



PEACE
CORPS

Times

INSIDE ISSUE 2, 2009

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Education PCVs Continue to Make a Difference



An education Volunteer in Nicaragua sings and dances along with her kindergarten class.

for making materials, as well as actual books they had made.

Frucci says she continues to see the influence of the workshop at one of the primary schools where she teaches. Those who attended the workshop have made materials not just for English classes, but for social studies and art classes as well. "It is so exciting to see teachers use an idea and transform it for other educational applications," she says.

In the case of a Volunteer in Guatemala who was able to mix English lessons with a workshop about HIV/AIDS prevention, the real life implications of these approaches are tangible. "It had a real impact on us because it wasn't just theory, it was practical and understandable," says one Guatemalan teacher.

This content-based instruction and project-based learning goes beyond the classroom. For example, Volunteer Christina Frucci (2007–2009) and her counterpart hosted a book-making material workshop. The goal was to inspire English teachers to use and create their own classroom materials. By the end of the workshop, teachers were loaded with new ideas, a CD toolkit

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ON AUGUST 30, 1961, 50 Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Ghana. These Volunteers were not just the first to arrive in this country, or in West Africa—but anywhere in the world.

The historic importance of this group of Volunteers is obvious, but what was less evident at the time was the impact of their arrival on the lives of the students many of them would teach.

Christiana Agyare Boateng was one such student. "Today, I'm able to speak English as if I went to a secondary school and not a training college [vocational school], just because of my Peace Corps teacher," says Boateng, who has extended that positive impact to students in her current role as municipal director of education in the New Juaben region of Ghana.

Lesotho Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations Mohlabi Kenneth Tsekoa has emphasized the far-reaching nature of the work being done by education Volunteers in his country. "I believe you will find that most successful Basotho [people], and nearly all of our ministers, have been the beneficiaries of a Peace Corps Volunteer teacher or community organizer," he states.

It's clear education Volunteers in Peace Corps countries around the world have dramatically influenced their students. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, president of the West African nation of Togo, was taught English by a Peace Corps Volunteer when he was in high school. Attaher Darkoye, spe-

cial counselor for the president of Niger, was also taught by a Volunteer and speaks fondly of his own experiences. "I have never forgotten the Volunteers who taught me English as a child; they were among the first to serve in Niger," he says.

The Peace Corps Response Volunteers who recently re-entered Liberia, an early Peace Corps mainstay, are being counted upon to duplicate the success the education program had from 1962 to 1990.

"Peace Corps Volunteers have made an immense contribution to various sectors of Liberia in the past, and I, myself, was a beneficiary of Peace Corps teachers. The return of the program is a significant development that will help us address the challenges we face in the quality of education," says Minister of Education Dr. Joseph Korto.

Today's Volunteers continue to add to the Peace Corps' legacy of teaching and capacity building. Forty-eight years after the arrival of those first Volunteers in Ghana, education is the agency's largest program area, having expanded to 53 of its 70 posts.

In 2008, there were 2,163 Volunteers serving in the education sector, assisting 591,732 individuals, including both children and adults. These Volunteers also assisted more than 70,000 service providers and reached a staggering 1.44 million people through mass media activities.

The impact of these interactions increases tenfold when sustainability is

added to the equation. The lessons Volunteers share with their counterparts often become part of a curriculum that will benefit students for years to come.

One Volunteer took her own unique approach to promote sustainability through teacher training and resource development. Thailand Volunteer Cristina Frucci (2007–2009) and her counterpart hosted a book-making material workshop. The goal was to inspire English teachers to use and create their own classroom materials. By the end of the workshop, teachers were loaded with new ideas, a CD toolkit

Need Inspiration? Check Out These Helpful Education Publications

Below are the most popular education resources in the Peace Corps information and collection exchange (ICE) unit, based on annual usage. The easiest way to request an ICE resource is by email (iceorders@peacecorps.gov). Be sure to include the ICE catalog number, item title, and quantity.

ICE publications are available without charge, but must be returned to your information resource center (IRC) at close of service. Please check with your IRC manager before placing an order to see if these publications are already available at your post.

- ED222 *The First Days of School*
- ED209 *The English Language Teacher's Handbook*

- M0042 *Nonformal Education Manual*
- ED220 *Zero Prep: Ready-To-Go Activities for the Language Classroom*
- ED223 *Teaching Multilevel Classes in ESL*
- RE035 *Libraries for All! How to Start and Run a Basic Library*
- ED102 *Grammar Games: Cognitive, Affective and Drama Activities for EFL Students*
- M0080 *Idea Book Series: Beyond the Classroom—Empowering Girls*
- ED192 *Five-Minute Activities: A Resource Book of Short Activities*
- M0085 *Idea Book Series: Information and Communication Technologies (ICT): Integrating Digital Tools into Your Projects*

health. We also played sports and did artwork; and finally, by the end of each camp, the girls wrote and performed their own theater pieces,” she says.

Others expand their “classrooms” through the use of computers, radio, and other technologies. Anthony Bloome, who served as an information and communications technology (ICT) specialist for the Peace Corps, notes that ICT—one of the Peace Corps’ global initiatives—is enjoying one of its biggest surges within the realm of education. “Kids everywhere want to use technology and it’s great to get these kids involved,” he says, adding, “Almost all of our Volunteers are ICT-savvy. Many are from the millennial generation, so it’s their second language.”

Communities throughout the world are eager to expand their use of technology, making it a natural secondary project among many education Volunteers. “Some Volunteers have even used Skype to teach English,” says Bloome.

It’s not just young people who are embracing this new way to learn and grow. Jaime Salazar, manager of a youth

center in Costa Rica, has witnessed Volunteers’ impact firsthand.

“I was astonished when I went to talk to a Volunteer during one of his ICT sessions with community members and saw an old woman asking him if she could use a computer to ‘chat’ with one of her sons. She could hardly read and never before had used a computer until he started ICT classes in the community,” he says.

Volunteer Abram Brummett (2007–2009) has taken his computer experience a step further. Arriving on the island state of Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia in September 2007, he saw a truckload of computers being scrapped by the Department of Education (DOE).

“I knew I had found my secondary project! I approached the director of education about what I had seen and asked him why they threw the computers out like that. He said that although they had someone working in information technology (IT) at the DOE, nobody really knew how to repair computers, so when one stopped working, all they could do was throw it out and

order a new one.”

Brummett got permission to use the parts from these discarded computers to build working computers—about 50, in all—and was then able to acquire educational software, applications, and other programs through Peace Corps IT staff members. Such computers have been installed in special classrooms and labs to help young people learn elementary math, English, typing, and computer skills. Brummett has also passed his computer repair know-how to an intern with whom he worked for three months in order to assure that the computers are maintained after he completes his service in November.

Regardless of the tools used, teaching—and learning—is central to what the Peace Corps is and does. The essential truth of this is stated eloquently by Violeta Jimenez, an education Volunteer teaching at a high school in Lesotho:

“Most [of my students] will never have a chance to go to university ... But is there value, and sustainability, in teaching students to wonder ‘why’ and

search for factual answers? Is there significance in remedying a little ignorance? I believe the answer is yes. I believe that such small, seemingly irrelevant steps forward are what contribute to measurable change. Because the question ‘why?’ is the basis of science, and the answer to ‘why?’ is the basis of change.”

Be Here for the Next Issue



You’ve spent three hours putting together a report about your last four months in-country, writing about how many people you’ve reached and how you developed a program that is now being used in neighboring communities. Is it all for naught?

Hardly! Check next month’s issue to see how those reports—and the many others that Volunteers and staff provide regional offices and Peace Corps headquarters—are used to improve the agency and offer the world a view of the valuable work our Volunteers do.

It Takes a Thorn Tree to Raise a Child: A Volunteer’s Story

EDITOR’S NOTE: Peace Corps, along with National Geographic/Glimpse online magazine, named Volunteer Brian Carroll of Santa Maria, Calif., as the winner of the Peace Corps and National Geographic/Glimpse Short Story Contest on the global food crisis. He recently completed his service as an environment Volunteer in The Gambia. Thirty-three entries from Volunteers serving throughout the world were received and judged by members of the Peace Corps Food Security Task Force, and the top stories were submitted to the magazine, which chose Carroll’s as the winning entry for its online publication. Following is Carroll’s winning submission. The remaining 10 finalists can be found at www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=learn.whatvol.food-security.volstories

I squat in front of the giant stainless steel bowl and struggle to squeeze into the open space. There are 10 of us sharing lunch together, wrapped inside billowing kaftan robes. Our elbows knock each other as we reach for handfuls of *ben-achin* (a mixture of oily rice, sweet potato, cassava, and a trace of meat). Keeping our balance is difficult—one ill-timed twitch, one spasm, and we might all end up on our backs. In The Gambia, this is how we celebrate the naming of a new child. Today, it is my host father Amadou’s new son, Abdoulie.

The food vanishes in minutes, bringing the ceremony to an end. Everyone scatters to the shade of mud walls and mango trees, seeking respite from the relentless sun. I glance toward the entrance to Amadou’s grassy compound,

and I see them: winter thorn trees, 200 seedlings in black plastic pots. As part of my work with the Peace Corps, I will spend the next few weeks helping Amadou plant these trees throughout his peanut and millet fields. They are small, but their potential is enormous. And in a village where farming hasn’t progressed much in the last few thousand years, they represent an important opportunity to embrace change.

The winter thorn is a natural and sustainable means of fertilization. Its roots fix nitrogen deep in the soil, while leaving the top layers undisturbed so crops can be planted. The trees lose their leaves during the growing season, thereby adding more nutrients to the soil, while at the same time not competing with crops for sunlight. The leaves, shoots, and seedpods also attract foraging animals, and these animals leave behind manure, which further enriches the soil. It’s a perfect cycle—a simple solution in a seed.

But there are some who resist the winter thorn.

Amadou is standing at the gate, saying goodbye to Yero Ketta, one of the village elders. The old man looks at the winter thorns, and asks what they are for.

“For the fields,” Amadou answers, half distracted by another group of guests. “We’ll plant them to fertilize the fields.” Yero pauses for a moment, his small, thin frame hunched beside an upright gatepost. His eyes are wide and fierce.

“Not this tree,” he says, glaring. “You don’t want this tree. It will only fill your fields with birds and thorns.” The

creases on Yero Ketta’s face look like dry riverbeds—dusty and permanent—and the bristled white hairs on his chin stand on end. Amadou listens patiently, still wrapped in his spotless white robe from the day’s celebration.

“Yes. You are right, you are right,” he says out of respect. “But we will try them. Maybe we will see a benefit.”

Yero turns to a group of guests who have gathered at the gate and points a thin finger at the saplings as if to damn them. “You’ll ruin your crops! The birds will destroy them!”

Yero’s family starts to guide him out to the sandy road and back to his compound, his stunted steps sinking beneath him. Amadou looks down at his trees and then at his friend Njie, who is standing beside him. Njie watches in disappointment as Yero slowly scuffs away. He knows the potential in Amadou’s trees and he knows the danger of resisting change. In a hushed voice he leans close to me.

“A little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing.”

Six months later, Amadou stands on an empty oil drum in a peanut field planted with winter thorn saplings. He throws handfuls of peanuts, twigs, and leaves high into the air, allowing the breeze to sort the harvest. The heavy peanuts fall to the earth, while the leaves and twigs blow away. The saplings have started to take root.

“Watch out,” I say with a smile. “You’ll bury the trees with all those leaves and twigs, and we’ll never find them again.”

Amadou laughs and takes a basket

of peanuts out of my hands. “They’re strong trees,” he says. “They’ll find us.”

We pour the peanuts into empty rice bags and load them onto a cart. I wince as one of the cart’s wheels crushes a tiny sapling, but a moment later, it springs back up. I smile. Survival is tough in the dusty upcountry, but these trees have what it takes to thrive. Fortunately, Amadou’s village affords elders like Yero Ketta respect, but does not rely on them to make important farming decisions.

Sitting with Amadou and Abdoulie, now six months old, under the shade of a mango tree, I wait for glowing coals to boil a sugary green tea called *attaya*. Abdoulie throws his head back to see his father’s face and flashes a rapt smile. His hand reaches out, searching the air for a single, calloused finger.

Amadou pours a tiny glass of tea and hands it to me, as Abdoulie watches intently. Amadou pours a second glass and we drink together. The tea is so dark that the glass is almost completely black, and so hot that I nearly burn my tongue. Abdoulie mumbles to his father in gibberish, and Amadou mumbles back.

Abdoulie and the winter thorns came into Amadou’s life in the same week, and they will literally grow up together. Together, they represent the test of a father’s ideas—the test of a changing relationship between farmer and field. Their success can prove a village’s ability to adapt to the changing world around them.

Abdoulie mumbles again, and reaches for his father’s cup. I laugh at the exchange. “He’s waiting for his tea, Amadou.”



Career Corner

What's in Your Future?

job search workshops, Peace Corps Fellows/USA program listings, Coverdell World Wise Schools information, and Peace Corps Response opportunities.

If your service is coming to a close, or if you're just curious, check the current issue of *Hotline* at <http://multimedia.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/former/hotline/current.pdf>.

The Peace Corps also publishes a series of career manuals that provide an overview of diverse occupations

Peace Corps website.

Those interested in pursuing opportunities within the federal government have several advantages over those in the private sector. In addition to overseas experience, they are eligible for the non-competitive selection process. To be eligible for non-competitive selection, an applicant must be certified by the country director. A country director may issue certification to a Volunteer (a) who has satisfactorily

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following in the first installment of "Career Corner," a regular feature that will provide tips for Volunteers considering their future after Peace Corps service.

ARE YOU ENTERING YOUR FINAL MONTHS of Peace Corps service and beginning to debate your future? The Peace Corps offers a variety of options for returning Volunteers, with Peace Corps Response and the Peace Corps Fellows/USA program growing in popularity over the past few years.

The Office of Returned Volunteer Services also provides resources to assist you in a self-directed job search. Offered are various career publications, nationwide services, and informative career events. It also provides *Hotline*, an online bulletin of employment and educational opportunities for returned Volunteers that is published twice a month. Each issue includes resources related to career and education opportunities, transition issues, and/or third-goal activities. *Hotline* contains job announcements from employers who are specifically interested in hiring returned Volunteers and announcements from educational institutions that are looking to enroll returned Volunteers in educational programs. You'll also find relevant information about career and



Returned Peace Corps Volunteers gather to share their experiences during a career fair in Washington, D.C. At this session during the four-day event, Volunteers learned how to talk to others about their Peace Corps experience through the art of storytelling. Among the RPCVs shown, facing the camera, is Conor Cronin (Cambodia, 2007-2009).

and graduate school opportunities. The guides are designed as a reference tool to generate ideas, to formulate job search strategies, and help identify educational institutions. Such options for Volunteers are outlined on the

completed a full term of service or (b) (1) who has satisfactorily served for at least 12 months, including training, and (2) whose termination is determined to be for reasons beyond the Volunteer's control.

For those considering continuing their education, the Peace Corps Fellows/USA program may be an option. Following are some words of advice from Joby Taylor, a Peace Corps Volunteer in Gabon from 1991 to 1993 who serves as director of the Shriver Peaceworker program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

The Importance of Networking

"A lot of us are involved in specific projects when we're in the Peace Corps and you're kind of lost when you get back to the States," Taylor says, recalling his own frustration with a bit of "reverse culture shock."

Taylor notes that the community aspect Volunteers enjoy overseas is often left behind, with host country nationals and fellow Volunteers no longer being a part of a Volunteer's life. "In our graduate program, if you can create things that engage such RPCVs, then the transition will be easier," he says, noting that the Shriver Peaceworker

Taking Development Out of the Classroom and Into the World

ARIANNA ROBINSON CAME BACK from a service trip to Sudan in 2004 knowing she had changed. "I realized that people in much of the world faced more uncertainty than I face," she explains.

Having worked with a population returning home after years of displacement, Robinson had witnessed firsthand the needs faced by so many in the world's developing nations. "I kept trying to describe what I wanted to do with my career by a term I had come up with, 'international social work.'"

One day, while perusing the Peace Corps website, Robinson discovered a Master's International (MI) program through the University of Montana called Intercultural Youth and Family Development (IYFD). The rest is, as they say, history.

Now serving in Peru as a community development Volunteer, Robinson teaches classes as diverse as theater, computer science, and gender studies to classrooms of children, adults, and even other Volunteers. Her year of graduate work in the IYFD program at the University of Montana prepared her well for the overseas portion of her MI assignment.

"I came into training with so much more understanding of the issues than I'd expected. We'd covered a lot in class, from the theories of Paulo Freire [a Brazilian author and educator], to the challenges of development work, to community diagnostics," she says.

There are six other IYFD MI students currently overseas as Peace Corps Volunteers in the Philippines, Azerbaijan, Peru, Honduras, and Costa Rica. "MI students in our program leave for post knowing how to design programs, how to write grants, and how to work with interpersonal conflict. They know how to ask the right questions and look for sustainable answers. They know how to see a cultural context," says Dr. Nancy Seldin, coordinator for the University of Montana's program.

The six IYFD MI students currently serving abroad are working in a diverse array of projects, from staffing an orphanage, to working with health centers, to helping city governments with community development projects. "The people who are attracted to the University of Montana IYFD MI program are people who intend to commit their lives to service," Dr. Seldin says.

As evidenced by Robinson, that commitment, coupled with the academic rigors of the MI program at the University of Montana, is a winning combination. To learn more about the MI program go to <http://www.peacecorps.gov/masters>.

Getting Started with Your Search

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

www.cdc.gov/employment/

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

www.usda.gov/da/employ.html

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

www.commerce.gov/jobs.html

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

<http://dod.jobsearch.org>

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

www.ed.gov/about/jobs/open/edhires/index.html

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AND HUMAN SERVICES

www.hhs.gov/careers

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

www.usdoj.gov/06employment

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

www.careers.state.gov

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

www.epa.gov/ohr

U.S. GOVERNMENT JOBS

www.usajobs.gov

PEACE CORPS

www.peacecorps.gov/employment

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

www.sih.si.edu

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

www.census.gov/hrd/www

U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICE

www.uscis.gov/careers

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION PUBLIC HEALTH PREVENTION SERVICE PROGRAM (AN ENTRY-LEVEL, U.S.-BASED, FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM)

www.cdc.gov/epo/dapht/phps.htm

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

www.hud.gov/jobs

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL

DEVELOPMENT (USAID)

www.usaid.gov/careers

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

(DOWNLOAD GOVERNMENT APPLICATION FORMS AS REQUESTED BY AGENCIES)

www.opm.gov/forms

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program is currently developing a mentoring program that would pair an incoming Peace Corps Fellow with program alumni. “As a result of such ties, it becomes a professional network as well,” he says.

Taylor stresses the importance of building such networks, advising Volunteers not to be hesitant about drawing upon the relationships they have made within the Peace Corps. “An added benefit of service internship with graduate school is the building of those networks,” he says.

The Peacemaker Fellows program supports returned Volunteers through a selective service-learning scholarship program that integrates graduate study, community service, and ethical reflection, preparing participants for leadership positions in diverse fields of public and private service.

With more than 50 Peace Corps Fellows/USA programs nationwide, RPCVs can choose from a wide range of disciplines, geographic regions, and program models, all of which offer financial benefits and engage returned Volunteers in service leadership in U.S. communities. According to Taylor, “Across the country, I’d say the Fellows programs are still under capacity and looking for great Peace Corps applicants. It’s never too early to begin considering the benefits of such a program.”

For more information on the Peacemaker Fellows program, go to <http://shrivervcenter.umbc.edu>. For information on Peace Corps Fellows/USA, go to www.peacecorps.gov/fellows.



Volunteer Life

Sometimes You are Left With More Questions than Answers

By MADELINE URANECK | PCV Lesotho

HOW DO YOU TELL FRIENDS you gave up a nice job and will return jobless, an older woman in a deepening recession, yet have no regrets?

How do you explain to family you’ve attended nine funeral services for friends you met and are having a happy time?

How do you tell colleagues you trudge long miles to isolated mountain schools, see crowded classrooms with kids sitting on paint cans, yet learn more than you teach?

How do you explain you live among poverty and see beauty; live among HIV and see elegance; live where time is slow yet have rich, full days?

Current Volunteers and returned Peace Corps Volunteers understand these contradictions. They are the ties that bind us.

Like almost everyone, I was perplexed when Peace Corps/Washington told me where I would be placed. I was assigned to Lesotho. Where? How did one pronounce it? With grace becoming my age, I decided to see why Lesotho had chosen me.

Even after 2½ years (I’ve added a six-month extension), I don’t have the answers. I’ve certainly never come to love the dirty, Wild West town I live in, where unemployed men lounge against the walls and sullenly watch me walk by. My town is the toilet stop for cross-country busses, where ladies I don’t know enthusiastically beckon me to bus windows, demanding to know my name, how many children I have, where my husband is, what I might do for them.

Lesotho is a tiny country the size of Maryland, surrounded on all sides by South Africa. Outside its wanna-be-sophisticated capital Maseru, it’s a series of tiny villages with thatched roof huts, herds of sheep, cows, and goats. A few tar roads circle the country. Infrequent traffic consists mostly of *combis*—16-person vans stuffed with 21 adults, plus children pressed in small spaces against canisters of gas, 50-pound bags of cornmeal, and a jumble of cheap suitcases.

Holding the dubious distinction of being among the top three countries with documented cases of HIV, Lesotho looks forward and backwards—one high heel shoe toeing the prosperity of South Africa, the other gum boot (shepherd’s rubber boot) stuck in poverty.

I am a teacher trainer at Lesotho College of Education. Since the day I arrived, I’ve tried to understand why our 2,000 teachers are afraid to test for HIV. I struggle, and fail, to break stubborn barriers of misunderstanding. Lesotho’s HIV rates, despite millions of dollars of contributions and Herculean efforts from the U.N. and nongovernmental organizations, hold steady, refusing to show needed decreases.

How do you tell future employers you failed, yet treasure this failure more than all the successes on your resume?

How do I explain to myself, as I plant flowers on graves, tears in my eyes, that I’m laughing more than I have in years?

How will I leave, my heart in my throat? The people I wave to have no idea of the distance I’ll travel from them and the improbability of my return, yet they’ll travel with me, to inhabit daily memories and dreams.

Tsumeya hantle (go well), beloved Lesotho. My questions add no weight to my luggage; it’s my heart that’s heavy.

Uraneck, a 50+ Volunteer and native of Madison, Wisconsin, is scheduled to complete her service in August of 2009. She invites fellow Volunteers to write her at globalmaddy@gmail.com.



EDITOR’S NOTE: Mr. Sock, your Peace Corps friend and columnist, makes his debut in this edition. These columns will offer humor, tips, and answers to some of those pressing questions shared by Volunteers around the globe.

I HOPE YOU’RE ENJOYING YOUR TIME in the Peace Corps. Take off your shoes (or sandals), kick up your heels, and enjoy this inaugural edition of the refurbished *Peace Corps Times*. For those of you in

Taking Stock with Mr. Sock

Kick up your Heels and Enjoy the Ride

warmer climates who rarely use socks, I promise not to hold it against you.

Whether you’re a recent trainee who is looking forward to a bit of independence after a lengthy homestay, or one of those Volunteers who is wondering how to adjust back to a lifestyle that seems to stress punctuality, I hope this issue provides some useful information. Remember that this is your publication and we welcome ideas for stories you would like to see covered.

One such idea came from a returning Volunteer who wondered how the Peace Corps had changed over the years. That is the impetus for “That Was Then ... This Is Now,” a column that debuts in this issue.

As with every publication, there will be articles that may not apply to all Volunteers, but in an effort to be more inclusive, we have dropped the idea of devoting entire issues to certain themes and, instead, have limited our features

about various sectors to one cover story.

A reader survey last year also told us that “Notes from the Field,” which presents vignettes of Volunteers’ work, and the more expansive “Volunteer Life” were the most popular features and, as a result, have been retained. “Agency News,” which provides a glimpse of what is happening in reference to the Peace Corps in the U.S. and abroad, will also continue.

“Recipes” fell to the middle of the pack in popularity and we opted to eliminate that section. However, we have reconsidered our decision based upon a letter from Peace Corps/Benin Volunteer Sarah Grace Ellison. Sarah wrote us a wonderful letter (yes, not an email, but a letter with an actual stamp!) that expressed her concerns about *Peace Corps Times*. She noted that she and her friend enjoyed the most recent recipe that explained how to make Mac

n’ Cheese in 10 minutes. As a result, Mr. Sock took stock and decided that we would provide a link to recipes on the Peace Corps website. This will allow more Volunteers to share recipes and we can even add a few from those Volunteers back in the States to enjoy. For those of you who have limited access to the Internet, perhaps you could encourage your local Volunteer newsletters to include such fare.

In honor of Ellison, we have included her recipes for “There’s Nothing to Eat” soup and Saucy Noodles in our inaugural weblink to Peace Corps recipes. Go to www.peacecorps.gov/recipes for cooking tips and send us your favorite recipes at pctimes@peacecorps.gov.

Ellison also asked that updates on some of the Peace Corps’ newer programs be included and we are working toward that end for our next issue. Please follow Ellison’s lead in letting us know what you think.



That Was Then ... This is Now Expanding Volunteerism

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is the first installment of a regular column that will look at stories and images from Peace Corps' past and show how such people and programs operate today.

THE PROGRAM IN THE PHILIPPINES is the second oldest in the Peace Corps. It began with the arrival of 123 education Volunteers in October 1961. Since then, more than 8,000 Volunteers have served in the Philippines. In June 1990, the program was suspended because of a threat from communist rebels; it resumed in 1992. Currently, Volunteers are addressing the country's development priorities through projects in youth, education, environment, and business development.

Then ... Filipinos Welcome The Peace Corps



In this photo from 1963, Volunteer Pam Benson sits with the school children she helped teach in the Philippines.

From The Volunteer newsletter, January 1962—

The first contingent of Peace Corps teaching assistants to land in the Philippines received a warm welcome. The road to the University of the Philippines College of Agriculture at Los Banos, where the Volunteers are completing their training, was lined with people, standing in the rain, waving flags and cheering the coming of the Peace Corps. When the group stopped for a ceremony at one of the schools along the way, children rushed forward with umbrellas to shield the PCVs from the rain. As PCV David Pierson commented in a letter to his parents, "We felt like we were all miniature Gen. MacArthurs once again 'returning.'" He added, "The important thing is that they want us here much more than we ever realized, and it leaves us with an aura of humility and we begin to realize the complexity of the job ahead of us."

Joshua Wayland, a coastal resources management Volunteer in the Philippines, explains the importance of coral reef to students. Wayland and Volunteer Matthew Hamilton, who teaches English, took high school students to the beach for a lesson on environmental education.



Now ... Philippines Borrows a Page From The U.S.

Illustrating the impact Volunteers have had on the people of the Philippines, a program patterned after the Peace Corps was launched with the signing of an executive order by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Arroyo announced the creation of the Youth National Service Corps, designed to promote the spirit of community and volunteerism in the country. "The National Service Corps shall be like a domestic 'Peace Corps' of the United States. It shall be geared to the unemployed or underemployed skilled youth or college graduates. It shall focus on their contributions to education and community service programs. We are recruiting such youth to undertake a two-year national service commitment with a modest stipend," Arroyo said in a speech on April 1.

She also announced the formation of the Youth Conservation Corps, which will encourage less educated youth to focus on environmental and infrastructure projects.

The president announced the formation of the new services during the launching of a government partnership to protect watersheds, forests, and marine life. "During these trying times, the Philippine spirit and commitment to caring should prompt each of us to count our blessings and give back to those who are less fortunate. Our nation needs us all pulling in the same direction. Volunteering time, skill, and resources is a noble undertaking we should all take seriously," said Arroyo.



Now You Can Keep Up with Peace Corps News and Events on Twitter

MOVE OVER ASHTON KUTCHER and Shaquille O'Neal, Peace Corps Twitter is the real deal!

The Peace Corps joined the ranks of the social networking scene when it launched its Twitter account at www.twitter.com/peacecorps in January.

Peace Corps Internet Marketing Specialist Amber Smigiel regularly "tweets" about Peace Corps events and

information, in addition to providing various links to news sources that post articles about the agency.

"It presents us with a medium where we can provide information a lot quicker to a wide audience," says Smigiel, who has seen a word-of-mouth campaign balloon to 4,300-plus followers as of mid-June.

Twitter hit the national scene just

over three years ago after co-founder Jack Dorsey expressed his desire to start a nationwide service that connects users by text message.

Twitter co-founder Biz Stone gave the service its name after comparing the short spurts of information exchange to the chirping of birds and pointing out that many ring tones sound like bird calls.



Astronaut, RPCV Joe Acaba Visits PC/Washington

Peace Corps headquarters hosted Mission Specialist Joseph Acaba, the first returned Volunteer to serve as a NASA astronaut, on May 1. Acaba, who was a Volunteer in the Dominican Republic (1994-1996), presented Peace Corps acting Director Jody K. Olsen with a Peace Corps flag that he had carried aboard the space shuttle *Discovery*.

Acaba addressed headquarters staff, as well as future and former Peace Corps Volunteers, as part of the Loret Miller Ruppe Speakers Series. The series, which honors the agency's longest serving director, is a forum for distinguished individuals to speak about issues related to the Peace Corps' mission, such as volunteerism, international peace and development, and public service. Acaba cited his Peace Corps service as inspiration for his career as an astronaut.



Astronaut Joe Acaba (Dominican Republic, 1994-1996) presents Peace Corps acting Director Jody K. Olsen with the flag he carried into space.



Astronaut Joe Acaba during a space walk conducted as part of his mission.

Rwanda Welcomes 32 Trainees as Program is Relunched

Thirty-two trainees were sworn-in as Peace Corps Volunteers in Rwanda on April 15. The Peace Corps/Rwanda program officially reopened on January 28, 2009, after a 15-year absence. Volunteers will work in the areas of health and community development, and will collaborate with other United States government partners to support the Rwandan government to combat HIV/AIDS.

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NOTES *from the* FIELD

A Brief Look at Some Volunteer Projects

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MEXICO

Volunteer Couple Help Restore Protected Land

Two Volunteers in Mexico have helped reduce carbon dioxide and increase farmers' incomes. Volunteers Benjamin and Buffy Lenth are developing programs that encourage conservation and restoration activities at the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, which covers nearly one million acres and is over 90 percent privately owned. Buffy helps identify investors and link them to local landowners working to conserve and preserve the protected area. Ben works to quantify both the conservation and social benefits of this and other programs, providing a holistic picture to donors and the general public.



Benjamin and Buffy Lenth work in the forests of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve in Mexico.

KENYA

ROADS Taken to Independence

Women in Kenya are learning new skills and gaining financial independence thanks to the help of Volunteers Heather Domenico and Grover Ainsworth. Domenico helps develop local markets for quality home and fashion accessories made at LifeWorks Shukrani Factory, while Ainsworth develops export markets. *Shukrani* (meaning "we give thanks") is located near a busy transport corridor that is part of an environment that lends itself to commercial sex work and surging HIV prevalence rates.

The program is part of an initiative called Roads to a Healthy Future (ROADS) and helps mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS in towns along major transport routes. Women are provided with a viable income and access to health benefits and insurance. The products are currently sold in Kenya and exported to Uganda, the Caribbean, and New York City. "Shukrani Factory is based on fair trade principles and guidelines, giving grassroots producer-level individuals a voice to better compete locally and internationally," explained Ainsworth.

BURKINA FASO

Volunteers Take Part in Sesame Sale Surge

Burkina Faso has an ideal climate for growing sesame, so Peace Corps Volunteers in that country have forged a relationship between village farmers and a large U.S.-based sesame processor that has dramatically increased community incomes.

Volunteers played a key role in organizing villages, providing translations, and advancing preparations after Associate Peace Corps Director Daniel Rooney was initially contacted by a company representative. Long-term business plans are being finalized and as of January 2009, sales of sesame at sites where Peace Corps Volunteers serve had already surpassed \$147,000, with another \$237,000 in pending sales. These account for 30 percent of Burkina Faso's total sesame seed exports and are expected to more than double the country's exports to the U.S.

BULGARIA

Holiday Networking

One of the things Volunteer Kellen Utecht first came to love about Bulgaria was the celebration of Trifon Zarezan Day, held February 1 to mark the start of the growing season. This year, Utecht enjoyed a full day of networking with locals through different activities, including hiking in the mountains, listening to an orchestra, and dancing the *horo*, a communal dance performed at festive gatherings. "This year's celebration was on a whole other level. I truly felt as though I had been a member of this tight knit fraternity for years," said Utecht.



Volunteer Kellen Utecht joins village residents in a traditional Bulgarian dance called the horo.

LESOTHO

Prayer Flags Display True Feelings

Volunteer Pamela Rogers has been encouraging students to create prayer flags in Lesotho to help them express their feelings about HIV or honor a loved one with the disease. The students write messages on small pieces of fabric that are sewn together and displayed in the classroom and other areas of her mountain village. Rogers had expected to have 300 to 500 flags by mid-April.



Prayer flags fly in the mountains of Lesotho

Digital Library Offers a Chance to Share Your Experience

The Peace Corps has launched a Web-based digital library. The purpose of the site is to increase awareness of the agency's rich history of service around the world with digitized photos, stories, and documents. The library provides a searchable collection of Peace Corps materials from 1961 to today. Each Volunteer and RPCV can contribute a story and up to five photos from their Peace Corps experience using an online submission form.

Go to www.peacecorps.gov/50 and scroll down to the section that says "Contribute to the 50th Anniversary Digital Library" for detailed instructions, guidelines, and links to the submission forms. One can also browse the digital library to view historical documents and a growing collection of contributed materials.

Website Promotes Work throughout the World

A new interactive website has been launched to highlight Peace Corps Volunteer projects. The site features a clickable world map that includes links to audio stories, slideshows, pictures, and videos. Each page includes the story of an individual Volunteer and is a user-friendly resource to those who want to learn more about what Volunteers do in the field.

The site can be used to teach others in one's host country or can be shared with students involved with the Coverdell World Wise Schools Correspondence Match program. Access the website at: www.peacecorps.gov/wws/educators/enrichment/globalissues/index.html

PEACE CORPS | Times

A publication for Peace Corps Volunteers serving worldwide

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