

VENTURE MISSION TRIP 2011

By PATRICK ENGLAND

The past two summers I've been lucky enough to get a chance to go on the mission trips to McLaughlin, South Dakota. The experience that I had during last year's mission trip was so inspiring and peaceful, that it was no surprise that I would be ecstatic to go again this year. Returning to McLaughlin and continuing to strengthen the relationships I had from the past year with not only my church group, but the children and adults of McLaughlin was unexplainable.

There **is no** way to explain the love that you see in the kids' eyes when they see their big buddy from the summer before. After countless hugs, high fives and games of tag, our group seemed to start right where we left off the year before.



Throughout the week, I got to meet many amazing new people, like 6 year old Casey, and his older brother Kyler who live and breathe Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles; if you had any question they would answer it in seconds. These boys were full of vigor and loved the life they lived. Every day they would open up a little more to me and let me in on their life.

Another unbelievable person I got to meet during the week was Don, a grown man who loved cars almost more than his wife. While my group Antelope got to chip paint at his house; he told us different stories about his past, and his grandchildren who he cared for more than anything. He and his wife were the most hospitable people I've known, they not only put up with our crazy group during the week, but also cooked us the most amazing lunch ever. I am so gracious that I got to meet these wonderful people on the trip.

A few other unforgettable people that our group rekindled flames with were; 5 year old Emmet (the cutest kid on the reservation who took a particular liking to Patrick), who was even willing to show him his pet turtles. Robert White Mountain, a remarkable man who was willing to dedicate his life to help his community of McLaughlin by creating this amazing orchard called the Medicine Wheel of Healing.

I left this mission trip with unforgettable memories and a maturity that I never thought I would gain. I am thankful for every opportunity that I am given and I'm especially thankful for Matt, who did an outstanding job recruiting and leading a group unlike any other on this mission trip. We all owe this to him and his hard work, because without him we wouldn't have been able to experience what we did. I thank God for all of Matt's work throughout the years; he lives out the true meaning of service. I pray that I will be able to go on another mission trip as amazing as the one to McLaughlin.

McLaughlin, South Dakota will always be a home of mine.