PEACE CORPS Times

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World Map Project Spans Five Continents

THE NETHERLANDS HAD REMBRANDT and Spain had Picasso. The Peace Corps has Barbara Jo White.

Her work may not be hanging in a museum, but it is no less visible. Whether it's splashed on walls surrounding a playground in Ghana, exposing itself to nature's elements, or displayed on the front wall of a schoolhouse in Thailand, The World Map Project endures.

While she'll be the first to tell you she is not an artist, an idea that White launched 21 years ago while serving as a Volunteer in the Dominican Republic (1988–1990) finds other aspiring artists picking up a paint brush to leave their mark on the world today.

Nearly all of today's Peace Corps Volunteers have either participated in, or observed, a World Map Project—the moniker for White's idea that has found itself applied to nearly every surface imaginable.

While the fruits of her labor can be seen on at least five of the world's seven continents, White says, "I think it is just a small good idea, but once I did it, I thought it would be good to spread to other Peace Corps Volunteers and their communities."

Inter-America and Pacific Country Desk Officer Ella Ewart (RPCV/Peru, 2006–2008) says all Volunteers in Peru are asked to complete a World Map Project. "It's such a great way to get integrated into the community. So many Volunteers work with children and youth and this is a great way to literally draw the connection between you, as a foreigner, and the community for the young people," she says, adding, "It was really rewarding to me, as a Volunteer, to have the map—something tangible that I could point to and that I created hand in hand with the kids."

The seed that fueled the World Map Project was planted in White's home in Cary, North Carolina, 10 years before her Peace Corps service. An album cover from the debut album of the musical group Boston featured a spaceship that would serve as a launching pad for future endeavors. "It was my brother's favorite album and I thought, 'I wonder if I can paint this using a grid method,'" she remembers.

Leonardo Da Vinci used such a method to teach art. It divides the image you want to paint into smaller "bite sized" squares, and then you sketch each square onto the canvas. When you're done with the last square, your sketch is in perfect perspective and ready to paint.

World Map projects have been completed in countries around the world in which Volunteers serve — (clockwise from left) Panama, Fiji, project founder Barbara Jo White at a map workshop in 1989, Thailand, and Liberia.

"I always thought it wasn't exactly about geography, but is more about community."

— Barbara Jo White

Success using the method in the 1970s would lead White to her most notable effort in the 1980s.

In her first year as an environment Volunteer in the Dominican Republic, White was traveling to an environmental education conference when a fellow Volunteer mentioned that she was going to write to *National Geographic* to get maps for her students. "I said, 'The only way you're going to get a map to stay on the wall is to paint it there,'" White recalls.

In the words of the hit single from that popular Boston album, the energetic Volunteer had "more than a feeling" that the idea would become something bigger from that day forward. "I always felt like I was on a mission with this thing. In a way, it never surprised me that it got this big. Good things just kind of happened," she says.

Applying the grid method to make her first world map, White says she initially utilized the Mercator projection method that makes countries further from the equator appear larger. She pasted pages together to devise a crude map. "That got us through the test phase. Then *National Geographic* came out with its new projection world map and I traced that."

A year later she would find herself launching regional workshops with the help of a Peace Corps Partnership grant. "A Volunteer from a neighboring area would come to one and lead the next—kind of a domino effect," she says.

She also outlined how to trace, label, and grid a world map in the May/June 1989 issue of *Peace Corps Times*. "A sidebar told PCVs to write me for free gridded map pages, which I intend-

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ed for them to do, though I had no idea how I would fill orders. Letters poured in and it really launched the project worldwide" she says.

Such enthusiasm for the project continues today due to its simplicity and durability. As White explained in that same *Peace Corps Times* issue, "Because few rural schools have maps and many students leave school in their teens, some children never see a world map or have a concept of the world. The only way many schools can get and keep a map is to have it painted on a wall."

The idea has launched new versions of maps, varying in language and style. "A Volunteer in Madagascar made a map of her country, surrounded by all the different species of monkeys and plants exclusive to that country," White says.

Judee Blohm, publications specialist for overseas programming and training support, says the agency continues to get requests for the manual through its Knowledge Exchange Unit (KEU). "Despite the hundreds of copies that have been distributed over the years, KEU regularly receives requests for it and regularly reprints it. The simple method of enlarging taught in the book is useful beyond maps, and the resource is cross-referenced in several other publications, such as *Adapting Environmental Materials* and the *Classroom Management Idea Book*," says Blohm.

The project has also grown to include a wide range of murals, with HIV/AIDS being among many topics Volunteers approach with paint and brush in hand. "I always thought it wasn't exactly about geography, but is more about community. If we are a stronger community, we can be a stronger group of learners," White says, adding, "I really think you could have made a mural of anything. It's really about the development process—putting together a group of people to do something they didn't think they could do that will make their community a little better, using a few resources, and then being successful and moving on to another project."

Inter-America and Pacific Country Desk Officer Joshua O'Donnell (RPCV/Georgia and Bulgaria, 2001–2003/2003–2004) suggests the project could be done to facilitate teamwork with at-risk youth or those working toward conflict resolution. "I loved the project and have been looking to do it again in the United States," he says.

O'Donnell had heard about the project in his first country of service (Georgia) and conducted an after-school English club activity that included a world map mural when he served in Bulgaria. "We spoke English while working on the map, which was valuable for the students. They also learned about geography," he says.

While White wasn't focused on using maps for teaching purposes in the Dominican Republic, she notes that many of today's Volunteers develop lesson plans to go with their map projects. "I also hear from Volunteers who devise their own gridded maps for their individual countries," she says.

Emily Hestness, an education specialist with the Coverdell World Wise Schools Program at Peace Corps, says many Volunteers share such innovative ideas with students in the U.S.

A Volunteer in Burkina Faso began a World Map Project in his host country and then arranged for his correspondence match school to engage in the project simultaneously. "The older students at the Illinois elementary school he is corresponding with will work with their teachers to create the map. The younger students, including the correspondence match kindergartners, will assist the older students and do smaller-scale map activities in their classroom," says Hestness.

Students from schools in Burkina Faso and the U.S. will exchange photos and share updates about their progress. "Through this collaboration, the Peace Corps Volunteer, students, and teachers will do more than improve their geography knowledge; they will experience a unique connection across place and culture through shared learning," Hestness adds.

Many Volunteers use a World Map Project manual that White updated in 1995, before taking a 15-year hiatus to finish two master's degrees and a doctorate in business administration. She also began her teaching career at Western Carolina University, where she has served as an assistant professor of information systems for the past five years.

She spoke about the map project on the "Today Show" with Willard Scott as part of the Peace Corps' 30th anniversary in 1990 and her enthusiasm for the project has been renewed as the agency's 50th anniversary approaches.

While working on a World Map Project website, she started "tweeting" with Volunteers and discovered many were blogging about their maps as well. One PCV had also requested an update of the map. "That's when I realized that The World Map Project had a life of its own and is in good PCV hands," she says.

White bought the domain for the website TheWorldMapProject.com in June of 2009 and hopes to update a manual in cooperation with the Peace Corps in 2010.

She also remains hopeful that the project she launched in 1988 spurs more ideas in the coming years. "When I think about projects like it, there are a lot of good ideas out there. The difference is a little bit of promotion because sometimes, accidentally, we keep good things to ourselves," she says.

Map Out a Plan

If you are interested in creating a world map in your community, contact your Peace Corps librarian or go to http://multimedia.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/library/R0088_worldmapproject.pdf.

The project manual and other valuable teaching resources are also available through the Peace Corps Knowledge Exchange Unit (KEU) in the Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS) office in Washington, D.C. Any KEU resource can be requested through your country post.

Guyana Teen Overcomes Obstacles, Inspires Others

By Chase A. Chisholm | PCV Guyana

Forget about proper finger placement on the keyboard, 19-year-old Norris Cummings types with his toes. He can also write, play games, and do about anything else with his feet. Even eat.

Living with cerebral palsy, a physical disability affecting balance and impairing the use of his upper limbs, Cummings has overcome obstacles many will never know. But it is not his disability that stands out to most. It is his sense of humor and laughter.

Laughter is a good thing in life; it will carry one through the falls. "You gotta fall and get back up. Try again," says Cummings' classmate, Adonica McDonald.

They are among my students at Open Doors Centre for Persons with Disabilities, located on the northern coast of Guyana. The national vocational training institute helps them complete coursework for a certificate in information technology (IT).

Walking alongside Cummings, his classmates, and additional community partners helps me encourage others to pursue information and communication technology (ICT) training programs and attend discrimination recognition sessions.

Such initiatives also provide the opportunity to highlight abilities, not disabilities, to promote volunteerism, and to encourage past trainees to give back to their communities.

Cummings is thankful for his two-year tenure at the Open Doors Centre.

"Norris is determined ... he goes after, he tries," says Rodwell Anderson, IT course instructor. "When it comes to learning, he is adventurous."

Job internships through Open Doors Centre run up to 12 weeks and show trainees how to integrate into society and find employment. Cummings is finishing his internship at the National Commission on Disability (NCD). Karen Hall, program officer for the NCD Resource Centre, finds Cummings very willing. "He actually asks for work," she says, laughing. "I cannot imagine anything better!"

Moving Forward

Cummings aspires to be an IT specialist. The opportunity to perform basic troubleshooting, data entry, and design a brochure at NCD has helped him toward that goal. "[The internship] has been a great way for me to show off my skills; to show people I can do what they can do," he says.

Cummings, who was 11 before he first walked, has learned to adapt. He sits on the table to use a computer at home, umpires neighborhood cricket matches, and enjoys most things any teenager would.

Watching him learn to walk was rewarding for his mother. "He has a determined mind," boasts Yvonne Cummings. She admits there are difficulties her son faces due to his disability, including finding transportation. "Some of the buses pass ... they just don't care."

Norris Cummings, a student of PCV Chase Chisholm, uses a computer at the Open Doors Centre in Guyana.

Cummings and his mother acknowledge and are encouraged by strides made by the Guyana Ministry of Health and nonprofit organizations in Guyana, but say it has not reached the level it needs to be.

It takes steps to make a stride; years of determination to overcome. Doing so with strength of mind, Cummings now walks with a proud bounce in every stride. "Believe in yourself," he offers his peers. "Have the determination to push for whatever you want in life."

Norris Cummings still falls sometimes, but usually from laughing.

Chisholm is an education Volunteer from Forest City, Iowa. He is scheduled to complete his service in 2010.

Volunteer Life

From Lollapalooza to 'Treasured Islands'

By Joey Carmelo | PCV Samoa

Two years before my Peace Corps service, I was backstage with rappers of the Wu-Tang Clan. One year earlier, I was on the main stage at Lollapalooza watching Daft Punk perform 10 feet from me. Two months before my service began, I was at the "Rock the Rabbit" Playboy party with bunnies and rock stars. Now, I'm on the "Treasured Islands of the South Pacific," Samoa, where my former life of living like a rock star has transformed into living under the stars.

Before the Peace Corps, I lived in Los Angeles and worked in the music industry. I wasn't a musician or a performer of any kind, but I shared many of the perks by working behind the scenes, finding new acts, throwing parties, and living the life most young people dream about.

Don't believe me? Don't worry. I wouldn't even believe it myself. What's harder to believe is why anyone would leave such glitz and glamour for a volunteer position in a developing country. Working in music was fast paced and well paid with plenty of benefits; all of the cliché—sex, drugs, and rock n' roll—held true to some extent. Working as a Peace Corps Volunteer has been different: various speeds on a bumpy road, working with an allowance, and one better not even think about drugs or it's a one-way ticket home.

I have my reasons for leaving and, although I am a Peace Corps Volunteer, sometimes it's hard to look back and only read about all the cool new bands and happening parties I left behind. However, I know that everything I'm missing will still be there when I return, so I better make the best out of my service.

My days of loud concerts three or five times a week have been replaced with village church choir every Tuesday, Thursday, and sometimes Saturday nights. Art installations with live artists have turned into tra-

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Career Corner

Make Your Service Story Work for You

By Jodi Hammer
RPCV Career Center Coordinator

If you are nearing the end of service, you are undoubtedly venturing into the infamous post-Peace Corps readjustment phase that most returned Volunteers talk so much about. You're probably struggling to reconcile the disparity between the simple yet meaningful life you are leaving behind and the mind-boggling complexity and pressure of post-Peace Corps life in the United States.

You're contemplating the fact that you'll soon be working hard to create a new home while your readjustment money runs out quickly. This will most likely lead your thoughts toward yet another pressure—that of having to get a job... and soon! It's enough to make you consider staying in your dear little pueblo, but for most of us, that's just not an option. So we do our best to deal with what comes, as difficult as it may seem, and move forward. But frustrating scenes like the following often thwart that process.

Scenario: You're at some social event—or in the bank, in the elevator, or wherever else you might run into people who realize you just returned from Peace Corps. Here comes the infamous question: "Wow, so how was your Peace Corps experience?"

After responding to this question a few times, the cynic in you might see this inquiry as a misleading one, as it seems to indicate a real sense of interest beyond the 20 to 30 seconds that encompass the attention span of your listener. However, you might consider, instead, that this seeming lack of interest may also be a reflection of the listener's inability to fully comprehend the Peace Corps experience.

In other words, the key to reducing at least part of readjustment frustration may come down to the age-old art of storytelling—how to tell your Peace Corps stories in a way that is engaging and facilitates an understanding by the non-RPCV. If done appropriately, storytelling will not only reduce your frustration by allowing you to avoid the glazed-over look from your audience, it can also ease your transition, and perhaps even land you an awesome job. Following are a few tips related to effective storytelling.

Tip No. 1: Respond to questions about your service in brief, targeted sound bites: two to four short, compelling sentences, maybe fewer. Perhaps start off by acknowledging how difficult it is to reply concisely to that question: "Wow, it's hard to put it into words how life-changing it was. I spent two years working in a rural village in Ecuador with 10 mothers' groups on child survival and health and HIV/AIDS prevention. It was an amazing opportunity to provide leadership." Pause and take a breath. This allows the listener to digest what you've said, and, if interested in hearing more, to follow up with another question. You would respond again with a few targeted sentences, followed by another pause. This will allow your listener to take in the information in a digestible form and/or change the subject, with no hard feelings and no sense of rejection. The key is in putting the information out there in small sound bites.

Tip No. 2: Such storytelling advice also rings true for job interviews and networking events. Remember to keep your sound bites short and targeted to the person asking the question or the organization he or she represents. For example, if you are networking with someone from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, you might focus more on the health aspects of your service and talk about some of your secondary projects in HIV/AIDS, even if you weren't a health Volunteer. Remember, your sound bites are a lure that can, if effectively utilized, draw people in to your story and experiences.

Apply this same principle to the job interview. When someone asks about an aspect of your service, respond with a concise answer that connects the skills you learned in Peace Corps with the skills necessary for the job for which you're interviewing. As you highlight your background, remember to work in stories from outside your Peace Corps service to show your diversity and range of experiences (even if some were in college). You'll come to see that the art of interviewing really comes down to the art of storytelling (and I don't mean story weaving—make sure what you say is the truth.)

Tip No. 3: Another great way to practice telling your story while fulfilling the third goal of Peace Corps is by taking part in Peace Corps Week (March 1–7, 2010), or by organizing a third goal activity at any time during the year. Thousands of RPCVs join forces with local schools, places of employment, or other institutions to share stories and cross-cultural experiences from their Peace Corps service.

Tip No. 4: Finally, when you return to the U.S., consider connecting with your local Peace Corps recruitment office to tell your story as part of a recruitment event—there are nine regional recruiting offices throughout the U.S., so there are bound to be periodic recruiting events scheduled for nearly every region of the country.

You might volunteer to be an RPCV guest speaker at a general information meeting, a recruitment event where folks interested in learning more about the Peace Corps gather together and talk to a recruiter and/or returned Volunteer. To contact your local Peace Corps recruiting office, call 800.424.8580 and press option "1."

We wish you success in the remaining months of your service, encourage you to go forth and conquer with these storytelling tips, and hope you will contact us to share your successes (rvs@peacecorps.gov). Happy storytelling!

RPCV Career Conferences in D.C.

If you would like more practice telling your story as a tool for finding employment, consider attending a returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) career conference, hosted by Peace Corps' Returned Volunteer Services. Our 2010 conferences will take place February 9–12, May 11–14, and October 12–15 at the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. These four-day events include interactive sessions on networking, interviewing, resume writing, and opportunities to actually put into practice what you've learned while connecting with employers participating in the career fair. For more information, visit peacecorps.gov/rpcv.

Taking Stock with Mr. Sock

Please Repeat After Me ...

Peace Corps' own version of "Who's on first" plays out daily across the globe, with the Volunteer sometimes stepping into the role of Lou Costello and students serving as a collective Bud Abbott.

The challenges of learning a new language can be felt by both student and teacher alike.

One of the methods used in teaching spoken English is to depend on repetition of basic sentences, with key words for substitution provided by the teacher. In this way, we hope, the students master English grammar. To start, we may ask them to substitute words in only one position in the sentence. For instance: This is a chair. Door. This is a door. Table. This is a table.

Unfortunately, even this method doesn't always go as planned. Consider the following dialogue that was pulled from a 1962 issue of *Peace Corps Times*:

Teacher: *This is a chair.*
Students: (Echo) *This is a chair.*
Teacher: *Mango*
Students: *This is a mango.*
Teacher: *Table*
Students: *This is a table.*
Teacher: *That*
Students: *This is a that.*
Teacher: *No, think please.*
Student A: *This is a think please.*
Teacher: *No, a thousand times no.*
(Pause)
Very Bright Student: *That is a table.*
Teacher: *Ah! Correct ... Eye.*
Student B: *I is a table.*
Student C: *I am a table.*

Sound familiar? I'm sure many of our education Volunteers have experienced similar circumstances. Instead of becoming frustrated, remind yourself of your own struggles with learning the language of your host country. Afterall, a few of our language facilitators who taught you their local language often had to play the role of Costello as well.

Research has shown that the best time to learn a foreign language is between birth and age 7. While the Peace Corps age limit precludes any of you from being in that category, researchers are improving the technology that adults tend to use for language learning, to make it more social and possibly tap brain circuitry that infants would use.

Noting that baby brains need personal interaction to soak in a new language, scientists in Japan have helped develop a computer language program that pictures people speaking in "motherese," the slow exaggeration of sounds that parents use with babies.

While you don't have the benefit of such a program, the second-best thing is right next door. Just ask that neighbor to speak a little slower and observe his or her mouth movements.

Pucker up!

In addition to language, cultural differences can also be a source of embarrassment or misunderstanding. Mr. Sock found the following blog from Morocco Volunteer Nathaniel Krause (2009–2011) amusing. It was written during the Islamic month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.

My family does not seem to sleep. They eat l-ftar *[the evening meal to break the fast], have dinner around 11–12 p.m. (by which point I've gone to bed), and have another meal before sunrise, between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m., which is signified by people banging drums in the street, often directly outside of my window. The first time that happened I thought I was dying. Anyway, they are already up at 7:30 when I get up to prepare for the day's [language] sessions.*

So the other night after l-ftar *we're lounging around, being full, when I casually pull my Chapstick out of my pocket and apply a bit to my lips. As I'm putting it away I look up to see the entire family gawking at me, half amused and half aghast. The moment passes awkwardly and I eventually head to my room for the night. The next day, after the morning language session, I do the same thing and my LCF gives me a look:*

"In America, do you do this a lot?"

"Yeah, it's pretty common."

"Do not do this in front of your family. It will make it look like you are wanting to be a woman."

I'm blending right in.

On a similar note, a returned Volunteer from Kenya spoke at a gathering to celebrate National Peace Corps Week last year.

Annette Hynes of Massachusetts served four years in Kenya. In the village where she worked it was custom for the elders to give their blessing to those who are younger by spitting on them. Hynes said she was disappointed after being there 2½ years and not being spit upon even once. When an elderly woman finally gave her the honor, she said, "I was so happy."

Mr. Sock would venture to guess that she wouldn't be as enthused if that had happened in Boston!

'Auld Lang Syne'

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
and never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
and auld lang syne?

While the famous Scottish poem that was set to a traditional folk song questions whether old times should be forgotten, the song is generally interpreted as a call to remember long standing friendships.

It is in that spirit that we ask, as you say goodbye to 2009, that you take the time to reflect upon all you have accomplished and the many friends you've made overseas. Here's looking to an even more successful 2010!

Volunteers Return to Madagascar

Peace Corps Volunteers returned to Madagascar on November 16. The first group of returning Volunteers includes 11 individuals who previously served in the country and four Peace Corps Response Volunteers. Seventy-five additional Volunteers are expected to follow them within the next 10 months.

The program was temporarily suspended last March due to security concerns after anti-government protests and looting that had taken place since last January.

RPCV, Recruiter a 'Jeopardy' Champion

"I'll take Peace Corps countries for $5,000, Alex!"

OK, that wasn't a "Jeopardy" category during returned Peace Corps Volunteer Jennifer McFann's run on the primetime quiz show, but it may as well have been. Showing her command of several categories, McFann won $19,410 as a contestant on the show that aired October 21.

"Jeopardy" host Alex Trebek with New York Regional Recruitor Jennifer McFann (RPCV/Georgia) during a September filming of the show.

McFann has worked for Peace Corps in the New York regional office since October 2008 and is responsible

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ditional tattooists inking other Volunteers with a hammer and nail. Finally, my mod fashion has become colorful waist wraps that say, "Sekia Samoa" (all good Samoa). My life is entirely different, but despite leaving everything behind, sound does travel.

Volunteer Joey Carmelo (2008–2010) introduced a new version of street art to his community in Somoa, helping his students turn ordinary trash bins into art.

For my Peace Corps service, I wanted to bring a set of skills to Samoa that inspire and influence. The approach can be unconventional, but it's part of my music culture.

For example, my program takes my love for street art and brings it to a community level to address the growing issue of waste. Samoans are amazing artists so my program involves giving waste bins to student artists and turning an ordinary bin into art. It's my version of Samoan street art that will increase waste awareness. Its simplicity and difference will inspire and influence.

With everything I learned in music and in Samoa, one similar goal remains—sustainability. Most people who work in music are self-employed so we have to find a sustainable source of income. For those truly successful, that includes creating programs that can run on their own so our efforts can be put toward another cause. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, my goal remains the same, as I can and want to address more issues. As I complete my first year of service, I have another year to find out if I will succeed or fail. Will everything I do be a waste or will it continue to inspire and influence?

Joey Carmelo is a small business Volunteer from San Francisco. He is scheduled to complete his service in August 2010.

That Was Then ... This is Now

Program Enjoys a Rich History

The Peace Corps enjoys a rich history in Sierra Leone, having initially arrived in 1962—just over a year after it had declared independence. Volunteers served the country in consecutive years until 1994, when the program was closed. Until that departure, 3,479 Volunteers had served in agriculture, education, and health.

Then ... Early Volunteers Leave Imprint

From The Peace Corps Times *in 1965, written by then-Country Director, Donovan McClure*

Teaching, as elsewhere in Africa, has high priority, and while we've functioned so far only in the secondary schools and training colleges, next fall two dozen or so Volunteers will teach in the primary schools.

A medical team of two Volunteer doctors and eight nurses transformed a small up-country hospital into a medical facility that attracted patients from all over Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, doctors could not be recruited for a new team and the program was terminated last July.

The first Peace Corps-CARE rural development Volunteers arrived here in October, 1962, and that program has come almost full circle–commencing as "pure" community development, evolving into self-help construction (bridges, market roads, jetties) and now, by degrees, returning to "semi-pure" community development at the village level. The first stage–"pure" community development–was frustrating to both the Volunteers and Sierra Leoneans. The Latin America-style community development simply didn't work here. The villages were too small, the population too scattered, and the social structure too limited.

In a village of 60 people, a Volunteer trying to build a bridge or school with voluntary labor soon wears out his welcome, and the self-help dries up before the project is completed. After much experimenting, the Volunteers themselves arrived at a successful formula: each Volunteer undertook projects in several villages simultaneously, spending a morning here, an afternoon there, the next day somewhere else, his visits timed to when his presence was required for either technical assistance or organizational help.

Since this sort of schedule requires high mobility, the Sierra Leone government donated seven Land-Rovers to the Volunteers and provides fuel and maintenance for the vehicles. By the time the original rural development group completed their tours last spring, this system had been highly structured and functioned smoothly. Too smoothly, in fact, as their Group V replacements felt a lack of challenge. Also, their very mobility deprived them of close, meaningful relationships in the villages. To offset this, a few Volunteers began probing into smaller, more personal projects in addition to the "high impact" ones.

They are teaching villagers to make toys and furniture, promoting improved methods of agriculture and delving into public health problems.

The impact made by rural development Volunteers can be seen and touched. Teachers sometimes fail to see results. If they could read the correspondence that comes across my desk from headmasters and ministry officials, they would not be troubled.

Headmasters like the fact Peace Corps teachers are friendly and work hard and teach classes when they're supposed to; that they organize the libraries, coach the athletic teams, direct the choirs, tutor the dull students, monitor the evening study halls, and spend their weekends and vacations painting, planting, plastering, and cementing. But what they like most of all, more than the go-go spirit and cheerful faces, even more than the projectors and tape recorders and wall maps and science kits that are the trappings of each Volunteer teacher, what they like more than that is the number, the ever increasing number, of students taught by Peace Corps Volunteers who pass the third- and fifth-form exams. This is where the payoff is, to students and headmasters alike. This is the battle they gear for, and the Volunteers have done, and are doing, a good job preparing them for it.

Now ... Peace Corps Returns to Sierra Leone

On November 2, United States and Sierra Leone government officials signed an agreement to re-establish a Peace Corps program in the African country after a 16-year absence.

The Peace Corps first entered the country in 1962, but civil war interrupted the program. Since 1962, the West African country has hosted over 3,400 Peace Corps Volunteers.

"We are delighted that the government of Sierra Leone has invited Peace Corps Volunteers to return and work shoulder to shoulder with the people of Sierra Leone," said Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams. "The partnership between Peace Corps and Sierra Leone was established in the era of President Kennedy and it is an honor and a privilege for us to have the opportunity to work with the communities of Sierra Leone once again."

The first group of approximately 40 Volunteers is scheduled to arrive in the country in June, with additional Peace Corps Response Volunteers also arriving in 2010. Volunteers will focus on secondary education in public schools and work together with communities on grassroots initiatives and community development.

A Peace Corps Volunteer teaches students in Sierra Leone in 1980. Peace Corps is returning to the country after a 16-year absence.

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for recruiting in western Pennsylvania. She served as an English teacher in Georgia during her Volunteer service (2006–2008).

A longtime fan of "Jeopardy," McFann was also a member of the College Bowl at New York University where she honed her skills in speech and debate. She auditioned online for Jeopardy in January 2009 and was invited to an in-person interview five months later. She flew to Los Angeles for filming on September 23, easily beating her closest competitor before finishing as runner-up during an attempt to defend her title.

World Wise Schools Celebrates 20th Year

In honor of Peace Corps' Coverdell World Wise Schools' (WWS) 20th anniversary of helping U.S. schoolchildren better understand and appreciate diverse cultures and world issues, WWS hosted a conference, "Educating For a Flattened World," October 15–16 at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Over 100 U.S.-based educators, leaders, and representatives from different organizations attended the conference, which focused on incorporating global issues into classrooms.

To learn more, and to access resources offered through World Wise Schools, visit the Peace Corps website at peacecorps.gov/wws.

Clinton Recognizes Morocco Volunteer

During a recent international conference in Morocco, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recognized Muriel Johnston, the oldest serving Peace Corps Volunteer.

Johnston, 85, serves as a health Volunteer in southern Morocco. Clinton said she had learned about Johnston at a meet-and-greet session of U.S. Embassy officials and other Americans when she arrived in Morocco.

"It's a great reminder that in America in the 21st century, there are not only second acts, there's third acts and fourth acts and fifth acts–if you're ready to embrace new challenges," Clinton said.

Indonesia Newest Peace Corps Program

U.S. and Republic of Indonesia government officials signed an agreement on December 11 to create a Peace Corps program in Indonesia. Incoming Country Director Ken Puvak represented Peace Corps at the signing.

"On behalf of the entire Peace Corps, it is an honor to be invited by the Republic of Indonesia to cooperate on Peace Corps service opportunities in Indonesian communities," said Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams. "I share President Obama's commitment to increase education and public service opportunities around the world. I look forward to working with our Indonesian partners with the Ministry of National Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs on education and teacher training initiatives."

Applicant Numbers Grow

Peace Corps recruited 15,386 applicants in fiscal year 2009. This represents the largest amount of applications since the agency began electronically recording applications in 1998 and is an 18 percent increase from fiscal year 2008.

NOTES *from the* FIELD

A Brief Look at Posts and Projects

COSTA RICA
A Clean Show of Hands

Community economic development Volunteer Brianna del Castillo (2009–2011) and youth development Volunteer Jon Skaggs (2009–2011) left their handprints in Costa Rica during Global Handwashing Day on October 15.

The Volunteers showed primary school students a video about hygiene, taught them a song, and conducted various activities intended to encourage proper handwashing. The activities were so popular that they were expanded from a kindergarten class to first-grade students throughout the school.

Volunteer Jon Skaggs (2009–2011) and students at a school in Costa Rica provide a show of hands after exercising clean handwashing practices.

ETHIOPIA
Garden Inspires Inmates

Health Volunteer Jessica Ducey's (2007–2009) vegetable farm isn't just feeding inmates, it's educating them about nutrition, training them in agriculture, and providing a source of income.

In addition to adults, a prison facility in central Ethiopia houses 17 vulnerable children whose parents or caregivers are incarcerated and unable to provide adequate nutritional support. A one-acre garden on the prison grounds has been funded by Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST) with the help of Ducey to bridge that gap. HIV/AIDS prevention education has also been conducted.

Aspiring gardeners till the soil in central Ethiopia. Volunteer Jessica Ducey (2007–2009) helped secure funding for a one-acre garden on the prison grounds.

GUATEMALA
PCV's Work Spurs Action Plan

A mountaintop village with limited transportation had witnessed several deaths related to child birth, encouraging health Volunteer Anne Bellard (2008–2010) to take action.

Bellard worked with the health center staff, with support from local midwives, to form a club for pregnant women. Club leaders teach others to adopt an emergency action plan based upon storing money, knowing where a phone is, and finding someone in the community with a vehicle.

"The women leave knowing that good mothering starts the moment you get pregnant, that their child's health is in their hands, and most importantly that they will be wonderful mothers," Bellard says. She also promotes healthy practices and has formed a children's health prevention class.

MOROCCO
Service Held for Volunteer

A memorial service was held on November 21 in Rabat for Peace Corps Volunteer So-Youn Kim, who died unexpectedly on November 16 after becoming ill. So-Youn, 23, recently entered her second year as a youth development Volunteer in Tamegroute, a small village in southeast Morocco. A native of San Francisco, she graduated from Stanford University in 2007 and began her service in September of 2008.

Volunteers from all project sectors, staff, U.S. Embassy personnel, and U.S. Ambassador Samuel Kaplan attended the service, where words of So-Youn's impact were shared.

Country director David Lillie stated, "We can all take comfort that we had the opportunity to know So-Youn and that we will always carry her memory with us. I will leave you with some words she sent me in a letter two months ago, which I think summarizes her beauty very well: 'I believe in the power of the day to day, the simple yet otherwise impossible conversations, the truths that I speak and live that affect the people around me as I learn from the truths around me, in turn.'"

PHILIPPINES
Clinton Swears in Volunteers

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton swore in 63 new Philippines Volunteers at the U.S. Embassy in Manila on November 13. Secretary Clinton addressed the new Volunteers and was joined by U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney and Country Director Sonia Derenoncourt.

The Volunteers will work on projects in 20 Philippine provinces and join 130 Peace Corps Volunteers currently serving in the Philippines.

Volunteer Suzanne Hicks of Tampa, Florida, added, "When Secretary Clinton spoke to us, it struck me that the tradition of service crosses a broad spectrum. It does not matter if you are the leader of a great nation, a famous person or a Volunteer–the call to service is for all of us to answer."

Peace Corps/Philippines is the agency's third oldest program.

ROMANIA
Vice President Meets Staff, Volunteers

Vice President Joe Biden met with three Peace Corps/Romania Volunteers and three staff members on October 22 as part of his visit to Bucharest, Romania. U.S. Ambassador Mark Gitenstein invited Peace Corps to participate in a meet-and-greet activity at his home with other members of the U.S. Mission in Romania.

"Vice President Biden's speech was a stirring reminder of the sacrifices of our families and friends at home who endure their own hardships due to our serving as Peace Corps Volunteers," said community economic development Volunteer Chris Fontanesi of San Diego (2007–2010).

Country Director Ken Goodson added, "There are few moments as proud as those when I have the opportunity to present Peace Corps Volunteers to leaders of the countries we serve and those representatives of United States public office that make our agency possible. Vice President Biden's enthusiasm and interest in our Volunteers was an extraordinary moment of pride."

Visiting with Vice President Biden in Bucharest, from left, are Country Director Ken Goodson; Volunteer and Anchorage, Alaska, native Tory Shanklin; Vice President Biden; Volunteer and Birmingham, Mich., native Susan Safford; Program and Training Officer Betsy Vegso; Volunteer and San Diego, Ca., native Chris Fontanesi; and Administrative Officer Craig Reeves.

UKRAINE
PCVs Renew Leadership Camp

A youth leadership training program was renewed through the efforts of teaching English as a foreign language Volunteer Dr. Frank Kersting (2008–2010), his counterpart at the Kryvoy Rog Institute of Economics, and nine other Volunteers.

Camp LEAD is built upon its acronym, with a focus on leadership, English, activities to encourage civic engagement, and development of personal goals. It was funded by Peace Corps for many reasons, one being the creation of a Student Leadership Advisory Council (SLAC). As a result of SLAC meetings, the camp was marketed based on an advertising campaign that saw registrations grow to include over 100 participants.

Teaching English as a foreign language Volunteer Molly Smith (2008–2010) leads activities at a youth leadership training program in Ukraine. A former Florida State University media instructor, Smith also produced a daily newspaper that was popular with camp participants.

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