

First of all, I would like to thank you again for your support, both financially and spiritually. It means a lot to me that there are people who care about me and support me. My first three weeks here in Atlanta have been great. I am living in a house in central Atlanta along with 4 other Young Adult Volunteers, Alicia, Charlotte, Kelsey and Kim. All of us are working at different agencies around Atlanta. The program that the Young Adult Volunteer program partners with in Atlanta is D.O.O.R., which stands for Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection. One major component is developing community, in our house, in a church, and in the neighborhood. We have two community dinners a week, and Mondays are our community day. On community days we plan an activity that will help build the house community. These activities could be team building or activities that involve us more in the community. We spent our first week here getting to know each other and getting acquainted with the city. I got to see a number of sites in Atlanta such as the Olympic Park, the CNN Center, State Capital, and some other local sites.

Another major part of the DOOR program is the work you do at your service site. I am volunteering at Decatur Cooperative Ministries; an organization dedicated to fighting homelessness and its causes in DeKalb County. DCM has three major programs which help families who are either homeless or near homelessness. Project Take Charge provides financial assistance to families near eviction and Family Transitional Housing provides transitional housing to one or two parent households for up to two years. I will give more details about those programs over the next few months.

I work in the administrative offices of DCM and the program I work with mostly is Hagar's House, a temporary night shelter for women with children. Because each family gets their own bedroom and bathroom, Hagar's House is one of two women and children's shelters in Atlanta that allows boys over the age of 12 to stay in the shelter with their mothers since they have private bathrooms. During the day, children are expected to be in school and the mothers are expected to be involved in activities improving their situation, such as searching for or working at a job or looking for housing once they leave the shelter.

I work at DCM from Tuesday through Friday and work 12-8 three days a week and from 9-5 on Thursdays. The shelter opens for the night at 5pm each day, so when I am working before 5, I am in the administrative offices, and after 5 I help out in the shelter. While in the offices I answer phones, accept donations, and put together materials for different programs. Two of my major duties are developing materials for the shelters technology center and activities for childcare in the shelter before and after dinner. The technology center is a program available to all of the programs of DCM, but mostly used by those staying at the women's shelter since they are at the same location. Children and moms at the shelter are allowed to use the computers at different times during the week. I am helping to update and develop materials for the women such as resume building and job and apartment searches. I am also helping to develop a schedule and curriculum for the childcare time. On the days when I work until 8pm, I work with the children or have a chance to talk with the mothers. I have enjoyed sharing meals with the families and getting to know everyone who is staying at the shelter.

It has been very eye opening to see the amount of need in the city. While answering the phones during the day, I speak with a number of people who are looking for a shelter, and because of the limited resources of our shelter, the only option I usually have is to refer them to other agencies in the city, but many of them are full as well. There is a lot of need, and most of the people we are helping are living paycheck to paycheck, so when something happens, they can very easily lose their home.

I will be keeping you up to date with monthly newsletters. I am looking forward to this year and know that it will be a great year Thank you again for your support and your prayers. I ask that you continue to keep me in your prayers throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Joshua Newton