



RPCV/W

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of
Washington, DC
rpcvw.org

2012 – 2013 Annual Report

(August 2012 - June 2013)

2012 – 2013 RPCV/W Board of Directors

Executive Board

President – Chris Austin (Kenya, 2003-2005)

Vice President – Brandon Roche (Honduras, 2003-2005)

Treasurer – Chris Polen (Azerbaijan 2008-2010)

Secretary – Liza Cushion (El Salvador, 2001-2003)

Board of Directors

Community Service – Cara George (Guatemala, 2009-2011)

Development Director – Jason Smith (Bulgaria, 2007-2009)

Membership Director – Renetta Boyd (Eastern Caribbean, St. Kitts 2004-2006)

Professional Development Director – Arvis Layton (Honduras, 2003-2005)

Public Relations Director – Chris Robinson (Jamaica, 2007-2009)

Social Director – Mariko Schmitz (Vanuatu, 2002-2004)

Special Events Director – Manuela McDonough (Panama, 2003-2005)

Non-voting Members

Historian – Jesse Bailey (Morocco, 2007-2009)

Inaugural Parade Committee Chair – Corey Taylor (Benin, 1997-1999)

Letter from the President

Dear Friends:

2012-2013 was a strong year for the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, D.C. (RPCV/W). We organized a total of 56 social, professional development and community service events, saw a 67 percent increase in our membership, grew our online community and remained fiscally sound, carrying over a budget surplus. Our success was a direct result of an active membership and a highly-dedicated Board of Directors.

Coming off the highs of the previous board year, which included the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps at Arlington National Cemetery, the newly-elected Board kicked off the term by meeting in the mountains of West Virginia for a planning retreat. We deliberated on the purpose of RPCV/W, and revised our mission to read, "To serve as a resource to RPCVs and friends in the Washington, D.C. area through social events, community service projects, and professional development programs that embody the [3rd Goal](#) and spirit of the Peace Corps." To achieve this, we laid out an aggressive, detailed plan for the year that we felt best served our members. As President, I had the responsibility of ensuring that we were successful in implementing that agenda.

Throughout the year, I led nine monthly board meetings and had the privilege of representing RPCV/W at many memorable events. Prominent among them was standing on the field of Nationals Stadium while RPCV/W was recognized at "Peace Corps Night," attending former Director Aaron Williams' farewell ceremony at Peace Corps headquarters and then giving him the Peace Corps Champion Award at our annual holiday party, joining Deputy Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet in congratulating Senator Harris Wofford for receiving the Presidential Citizens Medal, addressing our community at the "Peace Corps Town Hall," explaining the progress made by RPCVs in combating HIV/AIDS globally in a State Department online video on the tenth anniversary of the Presidents Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), leading the solemn yet inspiring tribute to the founder of the Peace Corps, President John F. Kennedy, at our annual wreath-laying, and organizing the election for the 2013-2014 Board of Directors.

In conclusion, 2012-2013 was a remarkably active year for RPCV/W, and I believe that the organization is stronger now than it was a year ago, at least in terms of membership, programming, communication, and finances. I am proud to be able to associate myself with our shared success which is directly attributable to our highly engaged members and board.

Sincerely,

Chris Austin
Kenya (2003-2005)

Vice President

The 2012-2013 Board year saw the Vice President plan and implement two Board retreats which were essential to planning the annual operations and programming undertaken in all areas of our organization. The first retreat was held in West Virginia in August and provided a weekend for the entire Board to get to know each other and to learn the responsibilities and expectations incumbent upon them.

The second, mid-year retreat, was held in Bethesda, MD and served as a way for the Board to focus on some of the larger issues facing our organization that we did not always have time to address during the regular Board meetings as well as reflect on what the board had accomplished up to that point.

Partnership for Peace

The Vice President serves as the primary liaison with our Partnership for Peace (PfP) organization, which was Language, ETC. This is a great organization that we were able to do three separate résumé and interview skills workshops with. Aside from volunteering with Language, ETC. RPCV/W was able to raise over \$4,000 for them through efforts such as our silent auction at the holiday party.

The Vice President also spearheaded the effort to restructure our Partnership for Peace (PfP) program by extending the time frame for the 2011-2012 Partner in order to re-set the year-long partnership to coincide with the Board term rather than the calendar year. This allows each board a full term to work with our partners and creates better synergy with the board elections coinciding with the annual PfP selection.

RPCV/W Operational support

The Vice President also undertook much of the compliance work necessitated by our 501(c)(3) non-profit status. This included advising on all aspects of planned activities, issues touching on our tax-exempt status, and putting on a "Directorship 101" session at the annual retreat to inform the board of their legal obligations to the organizations' membership.

Treasurer

Coming off the success of 2011's *Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary Event*, the 2012 Holiday Party, and a number of other highly successful events which increased both membership and income, RPCV/W is in the strongest financial position it has been in in many years.

Over the last year the Treasurer has worked with the Board to strengthen RPCV/W's internal control systems. For the first time in many years the Board voted to adopt a clear and fiscally restrained budget which was adhered to in all material respects. Payment systems have been upgraded and automated so that, when needed, any Board member with a smart phone can accept payments. RPCV/W has cut unnecessary expenses; including over \$600 per year in extra insurance coverage which was no longer needed. The Board has debated and adopted new fiscal controls which limit the fiscal obligation and risk any Board Member can place on RPCV/W's coffers.

The greatest accomplishment by the Treasurer in the 2012-2013 Board year was helping to set a new precedent for striving to ensure all RPCV/W social events are budget neutral. This means that dues-paying members are not subsidizing the social aspects of this organization but instead building greater charitable capacity and improving outreach. Because of budget neutrality we were able to provide our partner, Language ETC, the largest Partnership for Peace Grant in the history of RPCV/W. The \$4,150 we provided in 2013 was more than double the grant offered in 2012.

However, there are of course still areas RPCV/W's Treasurer must work with the Board and the membership to improve. The budget process must be refined and new Board members must be educated about budget rules and controls. In the coming year, two investment accounts totaling \$13,000 will mature and the Board will need to make important decisions on how that money is to be spent and invested in RPCV/W's future. The Treasurer must help the Board to maintain fiscal responsibility, ensuring that this organization can continue its mission to serve its members and stakeholders while strengthening its long-term financial future.

Secretary

In 2012-2013, the RPCV/W Secretary continued to assume the responsibility of sending out a weekly newsletter each Wednesday. The weekly newsletter is an embedded email serviced by Mail Chimp, a free online newsletter provider (<http://mailchimp.com/>). Mailchimp also posts the weekly newsletter to RPCV/W's Facebook page. The number of subscribers to the newsletter grew from 735 in August, 2012 to 1,618 in June, 2013. The average weekly open rate is approximately 30%.

Dropbox continues to be used as an archiving system for all RPCV/W related documents, PowerPoint, pictures, etc. As in years past, minutes of each Board meeting, notes from RPCV/W retreats, and this annual report have been filed. All documents that fall under the Secretary's jurisdiction can be found in RPCV/W's Dropbox.

Community Service

The Community Service Director was able to organize six community outreach events:

Grocery Delivery with We Are Family - Saturday, September 22, 2012

On Saturday, September 22nd, RPCV/W volunteered to pack and deliver groceries with We Are Family DC, a non-profit organization that serves seniors in the Shaw, North Capitol Street, Adams-Morgan, Petworth, and Columbia Heights neighborhoods. More than simply a social service project, We Are Family is an experiment in building a caring and inclusive community, by providing services to senior citizens in need. Eleven members and guests of RPCV/W joined about 30 other area volunteers, including Spring Hill College Alumni and Howard and GW Students to unload, organize, pack, and deliver groceries. We Are Family DC has a compelling mission to support seniors in need; especially as they have lived in the city for decades and as rent and other prices skyrocket, they struggle to meet their basic needs. As many of the grocery recipients live in the area, RPCVs set off on foot with groceries in hand to deliver groceries and smiles to those in need. Every volunteer in attendance was put to work, and expressed great satisfaction for the accomplishments made that morning. Finally, the RPCV/W volunteers gathered at SUNdeVICH for some amazing and well-deserved sandwiches!

Environment Awareness Day in Columbia Heights - Saturday, October 20, 2012

On Saturday, October 20th, Housing Counseling Services invited RPCV/W to their community center in Columbia Heights, Faircliff Plaza West, a center for low-income residents in the DC neighborhood. Eleven members and guests from RPCV/W attended for a morning of environment awareness building and fun with recycled art projects. The volunteers worked with the community center kids to make posters, wallets from milk and juice cartons, bracelets from candy and snack wrappers, and the most exciting project of the day, glasses from used wine bottles. The RPCVs enjoyed using the skills they developed during their Peace Corps skills to teach kids about the environment in a fun way, and using items that they can find in their own homes. The morning was big success, with many children from the residences coming to enjoy the recycled art projects and a lunch provided by Housing Counseling Services. Thank you to Faircliff Plaza West for hosting RPCV/W for the morning of recycling fun. We look forward to returning!

Grocery Packing and Delivery with We Are Family DC- Saturday, November 10, 2012

November's Community Service event was a success in combining RPCV/W and Rotary Club for a morning of grocery packing and delivery with We Are Family DC, a non-profit organization that serves seniors in the Shaw, North Capitol Street, Adams-Morgan, Petworth, and Columbia Heights neighborhoods. More than simply a social service project, We Are Family strives to build a caring and inclusive community, by providing services to senior citizens in need. Ten members of RPCV/W attended to pack bags of canned and dry goods, and deliver to senior citizens in Columbia Heights. Following the activity, the RPCV/W and Rotary Club volunteers

enjoyed delicious lunch and beers at Meridian Pint in the neighborhood, and exchanged stories about the seniors they visited that morning.

Conversation Skills for ESL Students - Saturday, December 01, 2012

December's event was with Language ETC, RPCV/W's Partner in Peace. Every year since 2009, RPCV/W chooses a local non-profit organization to be the focus of our community service, programming, and fundraising efforts in what we call the Partnership for Peace. This year, our Partner for Peace is Language, Education, and Technology Center (Language ETC), a Dupont Circle area, community-based program offering English and literacy training to low-income adult immigrants in the greater Washington area using volunteer teachers and tutors. Eleven members of RPCV/W attended to provide a resume, cover letter, and interview skills session, as well as attend the weekly Conversation Club. All were highly attended by the adult students, who were able to practice mock-interviewing, discuss music and current events, and improve their resumes. We look forward to working more with Language ETC in 2013!

Building Resume and Interview Skills in Columbia Heights - Saturday, April 20

RPCVs know well the challenges of finding a job and constantly improving one's resume! But for people who speak English as a second language, had little formal education, and no university career center or Peace Corps job resources, navigating the resume writing process can be a challenge. Faircliff Plaza West invited RPCV/W to volunteer with their community center residents in for a resume help session. The Faircliff Plaza West Apartments on 14th and Euclid streets in Columbia Heights is home to over 300 low-income residents, many of whom only speak Spanish. Ten RPCV/W volunteers put those resume writing skills to good use, working with the center's adults and youth in resume writing and formatting, and interview skills. RPCVs gave an overview of resume basics, and then divided up to work one-on-one with residents to help improve their CVs. Volunteers also gave tips and best practices for interview skills. RPCV/W members went to Columbia Heights to eat El Salvadoran *pupusas* and Honduran *baleadas* after the community service event.

Supporting the BEST Kids' 5K - Saturday May 11

On Saturday May 11, RPCV/W supported the BEST Kids 5K Race and Kids' Fun Run. BEST Kids is a local organization that seeks to promote better futures for youth in the District of Columbia's child welfare system by developing and supporting one-on-one mentoring relationships between the youth and caring, consistent adults. Six volunteers from RPCV/W were at Hains Point to hand out water at 7 am, which helped the runners and walkers through the hot day. After the race, RPCV/W volunteers enjoyed a brunch celebrating the morning.

Development

The Development director ordered 200 International Calendars (2013) from the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin and sold 166 calendars through individual board members and at several RPCV/W events for a total profit of \$628.26.

One of the biggest roles of the Development Director in the 2012-2013 Board year was to organize the Silent Auction at the 2012 Holiday Party. Each board member was responsible for collecting two high value (~\$100) items, and most board members met the goal. Cumulatively, over 200 individuals and organizations were solicited for donations in writing, by email, or in person. In total, 56 items were procured by board members. Overall, the auction raised a total of \$4,173.00, of which \$4,150.00 was donated to the 2012-2013 RPCV/W Partner for Peace (Language ETC). Detailed information including each item's description and selling price can be accessed via the Development Director's Google Documents account titled "Holiday Donor Sheet."

The following organizations and individuals contributed to the 2012 Silent Auction: [All Fired Up!](#), [Bits of Thread](#), [Boundary Stone](#), [Capitol Hill Arts Workshop](#), [Company's Coming](#), [DC United](#), [Elite Island Resorts](#), [Embassy of St. Kitts and Nevis](#), [Embassy of the Slovak Republic](#), [Firefly Designs](#), [Georgetown Cupcake](#), [Gilly's Craft Beer and Wine](#), [Karma Beauty Lounge](#), [Madécasse](#), [Meridian Pint](#), [National Aquarium](#), [Pleasant Pops](#), [Quiet Mind Yoga](#), [Sahara Dance](#), [Six Flags America](#), [The Spa Room](#), [SPE Dive School](#), [Sprinkles Cupcakes](#), [The Sweet Lobby](#), [The Crime Museum](#), [The Ost Mansion](#), [The Etiquette Institute of Washington](#), [United Social Sports](#), [Washington Capitals](#), [Washington Nationals](#), [Washington Redskins](#), [Yoga District](#), [Mel Schnapper Ph.D.](#), [Donald Norwood](#), Friends of Chad, Chris Matthews, Konstas Family, Davis Jones, Gloria Levin, Karen Ramsey, Susi Wyss, Tom Fedewa, and Tamar & Jonathan Lechter.

Outreach and Membership

As of June 2013, there are 947 active members in RPCV/W - an increase of 311 members from last year. Of these new members, 97 are also members of NPCA. Active members live in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, as well as outside of the region.

The renewal process is automated which could account for the substantial increase of members over the past year. Members receive several renewal notices before a lapse in membership occurs. Early in the year, an attempt was made to follow up with lapsed members. A template was created and uploaded to the RPCV/W database. A few members renewed their membership as a result of this effort.

A significant amount of time is spent on following up with membership inquiries, including NPCA membership requests, and researching RPCV/W membership questions. Every month, members are imported from NPCA to the RPCV/W database.

The Outreach Director worked with fellow Board members and participated in RPCV/W events to engage the RPCV/W community and to add new members to the organization. Examples include:

1. RPCV/W participation at the 6th annual Columbia Heights Day Festival at the Harriet Tubman Elementary Field (13th & Kenyon Streets, NW) on Saturday, October 6th, 2012.
2. RPCV/W, in coordination with Peace Corps, hosted the Peace Corps Networking Happy Hour Event at Cities Restaurant and Lounge on Wednesday, September 12th 2012.
3. RPCV/W hosted a Peace Corps Week networking Happy Hour on Wednesday, February 27th 2013 at Science Club (1136 19th Street NW).

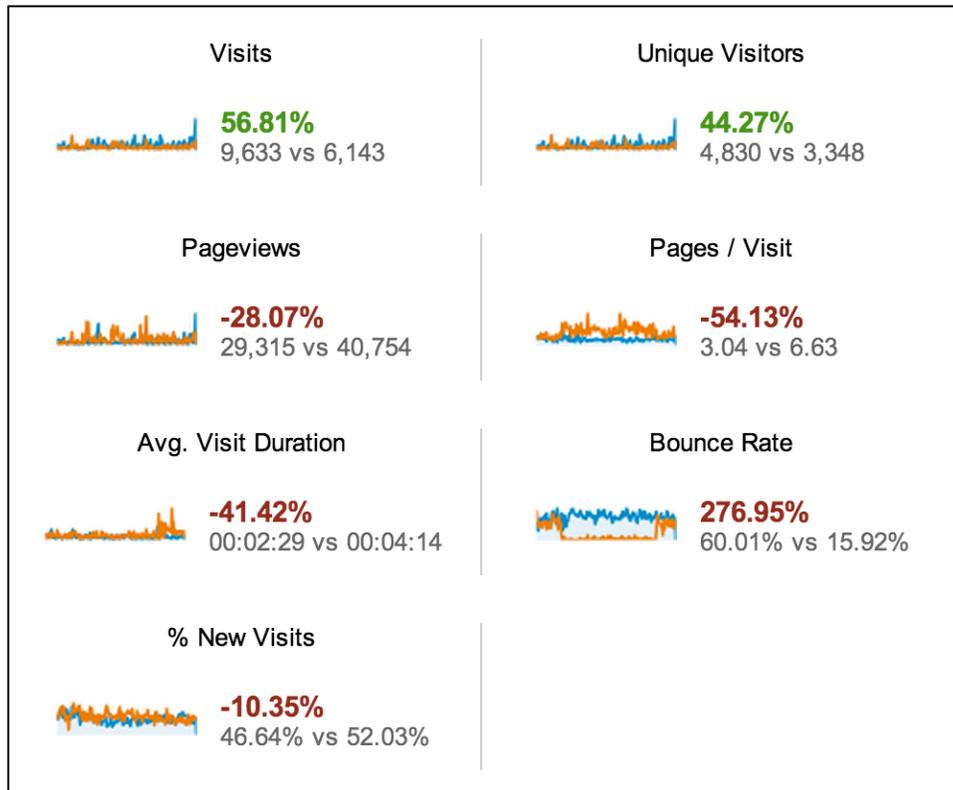
Professional Development

In addition, the Professional Development Director organized a member-only networking event with Abt Associates on Tuesday, November 17th, 2012. Given that Abt's employee roster is dominated by individuals with experience in the Peace Corps, they were interested in continuing to network with returned volunteers interested Abt's areas of focus.

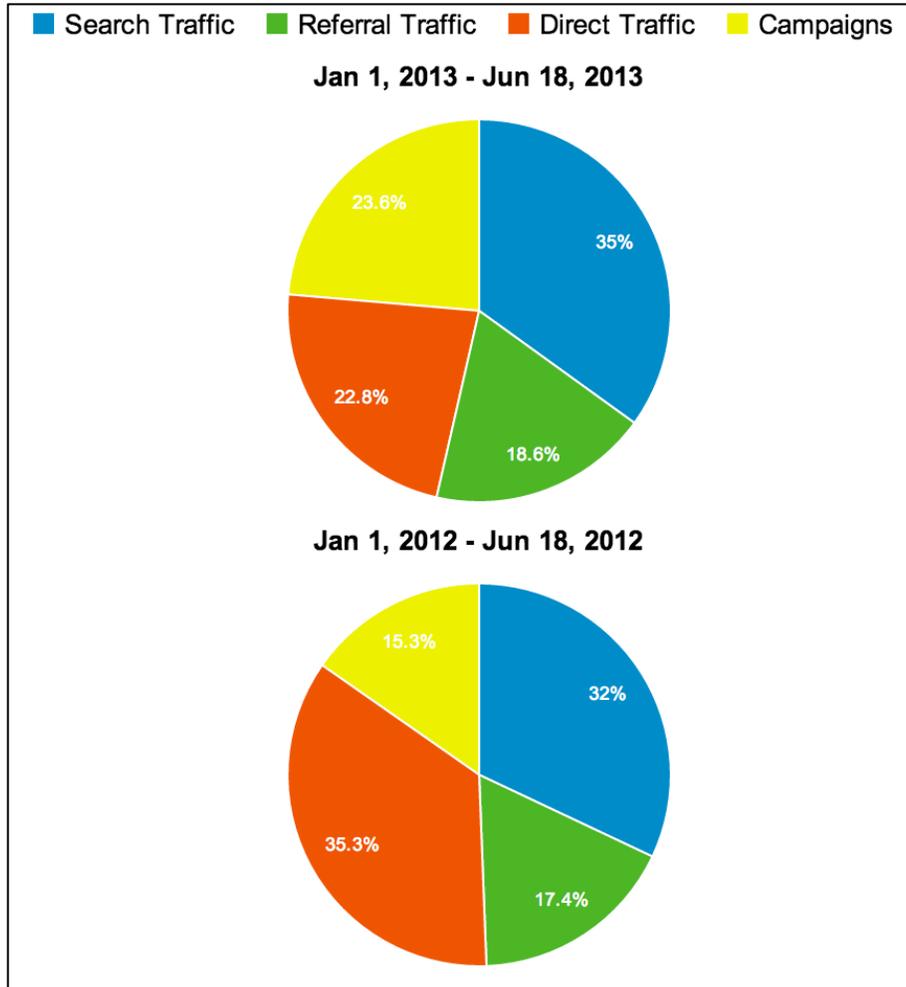
The Professional Development Director also organized an event entitled "Effective Networking" on Monday, March 4, 2013 in the Peace Corps Headquarters' Shriver Hall. This event provided tips and tools on how to effectively build a network with a focus on both non-technical and technical methods. The event was attended by approximately 20 people.

Public Relations

This was a year of steady growth for RPCV/W online engagement. The chart below provides the key figures:



Raw visits to RPCV/W.org increased 57% compared to last year, with at least 4,830 individuals spending an average of 2:30 there. With the increase in traffic, the other stats decrease, which is normal as the law of averages sets in. As people learn where to go for the information they want, pages per visit will continue to decrease. It would be good to increase page views, reduce the bounce rate, and bring in more new visits.



The chart above shows sources of traffic to the website. Search traffic is people who came to us through a search engine, such as Google. Referrals are visitors who came to RPCV/W.org through links from another website, such as Facebook. Campaigns refer to visits from email blasts and our weekly newsletter. Campaigns experienced the largest degree of growth since last year, reflecting the effectiveness of our email outreach.

Our social media influence is also growing. The chart below shows referrals from our three social media properties. Visits from facebook.com tripled. Twitter visits increased by 1,500%. Visits from Facebook mobile went up by 8, and visits to our site from LinkedIn nearly tripled too. Currently we have 1,606 newsletter subscribers, 517 likes on Facebook, 1,211 members in the Facebook group, 644 Twitter followers, and 422 members of the LinkedIn group.

1. facebook.com	
Jan 1, 2013 - Jun 18, 2013	891
Jan 1, 2012 - Jun 18, 2012	300
% Change	197.00%
2. t.co	
Jan 1, 2013 - Jun 18, 2013	240
Jan 1, 2012 - Jun 18, 2012	15
% Change	1,500.00%
3. m.facebook.com	
Jan 1, 2013 - Jun 18, 2013	182
Jan 1, 2012 - Jun 18, 2012	20
% Change	810.00%
4. linkedin.com	
Jan 1, 2013 - Jun 18, 2013	101
Jan 1, 2012 - Jun 18, 2012	35
% Change	188.57%

Each of RPCV/W's social media communities is beginning to develop its own internal culture as users become more involved. The most active is the Facebook group, where active members, lapsed members, and nonmembers introduce themselves, share opportunities, promote local events, and ask questions. Since the RPCV listserv ended in February, RPCV/W's Facebook group has increasingly been used by people looking for housing or offering places to live. Another encouraging trend is people posting jobs on the page. The hope is that the group will continue to evolve as users become more comfortable and expressive.

Some of RPCV/W's Twitter followers are also members, but many more are currently serving volunteers and RPCVs from around the world. The official Peace Corps and NPCA accounts follow RPCV/W, and frequently share tweets with their thousands of followers. Accounts associated with Devex, Save the Children, the USDA, Abt Associates, and many other organizations follow RPCV/W, as well as several reporters and even Yoko Ono! RPCV/W schedules tweets each month at the rate of 5-10 per day, but also go live from time to time and participates in weekly RPCV chats with the NPCA.

Much of the action on RPCV/W's LinkedIn group goes on behind the scenes, as people message each other privately. Jobs and events will be posted there, but not at the rate of the Facebook group. In November, the LinkedIn group was restricted to RPCV/W members only, although established professionals are sometimes admitted on a case-by-case basis.

By cultivating active social media environments, RPCV/W encourages people to start their own conversations and promote their own causes. Time spent on RPCV/W.org will always be necessary for members to manage their accounts and register for events, and the organization will continue to direct critical processes there.

2013 also saw the introduction of a move to redesign RPCV/W's website and logo. A survey found that members supported a change, so a contest was designed and 6 submissions for a new insignia were received. The winner will be chosen by RPCV/W's members and the design will be reworked by a professional. With a new logo in hand, RPCV/W will explore different website platforms and find one which is a little more contemporary than the current set up.

In summary, the more RPCV/W communicates with its members and wider audience, the more opportunities there are to engage with the community. The organization's activities are attracting more eyeballs, and members are helping to build a lasting brand. Soon RPCV/W can begin highlighting individual members and telling their stories, which should mesh well with the history project and wider outreach strategy.

Social

The Social Director was able to organize 22 community social events:

- *Happy Hour at NY Avenue Beach Bar, July 19th, 2012.* Summer pop-up bar in downtown DC was a good warm-up for the start of the new board. This event was advertised on Facebook only. There were about 20 attendees.
- *Capitol Hill Happy Hour at My Brother's Place, July 25th, 2012.* A post-Congressional event Happy Hour which attracted a mixed age crowd of people who work near the Hill. The quiet, spacious bar was a good place for some good conversation. There were about 20 attendees.
- *Happy Hour at Boundary Stone on August 16th 2012.* This bar is managed by an RPCV Gambia and was voted one of the best new bars in the city. About 60 people came. Some attendees complained that it was difficult to mix with people and asked for ice breakers.
- *Networking Happy Hour with Peace Corps HQ in conjunction with the Career Fair at Cities on Wednesday, September 12th, 2012.* The event was well attended but the music was too loud and the drinks were too expensive. The setting was professional and well received in general. 23 people signed up online but there were at least 100 attendees.
- *Craft Beer tour with Bud Hensgen on November 29th, 2012.* This event was a small group bike ride and visit to Bud Hensgen's house, where he brews his own beer using his own distillery. Attendees learned about hops, how to brew beer and got advice on how to brew beer at home. Event was capped at 15 people. Learned that it is necessary to make attendees pay in advance or else they might choose to not come on the day of. Attracted a different crowd than most happy hours.
- *Happy Hour at the Looking Glass on October 10th, 2012.* About 20 people attended. Some regulars, some new faces.
- *"Peace Corps is Gold" Professional Development event at James Hobans on November 1st, 2012.* Partnership with membership team at Devex. This event was capped at 35 people. More people attended than had registered. Everyone seemed pleased. One lesson learned from this happy hour was that it is important to make sure that the bartender keeps separate tabs because some people forgot to pay and it eventually was covered out of the Vice President's board budget.
- *Storytelling event at Cause Philanthropub on November 7th, 2012.* RPCV/W asked people to submit story ideas online beforehand. There were several responses, and during the event, time was allocated to those who felt inspired by other's stories to speak. This open mic night attracted over 60 people. 44 people RSVPed. Many of the same faces. It should be repeated as at least an annual event.

- *Americorps pre-holiday party at Cause on December 6th, 2012.* Attended by approximately 20 RPCVs, some of whom were both Americorps and Peace Corps. In the future, RPCV/W should try to plan for partnership opportunities with Americorps.
- *Post-Holiday party event at One Lounge on December 14th, 2012.* Happy Hour rates were pre-arranged with the manager, who was happy to have us. We reserved a section which quickly became too small. Bracelets would have simplified things, but everyone seemed very happy. Attended by about 80 people, at least.
- *Concert: Olivier Mtukudzi at Atlas Theater on January 11th, 2013.* There were high demand for these tickets, but Atlas called us too late (only 2 weeks before) and most tickets were sold out by then. Only one person used the discount and many were disappointed. This problem was addressed with Atlas.
- *Happy Hour at Galaxy Hut on Thursday, January 24th, 2013.* This event was planned at the last minute, the day before the newsletter. Attended by only 3 people. The lesson is to advertise on the newsletter for at least two weeks.
- *Concert: Sissiko and Segal at Atlas Theater on March 1st, 2013.* 18 people were registered, but there were several more RPCVs there. This means that this kind of event attracts RPCVs. During the concert Segal announced a young American woman had approached Sissiko speaking the language of Bamako perfectly. The assumption is that this was an RPCV, which is a sign of success.
- *Networking Happy Hour with Peace Corps HQ on February 27th, 2013 at Science Club.* 55 people RSVPed but about 200 attended. Science Club's owner, Steve, was excited to host the large group. RPCV/W reserved two floors, with specials for all RPCVs and a specialty cocktail was designed for the event. It became noisy after a while and was not good for an older crowd, however, the young people enjoyed it. Craig Elliot mentioned that he had found his current job through last year's networking HH and had come to return the favor.
- *Concert: Malian musicians at Artisphere on March 8th, 2013.* Artisphere sought to develop a partnership with us. RPCV/W advertised the event, but did not hype it too much. There was a small discount for RPCVs. Three people registered online; however, it is unknown how many people actually attended. It was hyped on our FB page by our members.
- *Happy Hour at Trusty's on March 20th, 2013.* This quiet and hip bar attracted about 30 people, the same number as the RSVPs. Several newcomers were there who subsequently participated in more social events during the spring.
- *Theater: Discount tickets to American Utopias at Woolley Mammoth Theater.* RPCV/W was invited, as leaders in the community, to attend the opening of new show. There were several youth group leaders, community performance groups and others who were also invited. It was a cool, if somewhat different crowd for RPCV/W to associate

with, and is worth pursuing. Sixteen people registered for tickets during the performance period, which was 3/26 to 4/21.

- *Annual Cherry Blossom Picnic on April 6th, 2013.* Corey Taylor managed the advertisement and organization of this event, with 47 people registering online in advance. As usual, this was a well-attended and successful event.
- *Happy Hour at Cause on April 25th, 2013.* 39 people registered online and about 70 people came.
- *Wine Tour in Leesburg on April 27th 2013.* Attendance was capped at 25 people. Several people dropped out at last minute, but there was a wait list. This kind of event is great to build a sense of community among people who do not know each other well. There is some risk given that there is a large financial outlay in the beginning. Please be aware to follow RPCV/W guidance on planning. The wine tour was very popular among attendees and should be repeated annually or bi-annually.
- *Discount tickets to Speakeasy DC courses.* This is a high priced item. There was some initial interest, but many people probably balked at the price. Some members complained that there was difficulty signing up for the discount. Only one member managed to get the discount code. While this is a good idea, it seems our membership is not interested in paying such a high price
- *Happy Hour with Federal RPCV groups at Elephant & Castle on May 9th, 2013.* This event was massively well attended and should be repeated. 72 people registered online. There was a variety of attendees from experienced to recently returned volunteers. A larger venue that has the ability to give Happy Hour prices after 7pm is highly recommended for similar events in the future.

Special Events

Three signature RPCV/W events were successfully implemented in 2012—2013 under the leadership of the Special Events Director. The first major event of the year was the RPCV/W Annual Holiday Party and Silent Auction held in December, followed by the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the end of May, and the Summer BBQ and Annual Membership Elections, held in June.

Annual Holiday Party

RPCV/W held its Annual Holiday Party and Silent Auction on Friday, December 14th, 2012 from 7:00 -10:30 pm at the Mansion on O Street, located in Northwest Washington, DC, walking distance from the DuPont Circle Metro Stop on the Red Line. A total of 215 people registered online and 82 additional guests registered at the door for a total of 297 in attendance—the highest number to ever attend an RPCV/W holiday party. Fortunately, the organization was only charged for 287 people. RPCV/W raised \$3,471.00 from the silent auction and \$6,160.00 from early ticket sales. Including sales made at the door and subtracting the \$8,445.60 cost of the event, the final profit was \$4,327.66, of which \$4,150 was donated to Language ETC, RPCV/W's Partnership for Peace. This is the largest single donation RPCV/W has made as part of its Partnership for Peace program and speaks to the success of the Annual Holiday Party. Please see the Annual Holiday Party Final Report for more details.

Wreath Laying Ceremony

The Wreath Laying Ceremony, honoring President John F. Kennedy, was held at Arlington National Cemetery on JFK's birthday on Wednesday, May 29th, 2013 at 5:30 pm. Approximately 30 RPCV/W members and guests attended, including Peace Corps Deputy Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Glen Blumhorst, President of the National Peace Corps Association, non-RPCV/W members who found out about the event via our website. A brief program was held at the Arlington National Cemetery Welcome Center, followed by a procession to the memorial site. Thirteen white roses, representing the first 13 countries Peace Corps sent volunteers to, were placed at the gravesite of President Kennedy. Please see the Wreath Laying Ceremony Final Report for more details.

Summer BBQ and Annual Membership Elections

For the last several years, RPCV/W has hosted its Summer BBQ at the Capital City Yacht Club thanks to a RPCV/W member who has been able to subsidize the costs. Unfortunately, the Yacht Club was under renovation this year forcing RPCV/W to look for a different venue. After much vetting, the National Zoo was selected. The Summer BBQ was scheduled for Saturday, June 22, 2013 12:00 - 3:00 pm. The event was catered by the National Zoo and includes hamburgers, hot dogs, veggie burgers, baked beans, potato salad, caesar salad, two kegs, and 12 bottles of white wine. At writing of this report, 84 people were registered to attend. Please see the Summer BBQ and Annual Membership Elections Final Report for more details.

2012 Inaugural Parade Chair

In 2008, RPCV/W was selected to participate in the Inaugural Parade, which was a great honor. To continue with this tradition, RPCV/W decided to create a new position that would be dedicated to the application process and logistics of participating in the parade. The Inaugural Parade Committee Chair prepared a lengthy application that was successfully submitted by the deadline. Unfortunately, due to various reason including tighter security and budget restriction, our application was declined. RPCV/W intends to apply again in four years.

Historian

The first RPCV/W Historian did not have much in the way of guidelines or predecessor's work to build upon. There were some overall goals to fulfill, such as connecting with former active member of RPCV/W to learn about what the group had done in the past, and to have a one page history that could be added to the website. In the course of the 2012-2013 board year, the Historian was able to interview six former board members in person, two via internet and four via phone. In addition, the Historian was also able to gather physical documents from four individuals, including a large amount of documents from Joe Ford (former RPCV/W board member).

Many of the people interviewed were board members during the first several years of the organization's history. This included a lengthy internet email with the founder President of RPCV/W, Karen Keeffer. From these interviews and materials, the Historian was able get a strong sense of how RPCV/W was founded and operated as an organization in the 1980's; learning along the way when several traditions, such as the annual BBQ, holiday party and Wreath Laying ceremony were started. While the people interviewed were mostly involved in the early years, the Historian was able to interview former board members whose experience spanned the entire history of RPCV/W. For example, an interview with Joseph Permetti, former RPCV/W President, provided a lot of information about what the organization did in the 1990's. And an interview with Lisa Martin, former President, allowed the Historian to learn what the organization did in the very late 1990's and early 2000's.

These interviews will allow the Historian to create an overall narrative of the history of RPCV/W, with a strong understanding of the first few years. The interviews and documents will support the creation of a one-page history of the group to be put on the website. In the near future, the Historian will also create a longer narrative that draws more directly from interviews and some selected archive material. This longer narrative document will be intended for the use of the board which will include summaries of each interview and insights learned from talking to former board members. Hopefully, this information can be used by future boards to inform their decisions based on past experience. This work will also provide a solid foundation for future RPCV/W Historians to work off of. A list of the names and contacts of everyone interviewed are attached to this annual report in Annex 2, as well as contact information for people that the Historian communicated with, but did not interview. A few of the people interviewed mentioned that they also had material to give RPCV/W, and hopefully in the future these documents can be obtained, and more former board members will be interviewed to strengthen our understanding of what RPCV/W did in the past.

Annex 1

The History of RPCV/W

In the winter of 1978 three RPCV's from Latin America contacted Peace Corps Headquarters to get a list of all the local RPCV's in the Washington area (K.Keffer, interview, March 27, 2013). They were interested in forming a regional group of RPCV's, and in May 1978 110 RPCV's met in the Tyber Island apartments to form a regional group then known as the ACTION Alumni Association of Greater Washington D.C (AAAGWA)(J. Hettgar, interview, March 9, 2013). Before this meeting, RPCV's had started to organize themselves around the regions that they served (Latin America, Africa, North Africa and Asia). African Agenda was largest such group and 70 members were present at the first meeting. In the early years, many of the leaders of AAAGWA/RPCV/W had been members of African Agenda (K.Keffer, interview, March 27, 2013). In 1982 AAGWA was renamed Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington D.C (RPCV/W).

In the early years of AAGWA/RPCV/W's existence, the group was able to help organize and participate in the 20th Anniversary and 25th Anniversary of Peace Corps. These events helped energize and organize the RPCV community, and after the big 25th Anniversary event many regional and country groups were formed (R. Landram, April 4, 2013). Also during the early 80's the President of RPCV/W testified before Congress about the Budget for Peace Corps in FY '82 (K.Keffer, interview, March 27 2013). RPCV/W created a list of 5 recommended changes to Peace Corps, and 3 out of 5 recommendations were enacted into law shortly after they were proposed (R. Landrum, interview, April 4, 2013). In 1985 the annual membership fee was changed from \$3.50 to \$15, where it stands today (R. Landram, April 4, 2013).

In 1991 RPCV/W helped to organize the 30th Anniversary, and also helped organize a smaller 35th Anniversary in 1996 (J. Permetti, interview, May 8, 2013). In January 1993, RPCV/W marched in President Clinton's first Inaugural Parade. While the 35th Anniversary was smaller in size, Madeline Albright was the keynote speaker (J. Permetti, interview, May 8, 2013). RPCV/W continued to grow in numbers, holding popular monthly Speaker Series events, where members would get personalized tours of the Botanical Gardens, The Smithsonian Museum and the National Archives (J. Permetti, interview, May 8, 2013). RPCV/W was also highly active in raising money for Peace Corps Partnership Programs, and general recruitment for the Peace Corps (J. Moore, May 14, 2013).

In late 1999, RPCV/W started to plan for the 40th Anniversary in 2001. By the summer of 2001 a large weekend long celebration had been organized, and the newly elected president of Peru, Alejandro Toledo was set to be the keynote speaker (M.Wolfson, interview, March 15, 2013). Sadly and understandably, the events of Sept 11th caused the 40th Anniversary to be postponed. The 40+1 anniversary was held in June 2002, with two days filled with events (L. Martin, Nov 13, 2012). In the past decade RPCV/W has marched in President Obama's first Inaugural Parade in January 2009, and had a very successful 50th Anniversary celebration in 2011.

Annex 2

Interview list

Contact information for people interviewed

- Lisa Martin, former president of RPCV/W, 2001-2003. Has photos. lismartinwashingtondc@gmail.com
- Joel Hettgar, member at first meeting in 1978. RPCV/W488@gmail.com
- Michael Wolfson, active member during 90's and early 2000's. Was very involved with the flags whenever they were used by RPCV/W. Has photos. arequipamike@juno.com
- Karen Keefer, founding President of RPCV/W. KJKeefer@juno.com
- Alan Smith, President in late 90's. alanjsmith@gmail.com
- Roger Landrum, President of RPCV/W, 1983-1986. Changed the structure of the board to how it is now. The board makes decisions on behalf of the membership. Ended direct votes for all issues (202-966-5461).
- Brian Moore, one of the three people who called the first meeting in 1978. Has a lot of documents to give (352-686-9936).
- David Hunsburger, President of RPCV/W, 1982-1983. Has documents to give. Davidhuns@aol.com
- Joseph Permetti, President of RPCV/W, 1995-1997. jcpermetti@gmail.com
- John Moore, active member of RPCV/W in 80s. moore_lbj@hotmail.com
- Marsha Zellam and Jerry Lutes, Officers of RPCV/W in early to mid-80's (301-881-3407)

Contact information for people not interviewed

- Steve Wolf , now in FL, but early officer (813-995-2926)
- Paul & Kathy Smolen in NJ, but Paul was early officer (212-630-7329)
- Cori Welborn Basset, former President in 90's, coriwb@gmail.com
- Jeff Drumtra, editor of newsletter in 80's. Has lots of old newsletters. jdrum@comcast.net
- Carol Rogers, Board member in 90's- crogers100@speakeasy.net
- Tom Burwell, Board member in 90's - toburwell@gmail.com