

Will Warpinski  
TALLULAH 2010

Anne Pluchar  
 Ryan McGuire  
 Danny Benz  
 Luke Vernam  
 Eric Sirvid  
 Jim McGuire  
 Mr Colin Nolan  
 Samantha Marren  
 Mr Chris Pluchar  
 Ashley O'Donnell  
 Mrs Sheila Pluchar  
 Mrs Kelly Cummins  
 Keely O'Donnell  
 Mike Benz  
 Mrs Cindy Evans  
 Alyssa King  
 Mrs Kay Kempke  
 Devin O'Donnell  
 Jessica Sirotkin  
 Maura O'Donnell  
 Casey Lavigne  
 Julie Metzler  
**TALLULAH 2010**  
 Nick Metzler  
 Shannon Kline  
 John O'Donnell  
 Katie Campbell  
 Mr Joe O'Donnell  
 Dave Engler  
 Eric Kempke  
 Carli Chatlos  
 Chris Sirvid  
 Carli Evans  
 Rich Ward  
 Liz Guntz  
 Deacon Ed  
 Mr Randy King  
 Caylin Alex  
 Janae Fry  
 Morgan Ignacek  
 Ashley Payonk  
 Deirdre Rudolph  
 Kristyn Chatlos  
 Jack Harmening  
 Andrew Rubino  
 Ben Warpinski  
 Mary Benz

Going into this year's mission down in Tallulah, I was somewhat concerned with the site. It was new, in trial stages even, and the work sites were going to be unpredictable.

Upon arrival, we were met by an excellent crew of YouthWorks staff, who immediately addressed this concern I had. The kid's club was in a "rooting" phase, getting accustomed to the community and really opening up to the children of Tallulah. The work sites were very hectic, as Steve (?) was working to close down all of them and tie off any loose ends before the move to Jackson. But one thing was for certain, this was a community in need of YouthWorks help, and of the help of teens like ours.

Aside from the site, I have said it all along, and continue to commend the teens of our church, as well as those of the Reno and Tennessee groups that we were with. In this my 9th mission trip, I can honestly say I have NEVER seen a group of teens work as hard as these kids did, without rest, complaint, or temper. Sure there have been individuals who were the hard workers, who set themselves apart from the group in past trips. But this one, every single youth gave 110% from Sunday at 8pm until Friday at 9am. They really were the hands and feet of God to the community of Tallulah, to each other, and to us chaperones.

It never ceases to amaze me how a group of such diverse youth can really put their heads together for such a greater cause as serving His community. When you hear all the bad news on TV, on the radio, from friends and coworkers, you often may see the future as dull, dreary, or even hopeless. But this group of teens, really continues to show how bright the future can be, and how deserving these youth are of our trust, commitment, and future.

I continue to pray daily for the participants of this trip, for the community of Tallulah, and for the future that will be lit up by these teens.

God bless,

Colin Nolan

## Tallulah Mission Reflection by Sam Marren

When I signed up to go on mission trip, I honestly did not know what to expect. I knew little about what was going to happen during my visit to Louisiana. On the trip I also found out that I knew little about what was going on within our own country. The situation in Tallulah opened up my eyes to a whole new world right here in the United States. I have not really traveled much, so I always believed the whole country was full of towns similar to Tinley Park. Little did I know towns were still segregated in the south. This was very surprising to me. It is weird how we can be living within the same country but be going through two completely different situations.

Aside from learning about the situation of others, I learned a lot about myself and how I view others. I learned that it is a lot easier to make new friends than I thought. People are more accepting than I give them credit for. When I came on the trip I was a little afraid of not fitting in since everyone already seemed to be friends and know each other. But everyone was very nice and I truly enjoyed meeting everyone. I loved the small group time when people just opened up and you were able to learn so much about them. It also made me truly think about myself and who I am and what I got out of the trip.

The trip also gave me a lot of down time to just think and reflect on my life. It made me realize that I needed to spend more time with God and have more God in my life overall.

# TNT Mission Trip Reflection

By John O'Donnell

This was my first mission trip and at first I really didn't want to be there, but after the trip was over I realized that I had a blast. The sixteen hour drive down to the little town of Tallulah, Louisiana was a killer and the vans weren't the most comfortable thing in the world. When we arrived in Tallulah we met the counselors who were all really cool. I really enjoyed the activities we did at night like the puppet show, which was hilarious. My group which was the Raptors are all really cool and I had fun with them when we were working. I enjoyed all the mini trips we took to the ranch, the lake and the civil war museum.

The kids club was really fun, because I enjoyed playing with all of the kids there. I was happy that I brought a little joy to the kids of Tallulah. I enjoyed the working days a little more than kids club, because I like to physically work. My group helped a little boy who had really bad sleeping problems and he had a tracheal tube and a respirator. He was living in a room that was full of mold and it was really bad for him. Our group tore up the carpet and put tiles down on the floor, fixed the leaking air conditioner, painted the room and fixed the dry wall. After we fixed the little boy's room it smelled a lot better and it just felt good, because we all knew that it would help the little boy's health a little bit.

At the end of the week we had a cookout with the community which was really fun and really good. The last night I didn't want to leave because I wanted to stay a couple more days to help some more people in the Tallulah community. After all I had a great time on the mission trip and I felt accomplished because I helped a little in the Tallulah community.

You watch movies such as Sweet Home Alabama that are set in the south. At the same time you wonder, "do they really act that way?" Truth be told, southern hospitality was a welcomed change from the life in Chicago. From the time that we walked into Sunday night dinner, (we were 2 hours late) we were told that they left it on the table and we can take our time to eat. Then it was off to finish our first day in the south.

Day two and three, my group took part in Kids Club. The focus of the week was God's love. We were split into three groups. Group one was Creation Station. There the kids worked on place-mats and shirts that show scenes of love. Group two was Reading Center. There teens read books to help with literacy in the community. The last group of teens played games outside. Kids Club was small with no more than ten to fifteen kids for the two days. Kids find the teens they wanted to be friends with right away and the friendship continued the week. Teens from all groups worked together to spread the love of God. This was done through songs, stories, and plays.

Days four and five, my group took part in work sites. About a month before our arrival, there had been a tornado in the area. The group was taken to one site, family home, where the tornado had hit. Our job was to simply pick up and save the things we could. As we drove down the street, teens were amazed at the damage that was done to all the homes in the area. When we arrived on site, we started moving branches, insulation, and steel. Teens found old pictures, games, tapes, and other household necessities. Later that same day, we went to a house to paint the bedroom of a wheelchair bound teen.

This project led the group that I was with into the fifth day. We painted the trim, LSU in graffiti, and a tiger on the walls. The best part about being in the house were the talks. Teens and adult leaders were able to spend some time with this teen. We talked about his life, dreams, and future. He shared stories about the neighborhood and community. A lot of teens became close friends with him

and realized that some things do not change no matter where you go. When we finished, said he liked his new room and thanked us for our time.

My favorite evening activity was going to an old war museum. It had history and stories from World Wars and the Civil War. Reading stories and seeing where fights and court cases happened was like being there while is happened. Other evening activities included going to a farm, swimming in a lake, and community dinner. Each activity was a chance for the teens to get to know the community and other teens from all over the United States. Driving home, we heard memories and ideas each teen had for the future. I think one was for everyone to meet next year in Cairo, Illinois. Looking back, this trip was one were everyone mixed and enjoyed.

Mrs. Kelly Cummins

This mission trip to me was about giving to the community of Talullah, Louisiana, and I believe that was exactly what we did. The first two days my group had to work kids club. A little girl walked in and wrapped her arms around my legs and I instantly knew she was going to be with me for the next two days. The last two days we had work site and we went to a tornado site. We also went to a guy named Mike's house to paint. This experience clearly changed my life.

Kids club was so fun! It was amazing! When I was there, I instantly felt a connection to all the children. We had a lot of fun helping them learn about God.

Work site was my second favorite thing. It was fun to listen to all of the interesting stories the people told us and wonderful to know how much we were helping them.

All in all, my second mission trip was amazing and I learned so much!

By Ashley O'Donnell

## Jack Harmening-Mission Trip 2010 reflection

Mission trip was a unique experience for me. This trip gave me the opportunity to consider the aspects of my faith, and showed all of us the proof of faith's strength, no matter where you are.

The community we served was always kind, the kids were no different from any kids there age that I have known. They were all joyful, and excited. Helping out these kids, teaching them, and even just being their friends was what I felt was our most important contribution to this community. There are many times when I remember early role models, and can reflect on how they affected my becoming the person I am. I am proud to have been part of a group of many role models, who hopefully will have this same positive effect on these kids.

The other aspect of the trip I enjoyed and was proud of was our role as trailblazers in the YouthWorks program. Being in the first summer of service to the community made our actions, and the people we help's reaction to it all the more real, and important to the community. If we were unsuccessful, or not well received, YouthWorks would not have been able to continue to make a positive impact on this community.

However, the most important part of this trip to me was that I had time, support, and a group to discuss faith with. Although I have always had my belief in God, it has been hard for me to interpret my life, and the world I live in to his word. I have trouble looking finding God in tragedy, and in understanding specific events in correlation to him. How, for example, do people who suffer- and do not ever escape their sufferings- a work of God? Why are people who are good burdened? To me, suffering in the world is not a work of God. God is the opportunity we have to rise above our sufferings.

In this community, where so many people have suffered or struggle, it is especially evident that God works in many ways, and many are not always glorious in sight. However, this trip also showed that grandeur can be found in willpower, and simplicity. Willpower being the people who still have faith, and live their lives to the fullest, and simplicity being the joys of childhood, an island of innocence and happiness that no matter where I travel, is untouchable.

This mission trip had all the fun of friends, the satisfaction of being part of a movement to help and be good role models, and a renewal in the most obscure areas of my beliefs. Hopefully the community we served will continue to rise to the potential of its' people, and continue to show faith in God. For me, I only hope that in forthcoming mission trips, I can continue to grow in my faith.



And once again, my video program decides to stop working once I get over half-way done with my reflection video. Apparently I am not meant to make a video for my reflection. This year, as every year I have had an awesome time on mission trip. Throughout the year in between mission trips, I always loose a little bit of my faith, or forget what it is all really about. Mission trip always strengthens my relationship with God and makes me remember the reasons why I believe. Every year, I come home remembering that, but it slowly fades until the next mission trip. This year I am going to try my best to not let the strength of my faith fade away. Seeing less fortunate communities and people make me feel so grateful for what I have. Sometimes I can be greedy or forget of all the great things in my life, but the less fortunate communities quickly remind me of how good I really do have life. It still amazes me to see how kind, loving, and even grateful the people in the community are. They seem genuinely happy, and so very thankful for all that we do for them. They have so much they could complain about or be unhappy about, but there are very few who do just that. I always wish I could be that type of person, and I strive to be that person. This year in Tallulah, the tornado site was one of my favorite things to see. I thought it was crazy to see all the damage done, yet no one was killed. And even though I was not present at the time Mrs. Evans had found a cross of wood left from a torn down house, I thought that was just so awesome. To me it was kind of like God's way of saying he was there. That he was there with us, that he was there to save the people during the storm. Overall, this year's mission trip was great as usual. The entire community was so great, and I loved getting to spend my week there. If only it was for more than a week!

Keistyn Chatlosh

By Devin O'Donnell

Knowing only what my sister had told me about last years mission trip (which wasn't very accurate) and a handful of O'Donnell related people, made it a little bit frightening to go away for a week. I didn't really know what it was going to be like. I just thought that if I didn't want to talk to any of the TNT people I could resort to my cousins. So I was happy that they were going so I wasn't completely alone. My experience wasn't like that at all. Getting to know everyone was really easy. Most of the people I met were nice, funny and outgoing which lead to a lot of loud noises. The explanation for that would be "that's just TNT." That little phrase was repeated a lot through out the week. Having the other churches come also made it easier to get to know every one, now no one knows everyone. Small groups and work groups split a lot of people into areas where you could get to know everyone well in just that group. That helped me learn a lot more about some people then just their name.

The week wasn't just about friends and meeting new people, I learned a lot about my relationship with God and God in general. One of my favorite times during the mission trip was devotions. It was a quite time and though half the people slept, I would just read parts of the bible. I had never used a devos book before and it was a really cool way to learn about a passage and relate it to different things. One of the major things that I learn is that God doesn't care who you or where you came from He will love you if you love and serve Him. This week of serving him was one of the best experiences of my life, and I hope TNT will keep welcoming the O'Donnell stragglers who's church don't have mission trips quite like that.

By Brienne O'Donnell

When the mission trip began I was worried. Tallulah was my first actual mission trip and having no earlier experiences I didn't know what to expect. I assumed that I would become closer to Jesus but that majority of the trip I would spend trying to talk to the other members of the church and be "accepted". After the first day I came to recognize that being "accepted" was not the point.

The first day people immediately began coming up to me and exclaiming "Hey it's Keely's little sisters!". I would laugh and promptly try to explain to them the difference between Devin and me. I shared the physical differences with them because people tend to remember things like Devin has braces and I do not. They would nod along trying to remember the difference and peering into our faces I could see the cranks in their heads turning putting into place the variations between us. During this time I was still nervous and lost because I wanted to be excepted.

The lock-in continued and I was talking to a few people when I wandered into the back room. I looked up and a painting of Jesus was across from me. The picture filled my eyes. My vision stayed locked on his for five minutes and the entire time I could not break the stare. I could not decipher what was so captivating about the painting. I had seen other images of Jesus before and they all are relatively similar but this image fascinated me, his eyes especially. I could not think of much else other than this illustration.

This image of Jesus stayed with me the entire trip and still today. Parts of the representation have faded away but the greater part of the painting has stayed. Jesus gently glared at me as I stubbornly glared back at him. As I did this I felt as if he was

searching my soul looking and correcting the actions I have made in my life. I took this image with me on the trip and whenever I felt I was leaning in the wrong direction I would think of this image. I felt as if this was God's touch. He shared with me this image so I would know that I always have Him to help me. Even though I was anxious in the beginning the feeling of lost and falling in the wrong direction fell away and left me with one of the best experiences of my life.

p.s. thank you sooooo much for everything Aunt Sheila and Uncle Ed. I enjoyed every minute of it!! Could you also tell Chris thanks for the amazing stories and being an awesome group leader! Thanks!

Love you guys! See you at Christmas!

## Mission Trip Reflection- Tallulah LA- 2010- KEELY-

For two years now, I have been blessed with being allowed to attend your mission trips. Each year the experiences I have with God, and the other students at St. Julie's parish are making bigger and bigger impacts in my life. This mission trip was really enjoyable for me this year. I had large numbers of family surrounding me, as well as friendships that were created in the past trip were still present and ever-growing. The most prevalent emotion among these is love.

Shortly after the mission trip ended I had a revelation. I was lying in my sleeping bag, on the floor of a hotel in Chicago spending even MORE time with my family, and I could not fall asleep. So, I picked up my sister's bible lying next to me and flipped it open to a random page. Now, I cannot even remember the verse, or even the author, but, I do remember reading that the only command God truly has for us is to love. The ONLY command. That's it.

Most of us do not go on these mission trips to love. Honestly I did not go on these trips to love. I went to do work, to make a change for the better in the community. Then I realized that whatever I did down in Tallulah I did through God. That was loving through God. All of my actions were performed by me, but done through God's love. Looking back, all I see in these mission trip memories is love. Even if we don't go half way across America to love, we all did, whether you like it or not.

But besides loving both the trip and the community this mission trip had a lot of fun aspects that I really enjoyed. The trips to swimming, the civil war museum, and to the ranch of the pastor, were nothing but fun. I think that this shows how, despite the fact that this is by far the least emotionally touching of the two mission trips I have attended this one was more fun. This allows me to think that God really had two commands. To love, and to have fun. If you truly love, and love right fun is sure to follow, just as it did on this past mission trip.

p.s.

Thank you so much for welcoming me, yet again, on this mission trip to Tallulah. I really had a good time. Hopefully I can come next year too!! ☺

## Reflection of Tallulah Mission Trip

I am very glad that I was able to join TNT on the trip to Tallulah! The week in Tallulah was definitely the highlight of my summer. I had a great experience and have a LOT of wonderful memories!!!

The Youthworks staff was great! They were easy to get to know and made the experience even better with their enthusiasm and creativity! They had great stories that we were able to relate to, and they tied to the lesson that we were focusing on for the day! They also planned great activities! We always had something to do, from devotions in the morning to the evening activities/Club and everything in between. I enjoyed every minute of the trip!

It was great to get to know everyone from the different churches. I did not know many people when I arrived, but I was able to become very close with many of the people there. The three churches bonded very well. It was entertaining to listen to and compare the different accents and create many inside jokes. I think that I created some lifetime friendships on the trip!

The trip to Louisiana was a humbling experience. I feel that sometimes I take some things for granted when I am at home. We may not realize how much we have until we see people who have next to nothing. At first, at the tornado site, we were moving metal and wood. Then we started to look for smaller items. We found Christmas tree ornaments, pictures, Bible verses, and some everyday items. These items and their faith were the only things that this family had left.

It was also a moving experience! To see many of these families with so little, but their faiths were so strong, it helped to strengthen my faith. Club also helped to strengthen my faith, especially the last night and the washing of the feet.

Thank you to the leaders of Youthworks and the chaperones! I am really looking forward to the trip next year!

Janae Fry

Liz Gunty  
Reflection  
Tallulah 2010

Going on the mission trip with St. Julie's was an amazing experience. I signed myself up for this even though I was a little skeptical about it. I had never been on a mission trip before Tallulah and had no idea what to expect. I remember on the first day, when we first arrived at the church,

I had a feeling that I wouldn't like it. I was completely wrong. This trip showed me how rewarding it can be to help others and how God can guide you through the process. To be honest

I am not the most religious person, so when I was told we had to do devotion time I was so nervous. After a day or two of devotion and all the time we spent with God, I already felt a huge difference. All that I learned while in club and in devotion has been carried back home with me. I

still spend my alone time with God everyday, I still pray, but before mission trip I had barely done either of these. The trip has brought me so much closer to God on a personal level, which is something I would have never seen myself achieving.

Also, kids club and the work sites were awesome ! Working with the kids from the community was so rewarding. It shows how doing something so simple, like playing with a child can make such a big difference in a community. Seeing the kids of Tallulah genuinely happy at kids club made the experience unforgettable. One child that struck me in particular was Andre'a, a girl about 8 years old at kids club. On the second day of kids club, I spent almost the entire day with

her. She was always smiling, laughing and joking around. I didn't realize until I really got to talking with her, that this eight year old could have so many problems and still be so emotionally strong. I think what she needed was a person to talk to about everything, and I am so thankful that person was me. That one moment to me was probably one of my favorites from mission trip.

I learned not to take for granted how good I have it and how fortunate I am. I think the worksite for me was surprisingly the most challenging. Doing the same thing all day and being outside made the day seem so much longer, but it ended up being so much fun! Being at the work site really got me to open up and bond with the people of my group. All of us working together as a team paid off at the end when we saw the finished product. It felt great to know that we had done something for someone who truly needed it, and appreciated it. Overall the trip has changed my life greatly. I met many new amazing people and also built stronger relationships with others that

I already new. I learned how important it is to have a strong relationship with God, and how rewarding it can be to think less about yourself and more about others. I am so thankful that I was given the opportunity to come on this trip and look forward to becoming more involved in other activities just like this mission trip !

Thanks, Liz Gunty

Will Warpinski

## My Tallulah Trip Reflection

Since this my first reflection and I don't really know what I am doing I'm just going to talk about what I liked, my favorite moment, and what I got out of this trip.

### What I liked:

1. I liked that I was able to spend a lot more time with my cousins and get to know them a lot better.
2. I liked that I met many new people that are all nice and funny.
3. I liked working for someone else's benefit rather than my own

### Favorite Moment:

I did not really have a "favorite moment" since this whole trip was an awesome experience. If I had to pick it would be the water day at the kids club. All of the kids just seemed so happy to be playing with us and I had a lot of fun too.

### What I Got Out of the Trip:

I learned a lot on this trip but the most prevalent thing was that I should be happy with what I have. Those people down there had nothing and they were happy. Whereas I sometimes get caught up in having the latest game or gadget. I need to appreciate what I have and not complain.



## Mission Trip Reflection

My mission trip to Tallulah, Louisiana was a very memorable, moving experience in many ways.

Going into this trip, I was nervous that I would know very few people. Although Tallulah was my first mission trip, the members of TNT were very open and kind to me. I immediately felt welcome.

When I began at the sites, I began to realize how fortunate I was. Even though some of the people we worked for were living in poverty, they seemed very grateful for what they did have. It felt very good seeing how appreciative the people were for the work we were doing.

At Kid's Club, I didn't know what to expect on how the children would feel towards us. When they arrived, they were very sweet and open. It was very difficult to leave them after becoming so attached at the end of the trip.

The Tallulah mission trip had changed me in many ways. It made me more grateful for what I have and closer to God. I also had a lot of fun and will definitely go on a mission trip again.

Caylin Alex

Ben Warpinski

### My Reflection

#### Liked:

1. I liked how I got to bond with people I've never met before.
2. I liked how you separated me from Will and John and made me be with different people (besides Annie)
3. I liked the kids center.
4. I liked all the evening activities we did.
5. I liked how this trip made me be closer with my faith and closer to God as well.
6. I like all the new friends I've made.  
There are some I'm forgetting but I liked everything.

#### Dislikes:

1. The small room in the van but there's nothing I can do about that.

I'm a pretty blunt person, so I'm going to try and make this as quick and painless as possible. However, for this occasion, I am not quite sure that a short and to the point essay would do justice. So, be prepared if this is long winded and has a bunch of pointless stuff in it. Ohohoh, and I know the beginning makes it seem like this isn't going to be good, but trust me, it will.

As Mission Trip was about to begin, my mother and I decided it would be the proper time to have a fight. The car ride to Saint Julies was the most loud car ride I think has ever existed; yelling surrounded us. Then, after I'm in a bad enough mood, my flip-flop broke in the middle of mass and I looked ridiculous dragging my foot around so as to not draw attention the fact that the flipping and flopping of my footwear was only happening on one foot. As church ended, all I wanted to do was get out of there and go home. But of course, something else had to go wrong, too. My brother who was supposed to pick me up called me as church ended to delightfully inform me that I would have to be walking home... For the car wouldn't start. Fortunately, I hitched a ride from a friend and got home.

A few hours later, my parents took me to the lock-in that they were to be chaperoning. Of course the whole fighting thing hadn't ended, so the whole time we were tossing death glares back and forth and back and forth. Finally my parents and I were semi-alright with each other, I don't really remember how it came to tghat, but regardless, we were cool. It may have had something to do with the fact that God forbid anything happened, my mother would hate for our last while to have been spent fighting. So, we did the whole hug, kiss, I'll miss you dealio and then...

Then came that wonderful van ride. Yes, I know, sarcasm is a horrid thing, but I just couldn't help myself there. For the whole way to Tallulah, LA, I got to be the odd man out and

had to be away from my friends. It wasn't that the whole ride was vile, it just was not the time of my life like I had planned it would be. I mean, I had planned to sit in the same van as all my friends, but at the last minute, I had been relocated and replaced by other people. I felt so bored and alone. I mean, sure I was able to text and talk with my friends, but it wasn't the same as if I was able to be with them. At about the half way point I was bored to tears, my iPod dead and my cellphone drifting in and out of receiving service. I just wanted to go home. At least fighting with my mother was more comfortable than this forever long car ride and feeling of not belonging where I was, and even so, we weren't even bickering anymore.

So, I'm going to go off on a random tangent here. I know I said short and painless, but I'm putting that on the back burner for now, so I can make this all make sense. I'm Catholic. I go to church twice most Sundays, I believe in God, I'm baptized and confirmed. I'm all that surface stuff. Heck, I even have a few Christian bands on my iPod. But, I don't read the Bible and I don't bother praying a ton. Or, I didn't, anyways.

But, nothing was going right, and I was on a church trip, so I figure, 'why not?' So, after I laid out my blankets and claimed my space, I prayed a bit. I tried to get things to work in my favor, or at least a favor that would benefit me a little. And low and behold, they did.

Five minutes after I did the whole praying thing, I was talking to this girl from another church. She told me that she came to get away from all the unnecessary drama. She's like, "This is a church trip. If anyone is going to bother complaining about someone or being unhappy because of something stupid, they shouldn't have bothered paying the million dollars it cost to come here. This isn't about being selfish. It's about being nice, helping people, and hitting on the cute boys." Now, save for the last part, that was something I really needed to hear at that point. I

needed to just forget about all the bad that had happened and start over. Keep an open mind and ignore the fact that I spent 16 hours with the man of my nightmares, my friends ditched me, and my day before had been just plain yuck.

And, so I did. I just forgot about the whole ride and lock-in, and I completely forgot about everyone and everything in revolting Tinley Park. I even turned my phone off for most of the trip, which is amazing, since I don't think I had turned it off one in the two months I've had it. I spent my time socializing with the kids at the other churches and when we went to the work sites I invested every single fiber of my being into doing whatever work I could manage. I know that we made a difference for the house I went to. Sure, maybe all we did was decorate the walls of some boy's room, but it was MORE THAN THAT. We all talked and shared bits of our lives with him, and he shared bits of his life too. We gave him smiles and entertainment that I doubt he usually received on early Thursday mornings. We gave him something to wake up to that he wouldn't have to be ashamed of. We gave him a room that he could call his own, and do so with some pride. We gave him things that we take for granted every single day.

And kids club... oh how it hurts my heart to mention it... Those wonderful little children were so blissful, even when they seemed not to have reason to be. There was this one girl who every day I saw her, Monday and Tuesday for kid's club, and again Thursday for the cookout, wore the same yellow shirt and beige skirt. Her hair never changed from her mussed up pony tails. But, I swear, she never stopped smiling.

Another boy there was a bit of a tyrant. I met him the first day I was helping, and he decided it would be fun to try and consume my sunglasses. Oh, the poor pair would never be the same after that... When he failed to eat my sunglasses, he decided that my finger would be an

acceptable substitute. The child was mean and had I not been childless at the time, I probably would have abandoned him... let some other kid or adult take care of him. But, it was the card I was dealt, and I couldn't just toss it away. So, I read to him. And it failed. So, I went to play Uno with him. And it failed. So, I brought him over to the creation station to do a craft, and in just the time it takes to create a glittery mess, it failed. A friend of mine was then holding a totally sweet little girl and I decided I must take a photo. But, my little buddy thought otherwise and took my camera. And then my mind and camera clicked (and flashed) and the kid I had been trying to force into doing things became a photographer for a bit, and I can proudly say did not try to eat any other part of my being or my stuff... or any other stuff... well, other than this one piece of plastic... but I took it away really quick.

Now, this reflection may seem more concentrated on the bad rather than the good, but honestly, the bad WAS good. If I had not been having a bad time in the beginning, I never would have been able to focus on what God wanted me to do... I honestly believe that had I been in a van with all my friends, I would have spent the whole trip like how the van ride was- a party. I would never have done anything that really meant something. I never would have had any of the experiences that I had if I had not left my comfort zone and began talking to people I usually never would. I never would have met who I did had I not been totally in an awful mood when I got there. I owe the amazing-ness of this trip to the wonderful insight that I got, which I am totally crediting to God. Without Him, I wouldn't have touched anyone. I would have been sour and rotten. Instead, I know I made a difference, and for that, well, God blessed.

\*random note- I pray now. 😊

Shannon Kline

O'Donnell  
 Work Site  
 Community love  
 No Purple  
 Fiddle Faddle  
 Jesus Christ  
 Beach  
 friends  
 year olds  
 Inspiring Raptors  
 Tallulah  
 Sock Puppets  
 Tallulah  
 2010  
 Iquandons  
 Signs  
 Missions Trip  
 life-changing  
 van-rides  
 Tornado Site  
 Alyssa King's Dad  
 AIN'T THAT THE BERRIES  
 Devotions  
 Miss Mayberry  
 Bedtime Stories  
 Club Nashville  
 Chicago  
 Reno  
 15-hour  
 T-Rex Memories  
 PARTYS  
 ANNOUNCEMENTS  
 Club Louisiana  
 Youthworks  
 Pictures  
 Painting accents  
 Diverse Kids Club  
 No Shower Club  
 Stegosaurus  
 T-Rex Memories  
 Club Nashville  
 Chicago  
 Reno  
 15-hour  
 van-rides  
 Tornado Site  
 Alyssa King's Dad  
 AIN'T THAT THE BERRIES  
 Devotions  
 Miss Mayberry  
 Bedtime Stories  
 Club Nashville  
 Chicago  
 Reno  
 15-hour  
 van-rides  
 T-Rex Memories  
 PARTYS  
 ANNOUNCEMENTS  
 Club Louisiana  
 Youthworks  
 Pictures  
 Painting accents  
 Diverse Kids Club

If there's one thing consistent with every mission trip I've been on, it's that none of them are the same. Sure little things match up, like the fact that every trip I've been on worksite first and Kids Club second, but the people are different, the community is different, and I react differently every time. And every year, I try to write a different kind of reflection. I just wrote one the first time and I made that poster last year and for this year's I think I'm just going to list the things that I loved.

1. I really liked our Youthworks leaders. I don't think I've ever gotten to know them this well. They were all hilarious and so approachable. I still watch the announcements and the mad props videos. I feel like I'm still there.
2. My dad came this year. That changed everything A LOT, in one of the best ways possible. We were able to spend more time together than we would at home and became closer and built a relationship, because we really didn't have one before. It consisted of a lot of screaming and yelling at each other and disagreeing about EVERYTHING. He also made things a lot easier. The best part? Not having to bring money. And of course, everyone loved him.
3. The Kids Club setup. I liked how everyone had a little thing to do in front of the kids. Everyone got to go up and teach a song or do a skit or the memory verse. And it was very laid back. The structure was there in the rotation stations but it wasn't super strict, which was a good thing. And the fact that we got to be there with the last group that Josh was able to give the books that were donated to the kids and they got those little school supplies packages. I didn't know that happened, but it felt good to be able to be a part of it.
4. Going to the tornado site. I've never seen anything like that. I've never been to a tornado site and it just helped me realize A LOT. How lucky I am and how much I do have, but don't always realize. Those people didn't have insurance to pay for the house to be cleaned up or fixed. They were sleeping at their church just so they could have some shelter. It really humbles you. Plus the teamwork we had with our train. And it took us away from the normal painting/scraping routine, which is always nice. And getting hit with sheet metal really added to that day and then having a legit reason to wear Toy Story band-aids. And joking to people that I needed stitches. That was fun.
5. Club. Club was very relatable this year. Last year was very preachy but I think Mikala really was able to connect to us in a way that she was like us not better or higher than us. And announcements again and mad props.
6. The evening activities. They were very diverse and different from past missions. Although I would have liked to go to a community church, the rest made up for it. And the museum that was SO COOL and had a look-alike for my dad. And the ranch! The ranch was soooo pretty and fun. And Deirdre and I got to help with the hay and I think hay is like the coolest thing on the planet for some reason.
7. Becoming an O'Donnell and just becoming more like a family in general with ALL the church groups.
8. Bedtime stories. I love bedtime stories, what can I say?
9. The dinosaur names. Those were awesome and by far, the coolest small group name I've EVER had.
10. PARTY VANS! And all our inside jokes in general, with the accents and such.



## Reflections from Tallulah, Louisiana Mission Trip 2010

My decision to chaperone a mission trip came to me a few years ago when I listened to a mission trip reflection. I thought what a great experience it would be not only for me but also my children. That decision proved to be one of the best ones that I've made.

I really had no idea what I was getting into. I was a bit nervous about the long drive but was so happy to do this with Kay Kempke. My son wanted to drive in my van because I had a bunch of goodies for the trip. He recruited 10 of his friends (or soon-to-be friends) and that is where the fun began. A friend of our family made a 7 hour long CD full of great summer music that we enjoyed listening to. We soon became known as "The Party Van". After a 15 hour drive we arrived at the United Methodist church of Tallulah. We were briefed and told that there was very little water pressure. That night after the toilets wouldn't flush and there wasn't enough pressure to brush our teeth I realized that I had to give up control, make no judgments and accept that I was here because this was where God wanted me to be. I am so grateful that I made that choice and I am still trying to live my life by those rules.

On Monday we had the pleasure of meeting with Ms. Vera Hoskins. We were there to help her with some painting on the inside of her home. She wasn't sure about what she wanted done and had a difficult time making up her mind. Once she had, we painted her kitchen cabinets and laundry room and enjoyed being in the air conditioned home. The group did a great job and I was happy to have done as much as we did after the long delay in the morning. We washed the cabinets, primed them and washed the kitchen floor and counter tops so on Tuesday we only needed to paint the cabinets. I was pleased and while getting ready to leave, Ms. Hoskins pointed out the things that we missed and the spot of paint left on her carpet. I was so crushed. We went back the next day and finished the job, cleaned up the nickel sized spot of paint on the floor and left a special note (with her son for) that wished her well from all of us that worked on her home. She never thanked us or even said goodbye, just stayed in her bedroom. I struggled with this because I worried about how it would affect the kids. I was however so very proud of the work they did and the respect they showed her. I was approached by a chaperone from another church and he asked me how I could go back after the day before and I explained to him as I did the kids that I was not going to judge why she didn't appear thankful and that I believed we were there for a reason that maybe God only knew. I told him and the kids that even though we may not have seen the good right away that we did do something exceptional and that good would someday be "paid forward" as Morgan said so well.

On Tuesday morning we went to the tornado site. This was the most touching part of the trip. I really felt God working in me that day. I also saw him in the great group we had. We worked as a team and accomplished a lot of work. It was about 95 degrees and so humid. We found a 2x4 nailed to another 2x4. One was longer than the other and when rearranged it became a perfect cross. To me that was another sign that I was doing exactly what He wanted me to do. I cried many times that day because I was so humbled

by our group and the site. These people had so little and they lost even that. The ride home we sang and I mean SANG "The Lion Sleeps Tonight." I had so much energy and I was so incredibly happy that I cried again. The devotion that day was Do Less, Be More. I got it turned around and wrote Be Less, Do More. I think it was a slip because I felt like there was so much to do to help these people.

The next few days we spent helping at the kid's camp. I was relieved that Jeff Clark the Art instructor from Nashville was my partner at the creative station. I am creatively challenged to say the least, but I really had nothing to worry about because once again the kids in our group took the project to a level I couldn't even dream of. I most loved the water games on our last day. I had the opportunity to visit the work site of Michael. My son Carl drew a picture of a Tiger on the wall and Randy took me to see it. How great it was that he had the chance to use his talents. It was why I wanted to do this trip with him. That night we prayed with the community at the court house. I was very emotional again when it really sunk in how wonderful this whole experience had been.

Each night I was exhausted but felt so blessed. I still do. Thank you for allowing me the chance to join this mission trip. It was definitely an experience that I had never done before and one I will never forget.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindy Evans".

Cindy Evans

Mission Trip 2010 Reflection

As I began to prepare for my second mission trip, this time to Tallulah, Louisiana, I didn't know how this would compare to my first mission trip. Although I had a better idea on what life could be like for people who live in these types of areas, I didn't exactly know how the community would be affected or how they would react to the presence of YouthWorks. I learned rather quickly that although Mon Valley and Tallulah may be different in many ways, they are communities that are in need of help and in the end, the only thing that matters is that we help the community.

My favorite part of this mission trip work was painting the houses, working both indoors and outdoors. On the final day of work, I switched groups so that I could help a group that had a lot of work to finish in a short amount of time. Although there was a lot of stress due to the pressure of finishing such a project in such a short amount of time, I felt that our group bonded together more because of it. We knew that we needed to work together and help each other out if we wanted to finish the house before we left. When we all finished, despite having to stay past the time we were scheduled to work, there was a feeling of accomplishment throughout the group. In my opinion, the feeling of accomplishment and pride that we felt afterwards was the feeling that summed up this mission trip.

There was one specific time during this trip where I realized that we had really made a difference and that the community was thankful that YouthWorks had a site in Tallulah. We were putting up trim at a house as a work project, and while we were waiting for some tools to complete our job, a man driving his car stopped to talk to us and thank us for everything we were

doing for this community. This meant a lot to me because at that point I hadn't realized how big of an impact we had on the town of Tallulah.

What interested me the most on this mission trip wasn't so much how big of an impact we had on Tallulah, but how this trip had an impact on me. There were so many cases where I felt that I was growing in my faith in a way that I wouldn't just by going to church every week. I believe that because of this mission trip, I came into Tallulah with view on life and left with many different views on life.

If there was one thing I learned on this mission trip, it was that it doesn't matter how many friends you have, or how popular you are. In Gods eyes, all of that is irrelevant. All that matters in the end is the relationship that you build with God and how you have followed his commandments and loved one another. I also learned that society today will make it very difficult to continue to live this way, but all these difficulties are only distractions away from God.

Now that I am home in Orland Park, I brought back with me many memories of Tallulah, as well as many lessons learned. I will remember all the people that I met, whether it's from St. Julie, other parishes, or from the community of Tallulah. I will remember to always keep God in my life, and will give him a little bit of time every day.

I would like to pray for the community of Tallulah, that they could receive help and that a YouthWorks site is permanently set up there. The people in the community deserve any help that they could receive. I would also like to pray for YouthWorks, that they will continue to serve the people of this country, as well as others. I hope that they will continue to help the lives of others and function through the life of God. This mission trip left me with some memories that I will never forget, and I can't wait until next year.

REFLECTION

MY FIRST MISSION TRIP IS SOMETHING I WILL NEVER FORGET. FROM KIDS CLUB TO THE WORK AREA THIS IS A LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE. MY SMALL GROUP WAS DEFINITELY THE BEST ONE THERE. AFTER EVERY DAY WE TALKED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THAT AND WE TOLD EACH OTHER WHAT WAS THE BEST PART OF DAY. FORTUNATELY MY SMALL GROUP LEADER WAS DEACONED AKA MR. PLYCHAR SO HE ALWAYS SAID A FUNNY COMMENT ABOUT ME THAT DAY. THE FIRST TWO DAYS WE WENT TO THE WORK AREA. WE WENT TO THIS ONE WOMAN'S HOUSE AND WE PAINTED HER WALLS AND CLEANED THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE. HER NAME WAS MRS. FOUNTAIN AND SHE WAS THE NICEST PERSON YOU WOULD EVER MEET. THE SECOND DAY I WAS SENT OFF TO WORK WITH THIS OTHER WOMAN, WE HAD TO PAINT HER CABINETS AND HER LAUNDRY ROOM. THAT SAME DAY WHEN MY CREW WAS DONE PAINTING I WENT BACK TO MY ORIGINAL HOUSE, MY GROUP WAS GONE AND SO WAS THE VAN. THE VAN ALSO HAD MY SHOES STUFF IN THERE AND SO ABOUT 10 MIN. THEY CAME BACK AND DEACON ED GETS OUT OF THE CAR AND I ASKED HIM, "WAY TO FORGET ME." AND HE REPLIED SAYING, "WE DIDN'T FORGET YOU WE LEFT YOU." AND THAT MADE EVERYONE LAUGH FOR NEXT TWO DAYS. BUT OTHER THAN WORKING, IF YOU HAD A FEW SECONDS AND LOOKED AROUND YOU WILL NOTICE THAT THESE PEOPLE HAVE SO MUCH LESS, BUT THEY ARE STILL HAPPY. IT MAKES YOU WONDER THAT WE HAVE THE LIFE. I LOVED GOING TO THE TORNADO SIGHT TOO. THIS TORNADO RIPPED THIS PARK APART AND THESE PEOPLE HOMELESS ALSO JOBLESS. THE NEXT TWO DAYS WE WENT TO KIDS CLUB. THE FIRST DAY I MET TWO KIDS THAT WILL CHANGE MY LIFE FOREVER ONE OF THEM WAS CALLED LORENZO. HE WAS 21 YEARS OLD AND HE WAS PARTIALLY BLIND. ME AND HIM BONDED THE WHOLE TWO DAYS. EVEN THOUGH HE COULDN'T PLAY OR SOMETIMES PARTICIPATE IN THESE COMPETITIVE ACTIVITIES HE ALWAYS FOUND A WAY TO DO SOMETHING. THE OTHER KID WAS CALLED "TOOKIE". HE WAS QUIETEST PERSON THERE, BUT THE MOST LOVING. I SPENT THE WHOLE DAY WITH THESE KIDS. LORENZO GAVE ME TIPS ABOUT LIFE AND TOOKIE AND I CUDDLED AND WE TALKED EACH OTHER ABOUT FAMILY. BESIDES KIDS AND THE WORK AREA I HAVE LEARNED THAT RESPECT ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE AND DON'T COMPLAIN. SINCE THESE LIVED IN THESE CONDITIONS MOST OF THEIR LIFE. I HOPE OUR CHURCH COMES BACK NOT ONLY TO VISIT TULLULAH, LA AGAIN, BUT TO ALSO VISIT THE TWO OTHER CHURCHES WE MET UP WITH (RENO, NEVADA AND NASHVILLE, TN)

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THIS LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE.

Jessica Sirotkin  
Tallulah 2010

For anyone to call Tallulah a broken town has never looked past the houses the people live in or their graduation rates. These people, although rough around the edges, are the very same people who have given me a new outlook on many aspects of my life.

Society gives places of poverty such as Tallulah the cold shoulder. They say that these people have made "bad choices" which result in their current state of living. Is a tornado ripping through your town leaving your home wrapped around a tree really a bad decision? They say that these are our enemies, the very people that are holding our prosperous country down. I have yet to find, in the little time that I have called Tallulah home, a broken person. The residents there are kind, optimistic, and spiritual. I worked in Miss Fountain's home and over heard her on the phone saying that she had no idea where we had come from, she had never called us or asked for help, that we were simply gifts from God. She appreciated everything we did and encouraged us to listen to what God had to tell us and that the message he wants to give us is something we must search for and find. I remember her saying that she felt guilty because she was already so fortunate. She considered herself fortunate when she had medical problems, lived in the blistering heat, and her house, like society had abandoned her. Her life was enriched with God and the only people she felt were unfortunate were the people whose lives weren't. "Yea God" for sending me to her, or rather her to me because she has given me so much more than I have given her. And if these people are indeed my "enemies" I will do as Jesus says when he tells me, to "love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Mr. P had told my small group (GO STEGS!) that what we're doing will last longer than the house we paint. This was the one thing I believe that stuck out in my mind the most. It made me realize that the reason we were there wasn't for instant gratification; it was for a greater good, a lasting good. Until this trip, I also hadn't realized how fast complete strangers could become so close (without being "purple"). Or how painting a house could bring people together. The leaders taught me, often through song, how although God is always forgiving and understanding, he needs to be needed and will always be there for you, but only when you work to keep him in your life.

Overall, I have discovered that in Tallulah, there are no broken people, only broken houses, and even that is temporary.

# Reflection

Carl Evans

I'm not really sure what I'm supposed to write, but I'll still say what I ~~experienced~~ got out of my week in Tallulah. My first 2 days ~~was~~ working and playing <sup>I spent</sup> with the kids. All of them were so fun and energetic. My ~~the~~ third day I worked on ~~at~~ MS. Hoskins house. ~~was~~ ~~part~~ This was one of my favorite parts of the week. My absolute most favorite part was when we went to the ranch and me and Eric Sirvid went on our "Nature Walk" we saw so many cool animals and maybe even the alligator! After my week, I am fighting less with my sisters and communicating with them more, and I also think I am treating my parents better. Thank you so much for providing me with this chance to make a difference in other peoples' lives and to bring me closer to God.

Carl

Reflections of Tallulah  
Kay Kempke

I came into the trip thinking I knew a bit about what would happen, having been on one whole mission trip before...the routine, the activity... but I wasn't prepared for the impact the trip would make on me and those around me.

I had forgotten about making new friends, and getting to know others better; of seeing the hard work of our teens and feeling the pride of being made better by their actions and determination; of looking for the good and being flexible with people, time, differences and temperature preferences.; of being tested by preconceived notions and opening our minds; of loving all people and bringing more of Jesus to them, and less of "us" into the picture.

This trip showed me how similar, yet diverse groups of people can all work toward a common goal – to bring the sense of Christ into the lives of others through our actions and words.

Specially, I was happy to be able to focus on being an adult leader – vs. a mom. This was a result of the terrific adult leaders we had on this trip who knew how to have fun and also draw the line with regards to appropriate respect and discipline.

This experience left me with warm feelings for the community of people and well as for our teens and leaders. I am proud of what we were able to accomplish and the lives we touched.

My goal for this trip was to take time to get to know people better (our teens, the community, and the leaders). I wanted to feel more present, have more meaningful and caring dialogue – show more of the "be" versus the "do". I hope in some small ways, I was able to accomplish that goal.

*Thanks for the  
opportunity,*  
*Kay*



July 2010

Danny Benz

Tallulah Reflection

"Be still, and know that I am God."

Psalm 46:10

The above quote is what comes to mind when I look back on my trip to Tallulah, Louisiana. It's what gives me hope that these types of areas we've been working at actually have a chance to turn things around. When thinking about this mission trip, the first thing I look back to is the moment we arrived at our work site for the first time. The "house" was merely a motor-home without wheels, and the front yard was littered with garbage and uncut grass. While the inside of the home appeared to look better, we found mold under the carpet, holes in the walls and parts of the bathroom destroyed by water damage. The house seemed to be un-fixable in the time frame we were given: 6 hours a day for two days. "12 hours on this house won't put a dent in the amount of work it needs", I thought. Still, I put my faith in the hands of God. The results were beyond anything imaginable: a newly tiled floor, the holes in the wall fixed, and an entire bedroom painted. We even did work on the outside of the home, as we were able to weed, cut, and clean up the yard. As we left the house on that Thursday afternoon, I couldn't help but think of the things we could have done, if only there was more time. Sadly, a mission trip can't solve all the problems presented in one home, let alone one neighborhood or city. Still, my group and I felt accomplished in what we were able to do for that family. We also attended two days of kids club, which was different this year compared to other trips I've attended. In past years, there have been boatloads of kids asking to play games and wanting to follow you everywhere to get one of YouthWorks famous piggy-back rides. However, this time around was different: the ratio of kids to teens was about 1:3, and it was almost the opposite people chasing one another. It felt strange, but nonetheless made things a little easier to manage. I remember one kid in particular named C.J. At first, I was not a big fan of this little boy. To me, he seemed stuck up, arrogant, and was only in the mood for pushing people around. It helped me realize that some of the problems that these kids face aren't just physical- they're emotional. Perhaps a lack of discipline in their houses or even lack of attention could have caused this behavior. At one point, the boy was complaining that he had ruined his art project because he made the wrong design. "I messed up. I messed up", he whined. At first, I tried thinking of ways to cheer him up, as me and others around tried suggesting that he made a different design out of his work and so-on. But after a while, it seemed to me that the only way he would learn to stop whining is to tell him what the rules are, and treat him like a more mature person. At that moment, the boy appeared to have some sort of break-through, as he started working on his project with increased enthusiasm and care. It came back to God, as he was able to take this child into his hands and show him the right way. In the end, this trip was an eye-opener to what people can do, if they put their faith in God. It's something that's difficult for children, teens, and adults. But if someone truly wants to change their life, or change someone else's, all they need to do is put their trust back in God. Thank you, and God Bless.

Julie Metzler

Tallulah was my first mission trip ever, and I can't believe how much it has changed me. Upon arriving at the work site, on the first work day, I already felt blessed to be there. Working on Ms. Fountain's house was an amazing experience, not only because of the house washing and painting, but because of Ms. Fountain herself. She believed so deeply in God that even though she had feet and hand problems, she kept telling us that everything happened for a reason. I was so amazed that someone could be so devout that she believed that God had a plan even when she had her hand and foot messed up. My group also heard a phone call between Ms. Fountain and her friend, and Ms. Fountain kept telling her friend that she didn't know where we all came from, but she was convinced that we were all angels straight from heaven. Also, my small group had the privilege to go work on the tornado site. It was a wonder to see. But what really struck me wasn't when we were moving the scraps, but it was when I found things that I had in my own home in the rubble and burnt pieces of a bible, one of which that said, "You cannot fathom the power of God." I think that God meant for us to find those scraps, because we were looking at a motor home that had been destroyed by a tornado and then burnt pretty badly by a fire. Then, on Wednesday and Thursday, when I went to kids club I met Melody. She became my buddy and told me that I was one of her best friends. When she told me that, I felt so happy that I could have made such an impact on her in such a small amount of time. I'm going to miss her and I pray for her every night. I hope that I have helped make a lasting impression on the community of Tallulah, because they have made a lasting impression on me.

We went to a town called Tallulah, It didn't have very much moola.

On day one we started on a house, It was Mrs. Schawanda's, and in no way did we find a mouse.

We ripped off wallpaper in three rooms, and then we swept up the floor with brooms.

We found a rap titled loose as a goose, I don't know why this phrase is in here: moose

On day two we painted the walls, when we finished, we felt like Jesus had called.

Day three came around and we started Kid's Club, After planning, we all sat down and ate our grub.

We sang songs and played many games outside, and never did any of us think about our own self pride.

Day four came up fast, that day was filled with many a water blast.

On day five we packed up to go home, Who knows where next we will roam. Cairo?!

All in all I changed quite a bit, for better or worse I try to never slack off and sit.

I learned a lot form that impoverished town, I find it sad that places like these can be found all around.

My spiritual journey has stayed it's course so far, I think it is time I raise the bar.

I met many new friends on this trip. These people were not some small little blip.

I also had a great time with all my old friends in the party van, we sang songs about California girls with a tan.

This was possibly my favorite mission trip yet, although will it be surpassed? Yes, I bet.

I look forward to next year at Cairo, rhyming that will be difficult, all I can think of is.... No.

I can't believe you read all of this, much thanks to a kid I know as Chris.

He gave me the idea for a poem, now I wish I had just ignored um.

Nick Metzler

### Day 1, 2, and 3- Departure, Work Site and Tornado Site

It was four o'clock in the morning and we all met to get ready to depart to Tallulah, Louisiana for the 2010 Mission Trip with St. Julie's. I was a little nervous coming into this trip. Everyone seemed so in synch with each other, so close to one another. To be honest, I was not very close with that many people who were going on this trip in the beginning. Sure, I knew a few people here and there, but I had no 'best' friend going on this trip with me. I'll admit it I was intimidated a bit. Once we loaded up the vans, there was no stopping (except for the 16, 972 one hour stops we made to accommodate everyone). My van definitely was no "party van" but we still bonded with each other, and that's all that matters at the end of the day.

Our first day on site was very hot, and very humid I might add because we are in the South of course! We got our group assignments and I was a T-Rex. We went to Miss Vera's lovely home, and helped fix that up. Three other T-Rex's and myself were inside of Miss Vera's house for a majority of the day, while the rest of the T-Rex's were outside working on Miss Vera's daughter's house, a retired Army veteran. Outside, the T-Rex's we're scraping the paint off of the outside of her daughter Matt's house. Despite the heat, they did an awesome job doing it. They started it and stuck with it, without much complaining. I was proud of them and what they accomplished in that heat. Inside, we worked in the kitchen to start off with. The kitchen cabinets and doors got scraped and primed so they could be painted the following day. During this time inside, some of us got the opportunity to converse with Miss Vera and Matt themselves. Miss Vera was very sweet and there was something about talking to her that made me want to make sure that I, myself, and everyone else did the best job they could for her. She deserved it, they all did really. I'm so glad I got the opportunity to work inside and talk with her for a bit.

The following day, the T-Rex's, were taken to the Tornado site in the morning before lunch. I think that it is safe to say that once all of our eyes met the damage the tornado left behind on the property, each and every one of our lives and priorities back home changed. No doubt about the fact it was an eye opening experience. It made me feel very fortunate for what I had back home, and no, not for the materialistic things, but for the things that matter- for a safe home for me to be in every night and for family and friends that love me unconditionally no matter what happens. About halfway through our time at the Tornado site, Mrs. Evans found a

wooden cross that was about to be tossed. It was a sign that God was there with us. It inspired me to do less and be more. After we left the Tornado Site, we were taken back to Miss Vera's home. I finished up painting the laundry room with Mrs. Kempke and her son. We worked so hard to make sure the second coat looked as if a professional had attempted it. Our time, effort, and love definitely showed in the final product. I hope and know that Miss Vera will realize our dedication to her and she will be able to pay it forward just like we did all week. It was very inspiring few days for us all, getting to witness the kinds of things we did. However, the end results made it worth every second.

#### Days 4, 5, and 6- Kids Club, Nursing home, and Departure

After having spent two work filled days out at the work sites, we were now able to spend the next two at Kids Club. Day one at Kids Club consisted of the youth planning for the first half and spending time with the kids the next. There was a lot of down time after we all finished planning so the youth got the chance to bond with each other by playing games and activities. No one that wanted to be was left out, everyone was very friendly towards one another and that was awesome. Once the kids met us for the first time, everyone was so playful and really spent good, quality, one on one time with the kids and helped them when they needed it. I was surprised to see how well the kids bonded with the youth. They really looked forward to spending time with us and I was so glad that we had the opportunity to connect with the kids. Seeing the kids have such a good time with us made me feel like we were a big part in their life, and for those two days, I honestly believed we were!

The beginning of the second day at Kids Club we got to fill up water balloons for the kids because it was their last day at Kids Club. Part of me felt sad for the kids, but the other part of me said 'Hey, listen! These kids had an awesome time here these past couple of weeks and they'll take the moments they've spent here and cherish them for the rest of their life!' Upon the completion of the water balloons, we were off to the Nursing home. I was a little nervous at first, ok, I lied, I was extremely nervous at first. It was scary going into the Nursing home with one other person trying to make conversation with the elderly. I was only able to talk with one elderly woman for a brief ten minutes and her stories were interesting and touching. She did ramble on for a few minutes about nonsense, but it was nice to be able to talk to her. She even said a prayer for Julie and myself. After the Nursing home we went back to Kids Club. Seeing

their faces light up as we walked to the courtyard to play water games was priceless. All of the kids, with the exception of a few, could not wait to play with the water balloons! The kids had an absolute genuine time, and so did the youth. Everyone was connecting with each other and helping the little kids at the same time. Then I got hit in the eye with a water balloon, and boy did it hurt! Everyone kept coming up to me asking if I was all right and I really appreciated that. They were all so sweet and concerned; I don't think we could have gone down to Tallulah with a more genuine group of kids than these ones!

I do not regret a single minute I spent down in Tallulah with this group of kids. I do regret however, that this was my first Mission Trip and I only have one left for my high-school time. I wish we got to spend more time down there to make more of a difference, but the difference we made definitely made an impact on a lot of people in the community. I hope those people get the chance to 'pay it forward' because I know that they will make someone else very happy just as we made them happy.

Chris Cali Sirvid July 16, 2010 at 9:47pm  
Subject: reflection

Just thinking about writing this paper seemed so easy but it isn't. I couldn't think about the breaking point that made it from good to amazing. It seemed like every second of it was amazing. From the lock-in the night before to getting in my car to go back home.

This trip is basically a life changer. The reason why it was is because now instead of thinking about my self when I'm older I want to help out and do missions for years. I realize how good I live and how so many others have way less then myself. Thinking this way really helped me change my dream job and the fact that I've been on two missions and realized how fun they are and how good I feel after I do them. Thinking back to the trip I still can't think of where it switched from good to amazing but I can remember all the great things that happened like meeting so many people, helping others, and hanging out with the kids from kids club. I hope many others from our church can realize that this trip is amazing and really can make you feel better.

Thank you Mr. and Mrs. P for having me on this trip you really don't realize how much it means to me. Love, Chris Sirvid

## My Mission Trip

By: Casey Levigne

During my stay in Tallulah, Louisiana, I realized many things. One, take risks and break out of your shell even if it makes you a little uncomfortable. Two, don't judge a book by its cover. Three, teamwork is key in any sort of project we were involved in. Finally the most important thing I realized is how much I took for granted the time I could have been spending with Christ. I went through my life not thinking about all the things I have that most people do not and how much I take it for granted. Seeing all the homes that we had to rebuild made me look at my own life and just appreciate all my parents do for me and what God has blessed me with.

I first learned about this trip from Luke Vernam. Every day in chemistry class he would come in and rave about how awesome mission trips were. At first I did not listen and was not interested. But as he started to tell me some of the details about the trip, I thought maybe I should give this a try. I have never done anything like this before so maybe this would be a good experience for me.

When I arrived at the church that Sunday, I was so nervous. I did not know anyone except Sam, Liz, and Luke and I felt a bit out of place. I am shy before you get to know me so I did not expect to become close with any knew people. I was so wrong. During this trip I got to meet so many amazing people. I opened up with a lot of them and they opened up with me. It almost felt like I have known them all my life. At the beginning of the trip, I was scared to introduce myself to anyone. By the end of the trip, I was brave enough to go up to anyone and strike up a conversation with them. In this way, I feel like the mission trip changed me.

Working in such a great town with the community behind us was really an honor. It was amazing to see how much faith they had in God and how blessed they were to have us there. Their gratitude really left an impression on me. It made me realize how much of a difference we were really making in this community. I would have to say the biggest impression that was left on me was when I was working at the children's club. One of the girls, Miracle, came that day with a yellow shirt and beige skirt. The next day she came with the exact same outfit on. I didn't think too much of it until I saw her again at the community cook out with the exact same outfit on. Even though that is such a small detail and clothes aren't the most important thing in the world, I was still affected. It made me realize everything I have in my life and how much I take the small things for granted.

Another great moment for me was when I was at the work site tearing out this boys carpet in his room. When we were done for the day the boy, Daniel, came over to me and gave me a big hug. I almost started to tear about because although this was a work project for me, it meant so much to that boy that we were helping him have a cleaner and safer room.

To conclude, this mission trip was a life changing experience for me. It not only brought me closer to God, but it helped me to meet new and wonderful people. In school I most likely would not



have seen or hung out with any of these people because I can admit I sometimes stereotype people. But after really getting to know them, I came to realize they are genuine people who were so nice to me even when they did not know me at all. I still stay in touch with a lot of people from the trip and hope to keep in touch in the near future. This great opportunity was one I will never forget. The memories I have created on this trip will stay with me forever. I am already excited for next year!!

The greatest week of my life.

Tallulah, LA

By Jimmy McGuire

As soon as I arrived in Tallulah I was immediately ready to help the people there. I believe this trip helped me two different ways. The first being the more obvious one which was the "getting the bigger picture". By this I mean that I realized the difference in the way people there lived as opposed to us. I found how fortunate I can be. For the week I was there I had decided to put myself into their shoes and to try to understand their emotions. I treated my actions toward them how I would have wanted to be treated. I felt this really helped me connect with the kids in kids club as well as the people I served. By connecting with the people and finding out what they were like, the tunnel vision I had of the world being perfect was widened immensely.

The other way this trip changed is in my religion. I feel that I became a lot closer to God. Before this trip I never really prayed I just sat in church every Sunday at 7:30 in the morning. The only thoughts in my head at that time were: why am I here, and I want to go to bed. I never really concentrated on god. This trip gave me the chance to learn about God and really connect with him.

In addition to finally connecting to God, I had a ton of fun with all of the new friends I made this week. It is amazing how teens doing the work of God could become such a tight group of friends. This may sound a little weird but when I got home and started running through all the fun things we did together and all the good times we had and then I started to cry. I just thought it was amazing that so many teens could come together for one mission, to help people and serve God. There are just not enough words to explain this week. If I could choose one word to describe this week I would choose this: Amazinginspiringfun togetherfriendsforlifecan'twaittillnextyeartouchinginsanelyawesomeGOD.

Ryan McGuire

## Mission Trip Reflection

The week we spent down in Tallulah, Louisiana was one of the best, most humbling experiences I have ever been through. I had a great time getting to know all the people from Reno and Nashville. All of the groups got along so well with each other, and that fact just made the experience a whole lot better. My small group and I got a lot done at Ms. Shawanda's house, stripping wallpaper and painting two bedrooms and a bathroom. Then, later in the week, when we went to kids club, I continued to serve under God and play with the kids of the community. I had a ton of fun meeting new people and getting to know them, but the most important part of this week was strengthening my relationship with God. I learned this week that being close to God doesn't necessarily mean reading the Bible and praying. You don't have to do these things to be one with God. So for devotionals this year, I didn't read the Bible, or fill out the workbook that they gave us, I just sat and thought. I even felt closer to God by just doing that. I would think about my family, my girlfriend, my new friends, and the great time I was having being the hands and feet of God. I thought about how quickly the week was going by, and how I never wanted it to end, because truly, mission trip is the most fun I have ever had doing anything. I love being around friendly people who are easy to get along with. I love learning about God and our religion. I like the serious, reverent parts of this trip just as much, if not more, than the fun parts. I just love mission altogether and I CANNOT wait until next year!!!

Maura O'Donnell

Things I liked about the mission trip.  
-everything.

Things I didn't like about the mission trip  
-.....nothing? Well, those mornings were a little rough.

I went to Tallulah, Louisiana for a mission trip this year, and I now plan on going to every mission trip TNT will allow me to go on. Every morning I would wake up to either A. someone tripping on every bit of luggage that was scattered all over the floor for breakfast crew, B. someone miserly attempting to wake Katie Campbell up, or C. someone waking me up to get up for breakfast crew... The mornings were always a rush because Katie and I would wait till the last possible second to get ready, but no worries we were always there on time! After breakfast I would either get ready for worksite or go to kids camp. The days I went to worksite I always wore old t-shirts and Katie's shorts because I knew that my mad skills in painting would probably end up on my clothes. The days I went to kids camp I usually just wore whatever I wore to bed, because I knew I'd be making endless amounts of bracelets for kids...and anyone else who asked (JIMMY, Jess, Ben, Will, ect.) The first day at worksite our whole stag swag group basically spent the entire day painting and making fun of everyone's accent, it was a pretttyyy successful day. One of the days at kid's camp we had the water balloon toss/ drip drip drop/ and extreme water fight. I'm almost positive that within the first half hour I was there I was completely soaked. Ben broke our promise in drip drip drop and completely downed the full cup of water down my back, thanks cousin. But hey it's ok I guess because Uncle Ed did the same thing! I guess it's a family thing?...no worries I'll get my revenge some day. Another day at kid's camp we did these little station things, and all the cool kids were in creation station. Let me just say that learning three completely new songs and hand motions to those songs in like 2.5 seconds is not the easiest thing! Other than that baby shark song...it was a complete fail for Averil and I to keep up with everyone, but it's ok we put our own twist to it. I loved going to the field the first day because I started to get to know everyone better. I guess I should've got to know Carl Evans a little better because I was convinced his name was Carl Sandburg the entire trip. Josh, Steve, and Michaela (idk if I spelled that right...you can blame my dad) were pretty cool. I made Josh a purse after accusing me of making one for myself, Michaela and I had the same shoes, and Steve refused to let me go near Katie the first day. Josh also loved making me do just about everything on breakfast crew...just saying. I met a lot of really awesome kids there! Averil and I shared a common disadvantage at the creation station, Avery was probably one of the funniest kids I've ever met, Brad just lovveees making fun of Chicago accents, Jess and I met Emily the first day and already became really close, Austin is amazing at making bracelets and has an interesting way in dancing to "your love is my drug", and Michon and Eric were the cutest couple and really nice, Rowan had

the coolest accent eveerrr, and Logan was probably the biggest baseball fan ive ever met. Logan also just messaged me on facebook, and when I told him I was writing this he said make sure to say that Logan says hello to Katie and everyone else from Chicago...sooo there ya go. Going on the mission trip with all my cousins my age was really fun because I got some family bonding in. All the kids from TNT are amazingggggg and if I lived out there by you guys I would hangout with everyone all the time, and Katie thinks the same. I found out that I'm related to a lot of kids from TNT that I didn't know about? Alyssa king....favorite cousin right there. Jess, Kristyn, Alyssa, Jimmy, Ryan, David, Carl, Eric, Chris, Andrew, Liz, Mike, Rich, anddd anyone else who I'm forgettingg at the moment are all realllly awesome and we better have those weekly tnt partys again! Because I miss all of you! Well to rap this all up I would like to say that I looooved this mission trip and it was probably the best thing I've done this summer by far. Oh and sorry for turning this in like 25 years later than I was supposed to....(:

Stag swag<3

We were all sent on a mission trip to Tallulah, LA from; some may say Tinley Park we would say from Our Lord. God chose each and every one of us to go on this for one reason or another. Some were there to share their gifts and talents with others. Some were there for a lesson to be learned only known to themselves. But one thing is for certain, that God called all of us there at that place and that time for a particular reason. For any one of us to do all that was done would be impossible but together all things were possible and are possible through the gifts that Our Lord has given to all of us. When I was in kids club for the first two days I saw the kids from the three different churches sharing themselves with the kids in the neighborhood. To give a child not just the gift of time but also the gift of attention to that child is truly special. To see the kids of the neighborhood smile and play and really enjoy themselves was a gift for me to witness. I also had the opportunity to talk with the adults from the neighborhood. They too were so grateful for the help.

The worksite was also a time to help the community and to learn how to work together as a team for a common goal. It was great to see how the kids worked through the delegation of jobs on the worksite and then to work hard to complete the jobs before we left Tallulah. Mattie was the woman whose house our group worked on. Mattie was honorably discharged for health reasons from the Air Force. During one of our conversations I explained to her how special it was for all of us to be down here to help out in any way that we can. I also said to her that because she served in the armed services to protect our country, that it was that much more special to serve her and her needs. A very humbling smile came across her face and she said thank-you.

The morning devotion and evening prayer and songs were great times to have discussions about our Faith. The talks challenged us to look at how we live our lives. They made us look at who is in the center of our lives. Is it God or is it stuff? Is our life about ourselves or is it about others? Thursday devotion theme was "Less Ego/ More love". Ego can also stand for Edge God Ot. One of the things we experienced on the trip was, we were doing for others. We did not let our ego's influence our actions. When we do for others there is then more room to love others which is what we are called to do.

I personally had a great time being with the adult leaders and getting to know all the kids from TNT. It was also a blessing to be able to share this experience with my daughter Maura, my nieces, nephews and my sister and brother in law Deacon Ed.

Mr. Joe O'Donnell

Tallulah, LA "Believe the incredible and you can do the impossible."

I was thinking to myself at some point the week before we left.....so why did we choose Tallulah? Why are we going almost 16 hours from home? All I could say in response was that there must be something in Tallulah that God wants us to see, do, discover about ourselves, each other or someone special we are suppose to meet. Correct on all counts.

I have to say immediately that this has been from the time we left St. Julie until the time we arrived home, the best-behaved group we have ever taken anywhere. The chaperones were outstanding. The teens did everything they were asked. They worked extremely hard and participated in all the events. Everyone followed the rules, were respectful of each other, the other groups and all of the adults. They even went to bed! Yeah! Thank you very much for behaving like young adults. It made a huge difference.

There were so many special moments about this trip and it would take a book to write about all of them so with all due respect to our amazing, hard working male participants, I would like to talk about the Girls. : )

When my small group went to the work site we were given the assignment to paint Mattie's house. Mattie is a retired army veteran who is losing the eye sight in one eye and possibly the other. The house used to be her dad's. He built it himself but as she said, he built it with the supplies he had or was able to afford. Now she is trying to improve what she's been given, slowly, as she is able to do so. Next door to the left is a house that has been torn down by the storms that have ravaged the area in recent years. The man who owned that house came over and offered to dust off his bench in order for us to sit if we grew tired. The bench was probably the only thing that survived on his property. To the right was a house that had ducks living under it. We had no idea that there was a man actually living in there until Mattie told us. It looks as though it could collapse with the next strong wind. Truly, it wouldn't have to be all that strong. He burns wood to keep warm in the winter because he can't afford electricity. He has dreams of a better day when he will have it all fixed up.

It was here that I first took notice of the special attributes of our girls. They didn't seem daunted by the task at hand at all. Each one would finish what they were doing and find myself or Mr. O'Donnell and ask what they could do next. They never stopped working. Ever. It would have been easy to stop, it was hot enough, the ants were biting, and they were working hard enough, but even the ones who had never been on a mission trip before, just kept coming back for more tasks. As I said earlier, the boys worked very hard, but there isn't a doubt in my mind that if it weren't for the girls, we wouldn't have gotten Mattie's house painted. As the saying goes "They kicked butt".

Not just on the work sites though and not just my small group. All of the girls were terrific everywhere. The kitchen, bathrooms, helping and motivating one another, they were there for not only those who needed a hand, but for each other. I heard so many compliments from all of the adults about the way they handled themselves.

I am very proud of they way they worked as a team. Some of them didn't know each other before this trip and here they were, working side by side, not caring who they hung around with, what kind of clothes they wore, or if they wore make-up or not. They ate their meals together, shared small group time, large group time, many conversations and lots of hugs. You don't get to see that in many high school settings.

All through our faith history we have wonderful and remarkable examples of strong women who did what they needed to get done and they did it with great faith in God and each other. I think that was an immeasurable gift that was so evident this week. Women can do some many *incredible* things even if at first they seem *impossible*. I hope, as a gift to themselves, they keep up the friendships they started this week. Who knows what, with God's help and each other, they will accomplish next? : )

Overall, this was indeed a week full of surprises, new friendships and the Holy Spirit working overtime. Thank you to everyone for all of their hard work and especially the people of Tallulah who were so very kind, generous and welcoming to all of us. We couldn't have asked for a better place to journey to.

Mrs. Sheila Pluchar

By Anne Pluchar

I met so many new people in Tallulah. The first day it was a little wierd working with people I didn't know. We sat on a tarp in the hot sun for an awkward 15 minutes until the other group showed up talking about accents. From there we all became fast friends. We spent so much time together that they became like another part of our group. Kat sang us to sleep every night, Dan and I shared a love of Batman, and Michon was just plain fun. I could talk to them as easily as anyone in my own group. Club was even more fun. The leaders we much better than my first trips. It felt like they were really interested in us and what we had to say. They made us laugh but still got their point across to us. There really was never a dull moment on this trip. I even got to know my own friends and family better. With Ben in my small group we became closer cousins than ever. My small group itself became great friends. I looked forward to spending time with them everyday. Mrs. Kempke and Mrs. Evans were absolutely amazing leaders. I could not have asked for better leaders. I saw all four hundred of my cousins become close to each other. This Mission trip was all around an awesome experience. I cannot wait for next year's trip and I hope it will be just as fantastic as this one.



Andrew Rubino

August 8, 2010

On the mission trip to Tallulah, LA I helped with kid's club and worked on improving homes. At the work site we scraped a lady's house. Scraping was difficult but we got it done on the first day. The second day we went to a tornado site. It was shocking to see how much damage a tornado can do to a house. When we were at this work site we separated the wood from the other items--like garbage. It made me think how fortunate I am that this didn't happen to the home I live in. When we got back to the house we were originally working on we had to power wash it before we could start painting. Even though we didn't finish painting I was proud on how much we did accomplished.

The next two days were a little more relaxing. We started the day at Kids Club. We did skits and sang songs. We got to play games with the little kids. On the first day at Kids Club we broke into groups. Some kids did arts and crafts or read while others played games on the nearby field. The kids seemed to be having a lot of fun with just throwing a ball or playing tag. That made me happy that the kids were having fun. The second day was designated water day. We played a game called drip, drip drop and then had a water balloon fight. The kids seemed to be so happy just because we were there. It made me proud of what I did during that week.

While we were in Tallulah we stayed at a church. We slept on the floor. It was very hot outside (about 95 degrees) and a lot of the homes in the area were falling apart. I am glad that I live in a house that is still in good condition and has air conditioning. Some of the houses down there were falling apart and people were still living in them. I'm so happy that there are groups like Youth Works to help the less fortunate. The experience of being able to help and be part of the work made me proud of myself. I am so fortunate for what I have.