

Holiday Greetings from the Spokane House!

NBA XPLOR 2018-19 - Spokane, Washington



Holiday Greetings to all Friends of XPLOR!

Rachel, Emily, Colby, and I (Nathaniel) are hunkering down for the festive season as the weather turns and snow begins to fall. We're finding our rhythms at work, making connections at church, and exploring the beautiful river city of Spokane. Some of us are going away for break, and some have family coming to visit us. It's always an adventure in the XPLOR program, and our shared meals

together are often a time to unwind, vent about the debilitating situation of the poor and disenfranchised, and laugh at internet jokes.

Here's a bit about our work placements and daily lives:

At Northwest Fair Housing, Emily's learning the ins and outs of housing discrimination and the legal landscape around it. She's met inspiring coworkers who challenge her to grow into her best self, and she makes calls to people with all kinds of backgrounds, heartened when she's able to help, and creative and resourceful when she has to refer folks to someone else.

Rachel is establishing their place at the YWCA as a leader on race and gender issues, learning the history and culture of organizations like the Y, and connecting with local advocacy groups and communities. They assist with organizing events and with handling social media content, helping to craft a socially conscious professional platform externally, as well as a strong foundation of social justice and community internally.

Colby works afternoons and evenings at Family Promise, and always has stories to tell when he comes home. Working one-on-one with families, Colby's learning the many and varied ways that people end up in need of shelter, and the equally creative ways we have at hand to help people succeed and get back on their feet. He's determined to take to heart the techniques, institutional structure, and commitment to values Family Promise has, and to start his own chapter back in Missouri.

At Transitions, I (Nathaniel) bounce between the kitchen, cafe, and day shelter, driving the hybrid to make deliveries, carpooling folks to Hope House (a local night shelter), and getting to know all the staff and participants. From this vantage point I'm able to see the connections between Transitions'

many programs, and am working to bring together folks at the nonprofit with my local church and other neighborhood organizations.

Early November was particularly intense, as we watched the midterms with bitten nails, just as anxious as the rest of the country about the outcomes. It was truly a momentous season: voter turnout as compared with 2014 midterms in some places exceeded 400% to 700% percent. While our current political climate is extremely partisan and polarized, our house focused on the positives, and took time to celebrate the inauguration of two First Nations women to Congress, two Muslim women to Congress, multiple out and proud LGBT congresspeople, and the wonderfully inspiring runs of important figures such as Beto O'Rourke and Stacey Abrams.

At home, we rotate cooking and cleaning duties, and share our favorite music, videos, games, and stories. It's anything from old Disney classics while we're baking cookies, to Ethiopian pop and acoustic West African in the living room, to dance ballads and A Tribe Called Red when we're around the table. Our church families shower us with baked goods, fresh produce, and holiday decorations, and keep our calendars full with extra events and lunch dates. We're slowly gathering a collection of books that has quickly exceeded our shelfspace, and we keep our cupboards stocked with spices, breads, and Bubly.

It's only been a couple months so far, but already we're thinking about the future. Whether it's looking into accounting, taking a nonprofit model back to our home state, finding a balance between making a living and doing justice, or getting involved in local community organizing, I think I can speak for all of us when I say the vocational aspect of the XPLOR program is a vibrant undercurrent in our daily lives.

We're so grateful for all the support that makes this program possible and worthwhile. It truly takes a village. We're especially indebted to our spiritual companion Greg Skinner, who meets with us weekly and helps guide us into a deeper understanding of ourselves and the Spirit who leads us. Edie Rice-Sauer has also been instrumental in orchestrating our positions and work placements, and has shown us generous personal kindness and enthusiasm. And of course none of this would be possible without Debbie Jennison's valuable logistical and relational work to make this program viable in Spokane. We're also thankful for the teams who prepared our house, and for those who have welcomed us into their homes and hearts.

With lots of love and holiday cheer,

~ The Spokane House ~

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.**