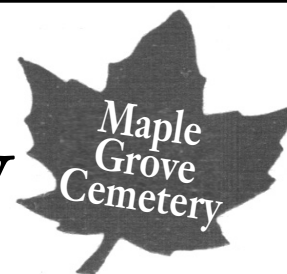


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Swedish honor student Volunteers to meet new people



Maria Rexhammar

BY JESSICA LYONS

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Since moving to the United States from Sweden two years ago, Maria Rexhammar has been getting involved in activities that have allowed her to give back to the community while also getting to know new people.

Rexhammar, an Astoria resident, moved to New York in February of 2006 to be with her boyfriend, who she had met a couple years prior in London through mutual friends. Not knowing much about schools she could attend, her boyfriend began asking around and was told that LaGuardia Community College was a good school.

Having gotten a “good feeling” during a visit there, Rexhammar enrolled as a liberal arts major and graduated last December.

“It clearly had a lot of international students,” she said. “I just figured that it would be easier to be surrounded by people in a similar situation.”

While at LaGuardia, Rexhammar joined the school’s honor society, Phi Theta Kappa, and was selected as its treasurer, her goal being to get as much money for the chapter as possible. One of the projects she did with them was “Operation Green,” which held Earth Day activities. She was also part of efforts to collect office supplies to send to schools in South America.

Through “Doors to Dreams” at LaGuardia Community College, Rexhammar participated in a drive that collected about 1,500 books to send to African countries.

Rexhammar also volunteered in the office of Public Advocate

Betsy Gotbaum as part of the CUNY Women’s Public Leadership Program. She was a member of Ombudsman Services and was given cases to try to solve as best as possible.

“From day one they put me in there as if I was one of them,” Rexhammar said. “They gave me a huge responsibility.”

Recently, Rexhammar was also honored by being named to the 2008 All-New York Academic Team for a statewide academic competition.

Now a political science student at Hunter College, Rexhammar is the treasurer of the pre-law society. She also continues to mentor freshman students at LaGuardia Community College.

“I think for me it’s always been important to be involved in the community where I live. That’s sort of how I was raised – to give back somehow,” Rexhammar said. “There are just so many things that are wrong and so many things to do that I want to do whatever I can.”

Rexhammar plans on going into law. Although she is not sure yet what area she will focus on, she is thinking about possibly criminal law or civil rights law. She said that law would be a good way to help people and change things more permanently.

Rexhammar is also looking for some long-term ways to get involved in the community outside of school. In Sweden, she had formerly volunteered at a homeless shelter and is looking for one in the city that she might be able to work with.

Over the summers, Rexhammar still goes back to Sweden to work at a health care company.

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