. I have witnessed the glory of Christ setting him aglow, and I know what Lewis meant by the temptation to worship such "gods". Most of all, I feel tremendous humility, the kind that bends my knees and presses my face to the ground, when I consider how the Lord has visited me.

I am blessed to have had not only a unique experience, but a holy one.

Eddie Phukan

## Mission Reflection—Appalachia

This was my second mission trip. I had a wonderful and life-changing experience in Mexico so I didn't know what to expect from Appalachia.

We pulled in exhausted. My first impressions were not good. Females were sleeping on the floor in one room, males in the other. We had to take gang showers; the staff was inexperienced. I kept praying to God to open my heart and mind. As an adult and group leader, I wanted to be a good role model.

Over the next few days as I talked to the young staff there, they were eager to be flexible and make our stay successful. Our group was assigned tasks we weren't especially eager to do—pass out leaflets and visiting a nursing home. It turned out to be one of the best experiences of the trip. We had long conversations with the elderly patients in the home and learned a lot about the area and the people. One of the ladies I talked with was 93 and her family had actually owned the land where the nursing home is now located. She spoke about growing up in town and playing on the hill where we sat. The next day we were painting a deck and chopping down trees! You never know what to expect on a mission.

My group and I did a 360° turnaround of what we thought of this trip. I felt a very close bond with all the teens in my group and will also have cherished memories of our conversations.

There was laughter, tears, silliness, lots of volleyball, and dropping into bed exhausted, and then lots more of the same. However, what humbles me the most is watching the goodness and kindness of our teens. They have so much to give and want to so much make the world a better place. I feel very grateful that I had this opportunity to witness this.

Kathy Mannion

Meredith Mannion  
Mission Trip Reflection

There were open skies, vast mountains, and the smell of pine trees. When I first entered North Carolina, this was my first impression, but I knew that I was here to do more than just look at what was around me. I was here to help out the people in North Carolina. The whole idea of a “mission trip” didn’t hit me until we reached North Carolina. The first couple of days were a little slow, but I got to know the kids in the area, and they seemed really nice. I remember the one-day I went with to pick up the kids from their homes. It was a nice scenic drive, but as we pulled into where the kids lived, my whole mood on the trip changed. The kids lived in a trailer park. I was used to a house, apartments, and big rich homes. But when I saw the little trailers that the kids lived in, I couldn’t figure out how they would survive. I realized that even with so little, the kids were able to get by. And that I didn’t need hot showers, a computer, a TV, a nice bed, and a big house, to survive. The people in the town depend on each other. That’s something, that I don’t have at home, and its something that I had never seen before. I realized that life is not always about what you have, it’s about using what you have to help those who are in need. This is what I learned on the mission trip. And I realized that there is more that I can do in life.

This was an amazing trip that taught me that all I have to do is reach out my hand to those who are in need and help. That I can do it, just the way I am.

After spending a week with St. Julie's teens, the lead YouthWorks! counselor sincerely complimented the group for their positive attitudes, great behavior, and hard work. Out of all of the groups he worked with over the past two years, Jim said he would always remember St. Julie's teens as "and then some." Here are just a few of the observations that helped to earn them this compliment:

☺ On Monday, only five children attended Kids Club . . . and then word must have got out about the fun you created! By the end of the week over twenty children came to share fun and smiles with you.

☺ You were asked to help George clear his land – you worked relentlessly to create a huge wood pile– and then you took time to give George what he really needed as you listened to his stories and advice.

☺ You were asked to inventory a few boxes at a food pantry – and then you decided it would be best to take everything out of the shed and reorganize it to make it easier for James.

☺ You were asked to attend a mid-week church service that brought some of you out of your comfort zone – and then you actively participated and graciously visited with members of the congregation after the service.

☺ You visited residents at a nursing home . . . and then returned with nail polish and hand lotion to pamper new friends and a supply of yarn for Clara.

☺ You were asked for 15 volunteers to help with a special project during dinner – and then almost 50 hands went up – those that didn't volunteer knew they had to fulfill their kitchen duties that night.

☺ You fell in a puddle of mud while giving a piggy-back ride to a little boy . . . and then you hosed yourself off and kept going.

☺ You were given the job of cleaning a deck without needed supplies – and then you creatively fashioned a toilet bowl brush into two tools to scrub the deck.

☺ You created games to play during free times – and then you welcomed everyone to participate and showed outstanding sportsmanship.

☺ You saw one of your peers having a difficult time – and then you lent a helping hand or a needed hug.

☺ You saw that something needed to be done or you were asked to help-out with skits, chores, whatever . . . and then you did so with an enthusiastic attitude.

We are so proud of you . . . and then some!

*Deane LaPorte*



My name is Ms. Velma, Velma Fisher to be precise. I felt compelled to write you due to an experience I had just last week. You see I'm retired, moved here from Florida many years back, and I live alone in my home in the outskirts of Cullowhee, North Carolina. I lost my husband a few years back and just last year I lost a good friend who helped me around the house with "chores" I'm not able to do. It can be a challenge some times, especially now since I broke my hip a few weeks back and getting around is somewhat of a struggle. Some days I wonder just how I'll manage but as usual, God provides. I'm not used to being in a position of asking for help; you see I've been involved in volunteer ministry for over 50, yes 50 years. I've done Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, resale shops, food kitchens, etc., etc... Currently I still help out where I can at the Community Table in town, it's a 4 night a week free dinner for those who need a little extra help. But enough about me, I wanted to tell you about this van full of teens that showed up at my door last week.

You see they were part of this group I've gotten to know called "Youthworks" and had come to help me with some "chores" I had. I found out they were from Chicago, can you believe that they came 600+ miles to work for free helping someone they didn't even know? I've seen teens these days that wouldn't cross the road to help you, sure made me feel good about our young folk. Anyway they came to clean and stain my deck. You see the deck was put in a few years ago and with our weather it tends to grow mold and discolor if it's not kept up. Well mine needed a major overhaul. Mary, Joey and Caitlyn jumped right in. A little bleach, a little creativity for tools (we didn't have the right scrub brushes) and a whole lot of elbow-grease and the deck slowly turned "new" again. It looked so good I can remember when we put it in. I don't know if you've ever had the pleasure to scrub a deck down to bare wood by hand but let me tell you it's no easy task and certainly not what I'd call fun. They worked for 6 hours that 1<sup>st</sup> day, through the heat and alternating rain showers, yes they worked right through the rain, and finished more than ½ the deck, it sure was a sight to see! You know what, the whole time I heard them laughing and singing and talking, never a single complaint!

While the young ladies were working away the 2 young men, Andy and Jim were off on another project for me. You see living on a fixed income requires some resourcefulness once in awhile. Our winters can be chilly at times and I use my fireplace to heat my home. After this last winter I was down to only a few split logs and was wondering just how I was going to get the remaining logs split up. Well you know what, we just turned Andy and Jim loose with a couple of axes and before long I had enough wood, chopped and stacked, to heat the whole county! I've never seen 2 teens have as much fun doing work (other than the girls stripping the deck). It was a sight to see. They even mixed a little entertainment into the day (I think for my benefit); the girls came over and proceeded to try their hand at chopping the wood as well! They swing a mean axe but I did have to chuckle a few times, I wasn't sure if they were swinging the axe or the axe was swinging them! I give them credit for trying and am truly thankful for the results.

By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day I couldn't believe my eyes; my deck looked as good as the day it was built. I had enough wood to last for more than a few winters, and if that wasn't enough Mary decided to cut my grass for me! I don't know where you find teens like this but they are truly "keepers" in my book. After saying our good byes and thank you's I figured I was blessed by this wonderful group hoped that they would continue on

in ministry and service to our Lord. You know what? My prayers were answered. 2 days later I went to the Community Table to prepare a dinner and who do I find there? Mary, Andy, Joey, Jim and Caitlyn all working around the center, having as much fun there as they did at my house. Now you tell me, how much fun can it be to take inventory of boxes of food, empty some "nasty" garbage cans and wash them out and rearrange hundreds of cans of food so we can find what we need? Would you be laughing and singing the whole time? They were! I hadn't expected to see them again but this surprise really touched me. There they were, as energetic and productive as they had been at my house. Once again I felt blessed, for myself, for our community and for the Lord's family here in North Carolina. As they were preparing to leave they had 1 final surprise for me, Joey was "volunteered" to sing a song. Wow! What a fantastic voice and what a rare treat, she sang "You're so pretty" and it sounded like it was coming straight off the record, and it was only for me, what a treat!

I tell you at my age I have some doubts about where this country is going sometimes. As I'm sitting here thinking about all the events of last week I can't help but smile and reflect. A group of high school teens willing travels 600 miles to minister in the name of our Lord for people they don't even know and turn it into a "fun" experience is truly remarkable! Now just think, if each of them in turn decides to minister for the next 50 years and in turn involves their children and grand-children in ministry before long we may have something here. The seeds have been planted by the remarkable teens, now I get to sit back and watch the growth!

Mary, Andy, Jim, Joey & Caitlyn I have to say Thank you from the bottom of my heart, we are truly blessed to have you in our community, even for a short time. You've touched a number of lives here and you will be remembered. May the Good Lord Bless You!

Ms. Velma

(m P)

“And then some,” North Carolina Reflection  
Mark Holan

One thing you can say about the teens in TNT, is that they don't do things half way. Jim, our site director in North Carolina, called our group, The And Then Some Group. This was evident in our North Carolina mission trip. Our teens go all out in all they do. I wish the rest of the parish could see them at work sites, in Kids Club, in worship and in play. I am in constant awe at how mature, how spiritual and how caring these teens are.

One of the biggest differences with this trip is that our work sites were more community than individual. On most mission trips, the teens work on a person's home. They paint, construct or help clean up for this individual. It's very easy to see the difference you've made in that person's life. In North Carolina, most of the work sites were at shelters, food pantries, hospitals, parks, etc. You see that you have worked and accomplished something, but you don't get the reaction from the people that benefit from your work. This is truly mission at it's best. You work hard knowing and trusting you've helped, but you do so anonymously. The reward of mission is the job done, not the thanks and gratitude that follow. Our teens were able to do the job and do it well without the platitudes and reactions.

An encounter that stands out for me was at the Community Table. The Community Table is a soup kitchen unlike any you have ever seen. It is structured like a restaurant. People walk in, sit down and are waited on by the staff. There is a menu board that let's you know what is available that evening. James, the women (yes James is a woman) who runs the Table, spoke to us about it's mission, it's success, it's hardships. The commitment to serving her fellow man burns within James. This fire was caught by our teens that day. After speaking with her, I could see them working harder, but at the same time, with more joy in their hearts. For every drop of sweat that fell, there was an equal amount of laughter. It was inspiring to see and talk with someone who sees service as a way of life and not as something to be done when you have the time.

In North Carolina, we worked, we played with the local kids, we worshiped God, we helped each other, and then some.

Subj: Reflection  
Date: 8/9/2004 2:59:10 PM Eastern Daylight Time  
From: [AliangelH17](#)  
To: [Smcp6](#)

North Carolina Reflection

"The soul would have no rainbow had the eyes no tears"

This summer I took a trip with 49 other people to North Carolina. I traveled in a van with 10 people that I grew to love in that 14 hour van ride. I was not sure that I was going to enjoy this mission trip as much as my previous mission trip because of an odd schedule where I would be attending kid's club only once. I was proved wrong though on my first day of mission work. My work group was assigned to visit the local nursing home to clean trays and visit with patients. After a short while of washing trays outside it began to pour rain forcing us to head inside and visit with the patients. I was nervous at first seeing as many of the patients had poor speech or were hard hearing. Pete Moritz, Jake Howard, and I began visiting the patients and found that they were thrilled to be talking to us. There was one patient in particular though that captured my heart. She was an elderly woman whose tray we had washed before it rained. We were talking to her and we asked if she liked the mountains and she began to cry. She then told us how she had fallen, broken her leg, and then had had it removed so now she was unable to fully enjoy the mountains. I knew after talking to that woman that my mission trip to North Carolina would be a life-changing experience. The next day another work group and my own went and sang songs at the nursing home and then later that day we worked our one and only day of kid's club. Despite the low attendance of kids for kid's club I was really able to bond with them. One boy in particular by the name of Nathan stole my interest that day. He was continuously on my back for piggy back rides and picked me to be the goose during a game of "Duck Duck Goose". Needless to say, it was very difficult to say good-bye to him at the end of kid's club. There was no time to be sad about our parting because the following day was the beginning of worksite for my work group. We would be working with the Department of Aging taking down handicap ramps and then rebuilding them at different locations. It was hard work deconstructing the first ramp and trying to preserve as much of it as possible to be reassembled at a new home. After finally getting all of the ramp down we had to build a set of stairs as a replacement. That too was very hard work but it was all worth it when our customer, Mr. Rock, tested them out for the first time with a huge smile on his face. The second day of worksite was just as challenging as the first. We were rebuilding the disassembled ramp at a new location. We dug post holes, hammered nails and used the screwdriver to reassemble the ramp. The work we did really made a difference and gave us a great sense of accomplishment. I will forever remember the work that was completed and the astonishing effort that was put forth on TNT's 2004 mission trip to North Carolina.

Ali Hayes

Andy Taube

I couldn't think of any better way to express what I experienced on the trip than how I expressed it in my journaling during the week.

Yesterday was pretty awesome. It felt so good to be out there doing something. I felt alive. Who would think that something so simple as chopping wood or scrubbing a deck could feel so right and good to be doing? I know God was there with us. You could just feel it. Brenda and Frank were so open and kind. It just warmed my heart. It was awesome when it started raining yesterday. I was beginning to feel so hot and sweaty, and then, it started to rain. It was so refreshing. It cooled me off and it felt so good. It was awesome. It blew my mind when I took a break from chopping, looked up, and realized where I was and what I was doing. There were trees everywhere, I could see mountain tops just a few hundred yards away, it was pouring rain, and I was chopping wood. It was so simple, yet so magnificent.

The entire trip was amazing. I had so much fun hanging out, getting to know, and growing closer to all of the people that I got to share the experience with. That is the most meaningful and lasting part of the trip for me. The memories that I have and the bonds that I formed with all the people that went on the trip. Something incredible happens when you work with others in a setting like the one we had in North Carolina. I don't mean the physical setting, though. The fact that we were surrounded by gorgeous mountains and millions of beautiful trees was just an added benefit that we got to enjoy. I think they were just there to remind of us God's presence. The setting that allows the something incredible to happen, is the setting of people who volunteer to come together to do something for the good of other people. What is most incredible, though, is that there really isn't anything complex about it. It is so simple, yet so magnificent. God must have something to do with that.

Another awesome part of this trip was the people who we met there. Hearing their stories was probably my favorite part of the trip. They were all so interesting, but they were also so filled with love. Like the story of Ms. Velma, who has voluntarily been

in the service of others for the past fifty years of her life, and despite various health difficulties, continues to spend her days serving others in any way she can. I was inspired when I heard the story of the community and the reason many people in it are struggling from James at the Community Table. It was awesome to see a young person like her so concerned and compassionate about the struggling people within her community. All the people I came in contact with were amazingly caring and loving, and shared so much with those around them, even though they didn't always have much to share. It was not hard to see God alive in them.

God was in every part of that week. He was in the mountains and the trees, the birds and the bugs, the sun and the rain. He was in the jokes and the laughter, the smiles and the hugs, the conversations and the games. In the meals and the cleaning, the work and the sleep, the ice cream and the. . . I mean. . . What ice cream? ; ) He was in the energy, the love, the kindness, the compassion, the sharing, the giving, the singing, the praying, the reflecting, the thinking, and the realizing. He was in all the people, the kids, and the chaperones. He was in us, and through this experience, we know He IS in us.

Thank You for this experience.

7/10/04

As I was expecting, North Carolina was an amazing, indescribable experience. The trip has made me grow closer to God and see all of the wonderful things He does through us. He brought sunshine in the lives of all the kids and He is giving the people at REACH a little more hope.

This trip was particularly special because I felt that TNT did a wonderful job breaking barriers not only in the community we were working in, but also within our group. We destroyed cliques and left all petty arguments at home. I felt that this truly made the trip.

My work group was stationed at the REACH worksite. On the first day of work, it felt like nothing was accomplished. As the week progressed we could see major improvements in our surroundings but it felt like work without a purpose. After getting a tour of their village and seeing how truly wonderful the REACH organization is, I not only worked for a purpose, but I wanted everything to be perfect for those wonderful volunteers and people in need. Listening to the stories that Sandy told made me realize not only how lucky I am, but also how much those people need YouthWorks! help.

This North Carolina mission trip is one that I will never forget; and is a thing that I look upon as a faith builder and time that God is truly acting through me.

-Ellie Maglia

Jennie Holan

## North Carolina Reflection

I was amazed by some of the things I experienced in North Carolina. Before we left, most people talked about previous trips and how, even though the people they worked with were poor, they were still so happy with what they had.

I was working on an abandoned house that had been covered in smoke damage, helping to fix it up for a local abused women's shelter that was down the road and had bought the house. When we went to the center, and we saw all the things that these people had done for the community by setting up this shelter, it was awesome. Also, after hearing real experiences of some of the women that had been through there, I was kind of expecting to see women that were battered, bruised, and beaten. Instead we saw strong women that were just like anyone you would meet anywhere. I found that pretty inspiring, because even though they had been stuck in relationships that bad, and had been through that much, they were still smiling. All in all, I know that after going to North Carolina, I'm going to think more about what I let get me down, and figure out if it's really worth it. It was just a really inspirational trip that I know I won't forget.



## Mission Trip 2004 Smoky Mountains

We always want to compare. So much of the conversation in our small group, early in the week, especially, revolved around experiences on other trips. I try not to compare. Each trip should be like no other. Who we meet, what we do, where the Lord pushes us to be...

I have to admit however that when we arrived at the site, I was disappointed by the "luxury" conditions (by comparison!). Here we were, in the midst of a modern college campus. None of the buildings looked older than I am! How can I focus on my mission? I want to live among those that we serve! This was going to be a struggle...

The Lord is glorious in how He reveals the Holy Spirit to us. As the week progressed, our small group was exposed to many people living all over Jackson County. What a challenge for the YouthWorks! Staff! Determining need, and coordinating so many different organizations with their group each week. Because we were at the WCU campus, we were centrally located to the sprawling community being served. We became a "processing center" for so many tasks. We were able to witness how a community and its organizations (some of which were government agencies) served the needs of the aged, handicapped, abused and poor. I felt our group of 50 was a small piece of a beautiful quilt which blanketed Jackson County with God's love.

Watching my small group was a true joy. No task was too boring or unnecessary. Rain or shine...they wanted to continue! Each member pushed themselves, overcoming barriers, to see our Lord in all we met. Each received back 100 fold of what they put in! It was difficult to walk into rooms in the nursing home and try to talk to the residents. We were the first group to visit, and it was very hard to walk in and have a conversation. By the end of the afternoon, I had to practically drag my group out the door. I still smile from ear to ear as I recall the conversations on the way back to our site!

Another indelible memory is the smile on Mr. Rock's face as he tried out his new stairs for the first time. His face just lit up! What a great feeling! What a great day! We worked with Ben, from the Dept. of Aging. He was an excellent teacher for our teens. With his guidance and humor, combined with Mr. and Mrs. Rock and Paul (a friend of Bens and the Rocks) we talked and joked around the entire day as we worked.

Barriers and challenges continued for our small group throughout the week: stubborn nails, ugly toads (God's creatures!), loss of electricity...yet NOTHING stopped them for long! When the power went out as they tried to build a wheelchair ramp, our teens grabbed hammers and saws and really pushed to get as much done as possible so that the family we were serving had easy access to their car that day. We never even met any member of the family!

Yes, this trip was different from others. Each difference revealed something about our selves, our faith, but especially how our Lord works in so many ways. We are so very blessed! THANK YOU, LORD, for all you have revealed to us!

Mary Ann Maglia  
11 July 04

7-20-04

Coming into this trip I was really scared because I had never known what exactly happens on a mission trip. From what I had seen & heard I thought we would be in the middle of nowhere in a very poor area. Then I saw where we were going to stay and I was shocked to see that it was all modern. At this point I was really scared that this would take away from the whole experience that I thought that I would get out of it. At first everything was really scary, all of the people that I didn't know, the fact that I had no clue what was going on, and how everyone was expecting so much out of me. I realized that I shouldn't be scared, that this was the chance that I had been waiting for to do the things that I dreamed of doing. I think that it took me a little while to realize that I was here, and that if I don't take all that I can out of it, I may never come out of the corner and be a real part of this group. During one night I found myself thinking that I finally was really helping people. Earlier that day we went to a retirement home and visited the people living there. The way that they became so happy when we talked with them, you could just tell that they were really make their day a whole lot better. While we were working with the kids the day before, it was so amazing to see that they were having so much fun, and that they really looked up to us. Also, that they got the message that we were trying to teach them, that God created them uniquely and that each part was special, and they were getting it at such a young age. It was really touching. On our final day of working, we worked for a man who recently lost his wife, and had back troubles. I really didn't think that we were doing that much, but I think that he was just glad to see us. He was so thankful that it seemed like he was almost crying. This is when I really realized that we were making a big difference in these peoples lives. But my favorite part of the trip was the final night that we were there. We had a washing of the feet ceremony and a passing of the peace ceremony. It had to be one of the saddest things that I had ever done in my life, and there was only one other time that I had cried so much. It was so amazing to see that everybody was really close together during this though. No one was left alone. It was really amazing. If there's one thing that I took away from this trip is to be thankful for what you have and you can make sacrifices in order to help others. This trip was really great and I will never forget the relationships that I have made on this trip. It has changed my life and I wish that everybody could experience something like what I have.

Ray Stone  
Sophomore

Subj: REFLECTION!!!!  
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As I sit down to write my affirmation, I cannot help but compare North Carolina to our past mission trips. Upon arriving to this new site I could not help but look around and see how similar this college campus compared to the university I would be attending next year. I arrived excited and couldn't wait to begin my week of ministry. But as the rules were set out or lack thereof rules (we were allowed to shower) I could see that this week was going to be different. But I wouldn't let anything phase me, I was too excited. My first two days were scheduled for Kids Club and as my first day went by I could see that I was right about this trip being different than the rest. Not that many kids showed up to join in the activities that day, and although I was disappointed in how many kids were there but it was evident that this Kids Club was not going to be unlike the rest. All the kids there wanted the same thing, to have fun. They all were so eager play the games that we prepared, or sings the songs that we sang, or even listen to the Bible stories that we acted out. It was great to see all the smiles that we created by just being there and giving them a little attention. Even when the rain came in, these kids would not let anything damper their fun. It was amazing to see that as simple game of duck-duck-goose could entertain and put smiles on a group of kids for such a long period of time. After my two days of Kids Club, it was my groups turn to go out on a work site. Our days were spent up in the mountains, in a yard at a house owned by man named George. When we arrived, you could see that he was as excited for us to work as we were. We started to work right away, cleaning up his yard, and creating a massive bonfire in the middle of his yard. As we were tending to his garden in the front of his house, we really got to know George and get a closer look at his life. He told me some of the greatest stories I have ever heard about his pottery work, his pet goat, or about living in the mountains and how he gets his power over night? mail three days later. George was so thankful that we were there not only to help him work around the house but to talk and get to know every single one of us. It was sad leaving North Carolina, because I knew that it was going to be my last TNT service project. However, I left North Carolina with a new sense of how I was going to live the rest of my life. I realized these memories will last me a lifetime, and I cannot express my gratitude towards people who made these trips life changing. I realized that you don't have to go on a mission trip to do community service and make a difference in the world. And above all though I realized that no matter where you are, a smile can cheer up anybody.

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