

## **Program teaches non-violence**

BY MARK GWIN

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K-lee Starland came to Smithville because this is a town where Hope Floats. And she is hoping to share some of that hope with others in the community. She has teamed up with the Smithville Police Department to offer a one-night class entitled "How to Successfully Negotiate Family Disputes." The class, which is aimed at adults, will be from 7-8:30 p.m. on April 12 at the rec center. "I hope that at the end of the class everyone will have better tools for communicating and resolving problems," Starland said.

Starland has a Ph.D. in health and human services, and she has a special interest in international affairs, especially where it pertains to violence. Starland's interest is not purely scholastic, however. She first became actively involved in teaching conflict resolution when her first marriage deteriorated into domestic violence. "It's important to understand the dynamics of both the bullies and the victims," Starland said. "Bullies live on what I call 'psycho planet.' Everything that is wrong is somebody else's fault, and a majority of their sentences start with 'you.' They look for vulnerability, and are heavily invested in being right or better than others," she said. Victims, she noted, are often quiet and relatively withdrawn, particularly in a school setting. They also tend to deviate from the norm -- whether it is that they are too short or too smart or something else unusual.

In August, Starland will be working on a program with the Smithville Independent School District to help junior high teachers recognize problems before they occur and give them the tools to deal with them. "We're trying to facilitate a peace plan by giving teachers and staff tools they can use," she said. An important one is recognizing a potential argument and de-escalating it before it becomes carried away. "An argument is anytime you have two people talking and nobody listening," Starland said.

Though Starland has been active in the community since moving here, she has 'always, always, always' been interested in international affairs, particularly in issues pertaining to violence. She has been active in human rights movements not only in the U.S. but also in Asia, particularly in Pakistan and Indonesia. She has been working in the human rights area of non-violence and peace planning over the internet for more than six years assisting in and setting up various non-violence programs. A pamphlet she wrote for Amnesty International was recently used throughout Asia in an effort to disseminate information about respecting the differences and the rights of sexes. She has written more than pamphlets, too.

She has also written two books -- "Changing the Rules: The Resurgence of the Feminine" and also "Higher Level Healing: A Bird's Song." All of this experience will come to bear on the training session she will be hosting Tuesday with the police department. After giving attendees tools to work with in addressing disputes, there will be a practice session where people can try using them in a controlled situation. The cost is \$10 and reservations may be made by contacting the police department and 237-3228.

