



National Benevolent Association

**XPLOR**  
FAITH, JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY

## **What I've Learned as an NBA XPLOR Resident and Why You Should Apply to Join**

Adrian Griffin, 2019-20 NBA XPLOR Resident in Bloomington, IN

*Note: This was written as the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning. Adrian did not write this with the context that the XPLOR program would be changing to cope with the pandemic.*



I'm sitting here at my computer at 7 a.m., just over a month before my XPLOR Residency ends, and I want to talk about my experience in the program and how I feel its impacted me and my intended career path.

When I arrived at the First Christian Church in Bloomington, Indiana, I wasn't sure what to expect. We'd just finished Laboratory, a rather intensive training course, and had also returned from a long car ride from Kansas City. Every resident was exhausted, mentally, emotionally and, to a lesser extent, physically. We grabbed our things and moved inside into the lobby. I met a stranger there, a friendly older woman with a kind smile who asked if I was lost. She introduced herself as Judith, and when I told her my name a big smile spread across her face and she scooped me up into a big hug. She told us she was our worksite liaison, and introduced us to Chuck, another member of the Bloomington team and the host of many a fun night watching movies and eating pizza. We had a party that night with all the members of the host team, and we got to know them all individually.

In addition to the night we arrived, we spent a week going out on the town, getting to know the community we'd be working in and the people in the church. We went to comedy shows, went on a scavenger hunt with the youth group, attended a small antifascist political rally, and even attended a pride festival held in the middle of August. Towards the end of that week, we got a first look at our internship sites, and learned about what the aims of these nonprofits we'd be working for during the next ten months. We got a tour of a food bank, a homeless shelter, and a Habitat for Humanity ReStore, a fundraising arm of the organization Habitat for Humanity, which was my work site.

The Habitat for Humanity ReStore is a hardware and furniture store, almost the entire stock of which is donated by people in the community. They sell these items at a low price and use the money to help build houses.

My job began relatively simply: find a place where a need wasn't being filled and fill it. Whether that was working as a cashier, processing donations and moving them out to the sales floor, going out on the truck and picking up people's donations which couldn't be brought to us, to even just scrubbing toilets, I went where I was needed, and as a result I found myself becoming very familiar with how the store runs, more so than I had with just about any job. I learned how all of these disparate elements of retail fit together, from the hard labor of transport to the data entry. I also learned how Habitat for Humanity works, including the ins and outs of 'sweat equity,' and the goals of the organization. I was able to sit down with various leaders in the local branch and talk to them about their responsibilities within the organization and the kinds of skills it takes to be a leader in the nonprofit/construction field.

I even learned a bit about eBay, an online e-commerce store, and how it works. It was never an easy job, but I always had people that were willing to help me out when I asked for it.

My experience working with the First Christian Church was varied as well. Every day was something different, from making sandwiches for homeless people, to singing in the choir, even hosting a game night, the responsibilities at the church stretched my skills like no other job, and caused me to think on my feet and do things I had never done before. The church community was there to support me as well, advising me on things and helping me to be better. I learned to live in community with my fellow residents, communicating with people in a way I wasn't used to, and ultimately coming together in a community of Christ. If nothing else, I can confidently say that I am now a much better roommate than I was before, taking more initiative with household responsibilities and being more consistent in following through.

Why should you join XPLO? You should join XPLO if you're looking for a new direction in life, if you want to see the world from a perspective you never could've even considered before, if your heart is open to joining a family and becoming closer with them in a few short months than you ever thought possible. Basically, you should join XPLO if you're looking for change.

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***NBA XPLO is a 10-month service residency opportunity for young adults ages 21-30, with the purpose of empowering young adults to discern and develop a "heart for care" as they live together in simple community, engage in direct service and justice work, engage in leadership development, and discern their vocational calls to honor the various communities they are called to serve. **Learn more and apply at [nbacares.org/xplor](http://nbacares.org/xplor).*****