

Leaving One Foot at Home

The artifact lays abandoned in a large plastic box, a memory from the days of yore. Once used regularly, Shan Shi no longer has need of it. The relic? A cellphone.

Shan, 23, and a Volunteer serving in Turkmenistan, stowed away the technological burden in favor of a more intimate form of communication: letters. "Especially ones with stickers on the front," she adds. But Shan presents just one side of the onslaught of new communication technology preferences among Peace Corps Volunteers looking to stay in touch with family and friends back home.

Matthew Meyer, on the other hand, is a fan of the cellphone. "Service in my area is impeccable," says the 23-year-old Volunteer in Tanzania. To Matthew, phone conversations are more personal because they provide an easier way to tell stories and "be caught up in life." The case is different for Shan, who feels closest to home when she's able to touch the message that friends and family will receive. It is the closest she can come to human contact with them.

Writing letters also gives Shan freedom to communicate where and when she wants. Whether in an open field or relaxing in her bedroom, the world is her computer, allowing communication without the hassle of finding an Internet café. But sometimes circumstances force Volunteers to choose

one form of communication technology over another.

Both Matthew and Shan just graduated from college, leading Shan to use more economical means of communication. "My friends from home don't call because they are all recent graduates and poor like me," she claims. However, with communication

technology evolving, there are more options than the conventional phone call or letter.

Technology Volunteer Lorena Hinojosa, 24, who serves in Peru, has seen tremendous growth in the use of podcasting and blogging as new forms of communication. Both are unilaterally transmitted

online: podcasts let Volunteers receive video information, such as news and sports clips, while blogs offer information for others to view. According to Lorena, "It's possible for Volunteers who live in extremely rural sites to come into town where there is Internet access, download hours of podcasts and then return to their sites to listen to the programs."

Blogs allow Volunteers to "create a more intimate connection with readers back home and is often considered therapeutic for some," says Lorena. This is especially true for 65-year-old Volunteer Katrina Meredith, whose blog is a gateway to her opinions and

Continued on page 7

"Volunteers from the sixties and seventies just shake their heads and roll their eyes when we compare their communication experiences to mine."



PHOTO BY RYAN BROOKS

Volunteer Nicole Voorhees stays connected in St. Vincent.

THEN & NOW

Bringing Back the World

The experiences of Peace Corps Volunteers have changed dramatically over the past 45 years, but one of the most noticeable changes has been in the area of technology and communications. From "snail mail" to e-mail, the communications options available to Volunteers have advanced greatly.

For the Head family of Wenatchee, Wash., these changes are especially obvious. When parents Doug and Lyn served in the Peace Corps in the 1960s, their only viable option to update friends and family was through letters mailed home, a process that could take weeks. Now that twin daughters Lauren and Connie are serving in Nicaragua and Honduras, respectively, they are able to keep in touch with weekly cellphone calls and e-mails.

"Each time we get an e-mail or talk with them on their cell-

phones, I marvel at the difference in accessibility Volunteers have now," says Lyn. "With instant communications, Volunteers today can have one foot at home and one foot in their host country."

Although the twins' father, Doug, who served in Afghanistan from 1967-70, worries that too much of the new technology will take away from Connie and Lauren's Peace Corps experiences, he is also grateful that this "new world offers cellphones, Internet cafés and e-mail," for continuous communication between home and abroad. Lyn, a Volunteer in Malawi from 1969-71, shares her husband's concerns, calling "the accessibility both a blessing and a burden in some ways." Despite easing her worries as a parent, she wonders if it can distract her daughters and other Volunteers from completely immersing.

Continued on page 7

COMMUNICATION

Volunteer to Volunteer

"Sometimes it's worth sharing a 'Peace Corps moment' with a friend," Ken Loomis says. For that, the 24-year-old Volunteer in Cameroon uses a cellphone. It is his preferred device of communication with fellow Volunteers, beating out Internet, satellite phones, and land-lines. "The call or text message is comforting at the end of a stressful day."

Ken, and others like him, use phones to set up meetings or give directions to friends traveling through new territory. With the advancement of technology, Volunteers are not just able to stay closer with friends and family, but also with each other.

"All major cities [in Cameroon] have

reception and the coverage is continuously expanding to more isolated areas," says Ken. That is good news for writing-inclined Volunteers who prefer text messaging to its more expensive sibling: the spoken word.

Text messaging in Cameroon is roughly equivalent to 9 cents (USD) per message. Compare that to the 36 cents per minute it costs for a call, and you can see why Volunteers often prefer texting over lengthy conversations.

"If I'm writing a text message, I can write an entire letter," Deborah Aparicio, 24, says. "Sometimes my text messages are so long that I don't have room to type

Continued on page 7

BEHIND THE VOLUNTEER

IT Specialists: The Challenges of Keeping Connected

With the “Geek Squad” or that college roommate who seemed to know everything about computers only a call away, it is easy to keep computers up and running in the U.S. But what do you do thousands of miles away when computer know-how is much harder to come by?

Information technology specialists are responsible for maintaining all Peace Corps-supplied systems and staff computers at their posts. In addition, for every 25 Volunteers in a Peace Corps country, there is one computer workstation that these technicians must also support. This creates a tremendous workload for one lone IT specialist.

In Paraguay, IT Specialist Gustavo Draugelis describes his typical day as, well, busy. After arriving at the office at about 8:30 a.m., Gustavo begins his daily routine of checking server logs, testing remote connections and cleaning out junk e-mail. Throughout the day, his office phone, cellphone and e-mail boxes will continually remind him that others need help. The biggest part of his job is assisting other staff in the office, training center or out in the field as they support Volunteers.

“Assistance is a big part of my job,” he says. “And it is quite gratifying.”

The majority of Gustavo’s work in the office is focused on training staff members on specific tasks, such as how to use a certain program or find information for reports. Examples include VIDA, or Volunteer Information Database Application, a complex program vital to Peace Corps’ operations in a post. The IT specialists must not only train staff members how to use this software, but maintain and support the program as well. Without VIDA, staff members would not have access to important information about Volunteers’ whereabouts and activities.

Another function of IT specialists is to constantly research Internet connectivity options in the country. When a faster or cheaper choice becomes available, the IT specialist can suggest a switch to a new provider.

Connectivity is best in countries like Mexico, South Africa and others in Central America and Eastern Europe. However, in other Peace Corps countries like those in the Pacific or western Asia, Internet connectivity is often poor and unable to sustain the activities of the post. In these situations, Peace Corps sets up satellite connections with generators to keep a post in contact with headquarters and the world.

Besides these responsibilities, Gustavo says he is often involved with Volunteers’ technical problems as well, usually individual projects using technology. Because the cost of Internet connectivity in Paraguay is gradually decreasing, more Volunteers have access to technology, creating more work for Gustavo.

To save time, “we now have a Volunteer IT coordinator/leader who spends more time directly involved with IT projects,” Gustavo says. “These can include computer learning centers, radio shows, and all the gamut of digital info such as tutorials, jingles, and more.”

In Panama, IT Specialist Erubey Calvo sometimes finds it challenging to keep up with creative Volunteers. “Some come to me with ideas on how to do a brochure or fix a computer in their communities without any technical computer skills,” he says. “I try my best to help them.”

When Volunteers have problems with their personal computers, often-times Gustavo reviews their complaint and recommends they go to the nearest computer shop. As Volunteers arrive in-country with more and more gear,



Keeping IT systems up and running in developing countries is a challenge IT specialists like Erubey Calvo (center in red) know is a necessity for success.

it takes more and more time to fix everything that goes wrong.

“Every minute spent on Volunteer equipment is time taken away from my job, and I certainly do not have any idle time, ever,” Gustavo says. “If it was slower around here, I could certainly help more.”

Gustavo says his working relationship with the local shops is excellent and they are relatively inexpensive, so he likes to send them business anyway.

Kathy Arle, Chief of International Technical Support at Peace Corps headquarters, says maintaining these relationships is an important part of the job description for IT support staff at Peace Corps posts. Without other IT specialists to rely on in-country, it is necessary for the technicians to know local vendors and specialists.

In Vanatu, IT Specialist Henry Vutinamoli spends more time solving problems involving communication

devices than he does working with Peace Corps-related computer issues. “With a little research and knowledge we always manage to sort things out,” he says.

Henry says working with staff to solve technical issues relating to computers, applications, communication devices and other similar problems requires patience, “but I definitely try my best to get things done in time.”

IT Specialists work at every post to keep technology running smoothly. Improvements and training keep them busy, but they also understand the need to be a resource and to be creative in countries where few others often have technology know-how.

Kathy describes the role of a post IT specialist as “one of the toughest jobs at the post. They are acting alone and often the only person at the post with any IT knowledge. These IT specialists are pivotal to keeping posts running on a day-to-day basis.”

Computers & Your Community: What You Need to Know

With constant and rapid changes in technology happening all the time, Volunteers can sometimes find it difficult to bring their sites up to speed. Computers are an important part of this process, but finding the means to bring the technology to a Peace Corps site can often be challenging.

This is where the Office of Private Sector Initiatives (OPSI) steps in to help secure donations for computers and software. With their Partnership Program, OPSI provides funding for community-initiated projects being overseen by Volunteers serving around the world.

Once a Volunteer writes the office with a proposal for Partnership funding, the proposal goes through an approval process before being posted to the Peace Corps Web site. On the Web site, donors can make cash contributions to the fund, many of which are tax-deductible, or agree to an in-kind donation, meaning an organization donates products as opposed to cash.

Many donations for computers, software and other project materials come from the Volunteer’s friends, family or hometown groups. Other organizations that support efforts in a particular country may also contribute

and donors involved in matching gift programs with their companies often make significant contributions.

Recently, Peace Corps/Ukraine received an in-kind gift of 15 laptop computers from the Scott County Government in Shakopee, Minn. A resident of the county is currently serving in Ukraine. The computers were transported to Ukraine by the Volunteer’s parents where they will be used in a local school.

In the past year, 12 computer lab project proposals have been approved by OPSI. Of those, eight have already been fully funded. Fundraising for the

remaining four projects continues on the Web site.

Unfortunately, Peace Corps can not pay the shipping fees for in-kind donations, so Volunteers or organizations must raise the funds by soliciting charitable groups or by finding other means, such as the Volunteer in Ukraine who had his parents bring the computers when they visited him.

The Office of Private Sector Initiatives will be releasing a handbook in the near future to help Volunteers draft effective proposals for computers and other projects.

www.peacecorps.gov/contribute



Deputy Director Jody Olsen highlights the successes of Director Vasquez during his farewell at Peace Corps headquarters.

I have been greatly honored to serve as the 16th director of the Peace Corps. Though I have enjoyed the richness that public service has afforded me for over two decades of my life, I believe that my tenure at the Peace Corps during the last 4-1/2 years has been the highlight of my public service career.

The sense of personal reward and accomplishment, coupled with the opportunity to work with you and all the staff, is unmatched. You represent the finest America has to offer, and I am proud to have been associated with your service and commitment to promoting world peace and friendship.

During our anniversary year, we have reflected on our legacy of service at home and abroad, and the

remarkable contributions the Peace Corps has made both in America and throughout the world.

Over the years, we have achieved great success in building on our strong legacy. Each of you have contributed to the record of accomplishments Peace Corps can talk about today, and I hope you are very proud to be serving at this historic time for our nation.

I encourage you all to build on our strengths, continue to grow, and ensure that Peace Corps remains relevant. And remember that no one ever really leaves the Peace Corps, it is always with us.

Ron Tschetter Confirmed as Peace Corps' 17th Director

Ronald A. Tschetter was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate as the 17th Director of the Peace Corps on September 14. Mr. Tschetter was nominated by President George W. Bush on July 25, 2006.

"I am honored by the trust President Bush has placed in me and grate-

ful to the United States Senate for their confidence," said Mr. Tschetter. "My wife and I served together as Peace Corps Volunteers, and our experience continues to inspire and affect every aspect of our lives today. I look forward to encouraging more Americans to become Peace Corps Volunteers and

continuing the fine tradition of this great agency around the world."

Mr. Tschetter and his wife, Nancy, served as Peace Corps Volunteers from 1966-68 in India as community health workers. After returning home from India, Mr. Tschetter worked in the financial securities industry for over

30 years, gaining strong management and leadership skills throughout his distinguished career. He also served on the National Peace Corps Association board from 1993-99, and chaired the board from 1995-98. Born in Huron, S.D., Mr. Tschetter has a degree from Bethel College.

READ THE RULES

Peace Corps Policy on Technology Usage for Volunteers

Note: In 2001, Acting Peace Corps Director Charles Baquet III sent out an official memo to help Volunteers and staff understand their responsibilities in a technology-savvy world. Here are excerpts from that memo that still apply today:

Volunteers who create their own Web sites, or post information to Web sites that have been created and maintained by others, should be reminded that (unless password-protected) any information posted on the Internet can probably be accessed by the general public, even if that is not intended. Because search engines regularly index most sites on the Internet, it is possible that members of the public could locate a Volunteer Web site by searching for information about the Peace Corps or a certain country. This is possible even if the Volunteer does not actively promote his/her Web site. Given these realities, Volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their IT use is consistent with the following guidelines:

Notification

Volunteers who create their own Web sites or post material to Web sites created by others are responsible for discussing the content in advance with the country director to ensure that the material is suitable and complies with this general guidance as well as any country-specific guidance.

Disclaimer

Any Web site maintained by a Volunteer during his or her Peace Corps service must reflect the fact that it is not an official publication of the Peace Corps or the U.S. Government. The site, therefore, must be labeled clearly and prominently with an appropriate disclaimer such as: "The contents of this Web site are mine personally and do not reflect any position of the U.S. Government or the Peace Corps."

Use of the Peace Corps Logo

Because use of the Peace Corps logo is reserved for official activities authorized by the Peace Corps Act, the logo cannot be used on Volunteer Web sites.

Cultural Sensitivity

The thoughtful and accurate insights that Volunteers convey in their communications with others can contribute substantially to bringing to the United States a better understanding of other countries. However, given the broad access to Volunteer-posted material on the Web, both in their country of service and elsewhere, Volunteers should remain culturally sensitive with respect to the material they post to any Web site. Volunteers should be reminded that people in their host countries and members of the U.S. public may make inferences about the Peace Corps or the Volunteer's country

of service based on the material a Volunteer posts to a Web site. Volunteer-posted material on the Web should not embarrass or reflect poorly on the Peace Corps or the countries where Volunteers serve.

Safety and Security

As a safety precaution, Volunteers are urged to omit from their Web sites information about their precise living location or those of other Volunteers, as well as information about events to be attended by a large number of Volunteers. For example, Volunteers who live in remote areas should use care before placing the name of their towns or villages on their Web site and, instead, should refer to the general area of the country where they live. For their own protection, it is also advisable not to provide information about Volunteers' personal possessions. Volunteers should be aware of the risk of identity fraud and other security concerns connected with the posting of any personal information about themselves, family members and others on Web sites.

Publication Policies

Consistent with Peace Corps' policy regarding publications, Volunteers may not accept payment for anything they write or photograph that appears on the Web. Articles, manuals, teaching materials, and other work-related

products developed in connection with Peace Corps service and/or financed by Peace Corps funds are considered part of the public domain and may not be copyrighted or used for personal gain. Volunteers should be advised that posting materials to the Web which they have not authored or created may violate U.S., host country, or other applicable copyright laws.

Contributions to the Official Web Site

The Office of Communications, which oversees the Peace Corps' official Web site, welcomes the submission of essays, stories, and photographs from Volunteers that will assist in highlighting Peace Corps activities to prospective applicants and the general public. All submissions should be reviewed by the country director and forwarded to the Office of Communications for consideration. Volunteers will also have the opportunity to locate resources and share information with other Volunteers via a special section on the agency's internal Web site and Peace Corps publications. Country directors are encouraged to broadly distribute this guidance, and any applicable country-specific guidelines, to staff and Volunteers. Such information should be posted in appropriate areas such as in-country resource centers or other facilities with Peace Corps-owned computer equipment.

Notes

BELIZE

Biking Back

Considering how much has changed for Bridget Igoe since she first arrived in Belize over two years ago as a Volunteer, she has been contemplating ways to transition back into U.S. culture. So, instead of a five-hour plane trip from her Dangriga, Belize, site to the richest nation in the world, Bridget plans to “return home in the same way I came to know and love Belize—by bike.”

For Bridget, bicycling has had a huge impact on her experience in Belize, allowing her to see the land and meet people she never would have had the opportunity to interact with otherwise. Bridget’s bicycle served many purposes for her: she was able to travel to remote areas unreachable by bus, deliver materials to a nearby village as part of her HIV/AIDS education program, and save money on bus fares when traveling around the region. Prior to leaving Belize in July, Bridget wrote: “My bike has allowed me to interact with my natural surroundings in ways that provided me with a better understanding of the many different cultures of Belize.”

Bridget finished her service in July and then began her 4,300 mile journey home to Portland, Ore. She expects the trip to take about three or four months, at which time she will begin looking into graduate school.

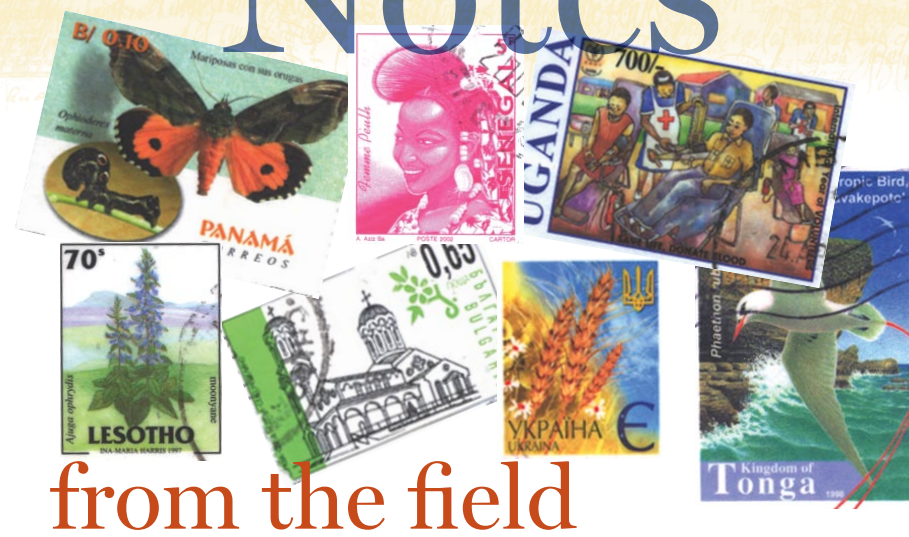
ECUADOR

There’s No ‘I’ in Bakery



Youth and families Volunteer Kadeon Tomas currently works in Guayaquil, a key commercial district of Ecuador. Along with Foundation Crecer, Kadeon and 15 young men and women have developed a bakery project in which the youth not only produce delicious bread and pastries, but also engage in personal development activities like responsibility, leadership, and teamwork. The bakery has attracted clients throughout Guayaquil, enabling Kadeon to continue the project and financially recognize the youth.

Kadeon also works in Afro-Ecuadorian barrios in the south of the city. Migration has brought many Afro-Ecuadorians to Guayaquil, but many have



from the field

not been able to achieve economic success. He has worked with youth on arts and crafts projects and taught methods to increase income generation.

GHANA

Music and a Muse



A PCV-CD is not a Volunteer who has become country director, rather, it’s a compact disc made by a Volunteer. Zuer Zuk Kunkor is the band’s name, which was created by Volunteer Tonya Stephenson and a group of kids from her Ghanaian village. In June 2005, after playing music informally at a local school in the evenings, Tonya found a small group of dedicated children who wanted to join in the music. By August, she had 15 members: five girls and 10 boys, ages 12-16. The name Zuer Zuk Kunkor means The Voice in the Hills.

The group decided to record and wrote songs during a nine-month period wherein they would practice up to six days a week. They prepared a full-length CD consisting of 10 songs in Talen (local language of Tengzug), Frafra (northern Ghana), Zulu (South Africa), and English. Two of the songs are arrangements and the remaining eight are original pieces.

The choir members took responsibility for the success of the entire project, from organizing rehearsals to performing at community events to fundraising for the recording trip to Accra. Participating youth showed drastic improvement in their self-confidence. They have learned to work together, to set goals, and to follow through.

The main goal of the project is to provide financial support for education beyond Junior Secondary School. Revenue from album sales will be used to send the members of Zuer Zuk Kunkor to Senior Secondary School and assist in sending one Senior Secondary School graduate to university. Any remaining revenue will be placed in the Tengzug Community Fund to be used for future education and community-selected projects.

If you or those you know are interested in supporting the children of Tengzug, while enjoying their vocal talents, you may purchase a CD (send \$20 + \$1.95 for shipping) through the following address: The Voice in the Hills, c/o Stephenson’s, 811 West 1175, South Woods Cross, UT, USA 84087

KENYA

When It Rains...

Lucia Mainga recently saved 450 Kenyan shillings in a month simply because she now has a pond. Working with Volunteer Tina Storck, people like Lucia are using man-made catchment ponds to earn a profit. By eliminating the need to be in proximity of a body of water, these ponds provide close-to-home irrigation needs.

Women & Children’s Alternative Lives (WACAL), based in Makindu, Kenya, has helped 19 members develop sustainable food and water security by constructing catchment ponds that hold up to 12,000 liters of water. “Members have water at home instead of fetching it from the river or buying it,” said Janet Kithome, WACAL coordinator. “Not to mention the water is salt-free and cleaner than most water obtained locally in Makindu.”

Water from the ponds is used to irrigate so-called kitchen gardens where traditional local vegetables are harvested. Some are sold in local markets as a source of sustainable income.

For Lucia, the extra money helps pay for her HIV medicine and tuition for her four children. Six of the mem-

bers are living with HIV and seven are caring for orphans.

If you are interested in building a tank/catchment pond in your community, please contact *The Peace Corps Times* for detailed instructions on how to construct one.



KIRIBATI

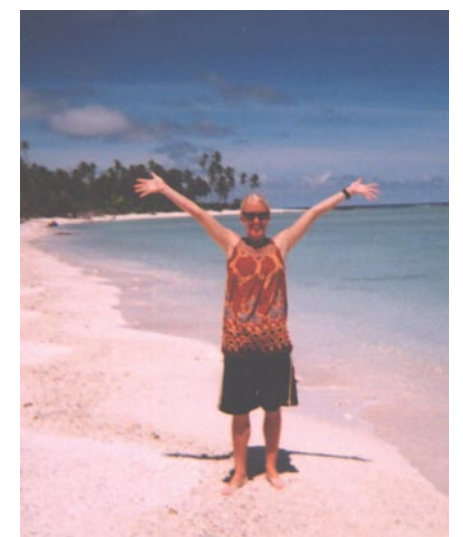
Boasting the Best

In response to the *Peace Corps Times* call for the most beautiful places to serve, secondary education Volunteer Sarah Larson claims she lives in paradise. Secluded, white sand beaches stretch for miles on Beru Island, her home in Kiribati.

It is not your run-of-the-mill location says Sarah: “The ocean water is turquoise and is quite inviting on a hot afternoon for swimming and snorkeling. Coconut trees tower above to quench your thirst. This is a place where old traditions and customs have stood the test of time, where one is always greeted with a *Mauri* (hello) and a smile and where no one goes hungry and everyone looks out for one another. This is a place where there are no guns or war and where life is peaceful.”

Kiribati is located north of Fiji, right on the equator. Its isolation creates a sense of timelessness, but also makes travel to and from it quite difficult. The country is composed of 33 atolls, only 18 of which are inhabited.

But being able to live in one of them is Sarah’s dream. “I have fallen in love with this place and am pretty sure that my two years of service will come to an end before I am ready to leave.”



New Collaborations Strengthen Peace Corps' Mission

The Peace Corps has recently signed two international agreements to further the agency's mission and broaden the range of programs in countries around the world.

In May, the Peace Corps announced a newly official partnership with the German Development Service (Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst or DED). The agreement will enable American and German Volunteers—who have a long history of working together in informal ways at posts ranging from the Philippines to Peru—to officially join forces on a wide variety of projects, working with local communities to achieve sustainable development.

On June 13, then Peace Corps Director Gaddi H. Vasquez signed an agreement with Mexico's Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) that will significantly broaden the range of Peace Corps' current technical cooperation program in Mexico. The Peace Corps has been involved in Mexico since late 2004, and this understanding will expand the program into the areas of environmental protection and ecosystem preservation.

1,000th Crisis Corps Volunteer Begins Her Service

As Crisis Corps celebrated its 10th anniversary in June, Michelle Cheltenham of Taylor, Mich., became the 1,000th Crisis Corps Volunteer sent into service. Cheltenham, 31, is spending the next six months in El Salvador, serving as a disaster preparedness specialist.

Prior to her Crisis Corps service, Michelle served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Grenada from 1998-2000 working in education projects for both mathematics and community health. During her service, she was selected by the Peace Corps staff to serve as a Volunteer leader and was tasked with developing parts of the emergency action plan for several of the islands in the Caribbean. The position offered the opportunity to organize disaster preparedness trainings for new Peace Corps Volunteers.

Since the Crisis Corps' inception in 1996, Volunteers have served in 42 countries around the world, including the U.S.

Franklin H. Williams Awards Ceremony Honors Outstanding Community Leaders of Color

Eleven returned Peace Corps Volunteers who have made careers of giving back to their communities were awarded the Franklin H. Williams Award at a ceremony at Peace Corps headquarters.

Established in 1999, the Franklin H. Williams Award honors returned Peace Corps Volunteers of color who continue the Peace Corps mission through their commitment to community service and who support the agency's third goal of promoting a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. The award assumes the name of former Peace Corps regional director for Africa and U.S. ambassador to Ghana, Franklin H. Williams. Ambassador Williams was instrumental in assisting the first Peace Corps director, Sargent Shriver, in advancing the agency's mission across the globe.

In addition to the 11 award winners, the Peace Corps gave special recognition to Constance Berry Newman, special counsel for African affairs at the Carmen Group, a Washington-based government relations firm. Newman served as the evening's keynote speaker and was honored for her continued



pursuit of service to others. She was the assistant secretary of state for African Affairs for the State Department and also served at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as assistant administrator for Africa. Prior to her work at USAID, Newman served as undersecretary of the Smithsonian Institution.



Peace Corps Fellows/USA and Master's International Expand

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers will soon be assisting new communities in Georgia, Missouri and California, as the Peace Corps Fellows/USA program has announced partnerships with universities in each of these states. The schools that have started new programs include Georgia College & State University, the University of Missouri-Columbia, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and Humboldt State University.

Fellows/USA enables returned Volunteers to pursue graduate degrees at reduced cost while aiding underserved U.S. communities through internships. The program has established partnerships with more than 40 universities nationwide.

In addition, Michigan State University and Appalachian State University are the newest Peace Corps Master's International university partners, working to train graduate students as Volunteers in scarce skills areas.

Master's International, one of the Peace Corps' domestic programs, enables individuals to pursue graduate degrees while serving in the Peace Corps. The program has established partnerships with 50 universities nationwide.

Oldest Known Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Turns 100

When Evangeline Shuler, born in 1906 and who served in the 1960s, arrived at a recent 45th anniversary event for the Peace Corps, it seemed almost everyone in the room wanted to hear her stories.

Evangeline, of Seattle, turned 100 on June 4, and while the Peace Corps does not uniformly collect statistics on Volunteers once they leave service, she is the oldest known returned Peace Corps Volunteer.

Unlike most of today's pre-arranged Peace Corps assignments, at her post in Maharashtra State the Indian government had given Volunteers the option to essentially do whatever it was that the villagers needed.

Evangeline urged villagers to plant their own gardens on their small plots of land next to their homes. She taught them to use a sewing machine; to build smokeless *chulas* (stoves) out of dung, water and mud; and to make "soak pits" which drained their unpaved streets. In addition, Evangeline worked with a Rotarian friend in the U.S. to collect money to buy supplies and books for the village schoolchildren. She said her biggest accomplishment in the Peace Corps was working with children and women, and helping the villagers make soak pits. From an outsider's perspective, however, Evangeline's largest accomplishment may have been that, at 62, she was a pioneer: traveling as an older Volunteer to the other side of the world.

A year and three months into their Peace Corps service, her husband contracted meningitis and died. At that point, she could have easily given up and returned to the U.S., but after a short trip home, she went back to India to fulfill the service and commitment they had begun together. She has not returned since, but admitted she would consider it.

At 100 years old and still passionate about the world around her and its various cultures, Evangeline believes the Peace Corps is certainly still relevant today, and said she absolutely would recommend volunteering to other people.



New HIV/AIDS Video Available

The Peace Corps recently produced a short video highlighting Volunteers' HIV/AIDS efforts in Botswana, Dominican Republic, Kenya, Paraguay, South Africa, and Ukraine.

Turning Hope into Action: the Peace Corps Response to the HIV/AIDS Crisis not only captures the diversity of Volunteers' HIV/AIDS activities, but also demonstrates the significant role the Peace Corps plays in the worldwide effort against HIV/AIDS.

The agency's ability to respond to HIV/AIDS has been considerably strengthened during the past three years through additional funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The Emergency Plan is a five-year, \$15 billion, multifaceted initiative that combats HIV/AIDS in more than 120 countries around the world. Since 2004, the Emergency Plan has awarded the Peace Corps more than \$14 million, which has provided placement of additional Peace Corps and Crisis Corps Volunteers, enhanced programming and technical training around HIV/AIDS, and funded establishment of the new Peace Corps Office of AIDS Relief.

The video will be distributed to all Peace Corps posts and recruiting offices. The video is also available on the Peace Corps Web site.

Devotions

Posted by Caitlin and Khaled |
June 13, 2006

Here we are at June quarterly meetings. Khaled said, "why am I always wearing that shirt in pictures?" That's because when you are in the Peace Corps you don't have money to buy new shirts.

<http://yayajamaica.blogspot.com/>

Unexpected Guest

Posted by Nam LaMore |
March 20, 2006

The host family insisted I come to the stairwell to see what was going on. I was asked to bring my camera.

My thought, half whispering, to myself: "Oh great, another relative has stopped by for a visit and they want me to take pictures. I don't have time for this!"

I left my work to see what was up and, to my surprise, it was not a visiting relative. The host brother had brought home an owl. It does not take the cunning mind of Sherlock Holmes to figure out what happened next. Seeing owl feathers all over the rooftop, I realized that the owl had, indeed, become the dinner for that evening. We had owl tajine that night. If you did not know already, then I'll tell you that owl is gamey and does not taste like chicken at all.

<http://nlamore.blogspot.com/>

Site Placement

Posted by Isaac | April 7, 2006

Things are [going] well here. I am in the big city right now, Nizhen. They even have a traffic light here. And fast Internet. We had our site placement interviews last week, where we tell



them what we want for our permanent placement for the next two years, and they do their best to not laugh at us when we ask for unreasonable things. I don't think they will give me my Black Sea-side resort town, with a private driver, but I guess I had to ask. Seriously, I hope that I am able to just get somewhere that is relatively urban and has people that I can actually relate to. We'll see.

<http://backafterlunch.blogspot.com/>

My Mac is Back!

Posted by Jays Phat Mac |
June 14, 2006

The environment here in Namibia is very tough on computers: extreme heat, dust, extreme heat, dust, and more dust. Most of the Volunteers in my Peace Corps group with laptops are experiencing one or more significant problems with their laptop.

Until just this past weekend, my laptop was randomly and routinely crashing. It especially crashed whenever I would try to use the mail application. This made it very difficult (and very frustrating) to send e-mail.

Somehow, I stumbled upon a great piece of Mac software called "Carbon Copy Cloner" produced by Mike Bombich. The wonderful application is donation-ware. That means you can use it for free, and if you like it, you should donate money to the developer.

<http://jsbigadventure.blogspot.com/>

Standards Deviation

Posted by Yuta | March 7, 2006

I know that it is obvious that one dollar will go a lot further in [Georgia] than any developed country, but a recent event has changed my perspective of the purchasing power of a dollar. You may be wondering if I recently experienced living through an economic depression, or perhaps you are wondering that having experienced severe gas shortages in the middle of winter, an earthquake, and recent bird flu scare (none of which has directly affected me) that I have reevaluated my American way of life to appreciate the value of a dollar. Not so, my friends. I have recently stumbled upon a burgeoning and happening store in Tbilisi called, what else, the Dollar Store. This store has made me appreciate the purchasing power of a dollar, and also to realize that expired food is not, really, expired at all!

<http://yutaisgone.blogspot.com/>

Bag It, Tag It, Sell It

Posted by Mark | June 19, 2006

Thought I would let you all know about a little road trip I did the other day with my buddy, Mu, and his family. We went to a town called Pattaya. Pattaya is a party town right on the beach. It is said to have its roots back in the days of the Vietnam war. U.S. troops started coming down to party on the beautiful beaches, and its reputation

grew. Now it is quite a tourist trap with lots of bars, hotels and resorts. The beach got pretty polluted, but it is still quite nice. Pattaya now has a reputation for its sex industry. Specifically, old white men come to pick up young Thai girls. Regardless, the reason we went to Pattaya is to sell fruit.

If you think it is kind of surprising that I was selling fruit, you should have seen how surprised the Thais were. Remember, this is a tourist town. White people don't come here to sell fruit, they come here to do other things. So I had a good time attracting people to Mu's stand. They were even more surprised when I could speak Thai and tell them that our fruit was the sweetest and cheapest at the market.

<http://www.aglimpseintotravels.blogspot.com/>

A Quick Note

Posted by Alyssa | August 3, 2006

Well, I just finished up an AWESOME online training course in gender and development with people from across Africa and in DC. Man, the Internet is soooo cool!!! I'm serious. We were chatting in real time with people all over this HUGE continent.

<http://a-gypsy-soul.livejournal.com/>

Catching Up

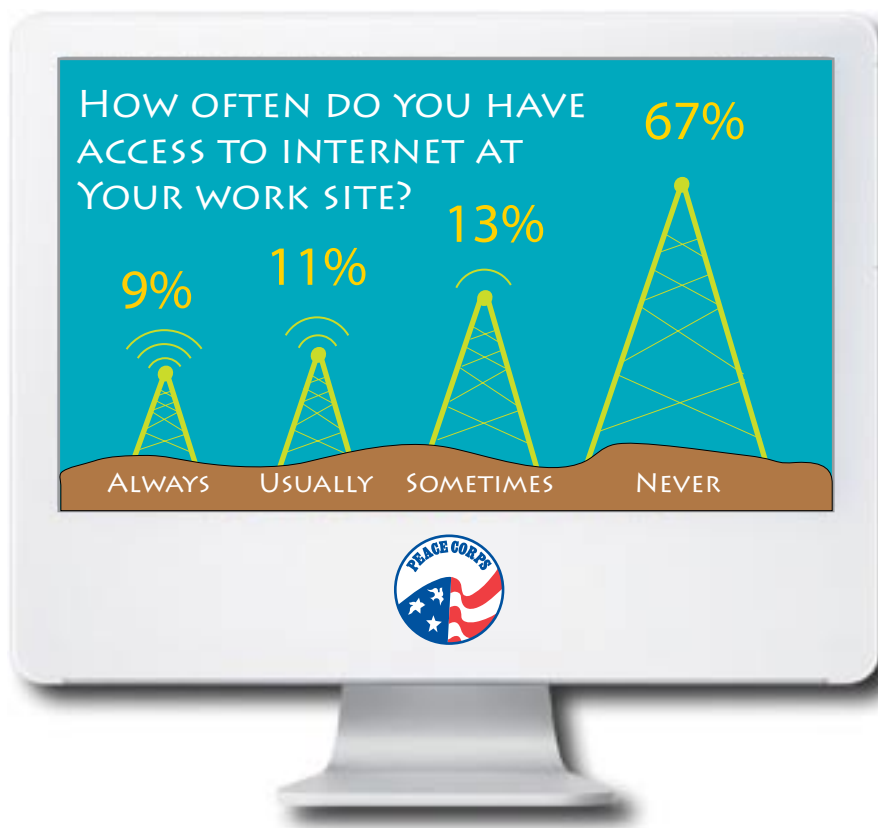
Posted by Jill | June 12, 2006

So much has happened in the past month or so since I have managed to produce an entry that I hardly know where to begin. Time is flying by now, and is marked by milestones such as the first camp of the summer, the arrival of the A14s (the new group of Volunteers in Armenia) and the beginning of the departure of the A12s. It is hard for me to believe that I have already been here a full year. It seems like so long ago that we stepped off that plane and met a mass of cheering Volunteers and staff members, and yet it seems like just yesterday, I remember it so clearly. Now suddenly I am a part of that mass, and have knowledge and wisdom to offer the next generation. In some ways it is difficult to let go of our status as "the new Volunteers" and in other ways it is a refreshing reminder of just how far we have come in such a relatively short period of time...

...On my way out I was asked if Peace Corps would be back next year to do this camp again. I deferred to the local organization we were working with, which happens to be doing its first camp on its own later this summer (this was the second camp it had done with Peace Corps). Our goal is training every organization we work with to be as self-sufficient as this one and to be able to do camps without our assistance in the future. The woman who was asking sort of shrugged and said, "we want the Americans to come back." It is nice to be wanted.

<http://jillisapc.blogspot.com>

Staying Connected



Source: 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey Global Report

One Foot at Home, Cont'd.

experiences, through which approximately 175 family, friends, and former colleagues can travel. She even posts links to Macedonian media for others to gain a better understanding of the world in which she lives.

Katrina admits that communication technology has had a significant impact on the Peace Corps experience. She is in the unique position to have had friends who served when the Peace Corps was in its earliest stages and didn't have access to e-mail, blogs, or Skype. "My peers who were Volunteers in the sixties and seventies just shake their heads and roll their eyes when we compare their communication experiences to mine," she says.

For Shan, who grew up with all of the technologies she has been forced to relinquish, limited access to e-mail and phone service almost entirely isolates her from the outside world. But if you think she would have it another way, then you are getting the wrong message.

"Coming into the city to use Internet and hanging out with other Volunteers is great and sometimes an absolute necessity," she says, "but this is still time away from site and it takes away from the full [cultural] immersion." Shan has learned to live with infrequent conversation back to the

States because she wants to stay more involved in her community. "Most things can wait for two years," she adds in the hopes of cutting down on e-mail checking.

Others, like Lorena, believe that communication technology "has helped Volunteers become better and more dedicated because they have family and friends at home encouraging them and giving them ideas to serve their communities in the best way possible."

"The addition of communication technology is really only another way to isolate or integrate," in Katrina's opinion. By no means should staying in touch with home equate to distancing oneself from the Volunteer's site. Anything, from family photos to a Red Sox recap, could draw one's attention away from their present situation.

Matthew agrees that the level of cultural immersion depends on the Volunteer, not technology. He lives comfortably in a three-bedroom house with views of the Indian Ocean and cellphone service that surpasses his parents' service in Vermont. He doesn't communicate back to the States regularly because, as he says, "My home is Lindi, Tanzania."

Unlike his father, who served in The Gambia from 1967-69, Matthew has had more than two phone calls from home. Lorena speaks to her mother us-

ing Skype and will occasionally borrow a webcam to see familiar faces while she talks. Katrina has a television in her room and communicates back to the States on a daily basis by Yahoo

phone, e-mails, or blogs. And for Shan, well, she'll have to wait a little longer to dig out her "old" cellphone, but that does not stop her from going to the city to use the Internet once a week.



Tech Savvy: While challenges exist, Volunteers find a way to stay connected

Above: Volunteer Nicole Voorhees intrigues students in St. Vincent with her laptop. Photo by Ryan Brooks

Left: Volunteer Joshua Wilcox, serving in Mozambique, demonstrates just how connected some Volunteers really are. Photo by Bern Moorehead

PCV to PCV, Cont'd.

anymore."

Deborah is easily annoyed by verbose conversationalists who use up all of her phone credit. In The Gambia, where she is serving, a text message costs 4 cents (USD). No wonder she chooses to text when every minute she spends talking subtracts up to three minutes from her phone card.

No matter how you price it, communication technology has changed the way Peace Corps Volunteers reach their goals. Cellphones and Internet allow collaboration among Volunteers on a multitude of projects, like sharing each other's expertise, which makes for more polished results.

"Cell phones and Internet connections have certainly improved our network of professional resources to work with," Ken adds. Using Yahoo and Google e-mail accounts, Peace Corps administration can effectively reach Volunteers within a reasonable amount of time. It isn't like the old

days when Volunteers could only be contacted by a well-timed land-line phone call or the sending of a Peace Corps vehicle.

Communication technology also has advantages on a number of other levels, including safety. Cellphone networks give Volunteers the ability to make a call in an emergency, to another Volunteer or even to request medical services. For, while the emotional support of a quick phone call is nice, the possibility of physical support is extremely comforting.

For the most part, Volunteer-to-Volunteer communication still revolves around sharing experiences, giving advice, or planning rendezvous. The cellphone dominates as the preferred means of communication, as Volunteers are privy to serve in an age when more and more remote sites are providing coverage. This gives almost everyone a chance to share frustrations and success stories or, as Deborah says, make "our lives away from home and loved ones more manageable."

Then & Now, Cont'd.

Lauren and Connie agree that the new technologies help them, both with their service and with communicating with friends and family in the U.S. Connie says she feels lucky to have Internet and cellphone access in her site to maintain constant communication.

Lauren notes that, "it has been great to be able to call Connie so easily, but it's also pretty expensive. Buying phone cards has definitely done some damage to my stipend!"

Although Lauren's site does not have the same level of access as Connie's site, both feel fortunate that they are able to communicate often, either through letters, e-mail, or cellphone calls.

"We make it work when we can," says Connie.

AUGUST 1966

From the Peace Corps Times: A Peace Corps computer has a crush on trainee Patricia Gallagher. It got stuck on her name and recorded it 350 times on the tape. As a result, her father in Philadelphia was our favorite subscriber (and his mailman our least sympathetic one) during May, when he received 350 copies of "The Volunteer." He graciously returned 349 copies. "I worry about all those people who didn't receive their magazines," he said.

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Do you have something to share with us?

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

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In Peru, Podcasting and Googling Bring Answers



VOLUNTEER LIFE

By Lorena Hinojosa

I work in Cajamarca, Peru. It is a city with a population of 80,000. My time here has been occupied with trying to find both new and traditional ways of introducing Peru to the technological advances of the 21st century.

The surrounding districts here have about double the population. In the most remote areas of Cajamarca, you might find a satellite dish that connects a small village to the Internet. Practical Solutions, a UK-based non-governmental organization through which I work, has the goal to assist certain rural areas to create "InfoCenters." In Cajamarca, an InfoCenter is described as a location that provides information, by means of telephone services, technology and Internet services. My work requires that I help in training the people that staff these InfoCenters located all around the province of Cajamarca.

As an example of the impact of this type of training, another local NGO in cooperation with my NGO provided young mothers with a two-month training course on what the Internet is and how to use e-mail, Word, and Excel. We also helped these women and girls learn how to use Google as a tool for finding information that could help in their everyday lives. These bits

of knowledge, for them, were very important. Many of them had health questions concerning themselves and their children. With the Internet, those questions were answered through access of official health Web sites.

By helping these women and girls, I was able to make a small difference. I had shown them how they could learn more, on their own, and how they could apply this technology to answer other questions they might have.

Also this past year my NGO asked me to assist with a podcasting project. It was a pilot project to see whether podcasting was a viable means of communication to rural areas. The project lasted six months. I was in charge of investigating free software to create the audio podcasts, software to upload the podcast, and finally methods of downloading and playing the finished product.

A common misconception that should be pointed out is this: that to listen to podcasts one needs an ipod. This is not true. Podcasts are just audio mp3 files that can be downloaded and disseminated in various forms. The mp3 files can be copied to CDs and distributed as such, or local radio stations can broadcast the mp3 files, turning them into a radio program.

I have investigated and learned about the freeware necessary to create a show. I assisted in creating a manual in Spanish that covers the use of these programs. I taught my counterparts and later the administrators from three InfoCenters.

The administrators learned the basics of how to create a podcast. However we did have problems uploading the audio mp3 files. Therefore, we had

to send each file normally via e-mail to our network administrator to load the files and create a web addresses from which they could be downloaded. The project was a test, and ended with positive results and hopefully they will continue to test the ability in other countries.

A technology Volunteer can do

many types of training, and there is great impact when you give knowledge. Training diffuses down to the lowest levels, and after a while a lot of people have some knowledge.

Being an technology Volunteer plays a small role in development as a whole, but it also plays a very powerful role.



Lorena works with a group of students in her community.

In Bulgaria, Introducing Internet Presents Challenges



VOLUNTEER LIFE

By Sarah Braddock

Technology, while serving as a Volunteer in Bulgaria, is practically a necessity.

I live in a small, beautiful village of 250 people in the Rhodope Mountains, where I work in a boarding school for truant. The school draws children ages 7-18 from all over Bulgaria, many of whom are minorities. The school is equipped with a wonderful new computer lab. However when I arrived in October 2005, there was absolutely no internet access in the town. At

first, my director was convinced that there was no way of getting Internet into the small village due to problems with the cable lines. I figured she was right, and left the issue alone for a few months. The lack of internet access was a nice distraction from the outside world. However, soon the teachers and I agreed, there had to be a way to bring Internet into this community, as the kids could truly benefit from this access.

To provide some background, the town where I serve is situated seven kilometers from one of the largest and most popular ski resorts in Bulgaria: Pamporovo. Due to the proximity of this resort, hotels and guesthouses in my host community have been expanding along with the tourism industry in general. Internet access is vital for this area to become a tourist destina-

tion in Bulgaria. The tourism center, the municipality, and local business have all agreed that Internet would greatly benefit their small community. Therefore, technology plays a very important role. With this in mind, I began my search.

We found a local satellite company that installs internet for a fairly reasonable price. After waiting a month to get an appointment, they came to the school and offered to put in a satellite for free, but not until the snow melted. So, we waited until May for the snow to melt. However, when the company finally came, instead of installing the satellite on the school, they put it up on the mayor's office, which services one computer, inaccessible to the community and the kids.

After daily phone calls to the satellite company, my counterpart and I

realized we needed to do something to get the people to come back and install Internet in the school. We traveled to their office and confronted them face-to-face. Currently, they have a tentative date to put it in, but as I write this, there is no Internet access for the public in the community.

Implementing this type of project into our community, especially a small mountain village, has been difficult, but not impossible. Patience is key with any project, but I have found that persistence with people—and more important the Internet company—have proven to be helpful.

Keep a smile on your face and make sure your community sees your enthusiasm, because it will keep their spirits high, and one day soon, I am sure we will have full Internet coverage even here.