



HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

Giving Back to Education

HHS Alumni Recognition Feature!

Dear HHS Alumni and HPS Foundation Supporters,

Holdrege High School is fortunate to have many very successful graduates. We are excited to continue sharing the stories of some of those HHS Alums thanks to the journalistic talents of Kristine (Long) Jacobson, Class of 1990.



We are hosting our annual HPS Foundation Golf Tourney on Saturday, June 17th in conjunction with Swedish Days. The tourney registration information and form can be accessed from our home page at www.holdregebusters.org. The Holdrege High School All-Class Reunion will also be part of the Swedish Days Friday night's [Ribfest](#) activities.



We also welcome your suggestions and comments.

Sincerely,
*Teresa Kroll, Chairman
 HPS Foundation Committee*

Megan Fuehrer - Class of 2005

Fuehrer Teaches English Around the World

By Kristine Jacobson

When Megan Fuehrer was in second grade, her friendship with a local college student who studied abroad ignited a fire in her that still burns today.

The 2005 Holdrege High School graduate has lived in a half dozen countries in the past 10 years and is currently enjoying her job teaching English to students in Shanghai, China. It's the fifth country where Megan has worked or volunteered as an English teacher.

Megan distinctly remembers being bitten by the travel bug in second grade. It happened after her former first-grade teacher, Mrs. Hulda Peterson, invited her out to ride horses at her farm, which resulted in a friendship with the teacher's daughter, Alisha. Alisha, a college student at the time, studied abroad in Australia when Megan was in second grade. "She (Alisha) sent me postcards, and when she



Megan Fuehrer with one of her students in South Korea.

came back, she had stories and gifts," Megan said of Alisha's experience. "It just sounded so exotic to me. I actually knew in second grade that I would study abroad. I don't know why. I just clearly remember thinking, 'I'm doing this.'"

Megan said she was also influenced by family friend and high school baby-sitter Andrea (Moomey) Wenburg, who sang with a group called "The Continentals" and seemed to choose a different path

from the usual activities her peers were choosing.

"I think admiring those people who did what they loved to do inspired me the most, watching those older than me go out of state to school and study abroad," Megan said. "Both of them had a good friendship with me, too."

Megan's parents, Tim and Steph Fuehrer, also shared their love of travel with their children by exploring the United States on summer vacations.

In high school, Megan played the clarinet in band, sang in the choir, competed on the speech team, played golf and participated in school plays and musicals and then ventured off to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She originally planned to study international business and minor in Spanish but switched to hospitality management in hopes of working at hotels overseas.

During the second semester of her sophomore year of college in 2007, Megan traveled overseas for the first time when she studied for a semester in Kenya, Africa. "I was hooked," Megan said of her experience. "The people. The culture. The vibrant. The smells, sights, and sounds. It was exotic and intoxicatingly good."

After graduating from UNL, she worked in the hotel industry in Arizona for a few years but soon realized that she needed to choose a different career path to satisfy her desire to travel and live abroad. That's when she turned to teaching.



Megan with her students in South Korea.

"I swore I'd never be a teacher," Megan said. "But when the opportunities to work in hotels abroad weren't available, I scoured jobs to work abroad and ESL (English as a Second Language) teaching kept appearing."

She enrolled in a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) course, which required 100 hours of online learning plus 20 hours of real-world experience conversing with refugees who were learning English. She enjoyed it so much, she decided to give it a try in the real world. She researched ESL jobs overseas and applied for a position in Korea based on the country's safety rating and the good salary offered.

In September 2011, she completed all the necessary paperwork to travel overseas, endured a 14-hour flight to Korea and landed in a foreign country in the middle of a rainy night - all by herself.

After she arrived, she had to find a bus to drive her another four-and-a-half hours to Jangyu in the southern part of South Korea to where she would be teaching. She did all of this without a cell phone and knowing very little of the language spoken there.

She arrived at her apartment at 3 a.m. with nothing but her travel bag and some bed sheets, and then the tears hit. She was all alone in a country far from home. But in the morning, she faced her fears and remembers telling herself, "Suck it up, this is what you signed up for."

Her persistence and sense of responsibility and commitment kicked in. She found her mentoring teacher the next day and immersed herself in learning how to teach English. Her job was to teach elementary-aged kids in an after-school program the basics of English conversation and culture. She taught in Korea for a year, formed bonds with the students, and saw their English improve significantly during the time she was there.

"It was a good year," Megan said. "It taught me so much. Korea was probably the most impactful country, just because I made really good friends. I think it just taught me a lot about living abroad and how to be flexible. You just learn so much about your limits and what you can handle."

After Korea, she took a six-month break back in Holdrege while she waited for a volunteer opportunity to begin in Chile. From April to July of 2013, she volunteered with the Ministry in Education English Opens Doors program in Chile.



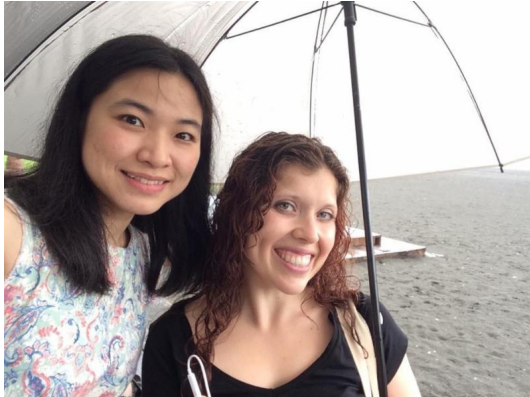
Megan in Chile, at left with her host Mom.

While there, she considered her next move. She applied for jobs back in the

United States even though she wasn't quite sure where she wanted to put down roots. But, nothing panned out. After a conversation with friends, she realized she wasn't ready to move back to the United States anyway. She desired island life.

"I just woke up one morning at 4 in the morning and said I just really felt like living on an island," she said. "I was ready for warmth and sunshine."

She applied for a job teaching English in Taiwan and was hired within 24 hours. With ESL jobs in high demand and the short duration of teacher contracts, jobs are easy to find, Megan explained.



Megan in Taiwan.

and was accepted. While she waited for her graduate school to begin, she took another short-term (seven months) teaching position in Indonesia, where she taught both elementary students and adults.

In each of the countries where she lived, she learned enough of their language to function. "I can order food. I can give directions. I can have simple conversation," she said. "I can understand more than I can speak."

In the summer of 2015, she returned to the United States and lived in California to begin her master's degree studies at Concordia University in Irvine. She completed the rest of her studies through the college's online program eventually earning her master's degree in international/global studies. Her thesis was titled "Study Abroad Motivations and Cultural Competency of Chinese Undergraduates."

She completed her thesis after conducting surveys of 500 college students during her next teaching assignment in Shanghai, China. She began her work in China in August of 2015 teaching college students at East China University of Science and Technology. Last fall, she started a second year teaching in China, this time switching to a bilingual school where she teaches first, sixth, seventh, eighth, and tenth graders.

Working in China has made her appreciate her education in the United States and Holdrege.

"Even though there are flaws in the American education system, it has made me appreciate that our education is not just academic," she said. "From sunup until sundown these kids are studying. I just remember in first grade that we'd get

She moved to the tropical warmth of Taiwan, where she taught English to first through sixth graders from August 2013-August 2014.

"I really miss my life in Taiwan," Megan said. "I had this amazing apartment. The gym was two blocks away. It was warm. It was easy living in Taiwan. The people were so kind in Taiwan."

During that time, she also applied for graduate school back in the United States



out at 3:15 and go play. But, they have homework and tests. It's very sad. It's eye opening and just makes you appreciate the freedoms we have in our education system."

Megan has enjoyed having an impact on the kids she teaches. "Yes, I am teaching, but I'm also helping the kids and inspiring the kids," she said. "I think it's just being that positive influence in their lives."

She also has learned about herself at the same time. "The most rewarding part is probably knowing that I know how to set up life in another country and that I can fully function in another culture," she said. "I can learn about another culture. I can make friends with people in that country. I learn some of the language."

Megan has learned to overcome her shyness, learned how to teach, and how to be flexible.

"It sounds very easy, but I've actually had visa problems in every country," she said of the challenges she has had to overcome to teach and live overseas. "I've had flight problems. I've had money issues. I have so much stress until I actually get there dealing with embassies and consulates and directors. It's not quite a cakewalk."

Megan said her persistence, willingness to try new experiences, flexibility, and organization have all helped her in her world experiences.

"Once I commit to something, I don't quit until it's done," she said. "I learned to be persistent and overcome obstacles no matter how big or small they are."

When she's not working, Megan enjoys practicing taking Ashtanga yoga classes.

"All my yoga teachers have been like my second moms in these foreign countries," she said. "My yoga instructors have almost been like family to me being abroad."

Megan will finish out the year in China, and then see where the travel bug takes her next.

You can keep up with Megan and her travels on her blog at www.wordsfromatraveler.com.

About Us

The mission of the HPS Foundation is to support and enhance the educational efforts of students and teachers of Holdrege Public Schools by providing funding for innovative and challenging programs, learning experiences, and activities.

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