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WORLDVIEW

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JOBS AND CAREERS

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

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Turkmenistan Peace Corps Volunteer Tracey Goldner stands atop an ancient icehouse among the ruins of Merv, an ancient oasis city on the Silk Road. *Photo: Tracey Goldner*

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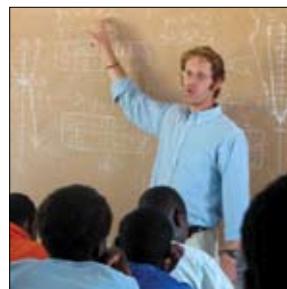
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The publisher of *WorldView* magazine is the National Peace Corps Association, a national network of returned Peace Corps volunteers, former staff and friends. The NPCA is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) educational and service organization which is independent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

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THE PEACE CORPS + JOBS

A great connection

by Kevin F. F. Quigley

There has always been a connection between Peace Corps Volunteer service and jobs, although until recently that connection has been underappreciated. This issue of *Worldview* explores this connection and is the beginning of an initiative for NPCA to expand its career-related offerings for recent and not-so-recent returned Volunteers including mentoring, job postings, and other activities.

The experience of 200,000 Volunteers provides compelling evidence that Peace Corps service helps individuals develop flexibility, empathy, cross-cultural and language skills that are invaluable attributes for job-seekers in today's highly dynamic global economy.

We also know that many U.S.-international oriented organizations, such as the Agency for International Development, the U.S. State Department, CARE, Save the Children, and a myriad other international development agencies are full of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs). Although being an RPCV may not always get you the job you want, it gets you in the door for an initial conversation about a job almost every time.

The recent ceremony marking the Peace Corps's return to Nepal after a six-year hiatus reveals the powerful nexus between Peace Corps service and international careers. Many among the individuals responsible for this return had Peace Corps connections. This included the Nepalese ambassador to the U.S., Dr. Shankar P. Sharma, who had two PCV teachers. Peace Corps Director Aaron Williams, Chief of Staff Stacy Rhodes, Regional Director for Europe the Mediterranean and Asia Helen

Lowman, and former congressman Jim Walsh are all RPCVs, the former two with distinguished careers at USAID. Additionally, RPCVs account for a significant number of the personnel at State, USAID and Peace Corps who were directly involved in making this return possible, including U.S. ambassador to Nepal and RPCV, Michael DeLisi.

What is less well known is that right from its inception a half century ago, applicants to the Peace Corps understood that volunteer service could be the start of an international career. According to *A Call to Peace*, our nationally representative survey of 11,138 Volunteers released in September 2011, nearly one third of the RPCVs from the 1960s named "wanting to develop career and leadership skills" as a very important or important motivation.

While there has always been interest in leveraging PCV service into a career, that interest has become more pronounced in recent decades. *A Call to Peace* found that, "...there has been a significant generational shift in the view toward acquiring skills, possibly reflecting pressures RPCVs feel from employers today that place a greater demand on job skills and experience when they return home." By the 2000s, a surprising 68% of RPCVs identified developing career and leadership skills as "very important" motivation or "important."

Regardless of when Volunteers served, or where they served, a remarkable 60% of surveyed RPCVs reported that their service influenced their choice of career. Regardless of why we volunteered, over 90% of the surveyed returning Peace Corps Volunteers reported that the phrase

"changed my life" described their experience at least "fairly" well, and 98% would recommend service in the Peace Corps to a friend or family member. So, clearly, we think that the Peace Corps is a worthwhile endeavor.

Another underappreciated aspect of the Peace Corps experience related to career development is that Peace Corps service is the entry point to an invaluable network. Just think of it: your PCV service connects you to a network of more than 200,000 individuals who share your experience, values and worldview. Coming from a small college with just 20,000 alums, I feel very fortunate to be plugged into a fabulous network that is ten times larger. After all, the Peace Corps may be a more powerful network than your family, friends and classmates.

While developing an internationally oriented career is one motivation for joining the Peace Corps, during these challenging economic times it is important that we make much more explicit the strong connection between Volunteer service and developing a meaningful career where you can make a difference.

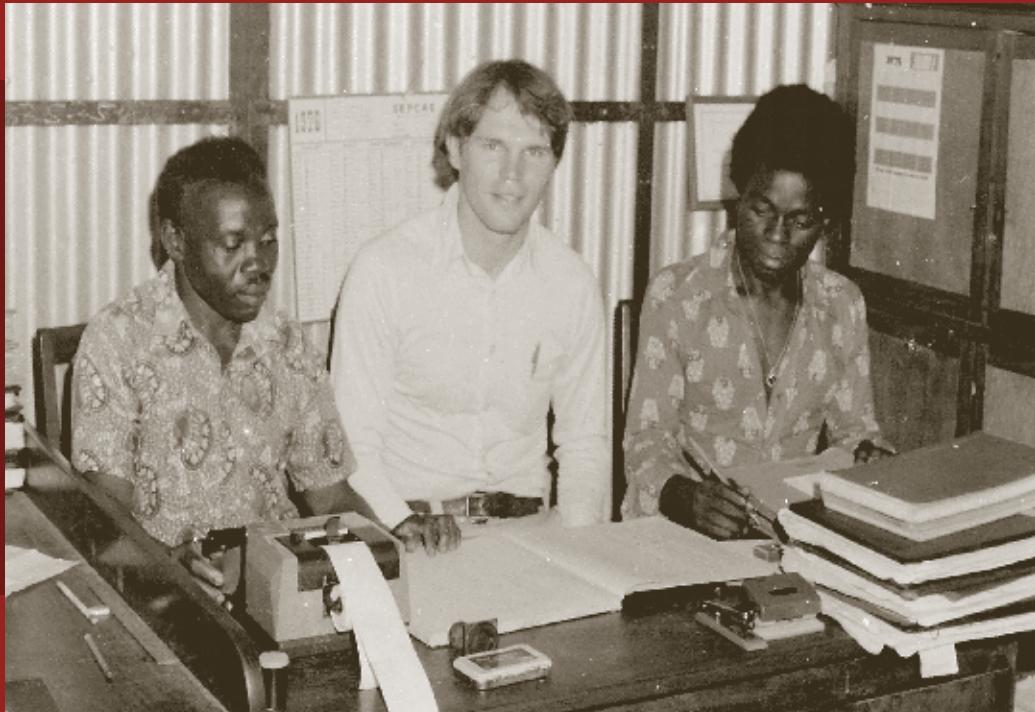
Kevin F. F. Quigley is the President of the National Peace Corps Association. He served in Thailand from 1976 to 1979. Please send your comments to president@peacecorpsconnect.org

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—Christopher R. Hill



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Join us for the National Peace Corps Association's first annual gathering, Peace Corps Connect: Minneapolis 2012. We are inviting you all to Minneapolis, Minnesota on the weekend of June 29-July 1, 2012 for an event that will inspire you to continue "bringing the world back home" while visiting with friends and having fun. Specific event details will be coming soon on our website.

START THINKING: THE SARGENT SHRIVER AWARD

Know of an exemplary Returned Peace Corps Volunteer? Nominate him or her for the Sargent Shriver Award for Distinguished Humanitarian Service. The Shriver award is awarded by the National Peace Corps Association to a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who continues to make a sustained and distinguished contribution to humanitarian causes at home or abroad or is an innovative social entrepreneur whose

actions will bring about significant long-term change. The award was named to recognize the tremendous contributions of the first Peace Corps Director, Sargent Shriver, in the founding and development of the Peace Corps.

Nomination information will be posted to the NPCA website later this spring. See bios of past recipients at www.peacecorpsconnect.org/about/awards. Questions about the award can be directed to Khalisa Jacobs at khalisa@peacecorpsconnect.org.

BOARD ELECTIONS AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NPCA bylaws stipulate the schedule for elections based on the Annual General Meeting, which this year will be held Sunday, July 1 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Voting for the following board positions begins on March 30, 2012 and ends on April 30, 2012. Voting is open to current NPCA members only. See the NPCA website (www.peacecorpsconnect.org).

peacecorpsconnect.org/about/board-of-directors/) for details on the candidates.

Geographic Groups

- Upper Midwest (one-year term)
- Northeast
- Mid-Atlantic/Nationwide

Country of Service Groups

- Europe, North and East Africa

The length of term is for three years, with the exception of the special election to fill the one year remaining in the Upper Midwest region due to a resignation. The Directors, who are responsible for the policies, budget and oversight of the NPCA, meet twice a year at locations chosen by the board, plus one or two conference calls. All Board members are expected to help promote NPCA membership and generate the resources required to implement programs. Board members are also responsible for their own expenses. The term of office is for three years, unless otherwise noted.

PROJECT FIND THE 250K

The goal: Find every Peace Corps Volunteer and staff member

Imagine a world where the universe of 250,000+ RPCVs and staff members is located in one place and where listings like the old paper directory can be easily searched online. We can do this with your help!

The National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) added over 3,900 individuals to the community over the 50th Anniversary year, and many of our member groups now have incredible lists. To carry this

momentum forward, the NPCA would like to identify an additional 10,000 RPCVs by September 22, 2012 and have all RPCVs identified by 2016.

We can do this with your help!

Tell your friends about Project 250K. Take the next step in changing the world by making the Peace Corps community voice strong one RPCV at a time. Visit www.peacecorpsconnect.org/findthe250K and fill out the form.

Have a list of people you served with? An old Peace Corps facebook, country directory or Volunteer newsletter with names and information? Send it our way: news@peacecorpsconnect.org.

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NPCA OFFERS NEW SOCIAL TRAVEL COMMUNITY

Homestays, sightseeing tips from locals just some of the benefits

by Erica Burman

The National Peace Corps Association has partnered with social travel site Tripping.com (www.tripping.com) to make it easy for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to engage in cultural exchange in over 175 countries. In addition to connecting with local people for travel tips, shared cups of coffee and homestays, NPCA members can also carry out the Third Goal of Peace Corps by hosting international travelers via Tripping.

For many years NPCA offered the Hospitality Network or “Host-Net,” a paper directory compiled and distributed by former NPCA board member Alan Burrus. NPCA’s partnership with Tripping.com streamlines the process and makes the network easily accessible online.

Membership in the Tripping community is completely free, with no money exchanged between guests



Tripping.com

A Tripper connects in a Ghana.

and hosts. While many members use the site for free homestays, most use it to meet up with locals for drinks, home-cooked meals and other social activities. Travelers can also step straight into local neighborhoods by renting local homes through Tripping.

Whether you’re at home or on the road, Tripping is the easiest way to

connect with other RPCVs and people who share your interests in over 15,000 cities worldwide. You can also meet people who share your affiliations through 100+ official networks for organizations including universities, study abroad programs, travel companies, touring rock bands and international volunteer organizations like NPCA.

“We’re incredibly excited to partner with the National Peace Corps Association, as we share a vision of fostering international friendships and creating peace through cultural understanding. We’ve always admired NPCA members for stepping out of their comfort zones and volunteering to make the world a better place. We welcome them all to Tripping and we hope they enjoy being part of our global community,” said Tripping’s CEO and co-founder, Jen O’Neal.

GROUP NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

A look at what NPCA member groups are up to

by Erica Burman

The Tennessee Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (www.tnRPCV.org) hosted its third annual Live Music Fundraiser on March 2. One hundred percent of the proceeds will go into the Peace Corps Partnership Fund to support current Peace Corps projects led by Volunteers who are from Tennessee. Since 2009 the group has supported

projects in Senegal, Peru, the Dominican Republic, The Gambia and Morocco.

The Friends of Cameroon (www.friendsofcameroon.org) is compiling a book, entitled “A Legacy of Peace Corps Cameroon—Celebrating 50 Years,” which will memorialize the first 50 years of Peace Corps

in Cameroon. Cameroon RPCVs can contact Sarah Grote at CameroonLegacy@hotmail.com for more information.

The Central Missouri Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (www.morpcv.org) held the fifth annual Third Goal International Film Festival on February 4, 2012 at the



The MORPCV film festival team.

University of Missouri. The festival showcased films covering diverse topics of worldwide significance; each film either dealt with the impact on or of a Peace Corps Volunteer, or featured significant issues faced in the countries hosting Volunteers. Speakers' panels featuring Returned Peace Corps Volunteers from the highlighted region(s) as well as country nationals followed each

film. This year's feature film was "Bush League," a character driven ethnographic survey of a tiny village in northern Malawi by filmmaker Cy Kuckenbaker.

The **RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison** (www.rpcvmadison.org) hosted the 31st annual 5K/10K Freeze for Food Run/Walk on January 21, 2012. The event—which is never cancelled due to weather—raises funds for food, seeds, and tools for people in Dane County's sister city, Apartado, Colombia. This year's race raised \$2,061 for the Colombia Support Network plus over \$900 to cover race expenses.

The Colombia Project of the **RPCVs of South Florida** (www.colombiaproject.org) anticipates supporting its 1,000th micro-loan in 2012 while making significant strides towards sustainability.

Last year the Project sent a record \$18,000, which combined with \$33,000 in loans supported through permanent loan pools in Colombia, totaled over \$51,000 in micro-loans. The Colombia Project anticipates an equally active 2012 and is working on a \$15,000 Rotary International application, contingent upon enlisting the support of a Rotary Club on the north coast of Colombia.

The **Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Phoenix, Arizona** (www.rpcvphx.org) pitched in for a day of community service at the Phoenix Collegiate Academy on January 21, 2012, Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The volunteers worked on two projects with twenty-four 5th and 6th grade students from the school: a mural painting project and a Martin Luther King Jr. awareness activity.

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RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER MENTORING

How it works

by Anne Baker

Remember the transition from Peace Corps service? One word to describe it could be “exciting.” Or maybe “scary.” Probably “unknown.” But one word it probably was not: “easy.”

“They told me it would be hard, but I never realized how hard it would be until I got home. My mentor made a world of difference.”—RPCV Ecuador

The NPCA’s RPCV Mentoring Program was started in 2007 with the fundamental goal of connecting recently returned Volunteers with RPCV mentors. Via phone, email and face-to-face meetings, these mentors help ease the transition from Peace Corps service, provide a connection to

the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) community at large and just say, “I know what you’re going through. I’ve been there.”

How does it work? PCVs and RPCVs wanting a mentor and those interested in mentoring sign up online at www.rpcvmentoring.org. Upon completion of a profile including background and mentoring criteria, mentors and mentees select or are assigned to one or more of NPCA’s administering member groups to find them the perfect mentoring match, make the introduction, and get them started. In some cases, the group administrator then steps back and lets the mentoring pair define their own involvement, while in others, the group may host trainings or brunches

just for the mentors or mentees. But in all cases, mentees now have that individual attention and support from an RPCV mentor.

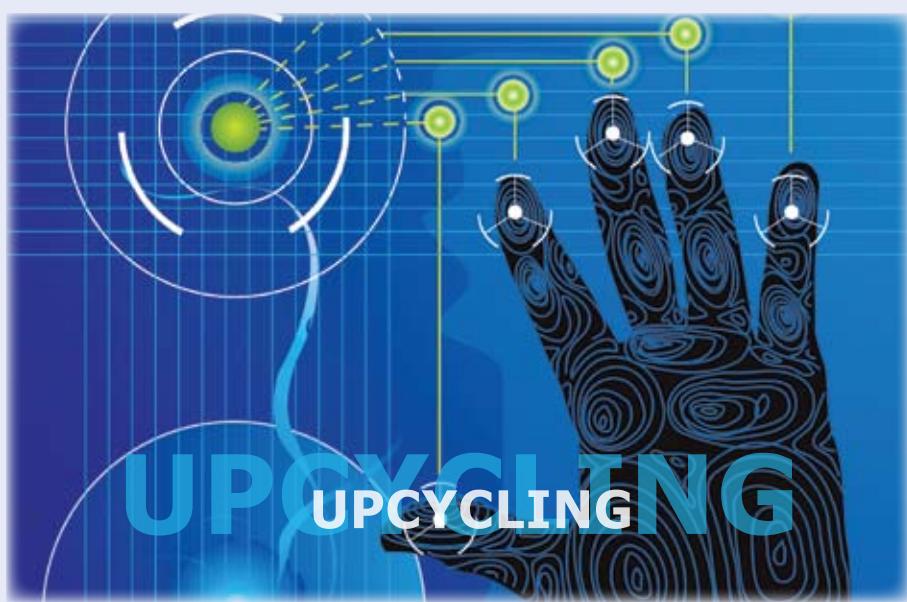
Thank you, Jeanne Paul and Laara Manler, for your work in administering the RPCV Mentoring Program for your respective member groups, SEMiRPCVs and RPCV/W, and for sharing your stories, insights and ideas for expansion in the following two articles. Are you not yet involved? Sign up today at www.rpcvmentoring.org. Want to get your group involved in the program? Contact Anne Baker at anne@peacecorpsconnect.org.

Anne Baker (Fiji, 84-87) is Vice President of the National Peace Corps Association.

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A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark hair, looking down with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a light-colored top. The background is slightly blurred.

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An aerial photograph of a dense urban slum area with numerous small, simple houses made of corrugated metal and wood. People are seen walking through the narrow, dirt paths between the houses.

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SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS

A two-pronged mentoring program provides crucial support to RPCVs and applicants

by Jeanne Paul

When I returned from Peace Corps service, I was on top of the world. I had achieved so much with so little help and few resources. But I soon felt alone. How could no one understand? Was it just a dream?" asks Justin (Honduras, 09-11).

Like many new Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), Justin found unexpected obstacles when he returned to the United States. Friends and family members couldn't understand the experience of immersion in a culture so unlike theirs. Says one Senegal RPCV, "I'm not the same person I was when I went into the Peace Corps." Justin continues, "My mentor was the first American friend I made who didn't want just a five-minute conversation about the beaches in my host country. I must have talked to her for three and a half hours. I was talking to someone who understood what I was passionate about."

Some RPCVs are uncertain about career direction or whether graduate school is the right choice. Many are new at information interviewing, networking, tailoring resumes to

specific jobs, and finding volunteer opportunities where they can both continue to serve and add important experience to their resumes.

Because of these needs and because RPCVs who returned earlier have developed expertise in these areas, in 2007 the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) launched a mentoring program that brings newly returned PCVs together on an individual basis—via meetings, phone calls, and emails—with RPCVs who closed their service more than a year previously. The mentoring programs are run by NPCA member groups. A new RPCV may file a mentee application at www.rpcvmentoring.org. NPCA notifies the local group's mentoring administrator, who matches the mentee with an RPCV mentor who has filed a mentor application, also available at www.rpcvmentoring.org.

The Southeast Michigan Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (SEMiRPCV) mentoring program began in 2010 with an RPCV mentee from Namibia who worked with her mentor to resolve ambivalent feelings about entering graduate school. Then Sarah (Zambia,

09-11) applied for a mentor because she wanted to change careers. Sarah followed up on every SEMiRPCV referral for informational interviewing and landed first an internship and then a board position at non-profit organizations. Though not paid employment, these activities bolster her resume and widen her contacts. Sarah says, "My mentor challenged me by asking questions about how I was working to achieve my goals, helped me translate Peace Corps skills into bullet points on my resume, and shared knowledge about the job market and tools available to job seekers." Justin adds, "My mentor helped me develop skills in informational interviewing with successful friends of hers."

A SEMiRPCV mentor initiates contact with a mentee by sending a welcoming email outlining the program and a little personal information. The pairs meet periodically and exchange emails often. Mentors inform mentees about member group gatherings and volunteer activities; edit resumes; assist with brainstorming career paths; forward relevant articles; offer suggestions about interviewing and good job-application



RPCV mentor Juliana Goodlaw-Morris (Jamaica, 01-04) with her RPCV mentee, Sarah Johnson (Zambia, 09-11).

SEMiRPCV



RPCV mentor Juliana Goodlaw-Morris (Jamaica, 01-04), applicant-mentee David Sinopoli, RPCV mentee and applicant-mentor Sarah Johnson (Zambia, 09-11), and SEMiRPCV mentoring program administrator Jeanne Paul (Brazil, 64-66).

SEMiRPCV

habits; remind mentees to check www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv for information about noncompetitive status for federal jobs and a schedule of career fairs; introduce mentees to each other, and much more. SEMiRPCV is developing materials its mentors can use, including a database of RPCV and non-RPCV contacts who agree to talk with mentees about their careers.

Justin sums up his mentoring experience this way: "The program not only picked me up when I was down, but it also helped me get myself on the right track toward closing one chapter and opening a new one."

In October 2011, SEMiRPCV expanded its mentoring program to include Peace Corps applicants. While this is not officially a part of the NPCA mandate, today's applicants become PCVs, who become tomorrow's newly returned PCV mentees, and eventually, perhaps, RPCV mentors. In fact, some newly returned PCV mentees like Sarah are simultaneously mentoring applicants. PCVs who were mentored as applicants will spread the word that there is a mentoring program ready to serve them when they return.

SEMiRPCV matches applicant-mentees with RPCV mentors through answers to a questionnaire. One applicant, for example, wanted to talk with a mentor who had maintained a romantic relationship with someone back home; an older applicant wanted to be matched with someone who had served as an older PCV. Applicants also find it helpful to talk regularly with RPCV mentors who well remember the long wait between application and departure. Says David, "The mentoring program has given me the most credible and useful support as I continue with the application process."

And Cassie says, "The first conversation with my mentor ignited a spark in my heart that says, 'I can't wait to begin my own journey!'"

Jeanne Paul (Brazil, 64-66) is a retired journalist, book critic, editor, writing teacher, and psychotherapist. For further information on SEMiRPCV's mentoring program, contact semirpcvmentoring@gmail.com.

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MENTORING, DC-STYLE

Mentoring program extends beyond the just-returned

by Laara Manler

I had only been home from my Peace Corps service for a few weeks when I offered to coordinate the RPCV Mentoring Program for the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington D.C. (RPCV/W). It seemed like a good fit, as I often counseled my fellow Volunteers in-country as to next steps when they got back home.

I started by matching mentees and mentors based on shared interests and experiences. I read each profile carefully and looked for areas in which each could learn something from the other, or at least share similar experiences and frustrations from either their service or their return home—or both.

I was excited when I matched all my mentors and mentees, but this was Washington—arguably the metro area most populated with RPCVs. There had to be more people “out there” who either needed a mentor or wanted to be one. Intrigued, I got more involved with the RPCV/W Board of Directors, ran for, and was elected to the position of Outreach Director.

The more RPCVs I met, the more I realized there was a mentoring need beyond recently returned Volunteers. After all, the job market is challenging even for those of us who have been home from service for many years. So I invited all RPCVs who thought they could benefit from a mentor to sign up. I also engaged my RPCV friends to find fellow RPCVs in their organizations who might be interested in becoming mentors. I broadened my contacts



and utilized mentors to help me find others working in specific fields or positions within those fields.

As Outreach Director, I am responsible for organizing and facilitating RPCV/W’s biannual speed-networking event. This event piggybacks with the jobs conference hosted by Peace Corps headquarters and always follows the day spent learning how to network. Our speed-networking event gives participants real-world practice using their newfound (or newly polished) networking skills and elevator pitches. Elevator pitches are brief introductory comments that can be used to connect to a person from whom we want to obtain a business card and make a connection. Speed-networking mentors and mentees alike love this event. It’s also an opportunity to engage RPCV Mentoring Program mentors who aren’t currently matched with a mentee. There is usually a spike in registrations for both mentors and mentees after each one of these events.

The diversity present in the Washington, D.C. RPCV Mentoring Program never ceases to amaze me. We have both mentees and mentors who live all across the U.S. and even

some who are living abroad. Most have called the District home at one time, while others use their mentoring relationships to aid them in transitions to the area. From Foreign Service officers to international aid workers, the mentors who live abroad offer real-world international work experience advice and support to those hoping to follow their example.

Although most mentees are looking for assistance in finding a job or in getting into graduate school, some just want help with the transition home. For them, our generalist mentors are great resources. From RPCVs who married host-country nationals to those who struggled with diversity issues during their service, we have mentors who have “been there, done that”—and are more than willing to listen and to provide advice and support.

One niche group that until recently had been woefully neglected is that of the medically evacuated Volunteer. As a one-time med-evacuee myself, I know how difficult it can be to go from your site to the craziness of Washington, D.C. Some will return to their countries of service, but for others, Washington will mark the end of their Peace Corps service. I was elated when Peace Corps’ new Med-Evac Coordinator contacted me. I see so many opportunities for both RPCV/W members and RPCV Mentoring program participants to welcome and support those PCVs who suddenly find themselves stateside. We recently held our first meet-and-greet where local RPCVs (a few of



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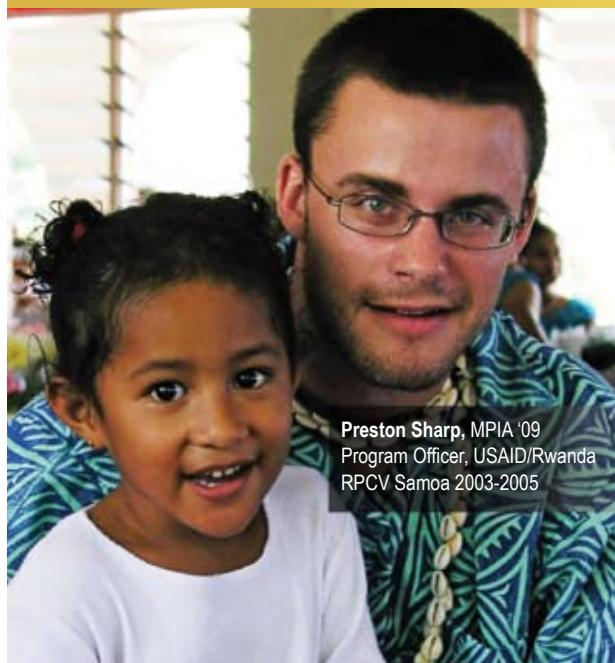
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whom are now RPCV mentors) and med-evac'd PCVs were able to mix and mingle. It was a wonderful and simple way for RPCVs to reconnect with their own Peace Corps experiences while helping the newest members of the Peace Corps family.

The RPCV Mentoring program started as a simple idea: connecting recently Returned Peace Corps Volunteers with more experienced Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

The times we live in, however, aren't so simple and I now see how helpful this program can be across the spectrum of age and experience in the Peace Corps community. We just celebrated the first 50 years of Peace Corps and I'm convinced we'll celebrate another 50. In the end, however, it's only as strong as we are. Programs like this one, which connect us all, remind us of what is important—that we're never

ex-Peace Corps Volunteers, we're RETURNED.

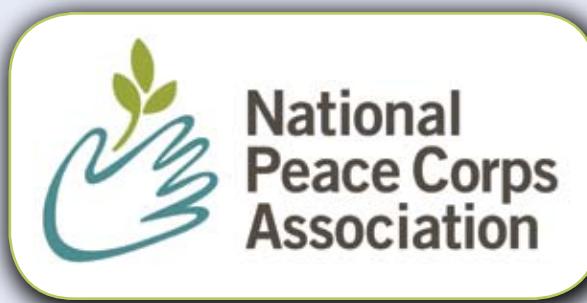
Find a mentor or become a mentor at www.rpcvmentoring.org.

Laara Manler (Paraguay, 08-10) is the Outreach Director (Volunteer) for the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, D.C. When not helping RPCVs, she works for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Jobs and Careers

CAREER RESOURCES FOR THE PEACE CORPS COMMUNITY

The National Peace Corps Association is here for you as you transition to life post-Peace Corps. The **RPCV Mentoring Program** links recently Returned Volunteers with those who have been back for a while (www.RPCVmentoring.org). A newly launched **NPCA Jobs & Resume Board** helps connect you to employers seeking people with Peace Corps experience (www.jobs.peacecorpsconnect.org). We



maintain the **Peace Corps Network on LinkedIn** (www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=39717), a moderated professional networking group open to serving and Returned

Peace Corps Volunteers and staff. In our **NPCA Online Community** (peacecorpsconnect.org) you can easily connect with others to share information and ideas. Groups that address career issues include:

Job Seekers of the World Unite! and RPCV-Federal Employees. We also offer short and long term volunteer and internship opportunities here at NPCA—check our website, www.peacecorpsconnect.org, for details.



The Peace Corps Returned Volunteer Services (RVS) team can provide you a wide array of career and transition support services. Whether it's figuring out how to leverage your **noncompetitive eligibility** (www.peacecorps.gov/nce), connecting you with RPCV-friendly employers through **career fairs** (www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/events), or

helping you brush up on your skills and translate your Peace Corps experience for diverse audiences, they are there to help you. Visit www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv or e-mail them at rvs@peacecorps.gov. Interested in **hiring a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer**? Learn how to leverage RPCVs' non-competitive eligibility for federal hiring (www.peacecorps.gov/hire).

AT THE TABLE, MOVING UP

Washington, D.C. RPCVs focus on mid-career level professional development

by Brandon Roché

Almost every former Volunteer can tell you a story of a great idea by an aid organization that was poorly executed on the ground in their country of service. This story is usually followed by the conclusion that if only there had been a former Peace Corps Volunteer sitting in the meeting, sitting in the board room, or leading the organization, it would have come out differently. While there is no one position or industry that can solve all of the problems faced by our former host countries, the more we as a group can do to help Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) move into the higher echelons of various industries, the better it is for the future of Peace Corps' ideals—and the better it is for RPCVs professionally.

While there are many efforts to connect former Peace Corps Volunteers in informal social settings, it is rare to encounter formal alumni networking events, like those hosted by colleges and universities. Professional life after Peace Corps takes former Volunteers down many divergent paths and after 50 years of volunteering we have reached a critical mass of alumni that rivals the numbers of many small colleges. There is an entire network of former Volunteers in all industries to be tapped.

With this in mind, the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, D.C. (RPCV/W) created a Professional Development Initiative in the summer of 2011. The Professional Development Initiative is based on the idea that RPCVs are one of the strongest and most underutilized alumni networks in the D.C. area and we are stepping

into that gap by organizing formal networking events. In the process, we would like for other geographic RPCV groups to be able to replicate our efforts on a local level. The idea stems from a perceived gap in the networking and job-seeking offerings our membership has encountered where most of the current job offerings for RPCVs are aimed at recently returned Volunteers and usually involve interning for free.

While RPCV/W has traditionally held many informal networking events in the form of happy hours or speed-networking, our idea is to take the next step. This initiative involves setting up a series of panel-style talks, each for a different industry in the D.C. area, aimed at mid-career RPCVs. Recently returned Volunteers are welcomed and encouraged to attend, but our panels are targeted at mid-career RPCVs who have been back for several years—to help RPCVs move up within an industry or move laterally into positions in different industries than they may have started in. Our panels consist of five to six RPCVs from a given industry talking about how they got started in that field, how their Peace Corps experience has helped them, what the career prospects are like, and what it takes to move up within a given field. So far, we have held professional development panels on the private domestic consulting industry, government agencies (HUD, EPA, and Transportation), and the education sector. We plan to hold one a month throughout 2012 focusing on other area industries with high concentrations of RPCVs; industries such as public and private international development, healthcare, and environmental careers among others.

I am proud to have been elected and to serve as board member of RPCV/W as the first Professional Development Director and to be a member of the greater Peace Corps community. If you have any ideas, questions, or suggestions regarding professional development please contact me at professionaldev@rpcvw.org

Brandon Roché served as a Health Volunteer in Lepaera, Lempira, Honduras from 2003-2005 and is currently an attorney in Washington, D.C. working in international litigation.



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THE GRAD SCHOOL DILEMMA

Creative funding options

by Jodi Hammer

In today's tough job market, many Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) are choosing to pursue graduate studies to acquire specialized knowledge and increase their competitiveness for jobs.

However, this can come at a significant cost. And, as anyone relying on student loans will discover, repayment can be a long and arduous path.

In some cases, people with substantial loans wind up taking unfulfilling jobs just to pay the bills—defeating the original purpose of expanding their career opportunities.

There is, however, an easier way: reduce the amount of student loans you take on in the first place. Although this may seem “easier said than done,” there are creative ways to finance your graduate degree that won’t leave you bemoaning your debt.

First, consider the **Peace Corps Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program** (formerly Fellows/USA), which partners with more than 60 American universities that offer financial assistance to RPCVs pursuing a master’s degree (or even a doctorate) in a wide variety of areas. The financial assistance offered varies by school so be sure to check out www.peacecorps.gov/fellows for more details.

Ask ALL schools of interest about possible scholarships and/or credit for your Peace Corps service. Leverage your Peace Corps experience by communicating to

graduate school officials the fact that “many schools offer special scholarships and financial assistance specifically to the RPCV population, in recognition of the [i.e. grassroots community organizing, international development, etc.] experience gained through overseas Peace Corps service.” You might be surprised at just how well this can work—universities are competitive and may rise to the challenge, and phrasing your request as such allows them to see the benefit you would bring to their program as an RPCV. I have heard numerous stories of RPCVs receiving scholarship and grant money from schools with no formal relationship with the Peace Corps, simply because they asked.

(Editor’s note: The School for International Training offers scholarships to National Peace Corps Association members to pursue master’s



degrees in international programs. Several awards of \$10,000 are made each year. NPCA members can request information regarding this exclusive scholarship opportunity at 800-336-1616 or 802-257-7751, or on the SIT Graduate Institute web site, www.sit.edu/graduate/.)

Never underestimate the value of your Peace Corps service. The global perspective you gained through your grassroots international development experience brings value to classroom discussions, and many universities see this as a great way to internationalize their campuses.

Another strategy is to do a **research or teaching assistantship**, which allows you to support a professor in conducting research or helping lead classes. In exchange, you can receive part or all of your tuition paid and gain great experience in the process.

This is what Sean O’Neill

(Honduras) did at the University of Maryland, College Park. After researching the professors working in his academic program, reading their white papers, and speaking with them individually, he wrote each professor a letter, reiterating his enthusiasm for the program and his interest in research support opportunities. His hard work paid off as he landed a research assistant position which ended up paying for his graduate degree.

Attending graduate school on a **part-time basis** while working full-time is another cost-saving tactic. Many universities in metropolitan areas offer part-time/evening graduate programs in a variety of disciplines,. Although these programs will take longer to complete, many find this to be a more realistic alternative as they are able to retain income and benefits while studying.

Alternatively, check into the possibility of getting a **full-time job**

at the university you will attend, many of which may offer full tuition remission. This means you could do a part-time evening graduate program for free! Sarah Bartfeld (Albania,04-06), a current graduate student in American University's School of International Service, is doing just that. Working in a full-time position as an undergraduate academic advisor, she receives free tuition for her evening master's coursework.

And finally, **don't overlook international graduate programs** when considering the best investment for your dollar. There are many reputable graduate programs abroad that may offer cheaper alternatives for the cost-conscious student. Eileen Conoboy (Mali, 95-97) knew she wanted to pursue Peace Studies but was deterred by the hefty price tag of many U.S. grad programs. "After a few hours of online searching, I found the International Peace Studies program at

Trinity College in Dublin. I earned my master's for a fraction of the cost of a degree here in the U.S.—and I didn't have to take the GRE."

Some international institutions even offer **government-sponsored scholarships or fellowships** to attract talented students from the U.S. and other countries, with the intention of increasing cross-cultural exchange and enrichment of their educational programs. Ask international schools if they offer such scholarships for international students. This could save you a lot of money while allowing you to enjoy yet another international experience.

Use your "RPCV resourcefulness" to explore these and other cost-saving mechanisms, and you will make your graduate degree dreams a reality without breaking the bank.

*Jodi Hammer (Ecuador, 94-97)
is the Peace Corps Career Center
Coordinator/Career Counselor.*



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Surprising business lessons from the Peace Corps

by Tim McCollum

I wanted to start a business that would make a difference.

And I didn't want to nibble around the edges. I wanted to go for the jugular. That meant taking on real poverty—in rural Africa. Something at the grassroots level would be my best shot—or so I thought.

Problem is, I had no idea what to do or how to do it.

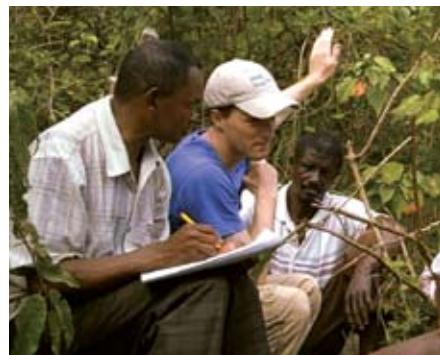
The idea of using business methods to solve social problems is the hip new thing. Businesses with a triple bottom line—that measure impact on people, planet and profit—are the Jay Z and Beyoncé of the business world. I wanted to be hip—and profitable—but how?

I had some business experience. After two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Madagascar, I spent six years working for American Express in New York City. I thought I'd learned something about what it would take to get a new company off the ground.

I was clueless.

That turned out to be a good thing. Had I had a clue, I would have seen that the idea of starting a chocolate company that would grow the cocoa, produce, and package the chocolate all in Madagascar was nuts. I would have walked on day one. My partner (also a former PCV from Madagascar) and I never even considered the basics. Africa is hot. Chocolate melts. Making chocolate requires reliable electricity. There isn't any in Madagascar. Transportation is complex and costly. Madagascar is a long way from anywhere. Obviously, Madécasse should have been a no-go from the start.

After several years of stumbling our way forward, I now realize



Madécasse co-founder Tim McCollum consults with local farmers.

that not knowing what we were doing has turned out to be one of our greatest assets. And, in many ways, it was thanks to those two years in Peace



Madécasse worker stands in front of cocoa bean roaster.

Corps that we stuck it out. That came as a huge surprise to both of us.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer I wasn't exactly hardwired for commercial trade, but I did learn several things that would come in handy years later. In Madagascar, I learned to live with uncertainty. Like every other Volunteer, I took a giant leap of faith—a blind commitment to a lifestyle and country I knew nothing about. It's hard to top that. And it's pretty much the same thing when you decide to start a business from scratch.

At site, Volunteers live with so much risk they stop seeing it. It's normal to flick insects off of food before you eat it. It's normal to push the seatbelt aside—if there is one—even when a drunken bush taxi driver is behind the wheel. Then we leave Peace Corps and many people forget what risk takers they once were.

Starting and running Madécasse required us to live with that same level of risk and uncertainty. Business plans don't go as planned. Good ideas turn out to stink. Ideas that seemed crazy somehow work out. At times it's been just as harrowing as those bush taxi rides in Madagascar. Other times it's been just as exhilarating.

Patience is a key ingredient in making top quality chocolate. It's also key to business success. For Americans, it's hard to practice because it runs against our "time is money" way of thinking. We've seen a lot of companies fail because they were impatient. Peace Corps is a two-year, continuously running lesson in patience. You wait for weather to come. You wait five months for a chair to be made. You wait 18 hours for a meeting to



Madécasse



Madécasse

start. No MBA program can teach you how to deal with that.

Finally, the Peace Corps gave us passion—to stick with it, to do the right thing, and not to give up. We first tasted passion as Volunteers. We fell in love with Madagascar and its people. It wasn't all roses. It was a love-hate—with a lot-more-love-than-hate—relationship. And it went deep.

The word “passion” has been so overused it's become meaningless and cheap, especially in the corporate world. But for us, passion is what keeps

us going. Passion to change the status quo in Madagascar. Passion to change the chocolate industry by making sure all added value stays in-country, so the people who produce the product benefit more. Passion keeps us focused. It's a big part of what separates us from our competition.

Peace Corps ignited our passion, passion that continues to drive us to try and do things that have never been done before. If Madécasse succeeds, it will, in great measure, be because of the passion we first got as Volunteers.

We really had no idea what we were getting into when we started Madécasse six years ago. And that's okay. The Peace Corps had prepared us.

Tim McCollum (Madagascar, 99-01), is a co-Founder of Madécasse Chocolate. Their chocolate is sold at gourmet outlets across the United States. In 2011, Madécasse was recognized by Fast Company Magazine as One of the 50 Most Innovative Companies in the World. For more information, go to www.madecasse.com.



Co-operative farmers separating cocoa beans from pods in Madagascar.

LET JOBS FIND YOU ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Three tips for leveraging social media in your job search

by Mrim Boutla

As a current or Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV), you are a member of an extended network of changemakers. But do you know how to connect with that network online to gain the knowledge you need to translate your Peace Corps experience into your next job or advance your career once hired?

It is well known that **80% of job openings are never advertised**, and are instead filled through referrals. Are you connected so that you can access job openings? A more recent and lesser-known fact is the increasing reliance of recruiters on social media to identify possible candidates and recruit new hires, making it important for you to effectively manage your professional image as a social innovator through social media. Whether you are still serving abroad or have returned, you can use the following three tips to get ready for your next career transition.

1. Create a profile that shows what you want to do next.

Review your profiles on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. If your profiles look like a laundry list of skills and projects, your profile is likely to communicate “I am not sure what I want to do next.” This can be a deal breaker for many recruiters, especially if that’s the case on your LinkedIn profile. To optimize your LinkedIn profile, read a few job postings and selectively list the skills you have that are relevant to your future jobs of interest. Focus on your relevant skill set, and show a progression of responsibility in these specific skill sets across your previous jobs. You don’t have to start from scratch. Instead, conduct an advanced

people search on LinkedIn. Enter the country you are serving or served in, along with type of project you managed (e.g. education, farming, social incubation, microfinance). This will lead you to profiles of RPCVs. Read how they described their experiences, and adapt these descriptions to showcase what you have done—and want to do more of in your next job. This layered “less is more” approach to your social media presence is likely to help recruiters find you for job openings that match with your career goals.

2. Join and participate in relevant discussions.

Defining your career direction also entails selectively joining groups and contributing to conversations that are relevant to your career goals. Popular groups on LinkedIn for current Peace Corps Volunteers and RPCVs include Peace Corps Network (over 5,200 members), CSR & Sustainable Development (over 6,800 members), Idealist.org (over 5,900 members), Net Impact (over 6,100 members), and MBAs without Borders (over 2,700 members). In order to avoid diluting your message, avoid groups or discussions and groups that are not related to your future career goals. For example, if you are currently serving in Kenya focusing on teaching English as a foreign language and want to transition into sustainable agriculture, join groups that are focused on sustainable development in Africa instead of education. Read all you can about these topics, and contribute your new knowledge to LinkedIn groups and online discussions. Recruiters at big and small social change organizations are likely to participate in these

groups. If you impress them by your contributions to the group, they might keep you in mind for future job opportunities.

3. Leverage different channels to optimally broadcast your brand.

Different social media have different focuses, and knowing what to broadcast where is important. Use your LinkedIn profile and Twitter handle to broadcast longer-term messages in terms of your career directions and relevant past achievements. In contrast, use your Facebook account for fun and life beyond the office. (In all cases, never ever post something anywhere online that you would not share with your grandmother.) By customizing your LinkedIn profile, joining and participating in LinkedIn group discussions, and connecting with like-minded professionals on Twitter, you will gain knowledge and build your visibility and credibility as a social innovator. At the same time, you will also optimally position yourself for future jobs and opportunities to find you via social media.

Portions of this article were previously published on the Justmeans.com Responsible Career Blog.

Dr. Mrim Boutla is a Swiss-Moroccan brain scientist turned career coach. She has lived and worked in 4 countries, and served as a career counselor at Brown University and at the Kelley School of Business (Indiana University). She co-founded and manages More Than Money Careers, which trains university staff in effectively helping their graduates compete for well paying jobs in corporate social responsibility, social enterprise, and sustainable business.

SO YOU WANT TO WORK IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT...

Straight up information on getting started in a competitive field

by Chad Chadbourn

International travel. Earning a salary. Rewarding work. Sounds like a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer's dream! Working at a donor agency, non-profit, government agency, or for a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) contractor is a great way to leverage your Peace Corps experience into a career in international development. I spent two and a half years working in Washington, D.C. as an international recruiter for an economic development consulting firm and recruiting for a U.S. government agency implementing development programs. While I can't offer you a larger monthly allowance or a ticket to Timbuktu, I can share my experience and what I learned. After working with hundreds of experts, fellow recruiters, and other RPCVs, I know the importance of understanding international development and types of positions in the field. There are several categories of job opportunities in international development.

ENTRY TO MID-LEVEL POSITION

The most common job for RPCVs holding a bachelor's or master's degree and little work experience outside of their Peace Corps service, these positions are based in home offices with firms, non-profits, multilateral donors, or government agencies. Individuals focus on administrative work supporting the operations of development projects and may complete travel arrangements, create expense reports, and recruit staff, all of which is classified as "backstopping" work. Overtime hours are often required, depending on the needs of the organization and current business development and/or project work, and travel is rare.

PROJECT MANAGER

Generally located in a home office that is close to the headquarters of USAID or other

multilateral donors. Helping to coordinate development projects and manage staff overseas, these individuals travel only when necessary to visit field offices or work on research and development for new business opportunities. Most RPCVs in project management positions have a master's degree, a minimum of five to ten years of experience within the industry including experience working with a multilateral donor agency, and an understanding of project management, finance, contract management, and general office administration.

TECHNICAL EXPERT – SHORT TERM VS. LONG-TERM

Many RPCVs are interested in technical positions, based overseas to build capacity of local counterparts utilizing the individual's skills and knowledge in a particular field. Experts generally specialize in areas such as water and sanitation, public health, agriculture value chain development, monitoring and evaluation, judicial reform, and/or infrastructure. Positions usually require either a short-term or long-term contract with a partner such as a non-profit or consulting firm. A short-term contract may range from a few days to several months depending on the project associated with one of the various multilateral donor agencies including USAID, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, African Development Bank, and other organizations. Technical experts may also be long-term employees of a firm, agency, or non-profit. Most RPCVs working in these positions have fifteen or more years of experience and a graduate degree in their field.

RESEARCHER

For individuals interested in international development policy and advocacy rather than operational activities, think tanks or non-profits often offer

research opportunities. Such positions are either at a senior level or will be associated with graduate research projects.

Outside of these four areas, there are other positions in the field of international development. Jobs often require knowledge of how agencies such as USAID or the World Bank work, understanding of partnerships to implement development, and experience related to development assistance. For example, if you have experience as an education volunteer, you may be best suited for an organization working in international education development rather than a consulting firm focused on agriculture development. Depending on the type of position or organization, there may be prospects for travelling abroad and gaining experience while making a slightly larger allowance. Remember that there may be additional overseas opportunities with Peace Corps such as Peace Corps Response positions.

The Peace Corps Office of Returned Volunteer Services can be extremely helpful to RPCVs interested in international development by sharing job opportunities through the Peace Corps Hotline and RPCV Google listerv. They are also a great resource for developing a winning resume and cover letter as well as learning interview techniques. Regardless of your career goals, networking with other RPCVs and professionals allows you to increase your knowledge of the industry while making contacts with private sector representatives, donor agency staff, and academic level staff who may be able to assist you.

No matter what, remember to pay it forward and keep helping others.

Chad Chadbourn (Costa Rica, 06-08) is an MBA candidate at the College of William and Mary. Previously he was an international recruiter for Nathan Associates.

FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE FOREIGN AID

Failures (and some notable successes) point a way forward

by Michael Buckler

In 2006, I left my law firm to become a Peace Corps Volunteer in rural Malawi. From 2006 to 2008, I lived among poor Malawians, taught English and mathematics at an underserved secondary school, and shared a tiny home with three male students. Overall, my experience was positive, but it raised difficult questions about aid: Who are we trying to help? Why are we trying to help? What, if anything, do we expect in return?

Honest answers confirm our worst fears and kindest aspirations. As a tool for poverty alleviation, foreign aid has been underwhelming, even counterproductive at times. But failures (and some notable successes) have revealed insights that might revolutionize the way we view the poor and deliver aid. Here are some.

Rethink Conditionalities. Poor countries receive money from our government under the condition that some of the money (about 50%) be used to acquire goods and services from American companies. By doing this, Congress ensures that aid money stimulates the American economy, not fragile ones in need of help. Although the British have halted this practice of “tied aid,” the U.K. and U.S. continue to condition aid upon the adoption of Western ideals like multiparty democracy.

Yet, democracy is no panacea. In his book, “Wars, Guns and Votes,” Oxford economist Paul Collier, writes that “[i]n low-income countries, democracy made society more dangerous” in terms of political violence, although democracy had the opposite effect on middle and high-income countries. Further,



Teaching in Malawi.

organizations, country specialists with superb language, cultural and historical expertise, guided by conscience and grassroots pragmatism, make programmatic decisions in the field. They live with local people, build local relationships, hire local employees and purchase from local vendors. Recognizing that poor people can and should solve their own problems, they provide marginal assistance to complement local investment and discontinue ill-fated projects before critical resources are squandered. They understand how hard it is to help.

This approach used to lack scientific rigor. But in recent years, organizations such as Poverty Action Lab and Innovations for Poverty Action have applied randomized controlled testing (RCT) to interventions, just

as pharmaceutical companies evaluate the efficacy of drugs. Two recent books—“Poor Economics and More Than Good Intentions”—describe cheap and proven “nudges” that can dramatically improve quality of life in developing countries. Examples include de-worming students, chlorine dispensers at community water sources, and planting-season fertilizer guarantees sold to farmers at harvest time, when they have spare cash.

Trade Fairly. On September 22, 2010, at the United Nations, President Obama said, “Development is helping nations to actually develop—moving from poverty to prosperity. And we need more than just aid to unleash that change. We need to harness all the tools at our



The author with his students.

disposal—from our diplomacy to our trade and investment policies.” Yet, rhetoric is not policy, and data from the U.S. International Trade Commission show that imported goods from least developed countries (LDCs) suffer the highest average tariffs—13.1%. By contrast, the average tariff on Chinese goods is 7.6%.

Making matters worse, we harm LDCs with kindness. During food crises, we inundate their markets with excess grain from American farms, purchased and shipped overseas by our government. Likewise, altruistic Americans send LDCs crates of donated clothing or school supplies to “help.” To the casual observer, these interventions seem noble, but procuring food, clothing and books within recipient countries (yes, poor countries have them) saves money and jumpstarts development. Providing free American goods, on the other hand, eviscerates local businesses.

Foster Innovation. As economist Charles Kenny notes in his recent book, “Getting Better,” much of the developing world has experienced significant improvements in quality of life without registering corresponding gains in income. The reason is the spread of cheap technologies such as antibiotics, immunizations, water boiling, hand washing, latrines, bed nets and cellular phones. Relentless innovation at home is one of the best ways wealthy countries can help defeat global poverty.

Support Entrepreneurs. Economic research shows that very few people are true entrepreneurs. Most businesspeople in poor countries barely make a profit and cannot scale their enterprises to a prosperous size, even with access to microfinance institutions. They conduct business not for pleasure, but because they have little else to do. Yet, every village has a handful of social innovators raring for an opportunity to shine. An organization called Ashoka identifies and supports them.

The promise of poverty relief through foreign aid depends on our answers to the difficult questions I posited above. Based on my Peace Corps experience, here are the answers: Who are we trying

to help? People crippled by poverty. Why are we trying to help? Because every human being should have the chance to realize his or her fullest potential. What, if anything, do we expect in return? Nothing.

In 2006, after working as a patent litigator for several years (mostly as outside counsel for Microsoft), Michael Buckler left his law firm to become a Peace Corps Volunteer, teaching at a secondary school

in rural Malawi. Upon his return to the States, he authored “From Microsoft to Malawi: Learning on the Front Lines as a Peace Corps Volunteer” (Hamilton Books 2011)(www.FromMicrosoftToMalawi.com). He now lives in Washington, D.C., and works for the National Park Service as an environmental planner. In his spare time, he writes and speaks about international development and serves on the board of Friends of Malawi.

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RECYCLING PROJECT HELPS RESTORE THAILAND FOREST

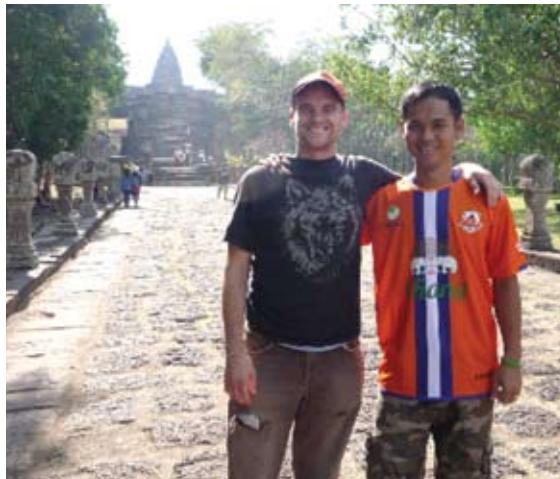
With RPCV and counterpart support, a Volunteer in Thailand finds success

by Kale Roberts

Hen eek laeo!" "I see some others!" My counterpart, Songkram Sanram, nicknamed "Pu," skids his bicycle to a stop and hops off to collect a few more aluminum cans and a plastic bottle littered along the roadway. Pii Pu*, is the Royal Thai government's community development officer in my sponsoring subdistrict's office. "Recycle daai!" he says and plops the cans into a bag he always keeps with him when he rides. While he is disappointed that so many people in the village litter, he never gets discouraged and always keeps an eye out for recyclable waste, taking the time to retrieve each piece with a smile.

Pii Pu's endless patience extends to his work as mentor of the local youth group. When I arrived to my site in Buriram Province, I admit I was somewhat overwhelmed. Garbage-burn piles were everywhere, including outside school classrooms and in the community forest. I knew I wanted to work on a recycling project right away. My project, working with Pii Pu, is to establish the Youth Environmental Initiative, which is funded by the Friends of Thailand (FoT) Returned Peace Corps Volunteer group (www.friendsofthailand.org). FoT support has provided infrastructure for village-level recycling through compartmentalized secure bins, educational signage, and—most importantly—trainings for a 30-member youth Recycle Team.

Pii Pu immediately acknowledged my ideas and helped me organize the youth to create recycling centers in two of the villages. This has proven to be a big undertaking, requiring an entire year to get the centers up and running. However, Pii Pu's enthusiasm and



Kale and Pii Pu.

around, Pii Pu makes sure I can jump in and help villagers in the fields. When it's time for a village event, Pii Pu is at my side explaining elements of culture and vocabulary so I can feel included and understand everything. When I make a cultural mistake, Pii Pu is there to explain differences and smooth things over.

I often ask myself, "What would I do without Pii Pu?" The answer may well be: not very much. As my counterpart, Pii Pu is my bridge to the youth group, to my village, my coworkers and Thai culture.

"You teach me many things, Kale," Pii Pu recently told me. I was flattered but I also know he teaches me much, much more.

Pii Pu shows me what endless patience is like. He teaches me how to listen more with my heart than my ears, why the youth are the future of our world, and the importance of stopping your bicycle to grab a littered bottle off the road. I joined Peace Corps hoping to develop a hero out of myself; I couldn't have known I would find my own hero among the people I was sent to help.

*The honorific "Pii" means "elder" in Thai.

Friends of Thailand (www.friendsofthailand.org), the official group for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, who served in Thailand, provides small grants to projects like Kale's, including for education, health, and youth development.

Kale Roberts is a Community-Based Organizational Development Volunteer in Thailand. He is originally from Kirksville, Missouri, and has a degree in environmental science from Humboldt State University in Arcata, California.

PASSING THE TORCH

Event in Colombia ignites voluntary spirit among generations of Volunteers

by Steve Vetter

This November a remarkable event took place in Colombia. The organization I lead, Partners of the Americas, held the Second World Summit for Youth Volunteering at Barranquilla's Universidad del Norte. Nearly 900 participants from close to 50 countries attended to share best practices and explore how they can better serve and contribute to their communities. Among them were several Peace Corps Volunteers from the recently reinstated Colombia program.

The Summit was an historical convergence of people from my generation, who volunteered in the 1960s and those who are just starting now. And the common thread among this young generation is that there's a deep support for volunteer service.

If there's one thing we saw from the Summit, it's that young people are, more than ever, showing a willingness to mount their own programs in communities across the globe. Everyone—especially Colombians—was buying into the idea of voluntary service as a force to solve interesting and difficult problems.

I never imagined in my lifetime I would see such a coming together of minds—and I wish John Kennedy could have been there to see it. It was also an opportunity for me to witness a transformation.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Colombia in the late 1960s, our ongoing challenge was to simply explain the role of volunteer service. At that time we were, as they say in Spanish, a *fenómeno*—like something from a different planet. The fact that we were in communities alone for two years to serve *voluntarily* was just unheard of. People viewed us as something that was strange and suspicious.



Vetter gives a keynote speech.

In 1961 Colombia was one of the first countries to receive Peace Corps Volunteers. But 20 years later, the program was discontinued. For the three decades that followed, there was no Peace Corps presence in Colombia until 2010 when the program was reinstated with a small number of Volunteers. One of the highlights of the Summit was getting to see the many Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) on our staff interact with those current PCVs and a host of other volunteers from every corner of the globe.

We were hosted for the Summit by Partners' Barranquilla chapter, led by Gina Pezzano, who, thirty years prior, had become a Partners of the Americas Kellogg Fellow. Through her fellowship, Gina learned the value and importance of service in one's community. As a result, she decided to develop a training program for volunteers at her university (Universidad del Norte) and—to repay Partners and the Kellogg Foundation—train 400 students to volunteer. Gina has now trained more than 1,200 volunteers and it was because of this remarkable display of voluntary spirit that we decided to host the Summit in Barranquilla.

Gina's training got me thinking: I continue to believe that it was the Peace Corps training program—those three months spent gaining language, cross-cultural, and technical skills—that played such a formative role in my life and the lives of other Volunteers. Gina's story reminds us that, with the right focus and dedication, you can end up with high-quality volunteers doing remarkable things for their communities. Training—whether it's in the Peace Corps or as a Kellogg Fellow—can help make that happen.

What I took away from my return to Colombia is that global interest in voluntary service is growing exponentially. The lessons of the last 50 years are a clear reminder that neither the state nor the private sector alone can solve all the pressing problems of poverty and under-development. It is within that realization that I can say the Peace Corps—and other voluntary organizations, like ours—will play an ever-increasingly important role in our future.

Steve Vetter (Colombia, 67-69) has served as President & CEO of Partners of the Americas since 2008. His background, which includes work with organizations such as the Inter-America Foundation and Eureka Communities, has spanned private, philanthropic, and governmental organizations focused on reducing poverty and improving the economic and social development of disadvantaged populations. He has served on a number of philanthropic, nonprofit, and corporate boards and committees.

J. Grigsby Crawford (Ecuador, 09-11), a Communications Specialist for Partners of the Americas, contributed to this article.

THE PEACE CORPS-ROTARY CONNECTION, A NATURAL FIT

Colorado RPCVs collaborate, continue to work in-country

by Arianne Burger

For those who have served in Peace Corps, the journey is never over. We return home from our countries of service seeing the world with new eyes and possessing a new determination to live our lives in a meaningful way. That new determination leads us to seek experiences at home that are as important as our service—and that often times leads Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to Rotary International (RI).

Sue Fox had an idea. As a Returned Volunteer from Liberia (68-70) and a past-president of the Denver Rotary Club, she knew that there was a natural connection between Rotary and Peace Corps. She felt that "RPCVs and Rotarians are kindred spirits, seeking the same goals embodied in Rotary's motto, 'Service Above Self.'" She followed up on that hunch by bringing together a group of Rotarians and RPCVs at her home on November 21, 2009 with the encouragement of then-Rotary District 5450 District Governor, Mike Oldham, who has been a huge and active supporter of the committee.

Since that November morning, the "Tiger Team" (named after Fox's aging Golden Labrador, Tiger) has met on numerous occasions and made incredible progress on formalizing how an official partnership between Peace Corps and Rotary International would work. The committee has grown to include other non-RPCV Rotarians, representatives from the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Colorado, as well as the Peace Corps community at the University of Denver. Together, the team has drafted a resolution to Rotary International, proposing that a formal alliance be formed between the two organizations that will serve as a prototype for similar alliances between RI and the international volunteer service organizations of many countries around the world. Conversations have also been held with top members of the Peace Corps administration, who are also keen on moving forward with this idea.

The District 5450 Rotary-Peace Corps Alliance Committee in Colorado has a three-pronged vision for a formal Peace Corps/Rotary alliance.

1. Connect Rotarians with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

There are teams of Rotarians working on projects around the world. Many times, representatives from clubs in the U.S. will travel to other countries to provide technical assistance with those projects. While technically prepared for the work ahead, many of these Rotarians are not as culturally prepared for what they will encounter while abroad. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who are back in the States have a fundamental understanding of cultural mores in their countries of service. By connecting outgoing Rotarians with these RPCVs, they can provide valuable information that can lessen the culture shock and provide an easier working environment once in country. We have seen this work in Colorado, as a team from the Meade, Colorado club visited Nicaragua in the fall of 2010, armed with information provided by three different RPCVs who had recently returned from their service. Not only did they provide valuable cultural information, but the RPCVs also connected the team to the Peace Corps office in Nicaragua. This connection was made possible by Rotarian Ted Bendelow (Liberia, 64-66) a member of the "Tiger Team" and the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Colorado.

2. Connect outgoing Peace Corps Volunteers to Rotary clubs both here and abroad.

Once at site, many Peace Corps Volunteers create projects that require funding as well as technical expertise. By formalizing a relationship between Peace Corps and Rotary, clubs both here and abroad could be connected to these projects and provide either financial or technical support. That door can swing both ways, as we found

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Colorado board.



RPCVColorado

here in Colorado. Judy Beggs, an RPCV from Senegal and member of Englewood Rotary, created a 501(c) 3 organization called "Friends of Gueoul," whose mission is to educate girls in the village of Gueoul. Judy received a large matching grant from the Rotary Foundation to build a computer classroom in Gueoul. Peace Corps Senegal has assigned a new Small Enterprise Development Volunteer to the project and has in principal agreed to have a PCV assigned to it for a total of six years (three tours) to maximize the possibility of its becoming self-sustaining. This is a perfect example of the ad hoc partnerships that are already underway around the world between Rotarians and Peace Corps Volunteers. Sue Fox's vision for this proposal comes full circle, as "formalizing this relationship seems to be a great way to foster and grow this relationship and the benefits that flow from it."

3. Create a stronger community of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers by introducing them to Rotary International.

Many of the RPCV-Rotarian members of the District 5450 Rotary-Peace Corps Alliance Committee have found kindred spirits in their fellow RPCV-Rotarians. Sue Fox has found that "Rotary gives Returned Volunteers the opportunity to continue their service to the world while they are also occupied with careers and family responsibilities, and even offers a way to teach these values to their children."

Steve Werner (South Korea 76-78) has been a member of the Rotary Club of Denver Southeast for 23 years. He assisted Sue in the creation of the committee because he felt that this partnership would "generate more members for each other's programs, and create more fellowship among the constituents of each organization who believe in service above self and world peace." Steve has a long history with both organizations, having served as Chair of the Board of the National Peace Corps Association.

Charlie Hunt (Vanuatu, 06-08) joined Peace Corps and Rotary later in his career. After returning to the U.S.

in 2008 and settling in Denver with his wife, Nancy Cole, Charlie has started his own project back in Vanuatu with the support of his LoDo Rotary Club in Denver. The LoDo club is working to demonstrate smokeless cook stoves to the rural women of Vanuatu. Charlie has connected his home club with the Vanuatu Port Vila Rotary Club through Assistant District Governor Robert Bohn. His club and the New Zealand District that the club falls under are supportive of the project.

Charlie contacted the Program and Training Officer at the Peace Corps office in Vanuatu to ask if the cookstove demonstration could be provided through their fifteen Community Health Volunteers who work in the Shefa Province. Peace Corps Vanuatu has approved this project, and so Charlie is now working with Peace Corps and his Rotary club to determine next steps. He knows that the LoDo Club will pay for the stoves that will be demonstrated in the rural villages

and sent to the Port Vila Club to be delivered to Peace Corps. Peace Corps Volunteers will then monitor to see if the women will consistently use the clean stoves.

What is clear is that Peace Corps Volunteers and Rotarians have been working together for years on projects like the ones described here. As Peace Corps begins its next 50 years, it's time to formalize this partnership so that future generations of Rotarians and Peace Corps Volunteers can continue the legacy of promoting peace and fellowship throughout the world.

To learn more about how your club can work together with RPCVs in your community, or to share your own success stories of Peace Corps/Rotary collaborations, please contact Sue Fox at Sue@foxlegal.net.

Arianne Burger (Kazakhstan, 99-01) is President of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Colorado.



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RUNNING IN FORGOTTEN LANDS

A world away from the Pacific Northwest

by Tracey Goldner

Bayramaly, Turkmenistan is a sleepy town on the outskirts of a bleak and formidable desert. The Garagum, whose name means “black sand,” covers more than 80 percent of the country’s total area. A Turkmen proverb says that “when a bird crosses the Garagum, it loses its feathers, but when a man crosses the Garagum, he loses his legs.” This country has been my home for the past two years. It is here that I work as a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV), live with a Turkmen family—and run.

The 50,000 people who live in Bayramaly today make a modest living working as teachers, doctors, taxi drivers and shopkeepers. But, on the outskirts of their town is a reminder of the past. A four kilometer fortress wall made from packed clay lies just east of the city.

The region around Bayramaly is an ancient place with a long and impressive history. Merv was one of the largest and most cosmopolitan civilizations in the world around the turn of the last millennium. Sultans constructed libraries and laid out a Greek-style city complete with hamams (communal baths) and ceramic water systems. Omar Khayyam is thought to have written his famous poems here.

The Mongols ravaged the great city in 1221. As the centuries passed, the Silk Road faded from the Western psyche and other empires forced their way into power.

During the 1920s, the Soviets pushed the Turkic peoples away from their nomadic traditions and into their communist mold. Tribal people found themselves herded onto collective cotton farms; their

nomadic lifestyle deemed uncivilized and unproductive. In the 1980s, Turkmen people began living in bloc-style apartments. Soon enough, communism’s ideals took hold and Turkmen adapted to their new way of life.

Today, Turkmenistan remains one of the most closed countries in the world. Despite billions in gas wealth, most of the country’s population lives a meager existence. The average family does not have indoor plumbing or a washing machine and corruption runs rampant in most sectors of society.

I moved to Bayramaly in the summer of 2010, fresh off of two months of intensive language and cultural training. After working for five years with an international NGO in the U.S., I was ready for life abroad.

Turkmenistan Peace Corps Volunteer
Tracey Goldner stands atop an ancient icehouse among the ruins of Merv, an ancient oasis city on the Silk Road.





Tracey Goldner

Turkmenistan Peace Corps Volunteers exploring the ruins.

One of my biggest concerns when I decided to become a PCV was: Would I be able to run? "You might have to run in your hut," my placement specialist told me. I grimaced. Two years of hut-running was pretty difficult to fathom after growing up two miles from the Nike world headquarters and spending my youth in Portland's Forest Park, one of our country's largest urban parks.

But, I persevered with my Peace Corps dream and hoped for the best. I arrived in Turkmenistan in the spring, just in time to witness a breathtaking poppy season.

I'm now in my second year of service as a community health volunteer and I've experienced some of my favorite moments in this country while out on my runs.

Turkmenistan's terrain is rocky and dry. Camels roam the desert eating a prickly plant called *yangdak* (camel thorn) and salty groundwater colors the earth in a swirl of white.

I used to set out fully clad in rain gear prepared for damp Oregon weather. Here, the only "must haves" are sunscreen and a cap. The temperature exceeds 80 degrees Fahrenheit before 7 a.m. many months out of the year.

Although running is a rare sport among the general population, many people understand its value. I am often met with Russian greetings of encouragement on the trail. Most strangers assume I'm Russian. I wear my hair short and opt for Western-style clothing so that I can ride my bike to work.

Running in public would be difficult for most traditional Turkmen women. They are expected to wear long cotton dresses and silk scarves and they must carry out all the housework for their husband's family.

"Running is a luxury," my friend Bahar told me once. "After we finish our house chores, we don't have the energy to exercise. Housework is

our exercise." I remember my own grandmother saying this to me when I was growing up. She never had the chance to join a sports team like her daughters or I did. Perhaps in two generations my friend Bahar will say the same words to her exercising grandchildren.

Turkmenistan now faces the same health problems many other countries face: heart disease, high blood pressure and obesity. On average, Turkmen people die 20 years younger than they do in the U.S. When a Turkmen asks me why, I usually start by talking about the lack of exercise and move slowly into the high-fat, high-sodium diet. Long ago, Turkmen lived in yurts in the hot desert and needed a lot of fat and salt to survive such rugged conditions. But now, American Toyotas imported via Dubai fill the streets and the average Turkmen need not travel miles in search of water. The sedentary lifestyle is just as standard here as it is in



Tracey Goldner

The majestic Sultan Sanjar mausoleum dates to the mid-12th century.

America. Our world has changed.

I like to tell the students who attend my weekly health clubs that exercising is more than just a weight-loss method. It is a lifestyle and a

way of seeing the world. It's a stress-reliever and a chemical reaction. It's also a fun way to socialize with friends and break up the daily routine.



Tracey Goldner

Camels graze along the author's running route.

When I first arrived, I missed my running buddy. Wednesdays weren't the same without her and I always felt a tinge of jealousy when I imagined her out on our runs back home.

She'd never have to deal with kids throwing rocks or village dogs the size of wolves jumping at her. Then again, she'd never get to race a kid driving a donkey cart or see a field of Turkmen sunflowers against the deep blue Central Asian sky.

New running buddies eventually emerged. But here, they took the forms of another PCV and a Turkmen teen. We often meet to spend an hour running through the ancient city near our homes. Merv looks like a child's sandcastle would after a few large waves attack it. The fortress walls are slowly melting back into the Turkmen sands.

Mud homes built into the riverbed remind me of the Laura Ingalls Wilder books I read as a kid. I used to yearn for a life that simple: a house carved into the riverbed and kept cool by the mud. Now, I'm running past the scenes I could only imagine



The author (right) and her new running buddy, Bahar.

in my childhood. Yet, this time they don't look quite as romantic as I once imagined them. I wash my clothes and body using buckets of water and can now appreciate the convenience of last century's inventions.

In many ways, living in Turkmenistan is like going back in time. Here, drinking tea late into the night is common practice. The Internet has been kept at arm's length and has not yet dominated or altered life. Sometimes, I bemoan the fact that this suspicious government blocks my right to access Facebook. Other times, I am so grateful to see what life feels like without constant connection to the Internet. Here, human connection dominates. Life is slower. And, there is always time for a run.

Tracey Goldner is a Community Health Volunteer in Turkmenistan. When not running, she enjoys perusing Turkmen bazaars, learning about local customs and throwing theme parties with her students.



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OPEN MINDS AND OPEN TRAILS

Bulgaria Volunteers train for the Athens Marathon

by Neysa Nankervis

What are you running away from?" "Why are you running?" "I don't understand why you run by here everyday." These are just a few of the questions we hear on a typical run in Bulgaria.

When Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) in Bulgaria get together one would think their stories would differ, given Bulgaria's diversity. However there are certain attributes that are shared throughout the country. Bulgarians are generally superstitious, love their wine and rakia (an incredibly potent liquor made with fermented fruit), and are extremely family oriented. And for Volunteers who like to run, we now recognize one other thing that Bulgarians have in common—the cultural divide when it comes to running or jogging.



Seth Stewart

For life and health!

Bulgarians generally don't run and they don't understand why anyone would want to. When I tell them running is good for my health, I often get the reply, "Just drink rakia if you want to lower your blood pressure and

red wine if you want to raise it." When I run in the summer my neighbor tells me that it is too hot outside and I will get sick. In the winter I literally have grandmothers chasing me to get inside because I am not wearing warm-enough socks and am going to catch a cold.

Normally these circumstances would be discouraging, but they have instead motivated me and many of my fellow Volunteers to run even more. Some of us even decided to run the original marathon, the course that started them all: Athens.

The first time I went running in Bulgaria I decided to explore the outskirts of my village. My counterpart drove by me and asked if I needed a ride somewhere. I told him no, that I like to run and wanted to run (that was all the Bulgarian I could manage at the time). Later that week a man approached me

From left to right,
Seth Stewart, Jose Luis Lomeli, Robert Evans, Neysa Nankervis, Thomas Youmans, Cameron Ottens, Tracy Minard, Jez McMillen and Koji Dae.



Jose Luis Lomeli



In front of the Erechtheion. This is after the race, we are wearing our medals, and for some of us it was really hard to walk up those steps to see the sites as we were so sore!

Seth Stewart

looking very concerned. He told me that my counterpart had called saying that I must hate the village—why else would I be running away? He actually wondered if there was something wrong with me, and was scared that his Volunteer might have some “issues.” I assured the man that, no, as far as I am concerned I have no problems, and that running is quite normal in America.

His response: “You aren’t in America anymore.”

As the months went on and my Bulgarian improved, I was able to have full conversations with Bulgarians that I passed. I had to run through four different villages in order to rack up the mileage needed to train for a marathon. As I ran through one village there was an old man who always sat on a little bench in his front yard. I would wave to him and he would give me that confused look to which I had grown accustomed. One day, while herding his goats, he pointed at me with his shepherd’s stick and asked me to come over. He asked in a very quiet voice, “What are you running away from?” Nothing, I told him. I am running simply because I like it. He looked

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at me and asked if I was kidding. I explained that I am an American Volunteer living in the village next door and training for a marathon. His look of confusion instantly became a look of admiration and he scanned me up and down, seeing if in fact I was in good enough shape to run. When he had made his assessment (apparently I had passed) he said, "So will you run through here again?" From then on I looked forward to our random mid-run meetings where my new friend would offer words of encouragement, helping me to just keep running.

At times, our antics actually inspired Bulgarians to run with us. Early in her training, Tracy, one of the nine Volunteers training for Athens with me, was approached by a friend who wanted to come with her on a run:

I knew when Zicra got to my house that this run wasn't going to count for much in terms of a typical training-for-a-marathon-run. My friend showed up with some lovely Bulgarian sneakers—horrible shoes with no support and in no way fit for a good run. She was carrying a change purse and when I asked if she wanted to keep it at my apartment, she simply responded, "No, I need my phone." I thought to myself, "Well be



Neysa Nankervis

There is one store in our village and this is the group of villagers that I always visit.

running so what's the use of a phone?" We walked towards the outskirts of the village to start our jog when Zicra turned towards a small shop. "To buy cigarettes!" she said with a smile. That day we probably only ran for three or four minutes but were gone for nearly two hours. Zicra has yet to go on another run with me. But, she tried it

that day and I was incredibly grateful for her ability to be open-minded.

For the Volunteers serving in Bulgaria we often feel lucky because the "conditions of hardship" we face may not be as physically challenging as they are for Volunteers in some other regions of the world. However, there are challenges we face every day, intangible ones that are sometimes hard to believe unless you have experienced them. But it is what makes us love Bulgaria.

In Athens, on the starting line of the race we yelled to each other the popular Bulgarian phrase, "For life and health!" Later that day, as we hobbled around with medals around our necks, we realized we were one and the same: we'd broken through a cultural barrier, turning the heads of Bulgarian farmers and grandmothers country-wide, and with pride had showed them what it was to be a runner.



Seth Stewart

From left to right Jose Luis Lomeli, Thomas Youmans and Neysa Nankervis posing with medals after finishing the race. We are tired, hungry, and really need to sit down but are so happy to be done that we can still manage smiles!

Neysa Nankervis is a Community and Organizational Development/Youth Development Volunteer living in a small village in Bulgaria. She works at a correctional school for youth, with the Alternative for Everyone Foundation, and with a doctor's office in a Roma neighborhood.

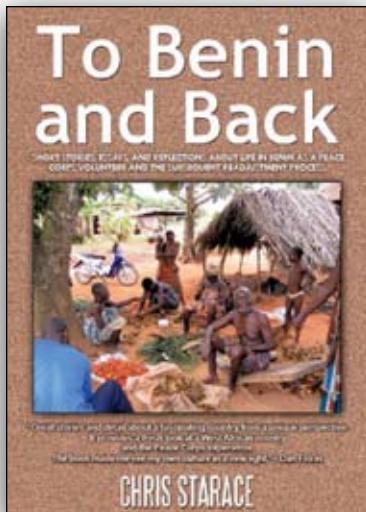
EXCERPT FROM TO BENIN AND BACK

"Ten Days in Dagleta"

by Chris Starace

Mathieu, our Peace Corps chauffeur, turns off the paved road and onto a narrow dirt path that twists and turns past many groups of small mud huts and people are staring at us with intense curiosity as we pass by. We follow the path for about a kilometer, and then turn onto an even narrower sandy path. It is so narrow in fact that the brush on both sides is almost rubbing the sides of the Toyota SUV we are in. We continue down the dusty and bumpy trail through dense brush for another kilometer. As we near the center of the village, a group of small children runs behind our car in excitement. Moments later we pull up in front of a group of mud huts, and I step out into another world. I am immediately surrounded by dozens of children and adults, who are all curious to see me, the Yovo (Whitey). The children are very excited and burst out signing repetitively, "Yovo Yovo bon soir, ça va bien? Merci?" ("Whitey, Good Afternoon, How are you? Thanks" in French). The song is a combination of derision and innocent fun, but we Yovos feel it's more derision than anything else. The Beninese children serenade us Yovos with this song constantly wherever we go. I have been in Benin only one month and I have heard it countless times. It's not very often that a Yovo comes to Dagleta, and the children make the most of it, as I am the first Yovo to have lived in their village since many years ago.

My host Felix shows me to my room, which is in a mud hut that is located in his family compound. The roof is tin and the walls and floors are mud with



a crumbling layer of cement over them. There is no electricity or running water and there is only one window, so it is very hot inside. I knew that it wouldn't be comfortable, but it doesn't matter to me. I am intrigued by the adventure of living in an African village, the likes of which I have only seen on National Geographic documentaries. Already I feel like I am living that exotic experience in a far away land.

My room is not ready, so Felix has some of his children quickly sweep it out. Mathieu leaves me with a mattress, a mosquito net, a case of bottled water, and sheets to sleep on to assure that I have a bare minimum of comfort. Before I know it, the vehicle is gone, and I am left alone, surrounded by dozens of men, women, and children all staring at me intently, trying to get a look at the Yovo. Up to this point I have only experienced cities and small towns in Benin. I have a feeling that living in a Beninese village will be as much of a new experience as arriving in Benin for the first time. I am quite a spectacle in the cities I have been to in Benin, but I can see that effect is

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magnified ten times here in the village. I draw so much attention that I feel my white skin is glowing compared to the almost black skin of the Beninese.

Shortly after I arrive, the adults disperse, but the children follow me everywhere I go and mark my every move. About 30 of them squeeze into my small room, and many peer into the door just to watch me unpack. I cannot close the door because it would be too dark and hot if I did. Hours later they are still here, and they watch me as I am trying to read. I cannot concentrate, so I play the harmonica for them and give them some balloons. They play with

them gleefully, hooting and hollering, and fight over them as if I had given them something precious and novel. Perhaps they have never had their own balloons to play with before, or at least not ones from Yovotome (the land of the white people).

My group of eight Peace Corps small business development trainees has been in Benin for our initial pre-service training for only a month now. Up to this point we have had some exposure to Benin outside of what the Peace Corps has structured for us, but living on our own at our future posts for ten days is a test to make sure we can survive without their

help. Everyone in my training group is relieved to finally find out where we are going to be posted. We are all very excited to get to know the place where we will live for the next two years when our training is over two months from now. The eight of us will be spread all over Benin from north to south, so each of us will surely have a very different experience...

Chris Starace was a Small Business Development Volunteer in Benin from 1995-97. For more information about To Benin and Back, please visit [www.tobeninandback.com](http://tobeninandback.com).

12 REASONS TO DATE A RETURNED VOLUNTEER

by Erica Burman

For Valentine's Day, we posted this tongue-in-cheek list to NPCA's website. To our amazement, it "went viral" and generated enormous attention. We're reprinting it here for the few who may have missed it.

Through the years here at the National Peace Corps Association, we've heard countless stories of Peace Corps romance. The couples that met at the airport on the way to training. The couples that met while serving. The Peace Corps Volunteers that fell in love with a host country national. And the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers that connected in the States, discovering that the shared bond of Peace Corps service was the spark that led to a relationship.

Peace Corps is a life-changing experience that develops a unique set of skills and attributes. So it goes without saying: **Returned Peace Corps Volunteers make GREAT dates.** And just to prove it, we've started a list.

1. We can woo you in multiple languages. Who else is going to whisper sweet nothings to you in everything from Albanian to Hausa to Quechua to Xhosa? That's right. Only a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.

2. We're pretty good dancers. Yeah, we don't like to brag, but after 27 months in Latin America or Africa we know how to move it.

3. We'll eat anything. Seriously. No matter how bad your cooking, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers have had worse and will eat it with nary a blink. Sheep's eyeball? Water buffalo gall bladder? Grasshoppers? Bush rat? Bring it.

4. We know all about safe sex, thanks to our very thorough Peace Corps health training. In fact, there's a chance that we've stood unblushingly in front of hundreds of villagers and demonstrated good condom technique with a large wooden phallus.

5. We'll kill spiders for you. Well, actually, we'll nonchalantly scoop them up and put them out of sight. Same goes for mice, geckos, frogs, snakes. Critters don't faze Returned Volunteers.

6. We have great date ideas: wandering a street market, checking out a foreign film, taking in a world music concert, volunteering.... Romantic getaway? Our passport is updated and our suitcase is packed. With us, life is always an adventure.

7. We like you for "you"... not your paycheck. Especially if we are freshly back from service, a local joint with "character" will win out over a

pretentious eatery. Living in a group house? No problem. Does it have running hot water? What luxury!

8. You won't get lost when you're with a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer. Navigating local markets on four continents, we've honed an uncanny sense of direction. Or else we'll ask for directions. We're not afraid to talk to "strangers."

9. Waiting for a late train or bus with us? Don't worry. Been there, done that. We can share lots of funny stories about "the bus ride from hell" that will make the time go quickly and put it all into perspective.

10. Our low-maintenance fashion style. Returned Peace Corps Volunteer guys are secure in their manhood and don't mind rocking a sarong. Women often prefer flip-flops to high heels. We don't spend hours in front of a mirror getting ready to go out.

11. Marry us, and you won't just get one family—you'll get two! When we refer to our "brother" or "mom," you'll want to be certain we're talking about our American one or our Peace Corps one. You might even get two wedding ceremonies, one in the U.S. and one back in our Peace Corps country.

12. And last but not least, we aren't afraid to get dirty.

PURPOSE PRIZE WINNERS EMBODY PEACE CORPS IDEALS

Older RPCVs continue to make extraordinary contributions to society

by Michele Melendez

Though three decades have passed since his Peace Corps service, Timothy Will has long embraced the values and skills that propelled him those many years ago in Honduras and Fiji.

In Honduras, Will taught school kids horticulture through an economic development program. In the Fijian Islands, he managed redevelopment

projects in typhoon-torn villages, helping to rebuild schools. And more recently, the 63-year-old built on that important work to bring economic development to Appalachia. This work earned him a \$100,000 Purpose Prize.

The Purpose Prize (www.encore.org/prize) awards people 60 and older who are making extraordinary contributions to society in their encore

careers. Now in its seventh year, the prize has recognized several Peace Corps alums and social entrepreneurs whose work depends on the generosity and drive of Peace Corps volunteers. The stories of Will and two of his fellow Prize winners who are changing lives speak volumes about the impact of the Peace Corps and the value of the years beyond 60.



Tim Will,
2009 Purpose
Prize winner.

CivicVentures

TIMOTHY WILL, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Timothy Will saw that his adopted community—which he chose for its stunning beauty—was decaying. Textile and furniture manufacturing jobs, the Appalachian county's employment backbone, had moved elsewhere. The area lacked the technological infrastructure to support new business. Internet access was scarce.

A former telecommunications systems analyst, Will had spent years introducing complex technological innovations in the Caribbean and South America. When he got to Rutherford County, N.C., in 2006, he joined Foothills Connect Business & Technology Center—an organization that promotes small enterprise—and began to connect the county's agrarian past to a digitally supported future.

Will persuaded farmers to grow specialty crops for restaurants in Charlotte, about 90 minutes away. At the same time, he got the entire county wired with fiber-optic cable and created an online ordering system to encourage restaurant owners to order directly from local farmers.

To attract chefs, the farmers switched from traditional crops, which might have yielded a few hundred dollars per acre, to more gourmet fare, such as shiitake mushrooms and heirloom tomatoes. That produce can bring in thousands of dollars—up to \$30,000—an acre, Will estimates.

The venture has lured unemployed factory workers back to farming, and the local economy is gaining ground. Since then, Will, who taught high school in Miami before moving to Rutherford County, has returned to teaching, with a course load of advanced placement classes in government, human geography and macroeconomics at a public charter school.

Will says his time in the Peace Corps, which he served alongside his wife, taught him that there is no higher calling than to serve others. And on a deeply personal level, he says, "The Peace Corps bonded my relationship to my wife. We have been married for 37 years and service in the Peace Corps set the tone for our marriage: hard work and service to social justice."



Civic Ventures

Ed Mazria, 2011 Purpose Prize winner.

EDWARD MAZRIA, ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Edward Mazria, who served in the Peace Corps in Peru during the mid-1960s, thought he knew the impact of his field on the environment. An award-winning architect, he had a 40-year record of innovation and advocacy in sustainable building. So he was surprised when in 2002 his analysis of U.S. government data revealed that the building sector consumes nearly half of all energy produced in the United States, causing about half of all greenhouse gas emissions yearly.

In 2003, Mazria founded Architecture 2030 in Santa Fe, N.M., to persuade the building sector to change its ways. Three years later he issued the 2030 Challenge, a set of benchmarks for transforming the built environment (buildings, homes and other man-made structures) to “carbon neutral” by 2030. The goal: Turn the greatest contributor to climate change into the leading solution.

The American Institute of Architects, U.S. Conference of Mayors, U.S. Green Building Council and National Governors Association immediately adopted the challenge. Legislation followed, requiring all federal buildings to meet the 2030 Challenge targets starting in 2010. In addition, many states and cities have adopted the targets.

Now Mazria, 71, is developing a program (to be available free online) designed to expand proven methods of sustainable planning and building globally.

He credits the Peace Corps for helping him shape his work and outlook over the years. While designing buildings, schools and bridges, among other responsibilities during his service in Peru, Mazria saw the effects of poverty, malnutrition, disease, inadequate housing and other challenges, learning about “what is meaningful and what doesn’t make sense, culturally and economically.”

“I remember the phone company installing public telephone booths on street corners around the plaza in Arequipa,” Mazria says. “Within 24 hours all the booths were stripped bare—the metal used for construction, glass ending up as windows in homes, wiring used to install a light. In other words, to fill more pressing needs.”



Civic Ventures

Nancy Hughes, 2011 Purpose Prize winner.

NANCY SANFORD HUGHES, SAFE COOKSTOVES

Nancy Sanford Hughes felt lost after the death of her husband, a doctor, from cancer in 2001. During their 30-year marriage, she’d been mostly a stay-at-home mom. Instead of taking it easy, Hughes volunteered to cook for a 120-member medical mission in the highlands of Guatemala.

As Hughes toiled in the makeshift kitchen, thousands of people came to see the doctors each day. Most of their conditions—chronic coughs, respiratory infections and horrific burns—stemmed from open fires in unventilated homes or from carrying firewood. She thought, “We need to do something to prevent these medical problems rather than treating them.”

Hughes, 69, created StoveTeam International, which since 2008 has helped local entrepreneurs establish six factories that have manufactured and sold the affordable, fuel-efficient Ecocina stove.

Portable, smokeless, cool to the touch and needing just three or four pieces of kindling to cook a meal, the stove has replaced the open cooking fire in more than 15,000 homes across Central America, reaching more than 90,000 people.

According to the World Health Organization, smoke exposure from traditional cooking methods in developing countries causes more than 2 million premature deaths annually, mostly of women and children. So StoveTeam, based in Eugene, Ore., is expanding its focus by helping develop Ecocina factories in Mexico, Kenya, Fiji and Ghana.

The initial factory owner in Nahulingo, El Salvador, owes his continued success to Peace Corps volunteers, Hughes says. “He initially contacted a few of them and offered to demonstrate Ecocina stoves in their villages. They were so impressed with the program that they spread the word to others.”

Hughes adds: “The number of Peace Corps volunteers involved is too numerous to count.”

Know someone worthy of The Purpose Prize? Nominate them at www.encore.org/prize.

Michele Melendez is the Associate Director for Communications at Civic Ventures.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR COMMUNITY

by JoAnna Haugen

BULGARIA

Donna Steiger (00-01) recently received an honorary doctorate in human rights and was named an honorary professor at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, Bulgaria, for her work to improve life for people with disabilities there. She has worked with the International Executive Service Corps and assisted as a consultant with the development of western tourism standards in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Poland after the Berlin Wall came down. Steiger has been founder, co-founder president or owner of several organizations and businesses including the San Francisco Municipal Theater, San Francisco Blind Acting Troupe and Travel Central School in Seattle, Wash.

ECUADOR

Sue Fritzke (82-85) has been named deputy superintendent for the East Bay national parks near San Francisco. These include Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site, John Muir National Historic Site, Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Monument and Rosie the Riveter/World War II National Historic Park. She began her National Park Service career in 1985 at Yosemite National Park. Fritzke has also worked at Mount Rainier National Park, Redwood National Park and Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

ECUADOR, HONDURAS

Richard Allen (Ecuador 64-66, Honduras 99-00) is on a mission to donate used bikes to day laborers in his town so they can get around town easier. He is a former sales engineer in the construction industry and has worked in commercial real estate. Allen has participated in numerous volunteer projects in Honduras, Nicaragua and post-Katrina New Orleans.

ESTONIA

Lisa Martin (96-98) has been named as Silver Spring Town Center Inc.'s first executive director. This Maryland non-profit organization was created to coordinate public arts and entertainment events including summer concert performances, monthly arts discussions and annual events like the Silver Springs Blues Festival. Martin has worked on the International VSA Festival (which is part of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts) and with the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C.

ETHIOPIA

Doug Eadie's (64-67) latest book, "Leading Out-Of-The-Box Change", will be published by Governance Edge Publishing and released in January 2012. The book provides hands-on guidance to nonprofit and public leaders in accomplishing significant innovation.



GABON

Bonnie Lee Black's (96-98) book "How to Cook a Crocodile: A Memoir with Recipes," received three awards

from Gourmand International in the categories of Food Literature, African Cuisine (Gabon) and Charity and Community (North America). Black is an instructor at the University of New Mexico-Taos.



GUATEMALA

Niki Woodard (01-03) recently opened her own public relations and marketing firm, Spiral-PR, which offers a full suite of communication services. Prior to going into business for herself, Woodard was the communications and development director for Sequoia Riverlands Trust, and a research associate with The Pew Research Center: Project for Excellence in Journalism.

GUYANA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, TANZANIA

Earl M. Brown, Jr. (Tanzania 64-66, 92-94; Guyana 02-04) has been hired by Livingstone College to establish the N.C. Study Abroad/Global Engagement, a consortium of North Carolina's historically

black colleges and universities meant to ensure more African American students study abroad and more faculty members spend time teaching outside the United States. He has worked in various capacities on four continents including positions as senior development planner for the Research Triangle Institute, director of the Office of Program and Field Operations for the African Development Foundation and country director for the Peace Corps in Guyana and Papua New Guinea. Brown worked at Elizabeth City State University from 1988 to 1998, where he helped design and implement a study abroad consortium.

IRAN

Donna E. Shalala (62-64) was named to the National Woman's Hall of Fame in 2011. She has more than thirty years of experience as a scholar, teacher and administrator. Shalala began her career as an assistant professor at Bernard Baruch College and later at Teachers College, Columbia University. From there she served as president of Hunter College and chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 1993, President Clinton appointed Shalala as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. In 2001, she became the president of the University of Miami. Shalala is a director of Gannett Co., Inc., the Lennar Corporation and Mednax, Inc. She has received more than three dozen honorary degrees and countless other honors, including the Presidential of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award.

LESOTHO

David J. Chard (86-90) was named to the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences by President Barack Obama. Chard is the Leon Simmons Endowed Dean and a professor at the Southern Methodist University's Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development. Prior to that position, he served as the director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Special Education, associate dean of the

College of Education and director of Middle-Secondary Education at the University of Oregon.

MALAYSIA

Leonard Edwards (66-68) was named 2011 Los Altan of the Year. Edwards was appointed as Superior Court of California County of Santa Clara Family and Juvenile Court judge in 1980, and though he retired in 2006, he is now a consulting judge. Among his many achievements, Edwards has founded or co-founded six different organizations or groups that help children, received more than 50 awards at local and national levels, published three books and dozens of published articles, held ten different teaching positions and made more than 500 presentations on issues related to juvenile and family courts.

MOROCCO

Jeff McCusker (86-88) is the new trail manager for the North Country Trail, a 4,600-mile, seven-state trail running from New York to North Dakota. The trail is overseen by the National Park Service. In addition to his time in the Peace Corps, McCusker spent a year in Mongolia working for the United Nations on plans to build the first national park in the country. He also worked on trails in Gombe National Park in Tanzania. In addition, McCusker has plans to travel to Mozambique to help locals learn trail-building techniques at Gorongosa National Park for a trail system that will go around Mount Gorongosa.

NIGER

Laura Lewis (00-02) is the new director of the Washington State University Jefferson County Extension. She has most recently been working at the University of Maryland's Baltimore campus where she was an assistant professor of biogeography. Lewis has experience conducting research for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington state and California, and she has worked with farmers in Central and Eastern Washington who manage fruit trees and cereal crops.

NIGER

Meg Garlinghouse (89-92) is the head of LinkedIn for Good, which connects more than 135 million professionals who share knowledge about and experience with non-profit organizations around the world. Garlinghouse has worked extensively in the technology and philanthropy sectors. She currently serves on the Boards of Network for Good and VolunteerMatch.



NIGERIA

Floyd Sandford (64-66) recently hiked 56 miles in five days in northern England; 48 of those miles were along Hadrian's Wall. The retired Coe College professor hiked alone from west to east. He is currently planning a hike along the Superior Trail from Duluth, Minn., to the Canadian border. Sandford is the author of "African Odyssey."

PERU

Mosaicist Isaiah Zagar (64-67) created folk art all around Philadelphia when he returned from the Peace Corps. One of his projects involved covering a rowhouse on South Street with mosaics—more than 3,000 square feet worth—including pieces of mirror and original poetry. This is now known as Philadelphia's Magic Gardens, which was noted by The New York Times as one of the top five attractions in the city.

SIERRA LEONE

Judith Weber has been appointed by the Supreme Judicial Court to head the Chelsea Housing Authority as its receiver, the first in CHA history. A housing expert from Newton, Mass., Weber is presently employed by VIVA

Consulting of Cambridge. She has worked for many housing authorities across the nation, most recently with the Cambridge Housing Authority. Weber also presently serves on the public housing committee of the Commonwealth Housing Task Force and is director and vice president of the Newton Community Development Foundation.

SOUTH AFRICA

Steven Gerner is the co-owner of Squarz Pies, which is based in Mesa, Arizona. The pies come in several varieties including steak fajita, steak, spinach and feta, pepperoni pizza, chicken and mushroom, chicken, breakfast, BBQ pork and apple. Right now, Squarz Pies products can only be bought at farmers' markets in the Phoenix Valley.

THAILAND

The Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative has named **Marcia Nielsen, Ph.D., MPH**, (88-90) as executive director of the organization beginning January 2, 2012. She most recently served as associate dean for health policy at the University of Kansas Medical Center, and she was named the department of health policy and management's Professor of the Year for 2011.

Thomas Rhoden (05-07) is the most recent author to research and



write a travel guide for the new publishing house, Other Places Publishing. Writing under the pen name T.F. Rhoden, he has published five Southeast Asia-inspired books including his most recent, "Chiang Mai and Northern Thailand." He is currently pursuing his doctorate degree at Northern Illinois University.

UKRAINE

Jeremy Gleason was named Alaska Youth Soccer Association's coach of the year. He has been coaching the Juneau Soccer Club's Capital City Strikers (a team of 12- and 13-year-old boys) for three years. This year Gleason's team won the Alaska Airlines Cup in June, and it was a runner up in the State Cup tournament in August. Gleason is also a volunteer assistant coach for Juneau-Douglas High School and a volunteer coach for the Juneau Soccer Club. Gleason is a certified teacher and works with students in the Juneau School District who are in jeopardy of dropping out of high school.

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