



Home is Where the Heart Is

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As I knock on the end of my first month here at the new home of U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C., *St. Elizabeths*, I wanted to share some reflections. My initial reaction to this move was admittedly not a happy one. I had been at the ‘Jemal Building’ for 4.5 years and finally getting comfy: I knew precisely which sandwiches to order in the cafeteria that would give me the best bang for my buck, dedicated to memory where every unit was located, and finally had timed to a tee when I needed to leave my desk to catch the shuttle to Transpoint. I was not excited about having to change all of this, especially digesting the thought of having to add an additional 20 minutes to my already hour and half commute! I attended the town halls, spoke to coworkers, and a consensus of fears continued to abound: Where will we eat? How safe will our commute be? How will we get around campus? Etc. It all was intimidating and I, frankly, was not happy.

Then I arrived. By the end of week one (we were the first group to arrive) most all of my fears were justified. My commute was in fact two hours, the cafeteria was far (and expensive), the water was messed up, getting around campus was going to be a feat, oh, and I was one of the unlucky recipients of a creepy rodent visitor. By the beginning of week two I wanted out! Then, one morning as I painstakingly attempted to find the fitness center I got lost. I was forced to ask a security guard how to find it and she said “oh it’s just right down and around the corner, but they are not ready for use just yet, you may want to consider walking down that path over past the GSA building, I think you’ll enjoy it, it’s beautiful, what a great campus to work on.” I decided to take her advice, thanked her, and walked away questioning how much she had been paid to say that. As I started down the path my world changed. I saw beautiful deer prancing around, what I think was an eagle flying over head, and studied in awe amazingly historic buildings that I knew carried stories. By the time I got back to my desk I was met with a decision – I could continue to whine, complain, and stomp my feet about everything wrong with this place, or I could, as my mom would say, “eat the meat and spit out the bones” and find the good in what this place had to offer. I chose, and am inviting you to choose, the latter.

Fact is, I love the Coast Guard. I love our missions, our people, and our faithful diligence in protecting this country. It has my heart. If home reflects the heart, then that is exactly what I was and am going to continue to do. So the end of week 2, all of week 3, and now close to the end of week 4 have been an entirely different experience – based on my heart. I take that extra 20 minutes of my commute to talk to and meet someone new, sans complaining. I’ve found a joy in preparing new and interesting lunches, sans complaining. I enjoy walking around and discovering hidden gems around campus or working out at the fitness center (which is absolutely amazing), sans complaining. I eat and laugh with team members while we share stories of getting lost or meeting new people, sans complaining. No sense in complaining, it does no good and doesn’t reflect my heart for the organization. I continue to see senior leadership addressing the kinks and am appreciative of my immediate leadership’s leniency and support as we continue to get accustomed to our new home. So whether you’re already here or on your way, remember...home reflects the heart!