

Cristy Ecton, RPCV, Slovakia, 2000-2001

Before Peace Corps service, I had never been out of the United States. I went to realize that the news from around the world was real – it affected people’s lives. I didn’t need to know each place or group of people affected, but I needed to know firsthand at least something and someone outside of Texas.

Serving in Slovakia, I not only learned a language and how to travel, I learned that we are all connected. No matter how similar or different someone else seemed, he or she has as much worth on this big blue marble as I. Independently, we are limited and can only do so much. Collaboratively, we are limitless.

Through a public relations campaign that included surveys, advertizing, town hall meetings, fund raising and a kids’ art exhibit, members of the town of Puchov and I built a playground. This was not mandated by government funds with plans created by someone who lived in the capital, Bratislava. This was a playground created out of the need, vision and hard work of a community. True public relations is the antithesis of Communism.

Slovakia challenged many of my assumptions, and I challenged Puchov to assume more.