"We focus on policies and programs in the general plan as well as natural resource planning. I’m part of the team currently working on the Placer County Conservation Plan," Jennifer Dzakovic said.

She found an interest in planning and land use at a young age. Dzakovic grew up on rural property outside of Livermore, where she rode horses and marveled at the open spaces that surrounded her town. Dzakovic graduated from Livermore High School in 1993 and from UC Davis in 2000 with a degree in environmental management and biology.

Dzakovic has been with Placer County for five years and began her career in land use as a city planner in Woodland. Her job is in long-range planning, working with developers, regional area MACs (municipal advisory committees), California Fish and Game, federal government agencies and environmental groups, all in the name of logical long-range planning.

Her work focuses on community planning, conserving natural resources, streams and wetlands.

Dzakovic’s thirst for knowledge and investing in her future has recently been rekindled as she has enrolled in Drexel University.

Dzakovic has now focused her non-working hours on getting her master’s degree in business administration — additional skills that she feels will make her a better planner and increase her opportunities for career advancement.

"Drexel is a small college and not well known on the West Coast, but is a well-respected college on the East Coast with several campuses," Dzakovic said.

Drexel University is involved in a land use project in Western Placer County and has plans to build a campus within the project in the next five years.

Dzakovic was exposed to Drexel through her involvement with the planning of the project and became interested in attending.

"After attending an information meeting I thought this is a good thing for Placer County if they could pull off building a four-year university, and this could be a good thing for me," Dzakovic said.

On Mondays and Tuesdays Dzakovic puts in long days working full time at Placer County and then commuting to school in Sacramento, returning to her home in the foothills, striving to get her graduate studies completed.

Dzakovic is part of a small inaugural class, the first of a potential tradition of higher education at Drexel University in Placer County.

In her very scarce spare time, Dzakovic loves to ride her horses and is an accomplished endurance rider, earning her silver buckle at the Tevis Ride in 2004.

She also volunteers her time with the ride, helping with various tasks at veterinary checkpoints.