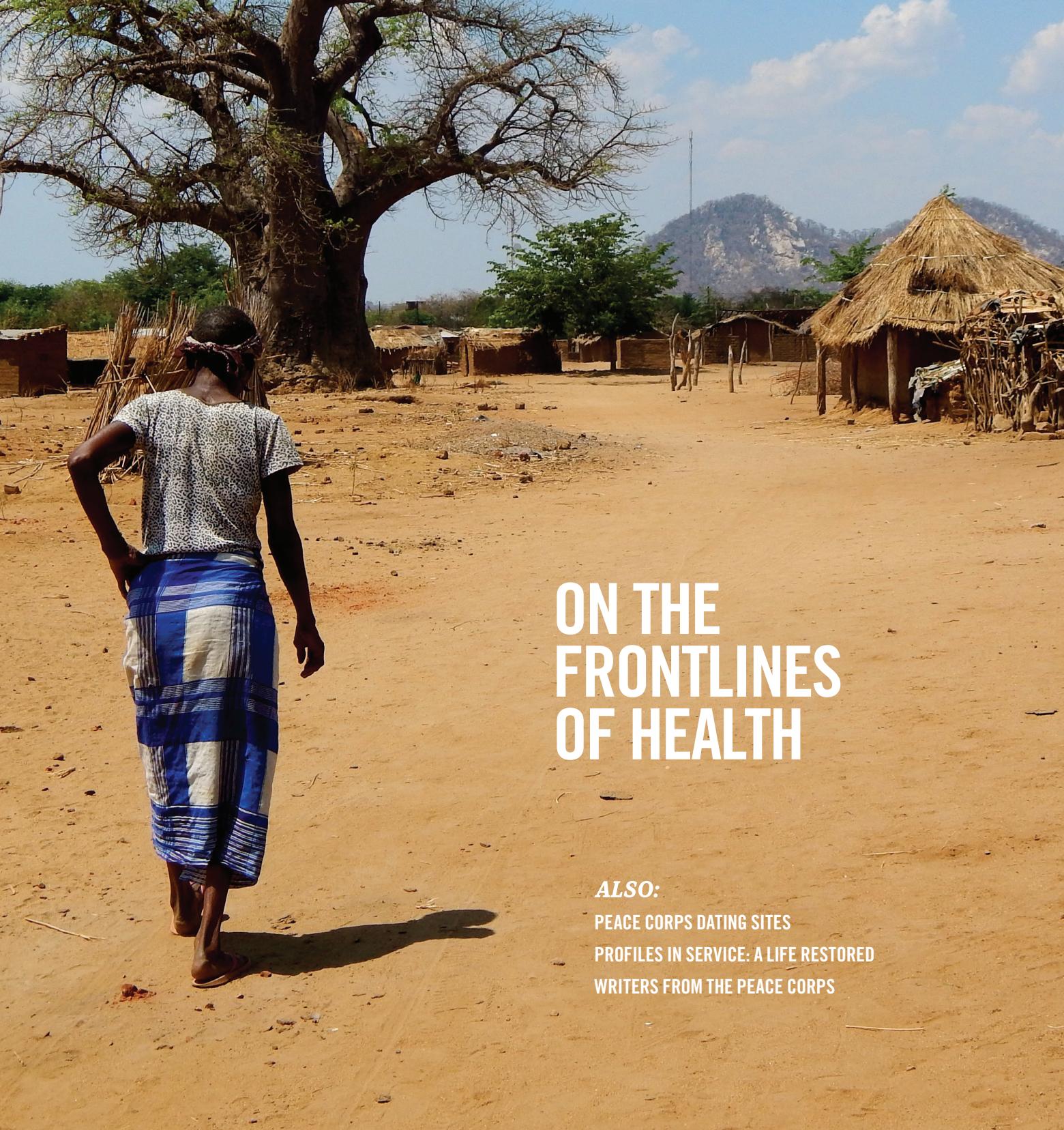


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Spring 2015  
Volume 28, Number 1

# WorldView

A magazine of news and comment about the Peace Corps world

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION  
The Independent Non-Profit Peace Corps Alumni Network



CDC epidemiologist Meredith Dixon confers with another physician at the Doctors Without Borders Ebola treatment center at Donka hospital in Conakry, Guinea, Dec. 19, 2014. (Meredith Dixon)

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CREDIT: BROOKE HEIN

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A magazine of news and comment about the Peace Corps world

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# GOOD OLE SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

By Glenn Blumhorst

Authentic gumbo can certainly be found in New Orleans, but it turns out you can't go wrong with the gumbo at Ma Harper's Cajun Kitchen in San Antonio, Texas.

A dear friend to many local Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), Ma Harper also knows good swing music, which is why San Antonio Peace Corps Association President Adam Tutor (Ukraine 2010-2012) can regularly be found playing his sweet saxophone there. It's where I found him and area RPCVs on a recent Sunday afternoon when National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) staffer David Fields (Ghana 2011-2013) and I came through town.

Good gumbo in San Antonio was just one of many discoveries David and I made during our recent 2,500 mile tour, visiting 11 NPCA affiliate groups across

the southern United States. At every stop we saw evidence that our Peace Corps community is vibrant—and that yes, we enjoy eating!

In Phoenix, it was an RPCV chili cook-off that brought us all together, while in Tucson, the Desert Doves threw a lavish Tex-Mex spread for the occasion. The Heart of Texas (HOT) RPCVs in Austin appropriately gathered at a local pub and brewery cooperative. In South Florida, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were the food of choice, as busloads of Miami inner city youth were treated to a picnic and guided tours by some 100 local RPCVs on the annual Everglades Outing.

However, at all our stops it was clear that food isn't the only thing that motivates and unites these RPCVs. They are communities with a purpose. In New Orleans, RPCVs are on a mission to reestablish the nascent Louisiana Peace Corps Association (LPCA) in the wake of

Hurricane Katrina. Up the road, RPCVs of Houston has been going strong for nearly 35 years, always a stellar participant in NPCA advocacy for the Peace Corps.

Meanwhile in Orlando, a core group championed by Jessica Lampron (South Africa 2005-2008) is earnestly working to coalesce the Central Florida RPCVs. In Sarasota, the Gulf Coast RPCVs produce a top-notch Third Goal radio program series to bring the world home. In Tallahassee, the North Florida RPCVs are some

of the Peace Corps' best recruiters, mixing and mingling with prospective PCVs at a community information session.

Whether in Texas or Tallahassee, ours is also a gracious community, as many RPCVs opened their homes to us. Special thanks to Curt and Norma Johnson in Phoenix, Dave Scheinman in Houston, Ryan Tascar in New Orleans, Helene Dudley in Miami, Renice Jones in Edgewater, and David and Bernadette Miron in Jacksonville.

As PCVs, you undoubtedly felt right at home in your host country communities, in close proximity to those you were serving. Likewise, David and I felt right at home visiting the southern states, immersed in the RPCV communities that the NPCA is serving. We swapped Peace Corps stories, joined in some great community projects and met over 400 RPCVs along the way.

After two weeks on the road it was "wheels up" in Jacksonville, Fla. David and I were soon reminiscing about our southern states experience and looking forward to our next trip outside the Beltway. Visits like these are energizing and serve as a vivid reminder that the NPCA is all about *you* – our community.

In continued service,

**Glenn Blumhorst**

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

You can reach Glenn at president@peacecorpsconnect.org.

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Young people enjoy an outing to the Everglades with the RPCVs of South Florida.

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# GROUP NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

A look at what NPCA member groups are up to

By Jonathan Pearson

## SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

During a two week period running from mid-January to early February, NPCA President Glenn Blumhorst and Community Organizer David Fields travelled more than 2,500 miles and met with Returned Peace Corps



Volunteers (RPCVs) and former Peace Corps staff at member group meetings, community dinners, happy hours and service events. The trip started with gatherings with member groups in Phoenix and Tucson. A flight to the heart of Texas led to connections with member groups in San Antonio, Austin and Houston. From there, it was on to more member group gatherings in New Orleans, Tallahassee, Miami, Sarasota, Orlando and

Jacksonville. Thanks to all the group leaders (and RPCVs along the way at other stops) for their energy, support and hospitality.

## FLORIDA

Haiti has a special place in the hearts of the RPCVs of South Florida (RPCVSF). Following their Peace Corps service in Haiti, many members of the group have made their home in the Miami area, including the last Country Director, Marty Mueller. The region also is home to a large Haitian diaspora community. With this in mind, members of RPCVSF spent a week in Haiti during January. In addition to touring the country, participants took part in service projects with Project Medishare (health care) and HELP (women's secondary and higher education)—two charities the group has supported in the past. RPCVSF President Barbara Junge (Togo) and Tour Coordinator Greg Zell (Nigeria) organized the itinerary.

## INDIA

One of the many charities generously supported by the Friends of India (FOI) hit a milestone in late 2014. Since 2008, the group has supported the "Lucky Dozen" student sponsorship program, founded by FOI member George Nepert (India 26), which focuses on impoverished but deserving girls. Sr. Mary Therese, headmistress of Presentation Convent Higher Secondary School in Theni, Tamil Nadu, provides local supervision. A past principal of a large all-girls school, Sr. Mary identifies students who meet academic requirements for further studies. 2014 marked the sponsorship of the 100th student through the program. FOI has donated more than \$111,000 over more than six years. Equally inspiring is that some of the early Lucky Dozen recipients who have since graduated are now donating to the charity as well.

## KOREA

In an initiative described as moving, "Friends of Korea to a deeper level of engagement with the many Korean communities active in the United States," the group marked the close of 2014 by awarding its first "Giving Back" grant. At a gathering in Los Angeles, a \$2,000 award was given to Korean American Family

Services (KFAM). Since 1983, KFAM has assisted tens of thousands of Korean Americans across greater Los Angeles, with special attention given to women, children, immigrants and low income families. In accepting the award, KFAM Executive Director Connie Chung Joe, said "it is organizations like Friends of Korea that quietly go about the business of helping to build bridges of understanding between the very different and diverse cultural groups that inspire us to work harder every day."

## MALAYSIA

Friends of Malaysia (FOM) has responded to recent monsoon flooding along the country's east coast—the worst flooding Malaysia has experienced in more than 30 years. Group members raised nearly \$850 to support flood relief efforts. The funds forwarded to the Red Crescent Society headquarters in Kuala



Lumpur have initially been used to provide medical aid and distribute tons of relief items to meet immediate humanitarian needs.

## NEW YORK

The local Peace Corps Volunteer/RPCV member group connection paid off in 2014 in upstate New York! At the close of the year, members of the Rochester Returned Peace Corps Volunteers rallied to help support its second development project of 2014 in conjunction with Betsy Jenson, who joined the local group before becoming a Volunteer in Georgia. Earlier the group made both a group and individual donations to support Betsy's Peace Corps Partnership Project—the successful renovation of a Day Care Center in Terjola—which was completed in October. Individual group members came through again in December with personal contributions that made up the remaining funds needed to purchase a portable sensory room that will provide services to children with disabilities at three day care centers in the Terjola region.

## OHIO

The Dayton International Peace Museum, working in cooperation with the Southwestern Ohio Returned Volunteers Organization (SORVO), recently hosted a program marking 54 years of Peace Corps service and honoring Ohio RPCV Tony Hall. Ambassador Hall (who was introduced by fellow RPCV and former Ohio Governor Bob Taft) received a Lifetime Achievement Award for Promoting Global Peace and Justice. More than 300 were in attendance at the Ponitz Center Auditorium to hear former Ambassador Hall share his Peace Corps experiences and speak to the power of Peace Heroes to change the world.

## PAKISTAN

An exciting milestone during 2014 provides hope for becoming even more eventful in 2015. Last year the first group of scholarship students sponsored by the Friends of Pakistan USA successfully completed their college preparatory studies. Six female students at Girls Government Intercollege in Rerra, Kashmir, graduated and six more were awarded scholarships for the final two years of secondary school. Friends of Pakistan USA looks forward to establishing a scholarship for motivated young women



to finish high school and qualify for entry into university and careers. Scholarships were awarded at a public ceremony on the campus of the newly inaugurated Women's University of Kashmir.

## PENNSYLVANIA

Peace Corps advocacy was part of the "bringing the world home" agenda of RPCV groups in Pennsylvania last November: the Pittsburgh Area Peace



Corps Association (pictured here) and the Philadelphia Area Peace Corps Association each hosted advocacy training workshops. Participants got an update on the Pennsylvania congressional delegation and wrote letters in support of strong Peace Corps funding as a lead up to the March National Day of Action. Both groups also hosted monthly dinner gatherings that included remarks by NPCA Advocacy Director Jonathan Pearson.

## NATIONWIDE

In February, the National Peace Corps Association launched The Purpose-Driven

Group, a series of capacity-building workshops for NPCA member groups. Facilitated by the NPCA, the workshops are designed around the first of NPCA's new strategic goals: to "enable members and member groups to thrive." More than 40 participants representing 28 groups took part in person or electronically for



the first session, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to consider what individual groups need to thrive. Presenters included facilitators from Ashoka, NPCA Vice President Anne Baker and Group Leaders Forum Coordinator Maricarmen Smith-Martinez.

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# NPCA ADVOCACY UPDATE

Get connected, get involved

*By Jonathan Pearson*

## Equity Act Victory

2014 concluded with a significant victory for the fair treatment of Peace Corps Volunteers. As part of the final negotiations for the omnibus Fiscal Year 2015 federal appropriations bill, language to implement the Peace Corps Equity Act was included in the bill. While not permanent (as appropriations language is reviewed each year), the approval means that a female Peace Corps Volunteer will be treated the same as others serving our nation overseas in her reproductive health decisions, should she become pregnant in the event of rape. The final appropriations bill also included \$379.5 million in funding for the Peace Corps, a very slight increase (1/10 of one percent) from the previous fiscal year.

## Strong Funding Request

It began with a letter to the President signed by 106 RPCV member groups. It continued with the signatures of RPCVs around the nation on a White House petition. Then, NPCA leadership met with officials of the Office of Management and Budget. These collective actions, coupled with outreach by other champions of the Peace Corps, helped ensure that funding for the agency was not neglected by the Obama administration. In February, President Obama submitted his Fiscal Year 2016 budget to Congress. Included in his request was a strong \$410 million funding request for the Peace Corps. This represents an 8% increase in funding and

is slightly higher than the 7% increase in the overall federal budget.

In its budget justification to Congress, the Peace Corps says it "is now well positioned to grow its volunteer force in a gradual and sustainable manner while maintaining the high quality of our work to train, safeguard and ensure a productive service experience to our Volunteers."

## Health Justice

The NPCA, in collaboration with the leadership of the RPCV member group Health Justice for Peace Corps Volunteers, is in the early stages of planning an inaugural series of activities to mark an annual day to raise awareness about the challenges faced by many individuals facing illness or injuries that occurred during Peace Corps service. The Health Justice Awareness Day is planned for the 4th Thursday in June (this year's day will be June 25th). Along with working towards key policy changes, we also realize that members of the Peace Corps community—individually and collectively—can play a critical role in building a support network to help those in need.

We need volunteers! If you are willing to help launch the inaugural Health Justice Awareness Day, contact us at [advocacy@peacecorpsconnect.org](mailto:advocacy@peacecorpsconnect.org).

## State Resources

With a new Congress, the NPCA has been hard at work to update the state



As part of her advocacy internship last fall, Amy Morton met with her Senator, Tom Udall (D-NM), to share her aspirations to join the Peace Corps and urge support for strong funding.

resources page on our website. This is the place where you can go to find key information about your members of Congress (including past level of support for key Peace Corps related initiatives). It's also the place where you can find a one-page document that highlights Peace Corps presence in your state. These are key resources you can use when preparing to meet with your congressional representatives. Learn more at [www.peacecorpsconnect.org/advocacy-state-resources](http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/advocacy-state-resources). **WV**

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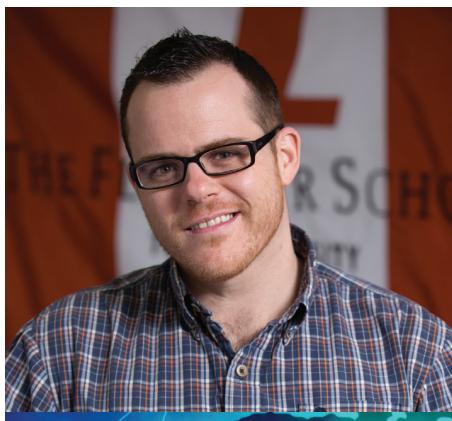
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# U.S. DISEASE DETECTIVES PURSUING EBOLA'S TRAIL

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers are there

By Carol Guensburg

**A** year into an Ebola outbreak that has killed more than 8,000 people in West Africa, resistance still plagues the public health response.

"And when a public servant charged with protecting people denies the deadly virus' existence, it's especially alarming," said Meredith Dixon, an epidemiologist with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She was visiting one of Guinea's western prefectures when a police officer stopped the vehicle in which she was riding. Dixon and her driver explained they'd been traveling for Ebola research.

"The gendarme said, 'There's no such thing as Ebola,'" Dixon said. "I know, I know—there are people who don't believe. But to hear it is a little different."

That resistance both challenges and motivates Dixon and other Americans involved in the international effort to combat Ebola. They're helping local governments—in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and some neighboring countries—as they try to track, treat and prevent the unpredictable disease.

While dismissiveness gradually has been yielding to rising death tolls and

aggressive public awareness campaigns, other obstacles remain. Among them: a general mistrust of outsiders, particularly white people; limited formal education; and poor infrastructure, especially a rickety health care system devastated by years of civil strife and widespread poverty.

Dixon, 36, is among more than 170 CDC staff members in West Africa aiming to expand knowledge about Ebola and how to fight it. Most rotate in for one or two months. Dixon is wrapping up a three-month tour, by far the longest of three trips she's made to Guinea since the country's health ministry acknowledged the Ebola outbreak. She was one of the early responders, arriving in April for a month and returning in July for another.

A pediatrician, Dixon has been drawn to West Africa since volunteering with the Peace Corps in Cameroon and Gabon. Now, as an officer training in the CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service, she appreciates working among the region's "kind" and "fantastic" people, polishing her skills in disease detection.

She focuses on health workers and their infection control practices, putting in countless hours in urban field hospitals and remote villages, working



A worker scrubs uniforms and other items at the Doctors Without Borders Ebola treatment center in Conakry, Guinea.

with Guinean and international teams, interviewing and encouraging.

Dixon recalled speaking with an infected doctor at an Ebola treatment center. When another patient arrived, moaning from abdominal pain, the doctor turned to offer a few calming words. Despite his illness, "he was still in a role as a physician, providing support to others," she said. "It was a very touching moment for me. ... This conversation was one which really made me feel the immensity of this work."

But as the outbreak has dragged on, even some health workers have become complacent or careless. "We have seen, in parts of all three of the countries, health care workers relaxing their grip on the response, not using protective equipment, not thinking of Ebola at every opportunity," CDC Director Tom Frieden said recently.

Still, health experts say they see progress. The transmission rate has slowed in Liberia and even in Sierra Leone, where it has been most intense, though it has fluctuated in Guinea since September. But experts have learned to be wary, especially after missing key cases last spring and mistakenly believing the outbreak was winding down. The World Health Organization, too, has been faulted for

delaying the international call to arms and inadequately coordinating aid.

There's yet another challenge: weariness among West Africans and others working with them to battle Ebola.

"I'm very tired, just like everybody else," said Dixon, who puts in long hours six and sometimes seven days a week. "But we have to keep doing what we're doing, and doing it better."

### Connecting cases

The Ebola virus slips in quietly, going underground as it lays waste to cells, to organs, to lives.

The only way to stop its spread is to find everyone who's come in contact with an infected person, then monitor them daily for 21 days—the disease's maximum incubation period. Any sign of fever, nausea, diarrhea or other symptoms should prompt isolation and treatment.

Identifying contacts is a specialty of disease detectives like Dixon and John Ngulefac, another CDC epidemiologist involved in training local teams. Once a police detective in his native Cameroon, he transferred his sleuthing talents to the public health agency. His knowledge of French and West African languages and customs, plus a cool, commanding presence, help elicit information.

Ngulefac, a handful of other CDC investigators, and a community agent followed the killer virus' trail one autumn morning in this capital city to a walled compound where a person had recently died.

Inside, a slender girl stepped away from several young children playing in the dirt courtyard. Keeping a few meters' distance from the visitors, she introduced herself as Aminata. The 16-year-old was named for her maternal grandmother, who came to the household with the first signs of her mortal illness.

The younger Aminata told Ngulefac she had helped care for the ailing woman, scrubbing her soiled clothing and bedding. She didn't wear rubber gloves or other protective gear—risky because the virus is transmitted through direct contact with a sick person's bodily fluids—but to date



John Ngulefac, one of the CDC epidemiologists, shown at the Centre de Sante de Macire, a community health center in Conakry, Guinea.

hadn't shown any sign of illness. Nor had anyone else in the household.

Ngulefac posed more questions.

Did Aminata know the cause of her grandmother's death? Yes, she said, Ebola.

Had that knowledge affected her behavior with friends? She shrugged and shook her head vigorously.

How did she greet her friends? Aminata clasped her hands to demonstrate a handshake. Investigators exchanged uneasy glances; touching has been discouraged during the outbreak.

The teen also established that her grandmother was the sister of an imam, a Muslim leader who'd died earlier of Ebola. That tip—later pooled with information from a local clinic and the nearby Ebola treatment center run by the medical charity Doctors Without Borders—turned up more connections in the transmission chains.

"That was contact tracing like you want," investigator Jon Eric Tongren said later.

### Troubling time frame

Later that day, CDC investigators learned the Doctors Without Borders center had admitted seven new patients. Five had been on their contact tracing list.

Ngulefac was troubled that it had

taken 18 days of monitoring; community agents may have overlooked something.

"They should not only be taking temperatures, they need to interview in depth. Maybe they weren't asking the pertinent question," said Ngulefac, who has urged more training—not only for the agents but for health care workers.

But Ngulefac and his teammates said they also were impressed by community agents' determination and personal sacrifice. Agents fan out daily, sometimes starting at 5 in the morning and returning long after dark as they pursue leads and check in with contacts.

The WHO and other entities supply agents with bikes or motorcycles—but not necessarily the money for fuel, the investigators said they were told.

"Most of these individuals are using their personal resources," Ngulefac said, adding that they're paid only a pittance. "What we need now is support for them."

### Coming up with solutions

Finding solutions is part of the detectives' work, too. Tongren said he'd proposed performance-based financing—an incentive model used in campaigns to eradicate polio and other communicable diseases—to increase tracing agents'

## Q & A with Meredith Dixon

### How did your time in the Peace Corps influence your decision to work in the health field? Was there an “aha” moment?

“I knew in high school that I wanted to be in the health field but just out of college wasn’t ready to commit to the serious field of medicine. I needed adventure. An “aha” moment came in my village in Nkolkosse, Cameroon when an outside group came to deliver care. I don’t know who it was nor did I talk directly with the medical group but they brought with them many medications and distributed many medications. In talking with a villager, it dawned on me that the people I lived among didn’t have routine access to medications. In the US, we can go to a pharmacy and pick out any myriad of over the counter medications. In my village, there was no such pharmacy, and even if there had been, many would not be able to afford the over the counter meds that would be in there. Seeing the big discrepancy made me want to help people in resource poor settings more easily access the care and medications that I had taken for granted in the U.S.

### What skills from your Peace Corps experience do you draw upon in your work as an epidemiologist? Do Americans who served in the Peace Corps bring skills or attitudes to the field that are unique in any way?

During Peace Corps, I had to learn to sit with the discomfort of being an outsider and not understanding a culture or speaking another language well. I learned how to build bridges and develop connections across cultures. I learned how important human relationships are in the workplace—that one simply cannot arrive, say a quick hello and go about one’s work; rather, one must ask genuinely about someone’s family and day. Those things helped me when I was in Guinea during the current Ebola epidemic. You work with many people of various backgrounds from different agencies and areas around the world. With that comes different attitudes and approaches. Responding to an epidemic like this requires fostering relationships to engender trust and build good will, and to appreciate that with any problem, there are different ways to attack it. Peace Corps set the stage for me excelling in this type of situation.

Americans who served in the Peace Corps bring with them the realization that work abroad often hinges on relationships. I see people who’ve never worked abroad come in to the field, and try to just get to work, and they flounder a little. I think Peace Corps helps you realize how to build those cross-cultural connections first, and then get to work.

### Do you work exclusively on Ebola? Do you specialize in a region or do you go wherever the next health crisis is?

I am based in the Division of Global HIV/ AIDS. I worked on Ebola because I spoke French and that was required to work in Guinea. I was fortunate to work many months there but due to other fellowship requirements, had to return back to Atlanta. The fellowship ends in June and so I have to look for a job, write things up, and finish other fellowship projects.

wages and cover their fuel costs.

The plan also would create incentives for broader cooperation in contact tracing, Tongren said. For instance, it would provide a finder’s fee for identifying an individual who might have been exposed to or infected by the virus. It also would compensate people held in quarantine.

While there was no word on finder’s fees, in December Guinea’s health minister, Remy Lamah, told VOA his government was “working with its partners to provide [quarantined] families of contacts with food and money assistance.”

And transportation problems have eased among all three Ebola-affected countries. The nonprofit CDC Foundation, which supports partnerships to help the agency’s work, by mid-December had bought 206 four-wheel-drive vehicles and more than 400 motorcycles for West African health teams. The vehicles can be used for contact tracing or for transporting patients, corpses or specimens. The foundation partnered with another organization, eHealth Africa, to provide fuel, insurance and maintenance.

The CDC is “helpful by providing all the necessary logistical assistance so that we can reach our goal for the well-being of the population,” Lamah said, praising “its expertise” in contact tracing and monitoring.

### Making a difference

The Centre de Sante de Macire, a community health center, characterizes the neediness of West African health care systems. Even here in Guinea’s capital, the 10-room center lacks running water and reliable electricity—though a small generator powers the refrigerator holding temperature-sensitive medications. Mosquito netting is bundled over the two patient beds in a small room with open windows and peeling yellow paint.

In the delivery room, babies often arrive by candlelight or flashlight. The center’s director, Mohamed Oulare, said the clinic handled as many as 60 deliveries a month before the outbreak.

Though “no case of Ebola has passed through,” as Oulare insisted in late September, fear of contracting the virus had kept away many laboring women and other patients—threatening their health and that of the pay-as-you-go center.

### Drawn to country

That neediness—along with a desire to make a difference and a love for the region—has drawn epidemiologist Dixon to Guinea again and again.

“It’s tiring, but I’m learning a ton. … This is public-health gold—it’s such a rich learning environment,” said Dixon, who’s “learning about the disease, about working with foreign governments and other international partners.”

But “working with the [Guinean] people here is a big reason I’ve come back.”

She’s had plenty of opportunity to hone the surveillance and interviewing skills needed to coax out information. And she’s discovered that even health care workers, who normally



Epidemiologist Meredith Dixon

appreciate the need for detailed medical charts, are reticent as patients.

"It's like this with patients in general: A story doesn't quite make sense, so you ask multiple questions," Dixon said. "At the beginning, they don't want to tell you. There's definitely a lot of stigma that prevents stories from being told."

In one case, teammates following up on a sick health worker told Dixon they'd interviewed the man's friend. "I asked if there were any random deaths in that village. 'No, no, no,'" she said they told her.

But a review of the nearest Ebola treatment center's patient registry showed otherwise. Dixon saw a pattern, so she asked the team to return to the village to get more details. "Digging deeper and [demonstrating] persistence are the keys here," she said. "... You just have to keep at it."

Dixon said the experience prepares her, and her government, to address future public health threats—whether outbreaks of Ebola or other infectious diseases.

She'll welcome a break from so much sickness and loss of life, she said. She's heading back to the United States this month and expects to complete her epidemiologic training in June.

She's already trying to figure out how she'll make her way back to West Africa. **WV**

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**Carol Guensburg** is a writer and editor for the Voice of America English Webdesk. Timothée Donangmaye in VOA's French to Africa Service contributed to this report, which was originally published on January 6, 2015 and is reprinted with permission from the Voice of America.

## GREAT CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME DEMAND A **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**



**MALINI RANGANATHAN**

Assistant Professor, School of International Service

**GARRETT GRADDY-LOVELACE**

Assistant Professor, School of International Service

### HOW DO WE LINK ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE?

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# TESTING POSITIVE

HIV/AIDS testing in rural Mozambique

By Brooke Hein

This day felt like any other day. At the first sign of light, the women began sweeping their yards with tethered bundles of sticks and the booming bass of music began blaring from houses near and far. I washed up to the chorus of roosters and donkeys and the rumble of semi trucks as they made their way down the main road that cuts through Changara. I went through the motions of boiling water for coffee, sweeping my house, and gathering together my necessary items for the day—a pen, my notepad, sunscreen, my water bottle, my keys and my phone. I was giddy, anticipating what the day's events would bring. Today was my first day working in the HIV/AIDS testing and counseling

center at the district hospital.

Of the 1.6 million people living in Mozambique, about one-third are living with HIV/AIDS. Of this one-third, more than 90,000 are children under the age of fifteen and about 5% (roughly 26,600 people) are living in Tete Province—where I call home for the next two years of my Peace Corps service. This isn't groundbreaking news or headline worthy data; the gravity of the African HIV/AIDS epidemic is known throughout the world, claiming millions of lives every year. Like many others, I can readily recite the statistics but have never actually known anyone living with HIV/AIDS.

Up until this day, I had spent my entire life learning about and discussing the HIV/AIDS epidemic knowing with almost complete certainty that it wasn't

something I would ever have to confront intimately. Crunching the numbers and studying the facts didn't prepare me to meet the epidemic face-to-face. The Peace Corps didn't equip me with the ability to look someone in the eye, in the midst of a life altering moment, and know how to react.

This day was not like any other. This day changed my life.

Outside the testing and counseling center sat a handful of women clad in colorful capulanas, some clutching their purses while others were breastfeeding weary-eyed infants. I excused myself as I navigated my way up the front steps to reception. They look tired, curious, inconvenienced. I wandered around the corner and into a room where I found our community health volunteers and counselors preparing for their day in the

field—putting together HIV rapid tests, cotton swabs, and paperwork.

I said my customary greetings and was invited to take a seat, where I sat quietly waiting for someone to ask me to do something. I felt like an awkward third wheel. They went back and forth between each other boisterously chatting in Nyungue, the local Bantu language, high-fiving and doubling over in fits of laughter.

Eventually the room cleared and still unsure of what I was supposed to be doing, I continued to sit and wait. As I scanned the room and assessed the sad state of organization, I was greeted at the door by our resident counselor and an elderly woman, frail and weathered looking. Realizing this was a patient, I asked if I should leave, but she insisted cheerfully, "No, stay!" Patient privacy

didn't appear to be of concern.

The woman cautiously lowered herself into the seat next to mine, coughing and groaning. They spoke the local language, so I understood none of what was being said but watched as the counselor put on rubber gloves and pointed to various posters on the wall that illustrated how HIV attacks the human body.

It was in this moment that I realized I was going to watch this woman test for HIV. I observed as her finger was pricked, her blood was collated on one end of the testing strip, and two little red lines appeared on the other end.

She tested positive.

I had never seen anyone test for HIV, let alone test positive. This was such a powerful moment, all I wanted to do was to leave the room. I didn't belong



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there and I couldn't imagine that this woman wanted me by her side through the process.

The counselor said a few words, ripped off her rubber gloves, and left us in the room together, side-by-side. I didn't know where to look. I didn't know what to say. We didn't speak the same language, but anything I could have said in that moment would have felt inadequate and irrelevant. I heard sniffling, looked over, and realized she was weeping into her hands. In an instant I could feel my face getting hot and the pressure building in my chest as I choked back tears. Feeling paralyzed, I stared at my feet. Not before long the counselor returned to fill out paperwork and sent the patient on her way.

I began gathering my stuff together to leave the room, but was cut short as the counselor escorted in a mother and her two little girls, each clutching identical Hannah Montana purses and a ball of sweet fried bread. I sank deep into my chair. They were tested in just the same way. One of the little girls tested positive. I watched her swing her feet and munch innocently on her bread as her mother received the news, knowing this little girl's life just changed forever. She couldn't have been more than eleven years old. But they seemed fine, laughing even.

As they exited the room I could hear more laughing and chatter coming from reception. It bothered me, the energy of the clinic felt too merry and aloof for

what was going on behind closed doors. I asked the counselor if this work was hard for her, emotionally and mentally speaking. She replied with a snort and a smile and said, "Nada".

Our next patient to enter was a young woman with her two-year-old tied to her back. The baby had just tested positive in pediatrics and the mother wanted to test as well. The baby cooed as she sat down. The mother fiddled with her capulana anxiously as we waited for the test results. I watched as two little lines crept across her test strip.

She tested positive, too. **WV**

**Brooke Hein** is currently serving in Mozambique as a Health Volunteer.



The author demonstrates how to properly use a condom during a meeting with one of the HIV/AIDS adherence and support groups in the area that aim to reduce the stigma and financial burden experienced by many.

“Peace Corps Mozambique Community Health  
Volunteers are assigned to work within a wide variety of assignments, all with the goal of strengthening the community response to HIV & AIDS. In order to make contributions in the Health Sector, more precisely in the fight against HIV & AIDS in Mozambique, the Peace Corps was invited to sign a second Memorandum of Understanding with National Council against HIV & AIDS (CNCS). With this, volunteers have various placements throughout the country. Some Volunteers work directly with a community-based organization (CBOs) or faith-based organization (FBOs) while others work in international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) or local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) assisting with community outreach efforts.”

—Peace Corps website

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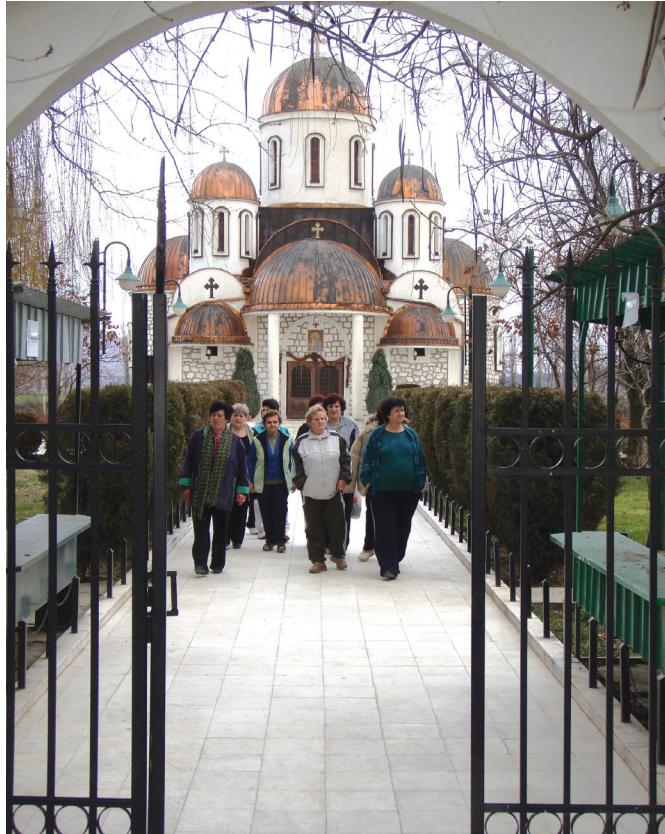
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# BABAS LEAD THE WAY

Blazing the trail for women's fitness in rural Macedonia

By Hana Truscott

HANA TRUSCOTT



The local monastery is a favorite destination of the senior women's weekly walking group.

Macedonia is a land known for its warriors—from Mother Teresa (warrior of compassion) to Alexander the Great (undefeated in battle). This land and its people are no stranger to life on the front lines. The rural region where I live is dotted with sites from more than twelve historical eras, including the front lines of World War I. While most of the historical sites are remnants of stories past, I am here to introduce you to the new and perhaps unexpected face of the 21st century Macedonian warrior: women fighting at the front lines of preventative health.

These are no ordinary women. They are babas (grandmothers) and senior citizens who have sacrificed a lifetime in service to the domestic duties of raising a family and keeping a home. They have been on their best behavior, drawing within the lines of their society's acceptable role for women. But as their roles began to increasingly revolve around an inactive lifestyle, their bodies slowly became susceptible to stealthy health threats like heart disease and diabetes. It's a story all too familiar around the world. Yet while the key activity for preventative health may sound easy (active lifestyle), it can be one of the greatest challenges.

As a woman living in one of the most rural regions of Macedonia, to participate in fitness activities is to risk the ridicule of village gossip. When I arrived at my site in 2011, there were no women's fitness opportunities despite a growing prevalence of heart disease and diabetes among the local women. In a village of 1,000 people, one's reputation has a significant impact on one's

quality of life and thus the majority of village women maintained the status quo even though their health was at risk.

This changed in June 2013. Elizabeta Jonchik, the visionary founder and director of the local youth NGO, Innovative Culture Club Novaci, along with local volunteer Snezana Veljanovska, created an opportunity for women's fitness disguised as a Zumba dance class. While the class was initially geared towards young women, it ended up having a most unexpected impact. Thanks to a grant from Friends of Macedonia, a US-based non-profit, the fitness program was expanded to include a Pilates' class and to awaken community awareness about preventative health and the significant health benefits of physical fitness and nutrition through a series of fitness seminars tailored to girls, women and seniors.

Skeptical about whether senior women would be receptive to the program, Jonchik and Veljanovska proceeded to include senior women as a target group for the project seminars. According to the Center for Disease Control, "everyone can gain the health benefits of physical activity—age, ethnicity, shape or size do not matter." Following the first preventative health seminar, senior women were encouraged to get out and walk. One month later, in the dead of winter, the senior women headed out on their first walk. I accompanied them, thinking the walk would last thirty minutes (per the project goal). Two hours later, we arrived home after a trek beyond the village borders to the gorgeous gold-domed monastery gleaming in the last light of day. In addition to weekly walks, the seniors insisted on their own Pilates class. Boban Kataroski, the fitness instructor and professional dancer, tailored a Pilates class to meet the needs of the seniors. It was well attended, with seniors showing up to class in both tracksuits and in daily wear of skirts and high-heeled boots. Excuses (like not having the "right" clothes) didn't stop them. According to Kataroski, "We

achieved our objective to lose weight, feel fit, eat healthy, all while smiling and feeling happy. They are excellent students."

When asked to share best practices from the project, Jonchik replied, "while

it was strange to activate women of the older generation in fitness activities, we managed to tailor activities to their abilities, to strengthen mutual trust and slowly break down the stereotypical attitudes and beliefs—in our village's

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environment it is quite strange and unusual for anyone to practice such activities.” Jonchik believes the greatest success of the fitness program is if “this seed will continue to bear fruit and develop into a very important and necessary need for women to take control of their health without shame.”

Like any leading warriors on the front lines, the women in the fitness program had to overcome adversity, in this case risking social status and self-respect to take control of their health. Gossip was the biggest opponent, especially for the senior women. Some women allowed the gossip to get the best of them, but

the senior women remained brave and resilient. They were reminded in the seminars that they are not alone in this. There are women all over the world becoming empowered to take control of their health. The local media finally caught on, featuring this rural preventative health movement and its importance on national radio and television.

If babas can be victorious taking control of their own health, so can you. Here are five tips from the women warriors on the front lines of preventative health in rural Macedonia:

1. If you want to be healthy, you have to be active.

2. There is strength in numbers, find people to be active with.
3. Find an instructor who will tailor a class to your group’s fitness level—it doesn’t hurt to ask.
4. No excuses: you don’t need fancy Under Armour® or the latest gadgets to take control of your health; we do it in skirts and heels.
5. Worried about what people will say? Think of the health benefits of physical activity: weight control, reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome, reduced risk of some cancers including breast cancer, stronger bones and muscles, improved mental health and mood, prevention of falls for older adults, and increased chances of living longer. You’re never too old to take control of your health; you might even outlive those doing the gossiping! **wv**

HANA TRUSCOTT



Kataroski leading the senior women's Pilates class.

**Hana Truscott** (Macedonia 2011-2015) is serving as a community development volunteer in Macedonia where she completed her Master of Arts in International Administration last year through the University of Denver's Peace Corps Master's International program. She is a lifelong fitness fanatic and Ironman triathlete.



The senior women leaving the village on their weekly walks.

# PECADOM PLUS

## Actively combating malaria one village at a time

By Chrissie Faupel

**D**eep in the heart of the southeast region of Senegal, with so much natural beauty it would take your breath away, Ian Hennessee served as a Peace Corps Volunteer, a health volunteer, to be exact, who worked closely with his brother and counterpart—Cheikh. Ian remembers being shocked by the number of people in his village who fell sick with malaria. “During the rainy season,” he said, “it seemed like everyone had malaria—some kids even had it as much as five times in a single year.”

Cheikh was a community health worker who had been working on a project called PECADOM (Prise en Charge à Domicile, or community case management of malaria). With this project, which is a part of the National Malaria Control Program, community health workers would be available to treat sick villagers. These villagers could

visit the home of the community health worker, who was trained to conduct a rapid diagnostic test and who also had a supply of medication to treat uncomplicated malaria. If someone had symptoms of malaria, they could be tested for malaria and treated on the spot.

Despite programs such as these, care isn’t always sought out, and malaria remains deadly. It is estimated that one child dies every minute from malaria. As a new Volunteer in sub-Saharan Africa—where 90% of all malaria deaths occur—Ian was horrified. One day he was having a conversation with Cheikh and



1: Ian with some members of his family. 2: Cheikh doing a sweep of the village and treating a villager in his hut. 3: Another Kedougou volunteer (Pat Linn, the husband of Anne Linn, who is mentioned in the article) at a river crossing, demonstrating how access to health posts can be quite difficult. 4: Ian and counterpart Cheikh giving a talk to a women's care group.

they asked themselves, "What if we could bring care to people rather than waiting for them to seek it themselves?"

Thus, PECADOM Plus was born. A vamped-up version of the old model, community health workers go door-to-door once a week to actively identify, test, and treat cases of malaria. The idea is a simple one; the results are astounding.

In the first year, the end-of-season sweep showed that the prevalence of symptomatic malaria was a whopping 88% lower in the PECADOM Plus pilot villages than in nearby villages that only had the passive PECADOM model.

Though it was clearly a success in its initial phase, Ian's time in Senegal was soon over. This is when Annē Linn took over. A Masters International student, Annē was placed as a health volunteer at the

district level. When asked about her role in PECADOM Plus, she replied, "I think it was Ian's baby and my toddler." Interacting at all levels, from the community health workers to the National Malaria Control Program, Annē was responsible for scaling up the project to cover 15 villages in 2013. With continued support from Peace Corps, the National Malaria Control Program has now taken over the project, which will soon cover the entire southern half of Senegal, with PCV-led pilot programs in Togo and Madagascar.

So what makes PECADOM Plus so different or revolutionary? "I actually don't think it's that revolutionary, and that's part of the beauty of it," Annē responded. With the pieces already in place to provide a much-needed service, the program was converted to an active

version of what already existed. Not only that, but this model provides community health workers with "a mechanism to meet their communities where they are," she continued.

Annē tells a heart-rending story of being out en brousse all day with a team of Peace Corps Volunteers who were shadowing health care workers as they did their sweep of the village. When she returned home, exhausted but elated at the work they had done that day, it was to a tragic scene—her neighbor's child was at the hospital, struggling to fight malaria that had turned cerebral. Days before, Annē had seen Bebe, noticed she was sick, and begged her mother to take her to the hospital. But it was too late. That evening, Bebe passed away.

"We had spent the day getting treatment to people in villages that are nearly impossible to reach and now this had happened to a family who lives a five minute walk away from the health center," Annē recalled.

Whether the barriers to seeking and receiving treatment are real or perceived, they are there. And the PECADOM Plus model provides community health workers with the means to overcome these barriers, and to meet people where they are.

Chris Hedrick, who was the Country Director of Peace Corps Senegal at the time that Ian and Annē were volunteers, finds hope and inspiration in the work that they have done. Through projects such as PECADOM Plus, "Peace Corps volunteers are helping save lives across the continent." **WV**



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**Chrissie Faupel** is a native of Auburn, Alabama. She received her bachelors degree from the University of South Carolina in french and international studies, focusing on francophone Africa. In 2012, Faupel went to Senegal as a Preventative Health Educator, working on PECADOM Plus, amongst other projects. In the fall of 2014, Faupel moved to Vermont to pursue a Masters of International Education at the SIT Graduate Institute.

# RETURN TO MOPTI

Aga Khan Foundation invests in Malian culture against a backdrop of both change and continuity

By David Taylor

**A**fter I finished my Peace Corps service in Mauritania many years ago, my visit to Mali next door with several other Volunteers was a highlight. We hiked the cliffs in Dogon country and trawled markets in Mopti. So two years ago when I returned, I wanted to introduce my wife to Mali life and the magical and historic mosque at Djenné.

We reached the town's market near sunset and stood before the massive earthen building—the largest in the world. We naturally drew the attention of three assertive vendors eager for one last sale of a day during high season when we were the only travelers there. Tourism had fallen off steeply following kidnappings in northern Mali. Even before the 2012 coup, that moment showed that people in Djenné needed more livelihood options.

At the mosque we met Abd El Kader *Fofana*, the architect working with the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) on restoring the historic mosque and a related training program for craftspeople in Djenné.

With Lisa wearing a headscarf lent by one of the Djenné vendors, Fofana led us inside the mosque to see his work, usually not open to non-Muslims. The soaring, meditative space felt like a cathedral. We ascended a staircase to the rooftop where Fofana showed us elements added to ensure a more resilient structure, such as vents for



Architect Abd El Kader *Fofana* on the roof of the historic mosque in Djenné.

better air circulation. Standing on the roof at sunset I felt strongly the grand scale of Mali's tradition and pride.

We also toured a craftsmen's studio across the street, part of the restoration project where artisans learned new skills in metal work to create architectural details and items that could be sold in the local market.

At that point I had worked for only a few months in the Washington office

of Aga Khan Foundation, one of 11 sister agencies in AKDN. Yet here I recognized the Foundation's signature characteristics: inventive approaches to improving livelihoods, respect for the varied aspects of people's lives, and a value on cultural treasure alongside economic opportunity for the poorest. Later, Lisa said that was what struck her: of the many development projects that we have seen over the years, this was the

rare one that valued people's culture as much as their economic prospects.

The Foundation is also committed to local ownership; besides Fofana, most of the staff in Mali were Malian. (Over 90% of the Foundation's staff worldwide

work in the country where they're from.) While it started in places with a significant Ismaili Muslim community, its programs serve people regardless of their faith or background, in countries where it is invited, as in Mali.

When we reached Mopti, we again found ourselves nearly the only foreigners in a city normally swarming with travelers. In downtown Mopti we sought respite from the midday sun inside a new museum on earthen architecture, created by AKDN. The exhibits gave historical and cultural context and an entry point for appreciating local traditions in people's lives. Our last stop in Mali was the music festival in Segou, where we absorbed the spectacle of the country's thriving music scene on the banks of the Niger.

A month after our visit, Mali turned upside down with the March 2012 coup and an insurgency by northern extremist rebels. Peace Corp Volunteers we had chatted with in Segou were evacuated. Timbuktu's residents hid that city's cultural relics to protect them from extremists who seized the city. Hundreds of thousands of Malians fled, many to the Mopti area, where the social safety net was already badly stretched.

The Aga Khan Foundation stayed, continuing its work in the Mopti region, especially with farm families and microfinance. Through better access to microfinance and training in business skills, Malian farmers learned tools for gaining control over their lives. Habi Sekeré, with forty years' experience raising livestock, received that training in business skills. She immediately saw ways she could increase her income. Plus she gained teaching skills for sharing those methods with others.

"I always wanted to teach," she said, "so when I was given responsibility to train the group, I thought I must be dreaming." With that kind of amplification, the project has helped over 73,000 Malians farm better and gain access to small loans. The project also connects farmers to microlenders that have developed loan products tailored to their needs, like seasonal repayment schedules.

Back when I was a Volunteer, business training took a back seat to

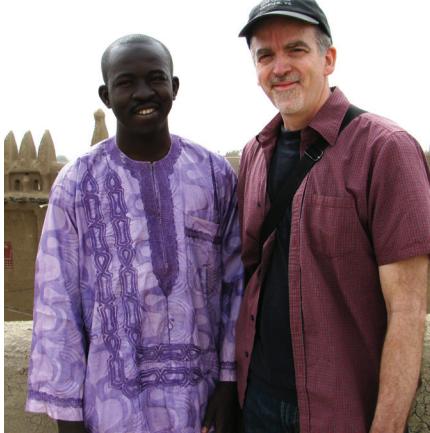
AGA KHAN FOUNDATION/David Taylor



Architect Abd El Kader Fofana points out rooftop enhancements on the historic mosque in Djenné.



The restoration of the mosque in Mopti, also by the Aga Khan Development Network included projects supporting livelihoods and the urban environment.



The author in Djenné with travel guide Mamadou Traore.

basic agricultural training: how to plant, how much fertilizer, etc. Now the Aga Khan Foundation, with funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, builds business management skills, literacy, nutrition and farming techniques hand in hand. Its microfinance arm, with a grant from the Whole Planet Foundation, is creating new loan options using mobile phones.

This summer Mali returned to a democratic process with a newly elected government, and Peace Corps Volunteers are returning to the country.

I found my own brief return to West Africa very moving, in part from witnessing Malians' strength, goodwill and pride in their culture. But the trip was also moving because it showed a new perspective on development. I hope that Volunteers will seek out the Foundation to see another model of community engagement. **WW**

*To see if Aga Khan agencies are active where you're serving, visit [www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org).*

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**David Taylor** was a Peace Corps Volunteer in southern Mauritania, 1983-1985, where he worked with women's cooperatives on vegetable gardens. He is communications officer with the Aga Khan Foundation in Washington, DC. Contact him at [david.taylor@akdn.org](mailto:david.taylor@akdn.org).

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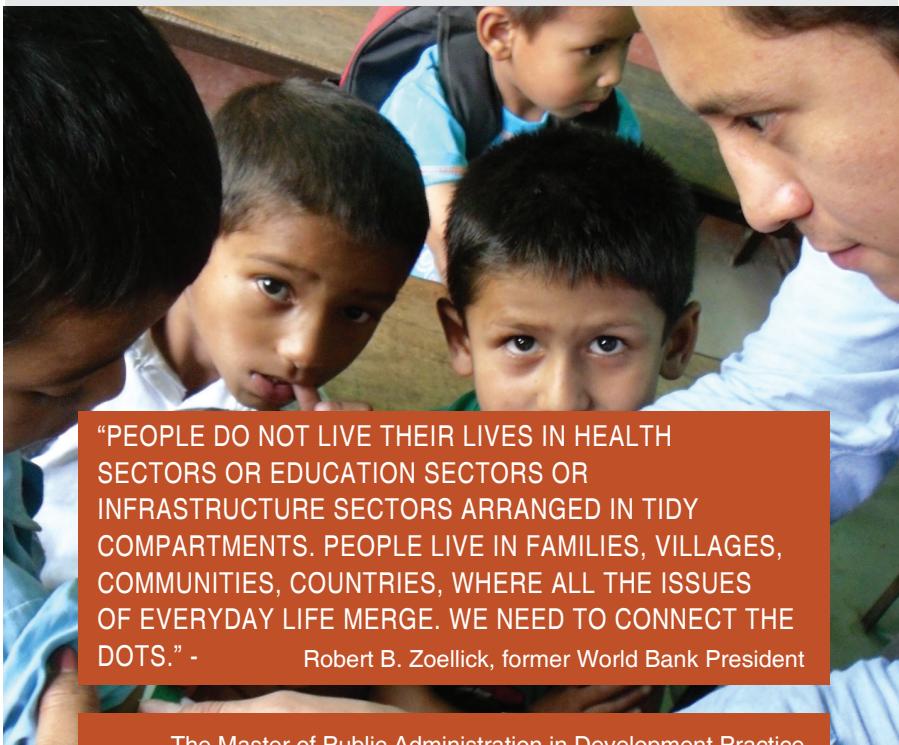


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# LOVE CONNECTION

Returned Volunteers launch dating sites tailored to people with heart

By Erica Burman

*In Peace Corps circles it's been a joke for the longest time: "Someone needs to start a dating service and a retirement community for returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs)." We can't comment on the retirement idea, but we can report that within the past few years not just one, but two Volunteer-centric dating sites have been started more or less in parallel by RPCVs. Each is aware of the other and has a unique approach.*

\*\*\*

They were struggling. Chris and Shelly Zenner had served together as Volunteers in Botswana, with Shelly at a nongovernmental organization that worked with youth to teach healthy living skills, and Chris assigned to the Social and Community Development Department at a Rural Administration Center. In addition they coached youth basketball, helped individuals with business plans and taught computer skills. They did their best; small victories kept them going and they met great people: Peace Corps Volunteers, ex-pats, and Batswana. "Being a PCV in Africa was the experience of a lifetime," says Chris.

But in 2011 the transition from isolated village in the middle of the Kgalagadi Desert to urban Minneapolis "was not going especially smoothly," recalls Chris. "We had the luxury of being a couple, but we also relied on one another like a crutch. We knew we needed



The Zenners during their Peace Corps service.

to get out, so we decided to volunteer. We signed up for an RPCV event volunteering at the Second Harvest Heartland food pantry."

Volunteering, they discovered, helped ease their anxiety, and connecting with fellow Returned Peace Corps Volunteers was especially helpful. During some post-volunteering socializing a young female RPCV mentioned that she was envious

that the Zenners had each other; she was not having any luck finding someone that understood her passion for service. Shelly quipped, 'We'll start an online dating site for volunteers!'

"One of the things that attracted us to each other, prior to becoming PCVs, was our passion for service through volunteer experiences," says Chris. "To have that in common brings along all sorts of other

similar values and common interests, such as compassion, kindness, sense of adventure, flexibility and the desire to help others."

The idea clicked.

The couple did not have a background in software development, and at first they tried to create a site with a web designer friend. But he didn't have enough time, and what they envisioned was too complex for him to build alone. Then a family tragedy struck—they lost their first daughter, Elly, at 6 months gestation. "We were absolutely devastated and the loss was the only thing on our mind," says Chris. "After about a year we were ready to follow through with our dream."

What they lacked in experience they made up for in careful research and preparation, detailed planning and a strong team. "Our team consists of individuals who are passionate about volunteering, which we felt was very important," says Shelly. "Well, everyone except for our web designer, but we plan on getting him hooked on volunteering!"

Their site, iHeartVolunteers.com, went "live" into a soft launch phase in October



The Zenners volunteering at a food pantry.

2014 and, as with any startup, there have been plenty of challenges along the way.

"It would be easier if we could spend a ton of money on advertising, but as a start-up we don't have much of a budget," says Shelly. "So we're using some of the lessons that we learned as PCVs, like working with limited resources, and coming up with creative, inexpensive ways to spread the word."

A distinguishing feature of iHeartVolunteers, according to Shelly and Chris, is verification of volunteer experience. "Service is the core of our organization. We want people in long-term immersive programs to be a part of our community; they will always receive a free subscription until their end of service." They will also donate 10 percent of profits to members' volunteer projects/

organizations. And during the current soft launch phase they are also offering a free three-month subscription to all verified volunteers.

The outlook is promising. "Our demographics are pretty expansive. There are members in Armenia and Mexico, as well as, several countries in Africa and South America," says Shelly. "In the US, we are nationwide from San Francisco to D.C., as well as Alaska and Hawaii. We have volunteers ages 20 to 71, with a majority being in the 25-35 range. We also have a solid group of baby boomers. In fact, when we last spoke, Shelly reported that a user was planning to fly across the country to meet someone they had met on the site."

"We want a lot of good things to happen as a result of our site," says

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Shelly. "We want good people to meet and build meaningful relationships, we want to give back to our member's communities, and we want to encourage our community to volunteer more. Our dream is to have a site filled with do-gooders, and for iHeartVolunteers to have the ability to give back in a big way."

\*\*\*

Like the Zenners, National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) board member Sharon Keld (Morocco 2006-2008, Peace Corps Response Philippines 2009-2010, Armenia 2011) had listened to the yearnings of unattached PCVs hoping to meet a fellow PCV and "live happily ever after."

"The idea started percolating when I returned from Peace Corps in 2011 and started to get involved in NPCA and other

RPCV activities," says Sharon. "I've always been interested in how people meet and fall in love. I started to research the dating service sphere and determined that this was a niche that hadn't been addressed. So why not me?"

Sharon liked that she could provide a service to fellow RPCVs and other like-minded people—and that it perhaps could be a viable business as well. Prior to joining Peace Corps she had had a career in marketing, so she knew how to develop a business plan. "I decided to finance this all through my savings. I incorporated CorpsSocial.com as an LLC, found a website designer, and introduced it at Peace Corps Connect (NPCA's national conference) in 2013."

Rather than building her own platform from the ground up, Sharon decided to partner with a software

provider that included transaction security and privacy protection. It also came with a selected, pre-screened database of singles, so that RPCVs would have profiles of like-minded people to view and contact while a critical mass of RPCVs built. "Everyone in the database is educated, loves travel and adventure, and has a volunteer mindset," says Sharon. "That's our niche." The site currently has about 2,000 members. Sharon also is proud that Corps Social caters to both straight and LGBT clients. "This delayed the [launch] while I figured out how to make that happen, but I felt strongly about being inclusive."

One thing Sharon can't definitively report on is how many lasting relationships or even weddings got their start on Corps Social. "The privacy protection includes privacy from me! I don't have a way to view how many connections are made or who contacts whom. Your data is secure!" Instead, she relies on anecdotes and feedback. "I know of at least one engagement and one wedding, so there are probably more out there," she says.

As for advice to RPCVs who want to start an online business, Sharon has this to say: "Corps Social took about three times as much money as I thought it would, and also three times the time I thought it would. When I mentioned that to other friends who had started their own businesses, they said it's always that way."

Despite the challenges, though, she's enjoying the journey. "Honestly, the most fun is telling people that I run a dating service. It's a great conversation starter." **WV**

**Erica Burman** served with her husband in The Gambia (1987-1989) and is happy to report that they're still married—so she has no plans to test the merits of iHeartVolunteers or Corps Social in the near future. She is director of communications for the National Peace Corps Association.

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# A SHARED COMMITMENT

## Mongolia RPCV Visits Japan International Cooperation Agency Volunteer (JICA) Trainees

By Ariel Wyckoff

**A**s a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, former Japan Exchange and Training (JET) Program participant and current employee of the U.S. Department of State, intercultural exchange and communication have been a big part of my life for quite some time. So when the opportunity recently arose to visit one of the two training centers for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Volunteers, it seemed like an opportunity that could not be missed.

I am currently living and working in Japan as part of the 19th group of Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation (MMMF) Fellows, with the aim of building and enhancing U.S.-Japan relations through research, learning, and cooperative work with some of our counterpart government agencies in Japan. In that capacity I will be working for three different Japanese government agencies over a ten-month period.

The first of these placements has been with JICA, and when it was discovered that I am also a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, my co-workers and supervisors quickly helped me organize a trip out to the Komagane Training Center (KTC) for JICA Volunteers in Nagano prefecture. My general goal for this trip was to learn about the similarities and differences between JICA and Peace Corps Volunteers and get a first-hand look at the Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) and Senior Volunteer (SV) programs. I also wanted to talk to the trainees a bit

about the Peace Corps.

It was great to get away from crowds and hustle-bustle of Tokyo during the fall, as deep autumn was setting in and the tree-lined mountains of Nagano were turning the most beautiful shades of yellow, orange, and red. KTC is nestled in the heart of all that beauty. It's also quite a bit colder than Tokyo, but having been a Volunteer in Mongolia, I was ready for it.

I arrived at the center around mid-day, and the first order of



The author (second from left) joins KTC trainees for dinner.



ARIEL WYCKOFF

business was lunch with the trainees. I enjoyed using my much-improved Japanese (two months of intensive training helps) to introduce myself instructors, staff and several trainees. I then had briefings with Director General Tom Nitta and Kiyoshi Oguri about the

KTC, the history of the JICA Volunteers, the types of training the trainees receive, the differences between the JOCV and the SV programs, and the specific countries served by the KTC.

I was greatly impressed, and not just by the center itself. Yes, it has some



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The author (center) with Senior Coordinator Yuko Moji and Director General Tom Nitta.

large auditoriums and nice athletic facilities, as well as a large traditional Japanese communal hot-water bath for each gender; and the dorms, restrooms, and kitchen were completely spotless as the Volunteer trainees do all their own cleaning and maintenance. Beyond all of that, however, they train over 100 JOCV trainees at a time, in 10 languages (including Bengali, Sinhalese, Kirghiz, and Uzbek), for 70 days at a stretch. They run four such cycles each year, and they also run four 35-day training cycles for the SVs. The main difference between the JOCV and SVs, I found it, is that SVs are 40-years or older and generally have more work experience.

Beyond the domestic training centers and the split between JOCV and the SV, I found that the there are not very many differences between the JICA Volunteers and Peace Corps Volunteers. I gave a short speech (in Japanese) followed by a Q&A session that night for about 30 trainees and staff, and the main response was something along the lines of, "I didn't know we had so much in common!"

For JICA Volunteers as well as Peace Corps Volunteers it's two years of service for citizens, with the goal of furthering community development, empowering local citizens, and building bridges of intercultural

understanding. Just as we in the Peace Corps community celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2011, the JICA Volunteers will be celebrating their 50th in 2015. They also have three main goals/objectives, the third of which is to bring the culture of service home to Japan; and their Returned Volunteer groups, just like our own, do just that all over Japan.

From the numerous conversations I had with trainees at meals and during morning exercise the next day (the wake-up announcement at 6:00 am was a surprise!), it became clear to me that the trainees have some of the same motivations as American Peace Corps Volunteers: make a difference in the world, experience life in a new country and culture, learn a new language, challenge oneself and find growth in the

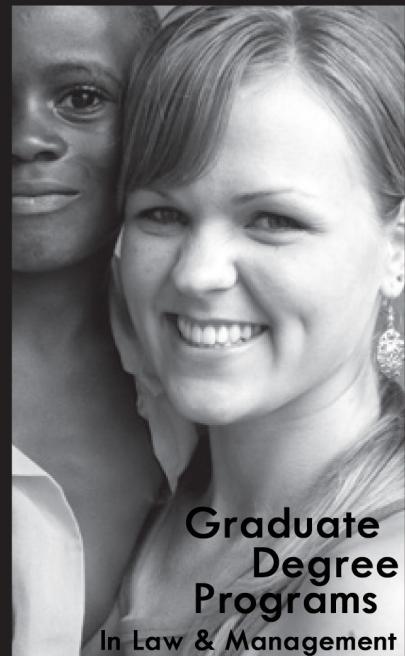
process, start over on a new career path, etc. Sounds familiar, right?

If you happen to meet a JICA JOCV or SV overseas in our host country, know that you are in the company of friends. **WV**

---

*Ariel Wyckoff (Mongolia 2000-2002) served as a TEFL Volunteer in Chuluunhoroot, Dornod, Mongolia, and from 2005-2014 was part of the Executive Committee of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer group, Friends of Mongolia, having served as Treasurer, Membership Coordinator, Co-Director, and Board Member during that time. He now works for the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, but is on a one-year Fellowship to Japan (July 2014-July 2015) with the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation.*

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# THROUGH STICKS, BONES AND EBOLA

## A man and his dog in Liberia

By Mark Tibbetts

**M**y story begins on October 12, 2013, in a mud hut in Suakoko, Liberia.

When my friend AB took me to a poor farming family's house, and introduced me to some newborn puppies, Boston, as I would call him, was the first one in my arms. I immediately knew I wanted to raise him as my own. Real life hit fast, because 3 weeks later, the puppy's mother died. I went to their house that night to retrieve him. He was

only 3 weeks old and too young to be taken away, but I had to do it.

Back at my house I took a closer look at him. His body was covered with fleas. He was crying for his mother and his siblings. I felt so bad. All I could do was give him powdered milk and a clean bed to sleep on. He cried all night, so I took him back to the farming family to see if they would be willing to take care of him until he was 8 weeks old. They agreed and I provided the milk they needed.

Every day I visited Boston, to make sure he was okay. But his troubles weren't over. Two weeks later, Boston developed malnutrition and a skin disease. I rushed him to Dr. Belay, a

Being an animal lover doesn't change once you become a Peace Corps Volunteer. Some Volunteers adopt pets (of all kinds!) and a few even manage to bring them home to the U.S. after service.

Since 2013, at the suggestion of Atlanta Area Returned Peace Corps Volunteers President Amber Davis, the National Peace Corps Association has maintained an album on its Facebook page devoted to Peace Corps Pets. Visit [www.facebook.com/peacecorpsconnect](http://www.facebook.com/peacecorpsconnect), click on Photos, Albums and then Peace Corps Pets for some wonderful stories!

*Have a Peace Corps pet you'd like included there? Email a photo and a brief back-story to [news@peacecorpsconnect.org](mailto:news@peacecorpsconnect.org) with the word "Pet" in the subject line.*



A Liberian friend holds Boston as a puppy.



The author with Boston as a puppy, and Boston today.

veterinarian in Monrovia, for a diagnosis. When she told me how much it was going to cost, I blanched. There was no way I could afford his treatment on my Peace Corps salary. I would put him up for adoption, hoping someone would be able to pay for the treatment and save his life.

As Dr. Belay started to make the phone call, I sat on the ground and apologized to Boston that I could not help him any further. He licked me on the face and I don't know why, but I started to cry.

Dr. Belay put down the phone. "You are volunteering for our country," she said, "so I will volunteer for your dog."

My tears became tears of joy. Boston stayed in Monrovia in Dr. Belay's care for a month and after Christmas of 2013, I picked him up and took him back to my site, his new home. Soon Boston was living large, living the American life in Liberia. I bought him canned and dry dog food from the grocery stores in Monrovia. He slept on his own bed or with me at night. He walked on a leash. Took biweekly baths. Most importantly, was loved.

All was great for the next seven months. Boston was very popular in the community. The Liberians loved him; they wanted to pet him and even give him food, which was highly unusual because they didn't treat their own dogs that way. They would always ask how

Boston was doing. "Where da dog? We want to see it?" they would say whenever I was walking about the community.

Then, July 2014. My neighbor, Mama Maima had watched Boston all day while I was in Monrovia. When I returned, she came to inform me that my good friend had died of the Ebola Virus in Monrovia. I was heartbroken, and a few days later Peace Corps gave notice to all Volunteers in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone that we were being evacuated.

On July 30, 2014 Boston and I left Tubmanburg. I dropped Boston off at Dr. Belay's office in Monrovia before I was taken to the training center in Kakata. Dr. Belay took Boston

in. Boston romped in a nice gated compound while I was at the training center for a week. Then, in early August I was on my way back to Boston while a big part of my heart stayed in Liberia and is still there today.

I have tried my best to reunite with him. On October 17, 2014—the day he was supposed to get on a plane to the U.S.—the airlines banned the shipment of live animals because of the Ebola outbreak. I then asked a friend at the U.S. Embassy if he could watch Boston until I was able to get him on a plane.

Recently, though, I have made the decision to let Boston remain in Liberia with my friends, who have agreed to adopt him. Who knows when animals will be able to fly again and having him split apart from another caretaker would be too traumatic. As much as I would love him back in my arms, my Boston Strong pup—"the dog that lived"—is safe and with a loving family that cares for him as much as I do. **wv**

---

**Mark Tibbets** is a returned Peace Corps Volunteer from Liberia (2013-2014). "I just want to say thank you to the United States and Liberian governments for providing the opportunity for American citizens to serve in Liberia. There is no greater place to be a Peace Corps Volunteer!"

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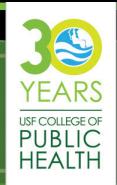
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# THE PINK WIG

When I moved in with my host mother I thought I knew what it meant to be a woman. She wasn't so sure...

By Nina Keehan

**H**er boobs were out at dinner again. They were wrinkled and deflated and although they were the most sexless things I could imagine, I couldn't ignore them. I watched her pick a bit of fallen food off her chest and continue eating. Evidently shirts were optional in my new home.

My homestay assignment thrust me into the care of a single, elderly woman. Her job: teach me all the skills I would need to live in my assigned village for the next two years, including, it seemed, the cultural acceptability of toplessness.

To this day, I still don't know how to pronounce her name correctly. So from the very beginning she was, and forever will be, simply "Mma"—the respectful title for an older woman in Botswana. My first impression was of someone feeble, thin and overall unassuming. As I loaded my bags into the back of her neighbors' pick-up truck to start my new life as her "daughter" I felt relaxed. I was in the care of a compassionate old woman.

As it turns out she was actually quite frightening. And strict and not very fun. But she taught me everything I know about what it means to be a woman here.

Mma was raised in the transformative era when Botswana first gained its independence and when the roles of women first began to shift. Mma got an education, became a primary school teacher, had three daughters and developed a passionate hatred for men, English-language television and dogs.

Of course it took quite a few weeks before I deduced any of this via a combination of sign language and careful observation. She barely spoke any English, and I spoke even less Setswana. Our first dinner together had the

conversational dynamism of a couple of toddlers. But I learned quickly that Mma was a traditional woman. Particularly when she woke me at the crack of dawn on my first morning so that I could heat my bath water. The two months I spent in her home exposed me to the plight of the youngest daughter, which, being the only other occupant in the house, was me. There was cleaning and cooking and sweeping and laundry. There were the times at 6 a.m. when she woke me to move chairs off the porch or make tea for guests. Or every night after dinner when I cleared her plate, did the dishes and heated the water for her bath. This family structure was the opposite of what I had anticipated. I thought I was the guest in her home, she thought I was a student in need of some serious feminine training. She was teaching me what it meant to be a woman in Botswana, what it meant to be young. A combination that gave me little bargaining power and helped me understand the gender and generational gap that makes young women nearly powerless here.

After a few weeks, this indentured servitude disguised as "cultural integration" had lost its charm and I was avoiding spending too much time at home. The chores I was being assigned were getting progressively more creative, until they reached their pinnacle in the form of a haircut.

One evening, Mma called me into her room. She sat topless (of course) on her floor, wearing only a long skirt and holding a wig. A long, pink wig. "I need help cutting this for a wedding" she told me as if that explained everything. The next 30 minutes consisted of me cutting the wig into a pink bob while she

critiqued my work with a hand mirror. When I'd finished she sat and giggled like a little girl and said, "I love this, it makes me look *lekowa* (white person/foreigner)." The irony of my extremely traditional host mother rocking a Nicki-Minaj-inspired hair piece made me realize perhaps she was struggling to find her place in the quickly modernizing world, a culture she didn't understand, just as I was struggling to fit into hers.

Mma was full of contradictions; ones that represent the broader contradiction of what it means to be a woman here. Mma's generation now creates a strange paradox in Botswana. The *basadi bagolo* (elderly women) are a generation caught between preserving the cultural integrity of their past with a massive influx of western ideas. They are the backbone of Botswana's cultural legacy. They are the women who walk down the road carrying the babies of their own children on their backs: They are mothers a second time over. They are the silent but ever present leaders of their communities. They are tasked with the burden of choosing what parts of culture are worth saving and what developments can slide by.

So far Mma has chosen long, pink wigs. Here's hoping she gets even more wild. **WV**

---

**Nina Keehan** is a second-year Local Government Capacity Building Volunteer in a rural village in Botswana. She works mainly with the District AIDS Coordinating office and primary school in her community. Before entering Peace Corps, she received a dual degree in magazine journalism and public health at Syracuse University. Currently she serves as co-chair of the Peace Corps Botswana Gender Committee and managing editor of Botswana's PCV-run newsletter.

# A LIFE RESTORED

Bound by the Peace Corps experience, and now much more

By Erica Burman

**“W**e call it ‘Little Mac.’” That’s the affectionate nickname Norman Sapoznik and Anne McAvoy have given to her kidney, the one that now resides in his body. How it came to be there, how two returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who served in the same country, at the same time, but never knew each other ... well, it’s a great story.

\*\*\*

On September 23, 2013, the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) received an email message that began:

Dear RPCV Brothers and Sisters:

I never thought I would be doing THIS but circumstances, literally beyond my control, have forced me to ask for help....

Norman had served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Malaysia as an industrial arts teacher from 1967 to 1969. Afterwards he returned to New York City to forge a successful career as an art director, film and TV producer, and high school

media arts teacher, as well as becoming a father and grandfather. He also was sick, and after many years and many tests doctors finally determined that his renal failure was due to amyloidosis, a poorly understood disease that manifests itself in a number of ways, one of which is attacking vital organs, with the kidneys especially vulnerable.

According to data provided by the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, there are currently over 10,000 people in the New York metropolitan area alone awaiting kidney donations. The wait for a cadaver kidney—which although life-saving carries a higher risk of rejection, may entail longer recovery time and may not function as long as a live donor kidney—is 10 to 12 years in New York.

At age 66, time was the one thing Norman didn’t have. His mother was 93 years old, and he had an aunt who had lived to 103, but without a kidney transplant he faced dialysis and greatly diminished life prospects. Norman turned to “a group of people that understand what altruistic feelings can do”—the returned Peace Corps Volunteer community and its alumni association, the NPCA.

That fall, using its blog, Twitter, Facebook, and e-newsletter, NPCA spread the word about Norm’s situation and asked for potential kidney exchange donors. And just as Norman predicted, it worked. Within three days there were eight responses, and three people were willing to be considered for kidney matching. Unfortunately, none of these matches were able to progress. NPCA posted another appeal.

Across the country in Portland, Oregon, Anne McAvoy (Malaysia 1967-1969) saw the item about Norman needing a kidney in NPCA’s January 2014

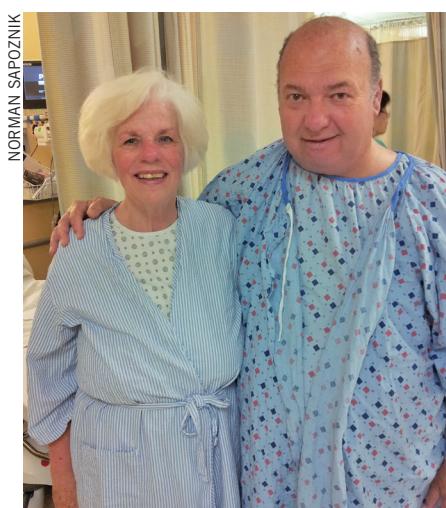
e-newsletter and thought, “I could do this.” Her brother had donated a kidney to a neighbor five and a half years earlier and both were doing wonderfully, with no negative repercussions, so she was open to the idea. She had seen firsthand how a kidney donation could transform someone’s life.

Anne took a day or two to reflect—she didn’t want to respond unless she was absolutely certain; to do otherwise “would be cruel”—and on Monday morning, per the instructions on the blog post, she contacted the Cornell Medical Center in New York City. According to Anne, the hospital was somewhat put off by the fact that she was in Oregon. Nonetheless, six weeks later she underwent the first set of tests with a doctor in Portland to ascertain if she was a potential match and sent them to New York by FedEx. An email came back: she was a match and could go forward with the next stage.

“Then they went dark,” says Anne. She waited and waited. She and Norman had begun to correspond and by the third email exchange they determined that not only were they both returned Peace Corps Volunteers, but that they had both served in Malaysia at the same time, only at opposite ends of the country.

It was a difficult period. “We were told not to become friendly with the donor,” explains Norman. “He was trying to be neutral and not put any pressure at all on me, which I appreciated,” says Anne. Finally she contacted Cornell to let them know that she was still interested. There were more questionnaires, tests, an MRI, chest X-rays—and she would have to come to New York to do them.

In March, Anne flew to New York (Norman covered her expenses) and underwent a “marathon day” that



Anne and Norman before their simultaneous surgeries.



Norman's Peace Corps ID.

lasted from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thirteen more vials of blood were drawn. An electrocardiogram. Two CAT scans. Visits with a social worker, psychologist, cardiologist, nephrologist, transplant coordinator and financial advisor. "It was very thorough," says Anne. "They wanted to be sure that I was both healthy enough to donate and that I had very little risk of developing kidney disease in the future."

Anne flew home and waited some more. The transplant coordinator called and said she was a "go" save for one "minor" thing: an arterial aneurysm that she either needed to have taken care of or have a surgeon sign off on. After another nerve-wracking six-week delay—Norm worried that things would "go off the rails" at the last minute—the Portland surgeon gave his okay and the kidney donation was on.

Anne flew to New York City on May 18, 2014, the day before the surgery,



Norman shows Anne and her son the sights of New York.

accompanied by her son Colin. Norman and his family welcomed them and showed off all his favorite Brooklyn haunts. Later that evening Norman's daughters took Anne's son to explore the city further. "It was a really warm experience," says Norman.

The next day, they checked into adjacent hospital rooms for the simultaneous surgery.

\*\*\*

It's ten months later and Norm is feeling great. His kidney is functioning. He's not tethered to a lifetime of dialysis treatments. He and Anne call each other regularly. ("She is literally a part of me now."). It has been, he says, "a miracle."

And he wants more people to know about live kidney donation. "People on dialysis ... I hate to say it, but they're like zombies. And as their health deteriorates, they're not strong enough for transplants."

Anne says she's learned so much about live and cadaver donations. "A person with two normal kidneys has four to five times the filtration capacity they need. If a kidney is donated, the remaining kidney increases its filtration capacity within six months, so even after donation you are at 85% of where you were when you started. And any risk involved is very, very low."

In fact, Anne says that she's had no negative repercussions at all from her operation. "I wish the word could get out about this (live kidney donation)," says Anne. "I think a lot more people would be willing to donate if they only knew how to access the system. She encourages others to consider kidney donation, saying, "This gives somebody back their life. They can continue to do good things."

Norman agrees. He is convinced that what worked for him—tapping into a professional affiliation, in his case the Peace Corps

community through the National Peace Corps Association—can help others have the same positive outcome. He recently helped an electrician in need of a kidney transplant approach his national electrician's union. He tells of speaking with a woman who worked in a dialysis center who did not know where to go to donate. "That's just sad when the need is so great." Moreover, a perfect match is not needed. According to Anne there are six criteria upon which potential donors are rated; she and Norman only matched on two of them.

For Norman, the "miracle" of Little Mac is more than a successful surgical procedure. The transplant has "affected everything." He has resumed an active life and is sharing his love of art through teaching painting to senior citizens. Recently, his seven-year-old grandson was asked what he was thankful for. He replied, "I'm thankful for my Grandpa Norm, and that he can teach me art and to ride a bike."

Norman freely calls Anne a hero. "Anne is the true meaning of Peace Corps," he says. "We need more people like her. I wish more people were aware that you can make a donation and live a perfectly normal life."

Anne downplays what she did. "These are people who volunteered before. If we can't expect this from Peace Corps Volunteers, you won't find it anywhere." **WV**

#### *Live Kidney Donation*

*You too can make a difference in the life of someone in need of an organ transplant. The following are generally accepted requirements for living kidney donation: good general health, normal kidney function, age 25 to 70 years (exceptions are made). Learn more at [www.kidneyregistry.org](http://www.kidneyregistry.org).*

Anne says, "Within 2-3 weeks of surgery, it is like it never happened. I might compare it to a C-section."

**Erica Burman** (*The Gambia 1987-1989*) is the director of communication for the National Peace Corps Association.

# CULLY AND BRIDGET DAVIS

## New members of the Sargent Shriver Leaders Circle

By Janet Greig

**T**he Hilton" probably isn't the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the Peace Corps, but for Cully Davis, the San Francisco Hilton he sees from his office window serves as daily reminder of where it all started.

Cully and Bridget Davis met there in 1991, during the three-day pre-departure staging event. "Seeing the Hilton," he says, "reminds me of the impact the Peace Corps experience had on our lives."

Their Peace Corps service in Thailand would build on an already deeply-rooted sense of social activism, especially for Bridget. Both Cully and Bridget had grown up in Illinois—Bridget in an ethnically diverse neighborhood in Chicago and Cully in Springfield. Bridget's parents were strong supporters of the Civil Rights Movement, participating in the 1963 March on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—her mother was actually pregnant with her at the time. Cully grew up immersed in a highly academic environment, with a family that had an avid interest in other cultures and encouraged a diversity of opinions.

### Peace Corps: a source of lifelong skills

Fast forward to their arrival in Thailand. Both were assigned to be English teachers—Bridget at a remote site near the Cambodian border in northeastern Thailand, and Cully in central Thailand, a nine-hour bus ride away.

"We were friends as well as English teachers and baseball coaches throughout our amazing Peace Corps journey in Thailand," says Bridget. "We travelled together after our close of service and fell in love."

Cully credits his Peace Corps experience as the source of many of the skills he finds essential in his life today.

Flexibility, creativity (Cully expanded beyond his formal assignment and helped organize, with several post mates, a Little League program affiliated with the U.S. national program), the ability to deal with ambiguity, the willingness to try new things, and the confidence and patience to

(RPCVs). She earned a Master's degree in Curriculum Development through DePaul University's Urban Teacher Corps and taught writing with the Chicago Public School system. "I wanted to give back to a city and a school system that had shaped my life," she says.



Thailand RPCVs Cully and Bridget Davis brought their children back to Thailand for a visit in 2012. A Peace Corps mural, painted by children, appears on the wall of the temple across from the village market.

see them through—these are just a few of the invaluable lessons he learned.

"These are skills I use today as a managing partner identifying innovative high technology companies and helping them finance further growth," says Cully. Peace Corps pushed him to discover new strengths and a creativity he previously never knew he had.

### Giving back through a career in education

Bridget found her Peace Corps service to be similarly inspiring and it set her on a path to work in the field of education. Upon returning to the U.S., she sought out programs that offered scholarships to Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

Although Peace Corps was a springboard to their careers, giving them necessary skills and insight into their passions, the couple remembers feeling incredibly anxious as they came to the close of their service. At the time, they had no real sense of what their next steps would be when they arrived back in the U.S. Would they find meaningful work? Would they be able to continue making an impact on those around them?

### Giving back to support RPCVs—via the NPCA

Cully and Bridget believe they were

**Continued on Page 41**

# WRITERS FROM THE PEACE CORPS

## An unheralded literary movement

By John Coyne

**O**ne of the most important books of the late 1950s was *The Ugly American* by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick. The book's hero was a skilled technician committed to helping at a grassroots level by building water pumps, digging roads, building bridges. He was called the "ugly American" only because of his grotesque physical appearance. He lived and worked with the local people and, by the end of the novel, was beloved and admired by them.

The bitter message of the novel, however, was that American diplomats were, by and large, neither competent nor effective; and the implication was that the more the United States relied on them, the more its influence would wane. The book was published in July 1958. It was a Book-of-the-Month selection in October; by November it had gone through twenty printings.

Attracted to the ideas expressed in the novel, by January 1959 Senator John F. Kennedy had sent *The Ugly American* to every member of the U.S. Senate. The ideas expressed in the book about our government's inadequate efforts in foreign aid, would be used by Ted Sorensen when he crafted the speech presidential candidate Kennedy gave on November 2, 1960, at the Cow Palace Auditorium in San Francisco six days before the election. In this final campaign speech Kennedy called for the establishment of a "Peace Corps" using the term for the first time.

The book and its message were so influential that in later paperback editions the cover proclaimed that "President Kennedy's Peace Corps is the answer to the problem raised in this book."

And that is true enough. However, for Peace Corps writers the connection

to books and literature goes further back in time. It goes back to the 1920s; it goes back to Paris, France; it goes back to the Lost Generation.

### The Lost Generation

In the 1920s Ernest Hemingway took the phrase "the lost generation" coined by his friend Gertrude Stein and used it in *The Sun Also Rises*, his novel of Paris that described the novelists, poets, artists, and intellectuals who rejected the values of post-World War I America.

These American writers: Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, John Peale Bishop, Kay Boyle, e.e.cummings, and Paul Bowles, among others, relocated to France where they quickly adopted a bohemian lifestyle of excessive living and messy love affairs, all the while creating some of the finest literature ever written.

For the last fifty-plus years Peace Corps writers serving in developing countries around the world have built an equally important and impressive literary movement.

### A Literary Bridge

So, how do I make a connection—a literary bridge—between the Lost Generation of Paris in the 1920s and over 1,500 Peace Corps writers who have written about life in more than 140 Peace Corps countries?

I do it this way.

By writing about the developing world and emerging democracies, Peace Corps writers have broadened the landscape of American readers, introducing new countries and new ideas about those countries' cultures and societies, much the same way that the writers and artists in Paris in the 1920s broadened the view

of Europe for Americans back home.

Hemingway wrote of Paris and Spain; Mark Brazaitis writes of Guatemala; Hemingway wrote of big game hunting in East Africa and Norm Rush writes of white racists in Southern Africa; Fitzgerald wrote of wealthy, bored Americans on the French Riviera and Simone Zelitch writes of survivors of the Holocaust leaving Hungary for Haifa.

Paul Theroux wrote of Indians in Kenya in his first novel set in Africa; Richard Wiley of Korea and Koreans; P. F. Kluge writes of islands in the sun in the Pacific; and Mark Jacobs, who was a Volunteer in Paraguay and a foreign service officer in his Peace Corps country as well as Turkey and Spain, has written about these places, and more.

Like the Paris author, Peace Corps writers are award-winners. A partial list of Peace Corps awardees includes Bob Schacochis, who was a PCV in the Eastern Caribbean and won the National Book Award in 1985; Kathleen Coskran, was a PCV in Ethiopia, and won the Minnesota Voices Prize in 1985 for her collection of fiction; Shay Youngblood won both the Pushcart Prize for fiction and a Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award; Melanie Sumner and Marnie Mueller both won the Whiting Award for their fiction about serving in the Peace Corps, and Mike Meyer received the Whiting Award for his nonfiction book on China. Norm Rush won the National Book Award for his stories set in Botswana. Ann Neelon won the 1995 Anhinga Prize for poems written about West Africa. And add to that list such wonderful writers as Mary-Ann Tirone Smith, Dick Lipez, Sarah Erdman, Kent Haruf, Cynthia Phoel, Lenore Myka, Cliff Garstang, and Peter Hessler and George Packer for their books on China

and Mali and their reporting in *The New Yorker*. The list goes on and on.

### Poetry in the Peace Corps

This intense cross cultural experience of the Peace Corps has produced in many Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) a deep well of sentiment that has also found its way into poetry. Poet Ann Neelon summed up her experience in Senegal with one word, "foreignness."

"Foreignness is important to a poet because it teaches humility," she writes. "Humility is important because without it there is no mystical experience."

She goes onto say: "In Senegal, I gained many things useful to a poet. These included hours of direct exposure to the oral tradition of West Africa, caches of exquisite bush and desert images, and French and Wolof syllables, but none of these can compare with the opportunity to have Africa erase who I was. Only after losing myself could I find myself as a writer."

### Travel Now, Write Later

Anyone who has read *The Sun Also Rises* knows that this novel is also a wonderful travel book. Hemingway's description of a bus trip to Spain is classic travel prose: A trip in Spain in the 1920s by Hemingway is something most Volunteers can identify with today from their own overseas experiences.

Paul Theroux, it is generally agreed, reinvented the art of travel writing with *The Great Railway Bazaar*, published in 1975. He returned the genre to the place it held when Mary Kingsley and Evelyn Waugh were crossing Africa and globe-trotting the world. Many Peace Corps writers have followed, most notably Karen Larsen, David Taylor, Josh Berman, Don Gayton, and Jeffrey Tayler.

### Expatriates And Exiles

Peace Corps writers are, at least for a while, expatriates and exiles from their culture, and from that experience they gain a new perspective, even a new vocabulary, as Richard Wiley recalls from living in Korea. "As I started to learn

Korean I began to see that language skewed actual reality around, and as I got better at it I began to understand that it was possible to see everything differently. Reality is a product of language and culture, that's what I learned."

The late novelist Maria Thomas said of her time in Ethiopia, "it was a great period of discovery. There was the discovery of an ancient world, an ancient culture, in which culture is so deep in people that it becomes a richness."

Novelist and short story writer Eileen Drew makes the point that writers with Peace Corps experience "bring the outsider's perspective, which we've learned overseas, to bear on the U.S. We are not the only writers to have done this, but because of the nature of our material, it's something we can't not do."

Bob Shacochis characterizes Peace Corps writers as "torchbearers of a vital tradition, that of shedding light in the mythical heart of darkness. We are descendants of Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, George Orwell, Graham Greene, Gertrude Stein, Somerset Maugham, Ernest Hemingway, and scores of other men and women, expatriates and travel writers and wanderers, who have enriched our domestic literature."

### Myth And Mythology

Peace Corps Writers have had fifty plus years of living on the edge of the world, learning new languages, having new experiences, and telling stories in prose and poetry of other societies with understanding, compassion, and insight. In doing so, Peace Corps writers have educated Americans and helped to erase the image of all of us as "ugly Americans" in the developing world. **WV**

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**Novelist John Coyne** is the editor of five collections of Peace Corps writings, and is the co-founder (with Marian Haley Beil (Ethiopia 1962-1964) of *Peace Corps Writers*. He was also an APCD in Ethiopia and manager of the New York Peace Corps Office. His website is [www.johncoynebooks.com](http://www.johncoynebooks.com).

### Continued from Page 39

lucky. They both began successful and empowering careers, which they credit in large part to their Peace Corps experience.

To honor this experience in their personal lives, they have worked to instill an appreciation for other cultures in their two daughters. The family has traveled to Thailand to visit Cully's Peace Corps site and takes an international trip together every year, visiting places as distant as Burma, Peru and Botswana.

However, in the past year the couple began to consider how they could more outwardly honor the gratitude they both feel toward the Peace Corps community. NPCA Advisory Council member Ginny Kirkwood, the Davis's country director in Thailand and a "lifelong connector" for them on Peace Corps issues, connected them to the NPCA.

"I am so happy to be reconnected with the Peace Corps, an organization that has shaped my life and dreams," says Bridget. "I am honored to give back in hopes of inspiring and supporting other Returned Peace Corps Volunteers." **WV**

**Bridget and Cully Davis** (Thailand 1991-1993) are drawn to the vision of the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA)—a united and vibrant Peace Corps community—and proudly support the NPCA as members of the Sargent Shriver Leaders Circle. "It's not a burden," Cully says, "but a sense of responsibility we share to pay back this community in some small way." Learn how you can support your Peace Corps alumni network more at [www.peacecorpsconnect.org/shriver-circle](http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/shriver-circle).

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**Janet Greig** (India 1966-1968) is a member of the board of the National Peace Corps Association. She and her husband Wylie (also an RPCV) are long-time members of the NPCA and of the Northern California Peace Corps Association and became members of NPCA's Shriver Circle in 2004. Originally published on the NPCA Polyglot blog, Jan. 26, 2015.

# RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR COMMUNITY

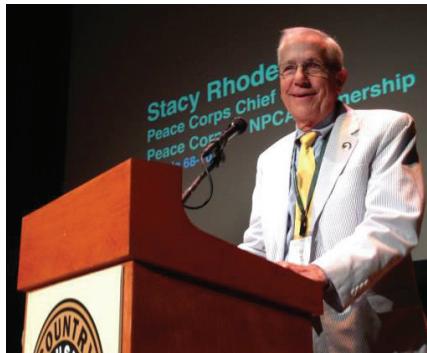
By Jonathan Pearson

## AFGHANISTAN/IRAN

The year is off to a good start for Honolulu restaurateur **Savas Mojarrad**, owner of the Olive Tree Café. As the restaurant celebrates its 20th anniversary, it was also recognized by *Honolulu Magazine* with its 2015 Hale 'Aina Awards for the Best Mediterranean Restaurant. Mojarrad has been engaged in the Honolulu restaurant scene for the past four decades. In a magazine feature, Mojarrad said ever since his early service with the Peace Corps in Afghanistan and Iran, his dream was to create a self-contained space with locally grown food, locally produced electricity and local water.

## BOLIVIA

**Stacey Rhodes** (1968-1970) has been named to the Board of Directors of Global Communities. Rhodes, who recently completed his service as Peace Corps'



Chief of Staff, has more than four decades of experience working in international development.

Former U.S. Ambassador **David Greenlee** was selected to be this spring's Ambassador-in-Residence at Alabama's Troy University. During his time at Troy in early February, Ambassador Greenlee visited with students in various classes and also met with the command and students at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Benning. Following his Peace Corps

service in Bolivia, Ambassador Greenlee served as an Army officer in Vietnam and later graduated from the National War College. He was appointed Ambassador to Paraguay from 2000 to 2003, and Ambassador to Bolivia from 2003 to 2006.

**James Gore** (2003-2005) has been elected Sonoma County's next 4th District Supervisor in California. An active member of the RPCV community, Gore was elected to three terms as president of the Board for the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in Washington, D.C. and served on the NPCA Board of Directors.

## COLOMBIA

Washington State University Extension Master Gardeners recently presented the U.S. President's Volunteer Service Award to **Robert Findlay** (1963-1965) for contributing over 4,000 hours to the community. He and his husband, Lee Haugen, are now married and enjoying a retirement (from Iowa State University) of volunteering, including coordinating activities for the Olympia Area Peace Core Association.

## COTE D'IVOIRE

**William Roebuck** (1978-1981) is the new U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain. Roebuck's international service began as teacher in Cote d'Ivoire, and he went on to work as a teacher and school administrator for five years in Saudi Arabia. He joined the State Department in September of 1992, and after serving as the Chargé D'Affaires in Tripoli from January through June 2013, Roebuck received the Ryan C. Crocker Award for Outstanding Leadership in Expeditionary Diplomacy.

## GUATEMALA

**Kim Nolte** (1986-1989) was named president and CEO of the Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power & Potential (GCAPP). Nolte's Peace Corps service transformed her life and ignited her passion for public health.

## HONDURAS

In response to the influx of Central American refugee children entering the United States last year, **Daniel and Emily Keller** (2008-2010) organized a solidarity relay in the fall of 2014, during which 160 family members and friends (many of them RPCVs) collectively walked and ran 1,600 miles—the approximate distance it would take one child to travel from Honduras



to the U.S. The couple produced a video about the event (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lb8nXuWrzo>) in hopes of generating a compassionate conversation about the conditions that prompted the children to flee their homelands.

**Steve Lenzo** (1985-1987) has been selected as the new assistant national director of Job Corps. He is currently the deputy supervisor of the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands. He has over 30 years of experience with the US Forest Service and has served in leadership positions in natural resource management in Nebraska, South Carolina, Washington, and Oregon.

## KENYA

Current University Professor Emerita and former Director of Graduate School Geography at Clark University, **Susan Hanson**, was awarded the 2015 AAG Stanley Brunn Award for Creativity in Geography from the Association of American Geographers. The award is given to a geographer who

displays originality, creativity, and significant intellectual breakthroughs in geography. Hanson's research has focused on urban transportation geography and the gendered character of local labor markets.

## KOREA

**Steve Werner** (1976-1978) is the new executive director of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN), whose mission is to prevent cruelty to children in every nation in every form.

## MACEDONIA

The Keiller Tavern Museum in Ridgefield, Conn. recently hosted an art show featuring the work of **Martha Talburt** (1998-1999).

In between teaching art classes in Ridgefield and nearby Wilton, Talburt spends hours in the studio "pushing the envelope" with portrait and landscape painting, portrait drawing and her unique "arti-stones". Talburt credits her Peace Corps service with her becoming a teacher over the past fifteen years. In 2009, she was named "Mentor of the Year" at Western Connecticut State University.



## MALAWI

**Paul A. Milton** (1981-1983) has been appointed as acting president and CEO of Ellis Medicine in Schenectady, New York. Milton has been with Ellis Medicine for seven years, serving as chief operating officer and executive vice president.

## MALI

At its 42nd annual convention, the Pennsylvania Farmers Union membership elected **Heidi Secord** (1992-1995) as vice president, the first woman to serve in this position. During her three years in Mali with the Peace Corps she learned about subsistence farming in developing countries. She has 15 years of experience in organic farming in Pennsylvania and now runs a 50-acre produce farm with her husband. She also currently manages a Community

Supported Agricultural operation and a farm education program.

## MICRONESIA

Following the 2014 midterms the U.S. House of Representatives gained a new delegate to represent the American Samoa, **Amata Coleman Radewagen**. She is the first woman elected to Congress from American Samoa. Previously she served as a Peace Corps trainer for Volunteers coming to Micronesia. Congresswoman Radewagen has consistently been involved in helping to bring democratic institutions abroad, including in 2007 when she conducted training in Washington for Iraqi and Uyghur women leaders.

## NIGER

Following the recent and tragic events in Ferguson, Missouri the Archdiocese

of St. Louis has named **Marie Kenyon** (1981-1983) the new director for the Peace and Justice Commission. Prior to the appointment she was the managing attorney of the Catholic Legal Assistance Ministry. As director of the Peace and Justice Commission for the St. Louis area Kenyon will address issues like poverty, education, and racial tension.

## PALAU

**Dawn and Kerry Fitzgibbons** (1967-1969) have donated photographs they took of Palau during their time in the Peace Corps to the Belau National Museum and the Palau High School. In addition to leading, the couple had been responsible for supervising the students, and organizing activities at the Palau High School dormitory.

# WHERE IN THE WORLD IS WORLDVIEW?

## Send us a photo, become Peace Corps famous!

**T**ime to enjoy myself" is often the mantra after retirement. Geri Critchley (Senegal 1971-1972) wants to show by example that enjoyment comes from serving others and that people are needed no matter how old they are. In fact, the older they are, the more they have to give.

For eight weeks this spring—sponsored by Cross Cultural Solutions—she will be an ambassador for global service by baby boomers as a Harris Wofford Global Service Fellow. She will teach at a Head Start-type school in Tanzania, work at the Nyumbani AIDS orphanage in Nairobi, Kenya and volunteer on a girls' education project at a women's center in Rabat, Morocco.

Writes Geri, "I feel like a Peace Corps Volunteer again!"

Here she is with her copy of *WorldView* magazine in a photo taken by a guide during a two-day hike on the lower slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Have an idea for a great photo of yourself with *WorldView* magazine?

Take one and become Peace Corps famous! Send your submission to news@peacecorpsconnect.org.



GERI CRITCHLEY

## PHILIPPINES

**Jerica Ward** (2009-2011) is among the 20 recipients of the 2014 Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship for graduate students pursuing a master's degree in international affairs at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. As part of the Fellowship, Ward will serve as a foreign service officer for a minimum of five years.



Author and scholar **Michael M. Cullinane** (1966-1968) was recognized as the "Adopted Son of Cebu City" during his book launching ceremony in Cebu City, Philippines. His book, *The Battle for Cebu*, celebrates the life of an American soldier who was present during the siege of Cebu City in 1899. Cullinane was first introduced to the island while serving in the Peace Corps and has since focused his scholarly studies on this province. He is currently the associate director of the Center of South East Asian Studies for the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Kevin Lee** (2004-2006), now a permanent resident in the Philippines, is one of five social entrepreneurs from that country who have been elected as Ashoka Fellows. Lee runs A Single Drop for Safe Water, an organization which works to provide safe water for vulnerable communities.

## SENEGAL

"The Guards at the Taj" by playwright **Rajiv Joseph** was chosen from a selection of other plays for the 2015 Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award. President of The Laurents/Hatcher Foundation David Saint said, "Our panel this year was knocked out by the sheer theatricality, imagination, and



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brilliance of Rajiv Joseph's play." Joseph is also known for his play "Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo," a 2010 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. He started his career at Miami University where he received his B.A. in Creative Writing and then went on to get his M.F.A. in Playwriting from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

## THAILAND

Vermont's Marlboro College has named **Kevin F. F. Quigley** (1976-1979) to be its next president. Quigley, who is scheduled to assume the college presidency in July, is the current Peace Corps Director in Thailand. He is also a former president of the National Peace Corps Association.



**Geoffrey Longfellow** (Thai 58), project director of the Thailand Sustainable Development Foundation, was the guest speaker at a late January event hosted by the Royal Thai Embassy in Washington. Longfellow's topic was "Preserving the Past, While Preparing for the Future: Thailand's Strategy for Sustainable Development." Longfellow originally came to Thailand in 1977.

## UKRAINE

**Francine Curro Cary, PhD** (2009-2011) spent much of last November serving as a host for a group of five Ukrainian women leaders who traveled to northwest Ohio to learn more about rural community development. The program was made possible through the office of Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur and the Open World Leadership Center, in cooperation with the Great Lakes Consortium for International Training and Development. Homestays allowed the women to experience American family life. Three of the participants were from Starobelsk, where Cary served as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

## ZAMBIA

Representative **Shane Robinson** (2002-2005) has been named chairman of the Montgomery County delegation of the Maryland General Assembly. Robinson was re-elected for his second term as a member of Maryland House of Delegates representing District 39. During his first term he served as a member of the House's Environmental Matters Committee. For his second term he will have a new role as delegation chair. He is also the executive director for Ehlers-Danlos National Foundation.

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# IN MEMORIAM

We remember those within the Peace Corps community who passed away in the last several months, and thank them for their service to our nation. For a more extensive list of those lost in recent years, visit <http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/rememberingthoselost/>.

We welcome you to send information on additional members of the Peace Corps community by sending a message to [obituary@peacecorpsconnect.org](mailto:obituary@peacecorpsconnect.org).

## STAFF

James Patrick Blank, 1/14/15  
 James Joseph "Joe" Connors III, 10/21/14  
 Roger Ernst, 11/17/14  
 Denise Marina Fantone, 1/8/15  
 David Hapgood, 10/18/14  
 Frank Mankiewicz, 10/23/14  
 Frances Phelps, 1/11/15  
 Mildred Rice, 1/19/15  
 Donald Stannard Schultz, 1/28/15  
 M. Douglas Stafford, 2/1/15  
 Francesca Stone, 2/6/15  
 Robert E. White, 1/14/15

## MULTIPLE COUNTRIES OF SERVICE

Richard Thomas Gallagher, Somalia, Peru; 1/30/15  
 Larry Guzman, Guatemala, Costa Rica; 11/27/14  
 Michael Shea, Iran, Bahrain; 10/30/14

## AFGHANISTAN

Peter Baginsky, 11/14/14

## BANGLADESH

Arthur Sipma, 10/31/14

## BELIZE

Judi Ann Weaser, 10/21/14

## BOLIVIA

A. Campbell Berkeley III, 1/18/15

## BOTSWANA

Robert Hubbard, 11/28/14  
 James Michael Powers, 1/23/15  
**BRAZIL**  
 Donald Brenner, 10/27/14  
 Harvey S. Goldman, 1/13/15  
 Dorothy Johnson, 2/14/15  
**COLOMBIA**  
 George Hindall, 11/27/14  
 Jacob Morgan "Jake" Pioche, 1/03/15

## CZECH REPUBLIC

John R. Hess III, 1/13/15  
**DOMINICA**  
 Randall Cooper Davis, 11/17/14  
 Constance Louise "Connie" Tosch, 1/02/15

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Herbert D. Trossman, 1/12/15

## EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Patricia Gavagan, 11/1/14

## ECUADOR

Anne Steffes, 11/11/14

## EL SALVADOR

Rosalind Mariani, 11/27/14

## ETHIOPIA

Charles V. Callahan, 1/13/15

## FIJI

Joye Gasser, 12/18/14

## GABON

Paul Seymour, 12/3/14

## GHANA

Daniel Carmody, 11/11/14

## KOREA

Robert M. Tershak, 1/19/15

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Robert M. Tershak, 1/19/15

## MALAWI

Julia Belinski, 2/15/14  
 Charles Rolinski, 11/29/14

## MALAYSIA

William "Mick" Anderson, 2/05/15  
 George Cole, 11/14/14

## MICRONESIA

William Peet, 1/08/15

## MOROCCO

Frans E. Bogardus, 12/11/14

## NAMIBIA

John D.L. Petersen, 12/31/14

## NEPAL

William Rufus Clayton, 1/21/15

Stephen E. Gibbons, 12/11/14

James Neil Reese, 10/21/14

Jeanne Thiel, 11/2/14

## NIGERIA

John A. Bewick, 12/25/14

Vincent M. Gulisano, 1/9/15

## IRAN

Sandra Loree (Petersen) Langley, 1/8/15

## PAKISTAN

Neil Smith, 11/20/14

David Charles Phillips, 1/08/15

Robert Reno, 1/05/15

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Jean Catherine (Smallwood) Gold, 2/5/15

## PERU

David Harcharik, 12/3/14

Mary Hennessey Wohn, 10/24/14

## PHILIPPINES

Mary Lorraine Margaret (Fitzgerald) Andrew, 2/08/15

Joan Casler, 11/1/14

## TURKEY

Judy Swigost Hill, 10/25/14  
 Charles Mickelson, 2/17/15

Mary Lynn Rupe, 12/20/14  
 Ben Thies, posted 2/08/15

Bennett Edward Thies, 7/31/14

## POLAND

Eleanor Dionne, 10/20/14

## SAMOA

Florence J. Mikowski, posted 12/29/14

## SIERRA LEONE

George DeWan, 12/22/14

Betty L. DuLac, 2/15/15  
 Leslie Fields, 1/19/15  
 Rita Fay Nail Glicco, 1/17/15

## ST. LUCIA

Mary Jo Wertz, 10/30/14

Ronald J. Hicks, 1/14/15

## SWAZILAND

Michael Xavier Nolan, 1/16/15

Wayne Todd, 11/2/14

## THAILAND

George John Antonaros, 1/19/15

Michael Hayden, 1/26/15

Judy Clem Klaas, 12/1/14

Daniel McDonald, 11/15/14

Mary Richardson, 12/21/14

Thomas Ryan, 12/7/14

## TONGA

Patricia Touchette Hutchinson, 12/11/14

## TOGO

Elise Ayers, 11/23/14

Dean Edgar Sterling, 12/7/14  
 Enid W. White, 1/19/15

## UKRAINE

Tommie Soileau, 10/22/14

## ZAIRE

Irene Lillian Anibal Sanders, 1/29/15

## COUNTRY OF SERVICE NOT SPECIFIED

Stanley Bissell, 12/20/14  
 Rex Bullen, 12/10/14  
 Edward S. "Ted" Burriss, 12/2/14  
 Gene Ross Cook, 12/22/14  
 Betty L. DuLac, 2/15/15  
 Leslie Fields, 1/19/15  
 Rita Fay Nail Glicco, 1/17/15  
 Reverend J. William Harmless S.J., 10/14/14  
 Ronald J. Hicks, 1/14/15  
 Elaine Rice, 12/22/14  
 Cleo Wolfe, posted 12/17/14  
 Charles Edward Wardle, 1/23/15  
 Paula Buffington Young, 2/11/15



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