

P e a c e C o r p s

T O D A Y

THE WORLD OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

SPRING/SUMMER 1997



*Health Volunteer Sheri Nouane in the Community Center*

## Peace Corps: The International Experience That Opens Doors!

Peace Corps service is your passport to a world of opportunity. As a Volunteer, you'll have the chance to challenge yourself as never before, helping solve some of the world's most pressing problems while developing impressive credentials. National and international employers in both private enterprise and government value the experience acquired by Peace Corps Volunteers. More than 100 employers contact the Peace Corps each month looking for Volunteers who've completed service abroad.

The Peace Corps develops leadership, resourcefulness and sensitivity. As an added bonus, Volunteers receive what is arguably the best language and cross-cultural training in the world. For recent college graduates, Peace Corps is a smart career move. For many experienced individuals—mid-career professionals and retirees—it's a great way to find adventure and put your skills to work where they are desperately needed.

"I don't know what other job would give me so much autonomy right after college," says Paul Berman, a Peace Corps Business Volunteer in Honduras. "I really believe the experiences I'm having here will help me in my career." (Read more about what Paul is doing on page 6.) If you've got the skills and the motivation to make a difference, please apply today!

### **Volunteers Needed for Business, Education, and Agriculture Assignments Starting This Spring and Summer!**

Call your local Peace Corps recruiting office *today!* Dial 1-800-424-8580, option #1, and ask about Spring and Summer openings in agriculture, business, non-governmental organization (NGO) development, secondary English and math education, and primary education teacher training. Opportunities exist for experienced professionals and new graduates with degrees in liberal arts and in technical areas.

Volunteers live in cities and rural areas, in apartments, straw huts, and western-style houses. They spend 12-14 weeks in intensive language, technical, and cross-cultural training, and then report to their assignments for two years of service. Volunteer benefits include a living allowance, transportation to and from the country of service, health care, and a \$5,400 readjustment allowance when they return stateside.

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Peace Corps Today is written by Peace Corps Volunteers and staff. Peace Corps Director: Mark D. Gearan. Director of Communications: Andre Oliver. Editor: Patricia Cunningham



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For more information on becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer, call (800) 424-8580 or visit the Peace Corps World Wide Web site at <http://www.peacecorps.gov>

Peace Corps does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, political affiliation, or sexual orientation.

# Service in Morocco: "The Most Challenging and Rewarding Experience of My Life."

BY AMY GAMBRILL

It was a typical sunny Moroccan day about a year into my Peace Corps service when a jeep full of veterinarians came into my small village, Tazarine, on a vaccination campaign. There was never much traffic on the narrow, unpaved road through the valley, so everybody poked their heads out when the motors rattled in. As the curious villagers came out of their houses, a crowd formed. The community had done the same thing for me when I first arrived with my two duffle bags of clothes, books and pictures from home. It was then that I realized I was no longer the "outsider," but a member of the community.

I applied to become a Peace Corps Volunteer during my senior year in college with hopes of putting my double major in environmental studies and geology to use in another country, but mostly to serve. I had been committed to community service throughout high school and college, working at family crisis shelters, soup kitchens, and the YMCA, so becoming a Volunteer was an extension of that desire to help people. On graduation day, I received my country of placement: Morocco. Four weeks later, I was on a plane to the most challenging and rewarding experience of my life.

The 11 weeks of Peace Corps training were excellent. The Peace Corps staff taught us Arabic and Berber, a tribal language, through rigorous, intensive classes for four hours a day. They gave us insight into Morocco's cultural norms and values, like eating from a communal dish and taking our shoes off as we entered rooms. And I gained knowledge of the environmental problems that plagued this dry country by visiting Morocco's national parks.

Tazarine is a small village located in a national park in the eastern High Atlas mountains. It has a population of 400 people, primarily farmers who live off their land. They grow potatoes, carrots, turnips, wheat, corn, alfalfa, hay, apples, and walnuts. Many people sell apples and walnuts for income, and a few young men work in cities to send money back to their families. Although there was little to spare, I found the people more hospitable than any I had ever met. Families would offer their last loaves of bread and their

last glasses of tea to me because I was a guest in their home.

I found a vacant house, in the middle of my village. It was made of mud like all the other houses in town, and it had two small rooms. My floors were made of dirt, and there was no electricity or running water. This was home.

My assignment was to work as an environmental educator. Four of Morocco's national parks had requested socio-economists, wildlife biologists, and environmental educators from the Peace Corps to help with park management plans and to act as liaisons between park inhabitants and park officials.

In the park where I was stationed, there were serious erosion problems brought on by the dry climate and deforestation, and there was an endangered species of sheep that inhabited the park's mountains. My work included reforestation efforts, drafting an ecology text book, training teachers on how to teach environmental subjects, introducing solar power for cooking, and training park staff.

Each day I awoke to the sound of the roosters crowing and the shepherds taking their goats out to graze on the mountains. After being invited to a neighbor's house for a traditional breakfast of home-made wheat bread, olive oil, and spiced coffee, I would go to the nearby irrigation ditch to get my day's supply of drinking water. Like many of the women in the village, I would spend my mornings doing housework. But then my friends would go to the fields to harvest alfalfa for their cows, cut stalks of corn, or head into the mountains to cut fuel wood for the fire to cook and heat their homes. After a lunch of stew and homemade bread, every one would nap. In the afternoon, the girls would go back into the fields to carry alfalfa, carrots, turnips, or potatoes on their backs. I could barely stand up with a load on my back!

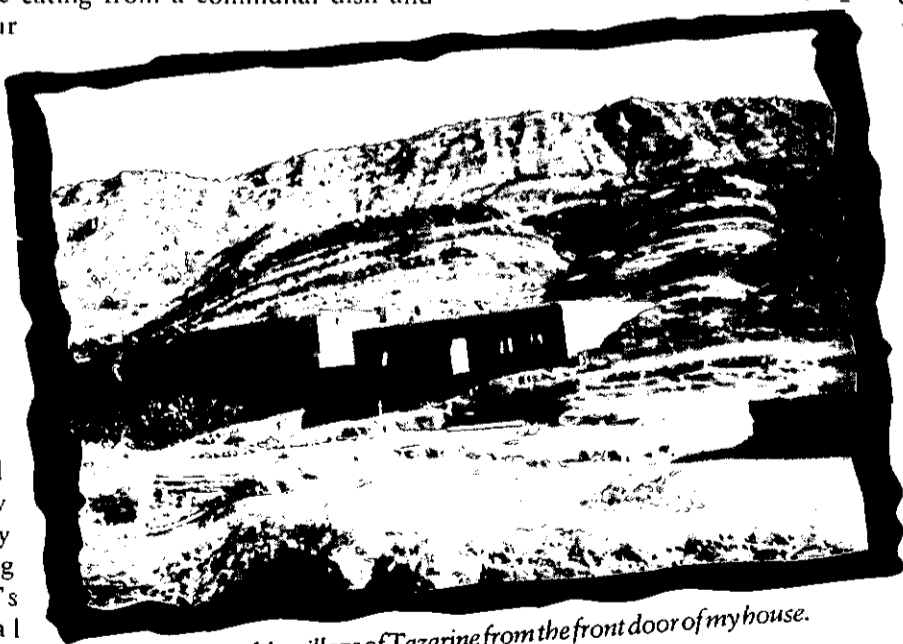
My afternoons were spent writing environmental education lesson plans for an

ecology text book, hiking around the mountains to track plants and animals, or accompanying women to learn about the methods they used to gather fuel wood. I grew accustomed to hours of winnowing wheat around tables with women, so I could hear about their needs more candidly. I followed shepherds out into the mountains to find out first-hand how overgrazing was affecting the land. And I sat with community members and village elders over pot after pot of sweet mint tea, talking about the corn harvest, the price of tomatoes, or when the next holiday was.

It was from these days of taking the time to meet the community members, learning their daily routines, and observing how people effected their environment that I developed my projects.



*That's me (laughing on the left) with two friends from my village, Nadda and Zahara.*



*A view of the village of Tazarine from the front door of my house.*

The first project I did with other Volunteers and my Moroccan colleagues was to plant trees in an area that had been deforested. We followed up on this with environmental education in the schools.

I loved sitting for hours with my friends, talking about life, the weather, marriage, the United States, and my family. At dusk, when the day's work was done and it was not quite dark enough to light the gas lamp, women sat in clusters around their houses and men gathered around the local store. This was the time of day when I learned the most from my Moroccan friends. I found out about their tradition of naming babies after they are a week old. I learned how to make cough medicine from sap. I learned to sing and create my own wedding songs and to play their drums. I wove a rug from scraps of old clothing. I had my hands and feet dyed with henna. It was from these women that I learned new words, lots of jokes, and the meaning of friendship.

My most memorable day as a Volunteer, however, was my last. It was hard to leave my Moroccan friends and family. I was riding my mountain bike out of the village carrying a small backpack with the last of my belongings. Friends had given me gifts to bring to my family in the States—apples, peaches, nuts, and honey—so they would know I was fed well in Morocco. I was busy trying to say my good-byes as people lined the street that ran through the village. I hopped on my bike, sad and waving, when a bag full of apples ripped open and scattered in the road into puddles from the rains the night before. Suddenly, everyone went from tears to laughter. I left my village, my friends, and my family laughing.

*Amy Gambrill was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco from 1993 to 1995.*

# Can my friends visit me?

## ...and other common questions about being a Volunteer

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PEACE CORPS?

Peace Corps has three goals: (1) to help the people of interested countries meet their needs for trained men and women; (2) to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the people served; and (3) to promote a better understanding of other people on the part of the American people. Peace Corps was established in 1961, and since then more than 145,000 Americans have joined.

### WILL I BE ABLE TO GET MY STUDENT LOANS CANCELED/DEFERRED?

Anyone who enters the Peace Corps with an outstanding debt in the Perkins Loan Program (formerly the National Direct Student Loan Program) may qualify for partial loan cancellation. Stafford Loans (formerly the Guaranteed Student Loan or GSLs) and Perkins Loans may be deferred during Peace Corps service. Peace Corps has a brochure detailing who is eligible for deferment.

### CAN MY FRIENDS VISIT ME?

Yes. Family and friends can visit you while you're overseas. However, visits must be coordinated with your work and vacation during your two years of Peace Corps service.

### HOW WILL PEACE CORPS LOOK ON MY RESUME?

Peace Corps is a highly regarded overseas experience. Many Volunteers are considered the most qualified for many positions they apply for when they return because of the additional cross-cultural, language, and other skills they developed while living and working overseas. Employers know a Peace Corps Volunteer is flexible, can communicate professionally at all levels, and has a high level of motivation and commitment to any job.

### CAN I CHOOSE WHERE I GO?

The application form allows you to indicate your geographical preference, as well as places where you would not want to serve. To be sent to a particular country an applicant must have a skill currently being requested by the host country. If an applicant is only willing to serve in one country or area, his or her chances of being accepted are greatly diminished. Personal flexibility is extremely important to help Peace Corps fill the requests of all countries. Your personal preferences are discussed during the formal interview.

### WILL I HAVE ELECTRICITY AND RUNNING WATER?

You may have running water and electricity, live in an urban area, and even have a phone! But you may live in a hut, have no running water (though you *will* have a water supply), and no electricity. However, candles and kerosene are

always available. Many people who were originally concerned about not having the things that they were so accustomed to in the United States actually came to value that aspect of their lives as Volunteers.

### WILL I LIVE IN A MUD HUT?

Living conditions vary enormously from one country to another and from one program to another. Many Volunteers live in cement, brick, or adobe houses. Some live in modern apartments. Generally, the more rural the program, the more



basic the accommodations. Most Volunteers live comfortably but very modestly.

### WHAT IF I GET SICK OR AM INJURED?

The Peace Corps medical examination, which is required of all applicants prior to final clearance for departure, is intended to ensure we don't send Volunteers into countries where their health needs cannot be met. Volunteers who abide by the Peace Corps' recommendations do not usually have any more health problems than they would if they lived in the United States. Peace Corps has a medical staff in most countries, and where there is no staff, the local health care system is adequate. Should a medical problem occur that cannot be treated locally, you will be sent immediately to a facility in another country or back to the United States.

### WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO APPLY?

Ideally, you should apply 9 to 12 months prior to when you might be available to start training.

**Any More Questions?**  
Get answers by calling (800) 424-8580  
or visit the Peace Corps Web Site  
<http://www.peacecorps.gov>

## CAN I GET BY ON THE LIVING ALLOWANCE?

Peace Corps adjusts and monitors its living allowances for each country to make sure that Volunteers can purchase what they need. Worried that you may not make it on a fixed income? These Volunteers talk about how they adjusted to the Peace Corps standard of living.

**The living allowance provided plenty to live on. As long as you weren't extravagant, buying all kinds of imported goods in the capital and what not, Volunteers had plenty in Cameroon. I missed things like milk, cottage cheese, and brown rice, but this had nothing to do with lack of money. But rather lack of availability. If you're always short of money in the U.S., you'll probably always be short of money in the Peace Corps. Just remember, you'll be bringing in more than most of your neighbors.**

—Shauna Blanchard, Cameroon

**In all honesty, there was nothing I really needed that I had to go without. Don't worry, though. If you can live a simple life, you'll be fine. The only caveat is to beware of the capital city. I could spend my \$200 there on a weekend if I tried. Save your money by living cheaply at your site and then you'll have more to spend when you travel.**

—Bethe Lewis, Thailand

**I didn't feel like the living allowance caused me any hardship. It did not cover luxuries like Avon lotions or Nike running shoes, but my life did not seem hard to me.**

—Marya Nowakowski,  
Dominican Republic

**I lived quite comfortably. My site was in a rural area where there was really no way to spend a lot of money. I was even able to save money every month (which I used in travelling my way home at the end of Peace Corps service). A lot of people have the mistaken impression that being a Peace Corps Volunteer means having to physically suffer. Being a Volunteer means having to adapt. For flexible people, adaptation is not suffering.**

—Jan Weisman, Nepal

**I lived in an adobe-type mud house, in the Southern tip of the Sahara, the most isolated post in the country. I ate rice, goat, camel, and vegetables from the local gardens. Once a Volunteer develops the living habits of his or her surroundings, they understand how much more they are making than their neighbors. Your neighbors are not deprived, in many ways they are very rich, and as Volunteers we learn a lot from them about everyday living.**

—Ava Castanuela, Niger

**I felt my allowance was adequate. Surviving on a living allowance is like living on any salary—you have to be careful in managing your money. Some of the Volunteers in urban areas actually had nicer houses than they will probably ever have because rent was so cheap!**

—Alex Zipp, Morocco

## Getting to Go

Think you don't have the skills to go overseas?  
Think again!

BY PENELOPE ANDERSON

Matheu Schwenk was nervous when he signed up for a Peace Corps interview in October 1995. A Spanish major with an Anthropology minor at Skidmore College in New York, Matheu had become interested in the Peace Corps after his junior year abroad in Spain. Yes, he had lived overseas and had always been involved with community service, but was he qualified to be a Peace Corps Volunteer? He had always heard that the Peace Corps was competitive, and that unless you were a forester or nurse or some other professional, it was difficult to get accepted.

Glancing through the different sections of the Peace Corps application, he felt he wasn't qualified to do anything, especially when he reached the "job preference" section that asked: "List the work assignments you would prefer."

Matheu thought about this for a moment, and feeling totally hopeless, typed, "I'm willing to do anything I'm qualified for." But what exactly was he qualified for?

Six months later he found out.

He was nominated by his Peace Corps recruiter for an assignment in Latin America and is scheduled to leave in February 1997. As a Volunteer, he will work to increase a rural community's access to water, improve their sanitation services, educate his neighbors on basic hygiene, and strengthen the community's ability to manage their own resources. Now, how did a Spanish major qualify to do all that?

### Becoming Qualified

During his interview, Matheu had discussed various Peace Corps programs with his recruiter, Janet Gerchell. Janet told him that, as he had

expected, he did not have the technical skills currently being requested by Peace Corps' host countries. She was impressed, however, by his overall community experience and his strong desire to be a Peace Corps Volunteer.

"You have various options," Janet told him. "The Peace Corps has several 'generalist' programs that you can qualify for based on a few months of volunteer work here in the States."

Janet told Matheu he could tutor students or immigrants if he wanted to qualify as an English teacher. She also suggested that he might work in a community garden, or get hands-on health experience. If not that, she recommended spending some time working construction or doing carpentry.

Matheu decided on construction. He contacted Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit organization that builds and rehabilitates houses for lower-income families, and asked about upcoming projects.

Janet had recommended Habitat to Matheu, not only for its hammer-and-nails practicality, but because the job would call for him to interact with the people his work was affecting, which is very similar to a Peace Corps assignment. In Matheu's subsequent assignment in Wichita, Kansas, he worked side-by-side with neighborhood kids framing a house and installing floor and roof trusses.

"I loved it!" Matheu says today. "When quitting time came each day, I didn't want to stop building." Based on that Habitat experience and a job he gained as a plumbing technician on a construction site, Janet was able to nominate him



for service.

All over the country, Peace Corps recruiters tell the same story: an applicant with a generalist degree and background spends a few months learning a technical skill and then becomes a Peace Corps Volunteer in the developing world.

### Demand-Driven Jobs

Peace Corps is demand-driven: we respond to requests made by our host countries. The more concrete skills that applicants have, the more assignments they might qualify for.

Bonnie Black, another Peace Corps applicant, worked with her recruiter to repackage skills she already possessed into what the host country had requested. "Joining the Peace Corps allows me to check off several things I've always wanted to do," she says. "I wanted to do some good with my life."

At the age of 50, she had owned and operated a small business, the Bonnie Faire Catering Company. Bonnie and her recruiter, Malcolm Aste, determined that her background in food management might make her a good candidate for an assignment dealing with health and nutrition.

There were a couple of catches, however.

—continued on page 10

## Community Service Opportunities—Right Here at Home!

Peace Corps Volunteers need to have a certain level of technical skills to meet the needs of their host countries. Joining a volunteer program in the states can give you hands-on skills in a community setting, and let you see what it might be like to be a Peace Corps Volunteer before you ever step off a plane. Before going off to change the world, have an impact in your community here at home.

### English Teaching

Teaching English as a Second Language or Adult Literacy in a formal program could prepare you to be an English teacher overseas. Look for tutoring programs that provide training and work with students at least 13 years old.

•*Literacy Volunteers of America* is a national, non-profit educational organization which delivers tutoring services through a network of more than 50,000 volunteers nationwide. To find out about chapters near you, call 315-445-8000.

### Skilled Trades

Three or more months experience with construction, carpentry, welding, masonry or other building methods could give you the technical expertise requested by Peace Corps host countries.

•*Habitat for Humanity* is a non-profit organization that seeks to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness, and has built 30,000 homes around the world since 1976. To find out about Habitat projects, call 1-800-HABITAT.

### Health and Nutrition

Get CPR, First Aid or AIDS education certifications, and volunteer your services at a hospital, health center, or as an EMT or health educator. Certification, plus a demonstrated interest in health and community leadership, may qualify you for health work in the developing world.

•*The American Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization, led by volunteers, that provides relief to victims of disasters. They provide training for health certifications, and welcome volunteers. Look up your local chapter in the phone book, or visit their web site at <http://www.redcross.org>.

### Agriculture

Three or more months experience with gardening, forestry, greenhouse or nursery work, plus community development skills, could qualify you for an agriculture program. French or Spanish study will make you a more attractive candidate.

•*4-H* is a non-profit youth organization. In many rural and suburban areas, 4-H has a strong agricultural component. To find out about 4-H clubs near you, call 1-800-368-7432.

# What Do Peace Corps Volunteers Do?



**“If you want to stay comfortable, stay home. But if you want to be stretched mentally, physically, and emotionally, give some of your time to help others.”**

*By Mary Miller, Peace Corps Volunteer  
Palau, the Pacific Islands*

Last summer, my host country counterpart and I developed the Palau Reading Program, the first national reading program. To our delight, it was a success! Over 2,100 books were read over a period of two months. The Department of Education realized the impact that reading during vacation makes and has expanded the summer project into a year-round event.

Before I came overseas, I was afraid that I would be very lonely and very hungry. The information I received contained many Volunteer letters that told of a monotonous rice and fish diet and very limited access to radios and televisions. I decided, however, that I would rather trade two years of my comfortable, although unchallenging, life in the States for the excitement of working overseas.

I remember my shock when first seeing the bamboo, thatch, and corrugated tin huts that some of the Ponapeans lived in. As trainees, we tried to adjust to our surroundings, though I think we feared our permanent sites would be worse.

Fortunately, this was far from the truth. I was amazed when I first saw Palau. It's truly an island paradise. There was a flurry of traffic as we entered the capital city of Koror, my new home.

Looking back over my last year of service, I can point out some of the frustrations I had as a Volunteer. But more importantly, I would be able to point to my friends here—equals with those in the United States—who help me to understand Palauan ways, learn the language, and generally keep me laughing.

And my work! Oh, how I work! But for the first time in my life I don't complain about waking up early and staying at my desk late. I know that what I do really makes a difference here and, eventually, subtle changes will occur in the lives of my students.

If you want to stay comfortable, stay home. But if you want to be stretched mentally, physically, and emotionally, give some of your time to help others as a Peace Corps Volunteer. The repayment for your efforts will never end.

**“I don't know what other job would give me so much autonomy right after college.”**

*By Paul Berman, Peace Corps Volunteer  
Honduras, Central America*

Everyone tried to push me into working for one of the “Big Six” accounting firms after college. I compromised and gave an internship a try with one of them, but I just couldn't imagine doing that type of work for the rest of my life. I decided that I was going to do what made me happy, despite what everyone else thought was the right thing for me to do. The money will always be there. I may never have the opportunity to join the Peace Corps again.

This is the perfect time in my life. I really believe that the experiences I'm having here in Honduras will help me in my career. I have grown so much as a person, too. If I had it all to do again, I would still be here. I'm happy and very proud to be a Peace Corps Volunteer.

I've been a Volunteer for three months now. I feel like my work is going well. My Spanish is getting better every day. I feel confident talking to people now. I have been working out of the Chamber of Commerce here in my site, visiting businesses that have loans from the Chamber and consulting with them. Some of them have very complex problems—labor-management issues, the absence of accounting systems, the need to expand production capacity—and finding workable solutions can be challenging.

I also decided to pick up the work of an Environmental Volunteer who finished his Peace Corps tour. He was working to get people to start tree farms for the production of firewood, which is heavily relied upon here for cooking. I'm continuing his work on the industrial scale. I hope to show industries that use large amounts of firewood, such as salt manufacturers, that it would be economically beneficial for them to start their own tree farms. And of course, this will have the added benefit of helping the environment here, which has been greatly deforested.

I'm also working with an artisans group, organizing an “arts fair” for them, advising them on the business side of arts and crafts, and helping them export their products in the international market. On top of this, I'll soon be instructing Junior Achievement groups. I don't know what other job would let me have such a variety of work and give me so much autonomy right out of college. I love it!

Get your free copy of  
*At Home in the World:  
The Peace Corps Story*  
by calling  
(800) 424-8580  
and press 1 at the prompt



## Read more about it!

If you are considering Peace Corps service, or even if your interest in living and working abroad is yet only a dream, here's some interesting resource material and food for thought. Warning: The following may provoke an irresistible lust to wander.

### *At Home in the World:*

#### *The Peace Corps Story*

Edited by John Coyne. (Peace Corps, 1996) A collection of short essays by former Volunteers. *At Home in the World* gives the uninitiated a broad overview of what it's like to serve. Available at any Peace Corps Office.

### *The Ivory Crocodile*

Eileen Drew. (Milkweed, 1996.) A returned Volunteer draws on her experiences as in Zaire to spin an insightful novel about a young woman working in Africa.

### *From the Center of the Earth:*

#### *Stories Out of the Peace Corps*

Geraldine Kennedy. (Clover Park Press, 1991.) An anthology of witty and reflective accounts of life in the Peace Corps told by former Volunteers.

### *Lament for a Silver-Eyed Woman*

Mary-Ann Tirone-Smith. (Morrow, 1987) This humorous account of being a Peace Corps Volunteer in Cameroon. One of the funniest novels of Peace Corps life.

### *The Village of Waiting*

George Packer. (Random House, 1988.) Stationed as a Volunteer in Togo, the author tells of his own schooling at the hands of an unforgettable array of villagers.

### *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*

Moritz Thomsen. (The University of Washington Press, 1990.) One of the classic Peace Corps accounts. *Living Poor* follows the experiences of a Volunteer in Ecuador in the 1960s.

### *Festival for Three Thousand Maidens*

Richard Wiley. (E.P. Dutton, 1991.) Written by a former Peace Corps teacher in Korea, this book offers a moving account of what it's really like to teach overseas.

### *The Ponds of Kalambayi*

Mike Tidwell. (Lyons & Burford, 1990.) Considered by many to be the best portrait of life in the Peace Corps. Mike Tidwell chronicles experiences and lessons learned as a fish culture extension agent in Zaire in the mid-eighties.

### *Under the Neem Tree*

Susan Lowerre. (University of Washington Press, 1993.) Set in Senegal where Susan was a fish culture extension agent in the mid-eighties, the novel relays a touching story of one woman's life in West Africa.

### *The Art of Crossing Cultures*

Craig Storti. (Intercultural Press, 1989.) A former Morocco Volunteer's account of smoothing the transition to another culture.

# "The human element of the development process shows what you can do as a Peace Corps Volunteer."

By M.B. Iseminger, Peace Corps Volunteer  
Tunisia, North Africa

I began my service in Tunisia as a youth development worker in a rural community, but I'm leaving as a specialist in beekeeping and small-enterprise development. That's quite a switch since I wasn't even trained in beekeeping. My experience demonstrates that with a lot of flexibility, perseverance, and networking skills, you can refashion yourself to any project aim and meet the needs of your host community.

This is not a miracle or an impossible challenge. Basically, I got information from books in my country resource center, received guidance from a returned Peace Corps Volunteer, and then used Tunisian agencies to train and support a grassroots initiative. I was able to coordinate a complete project in beekeeping with broad enough parameters that it now includes training equipment, pest control and medicine, a small

business component and a technical manual for the illiterate.

Like most Volunteers, I had bold visions about what I might accomplish within my community. My enthusiasm for my service was laced with hues of idealism, and I had ambitious aims for what my community would achieve. I believe it is important to hold on to those visions and goals and pursue project ideas, regardless how lofty. This project has effected the lives of over 150 people. That is the human element of the development process and shows what you can do as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Watching a farmer demonstrate new techniques to a friend and marking the increase in the population of his bees, or noticing how women have become more self confident about their work are the aspects of my service that really make it all worthwhile.

*A Volunteer dressed in traditional Papua New Guinean garb takes aim. Learning about and participating in aspects of their host culture lifestyle is an important goal for Peace Corps Volunteers.*



# Where Older Translates Into Better!

BY CAROLINE MORSE

Old, older, oldest. Is this a lesson in comparative and superlative adjectives? No, not really. I am just reflecting on the topic of age, which has been a daily question asked of me since coming to Thailand.

I am a senior Peace Corps Volunteer, but I have never considered myself old, older, or oldest. To me, age is a state of mind, and my Peace Corps experience has helped me realize the truth in this adage. Since being in Thailand, my physical and mental capacities have expanded in both strength and flexibility.

Upon graduating from college in 1961, I opted for marriage and a family, and for the next 25 years, I was busily engaged as a wife, mother, civic volunteer, and, later, as an executive in a small consulting firm. I never stopped very long to think about aging. However, I was aware of my gaining maturity and wisdom, a blessing through the many passages of life. My dream was to become unencumbered enough to "take off" at some point along the way and experience living in a foreign land and culture. So, I joined the Peace Corps as an English teacher, and I am finally putting my English degree to some practical use.

I am enjoying this experience thoroughly, exposing all my senses to a world of new things. During this time, I have even managed to celebrate two more birthdays, and the truth of the matter

is that I am feeling, thinking, and maybe even acting younger.

After finishing the three month training period as the oldest trainee, I often wondered why there were not more of "us." By "us" I mean Volunteers over 39, which, as the cliché says, is just the starting point of life. Without a peer group, I spent many happy hours with a my new, younger friends. They opened my thinking and modes of learning. I began to see things through their eyes, their windows of thought. I listened to them talk, watched them react and cope, heard their music and laughter, and learned with them all the new things that were being thrown our way. Best of all was taking part in the camaraderie. At this initial stage, I was inclined not to categorize myself as a senior Volunteer.

Since going out to my site and becoming a teacher for primary school students, all the windows and doors have been flung open. I assumed a wonderful, free attitude about age. As to my students' point of view, I don't think they even considered my age. They were amazed to see and hear an English-speaking teacher each day up in front of the class. With interest, they watched me go through my daily teaching exercises, staring curiously at my Western dress and demeanor. I began to relate to *them*—their needs, their senses

of humor, their energies, their mischievousness, and somewhat naive and almost guileless personalities. Maybe singing "Bingo," "Jingle Bells," and dancing the "Hokey Pokey" helped me assume that ageless and carefree feeling. And in an amusing and wonderful way, that feeling spread to the classroom and the rest of the school.

I try keep up with my students, and they are my best friends here in Thailand. But the Thai are trying to keep up with me too. The students personify that state of mind that I strive to display: happiness, energy, curiosity, wonder, excitement, freshness, and gratitude.

So this is the way I feel about my so-called "aging process." Sure there are some new wrinkles, gray hairs, and sagging spots, but so what! What is most important is my state of mind. Today, I am a healthy, happy, strong, confident Peace Corps Volunteer and very thankful. So let me close by changing my first adjectives, old, older, oldest to good, better, best!

*Caroline Morse is a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand.*



*Older Volunteers bring years of experience to their projects.*

## Database...

The first Peace Corps Volunteers left for Ghana in August 1961. Since then, more than **145,000** Peace Corps Volunteers have served in **131 countries**. ▲ With nearly **7,000 Volunteers** in the field, Peace Corps is at a 21-year high. ▲ Within the Volunteer Corps, over **200 languages and dialects** are known and spoken fluently. ▲ Today, the **average age** of a Peace Corps Volunteer is 29—in 1961, it was 22. ▲ 8% of Peace Corps Volunteers are **over the age of 50**, and the oldest Peace Corps Volunteer is 79. ▲ 33% of Peace Corps Volunteers were female in the '60's. Today, **55% are female**. ▲ More than 10,000 people filled out applications for Peace Corps service last year. ▲ Over 500 Returned Volunteers are employed at the U.S. Agency for International Development. ▲ Fourteen **U.S. Representatives and Senators** have served as Peace Corps Volunteers or staff. ▲ The Peace Corps is the world's largest volunteer teacher organization of **English as a second language**. ▲ Over 37% of Peace Corps Volunteers work in **education**—making it the largest Peace Corps sector. **Environment** is the second largest, and **health** is the third largest. ▲ The number of Volunteers working directly in **natural resources/environmental projects** has quadrupled since 1980 to 700 in 1989—10% of all Peace Corps Volunteers. ▲ The Peace Corps has implemented **environmental programs** in 50 countries. ▲ 13 million people now have **clean water** thanks to Peace Corps. ▲ Since 1988, Peace Corps **Farmer-to-Farmer** Volunteer teams have worked with over 1,800 overseas **farmers**. ▲ More than 4,000 people have benefited from **housing construction** and/or upgrades in Costa Rica alone as a result of Peace Corps efforts. ▲ 986 Volunteers now work directly with **small business development**.



# Notes from Around the World



## South Africa Signs on to Peace Corps

Vice President Al Gore and South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki signed an agreement that will send Peace Corps Volunteers to South Africa in early 1997. "This is a partnership of historic significance," said Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan at the signing ceremony in South Africa. Although South Africa's economy is showing signs of recovery, the country faces daunting problems. Half of the black population (76 percent of the total population) is living in poverty. Unemployment is 46 percent nationally. South Africa also faces enormous challenges in education, with approximately 50 percent of the black population being illiterate. "Sending Volunteers to South Africa is a very important step for the Peace Corps and for the people of the United States," said Director Gearan. "By living and working at the grass roots level, Peace Corps Volunteers can help further strengthen the personal ties between Americans and South Africans."

## Crisis Corps Weathers the Storms

Last year, when Hurricane Luis struck Antigua and Barbuda, it left a path of destruction in its wake: the homes of over 2,300 low-income families were either damaged or destroyed. Because they had no insurance or were grossly under-insured, many families on the islands didn't have the financial means to rebuild or repair their homes. Most were forced to live in crowded conditions with relatives and neighbors, or outside, exposed to the elements. In response, eight Volunteers, who had completed their two-year tours in Peace Corps, re-enrolled, joined a Volunteer in Antigua and are now working with the people of Antigua to help them rebuild their homes. The Volunteers are also training young people in hurricane-resistant construction methods as part of Antigua's National Youth Skills Training Program. These Volunteers are the first to serve as part of the "Crisis Corps," a project within the Peace Corps that will allow current and former Volunteers to use their technical, language and cross-cultural skills to assist people whose lives have been disrupted by natural disasters or humanitarian crises.

## Banking on a Brighter Future

Volunteer Debra Boyer has helped Mongolia's largest bank gain sound financial grounding as the country moves toward a market economy. Debra's analysis of the Agricultural Bank of Mongolia's government-directed lending practices demonstrated that without proper support from the government, the bank was on the verge of collapse. Information from her analysis was used in the bank director's negotiations with the government to gain more support, and resulted in a renegotiation of the bank's debt with more favorable rates and terms. Additionally, the Asian Development Bank agreed to give the bank more aid. "Perhaps my most important accomplishment is the beginning of the change of attitude," says Debra. "I see the director standing up to outside forces and fighting for what he sees as necessary for the bank and its customers. He is beginning to see the change in his role to a manager of a

business who must think independently and act in the best interest of his shareholders and customers."

## Saratov in Cyberspace

Robert Giovanne is the type of Volunteer who simply can't sit still. He built and sold his first business, a specialty car wash, by the time he was 18 and, more recently, he owned and operated a restaurant in the States. While waiting to go to Russia with the Peace Corps, he completed a Master's in Public Administration and got his pilot's license. So when he arrived at the Saratov Center for Business Development, you just knew he was going to concentrate on leaving his mark—and he is, helping develop Internet access for Saratov. Robert is currently working with local businesses and the state university on the finer points of "the net." No doubt before long more people from Saratov will be web-surfing with the rest of the world.

## Putting a New Face on Nepal's National Zoo

It may not be your average fix-it job—transforming Nepal's central zoo from an out-of-date facility with too-small rusted cages to a modern, humane place that will educate its visitors—but to Volunteer David Lewis it has become a labor of love. "As a former elementary school teacher, I thought this would be a good opportunity to tackle some of Nepal's biggest problems: pollution, garbage, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and a sense of hopelessness." In the past few months, the zoo project has grown to about one hundred volunteers, both Nepalis and international residents working together with the zoo staff—which includes local high school and university students, volunteers from North and South America as well as the support of the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. David and his team have even put together a slide show to introduce visitors to the zoo, developed educational programs, and trained over 30 tour guides.

## Keeping Schools Safe and Sanitary

Peace Corps Volunteer Colleen Marchwick is implementing waste management strategies to break the chain of disease transmission in Morocco. Through her efforts, school latrines have been constructed at three rural primary schools. Colleen works with local engineers and community leaders to develop a latrine design that best fits the financial, technical, and sewage constraints of each school. Colleen acts as foreman throughout most of the project, monitoring expenditures and construction, arranging transportation of materials, and supervising labor. She also devised health edu-

cation sessions that address the maintenance of the latrines and to explain the role they play in combatting the spread of disease.

## Lights, Camera, Marketing!

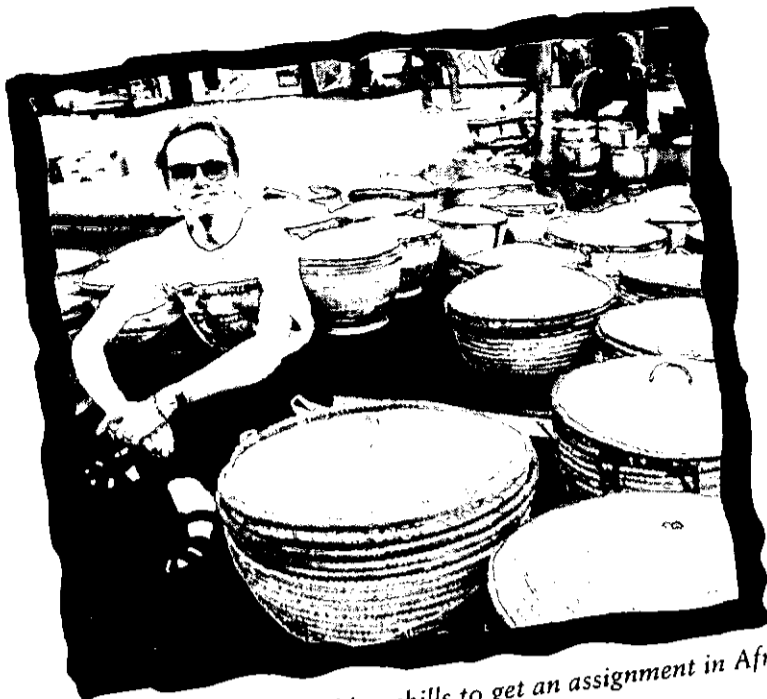
At first, Togo Volunteer Shawana Lee had some difficulty getting her project off the ground. "I had trouble getting students for my financial management training courses," says the Small Business Volunteer. So, she decided to go the them—via the television. In conjunction with TV Togo, Shawana is now broadcasting lessons on financial management to thousands of viewers on Saturday evenings. The show's become a prime-time hit, and Shawana is basking in the limelight of her newfound celebrity. "I now have requests in the dozens because I am a television personality," she explains. "When I am shopping at the market or walking along, many people stop me and say 'Hey, I saw you on television. Can you teach me management?'"

## A Jewel in the Isle of Spice

One of the well-kept secrets of Grenada, the 75-foot-high Royal Mt. Carmel Falls, is no longer a hidden treasure. After local villagers identified the falls as a possible tourism site, they contacted Grenada's ecotourism development office, and Yolande Joseph, the director of the program contacted Volunteer Sharon Johnson, a community development advisor at a non-governmental organization, for help. Working together with the villagers, they set up a community-managed system for running the falls that protects the fragile island environment while it encourages tourism. Community members laid a trail and installed handrails, botanical labels, picnic tables, and a booth with a uniformed attendant who collects a one-dollar fee. Over 2,500 visitors have traveled to view the falls since the trail opened. To keep up with the influx of visitors, nearby villagers have begun to set up stands along to road to sell handcrafted straw hats and baskets, homemade mauby and sea-moss juices, and honey.



Peace Corps Volunteer Kelly Cullen breaks with pals in Kingston, Jamaica.



*Bonnie Black repackaged her skills to get an assignment in Africa.*

—continued from page 5

Bonnie taught classes on healthy cooking, but had no formal training in nutrition. Her knowledge of health issues was minimal. Undeterred, she plunged into the process of making herself competitive. She took a nutrition class, got certified in CPR and First Aid, and took two courses in French.

In her assignment, she will be acting as a health educator, working with a local community to promote good health practices. And she will teach in French, the official language of Gabon, and an African language.

"After ten years of feeding the rich," she said in the days before she left for her assignment, "it's now time for me to work on hunger issues in the developing world."

**Getting Started in a Career**

At times, stateside work, done to help an applicant qualify for a two-year assignment, can point the way for an entire career change. That was the experience of Seamus Dowling, who left in June for Ethiopia. Seamus is a former NCAA Division I basketball player and a graduate of Lehigh University. He has a Masters in

International Affairs from the City University of New York.

On his own, Seamus started to tutor English as a Second Language (ESL) at the International Center in New York City in 1995. He was inspired by letters from his sister, a Peace Corps Volunteer in Gabon, who wrote about the effect her teaching was having on her students and the entire village. When he applied to the Peace Corps, however, he was still a little apprehensive about using his ESL experience as the basis for his assignment—with only a couple months of tutoring under his belt, developing a curriculum and being an effective teacher still seemed to be daunting tasks.

His continued commitment to his students, however, made him realize that he had the skills and the motivation to be a full-time teacher.

"Your impact as a teacher is almost immediate," he said. "What one person learns can be shared with others. Take an electric bill. It can seem almost incomprehensible to someone just learning English. But when I show my student how to read it, then he can go back to his community and share the information. That one lesson can ultimately have an impact on twenty or thirty people who have never been inside my classroom."

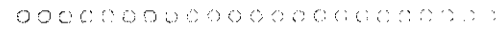
The Peace Corps experience offers a chance to expand one's horizons, learn new skills and play an active part in community development. As these applicants discovered, these opportunities also exist right here at home, and can pave the way to an exciting Peace Corps assignment. Looking back at his service work in Wichita, Matheu Schwenk commented, "When I was working on the house, I forgot that I had originally joined Habitat to help my Peace Corps application. In the end, the project convinced me that I had made the right choice, that this kind of community development was what I wanted to pursue, in this country as well as in the Peace Corps."

*Penelope Anderson was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Hungary from 1990-1992.*

**PEACE CORPS**

*Profiles*

**Lillie Lindsay is a great teacher; before that, she was a great Peace Corps Volunteer.**



**Home:**  
Virginia Beach, VA

**Occupation:**  
Elementary School Teacher

**Peace Corps Service:**

Jamaica, 1991-1993.

**I worked at the School of Hope in Kingston, the capital, instructing young people. I not only taught these students basic living skills, but I arranged job internships at the University of West Indies—reinforcing what they were learning in school and helping them develop job-related skills at the same time.**

**Most Memorable Peace Corps Experience:**

**Seeing the courage, dedication and phenomenal success of the students that I helped prepare for the job market in Jamaica.**

**Value of Peace Corps Service:**

**It's been life changing. You help others, but you also help yourself. In fact, the benefits of service are myriad. Peace Corps is something I'd do again if given the opportunity!**



**Speak Tambuka**

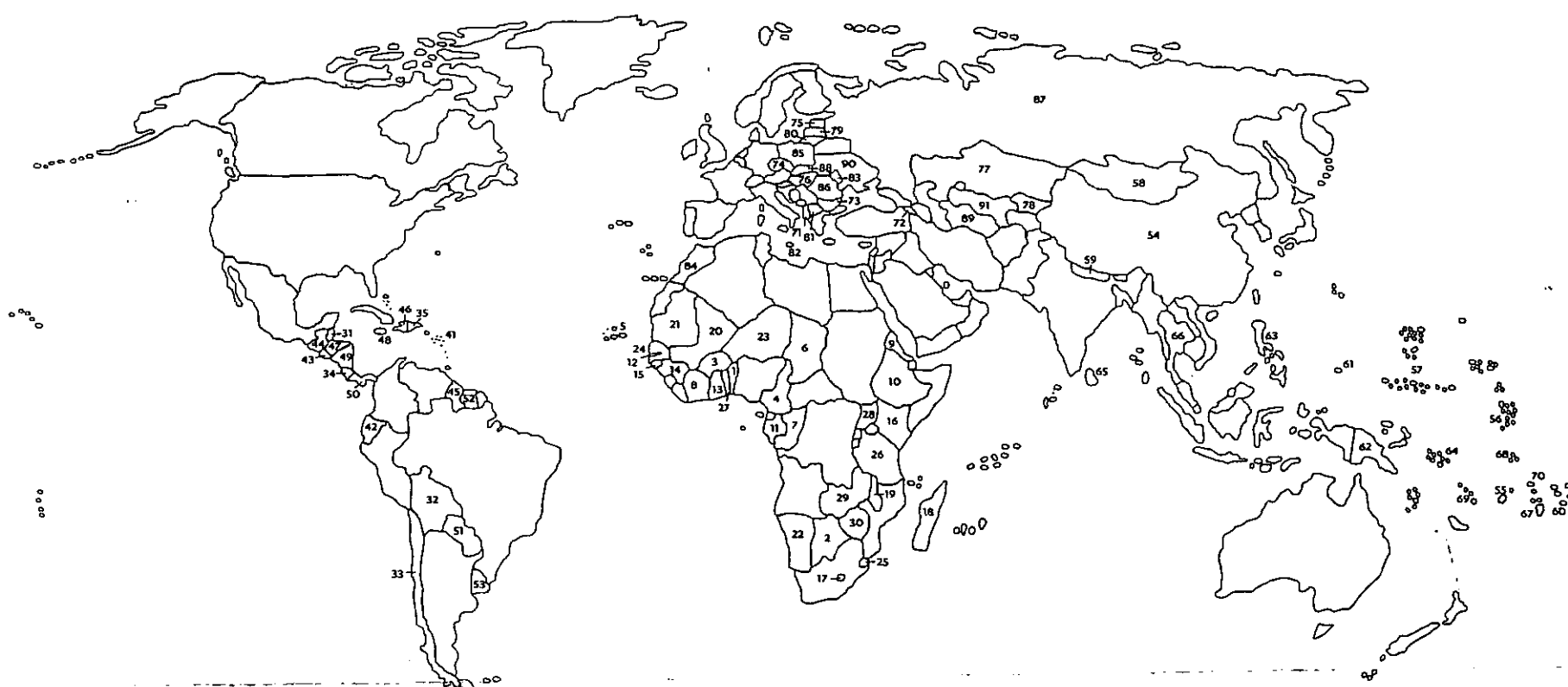
or another of the more than 200 languages and dialects our Volunteers learn, including

- Sango • Minianka • Quechua • Mopan • Thai
- Slovak • Arabic • Luganda • Bislama • Trio
- Amharic • Swahili • Tongan • Creole • Latvian
- Ndebele • Setawalese • Loocnon • Russian
- Malagasy • Setswana • Ilokano • Lithuanian
- Sesotho • Spanish • Twi • Nepali • Oshindonga
- French • Kiswahili • Samoan • Mandarin

Peace Corps provides what many international experts consider the best language training in the world. Peace Corps language training emphasizes conversational skills, taking you out of the traditional classroom and placing you in cultural settings where you'll put your new-found abilities to use. The language you learn as a Peace Corps Volunteer will help you communicate with friends and co-workers in your adopted community and open you up to a host of new experiences.

# Where in the World is Peace Corps?

*Volunteers are making a difference all over the globe.*



## *Africa*

- Benin-1
- Botswana-2
- Burkina Faso-3
- Cameroon-4
- Cape Verde-5
- Chad-6
- Congo-7
- Côte d'Ivoire -8
- Eritrea-9
- Ethiopia-10
- Gabon-11
- The Gambia-12
- Ghana-13
- Guinea-14
- Guinea Bissau-15
- Kenya-16
- Lesotho-17
- Madagascar-18
- Malawi-19
- Mali-20
- Mauritania-21
- Namibia-22
- Niger-23
- Senegal-24
- Swaziland-25
- Tanzania-26
- Togo-27
- Uganda-28
- Zambia-29
- Zimbabwe-30

## *The Americas*

- Belize-31
- Bolivia-32
- Chile-33
- Costa Rica-34
- Dominican Republic-35
  - Antigua/Barbuda
  - Dominica
  - Grenada & Carriacou
  - St. Kitts/Nevis
  - St. Lucia
  - St. Vincent & Grenadines
- Ecuador-42
- El Salvador-43
- Guatemala-44
- Guyana-45
- Haiti-46
- Honduras-47
- Jamaica-48
- Nicaragua-49
- Panama-50
- Paraguay-51
- Suriname-52
- Uruguay-53

## *Asia & the Pacific*

- China-54
- Fiji-55
- Kiribati-56
- Micronesia-57
- Mongolia-58
- Nepal-59
- Niue-60
- Palau-61
- Papua New Guinea-62
- Philippines-63
- Solomon Islands-64
- Sri Lanka-65
- Thailand-66
- Tonga-67
- Tuvalu-68
- Vanuatu-69
- Western Samoa-70

## *Europe, Central Asia & the Mediterranean*

- Albania-71
- Armenia-72
- Bulgaria-73
- Czech Republic-74
- Estonia-75
- Hungary-76
- Kazakhstan-77
- Kyrgyz Republic-78
- Latvia-79
- Lithuania-80
- Macedonia, Former Yugoslav Republic of,-81
- Malta-82
- Moldova-83
- Morocco-84
- Poland-85
- Romania-86
- Russia-87
- Slovak Republic-88
- Turkmenistan-89
- Ukraine-90
- Uzbekistan-91

\* As of September 1996 Peace Corps Volunteers are serving in 91 countries worldwide.

# Can You Picture Yourself in the Peace Corps?



Peace Corps Volunteer David Baum has a blast with local school children in Khiva, Uzbekistan.

## Peace Corps has an urgent need for Volunteers with the following backgrounds:

**EDUCATORS**—Teachers are needed in many areas, particularly primary education, math, chemistry, physics, and vocational education (also, see English, below). Assignments require a degree and, in some cases, teaching experience or certification. Experienced Volunteer teachers train local teachers and conduct local and regional workshops.

**ENGLISH TEACHERS**—Volunteers with English degrees, experience or certification in teaching English, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, (TEFL) or a foreign language, teach in classrooms at the secondary and university levels. More experienced English or foreign language teachers conduct teacher training and prepare curricula and instructional materials.

**AGRICULTURALISTS**—Individuals with agriculture degrees, extensive farm or gardening experience, or agribusiness backgrounds in crop extension, plant protection, agricultural education, agricultural economics, animal husbandry, apiculture, cooperatives, and research.

**BUSINESS-PEOPLE**—Volunteers with business degrees or five years' managerial business experience are assigned to assist small businesses and cooperatives performing feasibility studies, accounting, training, and marketing.

**SCHOOL RESOURCE**—Volunteers with experience in elementary education, pre-school education and early childhood development work in primary schools with teachers and in teacher training centers.

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION (NGO) ADVISORS**—Volunteers with experience in non-profit management are assigned to social service, environmental, youth, and business NGOs to assist with resource and organizational development.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS AND NATURAL RESOURCES WORKERS**—Volunteers work in nursery development, agroforestry, reforestation, village woodlot development, and environmental education. Candidates need appropriate degrees or three years' relevant work experience in forestry, wildlife biology, resource management, or related areas.

**URBAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**—Volunteers who have experience in youth leadership training or directing youth organizations work in programs that focus on peer leadership development, counseling in the life skills, income-generating activities, substance abuse counseling, and general mentoring.

**SKILLED TRADES PROFESSIONALS AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATORS**—Experienced carpenters, masons, electricians, plumbers and welders teach and demonstrate these skills. A college degree is not required, but three to five years' experience is.

**HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**—Volunteers with degrees or certification in health fields help developing nations provide preventative health care to those most in need (such as women and

children) and promote the development of health services to meet the local community's basic health needs.

**ENGINEERS**—Volunteers work on water, sanitation, and irrigation systems, and perform math and science education. A relevant degree or three to five years' work experience is required.

**OTHER SKILLS**—In addition to these specific skills, Volunteers with other skills and years of experience may qualify for a variety of other assignments in Peace Corps.

**The Toughest Job  
You'll Ever Love!**  
**(800) 424-8580**

Press 1 at the prompt.

For local addresses and telephone numbers, look in the U.S. Government pages of your telephone book.

<http://www.peacecorps.gov>

