



Welcoming the 2018-19 NBA XPLOR Residents!

*Now in its fifth year, 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.***

Dallas, TX

Erin Gresham (Dallas)



Erin Gresham is from the small town of Mackinaw, IL, and is a member of Mackinaw Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Erin has volunteered for many social service organizations and mission trips through her church. She recently graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Human Development and Family Sciences from Illinois State University and plans to return to pursue her master’s degree in Social Work. Erin has worked with an agency advocating for victims of domestic violence and serving on that agency’s hotline. She is dedicated to helping and listening to others in need. She loves to dance, sing, paint, and take photos in her free time. She is excited to live in a new city and explore the community. Although she’s a little nervous about being so far from home and family, she understands this is a wonderful way to grow. She describes herself as a respectful woman who is generous and loving to many.

Jemima Suwa (Dallas)



Jemima Suwa just completed a graduate degree in Professional Media and Media Management at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. She has an undergraduate degree in Communication from Wesleyan College in Macon, GA. Jemima was born and raised in Nigeria. She has been involved in international students’ ministries, youth ministry, and social justice work with nonprofit organizations in North Carolina and Arkansas. She completed a year-long internship (2013-14) with QC Family Tree in West Charlotte, NC, an NBA Incubate Partner. Although she is far away from her biological family, she is grateful for the new family and friends God keeps bringing into her life. Some things she loves to do: dance, watch TV, journal, read, travel, and shoot and edit videos. In NBA XPLOR, she hopes to find the connection and future for two of her deepest passions: media and ministry.

Neo Uesi (Dallas)

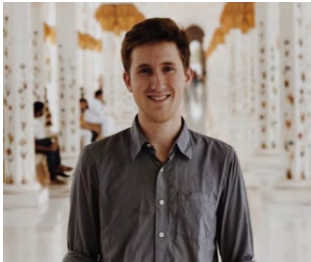


Neo Uesi is from Greater Salt Lake City, UT, but her roots are from the Pacific Island nation of Tonga. She is part of both the First Tongan Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ) and Granger Community Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ) in West Valley City, UT. She is part of her church’s young Millennials worship group, and a few years back she started their mime ministry called “Soldiers of Christ.” Neo loves learning history and has a passion for traditional Tongan dancing. She is also part of their Hesed (Loving Kindness) special needs ministry. Joining the Christian Church has been a huge stepping stone for her. She is finding her voice beyond being a pastor’s daughter and living in the shadow of older siblings. Neo currently works as an Outpatient Service Specialist at the University of Utah Healthcare Clinic and loves every minute of it!

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Hiram-Mantua, OH

Isaac Ackerman (*Hiram-Mantua*)



Isaac Ackerman loves learning and listening to people's stories. He grew up in Morton, IL, and his father is responsible for the growth and harvest of the majority of the United States' pumpkins. He attended Disciples-affiliated Eureka College in Eureka, IL, where he was a Ronald W. Reagan Leadership Fellow, and graduated with a double major in Biology and Chemistry and a minor in Spanish. In college, he spent several weeks one summer working in a rural hospital in Mungeli, India. After graduation, Isaac moved to South Korea to teach English for more than a year. His home church is First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), in Creve Coeur, IL, where he often plays viola, piano, and guitar. Why did Isaac decide to apply for NBA XPLORES? "I want to surround myself with people who are seeking justice, living in humility, and loving their community."

Valeria Bejar (*Hiram-Mantua*)



Valeria Bejar is a 22-year-old with a tendency to stand out from the crowd. In high school, she enjoyed performing in dance all four years and participated in step team, placing second in an Eastern Valley competition in Arizona. She is a member of *Iglesia Alas de Salvacion* (Wings of Salvation), a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation in Chandler, AZ. There, she is a part of her church's worship team, and she enjoys every service worshipping the King of Kings. After high school, she worked for more than a year for Amazon Fulfillment and currently works at an auto insurance office. She describes herself as someone who never lacks a smile or the intention of making others happy. In her free time, she enjoys a good breeze and a blank canvas accompanied by her brushes and acrylic paint.

Katherine Dumas (*Hiram-Mantua*)



Katherine Dumas comes from the small town of Shelby, MS, where she was very active in New Bethel A.M.E. Church. In May 2018, she graduated from Disciples-affiliated Jarvis Christian College in Jarvis, TX, an Historically Black College, with honors, majoring in Mathematics and minoring in Religion. Katherine learned about NBA XPLORES from a senior classmate at Jarvis, who is also entering the Residency this fall. She believes XPLORES is all about bringing people into a safe environment, showing compassion and care to those who are hurting mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. She sees herself as a quick learner and loves working with people to resolve problems and issues. Katherine loves to do make-up and hair, and to cook for others.

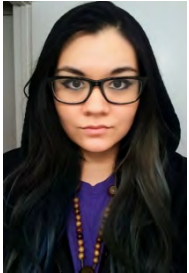
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Spokane, WA

Rachel Bechtol (*Spokane*)



Rachel Bechtol is a California native and First Nation-Pomo, who grew up migrating around congregations before eventually settling down to help start Heartbeat Organic Church, in the Sacramento area, which recently affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). During their downtime, Rachel likes to write stories, play video games, sing, or hit the gym. They work full-time but are also slowly working their way through a few different degree programs. Their biggest dream is to one day write an original story that gains a cult following online and is then adapted to screen by either Netflix or Hulu. Rachel eats a paleo diet as much as possible. NBA XPLOR attracted them because it is an empowering opportunity to be God's hand and feet. Rachel says that they are intense, passionate, and ready to rant about injustices at a moment's notice.

Nathaniel Nelson (*Spokane*)



Nathaniel is a writer, artist, and activist from Los Angeles, CA. He studied Creative Writing and Dance at Hope College in Michigan, where he weathered the cold by keeping active in student organizations and spending time with quality humans. At Hope College, he helped develop safe-space training curriculum for faculty and staff who were seeking to be better allies for the LGBT community. He and two classmates launched the "95 Stories Project" to address racism and homophobia on campus. Prior to college, he worked with Breath of Heaven Children's Village in Zambia, a program that cares for AIDS orphans. After college, he interned for three months as at Koinonia Farm in Americus, GA. As an aspiring community organizer and contemplative, in XPLOR, Nathaniel is excited to practice living intentionally and engaging in professional development. He hopes to experience "beloved community." His home church is Mosaic, a multi-site church in L.A., which has more than 50 nationalities in attendance. He enjoys skiing and listening to global pop music.

Emily Newsom (*Spokane*)



Emily Newsom is from Virginia Beach, VA. She graduated from Disciples-affiliated Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, VA, in 2018, with a major in Business Administration and a minor in Human Resources. In college, she was a part of the Bonner Leader Program, which emphasizes community service and leadership development. She also participated in the Ethical Debate Team. She loves to discuss hard topics, read, cook, bake, serve, and hang out with friends. In her home church, Grace Bible, she served in Sunday School and took part in a Bible study called BYOB (Bring Your Own Bible). While in college, she was very active in One Community Church of Lynchburg, where she served every week with Sunday school. She would love to learn to speak Spanish fluently. She describes herself as hardworking, funny, compassionate, and reliable. She loves to make others laugh.

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Colby Robb (*Spokane*)



Colby Robb comes from a small country town, Hallsville, MO, where he and his mother found their way to Red Top Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) when he was in the 6th grade. Before college, he was active in church camp, including running and leading some camps, and serving on the Mid-America Regional Youth Cabinet for three years. In May 2018, he graduated from Disciples-affiliated Culver-Stockton College in Canton, MO, with a double major in Religion and Philosophy and a minor in Music. In college, Colby was chaplain for his fraternity and gave leadership to a local Relay for Life and a Homeless Rally. After NBA XPLOR, he aspires to pursue a Master of Divinity degree. He has a strong drive for equality, is good with mechanical repairs, and has a strong bond to those he considers family, even if not blood relation. His favorite pastime has always been spending his free time with horses.

St. Louis, MO

Marissa Bucklew (*St. Louis*)



Marissa Bucklew is a Lynchburg, Virginian, born and raised. She attended Disciples-affiliated Lynchburg College, where she graduated in May 2018 with a degree in Human Resource Management and Leadership. Marissa found her passion for community service through the Bonner Leader Program, which emphasizes community service and leadership development, and her outdoor recreation campus job. Her home church is Bedrock Baptist Church in Lynchburg. In NBA XPLOR, Marissa is grateful for an opportunity to connect with a new community and to help her realize what she values most in life while to re-focusing on her faith. Marissa is a sucker for fresh produce and handmade crafts. With a casual hum and a loud whistle, she is always ready to learn something new.

Bianca Holley (*St. Louis*)



Bianca Holley comes from McKinney, TX. In May 2018, she graduated from Disciples-affiliated Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, TX, an Historically Black College, where she received her BA in History. While at Jarvis, Bianca was president of the senior class and president of the student ministry association. She served as an RA and worked in the campus cafeteria. She was very heavily involved with her home church, Eternity Community Church, working with youth, leading the praise dance ministry, and helping many other ministries within the church. Bianca loves to dance, cook, and spend time with her two handsome nephews. Her faith allows her to trust, even when things look bad and like nothing good could come of what is going on. She is ready to get out of her comfort zone and experience diverse cultures, backgrounds, and a totally new environment. She hopes to become a counselor, and have her own nonprofit, helping young girls and young women.



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Madyson McColm (*St. Louis*)



Mady McColm grew up in Fort Scott, KS. As an only child growing up in the country, she spent most of her childhood reading, writing, and playing make believe. To the surprise of absolutely none of her close family or friends, she studied theater, writing, and English at Drury University in Springfield, where she graduated in May. At Drury, she has been an RA, worked as staff writer and page editor for the student newspaper, has held about every role in theater production, and served as president of the theater honors society. Her college church has been National Avenue Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ), in Springfield, MO. She has also worked at the Academy of Hair Design in a variety of roles...and she plays the ukulele! During NBA XPLOR, she plans to complete her Fulbright application. Mady hopes to one day contribute to the arts that have inspired her throughout her life.

Jaclyn Oden-Peace (*St. Louis*)



Jaclyn Oden-Peace has been involved in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) her entire life. Currently a member of First Christian Church Pasadena, TX, she has held leadership roles at the area, regional, and general levels, including Moderator of the General Youth Council. She has competed in singing, dancing, piano, and theater. Jaclyn was active on her high school's basketball, cross country, and track teams. She loves animals and currently works in the grooming department of a dog grooming, boarding, and daycare facility. Jaclyn has considered fields in therapy and music therapy. She loves communicating and helping others, and seeks to understand the psychological aspect of things. She knows that her talents and leadership are not given just for her own use, but to help build communities and develop leadership where others can engage their gifts into ministry. Jaclyn hopes to do work that helps all of God's creation and desires to be a voice for justice.

Tucson-Marana, AZ

Ethan Bradfield (*Tucson-Marana*)



Ethan Bradfield is from Bixby Knolls Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ) in Long Beach, CA, where their dad is the pastor. In middle and high school, Ethan was very involved in theater/drama. Their passion is for photography and film-making. They have spent the past three years as a part-time staff at Loch Leven, the Pacific Southwest Regional church camp, and they are active in many regional events. Ethan is an Eagle Scout and applied for NBA XPLOR because of a call to help others and spread their love for humanity. They are very good at working with others and solving problems. As well as photography, they enjoy Photoshop, building props, and playing ukulele.

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Emily Bray (*Tucson-Marana*)



Emily Bray is a preacher's daughter from Wauseon, OH, participating in First Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ), Sylvania, OH. Since high school, she has completed one year of college and worked as a barista, head maintenance at the Ohio Regional church camp, Camp Christian, in the summers, and as a grounds maintenance worker at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. In October 2016, she traveled to Thailand to serve two weeks at a refugee camp. Emily says that her faith has been the most important thing in her life for as long as she can remember. She doesn't quite have the future figured out yet, but she'll get there. She loves to read, sing and dance, drink coffee, work out, and spend time with her kitten. She describes herself as hardworking, smart, loyal, reliable, kind, focused, loving and accepting, and adventurous.

Natalie Maxson (*Tucson-Marana*)



Natalie Maxson graduated in May 2018 from Disciples-affiliated Drury University in Springfield, MO, where she majored in Religious Studies and Spanish. She acted as a peer mentor for international students in Drury's English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program and worked at the campus library as a Circulation Assistant. Natalie is fairly new to the Disciples but found her way to Central Christian Church in Springfield because she sought a faith journey that fostered inclusivity and community engagement. She has a passion for music, dance, intercultural communication, and interfaith dialogue, and she loves discovering how these inspire and inform the pursuit of social justice. Natalie dances West Coast Swing and other assorted styles, practices yoga, plays ukulele, crochets, and cultivates a sense of perpetual curiosity.

XPLORmore - Charlotte, NC: *A new, 10-month extension of the XPLOR Residency*

Mary Taylor (*Charlotte*)



Mary Taylor served 10 months as an NBA XPLOR Resident in Hiram-Mantua, OH, where she interned as the Service Coordinator at Disciples-affiliated Hiram College, preached twice, represented the NBA at Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C., and helped plan the Church World Service Crop Walk at Hiram Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In August 2017, she came to XPLOR from North Carolina: where her home church was First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Smithfield; where she graduated from Disciples-affiliated Barton College in Wilson, NC, majoring in Religion and Mathematics; and where she discovered her unique passion for interpreting song in American Sign Language. One of her greatest loves is serving at the Disciples-affiliated Christmount Retreat, Camp, and Conference Center in the mountains of North Carolina. As an inaugural "XPLORmore" Resident, she will dedicate another year to expanding her passion for seeking justice for all.

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