



## Twain Harte woman ready for mission

By SUZANNE ASHE

While most 22-year-old college graduates are thinking about finding a job, dating, or possibly going to graduate school, Megan McInnis, of Twain Harte, is packing for a 14-month-long mission in Peru.

She even looks forward to living without a refrigerator, TV, blow-dryer and other modern comforts, she said.

She will live in a modest home in a poor Lima neighborhood and spend time praying and playing with the children.

A member of Sonora High School's 2002 class, she studied biology and Spanish at the University of San Diego and graduated summa cum laude in May.

McInnis and her family belong to St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Sonora, and she has always felt a strong desire to do charitable service.

After graduating from college, McInnis started looking for an adventure. Instead of the backpacking trip through Europe that many her age take, she stuck to that goal.

Through her church, she learned of Heart's Home, a Catholic missionary service. She signed up and soon learned she would be heading to Peru.

"Unlike the Peace Corps, you don't have to have any special skill to do this work,"

she said of her mission assignment in Peru.

Last month, McInnis spent a weekend at the Heart's Home service center, in the Bronx, New York.

"It's an amazing way of life," she said of the missionaries there.

During her visit to the Bronx, she met a host of international missionaries and the children they work with.

Heart's Home was founded in 1990 by Father Thierry de Roucy, of France. McInnis will be the third Heart's Home missionary from the U.S.

Last year, 179 missionaries served in 30 Heart's Home service centers in 20 countries. More than 1,100 missionaries from 18 countries have served since the program began.

"The idea is to spread love and compassion," Leroux said. "Mostly, she will be involved with people where she lives. Some of children need help with homework. Some mothers, who have a lot of children, need help taking care of the younger ones."

The Heart's Home program is under the auspices of the Catholic church, but the volunteer missionaries' work is not one of conversion. In Peru, McInnis will spend time each day in prayer and contemplation. She will also keep a journal, she said.

It's about compassion, McInnis said. She and the other



Union Democrat photo by Amy Alonzo

MEGAN MCINNIS IS leaving for a 14-month stay in Peru, where she will serve as a missionary with Heart's Home. Each missionary serving is given a rosary to wear on their wrist to identify her as a missionary.

missionaries pay their own way, about \$650 a month. For the past few months, she has been raising money, including hosting a fund-raising car wash a month ago.

McInnis, who is is fluent in Spanish, will live with other missionaries; two men from France and two women from Argentina.

The missionaries follow a daily routine of prayer, attending Mass, studying the Bible and reaching out to the com-

munity. She will also visit children and adults in orphanages, prisons and hospitals. "We are not there to change anything. There are no programs to build schools, or anything like that," she said.

But the former high school soccer player says she is taking a soccer ball, so she and the children can play.

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