



National Benevolent Association

XPLOR
FAITH, JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY

A Bittersweet End

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In a couple weeks, I will have to begin to say good-bye to a place I have called home for the last 10 months. Saying good-bye to my house will be easy, but saying good-bye to my support system, my family that I have built here, will not be easy.



The people here have been such a blessing on my life and have taught me so much. First off, if it weren't for my housemates, I wouldn't have made it through this experience. Anna, you taught me how to enjoy life and not be so serious all the time. Cris, you taught me to appreciate others' opinions and really learn from them. You both made this experience so enriching for me.

To my spiritual companion, Laura Mahn, meeting with you was like seeing the first ray of sunshine on a rainy day. You always know how to make me cry just when I need it. And to everyone at First Christian Church in Davenport, especially our Thursday night bible study group, and the kids who never fail to give me that much-needed run-and-almost-knock-me-down hug every Sunday morning—you have all had such an impact on my life, I cannot begin to describe it. Working with each other to challenge us to be better members of society and Christians—you have taught me so much in the last 10 months with the NBA XPLOR program.

Working for Braking Traffik has taught me so much, and I will be sad to leave. My boss, Cathy O'Keefe, has been such an amazing boss and mentor, challenging me to step outside my comfort zone but standing by me and encouraging me with every step. She has provided me with guidance and courage to take risks because that is how I will begin to find myself. Seeing her passion and knowledge of her work each and every day has inspired me to find that same love for my future job. The amazing work that I have done with Braking Traffik will be hard to leave, but I know they have a big and bright future ahead of them. Being part of such an amazing and influential organization has been a blessing on my life. Human trafficking will always be somehow a part of my life because of the great work of Braking Traffik.

But I must continue on my journey as this year comes to a bittersweet end. I cannot help but get excited, as I am now finally sure of my next adventure. After many prayers and much consideration, I have decided that I will be attending Lynchburg College in the fall of 2016 to study criminology!

God has provided me with so many great opportunities, and I know he will guide me in the best direction. As I start to reflect on the past nine months of XPLOR and begin to see the change that has happened in my life, I cannot image living with blinders on anymore. I now see and know about so many different justice issues that I cannot ignore any longer. I feel I need to stand up and DO SOMETHING. I cannot just sit in my little box any longer. I must get out and begin to fight for justice because when there is no justice, there is no peace.

*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 at nbacares.org/xplor.***