

THE REALITY OF

Relocation

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IF YOU WERE TO ASK ME FIVE YEARS AGO, at the beginning of my second major relocation, what I thought the reality of relocation was, I would have told you that it stunk! I had moved once to Iowa for my job, then back to my home state of North Carolina, still four hours from my hometown, and then to Southern Georgia for my husband's new career.

I hated to leave behind my circle of friends and the luxury of living within a thirty to forty minute drive to several Target stores. I now drive over an hour and a half to get to one Target!

Another reality of relocation for college graduates is that it can be a barrier to employment after graduation. Many students graduating with an agricultural-related degree, or seeking employment in agriculture, share a similar personality trait. That trait is a love of the land and need to be near that land, farm, or ranch. That desire limits career choices.

This trait is often accompanied by a strong bond with family. This attribute obviously isn't specific or limited to people in the agriculture industry but it does tend to play a considerable role among agriculture graduates when it comes to the location of their potential careers.

Despite these potential pitfalls, another reality of relocation is that it can open up so many doors. By removing yourself from your comfort zone, new opportunities in language, food, religion, cultural experiences and many more become part of your life story. Some may not be great (driving over an hour to get to Target), but others you may embrace and develop lifelong traditions, like the hymn our church

sings every Sunday as we dismiss, which I find myself humming all week long. I went to church all of my life and never heard this hymn, but now it's one of my favorites.

Relocating can also open up some fantastic career opportunities. Anna Leigh Peek is from a small town in Alabama. She graduated in May 2014 from Auburn University and moved to St. Louis for a job with Monsanto. While moving back home after college was tempting, Peek says, "I cannot imagine what kind of job I would have found if

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I were dead-set on going back to my hometown. I most likely would have had to settle for a low-paying and low ceiling job with little to no room for advancement. While I am hundreds of miles from home I can already see numerous opportunities for growth in the career I've chosen."

Perhaps one of the most feared realities of relocation is that it will be difficult, lonely, and at times depressing. Especially if you move to a city or town where you don't know anyone. A simple decision like where to get a haircut can seem overwhelming with no prior experience or recommendations to help you make the choice. This can be circumvented if you mentally prepare and approach the transition with a plan

for a positive experience.

Ryan Amaral works with the National FFA Organization. He moved from California to Indianapolis three years ago, following his graduation. He gives the following advice for preparing yourself ahead of time for a move:

"It is hard to make new friends after college, they will come with time. Get involved in whatever you can that remotely peaks your interest and not just at work. Use your network...chances are you know someone who knows someone near where you're moving. Lastly, fall in love with your new city.... You're going to be living there for an extended period of time, don't waste time being miserable."

Careers in agriculture are diverse and changing every day. There are great careers in big cities, where there are lots of people to meet, places to go and things to do. There are also some great careers in small towns and rural areas. Areas where meeting people can be a challenge; places to go are a day's drive away; and things to do are limited by the day of the week and the temperature outside.

Aligning your career goals and personality is an important step to approaching relocation for your first job. Do your homework before making a decision and realize that the reality of relocation is like most things in life: it has its positives and negatives, but you'll never know what you're missing until you give it a try. And at the very least nothing has to be permanent, this generation is estimated to make between seven and ten career changes in their lives. Chances are not all those careers will be in the same town or city!