



rpcv/w

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

2007 – 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

RPCV/W Board – August 2007 – July 2008:

President – Jim Gore (Bolivia 2003-2005)

Vice President – Molly Mattessich (Mali 2002-2004)

Secretary – Joe Ford (Zambia 1994-1996)

Treasurer – Deb Johnston

Membership Director – Jeff Lovelace (Bolivia)

New Members Director – Elizabeth Olson (Burkina Faso 2005-2007)

Communications Director – Jessica Benton Cooney (El Salvador 2004-2006)

Web Director – Michael Louie

Programs Director – Leslie Pories

Special Events Director – Tamar Schiffman (Uzbekistan/Ukraine 2001-2003)

Social Activities Director – Corey Taylor (Benin)

Community Service Director – Amy Kunz (Guatemala 1995-1997)

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear RPCV/W Members,

The Board of Directors of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, DC (RPCV/W) is proud to present this 2007-2008 annual report to its membership.

RPCV/W is run by an all-volunteer Board of Directors, elected once yearly, and comprised of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Directors of Membership, New Members, Special Events, Social, Communications, Website, Programs, and Community Service. We, your Board of Directors, are proud about what has been accomplished over this last year and excited about what is yet to come through this organization.

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, a quarterly newsletter: *RPCV/W News*, monthly social events, monthly Treasurer reports, Program events such as movie screenings 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 the RPCV/W website and listserv. The Board also addresses collaborative opportunities with members such as 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.

Now entering into my third year as President of RPCV/W, I am truly excited about what we have accomplished and what is to come. I am inspired by my fellow Board Directors and their continued commitment to service as catalysts of our community. These Directors volunteer not just their time and energy, but also their enthusiasm, their initiative, and most importantly, their dedicated work in support of you, our membership.

Lastly, I would like to thank each and every one of you for giving this Board the opportunity to serve you, our community, in bringing the reality of the 3rd Goal of Peace Corps into the lives of the greater Washington DC community.

On behalf of the RPCV/W Board of Directors, I am proud to present this overview, which is testament to the vitality of the organization.

Regards,

James Gore
President - RPCV/W
Agribusiness Volunteer
Bolivia (2003-2005)

2007-2008 OVERVIEW

COMMUNITY SERVICE

During fall 2007 and summer 2008, RPCV/W Director of Community Service Amy Kunz facilitated and publicized the following six community service activities for the RPCV/W community.

On November 17, 2007 eight RPCVs joined the Casey Trees Foundation for a community tree planting event on Capitol Hill. The group dug holes, planted, and watered trees under the direction of Casey Trees' Urban Foresters.

On January 24, 2008 Amy helped round up about five RPCV/W members to help out with the Washington Humane Society's annual Sugar and Champagne Affair, which is a fundraising event that helps them run their two DC area shelters for cats and dogs. Volunteers helped checked guests in, ushered the press to designated areas, helped guests take photos with their pets, and even cleaned up a couple of canine messes.

In early March 2008, Amy helped coordinate classroom presentations at Cesar Chavez Public Charter School in the Capitol Hill neighborhood in honor of Peace Corps Week. Peace Corps headquarters provided help by offering videos, maps, and other visual aids materials for the RPCVs' presentations about their Peace Corps service and relayed information on the customs and culture of their host countries. Almost all of the RPCVs that participated brought a popular prepared dish from their host countries to share with the students.

On May 3, 2008, Amy recruited a team of 16 people representing RPCV/W to join Greater DC Cares' annual Servathon to help clean up and raise money for District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). They spent a Saturday morning painting the hallways, bathrooms, and principal's office of Sousa Middle School in NE Washington, D.C. Each team member was tasked with fundraising toward the team's goal set at \$1,000. Team RPCV/W more than doubled its goal by raising \$2,218 for DCPS.

Each May, the Director of Community Service is responsible for overseeing the wreath-laying ceremony to honor President John F. Kennedy. The ceremony takes place as close to the anniversary of his birthday –May 29th—as possible. On May 15, 2008, and in coordination with Returned Volunteer Services and the wreath-laying office at Arlington National Cemetery, dozens of former volunteers gathered at JFK's gravesite at Arlington for the brief service. A program for the service was created with the help of fellow RPCV/W Board members and distributed among the attendees. Speakers included the current President of RPCV/W Jim Gore, Ken Hill, a former Peace Corps staffer overseas and RPCV, as well as the current Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter (also an RPCV). After the speakers' remarks, a wreath of roses and carnations (purchased ahead of time and delivered to the site) was laid at the gravesite. RPCVs who were among the first to serve in the 1960s attended as well as some who had just completed their service in 2008.

On June 5, 2008, Amy led 13 RPCVs to DC Central Kitchen (DCCK) to work for three hours on their Co-Op Shift. The group assisted with DCCK's meal distribution by prepping locally grown produce for use in the 4, 500 meals the organization makes and delivers each day; their jobs on the shift included washing, peeling, chopping, and sorting produce, as well as mixing salads and cleaning the kitchen. DCCK prepares and delivers meals to other area social service agencies to feed homeless and poverty-stricken people. They also train and employ homeless men and women for the food service industry so that they may become self-sufficient. Many of the RPCVs who attended this activity returned to DCCK and volunteered on their own. To publicize and/or find space for these activities, Amy sent regular announcements to the RPCV/W listserv via RPCV/W's Director of Communications and she coordinated with groups such as Returned Volunteer Services, Latin American Youth Center, National Peace Corps Association, as well as public and private school teachers and administrators.

MEMBERSHIP

The major goal this year (August 2007 – July 2008) has been keeping the membership database updated, and sending renewal notices via e-mail. Obtaining the information came from several sources, such as the NPCA website, registrations through e-mail / pay pal, and RPCVW social events.

RPCV/W continues to work and refine our 'new' on-line membership process. We adopted Memberclicks.com a few years ago and are still working out the kinks. Memberclicks brings many benefits to RPCV/W such as on-line renewals via PayPal, auto-generation of renewal/expiration emails. There is still a fair amount of manual work that needs to be performed as we continue to receive new members from NPCA. Each of these members must be manually entered into the database.

The Memberclicks database has allowed us to more accurately understand our membership. We now have a better understanding of who are our Free, Paid and Non-Members. We continue to provide Listserv announcements to all current and expired members, but work to encourage Expired and Non-Members to rejoin at the low rate of \$15/ year.

Membership continues to be a challenge.

RPCV/W continues to face challenges in recruiting paying new members. Some of these challenges can be attributed to the recent economic downturn as well as change in NPCA Group Affiliation structure. Previously all RPCVs who joined NPCA also selected a local RPCV group. RPCV/W received lots of new members via this channel. Currently RPCVs are no longer

required to join a local affiliate when joining NPCA, this has directly impacted the RPCV/W Membership Roster.

“50 by 50 Membership Campaign” Adopted.

RPCV/W has embarked on the “50 by 50 Membership Campaign” with the goal of adding 50 new members per year and culminating with the Peace Corps 50th Anniversary of 200 new members!

Membership (as of July 2008).

- Paying Members: 430
- Recently Returned (free): 106
- Non-Members: 1628

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. Emails sent out asking expired members to consider renewing.

2008 PARTNERSHIP RECEPTION

RPCV/W held a reception on Thursday, June 26 from 6-9pm at TORO MATA - The Art of Peru, 2410 18th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009. No tickets were sold, but rsups were accepted and donations were collected at the door. Suggested donation was \$20 (RPCV/W members), \$30 (Non-members). About \$800 was earned at this event. Total cost was approximately \$2500 and we served Peruvian appetizers and beverages. TORO MATA gave a 10% discount on all items purchased in that store that evening.

We chose to support a volunteer project organized by Sarah Mendelsohn, who is helping her village in Cape Verde to build solar panels for a community center. However, by the time all money had been collected, Sarah's project was funded, so we made a donation to the Cape Verde fund for Partnership Projects.

This event was co-sponsored, in name only, by the MorePeaceCorps campaign. Rajeev Goyal, coordinator of the campaign, gave a short speech about the initiative in addition to speeches given by Jim Gore and Molly Mattessich about RPCV/W and the project.

RPCV/W extended a special invitation to all of the "Friends of" Groups in the area to have them introduce themselves and informally discuss mutual goals and events for the coming year.

About 50 people attended this event.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The RPCV/W Christmas 2007 holiday party

The party took place at the Josephine Butler House. Over 200 people attended this event. It was catered by Chef Kyle, and there was beer and wine available. A silent auction also took place.

RPCV/W Annual Picnic – June 2008

The annual picnic was held at the Capital Yacht Club and had wonderful attendance. This year there was a focus on partnership. Professionals for Non Profits had a table at the event and covered the cost of wine and nonalcoholic beverages. The beer was donated by Lagunidas Brewery. Former Senator Harris Wofford made a surprise visit and spoke.

PROGRAMS

Socially-Responsible Investment 101, featuring Justin Conway of the Calvert Foundation. ~15 attendees. October 2007.

Iftar--Ramadan fast-breaking meal and informational talk, Casablanca Restaurant, Old Town. (Co-sponsored event with Friends of Morocco) About 25 attendees. October 2007.

Cinco de Mayo cooking class with Chef Kyle, held at St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Columbia Heights/Mt. Pleasant. About 30 attendees. May 5 2008.

NEW MEMBERS

New Members Director Elizabeth Olson worked to expand the new members community by reaching out to newly returned Peace Corps volunteers and Peace Corps "Friends Of" groups associated with a particular country of service. The goal: to grow an engaged new member base who sees RPCV/W as a helpful, fun, active organization and wants to stay involved. Here are some of the membership events we organized:

Harvest Bike Tour: October 2007

Twenty RPCVs biked together along the Potomac and out to Mount Vernon on a day-long bike trip. They wrapped up with dinner in Old Town Alexandria on their way back to the city. Many of the RPCVs asked that RPCV/W organize more outdoor events!

New Members Thanksgiving Pot-Luck Dinner: November 2007

Seventy RPCVs packed into Elizabeth's house a few days before Thanksgiving, all with delicious homemade plates of food in hand, in what felt at times like the end of the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life." Many attendees were RPCVs who had just finished their Peace Corps service days earlier. This event is sure to become an annual tradition!!

Cyclone Fundraiser for RPCV friends of Madagascar: February 2008

Over 200 RPCVs took over Haydees restaurant on the Leap Year to meet new members and raise money for the victims of a devastating cyclone that hit the shores of Madagascar in

February. We raised over \$300 to help some of those who were left homeless by the cyclone. A big thanks to Haydees for your constant support of RPCV/W!

Membership Committee "50 by 50" Strategic Plan: February 2008

Several RPCV/W board members gathered together to lay out a 2008-2011 membership plan that will help RPCV/W achieve measurable membership goals. Our plan, "50 by 50", seeks to grow our membership by 50 new members each year until the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps in 2011.

New Members Brunch at Eastern Market: March 2008

Twelve recently returned volunteers met on a drizzly Sunday morning to explore Eastern Market and have French brunch together at Montmatre restaurant. We found some real market bargains (in true Peace Corps fashion) and had a great time sharing stories from our service.

Meet 'N Greet the RPCV/W Board Members: May 2008

Fifteen interested RPCV/W members joined board members for a pizza party at Elizabeth's house to share thoughts on the scope and mission of RPCV/W and exchange ideas about where the organization is headed. We were thrilled to see so many who participated in the Meet 'N Greet decide to run for a 2008-9 board position, and we hope everyone will stay engaged with RPCV/W!

RPCV/W Summer Writers Series: June 2008

Over forty RPCVs headed to the International Student House for the first annual RPCV/W Summer Writers Series. Moderated by local RPCV writers Sarah Erdman and Sam Esquith, this three part workshop gave RPCV/W members the chance to finally put some of our great Peace Corps stories on paper. In between workshops, we broke into small groups and e-mailed each other our stories for feedback. A special thanks to our two wonderful moderators who volunteered their time to facilitate each workshop!!

White House Tour: August 2008

Twenty lucky members got a tour of 1600 Pennsylvania Ave in mid-August, courtesy of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC)'s office.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

- August 2007: Field trip to a live performance of "The Unmentionables" at the Woolly Mammoth Theatre.
- September 2007: Happy Hour at RFD
- October 2007: Happy Hour at the Black Rooster, post-career fair at Peace Corps HQ
- November 2007: No Happy Hour due to Thanksgiving
- December 2007: Annual Christmas Party
- January 2008: Ice Skating afternoon in the National Mall's sculpture garden.
- February 2008: Peace Corps Happy Hour at the Russian House.
- March 2008: St. Patrick's Day Happy Hour at Four Provinces in Cleveland Park
- April 2008: Picnic during the Cherry Blossom Festival near the Jefferson Memorial.
- May 2008: Post-JFK Reef Laying Ceremony Happy Hour at the Continental in Arlington VA.
- June 2008: "Peace Corps Wiki" Happy Hour at Recessions
- July 2008: Canoe outing on the Potomac River