

RPCV Update

AN UPDATE FOR RPCVS AND FRIENDS OF THE PEACE CORPS

Promote World Peace and Friendship During Peace Corps Week March 1-7, 2004

During Peace Corps Week, join thousands of RPCVs and current and former Peace Corps staff in celebrating the Peace Corps' 43rd anniversary. Help Americans nationwide increase their understanding of the world and its people. Register online or by mail and receive a free presentation kit, including souvenirs for student and community audiences. Visit the Peace Corps Week website for ideas, suggestions, and resources for setting up your presentation and sharing your experiences.

Register online:

www.peacecorps.gov/pcweek

Search for a local teacher who is interested in an RPCV classroom presentation through a new website developed by the National Peace Corps Association. You can also register online to indicate your willingness to make a classroom presentation. This new website is linked to the Peace Corps Week website at peacecorps.gov/pcweek.

If you have any questions,

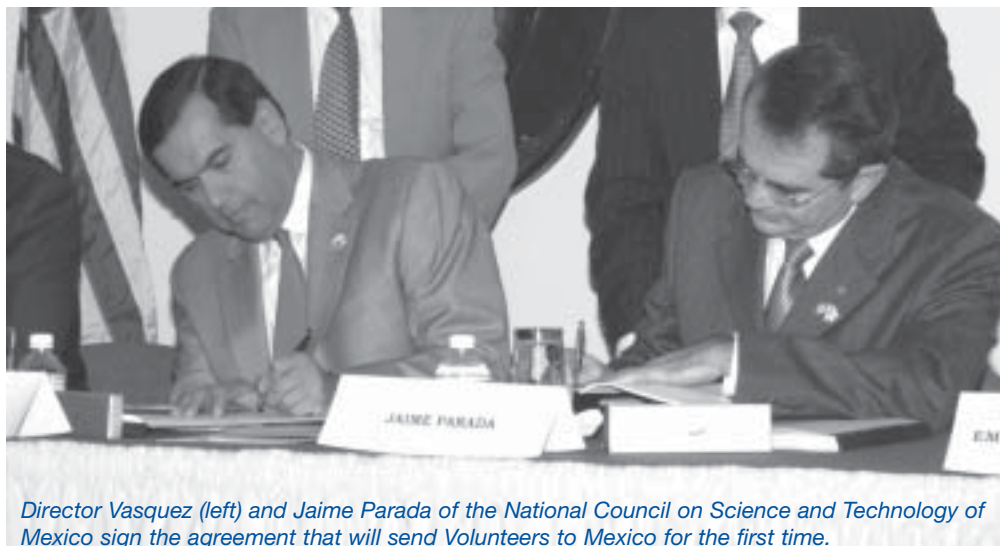
call 800.424.8580

(press 2, then ext.1961),

or e-mail pcday@peacecorps.gov



Peace Corps Week 2004 presentation kit materials



Director Vasquez (left) and Jaime Parada of the National Council on Science and Technology of Mexico sign the agreement that will send Volunteers to Mexico for the first time.

Peace Corps Signs Historic Partnership Agreement with Mexico

Agreement to Place First Volunteers in Science, Technology, and Small Business Development Programs

On November 12, 2003, Peace Corps Director Gaddi H. Vasquez signed a historic agreement with Mexico that will lead to Peace Corps Volunteers serving in Mexico for the first time.

"The citizens of the United States and Mexico have shared culture, family connections, history, and common triumphs, and now, for the first time, Peace Corps Volunteers will be a part of that tradition and history," Director Vasquez stated at the signing ceremony. "The Peace Corps is in a historic time and nothing could be more historic than this partnership with the citizens of Mexico and CONACYT. As Peace Corps continues to expand and reach new areas of the world, it will be through innovative partnerships like the one we are signing today."

Director Jaime Parada Avila signed the agreement on behalf of the National Council on Science and Technology (CONACYT) of Mexico at the ceremony

at the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C. U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Tony Garza and Mexican Ambassador to the U.S. Juan Jose Bremer were also there to witness the signing.

Peace Corps Volunteers assigned to Mexico will work in partnership with CONACYT in the areas of information technology, small business development, and science and technology. A Peace Corps assessment team has worked closely with CONACYT to select sites and determine the best way to utilize the Volunteers. The Peace Corps will send its first group of 15 to 20 Volunteers to Mexico in 2004.

The Peace Corps first began exploring the possibility of opening a Mexico program after President George W. Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox announced the "Partnership for Prosperity" initiative during their summit in September 2001.

On Volunteer Safety and Security

A recent series of stories in the *Dayton Daily News* suggested that over the past 30-plus years, the Peace Corps has failed to provide adequate safety for Peace Corps Volunteers. The stories focused on some tragic and difficult events that have affected lives and communities here in the United States and overseas. The Peace Corps family mourns every life lost. And every crime against a Volunteer is a reminder that we must remain vigilant and continue to enhance the safety and security of every Peace Corps Volunteer.

Each Peace Corps director beginning with Sargent Shriver, the agency's first director, has placed a high priority on Volunteers' safety. While the Peace Corps will never be able to issue an absolute guarantee of safety, it remains committed to developing optimum conditions for a safe and fulfilling experience for every Volunteer. Since I took office in February 2002, the safety and security of Volunteers have remained my No. 1 priority.

Based on my experience as a former public safety official and aided by suggestions of others in the agency and Volunteers in the field, the Peace Corps has made a number of safety enhancements. In 2002, a reorganization created a new Office of Safety and Security and increased by 80 the number of full-time safety and security staff. This staff, which includes a chief compliance offi-

cer, was restructured to better communicate, supervise, monitor, and help set safety and security policy. In addition, each Peace Corps post now has a safety and security coordinator in-country to oversee Volunteer safety in the field.

While establishing new training procedures, expanding staff resources, and ensuring compliance are important, the ultimate evaluation should be measured by results. Over the past two years, the Peace Corps has experienced a significant drop in Volunteer deaths, major sexual assaults, and minor assaults.

For an accurate look at the Peace Corps' global safety and security record over the past two years, I invite you to visit the Peace Corps website at peacecorps.gov/safety.

Notwithstanding the statistical data, the most effective tool for gauging success is to ask Volunteers. Every two years, the Peace Corps conducts a global survey to measure the levels of Volunteer satisfaction with programming, safety, medical, and other key indicators. In the most recent survey, which had a 68 percent response rate:

- Volunteers were asked how safe they considered their housing, and 97 percent of the respondents replied "Very Safe" to "Adequately Safe."
- Volunteers were asked how safe they felt at their work site, and 99 percent of the respondents replied "Very Safe" to "Adequately Safe."

- Volunteers were asked how safe they felt when they traveled, and 84 percent of the respondents replied "Very Safe" to "Adequately Safe."
- Volunteers were asked if they would make the same decision to join the Peace Corps, and an overwhelming 89 percent responded in the affirmative.

The Peace Corps will not rest on its achievements and accomplishments. It will build on the successes and learn from events as they occur. When President Kennedy outlined his vision of the Peace Corps, he said, "Life in the Peace Corps will not be easy. Men and women will be expected to work and live alongside the nationals in the country in which they are stationed—doing the same work, eating the same food, talking the same language. But if the life will not be easy, it will be rich and satisfying. For every young American who participates in the Peace Corps—who works in a foreign land—will know that he or she is sharing in the great common task of bringing to man that decent way of life which is the foundation of freedom and a condition of peace."

That vision remains strong and vital to the continued promotion of peace and friendship throughout the world. Today, there are 7,533 Volunteers serving in 74 countries, which represents a 28-year high. Americans across the nation continue to show interest in Peace Corps service.

This piece by Director Vasquez was first published as an op-ed in the Dayton Daily News on November 5, 2003.

RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison Are Doing Good—Lots of It

The RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison will be donating more than 65 percent of the profits from the sale of their award-winning international calendar to the Peace Corps Partnership Program, which supports Volunteer projects around the world. Over the past two years, this group has donated \$98,000 to the Peace Corps Partnership Program.

Rose Ann Scott, chair of the group's finance committee, recognizes the Peace Corps Partnership Program as "a safe, secure way to get money to Peace Corps Volunteers around the world, who are serving in places where small projects can make a difference." The in-country community involvement required by the program is also important to the group; all projects are community initiated and require a 25 percent community contribution.

The Wisconsin group prints nearly 40,000 calendars a year. The calendar provides pictorial memories of Volunteers' experiences and is a teaching aid that introduces Americans to many of the cultures of the world. All proceeds from calendar sales are used to support grass-roots projects.

For more information about the calendar, visit rpcvmadison.org.

For a list of Volunteer projects in need of funding:

Visit peacecorps.gov/contribute, call 800.424.8580, ext. 2170, or e-mail pcpp@peacecorps.gov.

Peace Corps Contributions Lauded Worldwide

President Bush Praises Volunteers in the Philippines

On October 18, 2003, President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush greeted Peace Corps Volunteers and staff and the U.S. Mission employees at the American Embassy in the Philippines. The president, an enthusiastic supporter of the Peace Corps, acknowledged the positive work of the agency in his remarks. Since 1971, a total of 7,929 Volunteers have worked in the Philippines, primarily with Filipino teachers and officials to increase their fluency in English and to improve their teaching skills. Volunteers have also worked on environmental projects aimed at improving water quality and sanitation.

Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith Speaks at the Peace Corps

On October 27, 2003, Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith, the sister of President John F. Kennedy, spoke at the Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps headquarters in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The ambassador is the founder of VSA arts, an international nonprofit organization that works to ensure that people with disabilities can learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts.

The ambassador applauded the work of Peace Corps Volunteers with disabilities who serve overseas and set examples for people around the world, as well as the work of Volunteers who aid individuals with disabilities in their overseas assignments. Ambassador Smith remarked that the Peace Corps and VSA arts share aspirations and a positive view of the world and that, through both organizations, the vision of President Kennedy will be realized.

Ecuador Recognizes Peace Corps for 40+ Years of Volunteer Service

On October 28, 2003, Ecuadorian Ambassador Raul Gangotena—on behalf of the president and government of Ecuador—recognized the contributions Peace Corps Volunteers have made to the people of Ecuador by presenting the Peace Corps with the National Order of Merit. Peace Corps Director Gaddi H. Vasquez accepted the medal on behalf of the more than 5,700 Volunteers who have served in Ecuador since 1962. This award is

made by the president of Ecuador for outstanding service to the nation in public administration, national or foreign diplomacy, literature, or the arts. To commemorate the occasion, the government of Ecuador sent a thousand roses, and a brass band of young Ecuadorians played the national anthem of both countries.

Current Volunteer projects include agriculture, natural resource management, rural health, and youth at risk.



Director Vasquez (left), Ambassador Gangotena (center), and Ecuadorian band members at ceremony.





Rep. Kolbe and a congressional delegation visit with Peace Corps Volunteers in Guatemala.

Congressional Delegation Visits Volunteers in Central America

Peace Corps Volunteers recently told their stories—the daily triumphs and challenges of working in Central American communities—to members of the House of Representatives during a visit in September. The delegation included Reps. Jim Kolbe of Arizona, Pete Stark of California, Mike Thompson of California, Candice Miller of Michigan, and Earl Blumenauer of Oregon.

The delegation visited Costa Rica and Guatemala and learned firsthand the impact Volunteers make in those countries.

After hearing Volunteers' stories, Rep. Kolbe, who chairs the House Appropriations Committee's Foreign Operations Subcommittee, praised the Volunteers for their efforts. "Peace Corps Volunteers are America's true ambassadors," he said. "It is heartwarming and inspirational to hear the Peace Corps Volunteers talk about both their work and their connection to their communities. Volunteers have a significant role to play in helping promote a more positive image of America, a task that is critically needed in today's world."

Worldwide



The National Peace Corps Association
2004 Conference

Chicago
August 5-8, 2004

Conference activities will include a career fair and Peace Corps workshops on the following topics:

- Update on key Peace Corps initiatives
- Crisis Corps
- Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools program
- Fellows/USA
- Opportunities for RPCVs to assist with recruiting
- Serving as a Volunteer for the second time

For more information, visit www.rpcv2004.org or www.rpcv.org

The RPCV Update is a free newsletter for returned Peace Corps Volunteers, current and former staff, and friends of the Peace Corps. The RPCV Update is also available in an electronic format. To continue to receive the newsletter, please fill in the following information, detach the card, and drop it in the mail. You may also put this information in the body of an e-mail message and send it to the database manager at rpcvupdate@peacecorps.gov. Please put "RPCV Update" in the subject line.

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The collection of this information is authorized by provisions of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2501, et seq.). Information will be used to involve former Volunteers in agency affairs and recruitment, and to keep addresses for informational mailings. Providing information is voluntary.

Has any of your contact information changed?

RPCV Educator Receives Coverdell Award for Excellence

On October 30, 2003, Peace Corps Director Gaddi H. Vasquez awarded educator Mary O. Nasibi the third annual Paul D. Coverdell Award for Excellence.

Nasibi teaches English as a second language at the Marie H. Reed Community Learning Center, a public elementary school of 490 students in Washington, D.C. She served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Liberia, where she taught elementary school from 1965 to 1967.

Since 1993, Nasibi and her classes have participated in the Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools match program, which allows U.S. students to communicate with actively serving Peace Corps Volunteers overseas. Her classes are currently matched with [Maria Arias](#), a Volunteer serving in Nepal. At the award ceremony, eight students from Nasibi's classes presented what they have learned from the Peace Corps classroom education program.

In addition, Nasibi has been a Peace Corps Day participant since 1998, inviting at least 20 returned Volunteers to participate each year.



"Ms. Nasibi has worked hard to teach her students about the value of serving as a Volunteer, not only overseas but also in our communities," remarked Director Vasquez. "We are extremely grateful for Ms. Nasibi's continued commitment to the Peace Corps community."

The Paul D. Coverdell Award for Excellence pays tribute to educators who have helped students achieve greater cross-cultural understanding through resources of the Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools program. The World Wise Schools program was established by the late Senator Paul D. Coverdell, who was Peace Corps director in 1989, and it was named in his honor by the U.S. Senate in 2001.



Above, Paul Coverdell in Guatemala.

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First Fellows/USA Program Receives Endowment; Wisconsin School Joins Partnership

The Peace Corps Fellows/USA program at Teachers College, Columbia University, in New York recently received an endowment from Dress Barn Chairman and CEO Elliot S. Jaffe and his wife, Roslyn. The Jaffes' gift of \$500,000 plus income from a separate \$900,000 scholarship will perpetuate the program's existence and allow Fellows to receive substantial financial assistance for their studies while they teach in some of New York's hardest-to-staff schools.

Fellows/USA is a graduate fellowship program that offers financial benefits to RPCVs who want to earn professional certification or advanced degrees and complete a professional internship in underserved U.S. communities. Fellows/USA programs are sponsored by more than 30 universities nationwide. The newest is an environmental program at University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point.

Visit peacecorps.gov/fellows.

CRISIS CORPS

A Chance to Serve Again

*Are you ready to put your
skills and experience to good
use by serving again on a
short-term basis?*



The Crisis Corps mobilizes qualified RPCVs to assist countries around the world in five broad program areas—humanitarian response, natural disaster relief and reconstruction, HIV/AIDS, disaster preparedness and mitigation, and post-conflict relief and reconstruction. Assignments are opening up in the areas of information technology, business development, health and nutrition, training, and humanitarian relief.

Apply now to be contacted when appropriate assignments become available.

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