

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION

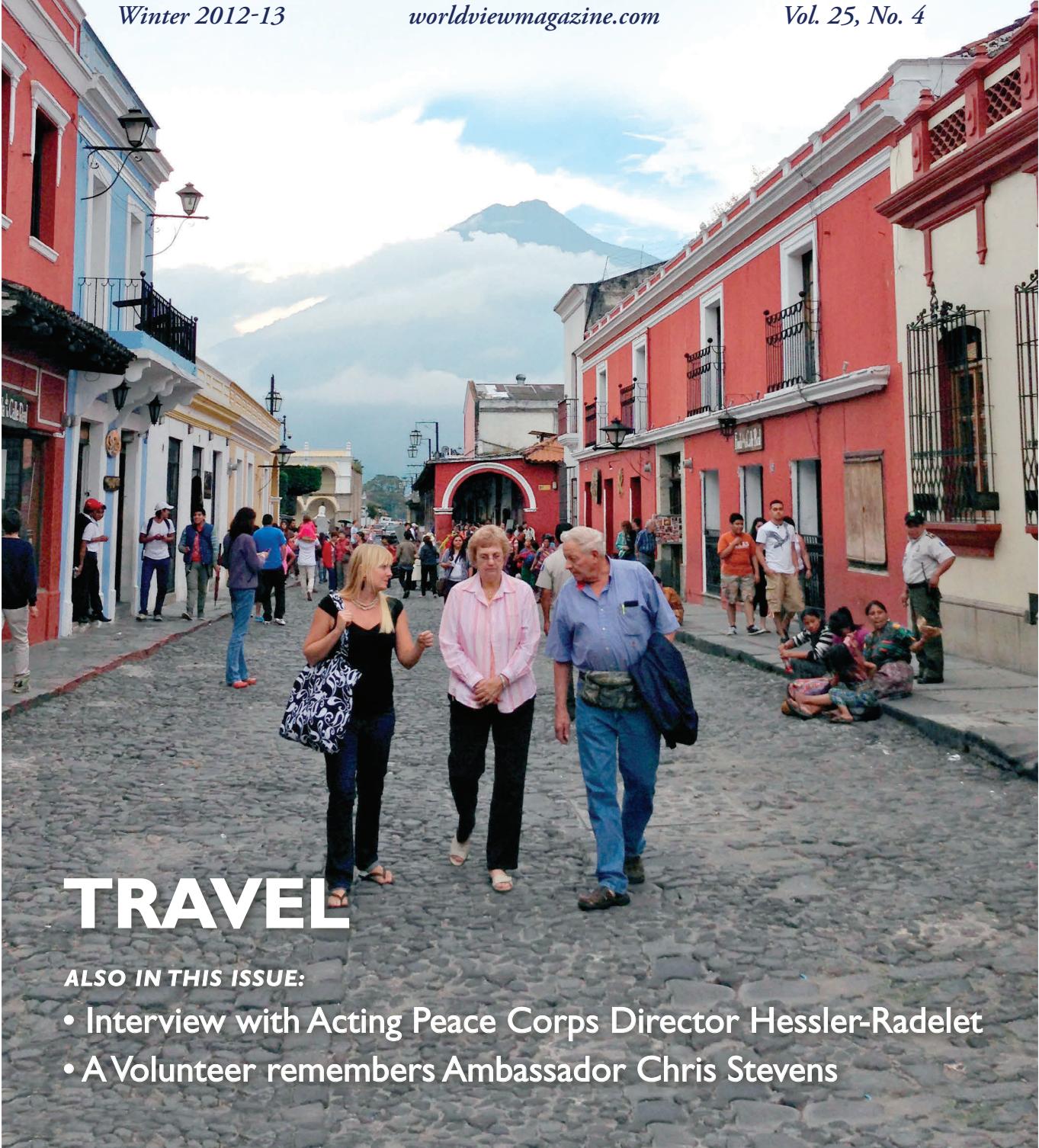
WORLDVIEW

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TRAVEL

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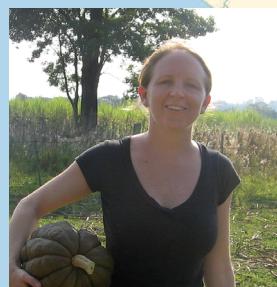
- Interview with Acting Peace Corps Director Hessler-Radelet
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Letters to the editor are welcomed. Unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, or other illustrations will be considered. The editors prefer written proposals before receiving original material. 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.

Winter 2012-13

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COVER: NPCA Next Step Travel guide Tara Tiedemann (Guatemala 2010-12) walks the historic streets of Antigua with participants Jan and Gary Sonderland (India 1971-73).
Photo credit: National Peace Corps Association.

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NPCA

Sandy Cooper

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Winter 2012-13

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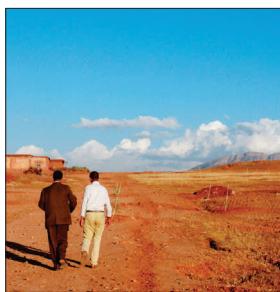
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BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

The world needs more of what the Peace Corps represents

by Tony Barclay

TIt's been just over a year since I was elected as chairman of National Peace Corps Association's (NPCA) Board of Directors. I felt extremely lucky to join the board in the midst of the 50th anniversary celebrations: there was no better moment to appreciate the deep bonds of loyalty and commitment to Peace Corps values that are shared across the community of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), currently serving Volunteers, their families, and current and past Peace Corps staff.

In fact, my good luck has held up remarkably well since the day that I showed up for Peace Corps training at Teachers College, Columbia in September 1967. My experience as a volunteer teacher in Kenya's Rift Valley Province started me down a career path as an anthropologist and development practitioner that has kept me in close touch with Kenya and sustained countless friendships there.

Conventional wisdom says that you can't go home again, but I've managed to visit Kenya for days, weeks, or months every year, with just two exceptions, since completing my service as a PCV. A former student from the 1960s, who's now a successful businessman and respected environmental activist, once told me: "You may have left Kenya, but Kenya has never left you."

Isn't the same thing true for almost all of us? The unique experience offered by Peace Corps service sticks with us, and influences our lives in many different ways. Sometimes it's expressed in the career choices we make, or in the generous contributions we give to support the communities where we live, or projects in the countries where we've served. Sometimes the influence

is personal and less visible, as in the case of my fellow RPCV teacher who scours music stores in Massachusetts for East African and Congolese CDs that will go on his iPod, and evoke fond memories of a time 40 years ago during his daily two-hour commute.

As I've gotten to know the outstanding staff at the NPCA and my fellow board members, I am struck by how Peace Corps service has shaped their view of the world and their dedication to our community. Together, we look at the 50th anniversary as the start of a new chapter in the Peace Corps story. This is what I meant when I told the gathering at last year's gala dinner that "the Peace Corps is a quintessential 21st century idea."

The evidence that the world needs more of what the Peace Corps represents is overwhelming. That's true not only for the Peace Corps itself, which has been reinvigorated and expanded over the past several years, but for innumerable other new, innovative models of voluntary service that bridge geographies and cultures.

The "multiplier effect" of Peace Corps service was a central theme in the vision of President Kennedy and the agency's founders. They designed the agency both to provide needed skills and knowledge in host countries, and to increase awareness and understanding of American values, but also to foster the Third Goal of lifelong service and influence in community life by PCVs returning to the United States.

Since its founding, the NPCA has found ways to elevate and spotlight the work of RPCVs who exemplify this multiplier effect. Our founders and early leaders are inspirational role models. The Sargent Shriver Award for

distinguished individual achievement and the Loret Ruppe Award for outstanding Third Goal efforts by member groups are high points of our annual meeting. Next June, in Boston, we will inaugurate the Harris Wofford Global Citizen Award to recognize a global citizen leader whose life and career have been influenced by the work of PCVs during their service overseas.

These awards are a great way to retell the story of the Third Goal, but those being honored are just the tip of a very large iceberg. It is satisfying to learn about their achievements, but it's also frustrating to realize that so much more of the lasting Third Goal impact, both in the U.S. and in countries of service, is below the water line. That's the case not only because many RPCVs are doing great work with no fanfare, but also because there is no way to know where all of them are.

Last June our board endorsed this updated mission statement: "The NPCA connects and champions Peace Corps community members in bringing the world home." To fulfill this mission, we need to locate the 250,000 people who have served as volunteers and staff in 139 countries over the past 51 years. For reasons no one can explain, there is no comprehensive record that contains all of those names and points of contact.

To be a strong champion and enhance the multiplier effect of Peace Corps service, the NPCA must provide the connective tissue for our diverse, multigenerational, geographically dispersed community. That's the rationale for our "Find the 250K" Campaign, a challenging but very exciting task. Each person we find offers

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GROUP NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

A look at what NPCA member groups are up to

by Jonathan Pearson

In May of this year, **Friends of Sierra Leone**, with support from the Sierra Leone Village Partnership, completed its first school-building project in the village of Kenema-Blango. U.S. Ambassador Michael Owen presided at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new six-room school compound, which also includes a new well and latrines. This is the village's first school, where over 300 students now attend classes. This project started in 2004 when several people sent one of the untrained and unqualified teachers from the village to teacher training college. The U.S. Embassy and FoSL donated two boxes of books and school supplies as well.

A beautiful day and a big turnout! Congratulations to the **Northern California Peace Corps Association**. The group's annual fall picnic hit a 10-year high in attendance, with more than 170 members and friends of the Peace Corps community in attendance. The group didn't fare too badly on the fundraising front either! They raised more than \$2,000 for program operations and group charitable efforts.

A plaque recognizing the 1961 founding of the Peace Corps was dedicated in October in Hyannis, Massachusetts, by members of the **Boston Area Returned Peace Corps Volunteer** associated group, Cape Cod and Islands. The plaque is located in Aselton Park, and is part of the Kennedy Legacy Trail. It recognizes the contributions of President John F. Kennedy as founder of the Peace Corps, Sargent Shriver as Peace Corps' first Director, and all individuals who have served.

The **New Jersey RPCVs** are coming together around advocacy! Two grassroots advocacy workshops were held during October in Princeton and Whippany. Fifteen members of the



RPCVs of New Jersey meet at the Princeton Public Library to discuss NPCA advocacy initiatives.

New Jersey Peace Corps community, representing a cross-section of countries of service, service era and, perhaps most importantly, congressional districts, devoted part of a Saturday to discuss effective advocacy, learn more about NPCA advocacy initiatives, and make plans for future activism.

It was another highly successful Fundraising Gala put on by the **Friends of Fiji**. The biennial event attracted nearly 130 attendees, including Fijian Ambassador to the U.S. Winston Thompson and current Fiji Peace Corps Country Director Eddie Stice. A raffle and silent auction raised more than \$7,000. The funds will support Peace Corps Partnership and other projects benefiting Fiji.

For the second year in a row,

a dedicated group of volunteers connected with the **RPCVs of Colorado** participated in an urban garden project in Denver. Donating 200 volunteer hours involving weed-pulling, planting and harvesting, the group grew nearly 350 pounds of produce in partnership with Grow Local, an organization dedicated to promoting local food, local community and local economy. The produce was donated to The Gathering Place, a daytime drop-in center for women and children in Denver who are experiencing homelessness and poverty.

To see a complete listing of National Peace Corps Association member groups, visit www.peacecorpsconnect.org/resources/member-groups/.

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THE NPCA'S SERVING VOLUNTEER ADVISORY COUNCIL IS OFF AND RUNNING

by Lauren Bernstein

If you read previous issues of *WorldView*, then you may already know a little about the National Peace Corps Association Serving Volunteer Advisory Council (SVAC). For those who missed it: SVAC is a newly formed group of Returned and current Peace Corps Volunteers (and even some Peace Corps Response Volunteers!) who help to advise the President of the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA)—the independent “alumni association” for the Peace Corps community—on issues related to Peace Corps Volunteers currently in the field, and better inform the serving Volunteer community about the work of the NPCA and ways to connect to the Returned Volunteer community. With a better understanding of worldwide issues affecting Volunteers, the SVAC and the NPCA can help the RPCV community to better support

Volunteers before, during, and after their service.

So what are some of the things that SVAC is working on right now?

SVAC comprises 12 different groups of Advisors in the areas of advocacy, communications, community building, field training, initiatives, leadership, mentoring, partnerships, projects, public relations, resources, and social media. Advisors have been speaking to Volunteers from around the globe to better understand their needs, and some of the new projects underway are:

- Building out the SVAC website (pcv.me) to provide more resources and to help gather information from PCVs.
- Highlighting great PCV projects from around the world.
- Developing podcasts for those in the field — the first one up is for PCVs

tasked with developing building projects!

How can PCVs or RPCVs get involved with SVAC?

There are many ways to be a part of SVAC. You can join a Town Hall phone discussion, with topics rotating monthly from each of the SVAC Advisors’ areas. You can also apply to become an SVAC Advisor, and help to develop connections and share ideas with PCVs around the world. And lastly, you can spread the word to others about this new initiative that brings PCVs and RPCVs closer together to share ideas, feedback, and visions to improve the Peace Corps service.

To learn more, join a Town Hall phone call, or apply to be an SVAC Advisor, visit the SVAC website at www.pcv.me.

Lauren Bernstein is a Volunteer in Morocco.

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**Shavonda Mobley,
Peace Corps Volunteer, Paraguay**



Shavonda Mobley

NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR HARRIS WOFFORD GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AWARD

New award to honor outstanding host country national

by Anne Baker

While the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) has several awards recognizing the achievements of the community of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), we realized we were overdue to honor outstanding leaders from the countries where we served.

That changed during last September's 50th anniversary celebrations in Washington with the first Harris Wofford Global Citizenship Award. Named after the former Pennsylvania Senator who worked closely with President Kennedy and Sargent Shriver in the early days of the Peace Corps,

the Wofford award will be presented annually to an outstanding global leader who grew up in a country where Peace Corps Volunteers served and whose life was influenced by the Peace Corps.

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2013 Wofford Award, which will be presented at Peace Corps Connect - Boston on June 28 - 29, 2013. Nominees are persons whose life's work has made a significant contribution to the world in a way that reflects the core Peace Corps values of service, peace, development, human rights, health, and understanding.

Continued on page 21



Harris Wofford and Steve Clapp, Peace Corps teacher of Atiku Abubakar.

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NEXT STEP TRAVEL: RECONNECT, LEARN, SERVE ... LAUGH!

NPCA kicks off an alumni travel program

by Erica Burman

In October, the National Peace Corps Association launched **Next Step Travel**, a new alumni travel program featuring small group travel (up to 20), hands-on service projects, educational programs and a close-up view of the impact of volunteer service. In 2012 and 2013, we're piloting trips to Guatemala and the Dominican Republic; assuming they're a success, we'll expand to other Peace Corps countries in the future.

What makes Next Step Travel trips unique?

- *That Peace Corps connection:* In country, our tour operators are RPCVs with established local

relationships and on-the-ground knowledge like no others. Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Andrew Motiwalla (Honduras 1996-98) is the CEO of our tour operator partner, Discover Corps, a program of Terra Education, and an experienced leader in educational travel.

- *That Peace Corps spirit:* trips infused with curiosity, tolerance, learning, giving back ... and fun!

"Next Step Travel to Guatemala was a meaningful, exciting, and educational retirement travel experience for a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who was in the field almost 50 years ago!" says J.K. Nelson (Nigeria 1963-65).

"On the trip, I was 22 again, back doing the work that was so life-changing for me and doing it with people who share that part of my history. The bonding all around was instantaneous."

Enjoy these photos from our first two trips, and visit the NPCA website at www.travel.peacecorpsconnect.org for more details, including links to more photos and blogs posts. Learn how you, your friends and your family can join us on future trips!

Erica Burman (The Gambia 1987-89) is Director of Communications for NPCA. She participated on the first Next Step Travel trip to Guatemala.



Early morning, Lake Atitlan, Guatemala.



Exploring market stalls in a town on the shores of Lake Atitlan.



Friendly shopkeeper.



NPCA Next Step Travel, Guatemala Group 1!



Visiting with Guatemala Peace Corps Volunteer Samantha Boss.



Admiring the finished world map project, Guatemala.



Local teacher gives a tour of Aldea La Esperanza (Municipio Zunil), Guatemala.



Visit to a weaving workshop.



Painting the classroom exterior, Guatemala.



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Cutting drywall for a new classroom, Guatemala.



NPCA Next Step Travel, Dominican Republic Group 1 visits the Peace Corps office in Santo Domingo.



Thank you from the students, Guatemala.



Painting the new school at Jardín de los Niños, Dominican Republic.



The project in Caño Dulce, Dominican Republic, truly involved the entire community!



Exploring historic church in Antigua, Guatemala.



PCV Ekw

Adventuring in the pools of 27 Charcos (Waterfalls), an ecotourism project carried out by Joe Kennedy III while he was a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Dominican Republic.



Quetzaltenango classroom.



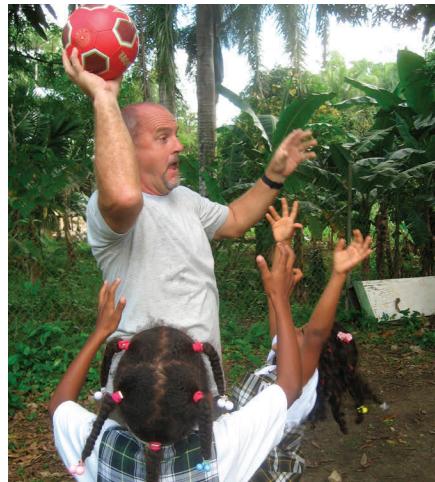
Recess time fun, Guatemala.



The group stops to take in the view in Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic.



Volunteer Ekow Edzie shares a laugh with Next Step Travel participants in the Dominican Republic.



Enjoying a break with the students at Jardín de los Niños, Dominican Republic.



Visiting the DREAM (Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring) Project, started by an RPCV.



New friends in Caño Dulce, Dominican Republic.



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PART OF SOMETHING MUCH LARGER

New NPCA service travel program connects Peace Corps generations

by Sandy Cooper

For the past two weeks, I've been reading *When the World Calls*, a 50-year history of the Peace Corps, while accompanying eight travelers—six of them Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs)—around the Dominican Republic (DR).

I am here to help launch the National Peace Corps Association's (NPCA) first Next Step Travel program, a new alumni travel program featuring small group travel (up to 20), hands-on service projects, educational programs and a close-up view of the impact of volunteer service. Reading this book in conjunction with this trip has made me feel honored to be a part of something much larger than my own experience—both through my own experience Peace Corps, and through my current work with Discover Corps, National Peace Corps Association's program partner.

Before the trip began, I was super excited to meet the travelers, to hear stories from the early years of Peace Corps in Ghana and India. I was curious about their challenges and successes, how they decided to serve, and what they are doing now. And yes,



Resting after a day of hard work.

those stories have been pretty incredible.

Fran and John met and married as Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) in Ghana. Stories of border crossings where guards went from wanting bribes to suddenly being kin once Fran started speaking to them in Twi, of rekindling connections with students when they returned to visit 30 years later, and of African juju, have been my favorites.

Ruth served with 1,500 volunteers when she was in India, and was part of a Peace Corps program called "World Wide Secretaries." She speaks of how the sights and sound of the DR connect her back to that time.

Anne has tales from Fiji—of rural roads and rides in the back of trucks, of traditional dances that tell stories of the people, and of celebrations that involve the entire village—reminding me of some of my own experiences as a PCV in Kiribati.

Anne Marie was both a PCV in Paraguay and a Peace Corps Response Volunteer in Honduras. Yesterday she mentioned how nice it has been to share Peace Corps stories with other people who really "get it." Things that may seem strange to friends and family at home come across as perfectly logical to others in this group. While all our stories are unique, they also overlap and share some common themes. (We all found NPCA's Valentines Day blog post, "12 Reasons to Date a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer," to be quite accurate!)



Anne and her helpers.



Fran at the DREAM Project.

Ironically, what I did not think as much about before heading to the Dominican Republic was all the current Volunteers with whom I would get to connect here. It is exciting and inspiring to see the work they are doing, to learn about Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic, and to think about how so many different Volunteer projects around the world add up to a massive amount of good. Peace Corps Volunteers in the DR are helping to provide high-quality education to children that would not receive it otherwise, bring clean water



Anne Marie and Ruth prepare sand for cement.

to hundreds of villagers by building aqueducts, and empower youth through projects in their own communities and national conferences. I have so loved getting to meet them and hear about their projects. Through Next Step Travel trips, we will also support some of these projects with funds and labor.

One of the exciting things about this new NPCA program is that it forges a connection between RPCVs and current Peace Corps Volunteers. It feels positive on so many levels. Both sides are equally curious about the other. Again, our stories overlap: around food (what did you miss the most?), transportation (how many people can fit in a minivan?), and how we come to consider a place so different from where we were raised our home.

Perhaps even more significant is how our shared connections can continue to make a difference now. For example, we visited a chocolate cooperative where a PCV is helping a community to grow and improve their business. We will help to connect her to RPCVs who have developed a successful “bean to

bar” chocolate company in Madagascar.

And for those who have not been Peace Corps Volunteers (yet!), we are both sharing the Peace Corps experience, and inspiring them to transform the world. Rob, the only non-RPCV on this program, departed today. He worked incredibly hard at our project sites (heading back to finish painting a ceiling while the rest of us were finishing lunch!) and was deeply struck by the sights and sounds of the DR. When he left today he commented, “I'll be back to this country.”

Sandy Cooper (Kiribati 2002-04) is the senior manager for international programs with Terra Education/Discover Corps, the National Peace Corps Association's partner for its new Next Step Travel alumni travel program. Sandy has lived, worked, studied and traveled in over 25 countries. Her commitment to social responsibility led Sandy to co-found Thinking Beyond Borders, an organization designed for gap year students to explore international development through global service learning and academic study.



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TOURISM VOLUNTEER TO TOURISM ENTREPRENEUR

A Guatemala RPCV takes the plunge, starts her own business

by Tara Tiedemann

I wasn't your typical Peace Corps Volunteer, who joins shortly after college to gain some real world experience in an international environment. Instead, I had spent close to a decade in the ski resort business in Colorado and Utah and joined Peace Corps looking to mix it up a little bit—exploring the international development community, with an open mind and spirit, leaping out into the universe, ready for a change. Never did I think that over two years later I would find myself as a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) who hasn't returned, still living in my host country as a new business owner.

A wave of excitement hit me as I eagerly read my official invitation to serve while standing in front of my mailbox as a Peace Corps applicant back in October 2010. I was nominated to serve as a Sustainable Community Tourism volunteer in Guatemala and my departure date was set for that coming January. "Tourism in Guatemala," I exclaimed to myself. What a stroke of good luck! Little did I know what I was about to get myself into as I boarded the plane. Leaving behind a career involving multi-million dollar resort operating budgets and stepping into the grassroots style of community tourism development would be a challenge.

After training, I was placed in a very rural environment, 100% "off the grid," on an organic coffee and macadamia *finca* (farm) on the Pacific coast of Guatemala. An active volcano lay to the north and the Pacific Ocean spanned out to the south, with rows of coffee and macadamia trees in between. It was a beautiful location, and the friendly community, eager to share their lives as coffee farmers, only enriched the experience. My job was to assist the local community of 50 families in developing a coffee tour, focusing on experiential



Tara leading her clients, also Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, on the Tikal extension trip after the NPCA Next Step Travel Guatemala trip.

travel. In addition, I facilitated the development of a business and marketing plan, with trainings on how to attend to the international visitor.

The community had successfully taken control of the *finca* after its bankrupt former owner, who hadn't paid them for 18 months, had abandoned it. They are now working with the Guatemalan government organization Fondo de las Tierras (Land Fund) to pay off the land over a period of 12 years. The community was eager to welcome tourism as it serves as an additional source of revenue, especially useful due to the volatility of agriculture given the impacts of climate change.

Over my two years as a Volunteer on the *finca*, I worked mostly in the eco-hotel, the 100-year-old former owner's house, with a small core of hotel employees and members of the tourism committee. I gave trainings on how to make reservations, safely coordinate travel logistics, anticipate guests' needs, and ensure them a pleasurable stay in the community. We had trainings in the kitchen involving hygienic food



Getting out to the ruins at Topoxte, Petén, Guatemala, requires a boat ride to the island. Beware of crocodiles!



Tara with her Viva Adventures clients celebrating the trip with a sunset toast on top of Temple 2 in Yaxha, Petén.

preparation and developed new recipes and cooking techniques. We used the hotel kitchen as a capacity-building facility for women's cooking weeks, hosting women from the community, focusing on safe and healthy food preparation and having fun trying new recipes using local ingredients. All of this time in the kitchen with the women eventually launched the community-wide improved cook stove project that we also completed.

Throughout this experience, the wheels were turning in my head. As I hosted my own family and friends and talked to international guests who visited the *finca*, many came to me as they departed, thanking me and saying how much I had been of help to them. Some mentioned they might not have been able to manage otherwise, especially with the language barrier and

Photos Tara Tiedemann

rather complicated logistics of traveling around the country. With my COS date approaching and thoughts swirling of next step possibilities, the idea to stay in country and open my own travel business began to take shape. I could use the unique skill set I had developed as a Peace Corps volunteer to assist other travelers to plan their vacations, focusing on sustainable active travel, and give them rich experiences in these vibrant local communities.

Shortly after my close of service in February 2012, my company Viva

Adventures was born. I am currently working with clients to give them unique vacation experiences in four countries in Central America: Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. I am also proud to partner with Discover Corps, the operator of National Peace Corps Association's Next Step Travel program, to offer a special extension trip to the Petén, Guatemala, home of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Tikal. There, visitors can walk in the footsteps of the Maya and visit this and other Mayan sites.



Sunset at site in Finca Nueva Alianza. This photo was taken from the terrace of the hotel and was my nightly treat while serving as a Volunteer.

There is so much to see and do in Central America, and as an RPCV, I can help give my clients a special insider's experience in the countries in which Viva Adventures operates. After serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer, that spirit of sustainability still lives strong and is incorporated in my business model and operating plan.

So here I am, almost three years after first stepping off the plane in Guatemala, with my own business growing and so many new doors opened as a result of serving as a Volunteer. Being a Volunteer gave me the perseverance that opening a new business takes and has made me so much more comfortable stepping out there into uncharted territory. Join me and travel—gaining that insider's edge that only traveling with an RPCV can bring!

Tara Tiedemann (Guatemala 2010-12) spent close to a decade living in the mountain states of Montana, Colorado, and Utah before joining the Peace Corps. She now resides in Guatemala and is the owner of Viva Adventures—www.vivaadventures.com.

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UNCORNERED LIFE

“Regret avoidance strategy” leads to six years traveling the world, sharing new perspectives

by Audrey Scott

In December 2006, Dan and I sold everything, gave up our apartment and exchanged our traditional and stable office jobs in Prague, Czech Republic, for an opportunity to pursue our dreams of traveling around the world. Our plan: travel around the world for 12 to 18 months as a sort of creative sabbatical and develop a blog (Uncornered Market) to highlight our more creative written and photography work.

Given that we're coming on year six of this journey, you could say we miscalculated just a bit. Or, more like it, the journey took on a life of its own. As we traveled, we created our current roles as storytellers using blogging, photography, speaking and other media to share the stories of little known places and cultures.

We both knew that while we could have continued living and working the same way in Prague, we knew there was another world out there to explore; we were curious and wanted to see and experience it for ourselves. And we didn't want to look back in 10 or 15 or 20 years and wonder “what if.”

This wasn't the first time we had applied the “regret avoidance strategy” in our lives together. When I finished my Peace Corps service in Estonia in 2000, Dan and I backpacked around Europe for four months and got married in Pienza, Italy, along the way. We made the decision then that we wanted to live abroad together within a year. At the end of 2001 we sold our two cars and everything else in San Francisco and moved to Prague with six suitcases and no jobs. Our family and friends thought we were crazy to leave our lives in San Francisco, but we knew that we wanted to experience and learn something different.

At the beginning of our current journey, we would buy a one-way ticket



Uncornered Market

Dan and Audrey in Jordan.

to a continent and travel mostly by public transport from one side to the other. This included 18 months in Asia, six months in Central/Eastern Europe and 15 months in Latin America. We wanted to spend longer periods of time in countries to really try to understand the people, socio-economic situations and the changing nature of urban and rural areas.

Traveling by public transport, spending lots of time in fresh markets, eating street food and walking extensively provided us the best opportunities to interact with local people. Our motivation was to put a personal and human face on countries and people that were sometimes feared (e.g., the 'stans in Central Asia) or were only paid attention to when there was an environmental or political disaster. We wanted to show the life of ordinary people in ordinary times, and show the universal similarities between people all over the world. Through photo essays, human interest stories and videos

on our blog we were able to make connections between our main blog audience (Americans) and the countries we were visiting. Our belief is that awareness and understanding leads to less fear.

The five months we spent traveling overland from Georgia through the Caucasus and Central Asia to China solidified in us the importance of citizen diplomacy and the power of human connections to go beyond politics. Again and again, in countries with governments unfriendly to our own and that were seen as “dangerous” back home we were welcomed and humbled by hospitality. Nowhere was this more evident than when we visited Iran last year (November 2011) for three weeks.

In many cases, we were the first “real” Americans the community had ever met and they were curious about the United States. These discussions changed assumptions and stereotypes on both sides, and we know they left an

impression not only on us.

When people ask what inspires us or what keeps us going, it's pretty simple: people, curiosity and stories. And we believe there is a common thread between them all.

While we love a beautiful temple or landscape, it's the people we meet everywhere who keep teaching and humbling us. We want to share their stories and take the "other" out of how we think of the rest of the world. And curiosity keeps us exploring places unknown, or perhaps places we think we know.

It's a big world out there.

Audrey Scott (Estonia 1998-00) is a writer, digital storyteller and photographer at UncorneredMarket.com, one of the world's leading travel blogs. Along with her husband Daniel Noll, she has been traveling around the world for nearly six years to over 75 countries, sharing stories about destinations' more personal and human dimensions, often challenging stereotypes and shifting perceptions along the way.

HARRIS WOFFORD AWARD

Continued from page 11

To nominate an individual for this award, please visit the NPCA website at www.peacecorpsconnect.org/about/awards, complete the nomination form and send it along with a nomination letter and supporting materials to WoffordAward@peacecorpsconnect.org. All nomination materials must be received by January 10, 2013. The winner of the award will travel to Boston to deliver the Global Leaders Lecture and will also travel to Washington, D.C., to meet with Congressional leaders on Capitol Hill.

The Wofford Award is endowed through a generous gift from Atiku Abubakar, a businessman, philanthropist and former Vice President of Nigeria.

Anne Baker (Fiji 1984-87) is the acting president of the National Peace Corps Association.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Continued from page 6

the discovery of a life of continuing service in some form, and further proof of concept for the Third Goal vision.

Just like an election, this campaign relies on a ground game, with lots of person-to-person outreach and follow-up. I invite you to help us by tapping your personal networks, by volunteering your time (contact Jonathan Pearson at jonathan@peacecorpsconnect.org), or through a donation to the NPCA. It will take time to reach this goal, but the payoff will be enormous.

In service,
Tony Barclay

Tony Barclay (Kenya 1968-70) is the Chairman of the Board of the National Peace Corps Association. Please send your comments to tonybarc@gmail.com.

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FROM THE GROUND UP

Returned Volunteers write and research travel

by Christopher Beale

Ask any Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) what they think about the current travel information for their country of service and the answer is nearly always the same: "Horrible, inadequate and scant." Another response is often given: "The publisher should have us write the travel guide!"

In 2007, I was wrapping up my two years of Peace Corps service on Antigua and Barbuda (one of six Caribbean nations that comprise the Eastern Caribbean post). Antigua and Barbuda is not your typical Peace Corps assignment—I often catch much grief from other Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who served in "real" Peace Corps sites.

When I signed up for the Peace Corps, I didn't think I would be sent to an island that boasts 365 beaches (one for every day of the year). An island where white sand, blue water, and a blazing sun decorate the national flag. An island where ports are crammed with cruise ships emptying eager visitors into strategically placed shopping centers. An island where tourists pay thousands of dollars for a few days on its white sand beaches. But that is exactly what happened.

Outsiders looking at Antigua only through vacation guides might think life on the island is all rum punch and reggae music, from sunrise to sunset. It isn't. In fact, the pockets of paradise promised on postcard prints, while evident, are few and far between on this Caribbean island. And where there is a holiday destination, you will find concrete barriers, security guards, and foreign investment. As Antigua's focus on tourism increases, the number of visitors racing from the airport or cruise ship dock to coastal resorts will surely rise. But what the Land Rovers pass on



Christopher Beale (Eastern Caribbean 05-07) began Other Places Publishing to help RPCVs write and publish travel guides for their countries of service.

their way to postcard paradise is the *real* Antigua—a side of Antigua that I had come to know and appreciate through my Peace Corps service.

I decided to put pen to paper and write not only about the places to visit on Antigua and Barbuda, but also about the people, culture, and history. My intent was to lure the tourists out of the walled compounds of the all-inclusive resorts to see the other side of Antigua. I also wanted the local communities and villages to benefit from tourism (most of the money from the resorts does not reach surrounding communities). In addition, I truly believed that I had some great information to share and wanted to document it before I left the island.

After writing the book, I realized that PCVs in other countries might be

in the same position. I reached out to the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer community and was overwhelmed by the response. Active and former Volunteers from across the globe began contacting me to express their interest in collaborating on a travel guide for their countries of service. Out of that began Other Places Publishing, an independent press focused on producing a series of travel guides (*Other Places Travel Guides*) written and researched by RPCVs.

Our guides cover all of the basics a traveler needs to explore the country: eateries, accommodations, transportation logistics (including detailed maps), things to do and see, etc. But we delve further by telling the story of a country and of a people. That's where the Peace Corps

experience is so essential—RPCVs have absorbed a people, place and culture over time and are intimately familiar with their countries of service. More importantly, they are connected to the inner workings of a country and have access to a national network of locals and expats. For the majority of our guides, we organize a team of writers, each contributing their own area of expertise (whether regional or topical) to the guide. Through these relationships, RPCVs can gain access to events, spots, and knowledge that are often out of reach to the traditional travel writer (who may have spent little time in the country they are writing about).

RPCVs are also able to highlight local community-driven initiatives that allow the traveler to have a more enriching experience and, at the same time, contribute to local community development.

For example, our Benin guide highlights a small lake near the rural village of Doukounta where a PCV (along with a local non-governmental organization) organized local fishermen to provide tours of the lake to observe the hippopotamus population. After the boat ride, visitors continue to the village for a ceremonial shot of *sodabi* and interact with the villagers. The profitable eco-tourism activity brings much-needed dollars to an otherwise simple fishing village. At the same

time, it supports the preservation of the lake's hippo population. However, because the lake is off the beaten tourist path, it would otherwise be difficult for travelers to participate in Doukounta's hippo pond initiative. Our guides are peppered with such projects, which we make a priority to highlight.

Nearly every PCV has thought about writing a book about their service. The personal journey, exotic environment, and rich characters naturally lend themselves to the endeavor. But *Other Places Travel Guides* bring RPCVs together to turn their inner Hemingways toward telling the story of their countries of service in hopes of bridging the gap between locals and travelers, and to assist communities in their own development.

Christopher "Kit" Beale (Eastern Caribbean 2005-07) is the founder of Other Places Publishing, an independent book publisher focused on producing a series of travel guides written and researched by RPCVs. To date, Other Places Publishing has produced 17 books, 15 of which are comprehensive travel guides to the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Madagascar, Micronesia, Mongolia, Namibia, Paraguay, Thailand, Tonga, and Ukraine. To find out more about Other Places Publishing, please visit www.otherplacepublishing.com.



A local fisherman leads visitors on a tour of Lake Dokon (Hippopotamus Lake) outside of Doukounta, Benin. The PCV-led project has become a successful eco-tourism project in the small fishing village.

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TRAVEL WITH A MISSION

RPCVs give back through altruistic travel

by JoAnna Haugen

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) are often the first to admit that giving back to the global community doesn't end with the close-of-service conference. Long after they've said goodbye to their Peace Corps communities and settled back into some semblance of a "normal" life, RPCVs continue to find ways to contribute to neighborhood causes and beyond. In fact, some are so motivated that they even find ways to turn vacation time into something much more meaningful than a fruity drink on the beach.

Traveling for altruistic purposes comes in a variety of forms. Sometimes people peg a cause to a trip, and then travel to raise awareness. Others coordinate fundraising efforts into their travels. Some go it alone; others choose to tackle their altruistic mission with a team. Regardless of how they do it, RPCVs who continue to carry the Peace Corps mindset know that there's more to the world than what is within a personal bubble. It is a mindset that is pervasive among returned volunteers, and it's common to find RPCVs who are hiking, cycling, climbing or undertaking some other physical challenge for a greater purpose.

When Lauren Brown (India 64-66) visited a friend in his former Peace Corps village who was personally funding the education of students at Methodist mission churches in the country, he was inspired to do the same. "When I came back, I started thinking, 'Well, how can I help extend (his) efforts?'" Brown says. The answer: A four-month cycling trip in 2010 across the United States that ended up raising more than \$26,000 in scholarship funds for children in India.

Preparation for Brown's trip began more than six months before he actually hit the road. Because he wanted to



Lauren Brown

Lauren Brown in full biking regalia and equipment at Morro Bay, California, during a training ride for the cross-country trip.

focus on the trip and the fundraising and not the handling of money, he partnered with the United Methodist Church to collect funds, and during his journey, Brown stopped at churches across the United States to share stories and give presentations about his experiences in India.

At press time, Jeffrey Wetzel (Honduras 10-11) was preparing to do something similar through Curt's Ride to Cure Cancer, which follows the Florida section of the East Coast Greenway. "I can only think of one friend who has lost to cancer," he says. "I'm incredibly lucky. I see so many other people lose Mom, and then Dad or sister and coworker and friend and friend and friend. It is their pain that motivates me. I have hope for the future, but hope alone doesn't work. Action is required to effect change. The \$2,000 I raise to fight cancer is a small change in the bigger cancer-fighting picture, but the important part is that it is change."

Brown and Wetzel both chose a bicycle as their altruistic tool of choice. So did Kyle Henning (Ethiopia 09-11), who set out on a cycling expedition from Lac Assal, the lowest point in

Africa, to Mt. Kilimanjaro, which he called Low2High: Africa. The ride raised \$5,000 for a new compound for the New Day Children's Centre in his Peace Corps village.

Erik "Boots" Christensen (Tanzania 08-10) completed his altruistic trip on foot when he and three friends hiked every foot of the Appalachian Trail over the course of five months to raise money for the Mdabulo General Hospital in Mufindi, Tanzania. After 2,175 miles, the group was able to provide \$16,000 for the medical facility.

Though altruistic travel often focuses on fundraising and collecting money for a distinct organization or cause, some trips are simply meant to raise awareness on a myriad of issues. In 2010, Elizabeth Gore (Bolivia 03-05) joined Summit on the Summit and climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro to turn attention to the global clean water crisis, which kills 1.8 million people worldwide each year, on behalf of the United Nations. Each day of the six-day trek and in village visits both before and after the climb, Gore educated people about the world's one billion people

Continued on page 27

A TIME OF CHANGE AND INNOVATION

WorldView sits down with Peace Corps Acting Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet

by Erica Burman

Let me show you my pictures!” Carrie Hessler-Radelet, the Acting Director of the Peace Corps since mid-September 2012, gets up at the end of our interview, disappears into her inner office on the eighth floor of Peace Corps headquarters and then emerges with a small book of photos. Like every Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) you’ve ever met—Hessler-Radelet and her husband Steve Radelet served together as Peace Corps Volunteers in Western Samoa from 1981 to 1983—she’s happy to point out her school, her house, the youthful version of herself at work as a Volunteer.

It’s a sparse collection by 2012 standards. Nowadays, digital documentation of one’s service routinely encompasses not just thousands of digital photos, but also videos, blogs, Twitter and Tumblr accounts. But for Hessler-Radelet, these few photos are precious. After Peace Corps, she and her husband left all their worldly belongings back in Boston, in storage paid for by Radelet’s employer. Except the employer didn’t pay. The storage locker and all its contents, they later discovered, had been auctioned off. Everything — wedding pictures, baby pictures, pictures of themselves as Peace Corps Volunteers — was gone. Luckily her parents had visited the couple in Samoa, and took some photos. Hessler-Radelet had only had those early 1980s photos scanned and put into a simple photo book at a local CVS a few days ago.

Which raises one of the top challenges and opportunities of the Peace Corps today: technology. Hessler-Radelet notes that while it often feels like the agency has had to play a bit of catch-up in terms of keeping on top of some technological

changes, the Peace Corps is nonetheless moving aggressively to embrace tools that increase Volunteer effectiveness. She cites Volunteers who are using MP3 players to develop podcasts on development topics, which are then translated into a host of local languages and easily shared. And the agency’s Stomp Out Malaria initiative in Africa, which brings together a cohort of Peace Corps Volunteers and puts them through an intensive 10-day “Boot Camp.” Skype and other open-source tools connect the Volunteers with the world’s leading entomologists and medical research experts for conversations about conditions on the ground. The newly trained Volunteers then go back to their Peace Corps countries and share what they’ve learned.

“Boot Camp-trained Volunteers are part of a larger malaria community of learning that uses technology to communicate and stay in touch and to share their own materials that they have created or new materials that have come out,” says Hessler-Radelet. “So, really using technology to build our skills and maintain our skills and to communicate our successes.”

She also points to an electronic reader pilot project in Liberia that has been “very, very successful.” “Typically, for the last 50 years we gave Volunteers a big stack of training materials. What we’re experimenting with in Liberia is giving trainees all of their training materials and all of the paperwork including forms, their Peace Corps cookbook, core expectations —anything that would be put on paper — and we’re putting it into an e-reader. They all have solar charging capabilities and long-life batteries—and frankly, if you can do it in Liberia, you can do it anywhere.” What’s more, with the guidance of a



Peace Corps

As a Volunteer in Western Samoa, Hessler-Radelet taught high school and helped design a national public awareness campaign on disaster preparedness.

Volunteer, an enterprising girls’ club has started a cottage industry to sew e-reader covers out of local fabric and sell them to local PCVs. “This has actually come to the attention of the [Liberian] president; she’s become very interested in the idea of using e-readers to support training materials and has asked for a briefing from our Country Director, so I suspect you’ll be seeing more and more of that,” says Hessler-Radelet.

Technology is just one piece of an aggressive reform agenda within the agency. When the previous Director, Aaron Williams, came in, he commissioned a Comprehensive Agency Assessment. Hessler-Radelet, who was then Deputy Director, says, “We did a lot of planning and thinking: ‘Okay, what do we do with this information and how do we take it into a strategic plan?’”



Peace Corps

Four generations of Hessler-Radelet's family have served as Peace Corps Volunteers.

The agency added in a number of Office of the Inspector General findings, and also recommendations flowing from the November 2011 enactment of the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act, which became "important components" of the reform effort.

"This is the most far-reaching reform effort that this agency has ever undertaken in its history," says Hessler-Radelet. "There's never been a time in the history of Peace Corps, apart from the first five years or so, that there has been so much change and so much innovation. It became an opportunity to really take a look at the great work that we do and also how we can take advantage of the tools and resources that we have available to us now, while also looking at how to improve our effectiveness and efficiency of our daily work and how to better support our Volunteers, both technically and in terms of safety, security and health. So, a real focus on Volunteer support on all levels and then another focus on operational effectiveness and efficiency. And I would say that underscoring all of those efforts is a desire to use data for decision-making so that all of our programming is based on best practices and evidence."

According to Hessler-Radelet, a reform effort around the issue of Volunteer safety and security the agency had been under way since at least 2007, with the establishment of the Office of

Safety and Security, hiring of regional safety and security officers, placement of security coordinators at posts, and implementation of a sexual assault risk reduction and response program.

However, news coverage and resulting advocacy surrounding the unresolved murder of Benin Volunteer Kate Puzey, for whom the Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 is named, coupled with emotional congressional testimony in May 2011 on sexual assault in the Peace Corps, shook the agency and the wider Peace Corps community. The result was significantly strengthened support for victims of sexual assault.

"It's an issue that I care passionately about, both from a personal and a professional perspective," says Hessler-Radelet, who in the wake of last year's events has become close to Kate's mother, Lois Puzey.

"Many more improvements have been made since the Kate Puzey Act, and I'm proud to say that we are implementing them on track, and in collaboration with leading experts in sexual assault and international programming," says Hessler-Radelet. "Some of the highlights include not only the Office of Victim Advocacy but also the guidelines for managing rape and sexual assault. All of our posts and staff have been trained, and new training for Volunteers includes best practices such as bystander intervention, which trains Volunteers to recognize threats and to stand up for each other." The agency has developed educational materials such as posters and wallet cards that advertise the services of the victim advocate, and a hotline is in place.

The agency has also convened an outside advisory council of 12 senior experts in the areas of international law enforcement, international sexual assault programming, and Returned Volunteers (including victims of sexual assault). "We're working very closely with other U.S. government agencies," says Hessler-Radelet, "including the Departments of Defense, Justice, Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control, and the organization RAINN (Rape, Abuse &

Incest National Network)... We're in communication with the Department of State, so it's a cross-governmental to improve the quality of our support.... We have made a lot of progress and we report regularly." In short, all the deliverables that were required in the Kate Puzey Act are being produced according to the agreed-upon timeline.

But the work doesn't end. This year a group of RPCVs with longstanding unresolved health issues resulting from their Peace Corps service have been working with the National Peace Corps Association to open dialogue with the Peace Corps. Hessler-Radelet says she is grateful for NPCA's efforts, and has personally reached out to members of Health Justice for Peace Corps Volunteers.

"For our part we want to provide compassionate support to RPCVs to help them navigate that process as much as we can, with the understanding that [the Peace Corps is] not actually authorized to provide that care. *[Editor's note: That care is provided by the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA), which is administered by the Department of Labor (DoL)].*

She continues, "I think we've taken some very proactive steps in collaboration with the Health Justice for Peace Corps Volunteer network and the NPCA. Compassion goes a long way, absolutely, it really does. These folks have served, they are part of our family and we want them to feel that—and sometimes all they need is some advice, so we're looking at some of our own processes."

As a first step, Peace Corps has hired a consultant to determine the scope of the problem and to begin work on the really long-term cases. In addition, they've hired two new staff members, one of whom has a great deal of experience working with FECA and the agency, to help craft a program that will help Volunteers as they interact with FECA, and the other to be a case manager. Work has begun with the DoL to "insure that there's more responsive care of RPCVs and a greater understanding of some of the difficulties they face."

Her bottom line? "We care deeply

about RPCVs and we're very grateful for their service."

Finally, RPCV Hessler-Radelet is forging ahead with Third Goal initiatives started by fellow RPCV and former Director Aaron Williams—in fact it's part of the agency's roadmap for reform. Helping Returned Volunteers transition home to careers is a big priority, and the new Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services is getting increased resources to do that more effectively. In addition to two big career conferences in Washington, D.C., others were held in Chicago, Denver and San Francisco this year. The agency is reaching out aggressively to other agencies to strengthen non-competitive eligibility opportunities, an important RPCV benefit.

One important but long-overlooked stakeholder group that Peace Corps plans to reach out to is Peace Corps families. "They are great ambassadors for Peace Corps, and I'll tell you, there is no one who cares more about Peace Corps and supports it more than currently serving Volunteers' parents. They are passionate, and they can see

the change [in their] family members."

Hessler-Radelet should know: four generations of Hessler-Radelet's family have served as Peace Corps Volunteers. Her aunt, NPCA Advisory Council member Ginny Kirkwood, was the 10,000th Peace Corps Volunteer, served in Turkey (1964-66) and was also the country director in Thailand (1990-93). Her grandmother served in Malaysia (1972-73), and her nephew recently completed his service as an HIV education Volunteer in Mozambique (2007-09).

For an agency that has had a preponderance of Directors who have not served as Volunteers, having someone at the helm with that family legacy, with that gut feeling for what it means to be a Volunteer, and that sense of responsibility is reassuring.

What is certain is that this time around she'll have more pictures of her service.

Erica Burman (The Gambia 1987-89) is the editor of WorldView magazine and the Director of Communications for the National Peace Corps Association.

TRAVEL FOR CHARITY

Continued from page 24

who lack access to clean water.

Regardless of how they undertake their missions, how much money they raise or how many conversations they have about their causes, the steadfastness in doing something good for the betterment of humanity on a larger scale seems to be a universal truth among RPCVs. "I was very motivated by my recollections of serving as a teacher in the Peace Corps," Brown says. "I had lots of photos and pictures of my time in India to share with people to convey how lives were changed by getting an education in India."

"I don't have Bill Gates' money to throw around, so it limits me in what I can do," Wetzel says. "But I do have my passion and time. I can ride for a week, and talk to people about cancer. I can raise \$2,000. I can make a difference, one pedal at a time."



Lauren Brown

Lauren Brown and two of his chemistry students at Zahirabad Methodist Rural School in Zahirabad A.P., India, 1964.

JoAnna Haugen (Kenya 2004-05) is a freelance writer, globetrotter, avid recycler, creativity connoisseur, idea inventor, and is planning her next great adventure. You can contact her at www.joannahaugen.com.



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FROM MUD HUTS TO STARTUPS

Some things never change

by Kelly Meeker

There's one thing that hasn't changed in five years: I still bike to work. But instead of dodging cows and the occasional snake on a dusty *brousse*-path, today I dodge cabs, hybrid drivers and the occasional runner in Portland's spacious and well-marked bike lanes.

A few years ago, I was a natural resource management Volunteer in Mali, where I spent more time killing scorpions than I did taking baths. Today I work for OpenSesame in a sleek startup office, with big screen TVs displaying real-time website metrics and a desk piled high with gadgets and cords. I develop marketing programs and work with partners and customers to design software solutions for their internal training programs. When you ask me how I got here, I'll tell you: "On a bike, starting in a dusty *brousse*-path."

I learned everything I needed to know to succeed in tech as a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV)—resilience, problem-solving, project management, communications and, most importantly, kindness. Peace Corps is the greatest life training program I can imagine. When you have few resources but lots of need, you learn to cobble together finished work with duct tape.

Startup businesses are no different—there aren't enough people or resources to do everything you dream of doing, but you focus on the things you can do and you get them done. When resources are scarce, every rock becomes a tool and every stick becomes a lever. And though I'm sitting at a desk adorned with a 21st century tech menagerie, ultimately, a shiny new Macbook, to a PCV, is just another roll of duct tape.

Whether designing an infant nutrition program or building out software, it starts with an idea. Next comes building support and



Au village in Mali.

commitment from your team and community. Then, together, you develop and execute. You evaluate your success, you make improvements, you try again. And each time you get better, learn more and become more confident. The central characteristic that drives success from mud huts to tech startups is persistence: the ability to embrace challenge and accept that failure is a transitory state.

Peace Corps is not merely an opportunity to serve; it's an opportunity to develop the skills employers appreciate: flexibility, responsiveness and a willingness to embrace the problems of others and attack them as your own.

Serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer changes you in very obvious ways: You return home with stories of that one time a black mamba fell through

your roof a foot away from your mosquito net. But it takes time to understand the more profound and subtle changes: problem-solving skills, teamwork, leadership, and unwavering perseverance. When you approach your future with this foundation, tapping away at a keyboard and helping another customer is no different from ripping one more length of duct tape or hammering the pedals on that dusty *brousse*-path.



Kelly Meeker is the Community Manager at OpenSesame, an online marketplace for training courses. She served as a natural resource management Volunteer in Mali from 2005 to 2007.

MAP IT!

Let's engage Peace Corps Volunteers in open-source community mapping

by Oliver Cunningham

While receiving my master's as a Paul D. Coverdell Fellow at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, I've recently heard lectures by Rob Baker of Tech Change and Nathaniel Raymond of the Satellite Sentinel Project, who have shown the increasing need and appeal of open-source mapping software to provide critical initial assessment information in humanitarian crisis situations, and inspired students with the power and possibility of mapping technology. Although many larger, urban areas have decent maps, just as many rural, developing towns and even cities are not adequately mapped. That's where my idea comes in—have Peace Corps Volunteers do it.

One of the many roles of Peace Corps Volunteers is to serve as liaisons between their local host communities and their home communities. Often they serve in remote places outside the purview of modern commodities like electricity, running water and Internet—which means no maps either. In fact, I remember looking at a map of Guatemala, and not being able to find my community. Nonetheless, newly deployed Volunteers are tasked to do a needs assessment, including a community map, within their first three months at site. Imagine if that map were then translated, through technology like Walking Papers (<http://walking-papers.org>), Ushahidi (<http://ushahidi.com>) or Open Street Map (www.openstreetmap.org) into usable and comprehensive maps. There would be many benefits to such a partnership.

Like what? First, Peace Corps Volunteers would better integrate with their communities by hashing out the details of the actual capabilities and resources available within their community and surrounding areas.

This would help to foster trust-based relationships between community members and new Volunteers, as well as use community input to make thorough and practical maps. It seems like community mapping would provide limitless possibilities for tourism, development, and other Peace Corps projects.

Second, it would benefit humanitarian workers and mappers alike, because having Peace Corps Volunteers map their communities would generate maps in remote, isolated, and probably unmapped (or at least not well-mapped) areas. For example, despite the fact that there have been Volunteers in Lanquin, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, for over 20 years, and Internet access for nearly 10 years, none of the aforementioned open-source technologies display accurate maps of the area. New Peace Corps-generated maps would help make open-source mapping more comprehensive, and could potentially improve the efficacy of humanitarian responses to emergencies or epidemics.

Third, it is a viable strategy—the Peace Corps currently has over 8,000 Volunteers working across the world in 75 countries. Volunteers have great potential to easily, effectively, and cheaply expand the capability of open-source mapping technologies. Volunteers are resourceful, know the local culture, area, and networks, and could provide verification for the mapping they do. In my view, Volunteers could take this idea as far as they, or their community, wanted. Ideally, they would map "nuts and bolts"—roads, rivers, and bridges as well as key community resources, like water sources, schools, health centers and markets. But these maps could also be used to track thematic information, such as malaria occurrences, deforestation, HIV/AIDS, etc. Not only that, but they

also easily serve as intermediaries between the local population, which may or may not speak English, and the English-based database systems of the open-source systems. Moreover, your average Peace Corps Volunteer is computer savvy, has a computer readily available (or can at least access one at the Peace Corps office or regional headquarters) and has the time to put into developing a mapping skillset, not to mention a practical deliverable for the Volunteer, local community, humanitarians, and mappers. The reason it's not happening already is more than likely because people don't know—getting the word out is the first step.

So, in practice, if you're reading this and you are a Volunteer, get out of your hammock, go on these websites and map your community! You will be contributing to your community, building confidence, trust and capacity with local counterparts, and doing something useful, even learning a new skill—all while contributing to both the first and third goals of Peace Corps. If you're Peace Corps staff, implore your Volunteers do this. It benefits the host country and could potentially be useful for security reasons for both host country nationals and Volunteers. Engaging Peace Corps to conduct and implement open-source community mapping projects builds community collaboration and trust networks, provides crucial information to open-source maps, and accentuates the importance of partnerships in the humanitarian realm. It seems to be a practical solution to under-mapped rural areas that would benefit all involved parties.

Oliver Cunningham (Guatemala 2009-11) is receiving his M.A. in International Studies with a certificate in Humanitarian Assistance at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver.

HOW TO CLOSE A POST

When Peace Corps leaves a country, it's bittersweet

by Kyle Smithers

San yu tjari gi mi?" "Wat heb je voor me gebracht?" "What did you bring me?" If this sounds like a straightforward question to you, then you haven't travelled much in Suriname. Anyone familiar with this country will recognize the seemingly innocent, yet complex, cultural greeting and, I guarantee, will have strong opinions about it. Depending on your relationship with the requester, it can be a way to see how a trip went, ask if you thought of them while you were away, give a playful jab to your guilty conscience, or, like many things Surinamese, be a sexual innuendo.

At first my American sensibilities were pierced by this question whenever I returned to site. Regardless of whether I knew the person or not, I struggled to answer. *Why should I bring you anything? Are you going to give me something?* As someone who has served in the Peace Corps it's embarrassing to admit these thoughts now, but it's the truth. Once I learned there was no actual onus to give anything, I started to reply smugly, "I brought myself." Only then did I learn the question's second half, "Then leave me something when you go."

My Close of Service was July 2012. I was in the sixteenth of 17 groups to serve in Suriname. There will be no 18. The same year Peace Corps celebrated its 50th anniversary worldwide and its 15th anniversary in Suriname, we were given the news that our post would close. Since my group left, a few people melting away every week starting that June, the post has shrunk to fewer than 30 Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) and Peace Corps Response Volunteers. On a day in July 2013, the Peace Corps Suriname office will lock its doors a final time, leaving behind memories of staff



Youth waving goodbye to Volunteers and other campers at a CAMP GLOW in the interior of Suriname.

meetings, fickle Wi-Fi and Volunteer group movie sessions on tiny, dirty sofas.

How do you close a Peace Corps post? *Where There is No Peace Corps* isn't a book in our library yet. And I'm pretty sure it wasn't a training module. We find ourselves in uncharted waters, navigating the best we can. I know that a prominent strategy of sustainable development work is in leaving a project capable of continuation on its own. Ask most Volunteers though, and they'll say that often this just isn't the case. Nothing in development work is ever that simple.

Although it is not mentioned frequently, an important part of the complete Peace Corps experience is receiving the groups after you. It is an informative and often energizing step in a Volunteer's journey. By helping train them for the work to be done, teaching the cultural pitfalls they may encounter and watching as a group of doe-eyed Americans lose themselves abroad, Volunteers progress along the sizeable spectrum towards RPCV-hood. After all, what's the fun in becoming an expert in something so esoteric if there's no one eager to learn from you?



The last group of Volunteers will COS in 2013.

The last few months of a Volunteer's time is inundated with plans for their life after Peace Corps. To be frank, many Volunteers start dreaming of returning to hot showers and take-out food the first time they meet their latrine or are fed by their host family. The transition after Peace Corps is frequently cited as an important and difficult one. We are warned about, and prepared well for, reverse culture shock. But there are certain pieces of that transition that make it easier, that make it cleaner; pieces Volunteers often take for granted. It's less complicated to leave when you know the post will

Photos Kyle Smithers



Youth playing with Scrabble cards in the interior of Suriname.

be there after you're gone. It's more orderly when you know there will be Volunteers following you. You can return later, nostalgic and reflective, and visit the office or, if you're really lucky, the Volunteer currently at your site. Accepting your own shortfalls is easier when you can teach others not to make the same mistakes. You know the projects that remain unfunded or uncompleted at the end of your service can still be supported. Projects you may have even inherited yourself or ones you didn't know were perfect until the very end. The group before ours began Camp GLOW, arguably the most successful project of our service, to then pass it on to us.

But there is no one coming after us. Our post has an expiration date. When I return to Suriname in the future, there won't be a Peace Corps presence to visit. Some projects have been abandoned because there's simply not enough time to get them done. Volunteers feel depressed when they see friends leaving knowing new ones aren't coming to replace them. Motivation becomes a problem, work starts to slow down and the elephant in the room looms larger. How do you prepare to have an optimistic finish?

Our way is to ensure the post is accurately and positively remembered for what it was, what it did and who was affected. To ensure it has a legacy.

My position at Peace Corps Suriname is to commemorate the tangible development work, celebrate the intangible cultural exchange and encourage the continuation of both after we've left. To do this we've created the Legacy Project, a series of media events using photography and



Volunteers write CAMP GLOW with headlamps.

documentary film to highlight the best of the local impact stories that often go unheard. The Legacy Project began in September 2012 and will culminate with a final exhibition this April.

But I can't do it alone. I am reaching out to all returned Volunteers and staff since Suriname's first group in 1995. I need your stories, your pictures, your video, your attendance. Tell me your most touching moments, share your best pictures and send me the videos you still watch to remember your time here. The Legacy Project will be a commemorative way to capture the stories and perspectives of those who volunteered, lived, worked and gave in Suriname.

I've shed a lot of my American self here in the jungle and along the way I've learned and grown. I look forward to returning to Suriname in the future, a country without Peace Corps, and hearing, "What did you bring me?" Because I think I've finally found my answer. This has never been about what we can bring or what we can leave. From this experience, this opportunity, I've come to see it's really about what we can exchange, what we can learn and, most importantly, what we can become.

Perhaps "closing" the post is a misnomer. Peace Corps Suriname is graduating.

I'm proud to be one of a very select group of Americans to have lived and served here and I will hold that bragging right forever.

Kyle Smithers served as a community economic development specialist in Suriname from 2010 to 2012 and is now the legacy coordinator and media expert through April 2013. He can be contacted at suriname.legacy@gmail.com.

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ANOU

Using Peace Corps ingenuity to solve the artisan middleman dilemma once and for all

by Dan Driscoll

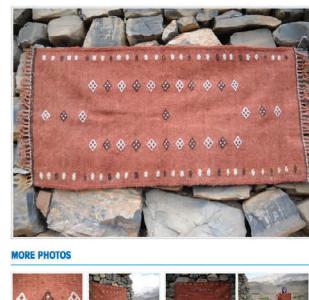
Innovation manifests in the most unexpected places. It is no surprise then that Peace Corps Volunteers, placed in foreign environments and equipped with minimal resources with the mandate to “do good,” are frequently innovating solutions to age-old problems. My service as a Peace Corps Volunteer was no different. Originally assigned to be an environment Volunteer in Ait Bougmez, a valley hidden away deep in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco, I found myself reinventing the artisan fair-trade model with a website called Anou.

THE PROBLEM

The story behind Anou began in a woodcarving shop. The shop had filled a traditional and important role in the community by providing a space for people to carve utilitarian items such as bowls, spoons, and forks as well as the wooden doors that traditionally adorned the homes throughout the valley.

However, the history and the very existence of the woodshop came under siege as cheap plastic goods and lifeless metal doors flooded local markets. The carvers’ problems were compounded when a corrupt forest guard deemed the woodshop illegal and began soliciting crippling bribes from the woodshop. Over the years, the carvers scraped by with intermittent sales to middlemen and fair-trade organizations that paid little, yet turned around and sold the carvers’ products for exorbitantly high prices. What was once a vibrant small army of carvers was reduced to one full-time carver and a handful of apprentices by the time I arrived in 2008.

Eager to restore the woodshop and the cultural traditions it represented, I opened up negotiations on behalf of the woodshop with the Moroccan Ministry



RUG FROM TOUNFITE, MOROCCO



ABOUT THE ARTIST

FATIMA HADDU

Fatima was born in the small village of Tousit, just outside of Tounfite. When her husband passed away several years ago, she moved to Tounfite to stay closer with her family. Fatima has eight children of varying ages who live and work throughout Morocco. Two of her daughters, Ito and Fatima, whom she taught how to weave, remain in Tounfite and now work with her at the cooperative.



Show more →



of Water and Forests. Since the ministry was eager to find more community-led forest management initiatives, I quickly found common ground with the ministry when I proposed that the carvers would plant a tree for every item they sold. While such an agreement was promising, the carvers could not even afford to plant a \$1 sapling with the prices that fair-trade organizations were willing to pay for their products. Any agreement would be shelved until the carvers and I found a way to solve the artisan middleman dilemma once and for all.

THE SOLUTION

Geographically isolated with limited technical and language capacity, the carvers, and many Moroccan artisans, seemed destined to always be dependent on others to sell their work. But things started changing in Ait Bougmez. Just before my arrival in 2008, roads and power lines connected the valley to the nearest town and cell phone coverage began to blanket the valley. The pace of change was as fast as it was comical: while my mud house still lacked running water, I did have Internet.

In order to meet the requirement of the agreement with the ministry, I did what Peace Corps Volunteers do best: innovate. I began teaching the carvers how to use computers, cameras and the

When an artisan posts a product, they can visit the product page to see what prospective customers think of their product, its pictures, and its price. Five stars is outstanding. With one star, they are advised to make some adjustments.



Yemna of Cooperative Tifoute poses for a picture with her newly woven carpet in order to post it on Anou.



Members of Association Nahda teach each other photography skills after a photography training led by Dan.

Internet to sell their products online even though they had never touched a computer before. I came up with a system that enabled the carvers to independently post and sell things on Etsy.com, an American e-commerce store, even though they did not share the same language as their customers.

By the end of my service, the carvers



Dan leads a training with Association Nahda on how to post products on Anou.



Brahim Mansouri, Moroccan Director of Anou, works with a painter in Essaouria to post a painting online.



Dan teaches a group of Ait Bougmez carvers how to use a computer and the Internet for the first time.

had sold over \$2,000 in products. And meeting the requirements of the ministry, they planted over 200 apple trees for the most underprivileged families in the valley. The project was an example of what Peace Corps embodies best — that through partnerships and a little bit of grit, even the most marginalized global citizens can always stand up on their own if given a chance.

SCALING UP AND CREATING A FUTURE BEYOND FAIR TRADE

Despite the success the carvers and I had, artisans across Morocco and throughout the developing world still faced the same middleman dilemma. Focused on creating widespread social impact, I began developing a website called Anou.

I incorporated lessons gleaned from each painful experience teaching the carvers how to use Etsy.com. The goal? Enable all artisans, no matter how geographically isolated or computer illiterate they are, to be able to sell their work independently.

I addressed the critical problems first: language and confusing interfaces designed for the computer literate. I began by eliminating language from the

artisan's dashboard and exclusively used images. Now, instead of having to type in descriptions of the products, artisans would simply have to click on images that resembled the new product they were posting. Each selected image would generate product information in English on the official product page. Keeping things image-based and simple enabled me to drop the six months of training it took to get the carvers on Etsy down to just a day with the new artisans I trained.

Yet a language-free, simple interface wouldn't help artisans if they couldn't access it. The carvers, for example, were a three-hour walk from the nearest cybercafe and couldn't afford to have Internet in their home. Therefore, Anou is enhanced with a mobile platform that enables artisans to manage their online store through a simple cell phone. For example, if an item sells, they are notified by text which item sold and where to send it. Once the artisan sends the product, they simply reply to the text, and Anou's system will automatically send an email to the customer informing them that their product is on its way.

One of the biggest and most frequently overlooked problems facing the carvers and many other artisans was that they lacked insights into what potential customers thought about their work. The carvers only knew if an item was liked if it sold, but had no idea why something *didn't* sell. To address this, each product page on Anou features a rating system that enables artisans to get critical information from prospective customers. Such customers can rate whether the pictures the

artisan took were bad, if the item itself is undesirable, and if the listed price is unreasonable. Each rating is aggregated on the artisans' dashboards using simple, understandable images that not only provide artisans with the tools and information to grow their business and sales, but involve potential customers directly in the artisans' development.

THE FUTURE OF ANOU

The exciting tools and features integrated into Anou described above represent just the beginning. Throughout 2012, the carvers and I have been working hard to refine Anou and develop key areas where the site can improve. With each training, we are discovering new and better ways to bring artisans and their customers closer together.

The process has been long and hard, but we're close to opening our beta in the fall of 2012. When Anou's beta closes, it will mark the beginning of its expansion to other promising countries through partnerships with local associations and cooperatives. As Anou grows, I hope not only that it represents the end of the middleman dilemma, but that it also serves as inspiration to current Peace Corps Volunteers looking to find innovative solutions for intractable problems of their own.

Dan Driscoll (Morocco 2008-10), founder and CEO of Anou, previously worked as a journalist and as a communication consultant on a USAID-sponsored project in Yemen. Dan graduated from University of California – Irvine and lives in, and works from, a small village outside Fez, Morocco.

LEND A CLEAN HAND

Music proves an effective learning strategy

by John Underwood

The sound of children singing—is there anything more beautiful? My brave volunteer, Sharon, carefully scrubs her hands with soap as her classmates watch. She dips her soapy hands into the running water, and as she does the whole class joins her in singing to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”: *Wash, wash, wash your hands ... wash them every day ... I use soap every time and wash disease away!* Sharon has just successfully demonstrated how to wash her hands, and she smiles as she holds them up proudly to show they are clean. Her fellow classmates burst into applause. Excitedly, they raise their hands, hoping to be the next to demonstrate.

As a health education volunteer, my objective is behavioral change on the community level. In other words, my mission is to help people understand and adopt healthy lifestyle choices. Most of my time is spent teaching in classrooms, and it can be discouraging to find that students will learn good lifestyle choices in school, only to fail to apply what they have learned in their communities. Even after repeated instruction, many remain resistant to

change and lack the enthusiasm to follow through with good habits or choices. I often found myself asking: How can students be motivated to apply what they learn in school?

I live in Bome, a small village in the mountains of northwestern Cameroon. Here, music is an integral part of the culture. People sing for entertainment, tradition, or in worship. In Bome, where people cannot afford iPods or CD players, music must be brought to life by the voices of the people themselves. While washing my clothes one day, some children passed by singing church hymns. Their singing inspired me, and the following day, I taught my students the song I had written about the importance of hand washing. It reminded them of the appropriate length and procedures for hand washing: *Wash, wash, wash ...*

To my disbelief, the song spread like a rumor. Within a few weeks, even children outside of my teaching circle could be heard singing the hand washing song as they washed their hands at community wells. In Cameroon, proper hygiene in small communities is important for



Photos John Underwood

Hand washing prevents diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever, and intestinal parasites.

preventing diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever, and intestinal parasites.

The successful introduction of the song inspired me to turn my presentation into an art project. I gave paper and markers to students at my school to make paper copies of



John and primary school students show off their clean hands poster.

their hands—by tracing their hand and signing their name, students were making a pledge to me and their community to keep their hands clean and stop the spread of disease. The traced hands were pasted onto a poster that read: “Lend a Clean Hand and Wash Disease Away!” The school loved the project, and now every time I visit a new community, I show the students the photo and tell them just how much my school in Bome knows about washing hands to prevent disease!

Music turned out to be the answer to my question. It's catchy, it's interactive, and without knowing it, students are motivated to apply what they have learned outside the classroom. With new health projects, I try to incorporate some form of music or other artistic idea. For example, students from the health club at my local high school now teach their classmates through drama. In one scene, a student pretends to walk through the households in her village, noting the different local foods families are preparing and their nutritional content. In another scene, siblings quarrel over the importance of mosquito nets for preventing malaria.

Music and other types of art are successful because they engage learners. In Bome, students were excited by the prospect of singing in school, and the excitement spread easily to other children in the community. Children were not only reminding themselves how to wash their hands, but in singing out loud, they were inadvertently passing the advice to adults in the community as well.

In all communities and cultures around the world, there is some form of art that can be utilized, especially music. If teachers can tap into these cultural practices, they are opening the doors to a style of education that is engaging and effective, especially for changing behavior at a young age. Bottom line: if students are interested and engaged, they'll remember what you have to say!

John Underwood is a Peace Corps Volunteer serving in the health sector in Bome, Cameroon.



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WINGS FOR WEST AFRICA

Starting “small small” leads to bigger dreams

by Leita Kaldi Davis

At our school we have eight hundred students and no latrines!"

Habib Diatta spoke with a soft, raspy voice. His eyes were dark wells between furrowed eyebrows. His full mouth might have been pouting, if his jaws had not been set. Tall and slender, his shoulders sloped with that Senegalese grace so suited to dancing.

"Can you help us find a way to build latrines?" he asked.

I'd been in the village of Fimela for six months, a place where the Sahara meets the Atlantic, where baobab trees etch spidery shapes across the horizons, where the Sérère people dwell, people who fish in the lagoons and open ocean, and live on isolated islands, practicing the ancient animism of Pangool, along with Islam. Beautiful people I could never stop staring at, as I was staring now at Habib.

"What can I do?" I asked.

"Find money to build latrines. I'm not asking you personally. I know what Peace Corps Volunteers do; just help us find a way."

He held out his hands to me, elegant hands with long fingers and smooth

skin; not a farmer's or a fisherman's hands.

"What do you do?" I asked. "Why do you care about the students?"

"I'm a teacher," he replied proudly. "I teach English and French. I'm the student council sponsor."

"You speak English quite well."

"Yeah, I try." The "yeah" sounded American, which made me smile.

"Well, I'd be glad to help you, Habib. Eight hundred kids with no latrines ... I don't even want to think about that. Perhaps you could find funding yourself."

His brows creased. "How would I do that?"

I looked away, searching for an idea. "Habib, do you ever go to Dakar?"

"Oh yeah, my parents live there. I visit them quite often."

"Great! I hate going to Dakar. Tell you what. Next time you visit, go to the Peace Corps office and ask them for an application for a Small Project Assistance grant from USAID. I'll give you a note saying that it's for me. You know English well enough to fill out the application, though I'll help you with it. You'll have to come up with

a budget, and raise 25%, among the villagers, to get a grant."

Habib stared at me. "You mean you want me to do all that?"

"I think you can do it, Habib. Do you want to try?"

"Yeah!" he agreed. "I'll try it."

A few weeks later, I heard a knock at my gate. Habib stood there, smiling widely.

"I got it," he announced. "The application. I even started filling it out. They were very nice to me at the Peace Corps office. Wow! It's like being in a little piece of America over there, isn't it. All those American people!"

I supposed that would be my impression, too, if I were Senegalese. He proudly pulled out the application and handed it to me. He had filled out most of it in pencil, including a budget. Villagers would fulfill their 25% contribution with in-kind labor, some materials, such as seashells and sand for building blocks, and some cash. I corrected a few words in pencil, and handed the paper back to him, telling him that he could fill it in with pen and



The village chief with Leita.



Diofior village elders.

take it back to Dakar. I loved it; he was doing the whole job himself.

It took a month or so for money to be transferred into my account, but the villagers had already begun work, clearing ground near the school, collecting crushed seashells and sand to mix with cement that they would purchase with the grant money. A technical assistant from USAID visited to advise the villagers on the proper construction of latrines, while students were taught how to properly maintain them.

Habib invited me to visit the school. One of the teachers was a petite young woman with a sweet face and shy expression; her name was Korka; she was Habib's fiancée. The teachers talked about their ambitions. Habib longed for computers in the school, which seemed to me like a far-fetched dream, because the village had no electricity. Unfazed, he insisted that one day there would be electricity and computer classes, and he wanted to teach them. As he spoke, his brows pleated with intensity. I doubted the viability of his wishes, but I didn't say anything, because to dash dreams is to dash hope. I didn't know, however, what a powerful dreamer Habib was.

People worked on the latrines in the evening, after returning from their fields. They slowly built the latrines, one after another: six on one side for boys, six on the other for girls. Finally, the day arrived when the last touch was applied: a hand-painted sign on the wall facing the road that read *Association des Parents d'Eleves de Diofior*, and flags of Senegal and the United States in the middle with the caption, SENEGAL USA.

The village chief presided over the opening ceremony, standing next to Habib, who looked on proudly and followed the chief's speech with his own, expressing on behalf of all the teachers and students their gratitude for this essential facility. As I stood there grinning, he turned to me and declared that this great achievement would not have been possible without my help and that of Peace Corps and USAID.

I responded that I had done nothing, actually, but offer people a way to do it themselves. At that moment, I was so overwhelmed with pride and joy, I felt ten feet tall.

But that's not the end of the story! Within five years electricity came to Diofior, and Habib solicited donated computers to set up his class.

"I started teaching word processing," he told me. "I trained one or two teachers, and they trained other teachers and students. It was my life. I spent many nights at the school."

Then in 2002, Habib was hired to teach and coach soccer in Indianapolis. He brought Korka, who had become his wife, to live there. An American friend, Kathy Lattimer, who had visited Senegal, encouraged Habib's dream of providing computers to Senegalese schools, and together they set up Wings for West Africa (wafwings.org). Habib sent me the website he designed. Tears welled as I read my name there.

"Years ago a Peace Corps Volunteer named Leita Kaldi came to Diofior. She showed me how to develop a project; she opened the path for me."

Today, Wings for West Africa's computers have reached every corner of Senegal. And I had thought that building latrines would be Habib's greatest achievement. I smile when I think of how I had underestimated the power of his vision, a vision that would unfurl into wings for West Africa, and for Habib.

Leita Kaldi Davis worked for the United Nations, UNESCO, Tufts University Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and Harvard University. She worked with Roma (Gypsies) for fifteen years, became a Peace Corps Volunteer in Senegal from 1993 to 1996, then worked for the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Haiti for five years. She retired in Florida in 2002. Kaldi published a memoir of Senegal, Roller Skating in the Desert, and is working on a memoir of Haiti.

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MY JOURNEY TO OUAOUIZERTH

A Volunteer remembers Chris Stevens

by Melanie Kondrat

On September 11, 2012, the world learned the shocking news that U.S. Ambassador to Libya, J. Christopher Stevens, had been killed in attacks on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya. Stevens had served as a TEFL Peace Corps Volunteer in Ouaouizerth, Morocco from 1983-85 and afterwards pursued a career in diplomacy. He was widely admired for his empathy, openness and deep knowledge of a complex region, and his loss was mourned around the world. In later remarks at the United Nations, President Obama said, "...Chris Stevens embodied the best of America. Like his fellow Foreign Service officers, he built bridges across oceans and cultures, and was deeply invested in the international cooperation that the United Nations represents. He acted with humility, but stood up for a set of principles—a belief that individuals should be free to determine their own destiny, and live with liberty, dignity, justice, and opportunity."

Melanie Kondrat, a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco, undertook a journey to Stevens' site, and wrote about the experience. This is an abridged version of a post that first was published on her blog, Post Grad Mel.

I like to think that if I had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco in the early 80s Chris Stevens and I might have been friends.

Maybe we would've bonded over our mutual love for the Tadla-Azilal province. For the mountains that surround us. For the red dirt that threatens to stain our clothes every day. For the generous culture of the Amazigh people who've inhabited this region for ages.

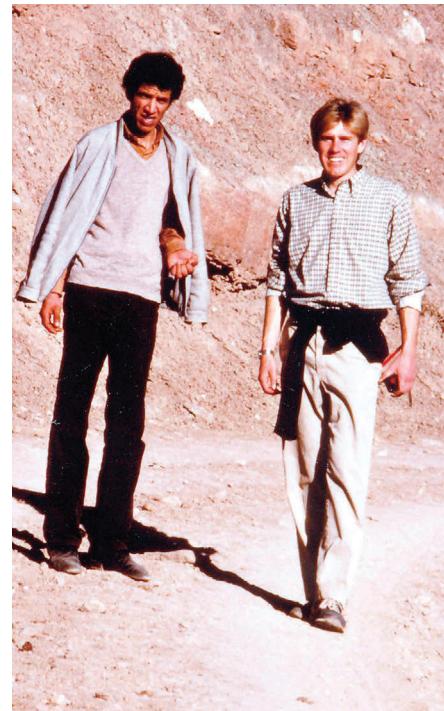
Or maybe we would've bonded over a love for the West Coast (Best Coast). We might've compared notes on our favorite hiking trails. I probably would've tried to convince him that Mt. Rainier is far superior to any mountain they have in California.

Perhaps our time would've been spent trying to make sense of some of the more amusing, at times ludicrous aspects of life as a Peace Corps Volunteer. The cultural mishaps, language woes, highs, lows, 'Aha!' moments, etc.

Nearly 30 years have passed since Stevens began his service in Morocco. Thirty years is a long time. But I also like to think that some aspects of

service in the Peace Corps transcend time and technology. He might not have been able to relate to the magic that is an external hard drive loaded with TV shows and movies, but he would've related to the magic that is a hot shower. He would've understood how meaningful it is to master certain aspects of Darija because 30 years doesn't change the fact that it's still not a written language. He would've understood the intricacies of Moroccan culture; standard greetings, eating with the right hand only, sticking to your triangle in a tagine.

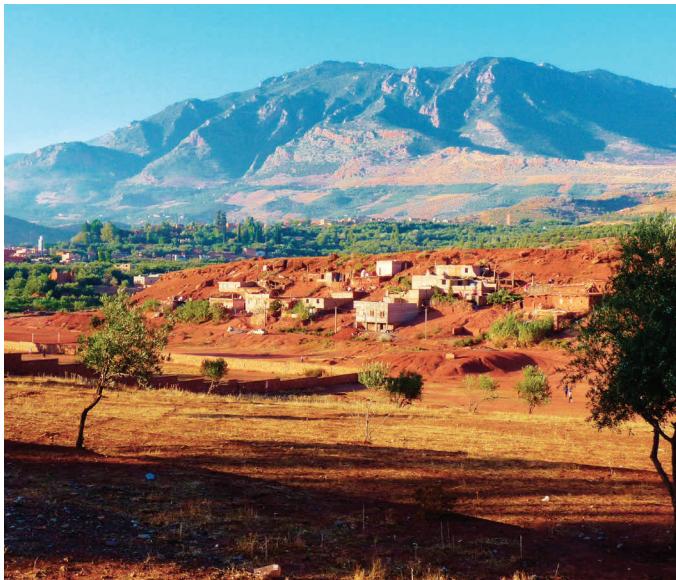
I guess what I'm trying to get at is that Stevens was human. That prior to his days of law and Foreign Service, he was someone like me (or like a lot of Volunteers) trying to figure out a little about himself and the world in the midst of this adventure. When I found out via other Volunteers that Stevens served in a town relatively close to mine I felt compelled by his story and the place that ignited his passion for North Africa. Thankfully, I was able to recruit my sitemate Emily and counterpart Aziz to come along, in the roles of companion and translator.



Peace Corps Volunteer Chris Stevens.

The road to Ouaouizerth winds through the Middle Atlas Mountains. It's hard not to feel like you're in the middle of nowhere as you ascend higher, for to look out is to see nothing but green. If it sounds cliché to say it was a beautiful day, then so be it. It was a beautiful day. I snagged a front seat next to the window, enabling me to enjoy a gentle breeze and gaze with content at my surroundings. The closer you get to Ouaouizerth, the more the view opens up. Ouaouizerth is settled in a valley of sorts, surrounded 360 degrees by mountains and rolling hills, nestled a few kilometers from the shores of the region's lake Bin El Ouidane. The descent into Ouaouizerth is tree-lined like out of a storybook and it's not difficult to imagine why Stevens would have loved this area so much.

While in Ouaouizerth we went to the high school where Stevens worked



View of Ouaouizerth from outside of town.

and met with the principal, teachers who worked with him, and people who knew of him; nearly everyone we met had something to say about him and it was evident that he was beloved by his community.

The most compelling and in-depth account of Stevens came from an English teacher at the high school, Lahcen, who was one of Stevens' students. From Lahcen's narrative I was able to garner a pretty solid idea of what kind of a person Stevens was.

- Chris Stevens was always smiling. Never in a bad mood.
- He was not interested in himself. He devoted all his time to teaching and learning Moroccan Arabic.
- He was the kind of guy who carried a notebook in his back pocket and would write new words down and practice them; a fact which endeared me to him since I do the same.
- Stevens was a model teacher. He provided extra hours after the school day was finished to his most dedicated English students.
- He was personable. Always listening. The kind who made you feel like what you have to say is important.
- Stevens was inspirational. Lahcen cited Stevens as the reason he became an English teacher.
- Also according to Lahcen, "Any qualities that were good—he had it."
- He was active. Always on foot. Fond of hiking and jogging. Every

afternoon between five and six Stevens would jog along the dirt path to the village right outside Ouaouizerth and would often stop by Lahcen's house. He would drink tea and practice Tamazight (a Berber language) with Lahcen's mother.

- On Fridays he liked to play basketball with his students. Afterwards they would sit around and talk. They were always talking about different things.
- Stevens was interested in Moroccan culture. Described as being tolerant. He showed respect to the standards of the community by jogging in track suits as opposed to shorts.
- From a Volunteer standpoint, Stevens was smart. He lived close to souk.
- He was the kind of teacher who gave back tests outside of class, so as to save embarrassment.
- Lahcen also pointed out that Stevens always wore the same khakis, track jacket, white polo, and tennis shoes. A fact which I'm sure most Volunteers can relate to.

I wish I could better describe how meaningful this experience was. I wish my words and images were capable of explaining why that day was the best day I have had thus far in my service. But I'm afraid they fall too short. But I will say this:

The legacy of Chris Stevens speaks to what service in the Peace Corps is all about; it's proof that the Peace Corps is



The high school in Ouaouizerth where Stevens worked as an English teacher.

relevant. Opponents of the Peace Corps might argue that it's a money drain, that its results aren't quantifiable, that it's resume padding for overachieving post grads who aren't ready to enter the "real world," etc.

All to which I respond, how? How can money be wasted in the spirit of diplomacy and fostering peace between nations? How can you measure the extent to which you've changed someone's life? How do you define the "real world"? And who's to say that Peace Corps volunteers aren't living in it?

It means something that nearly 30 years after Stevens served in Ouaouizerth people still talk about him. That when I met with counterparts last week the first thing they expressed to me was their condolences for his death. That when word got out about his passing the entire community of Ouaouizerth mourned, even people who never knew him. And moreover, that every single person who knew him lauded him as a great man with a compassionate heart.

Stevens was a model Peace Corps volunteer, ambassador, and citizen. But more than that, Stevens was a model human being. Someone with a passion for service to others and an inclination to leave this world a little better than it was before.

Melanie Kondrat is a Peace Corps youth development Volunteer serving in Morocco.

THE RAINS OF WINTER

An excerpt from One For The Road

by David Mather

Winter was a rude change from the warmth and bright blues and greens of summer. It rained constantly. It was gray. Nothing dried out. The crudely tanned sheep pelts that served as his mattress began to sweat and smell. His clothes were cold and damp when he put them on in the morning. He could see his breath as he dressed. The house never warmed up completely, and he and Ramon huddled in the kitchen around the cookstove and brazier. Strong drafts that came through the walls and windows made the candlelight flicker. Even the flame inside the glass chimney of the kerosene lamp was unsteady, and his eyes soon tired when he tried to study. But the weather was a common denominator—it gave everyone something to complain about. It was a season to suffer through, and the animals didn't like it any more than they did. Sometimes when he went out in the driving rain to help Ramon bring in the sheep, he would pass Salton and Lobo huddled under a clump of *quila*, with their rear ends pointing windward. They looked comatose. He wondered if they thought about anything—like sunny days and long green grass. Oddly, colds or the flu were not commonplace at this time of year. Maybe it was because everyone was so isolated. But when misfortune struck, it struck hard.

One afternoon, he and Ramon were drinking *mate* after a late lunch. It had been raining steadily for forty-eight hours and had only just let up. There was a knock on the door. Ramon got up and opened it. A young boy of about twelve or so stood there, drenched.

Ramon ushered him inside. Before the boy could say anything, Ramon had him take off his wet hat and *manta* and sidle up to the kitchen stove. Tomás

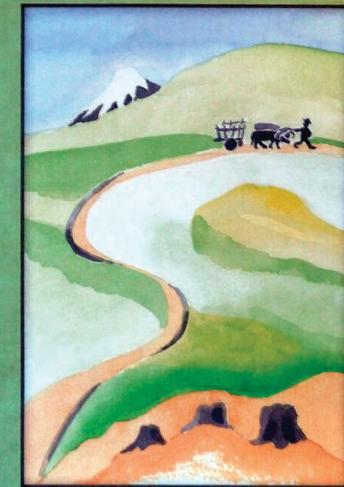
brought a stool over so the boy could sit down as Ramon slid the kettle over the firebox. Once the boy had a cup of hot tea in his hands, Ramon asked the purpose of his visit.

The boy was the grandson of a widow who lived a mile up the road. Last night the old *trabajador* who had worked for the widow for years had a stroke in the little shed where he slept. He could not move and they could do little for him. The widow had her grandson walk down to the highway very early in the morning—which must have been during some of the heaviest rain—and wait until a trucker came to pick up firewood. The truckers usually made at least one morning trip regardless of the weather. When one arrived, the boy explained the situation and the trucker agreed to return in the afternoon and take the old man to the hospital. The boy was here to ask for Ramon's help to hitch up their oxcart and to load the man onto it.

Ramon said of course he would help and they would leave as soon the boy finished his tea. Tomás asked if he should come. Ramon hesitated, then nodded. When all three were bundled up, they set off and walked up to the widow's house. Tomás helped Ramon bring in the oxen and watched him hitch them up to the cart. He made it look so easy—there was not a wasted move. They folded up a *manta de Castilla* and placed it on the bed of the cart as a mattress. Then they went to the worker's shed.

Opening the rickety door, it took a second or two for Tomás's eyes to adjust to the dim light. Over in a corner was a bed of straw. On top was an old man covered by a *manta*. His complexion was gray and only his eyes moved. He watched them come over and bend down to pick him up. He looked from

ONE FOR THE ROAD



DAVID J MATHER

one of them to the other, but when he saw Tomás, his eyes froze. He did not take his eyes off Tomás as they carried him over to the cart. They covered him with every other *manta* the widow owned and put a sheet of plastic on top, tucking the edges underneath. They tried to make him as comfortable as possible, although Tomás didn't know if that made any difference because it looked like the man couldn't feel a thing. He only stared. And he looked awful. Tomás and Ramon walked down with the boy as far as Ramon's gate, and said goodbye and good luck. The boy thanked them. They watched the boy slowly lead the oxen down the road. It started to rain again. The next day they learned that the old man did not make it to the hospital. He died in the cab of the truck.

David Mather (Chile 1968-70) has lived off-grid in Lyme, N.H., for over forty years. Self-educated in forestry, he founded a successful specialty lumber business that sold rare domestic woods nationwide. He has traveled extensively, especially throughout Latin America, and returned twice to Chile to do research for his book. He and his wife now split their time between Lyme and a small fishing village on Florida's gulf coast. One For The Road is his first novel.

ESL TO GO—A CLASSROOM ON WHEELS

When transportation is a challenge, taking language lessons to the learners

by Mary Morgan

I have to learn English so I can survive in America. In Tennessee the driver's permit test is in Chinese, Spanish and English. No Arabic. Why am I here if I can't go anywhere? I can drive. If I don't get a license, I can't get to work, and I'll lose my job."

That's fundamentally what Kurdish refugee Ibraheem Omer told his English teacher recently. And he was right. Because of routes and schedules, a bus from Ibraheem's home to his job would take about 2 1/2 hours, even though the driving distance is only 8 miles, taking about 15 minutes. Bobby Hopkins, Ibraheem's teacher, says Ibraheem is very typical of his students: "All of our students are refugees, none speak English, they have limited access to transportation. In order to make it in this country, you have to speak enough English for basic needs, typically including getting a driver's license if you want to get to work."

In 2011, Tennessee welcomed 1,236 refugees from 17 different countries, most of them settling in Nashville. As is true for the entire nation, the largest groups came from Bhutan, Burma and Iraq, but all of them had in common, as the United Nations puts it, having fled their country and being unwilling or unable to return due to a well-founded fear.

For a refugee, the first order of business is survival, and the key to survival in the United States, as Ibraheem knows, is learning English. For Angela Harris, Director of English as a Second Language and Teaching English as a Second Language at the Tennessee Foreign Language Institute (TFLI), making sure Nashville's refugees learn English literally keeps her up at night.

One of those nights, an idea came to Harris after she attended a meeting



The ESL to Go truck.

of community leaders during which lack of transportation surfaced as the number one barrier refugees face in attending English classes. If the refugees couldn't get to class because of lack of private transportation and the complexities and cost of public transportation, why not take the classes to the refugees? Not by the traditional method of trying to find a willing host in the refugee community, which proves difficult for cultural and other reasons, but with the same level of professionalism students encounter when they're able to get to a local community center. Why not a classroom on wheels that could make the rounds of the apartment complexes where refugees live?



Angela Harris.

THINK

- like a scientist
- like a doctor
- outside the box

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Angela Harris with her students in Papua, New Guinea, 1992.

Thus was born the notion of ESL to Go. In a mobile classroom inside a custom-built truck, classes will be held around a table mimicking the traditional classroom setting where TFLI-trained instructors teach English at levels specific to the needs of the students. Students will be close to home, with no transportation worries or other distractions from the all-important task of learning to function in a foreign land and a foreign language.

Learning to function in a foreign land and a foreign language is an experience Harris relates to well. A Peace Corps Volunteer in Papua New Guinea from 1991 to 1993, Harris, who graduated from Tennessee Tech University with a degree in foreign languages and a teacher certification, spent eight years teaching English overseas, eventually establishing language programs and schools in South Korea and Nepal.

"In Papua New Guinea, as a Peace Corps Volunteer, I began to understand the tremendous value of a grassroots approach to development and education," Harris says. "The single most important lesson I learned was that in order to teach effectively, I had to listen to and learn from those I was teaching. That's a lesson I've never forgotten, and it's carried me to this point in my career."

Harris credits her Peace Corps experience giving her the foundational skills required to become a successful

leader in educating the refugees and immigrants in her home state of Tennessee. Harris taught English in Asia following her Peace Corps service, then settled in Nashville and began working at the Tennessee Foreign Language Institute, a unique state agency with the mission of teaching foreign languages to native Tennesseans and English to foreigners.

"Since joining TFLI in 1999, I've been able to put my accumulated experience and hands-on skills to good use in developing a program that teaches English to non-natives as well as a certification program to train teachers of English as a second language. I'm proud to say that after 35 cycles of the certification program, we have graduates teaching English all over the world, as well as right here in Nashville," Harris notes.

Upon her return to Nashville after her overseas stints, Harris says she wasn't sure what to expect in terms of continuing her career in adult ESL education. "But the Nashville I returned to wasn't the one I left," she says. "Culturally diverse, even cosmopolitan, Nashville has become home to multi-lingual, multi-ethnic communities. A great many new refugees and immigrants struggle to achieve financial stability and social ties in a largely unfamiliar cultural landscape. Working with them has proven to be just as challenging and richly rewarding as

working in other countries."

Harris' work exemplifies the Third Goal of the Peace Corps—helping Americans understand the people and cultures of other countries. Her ability to bring groups together and leverage resources to benefit all stakeholders is evidenced by the new initiatives and community partnerships created under her leadership. Her experiential knowledge of grassroots development gained in the Peace Corps has enabled her to engage refugee resettlement agencies, private and government organizations, and foundations in support of common goals.

Harris' newest initiative launched in April 2012 when the Tennessee Office for Refugees awarded funding for operating expenses to TFLI's ESL to Go program. The team now consists of three full-time employees and a selection of part-time teachers. Fundraising to purchase the mobile classroom is still underway, with generous grants thus far from local foundations. In the meantime, TFLI is working in collaboration with area refugee resettlement centers to offer ESL classes at apartment complexes with existing classroom space. This is an acceptable solution for some, but won't replace the mobile classroom because there are few apartment complexes with space to spare. The ESL to Go team plans to have the mobile classroom up and teaching by spring 2013.

For Harris, the ESL to Go project is the perfect storm that combines her Peace Corps experience with her Nashville experience. "Those lessons [in Peace Corps]," she says, "have guided me in developing leadership skills and creating educational programs culminating in the ESL to Go program. We have to help all those refugees like Ibraheem Omer build a new life here."

ESL to Go welcomes private donations in any amount. For more information or to make a contribution, go to <http://www.crowdrise.com/esltogo/fundraiser/esl-to-go> or email angie@tfl.org.

Mary Morgan is the Director of Communications and Marketing for the Tennessee Foreign Language Institute.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR COMMUNITY

by Jonathan Pearson

BURKINA FASO

Zach Morrison (07-10) is one of two students to receive a four-year, \$12,000-a-year scholarship from the Medical School for International Health scholarship fund. A graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, Morrison is entering MSIH this year. He has volunteered with the Haight-Asbury Free Clinic in San Francisco and tutored middle school-aged children. Morrison completed post-baccalaureate studies at Harvard University and worked in the Africa Division at World Education, Inc.

CAMEROON

Tara Smith (07-09) is a co-founder of Cherie Amie, a fair trade intimate apparel company with operations in Cameroon. It is the first of its kind to contribute 100 percent of its profits to sustainable antipoverty measures for women. The company also funds development projects across Africa by contributing to Peace Tree Africa.

CAMEROON

The Mattress Factory has hired **Felice Q. Cleveland** (03-05) as the new director of education. She spent the last five years as the education coordinator at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore. Cleveland has been a guest blogger for Design*Sponge and given lectures and presentations on art education. She has a master's degree from the Rhode Island School of Design.

CAMEROON

Vijay Rajendran (02-04) has launched Hungry Globetrotter, a month-to-month subscription service for food items designed to connect home chefs, culinary enthusiasts, families and busy professionals with the flavors

of the world. Subscribers receive a subscription box each month focusing on a cuisine of the world. As noted on its website, "Our subscription boxes include an ever-changing mix of gourmet products and flavors from the best emerging and renowned brands in global cuisine."

COMOROS ISLANDS



Kate Mortenson (88-90) has been elected to the Minnesota Public Radio board of trustees. The Minnesota Community Foundation and Social Venture Partners Minnesota also recently recognized her with the Engaged Philanthropist Award. Mortenson has advised nonprofit

organizations on their program strategies and initiatives for many years as an independent consultant. Prior to that, she was a managing editor for Conus Communications. Mortenson has a bachelor's degree from Boston University.

ECUADOR

Jeremy King (07-09) has joined the Licking Land Trust Board of Trustees, a nonprofit organization specializing in consulting and implementing conservation easements for area land owners. King is the campus sustainability coordinator at Denison University and taught high school science at Circleville High School for ten years. He has a master's degree from Ohio State University.

GHANA

Jerome E. Perez (89-91) has been appointed by the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as the new Director for BLM's state office serving Oregon and Washington. Perez served in the Peace Corps with his wife, Rita. Most recently, Perez has been serving as Deputy Regional Forester for the U.S. Forest Service's Intermountain Region, based in Ogden, Utah.

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HAITI

CH2M Hill, a global full-service consulting, design, construction and operations firm, has hired **Alonzo L. Fulgham** (84-86) as vice president of strategy and sustainable international development for its environmental services business group. Prior to this position, Fulgham worked with USAID for more than 20 years. After his work there, he joined International Relief and Development as vice president. Fulgham serves on the Board of Directors for the Society for International Development (SID), Malaria No More, GRM International, the Futures Group, Women Thrive Worldwide and the University of Michigan's William Davidson Institute. He is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has worked and lived abroad in several countries. Fulgham has a bachelor's degree from Fisk University and a master's degree from the National Defense University.

LIBERIA

Jackie Ladwein (63-67) is being honored in her country of service by one of her former students. Joseph Kpukuyou was inspired by Jackie to continue his education, went on to college, survived the Liberian civil war and reconnected with Jackie. Determined to make sure that her contributions to his country are not forgotten, Joseph has spearheaded an effort to construct the Jackie Ladwein School near Monrovia.

MALAWI



Leo Higdon Jr. (68-70) announced that he will be stepping down as President of Connecticut College at the end of 2013. Higdon has been president of the college since 2006. During that time, Connecticut College

has been recognized as a top producer of both Peace Corps Volunteers and Fulbright Scholars. Higdon was honored with the Sen. Paul A. Simon Award for Campus Internationalization, and the President's Community Service Honor Roll, with Distinction. In September, Higdon was the keynote speaker in Providence at a Third Goal Expo, organized by the National Peace Corps Association, the Rhode Island RPCVs, and the Peace Corps.

MALAYSIA

Don Lambert founded the Dallas-area non-profit organization Gardeners in Community Development (GICD) in 1994, which provides fresh vegetables, herbs and fruits to community members who have lost their jobs or are otherwise going through difficult times. Lambert taught anthropology at the University of Texas at Dallas and with Texas Discovery Gardens prior to working with GICD full-time. Today, he and his staff oversee five community gardens within the Dallas city limits. Records indicate that from 2003 through 2010, more than 50,000 pounds of food were donated to alleviate hunger in Dallas, though the amount of food donated in recent years has increased because of new gardens that have been planted. Lambert has a bachelor's degree from the University of Hawaii and master's and doctorate degrees from the University of California at Berkeley.

MALI

Nathan Sowry (08-10), a University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate student in the School of Library & Information Studies, is the recipient of a scholarship from the Society of American Archivists. He received his master's degree in history at Washington State University and worked at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., before serving in the Peace Corps.

Digital First Media has created a national curation team as part of Thunderdome, the company's centralized news operation. **Julie Westfall** (02-04), former associate editor for KPCC.org, has accepted

the position of curation team leader. She will be responsible for driving the development and execution of national and local curation strategy across Digital First Media in addition to leading the team of curators in day-to-day news processes. Prior to this position, Westfall worked for Southern California Public Radio in Los Angeles. She also helped launch TBD.com and was managing editor of the Voice of the Hill in Washington, D.C. Westfall graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

NIGER

Mary Abrams has been named to serve as head of the Oregon Department of State Lands. Abrams recently served as Peace Corps Director in Niger, beginning in 2006. The State Lands Department manages Oregon's waterways, wetlands and state-owned ranching and forestlands to generate money for schools. Abrams, who assumed the position on November 1, said, "I believe deeply in the mission of the agency to ensure a legacy for Oregonians and their public schools through sound stewardship of Oregon's lands, wetlands, unclaimed property, estates, and the Common School Fund."

NIGERIA

Gig Harbor, Wash., English/ESL teacher **Lucinda Wingard** (66-68) is the author of the newly published book, *The Turn-around Bird*. The novel is about twins Aimee and Zoe who travel with their father to Timbuktu. While he studies ancient manuscripts, they encounter the West African "being of fire," a djinni, who sends them seven centuries into the past to meet their ancestors.

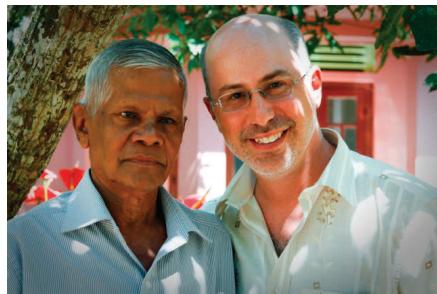
RUSSIA

Christina Baybay-Bykov is the latest member of the Peace Corps community to appear on the well-known television quiz show, Jeopardy. Christina appeared in the game show's special teachers tournament. She was one of 15 teachers from around the nation selected to compete. Tina teaches social studies at Boone High School in Orlando, Florida.

SIERRA LEONE

Anna Dragsbaek (88-91), president of the nonprofit group The Immunization Partnership, was recognized as this year's Childhood Immunization Champion for Texas by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prior to her current position, Dragsbaek ran the Houston-Harris County Immunization Registry. She also worked for the Texas Children's Hospital as manager of the immunization program. Dragsbaek has a degree in social work from Marquette University and went to law school at the University of Houston.

SRI LANKA



Andrew Harlem Ph.D. (92-94) has been appointed to the California Board of Psychology by Governor Jerry Brown. Dr. Harlem is a clinical psychologist in private practice in San Francisco and Oakland. He is also an associate professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies and serves on the editorial board of Psychoanalytic Dialogues. Dr. Harlem has a doctorate from the University of Chicago and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School/Cambridge Health Alliance.

TOGO

Nick Vilelle (04-06) is the founder of Cause, a "philanthropub" that opened in Washington D.C. in October. The concept around Cause is to make charitable giving more convenient, fun and transparent for the general population. The restaurant/pub plans to donate 100% of its net profits to selected organizations both locally and internationally. Since its launch, Cause has identified its first group of four charitable organizations that will benefit from its profits. It hosted

an event organized by the RPCVs of Washington, D.C. in November.

TUNISIA

Mary Wachacha (71-73) recently concluded a 40-year career of federal service, including nearly a quarter-century with the Indian Health Service. This was preceded by her employment by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as an elementary school teacher for the Cherokee (N.C.) central school system. Wachacha is a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI).

SWAZILAND

John L. Harrison Jr. is the first recipient of the newly created public service award in Philadelphia presented by Global Citizen's Mission 365 program. The program fosters civic engagement, networking opportunities, and partnerships among local military, their families, and veteran-serving organizations with local community-based organizations and service programs throughout the Greater Philadelphia region. Harrison, a retired Air Force Major and a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, headed the Peace Corps

program in Swaziland. He also served as a regional director for ACTION.

ZAIRE



The Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN), founded in 2002 by **Mike Tidwell** (85-87) recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary with a celebration in Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C. More than one hundred supporters came to mark significant victories for key climate change and clean energy legislation in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. A well-known RPCV author, Mike was recently published in *The Nation* magazine for his commentary on climate change and Hurricane Sandy.

For more Community News go to www.peacecorpsconnect.org/n pca/news/community-news.

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