

Gallagher from page A1

Group management team for several years as an assistant managing editor. His promotion to managing editor — the top spot in the editorial department — is well-deserved.

"Be sure to read Hugh's personal column in today's Farmington Observer on Page 13A. His deep respect for readers and community journalism is told in his own words."

Gallagher has been with the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers for 17 years.

"I'm happy to be moving into such a challenging and exciting position," Gallagher said. "I believe The Observer Newspapers are among the best community papers in the country and I look forward to working with a talented staff in continuing and expanding on that rich tradition."

Gallagher joins an Observer Group management team comprised of Peg Knospe, retail advertising manager; Mark Warren, circulation director

and Larry Gelger, circulation manager.

He previously was employed at the Lorain Journal in Lorain, Ohio, The Albuquerque Journal in Albuquerque, N.M., and Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.

Gallagher, 51, and his wife, Debbie, a librarian with the Ann Arbor District Library and the Michigan Electronic Library, live in Ann Arbor. They have two adult sons, Sean and James.

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Highlight: Kristi stands at the entrance of a tunnel in Utah.

She makes Gump-like trek

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM
STAFF WRITER

"I just felt like doing it."

That was Christie Ploski's answer when asked why she decided to take a 4,000 mile trek across country on her touring bike, accompanied by five people she had met on the Internet.

"I just wanted to see the country and meet people," she said. Plans for the bike trip were five years in the making. States she rode through included California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Maryland and Virginia. She logged just under 4,000 miles.

"It was a 'Forrest Gump' kind of thing," she added, referring to the 1994 film starring Tom Hanks. Like Ploski, Hanks' Forrest Gump character embarked on a cross-country journey.

Ploski is a 19-year-old Farmington Hills resident and Farmington High School graduate. She attended Calvary Chapel Bible College in Marietta Hot Springs, Calif. for a year and plans to transfer to either Eastern Michigan University or Oakland Community College this year.

She began her trip June 21 and ended Aug. 12. She took a 3 1/2 day trip in a bus before starting the trip. After enduring that, the bike trip was a cinch.

"It's the worst trip you could ever take," Ploski said, referring to the sleepless nights.

The bike trip, however, was very exhilarating.

"We camped pretty much every night," Ploski said. Inclement weather, personal conflicts, unforgiving roads and reckless drivers were among the biggest challenges she faced along the way. She said she logged about 80 to 85 miles daily, riding about six to seven hours.

Some of the places she stopped included the Continental Divide, cutting through Colorado's Rocky Mountains and several Civil War battle-field sites in Maryland and Virginia.

"It was really pretty up there," Ploski said of the Continental Divide, where she posed for a snapshot.

The beauty was not without its bite, however. "It was really rainy and we were so high up we were freezing," she said. During one spell of nasty weather, the group stopped off the side of the road to try to stay dry when serendipity visited them. Some vacationers from Kalamazoo offered them food and shelter and even let them do their laundry.

"They saw us and took pity on us," said Ploski, adding she was particularly impressed that the good Samaritans were fellow Michiganders.

Personal conflicts within the group, consisting of people from across the country, eventually broke them up, with only two finishing in the nation's capital.

"They said they were going to keep going and take a different route," Ploski said of the other four.

The experience taught Ploski the importance of fabric fiber content. The best bicycle duds are made of polyester because of its insulation and water repellence. Cotton is no good for distance



STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CARMICHAEL

Happy to be home: Kristi Ploski, of Farmington Hills, logged almost 4,000 miles during a bicycle trek across the United States this summer. But now, she's back home, with her mom, Marcia Ploski.

bicycling.

"It will freeze you," Ploski said, adding that it dries slowly.

So which state had the worst bicycling conditions? Missouri, according to Ploski. The state's incessant hills, lack of road shoulders and reckless drivers made for a treacherous ride.

The worst roads she dealt with were in the Missouri's Ozark region because of the hills and lack of shoulder. She compared the hills to "Shiawassee Hill," the large hill on Shiawassee in Farmington.

"They were two times bigger and much steeper," she said.

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