

Mission Trip 2007

26 Youth & 6 Group Leaders from St. Pauls United Church of Christ, Chicago IL to Rosebud Reservation, Mission SD with YouthWorks ~ June 16 - June 23, 2007



Several reasons why:

- #1. We **bonded with youth from the other churches** at Rosebud [Millburn UCC in Lake Villa & 2 Catholic parishes from Milwaukee] more than ever before. Many [of us], myself included, retain an active correspondence. In addition, since the trip, we have taken it upon ourselves to arrange small reunions (I believe the kids call it "hanging out"). This has not happened to this extent in the history of our church's mission trip experience and I should know, seeing as I've been on all five to date.
- #2. **The land was beautiful.** I'm sure you all have seen the picturesque screen savers and professional-quality backgrounds of flawless landscapes that our software-makers have thoughtfully included with our computer machines. Well, I deleted those when I got home and replaced them with pictures taken during the trip. You just have to see them. It is unreal.
- #3. **There was a church.** We attended worship halfway through the week, expecting a small tame service but finding a rhythm and blues band shouting the Gospel with the heart and soul of a lion. In all honesty, over half of us started openly crying when the elderly preacher talked of the hundreds of foster children she had raised over the years. And for the rest of my life I will remember these words: **"We do not belong to any denomination. We belong to Jesus"**
- #4. Okay. **The kids** [of the Rosebud reservation] **were amazing.** We were sitting downstairs in the Boys and Girls Club. As soon as the kids entered, they immediately demanded that Alyssa give them a piggyback ride. I didn't get much time to laugh, however – as they soon discovered my height and demanded that I become a steed as well. **They trusted us from the moment they saw us,** something I was just struck with.
- #5. Steel yourselves readers, this is the controversial one. The flashpoint of our trip. The heavily evangelic [posture of the] organization that ran the trip was... unsettling, to say the least. While some of us felt like that the organization was asking us to [proselytize], none of us actually did shout doctrine at little kids. Our mission trip group simply became the big brothers and sisters some of these kids never had and we **"showed them with our lives how Christians live."** And if it took a highly disagreeable experience to fully appreciate the way we do things at St. Pauls and how we think we want to go about changing the world, then let the bad times roll

On behalf of the St. Pauls JAYS and Group Leaders, thank you to all those who made the 2007 mission trip possible: Shareholders, Auction Donors & Winners, Lakota Lunch Providers & Attendees, Service Project Buyers and more. Special thanks to the St. Pauls parents – our P-JAYS – who gave unstintingly of their time, talents, and treasure! Thank you also to the pastors and staff of St. Pauls Church who provided untold resources in support of this trip and to the St. Pauls Congregation at large – our loving family of faith who takes the promises made at Baptism to heart.

I guess after seeing something done completely different from the way you would do it, it just strengthens your faith and resolve that much more. So congratulations to you for making it to the end of my tale. And if you are interested to hear more and you have got the time, ask one of the JAYS to talk with you about both the good and the bad of the trip. **Diamonds do come from coal, you know.**

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