



*By Kristi Duensing
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YOP MISSION: The goal of our student ministry is to reveal the truth to teenagers about God's love, equip them to have a Christ-like wisdom and offer themselves in service, in order to magnify God's holy name.

Hello! In a couple weeks, school will start again. The summer goes by too quickly, doesn't it? I hope you are taking some time to rest and enjoy the beautiful world the Lord has given us. It's easy for us to forget God's plan to stop and rest awhile when we "believe" we have so many things to accomplish. Don't we spend too much time trying to make our lives suited to how we think it should be, instead of taking enough time to listen to God's voice as He guides us in His direction? While listening to a Ken Davis CD, I was reminded that God wants our whole bodies in sync with HIS PLANS....our hearts, minds, hands & feet and our wills. It's crucial that we keep our guards up and don't let the world slowly change us according to what everyone else is doing. Keeping our faith and remembering to do the things that pleases the heart of God, Romans 12:2 says: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world." Give God your will. "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to know what God's will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will." By cleansing our minds with His word every day, it is easier having attitudes of thankfulness and helpfulness to others. It is always good to think about what He wants us to do for His Kingdom.

We want to say thank you again for the support and opportunities we had to "love on these kids" (as our Youthworks leader would always say) and the older community members of Eagle Butte, South Dakota. The youth group completed all the painting, mowing, cleaning up yards, serving food and sorting through clothes at the community building as well as other jobs without any complaints; but, the "Kids Club" was quite a challenge keeping up with these ornery kids. You feel so bad for them wondering what their home life is like.

Once again, these Peace Lutheran teenagers amazed me with their giving hearts and service to others. We found out that it's not always easy to know the right way to approach someone who is very sad. We were definitely out of our "comfort zone"; working with jobs that made us uncomfortable and tired, cold nights, and trying to really get to know another culture of people who are so different than us, but yet so much alike. ☺

I have a story to tell you about an elderly man named Everly. He came into the soup kitchen with his brother. After they got their plates of food, his brother walked outside. So I went to sit down by this Indian man. He had big tears flowing down his cheeks. He didn't talk for a long time. "I just don't know why he has to take his meal with him. I bet he's going to the liquor store.....no good brother!" Then another man came into the soup kitchen so I offered him some lemonade. He only wanted the empty cup and 50 cents. One of the men from the other table said that he needed an empty cup for a shot at the liquor store. These people are very depressed and feel "stuck". Suicide and alcohol abuse is very high. When I asked Everly how many children he had, he put his head down and shook it. "Too many and all they want to do is fight". Trying to change the subject, I was telling him about our horses and asked if he had many horses. "Oh yes, I ride them every day". "Once me and my horse (I don't remember the name) out-ran the cops. There was a deep cavern ahead and I told my horse we got to make it. I let loose of the reins and held tight to his mane. We went soaring, then..... no more cops." He told me that when he was in the Army in his younger days, he traveled to Louisiana and Texas. Then he started with the tears again. "Now I don't go anywhere, I'm just stuck here." When I told him Jesus loved him very much and died for his sins he said "God will never forgive me for the things I've done." As we talked a little more about God's forgiveness, he began to smile. He loosened up his conversation and tried to teach Ryan and I some words from his native language. They were strange sounding and hard to pronounce. When I told him our group had to go home, I said "I'll see you again in heaven". Then he smiled and said "meet you at the pearly gates"! The Lakota Indians are "in-between religions". Some believe in Jesus but they also believe in their Lakota God. So they are quite mixed up in who they should believe. This reservation is the size of Connecticut, noted to be one of the 5 poorest communities in the United States. They have 90% unemployment. There are few jobs available unless they make clothing or jewelry to sell from a table set up in the park. Everly told me he cries every night for his grandchildren. But he has 1 granddaughter who wakes him up to go to church. Then he got a BIG smile!

Thoughts from the youth as we drove home: Thanks to Youthworks for showing us how to "Love on" people and to make a difference or put a smile on their face. Our complaining here in Nebraska is nothing compared to what the Lakota Indians deal with every day. We are all spoiled brats, thinking about what is best for ourselves without looking to help others. We had great discussions each evening when all 14 of us shared how our faith grew! God has a plan for all of us even though we can't see it sometimes. We ask for your prayers for these Lakota Indian people.