

ACTION

June 11, 1980

update...

VISTA Caps 15th Anniversary Celebration



VISTA
MAKING
A GOOD
PLACE



Conference, Awards Mark Final Celebration

As part of the VISTA campaign, folksingers Mary Travers and Peter Yarrow entertain pre-schoolers at the Afrikan People's Action School in Trenton, N.J.



VISTA is putting the final touch on its 15th Anniversary celebration with a national conference on poverty that will bring together more than 1,000 concerned Americans, including low-income people and community activists from across the nation.

The conference, "Self-Help: Strategies for the 1980s," will be held June 13-15, at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. It will be a time for celebration, for recognition of past efforts and for developing fruitful directions and pragmatic innovations for dealing with poverty in the 1980s.

Many of those attending the conference have known poverty first hand. Present will be VISTA volunteers, ACTION staff from across the nation, local, state and federal officials, legislators and their staff, representatives from voluntary service organizations and from community-based citizens groups.

Nearly 50 workshops and panels will cover a variety of issues and skills, such as energy, health advocacy, hunger and nutrition, urban economic development, cooperatives and grassroots fundraising.

Andrew Young, former Ambassador to the United Nations and civil rights leader, will deliver the keynote address on Friday evening, June 13. His subject will be social and economic issues that may shape American life in the 1980s.

On Saturday, Si Kahn, former VISTA volunteer, author, song writer and union organizer, will discuss self-help strategies for the future. Kahn will explore steps he feels are necessary to combat poverty in the 1980s.

On Sunday, U.S. Rep. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) will address the conference. Mikulski is a veteran of neighborhood and community organizing, heading one of Baltimore's most successful citizen's organizations before her election to Congress.

ACTION Director Sam Brown will give the conference's opening remarks. Other ACTION senior staff, including Deputy Director Mary King, OAVP Director Helen Kelley and Peace Corps Director Dick Celeste, will also participate and speak. VISTA Director Margery Tabankin will deliver the closing address on Sunday.

Tabankin said the conference will give participants the opportunity to "share their successes and failures, evaluate their ongoing efforts, and develop ways to move the dreams and hopes of the 1960s into the realities of the 1980s."

In addition to workshops and panels, there will be ample time for participants to get together. On Friday afternoon, First Lady Rosalynn Carter will sponsor a reception at the White House for those

conference members who have pre-registered for this event.

On Friday evening, the Friends of VISTA, a private non-profit charitable organization, is sponsoring a special awards program and musical salute by celebrity entertainers. Music will be provided by such groups as Peter, Paul and Mary; and Sweet Honey in the Rock.

The awards—for outstanding contribution for anti-poverty service—will go to 23 persons selected by special panels. The recipients will be honored for their work in the categories: Arts, business, citizen activism, economic and civil rights, educa-



Happy Birthday VISTA

tion/research, former VISTA volunteer, journalism, labor, public service, and voluntary service in the private sector.

Conference sessions begin at 9 a.m. on Friday and conclude at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday. An information and exchange center will be open throughout the conference.

Conference activity for the weekend is as follows:

- Friday morning participants may choose from 22 topics at workshops, including rural economic development, urban neighborhoods, cooperatives, housing, and the role of voluntary services. Experts in related fields will provide an historical perspective and a current overview on each subject.

- Saturday morning workshops will examine current economic, social and demographic models which will have particular relevance in the 1980s. Participants will discuss their various strategies in the particular issue areas and will outline directions for the next decade.
- Saturday afternoon will feature 10 skill workshops to help carry out the conclusions of the morning strategy workshops. The afternoon workshops cover areas such as management support, grassroots fundraising, and media.
- Sunday will include two panel discussions on citizen participation and coalition-building, as well as the plenary session summarizing the conference.

The conference and its accompanying activities mark the culmination of VISTA's six-month national anniversary campaign joined by VISTA volunteers, former volunteers, ACTION staff, political leaders, show business celebrities and VISTA's many supporters and co-workers.

The 15th anniversary celebration began officially on December 19, 1979 at the White House. President Jimmy Carter inaugurated the celebration when he met with 24 VISTA volunteers and Director Tabankin to discuss the program and its goals.

In the months that followed, a number of celebrities, including Ed Asner, Ali McGraw, Peter Yarrow, Mary Travers and others, donated their time and talents in promoting public awareness of poverty and of the opportunities VISTA represents for voluntary service.

Some of the celebrities made public service announcements for radio, television and print media. Others made visits to VISTA projects, accompanied by VISTA volunteers and ACTION officials within the various regions.

In major cities throughout the nation, ACTION staffers, VISTAs and celebrities appeared on radio and TV talk shows, held interviews with the press, and attended special receptions honoring current and former volunteers.

Each region also planned its own awareness campaign in coordination with headquarters staff. They held photo and craft exhibits and organized lectures, concerts and other entertainment. Several regions held "VISTA Day" fairs to provide publicity.

Many of these participants from various parts of the nation will be attending the national conference, a fitting way to end six-months of hard work and dedication to the VISTA theme, "Making a Good Place Better."

Peace Corps/VISTA Week Proclaimed in D.C.



With District of Columbia Mayor Marion Barry at her side, ACTION Deputy Director Mary King receives a proclamation declaring June 2-6 as Peace Corps/VISTA Week. The June 2 ceremony which took place in D.C.'s Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, marked the beginning of a week-long campaign in that city which focused on the recruitment of minorities for VISTA and Peace Corps programs.

Office of Recruitment and Communications Director Jim Duke, presided over the ceremony, and Office of Policy and Planning Director Dennis Derryck discussed the upcoming summer program in which minorities will serve as interns in Peace Corps. Also attending the ceremony were other ACTION staff and various community representatives.

PC Plans Return of Volunteers to Nicaragua in August

Editor's Note: The following article is based on an interview with former Peace Corps Latin America Director Paul Bell, made shortly before his departure from the agency near the end of May. A few days after the interview, the State Department, with concurrence from the White House, urgently requested that Bell be allowed to leave Peace Corps to work with a newly formed State Department unit which deals with the Cuban-Haitian refugee crisis. Peace Corps Director Richard Celeste immediately granted the request.

"Given the positive response we have received from the new Nicaraguan government, we expect to begin returning volunteers to Nicaragua around the first of August," announced Peace Corps Latin America Director Paul Bell.

Bell made the statement during an ACTION Update interview in which he discussed some highlights of his recent trip to Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, April 20 to May 4.



Paul Bell

Bell routinely made four or five trips each year to Latin America, usually arranging visits to four or more countries on each trip. On this recent trip, the visit to Nicaragua was timed to coincide with the culmination of efforts to return Peace Corps volunteers to Nicaragua, Bell explained.

"We already have requests from the new government for 27 volunteers," Bell said. "The first group will be made up of currently active volunteers who will be willing to transfer from their present assignments."

Approximately 17 of that first volunteer contingent will serve in agriculture and rural development. Others will serve on education projects or in cooperatives.

Bell said the reception that he and members of his visiting party received from key Nicaraguan officials was warm, open and frank. "It was the kind of reception that should make us want to look forward to getting our volunteers back into Nicaragua," Bell explained.

Peace Corps withdrew volunteers in January, 1979, when civil war became so widespread throughout the country that it interrupted routine activities. "At that point it became apparent that the volunteers would not be able to carry out their normal duties, and we also had to consider their personal safety," Bell stated.

More recently, there has been civil strife in El Salvador. Beginning in October, 1979, Peace Corps began recalling the first of some 70 volunteers. By March 31, 1980 all volunteers had left El Salvador. Several staff persons have remained.

"Right now, we have a commitment to keep two staff members in El Salvador until the end of September. By then, we will have a better idea of the chances of resuming operations as they were before the phase-out," he said.

"The new government has made some progress in the distribution of lands expropriated under the new agrarian reform program," Bell said. "Violence in the country is now sporadic and confined to the rural areas.

"The decision to keep some staff in El Salvador until September represents one of the lessons we learned from Nicaragua," Bell said, explaining that complete removal of personnel and equipment makes it extremely difficult to renew operations when invited back to the country.

"We are keeping in El Salvador the basic furniture files and equipment we feel would be necessary to start operations again. We are hoping that once the situation changes for the better, We will be able to return with a minimum of delay."

Photography Portrays Experiences of PCVs In West Africa

Here are a few of the more than 3,500 pictures taken by freelance photographer Carolyn Redenius during her recent three-week Peace Corps assignment in the West African countries of Senegal, Sierra Leone, Upper Volta, Ghana and Niger.

Redenius was working to convey the PC theme, "You'll come back with more than just your luggage," by stressing, through her photography, the special experiences of Peace Corps volunteers. She photographed volunteers involved in energy, nutrition, well digging, forestry, education business, rural animation and construction. A special emphasis was placed on the work of minority volunteers.



Senegal



Niger



Upper Volta



Sierra Leone



Ghana.

Carol Hodges, OAVP Staffer, Dies



Carol Hodges, a program specialist with the Older American Volunteer Program, died of cancer on May 27 at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C. She had been ill since October.

Hodges, 45, of St. Louis, Mo., came to Washington in 1973 and began working with ACTION as an employee development specialist. She was promoted to program specialist with OAVP in 1976.

Jack Kenyon, chief of the Foster Grandparent Program Branch of OAVP, described Hodges as "a warm and outgoing person who was loved by everyone who really knew her. She was devoted to the program, its ideals and its goals. She will be sorely missed by her friends."

Hodges received her BS Degree from Dakota State College in 1967 and was an English teacher at Arlington High School, Arlington, S.D. and Lake Preston High School, Lake Preston, S.D. until 1973.

She was a member of the Pi Beta Phi Fraternity, the South Dakota Education Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English. Her awards included the Outstanding Service Award in 1973 for her work with the South Dakota Teenage Republicans.

She and her husband, Allard D'Heur, a senior operations officer at the U.S. Customs Service, Washington, D.C., maintained a home in Annandale, Va. Besides her husband, she is survived by her son, Mark, her sisters Barbara Paulson of Sioux City, Iowa, and Susan Veitch of Austin, Texas, and her father Robert W. Veitch of Houston, Texas.

The family suggests that expressions of sympathy be in the form of contributions to the American Cancer Society or to a charity or religious organization of your choice.

ACTION Luncheon to Focus on Ethnic

Author Michael Novak will address a group of ACTION employees at 12:30 on June 20 in Room 522 at ACTION Headquarters. Novak, who wrote the book "The Unmeltable Ethnics," will be speaking at an ethnic luncheon, which is being presented by a group of ACTION and Peace Corps employees with eastern European and other ethnic backgrounds.

The luncheon, which is being held in commemoration of Captive Nations Week - June 15-20 - will also feature a variety of foreign dishes, as well as photographs, artifacts and music from various ethnic cultures.

Victoria Mangiordo, deputy assistant, White House Office of Ethnic Affairs, will also address the luncheon.

Tickets to the luncheon are available, at two dollars each, on a first-come-first-served basis from luncheon committee members. Those wishing further information or wanting to make any kind of contribution should contact Dic Berberian, committee chairman, at 254-3545.

Transportation Support for VISTAs Proposed at Forum

The use of Public Health Service (PHS) and Veterans Administration (VA) facilities for VISTA volunteers, increased transportation allowance and a more detailed work plan for new VISTAs were among proposals made at the ninth national VISTA forum.

Twenty-one VISTA volunteers, two from each of ACTION's ten regions, and one NAFO (National Organization of Farm Workers) volunteer attended the forum at ACTION Headquarters, May 12-16.

After being welcomed to Washington by ACTION Director Sam Brown, VISTA Director Margery Tabankin and VISTA Deputy Director Jeanne Carney, the representatives brought forth more than 30 concerns voiced by volunteers from their regions. By the end of the forum, representatives had agreed on several major issues, including the following:

- Medical support for volunteers' dependents and a study of the feasibility of the volunteers' use of PHS and VA facilities.
- Increased on-site transportation allowance, a clarified Memorandum of Agreement to en-

force the volunteer travel reimbursement policy, and an increase in project support monies before increasing the number of VISTA volunteers.

- More detailed project information to VISTA volunteers before they begin service.
- Appropriate VISTA representation at area recruitment meetings.
- Increases in medical and dental coverage pending additional appropriations from Congress.
- Opposition to standardized contract training for VISTA volunteers.
- Participation of two forum representatives in preparation of fiscal year budget and supplemental appropriations.

In addition, representatives met with other ACTION staff and with VISTAs United, a group of VISTA volunteers who are exploring the idea of unionizing VISTAs. After considerable discussion with that group, the forum voted against unionization.

Tabankin promised to review all proposals and issue a response to each one by August 15. The outcome of some issues, she said, would depend on review by other office staff. "I agree with the forum that more information is needed on VISTA project descriptions, and I will recommend this to recruitment staff, but the final decision is up to them," she said.

Tabankin said she would commit the agency to study the feasibility of additional medical facilities for volunteers. She also pledged to enforce the volunteer transportation reimbursement policy.

Some forum issues were planned for discussion at the Domestic Operations programming conference, which is being held this week in Newport News, Va. That conference is examining ways of implementing long-range DO priorities.



VISTA Director Margery Tabankin and volunteers at forum.

FGP Helps The Handicapped at National Children's Center

What once was a frightening and confusing world for blind, deaf and mentally retarded children at the National Children's Center in Washington, D.C. is a brighter place, thanks to three Foster Grandparents.

The Center opened its doors to visitors during National Volunteer Week, April 20-26, to show the difference a volunteer can make in the lives of these children.

OAVP Director Helen Kelley visited the Center and met with three Foster Grandparents who care for children at the Center. They had a chance to speak with Kelley and express their feelings about working with the children.

"Since I never had children of my own," explained Wilhelmina King, "I had a lot of learning to do when I began working as a Foster Grandparent." She works with children who were born

prematurely and have developed blindness, deafness and mental retardation. "It has been a challenging experience," King said.

Rose Winston, 70, previously served for five years as a Foster Grandparent in Maryland. Now she is a teacher's aide in a class for the functionally retarded. At the Center she helps children with basic skills, something as simple as holding a pencil. "But these kids are smart. Don't let anyone fool you," she says. "They need a great deal of attention, and they can be mischievous. But aren't all kids?"

Foster Grandparent Oscar Smith, 75, who is partially deaf, feels that he can relate well to the deaf children whom he trains to use a simplified sign language.

"I look forward to this kind of volunteer work," says Smith. He remarked that the more he works with children, the more he finds himself recalling the days of his own childhood. "It all brings me back to my own carefree younger days. It's wonderful," he says.

Nancy Herbert, a staff person at the center says that since Smith began working with the deaf children in January, they have progressed beyond what anyone expected. "They seem to express themselves more now. They seem happier with Mr. Smith in the classroom," she said.

Mrs. Herbert said the work of the Foster Grandparents gives a big boost to the efforts of the regular Center staff. "Without the help of the volunteers, none of these children could have made such strides in self-help, academic and behavioral skills," she said.



FGP Rose Winston with student.



Helen Kelley with infants at the center.

personnel

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR OF ACTION

Josie Bass, new special assistant to the director of ACTION, is working, through the Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation, in an effort to monitor interagency agreements.

Prior to joining ACTION, Bass worked for the State of Maryland as legislative officer for the Secretary of Personnel. Before that, she was Executive Aide to Governor Harry Hughes of Maryland. Earlier, she served for six years as chief special investigator for the Human Relations Commission in Prince George's County, Md.

Bass, who is President of the Prince George's County chapter of NAACP, received her JD in 1978 from the University of Maryland.

ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

Skip Kaltenheuser has recently been named an assistant General Counsel in the Office of General Counsel. He is handling legal matters for DO Regions II, III, IV, VII, and X; and for the PC Latin America Region and part of NANEAP.

Before joining ACTION, Kaltenheuser served for a year as an environmental protection specialist with the Department of Energy. Before that, he was an Assistant Attorney General for the state of Kansas.

Kaltenheuser earned his JD in 1978 from the University of Kansas in Lawrence and his BSW from the School of Social Work at that University.

EEO Seminar

Counseling techniques, personnel management and labor relations were among key topics at the recent training seminar for agency Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counselors. The conference, which was sponsored by the Office of Compliance, was part of a continuing agency program to train EEO counselors and inform them of new regulations. It was held in Washington, D.C. May 12-16.

Training also focused on EEO laws and court decisions, and agency policies and procedures affecting equal employment opportunities. Participants heard presentations from the Director and Deputy Director of the Personnel Management Division (PMD) and all PMD branch chiefs.

EEO counselors are available to all agency employees or applicants for employment who believe they have been discriminated against because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or physical or mental handicap. Counselors should be contacted within 30 days of the alleged discrimination incident and have 21 days to effect informal resolution.

Headquarters EEO counselors are: Ruth Archie, Domestic Operations, ext. 47605; Douglas Cooper, Office of Recruitment and Communications, ext. 48373; Debbie Hubbard, Peace Corps, Latin America, ext. 48876; Lewis Moore, Office of Recruitment and Communications, ext. 47346.

EEO counselors in the field are: Shirley Willis, Region III; Eulalie Ferguson, Region IV; Sharron Mathews, Region V; Max Vigil, Region VI; Katherine Wilson, Region VII; Alexander Ramirez, Region VIII; Verdell Daniel, Region IX; and Billie Joe Caldwell, Region X.

For further information, please contact Jeanne Snowden at FTS 254-5940.

Long-Term Agency Goals Set at Conference

ACTION will focus, over the next five years, on three major issues – independent living energy and service-learning.

Those priorities were established at an ACTION senior staff conference, held May 7-10 in Coolfont, W.Va. Senior staff and regional directors set goals for the next five years.

ACTION Director Sam Brown said the conference provided “a unique dialogue to share visions of where this country will be by 1985 in a variety of areas – youth, poverty, appropriate technology, the economy.

“Each of the three established priorities impacts heavily on the poor and elderly to whom ACTION is committed,” Brown said. “And each cuts across program lines and is consistent with agency programming directions over the past few years.”

He added that ACTION would continue to provide people and communities with the resources to help themselves.

The major approaches to each issue, developed at the conference, are:

Independent Living - Initiatives will enable affected groups of people, such as the handicapped or elderly, to the greatest extent possible, to remove themselves from the need for institutionalization or other dependency relationships. This involves a greater advocacy role, on ACTION's part, in removing constraints on independent living, including restrictions on group housing for the elder-

ly, barriers to employment, and various eligibility and other regulatory requirements.

Energy - Emphasis will be placed on citizen participation efforts directed at energy conservation and efficiency, such as that demonstrated by ACTION's Community Energy Project; advocacy for recognition of the needs of the poor and elderly; projects which demonstrate the validity of appropriate energy technology; and development of an energy information sharing process.

Service-Learning - Programs will focus on the continuation and expansion of the technical assistance approach contained in ACTION's National Center for Service-Learning, skill acquisition through service-learning, and a determination of the future role of University Year for ACTION. Special emphasis will be placed on minority and disadvantaged youth.

Brown said the priorities would be addressed through the mobilization of volunteers who serve in accordance with agency program criteria. He stressed the importance of utilizing the agency's small size and decentralized structure to reach volunteers and the communities they serve.

According to Brown, the agency will focus 85-90 percent of its resources – including staff, money and time – on the three priorities by 1985. “We have made a conscious decision to do three things thoroughly and well and to forego attempts to become involved in all the important and worthy causes which exist,” he said.

A programming conference now being held, is enabling staff from DO headquarters and field offices to discuss ways of implementing the priorities. In addition, appropriate managers will submit plans for addressing these priorities over the next five years through the zero-based budgeting process.

ACTION UPDATE

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