

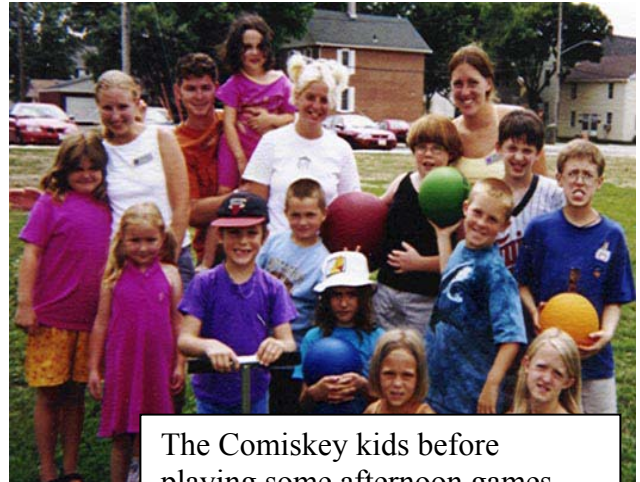
Nick Stumpf- AmeriCorps Summer 2002

Growing in the Garden--Fish Iowa

I participated in Growing in the Garden, Fish Iowa, as well as Nature and Environment instructions at Fulton and Comiskey playgrounds. I led the children in activities involving nature. I did not expect the service to be so diversified. I thought that I would do one thing from eight to five, but in reality, some days went from nine to nine, and I would visit four or five different sites in the day.



We actually caught some big fish with the Y kids.



The Comiskey kids before playing some afternoon games.



This is the trolley trip from the playgrounds to Heritage Pond. The kids really enjoyed getting off the playground to do other activities.

In the first couple of weeks, I wanted the summer to be over, already. I had re-occurring thoughts that I could not do what I was expected to do this summer. Then, something changed. Instead of wanting the summer to be over, I did not want it to end. I had a cognitive transformation. I wanted the summer to end because I had not connected with the children, but now, if the summer ends, I would lose my new friends. At first I was haunted by the notion that I needed to say something profound in order to influence the children. Frustration grew from my inability to find the right words. The frustrations subsided when I realized it was not the words, but just being with the children was the key. In being there with the children, they have given me an experience that I would never take back or change in any way. I thank them for all that they have given me.