



rpcv/w

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
of Washington, DC

2004 – 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the President	3
2002-2003 Overview	4
Speakers Bureau	6
Social Activities.....	6
Programs	6
New Members	7
Peace Corps Partnership Program.....	8
Communications	9
Community Service	10
Membership.....	11
Special Projects & Events	11
Merchandise	12

Letter from the President

President

LISA MARTIN
Estonia 96-98

Dear RPCV/W Members,

Vice President

MONIQUE WARE
Ecuador 95-97

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, DC (RPCV/W) is proud to celebrate its 26th year serving RPCVs, as well as the greater Peace Corps community, in the Nation's Capitol.

Treasurer

JOHN McELWAINE
Lithuania 96-98

We have recently learned from our Founding President **Karen Keefer (Nigeria 66-68)** that RPCV/W was actually founded in 1979, not in 1981 as previously believed. So the organization has already passed its quarter century milestone and moves forward toward a vibrant future.

Secretary

MICHELLE GHISELLI
Morocco 93-96
Côte d'Ivoire 97

The organization is presently structured with an all-volunteer board comprised of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chair, New Members Liaison, Social Chair, Communications Chair / Newsletter Editor, Programs Chair, Speakers Bureau Chair, and Community Service Chair. In addition, NPCA Chair **Ken Hill (Turkey 65-67)**, who is the Washington DC regional representative to the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), of which RPCV/W is affiliated, is in attendance at board meetings.

Membership Chair

JEFF LOVELACE
Bolivia 95-97

Social Events Chair

JODI HAMMER
Ecuador 94-97

The RPCV/W board meets monthly throughout the year to plan the overall direction of the organization, and maintain its infrastructure which includes: an annual Board Planning Retreat, the award-winning bi-monthly newsletter *RPCV/W News*, monthly social events, monthly Treasurer reports, Program events such as book readings and lectures, special events including the Annual Cherry Blossom Picnic, Speaking engagements to support Peace Corps' Third Goal, Community Service Activities, New Member Outreach, Peace Corps Partnership Project Sponsorship, an Annual Holiday Party, merchandise sales, an Annual Meeting and Picnic, and management of an award-winning website and listserv. The Board also addresses collaborative opportunities with members, the NPCA, the Peace Corps and the local community.

Programs Chair

KERI LOWRY
Burkina Faso 00-02

Speakers Bureau Chair

JOE FORD
Zambia 94-96

Community Service

Co-Chairs
CHRIS COSTA
Romania 94-96

The organization remains financially secure and reliably engaged in its mission of service to members and the community.

JOEL RUBIN
Costa Rica 94-96

After three years serving on the board of RPCV/W as president, I am strongly encouraged by the involvement, dedication and enthusiasm of our Peace Corps community. Our board contributed a great deal of time and effort to build upon the legacy of RPCV/W. Certainly, many before us laid a solid foundation paving the way for our lead today. Countless members continue to contribute in many ways making RPCV/W, perhaps the largest and most active RPCV group in the world.

New Members Chair

MEISHA ROBINSON
Benin 00-02

NPCA Liaison

KEN HILL
Turkey 65-67

On behalf of the RPCV/W board, I am pleased to present our members this overview which is testament to the success and vibrancy of the organization.

Warmest Regards,

Lisa Martin (Estonia 96-98)

2004-2005 Overview

RPCV/W began the 2004-2005 year with its annual meeting and picnic last July at Tiber Island, which, as we have recently learned, was the venue for the very first meeting of RPCVs who formed the organization in 1979. Outgoing and incoming board members gathered along with 100+ members for updates on the past year and plans for the future. The event also included a gourmet BBQ and other festivities.

The new board met for the first time officially in August to begin preparations for a busy year. In September, the board held its second meeting at the annual board retreat. All board members gathered for a full weekend of strategic planning, brainstorming and camaraderie at Fox Haven, an ecological retreat in the countryside of Jefferson, Maryland. With no pro-bono outside facilitator available, President **Lisa Martin** facilitated with assistance from **Monique Ware** and **Jodi Hammer** who also led sessions. Past New Members Chair **Beth Hain** visited on Saturday afternoon to lead an intensive planning session on Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), which was a major area of focus for the board throughout the year. **Meisha Robinson** led the board with their on-going efforts on SOPs.

Among RPCV/W's many accomplishments is our support of Peace Corps Partnership projects. Every year RPCV/W hosts an event at an embassy to celebrate the donation that year. This year the RPCV/W Board decided to focus its Partnership efforts on Women's Empowerment Projects throughout Latin America and donated \$2,000 to three projects that support woman's development in Costa Rica, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic. Vice President **Monique Ware** was responsible for oversight of this year's donation as well as the Peace Corps Partnership Reception which was held at the **Embassy of Costa Rica**.

Co-Community Service Chairs **Chris Costa** and **Joel Rubin** (who rejoined the board in December 2004) combined forces to organize an array of community service events and outreach, including the Annual Acorn Gathering in Arlington Cemetery and community service event at Martha's Table. (For the past three years, Martha's Table has been the recipient of all proceeds raised through the Holiday Party Silent Auction). RPCV/W continued its efforts to serve the greater DC community through long-standing partnerships with organizations such as Washington Parks & People and the Capital Area Food Bank. For the second year in a row, RPCVs also provided language and technical support to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

In September, **Social Chair Jodi Hammer** kicked off what proved to be a very busy social calendar for RPCV/W. The first Happy Hour of the year is traditionally held at the Brickskeller where attendance was up towards 150 members and guests. Social activities organized or sponsored by RPCV/W provide opportunities for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, prospective volunteers, and individuals interested in Peace Corps to socialize, network, meet high level Peace Corps officials, and obtain information about RPCV/W activities. The happy hours were attended by volunteers from all Peace Corps countries as well as from all eras, including the 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's and recent returnees.

The Annual Holiday Party was the biggest event of the year. The party was hosted at the International Student House. Nearly 200 RPCVs, Peace Corps staff, and friends gathered for the festivities. **Peace Corps Deputy Director Jody Olsen** was the guest speaker and expressed the importance of association groups such as RPCV/W who support Peace Corps and help it achieve Peace Corps' Third Goal of bringing the world back home.

Programs Chair **Keri Lowry** oversaw Peace Corps Week efforts, including the Around-the-World-in-90 Minutes event. Several board members participated in this effort joining fellow

RPCVs as they represented their countries of service to aspiring Peace Corps Volunteers. Other program highlights included a book reading by **Sarah Erdman** and a special lecture on Andean Culture.

To help support the Third Goal of Peace Corps of “brining the world back home,” Speakers Bureau Chair **Joe Ford** remained actively engaged in matching RPCVs to schools and other community groups interested in learning more about the Peace Corps experience.

Programs and special events kept members engaged in a wide array of activities, including a series of cooking workshops, which continue to be a hit. Aspiring chefs were able to learn a variety of cooking styles from our beloved Chef Kyle. Immediately following the workshops, RPCV chefs and more members gathered together to enjoy the festive meals, which included a Caribbean and Mexican Feast.

On another culinary topic, New Members Liaison **Meisha Robinson** organized successful New-Members Brunches in the fall and the spring. At other events, Meisha also actively assisted in bringing new members into the fold. While Meisha’s primary responsibility was bringing in New Members, **Jeff Lovelace** as Membership Chair completed his second year maintaining the large and complex database which dates back many years. He organized special mailings to re-engage lapsed members, as well as to find and delete old addresses. Under Jeff’s purview, the database has become even more detailed and efficient.

Throughout the entire year, RPCV/W has been managed well in all aspects: financially, administratively as well as creatively. Secretary **Michelle Ghiselli** was responsible for writing board minutes and maintaining organizational records. Treasurer **John McElwaine** also played a key role in overseeing the organization’s finances. And, **President Lisa Martin** worked closely with fellow board members while overseeing the overall management of the organization.

This was indeed a very active year for RPCV/W. Members learned about these events through various sources, including our own bi-monthly newsletter *RPCV/W News*. Acting Newsletter Editor **Lisa Martin** and other board members combined efforts to maintain the high quality of the award-winning newsletter. **Lisa Martin** and **Michelle Ghiselli** were responsible for the overall communications of the board, including management of the listserv, positively impacting the general image of RPCV/W.

The 2003-2004 year ends with our Annual Meeting and Picnic. Traditionally, past board members are recognized for their efforts and new board members are announced. Outgoing board members continue to assist the incoming board with the transition as new board members adjust to their newly-acquired roles and responsibilities leading RPCV/W.

Speakers Bureau

Speakers Bureau Chair **Joe Ford** matched RPCV speakers with local public schools for Peace Corps Week, as well as throughout the year. One speaking engagement that had particularly extensive outreach to students took place on April 28, 2005. Member **Christopher Smith (Uzbekistan, 2002 - 2004)** participated in the Fairfax County Public School Career Day at Rachel Carson Middle School. He gave three 30 minute presentations about his Peace Corps experience to large audiences of students at the school.

For these events, Joe liaised with the Peace Corps, which provided videos and other materials for the speakers' presentations.

Social Activities

Many will recall the 2004-2005 RPCV/W board year as having a full social calendar. Social Chair **Jodi Hammer** worked to organize a plethora of diverse social activities throughout the year. In addition to the traditional monthly Happy Hours, which were held at different venues throughout the DC metro area, and which regularly drew an attendance of 50-100+ members, RPCV/W sponsored several family-friendly events including cooking workshops, movie outings and discussions, an ice skating outing on the National Mall and a Cherry Blossom Picnic at the Tidal Basin.

Happy Hours

RPCV/W members always turn out in large numbers for the monthly Happy Hours. Traditionally our largest, the September Happy Hour at the Brickskeller brought close to 150 members and guests out for the evening. Many Happy Hours were organized with an ethnic theme in mind, including the traditional Old Russian New Year event at the Russia House, as well as Latin-inspired events at Haydees and Banana Café. In March, a very popular eco-minded "Green" Happy Hour was held at the Reef, which serves organic dishes. Other venues included the 18th Street Lounge, Local 16, and Dr. Dremo's, which usually follows the JFK Wreath Laying Ceremony at Arlington Cemetery.

Annual Holiday Party

The biggest and most popular event of the year was the Annual Holiday party which was held again at the International Student House in Dupont Circle. Approximately 200 people attended this festive event, and all enjoyed the gourmet food and drink. RPCV/W also raised over \$1,000 at the Holiday Party from the successful silent auction, all made possible by the generous donations of goods and services from RPCVs and the DC community. And, with the Holiday Party Raffle, an additional \$300+ was raised for RPCV/W Third Goal efforts.

Cooking Workshops & Feasts

RPCV/W continued its ongoing Cooking Workshops & Feasts with **Chef Kyle Vermeulen**. In March Chef Kyle packed his kitchen for a Caribbean Cooking Workshop. Then in May, he shared his culinary techniques at the Cinco de Mayo Cooking Workshop. Both events held at Blue Plate Restaurant were followed by a large Feast where the RPCV chefs were joined by more RPCVs and friends to enjoy the culinary delights.

Programs

Peace Corps Week

RPCV/W, the Mid-Atlantic States Regional Recruiting Office, and NPCA were very active during Peace Corps Week 2005.

RPCV/W and NPCA contacted their members of Congress on National Peace Corps Day, March 1, to support funding appropriations for Peace Corps and oppose the elimination of the federal Perkins Loan Program.

On March 3, over 40 RPCVs participated and attended the *Around the World in 90 Minutes* event held at Shiver Hall in Peace Corps Headquarters. Participants shared their stories, pictures, videos, music, maps and treasures. RPCVs, Peace Corps families, invitees, Peace Corps nominees, and friends toured the seven Peace Corps regions that were on display. This marked the third year in a row that RPCV/W has co-sponsored this successful event with the Mid-Atlantic Recruiting Office.

Finally, NPCA, RPCV/W, and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Recruiting Office closed Peace Corps Week with *The Global Challenge: A Day in the Life of a Peace Corps Volunteer* at Peace Corps Headquarters. Approximately 100 Girl Scouts were sworn in as honorary Peace Corps Volunteers for the day. They participated in four 30-minute activity sessions where RPCVs directed them in hands-on learning activities.

Lecture on Andean Culture

RPCV/W and **Amigos de Bolivia y Peru** co-hosted a special lecture featuring **Anthropologist Catherine Allen** who presented *Pachamama: Ritual and Symbolism in the Andean Home*, which took place at George Washington University. Dr. Allen spoke about the important cultural ideas encoded in architectural structures and how the traditional Andean adobe house often serves as an integrating template for cultural ideas about cosmos, kinship, body, gender and property. Dr. Allen closed her lecture by explaining how changes in house plans and construction are important aspects of the rapid cultural transformation occurring in highland villages and how they are integrally related to other changes in definitions of gender and property.

Dr. Allen also commended RPCV/W for its choice of supporting Women's Empowerment throughout Latin America and highlighted the fact that supporting a woman's health needs is an essential part of supporting her empowerment and the vitality of the family she cares for.

Book Readings

Sarah Erdman (Côte D'Ivoire 98-00), author of *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha* and winner of RPCV/W's Top Peace Corps reads, held a special book reading in January at Shriver Hall, Peace Corps Headquarters. Sarah spoke about her Peace Corps experiences, read excerpts from her book *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha*, and addressed questions about the process of writing and publishing a novel.

International Education Week

The U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Education, Peace Corps, NPCA, RPCV/W and numerous other organizations sponsored and attended International Education Week (IEW) events, which were held throughout the world November 15-19, 2004. IEW was an opportunity for RPCVs and non-RPCVs to celebrate the benefits of international exchange and promote Peace Corps' Third Goal of "bringing the world back home." Peace Corps Volunteers and RPCVs in over 85 countries hosted and participated in IEW events.

New Members

New Members Chair **Meisha Robinson** organized two successful New Member Branches – one in the fall and another in the spring. RPCV/W hosted two new member brunches in 2004-

2005. In October, 40 new and potential members enjoyed Latin American and Caribbean cuisine at South Beach Restaurant in Bethesda, Maryland. During the meal, attendees listened to a speaker discuss the “nuts and bolts of networking.” The spring brunch brought 60 new and aspiring members to the National Gallery of Art for a Jazz brunch, with a French inspired buffet.

Peace Corps Partnership Program

¡Viva La Mujer! Supporting Women's Empowerment throughout Latin America

Every year RPCV/W selects one or more Peace Corps Partnership projects to fund. Generally these are located in the same country or region where Peace Corps Volunteers serve. There are no deductions for administrative costs, therefore 100% of all participant contributions fully support partnership projects in communities where Peace Corps volunteers serve.

This year the RPCV/W Board decided to focus its Partnership efforts on Women's Empowerment Projects throughout Latin America and donated \$2,000 to three projects that support women's empowerment efforts in Costa Rica, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic.

My Life My Rights - Costa Rica Young Women's Empowerment Conference

In the last four years Peace Corps Volunteers have been working in partnership with PANI (Costa Rica Child Services), to conduct *VIDA Valuing Individual and Developing Self Esteem Workshops* for at-risk young women. Partnership assistance was requested to cover the cost of lodging and meals for all participants. PANI is covering transportation costs, lodging and meals for the presenters. RPCV/W has donated \$1000 to this project, which has helped to meet its overall need.

Fogon Stoves for Communities in Paraguay and the Dominican Republic

By providing safer, clean-burning stoves in places like Paraguay and the Dominican Republic, we are directly empowering the women who are the primary cooks and caregivers of the family. By directly impacting a woman's physical health for the better, we are supporting the entire family she cares for everyday. These communities have already raised some of the funds, and have committed to cover all of the labor to install the stoves once materials have been purchased. RPCV/W has contributed \$500 to each of these communities for the purchase of raw materials to build these much safer stoves for the home. With these stoves women will be able to work and live in a healthier environment. It is awesome to think of the impact these donations are having by improving every breath these women take from this day forward.

The support for Women's Empowerment throughout Latin America raised \$2,000 at this year's Peace Corps Partnership Reception, which took place Wednesday, June 1st at the Embassy of Costa Rica. Over 80 guests shared an evening filled with live Latin tunes from **Patrick de Santos** and **Richard Miller**, gourmet delights and festive spirits. Revelers dressed in swanky duds stayed rather late into the evening enjoying the soft bossa nova and lively salsa music outdoors under a canopy filled with little lights set in the lovely embassy garden.

Peace Corps Regional Director of Inter-America Pacific, **Allene Zanger (Panama 93-95)** spoke on *The Peace Corps' Contribution to Women's Empowerment Efforts throughout Latin America*. Deputy Chief of Mission **Ana Villalobos** graciously hosted the affair in the absence of **Ambassador F. Tomás Dueñas**. Ms. Villalobos gave a detailed and informative update on the *Advances and Challenges of Women's Empowerment Efforts in Costa Rica*.

Communications

At the NPCA's 25th year anniversary conference in Chicago in August 2004, RPCV/W was awarded the *2004 Website Structure Award for Excellence in Website Design* and the *2004 Newsletter Award*, both in the Geographic / Nationwide categories. It should be noted that past Communications Chair **Steve McNutt** was responsible for the new design of both the website and newsletter.

With the resignation of Communications Chair **Itzel Fairlie**, President **Lisa Martin** took over duties as Newsletter Editor and handled other communications needs. A call for an RPCV with design skills was made repeatedly throughout the year via the newsletter and listserv as well as announced at events; however no one with the required skills ever emerged. Lisa managed the collection and writing and editing of articles and general layout of the newsletter. However, with no formal training in design, Lisa required the professional assistance of a designer to assist with development of the publications.

RPCV/W produces six issues of *RPCV/W News* each year: a spring issue, a fall issue, a special holiday issue, a winter issue, a summer issue plus a mini / one-page end-of-summer issue to introduce the new board and kick-off a new year. Previously the issues were formally titled in a bi-monthly format (e.g. October/November); however the board decided to change to a seasonal and special issue format (e.g. Summer Issue, Holiday Issue)

Vice President **Monique Ware** and Secretary **Michelle Ghiselli** provided key editorial and proofreading assistance to the Acting Newsletter Editor Lisa Martin.

The newsletter is produced in an 8-page format using Adobe InDesign and it is printed on 65# ivory paper that is 30 percent recycled. As in the previous year, Leesburg Printing in Florida provides printing and mailing services at a low cost. Additionally, the newsletter is sent via first class mail to ensure timeliness and better promotion of RPCV/W events.

Newsletter files from years prior to 2003 are on the current computer's hard drive and probably cannot be recovered. (See 2004 Annual Report for explanation of the condition of the RPCV/W computer). Extra printed copies are available in the newsletter files.

The Secretary and President of RPCV/W were responsible for listserv management. Each month an average of 10 listserv announcements go out to approximately 1000 members of the listserv. The listserv announcements have a priority to advertise activities and events of RPCV/W. However, the organization does have a policy of supporting events and activities of the Peace Corps community, that is: the Peace Corps, the NPCA and other affiliate groups (where an affiliate group does not exist for a given Country of Service, accommodation is made where possible to groups of RPCVs representing a country with no official affiliate group.) When requests come from outside the defined Peace Corps community, a board member may champion a cause and ask for a board vote to promote an event or activity; however this is very rare due to the high volume of listserv announcements.

Throughout the majority of the year, RPCV/W was without a Webmaster to maintain the website. This was perhaps the greatest shorting-coming of the organization this past year. Engaging an active Webmaster and skilled Newsletter Editor remain the organization's biggest challenge.

Community Service Programs

Both with a long-history supporting RPCV/W Community Service, **Chris Costa** and **Joel Rubin** provided a diverse range of creative events and activities to engage the membership in worthwhile efforts helping to make our community better for everyone.

Language Links

In July 2004, RPCV/W helped Fairfax County find multi-lingual volunteers for a children's health screening event. RPCVs helped interpret between health professionals and immigrant families with limited English as their school-age children received free vaccinations and health exams in preparation for the new school year.

Growing Native Partnership

In October, RPCV/W Community Service partnered with the Potomac Conservancy, a regional non-profit organization that works toward preserving the health of the Potomac River Basin. As part of the Growing Native project, 25 volunteers joined forces with students from TC Williams High School to collect native tree seeds in Arlington National Cemetery. The seeds were delivered to nurseries where they are now growing into saplings to be planted throughout the watershed.

Food for the Hungry

In January, RPCV/W volunteers worked at the Capital Area Food Bank, the largest public, non-profit food and nutrition education resource in the Metro Area. Each year the Food Bank distributes millions of pounds of food to the community and educates thousands of local residents on hunger, poverty and nutrition issues. RPCV/W helped by sorting and packing individual bags of donated items, which went out to feeding programs throughout the DC area.

RPCV/W Serves at Martha's Table

In February, 30 RPCVs volunteered at Martha's Table, a non-profit organization dedicated to fulfilling the needs of low-income and homeless children, families, and individuals. Volunteers sorted food products and packed meals for the area needy. After the event, the group sampled *the famous fare at Ben's Chili Bowl, a DC landmark on U Street.*

Safer Greener Communities

Continuing a partnership with Washington Parks & People, RPCV/W volunteers joined forces with members of the Minority Peace Corps Association to help with WP&P efforts in revitalizing a dangerous, neglected park in Northeast D.C. Volunteers cleaned up trash, painted over graffiti, and installed posts to keep out vehicles. These efforts contributed to improving the overall welfare of the community by making Watts Branch Park a cleaner and safer place.

RPCV/W Hands On DC 2005 Event

Saturday, May 7th 25 RPCV/W members and friends came together for a one-day work-a-thon to improve conditions in the public schools and raise money for college scholarships. *Hands On DC* is an all-volunteer project that creates better schools and brighter futures for students in the District of Columbia. The RPCV/W team worked alongside a team from Accenture at Amidon Elementary School in SW, Washington, DC. Focusing on landscaping around the building and painting inside, team members enjoyed another RPCV/W community service event as part of the larger 2005 *Hands On DC* event. The Team Captain of this effort was Secretary **Michelle Ghiselli**.

Smithsonian Folklife Festival

For the second year in a row, RPCV/W members have responded to the call to assist with the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. This year about 20 RPCVs provided language and technical support to the Festival staff. With the country of Oman as a featured program, Arabic-speaking RPCVs were in particular demand.

Membership

One of the major adjustments that the Board voted on was the change of NPCA affiliation. The board voted to adjust from a Joint Dues group to an Optional Dues group. This provided the membership with the option to join NPCA. The decision was based on a variety of factors including: potential to increase membership through reduction of fees, informal feedback from members, desire to provide members with a choice.

Traditional database responsibilities included:

Update RPCV/W database with address changes from NPCA
Update RPCV/W database with address changes from returned newsletters
Update RPCV/W database with New Members from NPCA
Update RPCV/W with New Members from RPCV/W Events (HH, Holiday Party, Cooking Workshops, New Members Brunch, Community Service Activities, Summer Picnic, etc.)

Additional database activities:

The Membership Chair solicited non-RPCV/W members that participated in RPCV/W events for membership in the organization. At each of the RPCV/W events, individuals signed in and marked their membership status and if a non-member, their interest in joining RPCV/W. Approximately 50% of the participants were non-RPCV/W members, of which 77% expressed interest in joining RPCV/W.

Marketed to expired RPCV/W Members – member that has lapsed within past 6 months.
September mailing to 680 expired RPCV/W members (who expired in the past year)

Of which:

Returned due to bad addresses	39	6%
RPCV only renewals	13	2%
RPCV and NPCA renewals	54	8%
Submitted \$\$ to Partnership Project	\$245	5 people

Marketed Very Old Expired RPCV/W Members – membership that has lapsed between 2000 and 2004. Insert in Spring Newsletter to 2,545 expired members. Resulting in new members joining and removal of old addresses (408 or 16%).

Marketed Potential RPCV/W Members:

In the Summer 2005, the Membership Chair sent a mailing to 444 RPCVs in the Washington DC metro area that are members of NPCA, but have not elected RPCV/W as their local affiliate. Results of these efforts are yet to be determined.

Special Projects & Events

RPCV Archival Project

RPCV/W continues to support the RPCV Archival Project. Founded by **Bob Klein (Ghana)**, the Archival Project functions through RPCV groups affiliated with NPCA, including Geographic Area groups, Country-of-Service groups and special interest groups. The goal of 'Telling My Story' applies to everyone who has ever been a Peace Corps Volunteer – and our stories belong in the RPCV Archives. **Gloria Levin (Peru)** continues to serve as RPCV/W's Archival Coordinator interviewing RPCVs as well as assisting interested RPCVs to become interviewers.

American Red Cross Measles Initiative

In the spring of 2003, RPCV/W entered an agreement in support of the Measles Initiative – the American Red Cross' 5-year-long effort to immunize millions of children in Africa against the deadly disease. RPCV/W Liaison **Bryan Schaaf (Haiti)** organized several fundraising events and other outreach efforts throughout the year in support of the Measles Initiative.

An Evening with Jody Olsen

Peace Corps Deputy Director Jody Olsen (Tunisia) granted members the pleasure of her company at this special event for the third year in a row. Held in the privately-rented Adirondack Room of Buffalo Billiards, *An Evening with Jody Olsen* has become a favorite RPCV/W tradition. Over 60 members gathered to meet the Peace Corps' highest-ranking RPCV and hear an update on the Peace Corps, followed by a Q&A. As part of a benefit to members, RPCV/W rents out the billiard room so that members can also enjoy billiards throughout the evening.

Annual Cherry Blossom Picnic

For the third year in a row, RPCV/W held its highly successful Cherry Blossom Picnic at the Tidal Basin. Over 75 members and friends gathered during the Cherry Blossom Festival to share a picnic and a lovely view under a canopy of pink blossoms.

JFK Wreath-Laying

RPCV/W continued its annual tradition of laying a wreath in commemoration of the birthday of the founding President of the Peace Corps, **President John F. Kennedy**. Over 30 members and friends gathered to lay the wreath as well as place a rose in honor of the first 13 Peace Corps countries.

Race for the Cure

In June, webmaster **Phil Greiner (Kazakhstan)** organized an RPCV/W group to participate in the Annual Komen Race for the Cure. Over 20 members participated in this very worthwhile cause.

Annual Meeting & Picnic

The Annual Meeting and Picnic was held July 9th at the Capital Yacht Club. Members voted in a new board and enjoyed a tasty gourmet BBQ, fresh salads, sides and drinks prepared by **Chef Kyle Vermeulen**. For the 2005 Annual Picnic, **Silly Socks Puppet Theatre** presented a special puppet show pro-bono for children as their parents took part in the Annual Meeting. This addition to the program provided an added benefit to members with children.

Merchandise

This past year, RPCV/W explored various merchandising options to not only bring in additional revenue to the organization, but to also raise awareness about RPCV/W and the Peace Corps. The new logo (designed by **Steve McNutt** featuring a streamlined dove with the Washington Monument, Jefferson Memorial and Potomac River) made a prominent appearance on new merchandise including white coffee mugs, which were purchased for both sale and as gifts for special guests and speakers.

The new logo also appears on the front of the newly-designed t-shirt along with "The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington DC" followed by "Bringing the world back home since 1979" with the website below the text. The back of these violet shirts with dark chocolate ink feature an impressive spiral design of all the Peace Corps countries that have ever existed. In the center of this spiral is a past-tense version of the new Peace Corps slogan: How far did you go?

RPCV/W also continues to sell the popular Peace Corps Calendar produced by the Madison RPCV group.

All merchandise is made available at major events, including the Annual Meeting Picnic as well as the Holiday Party.

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