



**Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of
Washington, DC**



2002 – 2003 ANNUAL REPORT

Presented July 12, 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT.....	3
2002-2003 OVERVIEW.....	4
SPEAKERS BUREAU.....	7
COMMUNICATIONS & NEWSLETTER.....	7
PROGRAMS.....	8
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS.....	9
MEMBERSHIP.....	10
PEACE CORPS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM.....	8

Letter from the President

President
Lisa Martin
Estonia 96-98

Vice President
C.D. Glin
South Africa 97-99

Treasurer
Don Spencer
Kazakhstan 98-00

Secretary
Sarah McElroy
Cote d'Ivoire 98-00

Membership
Karen Van Roekel
Morocco 88-90
Senegal 90-91

Social Events
Tiffany Glass
C.A.R. 89-91
Russia Far East 95-97
Robert Greenan
Russia Far East 95-97

Programs
Ed Miltenberger
Ecuador 87-90
Bolivia 90-92

Newsletter Editor
Alan Smith
Tonga 99-01

Speaker's Bureau
Meredith Bellows
Guatemala 98-00

Community Service
Laura Bailey
Estonia 96-98

New Members
Jesus Puerto
Samoa 98-00

NPCA Liason
Ken Hill
Turkey 65-67

Dear RPCV/W Members,

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, DC (RPCV/W) is proud to celebrate its 22nd year serving RPCVs in the Nation's Capitol.

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

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, bi-monthly Newsletters, monthly Social Hours, monthly Treasurer reports, Programs and Special Events, Speaking engagements to support Peace Corps' Third Goal, Community Service Activities, New Member Outreach, Peace Corps Partnership Project Sponsorship, an Annual Holiday Party, RPCV Calendar Sales, a Family Picnic with local Peace Corps applicants, an Annual Meeting and Picnic, and management of a website and listserv. The Board also addresses collaborative opportunities with members, the NPCA, the Peace Corps and the local community.

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

After one year 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 among the largest and most active RPCV groups in the country.

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
President

2002-2003 Overview

RPCV/W began the 2002-2003 year with its annual meeting and picnic last July at Tibor Island. Outgoing and incoming board members gathered along with dozens of members for updates on the past year and plans for the future. Members of the board were greatly assisted by Dan Barutta who provided the space and Sue Boucher who coordinated the BBQ. In late August, the new board held its first meeting at the annual board retreat. All board members gathered for a full weekend of strategic planning, brainstorming and camaraderie in the historic Thomas Harrison House in St. Michael. Sessions were facilitated by Erin Marovelli.

In September, Social Chairs Tiffany Glass and Robert Greenan kicked off what proved to be a very busy social calendar for RPCV/W with our first Happy Hour at the Brickskellar with about 100 RPCVs in attendance. In November, a special social event featured Peace Corps Deputy Director Jody Olsen as the honored guest. About 50 attendees gathered in a private room at Buffalo Billiards for an engaging conversation with Peace Corps' highest-ranking RPCV. Other monthly socials highlighted the range of our community's diversity with events celebrating Gay Pride, African American History, Latin Heritage, and the Russian New Year.

Each monthly social gathering to follow proved to be a success, with the largest turn-out coming for RPCV/W's annual Holiday Party. Over 150 RPCVs gathered for the festivities at the International Student House in Dupont Circle. The entire board along with other volunteers played a part to ensure the event ran smoothly from the early planning stages to the end-of-party clean-up. President Lisa Martin garnered in-kind donations from area restaurants, cultural organizations, and local businesses for the holiday party raffle. Over \$850 was raised and donated to Martha's Table which is dedicated to helping homeless children, families and individuals in the DC area.

Volunteerism remained a key activity for RPCVs in the DC area. Community Service Chair Laura Bailey led three worthwhile projects that had a positive impact on the people and places of Washington DC. The autumn event took place at Arlington Cemetery where volunteers gathered to collect acorns to be replanted along Chesapeake tributaries. In the spring volunteers helped renovate an apartment building that now houses formerly homeless families. The summer community service project brought RPCVs to Southwest D.C. where they teamed up with Washington Parks & People in their efforts to make the city's green spaces safer and more livable for area residents.

Last summer Secretary Sarah McElroy led a group of avid soccer fans to a DC United Game, while this year Alexi Remnek plans to bring everyone back to RFK Stadium to cheer on the local team once more. Other events brought RPCVs outdoors for a Cherry Blossom Picnic in the spring. Later in June, about 25 members gathered on the lawn at Wolf Trap for an evening under the stars (and lightning) to hear Cape Verde morna diva Cesaria Evora who shared the stage with vocalist Lila Downs of Mexico.

One of RPCV/W's traditions is to honor the founding father of the Peace Corps on his birthday. On May 25th members gathered at the gravesite of John F. Kennedy for a wreath laying ceremony. Thirteen white roses were also placed on the gravesite symbolizing the first 13 Peace Corps countries.

Programs and special events kept members engaged in a wide array of activities, including a discussion with Hope Fellows from Kosovo. Programs Chair Ed Miltenberger also initiated a series of cooking workshops, which turned out to be a hit. Aspiring chefs were able to learn a variety of cooking styles from Cajun to Mexican to BBQ. Immediately following the workshops, RPCV chefs and more members gathered together to enjoy the festive meals. Ed also launched a Couple's Potluck this past spring which brought RPCV/HCN couples together. Ken (Turkey) and

Winnie (Nepal) Hill hosted the occasion, which will be followed later this summer with a second Couple's Potluck to be hosted by Jason (Lithuania) and Donata Kane.

In October, RPCV/W presented a special presentation on the Gullah with Anthropologist Joseph Opala (Sierra Leone 74-77) and his film *The Language You Cry In*. This event took place at Visions Cinema and was sold over capacity with 100 attendees. In collaboration with the Center for Multicultural Human Services, RPCV/W was able to raise \$2500. Proceeds from this event gave several Sierra Leonean refugee children an opportunity to attend a Gullah summer camp at the Penn Center on St. Helena Island. Just as this document is being printed, the same Sierra Leonean children are at the camp with Gullah children learning about their shared heritage.

Throughout the year, New Members Liason Jesus Puerto provided several opportunities specifically for RPCVs new to the area. Among these were some workshops on career development. In winter, board members had the opportunity to meet new members at the New Member Brunch which took place in Lauriol Plaza.

The Mid-Atlantic Recruitment Office provided RPCVs the opportunity to remain involved in Peace Corps' efforts to expand. RPCV/W co-sponsored a volunteer recruitment event in the spring where members had the chance to talk about their Peace Corps experience. Public Affairs Officer Sara Johnson served as liason attending board meetings and keeping RPCV/W updated and engaged in recruitment efforts.

Speakers Bureau Chair Meredith Bellows dispatched members out to public schools and community organizations to share their Peace Corps stories. Because of blizzards and school cancellations on Peace Corps Day, few of our local RPCVs were able to visit classrooms as is the tradition throughout the country. But earlier in the year, many RPCVs took part in an effort to speak to area school children on the 9/11 anniversary. NPCA Global Teach Net Coordinator Annie Schleicher helped prepare speakers for effort at a workshop beforehand.

RPCV/W continued to support the Community Bridge Project, led by member Kristen Dunne. In collaboration with the Montgomery County Schools, this project connects RPCVs with the school district to aid in the management of cross-cultural issues among kids, teachers, and parents. The project is in its second year and we look forward to responding to the Montgomery County Schools as necessary.

In the spring, Vice-President C.D. Glin led RPCV/W in our annual Peace Corps Partnership program event. Working with Secretary Sarah McElroy, incoming Speaker's Bureau Chair Suzanne Zoller and President Lisa Martin, C.D. and his team organized a successful event at the Embassy of Bulgaria with over 80 in attendance. Her Excellency Ambassador Elena Poptodorova and Director Gaddi Vasquez both addressed the crowd highlighting Peace Corps' role in Bulgaria as well as the rest of the world. This year's Partnership sponsorship was awarded to Bulgaria PCVs Edith Sloan and Rel Davis. RPCV/W donated \$2500 for the two projects - a Women's Weaving Cooperative and facilities for a Nature Camp. Attendees enjoyed the fine food, lively music and overall Bulgarian flavor of the occasion. Over the past 13 years, RPCV/W has contributed over \$33,000 to assist PCVs in 22 countries through the Peace Corps Partnership Program.

Throughout the entire year, RPCV/W has been managed well in all aspects: financially, administratively as well as creatively. Secretary Sarah McElroy was responsible for writing board minutes and maintaining organizational records. Membership Chair Karen Van Roekel not only maintained our massive RPCV/W database but cleaned out old names and addresses resulting in saving the organization perhaps thousands of dollars in unnecessary printing and postage costs. Treasurer Don Spencer also played a key role in overseeing the organization's finances – from processing membership payments to advising the board on its investment in the NPCA's Micro Enterprise Program. RPCV/W was proud to be the first affiliate group to invest in the program.

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*. Communications Chair Alan Smith redesigned the newsletter to the impressive format members receive every other month in their mail boxes. Alan was also responsible for the overall communications of the board, including the website, list serve and general image of RPCV/W. Wayne Breslyn remained on-hand for website consulting.

The 2002-2003 year ended with our Annual Meeting and Picnic. Past board members were recognized for their efforts and new board members were announced.

Speakers Bureau

From July 2002 to July 2003, the focus of the activities of the Speakers Bureau was to connect speakers with speaking opportunities throughout the Greater Washington D.C. area. Following is an overview of Speakers Bureau activities:

Speaking Venues

The Speakers Bureau coordinated requests from several venues, and placed 12 speakers. Seven speakers were scheduled to speak at DC schools, and six spoke at other venues including Girl Scout troops and workshops for high school students. For Peace Corps Day, the Speakers Bureau assisted with finding venues for RPCVs who wanted to speak with potential venues.

Next Steps

Outreach to schools and other venues should begin early in the school year, and the list of Speakers should be updated to take into consideration recent moves or a change in interest in Speakers Bureau. Advertisements will run in newsletters next year, soliciting more speakers and venues.

Communications & Newsletter

At the August 2002 retreat, the Board decided to change the name of this position from Newsletter Editor to Communications Chair in order to better reflect the position's changing responsibilities.

RPCV/W produced six publications this year. The newsletter was redesigned and renamed *RPCV/W News*, and five issues were produced in a bimonthly format beginning with an October/November issue. An August/September newsletter was not produced because of the Board transition in July. Instead, a welcome letter from the President was sent to the membership in late August to introduce the new Board and inform the membership of upcoming activities. This publication schedule worked well with event scheduling and the arrival of the new Board.

Efforts were made to include more pictures and graphics and to standardize the newsletter format and image of RPCV/W. Community Service Chair Laura Bailey and President Lisa Martin provided key editorial and proofreading assistance. This approach seemed to be more effective than asking the entire Board to review and proofread PDF versions of the newsletter before production.

The newsletter is produced in an 8-page format using Adobe PageMaker, and it is printed on 65# ivory paper that is 30 percent recycled. Leesburg Printing in Florida provides printing and mailing services at a low cost. Attempts were made to find a local printer and mail shop, but the rates of local vendors were not competitive when compared to Leesburg Printing. Additionally, the newsletter is now sent via first class mail to ensure timeliness and better promotion of RPCV/W events.

In 2000, RPCVW purchased a Dell PC with a large monitor, printer, and scanner for the newsletter. This system is still in good condition, and adequate to continue newsletter production. This PC will be passed to the new Communications Chair at the end of July. The original newsletter files are on the computer's hard drive, and extra printed copies are available in the newsletter files.

There was discussion about changing the RPCV/W logo, and a call for logos was put out to the membership. One suggested design has been submitted, but no decisions have been made.

The Communications Chair also worked on listserv announcements with Secretary Sarah McElroy and President Lisa Martin. The listserv is an effective, low-cost tool for the Board to reach a large audience quickly. Signing up for RPCV/W listserv announcements is an easy process, which ensures that we have a large target audience. Most attendees at RPCV/W events say that they heard about the event through the listserv. Although this rough data points to the effectiveness of the listserv, it also reveals that many non-members join the listserv and attend RPCV/W events. It should be a goal of the incoming Board to convert these attendees to dues-paying members.

Many groups and individuals request that we post announcements for them on our listserv, and the Board has debated what the policy should be regarding external requests to use the RPCV/W listserv. There has been consensus to posting events sponsored by Peace Corps, the NPCA, and other NPCA affiliate groups. However, no clear policy has been established for other announcements that may be of interest to the membership.

It has been recognized that the web site has not met its potential, and the membership could benefit from a more robust site. In addition to making minor updates throughout the web site, the Communications Chair converted the online event calendar to a Yahoo calendar for greater flexibility and ease of use. If the web site is redesigned, the new design should include some way to meet the requests of other groups who want to advertise information to our members (i.e. volunteer and employment opportunities, cultural events, etc.).

Programs

Anthropologist Joseph Opala lecture and film *The Language You Cry In*

In October, RPCV/W presented a special presentation on the Gullah with Anthropologist Joseph Opala (Sierra Leone 74-77) and his film *The Language You Cry In*. This event took place at Visions Cinema and was sold over capacity with 100 attendees. In collaboration with the Center for Multicultural Human Services, RPCV/W was able to raise \$2500. Proceeds from this event gave several Sierra Leonean refugee children an opportunity to attend a Gullah summer camp at the Penn Center on St. Helena Island. Just as this document is being printed, the same Sierra Leonean children are at the camp with Gullah children learning about their shared heritage.

Young Women Leading the Way for Change in Kosovo

Last winter, RPCVs gathered for a discussion with Hope Fellows Lirie Berish and Florina Mehaj-Kosumi who discussed the current changes underway in their native Kosovo. They explained efforts to privatize housing as well as other challenges facing Kosovar leaders today.

Cooking Workshops

This spring the Programs Chair initiated a series of cooking workshops, which turned out to be a hit. Aspiring chefs were able to learn a variety of cooking styles from Cajun to Mexican to BBQ. Immediately following the workshops, RPCV chefs and other members gathered together to enjoy the festive meals.

RPCV/HCN Couples Potluck

The Programs Chair also launched a Couple's Potluck this past spring which brought RPCV/HCN couples together. Ken (Turkey) and Winnie (Nepal) Hill hosted the occasion, which will be followed later this summer with a second Couple's Potluck to be hosted by Jason (Lithuania) and

Donata Kane. The goal of these gatherings is to help bring together a network of RPCVs and their partners who are facing similar challenges.

RPCV Archival Project

In March, RPCVs had an information session on the RPCV Archival Project. Visionary Bob Klein (Ghana) provided info to members interested in getting more involved in preserving Peace Corps stories. The Archival Project functions through the RPCV groups affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association, 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. RPCV/W member Lon Barash (Peru) is now RPCV/W's coordinator for the project.

Annual Picnic

With assistance from other members of the board, the Programs Chair also organizes the annual picnic in July.

Community Service Programs

Improving D.C.'s Green Spaces

RPCV/W arranged a volunteer project with Washington Parks and People as part of the Peace Corps' 40+1 anniversary celebrations and conference last summer. The Community Service committee mobilized more than 80 people for a park revitalization project in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Together volunteers refurbished a neglected trail and other areas of the park. These efforts improved safety conditions for local children to enjoy the park, while at the same time helped to prevent erosion on the park's hills and slopes.

Giving a Boost to Mother Nature

Last October, RPCV/W Community Service organized an environmental community service event at Arlington National Cemetery in conjunction with the Potomac Conservancy, a regional non-profit organization that works toward preserving the health of the Potomac Watershed Basin. As part of the project, RPCV/W organized 25 volunteers to collect tree seeds from the cemetery grounds. These seeds were then delivered to nurseries where they are now growing into saplings to be planted along Chesapeake tributaries. All together the group was able to collect more than 20 pounds of acorns, which have the potential to grow into hundreds of new trees in our region.

Helping House the Homeless

In the spring, RPCV/W Community Service organized and facilitated a group of a dozen volunteers to refurbish an apartment building for homeless families in need of transitional housing. Working with Washington, D.C.'s Transitional Housing Corporation, RPCVs joined other volunteers in the community to prepare the Partner Arms apartment building in Northeast D.C. The apartment building now houses 12 formerly homeless families.

Making for a Safer Community

For its final Community Service project of the year, RPCV/W facilitated a team of volunteers in a day-long project to revitalize a dangerous, neglected park in Southeast, D.C. In collaboration with Washington Parks and People, RPCVs worked in Watts Branch Park, where they spent the day pruning and creating sight lines in a wooded area that normally could be used for cover for illegal activities in the park. These efforts contributed to improving the overall welfare of the community by making the park a cleaner and safer place.

Peace Corps Partnership Program

Each year RPCV/W participates in the Peace Corps Partnership Program by contributing funds to projects with which Peace Corps Volunteers are currently involved. The 2002/2003 recipients of the Peace Corps Partnership Program contribution are Edith Sloan and Robert Davis both of whom are currently living and working in Straldja, Bulgaria. RPCV/W contributed a combined total of \$2,500 to two projects: a Women's Weaving and Sewing Cooperative and facilities for Youth Nature Camp.

To showcase this year's sponsorship projects, RPCV/W held its Partnership Reception April 25th at the Embassy of Bulgaria. Working with Secretary Sarah McElroy, incoming Speaker's Bureau Chair Suzanne Zoller and President Lisa Martin, Vice President and Partnership Chair C.D. Glin and his team organized a successful event with over 80 in attendance. Her Excellency Ambassador Elena Poptodorova and Director Gaddi Vasquez both addressed the crowd highlighting Peace Corps' role in Bulgaria as well as the rest of the world. The occasion was marked by a Bulgarian flavor with fine cuisine and lively music.

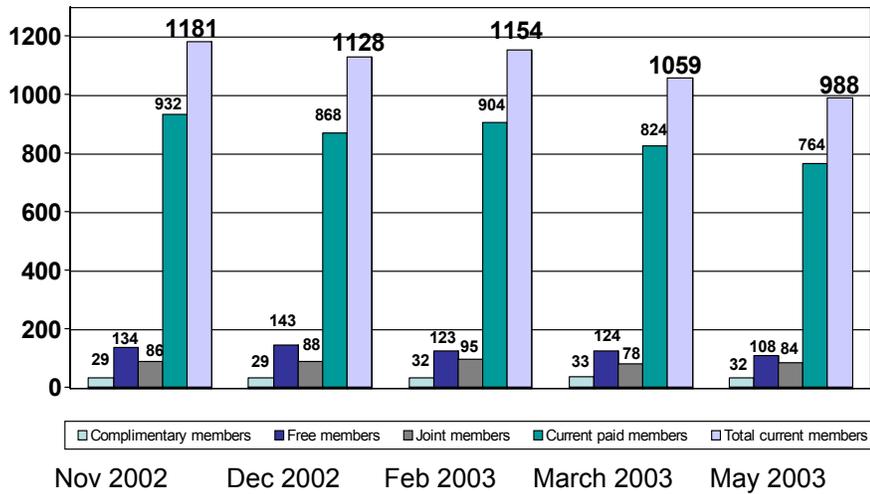
Membership

During the past year, the main activity of the Membership Chair has been maintaining and updating the database of names and addresses of members of the RPCV/W affiliate group. This activity has included enhancements in the structure of the database, the creation of new report templates, and development of a data entry screen to facilitate use of the database.

Each month, lists of additions to the RPCV/W group, additions to other affiliate groups, and address changes for current members are received from NPCA. The Membership Chair uses these lists as well as direct correspondence from current members to maintain the RPCV/W database. The Membership Chair is responsible for entering this data in the database and notifying NPCA of members who join or renew their NPCA membership through via RPCV/W.

In January 2003, the Membership Chair hosted a special meeting with the participation of RPCV/W members Michelle Ghiselli, Jenny Kinniff, Colleen Quinlan, and Steve Yoder and NPCA Board Member Joel Rubin. At this meeting, the group brainstormed on strategies for increasing membership in RPCV/W. These ideas were presented to the RPCV/W Board at the February meeting. Some of the simpler ideas such as greeting RPCVs at happy hours and other events, encouraging them to formally join RPCV/W if they were not already members, and mailing newsletters to RPCVs whose renewals miss the cutoff for the bimonthly mailings are being implemented. In addition, the Membership Chair sent over 240 letters to potential new members - including RPCVs who joined other affiliate groups in the Washington area and RPCVs whose choice of affiliate group was pending at the time of the NPCA mailing - to encourage them to join RPCV/W. She also sent 236 letters to members whose membership was expiring to encourage them to renew for another year.

Membership Numbers by Status



Note: The cutoff for a person to be considered a current paid member is if he/she has expired within the past 2 mo.

As of May 2003, there were 998 members of RPCV/W and the database included over 3300 names, of whom over 2700 had been members of RPCV/W at some point in time. The number of current members varies from month to month depending on receipt of the NPCA lists and direct renewals sent to the RPCV/W group, but it does appear that the current number of members is somewhat lower than the 1181 members present in November 2002 when the current Chair began maintaining these statistics. Due to the timing of receipt of NPCA mailings, it is possible that the activities designed to promote new and renewed membership may be beginning to bear fruit which will be apparent when the May-June NPCA lists are compiled, but if not, the outgoing Chair recommends that the new Membership Chair and the rest of the incoming Board of Directors for 2003-2004 explore some of the additional ideas developed in the strategy group to revitalize membership in the RPCV/W affiliate group.