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My gift from ASUU Strike

Chidinma shares her three weeks internship experience at Wavecrest Students Hall, Surulere, Lagos

11/09/2022

Hi everyone, my name is Chidinma Eucharia Ikwelle. I would love to share with you my three weeks internship experience at Wavecrest Students Hall, Surulere, Lagos.

My story dates back to when **the** *Academic Staff Union of Universities*

(ASUU) strike was 3 months old and was becoming so unbearable for me. I would say I did let myself become overwhelmed by my emotions as I was very sad, depressed, lonely and angry, both at myself and everyone around me. Most of this can be attributed to the fact that I wasn't doing anything to keep myself busy at that moment apart from a few online courses which I wasn't really interested in. These feelings went on for a while and I can say I was really unhappy. I could feel it that I was so empty and there was something wrong. This made me to be very quiet at home, I lost interest in discussions, I sometimes took offense at very little things my siblings did. In fact, I found myself doing things I preach against and it was really bad. It continued like this for days, weeks and even months. You must be wondering how deep this was. It was really that deep.

God willing, on one faithful day, I got a call from a friend at Greendale Centre, Nsukka where I attend the means of formation imparted by the people of Opus Dei while in school. She asked after my well being but I couldn't open up to her at that moment about what was actually going on with me. She went ahead to ask me a question that not only brought a big smile to my face but continuously rang in my head for a while. She said "Chidinma, if you are given the opportunity, will you like to attend an internship program in catering and hospitality at Wavecrest Students Hall?" Instantly my face brightened up and I started smiling unconsciously and I replied that I would really love that. She said she would get back to me and we hung up. Immediately she hung up, I realized I hadn't sought permission from my parents before accepting this proposal. It wasn't so much of a problem though. I just decided to let

them know about it if I finally got the opportunity. Weeks passed and I got another call from her, but this time, it was to tell me to get myself prepared as I just got myself something to be engaged with. I was so happy, first that finally I could leave the house and secondly, I would get myself busy with something worthwhile. She gave me a number to call to inform them of my interest with regards to the opportunity and we hung up.

Without wasting time, I dialed the number given to me twice but I didn't get a response, I got worried. Some time later, the number called back and I was very excited as I picked the call. The voice of the lady speaking made me very much at ease as she already knew my name and the reason I called. We fixed an appointment. I could already feel a sense of joy reawakening in me.

When my parents got back, I told

them about it and I was granted the permission to go.

On the day of the appointment, I got up very early as usual and prepared my body, soul and spirit. Funny right? On my arrival, the beautiful arena filled with flowers of different kinds caught my attention coupled with the warm welcome I received from the young girl who opened the door for me. It already felt as though I was part of the house. The director asked me to start immediately and scheduled my work timetable.

I resumed work immediately and I blended so well into the new environment such that even though I worked for just three weeks, it felt as if I was there for a year. My first day at work was so wonderful, I was introduced to every other staff and the cheerful faces they all put on gave me goosebumps, lol. It was very impressive how everyone that came

into the kitchen immediately noticed the new face and the beautiful uniform I wore. I felt very welcome and accepted as part of this family. This made me so happy because I never expected to be known that early as it was barely my first day. That day, I worked in the *server* section where I was taught how to clean and arrange utensils. After working at the server, I went over to the bakery section where I helped out with making Chin-Chin. After working, we went for lunch and what was served that day was Amala and Ewedu soup. Going through my mind was how I won't be eating the food because I haven't tasted it before. As if they all read my mind, they asked me if I had taken Amala before and I said no. To my greatest surprise, I was convinced to give it a try and after I tasted it, it wasn't bad after all. We talked about different things as we ate and I got to know some funny traits of my colleagues

and it cracked me up. **Although I was tired after the day's work, I was so happy that at last, I got my smiles back.**

On one of those days, I was told to make bread using a recipe I was given. Oh my God, that day was a disaster. In the process of kneading the dough, I went out of control and completely spoilt the shape. We all laughed about that and I was taught how to do it and the bread came out fine. Most times, I was also told to make the dish for the day which I did and we all ate together very happily. We also went for an outdoor function; a food and beverage fare. We had so much fun, had ice cream and learned how to make fruit shakes. It was really awesome and I was glad I was given the opportunity to be there. As time went on, I blended so well with everyone. **We worked, played, laughed, cracked jokes and prayed together.**

Towards the end of the internship period, although I felt a little sad that it was ending, I was happy because of the great moments I shared with my new friends. On my last day there, I was bided farewell, and there was this joy all over my face as I hugged them all before going.

Now I consider the ASUU strike a **blessing in disguise**. Although I may have lost some time or opportunities as a result of the strike, I count my joys instead; the joy of this wonderful opportunity to make new friends with amazing personalities and the joy of learning new things in a wonderful environment. Throughout my stay there, I would say I never had the moment to worry about anything. It was really an awesome experience to behold and I am grateful to God for that. And I can't thank all those that worked with me enough for the warm welcome I received on my arrival, and most

especially my friend at Greendale for giving me a long-lasting opportunity to be happy again.

Chidinma Eucharika Ikwelle

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(03/21/2026)