



National Benevolent Association

XPLOR

FAITH, JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY

Getting Out of My Comfort Zone

Lauren Frato, 2015-16 NBA XPLOR Resident in St. Louis, MO



Getting out of my comfort zone and being confident in myself has never come easy; it's something I have had to consistently work on. I didn't realize the importance of getting out of my comfort zone until I started NBA XPLOR. I heard my spiritual companion, Britani, once say that "we are called to get out of our comfort zone." I couldn't agree more with that statement; I think God has called us to get out of our comfort zone and reach the world for Him. I don't think God intended for us to sit on our couches and wait for someone else to do the work He has called us to do.

I was that person, who would just let someone else do the work, but then one day, I realized I was tired of that. I was tired of seeing this world in pain and knowing I could do something to help change it. That's when XPLOR came walking into my life. I am so grateful for the opportunities I have had being in NBA XPLOR, and the challenges it has come with have made me a stronger and better person.

As an NBA XPLOR Resident, I have been given the opportunity to serve in many different ways. My job site is at an organization called Neighborhood Houses, which has many different programs around the St. Louis area. They provide before- and after-school services to 16 different public schools in the area. I work at Mann Elementary, where I am an after-school program assistant.

A typical afternoon usually involves the staff getting the students from their classrooms and bringing them down to the cafeteria to do homework. That goes from 3:30-4:00 p.m. Then at 4:00 p.m., we serve the students dinner, which I am responsible for; the food is all prepacked, and I stick it on trays and pop it in the oven. After dinner, we split into different groups and do our curriculum for the day. We focus on four different curriculums weekly: Kidzlit, Kidzmath, Fab5, and Conscious Discipline. I have also had the opportunity to volunteer at a daycare center; I am there Monday through Wednesday, in between my morning and afternoon shifts at my school.

Another program that Neighborhood Houses does is called Girls Night Out, every Wednesday night from 6:00-8:30 p.m. I have the wonderful opportunity to help out with it every week. Girls Night Out is a program designed to support teen moms. These girls are able to learn skills to help them in the future, while also having a time to socialize with other teen moms. These are all just small programs, that I have been able to be a part of, to make an impact in the lives of others.

I have never been a person who could just get up in front of a crowd and talk, but in the last five months, I have been Liturgist, done Children's Moment, and have said a couple of prayers at the Communion Table. I also had the confidence to get up in front of my home church, to tell them what I have experienced in NBA XPLOR.

These accomplishments may not seem like a big deal to most people, but for me, they're a huge deal, considering where I was five months ago. Don't let fear take control of the difference you can make in people's lives. I have always let fear get in the way of things that I wanted to do, but in January of last year, I told myself, no more, and I applied for XPLOR. It has been the best decision I ever made. Get out of your comfort zone, and you could make an impact for this world.

*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.***