



PEACE  
CORPS

Times

INSIDE ISSUE 3, 2009

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## Williams Becomes 18th Peace Corps Director

AARON S. WILLIAMS became the fourth returned Peace Corps Volunteer to head the agency when he was sworn in as the 18th Director during a ceremony at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. on August 24. Director Williams was nominated by President Obama on July 14 and confirmed by the U.S. Senate on August 7.

Williams served as a Volunteer in the Dominican Republic from 1967 to 1970, initially serving in a training program for rural school teachers in the small town of Monte Plata. He extended his service for a third year to work as a professor of teaching methods at the Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra in Santiago. Upon completing his service, he became the coordinator of minority recruitment and project evaluation officer for the Peace Corps in his hometown of Chicago from 1970 to 1971.

"I am deeply honored to be the Director of the Peace Corps and I want to thank President Obama for the trust that he has placed in me. I look forward to making his call to public service a

reality for more Americans," said Williams. "I am committed to recruiting, training, and supporting the next generation of skilled and enthusiastic Volunteers eager to serve side by side with members of Peace Corps host communities around the world."

At the time of the nomination, President Obama released the following statement: "Aaron Williams has embodied the very best of that American ideal. I am grateful for his service and honored to nominate him to direct the critical work of the Peace Corps."

Williams has over 25 years of experience in the design and implementation of worldwide assistance programs. Most recently, he was a vice president for International Business Development with RTI International. As a senior manager at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), he attained the rank of Career Minister in the U.S. Senior Foreign Service. As executive vice president of the International Youth Foundation, Williams established innovative public-private partnerships around the world.



Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams is the fourth returned Volunteer to head the agency, serving in the Dominican Republic from 1967 to 1970.

Williams was awarded the USAID Distinguished Career Service Award and was twice awarded the Presidential Award for Distinguished Service. He is fluent in Spanish, is a graduate of Chicago State University, and has an MBA from the University of Wisconsin.

Williams met his wife Rosa during his service as a Volunteer. The couple have two sons, Michael and Steven. A video greeting from Director Williams to the Peace Corps community can be found on Peace Corps' YouTube channel at [youtube.com/peacecorps](http://youtube.com/peacecorps).

## Volunteer Reports and Surveys Change Peace Corps Landscape

DO YOU EVER WONDER WHAT HAPPENS to the information you regularly provide to the Peace Corps?

From a remote village cybercafé to the halls of the U.S. Congress, words of a Volunteer's service travel throughout the world courtesy of periodic reports and surveys from the field.

Stories and data collected from the field can also provide substance and context to the argument for increasing the number of Peace Corps Volunteers.

Leading to better training, innovative ideas, interesting stories, and quantifiable results, such reports have benefited many. Whether it's a Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) camp, an English immersion program, the World Map Project, new irrigation techniques, or HIV/AIDS training utilizing jars of beans—all of those ideas and more have been shared via Volunteer reports and surveys. This information has helped change the landscape of the Peace Corps.

### New Reporting Tool Adopted

The formulation of actual quarterly report forms have even benefited from the words written by past Volunteers, with an easier format having evolved over the years. Providing more guidance, today's forms are often filed electronically and help posts worldwide accumulate material more easily.

"We have an amazing tool to collect quantitative

and qualitative data for almost anything that has happened in the field. Now we're taking steps to make sure that information is properly used in our decision making for our projects in the field," says Randy Adams, a Peace Corps evaluation specialist who was among those instrumental in introducing the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT) that allows posts to consolidate information in an easily navigated electronic format.

"These forms are a powerful self-assessment tool for Volunteers. Nothing makes you realize how much you've been doing like summing up your last four months of activity in one document."

— Kipp Sutton, Mongolia program and training officer

This marks the first time the agency has had a unified, agencywide reporting structure that is adaptable to local needs. A PowerPoint presentation has been developed to show staff members how collectively to gather information and track correspondence they

have had with host country nationals (HCNs).

Apart from the VRT's principal use for project management at the post level, quarterly reports are also used by overseas staff to formulate annual reports provided to Peace Corps headquarters. Such information may lead to changes in a program's focus or training styles.

### Information Complements Training

Kavita Pullapilly, program and training officer (PTO) for the Philippines, says her post had noticed an increase in the number of Volunteers who indicated they would like to conduct disaster preparedness training in their schools or communities. As a result, the Philippine National Disaster Coordinating Council provided material, gave advice to Volunteers to work with local disaster coordinating councils, and provided additional support through a Peace Corps Response coordinator. The post also added sessions on disaster management and preparedness to its pre-service training (PST) and in-service training (IST) sessions.

"We are seeing great results. In addition, Volunteers are now able to give us insights into possible Peace Corps Response Volunteer sites to continue our work in this sector," says Pullapilly.

Information from HCNs can also be compared

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with stories from Volunteer reports and provide OSIRP with a clear picture of what is taking place in the field.

Kipp Sutton, PTO for Mongolia, cites a case where a Volunteer outlined the details of a hand-washing project she had been doing in her community. "It wasn't until the associate Peace Corps director saw the numbers of schools and children that she had reached and trained that she grasped the success and significance of the project," Sutton says.

As a result, the associate Peace Corps director (APCD) asked the Volunteer to write a detailed description of the project, from planning through implementation and evaluation, to be used during PST.

Macedonia APCD/PTO Michael Radmann points toward a similar experience with a Volunteer who was involved in tourism development and was able to share that experience with others at IST after the staff had learned more about his experience through a quarterly report.

Sutton adds, "These forms are a powerful self-assessment tool for Volunteers. Nothing makes you realize how much you've been doing like summing up your last four months of activity in one document."

### Impact Studies Benefit the Community

Susan Jenkins, evaluation program analyst for the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP) at Peace Corps headquarters, says information from Volunteer reports helps the agency when it does impact studies.

"The best of these reports provide counts of the number of people reached, as well as the number who increase their knowledge, skills, or awareness of a topic covered and who, ultimately, benefits as a result of Volunteer efforts," says Jenkins.

Through their reports, Volunteers may provide critical information about what is happening at the community level and the extent to which the Peace Corps is meeting its first goal.

### Press, Recruiters, Congress Amplify Results

Posts also use the reports to highlight Volunteer projects in newsletters and other sources. Ukraine Country Director Diane Schmidt explains, "When a Volunteer reports on an 'interesting' activity, we often contact the Volunteer for more details. We can use this information in our bimonthly newsletter 'From

the Field.' This newsletter is sent to all of our Ukrainian partners and government contacts to let them know how Volunteers and their Ukrainian colleagues are working together to make a difference in Ukraine."

Outside sources also utilize the information collected from Volunteers. The Macedonia minister of education used samples of Volunteers'



Carroll. "Reports from the field provide members of Congress an actual look at what Volunteers are doing and we use samples of our Volunteers' work in our Congressional Budget Justification each year," she says.

The Office of Press Relations at Peace Corps headquarters can also alert outside media of compelling Volunteer projects, while the communications office regularly gathers information from Volunteers to use in recruiting campaigns.

"Every Volunteer has a story. We want to make it as easy as possible for Volunteers to share their experiences with a larger community," says Communications Director Allison Price.

Mongolia Volunteers Jim and Julie Moulton (top), Costa Rica Volunteer David Larkin (above) and a march for domestic violence awareness in Guatemala (left). Reports from Volunteers on projects like these contribute to program development and enhancement long after their service has ended.

Quality of Work Assessed, Challenges Addressed

Adams says the agency depends on Volunteers' input to show the quality of work the Peace Corps performs. "We used to have a training session called 'Journey of the Number' to show Volunteers, partners, and staff the complexity of the flow of data collected from Volunteers. We changed that to the 'Journey of the Story.' We did so because the qualitative information we are able to glean from reports is more important to understand the challenges, lessons learned, promising practices, and the processes of development across sectors in general," he says, noting that the agency seemed to stray from the model of the 1990s that focused more on a specific analysis of what Volunteers were doing in the field and the corresponding results.

"We are now going back to that to show that Peace Corps has a lot to share from what we are learning about devel-

opment with an array of stakeholders both at post and with professional associations, international nongovernmental organizations, and the development community at large," Adams adds.

The current system allows Volunteers to file a summary report of activities they have undertaken during their two years overseas. "This provides them with a working diary at the end of their service," says Adams.

APCDs and program managers also learn how they can better mentor Volunteers, while a section titled "lessons learned" can be shared with incoming Volunteer trainees.

Costa Rica PTO Amanda Rabinowitz says such information was used to tailor a report of activities that was distributed to each outgoing Volunteer as a tool to use for writing his or her

description of service and formulating resumes. "We also developed a PowerPoint presentation for each project sector at mid-service training that visually represented the progress toward the achievement of project outcomes against the targets defined in project objectives," she says, adding, "We guarantee feedback on reports to Volunteers within one month of submission. This feedback had not

been institutionalized at post before the VRT and has been very well received by Volunteers."

Adams says the agency continues to move beyond "just counting" and is evolving and getting better at combining and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data to provide practical and useful information to Volunteers, staff, and other stakeholders.

"Volunteers and their partners are really the only ones who can report on what the agency has both accomplished and achieved and a Volunteer's site placement and work assignment is where that information is both collected and should be applied," says Adams.

## Be Here for the Next Issue



Peace Corps countries across the world bear the mark of returned Peace Corps Volunteer Barbara Jo White. A Volunteer in the Dominican Republic from 1987 to 1989, White developed the World Map Project, which serves as a blueprint for producing map murals all over the world.

In the final *Peace Corps Times* of 2009 we will profile returned Volunteer White and trace the mural's 20-year history.

# Peace Corps Response Provides Opportunity for COSing Volunteers

YOU'VE HAD LANGUAGE TRAINING and learned how to blend into your community and adapt to job situations quickly.

You have the experience of living in a foreign country and starting or maintaining projects with scarce resources.

What's the next step? How about Peace Corps Response?

Launched as Crisis Corps in 1996, Peace Corps Response (PCR) has evolved from a short-term, high-impact program that has been involved in everything from natural disaster relief and reconstruction to HIV/AIDS relief to post-conflict development.

"Previously we were more crises focused, but now our assignments cover a wider range of sector areas," says acting Director Heather Schwenk.

One of those emerging sectors is education. While highly-skilled positions were a part of the program in its infancy, PCR is now reaching out to those Volunteers who may be on the fringe of specializing in a particular field.

"It's not a doctorate program. The specialized personnel are still needed, but we also need math teachers, English teachers, and those Volunteers who may come from a more general background. We're casting a wider net to reach such Volunteers," says Schwenk.

It's hoped that such an umbrella makes the program accessible to more Volunteers.

"Eighty percent of Peace Corps Response Volunteers are Peace Corps Volunteers who completed their service within the past year," says Schwenk. "It's a great opportunity for them because it's such a unique opportunity to build upon their Peace Corps experience in a short-term assignment with high impact."

Christina Breuer, PCR recruitment and placement specialist, says many Volunteers spend their first year of Peace Corps adjusting to living overseas, whereas Peace Corps Response finds the Volunteer embracing his or her project immediately. "We know that you know how to integrate culturally and the adjustment time is much shorter due to the confidence you've gained," she says, adding, "Toward the end of their Peace Corps service, many Volunteers see Peace Corps Response as a professional experience that is concrete and they can teach others how much they've gained. For many, there's also that need to get back in the field."

The job of a Peace Corps Response Volunteer is well defined since those requesting such Volunteers do so for a

specific purpose.

Schwenk says it also offers Volunteers the opportunity to partner with various professional organizations internationally, often serving as a "launching pad" to a career, while Breuer points toward the benefits to those considering graduate school.

Peace Corps Response hopes to expand significantly in the coming year. Through July 30, 50 Volunteers had been placed overseas in 2009. Next year, PCR is planning to send over 200 Volunteers into a wide field of countries, including Bulgaria, Panama, the Philippines, and Swaziland. Over 1,000 highly-skilled returned Peace Corps Volunteers have contributed to the program over the past 13 years.

"It's uniquely different from your Peace Corps service because you're sent straight to the country for just two or three days of orientation before you begin your work," says Schwenk.

Peace Corps Response Volunteers are sent overseas on an ongoing basis, both individually and in small groups, with 10 or so serving in the field at any one time. The length of assignment varies from three months to a year, with six months being the norm.

Schwenk points toward the ease of



applying for a position. "Basically, to apply you are filling out a five-minute application and posting your resume," she says.

Peace Corps Response requires just 45 days to complete the medical screening process and to issue a passport, accounting for a total time of about three months from applying for a position to being placed in the field. "If you have COS'd within one year, there is an expedient medical clearance process as well," says Schwenk.

As of August 31, Peace Corps Response was in Eastern Caribbean, Guyana, Liberia, Malawi, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Swaziland, and Uganda. Twenty-five countries have requested Volunteers for 2010 and the agency is determining what posts to add to those currently served.

To learn more about the program or to apply, check [peacecorps.gov](http://peacecorps.gov) and go to Quick Links at the bottom of the page. Click on Peace Corps Response under the returned Volunteers section.



## Volunteer Life

# Working with Youth and (Hopefully) Changing the World

By LYNN DEBILZEN | PCV Philippines

WHILE RIDING THROUGH THE PHILIPPINES in a colorfully decorated minibus called a jeepney, it is impossible not to notice the overwhelming presence of children here. The population in the Philippines continues to grow at a significant rate, which means that more and more children are flowing into the basic family unit, school systems, clinics, and the streets. Just taking a walk through larger cities, the presence of children living or working in the streets is a heartbreaking reality.

As a youth, children, and family services (CYF) Volunteer, I have to remind myself constantly that I may not be able to change the world as a whole, but I can have a part in changing the world of a child. The same is true, though, for all Volunteers, whether you are working in coastal resource management, agriculture, education, or health. No matter what we are all doing on a day-to-day basis, we are ultimately hoping to make the world a better place for the next generation.

During my graduate studies at the University of

Montana in Intercultural Youth and Family Development (a Master's International program), we talked endlessly of the issues that children and youth face around the world. In our coursework, we analyzed existing programs that target specific populations, discussed the psychosocial ramifications on children due to traumatic events, researched different strategies of sustainability, looked at various models of youth development that are successful, and on and on. We asked questions that brought out emotions and personal values about such issues that, in the end, resulted in no exact right or wrong answers.

What I have learned outside of the classroom, though, is that in the day-to-day business of CYF work, it does not matter if you know the best and most comprehensive way to conduct a needs assessment, or if you have studied endlessly about children who have been trafficked, or if you have the skills to develop an annual fundraising plan for a nongovernmental organization. It does indeed help, but as Volunteers, we all have access to such resources. What matters is that you are willing to get your hands dirty in the messy

job of a youth worker—put your heart into it and jump right in. In the end, it's those relationships, smiles, and moments of connection that may ultimately make a larger impact than anything else.

*Debilzen is participating in the Master's International program. She is from Francis Creek, Wisconsin, and is serving as a youth, children, and family services Volunteer. She is scheduled to complete her service in November 2010.*

Volunteer Lynn Debilzen is welcomed by some of her students in the Philippines.



# From the Carpathian Mountains to the Black Sea

By NICK O'NEILL / PCV Ukraine

SEVENTEEN RUNNERS RECENTLY CUT A NEW TRAIL into the Czech Republic—from the Carpathian Mountains of the West, across farmland and sunflower fields, into the industrial East, and wrapping around the Black Sea and Sea of Azov. Those Peace Corps/Ukraine Volunteers participating in the 2009 Prague International Marathon ran by it all, having an impact on people and communities they passed along the way.

On May 10, runners from all over the world converged on Old Town Square in Prague. While athletes stretched in the morning sun, warming their muscles, the staff working at the outdoor cafes and restaurants arranged tables and chairs in anticipation of the day's events. Flags from every participating nation flew at the starting line as drummers rhythmically heightened the energy of the gathering crowd. Training has provided these Volunteers with better opportunities to understand the country in which they live. They have experienced a part of the Ukrainian people and countryside they had only previously seen through train windows. Before tightening their shoelaces, Volunteers reflected on their experiences and the months of training they put in, culminating in that moment.

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) Volunteer Michelle Kramer said, "The change of the seasons and weather, and watching the snow disappear from the mountaintops, is something I will recall when I think about Peace Corps down the road."

Training for the marathon not only benefited Volunteers' health, but also brought them closer to their communities. "The teachers at my school told strangers that I'm going abroad to run a marathon," said



TEFL Volunteer Ally Garcia, the first of the Volunteers to cross the finish line. "My director even made a point to tell the local priest about my training when he came to bless my school."

Neil Patrick O'Toole, also a TEFL Volunteer, trained for nearly a year and, in doing so, inspired students to join him in running. "Now I run with a group of about five kids every Thursday morning to a village about 11 kilometers away," he said.

Others, like fellow TEFL Volunteer Sarah Berson, also continue to run with their students. "Running with two girls from my village has given me the opportunity to discuss the health benefits of exercise, as well as to address body-image issues. I appreciate the time we spend together running laps," she said.

Cheers of congratulations could be heard in an array of languages erupting from the crowds lining the final stretch. The beautiful weather held, while music and applause guided the runners through the finish chute. Peace Corps Volunteers not running in the

Runners show the posters their fellow PCVS held to support them during the 2009 Prague International Marathon. From left are Curtis Schweiterman (2007-2009), Annie Bernstein (2007-2009), Michelle Kramer (2007-2009), Jessica Benes (2007-2009), Tara McCrimmon (2007-2009), Valerie Hoops (2008-2010), and Ally Garcia (2008-2010). All are TEFL Volunteers.

marathon covered the entire course, taking pictures, holding posters and shouting words of encouragement for their friends.

"At the finish, I began to run as fast as I could. I was so happy and overwhelmed with emotions, I started to cry," said O'Toole. "There were moments during the race where I questioned myself and thought that I could not do it. I overcame those feelings and at the end, reflected on what I had accomplished."

Many of the Volunteers spoke with curious marathon participants and spectators about their lives as Volunteers and their time in Prague. Berson was able to make connections with people from all over the world — an experience she said she would have missed had she not joined the Peace Corps.

Each runner achieved his or her goal, with 15 completing the full marathon and two completing the half marathon. Despite the soreness and blisters, as the runners departed Prague, they were already discussing the next European marathon and the road that will take them there.

*O'Neill is a youth development Volunteer from Bloomington, Indiana. He is scheduled to complete his service in June 2010.*



## Taking Stock with Mr. Sock

# No News May be Good News

occurred in 2009.

Perhaps you missed the story about the Des Moines, Iowa, teenager who beat out 20 other finalists to win the U.S. texting title. After two days of challenges such as texting blindfolded and texting while maneuvering through a moving obstacle course, she took the title. The teen has a 14,000 texts-per-month habit, sending 400 to 470 texts a day, and was among 250,000 people who attempted to get a spot in the competition.

I'm sure all of you have had your fill of news about H1N1, also referred to as swine flu, but you may have missed the story about Afghanistan's only known pig, which was taken off display at Kabul Zoo at the height of the outbreak. Agence France-Presse quoted Aziz Gul Saqib, who noted, "We put the pig temporarily in his winter house under quarantine. Most people don't have knowledge about swine influenza, and seeing a pig, they panic that they will be infected."

Or perhaps you haven't yet heard that North Korea opened its first fast-food restaurant. A hamburger costs \$1.70, which is more than half of the daily income of the average North Korean.

Speaking of food, in Royal Oak, Michigan, a 1,224-pound triple vanilla cupcake with pink frosting set the record as the world's largest cupcake. The treat took 12 hours to bake and included 800 eggs and 200 pounds each of sugar and flour. It also had an estimated 2 million calories.

A look at newspapers from across the globe also reveals the measures people will take to show their frustration. In Paris, a Russian woman threw a cup at the Mona Lisa painting in the Louvre Museum. Some reports say the woman was upset over being denied French citizenship, while others say she may have been suffering mental problems. The painting was not damaged.

As you lie on the ground and look up to the stars, void of city lights or noise, you will probably come to the realization that you haven't actually missed much at all. In fact, I'm sure you've gained more than you ever imagined.

### Notable News

*Sports Illustrated* writer Michael Meyer returned to his roots in writing about Beijing, China, one year after the 2008 Olympics. Meyer wrote about how the promotion of volunteerism in-country

was one aspect of the Games. In one excerpt, he writes: When I arrived in China, as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1995, people felt sorry for me, wondering what sort of nation would send its young people overseas to work with strangers. In the run-up to the Olympics, however, volunteering became a government movement, enlisting students, state employees, and retirees—older residents of my neighborhood recruited me to teach them English phrases such as "Beijing is getting better and better every day."

Check the August 3, 2009, *Sports Illustrated* for the complete article.

### Foot in the Mouth?

Have you ever inadvertently put your foot in your mouth? If you are living in a new country, learning a new language, it's likely that you have chosen the wrong phrase or mispronounced a word in an attempt to get a point across. Mr. Sock recalls confusing the work *kebda* with *kefta* in Morocco and ending up with liver on his pizza instead of beef.

Send us your humorous faux pas for publication in a future issue. Email Mr. Sock at [pctimes@peacecorps.gov](mailto:pctimes@peacecorps.gov). Send us your questions or ideas for future articles as well.

DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT the things you've missed as you wash your clothes in murky water while shooing away those pesky flies? Aside from an air-conditioned or heated home and those Thanksgiving meals of turkey and gravy, something as simple as the thought of a newspaper with a cup of coffee can bring tears to the eyes of Volunteers.

While the Internet provides a window to the world, if you're like Mr. Sock, that precious time at a dusty cybercafé is probably spent corresponding with friends and looking for ways to enhance your latest Peace Corps project.

Thus, Mr. Sock offers these memorable snippets from the news world that

# Welcome Peace Corps 'Sons and Daughters'

By PAUL KAGAME, President of Rwanda

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA has just sent a small number of its sons and daughters as Peace Corps Volunteers to serve as teachers and advisors in Rwanda. They have arrived to assist, and we appreciate that. We are aware that this comes against the backdrop of increasingly scarce resources, of budget discussions and campaign promises, and of tradeoffs between defense and domestic priorities like health care and infrastructure investments. All that said, I believe we need to have a different discussion concerning the potential for bilateral aid.

The Peace Corps has returned to our country after 15 years. They were evacuated in 1994 just a short time before Rwanda collapsed into a genocide that killed over one million people in three months. Things have improved a lot in recent years. There is peace and stability throughout the nation. We have a progressive constitution that is consensus-driven, provides for power sharing, embraces diversity, and promotes the participation of women, who now represent the majority in our parliament.

Our economy grew by more than 11 percent last year, even as the world entered a recession. We have chosen high-end segments of the coffee and tea markets in which to compete, and attract the most demanding world travelers to our tourism experiences. This has enabled us to increase wages by over 20 percent each year over the last eight years – sustained by, among other things, investment in education, health, and ICT.

We view the return of the Peace Corps as a significant event in Rwan-

da's recovery. These young men and women represent what is good about America; I have met former Volunteers who have run major aid programs here, invested in our businesses, and I even count them among my friends and close advisors.

Peace Corps Volunteers are well educated, optimistic, and keen to assist us as we continue to rebuild, but one must also recognize that we have much to offer them as well.

We will, for instance, show them our system of community justice, called gacaca, where we integrated our need for nationwide reconciliation with our ancient tradition of clemency, and where violators are allowed to reassume their lives by proclaiming their crimes to their neighbors, and asking for forgiveness. We will present to them Rwanda's unique form of absolutism, where the individuals who once exacted such harm on their neighbors and ran across national borders to hide from justice are being invited back to resume their farms and homes to live peacefully with those same families.

We will show your sons and daughters our civic tradition of umuganda, where one day a month, citizens, including myself, congregate in the fields to weed, clean our streets, and build homes for the needy.

We will teach your children to prepare and enjoy our foods and speak our language. We will invite them to our weddings and funerals, and out into the communities to observe our traditions. We will teach them that in Africa, family is a broad and all-encompassing concept, and that an entire generation treats the next as its own children.

And we will have discussions in the restaurants, and debates in our staff

rooms and classrooms where we will learn from one another: What is the nature of prosperity? Is it subsoil assets, location, and sunshine, or is it based on human initiative, the productivity of our firms, the foresight of our entrepreneurs? What is a cohesive society, and how can we strengthen it?

How can we improve tolerance and build a common vision between people who perceive differences in one another, increase civic engagement, interpersonal trust, and self-esteem? How does a nation recognize and develop the leaders of future generations? What is the relationship between humans and the earth? And how are we to meet our needs while revering the earth as the womb of humankind? These are the questions of our time.

While some consider development mostly in terms of infusion of capital, budgets, and head counts, we in Rwanda place equal importance to relationships between peoples who have a passion to learn from one another, preparing the next generation of teachers, administrators, and CEOs to see the exchange of values and ideas as the way to build the competencies of our people, and to create a prosperous nation.

We will do this because we see that the only investment with the possibility of infinite returns is in our children, and because after a couple of years in Rwanda, working and learning with our people, these Peace Corps Volunteers will be our sons and daughters, too.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This column is reprinted with permission from The Huffington Post. The piece initially ran in the news and opinion website on June 9, 2009.*

## Peace Corps Returns the Rwanda After 15-Year Absence

RWANDA REJOINED THE RANKS of full-time Peace Corps posts after a 15-year absence. Thirty-two Volunteers were sworn-in at a ceremony at the U.S. ambassador's residence in Kigali. Volunteers attended conferences recognizing the annual Genocide Memorial Week in April so they could more fully understand the communities they will be working in for the next two years.

Peace Corps has been collaborating with Rwandan government officials to get the agency's newest program up and running. "It's been an honor for us to be able to return to Rwanda and renew our relationship with the Rwandan people at this time," said Lynn Foden, acting Africa regional director.

This first group of Volunteers are working in health and community development, and are collaborating with other United States government partners to support the government of Rwanda's strategy to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Many of the Volunteers who will work on HIV/AIDS prevention and care will receive support from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program.

The next group of Volunteers will focus on education. Approximately 24 invitees were expected to join Peace Corps/Rwanda in October to assist the government in its desire to adopt English as its official language of instruction in its schools. French had been the primary language.

Over 100 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Rwanda since the program was established in 1975. Although the program was closed in 1993, Peace Corps staff returned in 2008.



**Peace Corps Community Remembers PCV Joseph Chow**  
Peace Corps Volunteer Joseph Chow died in a rock climbing accident in the southern part of Tanzania on September 22, 2009. Joseph, 23, a native of Scarsdale, New York, had been serving as an education volunteer in the Ndanda Secondary School in Tanzania. He was scheduled to complete his Peace Corps service in November 2009.

"Joseph was active, creative, and

charming. He was always ready to lend a helping hand, to work and play, and to contribute to his community. His sudden passing is terribly painful for the entire Peace Corps family, including Joseph's students, whose lives were changed by Joseph's passion for teaching," said Director Williams. "Our thoughts go out to his family and friends around the world."

Peace Corps/Tanzania Volunteers organized a memorial service for Joseph's friends and students in Dar es Salaam on September 27, 2009.

### Agency Mourns Loss of Shriver, Kennedy

The Peace Corps mourns the loss of two close friends of the agency, Eunice Kennedy Shriver and her brother, U.S. Sen. Edward "Ted" Kennedy.

Shriver was the founder of the Special Olympics and died at the age of 88 on August 11.

Her husband, Sargent Shriver, was the Peace Corps' first director, serving from 1961 to 1966. Sen. Kennedy died on August 25 and was buried near the gravesites of his brothers, President John F. Kennedy and Sen. Robert Kennedy, at Arlington National Cemetery. This year Sen. Kennedy championed the passage of the Serve America Act.

### PC Expands Online Presence

The Peace Corps recently launched its own YouTube channel, expanding the agency's online and new media presence.

The YouTube channel features nearly 50 videos about the agency and its current projects around the world. It also has historical videos featuring clips of President John F. Kennedy, who founded the agency in 1961; the first director, Sargent Shriver; and others.

During its first week, the channel had about 1,000 viewers. There had been over 6,000 viewers as of August 31.

To check the site, go to [youtube.com/peacecorps](http://youtube.com/peacecorps).

The Peace Corps can also be found on Twitter and Facebook. To become a fan of the Peace Corps, go to [facebook.com/peacecorps](http://facebook.com/peacecorps). The agency will also soon be on the photo-sharing site Flickr.

### PCMOs Train at Headquarters

Sixty-nine Peace Corps medical officers (PCMOs) attended the Worldwide Continuing Medical Education (CME) Conference at Peace Corps headquarters July 27-31. It was the largest CME in the history of the Peace Corps, with the main clinical workshops focusing on dermatology and managing trauma.

There were also sessions that covered clinical and psychosocial issues. Several of the PCMOs were able to reconnect with Washington, D.C., area residents who had served as Volunteers or staff members in their respective countries.



# NOTES *from the* FIELD

## *A Brief Look at Posts and Projects*

### AZERBAIJAN

#### Campers Gain a New Perspective

Volunteers in Azerbaijan are not just teaching children new languages and skills, they're inspiring them to seize opportunities and acquire a new perspective on their world.

Volunteer Jane Flegal organized a monthlong English language camp that incorporated sports, games, and crafts. At the end of camp, she noticed the girls had improved their English and gained confidence.

"I wanted the girls to see that they can do things that are usually considered 'boy' things," she says. "I saw them go from shy to enthusiastic, reserved to outgoing."

Volunteer Tom Brannen was similarly inspired by boys in Ganja, who started their own leadership club—and invited girls to join—after attending an Azeri Boys Leadership Experience camp.

"They were proud of themselves. As an added bonus, since I was not an integral part of the planning this time, similar events may occur long after I am gone," he says.

### TOGO

#### Seven Posts Address Food Security

In June, Peace Corps Volunteers and staff produced, presented, and participated in the first Peace Corps post-based international conference to address food security initiatives and issues. Joining host Togo at the conference were representatives from Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Niger. Peace Corps participants and host country counterparts learned how to provide future training to address the food security crisis in their respective countries.

Topics such as improved permaculture methods and agroforestry systems were covered to teach new skills. The conference was so popular that participants are anxious to introduce the idea to other sub-regions in the future.

### MOROCCO

#### PCVs Help Reorganize Camp

Peace Corps/Morocco enjoyed a new twist during its spring English immersion camps, with student campers being divided into teams that each represented an English-speaking country. The United Kingdom, Liberia, India, Jamaica, Ghana, Australia, and the United Arab Emirates were just a few countries highlighted by those participating in the prototype camps.

As in past years, students learned about English in communicative student-centered classes, but the focus wasn't limited to just learning about the

United States with Volunteers.

"It took the focus off the 'U.S. versus Morocco' pressure that's sometimes on camps," said Alex Collins, who coordinated a camp in Meknes. Julia Robbins' camp in El Hoceima used the same educational format.

Volunteers introduced information about other countries, highlighting gender roles, geography, arts, and music. The students then put a Moroccan twist on what they learned about other English-speaking countries and created their own sketches, songs, and routines for a final presentation.

### PHILIPPINES

#### RPCV Still Affecting Lives

A sample of the long-term impact a Volunteer can have was exhibited in the Philippines when returned Peace Corps Volunteer Veneeth Iyengar (2001–2004) was formally thanked by his community.

The province of Negros Oriental passed a resolution on June 17, 2009, recognizing various individuals, including Iyengar, for bringing new industry to the Philippines. Iyengar served as a business advisor and was instrumental in promoting economic growth.

The city council of Dumaguete, where Iyengar served, passed a resolution one year earlier to express its appreciation for his work in convincing call center companies to invest in the community.

### GUATEMALA

#### Working Toward Healthy Schools

According to the Volunteer assignment description for Guatemala, school ranks second behind families as the most important social institution where life skills and habits are learned. Each year, 33 Volunteers partner with the Guatemalan Ministry of Education to run a program called Healthy Schools, designed to ensure that students and schools practice safe and healthy habits such as washing one's hands before a meal and taking regular baths or showers.

The program was designed not only to ensure that students and faculty at local schools are taught good health practices, but also to implement health programs within the community. It is hoped that students will share such practices with family and community members.

### GHANA

#### President Obama Thanks PCVs

To celebrate President Barack Obama's first visit to a Peace Corps country as commander in chief, approximately 150 Volunteers and Peace Corps staff in Ghana, as well as 67 trainees who had

arrived in the country just five weeks earlier, attended his departure ceremony in Accra on July 11.

During his speech, Obama recognized the Volunteers in attendance. "You know, Ghana was the very first nation to host young people from the Peace Corps. And for decades, our two nations have formed vital partnerships and lasting friendships because of this program. So all of you in the Peace Corps, you are doing an outstanding job and we're proud of you," he said.

He also spoke to the youth of the country, noting that they have the power to hold their leaders accountable and to build institutions that serve the people.



Ghana Peace Corps Volunteers attend a departure ceremony for President Barack Obama, who visited the country in July.

### KAZAKHSTAN

#### Second Annual American English Competition

Students from Balkhash were eager to take part in the Second Annual American English Competition on April 24. Volunteers provided instructions and designed tests for participants. Students initially took written tests, with the top performers taking part in an English club that allowed them to practice the language with native speakers. They then performed in a conversational round, being allotted 20 minutes to speak in English with a Volunteer while a cassette player recorded their interviews.

After the conversational round, all assisting Volunteers listened to the tapes to determine the top three winners. The Department of Education funded the event and an assembly was held to honor the winners, many of whom may not have otherwise participated due to a lack of finances. Certificates were also presented to participating schools.

### NAMIBIA

#### Texting for Better Global Health

To address the problem of a lack of good information on health topics, including questions about HIV/AIDS, Volunteers Rashid Khan and Jenn Moore have developed an innovative program that uses

text messaging to spread their messages to Namibians throughout the country.

The two Volunteers developed a program titled Health Education Response (HER), which is a software package that provides health information through cellphone-based text messaging. The program uses prewritten content to address inquiries and can forward user questions to Volunteers who serve as guides for the callers. The program began a year ago and is currently staffed by 11 Volunteers, as well as a counselor from Childline/Lifeline, a nonprofit counseling hotline. In June the system exchanged 2,382 text messages with 325 clients.

### COSTA RICA AND UKRAINE

#### Vice President Biden Visits PCVs

Vice President Joe Biden traveled to both Costa Rica and Ukraine, taking the time to visit Peace Corps Volunteers along the way. He met with 130 Volunteers in Ukraine on July 21 and thanked them for their service. He and his wife also met 20 Volunteers and six Peace Corps staff members at a reception at the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica four months earlier.

"As Volunteers, we truly appreciated the vice president taking the time with us and expressing his genuine interest in who we are," said third-year Costa Rica Volunteer Deborah Winiarski of Battle Creek, Mich.

Fellow third-year Costa Rica PCV Porter Searcy of Atlanta added, "It was a real morale booster for all of us!"

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