

MARINE SCIENCES STUDENT OPTS FOR PEACE CORPS

Jennifer Sliko, a double major in geosciences and marine sciences from Lititz, PA, will graduate with honors from Rider this May. But instead of pursuing an advanced degree or starting a career right away, she will spend two years using her science background as a volunteer with the Peace Corps in Africa.

Shortly after graduation, Sliko will begin a 27-month assignment in Ghana, where she will teach high school-level chemistry.

"I have wanted to join the Peace Corps since middle school," said Sliko, a graduate of Warwick High School in Lititz. "And this seems like the best time. I want to go now before I settle down and start a family."

Strangely enough, Sliko found out about the Peace Corps through the film *Dirty Dancing*. In the movie, the character of Baby (played by Jennifer Grey) talks about wanting to join the humanitarian organization. "I found out more about the Peace Corps and thought I would like helping people in another culture. I think it gives you a different view of the world."

Sliko's journey will begin in Washington, DC, where she will spend two days filling out the required paperwork and getting shots to help ward off diseases. Upon her arrival in Ghana, Sliko most likely will live with a host family for three months while she trains for her role as a teacher. "I have to learn the culture, the customs and the languages of Ghana," said Sliko. Although English is the official language, there are more than 25 local languages around the country.

Upon the conclusion of the three-month training period, Sliko will have the option of either returning to the United States or continuing her work in Ghana. However, she expects to remain in Ghana for the duration. At this time, Sliko will be placed at a school where she will teach for the next two years.

Sliko said she could wind up sharing a house with other volunteers on the grounds of the school where she will be teaching. If not, the Peace Corps will find her a house it has deemed safe near her school.

Although she is looking forward to starting her assignment in Ghana, Sliko admits to being a little nervous. "It hasn't hit me completely yet that I'm not just going on a vacation, I'm going to be living in another country away from my family and friends for two years.

"But I'm more excited than scared. I'm pretty confident I'll be able to adapt to the culture," she added.

What has made it easier for Sliko is the support she has received from her parents. "Although they're not excited about me being gone for so long, my parents have supported me the whole way through. I owe a lot to them," she said.

Sliko, who plans on eventually earning her doctorate, said she may continue working with the Peace Corps even after returning from Ghana. She is considering making herself available to the Crisis Corps, a program within the Peace Corps that allows volunteers, who are completing their tours and those who have recently returned from overseas, to provide short-term assistance to countries that have experienced natural disasters or humanitarian crises.