



NO ONE STANDS ALONE

BY JANET THOMAS
Church Magazines

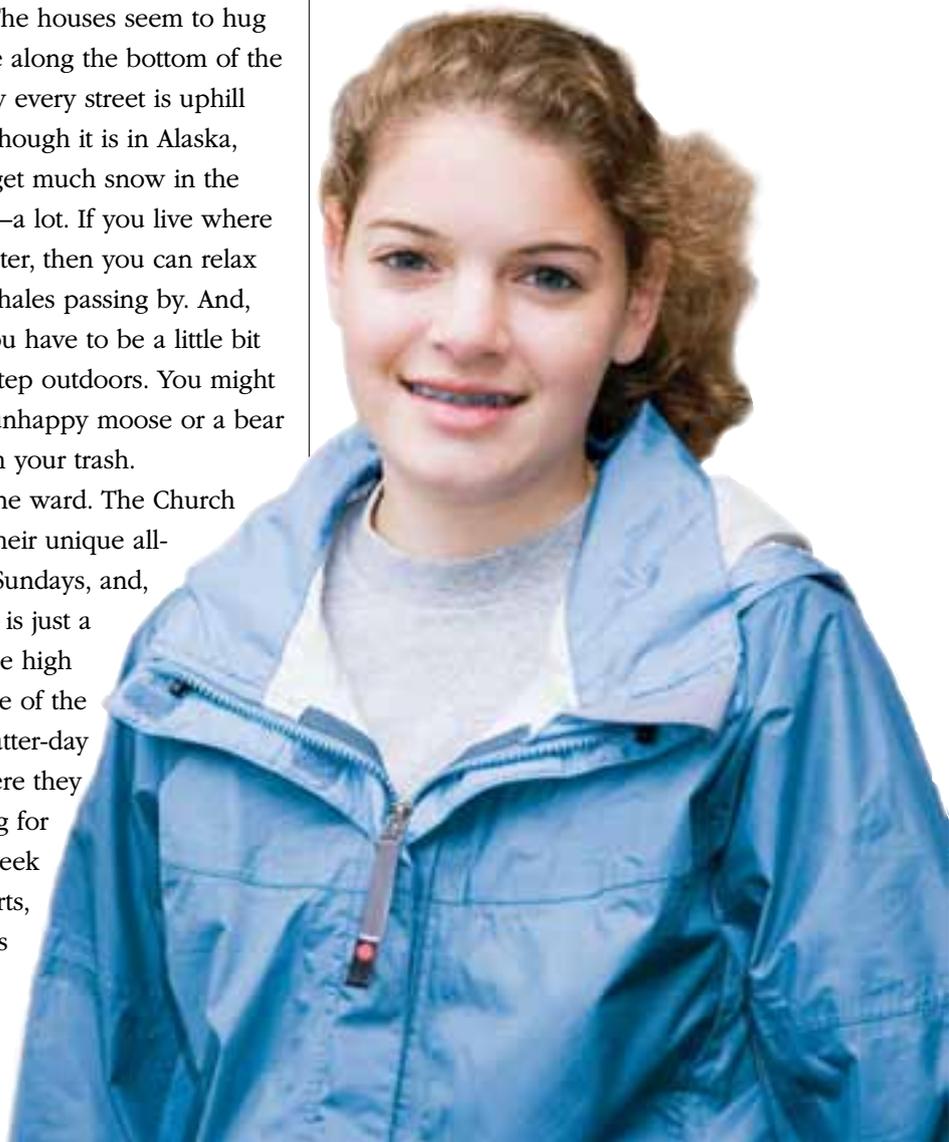


Ketchikan, Alaska, is one of the larger towns in Alaska, but it would be a rather small town in most other states. The houses seem to hug the ocean shoreline along the bottom of the mountains. Virtually every street is uphill or downhill. Even though it is in Alaska, Ketchikan doesn't get much snow in the winter, but it rains—a lot. If you live where you can see the water, then you can relax while you watch whales passing by. And, in the mornings, you have to be a little bit careful when you step outdoors. You might happen across an unhappy moose or a bear rummaging through your trash.

Ketchikan has one ward. The Church members meet in their unique all-wood building on Sundays, and, because the chapel is just a block or so from the high school, it is also one of the favorite spots for Latter-day Saint teens. It's where they head every morning for seminary, once a week for Mutual and sports, maybe on Saturdays for service projects,

and helping out with other ward activities.

And it is where they have learned the meaning of fasting.





A Great Idea

Last year, just before school started, the priests of the Ketchikan Ward were having a lesson on fasting. They started discussing how much easier it was for them to fast with a purpose instead of feeling like they were just starving. Russell Youngberg said, “We realized that school was about to

start and a fast Sunday was coming up, so we sort of put the two together. The entire ward youth would fast for each other to be able to resist temptations and have a good school year.”

Forrest Allred remembers how they came up with the idea. “We were talking about how to make the youth stronger and more righteous. We were confident that fasting would work.”

The bishop also thought it was a great idea. He invited the Young Women to join in. Amanda Youngberg said, “The bishopric came into the Young Women classes and



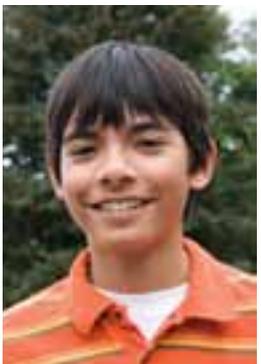
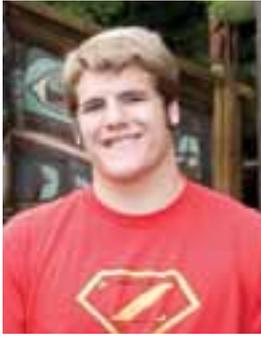
asked if we wanted to participate in the fast. We all did it together.”

They planned for the first weekend of September. They started their fast individually on Saturday afternoon. For some, having a distinct reason helped. Kaitlyn Skinner said, “Our parents could join us in our fast, but since the youth were fasting together, it was easier for me.”

For others, fasting was not easy because of where they were. Russell Johnston was playing a football game in Anchorage. “For me it was kind of awkward. We got done with our game, and I started fasting. Since we were out of town, I had to go to restaurants with my buddies and watch them eat . . .”



Far left and above: Pretending to be a totem; at a park called Totem Bight. Left: Jenny Youngberg. Right (top and bottom): Perla Busch; Adam and Sarah Fitzgerald. Far right (top to bottom): Tyler Mecham, Kelli-Anne Johnston, Phillip Johnston, Daniel Peterson, and Cortney Kiffer.



Left (top to bottom): *Forrest Allred, Emeline Hensley, Russell Youngberg, Amanda Youngberg, and Xavier Jones.* Right (top and bottom): *Perla and Kelli-Anne; Adam.* Far right: *The ward teens and Ryan Gray.*

He pauses and takes a breath, “. . . and listen to them hassle me about fasting. On the plane home, I was still fasting. They kept asking me, ‘Why do you have all those rules?’ ‘You can do what you want.’ ‘Why are you doing this?’ Sometimes it’s hard to explain why,

but most of the time I knew what to say to them. In the end, my friends were saying to those who were harassing me, ‘Be quiet, at least he follows his religion.’ They stood up for me in the end.”

The next day, fast Sunday, all the youth met after fast and testimony meeting in the seminary room. Adam Fitzgerald, one of the priests who talked about the original idea, described what happened. “I remember feeling the Spirit really strong. We all knelt, which was hard to do because the room was very full. The bishop gave the prayer for us. I remember him talking about us having a good year and that we would become bonded to one another and resist temptations throughout the year and continue our growth and development. Personally, as he was saying those things, I knew that it was going to be that way.”

Why Fast?

Learning the purpose of fasting starts with understanding its power. Perla Busch started fasting when she was about 10. She said, “My friends were asking me why I was doing this.



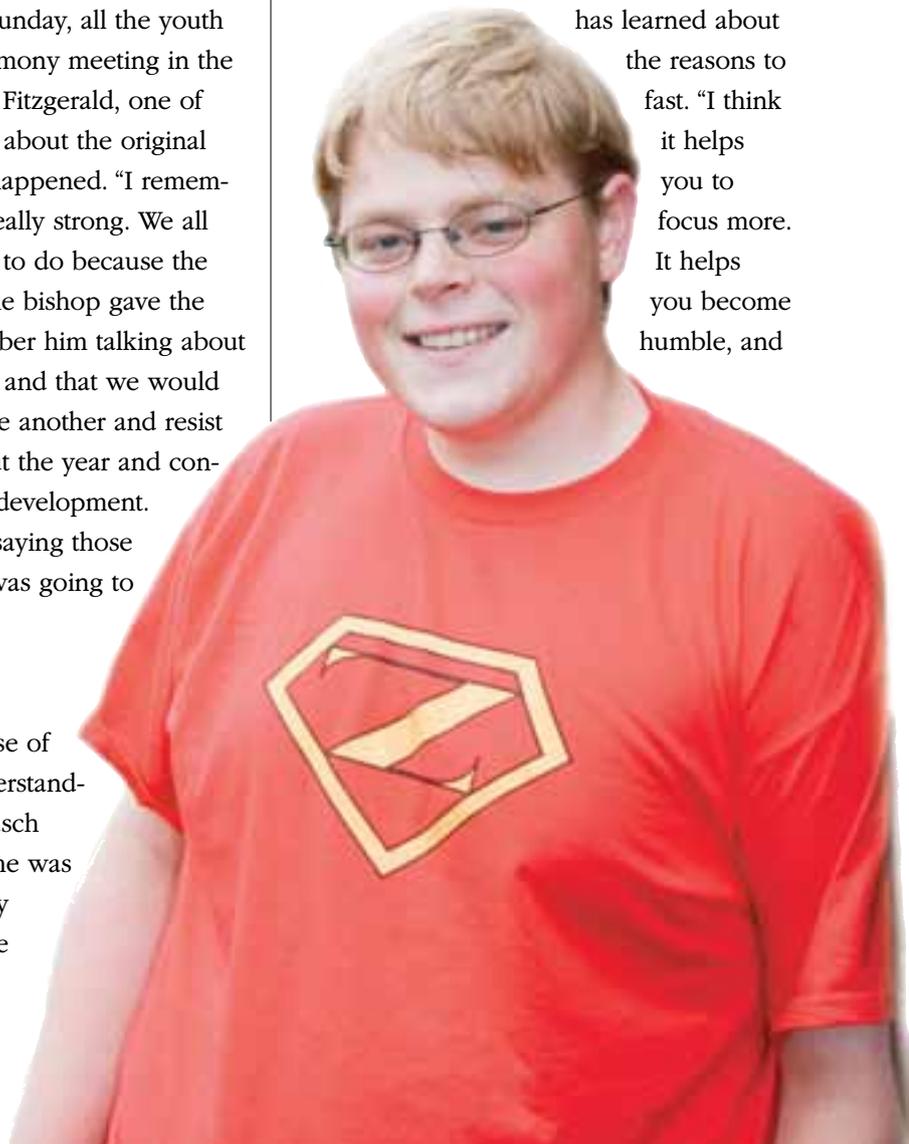
I told them I feel like I needed to. I’m always having to explain why I choose to do something different.”

A relatively new member of the ward, Malia Dyakanoff, says, “Fasting is still hard for me, but when I have a reason to fast, then it’s easier.”

Sarah Fitzgerald, who has just entered Beehives, said, “The first time I ever tried fasting was a couple of days after my baptism. It’s not easy, but it’s worth it.”

Sarah’s brother Adam explains what he has learned about

the reasons to fast. “I think it helps you to focus more. It helps you become humble, and





it's a symbol of how devoted you are to what you're doing. You know that Heavenly Father recognizes you and blesses you in your pursuits."

How Are Things at School?

Ryan Gray was on the student council at Ketchikan High School and noticed that the LDS students were more connected after their fast. "In this school, we're small in number. We all have our own friends, but we're all friends at the ward. We've got strength. Fasting for each other was a good way to start the year."

Being in a small town, there aren't a lot of things for young people to do. The LDS teens are blessed because they have Mutual, firesides, family home evenings, temple trips, and in the summer there are youth conferences and camps.

Perla says, "Teens who aren't members get into smoking, drugs, and alcohol. They don't have much else to do. But we find things to do."

Even traveling to stake events is something to look forward to. Jenny Youngberg asks, "Do you know what we have to do to get to stake events like youth conference and girls' camp?"

Since the only way in or out of Ketchikan is by plane or boat, Cortney Kiffer is quick to explain, "We have to take

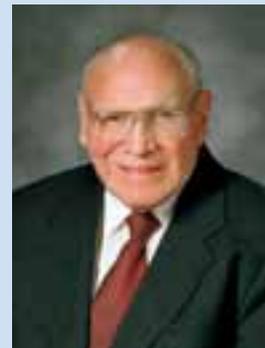


the ferry to Juneau. We get to spend all day and night with our friends and ward leaders on the ferry. It's the best. When we travel for sports in high school, then we see kids we met at youth conference. It's really fun to see them."

Jenny adds, "Having to travel is not a bad thing. It's awesome. We know the kids in the stake as well as we know kids in our own ward."

This unity, these friendships, these positive choices are the very things the teens were fasting for.

Russell says, "I think our fast made a difference, at least it has to me. It seems whenever any member sees another member at school, we stop and talk on the way to class. It feels like there is a stronger bond in the youth group. As for the fast, my stomach did the same stuff as always when I fast, but we all had a purpose for fasting, and that made it a lot different." **NE**



"Fasting and prayer can help develop within us courage and confidence. It can strengthen our character and build self-restraint and discipline. Often when we fast, our righteous prayers and petitions have greater power. . . . Each time we fast, we gain a little more control over our worldly appetites and passions."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Ensign, May 2001, 73.

