



Peace Corps Times



Focus on Earth Day
—Recycle me when
you're done!

We Can All Be Environment Volunteers

Quick, what are the “three Rs” of environmental responsibility? If, like many Americans, you were taught, “reduce, reuse, recycle,” you probably know enough about solid waste management to integrate raising environmental awareness into your role as a Peace Corps Volunteer, even if you are a health, education, or business Volunteer. Growing up in the United States, most of us have a basic awareness of the ways in which people can help or harm the environment. Many environment Volunteers arrive at site with an intense dedication to and interest in helping their communities manage the negative impact of positive growth. Creating awareness is half the battle.

Even within their primary activities, non-environment Volunteers engage in building environmental awareness. Business Volunteers work on recycling to improve tourism; community development Volunteers beautify municipalities with tree planting campaigns; education Volunteers include environmental themes in science fairs; youth development Volunteers co-lead environment clubs, camps, and excursions. Anyone from any sector can learn to plant a tree.

In celebration of Earth Day this coming April 22, this issue of *Peace Corps Times* is dedicated to the environment and the Peace Corps' role in



Raقيب Jamal, small enterprise development Volunteer in Ghana (1998-2000)

working to protect it. Climate change is on the minds of many Volunteers and their communities, while other threats to the environment—from local to global—seem to emerge on a daily basis. When Volunteers arrive at their sites, they come to understand how closely their new communities are tied to their local environments. Volunteers who have an interest in helping communities manage and become more aware of their environment can find plenty of opportunities to do so, often right outside

their front doors.

For Volunteers interested in getting involved in environmental work in their communities, an easy way to start is by simply taking walks—with friends, counterparts, kids, and colleagues—and asking people to tell you about their neighborhood and its history. Listen for what has changed, and what their concerns are, and what they regard as their successes. Once you have an idea of what the hot spots are—loss of trees, trash, standing water, erosion—work

with people you trust to start putting assets together. Look for leaders, technical know-how, examples from other communities, and take into account the aspirations of the people in your community.

Talk to people about their day-to-day lives—that's where you will find enthusiasm around the issues that matter most to the people you know. Ask adults how a particular public resource (a park, their drinking water, a nearby stand of trees) has changed since they were young. On walks with your friends, talk about what you see. Litter may cause your senses to revolt, but you are going to have a hard time getting folks to pick it up if the people around you don't even see it. Listen for the changes that sadden or anger people the most. Find out, too, what efforts have been made, and what has and hasn't worked. What has changed for the better? Who are the champions of change?

You may be most effective in talking one-on-one with your colleagues, friends and counterparts. Even starting with one single issue can have a long-lasting effect on the people around you. Remember enthusiasm and positive energy are contagious, and that one small initiative can often lead individuals and communities toward much bigger changes.

Earth Day: Make It about Raising Awareness

As April 22 approaches, Volunteers and their communities across the world will prepare to celebrate Earth Day. TEFL Volunteers and their students will plan visits to nature centers, school yard tree plantings, and poetry contests. Volunteers working with community organizations and businesses will organize festivals, parades, and fairs. Youth Volunteers and their kids will paint murals and organize park trash clean-ups and awareness campaigns. Blizzard or drought, as spring approaches back home, Volunteers turn to the task of reminding those around them of the wonder of our Earth.

Some Volunteers have realized that after the Earth Day date has passed, the challenge and the opportunity to create environmental awareness remain, so they make it a part of their job. Year round, Volunteers working on environ-

ment projects teach environmental education, create green clubs, and promote sustainable means of gaining livelihood from nature's resources. In other types of projects, too, Volunteers and their partners take on the challenge of helping people see how important it is to devise ways make water cleaner, forests and parks healthier, and neighborhoods safer and more appealing. Small enterprise development Volunteers encourage businesses to go green and highlight the value of healthy public spaces to attract tourists; public health Volunteers help people see the importance of sanitation; youth development Volunteers organize clean-up campaigns and the planting of organic gardens; and TEFL Volunteers use English language eco-banners, signs, and posters as supports to learning.

This Earth Day, draw on the energy

of this planet-wide celebration to kick off a new year of care for the woods, fields, waters, and neighborhoods we depend upon and share.

Planning an Earth Day Event

On the U.S. government portal for Earth Day, www.earthday.gov, you'll find suggestions on what individuals can do at home, in the classroom, and in the workplace. You may need to modify certain activities to fit your community context, but the “reduce, reuse, recycle” principle applies anywhere in the world. The “For

Kids” section has an environmental kids club, and lots of great ideas on subjects of interest to children: www.earthday.gov/kids.htm. There is also a timeline on the history of Earth Day, including a number of landmark events and legal decisions: www.epa.gov/earthday/history.htm.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also has an Earth Day page: www.epa.gov/earthday. At the bottom of the page is a “Test Your Enviro-Q” section that has a great archive of questions and answers on subjects ranging from SPF sunblock to oil spills to stats on morning traffic.

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Volunteers Go Green

Climate change is a growing problem that is now discussed worldwide as people begin to realize its inherent dangers. As such, Volunteers are eager to increase awareness about climate change in their communities. While many countries have urgent needs, such as providing proper nutrition, housing, and healthcare, various longstanding Volunteer activities continue to promote eco-friendly lifestyle changes in an effort to address climate change on a global scale.

For example, Peace Corps/Paraguay is involved in projects helping communities to integrate improved agricultural techniques. Techniques like using green manure help to maintain soil moisture and mitigate drought conditions, while conservation tillage and contour planting ease the effect of storm conditions and reduce erosion.



Volunteers in Armenia are organizing different community activities to celebrate Earth Day, including community park clean-ups, an Earth Day fair, and tree planting projects.

Volunteers in The Gambia are supporting the government's National Environment Agency and Forestry Divisions in using remote sensing and land use mapping to accurately record changes in land use and forest cover. In addition, staff and Volunteers in Micronesia/Palau are also doing their part by incorporating creative green initiatives to conserve energy and to protect their fragile environment (*See our Notes from the Field section to learn more.*)

Engaged in a wide range of activities, Volunteers are promoting ways for citizens to become more environmentally friendly in their daily lives:

- *Fiji:* PCV Maya Breitburg-Smith, an environmental educator, has helped organize the "Clean Compound Competition" in her village. She said, "It was so encouraging and rewarding to see so many people start composting and recycling, create stoned-in areas to pour out extra water, and really clean up their surroundings."
- *Jamaica:* PCV Brooke Anderson is part of the Green Initiative project where she works with the Negril Coral Reef Preservation Society to develop a World Oceans Day event. The event will help to build awareness on climate change and its effects on the ocean.
- *Jamaica:* Frank Mataska is currently working with Watermount All-Age School. He said, "Some of the successes from the past year have been planting and labeling trees on the school compound, painting environmental scenes, making kites out of plastic bags, crafting collage signs from old newspapers and magazines, and implementing an 'environmental warden' system."
- *Guatemala:* PCV Master's International student Kate Cleary is studying avian communities and working with the local community members to use the local communal forest for tourism

as an alternate source of income. She also works on a project that hopes to make young people the first tour guides in the area to do ecotourism specifically focused on bird watching.

- *Dominican Republic:* PCV Adam Bremer has recently formed Brigada Verde ("Green Brigade"), a youth group that promotes ecotourism activities. The senator for the Province of Monte Plata, Charles Mariotti, has expressed interest in supporting environmental conservation activities to be carried out by Bremer's group.



School children who have joined Marcel Coppolino, organizational development Volunteer in Belize in a community-cleanup activity. "I've always believed that Earth Day should be mindful part of every day," says Coppolino.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Changes to Peace Corps Partnership Program

By Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter

I never cease to be amazed at the limitless creativity and ideas Volunteers use during their service. Sometimes these ideas need a partner. The Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) can offer just that.

In Swaziland, I met Volunteer Megan Guetzko. She was helping grandmothers in her community who had lost their children to HIV/AIDS build a new school for their grandchildren. Megan had worked with PCPP to raise money for the material to build the school while the members of her community put in the labor.

In Niger, Michael Greenberg raised funds through PCPP to refurbish a building where they could store grain during harvest time when the supply of grain is plentiful and the price is low. When grain is scarce, the women can purchase it from the bank at reduced rates, and

profits from the sales go toward community development. The women also receive instruction in money management throughout the year. Amazing PCPP projects like these are happening around the globe.

Peace Corps provides this funding mechanism for Volunteers through the Office of Private Sector Initiatives (OPSI) to ensure sustainable projects like these are able to receive the financial support they need. This year, OPSI streamlined the policies, procedures, and criteria for submitting a proposal to make the process of financing a project much easier from the Volunteers' point of view. Changes include a redesign of the application and final report forms to make them more user-friendly, and the development of a new Volunteer handbook to better address staff and Volunteer questions.

The Peace Corps will carefully con-



Director Tschetter lends a hand in building a school in Swaziland with Volunteer Megan Guetzko.

sider each project; will seek to fund sustainable, well-developed projects with an accent on community involvement, and will insist upon accountability at all levels of the process.

We are already seeing the positive results of these changes. In 2007, the Peace Corps Partnership Program received 5,684 donations, a 31 percent increase from 2006, with funds totaling

\$1.45 million. One-hundred percent of the funds goes into funding Volunteer projects. In 2007, funds went toward 429 community-initiated projects in 50 countries, with an average of \$3,209 going toward each project.

These donations leveraged an additional \$643,000 in community contributions, bringing the required 25 percent contribution to more than 44 percent. Despite the increase in average project size over the years, we have been able to reduce the average fundraising time. In fact, the average fundraising time per project in 2007 was 54 days, compared to 79 days in 2006, a 32 percent improvement.

I encourage you to take advantage of the partnership opportunities available through the Office of Private Sector Initiatives. For more information, talk to your country director or email pcpp@peacecorps.gov.

WHAT VOLUNTEERS ARE BLOGGING...

Paraguay | May 25, 2007

La Rubia y El Moreno

We are experiencing initial cross-cultural success with our brand new radio show. The local radio station, 89.3 FM, MbaTovi gave us an hour time slot to use. We talk about events which we are hosting or participating in, technical topics such as gardening tips or the ecology of the Atlantic Forest of Alto Parana, and to play a little music. We also have an English phrase of the week (so far we've covered "what's up?" and "see you later"), and each show we read a recipe for home remedies for garden pests. Our show is called "La Rubia y El Moreno," which translates to "the blondie and the brown one" (Paraguayans find it endlessly amusing that I am so blond and Adam is so dark, and on top of that he has the last name of Moreno).

travelpod.com/members/almparaguay

Paraguay | November 9, 2007

Crash Course in Trash Training

Tomorrow two trainees and I are giving a presentation about compost piles to families in our community. Trash management is a huge problem here. Everyone either burns all of their trash in their back yard (including plastics and leaves), or they dump the trash on someone else's property. The chemicals from the burnt plastics get into the water supply, the vegetation, the soil, and cause an incredible amount of health problems. This is also incredibly bad for the air quality and the environment. One goal is to separate the trash into compostable, burnable, reusable, and buryable materials. Another three trainees organized a community trash pickup which about 30 kids participated in. They dug a huge hole, cleaned up the street and got certificates for completing the "Peace Corps Day" program.

burgessscott.blogspot.com

Tonga | November 14, 2007

A Nice Surprise

Last week we got a nice surprise from the current Volunteers in Tonga. They came to our training session to deliver "mail" to us. They said that during training, they missed getting mail like we do.

My favorite item was a bookmark with the following quote: "Some people see the glass half empty, some people see the glass half full, a Peace Corps Volunteer sees the glass and says 'Hey, I could take a bath in that!'"

The care package was great and was the first mail I've gotten since being here even though I know I have some on the way. It was a nice way to show us that our Peace Corps family is not just the people with whom we are training, but also the other Volunteers.

blog.stevesadventure.com

Jordan | November 7, 2007

Welcome to Jordan, J12s

Dear J12s,

In Peace Corps/Jordan flexibility, openness and curiosity are the order of the day.

So, be prepared. It's a regular job in an extraordinary, vivacious county. After a while, life settles down and begins to seem, uh, "normal" again. You'll think it will never happen, but normalcy creeps up on you. Everyone has their own ah-ha moment. Mine came when a guy I know beeped his car horn hello at me one morning and waved. Just a simple neighborly "hi" and I knew I had a second home.

Ahlan Wasalan! Welcome to Jordan

Susan

peacecorps.gov/volunteerjournals

Editor's Note: For practical purposes, the Peace Corps edits blog excerpts for length but does not change the grammar or content of the entries.

During a monthly meeting with my *Eaux et Forêt* ("Environment Ministry") counterparts, the "chief"—my boss—mentioned his desire to plant some trees around a school in my village. "C'est spectaculaire!" I said. He was willing to donate trees if I could dig the holes. My mind immediately went to work brainstorming, organizing, and fretting. I considered this while I looked up and scratched my chin. I finally found a man who was willing to loan me his pickaxe, and soon after we broke ground. A group of 15 boys blessed with a surplus of energy, three teachers, myself, and several onlookers managed to dig 50 holes to plant the trees.

The schoolyard soon bore a striking resemblance to a mine field. And then I started wondering, "What if the trees didn't come after all of our hard work?" To this, the chief replied, "If I dig them, trees will come."

But what if they didn't? Then holes would be left where I had promised trees. Well, holes aren't so bad. Digging holes builds character. I once heard that if you send a bad boy out in the hot sun to dig holes, it makes him a good boy.

I started making lesson plans on

the environmental importance of a hole. "You see kids, without holes, where would Mother Nature put all the piles?" Then I started thinking, children for generations would fall and hurt themselves in these holes and it would be my fault! Stress was taking its toll on me as I pondered how to get these trees.

On a Saturday morning at the market, the local forest guard found me and showed me a magical crate in the back of his pickup containing baby trees. He said he was willing to help in educating the group on the importance of planting trees. Perfect, I thought to myself, this is way better than teaching about the importance of digging holes! We brought the trees to the school and, naturally, the kids were curious to see what was going on.

Then the forester and one of the teachers at the school said they had to go somewhere and, as they drove off, I turned around to see a schoolyard full of kids migrating toward me and a fellow PCV. Being alone with about 100 kids and no teachers, chaos quickly set in. Some children began using the trees as footballs, while others were flinging shovels

VOLUNTEERlife



David Sumners
MOROCCO

of dirt in the air. I actually saw one kid swing the pickaxe centimeters from another kid's face. "Hey stop that!", "Put that down!" I yelled in my attempt to maintain order.

As well known and respected as I may be in my village, I have less authority than a two-year-old. Fortunately, the teacher and forester came back and gave a spectacular environmental lesson. The kids listened, and some were even motivated to plant a tree.

Two months later, all 50 trees were successfully planted and were still alive. Alas, a successful environmental education lesson—and a great outcome—with no serious injuries. *Hamdullah!* ("Thanks to God!")

agency NEWS

Top Volunteer States and Colleges Announced

Peace Corps now has 8,079 Volunteers in the field, the highest number in 37 years. Here are the top-producing states:

1. California: 943 PCVs
2. New York 429 PCVs
3. Texas 382 PCVs

The top colleges are categorized by enrollment. They are:

Large Schools

- #1: University of Washington
- #2: University of Wisconsin-Madison
- #3: University of Colorado at Boulder

Medium Schools

- #1: University of Virginia
- #2: The George Washington University
- #3: Western Washington University

Small Schools

- #1: The University of Chicago
- #2: Gonzaga University
- #3: Willamette University

Peace Corps Announces "Peace Corps Response"

Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter announced a new program called Peace Corps Response. This program, formerly known as Crisis Corps, is the result of an ongoing effort by the agency to broaden the scope and skills of this important department. The Crisis Corps title will be retained as a unique branch within Peace Corps Response, designed for Volunteers who are deployed to true "crisis" situations, such as disaster relief following hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, and other catastrophes. The new Peace Corps Response website and video can be found at www.peacecorps.gov/response.

Peter Piot Speaks at Peace Corps for World AIDS Day

On November 28, 2007, Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter welcomed Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS, to discuss HIV/AIDS, the U.S. strategic response to fighting the disease, and the status of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. He praised U.S. leadership on global HIV/AIDS issues, calling the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, "one of the most successful development programs in recent history."

HONDURAS

“Bio-Digesterable”
Products

In October, PCV Joshua Bogart led a demonstration on how to build a bio-digester. Volunteers learned the benefits and multiple uses of bio-digesters alongside representatives from Aldea Global Park, Instituto Hondureño de Café, and local coffee producers. Aldea Global will build 12 bio-digester systems in PANACAM to help diminish the polluting effects of waste water resulting from washing coffee in local water systems. After the demonstration, Carlos Perdomo from Aldea Global talked about future experiments with bacterial mixes that will accelerate the decomposition of coffee shells so it can be used as organic fertilizer in coffee plantations.



Bio-digester demonstration in Honduras

MAURITANIA

Dancing The “Moringa”

Environmental education PCVs in Mauritania are working with community citizens to improve their nutrition by producing and consuming more diversified food while, at the same time, protecting, conserving, and restoring their environ-

Notes



from the field

ment. One group is focusing on raising awareness about the benefits of the Moringa fruit tree. They have trained one school and over nine cooperatives on Moringa plantation techniques. As a collaborative effort, Volunteers, cooperatives, and local schools have planted over 4,500 trees, helping to replenish the environment as well as the health of many citizens.

JAMAICA

“Green Initiatives”

In an effort to build awareness on global climate change and to encourage action among several communities, Peace Corps/Jamaica has developed the “Green Initiatives” program. About 31 Volunteers have worked together on various activities to carry out the goals of Green Initiatives. They organized events like “Planned Earth Day,” “World Wetlands Day,” “National Tree Planting Day,” and “International Coastal Cleanup Day.” All have been instrumental in raising awareness about global

warming and educating local citizens on the many steps they can take to help protect the environment and preserve our natural resources.

PANAMA

Protecting Panama

PCVs in Panama have been exercising their conservation skills to help protect native plants and animals, and, by 2009, Volunteers hope to establish 45 projects that focus on preserving or propagating these native gems. So far, 15 reforestation projects of indigenous



Volunteers are working to protect the natural resources of Central America

trees have materialized to provide habitats and natural food sources for the wildlife and to protect watersheds. In an effort to protect Panama’s beloved sea turtles, Volunteers have worked with five communities to create nurseries in several coastal sites. To date, these nurseries have saved 18,500 eggs and 13,700 sea turtles.

MICRONESIA

Going Green!

Aware that global climate change may change the way we live our lives in the future, Peace Corps/Micronesia has incorporated creative “green” initiatives to reduce energy and protect the fragile island environment. The office has updated their roof insulation and exhaust fans for optimal cooling and installed electrical timers on water heaters to reduce energy waste. During PST, Trainees used ceramic cups instead of Styrofoam or paper cups. To save on paper manuals and reference material, Volunteers use preloaded flash drives. Volunteers and staff are also using diesel fuel/coconut oil mix in their generators to reduce fuel costs. As a result of their “green” efforts, Peace Corps/Micronesia was able to save \$20,000 in the 2007 fiscal year alone, which was then used to provide a 14 percent salary increase for all staff.

ONLINE SURVEY:

Do you want to give your input on *Peace Corps Times*? If so, write an e-mail to Laura Lartigue and get a link to a quick online survey llartigue@peacecorps.gov

RECIPES

WHOLE WHEAT PANCAKES

INGREDIENTS:

Half cup whole wheat flour
Half cup all purpose flour
2 tsp baking powder
Pinch of salt
1 egg
1 cup milk

Prep Time: 10 min. Cook Time: 10 min.

2 tbsp cooking oil
Several chunks of chocolate per pancake
Handful of pomegranate seeds per pancake

DIRECTIONS:

To make these “fill you up all day (‘cause there ain’t no money for groceries)” whole wheat pomegranate chocolate pancakes, simply mix together the ingredients and fry.

ANNCHER RAY

Doing Our Part

Beginning with this issue, *Peace Corps Times* is printed on 100 percent recycled paper using forest products that are Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified, establishing new environmentally-friendly standards for this and future editions of the publication.

FPO for FSC Logo

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

Please send us your thoughts, ideas, and stories related to next issue’s themes: promoting awareness about **diversity within the Peace Corps**, and **working with youth**. We want to hear from you!
pctimes@peacecorps.gov

Peace Corps
Times

A publication for Peace Corps
Volunteers serving worldwide

Do you have something to share about your Volunteer experience? We welcome all Volunteer submissions and suggestions. Send your inquiries to:

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Additional Info: For more of Annchel Ray’s delicious Peace Corps recipes, visit <http://annieimorocco.blogspot.com/2007/11/annchel-rays-delicious-peace-corps.html>