

Hello all!

Here is my monthly update for you for the month of October. :-) Hopefully, fall is treating you all well at home. I know it's been a little cold recently. Sadly, I've become acclimated to the weather here and apparently 75 degrees is "a little cold" for me now. I've gotten used to it being at least 90 degrees every day with 100 percent humidity so now that October/November is here, it's gotten a little cooler and nicer.

Ok, enough about the weather. October was pretty good for me (except for hurricane Wilma towards the end). At the end of September, we all packed up our cold weather clothes and headed off to Allenspark, Colorado for a beginning of the year retreat at Highlands Presbyterian Retreat Center in the mountains. It was beautiful. It was my first visit to the Rocky Mountains and I couldn't have pictured a more peaceful spot for a retreat. It was a great time to take a break and listen to what God wants for me this year. I got to take time to sit down and write in my journal, spend hours walking the trails and sitting by the lake, and talk with other YAVs about their placements and plans for the year. At this retreat, I decided that I will begin to work on an idea I've had for about a year now. I am going to create a Christian Music Magazine called "Pure Music". I'm trying it out online before creating a paper form. I know it will take a few years to get going, but I'm hoping it will be successful. I would really like for it to become a magazine that can sit on the shelves next to "Rolling Stone" and "Vibe". I will give you the address to the website once I've got it running in better condition. I ask you all to pray about it with me and spread the word to friends and family. Also, if you know anyone (including yourself) who would be interested in helping me write articles for it, that would be amazing. I will gladly receive any and all help possible.

I've also decided I'm going to write a book about this year of mission work throughout my time here and include journal entries and stories about how each of us saw how God worked through us and others around us while we were here. Obviously, it's not going to be complete until the program ends in August, but I will be working on it from time to time.

In addition to these two projects, I have also joined the choir and play hand bells at First United Methodist Church of Miami. We practice every Thursday night for both and it has been a great time for me to get involved with a church other than the Lighthouse and spend some time with people I wouldn't otherwise get a chance to.

Lastly, I just recently started to help the cheerleaders at the school near our house. They practice in our yard every day and in spying on them every so often, I felt like I could really help them out. This past Monday I helped them with some of their stunts they were working on for a pep rally and a little bit of tumbling. I hope I can help them more as the year progresses.

I have been going to a weekly Bible study every Wednesday night as well. We have been discussing the book of John for the past few meetings. I'm so glad I have the chance to read the Bible more than I ever have before. I feel like I'm learning a lot from it that I never thought I could.

Saturdays are always Lighthouse-related. I am taking classes at the Lighthouse Music School in the afternoon. I am in a beginning theory class (which is exciting since I've never taken a theory class before), voice lessons from my roommate, Megan, and I'm in the fledgling choir that Megan is directing too. After all of the classes are over, there is a Bible study for the students of the Music School (twice in one week=two times the learning!), community dinner, and then the service. It's been great to be a part of such a loving Christian community. I really feel like the Lighthouse provides the atmosphere I need to become the Christian I want to be. It

has been so encouraging to see a huge group of people my age that are so deeply-rooted in Christ. No one is there because they have to be. They are all there because they want to be. We could all be doing other things on our Saturday nights, but we prefer to spend our time in community with each other worshipping God. I feel so blessed to have a core group of friends like the ones I have at the Lighthouse. I know with my whole heart that if I need anything, someone from the Lighthouse will be there to help me.

On top of all of these things, I've still got the regular work schedule and community time that I am committed to. Needless to say, I'm pretty busy. Recently, the Miami Rescue Mission has been slammed because of preparations for Thanksgiving and our annual Open House. There has been more paperwork than usual and it has been difficult to get everything that needs to be done finished in one day. I'm sure that after Thanksgiving is over that it will start to slow down and I will have a little bit of breathing room before the small surge around Christmas. Work has been good though. Sometimes I get frustrated because I spend so much time in my office by myself and don't have a lot of interaction with people like I did during the summer, but I keep reminding myself that if the administration office doesn't run correctly, then no other department will be able to either. That's one thought that keeps me going. The other is that I am working for a Christian organization that is ultimately serving God's purpose. It is easier to see this when I get the chance to spend time with the clients at the Center for Men or with the youth at the Community Activity Center. However, when I spend more time with my computer than people, it can be more challenging to see God's work in the lives of the people I'm supposedly helping. There are some good things that have come out of spending 8 hours a day in an office by myself though. Every day, I'm learning about how to be a more patient person. I have begun to give up my frustrations that I now realize I cannot do anything about and give them to God. I know that He can handle them much better than I ever could. Since I've realized that, I have been much happier at work and can do the tasks set before me much more efficiently.

Wow! It's really difficult to tell you all everything that happens in one month briefly. I would really like to tell you about my experience with hurricane Wilma, but I think that might take a couple more pages. I will write a separate update about just the hurricane and send that to you all as well. It includes fun stories such as losing power for a week, grilling out every night to avoid spoiled meat, packing and passing out supplies at the Orange Bowl for needy families, and driving about 14 hours to Virginia on a Thursday evening/Friday morning and driving about 16 hours back to Miami on a Monday evening/Tuesday morning among others. I'll try to send it to you all within the next week.

Ok, well I hope you all are ok wherever you are, doing whatever you're doing. Please keep in touch if you can. I'd really like to know how you all are doing too. I hope to hear from you soon. Have a great week and may God bless you in the paths that you are following.

Sincerely,
Christie