

August 4, 2007

Lead-off role: Leading blind climbers in Peru

Noblesville softball player spends a week hiking the Andes in South America

By **Ted Schultz**

Ted.Schultz@TheNoblesvilleLedger.com

August 4, 2007

When Alyssa Shriver returns to Noblesville High School this month, she'll have plenty to tell her classmates about her summer vacation.

Last month, Shriver hiked in the Peruvian Andes with the group Global Explorers. This week, she has been in Sioux Falls, S.D., to play softball with Team Indiana in the ASA National Championships.

Shriver was one of 22 students who helped guide 10 blind climbers in seven days of hiking in Peru, which reached heights of up to 15,600 feet. The group spent a few other days sightseeing.

"Leading blind people really helps with leadership, and it helps me with my confidence," Shriver said. "They can't really do that (climb) without your help, and just to know that you helped them reach their goal . . . some of them were crying because they felt so accomplished."

Among the group was possibly the world's most famous blind athlete, Erik Weihenmayer.

"He's pretty experienced," Shriver said. "He helped guide. He knew what he was walking on because he had climbed Mt. Everest and Mt. McKinley. I guided him for a little bit, but he really didn't need it a lot."

Some of Shriver's experiences included eating a Peruvian delicacy meal of guinea pig served whole with teeth and eyes intact, cooking a sheep stew with eyeballs and hooves in it, seeing a dozen condors, jumping in a glacial lake and hearing glacial avalanches and while sleeping in a tent.

Shriver, who hiked the Inca Trail in Peru last summer, turned 16 on the return trip home July 19. She had a week to rest and practice with her softball team to get ready for nationals. Shriver, who played shortstop as a Noblesville freshman and earned All-Hoosier Crossroads Conference and All-Noblesville Ledger honors, plays second base for Team Indiana.

"It's been great," said Shriver, who will be a sophomore. "I'll have a lot of stories."