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YOUTH TELLING THEIR STORIES THROUGH WORDS AND PICTURES

Announcing the 2002 YouthWorks! Photo/Essay Contest Winners

We love to share stories – stories of our youth participants, our community members, as well as our staff. This past summer, we asked YouthWorks participants to share with us stories of their experiences through photos and essays. Now we are eager to share their stories with you! All submissions are posted on the YouthWorks website at www.youthworks.com.

As God's gracious light shown down,
The YouthWorks children gathered 'round.
No one knowing where to start,
Just praying for an open heart.
Looking around at all the new faces,
It was obvious we came from different places.
And as conversations started to arise,
We knew the week would be a great surprise.
Sitting anxiously for a clue,
What was it God wanted us to do?
The people and land were unlike others,
But in the Kingdom of God these are our brothers.
Wanting to help so much but being able to do so little,
It was God's desire to stick us in the middle.
Scraping and painting houses wasn't much fun,
But the look on people's faces told us we'd won.
Sharing everything they had which wasn't very much,
And telling us stories that touched our hearts such.
And who could forget the angels below,
Who jumped on our backs as we carried them so.
Tugging on our shirts and climbing in our hearts,
So trusting and loving they never wanted to part.
To be held tight with love and devotion,
Was some of the children's only notion.
I believe kids club is God's heaven on earth,
Where it is let known these angel's great worth.
Leaving them was hardest of all,
It broke our hearts as we started to bawl.
The best things in life are truly free,
How much fun being a Christian can be.
The week went by extremely fast,
Yet gave us memories that will last and last.
All our friends we met those days,
Have changed our lives in many ways.
So close in our hearts yet so far away,
We dream of meeting again someday.
Goodbyes were by far the hardest part,
Because everyone grew so large in our hearts.
And although it's impossible to be together,
Everyone will be remembered forever.
Connecticut, Indiana, our love goes out to you,
And to the angels of South Dakota, God Bless You.

FIRST PLACE ESSAY BY:
Jennifer Heinzlmann, Pewaukee, WI

Essay Contest Winners

First Place: Jennifer Heinzlmann, age 17,
from Galilee Lutheran Church in Pewaukee, WI.
YW trip: Rosebud Indian Reservation, SD.

Second Place: Elizabeth Hawkins, age 14,
from Christ Church of the Ascension in Scottsdale, AZ.
YW trip: San Diego, CA.

Third Place: Katie Lindbloom, age 16,
from BLAZE / Glenshaw Alliance Church in Glenshaw, PA.
YW trip: Benton Harbor, MI.

Photo Contest Winners

First Place: Timaree Zadel, age 17,
from Lakewood United Methodist Church in Lakewood, CO.
YW trip: Calico Rock, AR.

Second Place: Sophia Borg, age 14,
from Christ Episcopal Church in Ponte Vedra, FL.
YW trip: Blackfeet Indian Reservation, MT.

Third Place: Ashley Hurley, age 14,
from Christ Episcopal Church in Ponte Vedra, FL.
YW trip: Blackfeet Indian Reservation, MT.



FIRST PLACE PHOTO BY: Timaree Zadel, Lakewood, CO

SEEING GOD AT WORK: A Community Member and Pastor Speaks

The Fort Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona has been a YouthWorks mission site community since the summer of 1997. Over the years, we've made many friends here. One such friend is Robert Jimenez, community member and pastor of a local church. The following is an interview of Pastor Jimenez in which he shares how God is at work on the reservation and in the lives of Fort Apache community members. Pastor Jimenez was interviewed by Anna Klotz, a YouthWorks Area Director / GreaterWorks Intern, on September 18, 2002.

Could you share with us a little bit about yourself, the White Mountain Apache Tribe, and your church?

I am a nationally appointed Assembly of God missionary to the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. My job is to work with the local pastors, as well as to pastor a particular church – the Whiteriver Assembly of God Church. Our church had 40 members seven years ago – today it has close to 300 members. Our church is a very vibrant church in that it believes in worshipping God. Worship is extremely jubilant.

I worked in Los Angeles and ministered in Los Angeles. From there we moved to Mesa, Arizona where I also worked and ministered. I worked in the corporate world until one day God just spoke very clearly in my heart – it was time to make a full-time commitment to ministry. Little did I know that one day the Apache people would call and ask if I would come and be their pastor. I am very happy to be on the Indian reservation here, among the Apache people [on] the Fort Apache Reservation.

There are approximately 15-17,000 Apaches living on the reservation. The tribe consists of 60% under the age of 18, and so youth ministries and children's ministries are extremely important to reaching this reservation, not only the generations of the future, but the current population of our tribe.

We live in the beautiful mountains – the White Mountains, they are called. We go from 3,000 feet elevation to an elevation of 11,700 feet. We have a lot of deer and bear, and some of the largest elk in the entire world are found here – 28 lakes – just beautiful facilities.

But underneath that beauty that God has created here, there's great poverty. There's been a history of violence and rebellion since the time of Geronimo and Cochise. We have [also] had a lot of suicides. Since January 1, 2002 to today, we have experienced over 380 suicide attempts among children and youth, now making it the highest suicide rate of any reservation in the country. There is a great deal of depression [that exists here], but God is

gradually changing our people. Seven years ago we had 3% Christian. Today there are figures as high as 53% Christian on this reservation. We have over 40 churches, [and] God continues to birth new churches, an attitude of love, [and] an attitude of caring.

Could you describe the relationship between YouthWorks and the people of Fort Apache?

I think the relationship between YouthWorks and Fort Apache is extremely strong. YouthWorks has been instrumental in reaching people in ways that the church will never reach them by being God's hands, God's feet and God's voice in a very practical way by painting homes, by caring for children and ministering to children on the reservation. This last summer was particularly important to that relationship building in that our tribe suffered a very devastating fire which almost took a fourth of the reservation. 330,000 reservation acres, and another 120,000 beyond the reservation – 450 homes were lost. Three evacuation centers were set up. The church was asked to help provide help, in manpower and supplies, food [and] clothing for all three of the shelters.

But it was YouthWorks that jumped in there and unloaded the trucks, distributed the food, set up the cots, prayed with people, took over 120 kids every afternoon swimming, read to them Bible stories, included them in the Kids' Club activities that were provided here. So the relationship between YouthWorks and this reservation is extremely strong. I believe it will continue to grow.

Could you share with us the impact of the fires on the reservation this past summer?

There were two fires that were started. Both fires came together and became the largest fire in the history of Arizona. This was declared a national emergency disaster area. Immediately the tribe suffered [a loss of] about 35 million dollars in what they call stumpage fees. Our tribe depends upon lumber – the timber mill is our primary employer here on the reservation. We will feel the impact of that fire for four or five generations to come, because it will take that long to re-seed and re-grow that portion of our reservation.

Much of the wildlife that was in the area fled the fire. The tribe was also dependent upon that wildlife for income – as it is an area for much hunting. We don't know yet the impact of that [loss], but we have seen herds of elk and deer, and herds of big horned sheep all coming back to the reservation. So our prayer is that as we've been seeding, and God has been providing rain to, that there is enough undergrowth to provide food for the wildlife to return to the reservation.

One of the things that we suffered is emotional problems from the fire – the lack of knowing when you could come back to your home, the lack of knowing if your home was even going to be there when you came back. That was very difficult. The church provided much counseling and help for people in those circumstances.

I believe that the tribe has suffered a great deal. But on the other hand, we have now seen, as an aftermath of what happened, that God has helped us. We were harvesting trees that were 18 inches, 17 inches across – providing two by fours and two by sixes, getting \$250 per thousand linear feet. We have found some trees that we didn't know were there, as we've been harvesting the fire area – trees that are 48 inches across – four feet across. [These are] trees that are going to provide, not two by fours, but two by twelves and four by twelves, and beams, and two by tens – lumber which pays not \$250 per thousand linear feet, but \$950 to \$1,000 per thousand linear feet. [This] means that God has provided four times the revenue for the same amount of lumber. That's only God. We didn't have any idea those trees were even there.

We've also been asked by the Department of the Interior to go in – to harvest the area – to pull all of the burnt lumber out. It's going to mean 200 new jobs for the reservation for the two years that are yet before us. Right now we have 82% unemployment on this reservation – those 200 jobs are going to be important to us. And so what was devastation, on one hand, may end up being a blessing – being able to find lumber that we can harvest in a larger [capacity] – providing jobs for people [to] not only to pull out the lumber that burned, but also to help re-seed and plant new trees.

In the midst of everything, you took Whiteriver teens to volunteer in San Diego, another YouthWorks community. Why?

We were so involved with the fire, the evacuation and the needs of the community that we felt our youth needed an opportunity to help out in other areas, just to relieve the pressure on them emotionally. We had acquired enough manpower to provide help at the evacuation centers, so we felt that going to help somebody else would be good.

We were correct. Over half of our youth that went on the mission trip had never been off of the reservation before – and to experience the city – to experience the needs of the city – was a wonderful experience for them. It was just incredible, how God used your team to minister to our youth who were hurting because of the fire and the needs in their own backyard. Yet for just the week, for a few days, their mind[s] focused on how they could help other people.

I think the other thing that we wanted our kids to understand is that not only do they need to think about themselves, but they need to think about others. They need to realize there's another world outside the reservation – and that even though they have hardship, even though they have needs, they may not be as bad off as some of the other areas of the country, and of this world. So we have done many missions trips.

We desired to do one with YouthWorks because I felt that there was more to YouthWorks than being a recipient. By being participant[s] of YouthWorks, we'd be able to see what the ministry aspect was for each of the students who came to our reservation, and find better ways that we could minister to them through [the] YouthWorks [experience].

Can you describe the experience you and your teens had during your mission trip?

One of the highlights of our mission trip was our youth seeing the ocean – many of them had never seen it before. Another highlight was the evening services, the group meetings together – being able to work side by side with students from other fellowships, other denominations. One particular youth had only experienced Assemblies of God, and one day just said to me, "Wow, I didn't realize Baptists, Methodists and others were so cool!"

The footwashing service was a wonderful experience for us in that our youth needed some time to heal – and they needed some time to just receive from God that which God had for them. The footwashing service provided a platform for that as I saw kids' feet being washed by the leadership of the youth group and kids crying, realizing that they are truly loved. So that was a wonderful experience for us, as well.

What have been the spiritual repercussions of the fires for the White Mountain Apache Tribe?

I think from a spiritual nature, people became more dependent upon God. People realized that through a natural disaster like this, that only God could provide an answer. When the fire was approaching the town of Show Low, and was a wall of fire as tall as a mountain, five miles across and hundreds of feet high – it was the churches that began to pray.

The state had already decided [the U.S. Forest Service] that they were not going to be able to control it. When the churches began to pray together, churches here on the reservation and churches off the reservation, the wall of fire stopped. It stood there. People realized there was a God that could answer prayer. At the end of two days, the winds came and chased it back into itself, and [it] began to burn itself out. [Then] the firemen jumped in there and helped it to go out completely. People realized that just as when Jesus walked, God answers prayer. More people realized that God was real.

Thank you for sharing with us about Fort Apache and how God is at work in the lives of your community members. We are blessed to hear your story!

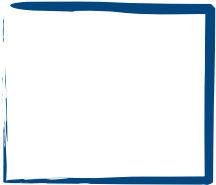


Pastor Jimenez and members of the Whiteriver Assembly of God Church



Pastor Jimenez with GreaterWorks Interns Anna Klotz, Sarah Jervis and Jonathon Cape

Background photo: A view of the fires that spread across the Fort Apache Indian Reservation this summer.



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A Day In The Life of a YouthWorks! Summer Staff A LIFETIME OF CHANGE

The youth have quieted and conversation begins. Another late night staff meeting. Who will start the work sites tomorrow? Does there need to be a run to the grocery store before breakfast? A church van broke down. Yea God's were incredible tonight. There is a need in the community – what can we do to help? A couple of youth were asking questions after club. As discussion wanes, prayer begins. One more day of adventure.

Staff meetings like the one above are common. Speaking from experience, I have faced some of the strangest and most challenging situations of my life on summer staff. I have learned the limit of my own wisdom and experience and seen my weaknesses made visible. I have been stretched and changed in unimaginable ways and through it all, I've seen Jesus at work. In on-the-job training, through failure and success, I have learned what it means to be like Him.

Almost 300 staff from all over the world ran YouthWorks trips last summer. Each came on board to be the hands and feet of Jesus. And the great thing is that in the midst of it all, He made Himself real to each one of us. We learned to trust Jesus in new ways, to rely on His wisdom and to live in His grace. We saw Jesus in the simplest and yet the most profound ways – in the warm smile of the checker at the grocery store and in the frenzied play of neighborhood kids. We saw Him as we learned how to love and be loved. Communities became a second home to many of us. We saw churches come together and understand what it means to be like Jesus and to live out a life of service for others. We saw Him in the tears and smiles of a teenager whose life was changed. We will never be the same.

–Tricia Carroll, Recruiting Coordinator

