

RPCVupdate

NEWS FOR RPCVS AND FRIENDS OF THE PEACE CORPS

All Volunteers Are Equal in Status, Though Some Are Senior

Age should never be a limit on your constantly expanding life.” Thus spoke former President Jimmy Carter, quoting his mother, Lillian Carter, who promoted that sentiment in some 500 talks she gave after returning from Peace Corps service in 1968. Miss Lillian was 68 when she served as a health Volunteer in India.

Former President Carter recalled his mother’s words in a ceremony bestowing the Lillian Carter Award in Atlanta last May on RPCV Eileen P. Blumenthal. The Atlanta Regional Office gives the award every two years for outstanding Peace Corps service by a Volunteer 50 or over who has also been active in fulfilling the third goal of the Peace Corps—to help Americans better understand other peoples.

In being honored, Blumenthal

talked about three “big lessons” she learned: “1. Use your own initiative; go ahead and try it! 2. Persistence—keep at it! 3. It’s not only about the program, but about the people. Lower the importance of the agenda and focus more on the people.”

Blumenthal went off at age 60 as a Peace Corps Volunteer to teach science and English to Nepalese children, and to train Nepalese teachers of English. She subsequently did volunteer work in Romania, and was instrumental in bringing aid to survivors of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras. Today, her home in Washington, DC, is open, as it has been for years, to those need-



Former President Jimmy Carter presents Lillian Carter Award to RPCV Eileen Blumenthal

ing a place to stay, including RPCVs.

In a second award ceremony at Peace Corps headquarters in June, Peace Corps Director Gaddi H. Vasquez described Blumenthal as “a friend, a guide, a mentor” to the dozens of visitors and RPCVs who have knocked on her door.

Whereas Volunteers over 50 constituted only 1 percent of those in the field back in the 1960s, today they make up 6 percent of the Volunteer population—about 450 Volunteers. Although the average age of Volunteers today is still in the upper 20s, more and more older citizens are coming to the Peace Corps—or back to the Peace Corps. Chuck and Martha

(continued inside, center)

Georgia on Her Mind

What began as a contest for Georgian students on how to compose an essay in English resulted in national recognition for 16 Peace Corps Volunteers and their students. On May 10, U.S. First Lady Laura

Bush and Georgia First Lady Sandra Roelofs brightened the day of the 42 Georgian student winners, ages 12 to 16. The students had won this year’s Peace Corps Volunteer-sponsored writing contest.

(continued on next page)



United States First Lady Laura Bush celebrates with PCV teacher Iris Sunwoo, of Anaheim, California, at a creative writing contest for students in Tbilisi, Georgia.



After 45 Years, Much to Be Proud of

As we approach March 1, 2006—the 45th anniversary of the Peace Corps—we have much to honor and celebrate:

- ▶ The 178,000 Volunteers who have given two years of service in 138 countries throughout the world.
- ▶ These same Volunteers, who have continually shared their experiences here in the United States and abroad, confirming our third goal as a vital part of our mission.
- ▶ The many returned Volunteers who have continued service through the Crisis Corps—recently, in response to the tsunami in Thailand and Sri Lanka, and to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- ▶ Our first-ever domestic service through Crisis Corps Volunteers aiding victims of Hurricane Katrina.
- ▶ The growing number of Volunteers in the field, who represent the rich diversity of Americans in background and even in age.
- ▶ The 72 countries and their communities currently welcoming

Volunteers, including Mexico, where Volunteers are completing their first year of service and a new group is arriving.

- ▶ The thousands of family members and friends who strongly support Volunteers and help share in their experiences.

To honor your service and the impact of that service, we are planning national and regional activities


'I encourage you to participate in 45th-anniversary events and activities.'

for the 45th anniversary. We will also have kits available for your own local activities and celebrations. These kits include stories of Peace Corps impact in countries of service, and Peace Corps facts, maps, timelines, and historical information (including CDs with 45 years of the Peace Corps' public service announcements, 30 years of *Peace Corps Times*, and photos and

other images). These will be available through our 11 regional offices.

The 45th anniversary will be launched on March 1 with a proclamation at the White House, and then be celebrated through December 2006. Peace Corps Week, which is February 27–March 5, is a particularly important time for you to take advantage of individual and local events commemorating the Peace Corps experience.

I encourage you to participate in 45th-anniversary events and activities. More information is available at www.peacecorps.gov/45 and through our regional offices, whose locations you can find at www.peacecorps.gov/recruit.

As I continue to travel to Peace Corps countries worldwide, most recently in Asia and southern Africa, national and community leaders in every Peace Corps country speak of the profound impact of the work of the Volunteers. I know that we can strengthen that message and the foundation of service here at home through your efforts this coming year. 

Georgia

(continued from front page)

Although the students had anticipated a certificate and books in English, the two first ladies brought the winners unexpected national recognition as well. “The students were so thrilled and beyond happy—this is the icing on the cake,” said Volunteer Helen Chung, 28.

At the event, two Georgian schoolchildren

read their essays before the assembled crowd. The two first ladies then fielded questions from the student winners, and Mrs. Bush thanked the 16 Volunteers who had attended with their students for their dedication to global education. “Mrs. Bush recognized and led applause for the Peace Corps Volunteers in the auditorium and the work that we do,” reported Chung.

Volunteer Ken Goff started the annual essay contest in 2004 to help his foreign language students express themselves competitively, yet creatively, in English. He devised the “Writing Olympics” for his students, who were rarely asked to write essays—in English or in Georgian. His idea caught on as other Peace Corps Volunteer teachers encouraged their students to write essays in

English and participate in the contest this year.

The first Peace Corps Volunteers in Georgia arrived in May 2001. Since then, 105 Volunteers have served in rural communities and towns throughout the country, where they offer English education for Georgian students and teaching methods for Georgian teachers. There are currently 42 Volunteers serving in Georgia. 

I Went Corps to Corps

By Linda Tucker (RPCV and Crisis Corps)

One of the greatest days in my life was the day I was accepted into the Peace Corps. I was assigned to go to Malawi, in Africa, as a health educator, where I served from 1997 to 1999. At the end of my service, I left Africa with a heavy heart—but with fond memories and a new knowledge about myself and the world.

Four years later I found myself wanting to return to Africa, and yet I didn't feel that I wanted to do a two-year program. I was a 57-year-old woman with three grandchildren, and yet how I longed to work in Africa and see my African family in Malawi!

Then the Crisis Corps came to mind. The Crisis Corps was exactly what I needed. It was short term, and I could work in my field—HIV/AIDS—and in peer education. After a short time, I was on my way to Zambia.

My assignment was with a newly formed NGO called PANUKA, which means “wake up.” Although some Crisis Corps assignments are more urban, I was, once again, in a rural area, in the south of Zambia. My main focus was to design and implement a curriculum for the training of trainers in HIV/AIDS issues for the women in the village. I also was able to work with the youth, training them in peer education and life skills.

The Crisis Corps put me perfectly into a job and area that I was comfortable with and had a passion for. In contrast to my Peace Corps experience, I definitely had a different



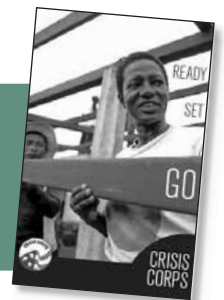
Linda Tucker (far left) with HIV/AIDS trainees in Zambia.

mindset in the Crisis Corps. I had a specific job to do, and six months to do it. Yet I had to be accepted into the community to be able to complete my work. Six months passed in a flash, and again it was time to close my service.

But, the story doesn't end there. I was chosen to be a trainer with a new HIV/AIDS program. We got 23 new Zambian trainees, and I worked with them for nine weeks.

So my love for Peace Corps and Africa has continued. It is a great experience to return to Africa and to the Crisis Corps. I was able to use my professional skills, and also the skills I learned in the Peace Corps. It has been a wonderful term of service and, yes, even Crisis Corps is the toughest job you will ever love. 🌍

For more information about the Crisis Corps and how to apply, visit www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/crisiscorps or call 800.424.8580, ext. 2250.



RETURNED VOLUNTEER SERVICES (RVS)

offers free career resources to RPCVs who have ended their service within the past year, including

- **HOTLINE**, a semi-monthly newsletter of job announcements and educational programs. See *HOTLINE* at www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/hotline.
- **Employment bulletins** for international and domestic jobs. E-mail RVS for a free password.
- **Career Information Consultants**, a directory of more than 1,500 professionals who will answer career-related questions. E-mail RVS for a hard copy or CD-ROM.
- **Career assessment software**: “Discover.” E-mail RVS for a free password.
- **Career and educational publications**, including *Career Resource Manual*. Check www.peacecorps.gov/rvs/publications.
- **Career centers** in the Arlington, Virginia, recruiting office and 10 other regional offices.

For more information, contact RVS at rvs@peacecorps.gov.

Senior Volunteers (continued from front page)

McBeath, in their 80s, recently completed their sixth tour, having served two or more years each in Lesotho, Jamaica, Namibia, St. Lucia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Kenya. The oldest Volunteer so far, John Goodfriend of Honolulu, returned from Hungary in 1996 at age 86.

“Senior Americans have come to the Peace Corps because they have an extraordinary potential to give,” said Director Vasquez. “They are business and community leaders who are ready for a new challenge. From retired teachers to entrepreneurs, they are proving they are part of the greatest generation, willing to roll up their sleeves and make the world a better place for everyone.”

Before applying to the Peace Corps, Eileen Blumenthal remembered asking herself as a grandmother in her 50s, “What are you saving yourself for?” 🌍

Mostly Back From Mongolia

Readjusting to the States

By Matt Lee
(PCV, Mongolia 2002–2004)

Coming back from two years in Mongolia was crazy—a whirlwind of family and friends; good, long overdue conversations; reconciliations; reunions and parties ... all making re-assimilation much easier. Nevertheless, some things just seemed strange. Walking into the local grocery store, I stood in awe at the five shelves of multi-variety orange juice. I found myself thinking or making random statements in Mongolian. While visiting a fellow RPCV in New York City, I felt like Crocodile Dundee. I probably spoke with half of Flatbush, Brooklyn, during that Halloween weekend.

It was cool having my Peace Corps experience as an icebreaker with people. Someone would ask me something like, “What do you do?” Or my experience in Mongolia would come up in conversation and people would immediately be interested. In fact, coming back and sharing with others what I learned and saw in Mongolia was one of the best parts of my Peace Corps experience.

Upon my return, on the advice of a friend, I randomly called a local Raleigh,

North Carolina, middle school. They arranged for me to speak to a few classes of eighth-grade geography students. I threw all kinds of wild pictures from my last two years onto PowerPoint and followed a rough outline, but mostly just went off on extemporaneous stories that were sparked by questions, comments, or the pictures themselves. I also gave a lecture for the Old Dominion University geography department in Norfolk.

Of course, the middle school kids were more fun, because I made them do Mongolian dances with me, and they freaked out when I

played a segment of Mongolian hip-hop. But the best part was that both groups were enthralled by the stories and inspired to travel afterward. I think it was obvious from the energy I had and the emotion I spoke with that my time in the Peace Corps had been a positive, confidence-building, mind-changing experience. It was great after the sessions when people came to the front to thank me or ask questions or just to tell me how they wanted to go and see the world. Ineffable! I can still see the faces. To inspire people is a powerful thing.

I think that traveling and

living abroad has allowed me to understand people much better, in the most general sense, and—more importantly—has afforded me the opportunities to understand myself much better. How do we fit in, in relation to everything else? This world is huge—too much to see and learn for one lifetime. For me, traveling and experiencing other cultures (even in one’s own country) increases our understanding of things and allows us to live a more enriched life. 🌍

Think Peace Corps Week '06!

Share your Peace Corps experiences. See www.peacecorps.gov/pcweek for suggestions on where to speak and how to plan your presentation.

RPCVs Get 35K Books Bound for Africa

Some 40 years after completing their Peace Corps service in Ethiopia, a group of RPCVs recently collaborated with their former students and others to get 35,000 books delivered to their host community. How did they pull off this mammoth project?

The RPCVs contacted Books for Africa (BFA), a Minnesota nonprofit which, since 1988, has collected, sorted, shipped, and distributed more than 20 million books free to children in Africa. To do this, they

collaborate with numerous nonprofit groups in Africa, RPCV groups, and individual Peace Corps Volunteers,



who pay for the shipping costs.

The three RPCVs from Ethiopia, who served in the mid-1960s, teamed with many of their former students in the Ethiopian town of Debre Marcos in a request to Books for Africa to ship and assist with the distribution of the more than 35,000 books. The books included elementary and high school math, science, and English textbooks, as well as school library and reference books.

(continued on next page)



Morocco RPCVs Continue to Serve

Former Peace Corps Volunteers who had worked on environmental issues in Morocco got together in 2000 to see how they could apply their professional relationships and the knowledge from their years of service to continue to benefit the Moroccan people. They formed the nonprofit High Atlas Foundation. Its mission is to establish projects in rural Moroccan villages that local people design and manage, and that are in partnership with government and nongovernmental agencies. Now, five years later, projects are underway to plant fruit trees and implement potable water and irrigation projects that benefit thousands of people.

RPCV Update is published several times a year at Peace Corps headquarters, in Washington, DC. Send comments, questions, and suggestions to


Editor, Domestic Programs
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street NW
Washington, DC 20526
E-mail: rpcvupdate@peacecorps.gov

This publication contains materials written by returned Peace Corps Volunteers and others that represent the writers' individual views. These views are not official opinions of the U.S. government or of the Peace Corps.

Printed on 15% post-consumer waste paper

The High Atlas Foundation staff attribute their success to their ability to develop understanding, communication, and positive relationships between rural villages and Moroccan government and nongovernmental organizations. They require that rural villages be included in determining and designing projects. Their Peace Corps service taught them that people are more invested in projects in which they feel ownership. The goal of the foundation is to empower people in a way that benefits families as well as the economic prosperity and natural resources of the region.

The board of the High Atlas Foundation focuses on the third goal of the Peace Corps by serving as a bridge between the United States and Morocco—the country they became so attached to as Volunteers. They work to mobilize broad-based support from across the United States, including RPCVs, Moroccan expatriots, and others committed to Morocco's future.


For more information about the High Atlas Foundation, visit www.hihatlasfoundation.org or call 646.285.7444. 

Books for Africa

(continued from previous page)

Pat Plonski, BFA executive director, reports that he also recently filled a request by a Peace Corps Volunteer's family to ship 5,000 textbooks and library books to a Volunteer in Tanzania who had received a grant from the Peace Corps to build a library in her town.

The Ethiopia team raised more than \$4,500 and secured the necessary tax letters from the Ethiopian government to qualify for a matching USAID grant to cover BFA's \$9,000 shipping costs. Then, last February, the Ethiopia RPCVs raised an additional \$3,500 for teacher supplies, reference books, medical books, and learning charts that they took with them on a visit to Debre Marcos. The RPCVs, accompanied by several of their former students, also presented the town's development committee with \$1,000 for school improvements.

"All the funds were used wisely," says Ethiopia RPCV Clare Shea (1965–1967), "and went a long way to assisting the educational needs of Ethiopian students." 

Books for Africa, which has RPCVs on its board and on its administrative staff, can be contacted at 253 E. 4th St., St. Paul, MN 55101.

Tel: 651.602.9844

Internet:

www.booksforafrica.org

For more information on the Ethiopia project, contact Clare Shea, at ppy154@aol.com, or Arthur Andersen, at nancyandarthur@msn.com.

**Affordable Graduate School for RPCVs
Through Fellows/USA**

You've Earned It!

Fellows/USA works with almost 40 universities that offer financial assistance to RPCVs to attend graduate school in many fields. Through degree-related internships, Peace Corps Fellows work in underserved U.S. communities.

- Earn an advanced degree at reduced cost and help a U.S. community at the same time.
- Receive strong personal and professional support, access to a broad network of professionals in your field of study, and a hands-on internship or work opportunity.
- Learn skills that can easily be applied to a career in the United States or abroad.
- Choose from degrees, including business, community and economic development, science and the environment, healthcare, international development, teacher education, and more.
- Study and exchange ideas with other RPCVs.
- Benefit from lifelong eligibility as a returned Volunteer!

Find out more at www.peacecorps.gov/fellows.

Call 800.424.8580, ext. 1440. E-mail fellows@peacecorps.gov.

45 Years (and Counting)

Peace Corps ... Far and Away the Best!

- 178,000 Volunteers since 1961
- 138 host countries

Go out and tell the world in 2006!

For more information: www.peacecorps.gov/45

If we have your contact information wrong,
please visit www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/records
to provide us with corrections.

Wrong Address?

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Peace Corps
P.O. Box 310387
Brooklyn, NY 11231-0387

RPCVupdate

Peace Corps



Presorted Standard
US Postage
PAID
Peace Corps
Permit No. G-264