

Monthly Melinda

Getting Carried Away...

... and learning to go with the flow when things need to change



You may not be able to tell from the expression of apparent glee on my face, but I'm actually being "initiated" by some of my House of Teens kids in this picture. This "initiation" entails them (mostly) playfully beating me up and taking pictures. I survived the ordeal partly

because of my dance background and cat-like reflexes. Thank goodness.

They tell me the initiation is a sign of their love and "respect" for me. The love part I believe; the respect part... well, I'm still waiting on that one.

Big Changes Already

I have some unfortunate news to share: effective October 30, my placement in San Antonio is no longer with House of Teens. You might recall that two of my housemates, Ana and Joseph, also worked with me at House of Teens. After two months of trying to make living and working together work, we decided that combination really wasn't working to the benefit of each of the three of us or to the YAV community as a whole. Thus, I have stepped down to take the work pressure off of the situation. It makes me very sad to leave the kids, but since Ana and Joseph are taking HOT on for the long-term, it made the most sense for me to be the one to step down. I am still staying in San Antonio for the duration of my YAV year, and Ana, Joseph, Christie, and I are all living in our house; my placement is the only thing that is changing.

Not being at HOT has not been easy so far, but I know that this decision will ultimately be best for all of us for the remainder of our time together.

SO... WHAT NOW?

To those of you who donated to my fundraising effort, fear not: your generous donations will still go to a good cause. That cause is still TBA, but I can guarantee you that it will be good!

My site coordinator and I are currently looking for new placements for me, and we are hoping to find something that combines working with West Side kids and creative writing. We have some promising leads,

but nothing definitive has been settled.

In the meantime, I am picking up some loose ends around Divine Redeemer by working on their newsletter, website, and helping coordinate Christian Education.



EVERYBODY'S WORKIN' FOR THE WEEKEND...



Our little YAV House on Saunders Avenue

As I mentioned in the last issue of the MM, I had some pretty exciting weekend activities planned almost every weekend in October. These weekend activities meant that I didn't spend much time in our humble abode, fondly called the "Sprite House" by our neighbors (referring to the resemblance in color to the soft drink). It's a cute little place, huh?

The visit from the Parental Units

My parents came to visit the first weekend in October, which proved to be a needed change of pace, and gave me a break from some of our struggles at home. We didn't do much-- just went out to eat and watched Vanderbilt beat Auburn (!)-- but it was great to see them and take some time to relax.

Homecoming Weekend at Furman

The weekend after my parents were in town, I returned to my Alma Mater for Homecoming. It was great to be back with my dear friends and to reconnect with others, but I definitely experienced some culture shock: it was a little strange to be back surrounded by almost all white people when I'm typically one of three I see on a daily basis, and it was eye-opening to be back in a very different socioeconomic bracket than the one in which I

currently reside. That experience heightened my awareness of the differences in my mentalities towards spending money from college to now, and how important that increased consciousness is.

Thinking critically in a whole new way about my surroundings is one of the joys and challenges of my experience this year, and the juxtaposition between my former life at Furman and my current life in SA made that reality more relevant and more apparent.

An International Gala

My housemate Christie works for Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement program, and they had a fundraising gala the third weekend in October. I was privileged enough to be Christie's date to the big event. As fun as it was to get dressed up and play SA socialite for an evening, it was equally enjoyable as a learning experience about the realities of foreign political refugees in this country. Granted, dancing and catered dinners don't do much for that education, but seeing how much work goes into trying to get these displaced people settled into a town very different from their homeland and hearing some of their stories makes that lesson come alive. It was a neat event.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE...

When I wasn't taking part in the fabulous events highlighted above, I spent every scrap of free time this last month studying for the GRE to get into graduate school. I successfully took the test October 30, and will be applying to graduate schools for (hopeful) admission next fall.

November Events

I will be spending about as much time in Nashville this month as I will in San Antonio. The first full weekend of the month I'll be at home for a friend from high school's wedding (Congratulations, Caroline!). I'll spend the next weekend in San Antonio, one of the few 'normal' weekends I'll have in the city. The Thursday before Thanksgiving will be Divine Redeemer's Thanksgiving celebration, then I'll be home for a lengthy break the 21st through the 30th. This experience has made me appreciate my home more than ever, so I am excited for my copious amounts of time there this month.

Prayer Requests

Some of you asked me after the last MM how you could pray for my experience here. While I am confident that we are taking concrete steps in a positive direction, there is still quite a way to go before we will build a comfortable, harmonious community amongst the four of us, and I ask that you will keep us in your prayers.

I would also ask for your support and prayers as we search for a new placement for me. Our hope is that we will find something that might even better suit my passions and skills than House of Teens did, but I will go where I am needed and can be used.

Finally, please pray for Ana and Joseph and the HOT kids as they adjust to this staffing change, as it is not any easier on them than it is on me.

Thank you so much for your prayers and support of me through this rough patch. I am hopeful that November can be a fresh start for all of us, and it means a lot to me to know that you are behind me. Very sincerely, thank you.

Love, MCH