



Car Wash Fundraiser

Wednesday, July 5th 2006

Hey Y'all,

Just wanted to give all of you up in New York an update on all the fun and exciting things we're doing (in between missing our parents and trying not to get lost). We had a fun and safe trip down to the Longhorn State. (I think we made our second flight from JFK to Austin better for the airline help with all of our great *senses* of humor and witty jokes.) Then went and had dinner on the River Walk. Today some got up EARLY and exercised and swam. And did lots of shopping on the River Walk. Then we got dinner and headed to the Alamo Dome for a concert by two bands and the "one-and-only" Tony Campolo talk.

The Youth In San Antonio

Written By
Tina Huehn
Amanda Ellwanger

Thursday July 6th, 2006

Good evening from San Antonio!

We have had a very busy couple of days. The people we are meeting, the places we are seeing and the youth of our church, are all amazing! I think we are a little tired but getting ready to do it all over again tomorrow.

We had a Mexican breakfast today and a bar-b-que tonight for dinner. The food size is amazing, although with 3 young men, we don't have a lot of left over food. We registered at the Convention Center and spent several hours doing all kinds of activities. We didn't even get to see most of it, so we will be back there tomorrow. We did get to play team hand ball in a big blow-up arena. Talk about feeling God's love and laughter, it has surrounded us.

The amount of time and effort so many people have volunteered to help plan and execute a gathering of this size for us and the thousands of others here, is almost too much to comprehend. Everywhere we turn around, there is someone willing to answer a question, give us directions, or just tell us to have a nice day.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this with the youth of Immanuel. It is just the beginning of a wonderful journey, not only with Jesus, but with the kids we brought and the youth and adults we are meeting.

In Christ's name,

Barb Rafferty
Joel Shoop

Friday July 7th, 2006

Hey Immanuel,

Bethany and I volunteered to write the Friday email and began the email at the convention center today. However, the email was deleted and therefore, we are racking our brains for a second time. Here goes:

There is nothing like chocolate cake in the morning. Jen and Stephen decided that breakfast foods at the bakery were not going to hit the spot. So they ate a piece of rich chocolate cake, while the rest of us had a hearty breakfast.

Opening session was filled once again with amazing speakers and lively musicians. The whole convention center was rock in' to the beat of the YMCA, but the words were not the same. The words had been changed to ELCA and words of praise filled the lyrics. The theme of the day revolved around the story of "doubting" Thomas.

After the morning program, the youth participated in Servant Life (Servant Life is community service done in the San Antonio area). After a stunning umbrella show, we boarded the bus to a literacy center. The umbrellas informed the youth of what bus they would be boarding. As we watched the hot pink, patriotic and cameo umbrella go, we wondered what dazzling color we would follow. Solid purple was the color of the day for us and it led us to an amazing place. The Good Samaritan Center is home to a number of classrooms for children, infant day care and senior citizen activities. Placed right in the heart of a high-risk neighborhood, the center sought to lead the people out of gang warfare, teen pregnancy and poverty.

At the center, each person was paired up with a 6 or 7 year old child and interacted with them through reading and conversation. Here is Bethany's story about her experience at the Good Samaritan:

I was reading to a girl named Virginia. She had many family members and her sister was also a child there. I read the book, "Oh the Places You'll Go" by Dr. Seuss, which turned out to be her favorite. After we read and talked of our different homes, we played on the playground.

There she showed me her amazing climbing skills. It was Friday which was their water day.

Water day could also be called, "Sand and Water Day" because the kids were lucky enough to play in both at the same time. I am sure you all have experienced this wonderful pastime in your childhood. Most times the mixture is not pleasant and the end result is a handful of wet mud down the shorts. Many kids in our groups were fortunate to experience this first hand. Bethany and Brett won the Slip and Slide contest by sliding the furthest off the mat. They were soaked from head to toe. Those that were smart, like Jen and Ashleigh were able to leave the center dry. This was only possible because Joel was our bodyguard with a water gun.

Leaving the kids and the water behind, the bus dropped us off at the convention center to continue our plans for the day. Jen, Joel and Barb donated blood and each got a sticker. Jen received the "I tried" sticker and the two adults were treated with OREOS. The rest of the group walked back to the hotel (with the help of Ashleigh's amazing directions!) to go swimming. Supposedly, we did not have enough of water day. We played Marco Polo and did Chicken Fights. The chicken fights are going to need work though, it was a little sad.

Having traveled so far to Texas, one would assume we'd try some ethnic food, but not today. We had Denny's. Once again Bethany was unable to finish her fries. So she began the construction of a fry house with ketchup as mortar. But sadly the syrup rain came and Bethany, Tyler and Amanda were "forced" to eat all of it. And it was surprisingly good.

The Newsboys rocked the house at the night session and really riled up the crowd. We were all screaming and singing on the way back to the hotel. But that didn't mean we weren't tired. Most of us were in need of sleep, so we did devotion early and attempted to go to bed early to start the next day off right.

I hope you all our having a great time in ROC!
Bethany and Ashleigh

Saturday, July 8th 2006

Dear Members of Immanuel:

Thursday we visited the Alamo; it did not meet the high standards we expected from it. All and all it was very educational. For breakfast we stormed a rather small doughnut shop that was refilling its stock of goodies at the time. Their business boomed from being en route to the Alamo Dome. During worship we listened to some cool rock bands and some people share stories about how JC (Jesus Christ) has affected their lives. The bible story that we studied today was the parable of the Good Samaritan. When night came on we ate a buffet and hit the sack. The gathering is an amazing experience, but we are all tired!

Tyler and Brett

Summary - A final note

Texas, the Lone Star State, was definitely not lonely the week of July 3rd. Not only were the streets packed with excited Lutherans, but the restaurants were bringing in lots of revenue with the hungry travelers. Among the 18,000 Lutherans that arrived in Texas for the National Lutheran Youth Gathering, were 8 youth and 2 adults from our own Immanuel Lutheran Church. Decked out in our Immanuel T-Shirts created the youth and made by Ed Huehn, the youth traveled the city admiring the Alamo, the River Walk and the Alamodome, where the gathering was held.

Every morning and evening, the thousands of Lutherans packed into the Alamodome to witness some extraordinary performances and speakers praise the name of our Savior. The opening ceremony was a wonderful induction to the week, with Tony Campolo (also known as "The Bald Sweaty Guy"). He talked about establishing a relationship with God and serving him in places out of the ordinary. Our group took this message to heart and went into a high-risk neighborhood to read to children. The Good Samaritan Center is a place that offers children and seniors an escape from the harsh realities of teen pregnancy, gang violence and poverty that are present in their area. Each of us paired up with a child or two to read with and

exchange stories. However, reading was not the only activity that we were fortunate to participate in. We were lucky enough to play with the kids on Water Day. Water day included mud, slip and slide, as well as water gun wars. Most of us did not leave the center dry!

Besides Tony Campolo, we were privileged to hear individuals speak of their struggles to escape slavery, poverty and abusive households. It opened our eyes to the evils that plague our world and encouraged us to go and help others establish a new life filled with the Holy Spirit. Various artists also rocked the stage of the Alamo dome. Superchick, the Katinas, Kelly Glow and the Newsboys provided all kinds of musical talent. The Newsboys and the Katinas definitely won the crowd award though, because they had the whole dome on their feet and singing God's praises.

While there were many times to witness the Holy Spirit in the masses, we were also engulfed by its presence within our own group. Touring the city, eating or stuffing ourselves with food, and playing games together helped bring the youth of Immanuel together. With laughter and reflection, each of us strengthened our relationship with each other and God.

San Antonio, home of this year's Youth Gathering, was a haven for finding ourselves and growing in our faith journey. In San Antonio, there are many memories that each of us will recall and the best part is that we spent them together. Because everything is bigger in Texas, our experience was bigger than anything we could have imagined.

So if you come across Bethany, Tina, Brett, Steven, Ashleigh, Amanda, Jen, Tyler, Barb and Joel, don't hesitate to ask how their trip to San Antonio was. We each have many stories that are just waiting to be told.

On behalf of the group that participated in this trip, we would like to thank the congregation for their prayers and their support. The youth would also like to extend a warm thanks to Joel Shoop and Barb Rafferty for putting up with this rowdy group of young adults. Thanks!

VAYA CON DIOS!! (Go with God!!)

Written by Ashleigh Kasiske