

## HOW GOD MOVED AT M-FUGE 2009

M-fuge New Mexico was an amazing trip. I thank everyone for your prayers and encouragement as you sent off our team of 41. Everyone who participated in this trip did an incredible job in giving their all to serve the Lord, to hear from His heart and to push themselves outside of their comfort zones to share God's love with others. Our teens and adults were sent daily into the city of Santa Fe. They would serve in one of 5 ministries (creative, social, games and recreation, painting, construction and yard work and children's ministry) with participants from churches all over the U.S. They would serve at nursing homes, boys and girls clubs, parks, childcare centers, and working hard meeting physical needs in the community and so much more. It was amazing to watch the adults and students open their hearts to the Lord and see what He would reveal to them over the course of a week.



The first lesson was sacrifice and selflessness as the air conditioning of one of our vans failed on route to New Mexico. Teens and adults took turns switching to the van affectionately called "Hot Stuff." I would also praise our team for working hard to encourage one another and to get to know those outside of their normal circle of friends.

We also saw that the mission trip started before we even arrived at Santa Fe. Blake Johnson, Kim Thomas and myself all spent time witnessing to an adult man named Joshua at our hotel. Josh had been through so many backgrounds of churches, (Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Christian Science, Assembly of God and Church of Christ.) He was very confused and very hungry to dialogue about spiritual things. I was able to share the gospel and help him understand that salvation was available by faith alone, rather than doing and works. Jeff Harper and Drake Van Roekel would also find a witnessing opportunity with a man named Stanley that morning.

Teamwork seemed to be the way God worked best this week. Zack Rose and Jordan Berger found success sharing the gospel as they tag teamed to share the gospel. I was thrilled to watch the creativity of the students. They worked hard to use any means necessary to share the gospel. Many found themselves challenged to be bolder and more aggressive to share the gospel. Teens like Elizabeth Olsen developed a passion for children's ministry. Megan Stufflebeem surrendered her life to say "here I am, send me" ... potentially considering joining the M-fuge staff next summer. It will be exciting to see where God uses her in the future!

God worked all week long to build our team unity. You could just watch as letters from home and letters from each other just built the team up and gave them the courage to press on in their service to the Lord. Night after night in our FFC church devotional time together we shared testimonies of what God had revealed to us and what we saw God doing in our lives on this mission trip. It was terrific to watch how the testimonies we would share would just build up courage for the other teens to try harder, to pray for those who were

discouraged or nervous, and we would watch as our prayers for one another were answered daily. It was not uncommon at all for someone to be discouraged one day, only to have prayers on their behalf answered, and they would have much better success in their witnessing, relationship building, and seed planting efforts the next day.

You could just watch the Lord touch the hearts of the participants. They would be encouraged by success in planting seeds and seeing how God could use them. Others shared the gospel for the first time. Nate Kamerick was able to lead someone to the Lord for the first time! Randy Maurer was used over and over again to lead at least 4 to the Lord. Watching Randy share his faith really inspired the students on our team! His son Nick Maurer and I worked together to witness to two boys named Ensign and Raven- both accepted Christ as Savior. Ensign had to leave the park to go to a water park, but we were able to give Raven my Bible. It was so cool to see how God used Nick to help me complete an earlier witnessing attempt with Raven and I was able to help complete his attempt to witness to Ensign. So we really needed each other! Later another group of teens asked me to help them share the gospel with another young boy named Alex. Alex also accepted Christ as Savior. We were able to give him a Bible as well. I had fun teaching both boys how to read the Bible, where to start reading and highlighting some important Bible verses.

I had some really neat encounters on the ministry sites. One lady I met at the nursing home was grieved that she lost her father when he was only 47 years old - she repeated the story over and over again to me. I felt that God helped meet this emotional need when I was able to ask a teen girl ,who was a brilliant artist, to draw a picture of a father and a little girl to give to this sweet 91 year old lady. It blessed her heart! Later on at that same nursing home, MY own story was able to be used to witness to one of the staff members at the nursing home. We had a lot in common.

I also was witnessing to a lady at another nursing home, sharing how my life was changed by the Lord when I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Another resident chimed in and said "me too, Jesus has changed my life too!" I then realized that if I asked her to share her story with the lady I was sharing with then it would be a great complement to the gospel that I was already trying to share with this lady. Better yet,... the ladies could continue to develop this conversation about God since they were friends already.

I struggled with my own comfort zone when I needed to hand feed 2 residents at an Alzheimer's wing,... they were dependant on others to do just about everything for them. My peace came from realizing that I was doing this for Jesus. Later I would sing hymns over them. Learning "Jesus Loves Me" in Spanish in Mexico came in handy - many residents spoke Spanish in New Mexico and this was a great bridge.

Speaking of Mexico,... our team had worked hard on drum line routines, drama skits and art work for the Mexico trip and we on faith took those supplies to New Mexico. God opened the door for us to perform all 3 at the Glorieta conference center. We felt that God might encourage the fellow believers who watched us perform. We are also aware that of the 650 Fuge participants, not all of them were saved, so the drama might plant a seed in their hearts. I was so proud of them as they shined performing with all of their hearts. It was a great moment for our team.

I was personally encouraged when I was chosen by the teens as the Group Leader of the Day, known as the Glad G.L.O.D. (Complete with a free "Glad GLOD" t-shirt, encouragement note and \$120 in free curriculum!) The 650 Fuge participants spent the whole day giving me high fives, shout-outs, and hugs. It meant a lot to me that our FFC team would nominate me - especially when I found myself feeling a little down that day. It was a great source of encouragement.

The theme of the week was: Faith to MOVE, and we did have many experiences in our journey that encouraged us to watch God move and work. Our Bible study throughout the week was on the life of Moses. Through it we were encouraged to 1) "let go" 2) to stand 3) to risk and finally 4) to wait on the Lord. We had quality times of worship with the contemporary Christian band, Downhere, leading us in worship.

Across the board, many teens rededicated their lives to Christ. But the most exciting news was that one of our mission trip participants, Alyx Birmingham accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior and Lord! Our whole team was greatly encouraged by that.

By weeks end, those who where disappointed by not being able to go to Mexico and even those who were initially skeptical of whether M-fuge would be a rewarding mission trip, all seemed to see God's hand in the whole process. They acknowledged God's control and had a peace that God had us exactly where He wanted us to serve. All are hopeful that this will be more than a (literally) mountain top experience. We prayed in the prayer garden created especially for the Glorietta Conference Center - dedicating our team to the Lord and our future service to Him back in Des Moines.

Thank you for all who diligently prayed for our team - your prayers were answered abundantly. This is only a snapshot of all the amazing things that God did this week and I am confident that He is not finished working and moving in our hearts and in the people that we witnessed to.

Below you will see the testimonies of our team - evidence of God's answered prayer!

THANK YOU SO MUCH and to God be the glory! ~ Howie

## Alyx Birmingham



Thought I served this week in the painting, construction and yard work ministry track, my testimony on this trip was for me finding God. My sister helped a lot in finding Him for me. She always would answer my questions whenever I had any. The night that we did the love chair in church devotion time, I knew that I wanted Ryan to be apart in me finding God so I asked her if we could talk and then later that night I asked God to be my Savior.

## Shelby Kamerick

I served in the painting, construction and yard work ministry track this year. Throughout the week by listening to the sermons I have realized I need to stop staring at the “game over” screen. I need to stop wondering about how the game WOULD have been rather than just leaving the arcade and moving on with life. I need to move on and just LET GO of my past and have a fresh start.

## Justine Dawn Leinen



God had me serve in the games and recreation ministry track this year. This week I felt like I really took God's word to heart. I listened more and stayed focused on God. In years past I haven't done this, but I wanted a change this time and I think I got it! I had an amazing fun time with all the kids at the boys and girls club and I'll miss them for forever! I made good new memories of New Mexico :)

## Jenna Janel White



I had the privilege of serving in the creative ministry track this year. This past week God has really taught me to put my trust in him. After being very sorely disappointed about the whole Mexico change, I didn't know what to expect from M-Fuge, people that had gone to Canada tried explaining it but they just ended up making it more confusing. I was NOT disappointed in New Mexico at all, by the end of the week I had faith that God knew what he was doing when our destination changed, by the end of the week I had grown so close to everyone I had met. By the end of the week I knew God had put me where I was supposed to be.

## Derek Holt



I served in the painting, construction and yard work ministry track in Santa Fe this year. Even after a disappointing start to the trip, still kind of wishing we were going to Monterrey, I learned to trust God in His decisions. I would have to say that I learned a lot this week about trusting in Christ - that was one thing that I learned especially with moving away this fall.

## Cody White



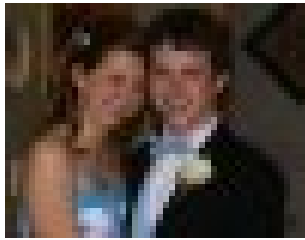
This week has had a lot of ups in my life. A sweet young lady named Alyx Birmingham has accepted Christ as her Savior. I found out that I am good with children because I act the same as them. I guess I have no problem with staying young. Last week was completely awesome {despite the horrid food}. Yeah, it started a lil shaky for me I just didn't say anything in the church group time cause that's just not my style to be a Debbie downer however you say it. I felt out of place on the first couple of days and then it came together over the course of the week. I wanted to serve in Painting Construction and Yard work (PCY), because that's my bread and butter I love to work and serve. I love to get my hands dirty. The lord put me in another track dealing with kids (not my best skill). But I felt more encouraged the second day after my sister said "you shouldn't be having a hard time just be Cody White and you're gunna have fun. My week turned around after that. I started to love the kids even though they wanted to play tag all the time.

## Matt Epp



New Mexico was the third mission trip I had traveled on. At first, it didn't live up to my expectations from the trip to Canada last year, but I decided to keep my objectives set. By the end of M-Fuge, I had dealt with most of these things. I was able to truly worship God freely and wholeheartedly; I had a great time with my friends even though the accommodations were a bit tight; and I had accepted the fact that there were going to be a ton of people at the center for different camps running concurrently. Part of M-Fuge involved being assigned to a track, a group led by one of the camp staff that completed Bible study and community ministry together. Through the social ministry track I was assigned, I was able to play bingo at a nursing home, do yard work at a retirement center, spend time talking with Alzheimer's patients, sing hymns for some senior citizens, and play with the kids at a boys and girls club. It was a great experience to pour out the love of Jesus onto several people from many generations. Another segment of the trip was whitewater rafting in Colorado. In my raft, nobody from my church had ever experienced the activity, so we had some trouble getting synchronized. At first, things were going okay, but on the second or third set of rapids, our boat almost flipped. When I had recovered from the intense spray, I could see three people from our boat in the water. I quickly pulled in the one closest to me, and another was taken in by the boat behind us, however, it took a bit longer to pull in the last swimmer. Thankfully, everyone was all right and the trip continued. This experience was a great teamwork exercise because everybody in the boat had to work together to safely navigate the raft. In Glorieta, I felt God working in me and through me. It was awesome to make new friends, get closer to other people from my youth group, and see great things be done by the Lord.

## Justin Stufflebeem



This year for me was really different. good in some ways and bad in others. I didn't quite get as emotionally attached as I normally do each year. but then again it opened me up to feel different emotions then crying.

I was in the PCY ministry track. We did bible study in the morning, then went to the work sites at about 11am. First we cut Chinese Elm out by a river bed then we organized cloths for a garage sale.

We got to buy some of the cloths from the say for the mega relay at the end of the week. I made some good friends and had an overall good time. After the sites we had some free time, supper, then went to worship. That's when I had the biggest change from most mission trips. Normally I can really get into singing and most the time it will make me cry cause of how awesome and amazing God is. The second to last night when I really started to get into worship, I started crying and (weirdly enough) felt really good but then my nose felt really REALLY runny. so I opened my eyes a little to just check and I saw blood. My nose was bleeding. Then I started to feel a really bad head ache. I taped on my sister to have her help me out and (from kneeling right in front of the stage) We snuck back to the first rode to take care of everything. After that, I couldn't really get too emotionally attached cause my nose would bleed more. But ,at the same time I could worship really hard to help get other people into it and help my sis if she needs. I still don't know if the head ache and nose bleed and all was the power of God really raining down or if I was just dehydrated. Whatever the case its kinda cool to think is was Gods power so I'm gunna go with that.

## Kathy Hamilton



I served with the games and recreation ministry track this week. God is present every day in our lives. This past week in New Mexico, I really felt His presence as we were immersed in His word and by being His hands and feet in service the entire week. Having no other distractions of our daily lives, it was wonderful to be able to focus solely on Him and feel the power of His presence. I made special, lasting connections with both teens and adults during the week. As a newcomer to FFC, it was great to worship and share with so many wonderful teens and especially the fantastic adults. The most lasting memory from the week is a verse from a song sung by the band "Down here". It is something I will try to remember every day: "Here I am, Lord send me"

## Danielle Hamilton



I served in the children's ministry track at M-fuge. This week we also went white water rafting and I fell into the rapids. Through that experience I realized what God has done for us. In the beginning we all started out in God's boat with no sin and everything was great. Then sin came into the world and consumed us, pulling us out of God's boat and into the rapids. In the rapids of sin we are tossed and thrown around. Rocks and debris come our way and there is nothing we can do to get out of there ourselves. It is very scary and dangerous. Then Jesus comes along and saves us by dying on the cross. All you have to do is reach out. He rescues you from the rapids and pulls you into his boat where once again you are safe.

## Ashley Griffin



I got to serve in the children's ministry track this year at M-fuge. This week I saw God work through people in amazing ways. I was able to see God work through Randy to lead little kids to the Lord. It was such an amazing feeling to know not only did we show them love but we could leave knowing we would see them again one day in Heaven. I was also reminded that I need to have more faith. Last year at M-Fuge I was filled with peace and had so much faith in God in whatever he was doing in my life, and I kind of forgot about that throughout the year. But on this trip I was really reminded in what God had done for me when I just put faith in Him. And the youth group really encouraged me this week, in letters and love chair and just by actions, it really made me want to come home and encourage everyone in our youth group. I loved getting to see God work in everyone in our youth group and to see God use people while We were in New Mexico, and what better way to see God's power then surrounded by beautiful mountains and a bright blue sky.

## Brandon Gable

At first I was really disappointed in not going to Mexico, but now I'm so grateful that God sent us to New Mexico. The time down there was really amazing. God had a reason for our issue with Mexico.

For the past year or so I've been heading south and not really living for God. I've basically been flipping Him off and telling him I want it to be my life. Up until this trip, actually, Wednesday night that's what was happening.

Tony and Downhere really brought me to my knees and made me realize how stupid I've been and how lost I truly was. At first I was struggling with my past mistakes and how I could even continue with all the crap in my closet. I heard this for a long time, but it made sense for the first time in my life, to leave the past in the past and use it to help share my faith.

I basically let go and am trying to live for Christ and now I know what I need to do to help out and I've never loved God more!!

It's been amazing to see God work through us as a youth group, to see someone get saved. It was amazing to know that I'll see her in Heaven. I believe with God's help, our youth group and church will be able to impact Des Moines, Iowa.

## Kim Thomas

I was really challenged by 1 Peter 2:9-12—To really see and understand that I am to declare and display the glory of God to the world. And I got to do just that at a boy's and girl's club in a government housing district in Santa Fe.

Another teen and I helped carry food to the home of two single mothers who together are trying to raise nine kids between them (one dad is in prison, the other estranged). We spent the next hour talking to them and got to share the gospel with them. They were very open to talking about spiritual things (one attends 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Church and one is Catholic but not going to church). I exchanged addresses with them so we can communicate more. They didn't pray with us but are open to more information. I'm praying for Lupe and Angelina to be saved.

Our contacts in serving around the community were so special. We were able to encourage believers, share with unbelievers and love on everyone!

God has given me such a new boldness and desire to really speak out my love for and faith in my Savior. The theme of surrender played over and over for me and the need to stop making excuses.

## Todd Pierce

I have seen my young friends step out of their regular friendships to explore new ones, teams from multiple states working hand in hand with God's leading, to bring His word to the children of Santa Fe.

I loved this week at M-Fuge, but it did feel more like a conference or camp than a mission trip, but then I was just thinking that, this is the first time I had taken a missions trip inside the U.S.

## Megan Stufflebeem

I served on the social ministry team at M-fuge this year. God has taught me amazing things on this trip. The biggest thing I learned was to be willing to give up anything for Him if he were to ask me too. Is started to learn that last year in Canada and it has taken me all year to get to the point that I am at now. Once I reached that point, God presented an opportunity to me through my track leader to serve with Fuge next summer. I am really struggling with this decision as I want to do what God wants me to do and I have no idea what that is.

"Here I am Lord send me. All of my life I make an offering. Here I am Lord send me. Somehow my story is a part of your plan. Here I am."—Downhere

## Drake VanRoekel

This trip to New Mexico was my first mission trip. I was pretty excited because I thought we were going to Mexico and I had heard some cool stories about it. So I was disappointed when I heard we were going to New Mexico instead. I had heard about Canada and it didn't sound as fun. When we got there it was pretty awesome because I figured out that I had an awesome ministry track group. I was in the children's group. We were working in an apartment complex with about 15-25 kids every day. It was about one on one with the kids which meant that we had close relationships with the kids. I got to talk with one kid named Marcos because he asked me to read the Bible to him. After that, we told him a story about Daniel and the Lion's Den. He never prayed with me, but he seemed to get the story. The rest of the week was amazing! The band, Downhere came to lead worship and they were amazing. We talked about Moses all week. I learned so much. I would do it again in a heartbeat.

## **Isaac Gardner**

At M-Fuge New Mexico this year I had a great experience. I did the Children's Ministry and had an AMAZING time. I met so many people, peers and children alike, and loved all of them.

At the boys and girls club, we played lots of games with the kids including basketball, tag, UNO, Sorry! and swinging. I gave almost every kid about a million underdogs! Well, just short, actually I counted 962,112. Anyway, I think that God helped lots of people there, both the M-Fugers and kids we ministered to. At our ministry site, 6 kids were led to Jesus and even more got closer to the prize.

This was a great trip all around! Thank God for the safe journey both ways.

## **Jacob Kucera**

So, this week I worked at an apartment boys and girls club in the children's ministry track. I was in a track group with Isaac, Ashley, Jessica, Drake and Danielle. Our Van was driven by Randy Maurer.

I had a great few days working with the little kids, especially a boy named Angelo. We pretty much just played games all weekend. I probably gave him a billion underdogs! Our track acted out a Bible story for the kids every day, and I think the kids really understood it. This week I learned a lot about the youth group and myself and I'm looking forward to the trip next year.

## **Ryan Birmingham**

I was serving in the social ministry track this year. How this trip impacted me...I wasn't as moved by the staffers and other members of my track as I was last time, but this week has definitely been eye opening. It has forced me to step out on my own and be okay with being alone with God. I learned to put Him first and I found that when you make Him a priority your prayers can be answered. I lead my sister to Christ and I stayed focused when I wanted to be elsewhere. God has shown me that I need to put no others before Him and that if I let Him, He will work wonders in my life.

## **Dylan Balmer**

I was in the PCY track this past week and one of my frustrations I had was that you didn't get many chances to have a deep one on one conversation with someone or just to talk to people outside of our track. So one thing God taught me was that I can make a difference by having a good attitude and showing a smile on your face. Also God taught me that I need to live out my faith on a more daily basis.

## Paige Harper



This week I was in the Creative group, and we went to some nursing homes. I was somewhat disappointed to be in this group, because I really wanted to work with children. I was wondering what God was doing, putting me in a group with a bunch of people I didn't know to go minister to the elderly of Santa Fe. But throughout the week, God really put my heart at peace. I learned to listen to Him and trust Him through everything. Just sitting, talking, and singing with the people there, I could tell how much they enjoyed and appreciated everything we were doing. Looking back on the week now, I'm so thankful God put me in that group. I really connected with the people in our track from Texas, Colorado, or Des Moines. I thank God for this unforgettable experience.

## Ashley McGregor

In the beginning of this trip I had no clue what God had in store for me, I had some really hard decisions before the trip but I followed where God wanted me to go. In the beginning of this trip I told God, my goal for this week was to get me out of my comfort zone, and sure enough God answered my prayer even more than I expected. There was times when I really didn't want to do what He asked me but instead I got out of my box and obeyed Him. I served in the creative ministry track all week. This week has been so awesome I now see why God wanted me there. God revealed so much to me this week, I just thank God for this trip and the changes He has made in my life.

## Randy Maurer

This trip for me was so rewarding and again life changing. I am always amazed to see how faithful God is when we are obedient to His calling on our lives. I enjoyed serving with the teens in the children's ministry track site this week at M-fuge. It was a privilege and honor to serve alongside our youth and to see our God stretch their faith, and from that, there were many decisions made for Christ.

Santa Fe will never be the same, because the lives have been changed forever. Thanks again for this opportunity.

## Zack Rose

I served on the games and recreation ministry team at M-fuge this year. My experience in New Mexico reminded me of a way that God has worked in the past. See, my plan was to stay in Ohio, maybe go to the local university, and never leave the state. But God had another plan. Instead of us going to Mexico for this past mission trip, God decided to send us to a different destination, New Mexico. We did his work there just as well as we would have if we had gone to a foreign land. He showed me that everything works out for the good when you follow him even if that is not the way you intend on going. He planted many seeds through us, and gave a select few the privilege of leading some children to the Lord which I think is amazing! I thank God for once again teaching me that camp is not about me, (HUH), but also that I planted seeds for him. it was a great experience!

## Jessica Jensen

Before I had gone on the trip, I was a little apprehensive because before, Hannah was going. After they said they weren't going to Mexico anymore, she decided not to go. It was my first mission trip and I wasn't going with anyone I knew too well. On the way there, I got to know a lot of people in the youth group so much more and I wasn't nervous anymore. Once we got there and were there for a couple of days, I loved it! I loved everything about it; all my children's ministry track members, Chase, the children, everything! When we got our group assignments, I was in the children's ministry track. I was a little scared because I wasn't with any of my friends. Then once again, God helped me through that also. I was so glad that I was in that group at the end of the week I didn't want to leave them. I was heart-broken because I knew I had to leave. I saw myself grow with God and my fellow youth and track group members. I will always remember this week and I'm so grateful to everyone who supported and prayed for me.

## Caleb Kucera

At the beginning of the week, I'll admit that I had a bad attitude. I had almost decided that no matter what I was going to be angry and unhappy, I would only focus on myself and my friends, and anything that God tried to do in me I would shut out and ignore. By the end of the week, God had not only softened my heart, I'm pretty sure he pureed it and made a delightful chilled soup out of it. (Very figuratively, I don't mean to upset any stomachs.) This week was the perfect time to get back in line, leave behind all the crazy stuff that goes on and get refocused and just chill with God. But it was an even better week to wax the floor with my chin fuzz. I was amazed by God, often breaking out in silent, self contained laughter at how "crazy" He is. He always has a plan. He can see EVERYTHING. He always knows what's best and blesses those that trust that. He's the boss and He loves reminding us of that. And I love being reminded of it. Every time I face the challenge of trusting Him with something big, especially a mission trip, he blows me away. I've decided that I am just going to expect it and not even start to doubt that He knows what's up. I was sad to go home at the end of the week because I felt like we had only seen the beginning of what God was doing. God is amazing. He is real, alive, and constantly working. To my knowledge, at least 7 kids accepted Christ as their Savior, including one of the teens from our church. All were directly influenced by members of our group. I am sure there were countless more decisions made for Christ. Whether it be coming to Christ for the first time, re-dedications, or a fire being rekindled. We saw God doing marvelous things and at the end of the week, no one could say they would have it any other way.