

# Peace Corps Times

Issue 1, 2009



Tools for making  
a better future.

## Volunteers Work with Tomorrow's Leaders

Every Volunteer is familiar with the scene: the group of kids you see every day. When you pass them on your way home, they call out to you. Maybe they know your name. Perhaps you will look at them and acknowledge the stares and calls. Over time, these kids will become your language coaches. You will learn their names and, as your language skills develop, you are capable of having a real conversation.

Sometimes you will play ball in the street or invite them to your porch to draw with the crayons you stashed in your backpack. You will get to know their siblings, their aunts, and their parents. You will encourage them to stay in school, to excel, and to dream big.

By the time you leave, you will shed tears. You and they will have been impacted by your daily interactions. Young people are inevitably a part of most Volunteers' service, regardless of the program to which you are assigned. So then, why does the agency focus on a youth development "initiative" and what does that actually mean?

### Why it matters

Throughout the Peace Corps' nearly 50-year history, Volunteers have always worked with young people. It is sometimes in formal settings, such as a classroom or youth center. Just as likely, it is through informal clubs or groups, through families, or just through the fabric of community life.

Since the beginning, Volunteers have been changing the lives of young people with whom they work. There are presidents, community leaders, inspiring teachers, and devoted parents throughout the world who have been influenced by Volunteers they knew when they were young. Over time, the Peace Corps has learned this is a true area of opportunity and strategic importance.

In the early 1990s, the agency started a youth at-risk initiative, intended to help young people with the greatest needs. This focus has evolved into an agencywide youth development initiative. This means the opportunities, ca-

capacity, and participation of young people as partners in development are examined and leveraged in all Peace Corps projects and posts. Over time, based on experience in the field, the agency has developed a positive stance on youth development. This means supporting Volunteers in taking a view of all young people as key development resources, rather than a more traditional view of youth as a "problem" to be solved.

As an emerging critical area of development, the World Bank's *Human Development Report, 2007* focused entirely on youth development. The publication emphasized the five major transitions in a young person's life, which serve as a lens to examine human capital development. These transitions are defined as continuing to learn, starting to work, developing a healthy lifestyle, beginning a family, and exercising citizenship.

Volunteers have been successfully working to help young people navigate and succeed in these transitions for years. Over time, the purpose of youth development work has come to be defined as helping to develop the assets and capacities of young people so they are better equipped for their adult roles in family life and to be active, contributing members of their communities. So what does that actually mean, and why does it matter?

### The youth bulge

According to 2008 data, Volunteers worked with over 1.4 million young people across the world. This reflects over 68 percent of all of the people Peace Corps serves. In many ways, young people are the Peace Corps' primary customers. In the 2006 All Volunteer Survey, 64 percent of Volunteers reported that part of their primary assignment involves working with youth. In five of the six project sectors, Volunteers reported working with youth as one of their top three primary activities. Sixty percent of respondents also noted their secondary activities involve working with youth.

This is good news, as over 50 percent of the population in most of the coun-



Education Volunteer Tom Peng explains a mathematics equation to students in the Philippines.

tries Volunteers serve is under the age of 25, and the world is facing the largest demographic "bulge" ever seen, with an explosion of a youthful population in the developing world. In 2007, 1.5 billion people were ages 12–24 worldwide, 1.3 billion of them in developing countries. This is the highest number in history, according to the World Bank.

This cohort of young people are transitioning to adulthood in a world that is fundamentally different than the one in which their parents grew up. Access to information and technology in all corners of the world has increased exponentially, and youth are best positioned to utilize these new tools for development and connectivity. Young people today also have more access to basic education than at any time in history. Many, but by no means all, have access to basic health care as well.

While this youthful population presents a great opportunity for social development and positive change, there are many potential threats to their successful navigation of this transition to adulthood. The World Bank's World Development Report also notes that in 2005, more than half of the 5 million people who contracted HIV worldwide were young people between 15 and 24, the majority being young women and girls. Youth unemployment and underemployment rates are significantly higher

than that of adults. Many young people question the returns on their investment in education, and may look to opportunities for migration or other means for livelihood that come with adverse risks.

### Agents of change

So what are Peace Corps Volunteers doing to make a difference? Increasingly, they are moving beyond the many fun, engaging, and important ad-hoc sports, games, and clubs they do with the kids on their front porch to intentional and structured activities to engage youngsters to build their assets and those of their community.

This is not to say that these many activities are not important. Indeed, it is such activities that create the natural synergy between Volunteers and young people. However, with a little thought and planning, Volunteers across the world and every sector, including health, education, agriculture, environment, small business, and even youth development, are creating opportunities for young people to become agents of change. Volunteers are also creatively integrating other key agency initiatives throughout their work, including HIV/AIDS, WID/GAD approaches, and ICTs. Here are some examples from projects across the world:

*Young people are inevitably a part of most Volunteers' service. This happens whether or not Peace Corps plans for it, recruits, or trains Volunteers to interact with them.*

Continued on page 5

# 'Our Common Humanity Shall Reveal Itself'

By *Peace Corps Acting Director*  
*Jody Olsen*

Tuesday, January 20, was an historic day for America and the world as Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States.

During his inaugural speech, President Obama stated, "... To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds ...." Over 7,800 currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers are fulfilling his pledge by working and living "alongside" individuals, families, and communities globally.

The inaugural parade that afternoon included a group of 200 returned Peace Corps Volunteers carrying flags representing the 139 countries in which Volunteers have served. The two most prominent flags in the group, front row left, were those of Kenya and Indonesia.

With our Peace Corps country flags, all 200 of us RPCVs walked 16 blocks from the Capitol Building to the presi-

dential reviewing stand. Thousands of American flags, bunting, and cheering crowds lined our path. As we passed the reviewing stand on Pennsylvania Avenue, our flags waving in the strong wind, President Obama acknowledged us and pointed specifically to the two flags connecting Peace Corps' work to his own life.

During his campaign, President Obama pledged strong support for the Peace Corps, emphasizing Americans

*President Obama pledged strong support for the Peace Corps, emphasizing Americans sharing technical skill and goodwill with citizens throughout the world.*

sharing technical skill and goodwill with citizens throughout the world. His inaugural address added the context of our work as Peace Corps Volunteers.

As with every new administration, President Obama brings new leadership to federal agencies, including the Peace Corps. Anticipating the change, we have been preparing since December for a smooth transition. On January

20, Director Ron Tschetter completed 28 months as head of the agency, and I was asked by the Obama team to serve as Peace Corps acting Director until a permanent Director is nominated, confirmed, and sworn-in.

I have been serving as Deputy Director for the past seven years and am honored to be asked to continue serving the agency during this transition. It was 42 years ago that I left Utah to become

a Peace Corps Volunteer in Tunisia. As with all of us, it fundamentally changed my life. My commitment today is to continue to help make that possible for each of you.

During this transition, I have asked each staff member to remember and model the characteristics we ask of all of you: flexibility, patience, tolerance for ambiguity, and humor. Our most impor-

tant work is to support each Volunteer, and encourage new Volunteers to serve. We are here for you.

President Obama is the 10<sup>th</sup> president under whom the Peace Corps has served, and yet our mission of world peace and friendship and the three goals have never changed. This is a testament to the work of the 195,000 Volunteers who have served and to the communities in the 139 countries in which we have lived and worked.

Our Peace Corps service will stay strong and hopefully grow as resources are made available. Americans remain highly committed. For example, in the 48 hours around the inauguration, we had 275 additional application starts—a 175 percent increase when compared to the same time period in 2008.

This is an exciting time, and we are making a difference, one person at a time. As President Obama said: "... as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself."

Thank you for all that you do—you are a significant face of that common humanity.

## Host Country Staff Recognizes Valuable Impact

No one has a better sense of the important work Volunteers do with young people than the host country staff members who work to train and support them. They witness the Volunteers' impact long after they have left their countries of service.

There are a few examples of Volunteers' influence that are well documented and thousands more that are not. One well known person who worked with Volunteers as a youngster is the former president of Peru, Andrew Toledo. He credits two Volunteers with providing encouragement, help, and support when he was growing up as one of 16 children in a poor community. Speaking of his interaction with Volunteers Nancy Deeds and Joel Meister, he told one newspaper, "There's no doubt that I woke up and said, 'Maybe I can go somewhere.'"

What some Volunteers may not always consider is that staff members are deeply committed youth development professionals who often have their own unique stories and reasons for working in this field. They are on-duty 24 hours a day, often giving up lucrative careers in the private sector or overseas, in order to help Volunteers develop the capacities of young people in their countries. *Peace Corps Times* asked several current host country national staff members why youth development is compelling to them and why the work of the Volunteers is so important.

Ukraine Program Manager Anatoliy Sakhno remembers being a ninth-grade

student in a small village school where he had a dream to visit an English speaking country.

"Both my parents and peers told me my dream would never come true because of lack of means and our origin. Peace Corps Volunteers whom I met at my university helped me overcome this disbelief, participate in an exchange program, and see the world. Volunteers taught me that if a young person works hard and believes strongly in his or her dream, nothing is impossible," he says, adding, "And here I am, working and helping youth from small and disadvantaged communities like mine for four years as the youth development program manager. Youth development Volunteers not only bring new knowledge and skills, but they also empower youth to become agents of change themselves."

Ivan Histroff, a program assistant with PC/Bulgaria, provides an interesting perspective. "We—staff and Volunteers—help the young citizens have a mind (for) freedom and critical thinking as an alternative to what they see and experience in reality, which can be unpleasant sometimes. Second, we ask the youth about their opinions before organizing something for them. This is the key element that explains the program's success. Third, the one I value most, is because we, the Volunteers and staff, create a new attitude in the Bulgarian youths—a new attitude toward education, environment, the less fortunate, and social justice."

Histroff says such an attitude may develop slowly or may accelerate without a supportive climate. "This is why I like being part of the Peace Corps youth development program in Bulgaria. I cannot separate the Volunteers from the program staff. It is not them or me, or any other staff, it is all about us," he says.

Philippines Program Manager Ambet Yangco offers some valuable insight on the role of Volunteers in building the capacity of youth workers and the field of youth development as a whole. As a former street child himself, Ambet benefited from the efforts of Filipino youth workers and organizations.

He says, "The youth development workers who helped me survive my years in the street and in the temporary shelter invested a lot in me. Their finished product is not just me being a successful social worker, it is me expanding their job, helping other children and youth help themselves. Working with young people is my passion and vocation because I am very confident that it will yield positive results in contributing to the development of my country. Maybe it is one of the most challenging sectors to work with, but it is definitely the most fulfilling and rewarding."

Yangco likens Volunteers' work to "a small, slow, and silent revolution that will grow into an avalanche that will inspire the nation." Such work adds to the sustainability of organizations and one's presence in the lives of young people

helps with their self-esteem. "They realize that their lives are important because someone they don't know, who is a not a relative, who lives halfway around the world, genuinely cares for them," he says.

Morocco Program Manager Abdelghani Lamnaouar cites the validity Volunteers contribute toward the youth initiative, which is a key priority for his government. "The fact that Volunteers initiate and help adults and service providers talk with youth, rather than at them, or listen to youth, rather than tell them, or work with youth, rather than on behalf of them, distinguishes the Volunteer from other youth workers," he says.

Lamnaouar, who also interacted with Volunteers as a child, adds, "They act as role models by easing off the typical roles as teacher, leader, and provider. They have youth share in these roles and in some of the power and responsibility that comes with it. They assist youth to realize they are not powerless, and that along with other youth, and in partnership with adults, they can make a difference!"

Peace Corps staff members speak clearly to the value of Volunteers' work in youth development. More importantly, they point toward the strength of coordinated efforts between staff, Volunteers, youth, and host country partners. The impact of the "small, slow and silent" revolution of youth development work is profound. Whether he or she likes it or not, the Volunteer is a role model.

# Is Future Employment on Your Mind?

By Bart Pogue

The initial phone conversation I had with my current supervisor was not a typical first interview. Sitting in my apartment in Morocco one month before ending my service with the Peace Corps, the discussion ranged from Moroccan cuisine and my work at the local youth center, to the dynamics of program development and our mutual affinity for the game of softball.

While my ability to articulate my achievements in Morocco was strong, my understanding of the world I would be joining was minimal.

Four months later, after a thorough and increasingly frenzied search, I received and accepted a job offer in Washington, D.C., and began working in the development department of an international education organization.

Working as a teacher and facilitator at a local youth center in a small town in Morocco, I practiced many skills that aided me in securing employment after the Peace Corps. I learned about issues important to youth directly from the source, and had extensive opportunities for collaboration with local organizations and ministry officials. Perhaps most importantly, I spent much of my second year developing and implementing a SPA-funded project.

Many organizations I was interested in working for value candidates with experience initiating and planning projects,



**Volunteer Bart Pogue helps community members put together ribbons for an HIV/AIDS awareness camp for youth and adults in Morocco.**

managing finances, and engendering collaboration. Moreover, these organizations are seeking people who have lived in the developing world.

Even if the focus of the organization does not correspond with a candidate's regional experience, they value cultural adaptability, and the understanding of how life works in poorer areas where the culture is more conservative and everything moves at a slower pace.

An RPCV's capacity to put faces and names to those struggling to make the

most of their lives in challenging situations is extremely marketable.

Personally, one of the biggest challenges of life after the Peace Corps has been transitioning to the nature of U.S.-based work within an international organization.

As a Volunteer, I was deeply engaged in all aspects of project and program development and implementation on a personal grassroots level.

In a development department statewide, my scope is much more limited and

my interactions with project outcomes and the frustrations and joys of implementation are stifled. Yet, I've had ample opportunity for expansion and exploration into areas of interest, and I'm excited about continuing to apply skills I developed in the Peace Corps as I advance in my career.

## Top 10 Tips

Are you in your final months of service and contemplating future employment? Consider these tips:

- Start planning early and begin acting on it after your COS conference
- Work through the "Career Resource Manual" that Peace Corps provides—take time to fill it out and really consider the provided information
- Write personalized cover letters for each job you apply for and send these within the emails to human resource representatives and as PDF attachments
- Talk with people—friends, family, those in the industry you're interested in—to get a better idea of what's out there and to learn from their experiences
- Be open-minded and flexible—sometimes your best option isn't what you initially thought you wanted to pursue
- Ask your program manager, program training officer, associate program country director or country director to be a reference (an experienced individual who knows you pretty well)
- Reconnect with professors, old employers, family friends, and others who can advise you on where to look and who to talk with, and potentially serve as references
- Always follow up with a thank you email (since mail would take a bit too long)
- Be patient
- Be open to temporary work if you haven't found anything upon your return. This is often a good route toward securing a full-time job

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: Sarah Zaenger completed her service as a Volunteer in Armenia in 2008. Like most Volunteers, she also found herself working with youth during her service in the community health education sector and wrote about her experience during the summer of 2008.)*

There is no doubt that Peace Corps Volunteers use running for stress relief, weight management, or even an opportunity to exhibit American culture. I have to admit, however, that I don't run for any of these reasons. I run for classroom respect.

Generally, Armenians are not open to the idea of women exercising. It is shameful for a grown woman to ride a bicycle and there is no excuse for a woman in my small village to go for walks, let alone a jog. I have a special site, however, because I am not the first American to be placed in the village.

Previously hosting a Volunteer who would walk each morning, community members would grow more accustomed to the fact that Americans like to exercise on a regular basis. The difference between the two of us, however, is that their

first Volunteer walked. I enjoy running.

One day I decided to risk running on the soccer field adjacent to the school. I entered and asked the children if I would disturb their games by running laps. They said no, but it didn't take long to draw attention.

Before I knew it, I had a parade of students following me. I think my endurance surprised and inspired them—they were amazed to see a female teacher outrunning the young, athletic boys.

As the students became tired, they would sit on the side of the wall and keep track of my laps. "She's run 10 laps!" one would exclaim. Another would reply, "No way, it's got to be more like 25!" When I finished, there were a few older students who had managed to keep up and I challenged them to a race to see who could run the length of the field the fastest. When I won, I could tell I had finally gained their respect. I was exhausted, but didn't dare show it. I could tell the students were starting to change their perception of the healthy life skills teacher from America.

I run on the soccer field as often as possible now. I've attracted a group of girls who had always wanted to run but

## VOLUNTEERlife



Sarah  
Zaenger  
ARMENIA

didn't have the courage to face the taunting boys. We've started doing stretches and other exercises after the runs and what the boys are quickly learning is that we girls can keep up, even excel, in physical sports.

Sometimes I wonder what I would think if someone from another country walked into my classroom, dressed differently, spoke like a kindergartner, and tried to tell me how to live my life. I'd probably hesitate to accept a word they say.

Running has gained the respect, however, that any extensive vocabulary or correct pronunciation could not. I may have come from the other side of the world, but if I can outrun the soccer team I've earned my place in the healthy lifestyles classroom.

*Bart Pogue served as a youth development Volunteer in Morocco. He currently serves as development assistant for American Councils for International Education in Washington, D.C.*

## A New Look In 2009!

*The Peace Corps Times* will have a new look this summer. In an attempt to provide Volunteers with more informative material, we will be changing the format and content of our publication. Such a change is based upon feedback we received during a 2008 survey of Volunteers. If you have a unique story to share with the Peace Corps, please contact us at [petimes@peacecorps.gov](mailto:petimes@peacecorps.gov)

# WHAT VOLUNTEERS ARE BLOGGING...

## Azerbaijan

### Host Organization

My host organization is formally called Ganja Education Information Center, GEIC, or also Soros, as it is funded by the Soros Foundation.

In many ways, I know this organization is the driving force for so many youth being active in their community. The students are interested in so much... it's just having someone to help them organize, plan, and conduct their own activities that they are often lacking. Hence, the Peace Corps Volunteer.

The best part of my job is that every day is both familiar and different. I see many of the same faces, but all of the things we do each day are different. I have the freedom to come in and decide to plan an art exhibition, essay contest, movie night, resume workshop, computer typing class, or an American game day. Whatever I do, students come. It makes me feel excited to go to work.

I find myself often going into the office on both Saturday and Sundays, and finding there is always something to do. And although every day presents its own challenges, it also has its own rewards. It is true what they say, Peace Corps really is the toughest job you'll ever love.

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

## Paraguay

### Challenges are Worth the Rewards

I arrived Saturday morning and walked to the municipality where the other Volunteer works on Saturdays. At one end of the courtyard I see my other Volunteer on the escenario ("stage," I think) with a lot of students sitting in there trying to learn English. I walk up with my big bags and join the group. I look around at about 20 bright-eyed little boys and girls staring at a Peace Corps Volunteer.

The kids were attentive and were learning a lot and asking really astute questions.

The kids sat in a big circle and tried their best to say "Hi" to me in English. I sat there for about two hours, but during that time period the kids were asking me questions about how to form sentences and all the easy stuff that is usually confusing for first-time English learners.

I wish you could have been there to not only answer their questions, but to see how it feels to be able to answer a simple question and see the satisfaction that comes over the kids' faces from feeling like they are learning something REALLY cool and new.

I think I better understand the challenges a teacher faces. They are some of the greatest, but I also think that the reward a teacher gets from seeing their students grow and learn is one of the greatest. In other words, big rewards come from great challenges.

<http://markinparaguay.blogspot.com>

## Peru

### Boy Meets World

The world map is complete! Micah and I started this project the beginning of October with 12 students and two professors at the largest high school (over 1,400 students) in Chota. While the group dwindled down to five boys and the professors disappeared, we managed to finish with a great looking map.

Along the way we did presentations on the continents (students here are taught that there are five continents: America, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Oceania). The process was tedious at times, but I really feel like the youth who stuck it out learned a lot.

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

## Cameroon

### Savings Among Youth

Once the children were settled into their seats, Tara Smith, an education Volunteer, would give a brief introduction of the Peace Corps and the participating Volunteers. Abigail Hyduke and Dan Lillis, both agroforestry Volunteers, then performed a sketch comparing two students—one who saved and one who didn't.

Tim Hartman, a small enterprise development Volunteer, then analyzed the sketch and pointed out important aspects and described them in depth. He highlighted three important reasons to save: for emergencies, for big purchases, and to follow their dreams.

Autumn Brown, another small enterprise development Volunteer, then involved the kids in an activity in which they calculated their necessary and unnecessary purchases, showing them that saving little by little works out to a lot in just a few years. The kids were always very excited when giving real-life examples of saving money.

We encouraged the continuation of this energy when Tara Smith would teach them The Savings Song, a beat used from a popular Cameroonian song, with the lyrics being modified to motivate the children to save. We collaboratively created and performed a dance to go along with the song, an illustration of putting coins into piggy banks.

Watching five Americans sing and dance was a great way to end the seminar. We were hoping this song would remind and encourage the kids to save, and when leaving the school after the seminar, we would oftentimes hear the kids singing the song and dancing along with their piggy banks... This is when we knew that the project was successful.

<http://taraforpeace.blogspot.com>

**Editor's Note:** The Peace Corps edits blog excerpts for length and grammar but does not change the intended content of the entries.

## agency NEWS

### The Peace Corps Cites Top Colleges

For the third consecutive year, the University of Washington finished No. 1 among large schools for those serving in the Peace Corps. There were 104 alumni of the Seattle school who were serving in 2008. In the category of medium schools, George Washington University captured the top spot with 57 alumni serving. Among small schools, the University of Chicago was No. 1 for the second consecutive year, with 35 Volunteers. The five top schools in each category are:

#### Large Colleges and Universities

1. University of Washington
2. University of Colorado, Boulder
3. Michigan State University
4. University of California, Berkeley
5. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

#### Medium Colleges and Universities

1. George Washington University
2. University of California, Santa Cruz
3. American University
4. Cornell University
5. College of William and Mary

#### Small Colleges and Universities

1. University of Chicago
2. St. Olaf College
3. Middlebury College
- Smith College
- University of Puget Sound

### California Remains Prime Recruiting Spot

Peace Corps' Home States campaign announced the top Volunteer producing states for 2008.

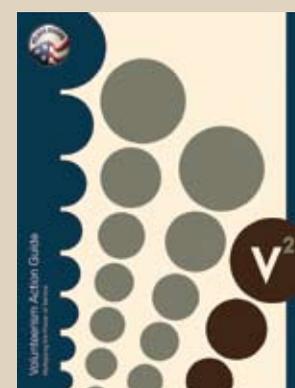
California and New York retained the No. 1 and No. 2 spots, respectively. There are currently 911 California citizens and 438 New York citizens serving the agency. The states have held the top two spots for seven consecutive years. Illinois rose from No. 4 last year, to No. 3 in 2008, with 368 Volunteers. The top 10 are:

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. California   | 911 Volunteers |
| 2. New York     | 438 Volunteers |
| 3. Illinois     | 368 Volunteers |
| 4. Virginia     | 351 Volunteers |
| 5. Michigan     | 342 Volunteers |
| 6. Washington   | 336 Volunteers |
| 7. Ohio         | 334 Volunteers |
| 8. Texas        | 317 Volunteers |
| 9. Pennsylvania | 280 Volunteers |
| 10. Colorado    | 272 Volunteers |

### Agency Recognizes World AIDS Day

Peace Corps recognized World AIDS Day, renewing its commitment to combat the pandemic through volunteer programs. Then-Deputy Director Jody Olsen and Dr. Shannon Hader, director of the Washington, D.C. Department of Health's HIV/AIDS Administration, led discussion on the importance of responding to HIV/AIDS.

In 2007, Volunteers carried out HIV and AIDS-related activities that provided assistance worldwide to over 1 million individuals in prevention and care, along with over 84,000 service providers and over 3,800 organizations.



### V<sup>2</sup> Volunteerism Action Guide Intended to Inspire Community Involvement

Outgoing Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter unveiled the V<sup>2</sup> Volunteerism Initiative in December of 2008. An online guidebook, the V<sup>2</sup> Volunteerism Action Guide, is intended to help Volunteers inspire host country communities to engage in service activities.

The guide was also provided to youth development Volunteers in book form and is designed to encourage partners to develop service learning projects in local communities.

### Health

Twenty-seven Volunteers in Ghana established youth clubs for over 1,000 young people, addressing topics such as reading, sports, education, human rights, and HIV/AIDS. Two Volunteers took this a step further by infusing soccer and family planning education as part of a “Real Man Family Planning” initiative, reaching over 900 young people.

In the Dominican Republic, health Volunteers partnered with their youth groups to educate rural youth in the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, adolescent pregnancy, and life skills. Trained peer educators reached over 3,000 boys and girls in over 80 communities.

Five Volunteers in Armenia conducted civic leadership, international outreach, and service-learning camps and projects for over 200 young people from 14 communities. At the end of the camps, participants provided project proposals on how to resolve certain problems in their communities.

### Education

In Ukraine, eight Volunteers and their partners organized journalism camps where 250 students learned the process of creative writing and of developing their own school newspapers. Nearly all of the participants improved their writing skills, learned the principles of objective journalism, and developed greater knowledge of possible career opportunities. Many went on to start newspaper projects dealing with topics of school news, fashion, sports, advertisements, and social life in their communities.

Three Volunteers in Ukraine also helped establish multimedia and technology resource centers with Internet access. These centers serve the entire community, as well as teachers in other schools within the districts. The initial intent of the technology resource centers was to train teachers and students who would, in turn, eventually train teachers from other schools.

Many of the teachers have also trained additional young people in their respective communities to become more effective members of a more technology-based society. These centers served 220 teachers, 4,600 students, and over 2,250 community members.

A Volunteer in Tanzania initiated a writing workshop as a way to encourage girls to improve English language and general writing skills in English and Kiswahili. Beginning by writing and telling typical folk tales, the girls are now writing their own stories and experiences, and sharing them with each other. Through their writing, they are reflecting on their experiences and addressing sensitive topics. The program, started very simply, has been very empowering and a source of continued learning and growth.



**Callie Sorensen enjoys working some after-school hours with youth in Kenya. Sorensen taught HIV/AIDS education for the deaf from 2005 to 2007.**

### Agriculture

Volunteers in the agriculture sector are working with young people to address critical food security needs, and innovatively helping young people access technology to contribute to the livelihoods of their families.

In Guatemala, four Volunteers and their teacher partners worked with 18 children of agricultural cooperative members to learn the basics of using a computer. All students now know how to use the Microsoft Word program, while 16 are learning to calculate costs of production in Excel, to create an email account, and to navigate the Internet. They are planning to help support the administration of a cooperative in the near future.

In Uganda, Volunteers and their partners integrate agriculture and permaculture activities into their work in schools. Working to support school gardens, the activities reap multiple benefits. The creation and maintenance of school gardens not only leads to improved food security and nutrition for students and community members, it is also a source of income that assists with school fees.

### Environment

Environment Volunteers and their partners in Bolivia trained over 200 youth and 22 service providers on how to organize clubs, outdoor activities, and walks directed toward environmental issues. As a result, seven eco-clubs are functioning and doing such things as cleanup campaigns and working on reforestation in recreational areas of their towns.

Volunteers in Morocco worked in collaboration with the National Association of Science Teachers and the Society of Animal and Nature Protection. The Volunteers provided environmental education resources, activity manuals, and information to several dozen teachers who were involved in existing environmental clubs. As a result, over half of the teachers, representing 22 environmental education clubs, used the resources to educate and train club members on how to

locate and collect reliable information for environmental investigations. Over 300 of the student club members were able to use basic sampling techniques and apply data collection skills in field situations, such as interviewing community members about environmental concerns or sampling water in a local stream.

### Small Enterprise Development

Young people are often a specific focus of many of the small enterprise development projects throughout the Peace Corps world. Volunteers work on entrepreneurial education, help young people develop relevant skills for the world of work, generate income, or help facilitate connections between youth and business owners.

Volunteers in Togo work with their partners to develop summer enterprise clubs that enable school children to pay for their own education. In Cameroon, Volunteers engage in similar efforts with a focus on savings clubs as well.

Small business development Volunteers and their partners in Peru also work with youth groups to develop income generating activities based on identifying community and group assets and needs. Examples of activities in the past year include sales of baked goods, homemade jewelry and friendship bracelets, bookmarks, and T-shirts. By working together, these groups also touch upon issues such as team building, self-esteem, and exploring career opportunities.

One Volunteer in Romania initiated a project in partnership with the head of a local social work university to develop training activities for disadvantaged youth and to promote youth mentoring. Together they designed and delivered multiple group activities that brought together a local mentor and youth living in a local orphanage.

### Youth Development

Volunteers in the youth development sector have a clear focus on developing the assets of young people. In addition, they work to engage parents, build the capacity of service providers, and build commu-

nitywide support for youth development.

Five Volunteers and school counterparts in Costa Rica initiated five mentoring programs in their communities involving 80 participants.

In the Philippines, nine Jaycees youth leaders participated in a training of trainers facilitated by four Volunteers and two Peace Corps staff members. Following training, the Jaycee youth facilitated various activities, including arts and crafts, theater workshop, and games for younger children. They reached an additional 40 participants in one Volunteer's host agency, catering to orphaned children. This Jaycees youth service-learning camp project was awarded the “Education for Peace Award” by the JCI Metro Area Conference. The nine youth leaders who participated in the camp are implementing similar activities at their respective schools and communities.

### Integrating ICTs, HIV/AIDS, and WID/GAD

In the Eastern Caribbean, Volunteers prepared youth groups to do weekly radio shows on sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention. Using radio as a tool to educate youth has been extremely useful to reach more people, as well as empower members of the youth groups to do research and improve their public speaking skills.

In Malawi, 30 Volunteers are active in radio listener clubs. All three sectors were trained during in-country training and provided windup radios through PEPFAR and program resources through a partner organization. A good explanation of the program comes from one Volunteer: “At Dwambazi Primary School, we have successfully started a listening group.... The students energize themselves at the beginning with music, and then listen to the drama. Afterwards, they talk about what they learned and how they can apply it.”

Given all the current momentum, where will the Peace Corps continue to evolve into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with youth development work? There really is no organization or group of people better positioned than Peace Corps Volunteers to help young people on the furthest margins build their skills and access opportunities to become a positive force for the future. It is, quite simply, what Volunteers do well.

During Ron Tschetter's final visit to a foreign country as director, the vice president of Ghana spoke of how Volunteers played an instrumental role in his education.

Undoubtedly there will be future presidents or leaders who will speak of the Peace Corps Volunteer they met when they were young, way back in 2009, who inspired them to work hard, dream big, stay in school, value themselves, and know they have something important to offer their community. It might even be one of the kids on your porch.

# Notes

## BULGARIA

### Email Connects American Students

Youth development Volunteer Natalie Moering has corresponded with a third-grade class from Whitman Elementary in Milwaukee, Wis., during her service. Via email, she tells students about life in Bulgaria, answering questions about such topics as sports, holidays, food, and animals. The class also sent a surprise package that included games, toys, and homemade cards for those she teaches.

## CAMBODIA

### Tournament Benefits Secondary Students

Kampot's Olympic Stadium recently hosted the area's first intraprovincial soccer tournament for secondary school students. Eight teams, representing schools from communities across Kampot province, participated in the all-day tournament. Volunteer Jason Park was the catalyst, with school leaders, coaches, regional education officials, players, and soccer enthusiasts working together to make the tournament a reality.

The schools outfitted their respective team members with uniforms and soccer shoes, while local community members, businesses, and nongovernmental organizations sponsored the teams' travel and tournament costs. In addition to being fun, the event was a big step forward for youth sports development in Kampot and is expected to encourage future soccer programs throughout the province.



Jason Park poses with a Cambodian team during a soccer tournament he helped organize.

## CAPE VERDE

### Camp Helps Students Make Better Choices

Volunteers on the island of Santiago, Cape Verde, conducted a six-day leadership camp for eighth-grade girls, which they named Camp Crioula. Thirty girls attended, learning about HIV/AIDS, goal-setting, communication skills, decision-making skills, and health. The camp's goal was to empower the young women of Cape Verde to make better choices for themselves and steer schoolmates and those in their community toward good choices as well.

## from the field

## PERU

### Feeling Like a Kid Again

In a little town in the foothills of the Andes, Volunteer Michelle Helman worked with local youth and learned, above all, how to feel like a kid again. During summer vacations she held a weekly creative art group where the participants (ages 6-12) created recycled art projects. They made picture frames out of Popsicle sticks, transformed plastic water bottles into painted flowers, and made poetry pamphlet collages with *Newsweek* magazine photos.



Children display the recycled art projects they created at a summer creative art group started by Volunteer Michelle Helman.

## JORDAN

### Changing Perceptions Through Leadership

Outside major metropolitan areas, young women in Jordan lack opportunities to develop skills in leadership necessary for higher education, employment, and promotion. This was the impetus for six Volunteers who launched a Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) program last summer.

Twenty-six GLOW campers were selected among applicants from Peace Corps villages and surrounding communities based on English skills and the potential to serve as leaders in their communities. In addition, four Jordanian female counselors and staff members from a development center and university collaborated with Volunteers Jessica Cho, Julia Hirschy, Mindy Ko, Natasha Marwah, Linsey Meldrim, and Bobbie Rose-Zerfas to organize and implement the camp.

Held July 20-25, 2008, there were sessions in English that focused on

building self-esteem, teamwork, environmental awareness, goal setting, and community service. Each day, there were guest speakers who presented campers with information about university education, nutritional diet, and career options outside of traditional women's roles in society.

Campers were challenged to overcome initial fears and develop independence and flexibility when faced with new trials.

"It's hard sometimes to break the wall of silence because of the culture of shame. It's within the family, the traditions that don't want to give women the rights that our government allows. It's a stigma," said 18-year-old camper Loma Madanat.

## KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

### Wrestling Serves as Universal Language

Volunteer Mike Chalfin had wrestled with the struggles of relating to people with a different language and culture, but after turning to a sport he had enjoyed from childhood to college, he has found a universal language.

"I feel I've connected with my community in a different way and it feels awesome," he says, noting that after he saw children wrestling on newly acquired mats at the school where he teaches, he couldn't resist joining them.

"I took off my shoes and stepped on the mat and showed some moves they never had seen before. ... I've been helping on the wrestling mat ever since," he says.

## MOLDOVA

### Volunteer Takes Steps to Empower Youth

Working with her counterpart in a village in northern Moldova, Volunteer Sharon Hakim implemented a summer leadership course for high school-aged youth. Based on nonformal education and learning through volunteering, the goal was to encourage youth to become more active in addressing community problems.

Since the course, participants have started a positive graffiti campaign, organized a local youth council (mirrored after the local government), started a volunteer network, and organized teens from surrounding villages for an academic bowl. Graduates of the course will teach the next generation of youth.

## TURKMENISTAN



Vanessa Armijo and Aimee Summers pose with participants of a baseball league and leadership conference.

### 'Play Ball'

Many students in Turkmenistan never get the experience of participating in extracurricular activities such as organized sports.

Volunteers Vanessa Armijo and Aimee Summers organized four teams from around the country for a baseball tournament and conference that concentrated on leadership, sportsmanship, teamwork, saying no to drugs and alcohol, and community development. Each team gave a presentation on one of the conference components, in addition to learning about and playing baseball.

## Peace Corps Times

A publication for Peace Corps Volunteers serving worldwide

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