

Where Are They Now?

Kim Guy, 2014-16 NBA XPLOR Resident in Hiram-Mantua, OH and St. Louis, MO



In 2014, the National Benevolent Association (NBA) launched the NBA XPLOR Residency, a 10-month internship program for young adults. Centered upon spiritual and vocational discernment, the Residency offers 21- to 30-year-olds time and space to live in simple

community and address social injustice. Residents serve with host congregations and community engagement sites, developing their leadership skills as Disciples.

Now in its fourth year, NBA XPLOR alumni are dedicating themselves to systemic justice work, as well as direct care and action, across the life of the church. We look forward to seeing where the call takes them!

In this story, XPLOR alum Kim Guy shares how her experience in the XPLOR Residency led her to doing another year in the program.

1. When was your NBA XPLOR Residency?

From 2014-15 and 2015-16.

2. Where did you serve?

For my first year (2014-15), my host site was Hiram-Mantua, my host congregation was Hiram Christian Church, and my community engagement site was Hiram College Office of Civic Engagement.

For my second year (2015-16), my host site was St. Louis, my host congregation was Union Avenue Christian Church, and my community engagement site was Neighborhood Houses.

3. What experiences led you to decide to do another year of NBA XPLOR?

There were a lot of thoughts and experiences that led me to do a second year. I felt like I hadn't gotten everything I needed to get out of the program. I experienced so much love from my host congregation and the other congregations, that I really wanted to stay in Hiram-Mantua for a second year. Through my community engagement site, I was able to help out at a local preschool in Hiram, which enabled me to see myself as a teacher. In the end of my first year, I was still asking the question, "Do I pursue ministry, or do I pursue early childhood education?" I knew that with a second year at a community engagement site that worked with children, I would be able to answer that question. My second year in St. Louis did help me realize teaching is what I want to pursue.

4. How did the two Residencies differ from one another? How were they similar?

Now that I think about it they were totally different experiences:

2014-15 was the first year of the program. None of us, even NBA staff, knew what to expect. The first host site was new for me since I had never been to Northeast Ohio before. When I was in Hiram-Mantua, I had to rely on my housemates for transportation to the grocery store or to attend events. (My first house did not share grocery expenses nor do weekly house meetings, although we met with our spiritual companion on Friday mornings.) But even with a rural setting, I was able to walk to my community engagement site. Unfortunately, I wasn't passionate about the focus area of my internship.

The second host site was more familiar, since I had visited St. Louis several times before. When I was there, I was able to use public transportation to get anywhere I needed to. My second house shared grocery expenses and we had a weekly house meeting, as well as spiritual companion time on Monday evenings. And I was finally passionate about my community engagement site!

5. What lessons did you learn, if any, during your first year, that you applied to your second year?

I learned the importance of a house covenant and of the positive impact that sharing groceries and having weekly house meetings has on building your intentional community. I learned it's OK to have different experiences than your housemates.

6. How did your faith develop before, during, and after your time with XPLOR?

Before XPLOR, I put my faith beliefs and my social justice beliefs into two different boxes. XPLOR helped me realize that our faith calls us to pursue and to stand up for social justice. I realized that you will hear God's still voice in the ordinary times, the exciting times, and the quiet times. You just need to learn how to listen and be open to listening.

7. How did your approach to addressing social injustice develop before, during, and after your time with XPLOR?

I had never gone to a social justice walk before XPLOR. During XPLOR, not only did I participate in walks, but I went to non-violent protests and vigils. I also experienced a prayer vigil for a black teen that was shot in St. Louis due to police brutality. After XPLOR, I made sure to vote even in local and state elections.

8. How did the XPLOR Residencies, if at all, lead you to where you are in your life now?

Without the XPLOR Program I would not be living in the Hiram-Mantua area. Even though I am not working in Early Childhood Education now, I am taking the steps that I need to in order to get into Early Childhood Education. I hope to work in Early Childhood Education soon.

9. Do you have any advice for current and future Residents? If so, please share.

Be present. Be honest. Communicate with your housemates. Be willing to try anything and everything. Get out of your comfort zone. Build a community budget. Commit to having weekly house meetings. Try local cuisine. Find a church member to have coffee with. Show up. It's OK to have your own memories.

NBA XPLOR 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.**