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WorldView (ISSN 1047-5338) is published four times per year (Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter) by the National Peace Corps Association (located at 1900 L Street, NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036-5002) to provide news and comment about communities and issues of the world of serving and returned Peace Corps Volunteers. *WorldView* © 1978 National Peace Corps Association.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. & additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER

Please send address changes to

WorldView magazine

National Peace Corps Association
1900 L Street NW, Suite 610
Washington, DC 20036-5002

ADVERTISING

Questions regarding advertising should be sent to advertising@peacecorpsconnect.org.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Magazine subscriptions may be purchased from the National Peace Corps Association by check or credit card. Prices for individuals are \$25 and institutions \$35 (add \$10 for overseas delivery). Order forms are also available on the NPCA website at www.peacecorpsconnect.org or www.worldviewmagazine.com.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Articles published in the magazine are not intended to reflect the views of the Peace Corps, or those of the National Peace Corps Association, a nonprofit educational membership organization for those whose lives are influenced by Peace Corps. The NPCA is independent of the federal agency, the Peace Corps. Further details at <http://www.worldview-magazine.com>

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Letters to the editor are welcomed. Unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, or other illustrations will be considered. The editors prefer written proposals before receiving original material. Send queries or manuscripts to the editor at news@peacecorpsconnect.org or by mail to the NPCA address.

All inquiries can be addressed to the appropriate person at NPCA by fax at 202/293-7554 or by mail to NPCA, or through the NPCA website at www.peacecorpsconnect.org or www.worldviewmagazine.com.

A magazine of news and comment about the Peace Corps world

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION



In 2013, to coincide with International Deaf Awareness Week, Peace Corps Volunteers in Kenya organized Camp Uwezo (Camp Ability), the first-ever Deaf youth leadership camp in Kenya. In addition to educational and team building activities, the camp also included a panel of successful Deaf adults who shared their experiences. Prior to an awareness-raising walk through the town of Kisumu, campers visited a booth run by a local Deaf VCT (Voluntary Counseling and Testing Center) for HIV/AIDS. The woman, pictured above, explained HIV/AIDS prevention and testing, and answered campers' questions.

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ON THE COVER A Peace Corps Volunteer works with Special Olympics participants in Belize, 1999. PHOTO BY PEACE CORPS

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Spring 2014

Volume 27, Number 1

THE PUBLISHER

The publisher of *WorldView* magazine is the National Peace Corps Association, a national network of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, former staff and friends. The NPCA is a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) educational and service organization which is independent of the federal agency, the Peace Corps.

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1979-2014 35 YEARS OF THE NPCA

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteer community has much to be proud of

By Glenn Blumhorst

Remember when?

- Presidents Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev signed the SALT II agreement.
- Mother Teresa of Calcutta won the Nobel Peace Prize.
- Iranian militants seized the U.S. embassy in Teheran and held hostages.
- The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan stirred world protests.

Maybe you do. Maybe you weren't born yet. But in 1979, a group of visionary Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) in the Midwest set about founding the National Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (NCRPCV) as the collective voice of the RPCV community.

In 1987, the same year in which the NCRPCV opened an office in Washington, DC, the then 120,000 Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs), RPCVs, and current and former Peace Corps staff were honored with the Beyond War Award.

In 1988, the first issue of the now iconic *WorldView* magazine was published. For many of us, it was a quarterly highlight of our Peace Corps service and always a welcome sight in our mailboxes.

In 1993 the NCRPCV was renamed the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), reflecting the inclusive nature of our Peace Corps community.



RPCV Council Members, Omaha, Neb., 1978. Pictured from left: Ed Henry (South Orange, N.J.), Greg Flakus (Omaha, Neb.), Jody Rohe, (Omaha, Neb.), Herman Debose (Chicago, Ill.), Fred Thompson (Minn.). The National Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers later became the National Peace Corps Association. Greg Flakus was the NCRPCV's first president.

In response to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, NPCA created the Emergency Response Network of RPCVs willing to respond to crises when needed. Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan subsequently modeled the Crisis Corps—later renamed Peace Corps Response—after this successful program.

In 2002, the Peace Corps and the NPCA were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for "creating the climate, the conditions, the momentum, and the spirit of peace that is needed all over the world."

From 2008-2010, NPCA's "More Peace Corps" campaign led the way in securing

an increase in funding for the Peace Corps beyond the amount requested by the President, which has only happened three times in its history.

And along the way, we've celebrated the 25th, 35th, 40th and 50th anniversaries of the Peace Corps agency.

It is only fitting that in 2014 we celebrate the 35th anniversary of the NPCA. Just from this synopsis, it's

evident that we have a rich history and much to be proud of as a community of PCVs, RPCVs, and former and current Peace Corps staff.

We are recognized as the nation's leading nonprofit organization connecting and championing the Peace Corps community. We are also the longest-standing advocate for an independent and robust Peace Corps.

As we reflect on the history of the NPCA, we are reminded that this organization was

founded by and for you, the Peace Corps community. You are the NPCA.

I'm very privileged to serve as your president during this landmark 35th year as we look forward to the NPCA's promising future.

Saludos,

Glenn Blumhorst

President, National Peace Corps Association
RPCV Guatemala, 1988-1991

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Alan E. Guskin, Distinguished University Professor, PhD Program in Leadership and Change, Antioch University President Emeritus

“My Peace Corps service in Sierra Leone provided a valuable foundation for my career. Insights from the experience inform my teaching at Antioch University Seattle, and I appreciate the skills, commitment and critical thinking of RPCVs in our graduate programs.”

Mark Hower, PhD

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ADVOCACY UPDATE

Our advocates score legislative victory!

By Jonathan Pearson

As the world bid farewell to 2013, the United States Congress also said goodbye to one of its most unproductive years in history. Only several dozen of the thousands of bills up for consideration were passed by both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and signed by President Obama.

While the level of productivity for 2014 remains to be seen, one of the very first legislative achievements was also a major legislative victory for the Peace Corps community.

On January 13th, the House of Representatives voted 387 – 7 to pass S. 230, legislation authorizing a

“But I am confident that necessary financial support will be forthcoming – from the RPCV community and from thousands of individuals, corporations and foundations – motivated by belief in what the Peace Corps stands for and the American ideals and values its historic founding represents.”

— ROGER LEWIS, PRESIDENT OF THE PCCF

Peace Corps Commemorative. The bill—signed into law by President Obama ten days later—allows the Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation (PCCF) to proceed with efforts to establish a privately-funded, modest space near the National Mall to mark the lasting historic significance of the founding of the Peace Corps in 1961, and the ideals represented by Peace Corps service.

The House approved the earlier passed Senate version of the legislation, which was authored by Rob Portman (R-OH) and originally supported by Mark Udall (D-CO). House efforts were led by Dominican Republic Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV)

Congressman Joe Kennedy (D-MA), with the full bi-partisan support of the entire RPCV delegation including Colombia RPCV Sam Farr (D-CA), Somalia RPCV Tom Petri (R-WI), Ethiopia RPCV John Garamendi (D-CA) and El Salvador RPCV Mike Honda (D-CA).

“On behalf of the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), I want to thank the bipartisan group of Senate and House leaders who led the way in guiding the commemorative legislation to final passage,” said NPCA President Glenn Blumhorst (Guatemala 1988-1991). “I also want to extend our thanks and congratulations to all the members of the

Peace Corps community who over the past four years wrote a letter, made a phone call, or participated in a meeting to urge passage of the commemorative legislation.”

Roger Lewis (Tunisia 1964-66), President of the PCCF, notes important work lies ahead. “Creating the Commemorative will require procuring a site on federal land in the heart of the nation’s capital; generating a Commemorative concept and design for the site; obtaining design approvals and building permits; and finally constructing the Commemorative. And, of course, funding all this will depend entirely on contributions. But I am confident that necessary financial support will be forthcoming – from the RPCV community and from thousands of individuals, corporations and foundations – motivated by belief in what the Peace Corps stands for and the American ideals and values its historic founding represents.” **WV**

Jonathan Pearson (Micronesia 1987-1989) is the advocacy director for the National Peace Corps Association.

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GROUP NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

National Peace Corps Association member groups are always working to make the world a better place – no matter the season

By Jonathan Pearson



WorldView Group News Shriver Peaceworkers

MARYLAND

People in the Washington, D.C. area aren't quite as hearty when it comes to the cold, but don't tell that to members of the **Shriver**

Peaceworkers at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. On January 25th, six group members took on temperatures in the teens, and took it a step further—participating in the annual “Keep Winter Cold” Polar Bear Plunge organized by the Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN), founded by Mike Tidwell (Zaire 1985-1987). It took two hours to break the ice along the Potomac River, and while several other similar fundraisers were cancelled, the Shriver RPCVs endured, raising nearly \$1,000 and contributing to the \$75,000 raised by CCAN to continue its efforts to combat climate change and promote clean energy solutions in the Mid-Atlantic region.

NEW YORK

In New York in the fall, the end of harvest season can prompt thoughts of Thanksgiving. And that's been a special time for the last eight years for members of the **Buffalo RPCVs** and the local refugee community. In 2013, the group hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for 100 refugees—many from countries where local RPCVs served or have since visited. The annual project has been coordinated during the past four years with VIVE la Casa, a shelter that provides services for both area refugees and others in transit to Canada. In February, VIVE la Casa honored the Buffalo RPCVs by naming the group as the recipient of the Bonnie Butler Humanitarian Award, named after one of VIVE's original founders.

WISCONSIN

It was a windy, 17 degree day with snow flurries. But if it's January and you live in Wisconsin, that qualifies as balmy! In fact, when it comes to the annual Freeze for Food 5K/10K run/walk organized by the **RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison**, the group proudly notes “this event is never cancelled due to weather.” One hundred and forty-three participants donated more than \$2,700 that was used to purchase food to benefit the school lunch and elderly programs at the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado, Colombia, the sister community of Dane County, Wisconsin. Now in its 34th year, Freeze for Food has raised more than \$63,000 for various non-profit international development organizations.

CONNECTICUT

For many NPCA member groups, the end of the year is a time for holiday parties. In 2013, at least one member group combined a little advocacy with the festive cheer. The **Connecticut RPCVs** invited—and welcomed—local Congressman Joe Courtney to their gathering. Congressman Courtney provided a Capitol



Rep. Joe Courtney (left) meets with Connecticut RPCV members.

Hill update and answered questions. The group, in coordination with the NPCA, presented Congressman Courtney with a letter thanking him for the many ways he has supported key Peace Corps related issues before Congress.

COLORADO

Warmer weather is on the way, and there may be no better harbinger of the seasonal change than planning for spring planting. That is why members of the **Colorado RPCVs** recently met to talk over what vegetables to plant for their 2014 gardening project. Starting during Peace Corps' 50th anniversary year, the Colorado RPCVs harvest vegetables and edible flowers to support The Gathering Place (TGP), a Denver-based drop-in center for women, children and transgender individuals who are experiencing homelessness and

poverty. During the summer and fall of 2013, more than 100 volunteer hours yielded nearly 250 pounds of produce, valued at \$500. Along with TGP, the project is conducted in partnership with Grow Local and the Denver Parks and Recreation Department.

Over the past two summers, the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Colorado have donated over 700 pounds of fresh produce to The Gathering Place, a daytime drop-in shelter for women, children and transgender individuals who are experiencing homelessness and poverty.



For many NPCA member groups, the end of the year is also a time to reflect on accomplishments. There is much to be proud of. Here are just a few examples.

LESOTHO

As the **Friends of Lesotho** note in their recent newsletter, "There is nothing more sustainable than an education!" Since 1989, the group has provided financial assistance for motivated students who struggle to pay tuition for education beyond primary school. The member group's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is coordinated with Lesotho parents and community members, as well as Peace Corps Lesotho staff and volunteers, many of whom help identify and assist with applications for promising students

who meet program qualifications. Now in its 25th year, the TAP program has grown substantially. While three students received scholarship support in 1989, more than \$16,000 was distributed in 2013, making it possible for 322 students to attend high school for the second semester.

CALIFORNIA

Like many geographic member groups, the **Orange County Peace Corps**

Association seeks to support the work of currently serving volunteers from their area through the Peace Corps Partnership Program. 2013 was no different, as the group raised \$600 to support development projects undertaken by Orange County PCVs. The donations assisted with a gender equality and leadership summer camp for youth in the Ukraine, latrine and reforestation projects in Panama, and construction of a community library in Mozambique.

GUYANA

Like many country-of-service groups, the **Friends of Guyana** (FROG) has an ongoing grant program that supports development projects in the country where they served. In 2013, FROG donated nearly \$2,000, supporting four projects in Guyana focusing on youth outreach and development, and assistance for individuals infected or impacted by HIV/AIDS. FROG provides grants up to \$500 that support education, the arts, health, the environment and the social and economic development of the citizens of Guyana. **WV**



LEFT TO RIGHT: Charles Hobbie, FOK board member Margaret Pollack, FOK member Nancy Kelly, FOK President Ting-Yi Oei, FOK member, FOK board member Lynn Barclay, FOK board member Ben Bryan, Acting Peace Corps Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet, President of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) The Honorable Kim Young-Mok, FOK member Stephen Wickman

KOREA

On Friday, March 21, Acting Peace Corps Director

Carrie Hessler-Radelet invited Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who served in the Republic of Korea to a private event with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). President Kim Young-Mok and Korean Ambassador to the United States Ahn Ho-young, as well as representatives from KOICA, the Korean embassy, guests from other U.S. government agencies, and Peace Corps staff.

KOICA, founded in 1991 to implement grant aid and technical assistance programs, represents the transition of the Republic of Korea from developing to donor nation. For many years, Peace Corps Volunteers lived and

worked in Korean communities. Today, the Korean government sends hundreds of volunteers abroad annually to promote development and friendship in other nations through World Friends Korea.

President Kim reflected on the relationship between his country and the Peace Corps, discussing the Korean government's direction on global development, and presenting his vision for KOICA and World Friends Korea.

Last year, the Peace Corps and KOICA signed an agreement to expand collaboration on global development and international volunteer programs. The agreement was a deliverable from the meeting between U.S. President Obama and Korean President Park, commemorating 60 years of strategic cooperation between our countries.

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Y'ALL COME ... TO NASHVILLE!

Annual Peace Corps Connect event to take place in Nashville this June

By *Emily Bello*

After the 50th Anniversary events in Washington, DC in 2011, which brought together members of the Peace Corps community from across the U.S., the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) resolved that there was a need for a more frequent gathering of the Peace Corps community. The result: a new annual event called Peace Corps Connect.

We have held Peace Corps Connect in Minneapolis and Boston and this year we are very excited to have **Peace Corps Connect in Nashville, TN on June 19-20, 2014**. With great support from the **Tennessee Returned Peace Corps Volunteers**, we're looking forward to a fun and informative weekend.

"Peace Corps Connect in Music City will provide numerous opportunities for RPCVs from all over the world to connect through dialogue and experience," says Tennessee Returned Peace Corps Volunteer President Angela Harris (Papua New Guinea 1991-1993). "A personal goal of mine for the entire conference is to unite first-generation Peace Corps Volunteers with more recently returned Volunteers."

The weekend will include:

- Workshops based on various topics that are important to the Community
- Short idea presentations from community members that they feel will help bring solutions to our global challenges

- An RPCV Graduate Research Conference
- Special award recognition of community members
- Annual updates about the NPCA and official NPCA member groups
- Great opportunities to reconnect with old friends, and to make new ones!

And come a day early for a free RPCV Career Conference and Fair hosted by the Peace Corps for RPCVs.

Registration is now open!

Visit www.peacecorpsconnect.org/nashville2014 for more information about the weekend and to register. There are registration discounts for recently returned RPCVs, senior RPCVs and NPCA members. **Early bird registration ends on April 20, 2014!**

For questions, please email us at events@peacecorpsconnect.org. **WV**

Emily Bello (Benin 2002-2004) is the manager of membership and operations for the National Peace Corps Association.



A GLOBAL CONVERSATION

Language rights in the context of shift and endangerment

By Emerson Lopez Odango

Afew years ago, during a linguistics research fieldtrip to Pakin Atoll in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)—the same atoll where I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) from 2006 to 2009—I had a discussion with one of my long-time friends, Mr. Liperto Linge (whom I address as “Liper”), which centered around language and identity. He brought up the idea of *shshan Mwoshulók* ‘Mortlockese blood’, saying that if someone is of Mortlockese blood, then they are expected to be able to speak *kapsen Mwoshulók* ‘the language of the Mortlocks’. Liper’s perspective is striking because of the particular sociolinguistic context of his community.

Pakin is an outer island of an administrative region in the FSM called Pohnpei State. The first language of the Pakin community is Mortlockese. The Pakin community is a diaspora because their ancestors originated from atolls hundreds of miles to the southwest, in the Mortlock Islands within neighboring



Emerson Lopez Odango interviews Liperto Linge (right) on Pakin Atoll in Pohnpei State (Federated States of Micronesia).

Chuuk State. Because members of the Pakin community live in Pohnpei State, they must learn Pohnpeian—the official state language—as a second language. Within Pohnpei State, Mortlockese is a numerically minor language as compared

to Pohnpeian; whereas approximately 30,000 people speak Pohnpeian, only a few thousand speak Mortlockese. In the context of the entire FSM, Mortlockese only has approximately 10,000 speakers, combining the numbers of those living

EMERSON LOPEZ ODANGO

in the Mortlock Islands with diasporic communities elsewhere in the FSM. But in a larger global perspective—in a world of seven billion people—both Mortlockese and Pohnpeian are indeed minority languages. For someone like Liper, then, being able to hold on to his Mortlockese identity through language is especially important in a bilingual scenario while living in Pohnpei State.

This contrast between Mortlockese and Pohnpeian in a local scale highlights the situations around the world regarding the ability of the members of any speech community to use their own unique language in ways that are meaningful to them—in other words, their linguistic rights. In the 1996 Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights (also called the “Barcelona Declaration”), the discussion in the preliminaries frames the Declaration in regard to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states in the second article that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms” set forth in that Declaration “without distinction of any kind,” including language. Among other overarching goals, the Barcelona Declaration supports cultural and linguistic pluralism through “the creation of a political framework for linguistic diversity based upon respect, harmonious coexistence and mutual benefit.”

This goal, however, encounters serious challenges in the form of language shift and language endangerment. Languages are naturally transmitted from parents to children, and when those children grow up and become parents, they pass on the language to the next generation, and so forth. Language shift is a process in which Language X as spoken by the parental generation is not acquired by the child generation, who instead acquire Language Y. In many cases, Language X is a minority language and Language Y is a majority one. Consider, for example, the scores of Mortlockese children born in Pohnpei State who acquire Pohnpeian as their first language, not Mortlockese. The reasons for language shift are complex and rely on many sociocultural factors, including the

choice of parents to speak to their children only in the majority language so as to give their children the best opportunities for the future.

Language endangerment is usually a consequence of language shift: when fewer and fewer children speak minority Language X and only speak majority Language Y, this means that the future generations will most likely only speak Language Y; if the absolute number of speakers of Language X around the world continues to decrease, there is the possibility that one day in the future, no one will acquire Language X as a first language. The language is on a path to endangerment and possible extinction. While neither Mortlockese nor Pohnpeian appear to be endangered given the strong intergenerational transmission of language in those communities, other

RPCVs who learned a minority language or a unique dialect of the majority language during their service. Such individuals are in an interesting position, considering the charges of the Barcelona Declaration to promote linguistic pluralism.

In light of the Third Goal—to “strengthen Americans’ understanding about the world and its peoples”—Volunteers who learn a minority language (regardless of its state of endangerment) can add to the global discourse. Many Volunteers do indeed learn major world languages such as Arabic, Spanish, French, and many others, but other Volunteers also learn languages such as Dholuo (Kenya), Sranan Tongo (Suriname), and Malagasy (Madagascar). By explaining to others around us—not only in country or back home in the US, but also around the world—the complexity of the linguistic

Among other overarching goals, the Barcelona Declaration supports cultural and linguistic pluralism through “the creation of a political framework for linguistic diversity based upon respect, harmonious coexistence and mutual benefit.”

languages in Micronesia are endangered.

These matters of language shift and language endangerment have been part of the global discourse for some time now. In retrospect, even though those topics did not arise during my language training as a PCV, I see great potential for PCVs and RPCVs to enter into those discourses, especially Volunteers who learn a minority language in their country of service. I, for example, was the only person in my training group in Pohnpei State to learn Mortlockese; I was later told by the training staff that it would be more beneficial for me to learn the first language of the community in which I would live and work, rather than the official state language. I have come across anecdotes from other

situations of where we work and the insights that arise, we can foster greater appreciation of the global diversity of our cultures and languages. The perception that Liper shared with me about the connection of blood and language represents his determination to hold on to his linguistic identity, even though his community is a minority. His voice is in no small way a part of the global discourse of linguistic rights, one that I am proud to share with others. **wv**

Emerson Lopez Odango (*Federated States of Micronesia 2006–2009*) is a PhD student in Linguistics at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and a Student Affiliate with the East-West Center.

ACCOMMODATING CHANGE

While Volunteers Work with People with Disabilities Around the Globe, The Senate Fails to Ratify U.N. Human Rights Treaty Modeled on the Americans with Disabilities Act

By Tino Calabia

The first Peace Corps Volunteers arrived at their country of service in Ghana in 1961. Since then, Volunteers have worked in 139 countries around the globe. Coincidentally, 139 countries—many of them now or previously served by Volunteers—had already ratified an international treaty, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons of Disabilities (CRPD), when the U.S. Senate took up the question of ratifying it this past December.

Those countries that had ratified included Ghana—but still, to this date in 2014, not the U.S.

Despite bipartisan support from powerfully placed Senators, such as Democrat Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and former Republican Presidential Candidate John McCain, the question of Senate ratification failed by five votes.

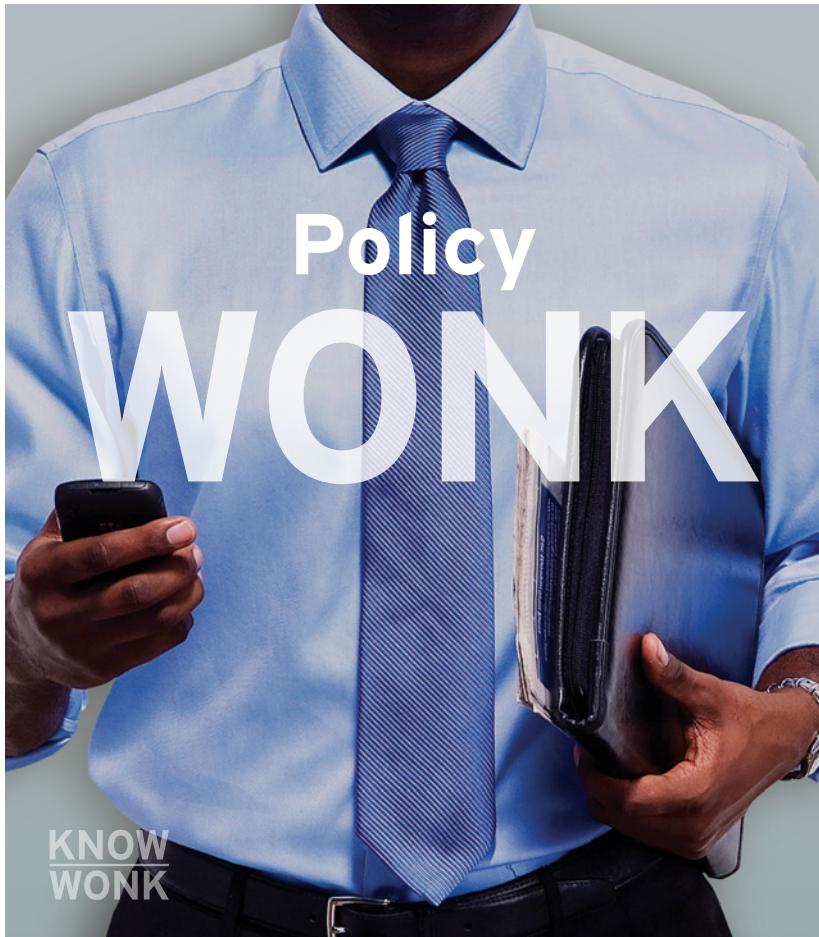
Many American proponents of ratification find ironic the failure of the Senate to ratify the U.N.'s CRPD treaty. Ironic because the CRPD virtually enshrines features of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that President George H.W. Bush signed into law in July 1990. (President Barack Obama signed the CRPD in 2009, but the Constitution

requires a two-thirds vote of the Senate to ratify international treaties such as the CRPD.)

Almost 18 years after the first President Bush affixed his signature to the ADA, the CRPD human rights law took effect when the twentieth country ratified it. Of all the countries that have ratified the U.N. treaty, dozens—including Afghanistan and Zimbabwe—have at one time or another been served by Peace Corps Volunteers.

In some countries that have ratified the CRPD and currently partner with the Peace Corps, Volunteers work directly with children and adults with disabilities. For example:

- In Kazakhstan, Volunteer Shannon Huett organized the first Winter Paralympics for children to heighten their confidence and raise community awareness about providing opportunities and appropriate services.
- In neighboring Kyrgyzstan, Brian Itoh organized a three-day workshop in which Volunteers and community heads taught pre-teens and teens handicraft skills, engaging them in team-building and leadership skills that the participants can use when going on to teach in other places around the country.



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In contrast, proponents of CRPD ratification see a plus in gaining full membership for a U.S. representative to work among all the representatives of the countries that have ratified it.

- And on another continent, Meisha Robinson and other Volunteers collaborated with Special Olympics staff and community residents to organize the inaugural Special Olympics Africa Unity Cup in which 15 soccer teams from 11 countries of Africa competed.

Despite the fact that their host countries are CRPD signatories, Volunteers may still witness an absence of things like curb-cuts, ramps for wheelchair users and other reasonable accommodations readily available throughout the U.S. In fact, the numerous accommodations that Americans take for granted are one reason given by opponents of Senate ratification. Such opponents question America's need for ratifying the CRPD since the U.S. has long been the world leader in providing accommodations.

Other opponents claim that, if the U.S. ratifies the CRPD, the sovereignty of the U.S. is threatened. They believe that at some point the CRPD, as international law, might now or one day infringe upon U.S. law in the event that a feature of the CRPD calls for changing the ADA. The supposed threat to sovereignty is an argument that has scuttled U.S. ratification of other U.N. human rights treaties including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and others.

But regarding any effect the CRPD might have on U.S. law, while still a Senator, Republican Richard Lugar stated that the U.S. has long shown leadership in disability rights and, ratification of the CRPD would provide a forum for the U.S. to continue to do so. Moreover,

"An important factor in my decision to support the convention has been the testimony received by the Foreign Relations Committee that joining the convention will not require any change—and I emphasize that: will not require any change—in existing U.S. law or policies regarding treatment of the disabled. . . . [O]fficials from the executive branch as

well as [Republican and former Governor and U.S.] Attorney General Richard Thornburgh stressed that current U.S. law satisfies all obligations the United States would assume in joining the convention."

In contrast, proponents of CRPD ratification see a plus in gaining full membership for a U.S. representative to work among all the representatives of the countries that have ratified it. When other countries consider how better to protect the rights of people with disabilities or how to provide them with appropriate accommodations, consulting the U.S. member would enable the U.S. to share America's expertise and perhaps even eventually to sell American technology and related goods to those countries.

Secretary of State John Kerry, who voted for ratification as a Senator, has summed up the reasons given by many proponents:

"[R]atification of the Disabilities Treaty will advance core American values, expand opportunities for our citizens and businesses, and strengthen American leadership. And I am still convinced that we give up nothing by joining but get everything in return. Our ratification doesn't require a single change to American law, and it won't add a penny to our budget. But it will provide the hook we need to push other countries to raise their laws and standards for the protection of people with disabilities to the standard we set at home under President George H.W. Bush and [former] Republican Leader [Senator Robert] Dole when we passed the Americans with Disabilities Act."

Should the Senate continue to fail in ratifying the CRPD, Columbia University professor and lawyer Louis Henkin's metaphor comes to mind. Henkin envisioned the system of human rights as a cathedral fortified by pillars on the inside and supported by flying buttresses on the outside. The U.S., suggested Henkin, chooses only to support the human rights cathedral from the outside like a flying buttress instead of standing inside the cathedral like a pillar.

In the meantime, whether or not the Senate finally ratifies the CRPD, Peace Corps Volunteers around the globe continue their work with children and adults with disabilities. **WV**

Tino Calabia (Peru, 1963-1965) worked on accessibility issues at the Department of Housing and Urban Development and helped draft HUD's section of the State Department's responses to the United Nations' reviews of America's anti-discrimination programs. With two other writers, he is now working on a history of the United Nations Association of the USA.

POINTS OF THE LANCE

RPCVs who have championed human rights

Compiled by Erica Burman and Alicia Nelson



FREEDOM TO MARRY

EVAN WOLFSON (Togo 1978-80) is the founder and president of the same-sex rights organization Freedom to Marry. Wolfson has said that his time in West Africa "...affirmed for me how precious the freedom we have as Americans is, and how we must work to defend, enlarge, and share it." After returning to the United States, Wolfson earned his law degree from Harvard and became intensely involved in advocating for same-sex rights. Wolfson founded Freedom to Marry in 2003 and was named one of Time magazine's "100 most influential people" in 2004. Today he continues to lead Freedom to Marriage on its "Roadmap to Victory," which seeks to change state laws, garner public support, and ultimately end marriage discrimination at a federal level.



UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Following graduating with honors from Howard University, **ELAINE R. JONES** was one of the first African Americans to serve in the Peace Corps in Turkey, from 1965 to 1967. She then became the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Virginia School of Law, one of only seven women and two African-Americans in the class of 1970. In an interview with the American Bar Association magazine Human Rights, Jones says, "You know what helped me? The fact that I had been in Turkey for two years. You don't get a culture more different than the one I was used to, coming out of the segregated South dropping into the middle of Muslim Turkey. So, going into Charlottesville was not easy, but it was all in context. I was more equipped to handle the difference."

In 1970, Jones joined the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, where she became the first black woman to defend death row inmates. She played a key role in securing passage of the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1982, the Fair Housing Act of 1988, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 and the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Jones was director-counsel and president of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund from 1993 to 2004.



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

In January, the Peace Corps community lost a human rights champion with the passing of **ROBERT A. PASTOR** (Malaysia 1970-72). His distinguished, four-decades-long international relations career spanned government service, the non-governmental sector, and academia. As Director of Latin American and Caribbean Affairs on the National Security Council under President Jimmy Carter, he was instrumental in carrying out wide ranging human rights policies that laid a foundation for greater democracy in the region. After Carter left office, Pastor became the founding director of the Latin American Program and the Democracy Project at The Carter Center in Atlanta, shaping the Center's deep engagement in human rights and democratization around the world. Pastor was the 1995 recipient of NPCA Sargent Shriver Distinguished Humanitarian Award, and later was instrumental in the creation of the Harris Wofford Global Citizen Award. Read more about Bob Pastor at <http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/2014/01/in-memoriam-robert-a-pastor/>.

MARK SCHNEIDER (El Salvador 1966-68) is senior vice president of the International Crisis Group, a conflict-prevention NGO active in around fifty countries. Schneider has called his Peace Corps service "the most illuminating, rewarding and exhausting period of my life." After Peace Corps, he worked with Sen. Edward Kennedy, Pan American Health Organization, the Department of State, USAID, and from 1999 to 2001 served as director of the Peace Corps. In 2007, Schneider joined the Democracy Network, an organization that assists Latin American governments with promoting and defending democracy. The Government of Chile honored him for his human rights work with the Bernardo O'Higgins Medal.

HAND-HELD DEVICES LESSEN THE LOAD

Peace Corps begins to say goodbye to printed materials for some Volunteers

By Mark Huffman

Many Returned Peace Corps Volunteers share stories about hauling one or two boxes of books across country to begin two years of service. The anxiety of making transportation plans was often compounded by the weight of personal luggage and extra learning materials the Peace Corps provided during training.

Today, hand-held devices are replacing those boxes in many countries.

"There has been a high demand from our posts for e-learning tools and we're always looking for ways to provide our Volunteers with the best resources in the quickest way possible," says acting-Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet.

E-readers were distributed to Peace Corps/Liberia trainees in 2012 and to Armenia, Ethiopia, Lesotho, and Swaziland trainees in 2013. Meanwhile, Volunteers in many other countries are using smartphones and personal computers to enhance their Peace Corps service. Building upon this reality, the agency's Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS) is overseeing the conversion of its publications for mobile device use.

By the end of 2014, approximately 50 Peace Corps publications will have been converted to e-book format for use in the field. All new and revised publications will be available in both .epub, which is standard for many mobile devices, and .mobi, which is a format unique to Kindle.

"Since no printing or shipping is involved, Volunteers will receive material

quicker. Revisions to existing material can also be done more easily," says Sonia Stines-Derenoncourt, director of OPATS, which tested applications for mobile devices.

A 2013 Peace Corps survey concluded that 90 percent of Volunteers have access to the Internet at least once a week. Volunteers in Africa were among those least likely to have access. However, even that continent has experienced progress with connectivity and accessibility over the past five years and is now at the forefront of e-reader usage.

Vince Groh, chief of operations for the Africa region, implemented use of

the devices when he served as Liberia country director from March 2011 to August 2013. "During my first pre-service training in Liberia, we spent a ton of time and money on printing and we didn't feel that was appropriate. I have been a Kindle enthusiast since they first rolled out and we decided to trust our Volunteers with equipment that could give them more access to resources," he says.

Of the 100 Kindles provided to Volunteers, Groh says fewer than five had to be replaced during his time as country director. "The Volunteers loved the message it sent — It told them on the first day, 'We're investing in you.'"

Groh says buy-in from the Volunteers and staff came quickly. "We pre-loaded all of our Peace Corps documents and once the Volunteers registered, they could download all of their own books and personal items as well. The hook is that we have all of the training material right there with their own reading material so they are carrying all of their training documents wherever they travel."



Chad Miller, a Peace Corps Volunteer leader in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, uses his e-reader.

RUTH GOODE

At a country directors conference in September 2012, Groh spoke about the successful launch of e-readers and others adopted similar programs soon after.

In Swaziland, Country Director Steven Driehaus started a pilot program that distributed Kindles to 33 trainees in June 2013. While there have been challenges in formatting documents for conversion to Kindle, the benefits appear to have outweighed the struggles. "Despite the challenges, the Kindles have been well received by trainees and are now being used in the field. The number of manuals and printed materials transported to site with the new PCVs was greatly reduced," he says.

Ethiopia and Lesotho have also had successful transitions to e-readers.

"They're light, mobile, and easily tucked into a secure place when traveling," Ethiopia Country Director Gregory Engle says, adding, "New Volunteers don't have to bring a huge stack of documents to their sites. We also issue them thumb drives [with the files]; that way, if they see something on the Kindle that's hard to view, they can open the same document on their laptop."

Lesotho followed suit in October 2013 and Programming and Training Director Eric Goldman says response from the Volunteers has been positive, although large manuals and graphics have resulted in some formatting issues that are being resolved.

Such glitches are inevitable, according to Jack Merklein, who helped shepherd the transition to e-readers when he took over as chief of the OPATS Knowledge and Learning Unit in May 2012. "There are always obstacles to overcome, but we are working continually to ensure that the information can be easily accessed and read. New publications will be converted to an e-book format as they are produced."

Groh stresses the importance of finding "local champions" in overseas offices to troubleshoot any problems with the devices. "My executive secretary helped crack the code on formatting.... It's a bit of

a learning curve, but like Microsoft Word, once you learn it you can build from there," he says.

That secretary, Alfreda Stephens, still serves in that position today and is happy to see binders and photocopies being put to rest. "The Kindle is an easy device to carry, it does not cause storage problems, and it saves time and money on printing. The only disadvantage so far is the lack of electricity in rural areas," she says.

However, Groh is quick to note that the latter point isn't as glaring when the device is used exclusively for training.

"If you are just using your wireless device to read, it will last for weeks," he says.

Noting that off-site conferences, training events, and camps that many Volunteers attend and/or facilitate will also benefit from e-book applications, Merklein says, "It's a great way to have a variety of resources right at your fingertips."

Groh says his team also loaded trainees' e-readers with speeches by the Liberian president and articles about Liberian culture and news when he was country director. "It really enhanced participants' cultural training and influenced an interaction with country politics," he says, adding, "I would find Volunteers, during their breaks and at lunch, under a tree reading their Kindles."

Looking forward to the day when host country nationals can be seen doing the same thing, Groh says, "Just think of the possibilities if community members had devices where they could search for their own material to fit their purposes. ... To put e-readers in the hands of students who have no access to traditional books would be amazing!" **WV**

Mark Huffman serves as writer/editor for the Peace Corps Office of Overseas Programming and Training. He was a youth development Volunteer in Morocco (2005-2007) and has also served in the Office of Communications for the Peace Corps.



PEACE CORPS

A NEW CHAPTER ... BUT NOT A COMPLETE DEPARTURE

Information Resource Center managers in Peace Corps countries will continue to coordinate distribution of both print and digital resources.

Jack Merklein, who serves as chief of the Peace Corps Knowledge and Learning Unit in the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support, cautions against a complete phasing-out of printed material. "There are always those cases where printed material is more amenable to a Volunteer's situation and, at a minimum, we will continue to provide our Information Resource Center managers with copies of our training resources since they serve as the first point of contact for Volunteers seeking information."

Many posts prefer print because access to technology is expensive or unreliable. Other posts prefer digital formats due to space, portability, high printing costs, and for environmental reasons.

While a new chapter has begun, the simultaneous use of electronic and print material will endure as the Peace Corps continually looks for ways to improve the Volunteer experience.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE PEACE CORPS

RPCV storytelling finds a new audience format

By Meleia Egger

One of the most compelling and heartfelt ways to share your Peace Corps experience is through stories. Peace Corps is 27 months of continuous funny, poignant, and amazing stories. Both during and after my service in Malawi, just like thousands of returned Peace Corps Volunteers before me, I knew I wanted to share my experience with a broader audience. When coming home I found that activities such as organizing my photos into a book, presenting to various audiences, and writing about my experience were very helpful for closure. It was during this transition that I stumbled on a hot reinvented genre in the open mic scene: storytelling.

There are countless storytelling groups and many extremely popular storytelling shows all over the United States. This timeless tradition is now a new media sensation, and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) are right on the cutting edge. In addition to participating in existing storytelling groups and shows like *Snap Judgment*, *Story Corps*, *SpeakeasyDC*, and *The Moth*, Peace Corps-focused "Story Slams" have popped up organically all over the country. Already stunning audiences in Portland, San Diego, North Carolina, NYC, Minneapolis, D.C. and San Francisco, these shows are teaching Americans about places they may never see, and people they will never meet. These diverse events center around two basic premises: Peace Corps stories are unique and RPCVs love telling them.

Storytelling is an excellent way to continue your service and show your commitment to Peace Corps' Third

Goal of sharing other peoples with Americans. These storytelling activities are an opportunity to teach in a personal and engaging way about the culture you encountered during Peace Corps so intimately. When RPCVs tell stories they humanize and illuminate places and people with that unique, grassroots, Peace Corps perspective.

It's not just Peace Corps Volunteers or those thinking of applying that get something meaningful out of RPCV stories. Sarah Porter, President of the



RPCVs share their stories at a recent story slam organized by the Northern California Returned Peace Corps Volunteer group. PHOTOS BY BRYAN LEMOS

Brooklyn Queens New York RPCV group, invited non-RPCVs to attend their group's two story slams in New York. She notes:

It's not just for the RPCV community. There's something very human and very personal about these stories that make it universal. Everyone at some point has been a fish out of water or has had to figure out how to live outside their comfort zone. By telling our stories and exposing some of our most uncomfortable moments, all of a sudden everyone in the room can relate on some level. I can see it in the audience's faces, whether they are laughing or cringing with us.

These events, like all thoughtful, creative Third Goal activities, have the added bonus of inspiring people to serve. Stories are memorable, and evidence suggests we are hard wired to receive and learn information better in story form. As the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie put it in her famous TEDTalk, *The Danger of a Single Story*:

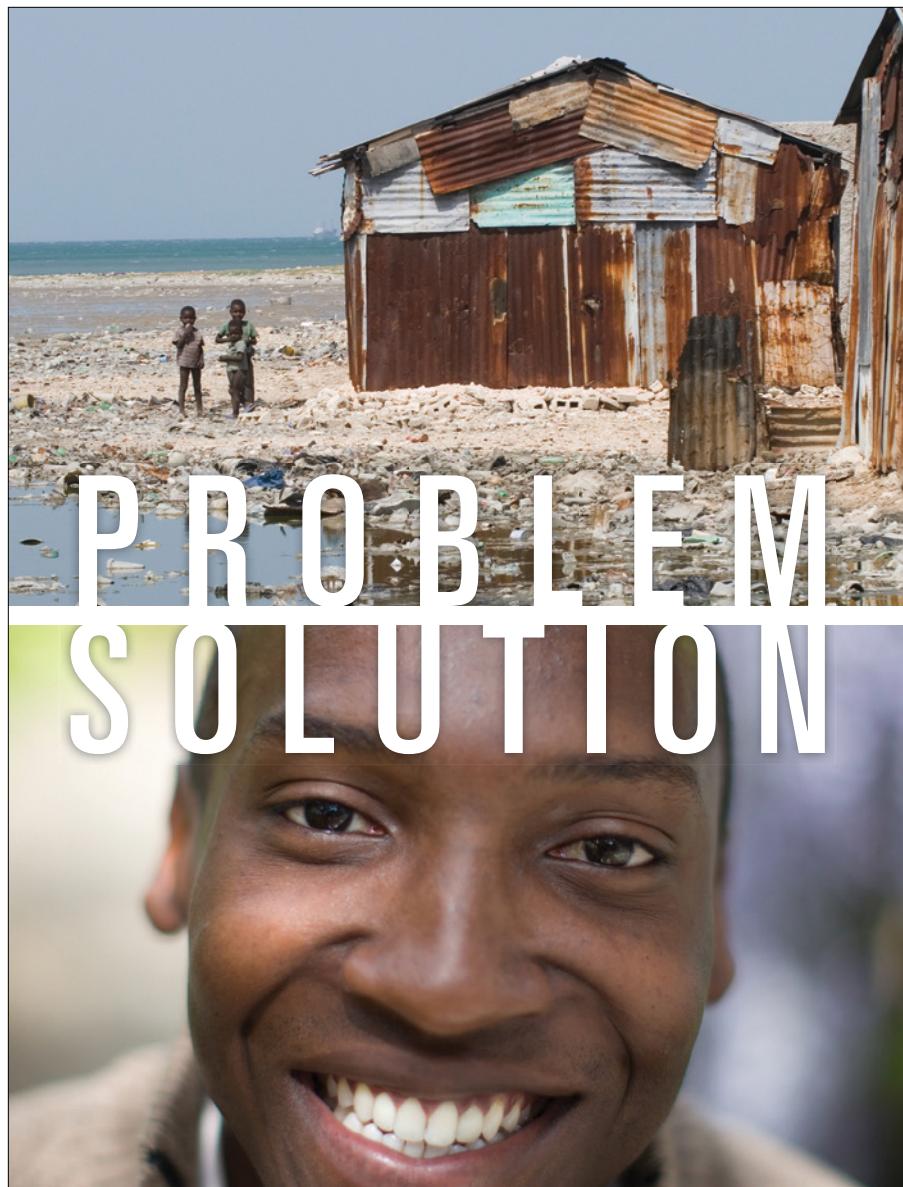
Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

If you would like to organize or participate in a Peace Corps storytelling show, or tell your own story at an existing event, contact Peace Corps at thirdgoal@peacecorps.gov. Peace Corps' Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services can help you with creative theme ideas, provide tips to find and craft your story, and assist you in planning a show. As always, if you are planning any event that supports Peace Corps' Third Goal, please register your activity at www.whathappenedoutthere.com.

peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal to receive a Third Goal Kit and help Peace Corps demonstrate its impact here in America. Pay that experience forward; tell them

what happened out there! **WV**

Meleia Egger (Malawi 2007-2009) is Peace Corps' Third Goal Program Specialist.



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TWO YEARS IN THE BOSQUE DE POMAC

Deforestation, up close and personal

By Tyler Owens

One man with a chainsaw can do a lot of damage to his natural environment, and he can do it quickly. In the relationship between man and his environment, man has always maintained an exponentially unfair advantage.

I witnessed this fact as a Peace Corps Volunteer in northern Peru from 2009-2011. I was sent to a rural community of about 180 people—some 30 families—twelve hours by bus north of Lima. The village, called Pomac III, was situated in the buffer zone (zona de amortiguamiento) of the Bosque de Pomac, one of only four national historic sanctuaries in the entire country. (Machu Picchu, the mystical stronghold of the Incan empire and the country's long-standing flagship tourist site, holds the same designation). To be deemed a national historic sanctuary, a site must have environmental, cultural, and historic importance. As an equatorial dry forest located in a low rainfall region, the Bosque de Pomac is part of a small, unique, and highly fragile ecological zone that is slowly disappearing in South America. The Bosque's historic importance stems from the fact that it served as the seat of the Sican peoples, whose reign from 750 to 1375 preceded the Incan empire.

The Bosque stuns its visitors. After rare rains, a tender coat of wild grass springs up and gives the forest a mystical feel. The *huerequeque* (Peruvian Thick-knee bird), with its bulging eyes and long, skinny legs, plods awkwardly along the forest floor. Different types of woodpeckers tap away at dense bark.

Small lizards and iguanas dart along stones and fallen branches. If one has a quick eye, a small desert fox can be spotted picking off its prey.

Living in the buffer zone, I could exit my house and enter the protected area



The author posing atop a sandstone pyramid in the Bosque de Pomac.

TYLER OWENS

One of the greatest achievements of my Peace Corps service was the simple act of placing hundreds of tree saplings into the ground and watering them.

with a few steps. I could scale several of the crumbling sandstone pyramids built during the Sican civilization and pick up shards of pottery and household items that Sican women used—the valueless refuse that the tombraiders of years past left behind. While the most fragile of the sandstone pyramids were off-limits and monitored by park guards, many of them

were open to tourist foot traffic. Scaling one of the bigger ones, I could gaze down and across the forest. At such times, I fancied myself a lord of Sican, watching a martial procession, where men with gold-spangled headdresses marched with deadly spears.

Yet, a climb up one of the pyramids or a day spent observing the flora and fauna gave little sense of the mortal danger that threatens the Bosque. In 2004 an invasion community—consisting mainly of poor farmers—sprang up inside the protected area. For five years, the invaders cleared native growth forest and trampled the remains of the Sican civilization. Park authorities as well as the local and federal governments were unwilling and unable to respond. Finally, in 2009—a few months before I arrived—the national police announced its intention to evict the invaders, forcefully if necessary. In response, the invaders armed themselves and hired “sicarios,” or professional hitmen.

Ultimately, a violent confrontation occurred that claimed the lives of two policemen and several community members. The state had re-secured the boundaries of the protected area, but by that time the invaders had wiped out more than 30 percent of the forest. The size of the protected area had fallen from roughly 9,000 hectares to 6,000—all in a matter of a few years at the hands of a few dozen people.

The invasion left deep scars on the Bosque. Deep, penetrating wells replaced tree roots. Instead of wild grasses, thousands of hectares of agricultural furrows covered the forest floor. An old growth forest felled for the sake of wood, rice, and beans.

And, of course, the damage cannot be undone quickly. The park service and various non-governmental organizations are devoted to reforestation efforts. I worked in many of these myself. One of the greatest achievements of my Peace Corps service was the simple act of placing hundreds of tree saplings into the ground and watering them. Peru's national public radio, in a segment, termed the reforestation effort "the slow rebirth of the forest." Yet human hands and projects can only do so much; the forest awaits the rains that rarely come.

Peruvians cut down trees for three main reasons: slash and burn agriculture, the production of wood charcoal briquettes, and the sale of lumber for both the domestic and foreign markets. Slashing and burning swathes of forest makes way for cash and subsistence crops, such as corn, beans, rice, and *loche*, a buttery squash that was the primary source of income in my village. Wood charcoal briquettes are used to cook one of Peru's beloved national dishes, *pollo a la brasa*, or flame-grilled chicken. The charcoal briquettes, which mainly come from the algarrobo—or Peruvian carob—tree lend a distinctive smoky flavor to the chicken. Brasseries that specialize in *pollo a la brasa* are present in virtually every part of the country. Outdoor markets everywhere have rows and rows of large sacks of charcoal briquettes.

In October 2013, the New York Times published an investigative report on logging in Peru. More than half of the country is covered by tropical rainforest, most of which is part of the Amazon. The preservation of the Amazon is critical to combating climate change and protecting biodiversity, but Peru's rainforests are disappearing at an alarming rate. And as much as 80 percent of Peru's logging exports are harvested illegally. Bribery and corruption are deep-seated and endemic at every stage of the production and export process and at every level.

Let's hope that the 2009 incursion and violent eviction of a small, indigenous Peruvian community in a little-known part of the world is not a harbinger of what is to come as humans continue to profoundly alter their environment. **WV**

Tyler Owens was a Peace Corps Volunteer in the northern coastal region of Peru from 2009-2011. He lived and worked in tiny rural villages, completing small-scale environmental projects. He is now undertaking his second year of study at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, working toward his M.A. in International Relations and

International Economics with a concentration in Strategic Studies.

ENDNOTES

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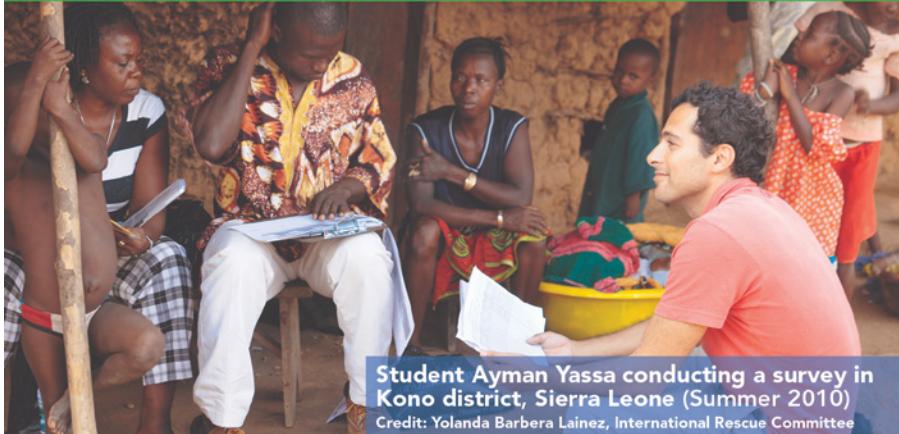
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Student Ayman Yassa conducting a survey in Kono district, Sierra Leone (Summer 2010)
Credit: Yolanda Barbera Lainez, International Rescue Committee

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS WORLDVIEW?

Morocco Volunteers takes *WorldView* to new heights

By Nick Karnezis



Nick Karnezis and Sanjay Iyer pictured on top of Mt. Kilimanjaro reading *WorldView* magazine.

*For the past 27 years, the National Peace Corps Association has been publishing *WorldView* magazine. From our desk in Washington, D.C., we correspond with writers via email. We send the proofs off to the printer.*

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– The Editor

My name is Nick Karnezis, and I'm a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) (2012-2014) currently serving in southeastern Morocco. In January 2014, I traveled to Tanzania with a fellow PCV, Sanjay Iyer (2013-2015), who is serving with me in Morocco. Our goals were to experience Tanzanian culture, meet new friends, and make it up the highest mountain in Africa.

Our photo for "Where in the World is *WorldView*?" represents something greater than just a snapshot on a mountain. It represents the dedication to succeed in a new environment and the collaboration needed among people from other countries to make it happen. A comparison could be made between our experience on Mount Kilimanjaro and Peace Corps service.

Throughout the six day trek, we worked together with hikers on our team,

which included people from Japan, China, and of course our wonderful guide and porters from Tanzania. Without these people, it would not have been possible. We did not have the best equipment or most experience on the mountain, but we found success and built cultural bonds and friendships along the way. Together, in an emotional and magical atmosphere, we made it to the 19,341 foot summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro (Uhuru Peak) just as the sun was starting to rise above the horizon.

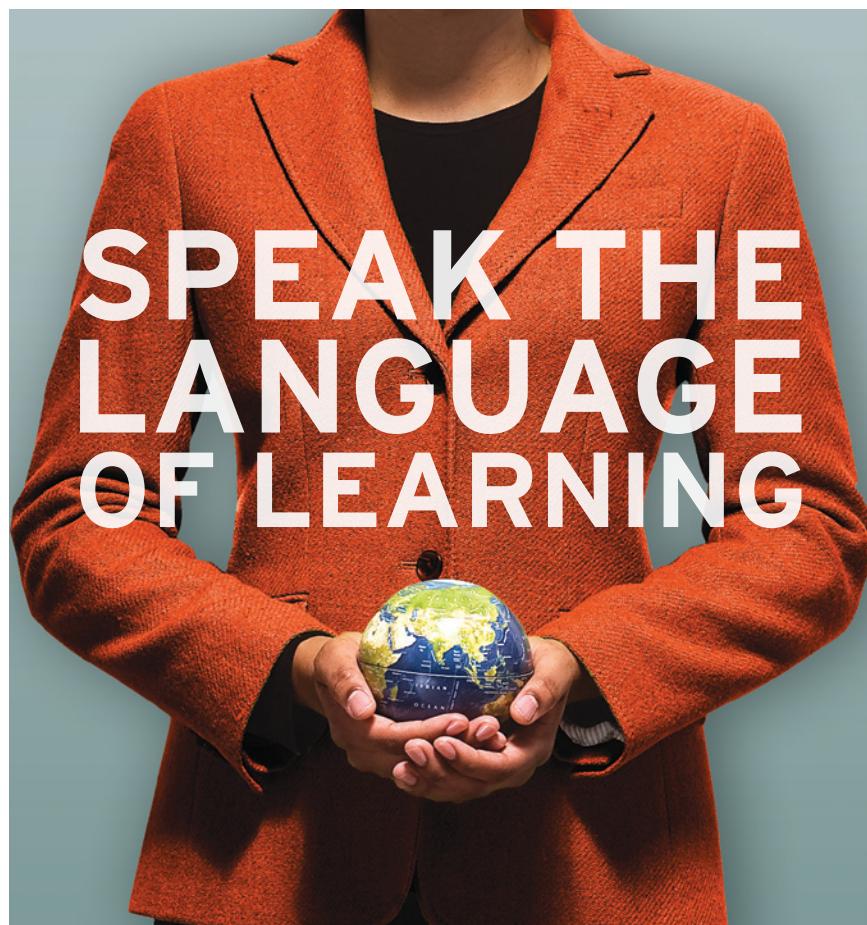
During the trek and throughout our stay in Tanzania, we were constantly talking about our Peace Corps service in Morocco and about Peace Corps worldwide to other travelers. It was a fun and different atmosphere to pursue Goal Two and

During the trek and throughout our stay in Tanzania, we were constantly talking about our Peace Corps service in Morocco and about Peace Corps worldwide to other travelers.

Three of Peace Corps while traveling in another country. People we met included Tanzanians, Americans, and many others from countries around the world such as Japan, China, South Korea, Germany, Great Britain, Canada, Kenya, India, South Africa, Australia, and more. Many seemed intrigued, impressed, or even inspired to volunteer in their own country, which I think was the best possible reaction.

We were also able to meet up with a handful of Peace Corps Volunteers who were currently serving in Tanzania, which was a wonderful opportunity to share stories about life in Morocco and Tanzania as well as life back in the United States. It was a nice reminder of the unique connection we will share as Returned Peace Corps Volunteers once we finish our service. **WV**

Nick Karnezis is a Peace Corps Volunteer (2012-2014) currently serving in Morocco as a youth development volunteer, which also includes working in public health, environmental education, youth entrepreneurship, English education, and more.



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MONGOLIA VOLUNTEERS GET NOMADIC... REINDEER HERDER STYLE

Working with the Tsaatan people of Mongolia

By Nick Armstrong

Mongolia is a country well known for its nomadic culture. However, due to a rapid rate of development, the number of people living in urban areas is on the rise, while the number of those who still lead the traditional Mongolian lifestyle is dwindling. There is one place though that remains virtually unchanged, and that place is the Taiga of Northern Huvsgul Province in Mongolia, home to the reindeer herding Tsaatan (pronounced tsah-tan) community.

Reaching the Tsaatan people in their amazing habitat is no easy task. From the capital city of Huvsgul Province, it is a 16-hour *purgon* (Russian all-terrain van) ride on unpaved roads, through forests and muddy terrain to reach the village nearest their settlement, Tsagaan Nuur (White Lake). From there, it is another eight to 12 hours (depending on the condition of the trail) on horseback to reach the place where the Tsaatan people happen to be settled in late spring. Because the Tsaatan reindeer herders are truly nomadic, it can sometimes be difficult for an outsider to know exactly where they are at any particular time of the year. Despite the challenging horse trails and rugged path—and how far away from town the Tsaatan purposely place their camp—it doesn't stop tourists and Mongolians alike from making the trip year-round to stay with these people and experience their way of life.

Tsaatan people are very self sufficient, living in teepees hours from the nearest town and leading their lives with limited electricity and no phone reception. They rely on their reindeer for meat, milk and a



TOP: A Tsaatan guide leads three Volunteers astride reindeer on a trek from the spring camp to the summer grazing lands. **BOTTOM:** The Volunteers split into two groups, one going to the eastern taiga, the other to the western taiga. Here, Volunteers pose with Tsaatan children in front of a teepee in the eastern taiga.
PHOTOS BY NICK ARMSTRONG

variety of tasty milk products. In summer they are able to forage for wild berries, but aside from that, vegetables, fruits and candies are hard to come by. They have, however, found ways to adapt with the times and harness the interest surrounding their culture in a way that makes it work for them. With so many tourists coming to catch a glimpse and spend time with these mysterious people each year, the opportunity to make money presents itself. Small bags made of reindeer hide, wolf tooth necklaces and beautiful things carved into and fashioned out of reindeer horns are all for sale. The fact that their communities move from place to place also allows them to capitalize financially. Often, people will hire a Tsaatan guide when they reach Tsagaan Nuur to take them from there to where the Tsaatan are currently living.

In the summer of 2012 another Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) and I went to Tsagaan Nuur for two weeks. Conscious of the need to be more than just tourists, we offered to teach English a few hours a day to the Tsaatan children and adults. After the long ride to get there, we realized quickly that their nomadic lifestyle put them at a significant disadvantage in terms of access to educational resources. Fortunately we discussed this before we left, and decided to bring the educational materials with us. This highlighted the difference between us and other tourists—and the Tsaatan people let us know that, asking us to stay longer and return the following year. It was such an amazing experience that there was no doubt in my mind I would come again the next year.

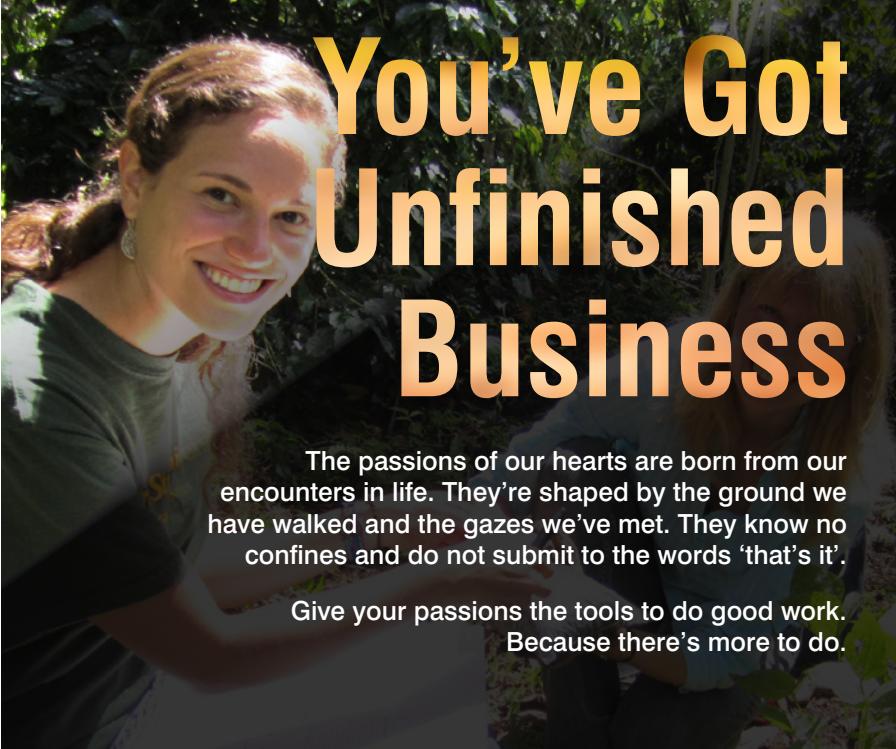
With the help of the 20 new Volunteers from all around Mongolia, we were able to work with Peace Corps Mongolia staff to ensure we took all possible health, safety and security precautions. We also connected with organizations in Mongolia that wanted to help by donating books, teepee material for us to make our own mobile English library teepee, and numerous health related items like

toothbrushes, toothpaste and handouts on general hygiene. We taught small English classes, interacted with the children in English and Mongolian, and also gave small health seminars during our stay.

The Tsaatan are one of Mongolia's true remaining nomadic subcultures. The opportunity to spend time with these people and their families, while helping them with the English and giving general hygiene and nutrition advice, (several PCVs were from our health sector) was unforgettable. Knowing that our purchases of carved reindeer horns, key chains and necklaces—priceless souvenirs to us all—helped these people to buy notebooks and pencils for their children to go to school next year, felt great. The chance to learn

from the Tsaatan people and experience their way of life, while also working on English and health, made it hardly seem like work at all. Many of us look forward to returning in summer 2014 to continue the development and strengthen our relationships with the people. With their self-sufficiency and a newly acquired way to interact with tourists, they will be able to preserve their culture while also communicating and learning from others that make the trek. **wv**

Nick Armstrong (*Mongolia 2011-2013*) started the Mobile English Library Project, served as a TEFL teacher in Ikh-Uul soum in Huvsgul province and is still living in Huvsgul, Mongolia.



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THE ROAD TO LA MATA

Unexpected welcome on return visit to Volunteer site

By Ralph Blessing

The three-mile drive to La Mata from the Pan-American Highway seemed little changed from when I first made it in 1969. It was still the same rutted dirt road, even if the Pan-American was now a 4-lane divided freeway crisscrossing Panama. Aside from the few newer structures clustered around the highway exit, it continued to be surrounded by scrubland dedicated to cattle grazing.

In contrast, as I entered the village I saw nothing that looked familiar. The houses that straddled the road appeared much too new for my 1969 memories. More confusing was the absence of any of the landmarks I had anticipated: the school, the community center, the communal water pump. While photos had prepared me for Panama City's massive development following the transfer of the canal to local control in the early 1990s, I had naively imagined that La Mata would remain frozen in time. Spotting a couple of guys squatting by the side of the road, I figured I'd better confirm my whereabouts.

Even though I had been a Volunteer in Panama during Peace Corps' first decade, I did not plan on returning this past June for the 50th anniversary celebration there. I had participated in the 2011 worldwide celebration in Washington (even the 50th in Thailand where my wife had served), but the reunion in Panama left me ambivalent for one simple reason: what I considered to be my Volunteer site no longer existed. Without a site to visit, it seemed hardly worth the effort.

Following my in-country training in 1969, I was assigned to La Mata, a small,

subsistence-farming community two hours west of Panama City. However, for reasons beyond my control, I transferred to a squatters' community in Panama City barely three months after being sworn in. *That* was my site, the place where I spent the rest of my tour alongside neighbors who became my friends. But even before my last visit in 1978 it had



ABOVE: Esme and me, along with an unnamed neighbor (with embroidered dress and hair in rollers), during my June 2013 visit.

INSET: My host mother and daughter Esme from the Figueroa family with me in-between, 1969.

reunion, but was that alone adequate justification for the time and expense of a trip abroad?

After vacillating for weeks, I finally decided to sign up, but not only to see those old colleagues. Appearances aside, I would also return to La Mata, even if merely for a drive-by visit.

As La Mata had no Volunteer at present (and only one other in the intervening 40-plus years), no site visit had been pre-arranged by Peace Corps/Panama; I'd be on my own getting there. But having reserved a rental car to go chasing after some out-of-the-way waterfalls prior to the reunion, I would have ample opportunity.

"This is La Mata, isn't it?" I asked the two guys squatting alongside the road, "I lived here for a while about 40 years ago?"

One of them jumped to his feet. "Blessing!" he exclaimed without a moment's hesitation, "*Cuerpo de Paz*" (Peace Corps in Spanish). I was floored, to put it mildly. He not only recognized me, he even knew my family name!

He could see my surprise: "Don't you remember?"

he asked. "You used to umpire our baseball games back when I was eight years old. I am Martín." The name immediately registered with me. "Blessing," he continued, "means *iglesia* (church), right?"

"No," I chuckled, "it's *bendición*," the shorthand I still use to describe my surname to Spanish speakers. Martín said that he knew it was some religious

been bulldozed in the name of "progress," its residents relocated elsewhere. For all practical purposes, if I went to the 50th, I would be a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer without a site.

I could pretend that La Mata was my "real" site, but would a return visit be just going through the motions, given the brief period I'd spent there? Certainly I wanted to reconnect with other RPCVs who would be at the



term but that he apparently had gotten the two confused.

He took me behind his house to the ball field where those memorable games were played in 1969. (It was in October of that year, while in La Mata, that my short wave radio kept me tuned to the Miracle Mets winning the World Series.) He said the kids now play on a different field, which explained why the old one was barely visible beneath the weeds that had overtaken it.

I showed him the photo I brought of the woman who had fixed my meals back in the day and her then-college-aged daughter, with me in between.

"The Señora is dead, Señor Figueroa too," he explained, "but their daughter, Esme, lives in their old house. Come on, I'll walk you over."

The young woman in the photo was now a retiree like me, but I recognized her in an instant. We sat and reminisced in her comfortable house with its enclosed kitchen and refrigerator (and electricity, of course), not to mention indoor plumbing, things that folks in La Mata only dreamed of in 1969, when the community water pump was the sole sign of development. Maybe not the fancy high-rise condos in Panama City or those luxurious beach resorts not that far from La Mata, but the updated Figueroa home was a pleasant, relaxing place with a polished concrete floor, a far cry from the dirt floor in the thatch-roofed hut that I'd rented next door in an earlier life.

Driving back toward the Pan-American Highway, I realized how wrong I had been in thinking that I had no Peace Corps site to which I could return. One of the beauties of Peace Corps lies in the unexpected memory that survives distance and time. For me it was a handful of folks in La Mata, Martín in particular, who helped me realize that even mundane activities like umpiring a baseball game could create bonds that decades couldn't erase. **WV**

Ralph Blessing (Panama 1969-1970, Ecuador 1974-1978, HQ 1980-1986) retired from the State Department in 2009 after administering Fulbright Scholar

Programs for countries in Latin America for more than 20 years. He devotes his time in retirement to photography, gardening, travel and volunteer tutoring.



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FOREIGN FUNERAL

Heartbreak in a Romanian village

By Andy Trincia

Our arms interlocked tightly at the elbow. We stared downward in the chilly, quiet living room when an improbable question broke the silence.

"Did you touch her yet?" my wife, Oana, asked as tears streaked down her high cheekbones. "She's still warm."

Mama Ana, as she was known, my wife's 82-year-old grandmother, died hours earlier in her small, century-old stone farmhouse in the Romanian

countryside. We journeyed 7,000 miles from California to Transylvania to witness her last days as her body shut down from liver disease. I have not attended many funerals or been around bodies much. I figured that I'd be uncomfortable, but the closeness I felt with Mama Ana prevailed.

I slowly extended my right hand toward Mama Ana, who lay in a mahogany casket. Her head was covered by a kerchief, a *batic*, which she always

wore, as most elderly women do in Romania. In life she was perpetually cold so she wore two, both fancily embroidered and pure black, as was her entire outfit, a long dress, satin vest with buttons and laced-up leather shoes. She picked out the ensemble long before she passed, all neatly packed in an old-school suitcase waiting for the moment.

She looked serene except for a small hand towel tightly rolled and tucked under her chin to hold it in place—more elegantly, before the wake—as the body chilled permanently. I never thought about that before. Romanians are resourceful, I said to myself, for the millionth time.

Oana was right. Mama Ana was still warm.



The holiday season was wrecked, every day a gut-wrenching death vigil after a lengthy hospital stay. She died two days after Christmas around dinner time. In Romania typically a wake is held that night or the next, and burial within 48 hours. Oana, her mom and two aunts sprang into action within minutes of Mama Ana expiring. With three shotgun rooms, the house is intimate so the men stepped outside.

We stood in the cold night air. Little was said at first but conversation gradually flowed, billows of breath visible in the porch light. One headed for the outhouse, two lit cigarettes. I looked up at the pitch-black sky sprinkled with stars and hunted for constellations. The men chatted rapidly in Romanian while I concentrated hard to follow every word.

Inside, the women changed and washed Mama Ana. Oana dressed her. I can't imagine how hard it was, knowing the deep bond the two shared. She helped raise my wife and was truly like a second mother. Three generations of women were inseparable despite geography.

Mama Ana's two sons, Oana's uncles, finished their cigarettes and carried the empty casket inside. Within minutes I saw her in the casket draped in white satin. She lay in state in her own home. Păuca, her village, has no funeral home, not that many Romanians use them—families usually handle this grim ritual. There is no makeup, no embalming.

At the wake, family and friends crowded around the casket and packed all three rooms, some standing on their toes to see. A 30-something priest, bearded and bespectacled in hip European glasses, the only priest at the beautiful Romanian Orthodox church on the hill overlooking Păuca, presided with care, joined by a cantor and assistant. They filled the house with stirring harmony. The priest's glorious, gilded robes reminded me of my Roman Catholic upbringing, as did the heavy use of incense.



ABOVE: Fr. Horia Stanciu, a Romanian Orthodox priest, presides over Mama Ana's funeral outside her home in Păuca, a village in the Transylvania region of Romania. Her lace-draped coffin is just to the left. On the makeshift altar are the symbolic traditional breads and homemade wine.

BETWEEN: Fr. Horia Stanciu, a Romanian Orthodox priest, pours wine and blesses Mama Ana's body at her funeral held in the courtyard of her home in Păuca, Sibiu County, Romania, in the heart of Transylvania. Family members and villagers look on.

By morning, scores of villagers, mostly older women—Romania has so many widows—streamed into Mama Ana's courtyard, conversing quietly, some with moist, reddened eyes, all dressed head to toe in black. These peasants live off small plots of land and a few livestock. Hands display the evidence, gnarled fingers and a bit of dirt under nails no matter how often they scrub them.

Church men prepared a makeshift altar, putting down wooden planks to protect the priest's footing from mud that formed after snow melted. The funeral included intense prayer and haunting vocals, which carried

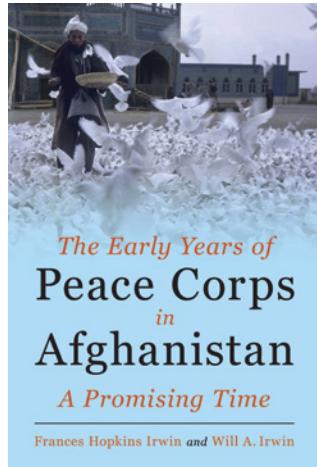
across the village for one hour. Pallbearers closed the casket and screwed it tight with bare hands. One last look at Mama Ana. My mother-in-law hugged the casket and wailed.

A farmer's flower-covered, horse-drawn cart waited for the final journey. Family and villagers followed it in procession for the mile-long walk to the cemetery nestled into the hill by the church. Others came to the street and paid respects. Mama Ana would be laid to rest with her husband who died 20 years earlier.

The gravesite was hand dug, a mound of fresh, cold earth piled near the tombstone. More blessings from the priest followed and she was lowered with a crude pulley device. Burial was quick and simple, followed by dinner reception for 100-plus at the village hall that included homemade red wine and țuică, a potent national brandy distilled by Mama Ana's children with plums grown on her land. People downed a few and ate quickly, thanked the

family with double kisses and went home, careful not to make it a party. **WV**

Andy Trincia (Romania 2002-2004) is a writer based in Sacramento, Calif. His work has been published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Wichita Eagle*, *The News & Observer* (Raleigh), *Florida Times-Union* and *Calgary Herald*; *National Geographic's Glimpse*; *Globe Trekker's Pilot Guides.com*; *Peace Corps Worldwide.org*; *Carolina Alumni Review*; and *Northeastern magazine*. Trincia lived in Romania for nearly four years in stints as a Peace Corps Volunteer and expat. He travels there regularly.



THE EARLY YEARS

Telling the story of Peace Corps in Afghanistan

By Fran and Will Irwin

After 9/11, Volunteers who had served in Afghanistan decades before suddenly found the country they once called home in the news nearly every day. Like other Volunteers who see countries where they served in U.S. headlines, they were eager to share stories of people and places they had known. WorldView published a special issue that fall of 2001 with pieces showing that “within Afghanistan’s past and its people there is strength to rebuild.” The Peace Corps Worldwide website lists three memoirs and two volumes of letters under Afghanistan, all published since 2001—and we know there are more.

A History of the First Four Years

In our book *The Early Years of Peace Corps in Afghanistan: A Promising Time* published in February 2014 under the Peace Corps Writers imprint, we expand the lens to provide a picture of how the program began. After hearing first director Robert L. Steiner speak on a panel organized by Friends of Afghanistan at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Peace Corps in 2011, we wanted to know how Peace Corps initially found its way in Afghanistan. How did the program grow from perhaps the smallest Peace Corps program in the world with nine volunteers limited to the capital city to 200 serving across the country between 1962 and 1966?

We started by talking with Bob Steiner and his wife Sherry about their four years fledgling the program, learning how Steiner drew on his experience growing up in Iran and later serving as a U.S. cultural officer at the embassy there as he guided Volunteers to work within the Afghan culture. These conversations provide the framework for the first part of the book. We intersperse them with contributions from a dozen Volunteers and other staff members including excerpts from letters by Len Oppenheim from Kandahar and David and Elizabeth McGaffey from Farah. Deputy director Robert S. McClusky provided memories and pictures of the royal family’s reception for Volunteers, and Sami Noor recalled how he found a part-time job at the Peace Corps when he was an instructor at Kabul University. Saif R. Samady, a former deputy minister of education of Afghanistan who in an earlier role at the education ministry helped place Peace Corps Volunteers, wrote the Foreword.

The second part of *The Early Years* is 80 pages written by Volunteers mostly during their service but largely lost in the “gray” literature of Peace Corps magazines and pamphlets and in the *Kabul Times*. Besides providing examples of the Volunteer perspective, our findings on the paper trail helped us check facts and fill in gaps. Newsletters produced by Volunteers in

Afghanistan that had been long buried in our boxes helped us figure out that a total of about 300 Volunteers served in the eight groups to arrive during those years. About half were teachers; a quarter nurses, lab technicians, and doctors; and another quarter worked in jobs ranging from accounting to promoting tourism. The National Archives yielded the proposal for the Afghanistan program in the minutes of a February 1962 Peace Corps Director’s meeting; an undated, untitled early draft of the program announcement; an evaluation of the program after six months; and end-of-service conference reports for the first four groups. The Peace Corps Digital Library proved increasingly useful as it added annual budget information submitted to Congress and the text of the *Volunteer* magazine.

The Next Wave of Stories

The accounts of Peace Corps in Afghanistan published in the wake of 9/11 offer insight into how Afghanistan and the United States both changed rapidly over the 17 years during which approximately 1,650 Volunteers served. David Fleishhacker, who arrived in 1962 with the first group, wrote *Lessons from Afghanistan* in 2001 to help Americans understand “the fundamental differences in the cultures of lands like Afghanistan and our own.” Five years later in 2006, John Sumser, fearing that Kabul was becoming a political symbol and the place itself was getting lost, wrote *A Land Without Time*, which describes his experience as a teacher just before Peace Corps left in 1979. Jill Vickers and Jody Bergedick made the film *Once in Afghanistan* in 2008 about how Volunteers vaccinated village women and children against smallpox in 1969. Using interviews and a journal, Susan Fox wrote about Jo Carter and other volunteers starting a nursing school for girls between 1968 and 1970 in *Little Women of Baghlan*, published in 2013.

Writing our own book left us with a sense of how many Peace Corps Afghanistan stories still remain to be told about how, as Steiner once wrote, diversity among peoples can be used to enrich cultures rather than to homogenize or destroy them. These stories will be an important complement to initiatives underway to document the experience of tens of thousands of Americans over the past decade like that of The McCain Institute at Arizona State University, which is surveying “military and civilian veterans of the Afghan war” to record and learn from their experiences in the future. Of particular interest will be stories from Volunteers who went back to Afghanistan after 2001. Frank Light, a Volunteer in

the early 1970s who returned with the State Department in 2003, provides an early glimpse of what these stories might look like in “Back to School,” published in Jane Albritton’s collection *Even the Smallest Crab Has Teeth*.

There is also more room to write the history of the program as a whole. Peace Corps is only rarely mentioned in discussions of the 1960s and 1970s in Afghanistan, perhaps in part because information about the program is not easy to uncover and the individual stories not widely known. Who will write the history of the middle and later years of the program when the U.S. was pre-occupied with Vietnam and Volunteers in Afghanistan were confronted with a

country experiencing famine, and then a short-lived Republic ended by a communist coup? What might we learn from Volunteers who served in other countries about effective ways to archive and share our materials? How might we encourage translations of the stories of the 17-year Peace Corps encounter with Afghanistan into Dari and Pashto and encourage Afghans to write their own? What might we add to the record about our experiences in carrying out the Third Goal of Peace Corps: educating Americans? **WV**

Fran and Will Irwin met in Kabul in 1966 as Peace Corps Volunteers. They got to know each other exploring the city on their bicycles and working at the Kabul Times.

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POSTED TO THE HILL

An interview with RPCV Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy III

By Erica Burman

“Hi, I’m Joe.”

Hand outstretched, Representative Joseph P. Kennedy III, strides up to greet me as I rise from the couch in the reception area of his warren-like office on Capitol Hill. He’s tall but surprisingly fine-boned, with a shock of red hair and that unmistakable family jaw line. He and a staff member escort me a few steps in to his private office where we sit on facing couches. Later, his dog Banjo—a sweet, skittish rescue dog—will come in to nose around.

Kennedy, 33, is a freshman member of Congress, representing Massachusetts’s fourth congressional district. He is also the newest Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) member of Congress, having served in the Puerto Plata region of the Dominican Republic from 2004 to 2006, where he worked with local guides on an ecotourism project. I sat down with him a few months ago to talk about the Peace Corps and his new site, Capitol Hill.

WorldView: RPCVs often can point to a person or an event that inspired them to join the Peace Corps; obviously you’ve got a little bit of history there [laughter]. When did you first become aware of the Peace Corps, and when did you start thinking, “That’s something I want to do?”

Kennedy: Well, I was certainly aware of the organization for ... I can’t even remember since when ... it’s obviously one that’s talked about with great pride in my family. When I was finishing up college, I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do next, and I was very interested in economic development. I wanted to see part of the world that I hadn’t seen, and do something that was going to be very much my own. And I recognize I’ve been very fortunate, so if there could somehow be a way to give back, I was very interested in that as well. So as I was winding down my time in college, my senior year, I was looking at those three ideas and Peace Corps goes to the top of that list very quickly. I actually remember



speaking to my cousin Maeve who at that time was over in Mozambique, and her advice about Peace Corps and what Peace Corps was like and what life was like for a Peace Corps Volunteer was really helpful.

You know, many of us traveled to parts of the developing world, and I remember asking her what it was like to pass time in those villages... ‘Gosh I can’t imagine living in such a place for a long period of time.’ She said, through the eyes of a tourist, no,

but when you’re there it actually becomes home, and then you’re just at home. And I thought of that advice quite a bit, and it very much rang true. When you’re in service you realize that it has become home, and your community. They accepted me like family. They looked out for me. I still keep in touch with them, even today. I’ve gone back a couple of times. It’s an extraordinary experience and one that I would never trade for anything.

WorldView: Tell me a little bit more about your Peace Corps service: your worst day and your best day.

Kennedy: There’s a wide gulf between the two. As I said, I wouldn’t trade my service for anything. I loved it. There were times that were challenging, and there were times that were extraordinary, and I guess I normally describe it to folks that are thinking of service, you know, those swings, those peaks and valleys

that everyone has in life... it was just those, but kind of exaggerated on each end. So the days that were good were incredibly good and you felt like you were really making a difference in people’s lives, and you were. The days that were not so good were particularly challenging. I think like many Volunteers, you have some times when you’re frustrated, you have some times where you’re not feeling well, you have

some times where you miss home, and all of those realities are part of the challenge to it. I guess the advice I try to give people now when they’re thinking about it is, that as bad as it is, it makes for a better story when you get back.

WorldView: Tell me a little bit about your village and your living situation. Were there other Peace Corps Volunteers at your site, or how far were you from them?

Kennedy: Not initially. The Dominican Republic is a country small enough that there are other Volunteers around. When I got there, the closest one was probably about a half hour or so away. After I was there in my site for about a year and a half, they replaced me with another Volunteer, so we overlapped for about a six-month period of time. The project was going well and was actually growing fairly rapidly, but they still were going to need assistance from a Peace Corps Volunteer. It gave me time to transition out, and another Volunteer to transition in.

I think one of the interesting parts, at least for me is, even within the country like the Dominican Republic...every Volunteer's experience even within some pretty narrow boundaries of a country is going to be extremely different, vary widely depending on your sector, your project partner, some of the support that you get, whether you're with other people, and just the personality of the Volunteer. I think that's both the challenge and the strength of the organization. And you know, the projects, so much of it is entrepreneurial. You're going into sites and places around the world where the need is undeniable, but the response can be hard. So how do the needs most fit your abilities, your personality and your resources, and how do you figure out how you can channel those into addressing one of the challenges that the local community is confronting? But it's also exciting when you're able to line those things up and have at it.

WorldView: How do you use your community engagement techniques from Peace Corps in your work with Congress?
Kennedy: There's not a day that goes by that I don't draw on my Peace Corps experience. Whether that was in law school or as a prosecutor, and certainly as a member of Congress. And I hope one of the great lessons that Peace Corps taught me was to do everything you can to try, to at least try, to listen. And that

you are coming at challenges, some of the strengths of that as a Peace Corps Volunteer is coming at it as an outsider with fresh eyes and different skills, and a different cultural framework. And on the one hand, that can be helpful, on the other hand, if you are unable to see those challenges through the eyes of your community—so through their own cultural eccentricities, their own norms, their own language, their own community infrastructure—then it's going to be awfully hard for you to craft a response that's going to get their support. Diagnosing a problem is one thing. Crafting a solution to that problem that's going to gain the support of the community is completely separate.

And it's a lesson that has been helpful for me in Congress, I think many folks here, we can all agree on many of the challenges our country is facing. The solutions are the part that we struggle with, but trying to take the time to listen to the other point of view, learn it, and even if you don't agree with it, understand it so that you can try to find a way to work with it. That doesn't mean you're going to convert everybody to your perspective. That's not the point. The point is to, at the very least, hear people out, and understand that if you do want to address the problem, you're going to have to at the very least come to some kind of mutual form of understanding about what that foundation is. And so the Peace Corps, I



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think was instrumental in helping me get that foundation. We'll see if it works.

WorldView: Has it been a bigger challenge getting the community you served in to work together or the members of Congress?

Kennedy: They both have their unique challenges. One thing that I will say to that, without being cheeky about it, is what was helpful to me as a Peace Corps Volunteer is, even as you get dropped into a community, with the best of intentions and with the perspective of a Volunteer—someone that has decided to make this commitment to your country, to go to some place that you've never been, a country whose language you don't speak, thousands of miles from home because you're committed to an idea, a principle or value—to recognize that from the flip side, from the community's perspective. Here drops in somebody that we've never met before that's going to try to solve problems that we've been dealing with everyday. And even with giving them the benefit of the doubt, saying someone is coming in with the best of intentions, it's going to take a while get a level of trust in that individual who is just trying to, genuinely trying to, do good. It takes a while for the community to get familiar with you.

And much can be said of that in Congress as well, where the vast majority of people here are genuinely trying to do what they think is the right thing for our country. We come at it with different experiences, different life circumstances, informed by our own histories and challenges and visions and values. Trying to all of sudden to just think that because you accurately diagnose something that you're going to get everybody's support, it's not that simple. It's not that easy—and if it were, we would have already solved it. And that's part of this: it's just it's hard and it takes time. You have to be willing to put the time in.



WorldView: You have "site mates" up here on the Hill, other RPCVs. How has it been working with them?

Kennedy: It's been wonderful.

WorldView: We hear rumors of a Peace Corps Caucus.

Kennedy: We meet about once a month or so for breakfast. Sam Farr from California normally is the driving force on that. It's a wonderful group. Representatives Farr, Honda, Garamendi—all from California—and then Representative Petri, one Republican. But we all, when it comes to issues of Peace Corps, are very much united in support of the organization. And you know it's a nice group that's been able to stick together, help each other, and support each other.

WorldView: There are very tight budgets for Peace Corps. In this era of fiscal constraint, how do you see Peace Corps being able to maintain its funding? And what do you see ahead for the new Peace Corps director coming in, we hope, very soon?

Kennedy: A new director, a very experienced director, obviously, who has been around Peace Corps for a very long time. I think she'll do a tremendous job in that position. I don't think that there's any escaping the fiscal reality that our country is facing at the moment. At the same time, I think it's important that, given the budget constraints, we do look

at return on investments, and what Peace Corps is able to do for a country and a community. Yes, some of those things you can measure on a spreadsheet; it's awfully hard to do that with inspiration and values. And that is what Peace Corps is so good at, and that is what you bring back to your communities, as I did back to mine. In countries that have a history of Peace Corps Volunteers, their work and their commitment is something that is passed down and is talked about, and is recognized by the community. And so, certainly, in a time where the world is going through such change and our level of interconnectedness is growing, the challenges we are facing are growing. Countries are still looking for leadership and stability, and that delivering of U.S. values, I think, is critically important. And I can't think of an organization that does that better than Peace Corps. So it's really something that, yes, we have a challenging fiscal situation ahead, we will for a while, but if you're looking to make that long-term, lasting impact, I'd bet on the Peace Corps pretty heavily.

WorldView: Last question, the Dominican Republic Peace Corps Volunteers want to know when you're going to come and visit.

Kennedy: Really? I'm hoping really soon. I'm going through an election cycle so part of that is just to going to depend on the nature of a race and, you know, if I can a break free. I'd absolutely love to. I haven't been back now, in I guess, probably three or 4 years. My wife has never been, and I would love to be able to show it to her. And as I said, I keep in touch with the guys down there fairly frequently. I'm missing it, definitely, so hopefully sooner rather than later. **WV**

Erica Burman (*The Gambia 1987-1989*) is the director of communications for the National Peace Corps Association. She can be contacted at news@peacecorpsconnect.org.

WHY I GIVE: VIRGINIA VOLPE

Peace Corps has led to treasured lifelong relationships

By Natalie Hall

My Peace Corps experience in Sri Lanka was life-changing," says Virginia Volpe, a member of the National Peace Corps Association's (NPCA) Leadership Circle. As North American head of the Client Executive Team for the Securities and Fund Services business at Citi, Virginia now deals with hedge and private equity clients. This is a long way from the small village in the mountains of Sri Lanka where she worked in community development, but she says her Peace Corps experiences from 1992 to 1994 proved to be valuable life and career lessons.

A World Opened Up

Virginia appreciates that NPCA helps her continue to support the Peace Corps and re-connect with other Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Many of her friends from years at Austin College also entered the Peace Corps in the early 1990s. The college opened up Virginia's view of the world and she felt the Peace Corps was a safe way to explore because it provided language training, was attached to the U.S. government, and had a process for helping Volunteers do their jobs well.

Virginia's job in community development in Sri Lanka illustrated several challenges of development work. She had to get permission from the village elders to work with the Women's Society to decide on a project to be funded by foreign sources. But neither the village women nor the outsiders understood the culture of the other; each side telling the other what they wanted to hear. "I probably was the driver of the project, since it fell apart when I left. Then I realized the value of micro-lending to women who had their own



WILLIAM ATKINS/THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Virginia's job in community development in Sri Lanka illustrated several challenges of development work.

ideas. I may know the best step they could take in my opinion, but each woman in her own knows the right next step for herself personally."

Longterm Relationships

Lasting relationships are important to Virginia. She is so pleased that a few members of her Sri Lankan host family won the Green Card lottery and now live in Dearborn, Michigan. She also values the connections RPCVs can make through NPCA.

"I donated to NPCA over the years but was not a huge participant. Now I am a member of the Leadership Circle. I really appreciated a thank-you call from Glenn Blumhorst, the President.

Peace Corps was so life-changing for me. It was there that I caught the international bug. I went on to get a degree in Economics and Latin American Studies from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, and have been involved globally with Citi."

Like Virginia, you can continue to advocate for the goals of the Peace Corps and connect with other RPCVs by supporting NPCA. Keep your life-changing experience alive. Thanks for your support, Virginia!

Members of the Leadership Circle are engaged members of the Peace Corps community who provide core support for NPCA's programs and services at the Contributor, Supporter and Sustainer levels. To learn more, visit [www.peacecorpsconnect.org/contact-us/contributing/leadership-circle/](http://peacecorpsconnect.org/contact-us/contributing/leadership-circle/). **wv**

Natalie Hall (Thailand 1967-1969) is the NPCA special projects volunteer.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR COMMUNITY

By Jonathan Pearson

AFGHANISTAN

Anthony Agnello (1972-1974) was selected by Northern Arizona University as the 2013, Dr. Cliff Harkins Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award winner. The award recognizes Agnello's continued service to the local and international community. Locally in Buffalo, NY Agnello is the President of the Return Peace Corps Volunteer member group Friends of Afghanistan and an advisor for Educational Outreach. As an Educational Outreach advisor, Agnello coordinates volunteer placements in women's and homeless shelters and organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. Internationally, Agnello has impacted the community by organizing and motivating student groups and community organizations to sponsor gender equity projects in Afghanistan.

BOLIVIA

Winston Harrell (2006-2008) is the newest member of the South Boston Town Council. Harrell has served in leadership for numerous Boston community organizations including the South Boston Lions Club, Lions board of directors for District 24B, The Good Samaritan, the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, and the Hargrave Military Academy Alumni Association.



James Gore (2003-2005) entered the race for the north county seat on the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors in California.

Gore recently served in the Obama administration as the assistant chief in the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Gore worked on several projects during his time in Washington D.C. including an initiative to combat rural poverty and federal support for West Coast salmon recovery.

BURKINA FASO

Lynda Garvin (1985-1987) was recently named agricultural agent for Sandoval County, New Mexico. Garvin will manage the Master Gardener Program and work to increase the sustainability of local and small scale agriculture. Working as a field botanist, naturalist, and a forestry Volunteer in Burkina Faso, Garvin has extensive experience in organic agriculture, food security, and livelihood projects.

COSTA RICA

The New York Times recently profiled **Mark Rampolla** (1991-1994), founder of Zico brand coconut water. Rampolla got the inspiration for this company while on his Peace Corps stint, where he found coconut water to be a source of hydration and nutrition.

COTE D'IVOIRE

Nicole Todd Bailey (1995-1997) has been hired by the Family Resource Center of Truckee, Calif., as the new executive director. Her other accomplishments include serving as a board member of Child Family Health International, and working for Apple, Inc.

DOMINICA

Andrew Pearson (1993-1995) was sworn in as the Stearns County, Minn. District Court Judge. Prior to his new position, Pearson worked in criminal defense, most recently for the Bradshaw & Bryant firm, representing clients in civil commitment hearings.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Robert Bielen recently donated a large collection of his Peace Corps memorabilia to the University of Georgia's library. This collection has been praised as giving important insight into the rule of former president Rafael Trujillo and the fears of communism in the Dominican Republic. A valuable source of research and history, this collection will be added to UGA's archives.

Steve Amdahl (1969) recently returned to the Dominican Republic to assist in establishing a senior home, Hogar Alegria or "Home of Joy," and the nonprofit Hogar Alegria-PDX to support the center. Amdahl first became aware of the needs of the senior community during his Peace Corps service, when he met Father James Meureé. Since then he has donated his time and money to Meureé's cause.

ECUADOR

James Fowler (1992-1994) of San Diego was featured in the *Los Angeles Times* for his extensive research on social media and its social and political reach. Fowler stated that he got the idea for his research during his Peace Corps service, when the same project was received and implemented differently in different villages. This prompted him to consider the effects of personal connections on influence, and how this is complicated by online social networks.

Steven Peruski (2007-2009) is the new chief of staff for Michigan State Representative Pam Faris. Peruski's past governmental experiences include working in the legislative affairs office of former governor Jennifer Granholm and on various campaigns, including those of state Supreme Court Justice Alton T. Davis and Senator Carl Levin.

ETHIOPIA

Peter McVeigh (1968-1970) was named Citizen of the Week by the Montgomery, Penn. *Ambler Gazette* for the first week of January 2014. McVeigh has been a history teacher at Germantown Academy for the past 44 years and is extremely involved in its Community Service Organization (CSO). McVeigh observed that his time in the Peace Corps showed him the value of helping others, and he now seeks to teach his students that same lesson through his position as a faculty advisor to CSO.

GHANA

Chris Ashman (1971-1973) received the Goshen, N.Y., Chamber of Commerce's Lifetime Achievement Award. The award was given to Ashman in recognition of his notable contributions to the community through his efforts at the Department of Mental Health. Ashman served as the Orange County Commissioner of Mental Health for 21 years.

GUATEMALA

Nathan Castillo, a student in the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education (GSE), was awarded the grand prize for the Penn GSE Summer Photo Contest. Inspired by his Peace Corps service, Castillo was on a two-week tour of South Africa conducting research and promoting increased access to education when he took his award-winning photo, "Ready to Learn," at a local school.

GUINEA

Asa Christiana (1989-1990) recently founded the non-profit organization Futbol Friends International (FFI). The mission of the organization is to connect U.S. youth soccer organizations to youth soccer players in developing nations and facilitate monetary donations for soccer equipment. So far FFI has successfully supplied equipment and built a field for a soccer team in Uganda, purchased balls and locally made uniforms for a soccer league in Nicaragua, and supplied equipment to players in Kenya and Ghana.

INDIA

Elaine Schroeder (1967-1969) was a

recipient of the Women of Achievement Award, an award given to women who have made extraordinary contributions to the Alaskan community. In Alaska, Schroeder has worked at Aiding Women in Abuse and Rape Emergencies (AWARE), founded the Juneau People for Peace and Justice, hosted a monthly show about mental health on KTOO radio, and created a sexual abuse survivor's program geared specifically for Southeast Alaskans. Some of Schroeder's work outside of Alaska includes volunteering with Amnesty International, assisting with family planning in Nepal, and the founding of a rape relief center as well as Aradia Clinic in Seattle.



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**IRAN****Ken Opin's**

(1964-1966) lithographs and etchings were recently displayed at

the Paoli House Gallery in Belleville and at the Manna Café in Madison, Wisc. Upon his retirement in 2001, Opin decided to pursue becoming an artist. Auditing a drawing class at the Madison Area Technical College multiple times, Opin rediscovered his passion for art. After taking a printmaking class at the same university, Opin found his artistic niche in etching and lithography. Opin has also served as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention and a lobbyist for the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers.

KENYA

Phil Hughes of Philadelphia was featured in the Huffington Post for the founding of his socially conscious food company Mavuno Harvest. Hughes got the idea for this company while serving in Kenya, when he realized that farmers were unable to capitalize on their produce all year round. He introduced the concept of drying fruit so that these farmers could sell their fruit even when it is out of season, and thus gain a greater profit from their land.

With his band, Eric & Magill, **Ryan Weber** recently created a new track called "Baggage and Clothes," telling the story of his experience in a remote area of Kenya during his Peace Corps service. This single was created through a series of email exchanges between the band members, and deals with issues of aid, humanitarianism, and striving for goals while trying to survive in harsh conditions.

MADAGASCAR**Brett Beach** (1999-2001) and **Tim**

McCollum (1999-2001) have moved and expanded the U.S. business location of their company, Madécasse, to the former Pfizer factory in Brooklyn,

**LATIN AMERICA****Ruth Meyer**

(late 1970s) joined the Honduran Solidarity network as an international observer of the November 2013 election. She was charged with monitoring the transparency and the accurate representation of democratic values throughout the election process. From Meyer's observations of the election she maintains that although an election took place it was not representative of democratic values or a truly "free" election.

N.Y. During their Peace Corps service, Beach and McCollum were inspired by the quality of Madagascar cacao and chocolate. Madécasse buys the cacao directly from local farmers and processes, manufactures, and packages the chocolate in-country for export to the U.S., ensuring that greater benefit accrues to local communities. U.S. sales provide the demand for chocolate otherwise absent in Madagascar, making Madécasse a sustainable business.

MALAWI**Kellee Anderson**

of Butte, Mont. (2004-2006) was recently hired as the new Butte-Silver Bow county extension service agent. In Malawi, Anderson worked with the government to oversee the installation of pine trees in order to better the environment there. Her background is in bio-intensive kitchen gardening, and she cites as her long-term goals working to encourage community gardening and other food and environmental initiatives.

MALI**Ken Hawkinson**

(1986-1988), academic provost and vice president of Western Illinois University, and his wife recently established a scholarship for African students to attend his university to study art, music, theater, or literature—or for Western students to attend African universities to study these subjects. Hawkinson's past accomplishments include Army service and studying as a Fulbright scholar in Burkina Faso.

MICRONESIA AND MARSHALL ISLANDS**Richard Creagan**

(1966-68 and 1979) was appointed as the replacement Big Island member of the Hawaii State House of Representatives.

Creagan is the vice president of Kiolakaa Mountain Farms, has worked at the Kona Community Hospital as well as the Department of Health, and is the founder of Hualalai Urgent Care.

MOROCCO**John Davison** (1983-1985)

was unanimously confirmed as the new Resident Director for the Tangier American Legation Museum (TALIM). Located in Tangier, Morocco, the purpose of TALIM is to provide a space for cross-cultural understanding between the U.S. and Morocco. Davison brings to the position nearly 30 years of global experience with past positions including: the U.S. Minister Counselor for Economic Affairs in New Delhi, Deputy Chief of Mission in Niger, Deputy U.S. Representative to the U.N. Economic and Social Council and Political Adviser to the U.N. on Iraq and the Middle East.

Heather O'Neill (2003-2005) of Colonia,

N.J. has opened with her sister a fair trade clothing company called Mushmina featuring designs by Moroccan artisans. Having worked with local communities during her service and subsequent travels, O'Neil obtains her products through a system of co-ops in Morocco.

NAMIBIA

Michael Merchant has been appointed as the new housing director for the city of Chicago. His other career accomplishments include many years in public service, including assistant public defender for Cook County, an investigator with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and a Chicago Public Schools mathematics teacher. He also worked for several years with the Peace Corps in minority recruitment.

NIGER



Whole Foods Markets recently signed a contract with the nutritional bar company Kuli Kuli of which **Lisa Curtis** (2010-2011) is the

founder and CEO. The essential ingredient in Kuli Kuli bars is Nigerien moringa tree leaves. In Niger, the moringa leaves are made into a peanut snack called *kuli kuli*. Kuli Kuli is a for profit organization which supports communities in Niger practicing self sustainable agricultural techniques in farming moringa.



Wendy Voet was named the executive director of Women's Way, a nonprofit organization focused on improving women's safety and equality in Pennsylvania. Voet was previously the deputy director of the Center for Public Health Initiatives at the University of Pennsylvania where she had earlier obtained her Bachelor's degree in

Psychology. Voet additionally has a Masters in Public Health from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Disease.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Matthew Rasmussen



(1999-2001) is a 2014 Pushcart Prize Winner in recognition of his collection of poems in his book *Black Aperture*.

Reflecting on the tragic suicide of his brother in poetic form, *Black Aperture* was also a 2013 finalist for the National Book Award and the winner of the 2012 Walt Whitman Award presented by the Academy of American Poets.



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REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND PERU

Julie Frieswyk (2011-2013) and **Vince Hartman**

Hartman (2008-2010) partnered to create the e-commerce company Art Zoco. Art Zoco directly connects local artisans in developing countries to their customers through an online server. In this manner the artisans are able to directly meet the demand of consumers for their products and maintain the majority of the profit.

PHILLIPINES

Mara Taub (early 1960s) was listed in *The Santa Fe New Mexican's* Ten Who Made a Difference in 2013. Taub is a champion for prisoner and immigrant rights and is the coordinator of the Coalition for Prisoner's Rights, as well as the cofounder of Los Amigos del Parque.

SENEGAL



Larry E. André (1983-1985) was nominated by President Obama in September 2013 to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. André is currently the Director of the Office of the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan at the State Department. Previously André served in the Foreign Service in postings including Nigeria, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Iraq, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone. Prior to his current State Department position, André served as the Director for the Bureau of African Affairs.

Becca Schwartz became the director of business development at Solar Sister, a nonprofit organization in Nigeria which provides resources for women to start their own businesses. Becca is recruiting, training and supporting women entrepreneurs, and establishing the distribution network to supply them. She brings a strong background in sales and business development, having worked as sales manager for a clean energy distribution company, opening their West African market.

TANZANIA



George Cummins

(1964-1967) recently received the Iowa Farm Bureau Distinguished Service Award. The award is given to those who

have made a significant contribution to the agricultural industry on a local, state, and or national level. Some of Cummin's contributions to Iowa agriculture include the coordination of the Floyd County Agricultural Development Authority and work as a field agronomist for Iowa State University Extension.

Russ Petricka (1965-1967) was awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship by the Northfield Rotary Club in honor of his ongoing, distinguished career of service. Russ is the supervisor of Carleton College's Math Skills Center, in which he hires a team of math savants every year as staff.

TOGO

In Washington State, **Cliff Moore** (1980-1982) was named the Thurston County Manager. Moore was recently the interim manager for the county and previously director of the county's Resource Stewardship Department and director of the Washington State University Thurston County Extension Office.



Jane O'Sullivan

(2009-2011) recently partnered with the Fort Wayne Rotary Club—a subset of Rotary International, as well as numerous North American Rotary Clubs, to fundraise for the construction of a middle school in Gléi, Togo. Through the combined efforts

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of various Rotary clubs in North America and O'Sullivan's already established connection to Togo, a school valued at \$50,000 was constructed for \$20,000.

MULTIPLE COUNTRIES

Dr. Jack Kornfield, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who served in Thailand, India, and Burma, was featured on National Public Radio for his advocacy efforts toward mindfulness techniques and their effects on mental health. Kornfield discusses in several books the benefits of meditation and mindfulness on well-being. Kornfield has taught meditation since 1974 and is considered an expert on Buddhist practices due to his Peace Corps service, where he trained as a Buddhist monk.

Dorothy Rozga, who served in Jamaica and Belize (1977-1981) accepted the 2013 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian prize in New York City. The Hilton Symposium gathers leaders of humanitarian movements and organizations in an annual gathering to celebrate achievements in this field. Dorothy is the executive director of EPCAT, or End Child Prostitution, Pornography, and Trafficking.

Mark Wentling, who served in Honduras (1967-1969) and Togo (1970-1973), recently wrote and published a book called *Africa's Embrace*, a work of fiction that is nonetheless a semi-autobiographical account of his Peace Corps experience in Africa. This book deals with local issues as well as the struggles of an American living and working abroad. It also delves into the future of these communities and the effects of poverty and illness. **WV**

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“The itinerary was a nice blend of working, learning, and enjoying the Dominican Republic. While it was beneficial to meet PCVs (Peace Corps Volunteers) and learn about their projects, it was equally important to talk to NGOs working in the area and to independent scientists and ecologists. It gave us all a richer and broader perspective on the enormous challenges the DR faces and some of the emerging solutions. ” – Rob C.

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