



South Dakota Mission Trip 2007

Reflections of Mission Trip 2001 – Pine Ridge South Dakota

The time has come to put our trip to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation on paper. With all that has happened, it could be a novel, but I'll settle for a short story.

The drive to and from Pine Ridge had its moments. All 5 vans trying to stay in a line, following directions, and at times misdirection's (I won't mention any names.). The weather was severe at times, waiting out the storm behind the trucks and in the basement. The teens, some very loud, but all of them good. I was fortunate; I had the quiet ones. The view of the countryside, at times, words could not express Gods' artistic talents. From the rolling landscapes to where it looked like you were on the moon, beauty was all around you. You just had to take the time to appreciate it.

It was great to see 3 groups of people of different faiths, different areas of the country, come together in the poorest county in the United States to show the Lakota people Gods' Love. Our mission for this trip was to sow the seeds of Love and to show them that someone cares.

I think the most fun for the teens was dealing with the children, especially in Kids Club. The teens planned activities, games, crafts, and bible stories for the afternoon session of Club. The Lakota children who attended had a fantastic time. I don't know who had the bigger smiles, the ones getting or giving the piggyback rides.

Out of all the trips and activities we attended, nothing compares to our trip to Camelback. The thoughts of "can I make it, will I make it" were present. The mind was saying, "YES" but the body said, "I'll think about it." The view was breathtaking. I can understand why the Lakota people hold this land sacred and I am thankful they shared it with us.

I am very proud of our teens, of all the teens, how they faced many adverse conditions without complaints, from storms to roaches. I am fortunate to have gone on this and to have met so many good people. I am blessed to have made many new friendships and to renew old ones. I also discovered that I wasn't the only warped one there.

My wish is that the teens will carry on with their enthusiasm for Jesus and continue their mission throughout their life journey. I also hope that the parents may see them as I have, doing good, praying and singing of Gods' love, and to be as proud of them as I am.

Thanks to all for everything, the smiles, the hugs, the tears, and the jokes. This will truly be a time that will stay with me always and I will cherish forever. May God Bless you all and keep you in the palm of his hand.

Mr. G

South Dakota Service Trip- Summer 2001

“Taste and see the goodness of God”

After experiencing a very scary night of storms and sharing many different emotions, as a group we bounced back the next day to our normal routine, it was the last day for all of us at our sites. It was my second day with Kids Club, and due to the weather, club was held in the gym for the first time. Club started when the doors to the school were opened and the kids came in out of the rain. The first task was to try and give every child a name tag with his or her real name and age! Once all of the kids were in the gym we started with songs and bible stories, and then went outside for crafts, games and treats.

I was chosen to be the group leader in songs. Since as a child I went away to camp, I quickly picked my brain for old songs that the kids might like. I was warned ahead of time that many of the kids don't like to sing, or they are just too embarrassed to. However, when I was about to begin two of the boys that were about 7 or 8 years old came into the middle of the circle with me and asked if they could help lead. I was shocked that these boys wanted to sing, let alone lead all of the others. Songs were really fun and full of surprised that day and the kids seemed to all enjoy them. The bible stories were a huge hit, for every child got to be an animal that boarded on to Noah's Ark. When it came time for games, we noticed the sun had finally broken through the clouds and we could take the kids outside. Once we got outside we started off with some games and then proceeded to do crafts. While others were busy doing crafts, one little boy sat crying because he never got picked to run across the field during a game of red rover. A few of us made two very small teams and played a quick game so that he would once again glow with happiness. After this short game I started horsing around with some of the boys who liked to steal everyone's hats. I decided that it would be funny to steal their baseball hats and play keep-away. Since the role was reversed, their reactions were very funny to me. They no longer thought this game was funny and got very mad that I had their hat. When the

other participants saw what I was doing they joined in this game of keep-away. Once I'd throw a hat and a boy would come running after me, I'd tickle him. The boys thought this was so funny to see their 8,9 and 10 year old friends rolling around on the ground laughing from being tickled. The boys had changed from being very defensive to just wanting to have fun.

I was getting very tired and my leg had started to throb a little from all the running around I shouldn't have been doing in my cast. I had just took a small break to step back and observe what everyone was doing. This really was a funny site to watch. It was at this point that I noticed there was a small group of boys on bikes that were starring at us. I went over and asked if they wanted to join us. They looked at me and in a real tough voice said they weren't allowed to because they didn't have name tags. I told them I could get them name tags if they wanted to play with us. They looked at me really funny and said, "Well, we better stay that boy over there looks like he needs our help, that big guy is beating him up" I laughed and said that he wasn't getting beat up, he was being tickled because he took a hat. "It's a game!" I told them, "Come play and you can be on that boy's team." They joined the game and in no time the boys that were seen as a little bit of trouble makers, changed from being "tough guys" to being kids again.

Throughout this trip I continued to ask God to fill my heart with love, be my focus, and use me to communicate his message. Seeing these boys forget about their reputation, drop their acts and for a few minutes just be kids made me feel that my mission was complete. For through this mission I got a taste of God's goodness and I got to see it working through people and in people.

Meghan Hosty

The trip is now over, but the memories will last a lifetime. At the start of the trip I didn't know anyone but my cousins, but soon that all changed. The kids I met on the trip were so nice to me, so soon I started to open up to them. Like when I was on the trip, I was sick, and so many people were asking me if I was feeling better and that just meant so much it made me feel like everyone cared about me

And just a few days ago it was my birthday, and a few kids called me to wish me a "Happy Birthday", and that made me feel like I was part of the group and they really liked me.

- Rick Ramous

After being in the group for about two and a half years, I went on my first mission trip with TNT. I had no idea what to expect at all. I had looked at pictures, but it didn't compare to what I saw when I first walked down the streets of the reservation. I could tell from the first time I actually set foot in south dakota that this trip would be something that would change my life forever.

The first few days of my experience were spent painting a house in the indian neighborhood. In the first day, I had met many new faces, not only of the energetic children living their but also of the teen from another youth group in wisconsin who wer staying there that week as well. It felt so good to know that I was helping out at least one family, but the most rewarding memory I have is seeing the warm, sheepish smile of the father living in that house as I painted above his front door. Looking into his eyes at that moment gave me the feeling that I was making a difference. The next two days I worked with the kids at the kids club, and while working with them I realized how much they didn't have as I compared their childhood to my own. It was really hard for me to know that I couldn't be with them more often. I wanted to share my compasion with them because I knew at home most of the children didn't recieve all the love that a kid needs. However, the time I spent with them was priceless, and I gained great memories... and one sore back.

The main thing that I will always remember about South Dakota was the unity...everyone coming together to do God's work. Not only did our group pull together, but the other youth groups there merged together with us to form a close team. The feeling of different people uniting together to be God's hands is one of the best feelings I have ever felt. By the last night, we were all sharing a part of us as we cried together knowing that our work was now coming to an end. The relationships that we made in just that one week will leave an impact in our hearts that we will always remember and cherish. South Dakota was really the closet I have ever been to witnessing people follow in the footsteps of the Lord. It was incredible, and it gave me the most enriching "feeling" ever.

~Brad Lancy~

South Dakota was a different experience. Everything was different from anything I'd ever done before. The way I got there was different, with the vans breaking up the group in a way a bus doesn't, but with enough people still together to make it dissimilar from a family trip. The town we were in was much different than any place I'd ever been before. Manderson was so small, so alone. It had nothing in common with the idyllic suburbs, the bustling cities, or even the sprawls of Juarez. With the lack of *anything* in Manderson, it was possible to admire the wonderful landscape in a way not feasible anywhere else. However, that same lack gave the town itself it's awful characterization. The lack of business seemed to cast a pall over the entire town. Every adult who lived there seemed depressed in some way. Because there was nothing to do, people didn't do anything. When we went to paint the houses, the apathy we encountered in most places was incredible. And this was what made the trip most different. The people and the culture were the biggest departure from the "ordinary." Between Native American's greater susceptibility to alcohol, the lack of jobs, and the Lakota's traditional lack of regard for permanent homes (they were nomads, after all), many houses were transformed into insect-ridden stink-holes. Those who did not live in such places were helpless to do anything about those that did. The lack of possibilities was simply astounding. Yet, we found wonderful children at kid's club. Children who were smart, clever, and wanted to learn. Children who could grow up to be anything, if it wasn't for the fact that there was nothing for them in Manderson. I came away from South Dakota amazed, and depressed, by many of the differences we found there. I feel that while we did some good, we did not do anything that the community could truly appreciate, because such acts were beyond our capabilities. I pray that somehow, someday, someone can make things there different from what they are today.

David Osborne

Going to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in Maderson South Dakota is a trip that I will never forget. Just seeing all the people and the conditions they live in made me realize how blessed I am to have such a loving family and home. The children there were all wonderful and fun loving. Even though some of the older kids acted like they weren't having any fun, they kept coming everyday. So I know that by the end of the summer, with all the other groups going there on missions, Youthworks will have a change on them for the better. Also I thank God for all the beautiful scenery.

Cindy Fashingbauer

Well, another mission trip under my belt. This one was somewhat different from the last.

We have a more diverse crowd of people from different areas and different beliefs. I believe our group of people was more ready to work with the people and interact with the children than the others. We started out very tired, but ready to go.

The accommodations are much better than Mexico. Showers, flush toilets, hot water, a much nicer kitchen, more space for sleeping and air conditioning.

To start with, we drove out there. And, for the most part, it was a good trip. It was very tiring but enjoyable. We got a little bit of a slow start with one of the seats missing for one of the vans, and also a small detour at 290 (Mark) just joking. The vans were a very good ride and easy to drive.

The work sites were close and it was easy to get working with the other groups at the work sites. The way the people joined together when working with the kids was great.

At the work sites this was a different experience because of the way the natives did not lift a hand to help or get involved. In the work, it seemed that we weren't appreciated as much as Mexico. It seemed like it was expected that we were there. But the kids appreciated it and has every bit as good a time as in Mexico.

What I liked the best was all of the history that was there. And I don't believe that the scenery in that area is second to any.

We had a wonderful group of leaders and chaperones that all worked together. I'm very glad that I had the opportunity to work with and be a part of this group. I was very proud of our teens and how they handled themselves there. All in all a good trip.

~~Bill Gallagher~~

GREG REHIZ

South Dakota Reflection

Mark Holan

When I think about our week spent on our mission trip, one word keeps popping up over and over again, Courage. Our courage began long before the trip. Many teens and adults signed up for their first mission trip not really knowing what to expect. One thing they knew for sure, it was not going to be a normal, comfortable week! They knew the week would be spent sleeping on the floor in sleeping bags, working hard and meeting people that share the same country and land but not the same values and heritage.

Our courage and faith was tested on the drive to South Dakota. Pulling our vans off the road and taking cover behind a gas station to ride out a storm that included hail and tornado warnings. People were afraid, but they put their faith in God. There is no courage without fear. Some of our group has a fear of storms. Being in a van while the wind is blowing and the hail is falling must have been frightful for them! They kept their spirits up throughout.

On work sites, there was a tremendous amount of courage exhibited. Those with fear of heights and /or ladders, were able to work at heights they never thought possible. Those with fear of dogs, were able to work effectively despite the constant presence of stray Rez dogs. One group was able to work under the most extreme of unsanitary and depressing conditions that one could encounter. They grew as the day went on! They were able to do things that most of us would run away from. They worked with smiles while most would complain. They showed a true mission spirit by working with love and not judging.

During Kids Club, there were those that opened their hearts and loved the children unconditionally. These were the shortest, most intense relationships that were formed. Knowing their hearts would be broken, they loved and they gave with no expectations of anything in return. And then we left.

Courage comes in many forms. We think about big courageous actions that take place in action movies. True courage comes from being who you are and letting others get to know you. It comes from showing true emotion, not knowing how others will react to this new side of you. It comes by trusting others to help you do something deep down you know you can do, but are afraid to try. It comes by meeting new people, whether they are from Wisconsin, Pennsylvania or the Reservation and stepping outside the comfort level of friendships to create new friendships. True courage was exhibited by all the missionaries from St. Julies.

South Dakota

Leaving all you know behind
is something many cant do
Opening our hearts to the great unknown
Together we saw it all through
The instant I got there
I couldnt wait to begin
I looked at my new home
and dragged my bags in
I didnt know what to expect
I wasnt sure what to do
I was waiting with anticipation
I would experience something new

I started the week with Kids Club
and bonds were instantly made
Through differences and trials
Their smiles will never fade
I met a beautiful girl Roxanne
She twirled her hair and called me Friend
We laughed and hugged and played all day
I wished the day would never end
She smiled at me
her brown eyes caught my heart
we spent the day together
I was having a great start
Later I met a boy Terrell
his presence took my breath away
Ive never felt such a feeling
Id give anything to stay one more day

The work-site was different
Theres nothing to compare it to
It was slightly gross and not so fun
but it was something I loved to do
There werent many kids where I was at
but that didnt matter much

I talked to some of the adults
My heart they deeply touched
These people I got to know
They were not ashamed
They only lived for the love of life
I will be forever changed

Through the storm I waited
at Camels Back I cried
God showed his love through nature
Beauty that will never die

My week was quite an experience
I never thought fright and beauty could mix
Through tears and smiles
Theres nothin a lil love cant fix

Theres nothing Id do over
Theres nothing I regret
I had the time of my life
Nothing I could ever forget.

-Nikki Owczarski*

Mission Accomplished (my reflection)

We didn't know what to expect. This may have been my first mission trip, but it was everyone's first visit to Manderson. The first thing that was noticed as we entered the reservation, were the traffic signs. At first it was asked if there were spitballs on them, but as we looked more closely we discovered that they were actually bullet holes. They served as our first reality check as we entered a new world.

For the next week, everything we knew of how things worked was false. We came to Pine Ridge as a group of 42 teens and adults looking to make a difference. We left with new experiences and the real difference being made in us.

Our first stop on the reservation was at a small church where we attended Sunday mass. We were nervous and a bit embarrassed. We were a little behind schedule because of the storm the night before. We walked into mass 30 minutes late. But we were welcomed none the less. Sighs of relief could be heard throughout the crowd we brought into the church as we each experienced the friendly atmosphere in the tiny building.

Of all the churches I've been in, this was probably my favorite. It was magnificent, or splendidly decorated, it was just simple. But when you entered, you could feel the love in the room. The church felt like home. It was personal, and it was beautiful.

After mass, and coffee with the parishioners, whom so kindly invited us. We loaded back into the buses and headed off to what may have been the most anticipated part of the trip. We were off to see what was for many of us our first national monument, later to be renamed the national disappointment. Now, I'm not going to say that Mount Rushmore was small, because in comparison to myself, it wasn't. But it was definitely not the great and massive rock sculptor I had been expecting. Of course this may have been partly due to the fact that it had taken us over three hours to get there. Thanks to the expertise directing on one man's part, but hey I'm not placing blame. It was still something I'm glad I got to see.

Later that afternoon we reached our final destination. We pulled into the parking lot of the school which we would be living in for the next 5 days. As soon as the doors to the vans were open, we were greeted by the teens from the two other churches offering to help us get unpacked. We didn't know it then, but some of these kids would become our best friends for the next couple of days, and many for longer than that.

We got through our first day with ease. Nothing too big. A lot of meeting new people and playing ice breakers. We got settled into our rooms. We were staying in nice clean classrooms, and it was much better than we had expected.

The first real day of work was interesting. I was assigned to work crew first, and I found out I would be painting a house for the next two days with the rest of my group. It was different than what I had thought it would be. We got to work right away, and started peeling the old paint off the house. Then we got to paint it the new color. The work wasn't too hard, but there was a lot to do, in a short amount of time.

Worksite was where I made most of my friends. Me and Erin Chlum paired up as painting buddies, we had been friends before, but never really hung out all that much. The next week sparked a friendship we never knew we could have. She helped me out

and was always encouraging me to do better. The trip would not have been the same without her by my side.

I also became friends with girl from Wisconsin. When we first started, she seemed kind of quiet, and me and Erin began asking her questions. Sam, that's her name, answered everything as best as she could. We learned about her religion, the type of music she liked, her family, her youth group, just about everything we could think of. Within the next few days, the two of us would become inseparable.

We also met a bunch of Lakota children when we were working on the house. Neesha was the first kid I met. She helped us paint, and I knew then that I would want to be friends with these kids. I also met J.R. He was a 15 year old boy who lived in the house. He wasn't perfect or incredibly nice, but I talked to him more than anyone. It was nice to hang out with someone close to my age. He kept me laughing the whole time. He even helped me find a pair of shoes I really liked (there were miscellaneous shoes everywhere). He had a good sense of humor and made me enjoy the work I was doing. His sister was just as cool. She cleaned paint brushes with me, and surprised me a little. She asked me questions, not ones I thought would be typical of an 11 year old. She asked about drugs and alcohol, and if me and my parents used any of them. It was unexpected to hear this from such a young kid. I know she wasn't too young, but it was hard for me to try to understand that these were probably things she was faced with every day.

Not all of the kids at the work site were as nice as those three. There was a group of ten year old girls who were more than a handful. I think they figured the best use of their afternoon was to try and make us crazy. They got paint everywhere, climbed up ladders, and constantly hung and jumped on us. At one point a chaperone asked me to try to keep one of the girls occupied for awhile. She had been making it very difficult for them to paint on the ladders. I pulled her down, put her on my back, and walked up the street where I bought me and her pops. We got back to the worksite and her friend looked longingly at her pop and asked where she got it from. I handed her mine, and the smile on her face was worth more than a hundred pops.

That night, after dinner and everything, us teens were surprised with one of the greatest opportunities. We were going to be climbing Camals Back. It was a large rock formation a little ways from the school. We headed out and started the walk to what would be one of the greatest experiences of the trip. It wasn't the hardest thing I've ever done, but it was most definitely the most rewarding. When we got to the top, the view was amazing. It overlooked all of Manderson. The town seemed perfect from up there. And as we headed back down, the most amazing sight of the whole trip was seen. A perfect sunset. And even though I had no film to capture it on, I will never forget the picture in my mind.

Our second day of work was much easier, we had gotten comfortable with each other and what we were doing. We finished our work early, and we got to talk to some natives. They were really nice, and it was an interesting experience. After that, something happened that made me want to cry. Apparently, there was some defacing of the park that was painted by the teens the week before. Local gangs had gotten their hands on some paint and had just ruined this park's new paint job. We walked to the park, and got to work. We had to peel paint off of everything, and then repaint the park. It was so upsetting to know that someone would take a park away from kids who need it. It was the most depressing thing I experienced.

That night we were scheduled to take a trip to the Sue Anne Big Crow Recreation Center. Unfortunately just as we were heading out, we received the news that there were tornado watches for the area. We decided to spend the evening inside instead. We started by going back to the gym for organized games. Not everyone really wanted to play, myself included. I figure my time would better be spent journaling about my experiences so far. Before long, the games were ended and we were shuffled out to the hallways. It was believed that they would be safer considering the storm had gotten worse. We tried to keep occupied. We were allowed to get our sleeping bags, pillows, c.d. players, or anything else we thought we needed to get through the evening. The Youth Works staff brought out chocolate pudding for us, it we began to get a little more comfortable.

Not everyone was alright with the storm. A couple kids were crying or trying to convince themselves that this wasn't happening. Some were being held by friends, or comforted by chaperones. One girl in particular from Wisconsin, was crying and looked so scared. I went over to her and gave her a hug, and told her it was going to be alright. All she could respond with was, "I need my bear". I asked her what it looked like and where it was at and headed down the hall and her to her room with a flashlight. I brought her back her bear, and was thrilled to see she was a little more at ease now. I could see this storm was going to be affecting us all.

We were moved again. Locals thought it might not be safe for us to stay in the school, and we were offered a spot in a basement across the street. All 74 teens and adults made the mad dash through the rain and to the house. We piled into the small room and tried to get comfortable. I myself, was half under a table and had someone sitting on my lap. But it wasn't as bad as it sounds. We began singing and before we knew it everyone in the room was crying. Next to me a friend simply wanted to see his father and brother, and no that they were alright. Others were crying because of the love and coming together that was felt in the room. It was incredible and indescribable. I have never felt anything like this before and probably won't ever again.

The storm finally dispersed. It was safe to head back to the school. As we made our walk, this time without the rain, the remains of a funnel cloud could be seen in the sky. The reality of the danger we were in, sunk into us. We hung out in the hallways for awhile longer until everything was safe and we headed back to our rooms for some much needed sleep.

The next day was my first at Kids Club. I was excited, I couldn't wait to meet more kids. We finished our planning, and headed outside to the playground until lunch. That's where I met Emma. We played "not it", a game of tag, for about a half an hour. It was more fun than I have ever had. I felt like a little kid again, just running and playing. We were given the opportunity to eat with the Lakotas too. After lunch, we got all of our supplies together and headed outside to begin our work.

Within the first 15 minutes of club, I was handed a two year old, and asked if I could watch her. She was given to me by a nine year old, and I was told her mom was on the jungle gym. The mother couldn't have been more than 19, my guess would be more like 17. It was hard to be faced with something like this. I didn't want to give the little girl back, she slept in my arms and couldn't have been sweeter. But I knew I couldn't do anything but try my best to watch her for the time being.

When I had to hand off the baby, I started playing with some of the other kids. We played games and made crafts, and gave piggy back rides. We walked the kids back to their homes after snack and it was hard to say our goodbyes. But tomorrow would be another day and another opportunity.

That night we visited a sacred place. We traveled to Wounded Knee. The site of two important Lakota battles. We learned about the history of this place, saw the ruins of a church that had burned down. We walked through the graveyard, and saw the graves of many important people and chiefs. It was a beautiful place, calm and quiet. It was a wonderful spiritual spot. You could just sit and feel nature blowing through you.

The next day was in actuality our last. We would be leaving the next day, but early in the morning so this was our last chance. Our last chance to tell everyone everything we wanted to tell them. Our last chance to get that feeling you get from doing something good. It was a day that we never wanted to end.

Kids Club was moved inside because of rain. I found myself sticking with the older girls more. Especially Gail, she was the girl who had cleaned paint brushes with me at her house. We talked and watched the skits. When the weather cleared up, we went outside and made crafts, and played red rover. We laid in the grass and ate freeze pops, and exchanged addresses. The time went by too quickly. I walked her home, carrying her on my back half the way. When we got to her house, I gave her the biggest hug, had a passing kid take our picture and gave her my cross. I didn't want her to forget me. I knew she wouldn't. I walked back to the school by myself, choking back the tears I felt like crying.

That night we visited the Rec.Center. I hung out with Sam, played games, watched movies and had the best chocolate shake. It was a great way to end the week. It was relaxing and fun, and a way for us all to just hang out. Back at the school, we had our final night session. It was particularly hard. We gave out Yea Gods, and tear filled hugs. The adults went around washing our feet, and we said our goodbyes. We would have tomorrow, but we knew it wouldn't be long enough to say everything that we needed to say to these people who had become a part of us. It was especially sad for me to say goodbye to Sam, I knew she was leaving at 5am instead of 9am like the rest of us.

I woke up early that last morning. I helped Sam carry her stuff out to the jeep. We hugged and said we would keep in touch and I watched and waved in the cold, early morning as my friend drove away from the school and back towards her home. Her incredible journey was complete, but mine still had 4 hours left to it.

The morning moved by quickly. Everything was packed away and final goodbyes were said. We took pictures and gave hugs. And finally we loaded into the vans that would once again become our homes. As we drove away, it hit me that everything had come to an end. This was it, and I may not ever see some of these people again. I watched the school become smaller in the distance and braced myself for a return into my own reality. Our mission was accomplished in my opinion, and I can't wait to receive another one.

-Stephanie Hayes

THAT'S A WRAP...

Heading into my first ever mission trip with our youth, I was not sure what to expect. Any fears I may have had were quickly put to rest when our vanload of teens set the tone for the trip: we're going to have fun, and you might as well join in! And I'm here to say we had a blast!

Let's get one thing straight: I'm not much for driving. But time passed quickly and painlessly with the energy and laughs provided by twelve of my newest, closest friends. From swapping sweatpants to songs about wrecked cars, from hiding behind trailers during a hailstorm to listening to me snore during our rest stop, everyone was having fun and looked forward to an exciting mission trip. The beautiful scenery along the way made the journey that much more enjoyable.

Once in Manderson, SD, we had a mission and nobody was going to stop us. That's the feeling you get from being around these amazing young people. Their determination is relentless, and their lack of fear gave me strength even through the less than friendly weather we experienced. To watch the young people interact with other church groups to plan activities for the local kids, or paint the houses in the area was an incredible sight. Maybe we don't find them doing this type of work around our homes, but when called by God to serve those in need, they shine like the stars they have grown to be.

The way everyone embraced our new Indian friends at Kid's Club or at the work sites was amazing. To see the smiling faces from the little Lakota children was proof that we were doing what God wanted us to do: share his love with those around us. And God's love could be found everywhere: at Pinky's store; at the top of Camel's Back hill; in the basement of a home providing protection during a storm; in a short note stuffed in our 'mail bags'; in the efforts of the workers at homes that needed some care; or in pushing a van out of the mud.

For me, the emotional high point of our journey came on the last night when we washed each other's feet just as Jesus washed the feet of his disciples at the last supper. The prayers and love we shared with each other was an experience that words can't describe. If I had to try and describe it, I guess I would classify it as the hugest, warmest fuzzy I've ever had in my life!

As I look back on the week I shared with forty-one other brave souls from St. Julies, as well as with the two other church groups and the YouthWorks! Staff, I am extremely happy that I had the opportunity to participate in this mission trip. I have memories that I will cherish the rest of my life.

If this is what I've been missing on all the other mission trips our youth have attended, then I have some catching-up to do. I can't wait to do it again. Yeah God!

Tom La Porte
Adult Chaperone

REFLECTION
PINE RIDGE, SOUTH DAKOTA

The reason I wanted to go on this trip was to have for myself the experience that seemed to have made such an impact on so many of our teens, my daughter included. Now I realize that each person's experience is unique and what they bring INTO the trip affects what they bring HOME from the trip; I could never have that same experience they had. I wanted to go to serve, to give more of myself than just volunteering in the safe environment of St. Julie's.

I did serve by being the hands and feet of Jesus – by painting, by holding the children, by talking to Loren and his mom, by making an effort to reach out. My feet were the feet of Jesus as I was wondering if I really should be walking the path to Camel's Back. True, He knew He was going to His death and my trek could not compare, but it still was a personal challenge for me because I wanted so much to be able to share that experience with our teens. How appropriate to take my last "steps" on my knees!

As I looked around from various points on Camel's Back, I was struck with wonder at how the people of the community have little or no money but they have more because they have God's gift of creation right there, always, and they have their sacred places built by God and not by man. I'm jealous of that! Where are our "sacred spaces"? Our church building can in no way compare to God's own creation! I wonder if they would really care to have all the "stuff" we have by virtue of our wealth? I almost hope not.

Sure there were some difficult moments, but the smile on the priest's face when we entered his Church; the tentative conversations with the girls in the parish hall after Mass – these were simple joyous moments that warmed my heart. Watching the younger children just delight in simply chasing bubbles! Seeing the baby sleeping in Stephanie's arms! Taking a scared child to Nikki to console ... such cries for simple pleasures and loving human touch. How could I forget that?

I came away from this trip with a much better understanding of myself and the realization that I CAN climb mountains, of various kinds -- "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" -- as long as I remember to ask!

There were some people who touched me so deeply on this trip that I can only say that when I think of them I feel the depths of my being, my soul, open up to embrace them and forever love them.

I was awestruck by our teens – their commitment to the purpose of the trip; their power to love and comfort friends they know well as well as people they just met; their ability to play like little children and their ability to be responsible young adults; their willingness to share themselves with others.

Nothing's gonna stop 'em now!

I just want to thank everyone for letting me share in such a wonderful (okay – AWESOME!) experience.

Mrs. O.

Mission Trip 2001 South Dakota

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

Mission: Have an effect on the lives of others and have a life changing experience.

Mission: Successful

South Dakota was my first mission trip I have ever went on. It was the greatest experience of my life. As soon as we arrived in South Dakota, already kids were asking us for piggy back rides. It was amazing to see how simple the Lakota people lived and still were somewhat happy with their lives. It made me realize how much we have and how much we take for granted. These people were living in the porrest conditions imaginable. When one of our work groups entered their houses, they had the happiest faces I have ever seen in my life. They were so happy to see their houses turn into "palaces" that were able to be lived in. They appreciated all we did for them and when we left, it was obvious how much they were going to miss us, but we also could see that we had an affect on the lives of these people.

Quote-"As one we are nothing, but as a group, we are a movement."

~Colin Nolan~

Looking out the van window just before we got out of the St. Julie's parking lot, I was thinking, "Is this going to be like Mexico?" I would have to find out by the end of the next week. On the van ride up, a song was playing that the lyrics made me think of what this trip is all about. I believe it's an 80's song and the lyrics go like this, "If we can build this thing together, standing strong forever, nothing's going to stop us now. And if this world runs out of lover's, we'll still have each other, nothing's going to stop us, nothing's going to stop us now." Those lyrics hit me because it makes me think how close we have to be to each other and work as a team to make sure we give the community of Manderson, South Dakota exactly what they need.

We arrived in South Dakota near 10:00 on Saturday night and all of a sudden, a terrible storm was coming our way, and we had to sit tight in our vans and hope that nothing terrible would happen. The "tornado" blew off and we were relieved. We went to a mass at a church near the area and I have to say that it was a nice service and the people in the community took pride in exactly what they believed in. We finally arrived at the High School in which we stayed at for the next 4 nights.

We all woke up getting ready to start our day. Since we had a big group and we were with two other groups, we split up into two groups to do different jobs. The one job was working at a work site, and the other was teaching Kid's Club for the kids in the community. We would do each job for two days. I started at the work site first. Our job was to repaint a family's house. It was such a blast painting the house. I had even more fun climbing up the ladder getting to all of the high spots. (Thanks Mr. Pluchar for always holding onto the ladder). After the first day of me being at the work site, the night was an unforgettable one. With the talk of another tornado hitting the town, I sat down by my sleeping bag and thought, if I don't make it through this, I'm going to miss everyone back at home. It got really bad outside, and some gracious family allowed us to come into their home in their basement to be safe. I was so thankful for the family that allowed us in. This is what I was talking about with the lyrics. We stuck together when we were in a tight position and we made through the tough times.

There was a little boy by the name of Emerson who lived at the home we painted. He was the nicest kid I met the whole week, and he was very playful. I never turned him down, whether he wanted a piggyback ride or to steal my hat. When it came down to the last day at the work site, I asked

him if he wanted to go to Kid's Club. He said he would come. The next day at Kid's Club, he didn't show up. Maybe he forgot to come. I was hoping he would come. So I waited for the next day to come, and all of a sudden, someone tapped me on the shoulder, and he said, "Hi Mike" I looked back, and it was Emerson. I was so happy to see him. We spent the whole time at Kid's Club together playing games and making crafts. He was like a little brother to me. Always tagging along, and having a great time and looking up to a brother figure. I was happy that he came to say goodbye to me and to tell me to have a safe ride home. He will never be forgotten by me. The memories we shared in South Dakota will be unforgettable. A special thanks to my dad, Mary, and Ricky for being the best people in the world to me that week. Another thanks to my leader, Mr. Pluchar, for letting me express myself and allowing me to get to know him better.

-Mike La Porte

My Mission was Accomplished
Christine Rehr

For me, my mission started at our lock-in held in May. Its entire purpose was for us to all get mentally prepared for our trip. We watched a movie taken at the reservation which we were going to, but it wasn't anything like what I saw. Nothing that we could have been told, in my opinion, could have prepared me for the people, their culture, and the way that they live. The video just seemed to not even capture the essence of what was there.

Rolling through the countryside of South Dakota, I was amazed at the beauty that I was being engulfed into. The hills and valleys blended into the skyline so beautifully that it looked as if the sky were the ocean and the hills the coast. The grass appeared to be as bright as emeralds and looked like a soft carpet that had been laid out for the cattle to feed upon. I can't even fully express the beauty which I saw on the ride up there, and I thought that I would never see anything that beautiful again.

After a long ride, we reached the reservation. Once there, at somewhere around 9:30 in the morning, we were off to mass. Before entering the church I was quite apprehensive. I mean this was going to be our first encounter with the people there, and we were half an hour late for mass. How bad does that look. It's like we were saying, "We're here to help, but don't count on us to be on time." But once we had entered that church, I felt truly welcomed by everyone there. We were greeted with such warm smiles, and given such friendly handshakes. My opinion changed immediately. I thought that now I could truly be open to any new experience, and that I could conquer anything that I set out for. This was the attitude that I would need throughout the rest of the trip.

After mass we took a day trip to Mount Rushmore. Thanks to our chaperons, we took the three hour scenic route in lieu of the hour long trip that was on our map. But, hey, that really made us enjoy it more, right.....Anyways, next stop, the school. We arrived at the school that we would be staying at later that evening. Once again we were treated with a warm welcome, and help unloading our gear from the other groups that were there to work with us that week, one from Wisconsin and the other from Pennsylvania. Once unpacked, we had our first get-together with the other groups, a night of ice breakers to say the least. We ran around and had an altogether good time.

The next day was our first day on the sites. My group was out at a house painting it. It was that day that I met a little boy that changed the course of my personal mission. At first I had just set out to do as much as I could and try to feel good at the end of the day. But, at that moment my goal changed from that to trying to make at least one person happy, and that would make my day. Seeing that little boy, Efanie, smile at me made me realize why I was there. To reach out and touch the people. Not to just paint a house, but to try and change lives. A positive attitude can make someone's day, and hopefully yours too.

That night we went on a hike. We all climbed up this foothill called Camel's Back. It wasn't exactly a walk in the park. There was a somewhat long walk to get to the foot of our climb. It was hot and muggy out not the ideal weather for physical activity. We persevered and went on. The last 30 feet or so were the hardest and steepest that there

was. One misplaced foot and you would slide right back down, and have to start over as many did. I, however triumphed and got up to the best reward ever. The view was breathtaking. Words can't even start to describe the beauty that I saw from there. It was one of the most awesome things I've ever seen.

The next day started off like the first. We went to the house we were working on and finished up the painting around lunchtime. Then, we went off to a park that had been completed the previous week by a different group. Only, we weren't going there to play. The gangs are so bad on the reservation that shortly after the paint was dry, a groups of kids vandalized the park. They poured paint all over everything there and wrote on some of the equipment. It was the saddest thing that I had seen done to something, and it really made me upset. I just couldn't fathom why or how someone could have done this, and all I wanted was answers. But they were questions that were left, and are still unanswered.

That night was full of excitement in great amounts. We had been planning on going to Wounded Knee, but that never happened. The weather got really bad and we were going to have a game night in the gym instead. This was the plan until the sirens started going off. We all were then ushered into the hallway of the school for quite some time. We sat there until a lady from across the street offered to take us in, and let us sit in he basement. The sirens had been blaring for what seemed like hours on end. We sat in that most generous lady's basement for a very long time. Most of us, including myself were hysterical. Personally, I thought that my life was about to end, and I was terrified! All I wanted was to be home with my family and to be safe. But I knew that in the back of my mind that if I was going to die then, that there with my friends and the people that care about me so much was the place to do it. I was so scared, but more so of not being able to say good-bye to the people at home then of actually dying. That was the most excitement of my life!

The next day was Kid's Club. A program somewhat like a vacation Bible school, but suited for the kids of the community. We had crafts and games in addition to a Bible skit and songs. Not to forget the kids favorite part...snack! I rotated around with a group of kids that were between the ages of 3 and 6. This group included my little buddy from the work site Efanie. It was a good day altogether and my goal was accomplished once more.

There was however one thing that I wasn't prepared for, the kids themselves. Not the fact that they were rout, that's expected, but the effects of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome on many of them. Looking at those kids I wanted to cry seeing the effects of a careless decision made by their mothers had on their little lives. They had no choice in the matter, and are stuck with the effects of it for the rest of their lives. I still don't understand how a mother could make a choice like that knowing that the outcomes ruins someone's chance at a normal life. That was the saddest thing I've ever witnessed. That night we went to Wounded Knee and saw the field where so many died. Not only that, but we also saw the place where they were buried. It was solemn, but yet a very interesting experience.

The next day was the last working day. It was Kid's Club for me, and it was great! We had the most fun ever with the kids. I met a little boy who absolutely stole my heart away. His name was Chris, and he never wanted to leave my side. This was the hardest good-bye that I ever had to say. I walked him home that day knowing that I would probably never see him again. It still brings tears to my eyes. I gave him a necklace to

remember me by, but the memories that he gave me mean so much more and will always stay with me.

That night was our last night, and we had a closing ceremony type thing. Our leaders washed our feet. It was the most humbling experience of my life. This man that I looked up to was on his hands and knees washing my feet. I cried. There was nothing that I could say, and even if I had something to say, the words didn't come out. There was one way that I got everything out. I wrote it on paper. I poured my heart out into a book and everything that I experienced was somehow put into words. To sum up my reflection I'll leave you with the poem I wrote that night:

Dear God

*Reaching out to you, I feel you running through my veins
Your warmth is so overwhelming and I long for you
The power that you possess reflects in all of your creations
There is no word that can be used to describe the emotion
you give to me
Love and joy are nowhere near strong enough and only
fulfill a portion on my heart
You have truly entered me, please never leave me
I long and desire for you to stay with me always
I truly love you and feel you with me, in my heart
Dear God, you are joyous and truthful and always will be*

This past trip to South Dakota was unbelievable. This was a trip that had chills run up and down my spine. It was absolutely unreal to see how teens bonded together to form such a great group of people that went to help out a poverty stricken community.

Working w/ the staff from Youth Works was AWESOME! The first day we began to work w/ the community was when I had been working w/ the Kids Club. Kids Club is where children from the community come to the school and the groups of teens coming from all over the country spend time and teach the children about God. After everyone had eaten lunch in the school's gymnasium, the Indian children and the teens would head out to the playground and play "tag." Everywhere on the reservation there were dogs that ran around freely. Many of them had no owners, but the children that were familiar w/ them had given most of them names that they respond too. The Indian kids would find a teen and ask them to be a buddy. When a young girl about 4 years old walked up to me and asked if I would be her buddy, my face lit up because the little girl had the biggest smile on her face that would brighten up even the dullest of days. After the teens played w/ the kids for about an hour we all went inside and prepared for that day's Kids Club. There were four groups in the entire Kids Club: the sing-along group, the bible study, arts and crafts, and games. I had been in the sing-along group and watching the kids dancing around singing along to the BANANA SONG was so much fun. Everyone had so much energy, including the adults who would sing-along w/ us. It was a major good time, good time. When we had finished w/ the Kids Club for that day we took all the kids to their homes. The next day every teen had been reassigned to a new group. I had been placed into the bible study group for day 2. We read kids stories...and the kids actually listened!!!! They all soaked up every word I read from the book I had read that was about the Creation.

After Day 2 was over, the teens and chaperones found out that there was a tornado warning over the area we had been staying in. At first, many teens were very calm, but there were they occasional worried teens. We all spent much time sitting in the hallway of the school we were staying at, and we were all talking and getting to know each other extremely well. Maybe an hour or so later one of the Youth Works staff members had made an announcement that we had to evacuate the school because the weather had been getting much worse. We were led across the street to someone's home and they had let us stay in the the basement for shelter. The entire group was together and close to one another, LITERALLY. While we were all in the cellar, there was one other thing on my mind besides my family and friends, that had been the animals of the reservation. They had no where to go. To try to calm everyone because we realized that the situation had gotten much more serious, we had all said a prayer and sang many, MANY songs. That had lifted the mood a lot that night. During this ordeal, I myself had not actually felt such a strong feeling as that feeling I had the night of the twisters. The group had bonded and shared so many feelings that it was one of the most emotional moments I myself had ever witnessed. It was Beautiful. After we heard that the tornado siren had been stopped we left the Indian home and went back to school and stayed in the hallway until about midnight. As we crossed the street to school, we all saw the clouds in the sky and saw which cloud had been the cyclone.

Day 3 was when my group had begun working on homes in the reservation. We had painted many rooms of the home. The kids of the house were always trying to lend a helping hand, which I thought was GREAT! But unfortunately there had been no space

in the bedroom we were working in. The greatest life-saver in the world would be Jim Lyons. For two days straight he took the kids outside and kept them occupied w/ games so that we could finish the jobs quicker. During our break we'd all also go off and play games w/ the kids. There was one "res." dog that had come to play w/ us, his name was Socks (I named him, but Jim thought he should be named Skunk). This dog was amazing. We would play keep away from him and he's play along! It was AWESOME.

This entire trip from my perspective could not have been summed up any shorter. OK well yes it could have, but I wanted to share some of my best moments. As this being my very first mission trip I have learned so much and have matured greatly. This trip has been imprinted into me for the rest of my life. I'd just like to thank St. Julie's for giving me this AWESOME opportunity.

Kathy Niemczyk

On one of the nights we were on our mission, I remember Erin Lia and I running around with our hands in the shape of fake guns singing the mission impossible theme song. At the time it seemed all like simple fun, but one night after we had arrived home from the trip I recalled the good time and gave it more thought. The words "mission impossible" rang in my head. I repeated the words and came to a realization. Our mission may have seemed impossible when we first arrived to the poverty stricken town of Manderson, but leaving on that sunny Friday morning I'm sure everyone realized how possible it became.

Monday June 11th, 2001(Kid's Club and Camel's Back) - "Today strong bonds were formed and everyone accomplished a goal." June 11th was a very stimulating day for me. It was full of smiles, piggyback rides, hugs, and tears of joy. It started out with the organization of Kid's Club. I personally didn't know what to expect and I had butterflies in my stomach. Some were nervous butterflies but most were of excitement. Nikki from the youth works staff kept telling us how all the kids want is our love, but while we were all concentrating on loving them we experienced the feeling of their love in return. Their smiles and hugs were proof that they needed us in their lives, even if it was only for a few short days. When Kids Club came to an end that day, the youth works staff announced that they would be taking us on a hike up Camel's Back. When we first started to walk it seemed so far away, but before we knew it we were on our way up. I jumped up the side with ease, but for some it wasn't that easy. In a way I wish I had struggled because it would have made the victory that much greater. It was really touching to see how hard everyone worked to get up there. The walk home was even fun. I had a really good conversation with two people I didn't really know. It's days like those that make you realize how much you've lived every moment. I'm so grateful for that day, those moments, the smiles, the tears, the hugs, and the accomplishments.

Tuesday June 12th, 2001(The night of the tornado <*after*>) - "Never before have I felt more togetherness or compassion, not only from ourselves but from God as well." The night of the tornado I wrote a lot in my journal. The statement above, in my opinion, expresses the most precious occurrence that happened that frightful night. Almost everyone was worried and afraid of how things might turn out, but what at least calmed some nerves was the presence of God. I observed him everywhere. I heard him in our song, tasted him in the salty tears that ran down everyone's cheeks including my own, and felt him in a touch, rub, or hug from a dear friend. That night I don't think anyone could refuse his existence or deny his presence in that tiny basement. Some say that they don't know why God spared them and

everyone else, but I know. God had seen everything we had done so far and he realized we could go on to accomplish many more great things not only for the rest of the week, but for the rest of our lives. I decided that he put us in that basement to grow and to learn, and I came to the conclusion that God needs all of us to set an example and to affect as many lives in our power. I thank God and everyone there for an experience I'll always remember because it truly was an unforgettable blessing.

June 11th and 12th were only the first won days of our mission, and we did continue to have great moments and experiences through out the rest of the trip. This reflection was only a taste of what I went through during the mission. I hope everyone realizes how much we did to make the mission set before us possible. We did some many things in such a short time. We made kids laugh and smile. We made some homes a little better, and we even had a lot of fun doing it. Thank-you so much for going on the trip and being great people. You guys are all "AWESOME" and I love you. I hope everyone continues to make all of our missions in life possible!

GOD BLESS! -Stefanie Pehr

The moment I arrived in South Dakota, I wanted to make a difference in any way I could. I had anticipated this trip greatly yet, when I arrived, it was nothing like what I'd expected, but that's what made it so amazing. We may have been sent out each day to paint houses and amuse children, but together we accomplished and gained much more. Such simple acts of kindness meant so much that week. The smiles of appreciation we received meant more than anything I've ever known and they are one thing I will never forget. I could also never forget the children we met. They could brighten anyone's day and melt any heart. They may not have been perfect, but all they wanted was love. It was that love that meant so much to all of us that week. Between ourselves, God, and the people there, we were unstoppable. The bonds between everyone were the strongest kind I've ever seen and experienced. We could get through anything that week, no matter what hit us we made it through. From tornadoes and paint spills to cockroaches and crying kids, we overcame it all. We extended our hearts to everyone and in return our hearts were filled with this same love. It was the most amazing feeling ever and I thank God and everyone else involved for this amazing experience. I went to South Dakota hoping to make life better for a few people and in return the people there changed my life forever. And for that I will always be grateful.

Tracy Lyons

South Dakota 2001- Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

Despite hours and hours of reflection I still feel there is nothing I can write that will adequately describe the South Dakota Mission trip.

My experience turned out much different than I anticipated. I hate to admit it, but I had trouble bonding with the Indian people. Many of the adults were polite but aloof and I found the behavior and lack of respect of most of the children to be somewhat disturbing.

Afraid that it was going to be a very long and rough week I asked God to help me find my purpose on this trip. As usual His answer came through loud and clear. Having spent the last eighteen years being “just a housewife” I often fear new experiences and doubt that I am capable of learning new things. God saw to it that I didn’t just step out of my comfort zone; I was in a completely foreign zone. This trip presented new experience and challenges; two long van trips with some very energetic teenagers, a mountain to climb, two brushes with tornados, pushing a fifteen passenger van out of the mud and wearing much of the mud home, to enduring a long day in a bug invested, garbage strewn house that was unlike anything I have ever before witnessed. I’m happy to say I not only survived, but I enjoyed every challenge presented to me.

Along with the challenges the blessings were numerous. The “white van” adopting the song “Nothing Can Stop Us Now” after Tornado Part I, huddled together praying and singing during Tornado Part II, laughing hysterically during the mud bath and listening to some heartfelt Yeah Gods at days end were some memorable highlights. I was fortunate to have a hardworking, cooperative, and supportive work group. Talking and sharing during small groups helped sort out all the days events and emotions.

I walked away with a deeper faith in God, a genuine love and respect for our teens
and a stronger believe in myself.

Thanks friends, it was awesome!

By: Debbie Chlum

South Dakota 2001 – Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

“We can build this thing together, standing strong forever, **Nothings Gonna Stop Us Now!!!!!!!**

This trip was about overstepping boundaries, exiting the comfort zone, and overcoming obstacles.

Some of the challenges that we conquered were two tornados, a mountain, a roach invested house, a van in the mud, wild dogs, a long van ride, and some not so kind Indians.

God has a plan for all of us and He does everything for a reason. At a certain moment, people may not understand His motives, but looking back it will make sense. An example of God’s unusual ways occurred in a basement in South Dakota, with a tornado only miles away. Many people were scared, many people were crying, then we started to pray and sing songs. It was a beautiful sight to see three groups of people, from three states, and three different denominations to come together and worship in a time of distress. Tears came to my eyes in that basement, not out of fear, but out of amazement at what I was witnessing.

We stayed strong throughout the week as the obstacles kept coming, and what we built together was a stronger bond with God and the other people on the trip. All of the participants will always have a special bond with each other after tackling so much together. It was a great final mission trip with TNT. Thanks to everyone involved, especially Mr. Pluchar, I really appreciate all of the work you have done for the past three mission trips and everything you have done for me.

Final Thought: I had an AWESOME time CHOOSING JOY with my FRIENDS!

By: Kevin Chlum

South Dakota '01

Though South Dakota was my third mission trip it was still an eye opening experience. Many great friendships formed and great experiences occurred during our trip. Some unexpected events turned out to be the highlights and life changing experiences we'd all hoped for.

At the worksite we experienced many hardships. The kids from the neighborhood roamed around each of the worksites, which caused chaos and some confusion. Though the kids were trying, sometimes their help caused problems. The Indian children had difficulty focusing for long periods of time so they would constantly be doing new things. For example, if we were on a ladder the kids would climb up behind us or violently shake the ladder and yell "Hurricane." These occurrences caused us to use teamwork. Everyone in our work group took turns playing with the kids and painting. The unity that was demonstrated by all made our work much easier and more enjoyable. At VBS we experienced many of the same problems, but our teamwork did the trick again as we each hung onto a couple of buddies.

My favorite part of our trip was meeting all the new people from the other church groups. There was one group that was Advent Christian from Wisconsin, and a Lutheran group from Pennsylvania. It was so **awesome** to see all three groups of different religions unite as one. On Tuesday night we experienced some dangerous tornado weather. As we sat in a Lakota woman's basement we prayed and sang songs worshipping God, as we comforted one another to ease our fear. I must say it was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, and it was definitely one of those scenes that will run through my

mind many times throughout my life. By the end of the week we all sat together at meals as opposed to the beginning of the week where we sat with our own groups.

I became instant friends with a girl named Dana who was from the Pennsylvania group. Her and I spent our free time talking and getting to know each other. Though we are far apart we are still very close and talk often. She is one of those people I'll remain friends with for a very long time. I know I am not the only person who formed an unforgettable relationship on our mission.

Overall our South Dakota mission was an eye opener for all that went. Many wonderful relationships formed with the Indian children and other teens. I think everyone who went on this trip has good memories and would agree that our group formed an unbreakable bond.

Did you see Jesus?

Did you see Jesus in the anticipation and excitement as we loaded the vans and headed off on our journey to South Dakota?

Did you see Jesus in the power and fury of the hail storm we encountered Saturday night?

Did you see Jesus in the small prayerfull church where we attended Sunday mass?

Did you see Jesus in the welcoming invitation to join the community in the hall after mass?

Did you see Jesus in the energy and attitude of Kari, Nikki, Matt, & Danny as they greeted us Sunday night and worked and lived with us during the week?

Did you see Jesus in the commaradarie that formed between the teens and adults from St. Paul's in Pennsylvania, Baraboo and St. Julie's in Tinley Park?

Did you see Jesus in the poverty of the community?

Did you see Jesus in the simple pleasures of Pinkie's?

Did you see Jesus at the worksites, the accomplishments of a job well done and the gratitude of the people?

Did you see Jesus in the challenges placed before us at the worksites which we overcame?

Did you see Jesus in the simple pleasures of a hot lunch prepared by the community for the community and in our being invited to share it with them?

Did you see Jesus at Kid's Club, in the smiles and laughs of the children, the excitement of the games, and the joy of having a special friend for a day?

Did you see Jesus in the faces of the children, Matthew, William, DJ, Casey, Lauren and others?

Did you see Jesus in the sharing of the adults, Nomo, Snakeman and others?

Did you see Jesus in the journey up to the top of Camel's Back and the awesome display of nature we saw from there?

Did you see Jesus in the fear and bonding that was shared by all in the basement during the tornado watch?

Did you see Jesus in the tradition and pride displayed at Red Cloud school?

Did you see Jesus in the quiet and serenity of Chief Red Cloud's gravesite?

Did you see Jesus in the sorrow and grief of the stories shared with us at Wounded Knee?

Did you see Jesus in the legacy of Sue Ann Big Crow and her attempt to make a difference?

Did you see Jesus in the quiet of reflection, the excitement of Club and the messages of the nightly talks?

Did you see Jesus in your small group and large group bonding and discussions?

Did you see Jesus in the Lakota people and their willingness to share an evening meal of Indian taco's with us?

Did you see Jesus in weary yet satisfied teens and adults as we completed our weeks mission?

Did you see Jesus in the tearful goodbye's as we left our new friends?

Did you see Jesus in majesty of the Badlands?

Did you see Jesus in the sunset over South Dakota or the most vibrant double ranbow on the way home?

Did you see Jesus in the smiling faces of our families as we pulled into St. Julies?

Do you see Jesus in the life-long memories of your mission trip to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation?

I Did!

Ed Pluchar

Reflection Paper

Dominic Capadona

I thought our trip to Pine Ridge, South Dakota was a wonderful experience for me. When I first thought about it, I didn't know what to expect. I thought the Lakota's would be very resentful toward me, because I'm white and the white people took their land. I was surprised that they were so friendly and didn't hold a grudge toward me. When we first arrived at the school, the two church groups came outside and welcomed us with open arms. On the second day I was there, I had to work Kid's Club. While we were eating lunch, I met a boy named Jeremiah. During my stay there, I became very close to him almost as if we were brothers. I thought it was great how he would always hang on my back and want my attention. I felt like I wanted to do more than just paint people's houses. The trip to Camel's Back was one of the most beautiful sights I've ever seen. It was also one of the most challenging things I've ever done. The last day of work on the people's houses we finished early, Kid's Club was still going on for another hour and a half so I looked for Jeremiah. When I found him I saw him playing Red Rover. He turned his head and pulled me next to him to play the game with him. When the game was over Jeremiah started crying because he didn't get picked to run across. When I saw him crying on the sidewalk I tried everything I could to calm him down. Mr. Holen asked me what was wrong with Jeremiah. We decided to have another small Red Rover game just for us. That brought the biggest smile to Jeremiah's face. When Kid's Club was over we had to walk the kids to their houses. When I brought Jeremiah to his house, a tear came from my eye knowing that this will be the last time I would see my "little brother". When we got to his door I gave him my cross and I told him that if he kept it we would always remember each other and be best friends.

This whole trip brought me closer to God and TNT. After this trip, I feel like the members of TNT are all my best friends and I will keep them in my heart forever.

This will be an adventure I will never forget.

Mission...Impossible?

For me, my mission started at the South Dakota 2001 lock-in. All the teens and chaperones spent the night at church to become acquainted with each other, and to discuss our mission. Throughout the night we played ice-breaker games and broke into small groups (the groups that we would be in at the reservation.) Basically we talked about what would most likely be going on when we arrived in Pine Ridge. All this talk got me so pumped up about going.

When the day finally came, we loaded up the vans (yes they were VANS) and set off (a little later than we had expected, sorry about that guys) to one of the most amazing journeys I had ever gone through. Let me say that our van was the best. Thanks to Tommy and DEB!, we had the greatest time. If it wasn't for the cows, the music playing, the striping in the back of the van, the no leg room, the bracelet making (thanks Mary), the lack of sleep, the food deprivation, the car sickness, and the National Disappointment, I don't think it would have been nearly twice as fun!

After the 22 or so hours of traveling, we finally passed the sign that said Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. We stopped at the local church, (just in time?) for mass. We then set off Mount Rushmore...haha! After finally getting some lunch/dinner, we drove to the school where we would be spending the rest of our week at. The Youthworks! Staff made us feel very welcome, along with the two other groups from different states that had arrived before us.

The rest of the week we split up and one group would be working with the kids at KIDS CLUB, and the others would be

painting houses and interacting with the people of the Res. After a days work we would come together and give a YEA GOD! to someone if you saw a kind act or if you saw God working his wonderful actions through us and the Indians. Sometimes we would spend an hour on saying all of our YEA GODS! I think I should give a YEA GOD for having the opportunity to go on this mission trip, and for all of the new experiences that I've gone through.

YEA GOD.....for the smiles on the little Lakota Children's' faces as we gave piggy back ride after piggy back ride.

YEA GOD.....for making a difference and bringing back hope in at least one persons life.

YEA GOD.....for the thank yous of the Indians as we gave them just enough change to buy that one special ice cream bar the Pinky's.

YEA GOD.....for having enough "courage" to paint AND clean up certain houses on the Res.

YEA GOD.....for the Youthworks! staff and all that they have taught us.

YEA GOD.....to have everyone of us make it up Camel's Back and the beautiful scenery we saw when we got to the top.

YEA GOD.....to have a safe basement to run to when condition weren't exactly normal. And for the Indians that invited us in their home to keep us safe.

YEA GOD.....for the conversations between us and the Lakota.

YEA GOD.....for getting us safely there and back home again, with special thanks to our chaperones!

YEA GOD.....for the special bonds we shared with the teens from different churches, and for the bonds we shared with one another...that we were able to become closer to one another during the week and for the rest of our lives.

YEA GOD.....for the memories that I will never forget as long as I live!

YEA GOD.....for a successful and completed mission!

"NOTHIN'S GUNNA STOP US NOW!"

~Erin Lia

Reflection: South Dakota Mission Trip 2001

When I first realized I was getting the chance to go on this trip, I was ecstatic. After it was paid for, all I could think of was how everyone had loved the Mexico Trips, and how the kids from Mexico and their families immediately held out open arms to TNT. I could hardly believe I was FINALLY going on a mission trip.

At the lock-in, I met my small group and got to know some of them. I had such a great time with the exception of some of the warnings given. I, for the first time, began to worry about prejudicial treatment, alcoholism, and the actual change in cultures. There were so many things I could do wrong without even realizing it. In a way, that really scared me. They told us it wasn't really safe for girls to be alone at night and you had to be VERY careful around older people.

While on the trip, I never once saw any sort of hostile treatment, and was amazed at how friendly the kids and the adults were. While some were, of course, more held back or reserved, they were great once they opened up.

Some of the things that I saw while I was in South Dakota were heartbreaking and others were breathtaking. I wouldn't have traded this experience for anything. I got closer to so many friends and made some new ones. I missed people at home, but I had the most incredible time while I was there. I can honestly see why people have said these trips can be life changing! It was for me!

Katie Hannigan

We've all heard the saying "A picture's worth 1000 words," ...but as I sit and reflect on our successful mission this summer and as I flip through all of my memory filled pictures...it is undoubtable that 1000 words could never even begin to describe any one of the pictures or memories we so fortunately experienced.

Before we even left for the trip I would sit and think about all that could possibly happen. I was filled with mixed emotions concerning what we would and wouldn't accomplish, how we would react to the culture, how those we met would react to us, and everything in-between. It was truly amazing the way we jumped right in as soon as we arrived. We were thrown in with about 35 other people we had never even met and of slightly different religions. But we gracefully got along with each other as if we were old friends being reunited. We were all truly blessed to have met all of the new people and friends that we did from the other two states. They will always stay in my heart for the way that so many of them touched my life...some a little more than others.

It wasn't just the new people I met, but also those I was getting to know a little better. My heart goes out to each and every one of the TNT parents and teenagers who went on this trip. I was pretty new to TNT and nervous about how everyone would react to me coming. I figured I'd be stuck sitting alone the entire time watching as everyone laughed and prayed together. I couldn't, however, have been more wrong. I was accepted with open loving arms... I don't think I experienced an awkward moment the entire trip. I want to thank everyone for helping me to open up and to feel a part of the TNT family. I'm doing my best to continue to be a part of the group. The teenagers weren't the only ones either, I formed some wonderful friendships with many of the parent chaperones and I just wanted everyone to know really how much it meant to me...without you all, this trip wouldn't have been nearly as much of a blessing as it was. With out everyone I don't think we would've survived those tornadoes either.... I especially want to thank everyone in my van...I'm so glad we became so close!

One of the most rewarding aspects of the trip was being able to touch the lives of the Indians whom we met and formed friendships with. Meeting and talking with the Indians was an even more rewarding and amazing experience than I could ever have imagined. It's impossible to even put into words the feelings I got seeing a little girl or boy look up and smile at me...just for holding their hand or playing a game with them. It was one of those things I'll never forget for as long as I live.

I truly believe God was with us every step of the way during our trip. He was there for everything, from keeping us from going crazy on those bus rides...to keeping us strong when the tornadoes struck. God was truly amazing in bringing us all together and keeping our faith strong and true. There is so much more to say, but I don't really think words could ever express the love and gratitude I have for everyone who went on the trip and shared the experience with. The only thing I can say now is that I can't wait until the Mission Trip 2002, I'm already eager and excited for what adventure and mission awaits us and our faith next summer! God Bless!

***Pam Frazzini

Did you see Jesus?

Did you see Jesus in the anticipation and excitement as we loaded the vans and headed off on our journey to South Dakota?

Did you see Jesus in the power and fury of the hail storm we encountered Saturday night?

Did you see Jesus in the small prayerful church where we attended Sunday mass?

Did you see Jesus in the welcoming invitation to join the community in the hall after mass?

Did you see Jesus in the energy and attitude of Kari, Nikki, Matt, & Danny as they greeted us Sunday night and worked and lived with us during the week?

Did you see Jesus in the camaraderie that formed between the teens and adults from St. Paul's in Pennsylvania, Baraboo and St. Julie's in Tinley Park?

Did you see Jesus in the poverty of the community?

Did you see Jesus in the simple pleasures of Pinkie's?

Did you see Jesus at the worksites, the accomplishments of a job well done and the gratitude of the people?

Did you see Jesus in the challenges placed before us at the worksites which we overcame?

Did you see Jesus in the simple pleasures of a hot lunch prepared by the community for the community and in our being invited to share it with them?

Did you see Jesus at Kid's Club, in the smiles and laughs of the children, the excitement of the games, and the joy of having a special friend for a day?

Did you see Jesus in the faces of the children, Matthew, William, DJ, Casey, Lauren and others?

Did you see Jesus in the sharing of the adults, Nomo, Snakeman and others?

Did you see Jesus in the journey up to the top of Camel's Back and the awesome display of nature we saw from there?

Did you see Jesus in the fear and bonding that was shared by all in the basement during the tornado watch?

Did you see Jesus in the tradition and pride displayed at Red Cloud school?

Did you see Jesus in the quiet and serenity of Chief Red Cloud's gravesite?

Did you see Jesus in the sorrow and grief of the stories shared with us at Wounded Knee?

Did you see Jesus in the legacy of Sue Ann Big Crow and her attempt to make a difference?

Did you see Jesus in the quiet of reflection, the excitement of Club and the messages of the nightly talks?

Did you see Jesus in your small group and large group bonding and discussions?

Did you see Jesus in the Lakota people and their willingness to share an evening meal of Indian taco's with us?

Did you see Jesus in weary yet satisfied teens and adults as we completed our weeks mission?

Did you see Jesus in the tearful goodbye's as we left our new friends?

Did you see Jesus in majesty of the Badlands?

Did you see Jesus in the sunset over South Dakota or the most vibrant double rainbow on the way home?

Did you see Jesus in the smiling faces of our families as we pulled into St. Julies?

Do you see Jesus in the life-long memories of your mission trip to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation?

I Did!

Ed Pluchar