

KHOTSO

July 2009



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Message from the Country Director

I've mentioned in this space in the past about the 4th goal of Peace Corps: to train a cadre of women and men to be global citizens, working in a life-long endeavor to create a better world. At your COS conferences we address 'life after Peace Corps' for the first time, usually in a workshop with RPCV panelists who've capitalized on their 'Peace Corps as training' experience. Considering that for many of you Peace Corps is the first or second leg of fulfilling this goal, I'd like to address what may lay beyond your Peace Corps service in Lesotho.

Many of you will chose to live and work overseas for most of your working careers. But how do you start? Do you go directly to graduate school or do you look to get more experience? Others will choose not to work overseas but will bring back to their work and lives in the US a global perspective that will inform their decisions in nearly every stage of life. How do you capitalize on this learning experience? Answer this question with another: what have you learned? Here are a few ideas how think about yourself to make decisions or potentially to craft a resume and a cover letter that will highlight what you bring to the table that is unique, specific and compelling.

Did you learn how to think through and solve problems? Do you know how to manage resources in difficult and risk-prone environments? Did you learn how to uncover all the interested parties of a project to include and communicate with them so as to keep them invested? Did you learn how to judge which parties are serious about the project and which are not? Problem solving, risk analysis, multi-cultural team building, project management – this is quite an array of skills and experience accumulated regardless if the projects were 'successful' or not. What can you do with them? Whatever you want!...

...Which poses a difficult question itself. Just what *do* you want to do when you leave? Not all of you will be certain what you want to do (though many will be certain what you *don't* want to do!).The good news is that there are many

wonderful examples of what RPCVs have done are right here in Lesotho. Take Laura Beres. After PC Lesotho she went to work here for the German volunteer organization GTZ which places mid-career technical professionals in developing countries. After two years she has enormous experience not only for her resume but in guiding her future decisions. She's received a fellowship to attend Emory University's Masters Degree program for Public Health which works in direct partnership with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Brian Baltimore, RPCV Cameroon went into investment banking using the network of RPCVs to help land a position at Citigroup where he worked for two years before re-entering development work joining the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Craig Anderson RPCV Lesotho joined the State Department. Yours truly worked in West Africa for two years after Peace Corps before returning to the States to get a second undergraduate degree (Mech. Eng). ED RPCV Travis Barnwell is an Inspired Teaching fellow soon to be teaching at DC schools while getting his Masters in Education. Some have entered politics, become novelists and started businesses.

Above all you should take from your service the courage you have discovered and developed in yourselves and apply this to your inheritance: a world that wants and needs your energy, resourcefulness, insight and leadership. Continue to challenge yourselves!

Khotso Pula Nala
Ted Mooney
Country Director

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From the Editor's Desk

Articles must be received by the 4th Monday of the month to be included in the following month's edition of the Khotso. **When submitting articles, please list the name of the person making the submission and a contact person for follow-up questions.** The Newsletter will be emailed and snail mailed on or about the 1st of each month. Please make sure that your email and mailing address is on file at the Peace Corps office.

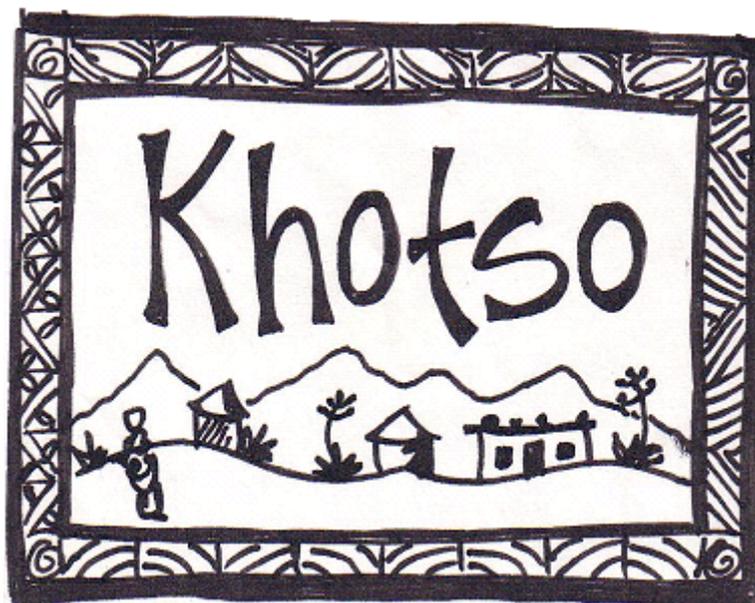
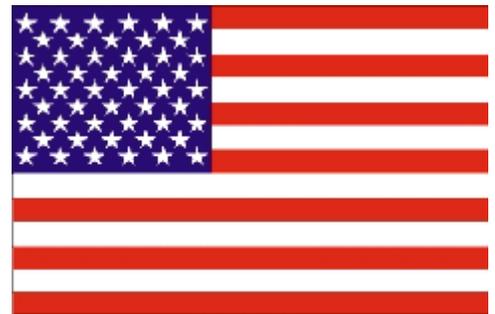
The editorial staff would like feedback from PCVs regarding the content. It is our desire to provide you with information that is useful, helpful, and encouraging. We would appreciate receiving constructive feedback from you as to whether the information contained in this newsletter met your needs.

By submitting articles, you are providing Peace Corps Lesotho with the right to reprint your article in full or part in any publication.

Deepak Pullanikkatil
Editor



Editorial



PCV Birthdays

Birthday greetings go out to the following PCVs. The Peace Corps Lesotho staff sends you greeting and hope that you have a very prosperous year.



July

Gluck, David	July 5
Hill, Melissa	July 8
Cozad, Madeline	July 12
Youngren, Phillip	July 12
Burns, James	July 20
Reilly, Rebecca	July 30

August

Ferneding, Kelly	August 12
Conz, Christopher	August 13
Laufman-Walker, Aaron	August 16
Langridge, Jessica	August 19
Veiga, Tarsha	August 19
Murray, Melody	August 31

September

Reed, Kristan	September 5
Jones, Christopher	September 9
Dreyfus, Clare	September 10
Wade, Cullen	September 10
Severson, Samuel	September 12
Washington, Maya	September 19
Valentino, Lindsey	September 21
Treski, Victoria	September 23
Kelly, Megan	September 25

TUITION ASSISTANCE PROJECT AWARDS

Friends of Lesotho Tuition Assistance checks have been issued and await pick-up by PCVs in the VRC – in a folder under and just to the left of the district mailboxes.

Tuition assistance has been awarded this year to one-hundred students enrolled in secondary/high schools (Forms A-E).

Checks are written out to the Treasurer of each school in which students who received assistance are enrolled. PCVs with checks awaiting them, as notified by group e-mail, are required to:

1. Submit the FOL check to the school treasurer (each school treasurer if more than one school was included in PCV 's award);
 - ◆ Working in accordance with Lesotho law, the Tuition Assistance Program requires that schools provide receipts of payment:
 - ◇ One receipt should be made out to "Tuition Assistance Project" and should be for the Total amount received. This receipt is to be given to the PCV.
 - ◇ One receipt must be made out to each student who is being funded. A separate receipt must be given to each student and the total amount awarded to the student should be deducted from his/her outstanding and future fees.
2. Return to the FOL folder in the VRC the following items: (a) "Tuition Assistance Project" receipt from school(s), (b) photos of the students who have received assistance, (c) thank you letter to FOL from each student. These will be mailed to the Friends of Lesotho in the USA.

Questions? Please contact Co-Chairs Janice Stapleton (59117397) or Karen Lindquist (59114838).

PCV News Corner



Staff Birthdays



July

Mamotena Phakoana July 7

August

No birthdays this month

September

Majimisi Machai September 14

Peace Corps Lesotho Holidays

July

July 3— Independence Day (US Holiday)*
July 17—King’s Birthday (LS Holiday)*

August

No Holidays this month.

September

September 7— Labor Day (US Holiday)*

* PC Lesotho remains closed on this day.

Admin Corner By Rich Carlson

DO YOU WANT A RAISE?

DO YOU WANT AN INCREASE IN YOUR LIVING ALLOWANCE?

IF YES, FILL OUT THIS SURVEY: [https://live.datstat.com/PC-Collector/Survey.ashx?](https://live.datstat.com/PC-Collector/Survey.ashx?Name=Annual%20Volunteer%20Survey)

[Name=Annual Volunteer Survey](https://live.datstat.com/PC-Collector/Survey.ashx?Name=Annual%20Volunteer%20Survey)

(ALSO POSTED ON SharePoint). WE NEED AT LEAST 75% RETURNED TO BE CONSIDERED VALID BY HQ. Contact Rich Carlson if you have questions.

CHANGE BANKS? WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Peace Corps – Lesotho is currently served by two banks. Your Living Allowance is deposited from the US Treasury into NedBank, the “mother bank” for all US government funds transferred to Lesotho, including the US Embassy. Your Living Allowance is then transferred to Standard Lesotho Bank. When payments to your account are late staff contacts both banks. We get nothing but excuses, with each bank blaming the other. We have sent to Hqts requests for payments weeks early, but still the money doesn’t reach your accounts until the last days of the month and sometimes into

the next month. We know the queues are extremely long at this time.

In order to resolve this ongoing problem we have met with both banks. The most responsive proposal is NedBank’s. This, however, would mean transferring your accounts to their bank and providing you with their ATM card. We know NedBank is not in all 10 districts. To compensate, they have agreed to waive their fees if you use NedBank’s ATM card in another bank’s machines. Therefore, your bank fees would remain the same. Their ATM card is good throughout southern Africa. The have also assured us that

payment into your accounts would be deposited the day they are received from Treasury.

Our goal is to serve you. We therefore seek your comments about such a change. If there is support, we would propose making this change around January 1st. Staff would set up the accounts and if you wish you could keep your Standard Bank ATM account until you COS. Future Living Allowance payments, however, would be placed in your Ned-Bank account. Please comment to either Rich Carlson or Ted Mooney. Thank you!



Staff Corner
Admin Corner
Education Corner

Education Corner By Clement and Malitaba

With schools closed and Volunteers (a good number of them!) out on vacation, you may be wondering what we have been up to this winter. It has become a tradition in our sector to spend this time carefully reviewing your trimester reports and analyzing them for end of year reporting, but most importantly to provide the Volunteers feedback. Because this year we have not conducted official site visits, the reports provide us a brief glimpse on the work that you have been doing. As of today,

we have received about 60% of the forms. We would like to hit 100%. Thank you again for putting an effort into these and thanks for your flexibility in adjusting to three different reporting forms (Training Class 08/07/06)! Those who have not submitted yet, please make sure we get them!

COS Conference

A reminder that the Close of Service Conference for Training Class '08 is schedule to take place August 24 and 25, 2009. Please plan to arrive in

Maseru (Peace Corps Training Center) on August 23. On Monday, August 24 at 8:30am, a vehicle will be available to transport you to Maseru Sun Cabanas and you will be expected to check-in at 9:00am. The first session will kick off at 9:30am.

Nota Benne:

All of the PCVs should be thinking about their COS date. Ntate Rich will need that **date by the end of this conference.** Ntate Ted can approve 30-days on each side of January

10th. COSing beyond those dates requires HQ approval. Any COS more than 30-days is an ET.

PCVs should also check their passports. If they are going to COS beyond the date of their Lesotho visa they will need 'M'e Makhauta to get an extension.

For COS dinner, ONLY Participating COSing Volunteers will be served meals on Peace Corps' tab, if you will have guests attending the "feast" you will need to pay. The cost is M 120.00.

Site Development

'M'e 'Malitaba and Ntate Thamae will be "on the road" once again during the August and September months. They will both be focusing their attention on the preparation of sites for our next group of Education Volunteers. Please refer to the attached calendar. If you have any suggestions we invite you to bring them to their attention.

New ICE Catalogue

The new ICE catalogue is out! You are encouraged to take a look at the catalogue and request books and other resources as you deem neces-

sary for your work. 'M'e 'Malitaba has a hardcopy if you can spare a moment whilst in Maseru. A reminder from ICE though: ICE resources are available to posts at no charge, but the materials remain the property of the Peace Corps. Volunteers and staff are expected to return them to their Information Resource Center (IRC) in the Peace Corps office in country. No resources from ICE should ever be sold by staff or Volunteers.

LESOTHO PEACE CORPS POLICY ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT Submitted for the Education Corner by PCV Janice Stapleton

Most Peace Corps countries have a policy on corporal punishment. Many PCV's in Lesotho feel that such a policy would be particularly useful in helping new volunteers stand up for their own values and the values of the Peace Corps and not betraying these values in the name of assimilating into the culture. We also hope that it will prove to be helpful in our quest to bring about positive changes in the Lesotho Educational System in order to most benefit the children of Lesotho.

Lesotho CD Ted Mooney, APCD Clement Lephoto and PA/Ed Malitaba Hlabana met with Peace Corps Volunteers Mike Dissen, Ellen Gordon, Jeremy Keen, Gwen Kerr, Kelly Kremnitzer, Kaitlin Leaf, Karen Lindquist, Janice Stapleton and Cullen Wade to discuss the drafting of a Lesotho Peace Corps Policy on Corporal Punishment on June 29, 2009.

The following document was adopted on June 30, 2009.

PEACE CORPS LESOTHO EDUCATION SECTOR LESOTHO PEACE CORPS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT POLICY

Corporal punishment is forbidden in both the United States of America and The Kingdom of Lesotho. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by Lesotho in 1992. The passing of the Children's Protection and Welfare Bill will further strengthen Lesotho's commitment to this issue. Peace Corps as an organization believes that every child deserves a safe and efficient learning environment. Because a climate of fear is an impediment to learning, no United States Peace Corps volunteer shall engage in corporal punishment, which we define as striking a student or using other discipline specifically designed to inflict physical pain.

Many of the above-named volunteers plan to work as trainers at the next ED group. Their main focus will be to train the new ED volunteers in classroom management techniques. They also hope to make a presentation at the All Volunteer Conference.

Training Corner

By Masechaba Mapena

PROGRESS ON PST

PST is continuing very well and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the PCVs who have hosted our trainees during current site visits in order to expose them to the daily life of a PCV in Lesotho. In addition, kindly continue liaising with the coordinators about the sessions that you are going to facilitate during PST especially when we are at CBT,

as this will help us to make proper logistics.

CLOSE OF SERVICE WORKSHOP

Close of Service Workshop for Education volunteers will take place on August 24-26, 2009 at Maseru Sun Hotel. Volunteers who are staying far from Maseru should overnight at the Training Centre on August 23, 2009. On Monday Septem-

ber, 09, they are expected to check in at Maseru Sun Hotel at 9:00 am. PCVs are allowed to invite guests to the COS ceremony but they, or you (the hosts) will have to pay for their meals, drinks and accommodation. The ceremony will be held on August 25, 2009 at 4:00pm till late. Please do not forget your attire for the ceremony on Thursday.



Education Corner
Training Corner



Alphabetically Arranged Marriage: Collmus / Ellick

By PCV Madeline Uranek

Have you ever looked closely at the alphabetized Peace Corps list for your ED or CHED group?

Rachel Collmus and Todd Ellick, married May 23, 2009 in the Hood College Chapel in Frederick, Maryland, said it all started because her last name started with “C” and Todd’s with an “E”.

Following Peace Corps staging in November 2006, their education group was seated alphabetically for the 14 hours of flights from Washington, DC to Atlanta, then Atlanta to Bloemfontein, South Africa. “C” / Collmus sat next to “E” / Ellick. In training, they ended up as neighbors in their community villages. With a twinkle in his eye, APCD match-maker Clement Lephoto next arranged to have them sent together on a site visit to St. James High School in Mokhotlong.

To put icing on the cake, their officially assigned sites were just a stone’s throw (and a bus ride, a hitch, a river, and a mountain climb) from one another. Rachel was assigned to teach English and Chemistry in the mountains of Mphaki, in Quthing. Todd was sent to teach English to high school students in Tebellang, in neighboring Qacha’s Nek.

“Peace Corps obviously wanted us to get married,” quips Rachel. In training they didn’t fight Peace Corps’ wish, and were one of the early couples seen together. They were still together 27 months later during their COS days. Todd proposed at the well-known Peace Corps hang-out, the Mediterranean Cafe in Maseru, just a couple of days before they were due to return to the USA.

A number of returned Peace Corps buddies joined them for the wedding on the East Coast, though the invitation caught many still job-hunting, with limited funds for cross-country travel. The couple plans to live in East Lansing, Michigan, where Todd will go to graduate school for history, and Rachel will do research for a year before starting graduate school in environmental toxicology and animal science. For congratulations, their e-mail addresses are: rachelcollmus@gmail.com and tellick@gmail.com



PCV Life



ED 07 RPCV's Sam Sednek, Travis Barnwell, Courtney McDermott, Brianna Buehler, bride & groom Collmus and Ellick, Graham Hall, Madeline Uranek.



FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

By PCV Karen Lindquist

Living smack in the middle of a large, seven hundred and one student school campus has pluses (quick run to the classrooms, teachers' room and up and down the hill to my home) and some minuses. While being passionate about teaching teenagers, living in the midst of two hundred and ten boarders occasionally tests my sanity.

I'm sixty-five. Teenagers are, well, teenagers. They scream and holler (gosh, aren't people sleeping at those hours?). With a basketball court close at hand and rise and shine long before classes begin, the perfect time filler is to play hoops – crash bang goes the metal on metal backboard and pole.

Teenagers love attention and are incredibly curious about a new teacher, so knock-knock on my front door. Visits are great fun and often a chance to meet students who are not in my classes. But, as my only source of entertainment for some time, I craved some adult conversation.

Well, adult companionship in my campus' "neck of the woods" is slim to none. And my only contact with people close to my age started as an irritating source of noise. Who were those loud, laughing, much-too-jovial women awaking me every morning at 5:15? Not my idea of a good time to be up and having so much fun.

Given time, however, it's those loud, jovial women who have brought just what I needed. Six loving, laughing, hard-working Bo-Me, my neighbors and friends. They are the delightful women who cook for the St. Agnes students, seven days a week, day in and day out. 'M'e Malisemelo, 'M'e Mamaputse, 'M'e Mamatseliso, 'M'e Maalina, 'M'e Masechaba, 'M'e Mamoletsane. Ranging in age from forty-five to sixty-three, these dear souls rise before the sun and walk from nearby villages to brew the tea, cook the porridge, chop the moroho, and prepare all that goes into feeding hungry students twenty-one meals each week. Bread and tea. Porridge and milk. Eggs and vegetables. Papa and moroho. Papa and bean soup. Russians and mealie meal. Over and over again.

The laughter and stories they share with each other have become a part of my life; their daytime place of rest between meals is the series of rooms that adjoin my campus house. I now smile at 5:15 a.m. as I hear their happy voices coming across the porch and I eavesdrop as they sit for a few minutes outside my window before heading to the kitchen and smokehouse to begin their daily work.

I now join them on the porch between meals and classes, ask about their families, their homes and gardens. Most have lived in the same home all their lives; their gardens sustain their families with moroho, pumpkin, beans, tomatoes, onions, and potatoes. Proudly, they talk about their collective twenty-three children; "I have four" said three Bo-Me; "I have six" said another, "we have two and three" said the final two. And grandchildren, too. Two of the women are widows, four with husbands, all out of work. Their stories now take on a more serious tone as they talk about life's hardships, husbands out of work, little money, and no work available.

Their eyes brighten once again as I ask about their work at St. Agnes. Their days are filled with things they love: the joys of children surrounding them, the chance to practice their English, and though it's hard work, the chance to cook – something they enjoy doing even for hundreds of students at every meal.

They love to cook. I love to cook. They become wide-eyed when I serve them something tasty from my kitchen. "What, that's pumpkin soup? What's this and this and this?" My pumpkin soup starts with boiled pumpkin and grows from there. I love to share my kitchen creations; they love to discover how I make them.

I marvel at their energy, their back-breaking daily chores, their resilience, their surface happiness that they show to everyone throughout each



PCV Life





PCV Life

day. They offer me companionship, moments of shared laughter and smiles and stories. While I reciprocate, I gain much more than I give. Their lives are difficult; mine, though far away from the comforts of my American home, is easy in comparison.

It's winter break now, time for the Bo-Me to have a much needed rest from the grueling rigors of their St. Agnes work. The campus is quiet and I'm enjoying this temporary place of peace. But, I miss the presence of those beautiful faces, those loud, laughing voices.



Good fortune has come into my life – all I need do each day when school is in session is open my front door and step out onto our shared porch. Six Bo-Me welcome me into their circle. We ask each other questions, we swap stories, we share moments of joy and some of sadness. We learn much from each other.

That's a description of friendship to me. Six Bo-Me and one over-50 Peace Corps teaching volunteer. Neighbors. Friends.



Family Arts and Literacy Centre Opens in Maseru

By PCV Jackie Tipsword, Photos by PCV Madeline Uraneck

Imagine a place where bana have access to children's books in Sesotho and English, as well as to real artists and free arts materials. This dream has become a reality through the organization Family Literacy Lesotho.

Family Literacy Lesotho was started in 2007 with the support and contribution of US Brandeis University Professor Jane Hale, together with more than forty enthusiastic Basotho contributors. The mission of Family Literacy Lesotho is “to encourage the development of beautiful picture books about Lesotho in Sesotho and to put them in the hands of all Basotho children.” The group has already published two books in Sesotho, Kamohelo Tlahong ea Ngoana oa Mosotho (“A Traditional Welcoming of a Mosotho Child”) and Buka ea Melumo (“Book of Sounds”). Not only were the books written locally, they were illustrated by Basotho artists.

To further the organization's mission, Family Literacy Lesotho has built a new Family Arts and Literacy Centre, the only one of its kind in the nation. Located just north of Maseru at the Khubetsoana cemetery intersection known as Ngoana Oa Lla (“The baby is crying”), it is a brick house that has been transformed into an art gallery, studio and library. Local artists display their artwork for sale and provide art lessons and materials for local children to create their own masterpieces. Walk into the next room and you will be excited to see shelves lined with quality, colorful children's books that are easily accessible to little hands.

The centre will be open to the community from Monday to Saturday, 10 am – 4 pm. The artists and volunteers at the centre are excited to share their passion for literacy and art, not only with the Khubetsoana community, but also with all Lesotho children, parents, and teachers.



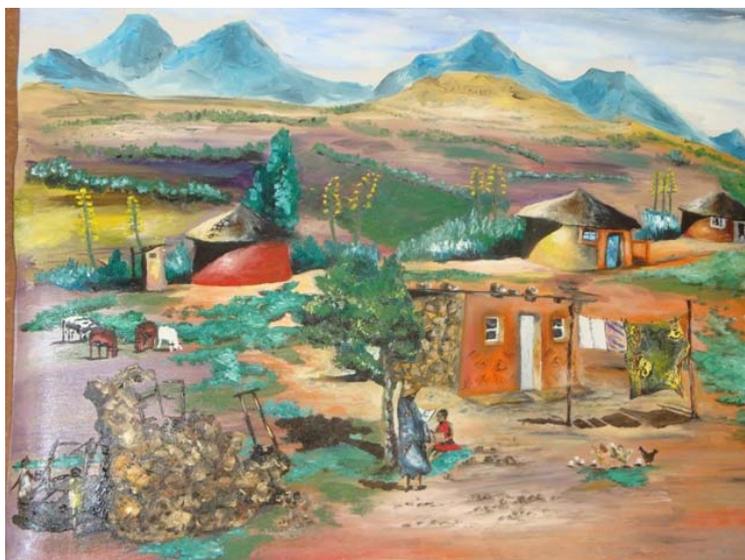
PCV's, show your support and come visit the beautiful Family Arts and Literacy Centre. It really is a place full of inspiration and hope.

Children throng in to read books in Sesotho and English at the new Art and Family Literacy Centre in Khubetsoana.



Bokang Mohapi, right, and friend Thabang check out the new Family Art and Literacy Centre.

PCV Life



Original art, like this landscape by artist Peter Maphatsoe, can be purchased at the Literacy Centre.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The Khotso Newsletter is definitely a PCV newsletter as it is produced for the PCVs. Although it contains articles submitted by PCVs under the "PCV Life Corner", it is actually a publication prepared by staff for sharing information with you. Starting July 2009, we have decided to include more PCV participation in the production of this newsletter by accepting the voluntary service offered by PCVs Kaitlin Leaf and Melody Murray to serve as Associate Editors. Kaitlin will be the associate editor for every odd month (July, September, November etc.) and Melody will serve on even months (August, October, December etc.). From now on, one of them will proof read and rewrite (if necessary), all articles received for the Khotso.

We could not stop noticing and appreciating the enthusiasm put forward by PCVs for making Khotso a finer publication. To show you our appreciation, the Country Director has agreed to allow PCVs to run their own newsletters. One for each group. Yes, a CHED Newsletter and an ED Newsletter. To have consistency in the format of the newsletters, we have a template each for the newsletters. If you think this is a good idea, please see me (Deepak) or Ted for more information (rules), to volunteer or nominate editors for the newsletter and check out the templates.



PCV Life



Over Two Years with Peace Corps... but who's counting...

By PCV Darrin Adams

As a third year extension volunteer, I am privileged in that Peace Corps Lesotho has allowed me the freedom and flexibility to execute the plans based on my imagination. Over a year ago, while still being an education volunteer in Mafeteng, I launched an idea that men can and are willing to be leaders in their communities.

Through this workshop, called Men As Partners, 30 people, both men and women, were trained to engage men in their communities. Coming from all over Lesotho, including Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek, these participants took what they learned and implemented it into their communities, teaching people about working with men, gender equality, sexuality and gender-based violence.

Fast-forward to the current time and this idea has grown and stretched into a reality that affects all of Lesotho. To date, the organizations that I have worked with in male engagement have included: PSI, Maluti Adventist Hospital, One Love Campaign, CARE, World Vision, LPPA, U.S. Embassy, PEP-FAR, National AIDS Commission, Ministry of Gender, teachers and other aspects that make up Basotho community.

Though I am still committed to assisting people at the community level, I have adopted a strategy to implement this work at a national level. I was invited to the National HIV and AIDS Strategic planning group (through the National AIDS Commission), of which I am now a member, to review the national plan and provide comments on how to insert male engagement strategies into it.

My time as a volunteer grows short, which is why I want to implement these strategies at a national level to ensure sustainability. Peace Corps Volunteers are some of the best people in public health and development. Though it may seem like we are insignificant in the grand scheme of development and public health, know that you are not. We make the best kind of difference, the kind that we can see and touch, talk and listen to.

We have the opportunity to see change happen before our very eyes. After sitting in a national policy meeting with some of the biggest players in health and development, I realized that they may have vision but they don't have what we have: sight.

One example comes to mind from that meeting in that they were reviewing the national strategy for post exposure prophylaxis (PEP). There was actually a discussion on setting up a national hot-line so that people can call it and then go and get PEP. The idea is that it is more readily available. It's a good idea, in theory, but doesn't make sense here. How can a country that is already incapacitated to deal with the current HIV response create a national hotline?

Thankfully, some of us voiced our dissent and this conversation came too close to lunch, so we were able to avoid having to vote on including it.

Use your sight to your full advantage. You have the unique opportunity to make a difference for the Basotho nation and for yourself. I say this many times: Lesotho is a blank canvas in which you can do anything. Take up your brush and paint what you see.

PCV Carol "Tae Kwon Do" Griffin

By PCV Kaye Thompson

Carol Griffin, PCT CHED, enjoyed teaching the 7th grade class at St. Rose Primary School during her site visit. Carol holds a Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do. She taught the students basic blocks, punches and kicks. She also taught them some of the principals of Tae Kwon Do such as: obey and honor your parents, be loyal to your friends, stand up for what is right, never fight to achieve selfish ends, and always finish what you start. The children enjoyed the training and are hoping that Carol will return in the future.



Volunteer numbers down, but technology use is up
Blogging their Peace Corps experiences.
By Carolyn Davis, Inquirer Staff Writer

It's not your grandparents' Peace Corps anymore.

Volunteers still work on community and business development, and agricultural, environmental, and health programs, with a dash of information technology in the mix. They use people skills and shovels, paper and pens.

But these 21st century do-gooders are using today's technology in ways that would have seemed like science fiction when President John F. Kennedy spoke to University of Michigan students about the international service program in 1960.

"How many of you are willing to work in the Foreign Service and spend your lives traveling around the world? . . . on your willingness to contribute part of your life to this country, I think will depend the answer whether a free society can compete," Kennedy said.

Nearly 50 years later, there are fewer volunteers - about 7,900 today compared to the 1966 peak of 15,000. They are finding ways to do their jobs with less federal funding.

Volunteers blog. They build computer databases. They get cell phones for fun and work.

In fact, more than 90 percent of all volunteers use cell phones at their site, according to a 2008 Peace Corps survey. About 94 percent connect weekly to the Internet and 43 percent write a blog.

"Right now, I'm sitting in my house. I don't have electricity or running water but, yeah, I have a cell phone," said 23-year-old Gwen Kehr, speaking over that phone from her Peace Corps post in Lesotho, in southern Africa.

The Chalfont native also has a laptop computer and a newly acquired wireless modem, which she uses to post entries on her blog. In it, she is describing her two-year stay in Lesotho and her job teaching biology and English at Mphaki High School in the country's south.

"I wanted to keep in touch with my family and friends at home and let them know what was going on faster than regular mail," Kehr said.

She writes about the food: "Two of the main traditional dishes are papa and moroho. Papa is maize meal and water cooked over the stove (or fire) until it gets puffy and sticky. . . . Moroho consists of cabbage that is finely chopped and cooked over the stove with oil and, sometimes, a bouillon cube."

She writes about work: "Our school's computer lab is connected to the principal's and secretary's offices and it is powered by a generator that they turn on and off as needed for classes and administration stuff."

Before Kehr got the wireless modem, she would travel six hours to use an Internet connection in the capital city of Maseru. Now, she posts the entries from her circular, cinderblock and thatched-roof abode.

Married volunteers Kaitlyn Fitzpatrick and Alex Fuller-Young, who met at the Hill School in Pottstown, write a blog on their service as environmental educators in Nicaragua. Fuller-Young, 26, grew up in Kimberton and Fitzpatrick, 24, in Royersford.

The couple now live in the town of Nagarote, in a home that is a short walk from an Internet cafe, said Fuller-Young over his cell phone as he rode his bicycle home from work. Using Peace Corps stipends, they each spent the equivalent of \$20 on a phone. A minute of airtime costs about 33 cents.

The phone came in handy in March, when Fitzpatrick got a call from home that her grandfather was gravely ill. She not only got the news faster because of the phone, she also was able to quickly arrange a trip back.

Like Kehr, Fuller-Young and Fitzpatrick use their blog to give friends and family a taste of the local culture.

"It's not only what my experience is like and what I'm taking away from it, but about Nicaraguans," Fuller-Young said.

PCV Life





PCV Life

That kind of thinking, said Peace Corps acting director Jody K. Olsen, fits with one of the agency's goals of helping Americans understand foreign cultures.

"I really embrace blogging," Olsen said. "I think it helps them think through the technical work they're doing and understand what they are experiencing."

Volunteers also have used blogs to raise money for projects, such as one to pay for construction of a farmers' market in Moldova.

There were a few problems initially: Some volunteers griped on their blogs about people in their host country. Olsen said the agency now makes sure volunteers understand that what they write can get back to people and officials they are working with locally. Blogs must have a disclaimer that the opinions expressed are only those of the blogger.

When volunteers go home, they use blogs, along with text messaging and Skype, the Internet phone service, to keep in touch with people in their host countries and check on their projects.

There's also a Web site, PeaceCorpsJournals.com, that serves as a portal to the blogs volunteers write. Mike Sheppard, 29, returned from serving in Gambia in 2005 and began looking for volunteer blogs, said Sheppard. He eventually started the portal.

In 2007, Sheppard, who lives in Washington, D.C., was joined in his work by Will Dickinson, 29, who served in Armenia and now lives in Fishtown.

In Armenia, Dickinson researched whether any Peace Corps volunteers had used global positioning systems, or GPS, to map their countries and mark access to clean water, health clinics, and other vital points. He found nothing, so he made the map - only to learn that a previous volunteer in Armenia had done something similar. When Dickinson's stint was done, he began building an independent database he calls Peace Corps Wiki (<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org>), and makes it accessible to all volunteers.

The Peace Corps is trying to use technology more effectively, and one of the top projects is assembling a database, director Olsen said. But government regulations the agency must follow slow the pace of cyber initiatives.

It's good that volunteers are leading the way for the agency, Olsen said.

The Peace Corps boasts about some of those innovations, including one by a public health volunteer in Namibia. He developed software to respond to Namibians' health questions via cell-phone text messaging.

The software forwards the questions to Peace Corps volunteers trained to answer them and advise whether medical attention is needed, said Peace Corps spokesperson Allison Price.

"This resource is meeting a need for advice," Price said, "and people are comfortable with text messaging as a medium - especially youth."

Khotso

CHED GROUP — JUNE 2009



Enriquez, Rocio



Erdeg, Irena



Foster, Brice



Griffin, Carol



Griffin, Edward



Hill, Melissa



Jones, Christopher



Kaufman, Elissa



Langridge, Jessica



Laufman-Walker,
Aaron



Lobrow, Karolina



McKeen, Emily



Milloy, Erin



Mohr, Jonathan



Movalli, Kristine



Viola, Gregory

PCV Life



Peace Corps Lesotho Welcomes you to the Mountain Kingdom



Loret Miller Ruppe Speaker Series

On Friday May 1st, Astronaut Joe Acaba spoke at Peace Corps headquarters about his most recent Space Shuttle Discovery mission to the International Space Station. Joe served as a Peace Corps

Volunteer in Dominican Republic. If you would like a dvd copy of the video, e-mail a request to Karen Chaput at: kchaput@peacecorps.gov

United We Serve

I invite you to join President Obama's summer service initiative—United We Serve—a call to all Americans to join a volunteer effort this summer and be part of building a new foundation for America, one community at a time.

United We Serve starts June 22 and runs through the National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11. Since his inauguration, the President has called on all Americans to serve their communities and be a part of building a better future for our country.

To kick off United We Serve, I am asking you to join me in supporting the FED FEEDS FAMILIES food drive. Our much needed contributions will go far to sustain food shelters in the District of Columbia.

I do not think that any of us needs additional incentive to serve—we do that everyday by supporting our Volunteers in the field—but, a bit of team spirit can be a fun way to inspire involvement. A friendly competition among HQ floors will be held during each of the three collection periods for the food drive. Winners will be announced at the conclusion of each collection period.

1. Monday, June 22 - Friday, June 26
2. Monday, June 29 - Friday, July 31
3. Monday, August 3 - Friday, August 28

Starting the week of June 22, you will find a food collection box near your floor's elevators. This is a head-to-head competition of nine teams, with each floor, including the 5th floor of the L Street building, functioning as a team.

OPM is coordinating the FED FEEDS FAMILIES food drive this summer and is hoping to collect one million pounds of food. I know we can make a huge contribution to this total. If you have any questions about the food drive, please contact Garry Stanberry at gstanberry@peacecorps.gov or extension 1195.

For more information and to get involved with United We Serve, visit www.serve.gov, and to learn about our agency's commitment to this initiative, visit www.peacecorps.gov/unitedweserve.

Agency Again Receives Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 5, 2009 - The Association of Government Accountants (AGA) has awarded the Peace Corps the Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting (CEAR) for fiscal year 2008 for its high standards in fiscal accountability and transparency.

"I am so proud of our accomplishments in the area of financial accountability at the Peace Corps," said Acting Director Jody Olsen upon learning of the agency's award. "For the second year in a row, Peace Corps received an unqualified opinion on the audit of our finances, which is a remarkable endeavor for any organization, and something about which we are extremely proud."

The CEAR is awarded to federal government agencies whose Performance and Accountability Reports (PARs) achieve the highest standards of clarity in communicating financial information and demonstrating accountability.

The award was presented at a black tie dinner on May 20 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

"Given the fiscal status of the United States government and the public perceptions about government fiscal accountability and transparency, the achievement of this year's CEAR recipients is even more significant," said Relmond P. Van Daniker, AGA's executive director. "The agencies and departments being honored today truly represent an elite group within the government financial management community.

"We are heartened by the numbers of agencies and departments receiving the certificate and those who participated in the program," he continued. "Seventeen awards is a large number, and we welcome it as evidence not only of continuous improvement, but also of a real commitment to accountability and transparency among federal government financial managers and their agen-



From the PC Director

cies." In 2005, Peace Corps set a goal to achieve an unqualified opinion by the end of FY 2009. However, Peace Corps' complicated budget, with hundreds of thousands of annual global transactions with a variety of currencies, banking systems, and regulations, made this a lofty goal. Members of the Office of the Chief Financial Officer worked collaboratively with the agency's leadership and other Peace Corps offices to strengthen internal controls, establish key performance metrics, re-engineer processes, and obtain financial system certification and accreditation.

Said Thomas Bellamy, acting chief financial officer, "This achievement happened because of the dedication of my staff, the support from the senior staff, and the leadership we have received from the chief of staff and the Director. We remain committed to excellence in financial management and to securing future unqualified opinions on the agency's financial statements."

Since 1950, the AGA has been—and remains today—the educational organization dedicated to the enhancement of public financial management. AGA serves the professional interests of financial managers, from local, state and federal governments, as well as public accounting firms, responsible for effectively using billions of dollars and other monetary resources every day. For more than 50 years, AGA has been addressing the issues and challenges facing government financial managers.

Ronkonkoma, N.Y. Resident and Peace Corps Volunteer Places First in Burkina Faso Marathon

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 22, 2009 – On Saturday, May 30, Peace Corps Volunteer Jennifer Lazuta of Ronkonkoma, N.Y., finished first among female participants in the annual Ouaga-Laye marathon in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Burkina Faso, a landlocked country on the cusp of the Sahara, is one of the poorest countries in the world. Though open and welcoming, Burkina is culturally conservative and maintains extremely traditional gender roles. This greatly limits the opportunities available to women. For example, only 29 percent of girls finish primary school and only 17 percent of women are literate.

As a Volunteer, Jen works in a village in the windswept northwest part of the country, speaking Moore, the local language, and working with motivated, self-organized women's groups in her community. Jen has taught the women valuable, marketable skills such as basic accounting, soap making, gardening, and tie-dyeing fabric. In return, the community has embraced Jen as though she were a member of their family.

The marathon gave Jen a rare public forum to demonstrate gender equality. Of the 400 participants, only 10 women competed, and only two finished. As a result of 100 degree heat, more than two thirds of the participants did not finish, yet Jen persevered. The Burkinabe were inspired by Jen's efforts, and they responded by inspiring her. Jen described the support she received throughout the race as phenomenal. Among the bystanders, there was an electricity and a buzz following Jen on the course, and the generally reserved Burkinabe loudly cheered Jen as she passed. As word of her progress spread throughout the course, the crowds increased, and the large crowd at the finish rewarded Jen with a standing ovation. "Many people made it clear that it would be okay to drop out if I couldn't keep up, if I couldn't finish. So I can only imagine their surprise when the 'white girl' not only managed to finish all 42 kilometers, but also finished before many, many men," said Jen of her marathon experience. "Running that race was probably one of the hardest things I've ever done, but it was also one of the most satisfying as both a personal accomplishment, and as a way to show the Burkinabe that yes, women (American or otherwise) can do anything a man can do. I can only hope that my performance that day shared a little bit of American athleticism, and inspired Burkinabe women to take part in future races."

Jen and a male Burkinabe student from University of Ouaga met on the course and, in a wonderful cross-cultural gesture, ran the entire 26 miles together. Both insisted that they would not have finished without support from the other.

After finishing, Jen was treated like a celebrity. She was swamped with requests for interviews, and her photo and profile appeared in most of the local papers in the days that followed. Despite being in the midday sun and 100 degree temperatures for two hours after finishing a marathon, she answered every question with a smile. One of those questions was: "What will Jen do with her (modest) winnings?" The answer was that she will be donating them to her community to install fencing around the local garden. Peace Corps Burkina Faso has a program of 20 Volunteers dedicated to gender equity. Among their activities, Volunteers work to build the self-esteem and self-confidence of school-aged girls by designing and implementing tutoring and mentoring programs, girls clubs, and life skills activities such as communication skills and personal goal setting and planning. They also improve schools and community environments by making them become more girl-friendly and build the capacities of parent associations so that parents, most especially mothers, are better equipped to advocate for girls' education and empowerment and to take leadership positions in their communities.

*From the PC Director
&
General Peace Corps
News*





Spotlight on sports and games

Summer is coming! For students and teachers alike, this often means a break from the school-year schedule of early mornings and evenings full of work. Perhaps this summer has travel in store, or volunteer work, or maybe just days on end of relaxation. Or maybe this summer you'll indulge in some of your favorite sports and games. Peace Corps Volunteers the world over use sports and games as a chance to share U.S. culture with their host communities, and to learn a little about their new places. Youngsters in Nepal and the Philippines love to learn the American "Hokey-Pokey," just as new volunteers in Zambia and Honduras feel more at home when they join in a soccer game with a crowd of locals. In this issue, discover resources that feature sports and games that have shaped the experience of Peace Corps Volunteers and the communities they serve, including a new slide show about how students study, live, and play in Namibia. As the school year comes to a close, maybe you can take some time to teach your students games that children are playing in other countries. And whatever you have coming up for you, have a wonderful summer!

Ask a Volunteer

Q: What types of sports or games do children play in your country of service?

A: Soccer, or "kora," as it is lovingly referred to here in Morocco, continues to show itself truly to be "the world's game." Luckily for me, my community received donations of used jerseys. The uniform tops offer a more "professional" feel to our afternoon battles overlooking the Middle Atlas Mountains.

—Tricia Friedman, English Education Peace Corps Volunteer, Morocco

Q: What types of sports or games do children play in your country of service?

A: As an environmental education volunteer in Nicaragua, I work in rural elementary schools. My kids have various games they play during recess. They love to play baseball and kickball, but they use only two bases instead of three. They also like to play the game Red Rover, as many children do in the United States.

Another popular game is The Cat and the Mouse, where the students form a circle in which one student, the mouse, stands. Another student, the cat, stands outside the circle. The students in the circle protect the mouse from the cat, but once the mouse leaves the circle, the cat can chase the mouse. The goal is for the mouse to leave the circle and return to its protection before the cat can grab it.

An interesting observation that I've made is the different levels of gender integration among my schools during these games. My schools that are located closer to the area's large town tend to practice more gender integration in the games. However, my schools that are more remote and removed from the larger town display more traditional exclusions of women in sports-like activities, especially baseball and kickball. For this reason, I place extra care in encouraging the inclusion of girls in all the activities we do together, and have thankfully observed marked changes in their attitudes.

—Alex Fuller-Young, Environmental Education Peace Corps Volunteer, Nicaragua

A: I am in South Africa, and the kids here are really big into soccer (football). There's also cricket, but I don't think that's as widespread with kids. There's also something called netball, which is like a cross between volleyball and basketball.

—Casey Frazee, NGO Development Peace Corps Volunteer, South Africa

Seeking an Education Specialist

The Coverdell World Wise Schools program provides a variety of services and materials to help American schoolchildren learn about, understand, and appreciate the diverse cultures and issues of the world. The education specialist will be part of a small team developing content about global issues based on the Peace Corps Volunteer experience, and providing support and technical assistance to K-12 educators in the use of CWWS resources to develop "globally ready" kids. The candidate should have the ability to develop curriculum content in multiple media formats, represent and promote curriculum projects to agency and external stakeholders, inspire and communicate clearly with program constituents, participate and contribute as an integral part of a small team, and facilitate professional development activities for K-12 educators. Professional teaching experience is required; experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer is desirable. Location: Peace Corps Headquarters, Washington, D.C.



Attachment

Remote VRC effectiveness questionnaire

Remote Volunteer Resource Centers are not funded by Peace Corps Headquarters. The CD and AO at their discretion save the money required from the post budget to provide you with the VRCs. This money would have been spent for post administration purposes or sent back to HQ as unspent money if they had not made this decision for your benefit. To help them justify to HQ any further expenditure on setting up more remote VRCs, we would like your feedback on the effectiveness of the current ones. Please take some time to fill out the following survey and send it to the post IT Specialist before August 1, 2009.

PCV Name: _____

1. Name(s) of remote VRCs accessible to you:

- Mohales Hoek
- Qachas Nek
- Thaba Tseka
- Mokhotlong

2. How often do you visit the remote VRC?

- _____ times a week
- _____ times a month
- Never get a chance

3. Are you able to access Internet with your personal Vodacom SIM card (with data time loaded) inserted in the modem every time you visit the VRC? If not, what is the hit rate? (Eg. Every 3rd or 4th time I visit the VRC, the VCL network is down and I have to wait up to 1 hour)

4. Do you feel the remote VRC is a value added service the post is providing you?

- Yes
- No

5. Would you like to see more remote VRCs set up in future? If yes where else do you want them?

Attachment

