

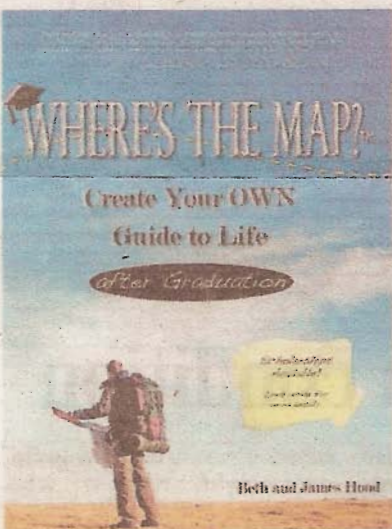
Book gives YOUNG GRADS map to future

By Jessie Forand
Free Press Correspondent

When Beth Chapman Hood was 26 years old, she was married, living in Seattle and working a 60-hour-a-week job. The Vermont native had no idea what she wanted to do with the rest of her life.

Hood and her husband, James, quit their jobs, gave away their things and moved to Hawaii, working in a care-taking opportunity on a goat farm.

While on the farm for six months, the Hoods did a lot of exploration. They read hundreds of books and spoke with people from various professions. These experiences and more led the Hoods to write the book "Where's the Map? Create Your OWN Guide to Life After Graduation" (Inspiration Publications Inc., 2008).



WHERE TO BUY

"Where's the Map" (\$19.95) can be purchased at local bookstores or online at www.wheresthemap.com.

passion for helping people.

The main message in the book, she said, is that it is never too early or too late to make changes in one's life. There is always a new possibility.

"The expression 'Where's the Map?' indicates that we're lost. When we were 26, we were in Seattle, and we had worked for a few years, but we still didn't quite know what it was that made us tick, that made our eyes sparkle, and made us want to wake up in the morning," Hood said. "We were still in this process, this journey, of

"Our goal really with this book is to help students, people who are younger than us, and we're only 30, wake up in the morning and feel excited about who they are and what they want to do with their lives," said Beth Chapman Hood.

The Tunbridge native and University of Vermont graduate, who met her husband in Seattle and now lives in Waimea, Hawaii, has always had a

figuring out what our vision was. 'Where's the Map?' is part of that exploration."

While aimed at high school students, the book can be used by college students to figure out a life plan, more or less. First is the concept of a life vision, Hood said, something to keep you going.

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BOOK: 'Map' guides grads to ask questions

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"It's very holistic in the sense that we're not just talking about your career. We're talking about your education and your career and your relationships, the people you want to surround yourself with. Where in the world do you fit in? How do you sort out where you are?" Hood said.

Hood decided on her college major after a five-minute conversation with a boyfriend, she said. No one ever asked her why she chose psychology, what she was going to do with it, or if she had spoken with any psychologists or students pursuing the field.

"Those are some of the questions that in retrospect I wish I had really been asked, and those are some of the questions that we want to ask in our book," she said.

Hood said she doesn't have regrets because she's happy with her life, but she would have tried to follow her own map earlier, "rather than being influenced by the expectations of others around me. That's what 'Where's the Map?' is all about."

One suggestion made in the book is a gap year, taking a year off between high school and college, during college, or after college, to get real-world experience.

Hood took a gap year building houses with Habi-

tat for Humanity in Seattle after graduating from college. Thirty percent of college freshmen drop out by their sophomore year and 50 percent of students take six years to complete a four-year degree, she said.

A scholarship is available to help people age 18-25 with a strong desire for a gap year, who have a plan based on the book's exercises, Hood said. The scholarship will be awarded through Inspiration Publications, the book's publishing company. One dollar from every book sold will go into the scholarship fund.

The "Where's the Map?" method is not for everyone, Hood said. "I love asking questions about myself and experiencing that sort of growth, like self exploration, and so I am expecting that probably people that are a little bit more like me would want to read that and do those processes," she said.

In the future, Hood plans to get involved with more high school and college speaking circuits, with "Where's the Map?" workshops to help go through the book's exercises and impart their message that people are never too young — or old — to choose a path. Such an event was recently held at the University of Vermont.

Also, she hopes to get more specific with the books — gearing them toward college students, different age groups, and even finding a map to retirement.