

In this week's Alumnae Spotlight, we feature Marisa Flores from the Class of 2013.

Marisa has just completed her post-baccalaureate research, involving antibiotic-producing soil bacteria colonies. She also works as a Special Needs Music Therapist for the Academy at Morgan's Wonderland, is one of the music ministers for St. Monica's Catholic Church, a part-time instructor at Guitar Center, and leads her own band along with other talented musicians. She is currently pursuing her Master's Degree in Healthcare Administration at the University of the Incarnate Word.

During her time at Providence, Marisa evolved from originally being a very shy and impressionable student. Transferring in as a sophomore, it took her some time to adapt to changing schools and making new friends. Marisa always had an interest in Performing Arts. Because of this, she immediately gravitated towards Mrs. Michelle Petri's Drama Class and Club. After her sophomore year, she realized the part she enjoyed most about theater was the singing. She decided to talk with Mrs. Elaine Bir '77 about joining Marian Choristers and Show Choir, both of which she stated became significant components of her time and growth at Providence. Her time spent in the Music Program provided her with opportunities that helped shape her craft and create friendships that she cherishes to this day. In 2013, she was awarded Show Choir's Outstanding Member Award. Every chance Providence gave her to sing, she took- recalling playing guitar alongside Mrs. Barbara Alvarez during monthly masses and performing in talent shows. As a gift to Providence's former principal, Sister Antoinette Billeaud CDP, Marisa wrote a song dedicated to Sister Antoinette, of which the entire school performed for her. Aside from allowing Marisa's love for music to flourish, another passion was slowly growing. Marisa took advantage of Providence's curriculum geared to those interested in the medical field. She took Sports Medicine courses, as well as medical terminology classes, and is thankful for the "influential and inspiring teachers" who led those courses which would prepare her for the field she would later pursue.

Following graduation from Providence, Marisa went on to UIW where she earned her Bachelors of Science in Biology, with a minor in Psychology. Marisa recalls sitting in English during her first semester of college and realizing how prepared she was for college, especially in comparison to her peers. From learning to cite in proper MLA format, to learning the importance of time management, she is extremely grateful for the many things she learned early on at Providence. She went on to become the FIRST Biology Major at UIW to be inducted Sigma Tau Delta- International English Honor Society- for earning a 4.0 GPA across all required English courses. She especially thanks Mrs. Alvarez for this preparation and readiness.

Aside from being prepared academically, Providence provided a spiritual foundation for Marisa. During her time in college, Marisa would sometimes struggle in a class, or even be told that women did not



belong in the field of science. At these times that her faith was tested, she remembered the Mulaney Chapel on the second floor of Providence, where she would meet for religion class or recite the Rosary with Mrs. Alvarez. Remembering this peace and falling on her faith as she learned to do at Providence, provided the guidance she needed to face such adversities.

This past Fall, Marisa's research titled "Bacteria Isolated From Soil Collected on College Campus Displays Antimicrobial Activity Against Bacillus subtilis and Mycobacterium smegmatic" was accepted for publication and will soon be made available to the public for scholarly research. This is the first publication made of which she is the primary author. Her research in antibiotics is a small contribution for other scientists to use to help combat the antibiotic crisis being faced in all healthcare settings today. Marisa presented this research at SACNAS- The National Diversity in STEM Conference- where UIW received two awards in biology and mathematics research.

Aside from her recent publication, Marisa has received a multitude of awards. Last year, she was chosen as an Abbvie Immunology Scholar, receiving \$15,000 to complete her Master's Degree. In 2017, she was awarded the National Engaged Leadership Award from the National Society of Leadership and Successes, in recognition of her community service to local San Antonio charities. In 2014, she was given the opportunity to perform on the Zaragoza Theater Stage at Six Flags Fiesta Texas, where she sang and danced along many other talented musicians.

This year, you can catch Marisa's band during the Annual Cavalier River Parade, as well as during the Fiesta Flambeau Parade on the Our Lady of the Lake University Float. You can also catch her party planning/cooking segment on San Antonio Living. Marisa attributes her love for cooking to Mrs. Sarah Salinas, who helped spark this passion.

Marisa stated she has been a busy and proud Provet, thanking God for her time at Providence and for shaping her into the woman she is today.

When asked what advice she'd give to current Provets, Marisa stated, "Trust in God's timing and most importantly, your timing. Do not place yourself on a definitive timeline, and especially do not compare your timeline to others. Accept that things will happen when they are supposed to, and when you are ready. You do not have to graduate in four years. Your age does not define how successful you'll be. You just need to be happy with who you are and with what you do. That being said, nothing that is easy in life is worth having. Never shy away from hard work or let others convince you that something is too difficult. Pursue it anyway, even if it has never been done before. You'll thank yourself for it. Value sisterhood and learn to empower each other. Always have a well-researched and thought-out opinion. Work on being a well-rounded individual. Gather knowledge from all places and credible sources. Surround yourself with those who think differently than you, so that you may learn to work together and build a world with proper leadership."

Congratulations, Marisa, on all of your amazing accomplishments. We are proud of the Providence woman you are! We pray for you and all of your endeavors.