

Amy Maraney, Peace Corps Volunteer, Estonia (2000–2002)

Biography

My name is Amy Maraney. Say it out loud and let it roll off your tongue. If you are saying it correctly you will hear that my first and last names rhyme. Say it again. You might find it slightly mesmerizing. Many people do.

I grew up just south of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the suburb of Bethel



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Park. My childhood and teenage years were not unusual. I worked hard in school, read novels in my free time, played

basketball and ran track on my high school teams, cheered loudly for the Pittsburgh Penguin hockey team, and landed my first real job at McDonald's. I have one sister, Lisa, who is nearly eight years older than I am. She is married and has an eight-year-old daughter and a five-year-old son.

After high school I went to Grove City College in Grove City, Pennsylvania. I graduated from college with degrees in English literature and secondary education. From Grove City, I moved across Pennsylvania to Philadelphia to attend graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania. I also taught English part time at a business school that offered English classes to immigrants. Living in such a large, diverse city gave me the opportunity to meet people from many different countries. At one point during my two years there, I shared a house with one other American, a Mongolian, a Swede, a Kenyan, and a Korean. The experience was both fun and culturally enriching.

I left for my Peace Corps assignment nine days after earning a master's degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). Now I live and work in a border town in Estonia. Located in the northeast corner of the country, my town is Estonia's third-largest town (pop. 78,000). A Russian town lies directly across the border. The official language of Estonia is Estonian, but I am learning Russian because my town is 96 percent Russian speaking.

I am English teacher and also a teacher-trainer. My Peace Corps assignment requires me to teach and interact with a wide range of people. I split my time almost evenly between two schools. One is the largest of 13 schools in the town and has approximately 1,450 students from first to twelfth grade. My other teaching assignment is at a local branch of Tartu University, a college. There, I teach American literature, American studies, and conversation courses to first- to fourth-year college students. Most of my students at the college are studying to become English teachers.

I have several other projects in addition to my regular teaching load. For example, I teach an evening English class for in-service teachers and community members. I am also trying to organize what will become an annual spelling bee for high school students. An English club for students and occasional workshops for in-service teachers are other small projects. My biggest project during my second year is planning an American studies conference to be held in the spring of 2002.