

Cairo – 2002

Cairo is a town with a rich and sometimes checkered past. It is also a town in decline. Opportunities for ministry are plentiful and as we realized as the week went on they went both ways. For me it happened on Tuesday morning with our visit to the Meridian Manor Nursing Home in Mounds, IL. I had the pleasure of meeting a fantastic lady by the name of Iris. Iris has been around the Cairo area for most of her life, when I asked her how long that was her reply was 80 some years. She had spent a few years in Detroit and a year in Chicago (south side); the rest was spent in southern Illinois. She's known as "Mama" to her 10 children, numerous grandchildren (she lost count), and 5 ¾ great grand children. Her eyes lit up as she told me of the pending arrival of her newest great grand child in 2 months. As time went on conversation turned to the history of the area, and luckily for me the "living" history that Iris was willing to share.

She confirmed that the recent economic troubles with the area were related to the decline in the "shipping" that used to support Cairo and nearby communities. Most working age people are now on boats working the rivers or have left the area; she didn't see that changing anytime soon. She shared that the area was rich with farmers, most of whom grow food to support themselves. Her own family and extended family continue to raise crops but don't raise livestock anymore. From there we got on a long discussion on the goodness of fresh vegetables and fruits and how the stores will never be able to capture that. She still looks forward to the family meals when she can again taste the "home cooking".

She then began to tell me more about her past, what the area was like, what her family was like. She lived on a farm with her family not far from the Mounds nursing home. They were farmers but also worked to support the family. She picked cotton in Missouri. Every morning, Monday thru Saturday, they would be up at 5AM getting themselves ready for the bus. They would go into town (Mounds) and catch the bus that took them to the fields across the Mississippi. They worked all day, usually until dusk when the bus would pick them up again and take them back to town. Wages: \$5-6 week! For 'relief' they would go to the corner bar (I assume they were all older at this point) and buy a 1-gallon jug of beer that they would share as they passed the evening away. They went to bed when it was gone and started the whole cycle over again the next day. Saturday nights were different. They got to "hit the town" on Saturdays – she spoke of 2 main outings. One was the show and the other was the clubs. She spoke of many of the "Blues" entertainers and the popularity of the shows. They used to look forward to going every week they could afford it and as during the week they had their "beer".

The interesting discussion centered around the events on Sunday. Every Sunday, regardless of physical condition or anything else you were going to Sunday service. You did NOT miss Sunday morning service. And pity the person who stayed up too late the night before or was under the weather. They could expect 'the back of your parents hand' across the side of their head if they started to fall asleep or if they messed around. Sunday Service was a mainstay, a constant in her life and her parents were not going to let her miss that. Sunday afternoons were for socializing with the family and friends, picnics and parties when appropriate and then it was back to the Monday work routine.

She did eventually marry, however her husband had past away a few years back. As mentioned above she raised 10 children (2 of whom have also past away) and

numerous grand children. She's still optimistic about the country and where we are heading however she can't make any sense out of what's going on over there in the middle-east. "A lot of fighting and bad will for nothing".

Before I knew it the time allotted for the visit was up and we had to head back to Cairo. It wasn't easy to say good-bye, I felt almost like I had met a long lost friend and in the back of my mind I knew I probably wouldn't see her again. It was enjoyable and enlightening for me, it exposed me to a new type of ministry I never thought I would enjoy and most of all – it allowed me to be ministered to by a wonderful lady. Past mission trips for me have been about experiences for the teens, working with local children, and experiencing the culture. This one for me was about personal relationships – it was a success!

Ed Pluchar

Don't know where to start. This is hard.

Our kids accepting, loving and caring about the elderly people they helped with their houses. Taking the time out to speak with them and to really listen to their stories. Paying attention to the details of the jobs they were doing. Making sure they did a good job. "No one's made me so happy in the four years since my wife died." The heartbreaking kindness of Woody. The love and search for love in his eyes.

Our teens pitching in when other groups didn't seem to be doing their fair share. Making an effort to reach out to the other teens, giving it a good try, even when they were shut down. So flexible in all they did...finding something else to do when the work supplies were short. Going with the flow with Kids Club. Having patience for all the water tossing. Breaking down the "attitude". Making new friends. Really pushing themselves past their comfort zones with the people in the nursing home that weren't able to communicate at all or communicated in their own world. The laughter and teamwork during Olympic games. How hard it was for them to stop the Yea Gods. The wonderful Happy Fun notes that made me feel so welcome and so much more a part of the group than the last time.

My own openness to receive whatever God chose for me to receive on this trip. How I felt about going in open and naked and coming home clothed in love, God's hands. Felt his hand upon my head many times. Lost myself more completely into Jesus, find out what he wants me to do. What do you want me to leave - at once? Literally? Or just leave the garbage behind? Leave MY life behind and trust You to care? Want to smile and laugh and work and serve and be You. Finding more of You this year than last. More open, more ready, more vulnerable. My soul feels so open. Thank you.

I am candlelight ... flickering, bright, dim, warm glow, sometimes out completely like when the wax of the candle douses the flame. Want to be a lighthouse, sure, steady, offering guidance to the lost and comfort to the weary.

Felt more useful this time. Actively participated more and let myself go into the experience. Not as worried about our teens and being a chaperone. Therefore could immerse myself more and really feel the experience. Sheer joy of being in a water fight and letting the child in me come out to play completely. Relaxing. Listening to the birds in the JAM time. Being Not-So-Normal. And loving every minute of it.

Tears still come to my eyes thinking about the wholeness of the experience, the wonderfulness of our teens, the oneness of our group. It's a presence and a sense that I don't ever want to lose. I can feel it to my core. Was this MY Mexico? My awakening? ... felt things I never have, or haven't in a long time. Didn't want to leave. Would like to stay for another week, just discovering more about myself, which is selfish. Want to serve but while serving, discover what is in me.

Mrs. O

Cairo Reflections

Mark Holan

My goal for this mission trip was to approach it with an open mind. I did not want to approach this trip by comparing it to other sites we have gone. I did not want to have pre-conceived notions about the town and the people of the town. Lastly, I did not want to predict how our teens and leaders would react to this situation.

This goal was harder than it seems. This was my third mission trip and wouldn't it be hard not to compare it to the others? I did a lot of research on the town of Cairo and was a little scared by the information I found. Would we be able to fit in let alone try to make a difference in the lives of the people? In contrast to my first trip, on this trip, I knew most of the teens and some of them quite well. I knew all the adult chaperones and had shared at least one trip with each of them. How could I not know how these people would react?

Life is full of surprises!

I found that each site and each trip is truly different. There is no comparing of one site to the next because the people we encounter are different. Our group is different every year. Each trip is a unique experience. Some say, your first mission trip is the most memorable. For me, this trip was my most memorable.

When we pulled into Cairo, the poverty was like a slap in the face. It was all around us in the shape of abandoned buildings, run-down homes and the lack of industry and retail. The streets around our "home" seemed uninviting to strangers. One block from the school we stayed at was an abandoned hospital. What does that say about a town when even the hospital has left? Cairo is a very urban like area in a rural setting and my apprehension was growing. I was concerned with our safety. I was concerned with our reception by the adults of the town and most of all, by the children of the town. What are we doing in Cairo?

God's work! Despite all the rough edges that this town has, I grew to love it in the short time we were there. People walking down the street would smile, say hello and be very welcoming. As good as the adults were, the kids of Cairo were even better. These kids had no pre-conceived notion about who we were or what we were all about. They let us get to know them and get to love them. The first day at kid's club, I saw Darren. Darren was about 2 years old and seemed terrified. He sat on Tracy Lyon's lap chewing on his collar not saying a word. Tracy held him the whole time we played the first game. At the end of the first day, THE FIRST DAY, Darren was smiling and talking and going up to everyone trying to climb on them. Darren, remember he's 2, was replaying the very first game that we played that day. He was lining up the ropes and jumping over them this time without Tracy's help. These kids touched my heart. I did not want to leave kid's club and go to the work site. I could tell so many stories of Bobby and Rissa and Darius and Everett, especially Bobby, all they want is what we all

want, love, attention, a sense of belonging. "You get more than you give." This sums up kid's club and the love the people of Cairo showed us.

Work sites were no less amazing. People welcomed us into their homes and into their lives. I worked on painting Woody's home. Woody is 87 years old and can "whip any other 87 year old man in mud rasslin." He shared his home and most important his life story with us. We got to know Woody as a young man, as a parent and as he is today. Woody had so much energy, I told him he should go work at the nursing home and help out those old people. His concern for us and appreciation for what we were doing, will not be forgotten.

I have to admit, my prediction on how our teens and adults would react was mostly on target. They were open and loving and up to any challenge. The week was full of smiles, laughter, tears and hugs. For the graduating seniors, this was their last trip and their emotions were genuine and raw. I am energized by the teens and inspired by the spirituality of the adults. Sometimes predictability is not a bad thing.

I will remember Cairo for the silly things, the ride down, the ride back (Pam and Erin saying good bye to EVERYTHING in Cairo, "good-bye stop sign, etc.), the rides to and from activities (Elimidate, "bye ladies"). I'll remember Cairo for the fun things, kid's club (Neal winning jump the creek, Bobby picking me for his team by saying "I'll take my man Mark", Justin from Wisconsin cheating in a running race), evening activities. I'll remember Cairo for the hard work that was done, Tracy and Pete painting the top of the house in 90+° weather and high humidity and doing it cheerfully. I'll remember Cairo for the spirituality, small group discussions, washing of the feet. Most of all, I'll remember Cairo as the place that surprised me and opened my mind.

A Week in Cairo... Illinois

This trip to Cairo, Illinois was my second one with TNT. It was very different from last year's trip to South Dakota. Being my second trip and all, I kind of knew what to expect, but every place is different.

The first day wasn't all that much different from last year (except for the significantly shorter ride down there). Later on, that night was filled with games to help us introduce ourselves to the other church groups. Not to mention playing Knockout and Big Booty all week long. What would we have done without them?

The next two days I was assigned to worksite. We had to paint a house. The person who lived there was an eighty-seven year old man named Woody. He lived there by himself ever since his wife died four years earlier. Needless to say, he really enjoyed our company, and we enjoyed his just as much. He lived in a pretty big house so there was a lot of scrapping and painting (and I mean a lot). But it was all worth it, and before we left on the second day, he told us that he never had two happier days in his life since he wife had died. After he said that, at that particular moment, I truly realized what we went down there to do- our mission was to go with God's help and help people and spread His love throughout the community. Mission Accomplished.

The Next two days I went to Kid's Club. I was supposed to go from activity to activity with the kids who were seven and eight, but there were only two kids of that age group there so the first day I kind of just wandered around playing with as many of the kids as I could. At first they acted like they didn't like us, but soon they were excited to see us and were begging to push them in the merry-go-round.

On the second day, I started out at arts and crafts helping the kids make the cross necklaces made out of beads. There was this little boy who wanted to sit at the picnic table and make one too, but there was no room for him to sit. So I picked him up, sat him in my lap, and we made a necklace together. Soon it was time to leave and go to play games. I started to walk away and he tugged on my shirt and put his arms up in the air, so naturally I picked him up and carried him. On the way he told me his name was Melique and that he was three years old. As the day went on, I would ask

him if he wanted to play games and stuff, but he would shake his head no and we'd just hang out. Also when people came up to us and asked him what his name was, he wouldn't say anything to them. At the end of the day, I gave Melique to his brother so they could go home. A few people who were standing near me were saying bye and waving, but Melique just sat there not saying a word. Then I said good bye to him and he looked at me with a big smile, waved and said "Bye." When that happened, it made me feel so good inside, and I was overwhelmed with a feeling that I simply cannot explain.

The evening activities were probably my favorite part. The Youthworks' Olympics were a little weird, not that putting Vaseline all over our noses and covering my face with shaving cream wasn't fun or anything. Movie Night was fun for everyone, especially the kids from Kid's Club. The improv games were definitely my favorite thing of all. They helped us relax and made us realize just how funny people are. The pool night was a nice way to end the week, not to mention it gave some of our braver individuals (Colin, Genevieve, and Bill) a chance to finally take a shower. Later that night we had the washing of the feet. This made us realize how spending a week together doing God's work brought us closer together and also that it was over in the blink of an eye. We all knew that we would see each other again, but you couldn't help but shed a tear and hug everyone you could.

I would have never imagined that I would have the opportunity to go on these mission trips or the impact they've made in my life. I have never met a nicer and more caring group of people than the ones in TNT- both teens and adults alike. Not a day goes by that I don't thank God for this, and I want to also thank all of you. A special thanks goes to Auntie Di, Mary Megan, and Mike for always being there for me, and I'm so proud to be in the same family. Yeah God to all of you!

Ricky "Hustla" Ramos

It wasn't Mexico or South Dakota; it was our home state, Illinois.
We complained about the location, but it never changed.
We wanted new scenery, a new adventure,
But we forgot what our real mission was, to help God's children.
We drove there in 6 hours, not 1 day or 2,
But the time didn't matter, what matters is the job we were going to do.
We wanted to meet new people and get a good experience from it,
If we didn't open our eyes and our hearts, this is what we would've missed:
Painting houses in hot summer days, meeting the loving people of Cairo,
Serving the community by working in a garden, visiting a nursing home,
Playing with the kids at VBS, sharing smiles, laughs, and memories,
Feeling comfortable in a town we thought we would be rejected in,
Growing closer to our friends at St. Julies,
Making new friends with teens and adults on the same mission
from Wisconsin and Pennsylvania,
The hours of playing Knock Out and Big Booty,
Understanding our faith and love for God,
Finding who we really are and the important things in our life,
And most importantly, taking off the blinders and we found that Cairo
is a very beautiful and amazing place.
It's hard to even imagine poverty in our country, let alone our state.
This trip was better than the other two missions we went on before.
We may not have had a hill to climb in Cairo,
One where we can over see the town,
Or sit and think about the experience we've had a chance to take part of,
We new what we did was awesome on the flat land of our Earth.
It will never be forgotten; we have the pictures and the stories to tell.
Our mission was a huge success.
We served our Lord of Lord, Our King of Kings, our Prince of Peace,
We have lived our life for him.
We are like Jesus.

~*~ Mary M. La Porte ~*~

Reflection

This was the first mission trip I have gone on. It was the best experience I have ever had. The first couple days I was assigned to kids club. When I looked into the kids it made me figure out that I was sent to help and serve. I played with the kids for a couple of days. It was the greatest feeling I had. When I played with them, it seemed like it meant so much to them. Just a little conversation with the m was great. It lighted up there day as if they never had a conversation with any one. When they had to leave for the day, they all looked so down. But when they arrived the next day, it was a site to see there faces all lit up ready to play the entire day. It was a downer when I had to leave and go to worksites the next day. I was assigned t a man named Woody for my worksite. When we got there he greeted us with the warmest smile I have ever seen. It was great to go inside and just hear the stories of his life. He never stopped, and we all enjoyed it. When we were done eating, we had to go back out to the walls and keep painting. That was also good cause it meant that I was helping someone who was less fortunate. When we were sitting there talking to him he said that it was the best experienced four days he has had since his wife died four years earlier. I cannot wait to see what Mexico has in store for this year.

Pete Moritz

MIRACLES

Mary Kate
O'Donnell

I didn't know any one going into Cairo, sure I got to know the people in my van but we still weren't good friends! I honestly wanted to go home the first day (Sunday), I didn't know anyone and it was really weird because usually I'm the talkative one and the one introducing everyone... but not that week! So the first day while everyone started the traditional "knock-out" game I sat down with Julia... one of the Youthworks staffers! And she totally got me through the first day! I'll never forget our talk! As the week went by I met more and more people and I started to love it!! I learned so much about myself! I never pictured myself doing all the things I did!! My favorite part was... well everything! Every job was awesome in its own way!! Especially our "mini-matt" project which I hope he still has!! But I had the most fun that week!! Thank you so much for letting me be a part of that experience! Have a great summer! God Bless!

Mary Kate O'Donnell

When asked to reflect on our trip to Cairo, Illinois this past summer, I found that I didn't really know what to say. We met so many people, did so many things, gave so much, and yet gained even more back, that it would take me years to tell it all. The urban setting of Cairo, along with its nearby location, truly made me more aware of how people live each day and how lucky I really am. The citizens of Cairo may not have had very much, but they greeted us with warm smiles and welcome hearts. In the few days it took to paint a house, we were able to befriend an elderly man and walk away with a new perspective on life. The courage and determination these people showed was inspirational and encouraging. The stories the children told about their family life sometimes made me wish I could take one or two of them back with me. Yet, knowing that I could not, only encouraged me to try a little harder to do something good while I was with them. It was a week full of God's love and blessings, and a time in which I was able to grow within myself, with those around me, and with God. I didn't realize it at the time, but all the little things that were said and done that week truly made our mission trip what it was. It was these random smiles and hugs that helped raise our enthusiasm and fulfill our hopes and goals of the week. And it's because of these little circumstances that this mission trip truly was amazing for me and is something that will be remembered in my heart for so long.

Tracy Lyons

Cairo Reflection

Cairo was an experience like no other. It really hit close to home for me. The people there weren't all that different from us. The only difference was that they needed help. They needed *our* help. It was a such shock to see people so much like myself, yet so very different. The children there only needed one thing, attention. We are all so lucky to have parents that love us and give us attention...these children would do anything for that. It was the least that any of us could have done. But I know, that even just being there to play with them and sing was enough to brighten up their days. The older people of the community were much of the same case. Those in the nursing home just wanted a friend to talk to or play Bingo with. Is that too much to ask? Not at all. And those still in the community. They needed a coat of paint on their run down houses. They can't get up on those ladders and do it themselves, otherwise I'm sure they would. And if you were lucky enough to get a chance to sit down and talk to them, you would have discovered how much wisdom they have to offer. No matter what the activity was, I know those people down there got something out of it...almost as much as I did.

Christine Behr

Cairo Reflection

Well, here we are on another mission trip, this time much closer to home--Cairo, IL. It's hard to believe that just six hours away there is such a depressed area in our state. Then again, there are similar areas within 20 miles. It is hot and humid because Cairo is located at the tip of the state where the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers meet. We ventured over to this site and saw the powerful currents where the two bodies of water mixed together. It's hard to imagine that it was once used for both upstream and downstream travel before there were motorized boats and barges.

The first two days were Kid's Club, and as always, the children were great. Somewhat shy at first, they eventually warmed up to all of us. They were very playful and mischievous, which made it much more fun and less tense.

The work site went rather well. We took a house that hadn't been painted in years, and helped to turn it into what looked like a dollhouse. The teens all did a great job especially painting the porch and bench. The owners really loved it. When there was a bit of a lull some of the teens went inside and read the Bible to the women who lived in the house. They loved every minute of it! They didn't want them to leave.

All in all, I believe that we made a huge difference in the community. It was kind of nice to be only the second group down there. I'm sure this will end up being one of the best sites we have gone to. It was a great experience.

Mr. Greg

“Spread the gospel to all, and if necessary use words.”

- St. Francis of Assisi

The best benefits of participating in mission trips are witnessing the awesome examples of God's love. St. Julie's has been blessed with incredible teens who are willing to leave their comfort zones to serve others. In their actions and words it was easy to see the gospel being spread!

Each year, the mission trip includes time at a work site and time working with children in the Kid's Club. Time is also spent in the community, sharing good times and stories. The teens were given assignments of working with community members from 2 to 105 years old. Each person we met was treated with dignity and respect. I was proud of our teen's positive attitudes towards life, tolerance of differences, and appreciation of new found friends. Here are just a few observations that touched my heart.

- ❖ Mary Kate and a leader from another church sang songs to an elderly blind woman at a nursing home for about one hour – her requests.
- ❖ After spending 2 days painting the house of a senior citizen, Katie, Cailin, and Stefanie read Bible passages to the grateful homeowner. She didn't want them to stop!
- ❖ Chris overcame his fears of heights to help paint high peaks of a house while Neal encouraged him, held his ladder, and took turns climbing to the peaks.
- ❖ Greg and Michael were on a mission to finish the house. They worked with few breaks, accomplished an incredible amount of work, and showed a positive attitude and good sense of humor the whole time.
- ❖ Tom filled my gas tank!
- ❖ Mark found all of the kids at Kid's Club who needed a special welcome, helping hand, or encouragement, and he stayed with them until they were comfortable.
- ❖ Dominic's playfulness and smiles always cheered up the other teens and the children at Kid's Club.
- ❖ Ed provided organization (of the whole trip), gentle reminders, kind words, and some very appreciated Cherry Cokes!
- ❖ Pete showed warmth and compassion to the little ones as they played games at Kid's Club.
- ❖ Kevin watched out for those playing the evenings' recreational Knock Out basketball tournaments to make sure that everyone had a fair chance.
- ❖ Christine's patience with people of all ages shined at Kid's Club and the nursing home.
- ❖ Robyn, a newcomer to the group, made fast friends with the teens, preschoolers, senior citizens – everyone she met!

And that was just a glimpse of what happened. The list could go on for pages if I continued to record all that happened. These recollections are of just half of our work groups. How I wish I could have seen the other teams in action! I heard they were awesome, too.

Pictures, reflections and verbal accounts could never truly reflect the feelings you get when you are on a mission trip with the St. Julie TNT teens and chaperones. How blessed I have been to have witnessed His love!

Thanks for the memories Cairo Crew,
Diane LaPorte

Cairo

I've been to Mexico and I've been to South Dakota, but Cairo has been the best mission I've ever been on. When I went to Mexico I had all these thoughts in my head because I heard what other people had said about it and I thought it was going to be so great. After I got back from that mission, I didn't feel any different. When I went to South Dakota I thought that it couldn't have been as good as I thought Mexico was. So when I got back from South Dakota I felt like I missed out on something big, I still didn't feel any different. I've realized for both trips, I was in the wrong mindset. I think that had to do with a lot of how I saw each trip.

I let go of all expectations. I let go of all past experiences on missions. I let go of my own comfort and went to Cairo with an open mind and an open heart. I didn't judge the place because it was only in Illinois, I didn't want to think anything. I didn't want expectations to get in the way of what I could get out of the mission.

When I got to Cairo, I didn't feel the excitement inside me like I did when I was in Mexico, but I didn't let it get to me. All that changed when I got to my work-site at Ms. Myers house. She was so excited to see people helping her and to just have someone to talk to. Our last work day was when I realized that we really touched her life. We were saying goodbye and she started crying and saying she'll never forget us. Seeing that little old lady so glad really made me feel like I did something. Each day was making me never want to leave there.

Kids club the first day was my first chance to see what the kids there were like. I was a little intimidated because all the 14 year olds were so much taller than me and I was afraid that they weren't going to listen to me or respect me, but after talking with them, I didn't have a problem. The second day was when I met Brytani, an eight year old angel. I never thought I could have so much in common with someone who was 9 years younger than me. We spent the whole day together and we played games and talked and I had the greatest time. We took a picture together and she gave me her address so I could mail a copy to her. I felt like she could be my little sister. At the end of the day she gave me a hug and she said that she loved me and she asked me if I will remember her forever, I will. I didn't realize that I touched her life until the last day. We were having free time and I walk outside and see her standing there with her arms open waiting for a hug. She made me (and Tracy) a bracelet so that we don't forget her. That was the sweetest thing and I felt the tears coming because I didn't want to say goodbye to her. The more the week went on, the more I wanted to stay there.

Besides all of the work and kids club that effected me, this was the first time I really got to know the people from the other churches. I made some good friendships and I continue to talk to them daily. I'm really proud of myself for the fact that I let go of everything to get close to others who I never would have if I didn't.

So much has happened on this trip that makes the memories so sweet. I wouldn't trade this experience for anything in the world. The only thing I'm worried

about now is that I don't think Mexico is gonna live up to my expectations from Cairo.

Just thinking about this mission gives me a feeling of pride and hope and love. The truest feelings I have for this trip can not be expressed in words. I will be forever changed because of this trip and I hope to keep this experience close to my heart always.

Nikki Owczarski

The Backyard Mission

Okay, so we didn't go half way across the country, and we didn't leave the United States, but does that really matter? I don't think so. One of our sayings for the trip was about mission work in our own backyard. You don't have to travel far to still be involved in a great mission. We were still in Illinois yet the difference in economy was so drastic. We went from our malls and bowling alleys to a few convenient and drug stores. It was hard to believe we weren't many hours from home. It was obvious, though that we were needed and meant to be there.

The first two days I was involved in kid's club. I was a little nervous given all the rules and guidelines we had to follow to be safe. When I got there though I met many kids who were kind and just had nothing else to do. I did, though, also encounter many rude children who didn't like me just because of my color. They told me I was ugly and that our kid's club was stupid. It made me feel bad, but I honestly think they didn't know any better. The other kids who would hold your hand and have bright smiles across their faces were the ones who made it all worth it.

The other two days we finished painting a house. Cailin, Katie, and I painted a bench with a huge heart on it. We finished that house and it looked amazing. We were so proud when we passed the house on the way home and saw how much we accomplished. Not only did we do mission on the outside of the house but we did some inside work, too. I don't mean actual labor, but we did read to the woman who owned the house. We read to her and her relatives from the Bible. They listened closely, and a look of appreciation was on all of their faces. I was so proud of all of us and everything that we had done for that family.

Now as a look back on the trip I can't help but smile. The work that we did over the course of five days will be remembered for a lifetime. It only takes a big heart and some hard work to make a BIG difference.

-Stefanie Pehr

Cailin Mittler

Cairo Reflection

The week leading up to the Cairo Mission Trip, I kept on thinking that this trip is going to be for me. I am going to be the one that is going to get the most out of it. I am going to take as many pictures as possible so I can make a collage . I was selfish and I apologize.

The trip touched me in more ways the one. Getting out of the vans and just taking in some fresh air and looking at what I would be calling home for the next five days touched me the most. I only had to live there for five days, the people in Cairo lived there their entire lives. That type of environment was considered normal to them.

After unloading the vans, and setting up our rooms, we went into the club house to get introduced to our leaders, and to hear the basic instructions on “what to do if..” After hearing the rules, and a few other things, I was scared. I didn’t know what was going to happen, and I had no idea what to expect. That is when I realized that everyone, including the Youth Works leaders were going into the trip blindly.

I was so excited to hear that I would be in the Kids Club for the first two days. I have always had a spot for children in my heart, and I love being with them. In Cairo, the children’s smiles were priceless. The simplest things thrilled them. If a kid started to cry or get upset over something give them a sticker, and it made their day. After making a few trips to the park, pushing a few kids on the swings, and watching them go down the slides, I honestly don’t think I ever heard so much laughter, seen so much happiness, or looked at so many smiles. It was unreal, and it touched me deeply. I kept on thinking that if these kids are growing up in one of the most poverty stricken towns, and they can smile more than some of us. That hit me hard, and it definitely changed the way I looked at life.

Ms. Lee was awesome. Her personality was amazing, and the way she smiled was even greater. Something as simple as touching up her front door made her day. In the two days I knew her I never saw her without a smile on her face, or laughter coming from her mouth. We worked hard on her house, and she made sure we knew that our work was greatly appreciated. One day a group of us went into her house and read her the Bible. I personally never thought reading the Bible was fun, or that interesting. Ms. Lee and her family hung up the phone on people as we

were reading the Bible. It was so different then what I was use to. My parents try reading my family the Bible, and the minute the phone rings, we all have a race on who can answer it first. It was unreal. I first thought Ms. Lee's family was doing that out of kindness, but after Ms. Lee stopped a few times to tell us one of her life experiences that related to one of the Bible stories, I knew that she enjoyed hearing us read, and it was something that she can't do very often.

Leaving Cairo and saying good-bye to everyone effected me the most. I didn't want to leave. I wanted to stay there just for one more week, and just visit with everyone, and play with the kids. Our life is very easy in comparison to what the people in Cairo life through everyday. It surprised me that we are normally the first ones to start to complain about something not going our way.

Cairo Reflection

The people of Cairo were not very fortunate, because they didn't have many things. Even though they weren't very fortunate to have many things, they were very giving to us. Our work group was very fortunate to meet this very old lady. She looked like that she was only sixty years old. She acted like she was very young. She was very kind to us. We were fortunate to here some of her stories of her childhood. She has live in Cairo her whole life. She has experienced from when Cairo was a popular town to now, be it is poor and very unfortunate town right now. Even though she didn't have many things, she was very kind and offered us many things. When my group was with the little kids we were also very fortunate to spend time with them. They were the nicest kids I have ever seen in my life. They played what we were setting up; they were so nice to every one. They were even nice to the people they didn't know at all.

Bill Moritz

Cairo – 2002

Cairo is a town with a rich and sometimes checkered past. It is also a town in decline. Opportunities for ministry are plentiful and as we realized as the week went on they went both ways. For me it happened on Tuesday morning with our visit to the Meridian Manor Nursing Home in Mounds, IL. I had the pleasure of meeting a fantastic lady by the name of Iris. Iris has been around the Cairo area for most of her life, when I asked her how long that was her reply was 80 some years. She had spent a few years in Detroit and a year in Chicago (south side); the rest was spent in southern Illinois. She's known as "Mama" to her 10 children, numerous grandchildren (she lost count), and 5 ¾ great grand children. Her eyes lit up as she told me of the pending arrival of her newest great grand child in 2 months. As time went on conversation turned to the history of the area, and luckily for me the "living" history that Iris was willing to share.

She confirmed that the recent economic troubles with the area were related to the decline in the "shipping" that used to support Cairo and nearby communities. Most working age people are now on boats working the rivers or have left the area; she didn't see that changing anytime soon. She shared that the area was rich with farmers, most of whom grow food to support themselves. Her own family and extended family continue to raise crops but don't raise livestock anymore. From there we got on a long discussion on the goodness of fresh vegetables and fruits and how the stores will never be able to capture that. She still looks forward to the family meals when she can again taste the "home cooking".

She then began to tell me more about her past, what the area was like, what her family was like. She lived on a farm with her family not far from the Mounds nursing home. They were farmers but also worked to support the family. She picked cotton in Missouri. Every morning, Monday thru Saturday, they would be up at 5AM getting themselves ready for the bus. They would go into town (Mounds) and catch the bus that took them to the fields across the Mississippi. They worked all day, usually until dusk when the bus would pick them up again and take them back to town. Wages: \$5-6 week! For 'relief' they would go to the corner bar (I assume they were all older at this point) and buy a 1-gallon jug of beer that they would share as they passed the evening away. They went to bed when it was gone and started the whole cycle over again the next day. Saturday nights were different. They got to "hit the town" on Saturdays – she spoke of 2 main outings. One was the show and the other was the clubs. She spoke of many of the "Blues" entertainers and the popularity of the shows. They used to look forward to going every week they could afford it and as during the week they had their "beer".

The interesting discussion centered around the events on Sunday. Every Sunday, regardless of physical condition or anything else you were going to Sunday service. You did NOT miss Sunday morning service. And pity the person who stayed up too late the night before or was under the weather. They could expect 'the back of your parents hand' across the side of their head if they started to fall asleep or if they messed around. Sunday Service was a mainstay, a constant in her life and her parents were not going to let her miss that. Sunday afternoons were for socializing with the family and friends, picnics and parties when appropriate and then it was back to the Monday work routine.

She did eventually marry, however her husband had passed away a few years back. As mentioned above she raised 10 children (2 of whom have also passed away) and

numerous grand children. She's still optimistic about the country and where we are heading however she can't make any sense out of what's going on over there in the middle-east. "A lot of fighting and bad will for nothing".

Before I knew it the time allotted for the visit was up and we had to head back to Cairo. It wasn't easy to say good-bye, I felt almost like I had met a long lost friend and in the back of my mind I knew I probably wouldn't see her again. It was enjoyable and enlightening for me, it exposed me to a new type of ministry I never thought I would enjoy and most of all – it allowed me to be ministered to by a wonderful lady. Past mission trips for me have been about experiences for the teens, working with local children, and experiencing the culture. This one for me was about personal relationships – it was a success!

Ed Pluchar

8 July 22

Cairo Mission Trip

How wonderful it is to serve God & receive so much in return! The people whom we helped were so gracious and welcoming. This trip restored my opinion of the character of our Society. We aren't Christ's servant for the "thank you's" or the glory; however, what a high we received from Woody's thank-you and Mrs. Meyer's tears of joy! It is easy to be the faithful follower when those you serve are so grateful!

Thank you, Father, for reminding the joy of service.

Mary A. Maglieri

Cairo Reflection

11-16-02

Cairo ~~is~~ was an amazing trip. ~~When~~ when I found out I was going I thought it was going to be a lot of fun, but I didn't know that I was in for a turning point in my life. Cairo didn't show me just how good we have it but it showed me something better, it showed me that money doesn't matter in a little child's eyes. Money is the least important thing its kids who have each other and have ambition. I met some amazing kids. Some kids from 1 year old all the way to thirteen or fourteen years old. ~~that~~ ~~you~~ ~~can~~ ~~never~~ think that a few kids could change your life. Not only did a few children change my life but also an amazing grandmother did as well. This grandmother showed us that hardwork and dedication pay off in the long run. She showed me that a little hardwork will always help you in life. She taught me a life story. "As long as you

know or think you could do
something you should never
doubt yourself." Caro was
AMAZING!

By: Joanna
niemczyk

Cairo Reflection

I had no idea what to expect at Cairo. Obviously, this wasn't going to be like a Mexico mission trip. Did the people live in cardboard boxes? Did they have houses? Were their houses nice like ours? Do they dress nicely? Are they clean? Can they afford cars or do they walk everywhere? How can people in Illinois be in this much need to have us go down there on a mission trip? I was frustrated with the idea of going on a mission trip in my own state. Surely there is more need in other states. Now that I look back on it, I am able to appreciate what I have and I find it easier to accept the people I deal with on a daily basis.

All the people in the town were very nice to us and accepted us. They knew why we were there and they were excited to have us. Knowing that in itself was rewarding enough to me. The most rewarding part of this trip was the peoples' reactions to what we were doing. When my group met Woody the first day, we went around and told him all our names. He stopped half way through and said, "I'm not going to remember all these, but all I got to say is God bless you." He was so happy to have people to talk to and someone to help him fix up his house. It was truly a rewarding experience. The whole trip, Woody especially, has touched my heart and has had a great impact on me. I will never forget you, Woody, and thanks for all you showed me.

Senevieve Magari