

## **AREA YOUTH RETURN FROM MISSION MINISTRY TO LAME DEER, MONTANA**

The First American Lutheran Church Youth League recently completed a week-long mission trip to Lame Deer, Montana on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Eighteen area youth and four adults participated in the trip which began on Friday, June 27, 2008. Youth participating in this year's trip were: Cory Muhowski, Shayna Friday, Nicole Tousey, Abbey Miller, Alex Exworthy, Lauren Caldie, Amber Trepanier, Lexi Woodworth, Katie Zoeller, Tarah Johnson, Casey Peterson, Marshall Bradshaw, Nathan Cox, Ross Heise, Adam Martens, Tyler Nordquist, Matt Peterson, and Casey Wusterbarth. The adult chaperones for the trip were Brad and Jane Weber and Tom and Elizabeth Olson.

The city of Lame Deer is the tribal headquarters for the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation and is located 90 miles east of Billings, Montana. The Reservation encompasses approximately 444,000 acres and has 4,470 residents. Of those approximately 2,000 live in the city of Lame Deer with 93% claiming Indian heritage.

With an average household income of \$ 19,000 (compared to the national average of \$ 42,000), an unemployment rate of approximately 55% and with approximately 47% of the population living below the poverty level the reservation is a land of unparalleled contrasts. In the city of Lame Deer, 7 out of 10 residents have no personal transportation, 25% have no telephones, there is no cellular service and 53 houses are heated by only wood or coal. An extreme is the majestic valley's, rolling hills and grasslands that surround the city where within the city there are dirt roads, broken windows and junked cars.

Once they arrived in Lame Deer, the First American youth partnered with two other youth groups from Colorado Springs, Colorado and Beloit, Wisconsin. One welcomed surprise was that they met up with the first intern pastor from our church, Randy Young who is the youth pastor for Bethel Lutheran in Colorado Springs. The groups were housed in the Lame Deer High School which normally educates 157 students.

While at the site, the mission participants had the opportunity to serve by painting homes, participating in a prayer walk, and operating a Kids Club.

The evenings were devoted to local activities. While at the ministry site, our youth had the opportunity to listen to Rick Richardson (a Cheyenne inspirational speaker), tour a buffalo jump site, attend the 40<sup>th</sup> annual Northern Chiefs Pow-Wow, view the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks in Lame Deer and travel to the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument

In all, the group traveled 3,000 miles through Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana and was able to stop at Mount Rushmore, Custer State Park, Sioux Falls Waterfall, Wall Drug, the Corn Palace and Sturgis for additional sightseeing. While on the road the group stayed in four ELCA churches located in Sioux Falls, Custer, Mitchell and Sturgis, South Dakota.

From eating a meal with the residents of Lame Deer to attending the Pow-Wow, God's presence, love, and grace have been with us wherever we have traveled. We have made many friendships, and our eyes have been opened to some of the struggles of the world. We would like to thank the

many people who have supported our ministry and offered prayers and encouragement while we have been on the road.

This year's trip was the seventh partnership that the youth of First American have had with Youthworks, Inc. Previous trips have been to McGraws, West Virginia, Custer, South Dakota, St. Louis, Missouri, Lynn, Massachusetts, and Coahoma, Mississippi and Monessen, Pennsylvania. Including this year's trip, 63 different people have participated in the First American Youth mission program.

A special presentation about the Lame Deer mission trip will be given at First American Lutheran Church on Sunday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:00 am during the regular church service.

A planning meeting for next year's 2009 mission trip will be held on Sunday, August 24th at 10:00 am in the Youth Room at First American Lutheran Church, 511 Madison Street, Oconto. Any youth in grades 9-12 who want to serve through relational and work-oriented service may participate in the mission program. Spaces for the 2009 mission trip will be limited. For additional information about next year's mission trip, please call Brad Weber (Youth Director) at 920-834-2479.

YOUTH UNLOADING SUPPLIES AT KIDS CLUB SITE



Randy Young, Casey Wusterbarth, Matt Peterson, Ross Heise, Adam Martens, Tyler Nordquist

YOUTH AT KIDS CLUB



Cory Muhowski and Shayna Friday at Kids club

PAINTING HOUSE OF TIM-BOB IN LAME DEER  
BEFORE



Adam Martens, Tom Olson, Cory Muhowski, Katie Zoeller, Casey Wusterbarth

AFTER



PAINING SAWDUST AND RUBBER TURTLES HOUSE



Randy Young, Ross Heise, Shayna Friday and Marshall Bradshaw

FIRST AMERICAN YOUTH AT LAME DEER

