

## UVSC Success

Michael Erin Strong



Months ago, if Michael Erin Strong '07 from Fort Worth, Texas, had decided not to go get ice cream with her roommate, her life might be a little different right now. She might not be spending the next 27 months in Ukraine with the Peace Corps.

“Joining the Peace Corps began as a spontaneous decision that my college roommate Tiffany Nez suggested over a pint of Ben & Jerry’s,” Strong said. “But after nine months of applications, paperwork, interviews, vaccines and research, the spontaneity is gone and the decision is more sincere.”

Strong will arrive in Kyiv, Ukraine with 87 other members of the Peace Corp in October. They will spend three months in local villages, learning the culture and the language. After that, they’ll work with Ukrainian colleagues and live alone for the remaining two years teaching English.

“For me, the decision was about serving the United States,” Strong said. “It’s ironic that I’m leaving the country to serve the country, but that’s why I’m going. I want to create a positive image of America for the people I interact with in Ukraine while helping them with community service and language skills.”

Strong graduated from UVSC with honors with a Bachelor of Science in English and Creative Writing. Her experience while a student at UVSC included internships with Senator Bennett’s office in Washington, D.C. and with Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla. She was president of Phi Theta Kappa, editor in chief of Touchstones literary magazine and won the Lucille Stoddard Award for published prose. She worked for The College Times and held a chair on the Service Committee.

“All of those accomplishments gave me the know-how and the courage to serve in the Peace Corps,” Strong said. “And I don’t think those opportunities would have been as abundant at other colleges. Everyone who is attending UVSC should realize how fortunate they are to be at a college on the cusp of being a university. And yet, they’re at a college that teaches the students to be individuals while caring for them attentively like the college is still a small school.”

But even with her wealth of experience and success, much of her future is full of unknowns. “I can’t fathom what this experience will entail,” Strong said. “I’ve never been outside of the United States. I’ve packed the necessary and unnecessary things that will make me feel at home wherever I am. I’ve learned enough of the language to get into, and then back out of, trouble. But I don’t think this is the sort of thing a person is ever prepared for entirely. My blog on Myspace is setup, my Sonicare toothbrush has its own plug adapter and my bags are packed. That will have to do.”

But even with all of the question marks, one thing is for sure. “I’m going to miss heated showers and clean tap water,” she said.