

COMMUNITY LIFE

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KATHY O'DONOHUE

Mommying is a most humbling experience

Mommying is a humbling experience. No matter what professional credentials or qualifications you may think you possess prior to having children, they are quickly whisked away as you begin to deal with these power packed, influential little beings.

Some examples: I was excited; my first professional outing in two years! I got dressed in a nice suit, hose and heels, and found my seat up front at the conference on "Hormones and how they affect our lives." The speakers handed out a syllabus and paper to write on. Eager to take notes, I reached into my purse and found the only writing utensil I had: a yellow Crayon. It wouldn't have been so bad if the paper they gave us to write on wasn't also yellow. I had to rely on my powers of memory and concentration, which are not remarkable. I learned a lot about my hormones at this conference.

On another recent occasion, I hired a babysitter to watch my kids while I again donned business clothes to attend an editorial staff meeting to sell my manuscript ideas. On the way out of my driveway, it was raining lightly. As I approached my destination four miles away, my windshield wipers were at full power and it was still difficult to see. Not to worry, I thought. I remember my son saying we had an umbrella in the backseat. I was agitated to find a "Barney the dinosaur" umbrella. I sat for a full five minutes contemplating what was worse, the momen-

See MOMMYING, B2

Volunteer extends a hand overseas

■ International relations graduate heads for Peace Corps stint in the former Soviet Union.



BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Meredith Perish wanted to immerse herself into another culture, learn other languages and work to improve the lot of those in underdeveloped areas of the world.

The Farmington Harrison graduate got her wish and just hopes she asked for the right thing.

"It seems to me that it is exactly what I wanted," she said.

Perish, 22, will fly to Turkmenistan, a central Asian country formerly a part of the Soviet Union. She will leave in a few days for Washington, D.C., then fly on Sept. 11 to Frankfurt, Germany; Turkey and finally Ashgabat, the capital of the new country.

After three months of training, the Michigan State University graduate will begin teaching English as a second language "somewhere in the country."

Perish, who majored in international relations at MSU's James Madison College, had planned on a two-year tour in the Peace Corps after her expected graduating in May.

"I wanted to learn another language and get some experience in a developing country," she said. "I'm embarrassed that I don't know another language."

Perish had been a nanny for a time in Italy, an experience that convinced her of the wisdom of living in another country.

After signing up for the two-year stint last fall, Perish found out that

she would graduate in December, rather than in the spring.

She changed plans quickly, landing a job with a telecommunications firm researching international markets.

"I wanted to get that experience, so I changed my availability for the Peace Corps to Sept. 1," she said.

Joining the Peace Corps meant Perish had to go through an interview and evaluation process. She was selected to teach English to 13-17-year-olds in the public schools. Perish taught English as a second language while in Washington.

Perish's group of American volunteers will be only the fourth to go to the country. The first group met with a less-than-kind reception, including rock throwing and some rapes.

"They have not had problems that I've heard of since then," Perish said. "The host country requests the Peace Corps. I just think there was ignorance in the beginning."

Although her father Robert supports his only daughter's decision, not everyone has been as enthusiastic.

"I was in denial for awhile," said her mother Bedonna. "Why did it have to be there?"

Not only is Turkmenistan distant in miles, with 87 percent of its population following Islam, a Jewish

See PEACE CORPS, B2



STAFF PHOTO BY CHRIS REED

Toys galore: Meredith Perish displays some of the toys she'll entice her students with in Turkmenistan.



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