

An Andean Adventurer at Heart

Career change has led Vujovich to unique experiences in the mountains of South America

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Instead of returning to work, vujovich has decided to flip her life upside down. She learned Spanish, bought a Chilean horse and is creating a business leading guiding tours on the opposite end of the globe in the South American area of Patagonia.

Woodbury Bulletin
 Wednesday, August 24, 2005 Serving Woodbury and Afton, Minnesota
www.woodburybulletin.com

NEWS AT A Glance

Budget workshop coming up
 The Woodbury City Council will discuss city services, funding levels and issues that will impact the 2006 property tax levy at its Aug. 30 workshop. The meeting will start at 4 p.m. at city hall.
 For more information about the budget process, contact the finance department at 651-714-3500 or e-mail finance@ci.woodbury.mn.us.

Tickets on sale for safety dinner
 A benefit dinner to buy equipment for the Woodbury Police and Fire departments will be held at the Poom Center Oct. 3. The dinner includes activities, demonstrations and public safety awards.
 Dinner tickets cost \$10 each and raffle tickets cost \$5. Both can be purchased by calling Greg Orth at 651-730-1663, Chris Murphy at 651-714-3698 or the Fire Department at 651-714-5700.

Individuals and businesses interested in donating for the silent auction call Chris Murphy at 651-714-3698.

City accepting contest photos
 The city of Woodbury is accepting pictures from residents who've captured images showing why Woodbury is a special place to live, work and play for its annual photo contest. The deadline for submissions is 6:00 p.m. Sept. 16.
 For more information on the contest visit the city's Web site at wwwci.woodbury.mn.us and click on "Community Events," then "City-sponsored events."



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 Career change has led Vujovich to unique experiences in the mountains of South America
 BY WENDY REVER
 Staff Writer

When Jill Vujovich, 42, took a sabbatical from her job as an environmental analyst at Prairie Island and traveled to South America, she hadn't intended to leave her job and busy American lifestyle behind. Instead of returning to work, Vujovich has decided to flip her life upside down. She learned Spanish, bought a Chilean horse and is creating a business out of giving guided tours on the opposite end of the globe in the South American area of Patagonia.

"I wanted to support and sustain local tourism," Vujovich said. "I've always camped as a child, always had a sense of adventure and I've always been interested in other cultures."

Vujovich first visited the rain forest areas near the equator and then later traveled to the Patagonia area of Chile and Argentina with Peter, her spouse.

"That experience was spectacular," Vujovich said. "The geography of the Andes Mountains, the topography, the people, the culture — I was smitten."

Although Vujovich has traveled substantially throughout Central and South America, she said she's not a big fan of the heat and humidity of the rain forest areas closer to the equator. "It's all about the outdoors. This is really what I want to do," she said.

The blond-haired, blue-eyed All-American Vujovich, who grew up in Hastings, found a culture and lifestyle which is similar to her American roots. The citizens of the area live with ranching to sustain their lifestyle.

Horses are used for transportation, work and play. Chilean cowboys are revered and the people waste nothing.

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Vujovich soon decided she wanted to become a guide herself and show friends and fellow northerners this corner of the world. Vujovich organized a trip of girlfriends who horseback rode with her through the Andes and temperate rain forests of Chile.

For seven months Vujovich traveled, lived and taught at an outdoor guide school. The school's premise is to educate young people in topics surrounding sustainable tourism such as kayaking, fly-fishing, horseback riding, leadership skills, cultural appreciation and English, which Vujovich taught.

To support herself, she lived with a Chilean family in the small, village of Futaluefu'. They embraced her as a family member while she had a chance to learn and enjoy the customs and hospitality of the family. "They really took me under their wing and took care of me," she said of her hosts.

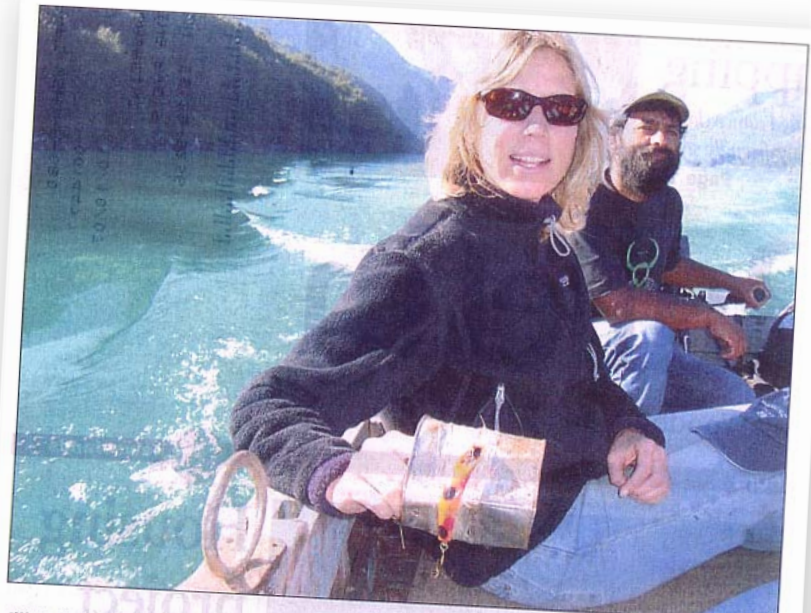
"Jill was an excellent guide. She has a wonderful relationship with the family whose horses we used and their support of us and hosting of us for many dinners was a highlight of our trip," Jill's friend Jennifer Gasperini said. "Because of this relationship, we were able to stay at many private homes and experience the warm of the people, the shocking simplicity of their lives, and their food."

Vujovich bought a horse from the Chilean family and plans to give guided tours through the Andes. Vujovich said she is impressed with the Chilean horses who are used to the treacherous terrain. "The horses never spook. They are so well behaved," she said.

Her next trip is planned for January when she will take an eight-day from the Andes mountains to the Pacific coast.

"I never would have gone to Chile if not for her incredible enthusiasm for her own experience. Now I am sure I will return," Gasperini said.

Even though Vujovich is well traveled she plans to keep the tours in the Patagonia areas. "The Chile area is spectacular for a number of reasons and it will satisfy me for a very long time," vujovich said.



Jill Vujovich heads for a fishing spot with an unidentified Chilean guide. Vujovich has spent months along the Pacific Coast and in the Andes Mountains of Chile and Argentina, fly-fishing, horseback riding, hiking, camping and working with local ranchers. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Chile: Finding a new way of life

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For seven months Vujovich attended a guide school. The school's premise is to educate young people in topics surrounding sustainable tourism such as mountain tracking, kayaking, fly-fishing, horseback riding, leadership, cultural appreciation and English which Vujovich later helped to teach.

To support herself, she lived with a Chilean family near the small village of Futaleu where she

worked for her keep and enjoyed the customs and hospitality of the family.

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Reuer can be reached at ureuer@woodburybulletin.com.