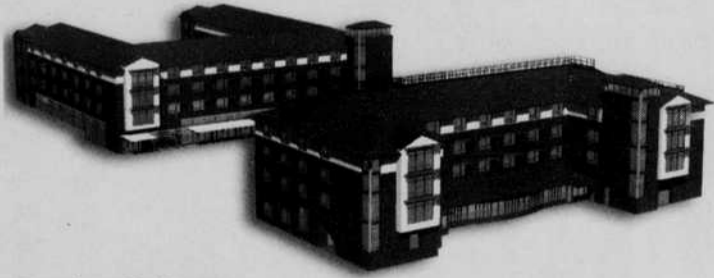


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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

KIDS and Culture

Senior Andrea Peruzzi hopes to continue working with autistic children

BY EMILY CHARRIER
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

A few hours after Andrea Peruzzi was patiently working with autistic children, teaching them the simple tasks many people take for granted, she returned to her small gray house on Polk Street, which contains a collection of mismatched furniture — a yellow couch here and a particle-board desk there. In a few months all the possessions will head to storage, local thrift stores or the trash.

Peruzzi, 24, will graduate from the University this spring with a major in sociology. She is applying to teach English in South Korea next fall for the Teach Corps, an organization that places people in foreign countries to teach English at schools and private institutions. Eventually, Peruzzi hopes to teach special education in America and possibly continue her work with autism.

"Since I want to be a teacher I can get that teaching experience and really find out if that's what I want to do," she said.

Like most college students, Peruzzi didn't always know what she wanted to do with her life. After high school she spent five months biking through Europe and found she loved traveling and experiencing other cultures.

Still, it wasn't until a family



Senior sociology major Andrea Peruzzi is going to teach English in Korea after graduation.

DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

tragedy that her life plan began to unfold: Her nephew, at age 3, was diagnosed with autism.

Peruzzi's family was in Philadelphia while she was thousands of miles away in Oregon. There was little she could do.

"I felt so guilty I couldn't help my sister. I thought if I could help another kid maybe it would make up for the fact that I couldn't help my nephew," Peruzzi said.

She began to volunteer at Bridge-way House, a nonprofit organization that works with autistic children and adults and offers classes and enrichment programs for their families. Soon after she began volunteering, some of the parents hired her to work with their children at home. She found the work rewarding and soon decided to pursue a career in special education.

Most recently, the soon-to-be graduate began looking for jobs in either teaching or social work. She found nothing of interest. Some friends she had made while traveling told her they

had saved a lot of money by teaching English in Asia, and it sparked her curiosity. After some research, she settled on Teach Corps because of its numerous benefits.

"I've never been to Asia, and I just feel like it's a good time to take that opportunity," she said.

Teach Corps places accepted applicants with a bachelor's degree in countries that are looking for English teachers. Usually the countries are in Asia, such as Japan, China or Thailand. Peruzzi decided on Seoul, South Korea, because it offers the most benefits. The program will pay for her rent and health coverage. She will be making between \$1,400 to \$1,600 per month, but her monthly expenses are only estimated at between \$400 to \$500.

After South Korea she will pursue her interest in teaching special education. For the time being, her future career with Teach Corps will help train her in that area.

"I want to save money to then go and become a teacher," she said.

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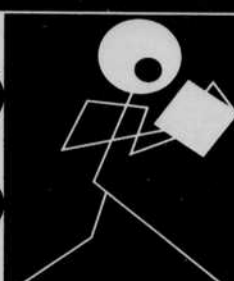
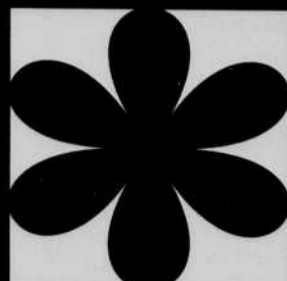
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