

## Blooming Where You're Planted

Sarah Smith, 2016-17 NBA XPLOR Resident in Hiram-Mantua, OH



Growing up in the mountains of West Virginia, I am no stranger to four-season weather. Watching my surroundings change from season to season has always been a favorite activity of mine, whether that is a damp spring changing to a sweltering summer, or a crisp fall to a cold and blustery winter. One of my favorite parts of being stationed in the Hiram-Mantua area as an NBA XPLOR Resident is not missing out on this marker of the passage of time.

Between Pumpkin Spice everything being available in stores, a breeze to counteract the lingering summer heat, and the smells of cinnamon and campfires abounding, I have to admit that autumn is probably my favorite season. I would also have to admit that fall can be a very trying time for me. In the beauty of the changing, colorful leaves and the earlier sunsets, I can't help but think about the cold dormancy of the winter months creeping around the corner. In just a few weeks, we will be bundled up with only the memory of these beautiful colors and a longing for even a small sight of green.

In my poking around on the internet to find materials for our weekly Sabbath meetings and daily devotional, I found a phrase that really molded my thinking and resonated with my time so far in XPLOR. While I can't remember the exact phrase or source, it was essentially this: If you do not expect the flower to bloom all year long, if it is okay for the plants to lie dormant and gather strength to bloom in the spring, why are you putting that pressure on yourself?

To me this was a radical thought. Letting myself have a break? Taking away the pressure of constantly being the best version of myself for others and actually focusing on me? I would have never thought about that before joining this program. I am one of many who are coming to this program in search of direction. In the three months we have been placed away from home, I have realized that the direction I was headed might not have been the way I actually wanted. Going through this fall, I have been asking questions about my future that lead to more questions than answers. But, what I am noticing going into this winter is that it isn't a time of dormancy, and certainly not a time of complacency.

NBA XPLOR has laid down the framework for personal success. I am at a job where I learn and teach new things every day, and I am surrounded by a community that is extremely active and concerned about planning for my future. I live in a house with three others who are also building and breaking and growing and creating, and I couldn't imagine going through this journey without each of their insight. So yes, the fall has been full of changes and ups and downs, as expected. But the winter will be a time of joyful preparation and taking small and large steps towards a more solid future. When spring comes, I know that I will be ready to bloom where I've been planted.



---

**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](http://nbacares.org/xplor).**