

Partnership

The Quarterly Publication of Peace Corps' Office of Private Sector Initiatives

OPSI Goes to School

The Peace Corps Partnership Program started its life as a conduit to help American schools improve educational facilities in developing countries. While our office has expanded the scope of our mission, we continue to value and encourage those schools that work with us, often over the course of many years. In the past several months our office has had the opportunity to visit schools in Texas, Michigan, Montana, and New York to talk with students about how to help Peace Corps Volunteers help people all around the world.



Corcoran High School

One school that we have been very proud to work with through the years is Corcoran High School in Syracuse New York. Over 23 years, Corcoran has donated over \$100,000 to the Partnership Program, benefiting 18 different countries.

At the end of October our Program Specialist in charge of the European, Mediterranean and Asia region, Elena Sergio, had the opportunity to go to

Syracuse and talk to the students and faculty that make this partnership enduring and successful. This trip was also an opportunity to film the students' involvement for a film that the Peace Corps is creating to educate schools and donors about our program.

The heart of Corcoran High School's fund raising effort is the schools International Relations Club.

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-Africa Region-

A Dry Student is a Good Student Masaga, Tanzania



Access to a quality education is a key facet of every parents dream: that their children will have even more opportunities in life then they had. That is why it was so difficult for the parents of Masaga, Tanzania to watch their children struggle to learn due to the poor state of their school. Situated in the Southern highlands of Tanzania, the Masage Primary School has fallen badly into disrepair. There were only a few desks in the school, forcing the 260 students of Masaga to crowd together on thin benches, with many having to settle for sitting on the mud floors. As there was no electricity in the school, it was necessary to keep the windows open at all times in order to conduct lessons. However, this would become utterly miserable for the students during the rainy season. As rain poured through the open windows and onto the dirt floors, the students were forced to huddle in the center of the room and would try to concentrate on their studies. For the Peace Corps Volunteer and the community it was clear that work needed to be done.

Due to a fervent commitment to improve their children's education, the town leaders and the Peace Corps Volunteer were able to get the entire community involved in this project. Through months of hard work, the classrooms were brought up to a level that would allow the students to focus on their education. Cement floors were added to the school rooms, which made the classrooms more useable and avoided the old problem of runoff from the nearby hillside when rain fell. Windows were installed allowing the entire classroom to be used during the heart of the rainy season. The roof was patched, and the dangerously dilapidated pathways of the school were repaired. Doors with locks were installed, allowing the teachers to store material at the school. Finally, desks were brought in so that each student would have a place to work.

By bringing the school up to basic standards, the students of the Masage Primary school are now able to concentrate on their studies with out having to put up with so many distractions and discomfort. Due to the strong participation by the entire village of Masaga, the town's people have seen that they do not have to wait for government support to improve their community. They truly feel empowered to shape tomorrow for themselves. The community saw their future in their schools, and that future is looking a lot brighter due to their wonderful work and the tireless dedication of their Peace Corps Volunteer. Now the people of Masaga have a school that they can truly be proud of.



Partnership Program Water Fund

Clean, accessible water supplies are a vital foundation to the development of communities all over the world. This is why in May 2007 the Peace Corps Partnership Program will proudly introduce a water and sanitation fund to help exceptional Volunteer projects in this critical field. The fund will support projects designed to provide safe, affordable, and sustainable supplies of drinking water to communities served by Peace Corps Volunteers.



-EMA-

Medicine on the Ground Floor Ban Tiu, Thailand



As in many rural, agricultural regions all over the world, the youth of Thailand have been drawn to the big city, in this case Bangkok. Left behind in their small villages are those that have the greatest need for sterile, accessible health care facilities: young children and the elderly. This was the crisis that the Ban Tiu health clinic faced. The health clinic served four villages, totalling 4,300 people or 709 families, with only 3 rooms. Impeding the clinic's ability to care for the villagers was the fact that it was on the second story of a building, with 18 stairs coming between the patient and the clinic. This made vital help virtually inaccessible to the elderly and the disabled. Consequently, they either went without help or faced risky or unsafe and unsanitary conditions by getting medical work done in the open air. In addition, the clinic was both ill-equipped and ill-educated to face the threat of Dengue Fever, one of the biggest health risks for people in rural Thailand. The need for better facilities was quickly recognized by the local Peace Corps Volunteer and she seized on this challenge with a gusto that both impressed those in the villages and ensured that they were swept along with it.



This project's hallmark was the strong collaboration that existed between the local citizens and administrators and the Volunteer.



A widely inclusive health clinic committee was formed to oversee this project and advise the community on what was needed to make the project effective. They decided to add a suite of rooms underneath the original clinic, which would include sterile rooms, as well as an internet connection to promote access to health knowledge. To fund this project, the families in the area agreed to each put forward a set amount, making it a true community project. The construction turned into a rousing success, as the entire structure was built in a strikingly fast 30 days. Because the community and local leaders took ownership over the project, problems and disruptions were dealt with smoothly. Even when extra funding was needed to satisfactorily complete the project, the need was quickly met by young professionals from the area working in Bangkok who had not forgotten their home. Celebrated with a large and boisterous opening celebration, this project helped the area villagers feel empowered to meet the challenges and problems they saw around them as a community.

-IAP-

The Simple Necessity of Clean Water Kru Nikode, Panama



When a person turns a faucet to pour themselves a glass of water, it is easy to forget how vital that simple act is. Personal hygiene, disease prevention, and tremendous efficiency are met by having a clean and consistent source of water near the home. This was the crisis confronting the city of Kru Nikode in Panama. Living near a stream, the people of the village had been dependant on this natural source for all of their water needs. As the city got bigger, constant trips down to the river took up an increasingly large part of villagers' time. Even more problematic was that the city also did not contain lavatories. Unfortunately, the river also came to serve this purpose. These unsanitary practices became a problem that could no longer be tolerated.

Spurred by the challenge, the local Peace Corps Volunteer and the town's residents began to collaborate on developing a source of clean water. Using a very organic fund raising approach, the community contribution came from all 140 residents of the village. This helped to give the community ownership over the project and a passion to see it accomplished. By tapping into a local spring, a sustainable infrastructure now brings water into every household in the village. In order for the village to maintain stable water usage during the dry season, a 2,500 gallon water tank has also been constructed. Most importantly, the water being brought in is filtered, which will play a tremendous role in combating disease. This project has done more than just improve the health and well being of the community. Residents have created a more formal community structure to create and administer the aqueduct. They have also discovered that by working together they can set their sights higher and accomplish more ambitious projects than they had ever imagined by working alone.

THANK YOU QUIZ

To thank you for partnering with the Peace Corps, and to give you something to do this spring, here is a game to test your language skills in the languages of some of the countries our Volunteers are posted in.

1. Spanish	A. Vinaka
2. Russian	B. Rakhmat
3. Chinese	C. Shnorhakalutyen
4. Armenian	D. Ngiyabona
5. Swahili	E. Merci
6. Portugese	F. Falemenderit
7. Albanian	G. Multsumesc
8. Arabic	H. Spasybo
9. Mongolian	I. xie xie
10. French	J. Shukran
11. Kyrgyz	K. Obrigado
12. Fiji	L. Bayarlalaa
13. Romanian	M. Asante
14. Zulu	N. Gracias

Quiz answers are found on page 6.

OPSI Goes to School

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Nurtured by Jim Miller, a former teacher at Corcoran, the club was created with the hope that it would encourage students to think globally. In order to raise money the students have been very creative, most notably with the art classes creating beautiful post cards that were sold to raise money.

While Elena was in Syracuse, she had the opportunity to observe members of the International Relations Club talking to 6th graders at Roberts Elementary School. They shared how Corcoran has been able to help the Peace Corps Volunteers make a real tangible improvement in peoples' lives. Suddenly the exotic places the students had heard about did not seem quite so distant.

These kinds of relationships with young students is so important to us because they can be the basis of a life long passion to really take an interest and help make a difference in the lives of people beyond our borders. Everyone came away from this visit really excited about what the Partnership Program can achieve, not only with those that benefit in the countries that Peace Corps partners with, but also what it can do for global interest and understanding here in America.

Hamilton Middle School

The chance to support a Peace Corps Volunteer's project is wonderful, but when a school can support a former student of theirs it is really special. This was the great opportunity presented to Hamilton Middle School in Missoula, Montana. When violent rainstorms descended on a small village in Uganda, large swaths of town were destroyed, including two school buildings. This obvious need spurred the local Peace Corps Volunteer to partner with the local community to rebuild the school so that students could return to their studies.

After hearing about this tragedy, Hamilton Middle School were eager to respond. In order to raise money for the reconstruction the school decided to hold a change drive, in which the students donated the money that they would have used to buy snacks. It is amazing how much can be done when a whole school puts their nickels and dimes together.

To honor their involvement with the Peace Corps our Africa Program Specialist, Adam Stinelli, visited Hamilton Middle School. Adam had the opportunity to talk about the Peace Corps and, before a school assembly, present the school with a certificate of appreciation signed by the Director to honor their wonderful contribution.

Austin, Texas and Detroit, Michigan

The opportunity to spread the word about the Peace Corps Partnership Program to schools that are not currently involved is something we really take pride in. Our OPSI Fiscal Specialist Matt Smith had this chance as he zipped across the country earlier this year. In the first leg of his trip, Matt went to Texas and visited 6 schools in Colleen and Austin. Matt was also able to spend a whirlwind day in Detroit getting to three different schools. At these stops, Matt was able to share with the students about the Peace Corps and its Partnership Program.

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**How else can we help Peace Corps
Projects?**

In-Kind Donations

If you have books, school supplies, computers, or anything that you think might be of use for Volunteers to give away, consider giving them as an In-Kind donation to Peace Corps. If you are worried about having the resources to ship the items, local civic groups are a great source for this kind of sponsorship.

Matching Gifts

Matching Gifts are a great way to increase the value of your donation. Many companies will include this in their community service strategy. So if you are thinking of getting involved with us, check with your company and see if they want to get involved as well.

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But most importantly he was able to share how much good the students of these schools can do. In addition, as a returned Volunteer, Matt Smith was the perfect person to answer the wide range of questions the students had. The Peace Corps has so many opportunities for students to get involved, from contributing to projects to corresponding with Volunteers, that we are so excited to get out there and share with them.

Answers to the Thank You Quiz
on Page 4:

1-N, 2-H, 3-I, 4-C, 5-M, 6-K, 7-F, 8-J, 9-L, 10-E,
11-B, 12-A, 13-G, 14-D

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