

A CHINA YEAR

Megan Denault will soon be off to Beijing, China, and eventually to Tibet, tracing the route that Nashoba Brooks first graders have traveled in their minds. [Please see "Lessons from Tibet."] She carries with her two areas of expertise that she has been honing over the years since leaving Nashoba: anthropology and film-making.

Megan went to high school at Hotchkiss and then to Ithaca College, where she "sort of fell into anthropology." After applying to film schools, she went to Ithaca hoping to transfer into that field. But then, she says, "I fell in love with anthropology. I enjoyed the readings, especially. I'm not into the theory, to be honest, but I loved studying about different cultures." She also "caught the traveling bug" backpacking through Europe the summer after her freshman year, fueled by her fascination with the peoples of the world.



After her first year of college, Megan applied for a transfer from Ithaca to Brown University and was accepted, but because she would enter there second semester of her sophomore year, she spent the fall semester studying in Galway, Ireland. She could have done more traveling, but she chose to study and enter Brown up-to-date with coursework.

And now, having just graduated from Brown, with a degree in anthropology, Megan hasn't deserted her interest in film. Most recently, she has been a member of The Rhode Island International Film Festival team, serving as an intern. RIIF is the largest festival in New England, screening 305 titles in six days with films from 33 states in the U.S. — and from 40 countries

around the globe. Again, her mix of anthropology and film makes a meaningful convergence.

Megan's mix will also serve her well in China, where she plans to follow her practice of filming while encountering new faces and cultures. "I keep journals," she says, "so if I want to create a travel memoir on film, I will have the resources."

Once she arrives in Beijing, in August, she will embark on another career. She has a contract to teach for a year at the International Montessori School there. Including Megan, there will be ten teaching assistants at the school, "mostly English," according to her, "and a few Americans who've spent the past few years studying in England." They will undergo training for two-and-a-half weeks before school opens.

Megan looks forward to the training, because her teaching experience mainly comes from the time, during her high school years, she "helped out at Nashoba with a first grade class." She was unfortunately not there during one of the China-Tibet units, and so when

asked if she, like Kathy Mortensen's students, can name the fourteen countries that border China, she just laughs.

After her year in China, Megan will no doubt learn these facts, and more. Although the student body has a large number of "expats" of many cultures, there are also Chinese. "It's a big melting pot," she says. She will be teaching in English, but, she says, "One of my goals for the year is to learn to speak Chinese." She also hopes to travel to Tibet, during the winter break from the Beijing school (she won't be coming home at all during the year). She plans to work in a Tibetan orphanage that has a relationship with the International School. And she promises to share moments from her experiences when she returns to the U.S. in the summer of 2008.

Megan is the fifth member of her extended family to graduate from Nashoba Brooks since 1982. She is the older sister of Emily, who will graduate next year.