

Subj: reflection

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From: Sumtr61

To: Smcp6

So, here it is, my reflection from my first and last mission trip. I don't really know what to write about other than I really enjoyed the experience. It was a swell time. It's great getting out there and helping folks and we had a fantastic opportunity to travel a good piece of the country. I am really very thankful that I got to participate and hope to do something like this in the future.

Tim Lyons

January
2012

What I expected to get out of the mission trip was a life changing experience.

~~It was a life changing experience. I was~~

When I got to North Carolina, my group found out we were going to work at the REACH site.

What we did was wash down and paint walls.

When everybody else went to a few different sites. Every day we did the same thing. I didn't get a life changing experience at this mission trip. I hope I have a better time next year.

Mary Megan La Porte

North Carolina

Our mission trip to North Carolina was my fifth and last mission I will attend with TNT. Each trip had its own, unique touch on my life, but the last one for most is the one they treasure for many years to come. At the lock-in for the mission, I wrote a journal entry stating, "I think this trip is the one I am most excited about [compared to my excitement for other mission trips I went on]". I think I was right, but through all the excitement, I learned valued lessons before the trip started, during the trip, and after the experience.

We all gathered in the parking lot before going into our separate vans. I really didn't know who I was going to travel the 12 hours car ride with, but I knew I wanted to be in a 15 passenger van so I can be with a lot of people. My best friend wanted to ride with her mom, but the car they were taking only fit 6 people. I was complaining about how I wanted to be with others teens in the group so I can enjoy the best out of my experience. That moment in the parking, I stepped outside of myself and realized how stupid and immature I must have looked. I was about to leave for a trip where the whole purpose was to help others. I stood there realizing how self centered I was, then jumped in the car of 6 people and thanked God for giving me the opportunity to go on such an incredible, life changing experience. As we drove on, I loved looking out the window and seeing all that God has created. When we reached the Smoky Mountain areas, I was in awe of the monstrous mountain that lay before me and on all sides of me. I loved the feeling of being so small in this great world we live in because there are so many wonderful sites people are given the chance to see, but take for granted.

As we can to our college campus that was housing us for the week, I was blessed to have a nice, comfortable space to sleep in at night. We started unloading, but other teens in the group questioned the staff of the site where our kitchen, showers, and club space was located. They explained that we had three different buildings that we were to use that week. One building was our bunk house, another building about a half a mile one way was a basement of a church which held our kitchen, dining area, and our club room, and another building about a mile away was where we showered. When I heard this, I thought it was so inconvenient to move around these three buildings all day and they told us that we would probably go to each building once, at most twice a day. Again, I complained, but this time I didn't share any of my thoughts out loud. One would think by their fifth mission trip, the person would learn to deal and live with any minor changes. Well, after a lot of thinking and realizing how lucky I truly am, I remembered that so many people in the community we were about to help had many more inconveniences than separate buildings designed for certain functions. It ended up that the moving around was nothing at all and we had a chance to see more of the people who live on the campus.

On our first day, my small group and I were lucky to be assigned a physical task compared to others. I love hard work because of the feeling of accomplishment, but I knew from the moment I came on the trip that I would be willing to do anything asked of me. We were given the chance to meet an elderly woman who lived in the mountains. This woman is an angel straight from God; she broke her leg in a countless number of places after a fall, yet she continues to volunteer her time to a local soup kitchen in her condition. After her fall, a local organization heard what happened to Ms. Fisher and built

her a deck so she could get to her door without climbing any stairs. Since she lives in the mountains, there is a lot of moisture in the air and mold started to grow on the deck. Our job was to scrape the mold off so another group could stain the deck. Also, Ms. Fisher does not have any other source of heat besides her fire place, so we had the chance to chop fire wood. May be these jobs were common to some people, but we were ecstatic to do the job asked because it was for someone special who really needed our help. I was even given the opportunity to mow Ms. Fisher's lawn. Anyone can mow a lawn any day in Tinley Park, but it felt so good to do the job for our angel.

Our group also had a day to spend with 16 children at kids club. In the past, we've been blessed to have countless number of kids come to kids club. It was a little depressing to see so few children, but it was so easy to make friends with the children and they showed us how to really have fun. They were angels God has sent to us because those select children taught all of the teens and adult chaperones with laughter and smiles!

One of the biggest lessons I've learned on the trip happened after the trip was over and I was at my home that I am so grateful to have. I was on-line talking to a friend who I haven't seen nor talked to in a very long time. He has participated in St. Julie Mission trips before, so he knows how people feel after the experience. He asked me how it went, and I explained how it was awesome and very fulfilling like other trips. Then I told him how little of work there was for us to do, so I personally felt like I didn't change anyone's life. He then asked me if I saw anyone smile after talking with them or finishing a small task or when I played with them. Right then, millions of images came to mind of all the smiles; from Mrs. Fisher when we left, from two adorable girls who

giggled when I gave them under-dogs on the swing and joked around with them, from other teens in the group. "Yeah, I did make a lot of people smile", I replied to my friend. "Then you changed a lot of people's lives". It was that moment that made me have no doubt that North Carolina was not like others, but better.

Mary Megan LaPorte

North Carolina Reflection

By: Pete Moritz

We had a Drop-in /Lock-in before we got into the vans. I couldn't wait until we got in the vans. Each and every Mission trip starts with a great van/bus ride. I would have to say it was true again with this ride. I was fortunate to be in the van that called themselves "Van-Dice." This ride set the tone for me the entire week. We had the most fun.

When we got into the mountains, I was amazed at how beautiful it was. There are no words that could describe the beauty of it. It was great to wake up and look into the skies and see these amazing mountains with the fog on top of the peaks of the mountains was great and I wish I could live with them every day of my life.

The first two days I was there, my small group was able to go to the retirement home that was in town. At first we were helping out with cleaning there bed side trays. That job was done pretty quickly, so we were fortunate to go room to room and visit the residents there. While I was there I met this lady and she made these dolls made of yarn. She asked me and Jake Howard if we wanted one and we were unsure because we weren't there for long. She told us to go into a drawer and there was an entire drawer full of these dolls and it was so sweet of her to give me one of them. It was amazing seeing all of these people and how welcoming they were of us and them telling stories was so awesome.

The next two days we went with Ben and we took down a wheelchair ramp and Mr. Rock's house and after that we put in some stairs for him. The first time he went up and down those stairs was amazing. He looked at us and just smiled his entire heart for us. He was so happy that we built that for him. The look on his face was indescribable. There is nothing that can compare to that. We then went to another house and built a wheelchair ramp for someone who was handicapped. We didn't finish, but we got pretty close to it.

The entire week was amazing. Working and playing and talking was amazing. I love it so much. By the end of the week it felt so good to be doing all of the work and projects. I can't wait to do it next year.

The Smokes Mountain, North Carolina was the first Mission Trip that I had gone on, I did not know what to expect. People would come back from the previous Mission Trips happier than ever. They would talk about how amazing Mexico was all through the year, even up to when we were just about to leave to go to North Carolina. I wasn't ⁱⁿ how one week, one trip could bring out so much in people. When we got back from it, I knew that was one of the greatest experiences that I had ~~been on~~ ^{had} ^{this} was my first Mission Trip and I will never forget it. I had an awesome small group.

It was Tracy Wans, Sennie Holan, Mike Mannion, Jeremy Willie, and Me. Our small group leader was Eddie Plushan. When I found out that he was going to be our small group leader I was very happy. Eddie is someone that I have looked up to for a long time. Also, he is not too old to ~~for~~ have forgotten about his mission work. At the beginning of the week, everyone was a little shy and wouldn't open up that much. When the week was coming closer and closer to an end, it seemed like everyone had become more open and would talk more. During the week when we had to go to work site, my group went to REACH. REACH is a place where women and children go to stay. The women and children that stay there were domestic_{ly} abused. REACH is an awesome place. While we were there, we did everything from weeding to painting. The amazing thing was I didn't hear a single

complaint from anybody, ~~there~~ Not me nor anybody that was working. Back at home, if we were asked to do this, there probly would be loads of complaints. I was very surprised with everybody. I am not sure why, but throughout the whole trip it felt like my body was getting filled with more and more joy. I think that it was like that with everybody because you rarely heard anyone complain or be mean to people. There was that occasional rude comment or yelling, but barely ever. Over all I thought that this trip was better than great. At the feet washing ceremony at the end, ~~but~~ I did not feel at all that I deserved for him to be washing my feet. I felt just like the disciples did when they thought that they should be washing Jesus' feet. Right after I had my feet washed, Eddie told me something. I will not repeat it right now, but I will never forget the words that he had said. After that, everyone was bawling their eyes out and hugging everybody. I was also crying with them, but I was shocked. I finally realized how this one trip could bring out so much love. ~~on~~ The way home was undoubtably the best ride I had ever been on. For ~~the~~ most of the ride, it was Mrs. Laporte driving, Mike sitting in the front seat, Tracy and Kathleen sitting in the middle, and me, Jeremy, and Ray sitting in the back. One of my favorite parts of the ride was when it was just me, Tracy, and Kathleen that were up. First we talked for a long time, and then we sang along to every song that

played. The ride gave me a chance to really meet Kathleen,
and become closer to everyone else. I am never going to
forget the trip. It was an awesome/amazing experience
that gave me a chance to meet new people and
became that much closer to my old friends. Now that I
am writing this reflection, all of the feelings from the
trip are coming back to me. It feels great.

Sean Anderson

After attending three previous mission trips, I thought I knew exactly what to expect this year when we left for North Carolina, but I was definitely mistaken. From the moment we laid eyes on the mystic Smoky Mountains something captivated us all and drew us to the beauty of the land and to one another. While in Cullowhee, we stayed on a college campus which allowed us to meet many diverse groups of people. Throughout the week we were able to get to know college students, local residents, tourists, and people from both a Hispanic community and a Native American community close by. The history of each of the people we met varied greatly, but one trait stayed the same and that was the welcoming attitude each had towards us. It was this attitude that allowed me and my peers to go out into the community that week and work hard for something we felt mattered. During the week, the work crew I was in helped out at Reach, a shelter for abused women and their children. We were able to complete many tasks that week and it was astonishing to see everything we accomplished by Thursday. After learning that North Carolina had one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the United States, along with other statistics about the tragic events that occurred near Cullowhee, we all became passionate about making a difference and doing something to help. It was that passion that allowed us to become close that week, to one another, to the community, and to God. I have never experienced such a unifying bond between all the members of a trip before and it truly was an amazing sensation. Whether we were playing volleyball in the parking lot during free time, staining a deck, planning for Kid's Club, or hiking up the Blue Ridge Mountains, we did everything together and together we all had an amazing trip, unlike any other.

I realize that my reflection paper is a little late. I guess that I have had a hard time expressing my thoughts and emotions into words, and of course I forgot that they were due two weeks ago.

Youthworks' Smoky Mountain North Carolina site was my fourth and final mission trip with T.N.T. Going into it, part of me honestly didn't want to go because I knew that this was one of the final stages of my high school experience, my youth, and my time with T.N.T. I knew that after this was over, it would be time for me to grow up and move on to college, and that thought terrified me to death. But, I remembered the covenant we all signed and the rule that stated to leave all emotional baggage at church. So, I figured that I would forget about all that and just have a good time.

Every mission trip that I went on has gotten better and better as the years passed, but I honestly did not think that this trip could beat last year's trip to Juarez. The whole van ride down, I couldn't stop wondering what this trip was going to be like while I was partying it up in the infamous Van Dice. Once we got out of the van and started unloading the trailer, it hit me. This was the beginning of end, and I honestly almost started to cry. So much emotion and so many thoughts were racing through my mind at the time. A part of me couldn't wait to start the week, but an even bigger part of me didn't because I knew that it would end.

The staff was way cool, and I knew that I was going to have fun with them all week. But, as time prevailed, it seemed to me that the staff wasn't as experienced as other ones that I've been around on previous trips meaning that it seemed that they tried too hard which kind of complicated things. To make things even worse, it seemed to me like I wasn't really doing any work to help the community. I guess you could say that the first couple of days I wasn't having a really great time on the trip because I wasn't doing the one thing that I love to do the most and that's help people.

But then, we were assigned to do work site at this man George's home. He was disabled and had a few medical problems that prevented him from doing basic work around his house. So, we didn't paint or even lay brick like on other trips. Instead, we got to use Weed Wackers and chain saws, put large, heavy logs into a pile so they can be burned, and play with George's pet goat. It was different, and I loved every minute of it. When we saw at the end of the day how different his yard looked and how huge that pile of wood was, you got such a great feeling of accomplishment. George was the nicest guy ever, and he was so thankful for what we did, and tears filled my eyes as he thanked us with such a loving and tender tone of voice. I got what I wanted all along, and that was to help others. I couldn't be happier.

So work-wise this trip ended up being one of the best ones after all, but there is one thing that happened that really did make it the best one. And that is that I got to be a lot closer with a lot of people. I truly believe that God gave me this opportunity to bond with everyone else, and that is what made this trip absolutely amazing. That's why I was so sad to see it end. As the last night came to an end, I was hugging and saying goodbye

to everyone while crying very hard, and I knew that this was the end. I finally realized how much I have both physically and emotionally, and how lucky I really am.

As I write reflection a mere ten days before I leave for college, I can't help but think about not only the trips I've gone on, but also the friends that I've made. I can't help but think how lucky I really am that I've had the opportunity to have these trips but mostly because I have T.N.T. and everyone associated with it. My life will never be the same because of all of you, and words cannot begin to describe how much you all mean to me. I love you all with all my heart, and I will miss you very much.

God Bless,
Ricky "Buck Nasty" Ramos

Mission Trip 2004 Reflection

North Carolina was a Mission Trip that will be with me for the rest of my life. When I first arrived at the site I really didn't know what to expect. The city we were in really didn't seem much different from life back home, and I knew this was going to be different from my previous Mission Trip. Work site began on Monday and we were told we were going to be working at the Reach foundation. The Reach foundation is basically a shelter for abused women and their children. We spent time cleaning a house that had been in a fire, but I really didn't feel like I was accomplishing anything. On Wednesday we were taken on a tour of the Reach shelter, that's when everything changed for me. While being shown through the different places we ended up seeing some of the women who were staying at this shelter. I realized that we were really doing good on this trip, and that we were in fact all bringing something special to these people. We ended up going to a counseling center for abused children, and it really made me feel good about what this foundation was doing for everyone, and that we had helped in the tiny way that we could. This week showed me and taught me so

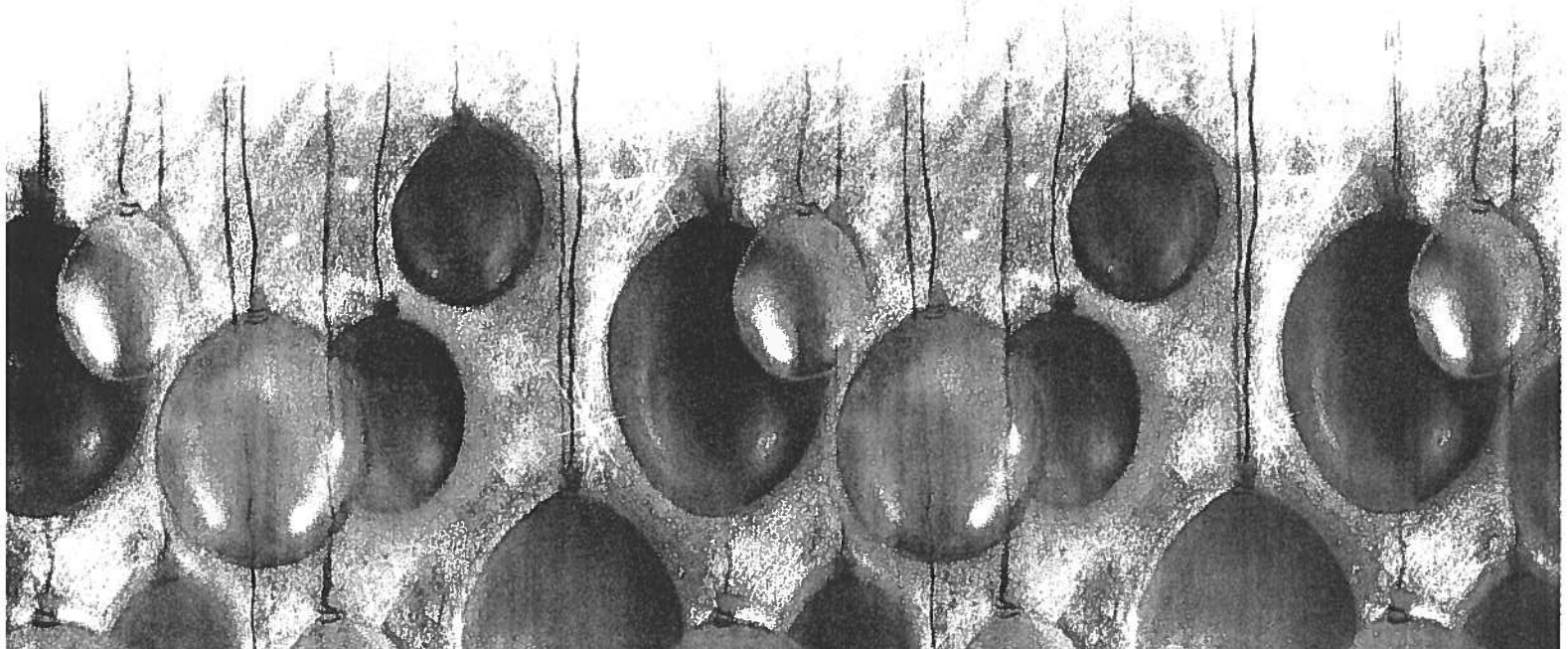
many things. Not only had I helped someone else, but I also took something with me. The impact this trip had on me was mind blowing. It helped me realize so many things about myself and the world around me. The abuse shelter helped me in one aspect of my life to realize I am not alone. This trip also gave me courage to talk a month later about something that I never was very open to share. I thank God everyday for what this trip gave to me. The week was incredible from beginning to end. The laughs we shared in Van Dine and the tears that were shed on Friday. Nothing else can be said except that the week was **amazing**. Thank you to everyone for all of the memories. You all have given me memories and showed me love in one way or another. Thank you, Forever and Always.

Cindy Fashingbauer

North Carolina 2004!!

This was my first mission trip that I was ever on. Right from the start it was amazing, I remember looking out the window and seeing all the beautiful scenery. From the never ending plains in Indiana to the Roaring tree covered mountains in North Carolina. The one thing that I was looking forward to was small group. I absolutely love them because if any thing was bothering me I know I can always talk about it and know that it will stay there. Our small group stayed together pretty much the whole week. We did many things together from children's day care to painting a deck. The first thing we did was day care, I remember only having a few kids there the first day, but all of them were filled with love. The second day we went around passing out flyers to try to get more kids to come to day care. Also we went to the nursing home and we met some wonderful people. There was this man named Willy he had a heart of gold. I remember teaching him to play go fish, and just how much fun he had playing that little card game touched me. Also, he sat there all day in the same spot just waiting to play bingo. Also, I remember this other lady who wasn't doing so well. She was in her bed and she had a breathing mask on. We were going around washing wheel chairs and this is when I ran into her. I walked in and asked if I could wash her wheel chair and I couldn't understand a word that came out of her mouth. You could tell it was really hard for her to talk, it made me think a lot. The nursing home had the happy side of life and also one of the sadder parts.

MIKE FASHINGBAUER



Cathy Murray

At the lock in for this mission trip, I saw the movie from the Mexico trip. From watching the movie, I got the idea that we were going to be in this extremely poverty-stricken, similar to the area shown in the movie, & I thought we were going to be building houses. But, when we got to ~~North~~ North Carolina, I was looking at the atmosphere there. It was a nice area, nothing close to what I thought it would be. I saw a McDonald's & a Subway, & the area where we were sleeping was really nice. I asked myself 'This area is so nice. What kind of work do we have to do here?' I wondered this, but I went with the flow of things.

I never really thought we could do anything to help anyone in the community, until the next 2 days when we helped Mrs Velma clean up ~~her~~ her deck so she could stain it. She had an accident & broke her leg & hip in 20 different places, so she really couldn't do much around her house. But, she had some amazing neighbors who took some time to check on her, help her do things she needed done, & talk to her. We also worked at Kids Club, which I loved! I love to work & have fun with the kids. All of the back pain from giving like 50 piggy back rides was so worth seeing the kids

7/1/14

the kids smile. Our last day there we worked at the Community Table, a soup kitchen. We helped sort out the cans took inventory on the food they had in stock. The lady in charge there was telling us how they weren't getting enough donations & volunteers. When I was leaving, noticed a sign saying the Community Table was going to be closed for a few days due to the fact that they didn't have enough volunteers. That really got to me - People couldn't take an hour or so to help out the less fortunate in their community.

This mission trip was an amazing experience that opened my eyes. There are more important things than boys, friends, & clothes and all people aren't as lucky as you & I to have 3 meals a day & have all of the nice things that we do. I was aware of that, but not as aware of it as I am now. I enjoyed everything about this mission trip - The work sites, Kids Club, coming closer to the people on the trip, the dumb jokes Mr H & I laugh over, & Mr H taking some of us to the drive-through brewery, buying a beverage getting us coasters. (Props to Mr H! That was one of the many highlights of my week!) I loved this mission trip. It was my first time going on one, & it was a great experience for me, as well as for everyone else. I am looking forward to next year's mission trip, & I can't wait until I have another opportunity to experience this again.

Meredith Wydra.

North Carolina Reflection

TNT - Mrs. P.

Being the fact that North Carolina was my very first mission trip, I had no idea what to expect. I was anxious, excited, nervous, but above all proud to have been given the opportunity to go there. I loved every minute of it. The people in the towns were so kind, our youthwork leaders were so dedicated, the scenery was gorgeous, and the bonds between every single person on the trip were strengthened beyond belief. In our set of rules at the lock-in before we left, we ~~set~~^{made} the coveted ~~rule~~ of "Save the drama for your mama!", and we truly followed by that; diques were killed; no one argued; tears were shed in happiness, not pain; love was just everywhere and anywhere to be found. In the beginning ~~of the trip~~, I felt sceptical about the trip making an impact on me or not. Our first day of worksite turned out to be unsuccessful due to the weather, and much of the ^{good} ~~vibe~~ in the group was brought down. It was only until the next day that I felt as if I was really making a difference. My group was chosen to work at ~~an~~ ~~upscale~~ the Community Table; an "upscale" soup kitchen, if you will.

There, one woman by the name of James devoted the vast majority of her time ~~every~~ each day in feeding those who can't afford a real meal. Those who come into the community table are treated just like those in a restaurant would, with a waitress, choices of a meal, & even a dessert, ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~companied~~ ^{companied} to the ~~same~~ ^{same} uniform food ^{standard} other ^{soup} kitchens ~~provide~~ offer. Whether it was completely cleaning up the community table ~~rep~~ inside and out, organizing the yard sale items in the back of the room so more people ^{could} be seated, or trying to ~~replenish~~ ^{replenish} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~rows~~ and organize the thousands of cans of donated food in a bad rain storm and the darkness of a power failure, my work there set the pace for the rest of the week to be amazing. I even got to write that night's ~~menu~~ ^{menu} on the wipeaway board; it was ~~a~~ an honor I will never forget! I was so glad I got the opportunity to work ~~there~~ at the community table so early in the week, for I doubt ~~any~~ ^{any} the rest of

my time in North Carolina would have had
the same effect on me as it ended
up ~~being~~ doing. Every ~~day~~ ^{that was} day after, ~~ended~~
up ~~being~~ better than the day before. It
was so hard to say goodbye. But when
the townfolk told us, "Y'all come back now,
ya hear?", ~~I'm ~~going~~ ~~to~~ ~~take~~~~
~~them ~~to~~ ~~take~~ ~~them~~ ~~to~~ ~~take~~~~ ~~back~~ ~~to~~ ~~North~~
~~Carolina~~ ~~again~~ ~~some~~ ~~day~~. I think I'm going to
take that ~~no~~ invitation seriously; I'd go
back in a heartbeat!

Mission Reflection 2004...by Stephanie Pasek

I will always remember my first Mission Trip with TNT to the Smoky Mountains. The trip was exactly what I needed at that point in my life. I went into the trip with an open mind and heart and the people and the experience blew me away. The beautiful scenery was breathtaking. The open arms that greeted us in the community were wonderful. One of the best feelings came from knowing that we tripled the amount of kids that came to kids club by the end of the week!

The way TNT came together was amazing. We were a family for the entire week. Everyone was able to leave his or her own "personal baggage" at the church and grow closer as the week progressed. From the nicknames to the laughter and even the tears every person on the trip was able to come back with something. I learned so much that week.

My worksite was at REACH. At first our group felt like we were not able to accomplish much of anything. It felt as if we were working without a purpose. However after we were given a tour of the REACH facilities our group was able to learn what the center does. It motivated us to make everything perfect. We were told horrible stories of what women go through there, and we learned how the volunteers dedicate their life to the center. It was absolutely amazing and inspiring.

Taking the time to reflect on this trip has made me realize so many things. This trip allowed me to grow in many ways. I have grown closer to God and strengthened my faith. I will never forget the memories and bonds created on this trip. I was able to get so much more out of this trip than I expected.

North Carolina was very different from any other Mission Trip I've ever been on. Up to this point the trips have challenged me on a physical level, but this year I was challenged in a very different way, mentally. I was forced to break out of my comfort zone in order to accomplish the tasks placed before me. In years past my eyes have been opened to how much I have been blessed with, this year my eyes were opened to all of the possibilities that are inside of me. I can't think of a more appropriate lesson for me to have learned on my last Mission Trip.

To Do List:

- I want to cry like the rain
- Shine like the sun on a beautiful morning
- Sing to the heavens (like a church bell ringing)
- Fight with the devil and go down swinging
- Fly like a bird
- Roll like a stone
- Love like I ain't afraid to be alone
- Take everything that this world has to give
- I want to live

Josh Gracin - "I want to live"

You truly feel "alive" when you go on any mission trip. You seem to find a reason for everything, and realize that those financially poor are rich in spirit. You are shown what truly matters in life, and taught that you don't always have the answers (as previously thought). On any mission trip, you grow closer to those around you, and you grow closer to God. But most importantly, on any mission trip, you grow as a person....

Colin Nolan
North Carolina Reflection

North Carolina never seemed at any point like the other three mission trips I had been on. The trip seemed a lot slower and the work we were doing seemed at first to not be needed as much as in the past. The general consensus was a wondering of why we were here. The groups split up, only two going to work sites, the other four going to a nursing home or kids club. Kids club came first for me and on the first day only 5 kids showed up. Used to seeing groups of 30 or more, it was odd having more of us running the show than attending. After day one, I was disappointed in the trip. The next day came around, and we were back at kid's club. This day the attendance was up to 12 and it was showing some hope. The smiles were always there and the kids seemed to love all the attention they were given. Having served our two days in kid's club, our group was ready to head out to service projects. I was happy to be going out to work on a man's yard that no longer could because of disability. After the second day, I still did not see the point of the trip, however. Day three came along and we were out on a ranch working to clean up the yard of a man who had a severely curved spine. He was always saying how good it was that we were there, and always mentioning to Ricky and I how appreciative he was. He had many stories to tell us of his property, the neighbors, and the land. We left and finally, I saw there actually was a point to the trip. The next day we were back out on his ranch cleaning it up again, and before we left, the man came up to Ricky and I and shook our hands and told us he could see Jesus working through us. This gave the trip it's meaning, and gave us a sense of accomplishment. What I took from this trip was a realization, that it's not how bad or good it looks, but rather how bad or good you want it to. We came into the trip with expectations of another experience similar to Cairo or Pine Ridge, but we left with a whole new experience and knowing that the type of service is not as important as the fact that we are acting as the hands and feet of God.