



Peace Corps Times

fall 2005

A Legacy Of Images Brings The World Home

It has been shown that the pen is often mightier than the sword. But is a picture the mightiest weapon of all?

The power of images has become a powerful recruitment and third goal tool when Volunteers return from service. Returned Volunteers use photographs to accomplish the third goal, to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. The Peace Corps often uses breathtaking images of Volunteers, host country nationals, and landscapes to portray the magnitude of the Peace Corps experience. And, of course, a picture speaks a thousand words when trying to explain the Peace Corps experience to family and friends.

Last summer, the Peace Corps held a photo contest, highlighting the best photos taken by Peace Corps Volunteers and staff around the world. One of the winners, Lisa Mirande-Lind who works in programming and training for Peace Corps/Jordan, said the significance of pictures can be found in how they connect with the past. When Volunteers and staff return to the U.S., they “want to talk about their experience and share them with anyone who will listen,” Mirande-Lind said. “A few good pictures can hold [a person’s] attention while you explain the context of the photo. The pictures show the realities of the country.”

The photographs of Volunteers and returned Volunteers have shown up



“Moroccan Delicacies” taken by Lisa Mirande-Lind of Peace Corps/Jordan staff, shows the vivid colors and characteristics that have helped the Peace Corps become known for its images.

everywhere from the award winning calendar published by the returned Volunteers of Madison, Wisc., to National Geographic.

From the first group until today, Volunteers quickly learn that photography best captures and celebrates the diversity of developing nations. When Volunteers share their photos and stories, it humanizes their host countries, presenting the people they encounter as more than nameless faces from the evening news. Often, pictures show a deeper connection between Volunteers and host communities.

Knowing the power of images and the legacy it has created for the agency, Peace Corps decided to “rebrand” itself in 2003. According to BBDO Atlanta, which the Peace Corps hired to help design the campaign, the target audience for the Peace Corps “[sees] life as a journey, a quest for identity and true fulfillment.” This led the agency to create the new slogan, “Life is calling. How far will you go?” In various ads and announcements, the slogan challenges potential Volunteers to consider their future and to question their goals.

In one such ad, actor Matthew McConaughey asks “How far would you go to help someone?” as the audience’s journey begins with a person stepping off a sidewalk. One of the final images in the ad is an outstretched hand, as McConaughey asks “Would you go if you could use your knowledge to teach someone and, in the process, maybe learn something yourself?”

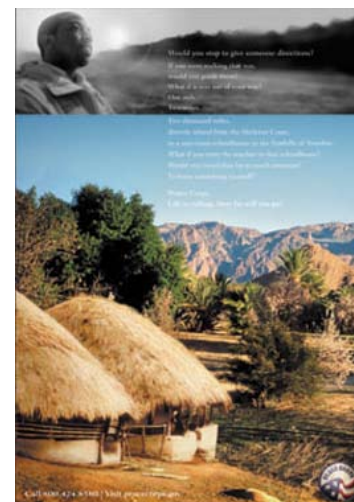
“[The ads] call out to people,” said graphic designer Krishna Brown of the Peace Corps’ Communications department. The communications staff produces recruitment materials, runs the Peace Corps website, and works closely with the ad campaign. Brown said that, like words, audiences can interpret photos literally or metaphorically. Either way, great images are “the arsenal of Peace Corps’ recruiters.”

The success of the recent ad campaign is surprising when one considers that the Peace Corps must rely almost exclusively on donated ad space. Despite this, the ads have appeared in large publications such as Rolling Stone and ESPN Magazine, on major networks like CNN and the Discovery Channel, and on billboards and buses in large cities like San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

“The decision makers that place the ads feel inspired by the Peace Corps’

message,” said Peace Corps marketing specialist Tom Lillig, adding that media outlets believe that the Peace Corps is worthy of their publication’s space, due in part to the aesthetics of the ads.

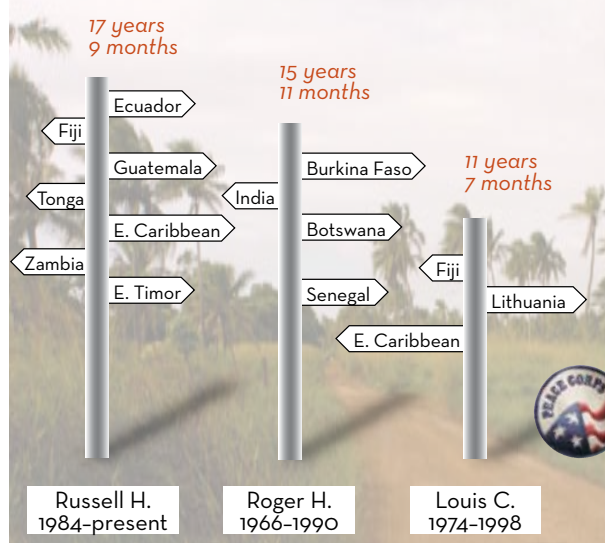
For the communications department, these ads have become a great way to inspire Americans to action and service. Lillig stated that a few weeks ago, an older gentleman said that an ad directed to older Americans inspired him to join the Peace Corps. “It’s great to know that somehow my work played a role in shaping this man’s life journey.”



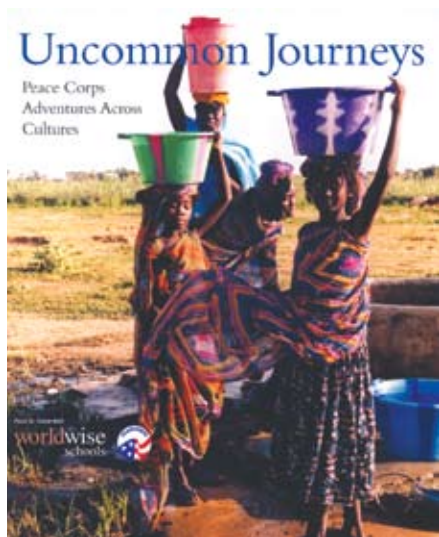
The Peace Corps’ recruitment campaign “Life is calling. How far will you go?” has won national awards and has appeared in such publications as Rolling Stone and ESPN magazine.

Volunteer Longevity

Here are the records for the most time (not necessarily consecutive) in service



World Wise Schools: The Classroom Goes Global



Through the Coverdell World Wise Schools program, Peace Corps Volunteers have the opportunity to inspire communities from Casablanca to Compton.

Based at headquarters in Washington, D.C., the program consists of a five-person staff led by Sally Caldwell who work diligently in a maze of cubicles, decorated with everything from deer antlers to artwork sent in by students. It is in this busy office that the staff promotes the education initiatives of the Peace Corps.

More specifically, World Wise Schools promotes awareness of the world's cultural diversity through education. While the program offers a

variety of services, their best known is the Correspondence Match program, which allows American educators and their students to connect with Peace Corps Volunteers around the world. Volunteers can fulfill the third goal of the Peace Corps: to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of all Americans. More than 50 percent of Volunteers participate in the Correspondence Match programs, where Volunteers and educators exchange monthly letters and e-mails. Many teachers incorporate the Correspondence Match program into their curriculum, using the letters in language arts, science, and social studies.

A former high school principal, CWWS Director Caldwell is especially proud of the wealth of lesson plans, workbooks, and tips available to educators who want to integrate the program into their classrooms. Caldwell said the materials are not just helpful to education Volunteers and American teachers, they would be useful to anyone interested in cross-cultural communication. All materials are available on the website: www.peacecorps.gov/wws

Editor Roger Hirschland, a returned Volunteer who served in the 1960s, prepares most of the written

materials, including *Uncommon Journeys*, a collection of stories written by Volunteers for middle and high school youth (and available at your post). Hirschland also edits the returned Volunteer newsletter for the Peace Corps.

Although everyone on the staff has an integral role in supporting the Volunteer, few have as much one-on-one contact with Volunteers as Correspondence Match coordinator Amy Wickenheiser. Wickenheiser manages

Corresponding with a Volunteer helps students realize that their neighbors aren't only down the street, but across the oceans.

the Correspondence Match database and pairs Volunteers with American educators. To make these matches happen, Wickenheiser coordinates a bright, color-coded wall of contact sheets, listing the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of those who could help the process along. If a Volunteer is having difficulties, she directs the Volunteer to that contact.

Wickenheiser said the thrill of matching Volunteers and educators is one of the most exciting parts of her job. "Sometimes, when I match a Volunteer and an educator, I think, 'These people are really going to suit each other.'" She knows the experience can change lives. Volunteers experience the joy of educating students back home, not to mention the thrill of getting mail. Students have the experience of learning more about other cultures and about the work done by the Peace Corps' dedicated Volunteers.

Pre-service Volunteers usually receive an invitation to join Correspondence Match about a month before staging. Although the team makes its best effort to match Volunteers and educators as quickly as possible, a few factors may slow the process. There are more Volunteers enrolled in the program than teachers, and many teachers request a Volunteer from a specific region, often Africa and South America. So, the process usually takes about six to nine months, after swearing-in.

What can Volunteers do to secure a match more quickly? Flexibility is the key. Volunteers in regions like Eastern Europe may have to wait longer, especially if they have several preferences

Continued on back page

DIRECTOR'S FORUM

After a nearly five-year hiatus, we are pleased to bring you the redesigned Peace Corps Times. This newsletter reaches thousands of Volunteers and Peace Corps staff around the world. Our goal is to provide you with inspiring stories of Volunteer accomplishments, useful information to enhance your Peace Corps service and a chance to offer your advice and creativity to help your fellow Volunteers.

During my three years as the 16th director of the Peace Corps, I've had the opportunity to witness firsthand the extraordinary achievements of Peace Corps Volunteers in the 43 countries I have visited. Volunteers like you are doing much more than transferring skills to developing countries. You are serving as cultural ambassadors by showing the generosity, enthusiasm and compassion of the American people.

In my travels, I've met many Volunteers who exemplify the goals of the Peace Corps. Recently, I visited George Economides, a Volunteer in Mongolia. Economides served as an education Volunteer for two years and then chose to extend his service to continue helping Mongo-

lians, whom George calls "the most open minded, resourceful, patient and flexible people [he has] ever met." Volunteers like George have made a lasting impact on their host communities. Several years ago in the Eastern Caribbean, Peace Corps Volunteers helped a group of young Dominican women start a small health and beauty business. Today, these young women continue to run the flourishing business, which sells its products to buyers throughout the Caribbean.

Whenever I meet with decision makers, I like to emphasize that one of the most important elements of Peace Corps work is the ability and the opportunity to put a face on America, to promote and build the cross-cultural understanding that is so vital in our times. As part of that, and as the first Hispanic director, I have made it a priority to diversify the face of the Peace Corps Volunteer, whether through our Spanish language versions of the "Life is calling" campaign or through media outreach.

We have made every effort to increase safety measures to ensure you have a secure and successful as-



Director Vasquez finished his three-week trip to Africa with a visit to Volunteers in Madagascar. The director has now visited 43 of the 72 Peace Corps countries.

signment. In a later issue I will outline the measures we have taken during my tenure, but for now rest assured that we have your interest in mind. Also please let your country director know if you have any concerns or questions in regard to safety or any other topic. Only through communication can we truly implement policies that work.

With every issue of the Peace Corps Times, we will bring you more stories of Volunteers who are turning their caring and compassion into ac-

tion. We hope you'll share your own stories with us and that you'll find this newsletter both informative and entertaining. I look forward to keeping you in step with where the Peace Corps of the 21st century is headed.

Thanks for all that you do.

Notes

GEORGIA

Essay contest brings international acclaim

When Volunteer Ken Goff started a writing contest in his Georgia classroom, he never imagined that his efforts would gain the attention of two First Ladies.

First Lady Laura Bush surprised 16 Volunteer teachers and their students by appearing at an awards ceremony held for winners of a student writing contest in the country of Georgia. Georgian First Lady Sandra Roelofs joined Mrs. Bush at the event held in the capital city of Tbilisi. After listening to two essay readings, the First Ladies answered questions from the 42 winners. Mrs. Bush thanked the Volunteers for their commitment to education.

Ken started the contest in 2004 because he wanted students in his classes to express themselves creatively and competitively in English, without fear of making mistakes. Although the students did not know the first ladies would be at the awards event when they entered the contest, the number of students participating in the contest doubled this year to reach 629 entries.

The Volunteers who worked with the students on their essays and attended the event included: Helen Chung of Gilroy, California; Kari Dahle of Busby, Montana; Laura Dellatorre of Bethesda, Maryland; Michael Ebel of Las Vegas, Nevada; Melissa Eker of Shawnee, Kansas; Karen and Jeremy Gaskill of Sioux City, Iowa; Ken Goff of Glenrock, Wyoming; Peter Kelly of Springfield, Virginia; Jamie Lykos of Sewickley, Pennsylvania; Dwayne Mamo of Wolfforth, Texas; Lauren Miller of Greeley, Colorado; Thomas Phillips of Greenville, Alabama; Kevin Sparrow of Somerville, Massachusetts; Stephanie St. Clair of Charlotte, North Carolina; and Iris Sunwoo of Anaheim, California.



from the field

GRENADA

Try making contact, and the NBA may respond

After Hurricane Ivan devastated the island of Grenada last year, Volunteer Micah Strand immediately became involved in recovery projects. But he still wondered what more he could do to help his host country.

Acting on a whim, Strand called the National Basketball Association and asked for help. After a couple of requests and a few months of patience, Strand's dedication finally paid off.

On August 4, Washington Wizards star Etan Thomas traveled to Grenada to present 14 outdoor basketball systems donated to the Peace Corps (through the Office of Private Sector Initiatives) by the NBA and Spaulding. These systems will create seven basketball courts in Grenada.

In early September 2004, Hurricane Ivan directly struck Grenada, killing dozens of people and damaging nearly 90 percent of the homes and businesses on the island.

Basketball is just one of many activities that provide productive outlets for at-risk youth. Thanks to Strand's ingenuity, many Grenadian kids will once again have a place to play.



TOGO

Reach millions via the pen

Many Volunteers write about their experiences abroad, but few receive national recognition for their work. However, that's exactly what happened to Liz Richardson, who recently won Vanity Fair's essay contest.

Vanity Fair asked its readers to write an essay explaining the American character to the rest of the world. In her essay, "My American Home," Richardson, from Raleigh, N.C., discusses the challenges she faces as a community health Volunteer in Togo. Since she's often the first American that locals meet, her neighbors confront her with difficult questions about American society and culture. "I am the resident expert on all things American," she writes, "the final word on a subject that almost never loses its appeal."

Richardson's essay gives millions of Americans insight into the Peace Corps experience. "I think my time in Peace Corps has been invaluable—especially as it relates to my perspective on the world and America's role in it," she said. It also shows a view of the world that only a Peace Corps Volunteer can possess.

BULGARIA

Small project, big change

A thrifty solution proposed by Volunteer Hannah Walker proved that a little inventiveness can go a long way to plug funding shortfalls.

Walker designed a \$6,200 project that will enable 33 local schools to replace their blackboards with white dry erase boards. The national newspaper *Dnevnik* hailed that the change may mean a "retiring forever [of] white chalk in Bulgarian classrooms." Walker's project proves that you don't have to move mountains to win the heart of the nation.

GHANA

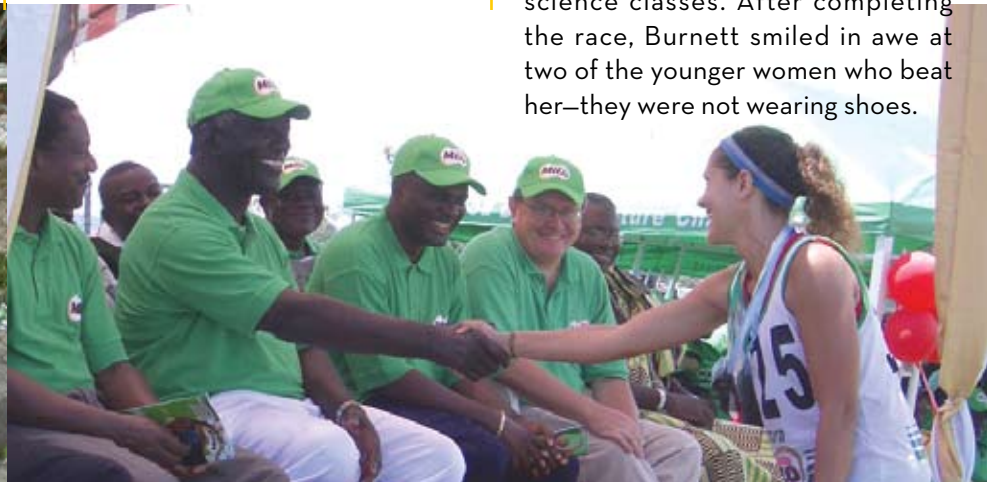
Volunteers run for a reason

Volunteers often go the extra mile to help their host communities—but 26.2 extra miles?

In Ghana, first-time marathoner and Peace Corps Volunteer Jennifer Burnett completed the 26-mile Accra marathon in 3 hours and 40 minutes placing eighth among women. Burnett donated the prize of 800,000 cedis (\$88) to Nsutaman Secondary School, where she teaches chemistry and biology. Two other Volunteers, Zach Goosens and Nick Buckley, also completed the race.

The race course passed through Accra's busiest roundabouts, along the blustery coastal road, through the densest parts of Makola Market, and across muddy narrow streets. Unlike many other marathons, runners in Accra competed with traffic, because the race coursed through unblocked roads. Water stops were scarce, adding yet another unique challenge to the marathon.

Ghanaian President John A. Kuffour congratulated Burnett at the victory ceremony and spoke with her about the Peace Corps and her science classes. After completing the race, Burnett smiled in awe at two of the younger women who beat her—they were not wearing shoes.



Far left: First Lady Laura Bush and Volunteer Iris Sunwoo; Left: Etan Thomas of the Washington Wizards and Volunteer Jaime Labbe-Lane; Above: Volunteer Jennifer Burnett greets Ghanaian President John Kuffour



Think your host country is the best?

Of course you do, so let others know. In a few paragraphs describe the best off-the-beaten-path attraction other Volunteers should see if they visit your country. Send your ideas and photos (if available) to the address on the back page.

More funding for HIV/AIDS work

In March 2005, the Peace Corps received \$4.7 million from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a four-fold increase from the HIV/AIDS program funding the Peace Corps received in the summer of 2004. The additional funding will allow Volunteers to provide even more support and education to their host communities.

The Emergency Plan operates in more than 100 countries, with a special focus on 15 nations that represent more than half of the world's infections. The Peace Corps operates programs in nine of the 15 focus countries, including Botswana, Zambia, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Guyana. More than 3,100 Volunteers serve in HIV/AIDS and health projects.

HIV/AIDS Volunteers will use the additional funding to further existing projects and facilitate relationships with community organizations that provide care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Historic Mexico program growing

For nearly a year, 11 Volunteers have served in the Peace Corps' newest program in Mexico. In October 2004, the Volunteers began their work with the National Council on Science and Technology to improve information technology, science, and environmental engineering throughout Mexico. The partnership aims to increase skilled labor and business productivity.

"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 said. The Peace Corps plans to send 20 additional Volunteers to Mexico this fall.

Online library offers ideas

Did you know that there is an online library with tons of Peace Corps training and support materials? Staff, Volunteers, and host nation partners can find information on topics such as culture, language, community development, and education. Visit the Peace Corps website at www.peacecorps.gov and click on the "Online Library" link in the upper right hand corner.



Crisis Corps Volunteer Kevin Schartz helps local fishermen launch a boat

Crisis Corps Volunteers recognized for lending a hand in wake of the tsunamis

Six months after the Indian Ocean tsunami devastated Southeast Asia, dozens of returned Peace Corps Volunteers have answered the call to service and are helping to rebuild lives through the Crisis Corps. Their actions have not gone unnoticed.

Crisis Corps Volunteers' efforts have garnered attention in the press, not only from local newspapers, but also from CBS and CNN. Both networks covered stories of Crisis Corps Volunteers in Thailand, visiting Volunteers Jen Rudolph, Roger Parent and Justin Strauss at their sites.

President George W. Bush and Congress have also taken notice, signing emergency legislation that gives the Peace Corps an additional \$1.1 million to support Crisis Corps in Thailand and Sri Lanka.

The first group of Crisis Corps Volunteers arrived in Thailand in March. Some Volunteers are help-

ing local organizations manage their operations, while others are building permanent housing and furniture, as well as boats so that fishermen can continue their livelihoods.

Crisis Corps Volunteers arrived in Sri Lanka at the end of June, marking the first time Volunteers have served there since the Peace Corps program in Sri Lanka closed in 1998. Volunteers are working with international charities to build permanent shelters, design reconstruction projects and organize programs to provide jobs, skills training and equipment.

Over 600 returned Peace Corps Volunteers have served in the Crisis Corps in more than 30 different countries. If you are interested in a new, short term adventure with the Crisis Corps after you complete your service, please visit the Peace Corps website for further details:

www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv

L I F E A F T E R T H E P E A C E C O R P S

What's Next

A career with the State Department is not for everyone, but with one in three officers in the State Department having served in the Peace Corps, it definitely is an option for many returning Volunteers.

State Department spokesman Jim Carragher said Volunteers are attracted to the State Department—which includes U.S. jobs and staffing the 265 worldwide U.S. Embassies—for the same reasons they are drawn to the Peace Corps: world travel and the opportunity to, in some small way, make a difference in the world.

The majority of opportunities—and the route most returned Volunteers take—involve becoming a foreign service officer. Positions vary in five focus areas, but all include living overseas for an average of 60 percent of your State Department career.

Becoming a foreign service officer also involves taking the Foreign Ser-

vice Exam, which is offered at least once a year in cities across the U.S. or at most U.S. Embassies. The exam is free and can be taken an unlimited number of times. Carragher advises not waiting to take the exam, as many people don't pass the first time. And, even if you pass, it could take many months or even a year to complete the various clearances and be offered a post.

For those who want the opportunity without the exam, other positions with the State Department also exist. Called foreign service specialists or the civil service, these positions can involve just as much travel, with opportunities to remain in one specialized field or post. Finally, you can also consider scholarship and fellowship programs that often include free graduate school tuition and guaranteed internships.

Visit <http://careers.state.gov> for more information.

CWWS, cont'd.

listed on the enrollment form. Volunteers should list as few preferences as possible. Volunteers can also shorten the wait by requesting a specific teacher. Many Volunteers approach former teachers, family members, and friends and invite them to join the program. These Volunteers can begin corresponding right away and can even arrange visits with the classroom before beginning their service.

Wickenheiser says that although most Volunteers are great Correspondence Matches, many don't understand how excited kids get about the letters received and the stories within them. A while ago, the office received an envelope full of rocks. The rocks came from a Volunteer in Guatemala, along with a message to forward the rocks to his Correspondence Match classroom. Apparently, his classroom was very interested in what the rocks in Guatemala were like.

Kids genuinely want to know how different the rest of the world is from their world in America, Wickenheiser said. And sometimes, students' inquisitiveness encourages Volunteers to ask questions about their host country that they may not have considered.

Kids also form a close bond with their Correspondence Match Volunteer. When a Volunteer doesn't contact them for a time, they can get worried for the Volunteer's safety. If a Volunteer decides to stop participating in the program or to leave the Peace Corps, Wickenheiser encourages them to provide some closure.

After all, the students are the focus of the Correspondence Match program. To quote an American teacher in Compton, California, corresponding with a Volunteer helps students "realize that their neighbors aren't only down the street, but across the oceans."

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A publication for Peace Corps Volunteers serving worldwide

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Do you have something to say to us?

We welcome all Volunteer submissions or suggestions. Inquiries can be made to:

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