

Orinda Has a Young Visitor from Tabor

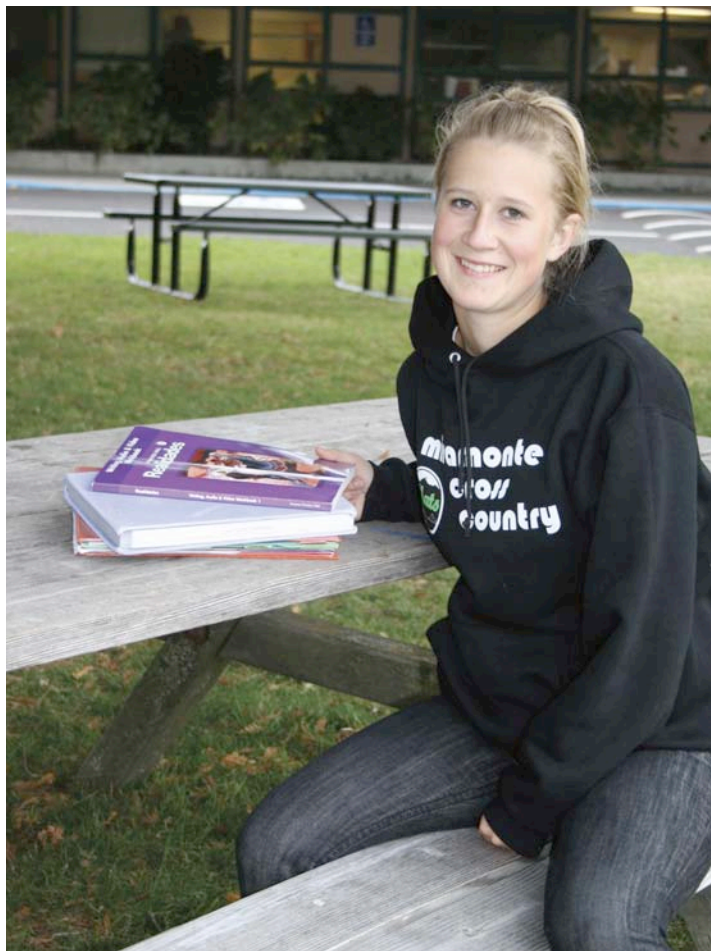
By Andrea A. Firth

When you ask Tereza Vertatova what she likes best about life in Orinda, she replies with assurance and a smile, "I like meeting people. There are lots of people from all over the world here." Sixteen year-old Tereza is from Tabor in the Czech Republic. She is spending a semester at Miramonte High School as part of the visiting student program sponsored by the Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation.

Tabor is a medieval city with a rich and turbulent history located approximately 60 miles south of Prague. "I'm used to all the old buildings in my country. I see America as young in this aspect," notes Tereza. She finds the weather and terrain in northern California a bit different too. "We have four seasons in the Czech Republic. I'm not used to the cool mornings and hot days. That's why I have a cold now," she reports with a sniffle and adds, "We have hills in Tabor, but they are not so big."

Having never been to the United States before, Tereza was motivated to head west to improve her English language skills and to do some exploring. Already, her conversational English is impeccable and includes a smattering of colloquialisms that make it difficult to distinguish her from any other high school student. As for exploring, she's been shopping in San Francisco, kayaking in Carmel, and plans to go hiking in Yosemite soon.

Now a junior at Miramonte, Tereza was intrigued by the op-



Tereza Vertatova, visiting student from Tabor in the Czech Republic. Photo Andrea Firth

portunity to take an elective such as Contemporary Issues. "This class is pretty hard for me, but I like it. I get to see the world from the American perspective, the American point of view—this is interesting." She is also taking Spanish and running on the cross country track team.

Although she misses her family and friends back in Tabor, Tereza has found the student body at Miramonte very welcoming and helpful. "Everyone talks to me and asks me where I am from. They are curious, and I think this is good," she explains. Tereza will have two more years of high school to complete when she returns to the Czech Republic in February. She plans to go to college possibly majoring in languages. Tereza would like to return to California someday, and she adds, "I hope that some of the friends that I made here will come visit me in the Czech Republic."



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