

## **Intergenerational leader to travel from Village in Chicago to Village in Caribbean**

By Ben Polk

In a few months, 23-year-old Madeleine Brenner will travel 1,865 miles to her new home in a village in the Dominican Republic. She'll journey from Chicago to another village in another country taking with her the valuable lessons she's learned interning first with Edgewater Village.

A recent university grad, she decided to intern before taking the next big step. Her sister interned in the 48th ward office two years ago and suggested she ask if there were any opportunities. Soon she was on board working with Ginger Williams, executive director of Edgewater Village. Madeleine said it's her first experience working with older adults. "It's gratifying to work with people who have so much more wisdom and life experience to share," Madeleine said.

In school she studied international development with minors in psychology and Hispanic studies. She gained valuable experience with English students and refugee populations when she studied for a year in Mexico. Madeleine already is starting with an international background since half her family is in Brazil and some relatives are living in other parts of the world.

### **Move to a small village**

Those Spanish-language skills and her international studies will serve her well when she takes the next step with the Peace Corps. Madeleine will live with a host family in the Dominican Republic for the first three months while she's in training. The training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security areas.

As an education facilitator, she'll work with educators, schools, private entities, and school programs to see if they can consolidate a program to raise Spanish literacy rates. She points out the program will be community-oriented, which requires individuals with a range of talents to achieve the goals.

Of course, by working with our Village and the Edgewater Satellite Senior Center, she's already gained important experience. "The main thing I learned," Madeleine said, "is that it's essential for older and younger people to work together and talk more."

In two years when she returns, she plans to work for a while, perhaps in marketing to gain additional skills. In time, she will probably return to school for a Master's degree since the Peace Corps offers reduced tuition.

Edgewater Village certainly has gained from Madeleine's skills, initiative and experience. She's proof of the value of intergenerational volunteering efforts.

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